THE DEMOCRATISATION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE FOR A POLITICALLY INFORMED CITIZENRY: THE CAPACITIES OF NEW MEDIA TO ENGAGE CITIZENS IN PUBLIC LIFE

A CASE STUDY

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Submitted October 2013
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Keywords

Abstract

This research explores the impact of the World Wide Web on the practice and purpose of journalism in the period 1997–2011 by examining the ways in which traditional news media models—public service and commercial—use digital tools and technologies to inform people and to encourage them to participate in public debates about current affairs. Through case studies which showcase the various approaches to networked online news journalism, each media model is examined in terms of its own social, political and economic milieu, through a detailed look at well-known exemplars of each. The research is framed by the continuing expectation that journalism in democratic societies has a key role in ensuring citizens are informed and engaged with public affairs.

The thesis finds that the use of the World Wide Web by the general population has impacted on the politics, technologies and tools of journalism in three main ways. First, it has enabled more people to share more information about more events and issues in the world than was possible before its general use. Second, traditional newsrooms have realised that the sum of public knowledge is greater than that in any news organisation. And finally, as a consequence of the previous points, it has transformed traditional news media’s approach to almost every aspect of journalism. The research identifies, describes and analyses the impact of these changes, and the benefits and challenges for each model as it transitioned from its legacy platform to the online environment.

In light of the failing commercial business models and the cultural shift in the role and expectations of the audience, the thesis recommends that traditional media organisations holistically implement participatory strategies, which will necessarily place greater emphasis on civic-service.
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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: QUT Verified Signature

Date: October 24 2013
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the supervisors of this research, Professor Brian McNair and Dr Jason Sternberg. I would also like to thank Professor Terry Flew, Dr Lee Duffield, Dr Ben Goldsmith, Dr Folker Hanusch and Dr Jairo Lugo-Ocando for their comments.

I give special thanks to all of the journalism industry professionals who generously and happily gave their time for interviews and follow-up advice, and for their invaluable insights into the operations and functions of journalism. Thank you to Peter Alford, Kevin Anderson, Andrew Bolt, Matthew Eltringham, Clive Mathieson, George Megalogenis, Jean K. Min, Professor Richard Sambrook, James Taranto, Vicky Taylor and Peter Wilson.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience, encouragement and support.
This work is dedicated to Heather Glenys Rodger (1939–2012)
Chapter 1  Introduction

“Journalism is being phased out. It is already gone as we who practiced it through most of the second half of the twentieth century remember it. Preserving journalism, as we know it, is probably out of the question. The real issue is who or what will take over its functions and whether they will serve the public interest” (P. Meyer, 2003: 11).

“Journalists and everyone else has forgotten what journalism is about. The particular skills of journalism require the same things it did in the past, and if we don’t see the skills then we will lose them in the information. We need to preserve these skills. The idea that journalism has fundamentally changed is wrong. The ability to access information has changed” (Marsh, 2011).

The Internet, or more specifically the World Wide Web, has created cultural, economic, social and political concerns for traditional news media models and the future of journalism. It has also created a cultural shift in the role and expectations of “the people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006). Before the introduction of the World Wide Web to the general population, traditional news media had dominated the landscape as the gatekeepers of information. As the gatherers, reporters and sense makers of local, national and global issues and events, news media organisations held the power to make decisions about what the public needed to know and the ways in which news was reported. These decisions were based on a set of values, laws and ethics designed to shape and regulate the practice of news reporting. During these times, ordinary citizens, who were largely defined by news organisations as the audience and consumers, had very little to do with the production and distribution of news.

Since the 1990s, the evolution of a diversity of Web based technologies has enabled the citizens of the world to produce content traditionally found only within the domain of the news industry, such as opinion, comment, investigative research, images, slideshows, audio, video, and graphics, on any topic imaginable, independent of traditional news media and made instantly available to anyone with
Internet access across dispersed geographical locations at any time. Ordinary citizens can now use multiple platforms, including traditional news media, to report eyewitness accounts of important events, such as the London bombings, the 2009 Iran general election riots (Goggin, 2011: 99), Middle East conflicts, the death of Osama Bin Laden, and natural disasters such as the Iceland volcano eruption, Brisbane floods and New Zealand earthquakes, to the world (Ahlers & Hessen, 2005). The uptake of Internet communication technologies by “everybody” (Gillmor, 2006) and the inclusion of citizen generated content in traditional media production and distribution processes suggests there has been a shift toward a democratisation of journalism, a phenomenon which is proving to be both beneficial and challenging to the established news industry.

A number of problems have emerged from this paradigm shift, one of which is finding ways to continue to generate enough revenue to sustain the industry’s business processes. While the news industry is comprised of many different business models, almost every news organisation is now faced with different degrees of the same kinds of economic challenges, namely finding a way to sustain journalism.

The news industry has suffered major economic losses across all of its main sources of revenue, at a time when it was attempting to establish an online presence. Until 2000, the world’s news industry was dominated by print and broadcast technologies. Newspapers provided coverage of the daily news and entertainment, but equally important in the context of generating revenue, they were the primary source of classified advertisements (Rotman & Forrester, 2008). Since then, many news print publications have experienced decreased circulation figures, for reasons including the shift of classifieds from the news industry’s print publications to online sites such as Craigslist, the rise of multiple and diverse online news and information publications (Cushion, 2012: 1; Fuller, 2010: 3), the large volume and variety of other online content such as games, and the increased production cost of newsprint publications (Ahlers & Hessen, 2005; Rotman & Forrester, 2008). As Internet technologies developed and access to computers reached saturation levels, people developed a preference for using online platforms to consume news and information over the traditional print formats. This then caused advertisers to look beyond the news industry for new business opportunities.
Given the commercial news sector’s almost exclusive reliance on advertising revenue, which Clay Shirky says, “can no longer be relied on to fund serious reporting” (Shirky, 2011), the unanswered question that remains as important in 2012 as it was in 2000 is, “who is going to pay for serious reporting” (Gitlin, 2009: 5). Shirky says the “lost value from print is not made up for by gains in digital readership” (Shirky, 2011) so production should be cheap and the product should be free (Shirky, 2011). But not everyone agrees that news should be free. News organisations throughout the world have grappled with how to reorganise their business strategies, which include making decisions about whether to impose subscription levies and, in the US, whether to seek government and philanthropic funding (Downie & Schudson, 2009). Organisations are now developing business strategies to meet the objectives of their discretely designed business models that will determine how the public gain access to online content, ranging from cost free to various levels of subscription.

The transition from traditional print and broadcast platforms to the online environment also brought cultural changes that generated further economic challenges for established news media. As Internet technology continues to evolve, so too do the tools and technologies of journalism, including hardware, software and professional practice, all of which add extra cost. Culturally, news services went from working to routine print and broadcast deadlines to producing content for a 24/7 news cycle, and newsrooms are continually figuring out how to use, develop and incorporate Web 2.0 technologies and the audience into journalism practice. The extra costs associated with each change added further financial burden to businesses that were already in economic hardship (Sambrook, 2011).

Once organisations established an online presence, they were further challenged by the public’s widespread use of Web tools such as RSS and the many newsfeed aggregators. The problem with these tools is that they provide users with access to content without them having to visit the originating news website, thereby circumventing news consumers from exposure to the advertisements they would have otherwise seen accompanying the news content.
This problem was exacerbated by blogs and other aggregators that created the same effect of obstructing the regular presence of consumers at the news content’s site of origin. Some argue that this should not be seen as a problem for established news media organisations, with the assertion that search engines (Olmstead, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2011), blogs and aggregators on-send traffic to their sites (Athey & Mobius, 2012; Jeon & Esfahani, 2012). However, business analysts Rotman and Forrester, and news media CEO, Rupert Murdoch, reject this view with claims that it reduces the capacity for news organisations to connect audiences with advertisers. They firmly highlight the trend as a significant problem that threatens the intellectual capital and the content created by traditional news providers (Rotman & Forrester, 2008). Murdoch’s viewpoint is best explained in the context of Jack Balkin’s description of the “propertisation of knowledge and information” (Balkin, 2006). Balkin contends that the highest costs for the production of knowledge and information are in the first copy, therefore in the interest of protecting profits and deterring competitors from cannibalising their content, some businesses will pursue strategies to monopolise the use of their own content, which is what Murdoch aims to do.

Each of these problems has created an overall sense of a “crisis in journalism”, which has become a central topic of debate amongst industry professionals, independent news providers, business, academia and the citizenry. In addition to the problems identified above, other topics of debate include: the tension between commercial interests and editorial imperatives1 (Standage, Rosen, & Carr, 2011); the loss of valuable newsroom resources, which has affected the quality and accountability of journalism (Downie & Schudson, 2009); conflict between the ideal of journalism as an investigative rather than repurposing process (Moeller, 2008: 175); and the industry’s laboured acceptance and adoption of the online environment.

Conversely, encapsulating these many concerns are the potential benefits the Internet introduces for journalism, including the degree to which news organisations use new networking technologies, to source, produce and distribute news content, and the value and role of participatory journalism and deliberative news environments, enabled by Web 2.0 technologies, to news organisations. The desire to find solutions to these questions and problems reiterate the considerable value and importance
attached first and foremost to acts of primary news reporting, and then to other forms of news journalism in general.

One of the shortcomings of the debate is that it tends to generalise rather than specify problems and proposed solutions. The range of solutions offered to the many questions and observations about the direct and indirect effects of the Web on the practice of journalism in established news media begs for more detail about the specifics of the changes as they have occurred in different organisations.

**Hypothesis**

This research investigates the extent to which the use of Web 2.0 technologies and the participatory media culture have contributed to the democratisation of journalism during the period 1997–2011. The work contextualises the democratisation of journalism within the scope of traditional news media organisations and is defined by the ways in which they have incorporated evolving digital technologies into their production structures. The democratisation of journalism is also concerned with the ways in which news organisations have restructured their businesses to participate in the networked information environment (Benkler, 2006: 1). This restructure involves the inclusion of the general public and other independent journalism entities as participants in the news production process, ranging from agenda setting to content production.

This research categorises the concept of journalism into three distinct yet interconnected components: the *politics*, *technologies* and *tools* of journalism. The politics of journalism is the broadest category covering the cultural, economic, social and political concerns affecting both macro and micro levels of the news industry. The technologies of journalism include practices such as computer assisted reporting and networked journalism. The tools of journalism include notebooks, computer hardware and applications including social media, digital mobile technologies such as smart phones, cameras, tablets and so on.

The research is framed by the notion that journalism has an obligation as the Fourth Estate to ensure citizens are informed and engaged with the issues that affect their lives. It explores the impact of the World Wide Web on the practice and purpose of
journalism by examining the ways in which different media models, public service and commercial, use digital tools and technologies of journalism to inform people and to encourage them to participate in public debates about current affairs.

This thesis argues that the use of the World Wide Web by the general population has impacted on the politics, technologies and tools of journalism in three main ways. First, it has enabled more people to share more information about more events and issues in the world than was possible before its emergence for general use. Second, traditional newsrooms have realised that the sum of public knowledge is greater than that in any single news organisation. And finally, as a consequence of the previous points, it has transformed traditional news media’s approach to almost every aspect of journalism. The research identifies, describes and analyses the impact of these changes, and the benefits and challenges for public and commercial media models as they transition from their legacy platforms to the online environment.

The thesis contends that digital news environments provide people with greater access to more information, multiple perspectives, and a diversity of voices, in what is described here as a discursive network of public spheres, than was possible via traditional print and broadcast platforms (Moeller, 2008: 184; G. Turner, 2010: 71). It reviews the role of journalism in a democracy; compares and contrasts traditional and new relationships between journalism and civil society; reviews how methods of journalism such as crowdsourcing and networking have evolved through the use of digital platforms; examines how newsrooms incorporate the use of news blogs and social media into the practice of engaging citizens with a form of democratic deliberation (Coleman & Blumler, 2009); considers the value to journalism practice and the public debate of including the personal viewpoints of citizens in news blog comment forums and message boards; investigates how and why news organisations incorporate user-generated content into their news production process; and analyses the benefits and challenges, associated with this practice, to newsrooms and citizens. Finally, the research provides a critical perspective on the ways in which each media model defines citizens.

The research began with an examination of the notion that individuals within democratic societies were disconnecting from the public political debate. These ideas
evolved from a range of academic viewpoints expressing concern that the general news media no longer adequately fulfilled its democratic function (Merritt and McCombs 2004: 47). A preliminary review of the literature (D. Adams, 2006) identified several theories that attempted to explain this phenomenon, including changing cultural values, the intensified marketing of politics, the dependency of journalism on commercial funding, cost cutting within the news media, concentrated media ownership and the loss of investigative reporting and foreign bureaus (McChesney, 2011: 54; Osnos, 2009: 1). It found each of these factors counterproductive to news journalism's primary purpose, which is to create an inclusive and diverse space for deliberative conversations between members of society about public affairs, to monitor the activities of government and business, and to mobilise citizens to exercise their democratic rights (McChesney, 2011: 53).

Early investigations into the idea that the rise of independent media, particularly the blogosphere, had a primary role in the problems of the news media that may ultimately lead to the “death of media” (Kamlya, 2009; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Schechter, 2005) found that traditional news media remains as important to society today as it was before the emergence of the World Wide Web. While the blogosphere does absorb some of the traditional media’s audience share, the large established organisations still distribute more original news to a larger audience than any other news provider model. Ahlers and Hessen argument suggests that the early discourses warning of the impending collapse of big media were greatly exaggerated (Ahlers & Hessen, 2005: 65). These have since evolved to discourses of co-existence. Most news media organisations are now of the opinion that an interactive and collaborative relationship with the public and other independent journalism entities is the ideal model.

Despite the many cutbacks and closures of traditional newsrooms, traditional news organisations still have more journalists on the ground covering more events and issues than anyone else (Rosenstiel, 2009a). More recently, Richard Sambrook, former BBC Director of Global News, said traditional news media is more important now than it has ever been before (Sambrook, 2012: 3). Others note that society’s need for traditional news media is most pronounced during times of crisis, when the
public turns to established media, more than any other source, in search of information and context (Rosenstiel, 2008).

The significance of the debates and challenges surrounding journalism as a practice, as an institution of democracy, and as a product of business, is explained via a detailed analysis of how three different news media models approach some of the biggest professional and economic challenges in the history of news media. It considers the ways in which national, international, public and commercial news organisations attempt to secure and increase business interests and social capital in a digital environment while continuing to function as a public service for democratic societies.

Methodology: Comparative International Research

At a time when the world is intricately connected by a diversity of social, political and economic relationships, the idea of undertaking comparative international research holds significant relevance. Sonia Livingstone says one of the main benefits of “cross-national” (Livingstone, 2003: 478) research is its capacity to change “generalised” (Livingstone, 2003: 489) findings to substantiated theory through comparative analysis. Frank Esser and Thomas Hanitzsch contend that comparative research enables the researcher to “test theories across diverse settings and evaluate the scope and significance of certain phenomena” without reducing conclusions to “naïve universalism” (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012: 4). It provides a framework from which to observe and contrast a variety of cultural systems, which include organisational/institutional systems in addition to “cross territorial” comparisons (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012: 6). Furthermore, it establishes networks of research that “foster global scholarship” and creates a bank of “practical knowledge and experience” (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012: 4).

Livingstone notes that this kind of research is sometimes criticised because it has a tendency to generate findings that relate to the notion of nation (Livingstone, 2003: 483) (see, for example, Esser and Hanitzsch’s definition of comparative research (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012: 5)). This research is not concerned with nation, rather it focuses on specific characteristics and processes associated with particular phenomena. It aims to examine a particular process in different contexts (Esser &
Hanitzsch, 2012: 5; Livingstone, 2003: 479), namely the use of Web 2.0 technologies in various models of news media, then to identify what is “unique or contrasting, atypical or widespread” (Livingstone, 2003: 483) in each context.

This research provides an international comparative analysis of the ways in which three specific public service and commercial models of news media use digital Web 2.0 technologies to:

- Enable them to achieve their economic, social and political objectives;
- Gather, analyse, publish and distribute news journalism;
- Provide multiple entry points for citizens of all levels of education and social status to participate in the news process and public debates;
- Encourage and develop citizen participation in the political public sphere; and
- Enhance the collaborative relationship between professional news producers, citizens and other journalism entities.

It poses the question:

**How has the migration of print and broadcast news production to online news environments transformed the capacity for commercial and public news media models to provide the public with new participatory and deliberative spaces, and what are the implications for the professional practice of journalism?**

This research contains an original international collective case study of a variety of print and broadcast news media models in two main categories: commercial and public service. The case studies showcase various approaches to networked online news journalism. Each media model is examined in terms of its own social, political and economic milieu, taking a detailed look at well-known proponents of each: British Broadcasting Corporation (*BBC*) (Publicly funded Public Service Broadcaster); News Limited newspaper publications including the *Australian* and the *Herald Sun* (Commercial Business Model), and the *Guardian* newspaper (Hybrid Commercial/Trust Business Model).
Media models were selected based upon their relevance within the news media domain (see Table 1.1). Each has worldwide significance and influence. The inclusion of a variety of different cases was designed to gain insight into a wider range of interesting variables and dimensions, and to provide a broader theoretical framework from which to understand and find solutions to the research problem.

The news organisations selected for this study are categorised according to their similarities and differences. Two generic business models currently dominate the news industry, commercial and public, and each has atypical variations. Business models are representative of an organisation’s founding business principles, interests and values, and consist of a mission statement or set of business goals, and strategies to fulfil organisational aims, operational policies, financial funding, infrastructure, business processes and operational practices. Commercial business models are generally founded on a desire to generate income for the organisation’s financial stakeholders, although this research also describes a unique exception. Ordinarily, their sources of revenue include shareholders, classified advertising, display advertising, sponsored content, reader offers, and, in some instances, philanthropists.

Being commercial organisations, News Limited and the Guardian have designed particular business models to achieve their business and social objectives. News Limited is founded solely on a commercially oriented profit-driven model, which seeks to maximise returns for its shareholders. The Guardian’s business model departs from the traditional commercial model in two ways. First, its funding is derived from both commercial means and through the Scott Trust. Second, income generated through commercial means is reinvested in the business to sustain its journalism rather than to benefit shareholders (Guardian Media Group, 2010b).

The BBC is the world’s leading public service media organisation. It is funded through an annual licence fee paid by all UK households, which makes its economic model unique. A Royal Charter ensures the BBC fulfils its obligation to provide socially responsible journalism to the UK public. BBC News was one of the earliest innovators of Web 2.0 tools and technologies for the practice of journalism.
Figure 1.1 shows the various revenue sources of the media models included in this study. It is important to understand the components of the business model of each because they have a direct effect on how each defines publics, their inclusiveness of citizens and the democratisation of their journalism.

The BBC, Guardian and News Limited each generate revenue from advertising, however the BBC’s advertising stream is limited to international audiences only. The Guardian is also funded by a private trust, a newspaper cover price and mobile apps.

News Limited generates revenue from a newspaper cover price, online subscriptions, mobile apps and News Corporation shareholders (News Corporation compensates News Limited for its financial losses).
Figure 1.1. Compilation of business models’ sources of revenue: BBC, the Guardian and News Limited, (Images sourced from Google Images).

**Interpretive and Ethnographic Methodology**

The case study paradigm provides interpretive and ethnographic frameworks with specific methods of data collection and analysis, which for this research incorporates a review of literature from the relevant academic disciplines, industry studies, historical contextualisation, policy analysis, and empirical data including interviews with key editors and journalists, obtrusive observation in a BBC newsroom, and unobtrusive observation of online websites. This evidence-based approach was selected because it uses multiple methods of data collection, and so provides “multiple sources of evidence” all of which “converges on the same topic” (Yin, 1989: 84) to enable a more accurate interpretation of the data (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991: 54; Stake, 2001: 443). Furthermore, it has the capacity to “cast an important light” (Repko, Newell, & Szostak, 2012: 4) on the specifics of the range of problems being addressed.
Interviews

Interviews were conducted in 2008–09 with a purposive sample of senior journalists and editors drawn from the online news site of organisations from each media model.\textsuperscript{10} Semi-structured in-depth\textsuperscript{11} interviews provided opportunities to explore new significant information about the editorial staffs’ first-hand experiences of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the day-to-day practice of established professional journalism. The interviews, which occurred in “one session per interviewee” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010: 93–102), also provided the researcher with the opportunity to ask professionals to provide specific information on the comparisons between the practices particular to their own organisation and those they had observed in other organisations. Since each of the informants were selected based on their extensive knowledge, experience and high profile in the field of journalism, they were able to provide educated and experiential viewpoints of professional journalism overall.

Face-to-face interviews with journalists and editors from the BBC, Guardian, Wall Street Journal, two Australian foreign correspondents and the OhmyNews communications director were conducted in London, New York, Japan and Seoul. In-person interviews are known to provide researchers with a deeper understanding of what the informants say based on the presence of interpersonal communication cues such as body language (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010: 99). A potential limitation of the interview process employed in this research is that three of the News Limited participants were interviewed via the phone\textsuperscript{12} rather than face-to-face. However, each participant was candid with their responses and advised of their willingness to make themselves available to the researcher for further questioning and clarification of information at any time throughout the research process.

Editors and journalists were asked how they thought the use of Web 2.0 technologies had impacted on the relationship between journalists and citizens. Here they were able to comment on their own feelings, their professional experience, their observation of the ways in which the public and journalists interact, and the use of digitally based tools and technologies of journalism within their own organisation, the wider news industry and by the general public. Editorial staff members were also asked whether the tools and technologies of contemporary journalism had changed,
and if so what were the benefits and challenges of the changes to the traditional practice and the politics of journalism. The interviews were guided by true curiosity and a desire to discover new information (Garber, 2011).

**Observation**

While conducting interviews at the BBC, I was invited by the Editor of Interactivity Vicky Taylor to sit and observe the work practices of journalists in the newsroom as they contacted sources to talk about topics related to events in Asia and the Middle East. Journalists explained how they managed content and used databases to store lists of case studies containing details about events, issues and sources, which included information about identity, location, credibility, authority experience, connections and so on. The observations made during this time supported a number of assertions from BBC editors during the interviews about the BBC’s verification processes and the strength of its relationship with members of the public throughout the world. While I did not have access to private conversations between sources and journalists, I was able to observe the professional manner in which journalists interacted with individual members of the public on matters of a general nature. I was also better able to understand the logic of the process as it was explained and demonstrated by the journalists.

**Related Works**

In 2004, Nick Couldry identified a need for international comparative research that describes the ways in which new technology is incorporated into old media traditions to create new modes of production and citizen engagement (Couldry, 2004: 27). Since that time, there have been multiple studies into particular aspects of the use of Web 2.0 technologies in traditional news media settings, including the ways in which the BBC uses blogs during elections (Thorsen, 2009), to cover war (D. Bennett, 2011), to achieve greater transparency and accountability (Hermida, 2008) and Paul Bradshaw’s (2010) research into the impact of blogging on the practice of journalism. Other research has focused on the ways in which British news providers, print and broadcast, have incorporated the use of user-generated content into their news services (Singer & Ashman, 2009; Wardle & Williams, 2008), the response to social media by UK news media (Newman, 2009), a review of the ways Australian public news media incorporates user-generated content into its news services (Flew,
2011), and a new theory of the Fifth Estate\textsuperscript{14} (Dutton, 2009). The following discussion outlines the methods, purpose and findings of each of these research projects and describes the role each played in the way the methodology of this research was constructed.

Einar Thorsen’s 2009 study used web dialogue analysis to review the value of the online spaces that were created by the \textit{BBC} in 2005 for the particular purpose of encouraging a global conversation about the UK election. This study was primarily concerned with the nature and relevance of dialogue between user-participants in specific \textit{BBC} comment forums, to the organisation’s “commitment to providing ‘democratic value and civic engagement’” (Thorsen, 2009: 233). Unlike Thorsen’s research, this study does not seek to undertake a quantitative analysis of dialogue between user-participants in blog comment forums, rather it more specifically focuses on how established news media responded to the challenges of Web 2.0 and participatory media culture to professional practice and its role as the Fourth Estate. Nevertheless, Thorsen’s study informs this research on a range of topics including online participation, deliberation and civic engagement at the \textit{BBC}.

Using an ethnographic mixed method approach, Daniel Bennett’s 2011 study of the impact of blogging on the \textit{BBC}’s coverage of war and terrorism provided him with direct access to a range of \textit{BBC} services, allowing him to experience issues and events as they arose in each area. The study used both participant and unobtrusive observation to show how \textit{BBC} journalists incorporated citizen bloggers into their contact books\textsuperscript{15} thereby expanding their networks of collaboration. While this research is not informed by participant observation to the same extent, it undertakes interviews and unobtrusive observation to show the ways in which the tools and technologies of journalism have evolved with Web 2.0 technology. Bennett’s work informs this research on the value and challenges of collaborative reporting for the \textit{BBC}.

Alfred Hermida conducted a seven-year study into the ways in which the \textit{BBC} uses blogs to achieve greater transparency and accountability. The study is comprised of documentary evidence and interviews with key developers of the \textit{BBC}’s blogging strategy (Hermida, 2010: 308). While the study found blogs to be an effective way
for the BBC to explain itself to the public, Hermida notes that the organisation was “yet to embrace blogs fully as a platform for a conversation with the audience” (Hermida, 2010: 314).

In 2008, Paul Bradshaw surveyed 200 professional journalists in thirty countries to discover how blogging had affected their work process. The study took account of the relationship between journalists and the audience during three key stages of production: ideas, newsgathering and story production (Bradshaw, 2010a: 99). The findings indicated that while journalists did not believe that blogging had completely changed the way they work, they said that blogging had in some ways changed their traditional routines, since they were increasingly utilising the audience for research and verification practices (Bradshaw, 2010a: 105).

Jane Singer’s 2009 case study of the Guardian’s website showed how the news provider incorporates user-generated content into its “perceptions and practices” (Singer & Ashman, 2009: 3). The study uses in-depth interviews and a questionnaire to gauge how journalists navigate their ethical responsibilities to verification, autonomy and accountability. The study found Guardian journalists had increased their attention to accuracy and raised concerns about the effects of uncivil/abusive comments produced by the general public on the credibility of the Guardian (Singer, 2011: 129). The study also found that journalists were guarded about allowing public participation to impact on their own professional news judgment (Singer, 2011: 126). Singer proposed that future research might aim to discover ways for journalists to optimise their relationships with the public, and by 2011 she had observed that “many newspapers have sought and, in some cases, implemented ways to boost that ‘human contact’ with their contributors” (Singer, 2011: 136).

In 2003, David Domingo conducted ethnographic research, which saw him spend time in four European online news sites (Domingo, 2008: 690). His cases of study were selected on the basis of their different backgrounds, which he says enabled him to better compare their similarities and differences (Domingo, 2007: 11). Using in-depth interviews with reporters, editors and web developers (Domingo, 2008: 680), Domingo said he found online journalists continued to reproduce mass media models of journalism, which enabled them to dominate the production of content for the
website, while the presence of the public existed in its traditional passive capacity (Domingo, 2007: 11). Domingo concluded that myths about interactivity were the product of the high expectations of changes that may evolve with the use of digital technologies (see Chapter 1). He said that while journalists embraced the notion of interactivity, the reality of its practice saw journalists “perceive audience participation as a problem to manage rather than a benefit for the news product” (Domingo, 2008: 697). Like Couldry (2004), Domingo identified the need for a cross-country study to explore international differences. Moreover, he suggested that future studies take account of the “meso- and macro-context factors surrounding online newsrooms: the market context (size of the companies, ownership, competitors’ strategies – both professional and citizen media) and the social context (public sphere history, information society policies, media laws)” (Domingo, 2008: 699).

Hermida and Thurman’s study investigates the way newspaper websites in the UK use user-generated content (UGC). The study found many newsrooms were incorporating this kind of content into their service with uncertainty about its overall value. It also revealed that UCG is subject to the same kinds of editorial control as any content in their publications (Hermida & Thurman, 2008).

Claire Wardle and Andy Williams’ 2008 research on the BBC’s use of user-generated content was comprised of six different methodologies, including obtrusive observation in the newsroom of nine different programs, exploratory and semi-structured interviews (Williams, Wardle, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011: 88) with 125 BBC staff members including journalists, managers and executives, analysis of radio and television news content, online survey, focus groups and a review of a national report on news media. The study aimed to find out how various levels of BBC editorial staff and the public perceived and approached user-generated content. It found that the use of user-generated content is an extension of what the BBC has always done, that is to take account of what the public has to say on matters in its interest. While the BBC has embraced the use of user-generated content, it continues to exert editorial control over what it publishes (Wardle & Williams, 2008: 41; Williams et al., 2011: 85).
These authors identified a need for the BBC to “proactively seek out participation in communities and groups which traditionally remain under the radar of mainstream media” (Wardle & Williams, 2008: 41). Their work also highlighted the need for a greater understanding of the value of collaborative content and networked journalism. In response to this, this research examines the possibilities and value of collaborative and networked journalism to traditional news media practice.

Bill Dutton’s work on the Fifth Estate finds it is comprised, in part, of networked individuals who use the Internet to “increase the accountability of the other Estates” (Dutton, 2009: 13), including the Fourth Estate. Nick Newman’s 2009 study into the ways in which the UK news media have responded to social media found that increased popularity and uses of participatory communities complemented the capacity of journalists to construct the stories they need to tell (Newman, 2009: 50). Interviews with journalists in key news organisations and journalism academics highlight the concepts of networked journalism, partnerships and the Fifth Estate, raise interesting questions about how to sort out truth from opinion and untruths, and how to maintain deliberative environments on a mass scale. Both Newman and Dutton’s work provides this research with a framework for understanding the use of Web 2.0 technologies as a method of enhancing existing and creating new networks of accountability.

Terry Flew’s ethnographic action research into public service media and citizenship is a case study which examined the digital strategies used by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) to harness user created content (UCC). The research establishes the value of public service media and identifies the benefits and challenges posed to the traditional editorial practices by the use of user generated content (Flew, 2011: 224). While the research concentrates on SBS, like Wardle and Williams’s study of the BBC, it provides a broader framework from which to observe, understand and analyse the purpose of journalism and media citizenship.

Stephen Cushion’s recent international comparative research into the distinctiveness of public service journalism compared to market-driven news examined the democratic value of each service to citizens (Cushion, 2012: 2). Cushion’s methodology includes content analysis of the various types of news content produced
by different broadcast news media models. His findings indicated that public service broadcasters were valuable and important to citizenship in democracies (Cushion, 2012: 206).

Each of these related works has informed this thesis to various degrees. This research aims to combine all of the topics described in these works into a holistic and cohesive comparative analysis of a variety of internationally acclaimed news media models. It analyses the ways in which established news media incorporate and develop digital tools and technologies of journalism with traditional journalism practices. It analyses the ways in which each news media model has incorporated participatory tools such as blogs, and collaborative technologies such as citizen produced content, into their news services. The research examines the ways in which professional journalists in commercial and public service news organisations seek to interact with the public, so it can gauge whether the use of Web 2.0 technologies has altered the production and distribution of the news (Livingstone, 2003: 479). The study will also examine the extent to which each of the established news media organisations networks with what Dutton refers to as the Fifth Estate (Dutton, 2009), which includes journalism entities such as WikiLeaks, Demotix, Storyful and Ushahidi. In identifying what the “unique or contrasting, atypical or widespread” (Livingstone, 2003: 483) qualities of each media model are, the study will draw conclusions about the differences between the ways in which each media model defines citizens in their approach to their role as the Fourth Estate.

The research aims to contribute new information to the domains of Journalism, Media and Communications, and Internet Studies. The work differs from previous studies because it examines how the use of Web 2.0 technologies by different media models impact on the micro and macro elements of journalism. The research takes account of the size of the organisations, their business models and business strategies in relation to their competitors, all in the context of theories of the Fourth Estate (including public sphere and citizenship), deliberation, participation (Oates, Owen, & Gibson, 2006: 15), democratisation and networked journalism. The research is designed around models of media, tools and technologies of journalism, and the Fourth Estate.
**Chapter Outline**

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the topic, contextualised the problem, posed the research question, defined the scope and the purpose of the research, described the methodologies used, listed related works and explained why the research is important. The chapter has also identified the stakeholders and stated the original contribution of the research.

Chapter 2 will review the literature relevant to the politics of journalism. It positions journalism within an industry that is suffering extreme financial pressure, undergoing significant cultural change and facing challenges in every aspect of practice. It provides a critical evaluation of the definitions and theories of journalism from the viewpoint of its role as the Fourth Estate and as one of the key institutions of democracies. In doing so, the review drills deeper into the finer details of the historical role of journalism in a democratic society. Its exploration of the interconnectedness of notions of democratic deliberation, public sphere and citizenship construct a framework from which to understand the evolving challenges for journalism in a variety of organisational settings and contemporary circumstances.

Chapter 3 reviews the elements that constitute the tools and technologies of journalism, including network theory, network journalism, participation, crowdsourcing, user-generated content, blogs and social media. It reviews the traditional and new relationships between journalism and civil society through an examination of the ways in which new tools and technologies can contribute to a democratisation of journalism and enhance its role in society.

Drawing on the history of democracy in South Korea, this chapter includes a review of the democratising effects of Web 2.0 tools and technologies of journalism, incorporating participation, active engagement, collaboration and networked journalism, as used by OhmyNews. It draws on the ways in which this alternative online news service circumvented the control held by Korea’s traditional news media to diversify the voices and information that defined the public debate and its impact on the democratisation process of South Korea. An in-depth interview with OhmyNews Communications Director Jean K. Min provides the research with
empirical insight into the organisations’ philosophy and editorial policy and processes, which serves as a framework from which to understand the ways in which traditional news media models undertake initiatives that encourage public participation. The discussion then describes the elements of networked journalism, which frame the politics, tools and technologies of journalism in each of the selected case studies. Finally, the chapter describes the key points in the debate about the limitations associated with the concept of democratisation.

Chapter 4 is a case study of the British Broadcasting Corporation. It provides a brief history of the organisation, a description of its Royal Charter, and purpose. The chapter provides an overview of the publicly funded news organisation’s approach to journalism and the ways in which its social and legal obligations to the public are met.

Beginning its public service as broadcaster, this chapter shows the BBC’s transition to an online news service that provides twenty-four hour news coverage across multiple digital platforms. As part of this transition, news blogs have evolved as part of the BBC news service since 2001.

Using interviews with specialist interactive media editors and a global news media director, this chapter describes the way the BBC use news blogs and a variety of social media platforms to engage citizens with the kinds of topics that enable them to develop an understanding of important issues.

Chapter 5 is a case study of one of News Limited through particular reference to one of its holdings, the Australian. It also refers to the Herald Sun and one of News Corporation’s US holdings, the Wall Street Journal.

The chapter begins with a brief history of News Limited before introducing the corporation’s CEO and the ideological challenges facing commercial news organisations. The discussion then turns to a description of the Internet based News Digital Media, which provides the framework for the organisation’s business model, before it describes and analyses News Limited’s transition from print to online in the context of news production, distribution and journalism practice.
Drawing on interviews with key editors and journalists from London, Japan, New York and Australia, the discussion then turns to the ways in which individual journalists approach the Web 2.0 environment. Importantly, this section compares and contrasts the diversity of professional viewpoints about interactivity, the use of Web 2.0 tools and new technologies of journalism from within one commercial organisation. The descriptions and analyses of two of News Limited’s most popular political blogs provide an insightful contrast between each of them and with journalists in the other media models included in this study.

Chapter 6 is a case study of the Guardian. It provides a brief history of the publication, a description of its business model, and explains the significance of the Scott Trust to the practice of journalism at the Guardian. It describes and analyses its approach to networked journalism through a review of the tools and technologies it uses to connect, collaborate and share content with all sectors of an international community. It describes and analyses one of the organisation’s earliest uses of crowdsourcing as an investigative technology of journalism. The analysis of the MP Expenses issue in 2009 shows the benefits of crowdsourcing to both the public and to the news organisation.

Chapter 7 describes the elements that shape the politics of journalism. This chapter critically analyses the business and value systems of journalism, and considers the impact of the crisis in journalism and the use of Web 2.0 technologies on elements such as international journalism, objectivity and impartiality. It examines how the incorporation of participation, user-generated content and collaboration into the business strategies of news media models has contributed to a democratisation of journalism.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions and proposes future areas of research.

1 Advertisers are less concerned with investigative journalism, foreign affairs and government issues, than entertainment and sports news and events, therefore these areas of the profession have “suffered the heaviest cuts.” See Nicholas Carr in News Industry Debate: http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/720. This assertion is also supported in a 2010 US report, ‘Abandoned Agencies’, which says news organisations have “abandoned their posts” as watchdogs of the key institutions of society (Enda, 2010).

2 Primary news reporting describes the first hand reports of facts about ‘who, what, where, when, why and how.’
See also (Turner, 2005; Norris, 2000: 3; Dyrenfurth, 2005: 87-109; Deuze, 2006; Irby & Bird, 2007; McChesney & Nichols, 2010: 12; Coleman & Gotze, 2001: 4).

This may include a range of entities such as **WikiLeaks**, **Storyful**, **Ushahidi** and **Demotix**.

The study also refers to a News International publication, the *Wall Street Journal*.

Businesses produce advertisements for their products to be appropriately placed in news publications. News organisations have little if any input into advertisements.

Editorial staff and advertisers collaborate to produce sponsored content for news publications. These are sometimes produced as supplements and are not connected to the editorial component of the publication.

Businesses work in partnership with the publication to offer readers various deals on the products from their range.

The Scott Trust was created to ensure financial and editorial independence of the *Guardian* (Guardian Media Group, 2010b). The Scott Trust is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

See Appendix A for a full list of interviewees.

According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy: “In-depth interviews are issue related” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010: 95).

All News Limited editors and journalists made themselves available for face-to-face interviews but travel fund allocation for this research was exhausted before the interviews occurred.

The phrase “the politics of journalism” was not explicitly expressed to the interviewees. Rather, references were made to particular aspects of the politics of journalism such as the economic crisis of journalism, the conflict between commercial and public service journalism and so on.

Dutton contends “the Fifth Estate allows networked individuals to employ the Internet to increase the accountability of the other Estates, for instance by challenging government policies and Fourth Estate sources” (Dutton, 2009: 10–11).

Len Granato describes the contact book as a database, which stores people’s names and need-to-know information about them and their expertise (Granato, 2003: 114).

Dutton acknowledges the “double-edged nature” of the Internet whereby the “space is over-occupied by an ill-informed, ill disciplined’ cult of the amateur” (Dutton, 2009: 11)

Terry Flew supervised the ethnographic action research project undertaken by Heidi Lenffer whose Master of Arts thesis, titled *User-Generated Content and Public Broadcasters: A Case Study of the Special Broadcasting Service*, was awarded by the Queensland University of Technology in 2009. The thesis can be accessed at http://eprints.qut.edu.au/30419/

Referred to as user-generated content (UGC) throughout this thesis.
Chapter 2  The Politics of Journalism

This chapter comprises an interdisciplinary review of academic literature in the fields of journalism, democracy, the public sphere, participation, and Web 2.0 technologies. It provides an historical background that explains the complexities of journalism in democratic societies. The discussion theoretically grounds the ways in which we understand how the business and practice of journalism has evolved, especially since the uptake of Web 2.0 technologies by news media and citizens.

This review will critically evaluate the key concepts, definitions and theories of journalism from the viewpoint of its role as the Fourth Estate and as one of the key institutions of democracy. Since one of the aims of the research is to discover how particular media models use Web 2.0 technologies in their approach to their role as members of the Fourth Estate, this review provides a framework from which to contrast the theoretical principles with the real world challenges. The literature review is an essential element of the case study method because, as previously stated, it allows the researcher to gain particular insight into the variables between the values and practices of individual cases.

The review of the Fourth Estate incorporates a discussion about the variables of what is classified as “news” and how journalists determine what is in the public interest. One of the concerns raised in debate about the crisis in journalism is that news organisations allocate fewer resources to investigative, international and political journalism than entertainment and sports news because the former does not generate as much revenue as the latter. This section frames the ways in which newsrooms set their agenda and begins to show how particular practices structure relationships between journalists and civil society.

The review will frame the concept of democracy in the context of deliberation occurring within the communicative spaces in society, with particular attention to the institutions of journalism. To do this, it also briefly reviews the concept of the public sphere, the communicative spaces comprised of a diversity of discursive interactions, which fosters self-reflection and develops understanding of the matters affecting the everyday life of citizens.
The review provides an analytical framework from which to consider the extent to which traditional news organisations and new journalism oriented initiatives have, thus far, used Internet technologies to develop and implement existing and new tools and technologies of journalism in an effort to fulfil their role as the Fourth Estate. Additionally, the research describes and analyses how traditional newsrooms have incorporated interactive and participatory modes of practice and reviews a diversity of views about how these impact on journalism’s role as society’s watchdog.

A preliminary review of the literature found a significant surge of optimism throughout the world about the potential that Internet technologies offered for the democratisation of journalism. This hopefulness, however, is tempered with equally weighted concerns about the capacity for Internet use to fracture the interactivity and deliberation between community members holding differing opinions (D. Adams, 2006). While the Internet is embraced for its potential to give everybody a voice, some are concerned that the personalisation of information consumption enables people to close themselves off from diverse or opposing viewpoints (Sunstein, 2004: 58). Furthermore, concerns are held for those who are excluded from public conversations by their limited literacy skills and access to the technology hardware and required to participate in the public debate online (Hargittai, 2009). Each of these concerns will be further explained in Chapter 3.

Before the Internet, newsroom routines required reporters to work to strict print and broadcast deadlines. Today, newsrooms using Web 2.0 technologies can file reports online as events happen. In addition, methods for communicating with the public have evolved from one-way modes on broadcast and print platforms to include interactive and collaborative communication across multiple online platforms. Interactions between journalists and the public now occur inside and outside of traditional news sites, which include social media platforms. The creation of new spaces within a diversity of online platforms allows news organisations greater scope to reach societies’ diverse socio-economic and political demographic.

The tools of news gathering have expanded from the traditional paper-based notepad, pen and voice recorder to include mobile phones, computers, video
cameras, digital still cameras, Internet connections and many different software packages such as word processing, data analysis, audio, image and video editing packages. These same tools allow news to be produced in multiple media formats, including video, audio, graphics, still images, slide shows, and maps for their organisations’ websites, and increasingly for external websites such as YouTube, Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. These innovations offer a wide range of citizens a far greater choice when accessing and engaging with content than was possible using traditional print and broadcast platforms only.

While many journalists believe that the Internet has enhanced their ability to perform the basic tasks of journalism, the new technologies used to produce, present and distribute journalism are far more complex than those of the past. Moreover, given that these tools and technologies are continuously evolving, the methods and practice of journalism are in a constant state of flux. It is therefore crucial that journalists not only keep abreast of the research skills necessary to access the precise information needed from the diverse and wide range of available data, but that they also look for more efficient ways to aggregate, filter and make sense of vast amounts of information. This requirement has seen the evolution of the methods and processes of networked journalism, which includes crowdsourced newsgathering and data analysis.

While the tools and technologies of journalism have changed, the basic requirement to provide authoritative and accurate writing remains the same (Bender, Davenport, Drager, & Fedler, 2009: 5; Marsh, 2008). Like journalists in the Industrial Age, contemporary journalists still need to be skilled in grammar, style, content creation, and reporting to be accessible to the diverse demographic of the local, national and global populations they serve. The need for skills to identify newsworthy stories, write good leads, research back-stories and histories of issues and events, to write concisely and ethically, to use critical thinking and attention to detail remain as important as the new modes of networking, verification, and technological literacy. The post-industrial age places much greater demands on journalists than ever before to help people navigate their way through the busy information super-highway.
The ubiquitous use of Web 2.0 technologies has added new dimensions to the theoretical perspectives of journalism and as such has created a diversity of journalism entities. The traditional debates about the role of journalists have evolved to include assertions and questions about: the significance of citizen reporters and citizen produced content; the similarities and difference between professional and non-professional reporters; and the value of publicly funded journalism compared to commercially produced and pay-walled news. This review will create a framework from which to understand these.

**The Crisis in Journalism**

There are a number of factors contributing to what is perceived to be “a crisis in journalism” (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2010; Gitlin, 2009; D. Levy, 2011a, 2011b; McChesney, 2011; Thompson, 2011). The global economic crisis has caused many businesses to cut costs, with the first cuts naturally hitting advertising budgets. As a result, advertising revenues for print have collapsed, and online advertising is also falling (Rosenstiel, 2009b). Compounding the economic crisis is the emergence of new Web 2.0 technologies, which among other things have largely displaced classified advertising from traditional print services and repositioned it in new online formats such as Craigslist. This particular business trend means that advertisers do not need the news to display and market their products anymore because the Internet has offered them new ways to reach audiences (Osnos, 2009: 1; Rosenstiel, 2009a).

Given that the economic model of commercial journalism during most of the twentieth century was based on advertisers reaching consumers (P. Meyer, 2003: 11; Shirky, 2009), this loss of revenue has created a colossal financial burden for the news media industry, and is ongoing.

All news media business models are, to various degrees, struggling, but the newspaper/print industry is suffering the most. The cost of producing news underpins many contentious debates about whether the industry ought to enforce subscription fees, and while several organisations have already adopted this principle, there is significant opposition to it. Although many print newspapers are in part subsidised by a user-pay transaction, critics argue that given the important role of the press to democracy, everyone should have equal access to the news regardless of their ability to pay:
“Newspapers play a critical role in the provision of news. They contribute heavily to the gathering and diffusion of local, regional or international news (which are then often re-used on radio or TV). They set the news agenda for a very long time and have a better track record of covering public affairs than other media. The printed press is also the main employer of journalists in most OECD countries” (S. Oh, 2010: 10).

More recently, The Right Honourable Lord Chief Justice Leveson said, “I know how vital the press is – all of it – as the guardian of the interests of the public, as a critical witness to events, as the standard bearer for those who have no one else to speak up for them” (Leveson, 2012). In the interests of sustaining the press, the quest to find new revenue streams for quality journalism has inspired a range of suggestions including micropayments and, in the US, the prospect of seeking government and philanthropic funding (Downie & Schudson, 2009).

The main problem facing organisations attempting to apply subscription fees to their online product is that people are not willing to pay for content that they can get for free elsewhere on the World Wide Web. Research shows that most people overwhelmingly say they will not pay a subscription fee for online news, and in the event that their favourite news site imposed a fee, most said they would simply move to other non-subscription sites (Rosenstiel, 2010). Rosenstiel believes the only way a payment system would work is if every news organisation did it. He points out that while some niche and elite publications have experienced a degree of financial success with payment systems, it is often still not enough to sustain the business. The New York Times, for example, continues to depend upon the financial support of several philanthropists to stay in business (Bollinger, 2010), which generates yet another debate. While Michael Schudson says this kind of public financing is a popular solution for those who can manage to get it, it also raises concerns for the notion of a free press (Downie & Schudson, 2009). There are further fears that, as raised above, limited access to national news publications, such as the New York Times and the Australian for example, may restrict their ability to fulfil their vital civic responsibility (Rosenstiel, 2010).
Another trend impacting the news industry’s revenue stream is the aggregation of content by website hosts, who generate their own advertising income by appropriating professional journalism produced by traditional newsrooms. Aggregators make money without incurring any production costs, since the newsrooms from which the content is sourced pay these. Rosenstiel (2009a) says the news industry will increasingly have to deal with the practices of the aggregators. While there is no consensus on the idea of charging users for news, the industry agrees that those who use content for their own financial gain should be paying a license fee to the developers of that content (Sturm, 2009).

**Cutbacks in the Newsroom**

The global economic downturn, failing business models, and the increased flow of information enabled by the Internet has forced many traditional news organisations, print in particular, to undertake dramatic budget cuts. This had led to a loss of staff, largely essential specialist reporting, and a collapse of news media share prices. Newsroom closures and staff cuts have been most prevalent in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain (S. Oh, 2010: 4). As of 2009, the US news industry had reportedly lost twenty-five per cent of all journalists compared to 2001 numbers, with over 50,000 jobs lost in the print industry alone (Rosenstiel, 2009a, 2009b).

Contemporary newsrooms are largely under-resourced, meaning there is less scope for the levels of in-depth investigations, “less foreign and national news, less space devoted to science, the arts, features and a range of specialized subjects” (Rosenstiel, 2008) and less original reporting than was possible in the past. The industry is now comprised of fewer journalists, mostly “younger, more tech-savvy… serving the demands of both print and the web… less institutional memory, less knowledge of the community… fewer editors to catch mistakes” (Edmonds, 2006), who are required to do more work than their predecessors.

Instead of deploying most of their journalists to the field, many newsrooms have now become more reliant upon news wire services. There is now less opportunity to follow-up and expand on public interest issues and topics and, in the new highly competitive 24-hour digital news cycle, journalists are required to file instantly. **BBC**
editor Kevin Marsh (2011) says “it is hard for journalists to have to file immediately; editors and managers need to identify good stories and give them more time”.

The consequence of cutbacks is reduced quality—an “erosion of substance” (Edmonds, 2006)—and reduced quantity of published content. The predicament in which the news industry finds itself manifests as a public perception that professional journalism sometimes appears to take a superficial approach to “monitoring the powerful” (Gitlin, 2009) and that it fails to provide the kind of service expected by the civic public. Rosenstiel (2009a) contends the problem is more acute at bigger news publications than smaller ones. He says while the numbers of news workers fall, “more of life occurs in shadows”.

**Foreign Bureau Cutbacks**

A 2008 study of 250 US newspapers concluded that foreign news was “‘rapidly losing ground at rates greater than any other topic area’” (Osnos, 2009: 3). Newspapers have been forced to cutback their foreign bureaus, and sometimes close them down all together. Large organisations such as the Associated Press, Reuters and Bloomberg continue to have large on-the-ground presences nearly everywhere in the world (Osnos, 2009: 3), but now produce more than simply on-the-spot news coverage, with many reporters filing “interpretive features that match the work traditionally produced by newspaper correspondents” (Osnos, 2009: 3). The BBC, too, has a global presence, but has a greater concentration of reporters in Africa and Asia “where other broadcasters are sparse” (Osnos, 2009: 4).

However, the consequences of the cutbacks to international reporting to the “broader craft of journalism and to the greater public good” (Osnos, 2009: 3) may not be as calamitous as some might imagine. Richard Sambrook casts light on the positive aspects of the current situation: “Many elements, like multimillion-dollar bureaux, will not [survive]. But much will, and there will be innovation and new opportunities to more than compensate for what is lost” (Sambrook, 2010: 97). He contends the effects of Web 2.0 technologies and globalisation on international journalism are intertwined and the impact is twofold. First, Internet technology has globalised news, making it much more difficult for mass media to publish inaccurate and/or incomplete reports about far away places without generating a flood of instant
responses providing real time accounts about what is really happening. And second, with increased movement of people across borders, less of the news may be foreign to more members of the news audience than was the case in the past (Sambrook, 2010: 47; 2011). In light of this, newsrooms increasingly treat news content according to its relevance to the audience rather than the traditional geographical local/foreign dichotomy (Professor R. Sambrook, personal communication, September 25, 2013).

Sambrook says foreign correspondents used to be mostly “white, middle class males” (Sambrook, 2011) who relied heavily on fixers and filed for two deadlines. Today correspondents are freelance, local, speak the language of the area in which they are based, and they work to multiple deadlines in multiple media formats. The advantage of using local freelance correspondents is that their local knowledge provides richer contextualisations of issues and events in the region, which reflects the diversity of the world more accurately than was possible in the past. Digital tools and technologies enable reporters from anywhere in the world including isolated areas to provide the world with instant access to culturally specific information as it happens. Sambrook says that this approach enables new services to cultivate information that builds a “cultural bridge to the people they are reporting to” (Sambrook, 2011).

This section has shown where journalism sits within an industry that is suffering extreme financial pressure, undergoing significant cultural change and facing challenges in every aspect of practice. The following sections explain the civic responsibilities of journalism in democracy.

**What is journalism and what is it good for?**

Many have theorised about what journalism is and why we need it (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001: 14; Zelizer, 2004). Debates pre-dating the Internet saw journalism defined as a trade or a profession, and broadly conceptualised as language, art, culture, sociology, political science, science and history (Zelizer, 2004). The emergence of the World Wide Web has created new tensions between ideas about who is a journalist, and the cultural role of both journalism and the journalist in the 21st century (McNair, 2005: 27).
The normative view of journalism sees it function as a liberalist information service, widely available to everyone, with the primary aim of existing as an essential institution for a healthy democracy (Zelizer, 2004: 154). It is a system developed by societies to provide members with information that enables them to protect their personal and social interests, form communities, and to understand social norms (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001: 10), and emerges in response to our intrinsic need to know. People are constantly inspired by the “shared sense of discovery” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001: 9) derived from engagement with journalism, whether that is with friends and family, or with “imagined communities” (B. Anderson, 1983). Similarly, McQuail sees news media advance society and the principles of democracy as it connects individuals in “a shared national, city and local experience” (McQuail, 2005: 52).

*BBC* editor Kevin Marsh says journalism is a very small, precise, socially and culturally important, part of the information universe (Marsh, 2011). Guided and regulated by specific standards and protocols that encourage legal and ethical practice, journalism deals with “facts, statistics, and information about public life, politics and services” (Rusbridger, 2009b: 20). In addition, it provides context and a diversity of informed opinions (Osnos, 2009: 1). As a “craft of newsgathering” (Osnos, 2009: 1), it sits at the centre of public life and political debate. It is influential and has the capacity to shape debates, destabilise governments and create change (McNair, 2005: 26), and therefore holds a central and critical role in democratic societies (Rosenstiel, 2009a). It aims to maintain the accountability of government, business and individuals who wish to be in power and who work in the public interest (McChesney, 2011: 53; McChesney & Nichols, 2010: 164). Journalism is about hard, truthful news stories that “can change society” (C. Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012: 3).

The ability to hold the powerful to account and to be a catalyst for social change is the central pillar of journalism’s purpose, and is defined through its role as the Fourth Estate. 25
“Media build democracy both when they cover the world... and when they take up the cudgels of the Fourth Estate by questioning authorities’ framing of events” (Moeller, 2008: 185).

The principle of the Fourth Estate stems from the late eighteenth century\(^{26}\) when the role and purpose of the news media in liberal democratic political systems (Dutton, 2009) was described as a “de facto but not official branch of government” (Hampton, 2009: 3). The adoption of this principle by the news media “contributed to the establishment of journalism as a mainstream economic and political force” (Conboy, 2004: 119). Social and political recognition of journalism’s important status was officially reflected when government introduced policy changes to ensure everyone could afford to access the newspaper. These changes saw the relaxation of taxes on knowledge, advertising, paper and publishing (Hampton, 2009: 4).

Fourth Estate theory postulates that news media hold certain responsibilities to its publics/readers, which include remaining independent, to respect the truth, to serve as a space for the deliberation of matters of public interest and to uphold the values and principles of the profession. Journalism should function as an early warning or “civic alarm” system that can anticipate problems and present them in ways that allow citizens to study and debate them, “before they grow to crisis proportions” (McChesney, 2011: 53; McChesney & Nichols, 2010: 164; Rosenstiel, 2009a). In keeping with deliberative democratic ideals (described in a later section), news media publications are expected to be a “critical uniting feature” (Rosenstiel, 2009a) as they foster citizen engagement, and make complex social, political and economic topics equally accessible to the demographically diverse sectors of society. And in its role as a watchdog, news media ought to expose any instances of corruption and/or failure by government to fulfil its obligations to citizens (Hampton, 2009: 4; Moeller, 2008: 185).

According to Moeller, one of the problems with this theory is that, in reality, most commercial media outlets do not spend their days considering their role in democracy “because it’s not a line item on a profit-and-loss statement” (Moeller, 2008: 180). But this is only one of three key pressure points on this theory. A growing closeness of relations between government and news media, a concentration
of media ownership, and a reliance by media organisations on advertising as their primary revenue stream (Hampton, 2009) pose significant challenges to the role of journalism as the Fourth Estate. Where there is a distinct separation between government and media, diverse competition, and multiple sources of revenue, then the Fourth Estate can be better relied upon to produce unbiased information and fulfil its watchdog role.

**When Relations Between Journalism and Government Grow Too Close**

Journalism’s greatest deference to authorities in the last decade was arguably its failure to question the decision of US President, George W. Bush, to invade Iraq in 2003 (McQuail, 2005). At this time, adherence to one of journalism’s key concepts, objectivity as an assurance of truth, fairness and balance, was seen to have failed. “Most mainstream media outlets abdicated their independent role; they capitulated to the White House demand that they fall in with the ‘patriotic’ message” (Moeller, 2008: 169).

Amy Goodman speaks directly to this problem as a flaw in journalism, and identifies examples where journalists have refrained from questioning government authority and from extracting the truth from the “propaganda” sometimes expressed by governments (Goodman, 2010). She makes specific reference to the campaign by the US Secretary of State, Colonel Colin Powell, to generate support for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. As Powell pushed the idea that Iraq had the capacity to use weapons of mass destruction on the world, Goodman said research showed that only three of the four hundred sources used by broadcasters to talk about Powell’s motivations for war were anti-war. Public opinion on this matter, according to Goodman’s argument, was shaped by a small number of powerful entities. She contends that this showed a failure by news media in its responsibility to uncover the truth and to present it to the public (Goodman, 2010). The main problem here lies with the unquestioning acceptance of those sources to which journalists traditionally refer: government, business, non-government organisations and lobbyists. Each of these groups has its own agenda in public matters, which creates a conflict of interest and makes compliant journalists vulnerable to manipulation.
The action taken by the US government, based on support generated by untruths, damaged many international relationships between the US and others, and the toll on lives around the world has been enormous. Traditional news media has not emerged unscathed from these events and the measure of credibility and trust in the media held by audiences has been seriously undermined as a direct result of failures such as this.

Goodman contends that although new media technologies have, to some extent, “broken the sound barrier” (Goodman, 2010) that traditionally protected channels of propaganda, traditional news media still has an ongoing responsibility to give voice to mass movements responding to important political events. She criticises the US news media for its failure to provide adequate and fair coverage of the nationwide demonstrations following Powell’s announcement of the decision to go to war (Goodman, 2010). Journalism, she argues, “should be the checks and balances of those in power” (Goodman, 2010). Similarly, and more recently, Manuel Castells criticised traditional news media’s coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement, saying that coverage was unprofessional and ideological as it falsified, dismissed and ridiculed the movement (Castells, 2011). Moreover, he said this happens because some media are “controlled by corporate ownership and frame the message according to the interests of the owners” (Castells, 2011).

These examples emphasise the need for the profession of journalism to develop better methods to “separate truth from lies” (McChesney, 2011: 54), especially during times of war, economic crisis and communal discord. The coming chapters will show that the availability of Web 2.0 publishing technologies to the general community has had a positive impact on this problem.

**Concentrated Ownership Of News Media Hinders The Public Interest**

The second key pressure point on the Fourth Estate can manifest in places where there is little diversity of media ownership, as is the case in Australia. Miller says this kind of situation has the capacity to change the values, ideas and politics of a country, and “perhaps even the national character” (Miller, 2002). Where there is less diversity of information and viewpoints, press barons who generate high circulations and enough revenue to gain a financial status are able to organise their
businesses un-beholden to politicians (Conboy, 2004: 109). More to the point, it provides them with opportunities to use their business “as instruments of power against the political parties” (Hampton, 2009: 6).

Conversely, the Guardian’s investigation\footnote{30} and the subsequent government funded Leveson Inquiry\footnote{31} into what we now know to be unethical and illegal business practices undertaken by some past and present News International (NI) employees and the UK police, exemplifies the benefits of maintaining diverse media ownership. Investigations conducted over a period of four years, have resulted in the closure of one of NI’s most popular and long-standing publications, the News of the World, and a number of arrests. The Leveson Inquiry was subsequently announced by the British Prime Minister to examine the relationship between the press, politicians and the police. This issue highlights what Hampton refers to as the paradoxical position of the Fourth Estate as a watchdog of government and large corporations when the news media is often, itself, part of a large corporation that has the capacity to affect the way the world is organised (Hampton, 2009: 7).

One of the key questions arising from the Leveson Inquiry is “Who will guard the guardians?” Hampton suggests members of the Fourth Estate need, also, to watch the watchdogs (Hampton, 2009: 7), as the Guardian’s investigation into the social and political dealings of News International has effectively done.

\textbf{Public and Business Interests Ought Not Compete}

The final key pressure point is the exclusive reliance by news organisations on advertisers for revenue. This poses “several distinct threats” to the independence and purpose of the Fourth Estate (Hampton, 2009: 7), placing journalists in a precarious position that has the capacity to influence what is reported and how it is represented. Parts of the news industry are accused of dumbing down or popularising news content for the sole purpose of generating larger audiences. The risk with this practice is that it depoliticises the news and alienates publics from matters that require their attention. While liberal media theories see the role of journalism as having an obligation to the interests of the people, Schechter (2005: 19) says some will argue that for commercial organisations “profit making” supersedes that obligation. Meyer expresses the same concern that political matters may take a back
seat to profit, however, he also warns where there is a connection between business and political interests, the mass media can be used as a powerful “vehicle[s] of explicit political messages” (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002).

Meyer and Hinchman (2002) believe that, with the exception of some prestigious newspapers, big commercial media has marginalised political news coverage. There is a strong feeling that journalists operating in commercial news media are increasingly censored, the news is sanitised and important stories are simply ignored in the name of profit (Schechter, 2005: 17). Moreover, Meyer and Hinchman suggest “there is a certain type of journalist who has taken advantage of this culture of commercial exploitation to fight his way to the top in private broadcast networks and in the tabloids” (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002). Where this occurs, the journalist is often focused on ratings and circulation figures rather than accurate, quality journalism (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002).

**What Should Be in the News, and what are the Variables of News**

There are many views about what the news should be and who decides. For example, Sally White broadly describes news as “contemporary information about changing worlds” (White, 1996: 21). While news is a complex entity that has multiple variables, the most common sense criterion of the value of news is whether it matters to the receiver. Where some see its role as ideological and political, others describe the world as being comprised of a diversity of interests and there is more for journalism to consider than simply politics (J. Hamilton, 2004; McNair, 2000). In this vein, it is argued that stories that aim to be more accessible to the general audience can be “useful ways of framing genuine public issues” (Conboy, 2006). One of the key skills of the journalist in both commercial and public media continues to be to find innovative and interesting ways to contextualise and present the information the public needs to know. Recent research by Stephen Harrington shows that “newstainment” —the hybridisation of news and entertainment—has increasingly become a legitimate and valuable form of public knowledge production (Harrington, 2007: 4; 2009: 25).

While Dahlgren (2001: 38) views the market and the public sphere as two distinct spaces, he notes how increasingly difficult it has become to keep them separate. The
mass media contains information about world affairs (journalism) but is also a primary channel through which the market operates. The convergence of these entities, each with its own unique purpose and function, within one communication framework, has created a clash of ideologies. Dahlgren further observes that “the public space of the media is interwoven with private space”, which is exemplified by the mass media’s consistent coverage of the private lives of celebrities and politicians, and moral issues (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 38).

Merritt and McCombs encourage journalists to think of their role as being part of the citizenry, rather than as a separate sector, to avoid alienating themselves from the ordinary people with whom they attempt to communicate (McCombs, 1993: 92). They ought to better consider the point of view of the questions they pose to the audience, because these often tend to reflect their own ideological agenda and usually only serve to generate “knee-jerk” responses (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 100). While these authors acknowledge that this particular view is a generalisation, and does not apply to every journalist, they continue to hold concerns that the practices of a few have the capacity to lower the credibility of the entire profession (Merritt & McCombs, 2004: 100). Mark Briggs argues that the decline of the public’s trust in the news media and its disengagement with the political process indicates a need for practical change, which involves recognising that the landscape has changed, and using Web 2.0 in ways that make reporting more collaborative and transparent (Briggs, 2007: 49; Irby & Bird, 2007: 10).

**Deliberative Democracy**

One of the concerns of democratic theory is the level of citizen participation in public policy debates. The defining characteristic of citizenship in a democracy is the freedom for citizens to engage with public affairs first through debate and periodically via the ballot box. Gimmler contends democracy has two tracks: one enacts the constitutional elements of society such as parliament and legal institutions, and the other—the focus of this research—has “more direct communicative and discursive foundations” (Gimmler, 2001: 24). She contends, like Jane Mansbridge, that citizens attain a personal and collective identity through their engagement in relationships with other individuals in “the public sphere of civil society” (Gimmler, 2001: 24; Mansbridge, 1999: 47).
Mansbridge’s argument for deliberative democracy is that the developmental stage of shaping public policy dialogue in democratic societies ought to involve as many participants as is possible to ensure the interests of a wide cross section of society are included. A diversity of interests threaded throughout the public debate ensures ongoing competition between ideas, and the news media, since it has the means to reach multiple and diverse publics in disparate geographical locations, is one of the key civic forums of political expression in democratic societies (Schudson, 2002). In 2009, Coleman and Blumler suggested that the use of Web 2.0 technologies to create deliberative spaces had successfully resulted in dramatic increases in interest in public policy debates across multiple participatory online environments (Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 15), which include those of the news media.

Traditional print and broadcast environments posed a number of limitations on the ways in which people could participate in the deliberative process. Tight broadcast media schedules limited the time that could be allocated to political expression, similarly limited space on the print platform. These limitations were often detrimental to the public understanding of the complexities and/or truth of issues and events (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002). The transition to Web-based platforms by news media organisations has changed the way newsrooms engage citizens with a range of public debates. It provides more scope for individuals, whether in local or disparate geographical locations, to directly participate in the many discursive public spheres of civil society (Gimmler, 2001).

The true value of a deliberative environment is its capacity for people to share information and knowledge, which enhances the understanding of complex issues. Using an array of digital technologies, journalists can provide greater depth, and show the finer detail and peculiarities of issues and events, than was possible in the past. Citizens are consistently invited by journalists to contribute information in areas where, perhaps, they have first hand knowledge, experience, and expertise.

The public sphere serves as a space where individuals can express and evaluate their personal viewpoints about the moral issues in everyday politics against other information and knowledge. Moreover, it “encourages citizens to face up to their actual problems by listening to one another’s moral claims” (Gutmann & Thompson,
Deliberation is seen as a transparent way of making decisions because all viewpoints are publicly scrutinised under the same conditions (Held, 2006: 237).

The limitations of deliberative theory are associated with concepts of reasoning and mutual cooperation. Deliberation assumes that people can always recognise that where opinions emerge in opposition to the dominant culture, they ought still be accepted as worthy of moral respect (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996: 3). While Gutmann and Thompson favour the way deliberation encourages people to listen to one another, realistically they recognise that citizens would only agree on everything “if they were all living in an ideal society” (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996: 16) where everyone had a comprehensive understanding of all of the topics in question. The desired outcome of deliberation, though, is to help people gain knowledge and understanding through dialogue with others (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996: 6).

Citizens find themselves in disagreement with one another over many moral issues in all societies, but sometimes these stem from much more than simple misunderstandings. At times, they are deeply rooted in serious issues that have been cultivated and become entrenched in societies over centuries. These differences are often extremely difficult to overcome, as is shown in the comment forum attached to the BBC’s 2007 news coverage of the assassination of Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. The BBC comment forums will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4, while Chapter 7 will provide an analysis of the BBC’s management of its comment forums during this significant social and political event. This analysis will illustrate the concerns about the limitations of deliberative theory raised by Gutmann and Thompson (1996).

Public Sphere

An examination of the notion of a public sphere is critical to the study of democracy and journalism in a civil society (L. Dahlgren, 2004: 2). Habermas has had a central role in shaping the concept of the public sphere. His theory of the public sphere stems from his concern for a healthy and lively democratic polity, one where engagement, participation and deliberation on matters of public interest serves to protect societies from political extremism. The original Habermasian public sphere included spaces such as coffee houses, salons and literary journals, where citizens
could come together as equals to engage in rational discussion with each other on matters of public interest. While the original principle/idea of the public sphere advocated openness, inclusiveness and equality, in practice these spaces were largely dominated by male, educated, wealthy property owners, with women, the poor and the uneducated being excluded. In this model, the public debate focused on the issues and interests of a small group rather than the broader community. This changed when newspapers began mass circulation and when broadcast technologies gained the capacity to affect public opinion on a grand scale. It changed further when the emergence of the Internet, and the general use of its associated technologies by the general population, created more opportunities for more individuals to participate in the deliberation of public affairs.

A civil society depends on a plurality of spaces between citizens and the State where opposing ideas are contested through debate. Journalism, when it is “open, free and diverse” (McQuail, 2005: 183), has the capacity to build and broker interactions between competing public spheres.

The public sphere may be defined as a communicative network with multiple, diverse and overlapping spheres and hierarchies (McNair, 2006: 137). It is an abstract space where people, motivated by the utilitarian ideal of the greater good, come together to express and share beliefs, ideas and opinions in a forum of debate. The public sphere is based on the concept of deliberation, so it is within the public sphere that multiple and diverse identities are iteratively and collaboratively expressed, tested, changed and reshaped (Born, 2006: 106).

The public sphere is widely theorised and much of the discussion is grounded in the work of Jurgen Habermas (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 37). Habermas describes the public sphere as “a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed” (Habermas, 1962, trans. 1989; McKee, 2005: 205). It is also described as “the institutional space where political will formation takes place” (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 33). A key condition of the public sphere, however, is that it “must be technically, economically, culturally, and linguistically” accessible to everyone in a society (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 35-6). The idea that this condition is not met in its entirety is one of the theories greatest limitations.
Habermasian theory was often criticized for its prescriptive requirement that deliberative communication to be based on face-to-face interaction (Habermas, 1992: 416). However, in 2008 the theorist took account of the ways in which the use of the Web had changed the structure of media communication. This led to a revised perspective that describes the public sphere as being comprised of networks of deliberative containers of political discourses, categorised as news journalism, entertainment, education, talks and commentaries, and carried through key actors such as politicians, journalists, lobbyists, advocates, experts, moral entrepreneurs and intellectuals (Habermas, 2006: 415).

The role of the news media has become central to theories of the public sphere since it is a primary site of dialogue on a diversity of information and opinions (Born, 2006: 106). Meyer defines the public sphere as a social space where citizens come together, in either an active or passive capacity, in a “nexus of rational communication” (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002: 125), and contends that the deliberation that occurs in the public sphere has a significant effect on decisions made at the ballot box. It is on this basis that Meyer’s argument that the notion of public sphere is understood as an essential element of democracy is formed.

The essential element of the public sphere is discursive interaction between citizens (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 36-41). One of the key responsibilities of media is to create a space in which citizens can feel a sense of belonging and value. The news media does this by constructing views and questions of and about a range of political issues. However, this practice creates a lot of scholarly criticism and discussion about the power of the news media to set the agenda. The problem with agenda setting that is most commonly expressed is that perhaps, at times, it is exclusionary rather than inclusive of the public, which is in opposition to the purpose of the public sphere.

McNair describes the public sphere as “the communicative institutions of society, through which facts and opinions circulate and by means of which a common stock of knowledge is built up as the basis for collective political action” (McNair, 2006: 136). He says the connection between the news media and the public sphere is in the exchange of information between citizens and news organisations that enable citizens
to participate in political debates and processes that affect the way they live their lives (McNair, 2006: 137)

Nina Eliasoph says people try to avoid thinking about politics entirely. Her assertions, viewed from a sociological perspective, suggest that people are not concerned with framing the social, political and economic circumstances of their lives within the broader context of macro social issues. Instead, they prefer to narrowly focus on individual social agency. Even then, when people are faced with a sociological problem that directly impacts the lives of their family, they still avoid thinking about the macro problem (Eliasoph, 1997: 605). Her research sought to understand political engagement, disengagement, and grassroots social change. In particular she was concerned with how people act when their assessment of their own power to affect social change is low. She found that if people are to take any kind of social action, it is more likely to happen over local problems rather than global issues simply because most people feel they have less control over what happens beyond their own geographical boundaries (Eliasoph, 1997: 607). She says feelings of powerlessness are often at the root of people’s expressions of not caring about politics and these feelings are further used to validate non-participation in public debates (Eliasoph, 1997: 621). Eliasoph advises journalists and politicians against taking “citizens’ expressions of apathy at their word” (Eliasoph, 1997: 640).

Dahlgren says that people do not have a basic concept of their role as citizens, therefore they do not see the importance of the “larger democratic project” (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 44). The crisis, according to Mosco (1997), is of “civic culture and citizenship” (P. Dahlgren, 2001: 43).

**Citizenship in the Context of News Media**

Citizenship is characterised through individuals and their collective membership, activity and interests in matters of governance in democratic societies. Benhabib conceptualises citizenship as a construct in which citizens have mutual dependencies and recognise each other’s right to speak and be heard (Benhabib, 2006: 78). Individuals have rights as citizens to participate in the discursive deliberations that support a democratic society. While there are many sites in democratic societies that support democracy through the recognition of these rights, this thesis is concerned
with how online news media provides citizens with the civic support required to deal with matters of governance.

Personal experiences and social institutions such as education, media, community gatherings and so on, shape the social and political nature of individuals. It is within such structures that individuals begin to align themselves with a political doctrine that they believe provides the greatest benefits to themselves and their communities (Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 3).

In his conceptualisation of citizenship, Alejandro (1993) draws on the principle of moral autonomy, which argues that people are less concerned with developing relationships for the purpose of fostering a strong political citizenry but are more focused with protecting their own individualism.

Bennett too observes a serious decline in public engagement with conventional politics, especially within the younger generations in many democracies throughout the world, while at the same time the world is experiencing a healthy commitment to community spirited acts that include volunteer work, involvement with non-governmental organisations and environmental causes (W. Bennett, 2007: 1).

In light of these observations, he describes two models of citizenship: the “dutiful citizen” and the “actualizing citizen” (W. Bennett, 2007: 5). The dutiful citizen is characterised by an obligation to participate in government-centred activities, vote, and rely on traditional mass media delivery systems and other one-way political communication models. Conversely, the “actualizing citizen” is a self-motivated activist and gatherer of information. This model of citizen is not reliant upon the one-to-many communication models that are representative of many mass media models, preferring instead to communicate via many-to-many interactive Internet technologies (W. Bennett, 2007: 5).

This research does not seek to examine the reasons for the perceived disconnect between citizens and politics, rather it is mostly concerned with the way news media attempt to engage citizens with public affairs. In this light, the research draws from a study undertaken by the UK government, The Audit of Political Engagement, which
investigated questions of whether citizens were satisfied that the quality and quantity of information provided by the media sustained their interest in public affairs (Fox, Gibbons, & Korris, 2010). The audit examined the various ways in which news media provide, engage and involve citizens with the production, consumption and distribution of information. Its findings showed a decline in the public’s interest in politics however, the “notion that politics is ‘a waste of time’” (Fox et al., 2010: 84) was rejected. Seventy per cent of online citizens said the Internet was an easy way to become involved with civic life, yet only nine per cent reported that they had “expressed their political opinions online” (Fox et al., 2010: 6). Sixty-three per cent of people thought media had the most impact on peoples’ lives compared to only seventeen per cent who thought the Prime Minister had more impact. Finally, only 2.2 per cent of the population believes that their involvement in political debates had the potential to make a difference to political policy (Fox et al., 2010: 7).

A strong point of contention in the conceptualisation of citizens as political entities is the idea of citizens as consumers. In the context of news journalism, this debate plays out through concerns regarding what publics need to know versus what they want to know. For example, news organisations such as News Limited use a consumer model to engage publics, whereas the BBC uses a public interest model to engage citizens with, for the most part, what it deems the public needs to know. The “need to know” ethic is underpinned by Fourth Estate theory that holds power accountable and aims to inform, educate and entertain the people, whereas the consumer model aims to draw large audiences for advertisers. This research does not aim to discount one or the other of these models but rather it seeks to explain the relevance of each model to the concept of citizenship.

Nick Couldry explores the relationship between consumer and citizen and argues that research cannot be framed into one of these concepts without taking into account the other (Couldry, 2004: 23). A recurring criticism in traditional news media is one where commercial interests take precedence over the social responsibilities of journalism. However, this assertion assumes that one of these elements should take precedence over the other and does not take account of the idea that consumption and opinion formation are intertwined (Couldry, 2004: 22).
Couldry defines citizenship in terms of the connection between individuals and the social capital and trust derived from such connections. He says although traditional media has largely facilitated political and consumption connections, there is still the need for more diverse and productive local networks to allow dispersed publics to connect on a wide range of issues (Couldry, 2004: 24). He also says that the way citizens engage with media is determined, in part, by the forms through which the media use to reach them (Couldry et al., 2010: 195).

Organisations such as the BBC have recognised the value of interactive environments such as comment forums, where the public can interact with one another and with multiple news media formats. The problem that remains is whether citizens have confidence in their own efficacy to register with policy makers. Morrisett argues people will not invest the time in deliberation, or perhaps even in following the news, unless they believe that some account of their commitment will be taken by governments (Couldry et al., 2010: 192).

**Change of Platform Change of Direction**

Perspectives of the effects of the Web on the politics, technologies and tools of journalism are multidimensional. It has to be stated from the outset, though, that from whichever angle online journalism is viewed, its main role remains unchanged: it still has to “facilitate debate, to constitute an adversary of entrenched power, to create a transparent society, to air the public’s business, [and] to promote responsive institutions” (Carey, 2000: 68).

In light of the transition of every aspect of journalism to the online environment, Briggs has called for journalists to maximise their use of the wide range of interactive technologies to enable them to learn more about the people they inform (Briggs In Irby & Bird, 2007: 10). Couldry is optimistic of the possibility of the Web to be used as a tool to challenge the concentration of power and to change the way we understand media communication (Couldry, 2003: 140). Hampton, on the other hand, contends that it is not a “foregone conclusion” (Hampton, 2009) that the use of the Internet will ensure that news organisations are more likely to perform their prescribed role as the Fourth Estate. McChesney says the Internet is leading a new
wave of a “more thoroughly commercialized and corporate-dominated press system” (McChesney, 2000 In Carey (2000)).

In 2008, Philip Meyer expressed concern that the mainstream media had been “painfully slow to keep up with the need for better and more skilful journalism” (P. Meyer, 2008). With the increased flow of information on the Internet, the search for authentic and valid sources has become much more complex, as has the evaluation of content. In light of this, the need remains for centres of communication, namely institutions of news gatherers and producers, to highlight what is important and authentic, and to avoid a “scatter effect” (Couldry, 2003: 138). Meyer agrees, and highlights the need for individuals and/or organisations we can trust to manage the constant and overabundant flow of information. He says that although technology is increasingly making some aspects of journalism harder to manage, he suggests that the development of new approaches to Internet/computer based journalism may help to improve its value and service (P. Meyer, 2008). Traditionally, journalists were hunters and gatherers, but now they must evolve into trusted people who add value to what they have gathered by organising it and making it useable. It is no longer enough to simply report an event without contextualizing it, without the inclusion of an enlightening story behind the structure. Reports require detail about the significance of the event, the relationships, the history of what has come before (P. Meyer, 2008).

Rosen identifies one of the problems arising from the constant and instant feed of information and breaking news that flows through the major newsrooms as being with editors who are more concerned with being first to break news, at the expense of providing context. He also calls for less sensationalism and more explanation for audiences clicking on reports with the expectation of finding relevant and useful information. He believes news organisations would be better served by knowing whether people understood news reports, rather than how many people clicked on the links. He contends that reporters sometimes forget that not everyone is an expert, which tends to leave the largest demographic, the layperson, with reports beyond their intellectual capacity (Rosen, 2010a).
Rosen suggests that a Wikipedia type facility, hosted by news organisations, may be a viable approach to ensuring all demographics have access to the background knowledge required to understand the complexities of news content. While some organisations such as the BBC provide topic pages for this purpose, Rosen questions whether these go far enough. In the spirit of research and innovation, Rosen has launched a project where people can ask questions about things they don’t understand or things in the news that they need more information about. The questions are answered in an audio broadcast on a news website by a journalist who sources answers from experts in the relevant fields of enquiry (Rosen, 2010a).

McKee says the Internet has changed “the nature of the public sphere in Western democracies” (McKee, 2005: 172). Given the capacity of the Web to cut across geographical and cultural boundaries, it has the capacity to forge connections between the diverse and culturally disparate views of the world. Publics using the Internet have the opportunity to instantly access and interact with a variety of people, information and opinion, thereby making individuals better informed across multiple public spheres than ever before (McKee, 2005: 176).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a theoretical framework from which to understand how the migration of print and broadcast news production to online news environment has transformed the capacity for commercial and public news media models to provide the public with new participatory and deliberative spaces. It has reviewed the literature relevant to the politics of journalism with an interdisciplinary review of some of the key literature in the fields of journalism, democracy, the public sphere, citizenship, and the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on journalism. Its exploration of the interconnectedness of each of these constructs a framework from which to understand the evolving challenges for journalism in a variety of organisational settings and contemporary circumstances.

The review has situated journalism within an industry confronted with financial pressure, and shows that it is currently adapting its business and practice to significant cultural change affecting the distribution and consumption of journalism.
The review positions journalism as a participatory information service, which ought to be equally accessible to everybody in democratic societies. A review of Fourth Estate theory shows that 21st century journalism is required to serve as a space, independent of government and business interests, for the public to freely engage in deliberative discussions about matters of public interest. An examination of the concept of a public sphere has shown that deliberative communication is not confined to in-person communication, but can occur in virtual networks created and hosted by news media institutions for the purpose of circulating knowledge as “a basis for collective political action” (McNair, 2006: 136).

This review is grounded in the notion that debates about governance are largely contested through news journalism, therefore online news media sites are considered to be spaces that civically support democracy. The publication of policy debates on issues such as healthcare, education, the environment and employment on online news media sites allows citizens to interact instantly and directly with journalists and other citizens, and indirectly with key political actors. The review shows it is necessary for news media to provide citizens with open access to topical debates and to enable matters of public policy to be addressed from a broad range of perspectives.

The review has also presented different perspectives of what constitutes a citizen in the context of news media. Drawing on the work of Benhabib (2006: 78) it conceptualises citizenship as a construct in which citizens have a right to be heard. However, it also highlights concerns that people are not likely to participate in public debates unless they believe that they are being listened to, and that there is a possibility that their contribution will make a difference to policy makers.

Finally, the review highlights some of the early observations of the effects of the Internet on the politics, technologies and tools of journalism in preparation for chapter 3, which reviews the elements that constitute the tools and technologies of online journalism.

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Some of the key publications include the New York Times, the Times (London), and the Australian.
For example, while the recently defunct *The Daily* had 100,000 subscribers each paying $40 per year, it was not enough to come close to covering running costs of $500,000 per week http://daringfireball.net/2012/12/why_the_daily_failed.

The concept of bailing out the Fourth Estate in the US was rejected in favour of spending money to create jobs in all sectors of society, which would have a complementary flow-on effect on the news industry in terms of demand, access and affordability (Rosenstiel, 2009a).


Fixers provide foreign reporters with local knowledge and contacts. They also arrange accommodation, transport, and help with language barriers.


The Fourth Estate complements the three other estates: aristocracy, clergy and common people (Conboy, 2004: 109).

Martin Conboy says “the phrase seems to have been used for the first time in the House of Commons by Macauley who, in 1828, pointing to the press area of the House, referred to them as acting as the Fourth Estate of the realm” (Conboy, 2004: 109).

See also McQuail (2005), who extracts examples from the history of international conflict, which saw the news media mobilize mass support for war in 2003.


See also Castells’ chapter *Occupy Wall Street* (Castells, 2012: 156–217).

The Guardian’s full investigation is available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/leveson-inquiry

The official site of the Leveson Inquiry: http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/

The term “newstainment” used by Executive Producer, Sunrise, Adam Boland, describes an unorthodox form of news found in entertainment genres. It can also be defined as the hybridisation of news and entertainment. See (Harrington, 2007: 4)

Key theorists include Walter Lippman, Hannah Arendt, and John Dewey and Jurgen Habermas.

Martin Conboy contends “the abilities of journalism to act as a public investigator and a public watchdog may have been increasingly compromised by its commercial success but they [the political functions of journalism] remain an essential part of its public legitimacy” (Conboy, 2004: 127).

See Poynter: ExplaiThis.org and (Rendall & Broughel, 2003).

See questions for journalists at ExplainThis.org and responses at The Breakdown with Chris Hayes at http://www.thenation.com/doc/20100329/hayes_breakdown.

The limitations of the Web as a site of democratic citizenship are discussed in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3  The Web 2.0 News Environment

Tim O’Reilly popularised the term Web 2.0 as an attempt to comprehensively define the differences between the static and interactive Web. Where Web 1.0 allowed users to read, publish and click only, Web 2.0 described the more advanced sites that allowed interactivity between Web users. This chapter will discuss journalism in the ever-emerging online environment. While in 2001, Web 1.0 was shown to have enhanced the practice of journalism, making journalists jobs easier and more interesting (Middleberg & Ross, 2001: 4), by 2004, a whole range of tools and technologies of Web 2.0 had begun to emerge which supported participatory and collaborative platforms. This chapter will review the elements that comprise the tools and technologies of journalism, including network theory, network journalism, participation, crowdsourcing, user-generated content, blogs and social media.

The Internet is “the fastest-growing medium ever recorded” (Flew, 2005: 7) and, increasingly for those with access, has become a part of everyday life. The use of the Internet is seen as “underpinning the social and economic progressions of nation-states throughout the first stages of the 21st century” (Selwyn, 2004: 342), with South Korea, for example, being one of the key sites of progress. The rapid and comprehensive uptake of the Internet by people throughout the Western world has generated much description and analysis of the ways in which it is socially inclusive and/or leaves the “have-nots” excluded or disconnected from society (Selwyn, 2004: 344). Some of the key discussion topics in the debates are concerned with the democratisation effects of the Internet, impacted by inequality of access (which includes access to hardware), media and technology literacy skills, assorted communication skills (Hargittai, 2009), socio-economic status (Flew, 2007a: 915) and social capital formation (Flew, 2005: 8). Castells and others contend that while the Internet is an “extraordinary instrument for free communication” (Kreisler, 2001: 6), those without access are excluded from important cultural elements of society (Andrés, Cuberes, Diouf, & Serebrisky, 2007: 2; Meikle, 2003). Multiple scholars and policy makers around the world have addressed the issue of the digital divide as a wide-ranging social problem (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002; Negroponte, 1995). This thesis is only concerned with the problem of access in the context of citizens
gaining access to online news content and being able to use Web 2.0 technologies to interact with the news production process.

Figure 3.1 shows the rate of Internet usage as percentage of population for Australia, UK, US and South Korea for the period 2003–2012. It can be seen that, although South Korea grew at a faster rate in earlier years as a result of government programs, for each country the rate has flattened out around the early 80 per cent mark, suggesting a saturation point is close to being reached.

Figure 3.1 reinforces the findings by the 2010 World Internet Project, which found that even those countries with high levels of education and employment, long histories of Internet use, and high rates of broadband installation exhibited a large proportion of non-users. The most common reason given for non-use of the Internet was “no interest/not useful” (Pierce, 2010: 2), with twenty per cent of this group divulging that they believed that they simply did not have the skills to use the Internet (Pierce, 2010: 2).

In 1997, then *The Times* (London) editor Simon Jenkins asserted that the impact of the Internet would be minimal: “the Internet will strut an hour upon the stage, and take its place in the ranks of the lesser media” (Nicholas, 1998: 49). This comment was representative of the views held by many commercial news organisations at that time, none of which could foresee the eventual pervasiveness of the World Wide Web. However, after varying degrees of resistance, much of the news industry began to show signs that it was gradually adapting to the online environment. This followed earlier concerns, held by the print industry in particular, that not only had there been reductions in the number of people reading news print (Kohut, 2006: 19), but many people had reduced their routine reliance on the entire traditional news industry as a primary source of information. Such fears were refuted by Rosenstiel, who argued that the crisis in the news industry was not rooted in a loss of audience, because although newspaper circulations were in decline, online consumption was increasing, and therefore the combined patronage meant traditional newsrooms maintained the largest audience of any news production entity (Rosenstiel, 2009a). By 2009, all news organisations, regardless of their business model, operated and competed in a new global news environment (Rosenstiel, 2009b: 7). With the use of Web 2.0 technologies, news production had become decentralised, networked, more interactive and open.

In 2002, Meyer and Hinchman held little doubt that the traditional media would maintain its dominance in the public sphere, but expected its power to be noticeably reduced by the democratisation of information production (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002). While Internet diffusion had not yet peaked in 2002, they expressed an expectation that the Internet would be used as a networking tool to mobilise all kinds of causes, and moreover, that the public would be able to bypass traditional news media altogether while publicising their messages. Furthermore, they believed that the capacity of the Internet to support multiple platforms for the publication of original information on a diversity of topics from different points of view, in a variety of formats, some of which may not be available in mainstream news media, provided for a much more objective point of view on all things. They expected that the technology would evolve to increase, not only the ability of news reporters to electronically network for the purpose of accessing and reporting on a much broader and diverse range of events, but everybody else’s opportunity to do the same. They
said increased access to more eyewitnesses and the capacity for more citizens to produce news about their communities and the world at large would most likely be very beneficial to society because it may encourage the mainstream news media to be more transparent and reliable. Overall, they expected that content generated by witnesses and citizens would serve to enhance or complement the information provided by traditional news media (T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002).

News networks that were traditionally dominated by large media organisations now include many smaller news operations, which rise and fall according to popular causes, issues and needs that arise in society. Smaller news media operations, such as OhmyNews for example, largely consist of individuals who have gained access to the news media network through Internet communication technologies for the purpose of expressing values and interests that are not represented in traditional news institutions (Castells, 2011). Castells contends that these operations, though small, still have the capacity to influence the broader system even though the larger traditional organisations have much more entrenched systems of support and power. He contends, “wherever and whenever there is power, there is always counter-power” (Castells, 2011) and institutions attempting to resist the information technology network will inevitably undermine themselves (Castells, 2011).

The Web has created a space for all kinds of causes, such as anti-globalisation and environmental activism. It enables groups to engage the general public with their causes, to mobilise the public to participate in debates, and to attend events and demonstrations to further the groups’ social and political agendas (Rovira, 2011). Identity networks such as these have increased in popularity because they offer both a wider scope of interests, and an alternative way for individuals to express their viewpoint. Castells says many people in the world are troubled by the failure of their democratically elected officials and some mainstream news media to represent their views (Kreisler, 2001).

While the Internet has a significant track record for mobilising activism, Calhoun is cautious about ideas that suggest the Internet is the solution to ensuring changes to unpopular policies and circumstances of inequality. He points out that whatever activists can do, those with more power and greater access to more resources can
also do, using the same tools, often on a much grander scale (Calhoun, 2004: 231-241). This kind of interference to which Calhoun refers is not limited to authoritarian regimes. For example, the Occupy protests in the US were undermined by ideologically prejudiced representations made by the traditional news media in the interests of its owners (Castells, 2011). Despite this challenge, Castells insists that the Internet has “disintermediated” control of the ways in which information is communicated. He says “people can connect with each other, diffuse their messages, take photos and upload them to YouTube” (Castells, 2011), regardless of the controls of the mass media.

Nerone observes a contradiction in the argument that individuals would be empowered by Internet communication technologies to communicate their opinions to a mass audience, given that they are for the most part seen to be politically unmotivated. While he acknowledges the potential for people to harness the participatory elements of the Internet, he says the act of switching on the television and radio for information takes a lot less effort. In 1995 he anticipated that the value of the Internet would be highest for those already inclined to search for information (Nerone, 1995: 108), a belief that continues to generate support (Markham, 2010: 90).

Castells says people in different parts of the world have always, to varying degrees, felt oppressed, exploited and humiliated without doing very much about it. He says, from “a spark of indignation, which eventually transforms into rage, then to action; individuals overcome their fears, then they act” (Castells, 2011). He contends the Internet is used as a method of “engaging with others in togetherness. It gives people a sense of yes we can do it” (Castells, 2011). The following discussion of OhmyNews illustrates Castells’ position.

**The Democratisation of Journalism: A Review of OhmyNews**

*OhmyNews* was one of the first news organisations in the world to purposively use Internet communication technologies as a “counter-power” (Castells, 2011) to simultaneously challenge the politics of the nation in which it resides, the ideological orientation of traditional news media, and the politics of journalism, by changing the way journalism was practiced. Founded in 1999 by Korean reporter and
political activist Oh Yeon-Ho, the online newspaper *OhmyNews* was conceived with the original signature slogan “Every citizen is a reporter” (Min, 2008b).

The political history from which this model emerged involves a long period of political instability, which includes a transition from autocratic to democratic rule, and the uprisings of a tenacious labour movement. *OhmyNews* was one of the earliest news publications to embrace the participatory and networked capacities of Web 2.0 technologies so it could fulfil the civic responsibilities associated with being an integral part of the member of the Fourth Estate. It regarded itself as an independent and alternative form of journalism, an unencumbered free press, which functioned in response to the region’s politics, and therefore deemed itself to be a reputable institution of journalism. Its efforts to democratise journalism in South Korea impacted on the evolution of democracy in the region to the extent that it was credited with having played a significant role in the election of Roh Moo Hyun as President in 2003 (Gillmor, 2004; Kwak, 2011).

Although South Korea’s pro-democracy movement had been active in various forms since the early 1970’s, as recently as the mid-1980’s there was still a question of whether its politics would ever be free of “perpetual authoritarian rule” (Tiffen & Kwak, 2005: 138). However, thirty years later, and in the wake of the 2003 election, South Korea became known as one of “the most successful third-wave democracies in Asia” (D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 2), with citizens able to vote for local and national leaders in regular “free and competitive elections” (D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 2).

While its performance as an electoral democracy is consistent with that of liberal democracies, concerns remain about the extent to which key liberal principles such as freedom, equality, justice, rule of law, and the responsiveness of political leaders and governmental officials to the mass citizenry, exist (D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 3). Many citizens continue to see “residues of the authoritarian past” (D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 13) and while the South Korean Constitution protects freedom of speech, the ability for citizens and journalists to enact this right continues to be limited (Khan, 2009: 2; D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 18). The expression of ideas, particularly critical or aggressive reporting of government, continues to be restricted by the National Security Act, which purportedly aims to protect the South from communist influence.
from the North (D. Shin & Chu, 2004: 18). Journalists have expressed concerns that “if they cross a line on a politically sensitive issue they could face harassment or possible criminal charges” (Khan, 2009: 2). As recently as 2010, OhmyNews founding editor Oh Yeon Ho told an international conference that the rule at that time was even more conservative than it had been with previous governments, which meant the need for news organisations to self-censor their reports remained (Y. Oh, 2010).

The general use\textsuperscript{43} of Web 2.0 technologies has provided greater scope for “reformist citizens” (Bromley, 2007: 179) to more efficiently build a wider scaled alternative public sphere than was possible in the past. Dr Oh Yeon-ho began his career as a magazine reporter and became a reformist citizen when he grew dissatisfied with news media coverage\textsuperscript{44} of important issues in South Korea. Motivated by his desire for free press, social change and political stability, he devised a way to use Web 2.0 technologies to challenge the entrenched practice of censorship and create balance in the field of news media by creating his own news media operation (Woo-Young, 2005: 400). He aimed to create a news service that reflected public opinion and offered ordinary citizens the opportunity to generate, participate in, and report on public debates. The publication was framed by the slogan, “every citizen is a reporter” and promised to evaluate all content submitted to the organisation for publication according to its quality and readability (Bentley, 2008).

From its earliest beginnings, the primary objective of OhmyNews was to emphasise to society the social and political importance of journalism, particularly journalism produced by ordinary citizens acting in the public interest (Y. Oh, 2010). Oh saw the publication as a social and political instrument used by citizens for citizens and believed it would encourage people to come together to create, shape and debate social and political policy issues that impact on democratic values, freedoms and the way people their lives (Y. Oh, 2010). Table 3.1 shows a summary of the aims and objectives of OhmyNews.
### Table 3.1

**OhmyNews Aims and Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximise the scope of freedom of the press in South Korea.</td>
<td>Create an alternative online news media site.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create a space for professionally produced citizen journalism.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Show the importance of citizen journalism to society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remove the traditional threshold to being a reporter.</td>
<td>Demolish barriers that separate media from citizens.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Break down traditional formula for news articles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To ensure continued citizen engagement with public affairs.</td>
<td>Encourage and support citizen participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a strong and ongoing commitment to democracy by citizens in South Korea.</td>
<td>Equip citizens with skills that enable active participation in public debate.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Improve and promote digital literacy and journalism education in South Korea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw the attention of the world to Korea, its citizens and <em>OhmyNews</em>.</td>
<td>Harness the collective intelligence of global netizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure continued citizen support of <em>OhmyNews</em>.</td>
<td>Convert global customers into educated stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise the social and political importance of journalism to society.</td>
<td>Create a blog to curate information that generates and develops knowledge about citizen journalism.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
OhmyNews Communications Director Jean K. Min describes some of the ways citizens could participate in the news process at OhmyNews:

- Writing News: citizens were encouraged to gather and write news articles.
- Editorialising: ordinary citizens provided analysis and opinion on news and events.
- Contributing comments: People could express their viewpoints on published news stories.
- Participation in message forums: The organisation encouraged people to form opinions and arguments about topical issues and to participate in discussion forums. The public was encouraged to develop its own rules and behaviour protocols for participation (Min, 2008a; Woo-Young, 2005: 400).
- Collaboration and Crowdsourcing: Citizens were encouraged to bookmark and share content, and to make contributions to crowdsourcing initiatives (Min, 2008a).

Min described two versions of OhmyNews. The first, OhmyNews 1.0, created a more conversational relationship between journalists and citizens, one that replaced the traditional news as a lecture model, while version 2.0 harnessed “the collective intelligence of Netizens on a global scale” (Min, 2005): 19). OhmyNews aimed to provide citizens with more media space than traditional media had previously afforded them. It provided unlimited web space to thousands of citizen reporters for a mixture of both professional and amateur news content, with amateur articles outweighing professional by 5–1 in terms of the daily number of published articles (Min, 2008b).

Oh modified traditional news production practices to create new formats, which aimed to increase transparency and enhance the human authenticity of stories (Y. Oh, 2010). Reports originated from a diversity of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds including non-journalist professional (for instance doctors) and non-journalist non-professional citizen reporters. Min said stories coming from non-professional citizen journalists’ first hand experience were the most exciting because they offered new and alternative perspectives on a broader range of issues, which often challenged the status quo (Min, 2008b). Professionals, for the most part,
provided feature articles based on their own professional experience, for example a
doctor might write to share medical knowledge and experience with the public,
which Min says provided the community with practical information. Over time,
OhmyNews developed a stable of citizen reporters who regularly submitted news
articles, opinion pieces, analysis, media criticism, and feature articles on diverse
lifestyle topics such as restaurant reviews, cooking, serialised fiction, cycling and so
on. Gillmor says, “the melding of old and new [journalism practice] was extensive
(Gillmor, 2004).

One of the concerns about early independent media sites was that it was difficult to
read them. The varied quality of content submitted to the OhmyNews newsroom
meant it was necessary for its team of professional journalists and editors (described
by Min as “gatekeepers”) to screen and make editorial decisions for every article
submitted to the publication. Although the term “gatekeeping” was often applied as a
criticism of the editorial practices of traditional news media in comparative analyses
of traditional and independent online news, Min said nothing was published online
without first going through the OhmyNews “guerrilla desk” (Min, 2008a). The
editorial process at the guerrilla desk was in fact similar to that of the mainstream
news media in that copy editors made decisions about the kinds of content that was
deemed acceptable for publication on the website.

Min said that while the editing process at OhmyNews was “extensive” (Min, 2005:
19) it was also “flexible” (Min, 2008a) with editors making every effort to “preserve
and encourage the unique and raw style of citizen reports [while ensuring the]
editorial integrity and readability of published news articles” (J. K. Min, personal
communication, October 19, 2013). He said “it has been a constant point of debate
among OhmyNews editors [whether] too much editorial intervention would
discourage or even depress creative and diverse styles in the news articles compiled
by amateurs” (J. K. Min, personal communication, October 19, 2013).

One of the most common problems with journalism produced by the general public
was the verification of facts. OhmyNews editors performed random checks on the
originality of submitted articles and required contributors to sign a Citizen Reporter’s
Agreement that sought to protect not only the interests and reputation of the news
organisation but also “to protect citizen reporters from potential legal implications” such as libel (J. K. Min, personal communication, October 19, 2013). Citizen reporters were also required to disclose conflicts of interest and to take responsibility for their own plagiarism and defamation charges should they arise. They were further required to provide information about the story development and research process with detail about the source of quotes and ideas (Thacker, 2006). Min said thirty per cent of citizen-produced content was rejected every day (Min, 2008b).

Where works submitted for publication did not meet reasonable publishing guidelines, editors took two approaches to maintaining the enthusiasm and confidence of writers. Participants were encouraged to become regular informants who provided OhmyNews with interesting leads and angles for new and existing news issues and events. In some cases this allowed them to share by-lines with professional reporters. Sometimes professional reporters were required to attend the site of a story to assist individuals with their reporting tasks. OhmyNews also offered special online tutorials and suggestions for newswriting in an effort to improve the readability of its news site (Min, 2008b). Min said the organisation always had its brand in mind and made every effort to preserve it.

Min says only 10–20 per cent of OhmyNews reporters resided outside of Korea (Min, 2008b). Most reports were about local rather than international issues and events, however editors sometimes contacted internationally based citizen reporters to give them assignments during specific events that occurred outside of Korea. For example, citizen reporter and US resident Han Na-young received a request to gather information about the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. Upon arrival at Virginia Tech, Han was uncertain about whether an OhmyNews reporter would be given the same media privileges as professional news media, however she was admitted with general media access rights after the presentation of OhmyNews identification, which demonstrated that OhmyNews had international recognition as a news media organisation and that the line between traditional and emerging media practices was blurring. Min says “it is a great asset for OhmyNews to have citizen reporters outside of Korea because we couldn’t get journalists all around the world” (Min, 2008b).
There was much debate and experimentation with the management of citizen produced journalism/content at OhmyNews. Min said if OhmyNews raised the bar too high on the quality of user-generated content expected from citizen reporters, then it might be pushing people to practice as professional journalists when the core purpose of OhmyNews is to produce journalism by ordinary citizens (Min, 2008b). So, he said there had to be a balance. If the organisation wanted to produce a professional publication that would sustain its business model and provide an innovative Korean news service to national and global citizens then it ought not expect to publish “extremely polished stories” (Min, 2008b). OhmyNews was a “pro-am news site” (Min, 2008b) comprised of a “combination of raw content, some sincerity and proper supervision, combined with daily news written by a professional journalist” (Min, 2008b).

Oh defined journalists as people who share news stories with others (Gillmor, 2004), which means every citizen, regardless of status, with the passion to find out and write about things that interest them, can participate in the news process.

He believed that qualities such as passion and commitment, often attributed to professional reporters, are common to all humans. He reasoned that this meant every citizen has the capacity to be a reporter (Y. Oh, 2010). However, he also pointed out that not everyone has the skill to write a news report (Oh, 2006). Min said “it is one thing to write a comment on someone else’s report, but it takes a more developed skill to actually write a story” (Min 2008).

Min unequivocally asserted that the Internet had made a vast difference to citizen engagement with public affairs in South Korea. He said it had changed the peoples’ way of life and behaviour and had created a more progressive society (Min, 2008b). The use of Web 2.0 technologies by the general population opened new opportunities for people to interact with each other. Internet communication motivates people to pay more attention to their surroundings in search of stories to tell, especially when they experience success and acceptance with their writing (Min, 2008b). The entire process develops peoples’ capacity to apply critical thinking across a diversity of topic areas. Min said people who write about politics, for example, will follow the work and policies of their local candidate to inform and entertain their readers; he
said, “It is very good for democracy; it makes [people] more engaged in this great country” (Min, 2008b). He said this was good for everyone, not just for OhmyNews.

Min said, “all news media can offer more diverse and rich content to readers by tapping into the wealth of Netizens’ collective wisdom” (Min, 2005: 19). As such, OhmyNews regularly asked the audience for ideas about interesting news topics.

The Role of OhmyNews in Social Movements
Since the 1990’s, citizen movements in South Korea have changed in nature and cause. Castells says most social movements begin peacefully and it is only when a force such as an authoritarian government, for instance, imposes restrictions on the freedom of expression of the movement that the movement escalates to violence (Castells, 2011). The years leading up to and including the 1980’s were characterised by “violent protests against the authoritarian state” (K. Shin, 2006: 6) however, by the 1990’s civil movements in South Korea had become more peaceful and revolved around middle class concerns such as consumption, education, housing, the environment, and gender equality (K. Shin, 2006: 6).

Peaceful candlelight vigils, the most popular form of protest in South Korea, have added a new dimension to participation in political affairs in Korea. They have become one of the key forces in the relationship between citizens, media and government. Held after dark for specific occasions and in various circumstances, the vigils are organised and attended by masses of people throughout South Korea to memorialise the loss of life, to protest against the marginalisation of particular social groups by the South Korean government and to respond to public affairs issues. Specific examples include opposition to the government’s Beef Trade Agreement with the US, support for the global political movement against the war in Iraq, support for Tibetan human rights, and support for the Iranians who rejected the 2009 Iranian election results.

The vigils were sometimes webcast via citizen media organisations such as Afreeca, Agora and OhmyNews. Traditional media’s failure to provide live coverage of the vigils during a time when people were intensely interested to know what was happening created an opportunity for OhmyNews to fill the gap. Webcasts and article
reportage of the vigils attracted audience numbers equal to those obtained by the “big newspapers in Korea” (Grandas, 2008). As the demand for coverage of the vigils increased, it became clear that this form of news coverage and political expression resonated with South Korean audiences. The overwhelming success of the citizen media broadcasts in capturing the attention of the public and stimulating interest in the public affairs issues prompted traditional outlets such as SinsaIN to adopt the practice of webcasting too, which subsequently generated increased traffic to its website (Grandas, 2008). This indicates that there was indeed a gap in traditional news media’s coverage of the issues and events. Either way, the idea that the public prefer the rawness of new media content to the professionalism of traditional media is rejected by the OhmyNews founder, who argued instead for healthy competition and collaboration between all types of news media organisation (Grandas, 2008).

The efficacy of the Internet as a tool to mobilise citizen support became evident in 2002 following a tragic event in which two Korean schoolchildren were accidentally killed by the US military during a training exercise. When a US military inquiry acquitted the defendants of all charges of negligent homicide, a Korean citizen reporter used the online edition of OhmyNews to post a call for a public protest against the decision. Following the publication of the news about the findings, the ensuing protests quickly spread to seventeen cities in South Korea, which ultimately had an enormous impact on the country’s Presidential Election held later that year. While there was little coverage of the protests on traditional news media platforms, there was extensive coverage by many participatory online channels of communication, including OhmyNews, which played a critical role in facilitating deliberative dialogue. Citizen generated reports and discussion forums expressing anti-American sentiment mobilised mass citizen protests that continued throughout the country for the duration of the Presidential campaign.

Woo-Young described the 2002 Candlelight vigils as the event that marked the significance and power of citizen journalism in two ways. Online citizen journalism generated publicity that mobilised mass participation, and, influenced the outcome of an election. On this occasion, Presidential candidate, Roh Moo-Hyun was considered to be less amenable to the US occupants than the incumbent President (Woo-Young, 2005: 400), therefore he drew stronger public support. This was championed as a
very significant milestone and as a positive effect of citizen reporting. Moreover, it was without doubt one of the most significant moments in the history of OhmyNews (Hauben, 2005).

*OhmyNews* online discussion forums played an integral role in the massive turnout to candlelight vigils and in the mounting of support for the opposition candidate, Roh. Woo-Young contends that the participatory and conversational structure of online news effectively turned “the Internet newspaper into a means of social movement” (Woo-Young, 2005: 400). The space and technologies made available to Korean community members by *OhmyNews* enabled free discussion of a diversity of topics that fell outside the professional news agenda. These have equal importance to the relevance and priority of community issues and to the topics raised by traditional news media. Citizens were able to generate their own news ideas throughout the participatory processes, which provided greater scope for the democratisation of journalism than was possible before the emergence of the Internet.

Such events in South Korea clearly show the capacity for Internet communication technologies to empower people to create new spaces to organise, express and mediate political ideals. It supports ideas that news organisations that adopt a participatory approach to the production and distribution of news not only have the capacity to generate collective action by people critical of government policy, but also that such organisations are essential journalistic information sharing systems.

While *OhmyNews* had proven itself to be groundbreaking in its approach to the practice of news reporting, its business model could not ensure adequate financial support for the production costs of quality and timely journalism. Faced with a debt of five hundred million Won (approximately four hundred and fifty thousand Australian dollars) in 2009, *OhmyNews*, like many news organisations, faced hefty cutbacks to services and professional editorial staff (cloudatlas, 2009).

Oh’s efforts to emphasise the importance of citizen journalism to society took a new direction in 2010 when curator-in-chief Joe McPherson announced that the original English language citizen journalism site *OhmyNews International* was to be replaced with a new blog format that would serve as a resource for citizen journalism.
The blog now publishes news and commentary on citizen journalism, rather than original citizen produced news. The blog is part of the organisation’s effort to generate and develop new and existing knowledge about citizen journalism.

The introductory blog post explains:

“OMNI is different from the original OhmyNews outfit by concentrating more on commentary on citizen journalism and its role in democracy. We source news from other established citizen journalism organisations, but we will occasionally produce original stories” (McPherson, 2010).

The new approach aims to generate discussion about the skills and techniques required to perform citizen journalism and comprises information about the politics of journalism, which includes the state of the industry and the effects of change on journalists. It also aims to equip citizen journalists with the skills necessary to work as effectively as professional journalists. It describes the tools and technologies of journalism and provides advice on how to use them. The site provides alerts for regular employment opportunities and provides updates on how citizen journalists affect the news culture (McPherson, 2010).

The OMNI site was refocused because it was a victim of its own success. By accepting many reports from around the world on widely varying topics, consistency and verification became increasingly more difficult for its overstretched resources. Since fact checking was one of its core principles, this presented a problem that could not be overcome (cloudatlas, 2010).

At the time of its inception, OhmyNews was unique for two reasons. Korea’s political history shows its struggle from occupation to autocratic rule and then its gradual transition to democracy. OhmyNews challenged traditional news media practices and the political powers of Korean government and business. The flow of shared information by many citizen journalists and the emergence of a diversity of autonomous voices within the confines of OhmyNews web pages transcended across multiple global demographics. Moreover, it provided a new model of open
information and knowledge development, which many sites throughout the world, such as The Huffington Post, would build from.

The fundamental requirement of a democracy demands free flow of information about political policies and the people who create them. Traditional journalism as the Fourth Estate aims to find and present information to the public who, in turn, engage in debates about matters that affect their way of life. OhmyNews used Internet communication technologies to provide the citizens of South Korea with ongoing opportunities to take an active and critical role in the political process.

Developments in Internet technology that have enabled the creation of new journalistic spaces, such as OhmyNews, allow ordinary citizens, national and global, the opportunity to enhance their human development through engagement with and participation in public affairs. This discussion of OhmyNews, a participatory space, shows some of the ways in which the use of Internet communication technologies have made a difference to the human development, freedom and security of South Korean citizens. Given the long history of autocratic rule and the ongoing challenges to the evolving democracy in South Korea, OhmyNews generated multiple methods and channels of open communication between citizens.

Limitations of the Web as a Site of Democratic Citizenship
The discussion so far has shown that the perceived benefits of the World Wide Web for democracy include its capacity to facilitate interactive communication by the general population; its enabling of the creation and distribution of information on all kinds of topics by any individual to instantly reach dispersed geographical locations; its impact on the collapse of the gatekeeping role of institutions of political power, including traditional news media, thereby increasing the capacity for ordinary citizens to become watchdogs of the powerful; and the mobilisation of movements and social change. These benefits—sometimes referred to as optimistic (Benkler, 2006: 233) and cyberutopianism (D. Hunter, 2006)—form the basis of arguments supporting the notion of the WWW as a democratising mechanism.

Opposing arguments by the “cyberskeptics” (D. Hunter, 2006) are as varied and critical as the optimists are of society’s institutional status quo. Their first concern is
that the increased flow of information has made it more difficult for people to sift through the “unmanageable din” to find the information they need (Benkler, 2006: 234). A further consequence of this is the shift of the public conversation from a few traditional news media sites to include a wide range of independent online environments, thereby causing the conversation to become unruly and fragmented. It is on this premise that Cass Sunstein has said that although the Internet’s capacity to provide faster and greater access to information was “a wonderful development” for democracy, uncritical approval of Web 2.0 technologies ought to be tempered by its limitations (Sunstein, 2001a).

Sunstein argues that the fragmentation of the public debate, combined with the use of Web 2.0 tools that enable individuals to personalise the kind of information they consume, has the capacity to limit the amount of exposure people have to a diversity of topics and points of view. Accordingly, this may cause the conversation to become polarised and lead to extremism. Sunstein places great importance on ensuring people are exposed to “unanticipated encounters” (Sunstein, 2001a), which provide them with an awareness of the social problems that exist beyond their immediate community. However, lawyer Alex Macgillivray disagrees with the idea that the conversation has become polarised, saying, “[t]hat takes a dim view of humanity,” and, “[w]e’ve always wanted to hear opinions that are not our own and that’s why we talk to other people” (J. Roberts, 2012).

In 2011 Pariser identified a more complex version of this problem, which he describes as a shift in the flows of information online, which is even more troubling to the notion of the Internet as democratiser (TED, 2011). Explaining the problem as an “invisible algorithmic” editing of the Web, Pariser says social media sites such as Facebook and search engines such as Google are using algorithms to personalise the content that flows to individuals. He determines that with the increased incidence of these kinds of practices by some of the key information sites, including news organisations such as the New York Times, the Internet can been seen to be providing individuals with the information they want, but not necessarily with the information they need (TED, 2011).
Graeme Turner, too, cautions those “jumping to the conclusion that a widening of access necessarily carries with it a democratic politics” (G. Turner, 2010: 2). His reservations about the notion of the Internet as an intrinsically democratising mechanism hold similarities to those of Sunstein. He argues that blog sites, for example, are not innately progressive or liberal, as suggested by the Internet optimists, simply because they operate independent of traditional news media. He contends that while there is much opportunity for bloggers to express both normative and alternative liberal perspectives, there is equal opportunity to publish extremist views. He too argues that the increased volume of journalism enabled by the general use of Web 2.0 publishing tools does not create a more open and reliable public debate, nor does it provide the public with a greater diversity of opinion.

Benkler describes yet another perspective, pointing out that even though the online environment contains multiple sites carrying a diversity of information, some independent sites have generated a greater following than many of the others, which, realistically, is not dissimilar to the mass media model of communication where most people listen to a “central set of speakers” (Benkler, 2006: 235). This view reinforces traditional news media as the primary source of trusted information, and argues “[i]ndividuals and collections of volunteers talking to each other may be nice, but they cannot seriously replace well-funded, economically and politically powerful media” (Benkler, 2006: 236). Benkler’s own argument is that the online-networked public sphere is neither too concentrated nor chaotic (Benkler, 2006: 239). Instead, he says it provides a better structure for individuals to participate in the public debate than was the case when the lecture model of mass media dominated the flow of information (Benkler, 2006: 272).

Turner argues that the cultural shift brought about by the generalised use of the WWW has increased commercial competition for attention, created even closer ties between big business and commercial news media organisations than before, and increased the integration of public relations with journalism, all of which have had a far-reaching impact on the topics shaping the public sphere (G. Turner, 2010: 73). He contends each phenomenon has created an interruption to the traditional connection between established commercial news media and the community. Turner says trust,
which was traditionally built on the journalistic value of independence, is being broken and the news media’s watchdog role is eroding.

For the cyberutopians, this ought not be a concern because their view is that open access to the tools and technologies of journalism means any individual can pick-up the baton dropped by the news media and perform the watchdog role themselves. However, Benkler believes “individuals, no matter how good their tools, cannot be a serious alternative to a well-funded, independent press that can pay investigative reports, [and] defend lawsuits” (Benkler, 2006: 261) to the degree and with the effectiveness that traditional news media can. At the same time he places great value on collaborations between members of the public and professional journalism on matters of public importance, a phenomena that he defines overall as the “networked information economy” (Benkler, 2006: 265). It is in this vein that Benkler argues that the Internet democratises (Benkler, 2006: 272).

Turner’s view contrasts with Singer’s research findings that Guardian journalists consider their online platforms to be a “healthy democratization of the media conversation” (Singer, 2011: 125), largely because they believe it provides audiences with a greater diversity of opinion than was possible in traditional print platforms. However, like Turner she too finds a variety of problems arising as journalists attempt to maintain order in the chaos of comment and opinion, all of which has the capacity to have a detrimental impact on the relationship between professional journalists and the public.

Putnam believes the Internet threatens interpersonal communication, which he argues is an important element of social interaction because it creates “meaningful community” (Putnam, 2000: 177). He places much weight on the importance of “geographically local networks, face to face contact and trust” (Putnam, 2000: 177) to the formation of social capital. For Putnam, participation in the virtual world is merely a “casual activity”, therefore it largely erodes the key qualities of social capital, including commitment, trust and reciprocity. While Meyer and Hinchman (2002) primarily agree with this view, they differentiate on the idea of place-based communication. They suggest that the many ways in which the Internet enables people of all political persuasions to connect far outweighs its potential impact on the
need for physical presence. Benkler provides a similar critique of Putnam’s work, arguing that online communication would need to “supplant real-world human interactions, rather than to simply supplement them” (Benkler, 2006: 362). Moreover, he says the kind of argument put forward by Putnam suggests that the social condition of individuals is static, therefore ought not evolve with the world around them (Benkler, 2006: 362), which is clearly untrue.

Barry Wellman’s work contrasts with Putnam’s, since he sees Internet communication technologies as a way to increase rather than reduce social capital and civic engagement, and argues that the modern social world is located in many different community networks rather than one geographic community as described by Putnam. He says the Internet is better able to develop social capital largely because it is not inhibited by geographical locations, therefore people are free to communicate and develop connections with others anywhere in the world (Wellman, 2001: 2031–2034).

Markham’s thesis is in agreement with those arguing that the democratising potential of the online environment has been overstated (Markham, 2010: 77). In particular, he argues that the deprofessionalisation of traditional news media structures, caused by the uptake of media production by the general population, will not necessarily lead to a democratisation of political structures. He specifically argues that while the exchange of information within interactive online environments such as blogs may appear to generate a sense of democratisation, this cannot be considered as relevant unless it transforms to “some form of action, deliberation or contestation outside the confines of this particular arena of cultural production” (Markham, 2010: 90). Moreover, he says that where online interactivity does in fact lead to activity in the urban space, it involves only those who are already politically motivated and does not usually engage people who are politically disenfranchised for one reason or another (Markham, 2010: 90). In summary, Markham says a shift in power, caused by use of Web 2.0 technologies by the general population, does not “inevitably change” the game itself (Markham, 2010: 91).

Castells takes yet another view of the democratising capacity of the Internet, which is useful when considering the ideas being expressed here, especially notions that the
use of Web 2.0 technologies undermines the incidence of place-based communication and that it is not inevitable that the game (social world) itself will change. He proffers that the Internet is a network of hybrid spaces comprised of cyber and urban environments, used autonomously to connect individuals with each other. He says cyberspace connections flow into the urban space, which becomes occupied by a particular cause or social movement (Castells, 2011). He argues that the use of Web 2.0 technologies by members of the general public have altered the mobilisation of protest movements forever. His research finds that the juncture where urban and cyberspace connect is where the most interesting view of the mobilisation of political movements occurs. He says political movements are “always born in the Internet” (Oltermann, Strauss, & Maynard, 2012) where they have the autonomy to construct themselves through debate, however they quickly move to the urban space where physical social networks are also created. He denotes that these movements are currently in an “embryonic state” and therefore there is a lack of evidence to suggest that they have impacted on public policy so far, however he believes there is a distinct possibility that what we are witnessing now, with the many Occupy movements for example, is the beginning of a mobilisation process (Oltermann et al., 2012). He draws this conclusion from the fact that there are increasing numbers of new forms of political expression emerging around many election campaigns, all of which indicate that there is a growing discontent with many current political systems (Oltermann et al., 2012). Castells contends that people’s awareness is enhanced by online communication and they are empowered by it, even though they know they cannot change things in the short term.

In a similar vein to Castells, Yochai Benkler approaches the Web 2.0 environment with optimism about the possibilities for the mobilisation of action, and more opportunities for participation in the social world. Benkler’s work focuses on the digital economy. Its relevance to this research is important because it is in part concerned with the shift away from the one-way model of news communication, which was comprised of “capital-intensive commercial and professional producers to passive, undifferentiated consumers” (Benkler, 2006: 29) and the removal of geographical boundaries that impeded the cost and speed of the distribution of information, to “peer production” (Benkler, 2006: 59). In terms of the Internet’s democratisation qualities, Benkler says that he does not anticipate a global
democratisation, however, he argues the “emergence of the networked information economy” of the Internet means it makes “the work of authoritarian regimes harder” (Benkler, 2006: 271) and it “offers a genuine reorganization of the public sphere” (Benkler, 2006: 465), reducing the capacity for news media owners to manipulate public opinion without interference. Moreover, he argues that the Internet enabled networked public sphere “provides an avenue for substantially more diverse and politically mobilized communication than was feasible in a commercial mass media with a small number of speakers and a vast number of passive recipients (Benkler, 2006: 465). Benkler observes an increasing incidence of “nonmarket, distributed, and collaborative investigative journalism, critical commentary, and platforms for political mobilization and organization” (Benkler, 2006: 465) all of which appear to indicate shift toward a democratisation of journalism.

Networked Journalism
Van Dijck contends that the Internet has become part of the cache of technologies supporting the power relations that shape the “political, economic and social forces” of society (Van Dijck, 2011: 344). Castells says its inclusion has reduced if not removed the middleperson from the communication process, which means individuals now have a significant amount of autonomy over the diffusion of their messages, and they ways in which their lives are represented and reflected in public spheres (Castells, 2011). Web 2.0 technologies enable people to more easily construct an “alternative society” (Brown, 2012; Castells, 2010; Van Dijck, 2011: 344) comprised of many social movements that aim to change particular values of society. This denotes a significant cultural change to the way people interact with each other and with the news media.

As traditional news media transitioned online, it had a choice to make, to either reshape its own role by engaging with this phenomenon, and to reflect the diversity of interests and values of the many nodes in the networks thereby becoming an intrinsic and trusted part of the network, or to attempt to retain its former power over the message by ignoring it or undermining it. For some organisations this has been a difficult decision, with a few opting to cling to the industrial model of media, the former power it provided, and a lesser-challenged capacity to shape certain institutions of society with their own values. The latter decision may well be fruitless
given, as Benkler points out, that “many hundreds of millions of users around the globe” now have the capacity to use the networked economy to bypass the industrial models of media, enabling them to connect with and widely distribute information to anyone, thereby making it much more difficult for the industrial model to maintain a demand for its product (Benkler, 2006: 32).

In 2001, Bardoel and Deuze described network journalism as comprising of “convergence, interactivity, customisation of content and hypertextuality”. They said it manifests as “the convergence between the core competences and functions of journalists and the civic potential of online journalism” (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001: 2). Emphasising the point that the notion of network journalism does not indicate a change to the core competencies of journalism, they suggest there is, however, a greater need for journalists to innovate and develop new technologies of journalism that will enable them to filter the high volumes of information for what the public needs to know (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001: 14).

Charlie Beckett describes networked journalism as “a synthesis of traditional journalism and the emerging forms of participatory media enabled by Web 2.0 technologies such as mobile phones, email, websites, blogs, micro-blogging and social networks” (Beckett, 2010: 1). His thesis suggests that networked journalism has the capacity to uncover and challenge things, ordinarily hard to see, that may lead to improvements in the social world. Similarly to Castells, he says for journalism to become more grounded in people’s lives, power must shift “from the newsroom to the connected online and digital world” (Beckett, 2008b, 2012). In doing so, journalism becomes better equipped to develop partnerships with alternative and independent organisations such as WikiLeaks, which aim to monitor and gain access to the activities and business of the powerful (Beckett, 2012).

Jarvis too favours a more collaborative and participatory approach to the production of news because he says it enables the news media to become more transparent and therefore trustworthy, and it is a more dynamic approach to journalism than the traditional lecture model. He thinks the news day should begin with the reporter disclosing the topic of his or her investigation to the public with the key objective being to gather crowd-sourced responses. The reporter would then post the gathered
information online with questions about, ‘What is right?’, ‘What is wrong?’, and ‘What else do you know?’ (Jarvis, 2010). This approach to journalism is underpinned with a presumption that the crowd is wise (Howe, 2006) and perhaps knows more than the news organisation. Jarvis believes that since the news process begins with the public then the news media ought to listen to individuals (Jarvis, 2010).

The Tools and Technologies of Networked Journalism

The tools of networked journalism are a combination of traditional and digital technologies, which also include social media and blogging platforms. The technologies of networked journalism include crowdsourcing and collaboration between professional, independent and citizen sources of news information. The politics of networked journalism are concerned with the ways in which the values and principles of journalism are enacted throughout its collaborative endeavours and how this now socially enhanced practice of journalism, impacts on the broader politics of journalism, incorporating agenda setting, investigative and international journalism, principles such as objectivity, verification, transparency and trust, and business models.

While the Internet has stimulated innovative developments in the production, distribution and consumption practices of journalism, it has also increased access to many more sources of information and has increased the layers of data available for analysis. While journalists have always consulted with multiple sources and trusted networks, analysed complex data, and produced stories to contextualise their findings, the main difference in the digital environment is the increased availability of tools and technologies that enable much more complex operations with greater volumes of data. While this is overwhelmingly good news for journalism, the problem is finding the resources—human, time, skills and revenue—required to innovatively complement the traditional tools and technologies of journalism (S. Oh, 2010: 7; Oliver, 2011). This involves identifying legitimate needs and uses rather than using technology simply for the sake of using it (Bell, 2011).

The methods of news production and ways to generate information flows in contemporary journalism include the use of hardware such as: computers and mobile communication technologies (smart phones, iPads and other tablets); software
including email, blog platforms and public comment forums; social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter; search engines such as Google; blog lists such as Google Blogs and Technorati; video streaming sites such as Bambuser and Livestream; photo sharing sites such as Flickr; data analysis tools such as Shapefile; mapping tools such as Google Maps; and social bookmarking tools such as Delicious. While reporters continue to meet contacts in person, they can now also use messaging services such as Skype to conduct interviews. In addition to traditional channels of communication such as landline telephones and broadcast phone-ins, news websites and social networks are used as complimentary and sometimes replacement methods for crowdsourcing information. Online news stories have, themselves, become tools that generate additional information. This happens in a number of ways, for example, through the interactive comment sections included at the bottom of online news stories, responses to journalists’ calls for content, crowdsourced data analysis and email. Some journalists also use personal blogs, video logs, online polls, surveys, message boards and forums to generate new information and leads. Contacts and information can now be stored in electronic databases.  

**Participation in Digital Environments**

A 2010 study *Digital Citizens and Democratic Participation* (Williamson, 2010: 15) surveyed 2003 online users in the UK and found that the Web is generally perceived as a valuable space for those who wish to engage with public affairs. Seventy per cent of the study’s participants feel that it is much easier to participate in the public debate now than it was before the availability of Web 2.0 technologies. They expressed a preference for interactive engagement with public debates over the one-to-many broadcast model that dominated media communication practices in the past. Most believe that the interactive qualities of Internet technologies provide them with more opportunity to “track and contribute to the democratic debate” (Williamson, 2010: 15). Sixty-four per cent of participants felt confident to use the online environment, however fewer people said they were self-confident enough to leave comments on blogs, or set up their own blog. Only forty-eight per cent said they could perform participatory tasks with confidence, while fifteen per cent said they were not confident enough to participate online at all. Thirty-seven per cent said they were not interested enough to become involved in online discursive networks.
Overall, the study found people believe the Internet has made it easier for those already interested in public debates to participate in political activities both online and offline (Williamson, 2010: 6). This finding is consistent with Nerone’s analysis of public participation and deliberation, fifteen years earlier (Nerone, 1995: 108).

News organisations have always allocated space to citizen participation. But before the news media’s transition to online news environments, the public could only participate in radio talkback and contribute letters to the editor in print publications and current affairs television programs. Each of these imposes limitations on the number and quality of contributions that can ever be heard in the public domain *en masse*. Newspapers are limited by column space, and television and radio broadcasts are limited by the availability of airtime, and all are constrained by editorial values. Only a very small number of people can access these spaces, therefore the ability for organisations to host large-scale participation and interaction through these channels is minimised. McNair describes the public’s involvement in the journalism process during this period as “…no more than a recipient of information” (McNair, 2000: 105).

The use of Web 2.0 technologies by the news media has created a range of opportunities for ordinary citizens to “join with journalists in the interrogation of political rhetoric” (McNair, 2000: 106). The public now has the capacity to create, contribute to and challenge the social and political narratives expressed in the traditional news media space, on a very large scale.

The following sections will review the notion of participatory engagement as having two dimensions: the networked individual and networked collective intelligence. Individual participation occurs on numerous social media platforms including news blogs on news media websites. Many news sites, including the *BBC*, *News Limited* websites such as the *Australian*, the *Herald Sun*, and *News International* publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, invite the public to comment on blog posts written by professional journalists. In the spirit of community, individuals also use a range of Web 2.0 devices to provide the news media with tips and information about public issues and events.
Blogs: The Noisy All-rounders

Blogs were the first shift away from the one-to-many model of news distribution (Gillmor, 2009: 2) since they enable anyone to tell a story on a topic of their choice for instant distribution to an unlimited number of people anywhere in the world. The main characteristics of a blog include “personal editorship by the owner/creator, the inclusion of hyperlinks, regular updates, free public access and maintenance of a postings archive” (Campbell, Gibson, Gunter, & Touri, 2010: 30). Blogs typically include a comment forum where users can interact with the blogger and other users. The interactive nature of the comment forum is an important quality of the format, and as such blogs are described as conversational (G. Reynolds & Lenhart, 2006). The notion of the blog as a conversation is further supported by the capacity that allows any number of weblogs to link to each other, thereby increasing the breadth of the conversation. The measure of a blog’s popularity is gauged by how many blogs link to it (Mortensen & Walker, 2002: 271) and how many people read it.

Blog posts have their greatest impact in conversations about topics that people would not ordinarily find in the traditional news media streams (G. Reynolds & Lenhart, 2006). They are also a “form of narrative that reflects a blogger’s own perspective and judgment on an issue, leaving the interpretation and evaluation to readers” (Baumer, Sueyoshi, & Tomlinson, 2008; Ekdale, Namkoong, Fung, & Perlmutter, 2010: 219). Blog genres vary and can range from a personal journal that expresses an individual focus, to an influential political publication that is concerned with community issues and outcomes, or may cover niche interest topics such as fashion, fishing, cooking, travel and so on. The subject matter of blogs is unlimited.

In 2005, the Pew Center reported that eight million people in the US had created blogs and thirty-two million regularly read blogs. By 2006, those numbers had significantly increased to twelve million creators and fifty-seven million readers (Lenhart & Fox, 2006). In 2008, Pew Internet research reported that thirty-three per cent of all Internet users read blogs, twelve per cent had created a blog, but only five per cent of users created content for their blog on a daily basis (A. Smith, 2008).

The Technorati 2010 edition of The State of the Blogosphere reports that blogs are “in transition” (Sobel, 2010). In recent years the practice of blogging has evolved
with the incorporation of new social media platforms such as micro-blogging (primarily Twitter), and live blogging, an instant messaging service that allows users to join the blogger in conversation in real time. Bloggers’ use of and engagement with various social media tools is expanding, and the lines between blogs, micro-blogs, and social networks are blurring. As the blogosphere converges with social media, sharing of blog posts is increasingly done through social networks, even though blogs remain significantly more influential on content than are social networks.

Recent studies show that young people, in particular, are migrating away from their blogs and using Facebook to communicate with their target communities, while conversely blogging by more mature aged bloggers has increased (Kopytoff, 2011). The use of the blog format by mainstream news media has, so far, remained constant for the last several years.

**Early Public Affairs Blogs**

Many of the “early blogs were produced by professional journalists or political insiders seeking to free themselves from the editorial shackles of mainstream newsrooms or the central party HQ” (Campbell et al., 2010: 32; Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 15). Following the terrorist events in the US in 2001, there was concern within the news journalism community that many “mainstream media outlets abdicated their independent role: they capitulated to the White House demand that they fall in with the ‘patriotic’ message” (Moeller, 2008: 169). This view of professional journalism is supported by Hammond and Herman who argue that when journalistic methods such as objectivity and truth are sacrificed for patriotism then journalists become “de facto enemies of democracy, and servants of the policy making elite” (Hammond & Herman, 2000: 201). The absence of objectivity became most obvious and of greatest concern during the Iraq War, when a large percentage of the US population were unaware of important facts about the war or the terrorist attacks that precipitated it (Sambrook, 2004). Some journalists felt compelled to tell their own stories and began to use personal blogs to express their own point of view on issues of war, their aim to develop discursive political communities to run alongside, but independently to those created by traditional news media.
Blogs have become an important element of the online world, and they have been shown to have significant influence in political discourse both in the blogosphere and mainstream news media (Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 19; Sobel, 2010). The blogosphere, referred to as alternative (Atton & Hamilton, 2008a: 47) and adversarial journalism (Curran, 2005: 127), continues to do “‘valuable and admirable work keeping mainstream journalism on its toes,’ and it performs invaluable service by linking to excellent coverage of events and issues so that coverage doesn’t get entirely forgotten after the news cycle in which it appeared” (Moeller, 2008; Schanberg, 2005: 175). Moreover, bloggers have a tendency to focus on information neglected or ignored by mainstream news media (Lowrey, 2006: 477). More people consult independent political blog sites today than ever before, with research showing blogs about public affairs register more visits than others (Zuniga, 2009: 109). There are several examples of how blogging can have a significant impact on political careers, one of which includes the resignation of Trent Lott following the blogosphere’s coverage of anti-social/racist comments made at a party. While the mainstream media brushed over the incident, the blogosphere’s comprehensive and relentless coverage and disapproving critiques led to the Senator’s resignation from political office (Curran, 2005: 127; Drezner & Farrell, 2004; G. Reynolds & Lenhart, 2006). The capacity for blogs to influence the public debate, based on their ability to interconnect or network, is proven to be powerful. Moreover, blogs that have built reputations as reliable and credible sources are taken seriously by mainstream media opinion makers and may be taken into account in the wider political debate (Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 23).

Ordinary citizens popularised the use of blogs long before traditional news media organisations decided to adopt the practice. Professional news journalism initially viewed bloggers as unprofessional and unreliable sources of information. Professional news journalism carries a number of values that often conflict with the blogging practice, including accuracy, which sits under the umbrella of verification, and objectivity. One of the key benefits of blogging is the immediacy in which information can be disseminated, however in some instances, the speed with which information is posted on a citizen blog is largely unattainable by a professional news organisation whose verification process is often complex and lengthy. While speed is of the essence to professional journalism, so too is the development and
maintenance of trust and credibility.\textsuperscript{57} It is on this basis that information published on traditional news sites is subject to a routine verification process before publication. The notion of objectivity is a strongly contested element of journalism and is often held up as one of the distinguishing characteristics between blogging and professional journalism.\textsuperscript{58} 

Blogs are often perceived to comprise of opinion and information recycled from traditional news sites: (Bruns, 2008: 93; Tremayne, 2007: 261). Further, on the whole, they are sometimes described as “unedited, unfiltered and opinionated” (Hermida, 2008: 3), and:

“It is evident even from only a casual glance at the sites and blogs of citizen journalists that in many cases the produsers involved treat the products of the industrial journalism process as raw material for their own work; journalistic content is repurposed, reappropriated, and remixed as is required for its use as catalyst for citizen journalism, and traditional news content is therefore introduced in the open news pool with little regard for questions of copyright or ‘fair use’” (Bruns, 2008: 93).

Campbell et al. argue that bloggers can act as “\textit{re-framers}, interrogating, challenging and making transparent elements contributing to mainstream media framing of news events” (Campbell et al., 2010: 42). On the other hand, as previously explained, some blogs have become very influential in the political public sphere (Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 19).

\textbf{Blogs in Traditional Newsrooms}

While the uptake of news blogging by traditional news media, compared to the general population, was slow, news organisations began to realise the value of the Web and news blogs following the events of September 11, 2001.\textsuperscript{59} Blogs are used in newsrooms to build trust, loyalty and credibility (MacKinnon, 2005: 3). They enable journalists to provide readers with up to the minute information as it comes to hand and to engage in conversation with local, national and global audiences. In the early days of news blogging, benefits of the new discursive closeness between newsrooms
and the public (MacKinnon, 2005: 14)\textsuperscript{60} saw the development of new ways for editorial staff to expand and enhance the production and distribution practices of journalism.

Blogging in traditional news media settings is a way for journalists to bring “public participation and debate into the everyday practice of journalism” (Rutigliano, 2007: 225). Research shows “[b]logs lower the threshold of entry to the global debate for traditionally unheard or marginalised voices” (Coleman, 2005: 277) and therefore encourage political participation (Zuniga, 2009: 114). Participation occurs at a higher rate in populations of political news media users than those using media for interests other than public affairs and current events, such as entertainment, recreation and amusement, all of which are “associated with lower levels of political interest” (Zuniga, 2009: 114).

The use of blogs by professional journalists enhances their practice in a number of ways. Blogs are used to interactively communicate with audience during both the newsgathering and distribution processes (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2011). They use blogs to provide the audience with information that would otherwise end up on the ‘cutting room floor’, which in the newsroom is full of “facts, interviews, asides, anecdotes, context, insights and media” (Gahran, 2011), due to limited publishing space in traditional print and broadcast formats. The vastness of the online environment provides journalists with ample space to present more in-depth analysis and opinion, often using content that was traditionally for the most part discarded due to it falling outside of the scope of the narrative, or to missed deadlines. Blogs allow journalists to provide information using one or more discrete storytelling formats including, video, still images, slideshows and text. The blog post is an ongoing entity that allows for the posting of the seeds of stories that grow as new information, generated through public comment, collaboration and further research, comes to hand (Marsh, 2011). It can be updated as often as required in contrast to traditional fixed formats. Research shows that audiences use blogs to gain a better understanding of information, with fifty-seven per cent indicating they enjoy the participatory aspect that allows them to interact within the blog’s comment forum (Hermida et al., 2011).
Journalists can also use independent blogs to gather specialised and locally produced content, particularly in areas of conflict (D. Bennett, 2011). Local bloggers are more likely to have the time and inclination to develop in-depth local expert knowledge than the professional journalist who is required to report on the wider field of issues and events. When a story breaks in a particular area, it is likely that local bloggers have already started to contextualise the event before traditional news media have had a chance to connect with it (Drezner & Farrell, 2004: 3). Locally produced information is often used for background and as a starting point for the mainstream news media journalist’s own investigations (Townend, 2011). These blogs can also be used as a source of verification (Murray, 2011).

**Limitations of Blogging**

One of the recognised limitations of the blogging process to the democratic process is the potential to encourage groupthink. Several authors have raised concern that “people cluster around sources of information and channels of communication that support their values and prejudices” (Coleman, 2005: 278; Keen, 2007; Putnam, 1995: 173; Sunstein, 2001b). This means there is a tendency for people to consistently consult only those publications supporting their own existing viewpoints, which invariably reinforces their own beliefs. The chance for people to discover new ideas through participation in the “marketplace of ideas” (Coleman, 2005) is limited by this habitual practice.

In 2003 Clay Shirky expressed concern that bloggers with very large audiences may not be equipped with the resources required to respond to everyone, which would render the format as a broadcast platform rather than a many-to-many conversation (Shirky, 2003). The *BBC Blog Network* exemplifies this concern, outsourcing the moderation of many thousand public comments it receives everyday because the newsroom simply does not have the journalistic resources to respond to everybody.

**Blog Hyperlinks (Links): Some Do and Some Don’t**

Hyperlinks carry a lot of weight in discussions about news blogs because they are seen to be enablers of interactivity, diversity, credibility and transparency. Dan Gillmor says: “Links are the fundamental unit of the Web. They are an invitation to see more, to drill deeper, to explore information” (Gillmor, 2009: 7). Traditional
news media organisations are often criticised for their reluctance to use the hyperlink in this way. Instead of linking to sources and complementary information outside of their own domains, many news organisations tend to either practice internal linking or else they do not link at all (Searls, 2011). Gillmor insists that drawing attention to sites beyond their own does not have to result in their endorsement of others’ material, but rather signifies that it is at least aware of its existence (Gillmor, 2009: 7).

The most commonly expressed reason for commercially produced news publications not linking out is that it compromises their editorial mission, which is to keep readers on site for the benefit of advertising campaigns (Hespos, 2008: 141; Searls, 2011). However, Weinberger proposes that since the mission of many news organisations, commercial, public and independent, includes an objective to foster humanity by creating connections between individuals and global society, linking becomes more important for knowing what happens to others in other parts of the world (Weinberger, 2008: 190). Moving away from editorial reasons, Kevin Anderson says many organisations do not use links for purely technical reasons. He says, “newsroom workflow is still print-centric” (K. Anderson, 2011), which means that news content is prepared for print first, using print tools, and the addition of links within the story during the transformation to HTML, which is the last task in the process, is largely overlooked (Karp, 2011). David Domingo contends “[t]he professional culture of traditional journalism has a strong inertia in the online newsrooms that prevents them from developing most of the ideals of interactivity, as they do not fit in the standardized news production routines” (Domingo, 2007: 1). Chris Anderson rebuts the reasoning offered by news organisations for not using links, with an argument proposing that the recognition and inclusion of the interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies become a priority for organisational workflow (C. Anderson, 2011).

Research by Jonathon Stray shows online only publications are more likely to “make good use of links in their stories” (Stray, 2010) than multiplatform publications (those that include broadcast and online platforms such as the BBC), which generally only link to their own content. In his survey of twelve online news outlets, Stray’s research found BBC News to be the only organisation that did not provide embedded
hyperlinks to internal, external or topic pages in the body of its news articles. Rather, the BBC prefers to contain its links in a side bar alongside its stories (S Herrmann, 2010; Stray, 2010). In addition to the embedded links and the links side bar, the BBC runs a “See Also” blog which contains a collection of the best content from the web on popular topics selected by BBC editorial staff. This blog provides a link to each site of interest and a small excerpt from each story. As a result of the 2010 BBC Strategy Review, its policy on linking was revised based on a re-conceptualisation of linking as added value to the BBC’s journalistic best practice (see Chapter 4).

In October 2008, the BBC trialled an application called Apture, which allows stories to include embedded inline links to external sites without leaving the home site. When a link is clicked, a text box showing content from an external site appears on the same page. The text box is a smaller window that allows the reader to scroll up and down through additional information without leaving the home site page (see Figure 3.2).

The BBC has been both applauded and criticised for this practice (N. Reynolds, 2008). No longer in use, critics argued that it operated in opposition to one of the most distinctive and collaborative elements that underpin blogging. Lloyd Shepherd criticised the BBC for acting “like a particularly ill-informed media company, hugely resistant to ‘sending users elsewhere’ and determined to keep their claws in the user’s flesh for as long as possible” (Shepherd, 2008). Ben Metcalfe, on the other hand, supported the initiative. He says:

“[T]he purpose of Apture is not to replace hyperlinking, and it would be wrong to use it in this way. It’s a tool that brings small amounts of relevant content to the user’s attention so that they are minimally distracted from their reading. The idea is that the user can gain background information about the themes/topics/etc. they are reading about so that they can better engage with the story” (Metcalfe, 2008).
Creating Conversations in Comment Forums

Comment forums are an integral part of blogs and as such have, to varying degrees, assumed a place in all genres of journalism. As spaces for public access to journalism, and additional sites for the exchange of information comment and opinion, the forums allow readers to engage with a blog author as well as other readers’ points of view on specific topic areas.

The online environment is a source of many successes and failures of different commenting forums. Getting the practice right has been a process of trial and error for many. Their value is widely contested, with general criticisms often describing the practice as useless and toxic, “these forums are insidiously contributing to the devaluation of journalism, blurring the truth, confusing the issues, and diminishing serious discourse beyond even talk radio’s worst examples” (Bailey, 2009 In F. Wilson, 2009). Gillmor suggests the problem arises because many news forums are “poorly administered” (Gillmor, 2009: 6). Problems such as poor, off track and abusive commenting occur when comment threads are left unattended. Fred Wilson argues, “simply adding a comment thread at the end of a news story is a recipe for trouble” (F. Wilson, 2009).

Similarly, Jeff Jarvis says he used to think comments from the public on news blogs were a good idea, but he now believes “comments are the voice of assholes” (Jarvis,
While he acknowledges there is sometimes some value in comments, these are largely buried in the fracas. The problem, according to Jarvis, stems from the old lecture format that journalists use to communicate information to the public. He suggests the practice of news blogging is much the same format where the media presents a completed product to the public for comment (Jarvis, 2010). He says journalists throw their stories over the wall and society comments; society throws a brick back at the wall; the wall doesn’t answer, and so society becomes angry and nasty (Jarvis, 2010). Charlie Beckett agrees: “Comments on political blogs do not create constructive debates. Despite clever attempts at moderation, referring and filtering, the conversation around blogs is still random. Fun, sometimes insightful, but it makes a limited contribution to anything approximating to the public sphere” (Beckett, 2009).

Some types of news media comment systems and the associated issues arising from their use are described below. Comment systems are varied and each has its distinct characteristics. Organisations deploy different rules and guidelines to achieve their aims. Systems use different degrees of hosting and moderation as listed below:

- **Hosted**: the journalist moderates and interacts with participants’ comments about the topic.
- **Un-hosted**: is not moderated by the journalist, nor does the journalist participate in the conversation. The comments can be moderated or un-moderated and comments are not confined to the topic.
- **Moderated**: moderators use specific policy guidelines that give them the power to accept and reject the comments that are submitted to the site for publication. The moderation process is further divided into pre-moderated and post moderated.
  - **Pre-moderated**: comments are moderated before they are posted to the site. During the pre-moderation process, some comments might be rejected based on breaches of the organisation’s comment policy.
  - **Post Moderation**: comments are moderated after they have been published. This occurs in two ways:
Peer Moderation: other users of the site flag the comment as inappropriate.

Host Moderation: the host of the site determines the comment has breached the policy code of the site.

- Un-moderated: commenting systems allow automatic publication of all comments submitted to the site.

It has become standard practice for news sites to require users to register before being allowed to submit their comments for publication on a news site. Sites that do not require registration generate a larger number of spam, anti-social and off topic comments than those that ask participants to register (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006: 58).

The Guardian started using blogs in 2000, and later became one of the first newspaper sites in the UK to use blogs collaboratively with readers. In 2008, following a refinement of the design and technology of user comment forums housed under the banner of “Communities and User Experience”, the organisation announced that users were now required to register before posting comments. The registration system creates a user profile page (Figure 3.3), which logs a history of each user’s participation on the site. There are various advantages to this system, with the key benefit being the ease with which posters with a history of offensive comments can be traced. On the editorial level, the introduction of basic formatting features such as block quotes and links is a further benefit to the readability of comments.

Derek Powazek says compulsory registration does not eradicate the problems associated with comment forums. Moreover, he says the need remains for some users to participate in comment forums anonymously. He proposes that organisations allow for anonymous comments. To guard against anti-social participants, comments should not be published immediately but rather “held in a special moderation queue for approval” (Powazek, 2008), i.e. a form of pre-moderation.
Crowdsourcing in the Digital Environment

Crowdsourced journalism is largely conducted in the spirit of Dan Gillmor’s assertion, “my readers know more than I do” (Gillmor, 2006: 13). Crowdsourcing is a practice found in many fields, including open source software development, Q&A websites and collaborative encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia. The practice is used “to tap the latent talent of the crowd” (Howe, 2006), in the belief that the crowd collectively knows as much if not more than professionals.

While it is not actually a new technology of journalism, it is a new term, and the practice is greatly enhanced with the general use of Web 2.0 technologies (Yahr, 2007). Brabham says the term crowdsourcing does not predate the Internet and is not a term that applies to just any instance of an online community, rather it refers to “an online, distributed problem solving and production model” (Brabham, 2008). More specifically, he says: “Crowdsourcing works when an organisation has a problem to solve or a product to design, and the organisation opens that challenge up to an online community with specific solution parameters” (Brabham, 2008).

In 2007, Robert Niles anticipated that the applied practice of crowdsourcing “might have more effect on all forms of journalism than anything else that’s come out of the online journalism revolution” (Niles, 2007). His estimation may prove to be accurate given that journalists now routinely use the technique to generate a variety of data including photos, video, and vignettes, all of which aid their creation of
professionally produced stories designed for the “public good” (Brabham, 2008). Traditional news organisations, to varying degrees, have applied the method to complement a variety of routine practices such as “interviews, observation and the examination of documents” (Niles, 2007). Journalists report that it provides them with a lot of material they would not ordinarily obtain through traditional channels of communication (Taranto, 2008).

Brabham describes four models of crowdsourcing: the Knowledge Discovery and Management Approach, which draws on particular communities to “find and assemble information in a specified location”; the Broadcast Search Approach, which seeks to use the crowd to find the “right answer” to a problem; the Peer Vetted Creative Production Approach, which aims to discover the “most popular answer” to a problem to which there is no definitive answer; and finally, the Distributed Human Intelligence Tasking Approach, which sources the crowd to “process large batches of data” (Brabham, 2008). Journalism entities, traditional and new, use each of these models at various times to crowdsource information from their audiences/publics.

Evaluation, verification and analysis of crowdsourced data are labour-intensive processes. Once data is verified and deemed to be in the public interest, it then becomes necessary for journalists to contextualise the content for public consumption. Some of the criticism of crowdsourcing is motivated by concerns about the costs associated with the entire process. Conversely, other critics argue that the participants are being exploited for their free labour. A recent example of such criticism saw a citizen content producer for the Huffington Post launch a class action against Arianna Huffington after she sold the publication without compensating the 9000 citizen content producers who had contributed content to the Huffington Post free of charge. Huffington responded: “Our bloggers utilise our platform to connect and ensure that their ideas and views are seen by as many people as possible. It's the same reason hundreds of people go on TV shows—to broadcast their views to as wide an audience as possible” (Sabbagh, 2011). Furthermore, Huffington argues, all media organisations depend on unpaid contributions, for example, “people appearing on news programs such as Newsnight are unpaid” (Sabbagh, 2011). In this vein she argues, “there's got to be a distinction between everybody who works for a media company and everybody who blogs for a media company” (Sabbagh, 2011).
Editorially Controlled User-generated Content

There are many definitions for the concept of user-generated content (UGC), none of which are commonly agreed upon (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006: 8). Paul Bradshaw (2010b) defines it as material which is not commissioned or paid for by news organisations, while Claire Wardle describes it as “audience material” (Wardle & Williams, 2008: 8). Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery describe the dimensions of UGC as follows: “i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices” (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006). For the purposes of this thesis, user-generated content is defined as story-building material created by amateurs and contributed to online news sites for distribution to a mass audience.

The conventional news consumer is now well positioned to participate in both production and consumption practices of news media, given the increased ease of access and mobility, and the high production quality of new media tools. The value of citizen-shot video and still pictures sent via mobile devices to the major traditional news media sites from the scene of unfolding disasters, such as the Asian Tsunami, the London bombings and the US Airways airplane crash into the Hudson River in New York, is high because they often show an extent of drama and devastation previously unseen (Moeller, 2008: 181). These citizen-generated pictures, and the many more from political uprisings and other events that have followed, often become the “iconic pictures of the day” (Quinn, 2006) (for example, the photo of the woman jumping from a burning building into the arms of fire fighters in the midst of the 2011 London riots (Kwek, 2011)).

While most news media organisations have expanded their editorial policies to incorporate the publication of user-generated content as part of their service, their economic strategies in relation to the content are also subject to modification. While some organisations manage to gain authorisation from the creators to use the content free of charge, user-generated content is not considered to be a replacement for the professionally produced content derived from their routine practices of journalism. The incorporation of user-generated content with traditional newsroom output
requires new editorial strategies, resources and innovative “frameworks and facilities for UGC creators to publish” (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006: 5).

The news industry is comprised of different kinds of news organisations/journalism entities, each with its own purpose, and each taking different approaches to the use of user-generated content. Sites such as the BBC, the Guardian, the various News Limited publications, and independent news entities such as OhmyNews, WikiLeaks, Storyful, Demotix and Ushahidi each take a different approach to user-generated content. Some appeal to their publics for specific content using a variety of services and platforms, and other times members of the public contribute unsolicited material. The desire for individuals to contribute content and comment is motivated by a number of factors. Some people offer content for remuneration, for example a news organisation may be willing to pay non-professionals for the exclusive rights to still and/or video images of their eyewitness accounts of significant events. Hargittai lists some of the motivating factors as, “connecting with peers, achieving a certain level of fame, notoriety or prestige, and self-expression” (Hargittai, 2009), however she contends most contribute content and comment simply to engage with the online community.

Jeff Jarvis is critical of the kinds of pictures that some organisations sometimes select for news broadcasts. For example, he says, the selection of “ordinary photos taken in peoples’ own homes” (Jarvis, 2010) during the UK snow blizzards was “inherently insulting” given that they could have selected the “best pictures” (Jarvis, 2010).

Many organisations now operate with a mixture of citizen and professionally produced content, and most maintain editorial control to ensure the values and principles of professional journalism are upheld. Pro-am journalism combines the raw material provided by the amateur journalist with the editorial finesse that makes it attractive and usable for a wide audience (Shirky, 2009). The online environment presents news organisations with much more space to publish user-generated content than was possible using traditional print and broadcast platforms. Table 3.2 shows a categorisation of major user-generated content types used by each media model included in this research.
Table 3.2

Types of User Generated Content

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Personal; Opinion; and Event</td>
<td>Personal Blogs; Collaborative Blogs; Popular Blogs Wikipedia; Facebook; Newsrooms</td>
<td>Mobile technologies such as smart phones and iPads; Computers; Word Processing software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Photo and</td>
<td>Personal; Eye Witness View; Public Event;</td>
<td>Photos taken by non-professionals and posted to</td>
<td>Mobile technologies such as smart phones and iPads; Computers; Camera software; and Cameras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Images</td>
<td>Natural Disaster; and Citizen Journalism.</td>
<td>the various online photo sharing sites such as</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Personal Blogs, Newsrooms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>Personal; Eye Witness View; Public Event;</td>
<td>Audio posted to online sites such as Audioboo,</td>
<td>Mobile applications for smart phones; Podcasting; and Audio recorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural Disaster; and Citizen Journalism.</td>
<td>Facebook, Personal Blogs, Newsrooms.</td>
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Vincent & Vickery, 2006: 6) a fundamental principle of democratic societies. In places where journalists cannot be present for political or other reasons, or in places where communication through the usual channels is temporarily or permanently disconnected, content produced by those with access to the situation have the capacity to tell the story of what is happening (J. Keller, 2011). This kind of interactivity between organisations, industry professionals and the public enhances the relationships between them. BBC editor Matthew Eltringham (2009) believes the audience has an “invaluable role” in storytelling. It is from this conceptual framework that many news organisations now incorporate the use of user-generated content into their editorial policies.

**Verification of User-Generated Content**

The use of raw user-generated content by traditional journalism sites has added extra pressures to editorial controls on the production, content and distribution of information (Shirky, 2009). Primarily, news organisations take care to ensure user-generated content does not conflict with their own editorial policies. Then, given how easy it has become to manipulate and plagiarise content, newsrooms should carefully consider questions about the authenticity of every firsthand account of the news events it covers.

Most have developed unique and stringent verification processes for content produced by those who do not apply professional routines to the production of news content (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2006: 9) (see later chapters for specific examples). The practice at the *Guardian*, for instance, has been to run the information it has with an explanation about how it got it. Oliver says the *Guardian’s* main aim when using this method is to be seen as transparent (Oliver, 2011).

**Social Media**

Olmstead et al. say social media has helped news organisations to reach a broader audience, with the flow of traffic from sites such as *Facebook* and many others increasing by 57 per cent during the two years 2010—2012 (Olmstead, Sasseen, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2012). However, their 2012 report also suggests that social media provides less referrals compared to the number of users who go directly to
Social media has changed the way news media have conversations with the public by providing a new way to interact. While journalists traditionally rely on sources such as databases, libraries and government offices, in the past they would have had to leave the office and meet people as part of the method of investigation (Shirky, 2009; Townend, 2011). Social media has added a new dimension to the tool set, providing more convenient and increased access to greater volumes of leads and information, and has become an everyday part of doing their job.

Social media practices are community centric; they are diverse and collaborative and occur on multiple platforms in varied formats. Definitions of social media are largely concerned with Internet communication technologies that enable different forms of social interaction. Some of the different forms of social media include, static, live and micro blogs, professional networking, syndication of aggregated content (RSS) and photo, video, friend, music and bookmark sharing sites. While there are many different forms of social media, there are also many different uses for the content. Bruns and Bahnisch define social media sites as: “Websites which build on Web 2.0 technologies to provide space for in-depth social interaction, community formation, and the tackling of collaborative projects” (Bruns & Bahnisch, 2009: 7).

Many traditional news media organisations are now using a range of social media technologies, which pose multiple challenges to the traditional practices of journalism and to the already strained budgets. While it is important for editorial staff to engage with social media in ways that both market the business and connect with sources and audiences, it is equally important for organisations to be able to monitor and measure the benefits of the technology. Organisations are experiencing extra financial strain through having to redirect funds into research, development and deployment of social media without the benefit of being sure of the value it adds to their social and economic position. Compounding this financial expense, the use of social media by ordinary businesses has created yet another economic loss for the news industry since business no longer needs to rely on traditional media to market its products. Business is increasingly becoming its own media company, telling its
own story, and inviting clients to engage with it directly (Edelman, 2010). Consequently, the allocation of funding for news media advertising budgets by business has shifted away from traditional media to fund in-house social media initiatives (Hogarth-Scott, 2010).

A particularly socially pervasive tool, Twitter, emerged in 2006 as a service that allows users to share information in a text-based format within the limits of one hundred and forty characters. Now with over 200 million users, it is the most commonly used micro blogging platform to connect the public with traditional news content.

The use of Twitter and other social networks present new and diverse ways for journalists to gather and disseminate information and has evolved as a useful and effective way for journalists to interact with others, including audience, sources, colleagues and collaborators. The use of Twitter by the news industry had developed generally in three phases: first, journalists joined Twitter independent of their news organisation; then news organisations began to produce automated news feeds through the Twitter networks; and finally news organisations encouraged journalists to use Twitter as a tool to develop technologies of journalism. Some news journalists joined Twitter as early as 2006, which in some instances was up to three years before their employers adopted the platform as part of professional practice.

When news organisations first officially joined the social network, their communications were largely one-way and comprised of automated news feeds only. While this practice remains commonplace in most organisations, some have trialled the inclusion of interactivity into the process. For example, the New York Times (NYT) switched from an automated Twitter process, which ordinarily contains a headline and a hyperlink to the story on its website, to include personalised responses by two social media editors to the public’s tweets (Sonderman, 2011). Similarly, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has also experienced success with “human-powered feeds”, saying it “do[es] much, much better than automated ones, by any relevant metric” (Sonderman, 2011). The aim of the NYTs initiative in this instance was to convert its 3.2 million Twitter followers into website visitors (Sonderman, 2011). For the WSJ, the personalised approach to Twitter resulted in more subscription
renewals. The approach taken by both organisations suggests that they are motivated to engage with the community as an important part of their business strategy rather than their broader obligation to democracy. Moeller contends many commercial media outlets do not concern themselves with their role in democracy because “it is not a line item on a profit-and-loss statement” (Moeller, 2008: 180). But in any event, increased engagement through economic drivers remains an encouraging democratising side effect.

Journalists across all models of news media are increasingly using *Twitter* to develop and improve the technologies of journalism. Some of the developments include crowdsourcing activities, while improvements include: new ways to find contacts; connect with people in local and remote locations; develop story ideas; research background information; discover new media tools; keep an eye on the topics and tone of the public debates; monitor the state of the industry; and to stay abreast of competitors.

*Twitter* has become one of the key platforms used to discover breaking news. After only three years of general use by a global public, Jemima Kiss said the *Guardian*, like many other news organisations, discovered breaking stories from other parts of the world via *Twitter*, such as the Buffalo plane crash (2009), the Hudson River rescue (2009) and the death of a British student in the French Alps (2009) (Kiss, 2009). More recently, Hu et al. have claimed the news of Osama Bin Laden’s death first broke on *Twitter*, and although journalists were not the first to tweet the news, they played a large part in breaking the news to a wider audience (Hu et al., 2012: 1). In this vein, Alfred Hermida describes *Twitter* as an “alert system”, since it is often the first word on crisis events. Furthermore, it is also “an awareness system” (Hermida, 2011) because, regardless of social and professional status, or geographical boundaries, it maintains people’s awareness of each others’ “activities, context or status” (Hermida, 2011). Hermida’s thesis suggests the act of tweeting reveals that its inherent quality is a form of journalism, which he describes as “ambient journalism” (Hermida, 2011: 301). The tweeting process involves the transmission of fragments of information including photos, video, audio and text, which enable the receiver to piece together a story about what is happening in the world.
The idea of Twitter as journalism is both embraced and challenged by the news industry and academia. Some assert that the aggregation of tweets about an issue or event can provide enough facts about the news to be categorised as “a source of journalism” (Ingram, 2008) while others argue that it is merely “a platform like radio or TV but with unfettered interactivity” (Posetti, 2009). Julie Posetti sees it as a way for professional journalists to produce real time reporting, with the composition of the tweet being similar to writing news headlines (Posetti, 2009). Twitter’s leading lawyer Alex Macgillivray says, “journalism and Twitter share a similar goal of uniting users with the issues that are most meaningful to them” (J. Roberts, 2012). However, on the question of whether Twitter is a media company, he says it is a technology company and notes “I haven’t heard of anyone stopping delivery of the New York Times because they’re avid Twitter users” (J. Roberts, 2012).

The question of whether Twitter is journalism is also problematic for industry professionals, with many answering that it is not. Kiss describes Twitter as a communication tool and says “the fact that New Yorkers reported on the plane crash on Twitter is a given, and no more surprising than the same people using the phone to pass on news” (Kiss, 2009). Laura Oliver says the problem with the debate about the idea of Twitter as journalism stems largely from a tendency to “conflate the tools [of journalism] with [the technology of] journalism and sometimes we put too much weight on these tools” (Oliver, 2011). Former BBC journalist, Kevin Marsh, suggests the debate carries a misunderstanding about the difference between data and journalism. He says journalism is more than simply processing data for a production line, but rather it is about talking to people and telling stories (Marsh, 2011). Philip Meyer’s thoughts on journalism insist that there needs to be more to it than simply “[p]iling up facts and putting them in clever packages” and says it requires an “interpretive framework” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2010: 161–164; P. Meyer, 2008). For Marsh, the most important quality of journalism is the narrative journalists construct around the data. He says one of the risks of treating Twitter as journalism is that there is tendency for the information it circulates to prematurely generate legitimacy before any of it has been substantiated (Marsh, 2011). Similarly, Townend warns that it is unwise for journalists to put too much weight on the information gained through social media because, she says, it is not necessarily representative of society (Townend, 2011).
This leads into one of the main concerns about *Twitter*: whether it is a reliable source of news. During the uprisings in Iran, which directly followed the result of the 2009 Presidential election, the information that circulated on *Twitter* was inundated with unsubstantiated claims presented as fact. The event was a very fast moving, politically and socially volatile situation. Former *BBC* Global News Director, Richard Sambrook, monitored the activity on *Twitter* for the period of the event during which he was acutely aware that not everything in the network was true. He grouped tweets into distinct categories, realising some were true, some were the result of confusion and some may have been “planted in the hope of inciting more protests and support” (Sambrook, 2009a). News organisations were faced with this same task, to quickly filter large volumes of information supplied by a wide range of sources from both inside and outside of Iran, and to discover what was actually happening. Sambrook also assessed the rate at which information flowed through *Twitter* compared to traditional news organisations. By his calculations, Twitter ran “significantly ahead” (Sambrook, 2009b) of traditional newsrooms, however he points out that it was journalism’s professional obligation to substantiate every claim with hard evidence that slowed the flow of reports compared to *Twitter*.

In all politically and socially volatile situations such as the Iran riots, the skills of journalism—evaluation, verification and contextualisation—remain essential to maintaining credibility and the trust of the general public. This obligation has led to the creation of many new positions with new job descriptions in newsrooms throughout the world to manage social media. This is yet another expense for newsrooms with many being forced to over-extend existing resources to minimise costs. Sonderman says there is a need for greater investment in this area (Sonderman, 2011). The *Guardian*’s head of communities and user experience, Meg Pickard agrees: “if all you do is hire somebody to look after your social media activity and potentially install a *Twitter* client on everybody’s computer back at the office, without thinking about why you are doing it or how it is going to change the organisation, then you are only doing half the thinking” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011b).

*Facebook* is another social media tool used by journalists and news organisations to: build a professional presence; for newsgathering, reporting, crowdsourcing and
distribution of information; interactions with the public; drive traffic to their online news website; build their personal brand name; showcase their photos and videos, including behind the scenes videos; broadcast live updates during times of crisis (such as natural disasters and political conflict); transmit live video; and connect with other news feeds, officials, organisations and professionals. Facebook users can sync their pages with their mobile phones, which means they are always connected to their information networks (Lavrusik, 2011a, 2011b).

Rory O’Connor says “the rise of Facebook and Twitter herald changes for journalism, and pose serious challenges to journalistic credibility and trust” (O’Connor, 2009). The news industry is increasingly accepting of the idea that people are willing to consume their content on external websites, especially Facebook. The premise that people are more likely to engage with information gained through a friend is why Facebook is thought to be a good platform for the distribution of news. People trust their friends to help them filter the vast amount of information just as much as they rely on friends to provide them with movie or restaurant recommendations (O’Connor, 2009).

While there is uncertainty about how long social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter might last, at this point in time journalists are using Facebook as a way to engage in the public conversation (Townend, 2011). Ideally, the news content posted on Facebook encourages people to participate in the public debate by adding comments and ‘liking’ posts (O’Connor, 2009). Townend says regardless of what happens to Facebook, journalists will always find other similar spaces for their work in the future (Townend, 2011).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the traditional and new relationships between journalism and civil society and described the ways in which new Web 2.0 tools such as news blogs and social media, and technologies including crowdsourcing and ultimately networked journalism can enhance journalism’s role in a democracy. It has provided a framework from which to understand the ways in which some news organisations undertake initiatives that encourage the public to share information about the world through the expression of personal viewpoints, the production of user-generated
content and in news blog comment forums and other spaces. This review suggests
the incorporation of the World Wide Web into the daily routines of the newsroom
has added civic value to news products and opened a narrow pathway to the
democratisation of journalism.

This chapter, together with Chapter 2, provides the foundational framework through
which the case studies in the following chapters will be examined.

38 Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those
that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-
updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple
sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows
remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going
beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (O'Reilly, 2005).
40 Jenkins remains a key participant in the online news ecology; he contributes opinion for the
Guardian’s Comment is Free and other online news publications.
41 See for example Graeme Turner (2012) for more on the public’s disengagement with public affairs.
42 Dan Gillmor writes: “OhmyNews has shaken up the journalism and political establishments”
(Gillmor, 2004).
43 General use defined throughout the thesis as “use by everybody”.
44 Chosun, Dong-A and JoongAng dominated the industry prior to the year 2000 (Kwak, 2011: 89).
45 The lecture model is read, view and listen only.
46 Benkler refers to the New York Times and Washington Post’s investigations that led to the
Watergate Inquiry in 1973, but a more recent example is the Guardian’s investigation in 2010 into the
wrongdoings of News International, which led to the Leveson Inquiry.
47 Authors such as Graeme Turner have expressed the same opinion (G. Turner, 2010: 5).
48 Marginalized or disinterested.
49 Definition of a social movement: “a group of people with a common ideology who try together to
achieve certain general goals” wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn
50 The Pew research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism provides a comprehensive list of
the tools of journalism in the digital age. http://www.journalism.org/resources/j_tools
51 Conversation is defined here as formal or informal dialogue between two or more people that may
or may not involve opposing points of view.
52 Live blogging includes first person accounts in the coverage of world events (Oliver, 2011). It
allows readers to witness the events, through the eyes of the reporter, as they happen. Alan Rusbridger
says the live blog is “influential media” since it allows users to incorporate multiple and diverse
sources of content, include links in and out and ultimately creates a lot of activity around the blog
53 Objectivity is explained in more detail in Chapter 7.
54 The full text of the University of Maryland’s Executive Summary: “Media Coverage of Weapons of
55 Salam Pax is known as the blogger who helped bring blogging to attention of the world. Beginning
September 2002, he used his blog, Where is Raed, to publish information about life in Iraq and the
Saddam Hussein regime (Gurak, Antonijevic et al., 2004).
56 The BBC provides information about its own modernised verification methods used for processing
user-generated content (Murray, 2011).
57 Carroll and Richardson’s work on credibility argues mainstream media “may want to adopt more of
the principles and techniques of blogging, including the practice of being transparent” (Carroll &
Richardson, 2011) See also the work of Rieh and Danielson on credibility (Rieh & Danielson, 2007)
pp. 141.
58 The concept of objectivity and other elements of journalism are defined and explained in the latter
part of this review.
The *Guardian* in London was the first major news organisation to adopt the practice of blogging (Carroll, 2004) pp. 344.

This is explained in more detail the context of each of the case studies in this research, Chapters 3–6.

The BBC outsources moderation to specialist moderation companies.

Hespos (2008: 141) describes advertisers’ economic business model (Push model) as one-way communication. He contends the dominant advertising model needs to change and argues for a “conversational” model of advertising.

Chris Anderson is an academic and has written extensively on Journalism. His research manifesto is here: http://journalismschool.wordpress.com/2011/03/11/the-things-that-tell-us-what-is-true-a-little-research-manifesto/

Topic page links are auto generated and therefore do not require human manipulation.

The “See Also” Blog is located here: http://www.BBC.co.uk/blogs/seealso/

BBC Strategy Review is located here: http://www.BBC.co.uk/BBCtrust/assets/files/pdf/review_report_research/strategic_review/strategy_review.pdf

Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery (2006: 9-12) provide data and analysis on the global measurement of UGC.

Following Castells, Van Dijck contends technology is mutually shaped by a range of “political, economic and social forces” (Van Dijck, 2011) This research aims to show how network technologies have affected the ways in which journalists interact with the social and political world.

Sambrook used his personal blog, Sacred Facts, to compile a list of some of the unproven claims.

In this instance technology is defined as *methods of organisation*.
Chapter 4  British Broadcasting Corporation

“We aim to engage everyone in the UK with impartial and accurate news and information. We will help to promote the public’s understanding of complex issues, which is fundamental to a functioning democracy. In order to achieve this, we must reach all sections of the population with services and programmes that offer trusted and authoritative insight in ways that engage people’s interest” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 38).

This chapter will examine the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) expansion from broadcasting to online, paying particular attention to how BBC News uses Web 2.0 technologies for the production of journalism to fulfil its obligations to the UK public, which ultimately encourages citizen engagement with public affairs.

Described as the world’s model public media organisation (Born, 2012: 120; Küng-Shankleman, 2000: 14), the BBC was created with a strong commitment to social responsibility to its UK and international publics. Georgina Born says that while the BBC was the first, “it remains the foremost public service broadcaster worldwide” (Born, 2012: 120). Its aims are to inform, educate, entertain (Crisell, 2002: 28) and build cohesive communities through creativity, knowledge, engagement and conversation. The BBC, first and foremost a broadcaster, produces a diversity of media products that include journalism, music and culture, drama and comedy, content for children, and events that bring the nation together (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010e). It produces a wide range of services in different formats on multiple platforms, including Radio, TV, Online and Satellite, to ensure it is inclusive of a diverse demographic. It aims to “provide ‘something for everyone’” (Crisell, 2002: 29) and “everything for someone” (Crisell, 2002: 29).

In response to the primary research question about the ways in which the public broadcaster has transitioned from its traditional broadcast-only news production processes and platforms to online news environments, this chapter will describe and analyse four key dimensions of BBC News journalism to show how its use of Web 2.0 technologies has transformed its capacity to provide the public with new
participatory and deliberative spaces. Each dimension focuses on particular characteristics and processes associated with using Web 2.0 technologies to produce news journalism in the context of a public service news media model.

As explained in Chapter 1, the news media models included in this study were selected based on the differences and similarities of each. In order to understand the strategies and activities of any organisation, it is essential first to discover its aims (what it wants to do) and objectives (how it will do it). Therefore, the first dimension of study is the BBC’s business model. This section will describe the corporation’s funding model and strategic direction, which includes showing how its publicly funded model is used to develop its capacity to practice high standards of social responsibility and a constant commitment to inclusiveness compared with other organisations. Revenue for BBC News is allocated for the production of news journalism and the research and development of the BBC’s professional practice and innovation. Uniquely, it also provides for the development of schemes that ensure members of the public are reasonably equipped with the skills required to navigate and engage with information in a range of digital public sphere

The second dimension of analysis focuses on the extent to which the BBC uses Web 2.0 technologies for the production and distribution of interactive/participatory news journalism. Viewed from the theoretical perspectives of journalism, public sphere, deliberation, citizenship and participation discussed in Chapter 2, it will identify, describe and analyse the transition of BBC News from a broadcast only platform to one that includes an online environment. The analysis will consider the ways in which the BBC approaches its role as a member of the Fourth Estate online. This will be assessed on the extent to which it uses digital technologies to create interactive and participatory spaces, thereby giving a diversity of publics the opportunity to engage, collaborate and deliberate with editorial staff and each other on matters of public interest.

The third dimension will describe the benefits of and challenges to BBC journalism arising as the result of its use of the new tools and technologies of journalism. This section describes the BBC’s approach to interactivity and networked journalism, incorporating discussion about crowdsourcing, the use of user-generated content, and
the range of interactive platforms developed by the BBC to provide the public with equality of access to a common domain for discussion and debate about topics that affect people’s ordinary lives. It then describes and analyses some of the tools of journalism emerging from Web 2.0 technologies, including a range of social media platforms, data mapping tools and VOIP technologies.

The fourth dimension will explain the implications of digital technologies on BBC news values, how it sets the agenda and how it establishes trust.

Finally, the chapter will draw conclusions about how BBC News defines the concept of citizen, and the impact of its use of inclusive and participatory technologies and practices on the democratisation of journalism. This provides a framework from which to compare and contrast the unique, uncharacteristic or common qualities (Livingstone, 2003: 483) of the BBC with the other cases of study included in this research.

The chapter triangulates data drawn from policy documents, regulations, research and news reports, all of which are publicly available, with theoretical literature and personal interviews carried out by the author in April 2008 with past and present BBC editors and journalists Richard Sambrook, Matthew Eltringham, Vicky Taylor and Kevin Anderson.

4.1 A Public Media Business Model

The BBC is charged with providing news services in accordance with the UK’s Royal Charter and the public service broadcasting framework. The Royal Charter sets out the aims of the BBC (see Appendix B), guarantees the corporation’s independence and provides the UK public with ‘the best possible value for money in return for the licence fee they pay’ (Vagg, Guest, & Reid, 2010: 2). The largest part of the BBC’s funding model consists of a television licence fee paid by each UK household. Other sources of income include advertising revenue generated from the international BBC Online community.
The BBC is managed by an Executive Board, which is responsible for delivering the organisation’s services, while the BBC Trust sets the corporation’s strategic direction and imposes measures to ensure that it upholds its values and functions as prescribed in the Royal Charter. Operating independently from the BBC Executive, the Trust develops policies and sets guidelines for the Corporation’s codes of conduct and practice. It develops the Corporation’s objectives and formally assesses proposals affecting its services as they arise. The BBC’s performance is reviewed by the Trust every five years to monitor and measure its progress, and to ensure it is meeting its aim to fulfill its public purposes. It also commissions independent research to investigate what the UK public wants and needs as part of its effort to ensure the BBC provides the right services for its licence fee payers (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013b). A Trust work plan is published at the beginning of every financial year to provide the public with an overview of the planned activities.  

The Trust also oversees the Corporation’s editorial guidelines, acting as an arbiter on complaints. In addition, it sets the BBC’s commercial operations, all of which are required to fit with the Corporation’s purpose, demonstrate commercial efficiency, uphold the BBC brand and avoid distorting the market (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013b). While the BBC is not permitted to show advertising or sponsorship in the UK (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010d), it can provide commercial advertisements to international audiences to offset the fact that those outside of the UK do not contribute licence fees. The decision to show international visitors commercial content was made in 2007 on the basis that the BBC’s global community should “support the costs of the international distribution of that content” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007b; Sambrook, 2008). This decision initially caused some concern that the standard of BBC journalism would be compromised, if not reduced to a spectacle, in the interest of meeting the needs of advertisers (Standage et al., 2011). However, in keeping with its national policy of independence and impartiality, the organisation assured the international community that advertising would not “have any bearing on the news, information or programme content or create the impression of endorsement by the BBC” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010f). Stories carrying advertisements for international readers are exactly the same as those without advertisements inside the UK, “the journalism is
the same public service you get whether inside or outside of Britain” (Sambrook, 2008).

The unique nature of the BBC as a directly publicly funded and totally independent enterprise means it is not compelled to put advertising interests ahead of editorial values, which therefore enables its journalism to maintain its fundamental role in British democracy. BBC journalism aims to:

• Provide accurate, impartial and balanced coverage of news and current affairs to assist the public in making informed choices;

• Report the proceedings of the political process in the UK and internationally; and

• Stimulate the public debate on a range of social, political and other current affairs issues (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 2), (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007a).

**Equality of Access**

The BBC is legally obligated to ensure equality of access as a means to comprehensively serve the UK public interest. Paddy Scannell describes this “principle of universal availability” (Scannell, 1989: 137) as a shared quality of public broadcasting which he describes as “a public good that has unobtrusively contributed to the democratization of everyday life, in public and private contexts, from its beginning through to today” (Scannell, 1989: 136). BBC Interactivity editor Vicky Taylor says, “journalism has a big role to play in making democracy open to everybody” (Taylor, 2008). In keeping with this obligation, the BBC creates and hosts a variety of interactive and deliberative environments that are accessible to all licence holders. Ordinarily, news media institutions do not consider finding solutions to these kinds of problems as part of their remit, however for the BBC it is a fundamental obligation.

One of its earliest attempts to address this issue was the creation of an online community space, iCan, where people were invited to engage with others on agenda topics of their own choice (Taylor, 2008). Wired reporter, Kari Lynn Dean, saw this BBC initiative as a way of mobilising people to actively engage with their communities and as a way for individuals to draw the attention of government
officials to their personal concerns about everyday life in their communities, such as “maternity rights, street cleaning and bicycle lanes” (Dean, 2003). At the time, Dean saw the potential for the issues raised by residents on iCan to develop into grassroots campaigns, which might then be widely debated in the national news media and ultimately lead to national legislation (Dean, 2003).

However, there was some concern about the BBC’s desire to ensure the topics of discussion were positioned around local rather than international issues, especially since international topics have the potential to elicit diverse political viewpoints. For example, at that time the impending war in Iraq was generating a lot of political debate as the country considered its role in the “coalition of the willing” (Schifferes, 2003). The BBC could not and did not want to be seen to be mobilising support for one ideological perspective over another. However, Headshift’s Lee Bryant held a different view to the idea of keeping it local, arguing “in the age of globalisation and interdependence” (Bryant, 2003) the issues explored by iCan should include international topics.

There were also questions raised about the ethics of using public money to subsidise what may be perceived as “online advocacy” (Bryant, 2003), however while this was an acknowledged “grey area” (Bryant, 2003) Bryant believed that if iCan could help people to navigate the Web, then it would be a beneficial public service.

The BBC’s role in familiarising and teaching the public what it needed to know to effectively use Web 2.0 technologies shows a much more comprehensive approach to social inclusion and participatory communication than simply constructing a website and filling it with information. It exemplifies the organisation’s understanding that those without access to the necessary online communication skills are at risk of exclusion from important cultural elements of society (Kreisler, 2001: 6; Meikle, 2003).

The need for the BBC to continue its efforts to reduce the barriers preventing people from using the Internet as a channel for engagement with news was reiterated in 2005 when its own research identified media literacy problems that limited and/or prevented people’s civic participation (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004) and
again in a 2006 Ofcom (UK Office of Communication) report that identified the need to boost the levels of digital media literacy in the UK (Ofcom Media, 2006: 4). The BBC is now firmly tasked with helping audiences critically engage with media and, where possible, help them “respond and interact with it” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007c: 1). While the iCan project has run its course, a more contemporary example of its education programs about modern technology is BBC Click, which provides its audience with a wide range of information that helps individuals to understand and effectively navigate the World Wide Web and mobile digital platforms.

Research and Development

Research and development activities within the organisation are constitutional requirements of the “Royal Charter and by the legal agreement between the BBC and the government” (2013a). BBC Online is guided by continuing research and development into innovative ways to engage citizens with public affairs, covering both organisational and professional spheres of development.

At the organisational level, it has implemented a number of initiatives, including the creation of a new audience community called Global Minds, which has been operational since 2009. This initiative aims to provide editors with a more in-depth understanding of the diversity of the global audience. The global community, which encompasses audience members of multiple news services such as BBC World News, the BBC World Service, and BBC Online, is invited to provide feedback on ways to improve BBC news services, new programme ideas, and current programmes and web pages. The initiative provides platforms such as a blog and comment forums for participants to express their views directly to editorial teams and “help shape the BBC’s output” (Watkinson, 2009). It guarantees participants:

“You’ll be able to take part in fun and innovative ways to review our programmes and web pages, chat directly with our editors, programme makers and commissioners in our community, as well as meeting and interacting with other BBC news consumers from across the world. You’ll also get previews of BBC material, and the chance to submit
questions for our interview and debate programmes, as well as read exclusive blogs from our editorial teams” (Watkinson, 2009).

In addition, the Global Minds team sends regular newsletters to participants providing updates on what they have learnt from the participant community. This initiative is an example of the BBC’s inclusiveness of public needs and opinion, and of its flexibility in setting program agendas. It exemplifies one of the ways in which it attempts to build strong relationships with the audience. It also shows that the BBC tries to find the most innovative and effective ways to frame and contextualise what Conboy refers to as “genuine public issues” (Conboy, 2006 as cited in Hampton 2009: 8). Moreover, it assists with the production of better-targeted and more skilful journalism, which therefore improves its accessibility to the broader audience.

From a professional practice perspective, the BBC College of Journalism (CoJo) is part of the framework that ensures the BBC maintains its uniform commitment to quality. Following the Hutton Inquiry and Neil report, BBC journalism was found to have an imbalance between the vocational and policy elements of its journalism education program. Up to this time, the BBC’s professional development program concentrated more on practical skills such as teaching journalists how to edit audio and video, with less emphasis on the editorial values, standards and principles needed to support the editorial judgments and decisions journalists were required to make in a range of very complex environments, such as the Middle East or European politics (Sambrook, 2008). Following the recommendations from each of the inquiries into BBC journalism, much of the organisation’s education program now focuses on editorial policy including law and ethics, and to a lesser degree on practical training. The program is comprised of face-to-face workshops, and a series of online modules presented by high-level editors and correspondents, which provide busy staff members with the flexibility to complete the modules via their desktops at anytime. Sambrook says, “We put as much effort into making one of those training modules as we would into our output”, which he says, “is how you get the staff engaged and interested” (Sambrook, 2008).

Additionally, once every year the BBC offers a limited number of its senior journalists the opportunity to undertake Journalism Fellowships at the University of
Michigan and Reuters at Oxford. The BBC sees the four-month research placements as a way for its journalists to develop “a broader perspective, nurture intellectual growth, and inspire personal transformation” (Baker, 2013). Furthermore, it is part of the BBC’s strategy to ensure that all aspects of BBC journalism remain at the cutting edge of discussion and debate about journalism.

CoJo also regularly holds “Analysis and Research” briefings that provide its editors and journalists with key points of information on hot topic issues, such as the Middle East and the Global Economic Crisis. Guest speakers, from both inside and outside of the BBC, are invited to present their field of expertise, providing staff with a diversity of important background information. This practice demonstrates BBC journalism’s commitment to providing authoritative and accurate accounts of news and events (as described by Bender et al. (Bender et al., 2009: 5)) since it serves to equip journalists with the information they require to critically analyse information, to identify propaganda and to uncover the truth in a fast paced digital news environment. Kovach and Rosenstiel stress that it is an important requirement of the verification process that journalists are equipped with the intellect that enables them to test the “veracity and coherence” of “purported facts” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) when evaluating information. News briefings such as those provided by the BBC help journalists to avoid unquestioning acceptance of information from journalism’s traditional sources that may lead to manipulation and unnecessary conflict (McChesney, 2011).

The Primary Role of BBC Journalism

The role of BBC journalism is to “shine light on what is happening” (Taylor, 2008) to stimulate the public debate on a range of social and political current affairs (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007c). Taylor says that while the newsroom is not responsible for whether individuals vote, it does have an obligation to provide the public with information and a depth of knowledge about public interest issues, presented in an interesting way. As such, BBC journalism aims to reflect knowledge arising from individuals’ personal experience for the purpose of helping the public learn what others think, thereby providing them with the opportunity to develop a broader view of the world (Taylor, 2008). This resolves with theorists who argue that people develop and understand their personal and collective identity through
their relationships with others, an important facet of deliberative democracy (Gimmler, 2001: 24; Mansbridge, 1999: 47; Rosenstiel, 2009a). In keeping with the theoretical perspectives of the Fourth Estate, which view news media as a watchdog that monitors government activities in the interest of the public (Hampton, 2009: 4), Taylor says the more information people have to back up their thoughts, the better equipped they are to question people in authority (Taylor, 2008).

The BBC’s public purpose and its journalistic aim to stimulate the public debate in interesting and engaging ways have remained constant since its earliest beginnings (Born, 2004). The use of Web 2.0 technologies has added new opportunities for news producers to innovate, create and discover new interactive methods of fostering citizen engagement with the diversity and complexity of social, political and economic aspects of day-to-day issues and events.

**Broadcast News: Transition Online**

“Online journalism is still journalism; it’s not a different thing that we have created” (Taylor, 2008).

Described as the BBC’s “third medium” (Highfield, 2006), the online environment has become an “essential resource” (Highfield, 2006) in the organisation’s mission to provide UK licence fee payers with an engaging, interactive and participatory public service. In keeping with its remit “to bring the UK to the world and the world to the UK” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013c) the BBC provides worldwide access to its network of multi-media platforms, where it brings continuous news about “major international issues to the attention of broad audience” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013c). *BBC News* uses the online environment—*BBC Online*—to provide the world with a global news service to contextualise what is important to the UK, and to increase the UK public’s knowledge about the events and issues important to other societies in the world, thereby broadening the UK’s exposure to different national cultures, and vice versa (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013c). The website receives ten million visitors every week, making it the most popular news site in the UK, with 60–70 percent of its visitors coming from within the UK. Approximately 500 stories are covered on the website everyday, 100 of which are video stories while the remaining 400 are text (S. Herrmann, 2012b).
The BBC’s Director of Future Media Ralph Rivera describes the convergence of broadcast and online as a constantly evolving process, which thus far has been defined by three distinct phases. Phase one was the launch of the online environment in December 1997 to market BBC television programs.\(^{84}\) The second phase saw it putting what was on television, online; then the third phase used online to provide an extension of what was happening on television. Finally, Rivera anticipates the BBC will eventually become “natively online” (Rivera, 2011).

![Diagram showing the convergence of broadcast and online](image)

**Figure 4.1.** An interpretation of the convergence of broadcast and online as described by BBC Director Future Media Ralph Rivera.

*BBC* Online began with a team dedicated to working on Internet initiatives, one that worked separately from its radio and television newsrooms. Originally a read-only site, by 2001 it had relaunched as *BBCi* to reflect the interactive services it provided, “bringing together *BBC* Online, *BBC* text and *BBC* Interactive under a single identity” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2001). The interactive services offered in 2001 enabled users to interact with *some* digital television programs to gain “on screen information and links about the programme, as well as the latest news, weather and sport” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2001). The success of this initiative was an indication that the use of digital environments had the capacity to increase and enhance the organisation’s efforts to interact with audiences. With that in mind, it began developing its use of a diversity of media communication channels, such as message boards, chat rooms, live forums (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2001), blogs, consumer content creation (2013a: 9), and most recently social media.
Each online channel of communication provides culturally diverse publics with a choice of deliberative spaces where individuals are free to engage with the wide-ranging opinions of others through dialogue. While the BBC is aware that its entire audience does not have the motivation to actively participate in all of its online initiatives, these channels of communication are deployed to encourage people to harness engagement with public affairs.85

By 2006, a significant culture shift brought about by the new online environment, and shaped by the rapid and popular uptake of social sites such as Flickr, YouTube and Second Life, left the BBC in no doubt that the public, no longer a passive audience, was well on its way to taking control of creating content. Equipped with this knowledge, the BBC adapted its service to try to incorporate ideas that enabled it to “reach beyond traditional [broadcast] audiences” (Highfield, 2006). Following almost ten years of successful online initiatives, it integrated its television, radio and online services and ran them in the one place, thereby replacing three separate news desks with one (Sambrook, 2008). This restructure would solidify the foundations for the BBC to continue its move forward into the online environment (S. Herrmann, 2012a).

In addition to joining the newsrooms in one location, the leadership and structure of daily operations also changed. Before the restructure, each newsroom, television, radio and online, would hold their own editorial meetings, of which there were many, and each kept the proceedings undisclosed from the other newsrooms because each platform was to some extent competing with the other. The move to co-location brought with it a new meeting regime, which comprised of an additional meeting in the morning, led by the Head of Global News, that included all of the key editors, and required everyone to participate in the discussions, and to share information (S. Herrmann, 2012a). The key objectives of this amalgamation were to encourage the “trade and transfer of skills and of editorial agenda”, to “integrate the Internet into the main newsrooms”, and to create “a multimedia news room under one common editorial framework and oversight” (Sambrook, 2008).

Herrmann said the new structure required platforms to swap skills and skill building practices, attachments, secondments and training programs (S. Herrmann, 2012a). A
new position was created for one “editor-in-chief of the day” (Sambrook, 2008) across radio, television and online, instead of the previous three, who sometimes took different views about priorities. The duties of this position were fulfilled by each of the output editors86 who were required to take responsibility for the whole newsroom on a daily rotational basis, which meant they had to make decisions about programs; stories, which ones to run, assess the associated risks, the running order, and follow their progress; ensure BBC standards were maintained; and deal with the talent, presenters and others in the BBC hierarchy (Marsh, 2006). The idea to rotate the editors negated any concerns that replacement of three editorial viewpoints with one would narrow the perspective of BBC News. Instead, the restructure resulted in better co-ordination rather than homogeneity (S. Herrmann, 2012a). The change at this time required an ample supply of multi-media skills in the newsroom, some of which already existed and some of which would be developed with time (Sambrook, 2008).

**BBC Newsroom Workflow**

Figure 4.2 shows the early incorporation of the online production team into the BBC newsroom workflow. The process began with a news agenda set by editors who then allocated stories to various news gathering teams, which included television and radio crews, foreign correspondents and specialist reporters. Content was gathered on the selected issues and events and distributed to radio and television production teams. This content then flowed through to the appropriate broadcast channels and to the Interactive team, which reproduced the content for the online site, bbc.co.uk/news
In 2008, the BBC remodelled its newsroom to better accommodate the changed news production workflow. The new multimedia newsroom converged the new online with the traditional television and radio newsgathering teams. The convergence of multiple media platforms into the one area aimed to provide a more efficient and productive way of gathering, packaging and presenting news. Where the Interactivity team was originally included as an add-on to the end of the workflow, the new arrangement saw it feed the traditional broadcast teams with editorialised user-generated content (see Figure 4.3), which indicates that it had become a valuable and integral part of the news production process.

![Diagram](image.png)
Figure 4.3. The workflow of the multimedia newsroom incorporating the News Interactive team at the start of the news production process.

**Editorial Values**

*BBC* journalism is founded on five key values, each consistent with normative theories of journalism: truth and accuracy; to serve the public interest; to ensure impartiality and a diversity of opinion; to remain independent; and to be accountable (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 10). Steve Herrmann attributes the success of *BBC* news to its journalism pedigree and to the considerable resources it has access to (S. Herrmann, 2012b). News is delivered through two divisions: *BBC* News (national and global services) and *BBC* Nations & Regions (local and regional services). With news bureaux in 41 countries (Van Klaveren), the *BBC* is not reliant on external agencies for reports, which allows the news provider to contextualise events and issues with a unique and authoritative voice.
The use of interactive and participatory tools and technologies of journalism provides for a more social style and practice of news reporting. In 2012, Herrmann told an Online News Association conference that he believed the newsroom’s use of citizen-produced content served to strengthen its journalism (S. Herrmann, 2012b). BBC News is, in part, guided by information and content it receives from the audience when setting its news agenda. The newsroom gets a sense of what people are most interested in, and the most popular debates, by looking at the wide range of viewpoints contributed by the public (Taylor, 2008). Sambrook (2008) qualifies this by saying that it sometimes happens that the biggest and most important issue is not necessarily the story that generates the most public interest, and where this occurs he emphasises that that does not cause the BBC to back away from it. He says the BBC has an obligation as a publicly funded organisation to identify, present and explain the important and significant issues (those that “form the shared basis for political conversation and broad social relations” (Benkler, 2006: 29)) in an interesting way, even where it may not have registered with the public as a popular topic. The BBC’s approach to journalism distinguishes it from other sources of news, in that it aims to understand audience interest but is not led by it (Sambrook, 2008). In this vein, BBC News is not cluttered with, or dominated by, the latest celebrity saga. With that said, it treats absolutely everything it intends to publish with the same journalistic rigour, “we ask the right questions, we check that pictures are not already out there on the wires, and we never take things on face value” (Taylor, 2008). 89

The public broadcaster now engages in a wide range of collaborative processes with the audience, which includes the incorporation of citizen produced content, comment and sometimes crowdsourced analysis, therefore editors are acutely aware of the need for rigorous methods of verification, comment moderation, filtering, screening and editing, and finally the importance of the professional production skills required to convert raw content into interesting and contextualised content (Taylor, 2008).

While there is little doubt about the value of the Web to facilitate interactive relationships between news organisations and the public for the production of journalism (Jarvis, 2010), many news organisations, including the BBC, have identified the numerous complexities it introduces. Moreover, as both Herrmann and Dahlgren point out, different newsrooms use particular technologies in different
ways, and their approach is predominantly determined by the aims and objectives of particular newsrooms (P. Dahlgren, 1996: 60; S. Herrmann, 2012b), which corresponds with the aim of this thesis to show a range of different approaches by different models of news media.

As this chapter has so far described, by 2008 the BBC had already made a significant effort to adapt to, evolve with, and develop its journalism, using the tools and technologies of the Internet, with consistent focus on public needs. In 2008, Sambrook observed a considerable amount of apprehensiveness amongst some editors in key news organisations about using Web 2.0 tools and technologies for journalism, even though these had already begun to have an impact on the broader business, cultural and practical elements of journalism. At about the same time, Philip Meyer warned it was now more important than ever before for news organisations to realise the value of Web 2.0 technologies to their role as news providers. Further, the use of the Web provides newsrooms with greater scope to access a wider network of sources of information, which includes the public, to help them filter and verify content. This practice ultimately has the capacity to improve their journalism and enhance their relationship with the community (P. Meyer, 2008).

4.2 Technologies of Journalism: New Participatory and Deliberative Spaces

The use of Web 2.0 technologies is transforming traditional journalism into a much more interactive and networked practice than in the past. In 2008, Richard Sambrook identified four distinct ways in which the BBC’s use of Web 2.0 technologies had already changed the technologies of journalism in the newsroom. First, he noted that even though BBC journalism had always been inclusive of the audience, Web 2.0 technologies had thus far provided the newsroom with more tools and greater scope to develop new techniques and opportunities to expand its connection with more of the audience. The use of digital technologies created more opportunities for BBC News to reflect the public’s shared experiences across multiple platforms.
Then, while much of the traditional news media continued to cling to the view that news organisations ought to be the gatekeepers of information and that audiences were passive, Sambrook said that *BBC News* was acutely aware that audiences sought active engagement, and that there would always be people outside of the newsroom who knew more about particular topics than journalists. In this vein, the *BBC* comfortably recognised the value of using online news platforms to harness and share audience knowledge and opinion.

Thirdly, he said the Web had provided the newsroom with a new environment for breaking news, and finally, he said it had fundamentally assisted and enhanced the practice and progress of networked journalism (Sambrook, 2008). The *BBC* was, at that time, well on its way to incorporating a wide range of Web 2.0 tools and technologies into the ways in which it gathered information, and produced and distributed journalism.

**Networked Journalism**

“Some people think audience input only matters when there is a big event such as the London bombings or the 2004 Tsunami, however that is absolutely not what happens” (Taylor, 2008).

*BBC News* encourages audience engagement with all of its services and participation on all of its platforms. As described in Chapter 3, networked journalism manifests as the convergence of traditional with digital tools and technologies of journalism. This better equips the newsroom for the formation of partnerships and collaborations between professional, independent and citizen informants.

Sambrook describes the practice of networked journalism as the “sharing of expertise” (Sambrook, 2008). In 2008, he observed that the wider profession was yet to broadly adopt the idea of networked journalism, however he expected it would become general practice in the future. The terms interactivity and networked journalism are now increasingly used in discussions about journalism.
Chapters 1 and 2 identified the cultural shift that has occurred in the domain of news journalism and how that has affected the way that news organisations, and society more generally, think about the role of the public in the news process. The realisation that news media are no longer the gatekeepers of information and the public is no longer a passive audience may have arrived a little earlier for the BBC than some other organisations. As it happens, the qualities and competencies of Web 2.0 technologies align well with the BBC’s strategies to fulfil the requirements of its Charter. While BBC News has always understood the value of being open and inclusive of a diversity of opinion and expertise, its use of Web 2.0 technologies now allows interactivity to happen on “an exponentially greater scale” (Sambrook, 2008).

From the earliest beginnings of the BBC’s use of Web 2.0 technologies, the organisation tasked itself with finding, developing and applying the tools and technologies that would help its journalists reach out to the public through the digital environment. Considering this as one of its most important undertakings in the digital era, Sambrook said provided it was done right, the application of Web 2.0 technologies to journalism practice would “only improve the quality of BBC journalism” (Sambrook, 2008).

The BBC uses multiple methods to gather news and generate conversations that are in the public interest. Taylor says it works continuously, compiling case studies, sorting, verifying and cataloguing, to find, monitor and present ordinary stories, not only those that are internationally well-known, but also everyday local stories (Taylor, 2008). Using a range of platforms, it informs the public that it is investigating a particular topic or issue and appeals to individuals to share their experiences and thoughts. For example, a story of the day at the BBC might be about the National Health Service (NHS); people may feel the service is not adequate for their needs. Or they may feel the banks are not treating them well; perhaps they cannot get a mortgage. In the past, journalists would have phoned media groups, charities, Non-Government Organisations (NGO’s) and banking organisations to build case studies on these issues (Taylor, 2008). Now, using a range of Web 2.0 technologies to create multiple entry points to a diversity of conversations in a variety of online spaces, the BBC encourages the public to use these tools to communicate with each other and with journalists, thereby drawing out a wide range
of ideas and opinion. Taylor says these methods provide for a much more authentic case study, “one that is not mediated by private interests” (Taylor, 2008).

*BBC News* has thousands of case studies on a variety of issues that it can continually build and draw from. It maintains a database that holds all audience contacts, expertise, and experience, which is used in the production of stories and programs (Sambrook, 2008). Once a relationship is established between the *BBC* and individual members of the public, through interviews or content creation, most people are happy to allow journalists to follow up on their situation and they are generally much more open (Eltringham, 2008). While the Internet presents many opportunities for more open relationships between journalists and the public, *BBC* journalists do not accept information at face value. The need to apply professional journalistic processes and standards to the production of news remains as important now as it was in the past (Sambrook, 2008).

The *BBC* often sources information from external specialist blogs. Where a blog presents particular information of interest to the *BBC*, the journalist will contact the blogger and, as part of the news gathering process, will verify the author’s sources. The blog may be incorporated into the story or the blogger may be asked to write something for the *BBC*. Specialist blogs in places where the *BBC* does not have expertise on the ground, such as Burma or Zimbabwe, provide the greatest value to the news service. *BBC* News specialists provide the newsroom with advice about which expert blogs are valuable and reliable for collaboration (Eltringham, 2008).

The Internet adds a further dimension to newsgathering where it enables journalists to circumvent political protocols that limit access to information. Before the availability of Web 2.0 technologies, journalists were largely dependent upon official military and government channels for information about wars. The method used by journalists to access information about the war in Iraq followed traditional routines until a *BBC* News team, frustrated by the limitations of these, took a different and modernised approach to gathering information. Kevin Anderson, a former *BBC* journalist, recalled the difficulties that all reporters experienced as they attempted to gain access to the soldiers in Iraq. News organisations were required to go through the official channels controlled by the Pentagon, which was often complicated and
time consuming. Frustrated by these restrictions, the BBC news team took a step outside of the traditional boundaries defined for war reportage, and referred instead to the technologies of the Web to find different ways to access the information the public needed to know about the war. Given that the capacities of interactive Web technologies were still in the early stages of being realised, the idea that soldiers in Iraq would use personal blogs, and then the idea to search the network of blogs for them, then search the pages of the blogs for email addresses, was for that time, innovative. For this particular news team, their efforts were successful when they managed to make direct contact with three soldiers serving at the centre of the international military presence in Baghdad, a place known as the Green Zone. They made arrangements with the soldiers to interview them live for a BBC World Service broadcast (K. Anderson, 2008).

When the program finished, producers of another BBC news program expressed their surprise that this team had gotten unprecedented access, moreover to hear how they got it, “we emailed them; we found their email addresses on their blogs and that was all there was to it” (K. Anderson, 2008). Kevin Anderson described this kind of reporting as “first person, experiential, on the ground context” (K. Anderson, 2008). The soldiers in the Green Zone ran personal blogs simply as a way to stay in touch with their families and friends at home. They were not trying to establish themselves as citizen journalists, instead they used the blog platform to provide their loved ones with regular updates on what was happening to them—simple things like what they had for dinner—and to provide reassurances of their safety. When established news media discovered their blogs, journalists were able to filter, evaluate and produce gathered information, and help the soldiers to share their first person experiences of the war in real time with the BBC’s international audience.

While the practice of using blogs to find contact details and other information has since evolved to become a commonplace approach to newsgathering, in 2006 it was considered innovative. At the time, it challenged both the dominant professional practice of journalism, and its political and social order. Following Castells’ assertion that technology is mutually shaped by a range of social and political forces (Van Dijck, 2011: 344), the methods described by Anderson served to reshape the tools, technologies and politics of journalism. Moreover, it exemplifies Bardoel and
Deuze’s description of “the convergence between the core competences and functions of journalists and the civic potential of online journalism” (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001: 2). Anderson said BBC journalists took the same approach with dissident journalists in Iran, cyber dissidents in China, and with people who were rushing to provide relief services after the earthquake in Kashmir. He said there was a misconception at the time that access to Web 2.0 technology was largely confined to the developed world, that it was not in general use in Africa or the remote parts of Asia, for example. He said, his experience showed that was not true (K. Anderson, 2008). For Anderson, the use of Web 2.0 technologies to report the news of the world simply “adds another layer of richness over the top of what is still very much traditional journalism” (K. Anderson, 2008). Journalists still have to verify all of their sources, ensure they are not being fed information to serve factional interests, and to abide by the traditional ethics of journalism.

The BBC receives a lot of emails, videos and still pictures of news events that people have witnessed and wish to share (Sambrook, 2008). The Internet has opened up global channels of communication, not only for people who are experiencing the huge news events, but also the people who are right at the centre of something happening to them. Like Anderson, Taylor and Sambrook agree that the content generated through these channels gives news reports a deeper representation of personal experience (K. Anderson, 2008; Sambrook, 2008) and it is much more direct than traditional methods of gathering information (Taylor, 2008). Where in the past reporters could only follow-up on a few letters from the public, the BBC now interacts instantly with thousands of contributors every day. Consistent with McQuail’s (2008: 52) emphasis on the importance for news media to connect people on the basis of their shared experience, Sambrook (2008) says the use of Internet technology means people can now see more of their experiences being reflected in BBC programs than ever before.

**New Tools and Technologies of Journalism to Share Opinion**

BBC Online enables the public to share opinion via the BBC blog network, the Have Your Say program and message boards. More recently, this practice has expanded to platforms external to the BBC, including Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Flickr and
*YouTube. BBC News* incorporates and reflects comment and opinion expressed in these platforms within its news programs.

The program *World Have Your Say* takes a topic and actively canvasses its global audience around that subject. Some news organisations have reservations about such practices because they are worried about the expression of public opinion. However, the principle of this practice is no different to a radio phone-in program, since it allows the public to express opinions about the news within a particular framework, and the same can be true of blogs (Sambrook, 2008). “I don’t think there is anything new about that, but the technology enables it to happen in new ways” (Sambrook, 2008).

Television and radio news programs can now ask audiences to participate in the interview process by asking them to send the questions they want answered by those in authority directly to the person producing the interview. While the political interview has long been a site of contention in debates about journalism practice (Schudson, 2006), the *BBC* technique provides the public with an opportunity to directly challenge those in authority (Taylor, 2008). Schudson argues that journalists, in their quest to uphold the notion of objectivity, are sometimes accused of bias and being fixated on conflict. They are also blamed for representing politicians and politics from a cynical perspective (Keating, 2012). Moreover, bias and conflict are seen to have the capacity to contribute to public disengagement with public affairs. The *BBC*’s interactive approach to interviews has the facility to reduce the common perceptions of political bias, cynicism and conflict generated by many political interviews (Schudson, 2006). It is a way of gathering more information than it may otherwise have obtained through traditional channels. As a complement to the traditional interview process, it provides refined detail about what is important to members of the community (Niles, 2007). Now routinely used in the day-to-day practice of newsgathering, Taylor says, “people no longer accept the old fashioned method where the presenter asks questions, and what they say is what you get” (Taylor, 2008).
Creating a New Environment for Breaking News

News can now be uncovered and broken by any one of the many independent news sites in the new online-networked environment. Using the same principles and values of traditional newsgathering, the BBC reports those stories in the same way that it reports traditional sources of news (Sambrook, 2008). Taylor says, because of this, things cannot be hidden from the public anymore. The Internet opens the window to what is happening in the world. Authentic stories from individuals from Zimbabwe, or Iraq, or wherever it may be, tell us what is really happening (Taylor, 2008).

The same applies on a local scale. For example, a story about a UK supermarket selling contaminated fuel was quickly brought to the attention of the general public via the BBC’s online community (Taylor, 2008). While a story such as this may have traditionally taken days to come to the public’s attention, the use of Internet technology, crowdsourcing techniques and traditional methods of journalistic investigation combined to enable the BBC to quickly identify the source and location of contaminated fuel.

The contaminated fuel story began when members of the public began to email the BBC with reports that their cars were breaking down after refuelling at a particular service station. The number of emails received prompted the news service to post an article on its website asking: “Has your car been affected” (Taylor, 2008). Within thirty minutes, the BBC received two hundred emails in response to the question, and so it began to deepen its investigation (Taylor, 2008). Reporters telephoned Tesco, which initially denied all knowledge of the complaints, and refuted the claims. When the BBC was eventually in receipt of thousands of emails, all of which were isolated to a specific geographic location, the overwhelming evidence sent the BBC back to Tesco, which then conceded: “Ah yes, there is contamination in some of the fuel in that part of the country” (Taylor, 2008). This example shows it is now much more difficult for stories to go underground (Taylor, 2008) and illustrates that the BBC’s uses of the new tools and technologies of journalism enhances its ability to fulfil its role as the Fourth Estate.
Crowdsourcing

The *BBC* used crowdsourcing techniques during the 2004 US presidential election campaign to engage national and international audiences with its coverage and to discover the issues that were of most concern to everybody. It began by asking radio listeners what they wanted to know about the US election. Then, taking Surowiecki’s “grass roots approach” (Surowiecki, 2005), its US correspondents spent five days travelling by road across America talking face-to-face with members of the public about what was important to them. The information gleaned was used to produce daily webcasts addressing a range of location specific issues (K. Anderson, 2008).

The significance of this method was threefold. First, it moved away from the traditional journalistic practice that primarily sourced information from authoritative institutions such as government, non-government and business. Second, listening to the concerns of individuals gave journalists a better idea and understanding of what the real issues were, enabled them to better contextualise stories, and to make them more relevant and accessible to the broader audience. Finally, the online daily distribution of news content meant information could be instantly shared with the world, and it enabled citizens across the US to consider the similarities and differences between their individual life experience and the experiences of others.

This example illustrates how the *BBC*’s use of Web 2.0 based tools and technologies with traditional methods of journalism during its coverage of the US election campaign, created a structure in which individuals could raise issues and consider their life experience of a range of political principles that have the capacity to either serve or weaken their individual and community interests (Van Dijck, 2011: 344).

The *BBC* used crowdsourcing techniques on a large scale again in 2009 when it was discovered that some Members of the UK Parliament had misused their parliamentary expense accounts. The *BBC* drew on the collective intelligence of the UK constituencies to review and analyse the vast number of documents pertaining to MP expense claims. The *BBC* coverage began with a story on the main news website, *news.bbc.co.uk*, entitled “MPs’ Expenses Made Public Online”. The article reported that following a lengthy Freedom of Information (FOI) application, all expense claims made by every British MP in the past four years would be published for all constituents to see and analyse. The publication of vast amounts of information was not possible prior to the availability of, and access to, Web 2.0
technologies. Some details on the claims, such as addresses, were blacked out where they were likely to impact on privacy and security. At the time of publication, several MPs had already either stepped down from their positions or agreed to repay their debt.

The BBC created a number of entry points to the task, encouraging everyone who wanted to participate to do so. It created multiple online news articles and broadcast reports on the topic, encouraged citizens to engage with comment forums, and enabled email interaction between editors and citizens. Overall, the collective of participatory sites generated a broad range of responses to an array of complex issues.91

**Interactivity and User-generated Content**

When BBC Online began, journalists were initially sceptical about the value of the untried platform for news.92 As the advantages and complexities of producing and distributing news in this environment became clearer, attitudes changed (Eltringham, 2008). More specifically, as the interactive capacities of online journalism were realised the platform became crucial to the BBC’s purpose. By 2008, it was well established that the public had become active participants in the news, “without them we couldn’t do what we do” (Taylor, 2008). At this time, there were significantly fewer people participating in the various interactive activities than there were reading, however, by 2012 a BBC study found that participation in the UK digital environment had become a mainstream activity with over three quarters of the online public being active. Participation comprised of discussions about general topics and what people saw on television, and photo sharing (Goodier, 2012).

Helen Boaden says the BBC uses “citizen newsgathering” to enhance traditional news journalism, “Our journalism is now fully embracing the experiences of our audiences, sharing their stories, using their knowledge and hosting their opinions; we're acting as a conduit between different parts of our audience; and we're being more open and transparent than we have ever been” (Boaden, 2008).

The BBC has a specific team of journalists who are responsible for managing the conversation between the BBC and the audience. The Interactivity team host
conversations via message boards and services, such as *Have Your Say*, which generate questions to encourage people to talk about their experience of the world. Using the website facilities and email, the public is encouraged to send in the content they have produced showing the events they have witnessed or been involved in. Some of these events have included the social unrest in Tibet and Gaza, and the London bombings (Eltringham, 2008).

Most people contact the BBC because they have been *invited* to send content (Eltringham, 2008). “Overwhelmingly, about 98 per cent of the content comes in because we’ve asked for it; only a very small proportion comes in unsolicited” (Eltringham, 2008). When the BBC asks for content, a high proportion of the audience responds. “People want to share their story and talk about their experiences” (Eltringham, 2008). Eltringham says, given the BBC’s global reach and reputation, “What better platform is there to share your experiences with, than the BBC” (Eltringham, 2008). The BBC has an international reputation that people respond to, so when social and political conflicts in places such as Burma, Kenya and Zimbabwe arise, the people in these remote locations want to get their story out. They want to tell the world what is happening to them (Eltringham, 2008). Moreover, the traffic to the BBC News online increases dramatically during times of crisis, which shows the ongoing demand for authoritative news coverage by traditional news organisations (Doucet, 2012).

The BBC receives a diverse range of user-generated content, however it does not publish raw content, but rather it publishes “editorialized user-generated content” (Highfield, 2006). Shirky describes the combination of raw content with “editorial finesse” (Shirky, 2009) for the purpose of contextualising/storifying/editorialising the content for a mass audience, as pro-am journalism. The BBC “never publishes or broadcasts anything without knowing for sure that it is true” (Eltringham, 2008). The interactivity team applies a rigorous verification process to all of the incoming user-generated content, case-by-case, to ensure the contributors are in fact who they say they are, and that the content is authentic and relevant. When the content is verified, it can be used across all of the organisation’s news platforms. Eltringham says the Hub can produce almost any kind of user-generated content, from events captured with a mobile phone, to witness accounts whereby contributors may be asked to talk
over video footage or a series of stills to explain what is happening (Eltringham, 2008). In instances where content shows particularly dramatic or newsworthy events, contributors may be asked for an interview, pre-recorded or live, with *World Television* or domestic television and radio. Finally, when the interactivity team has produced the content, it is offered to programs where it may be used in a package or sequence (Eltringham, 2008).

The *BBC* takes a number of things into consideration before deciding whether to include members of the public in its programs. For example, in places of political unrest there are issues such as whether sources or informants feel their lives may be at risk as a result of their participation, the participant may prefer to use an anonymised name, and, the *BBC* can establish that the participant is “absolutely genuine” (Eltringham, 2008). Eltringham says, “this new relationship [with the public] raises many questions about trust and verification and new questions of impartiality, independence and the public interest” (Eltringham, 2008).

The inclusion of user-generated content is not considered to be a replacement for the professionally produced content derived from the routine practices of journalism. For the *BBC*, which has an obligation to support the UK’s creative industries, its use of pictures, for example, is dependent upon the availability of professional images (Eltringham, 2008). However, since many people now carry smart phones, the *BBC* is aware that a member of the general public is most likely to record what is happening from the scene of an event before a journalist or professional photographer arrives (Bakhurst, 2011).

Eltringham says the first pictures from a breaking story usually come in to the newsroom within the first thirty to forty minutes, and they are always user-generated content. He says the good pictures, those that are very descriptive of the event—the “money shots”—generally arrive after an hour or so and are usually taken by eyewitnesses at the scene (Eltringham, 2008). These shots rarely come from the professional photographers. The newsroom normally uses user-generated content to “sustain coverage for its rolling news channel that needs to tell the story and talk about it” (Eltringham, 2008).
The first time user-generated pictures were sent to the BBC from the scene of a major crisis event was the London bombings of 2005. Photos were sent from the multiple scenes of attack throughout London. Eltringham points out that while the BBC managed to get authorisation from the content creators for use of the materials free of charge, some newspapers were required to make commercial arrangements for the same material, which he said, “shows the value and reputation that the BBC” enjoys with the public (Eltringham, 2008). As mentioned in Chapter 2, people have different reasons for contributing content to particular organisations. Some are motivated by remuneration, while others are driven by more personal reasons (Coleman & Blumler, 2009: 3). Similarly, some organisations are willing to pay for exclusive content while some are not. In 2008, Eltringham was aware that, regardless of the BBC’s reputation, it would most likely have to make decisions about whether to pay for priced user-generated content in the future. “The key shots are not always worth it” (Eltringham, 2008), therefore decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis (Eltringham, 2008). He adds, if the BBC buys exclusive, then it may take the opportunity to sell it on and make the money back (Eltringham, 2008).

Figure 4.4 shows one of the photos sent to the BBC by an eyewitness from the scene of the London bombings in 2005. The value of this photograph is its power to take the BBC audience into one of the many scenes of the event. Thousands of Londoners were stranded in the city’s underground tunnels when the rail network was halted following the attacks. Passengers were forced to leave trains at various places along the track to walk, sometimes long distances, through the dark and intricate subway network to get to the surface.

Internet technologies also provide the BBC with new ways of accessing information from parts of the world that are politically isolated:

“There are parts of the world where we cannot possibly get conventional journalists into, yet we can still get information from places such as Nauru or Burma, via people who were prepared to take the time to send the BBC information from cafes” (Eltringham, 2008).
During the most recent uprising in Burma, the government turned off the electronic means for external communication between the Burmese citizens and the rest of the world when it found people were using Internet cafes to get the stories of what was happening on their city streets into the global media. All of the cafes in Burma were shut down and, as a result, it took the event away from the headlines at the BBC and the rest of the world, causing the story to instantly “fall away” (Eltringham, 2008). The BBC and other news media could not get access to any information, “it was like turning a tap off” (Eltringham, 2008).

The BBC values the user-generated content from places it cannot reach because it enables it to continue to produce reports that have the capacity to create a greater global awareness of the issues and experiences of some of the people in these places (Eltringham, 2008) Eltringham says of BBC contributors, “the people have become another set of eyes” (Eltringham, 2008). Again, this shows the value of the tools and technologies of journalism, enabled by the Internet, to enhance journalism’s role as the Fourth Estate.

Talking Point and Have Your Say

Talking Point was one of the BBC’s earliest projects in user engagement. It provided the public with the opportunity to participate in radio interviews with some of the world’s most authoritative figures. The program presenters would ask the audience to
submit the questions they wanted to ask guests such as Kofi Annan or the King of Jordan via email or SMS\textsuperscript{93} text message (K. Anderson, 2008).

*Talking Point* was broadcast on *World Service* radio and was also streamed live on the Web. The program generated a lot of comment and information, which had to be moderated and verified. Following the success of including public input to the program, Paul Brannan, then deputy editor of the *BBC* news website, continued to publicly emphasise, “the *BBC* could no longer imagine doing some of these programs without the extra added value of content from the public” (K. Anderson, 2008). *Talking Point* evolved into the *Have Your Say* program, which, in response to its international popularity, became *World Have Your Say*.

The *Have Your Say* program has continued into 2013. It generates debate and conversation about important issues and, like its predecessor, assists editorial staff to gauge the importance and/or relevance of topics to the public. Designed to be accessible to all education levels of the general population, it is a news based message board that specialises in showing the more colourful contributions from the public. Editorially, it created a way for the *BBC* to “crowdsource” questions and to turn the agenda over to the audience, which “expanded into user comments and some citizen journalism” (K. Anderson, 2008).\textsuperscript{94}

The *Have Your Say* program provides up to four topics over a period of two days to encourage discussion and debate. People have the opportunity to say what they think about the issues and events of the day. The *BBC* listens to what people want to talk about and responds by moving stories, identified by the public as being important, up or down the running order. The *BBC*, at all times, maintains control over the focus of the discussion largely to ensure that it stays on topic and within the legal and policy boundaries (Eltringham, 2010). The *BBC*’s practice exhibits the benchmark characteristics described by Dahlgren (2001: 42-44) and Brandenburg as inclusive. It provides access to information, allows flexibility in its agenda, provides a reasonable amount of time for people to consider issues, and sets rules to ensure participation is inclusive (Brandenburg, 2006: 219). In this vein, the *Have Your Say* program can be viewed as one of several deliberative spaces made available to the public by the *BBC* for political expression, and the sharing of information about important and
sometimes complex issues. While, as Gutmann and Thompson point out, deliberation 
would only create public agreement on all social and political matters in an ideal 
world, deliberative spaces such as Have Your Say have the capacity to make debates 
more accessible and transparent (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996: 16; Held, 2006: 237).

**Message Boards**

Message boards are a type of forum where members of the public can discuss BBC 
programs and policies. The BBC uses message boards as a way to connect with the 
audience and to encourage the expression of a broad range of views across a variety 
of topics. While many hold that the conversations in online forums such as message 
boards and blogs are good in their own right, there is a flip side that questions their 
value, given a well documented perception that a lot of public comment tends to be 
“ranting” (Eltringham, 2008), which only devalues journalism (Bailey, 2009; 
Jarvis, 2010) (see Chapter 2.3). Nonetheless, the BBC believes the forums hold value 
for journalism and the deliberative process (Eltringham, 2008). BBC editor Ian 
Hunter contends comments on blogs, for example, “often illuminate or extend or 
challenge a post in interesting ways” (I. Hunter, 2011), and therefore they have the 
capacity to better engage audiences. “Engaged users come back more frequently” (I. 
Hunter, 2011), which he says increases the value of the service to them. Moreover, 
he argues, “richer connections with the user can help us [the BBC] be more open, 
transparent and accountable” (I. Hunter, 2011). This creed ensures the BBC’s 
continued efforts to try and test different methods of hosting comment forums to 
determine how to get the best out of them. Eltringham says it is important to the BBC 
that journalists hear and report everything, therefore it supports the use of 
technologies that enable the expression of a broad range of views (Eltringham, 
2008).

Chapter 3 showed that the key to maintaining a productive online public sphere 
through comment forums is proper administration (Gillmor, 2009). The BBC 
moderates message boards to direct the conversation away from topics that create 
anti-social responses. Eltringham says that fair comment to one person may be 
offensive to someone else, therefore moderation exists to maintain quality 
(Eltringham, 2008). In 2008 the BBC became aware that its moderation system was 
less than ideal, and while it tried to be transparent about its reasoning for moderation,
it received many complaints about many aspects of the process. People were becoming annoyed when the publication of their content was delayed because they felt it interfered with the flow of their conversational exchanges. Also, individuals did not like being prevented from posting comments more than twice per hour, a rule designed to stop people from dominating the conversation.

After trying a range of different software to improve functionality and to enable greater scope for public participation, the BBC decided to move to a blog-based platform, which enabled it to moderate in almost real time. In contrast to the problems associated with message board comment systems, blog comments were moderated in about twenty minutes and approximately ninety-eight per cent of content that followed house rules was published (Eltringham, 2010). The capacity for blogs to promote dialogue between the newsroom and members of the audience was very encouraging for the newsroom, with the consensus being that the use of comment forums on news stories would lead to “improved journalism” (Horrocks, 2008b: 17).

**Blogs: 2001–Ongoing**

The BBC’s use of blogs began in 2001 with Nick Robinson’s Newslog, a diarised coverage of the UK election (see Appendix D). Ten years later, its blog network had grown to include more than 300 individual sites (Shiel, 2012). BBC blogs initially used the same format as the blogs of the time, but it had to decide on the most effective way to use the platform, whether as “a diary column, or breaking news, or end-of-day analysis or running commentary - or all of them” (G. Wilson, 2011). The ‘About’ page on Robinson’s blog stated that it would be used to provide news, opinion and links to “things that happened” (Robinson, 2001). The Newslog comment system, unlike other blogs, did not publish user comments directly to the blog. In fact, comments were never published on the blog at all. If readers had something to say, they clicked an ‘Add Comment’ button that generated an email form to ‘newsonline.features@bbc.co.uk’. This method mirrored the traditional letter to the editor service, which largely missed the point of the platform’s interactive capacity, but was eventually replaced with a more interactive forum.

By 2007, the BBC Blog network was well established and was blogging for the
The purpose of engaging both “friends and critics” of the organisation in the discussion of “strategy and direction” and harnessing the “wisdom of the crowds” as a way of maintaining relevance in the new Internet age (Highfield, 2007). In 2008, following the recommendations in the Graf review, the BBC Trust proposed the creation of an Editors’ Blog, which aimed to develop the BBC’s relationship with the audience. Now one of organisation’s most successful blogs, it provides for “continuous dialogue between the BBC and its audience” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008b: 57), with editors using it to explain their editorial decisions and viewers using it to provide the BBC with critical feedback.

After more than a decade of blogging, this platform still contributes expert “analysis and explanation” across a wide range of topic areas and is looked upon as one of the “major strengths” of the BBC News Website. The BBC continues to see the benefits of using this platform, and in 2011 a decision was made to modernise its capabilities. In an effort to create a more intuitive and smoother user experience for users, all content created by journalists and editors, including their blogs, Twitter feeds, still images and video, is now aggregated and presented on their own home pages. In the past, blogs were produced on a system separate to the main production system, however this platform indexes and presents all aspects of any BBC journalists’ work in one space. Giles Wilson says it creates “a more compelling way to follow a story or subject” (G. Wilson, 2011).

**Blog Comments and Moderation**

As previously discussed, the BBC regards comment forums, whether on message boards or news blogs, as an integral part of its news coverage. Figure 4.5 shows a snapshot of the usage rate of the comment services across BBC News, representing the number of comments received per second in a fourteen-hour period, between 06:00 and 20:00 on February 11, 2011 (R. Summers, 2011). Summers says it is not unusual for as many as 500 users per second to access news pages using comment forums during peak periods (R. Summers, 2011).
In an effort to avoid the kind of problems identified by Bailey, Gillmor, Wilson and Jarvis in Chapter 3, the BBC maintains a uniform comment policy across its entire website. BBC policy ensures that all user generated content published on the BBC website is moderated.96

Figure 4.6 shows the BBC spends ninety per cent of its moderation funds on moderating message boards. Blog moderation accounts for only six per cent of its total moderation expense (N. Reynolds, 2009).

The BBC uses three levels of moderation:

- Pre-moderation:97 Content created by the public and submitted to the BBC website is moderated by journalists and editors who determine whether the content is suitable for publication on its website. Pre-moderation is generally applied to sites where published content deals with sensitive issues such as religion, conflict and so on. Content submitted to the BBC cannot be seen by other site users before approval.

- Post-moderation: allows users to post content directly to the site before a BBC moderator sees it. Moderators check the site regularly to ensure the content is suitable to remain on the site. Many sites across the BBC are post-moderated. This method is popular with users engaging in debates on news and current affairs sites because the immediacy of publication allows for instant assertions and responses. These sites are closely
monitored, since they tend towards robust debates that sometimes become controversial and abusive. *BBC* editorial policy on moderation states that all unsuitable comments should be removed within an hour of posting.

- Reactive moderation: is where visitors to the site alert the moderator to an inappropriate or offensive message. The moderator does not read every message.

![Figure 4.6. BBC Moderation Expenses August 2009. Adapted from http://www.flickr.com/photos/BBCcouk/3775708172/ (N. Reynolds, 2009).](image)

*BBC* blogs are largely “reactively moderated”, which means they function with a high degree of self-moderation. These blogs are hosted by a *BBC* editor who monitors the tone of the community in relation to the issues being discussed (N. Reynolds, 2009). In order to post comments on the website, users first have to register. Once registered, users are also encouraged, but not compelled, to leave contact information (K. Anderson, 2008).

When the *BBC* first moved from a pre-moderation to a post-moderation system it observed increases in the quantity and liveliness of the comments submitted, however it also raised concern that the quality of the discussion and debate deteriorated “because a lot of public comment is abuse” (Sambrook, 2008). Given it is the responsibility of the *BBC* to maintain the quality of published comments, the post-moderation system increased the intensity of the moderators’ task to keep a watchful eye on the forums, and to fulfil its obligation to remove defamatory, illegal
or offensive content as soon as possible (Sambrook, 2008). BBC moderators do not as a rule edit comments for grammar or spelling, however posts containing strong language are edited. Content with substantial errors and problems are rejected in their entirety rather than edited, and contributors are then advised to revise and change the content before resubmitting it.

The BBC editorial policy contains an “escalation strategy”, which is used in certain instances to prevent individuals from posting content to the website. More extreme escalation strategies are applied to particularly volatile blogs and message board conversations, which prevent everyone from posting content to the site, with the availability of a “read only” option. An example of this was seen in reports of the death of Benazir Bhutto, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. Hosts and moderators can obtain detailed guidelines from BBC New Media, while house rules reflecting these guidelines are published for visitors to see on the BBC site.

**External Linking**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the BBC has been widely criticised for its approach to external linking. The BBC views blogs outside of the BBC as sites of opinion, which do not necessarily carry the impartiality and objectivity that traditional news organisations aspire to (Boaden, 2008; Sambrook, 2008). Its policy on external linking has seen a number of iterations. In 1998 news producers were required to check the links on the linked page “to a depth of three further pages” (Hamman, 2010) before linking out. The logistics of this task, given that many pages contained multiple links, dramatically increased the degree of difficulty for the production of online news. This resulted in many BBC bloggers avoiding the inclusion of external links in their posts, even though it is well established that the inclusion of both internal and external links in news content provides users with a richer and more varied experience (Gillmor, 2009: 7).

Following concerns raised in 2004 about the BBC’s linking practices, the Graf report recommended that its policy should take a more “consistent and effective approach to linking” (Graf, 2004: 10) and should aim for more transparency with its editorial judgments on appropriate linking practices (Graf, 2004: 10). Since that time, it has aimed to act as “a trusted guide”, a ‘starting point on the Internet, guiding
users to the wider web and linking to external websites with high public value” (Currah, 2009: 55). It now uses links in a number of ways, to show the source of a story where possible, to source quotes, and to other publications when mentioned (S Herrmann, 2010).

Linking out to external sites highlighted a cultural change for the BBC, something that all organisations, to different degrees, have experienced. In the early stages of the Internet, the BBC believed it had to encourage people to visit its website, then to “lock the door to keep them inside” (Sambrook, 2008), which is why it did not participate in the link economy. It has since realised that it is much more useful to find where people are gathering, support that discussion and debate, and try to seed some of it (Sambrook, 2008). In light of this, the BBC revised its expectation of being people’s final online destination with a new approach to the practice of linking out (Sambrook, 2008).

By 2011, a BBC Trust report officially acknowledged that many of the organisation’s editorial controls, including linking practices, may not necessarily be the most proactive way to engage with the world. In particular, the report stated: “Participating in, linking to or otherwise showcasing the public discussions that audiences have about BBC content is also important; the BBC does not have to host the discussion itself” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010b: 59).

Prior to 2011, the BBC used an automated ‘news tracker’, which generated relevant links to news from external websites such as Business Week, Financial Post, Times Online and so on (see Figure 4.7a). The news tracker appeared in a text box to the right of the article (S Herrmann, 2010).

In addition to the news tracker, the See Also blog, which began in October 2008, presented a collection of content on the web, including comment, newspaper editorials and analysis (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008a). In 2009, the blog became the Daily View and continued until 2011, when the BBC’s link system changed, yet again, to include links “in boxes within stories and as stand-alone pieces” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011c), as well as placing text boxes showing “Related Internet Links” at the bottom of news stories (see Figure 4.7b) (S
Combined, these practices have resulted in double the number of click throughs than occurred using previous methods (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010b: 4).

![Figure 4.7](image)

**Figure 4.7.** (a) The 2010 graphic produced by Steve Herrman (S Herrmann, 2010) for the BBC The Editors blog, which shows how links to external sites were included on BBC webpages. http://www.BBC.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2010/03/BBC_news_linking_policy.html. (b) An example of how the BBC provides readers with external links to additional information.

BBC editorial staff selects both internal and external links that are deemed to have editorial relevance to the topic of discussion or provide extra background information, and are “suitable for the likely audience” (BBC, 2010d). In the spirit of impartiality, the BBC aims to link to sites that provide “a reasonable range of views” about controversial topics and public policy (BBC, 2010c). The BBC also links to sites that contain user-generated content such as photo images and video and, in keeping with its publicly funded model, it highlights the possibility that outbound links might include websites that contain commercial elements such as advertising. Adhering to its editorial guidelines, it advises its public to alert BBC moderators if the nature of the linked content differs to the BBC’s explanation of what to expect from the link (BBC, 2010d).

**Live Blogs**

The BBC has “fully embraced live blogs or networked journalism” (Wells, 2011) to cover election, sporting and other ‘live’ events. Live blogging is a practice native to the Web (Wells, 2011), which provides continuous news coverage of events and allows the news organisation to weave multiple sources of information, user comment and content, and correspondents’ stories into its method of telling a story
Guardian blogs editor Matt Wells describes it as “the online answer to 24/7 television news” (Wells, 2011). The BBC creates live events pages for all key developing news events, which have included election coverage, the death of Osama Bin Laden, the Arab Spring, and the England riots.

An early example of live blogging by the BBC was its coverage of the 2010 general election. In this example, the live blog streamed a wide range of information including a textual summary of events as they happened and links to both internal and external sources of information that BBC editors identified as relevant to the event. The blog also included public comment, tweets by politicians attempting to provide personal updates, links to other news organisations such as the Sun, Financial Times and the Daily Mail, and to its own programs such as Have Your Say and the online Politics pages. It also included video and audio of news broadcasts and links to political blogger, activist and bookmaker sites (see Figure 4.8). When Sarah Brown, the outgoing Prime Minister’s wife, changed her Twitter handle from SarahBrown10 to SarahBrownUK, for example, it was recorded on the BBC’s live blog with a link to her Twitter stream. The live blog page provided easy to read graphic updates of the election results and contained links to the main news page, information on the candidates, parties and issues, debates and so on. While some journalists have raised concerns that live blogs may, at times, be hard to navigate since events such as the Arab Spring, for example, occur over an extended period of time, the recent inclusion by the BBC of a “permanent summary of the latest developments” (Wells, 2011) on its live page provides the audience with the most recent verified facts of the story.

This chapter has shown that in the age of Internet technologies, journalism skills at the BBC are constantly being updated to incorporate new original and innovative methods to communicate with the public on new platforms. Journalists, now more than ever, need the proficiency to acquire technical knowledge that enables them to connect with the world in a range of different capacities. Broadly, their purpose is to connect with sources of information, to make sense of data, and to distribute contextualised information. Journalists are expected to be able to generate interactive conversations with the public and be multi-skilled in content production for online
platforms including video, slideshows (with and without audio), still images, audio and text.

Figure 4.8. A BBC News web page showing the organisation’s live blog coverage of the 2010 General Election. Adapted from (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2010c)

4.3 The Tools of Journalism: Social Media, Video and Instant Message Services and Data Analysis

“There are two kinds of newsgathering during times of crisis: journalists source the news wires and social media” (Bakhurst, 2011).

Journalists have traditionally relied on the news wire to alert them to the news and events of the world. The Internet hosts a number of different social media platforms that now supplement traditional breaking news alert systems (Hughes, 2012). These platforms are also used for creating new connections and sharing information. Voice-over Internet Protocol services such as Skype, and video software products such as Bambuser and Vimeo and a wide range of other video and instant messaging services
are increasingly being used for traditional journalism practices such as interviews and video coverage of news events. The following identifies the key social media platforms used by *BBC News* and explains how and why these are deployed as a news service.

**Social Media**

In view of the rapid and widespread uptake of social media by traditional news media, the *BBC*, like many other organisations, has incorporated social media into its day-to-day operations. As stated in Chapter 3, sites such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* have increased the flow of traffic to many news sites (Olmstead et al., 2012) and served as sources of information for journalists involved in the newsgathering process.

Social Media Editor Chris Hamilton says the *BBC*’s social media activity happens on a twenty-four hour, seven-day cycle. While television retains the *BBC*’s largest audience (Souviron, 2011), the link between social media platforms such as *Facebook*, for example, and broadcast programs such as *BBC World News*, which now has 1.5 million ‘friends’, is increasing (Walton, 2012). The benefit of generating activity on a range of different platforms is that it increases the opportunity to connect and collaborate with a diversity of individuals from different demographics and within a variety of social media communities. In other words, there is more opportunity to connect with more people, more of the time.

*BBC News* distributes content via social media technologies to a much larger extent than other news media outlets (Walton, 2012). It uses platforms such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Google+*, *YouTube*,[^103] *Flickr*[^104] and, before April 2011, *Tumblr*.[^105] All *BBC* journalists are trained in social media, and some are assigned to a specialist team dedicated only to searching social media sites for new, interesting and original content to share with *BBC* audiences (Walton, 2012).
Figure 4.9. The author’s interpretation of the BBC’s information flows between online news media utilities, including social media and its website. (Images sourced from Google Images).

Kevin Bakhurst says the BBC uses Social Media for three main purposes:

- Newsgathering: to find eyewitnesses and a diversity of sources;
- Audience engagement: to talk to audiences; and
- Platform for content: to draw audiences to the website, and to share content (Bakhurst, 2011).

Each purpose aims to improve the quality of its journalism. Journalist Stuart Hughes says he also uses it to provide people with a sense of what happens “behind the news” and what is coming up (Hughes, 2012). For Hughes, and others, social media has become an essential tool of journalism since it is mainly where news breaks, and that means it usually hits Twitter before the traditional news wire feeds (Hughes, 2012).

Hughes says journalists can use digital tools such as Tweet Deck and Hootsuite to set up a continuous stream of location based social media feeds directly to their desktops.
and mobile devices. It allows them to gather a constant plethora of personalised content, including user-generated content, from around the world. While social media has become another layer of information, and creates more depth of knowledge in all aspects of the news process, as explained in Chapter 3 these benefits do not arise without challenges.

**Challenges of Social Media**

Social media pose a number of challenges to traditional news media. There is greater exposure to rumour, speculation, and false information. Not all users of social media identify themselves when participating online, and not all of the content that appears on the Internet is authentic, which means journalists need to intensify their verification practices by adding new methods that are appropriate for the digital environment (Bakhurst, 2011).

As shown by Hughes, the importance of developing a reliable stable of contacts on Twitter is vital for its use as a tool of journalism. In terms of verifying digitally produced user-generated content published on Twitter and other social media platforms, journalists are advised to look at the embedded data such as location, time, photo settings and equipment type to verify its authenticity. The BBC provides regular workshops to teach journalists how to verify digital content.¹⁰⁶

There are other ethical problems besides verification that BBC journalists must consider when using content gathered from social media sites. Content is only used with the permission of the creator, the BBC does not report a death until after family is notified, and it follows laws and abides by injunctions regardless of the platform. The BBC accepts that compliance with these boundaries means it may not be first with breaking news, however it takes the view that “there is an appetite for a journalism that is based on the values such as truth, accuracy, integrity, verification, independence and speed” (Bakhurst, 2011) and as such, the news service grounds itself in these qualities.

**Twitter, Facebook and Google Plus**

The BBC has used Twitter as a tool of journalism since 2008. It was initially used as another source of information, a “link to more eyes and ears”, and was sometimes
found to be a useful filter of information (Taylor, 2008). According to Chris Walton, Project Editor at the BBC College of Journalism (CoJo), the BBC’s use of this network has since expanded dramatically, with key Twitter accounts @bbcbreaking with 2.5 million followers and @bbcworld with 1.5 million (Walton, 2012). The popularity of @bbcbreaking has grown rapidly, increasing its annual follow rate from 0.6 million to 1.8 million in the period August 2010 to August 2011. In 2012, its use has expanded to the extent that it is described as “an absolutely crucial tool used to monitor breaking news in real time” (Hughes, 2012).

The use of Twitter has expanded well beyond the organisation’s departmental accounts to include many more of its journalists. Hughes says he meticulously constructs his Twitter stream to include only trusted, reliable and relevant sources. He emphasises that journalists, as with any other source of information, have to check and double check Twitter sources—“just because it is on Twitter does not make it true” (Hughes, 2012). He follows hundreds of people, including his colleagues, other news organisations, government and non-government organisations, and people in socio-political hot spots such as Syria and Yemen, and says he interchanges sources in his Twitter stream depending on the current prevailing topic.

The first time Twitter was officially recognised as “a core mainstream platform” (Eltringham, 2011) for BBC journalism, was during the first extradition hearing for Julian Assange (A. Adams, 2011). The platform was also used by Philippa Thomas107 to give live updates from inside the courtroom of a high profile case in the UK. Thomas was able to gather and distribute information about the case by monitoring the Twitter accounts of those who she knew were closest to the case, including her BBC colleagues and a Guardian reporter. An important element of Thomas’s account of her own coverage of the verdicts is that she had developed authority on the case by attending every session of the seven-week trial. Her comprehensive knowledge of the case combined with the authoritative list of journalists she followed on Twitter positioned her to be able to contextualise and publish information about the verdict as it was delivered. Thomas sent a ‘breaking news’ tweet alerting her following of approximately 4,500 people to watch the BBC News channel for the imminent verdict (see Figure 4.10). Here, on the news channel,
she filed a live report, which was broadcast to more than one million viewers. (Thomas, 2012).

Figure 4.10. The @PhilippaNews tweet alerting followers to watch the BBC News channel for breaking news. Adapted from BBC College of Journalism (Thomas, 2012).

This example supports Smith’s assertion that Twitter, as a tool of journalism, is less time consuming than other tools and is useful in a number of ways. It allows “users [journalists and the public] to track a moving story” (Z. Smith, 2008: 21), and is also the perfect vehicle for sharing knowledge in real time. He says, people “want information when it breaks” (Z. Smith, 2008: 22) and, “increasingly demand an insight into what goes on behind the camera” (Z. Smith, 2008: 22), which he willingly provides.

Using social media to break news has been a contentious point for a number of news organisations, with many developing their own preferred policy. The BBC’s policy is to break news simultaneously on its website and on the Twitter platform, however if the technology, for any reason, does not allow this to happen, then journalists are required to get “written copy into [the] newsroom system as quickly as possible” (C. Hamilton, 2012). The main concern for the BBC is to ensure its network of journalists are positioned to produce and update content for distribution across multiple platforms, thereby providing millions of people with the most up to date and reliable information, rather than a smaller concentration on a single platform. This is indisputably a worthy consideration given the Thomas example of 4,500 Twitter followers compared to the broadcast platform of more than one million viewers for that story.
The BBC uses Facebook to connect with the public on a range of its own platforms, including the BBC website, YouTube and Flickr. It also links to external non-BBC news sites such as ABC News, The New York Times, and The Daily Show, via the ‘Like’ Facebook function. The Facebook ‘Wall’ is used to post content, ask questions and to crowdsource information and content. The use of the ‘Wall’ encourages users to engage with BBC content via the comment forum following each post. Each Facebook user is able to easily share BBC content with friends via the ‘Share’ function. User activity on the BBC Facebook page is logged on individual users’ Facebook ‘Timeline’, which means BBC content gains further exposure to people who may not have purposely engaged with the BBC.

Google Plus is one of the most recent additions to the social media sphere. Its use as a tool of journalism is not yet well established, however, like many social media platforms, it is quickly becoming populated with those interested in the production and consumption of news. The BBC’s Multi-Media Journalism and Production Trainer, Ramaa Sharma, says it has the capacity to help journalists “manage their relationships [contacts] from one space very easily and efficiently” (Sharma, 2011). She says Google Plus is a useful way to update stories, pose questions for the audience (crowdsourcing), post single photographic images, picture galleries and video, and to conduct debates using the Google ‘Hangout’ function, either prior or post broadcast (Sharma, 2011). In other words, like other social media platforms, Google Plus is largely used by the BBC to promote the organisation and its content.

World Have Your Say editor, Ben James, describes the way World Have Your Say is using Google Hangout. The program posts topics to the Google Plus page and hosts a thirty-minute daily hangout before the radio program starts. The hangout is used to gather questions for the program’s guests, to invite people with interesting things to say on the program’s chosen topic, to find people to participate in the program and for suggestions for future topics. The hangout also accommodates the members of the television audience who wish to continue the conversation after the broadcast (James, 2012). Participation in the BBC’s hangouts is only available to those who have been added by the BBC. James emphasises that the program does not allow itself to be dominated by a few but rather organises people into “circles” to avoid including the views of the same few people in its programs (James, 2012).
Skype

The use of Skype as tool of journalism is a cost effective way to connect with people throughout the world. It has a reasonable broadcast quality that enables journalists to conduct live interviews with subjects in remote, and perhaps non-liberal, geographical locations, not easily reachable via traditional methods. Moreover, Skype’s encrypted transmission inhibits interception by authoritarian governments.

Kevin Anderson uses Skype to connect with his contacts whose efforts to filter a wide variety of news can add extra value to his reports (K. Anderson, 2008). He says, contacts will see him online, open a conversation and post links to information on a range of topics they think he needs to know. He first started to use Skype for security reasons, “because it is encrypted on either side and it is difficult for [outsiders] to listen in to” (K. Anderson, 2008), however by 2007 he was using it because it was more commonly used than ISDN lines. He says Skype enables journalists to “do things that we would not have been able to do before” (K. Anderson, 2008). He describes two of its key qualities that add value to journalism: it complements traditional newsgathering tools, and it can be used in the news production process. For example, Anderson said the soldiers from the Green Zone in Iraq involved in the World Service broadcast contacted him using Skype. One of the soldiers had a Wi-Fi connection in Kirkuk, which enabled the program producers to broadcast him live on air. Anderson says, “I would never have been able to do that without the Internet” (K. Anderson, 2008). Furthermore, “the cost of this was a fraction of what it would have been using traditional tools. Some of the more expensive broadcast technologies cost tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of pounds” (K. Anderson, 2008). The low cost of Web 2.0 technologies “allows journalists to experiment with multimedia without necessarily breaking the bank, which is good” (K. Anderson, 2008).

Data Mapping Tools

News organisations are increasingly using interactive maps for online news journalism to increase the public’s understanding of the geographical location and physical details of issues and events. Maps are interactive (for example, users can click on tags to retrieve information about a particular location) and collaborative (users can insert information about a specific location). They are created using a
wide range of data including text, video and still images and can link to one or more databases. The BBC has used interactive maps during events such as the UK floods in 2009; London Tube Strike in 2010; the UK Snow event in 2011; and various election campaigns.

Online forms such as the Have Your Say map feedback form provide the organisation with another channel of communication with the public (see Figure 4.11). They also provide the public with opportunity to express opinions about a specific topic.

Figure 4.11. The first online form used by the BBC News, Have Your Say to crowdsource information. Adapted from http://news.BBC.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/7708582.stm

The Implications of Internet Technologies on BBC Journalism

Sambrook says the BBC’s news values have not changed with the adoption of new technologies: “we are pretty firm that we have a core set of editorial values that applies across the piece. If you get a news service from the BBC, it should have the same DNA of news values and principles whether it is online, on radio, or on television” (Sambrook, 2008).

The BBC uses Web 2.0 technologies to help it identify what is important to the public however, it sometimes happens that its website analytics will identify “the most emailed topic” as something completely different to what the newsroom puts down as its lead story (Sambrook, 2008), which shows that what the newsroom
identifies as something the public needs to know, it may not necessarily be something that the public finds as the most interesting. Sambrook says the BBC news agenda is not simply dictated by what is deemed popular by website analytics. He says, “there would be no point in us being a publicly funded organisation” (Sambrook, 2008) in that case. Its journalistic obligation to stimulate the public debate on a range of social, political and other current affairs issues means it must maintain consistent and clearly defined management of editorial decisions.

BBC journalism is framed by its obligation to provide the public with a comprehensive and diverse news service, therefore it provides a much greater range of information than politics alone. While news organisations are often criticised for tabloidisation, the BBC takes two positions on quirky human-interest stories. A large percentage of the BBC audience has some interest in celebrity and other light-hearted stories, so the newsroom needs to provide that content. By the same token, “part of our remit as a public service broadcaster is to make the important interesting and to explain what is significant, therefore we are not going to make celebrity the lead story” (Sambrook, 2008). The BBC is required to distinguish itself from other news media, which means that while it seeks to understand and support audience interest in these stories, it cannot be led by it (Sambrook, 2008). Eltringham describes BBC stories as “a dialogue; a two way street. We run something and we get a sense of the stories that matter to people—immigration, economy, or housing—we get a feel for it” (Eltringham, 2008).

Taylor says internet technologies provide the BBC newsroom with “a true voice and a true reflection of what is happening” (Taylor, 2008), with technologies as simple as email enabling its newsrooms to quickly identify the mood, popularity and reach of any story (Taylor, 2008). For the most part, the BBC sets the topics for discussion and then the people have the conversation. The newsroom sees itself as a global notice board, a conversation with the world. Interactive spaces are designed to ensure everybody is included in the conversation, and anybody can participate. The BBC seeks to ensure topics of discussion are of international interest, thereby encouraging a macro conversation amongst many, rather than micro conversation between a couple of individuals (Taylor, 2008). In that light, it has incorporated particular
courses of action into the moderation process to discourage individuals seeking to dominate message and blog comment forums.

Editorial staffs are constantly on the lookout for interesting angles in every debate. It aims to identify a diversity of viewpoints so it may present interviews that depart from traditional and dominant opinion (Taylor, 2008).

Stories that exhibit a strong social resonance are usually pushed high on the agenda. An example of this occurred following a BBC radio interview in which the Archbishop of Canterbury made comments proposing the adoption of some portions of Sharia Law in the UK. To the surprise of BBC producers, thousands of lunchtime audience members responded to the Archbishop’s comments. The reaction was “dramatic, unusual and unexpected” (Eltringham, 2008). By six o’clock, and following 37,000 emails, the BBC had responded to the public interest by pushing the story up the agenda to lead the news bulletin. Eltringham said, on this occasion, “the media had underestimated the resonance that the Archbishop’s remarks had on the audience” (Eltringham, 2008, 2010). While the story originated in the UK where the dominant view opposes Sharia Law, it generated public opinion from around the world. The international view, which in this case was mostly from the Middle East, was largely supportive of the Archbishop’s viewpoint (Taylor, 2008).

Taylor says, when the newsroom receives a flood of emails on a particular topic, it provides a strong sense of the range of views (Taylor, 2008). A diversity of viewpoints on any issue makes the debate more interesting and therefore it is more likely that the public will engage. Moreover, in terms of views that cross the political spectrum, the Internet serves as a ubiquitous platform. And for the BBC, which has to be global, the use of Web 2.0 technologies enables it to harness a diversity of opinion (Taylor, 2008).

**Trust and Transparency**

The BBC has built a reputation of authoritativeness and trust with the public over a period of eighty years. The relationship with the public is governed by particular editorial standards, which are guided by values and principles described in Section 3.1. The organisation’s key editorial values include objectivity, accuracy and
impartiality (Sambrook, 2012: 9). These require BBC News journalists to present the facts, ensure the facts are correct and to provide a diversity of viewpoints (Sambrook, 2012). The use of Web 2.0 technologies has impacted on each of these values.

The Hutton Report, released in 2004, criticised the BBC for not maintaining its editorial standards. It also found the organisation “neither sufficiently accurate nor sufficiently impartial” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 10), and said it had falsely claimed that the Blair government had lied about claims that Saddam Hussein was in possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

On the findings of this report, the BBC conducted its own inquiry, led by Ronald Neil, into the organisation’s professional practice. The findings, published in the Neil Report, recommended the organisation resolutely “recapture the full trust of audience and participants” (2013a). In light of this, the organisation resolved to address its weaknesses and to regain its public value (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 6).

The use of Internet communication technology presented the news organisation with multiple ways to enrich its news services and to increase its scope for transparency and accountability. The use of blogs by editors to theorise BBC journalism through explanations about editorial policies and guidelines, ethics, corrections and service changes provided an intrinsically interactive facility for public feedback and complaints (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2004: 11).

The BBC’s primary transparency blog is The Editors, “a site where we, editors from across BBC News, will share our dilemmas and issues” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). Launched in 2006 as part of the BBC News section of BBC Online, The Editors blog is a public entry point to open conversations between BBC editors and the public about editorial decisions. It is a space where the audience can listen to a range of opinions about the BBC’s journalistic values, and how they are applied and maintained. The public can comment, and receive instant responses from editors and other members of the public (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008b: 57).
The *BBC* uses the blog to publicly theorise its journalistic practices, ethics and values. Like many news organisations, the *BBC* is often accused of favouring one side of politics over another. Therefore, in an effort to be transparent it uses the platform to let the public know about a range of issues and activities that happen behind the scenes of the news production process. For example, where public figures present the *BBC* with contradictory narratives, one on the record and one off the record, it may describe the conditions imposed on presenters by public figures for the broadcast of interviews and debates. Thompson says spin “eat[s] relentlessly away at public trust” (Thompson, 2008), therefore in the spirit of cultivating trust, the *BBC* aims to openly explain its ethical dilemmas as they arise in all areas of the *BBC News* (Stone, 2011).

The *BBC* Internet Blog, started in October 2007, is another site created, says then Divisional Director, *BBC* Future Media and Technology Division, Ashley Highfield, “to have an open, direct, and hopefully lively conversation about everything we do, and plan to do, on BBC.co.uk and all our on-demand platforms (such as interactive TV and mobile)” (Highfield, 2007).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the use of Web 2.0 technologies by *BBC News* has enhanced its capacity to connect with its audience, and to deliver more participatory spaces for public deliberation on matters of public interest.

An overview of the *BBC*’s model of journalism emphasised the organisation’s commitment to its role as a member of the Fourth Estate, which includes ensuring equality of access to a variety of interactive channels of communication on different topics of public interest, and ensuring the public has the skills to participate in public debates hosted across the *BBC Online* website. This illustrates the *BBC*’s ongoing diligence to its role in a democracy as defined by its Charter, and that it conceptualises citizens as political entities who have a right to be provided with accurate and balanced coverage of the political process both in the UK and internationally, and the opportunity to participate in a variety of social and political debates.
The chapter has shown that the new tools and technologies of journalism have precipitated a modification of traditional practice within the BBC in ways that are much more inclusive of a broader range of public opinion and needs. Importantly, however, it also shows that while BBC News welcomes the changes advanced by Web 2.0 technologies, it remains committed to traditional ideals and values of journalism. BBC editors and journalists continue to express their obligation to transparency and presenting balanced, reliable and trustworthy coverage of issues and events, largely via The Editors blog.

The BBC combines a variety of Web 2.0 based tools and technologies with traditional professional journalism practice for the purpose of increasing interactivity between its journalists and citizens, to foster citizen engagement, and to provide the public with what it needs and wants to know, in an engaging and entertaining fashion. The ways in which it uses these evolves with each new event. The use of Web 2.0 technologies have created more opportunities for the BBC to reflect the public’s shared experiences, and to help make complex social, political and economic topics equally accessible to local and international audiences, than was possible using broadcast platforms only.

This chapter has reviewed the ways in which the BBC uses news blogs, a variety of social media applications, and technologies including crowdsourcing and networked journalism, and its approach to user-generated content. Web 2.0 technologies are used to gather information, to build case studies, to source and verify information including user-generated content, and to crowsource information about anything from the quality of petrol being sold by local service stations, to elections, political misconduct, environmental crises and/or war. BBC reporters consistently re-purpose the way they use Web 2.0 technologies to improve the standard of service the BBC provides for the public.

The BBC’s effort to fulfil its obligation to stimulate the public debate is illustrated through its use of digital comment forums attached to blogs, message boards and programs such as Have Your Say. The chapter shows that the use of Web 2.0 technologies by current affairs programs has enabled broadcast program producers to include members of the public in live interviews with public officials. Where
journalists have traditionally determined which questions would or would not be asked of officials, the BBC now offers individual members of the public the opportunity to find out what they want to know. Consistent with theories of deliberation, each of these methods of participation enables people to express their beliefs, ideas and opinions, and to contest the views of others.

The chapter also shows that BBC News encourages the public to produce audio and visual content which may be shared with the world in its original form or professionally contextualised/editorialised for a more comprehensive understanding by the mass audience. Editorial control over user-generated content is maintained to ensure the content is authentic, verified, and is of a high enough standard to be distributed across the BBC to each of its platforms: radio, television and online.

This review suggests the incorporation of the World Wide Web into the daily routines of the newsroom has added civic value to news products and opened a narrow pathway to the democratisation of journalism.

71 See also, a 2006 BBC white paper: A Public Service For All: The BBC In The Digital Age, which states the six purposes of the BBC as set out by the Royal Charter (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2006: 9).
73 iCan aimed to help the public to find information and to provide information that enables people to take action for themselves. http://www.bbc.co.uk/leicester/campaigns/2003/10/ican.shtml
74 Active engagement would begin online and then perhaps continue in public spaces (as is described by Castells).
75 A multinational force that aimed to disarm Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein
76 Click is a technology program that introduces people to the range of Internet communication technologies as they emerge for general use by the public. The public can gain access to the program using the BBC’s broadcast, online and social media platforms on http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/n13xtmd5/faq.
77 Clause 87 of the Agreement: http://www.BBC.co.uk/rd/about/introduction Clause87.shtml
81 Online training modules are also available to the UK public.
82 Journalists who are accepted into the Fellowship programs are required to take unpaid leave or a career break. Their salary is suspended for the duration of the candidature and the BBC does not pay any travel expenses. The US Fellowship “carries a generous stipend and covers all academic fees, health insurance and one international trip” (Baker, 2013). The Oxford program does not provide a stipend, however the BBC pays the tuition and accommodation costs (Baker, 2013).
83 This is consistent with the ways in which theorists such as Kovach & Rosenstiel (2001), McQuail (2005) and Zelizer (2004) describe normative journalism.
This includes news programs.


BBC editor Kevin Marsh describes what an “output editor” does.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2006/06/what_does_an_editor_do.html

See Appendix C for diagram of the BBC’s current floor plan.

See BBC foreign bureaux mapped by Stuart Pinfold: http://apps.stuart-pinfold.co.uk/bbc-correspondents-map/

By 2012, the BBC’s verification process had become more complex with the availability of more Web 2.0 tools. See a descriptive report about the BBC’s verification process (D. Turner, 2012).

These include the BBC website and BBC hosted social media accounts.

See (Goretzki, 2009) for example of how the BBC explained the “MPs’ Expenses” scandal to the public, and the post’s comment forum for public response to the explanation:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/2009/05/explaining/mps_expenses.html

Eltringham said the interactivity hub was “not the sexiest place to work” at first, but that quickly changed as journalists realised the complexities of the skill-set required of those working in this environment, and its relevance to BBC journalism.

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Simple Message Service (SMS)

Anderson defines citizen journalism as “random acts of journalism”, whereby people generally only report on events they happen to have witnessed (K. Anderson, 2008).

Moderation is determined according to the rules and laws described in BBC style guide: Hosting, Moderation and Escalation: http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidance-moderation-hosting

The BBC’s Pre-moderation policy is available at

http://www.BBC.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/onguide/interacting/reactivestandar.shtml

BBC New Media: http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/dq/contents/new_media.shtml

The report on Philip Graf’s independent review of the BBC’s online service is available from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport http://www.culture.gov.uk/ Live Osama Bin Laden Dead: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12307698

Live England Riots http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14449675


World Have Your Say: http://www.youtube.com/user/WHYSBBC

World Have Your Say Photostream: http://www.flickr.com/photos/bbc_whys/

BBC World News: http://bbcworldnews.tumblr.com/

Several sites, including the BBC, provide tips on the verification process in a digital environment. See (McAthy, 2012) and BBC College of Journalism http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/

Twitter handle, @PhilippaNews. http://twitter.com/PhilippaNews

Sharia Law is the moral code and religious law of Islam.

The Neil Report and Statement by the BBC Board of Governors is published at:

http://www.BBC.co.uk/abouttheBBC/insidetheBBC/howwework/reports/neil_report.html

In this instance technology is defined as methods of organisation.
Chapter 5  Commercial Models of News Media

In the wake of the Leveson Inquiry, there is increased criticism and renewed uncertainty about how news organisations should approach their role as news providers. While there are calls for increased government regulations of the newspaper industry, currently watchdog bodies, such as the Australian Press Council and the UK Press Complaints Commission, are responsible for the adherence of news organisations to the basic principles and guidelines that: ensure the right of the press to inform the people on matters of public interest; remain independent of government interferences; self regulate; provide widely diverse views and opinions; and protect the peoples’ right to know (Australian Press Council, 2011).

The current topic of debate within the news industry and its regulatory bodies is whether commercial news organisations such as News International and the Guardian can and do uphold these principles in their endeavour to generate enough revenue to sustain their economic and journalistic objectives. Commercial news media is concerned with creating media for audiences comprised of diverse demographics while simultaneously creating a platform for advertisers, too. As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, the concerns about the commercial imperatives of journalism are multidimensional; they encompass the issues of raising revenue to fund journalism, keeping shareholders happy, and ensuring their methods do not conflict with the founding principles of journalism as the Fourth Estate. Unlike the BBC, newspapers do not ordinarily have an intricately defined Charter with strict strategies in place to ensure their journalistic accountability to the public. Instead, aside from the laws of journalism, they are left largely to their own devices to self regulate ethically. This chapter, and the following (Chapter 6), will describe and analyse two unique commercial business models, and will show how each uses Web 2.0 technologies in their approach to ethical and socially responsible journalism.

Drawing on interviews with key editors and journalists at the Australian, the Herald Sun and the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), this chapter will describe and evaluate the ways in which News Limited—primarily the Australian—uses Web 2.0 technologies to achieve its economic, social and political goals. The discussion will briefly outline its history and business goals. It will show how it is affected by the crisis in
journalism (as described in Chapters 1 and 2), and will show when, why and how it transitioned from its traditional print platform to the digital news environment. The discussion will then explain the organisation’s digital news strategy, explain and analyse the way it uses Web 2.0 tools and technologies to gather, produce and distribute news journalism, and will describe the ways in which these complement and challenge its traditional work practices. Furthermore, it will show how their use of Web 2.0 technologies addresses some of the problems underpinning the crisis in journalism.

This chapter will provide a contrast to the theory and practice underpinning each of the models of journalism included in this study.

**News Limited**

What do we, a bunch of digital immigrants, need to do to be relevant to the digital natives (R. Murdoch, 2005)?

News Limited is a subsidiary of News Corporation, the world’s third largest media conglomerate and the leading publisher of English-language newspapers (News Corporation, 2010). News Corporation is said to yield more “in-depth public reach than any other media organisation in the world” (Flew, 2007b; Flew & Gilmour, 2003: 88). With news holdings on three continents, it generates nineteen per cent of its revenue from newspapers and information services and thirty-one per cent from broadcast, with the largest percentage of revenue coming from its 20th Century Fox film studios. 112It publishes three newspapers in the UK, two national editions in the US and almost one hundred and fifty 113 in Australia. It aims to derive revenue for the operational costs of newspapers and information services, including production and distribution of news products, salaries, rent and administration, from advertising, newspaper sales and subscriptions.

Like most other commercial news organisations, News Corporation has suffered declining revenues for its news holdings, and has become increasingly dependent upon its other assets, in particular its film studios, to support its journalism businesses (Doctor, 2010). Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rupert
Murdoch is often accused of using News Corporation’s news holdings for his own business and political interests rather than in the interests of the public (Neighbour, 2011), therefore his practice of propping up his newspaper holdings is viewed by some as Murdoch protecting the “political bargaining tool” that enables him “to get political and regulatory favors” (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 493).

News Corporation’s business network provides it with access to multiple and diverse channels of communication throughout the world. As a global media organisation, it has the capacity to reach markets and communicate with a vast number of disparate public spheres (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 488). While it had much more power to gatekeep information before the pervasive use of Web 2.0 technologies (R. Murdoch, 2005), the reach and complexity of its network still enables it to synergise a formation of discourses that frame debates in particular ways. The most significant benefit of what Arsenault and Castells describe as a network of power is the crossover of interests between the different spheres of communication (Arsenault & Castells, 2008: 493). The Corporation connects media, business and political networks, which enables it to mobilise power that impacts upon, if not determines, policy decisions and political outcomes in its favour. The Guardian’s investigation into phone hacking in the UK, which led to the Leveson Inquiry, showed that News Corporation’s power network had also infiltrated the institutions of law and order.

Despite the intense criticism of the power wielded by the Murdoch empire, Murdoch takes a direct approach to the control of the public’s perception of him and his news organisations and the public exposure his companies generate. Fox Business and News Corporation news releases are the key sites from which he informs the public about his business policies. Fox Business carries video interviews with the CEO, which allows him to speak directly to his audience. These interviews are often widely reported by large international mainstream media organisations such as the Guardian and the BBC, affording him blanket news coverage.

In 2005, Murdoch addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors on the role of newspapers in the digital age. He acknowledged that there had been a reluctance of many newspaper editors to take the “digital revolution” (R. Murdoch, 2005)
seriously, and revealed that even he had been “slow to react” to it because he had quietly hoped “it would just limp along” (R. Murdoch, 2005). However, amid the debate about the future of the newspaper industry was a prognosis by Philip Meyer that forecasted the extinction of the traditional news industry by April 2040, which seemingly caused Murdoch to have an abrupt awakening to the digital age (P. Meyer, 2004; R. Murdoch, 2005). Murdoch’s address to the editors signalled a more accepting approach to the news industry’s cultural shift than he had demonstrated in the past, especially since he indicated that his news businesses would now “grasp” the opportunities arising through the use of Web 2.0 technologies, to improve its journalism, expand its reach, strengthen its business and serve its readers (R. Murdoch, 2005).

Murdoch suggested that his decision to transition his newspapers online was motivated, in part, by what had, by then, become common knowledge, that people were “increasingly using the Web as their medium of choice for news consumption” (R. Murdoch, 2005), but more so by the idea that the newspaper was quickly becoming “the least likely to be the preferred choice for local, national or international news” (R. Murdoch, 2005).

In his quest to make his newspapers relevant in the digital world, Murdoch suggested it was no longer enough to simply provide the traditional one-way text-only news services. He expressed interest in the culture of participation, the essence of Web 2.0 technologies, and an understanding that people now want to be able to discuss, question and debate information about their own communities and the world at large with like and opposing minded people (R. Murdoch, 2005). In light of this, he proposed changes to the traditional methods of news production. He said he wanted his news sites to become the destination for bloggers, and he spoke about the value that bloggers could add to his news coverage with their “fresh new perspectives” (R. Murdoch, 2005). Murdoch felt that the use of bloggers by his newsrooms could potentially deepen the relationship between his editorial staff and the communities they serve, but only on the condition that the public had an understanding of the qualities that distinguish blogging from professional journalism (R. Murdoch, 2005). He said he wanted his online newspapers to be a place where readers could “engage with reporters and editors in more extended discussions about the way a particular
story was reported or researched or presented” (R. Murdoch, 2005), and hoped the interactivity between newsrooms and the public might address the issues of trust often expressed in research studies.

Murdoch also inferred that his newspapers would partner with video programmers and audio specialists to enable journalists to tell more stories with podcasting and video. For example, he said, “if my child played a little league baseball game in the morning, it would be great to be able to access the paper’s website in the afternoon to get a summary of her game, maybe even accompanied by video highlights” (R. Murdoch, 2005).

Thinking, again, about raising revenue, he also suggested, that given the loss of print advertising revenue to the online environment, if they could successfully converge print, video and audio technologies, then they might see more advertising revenue allocated to online newspapers (R. Murdoch, 2005). Additionally, as Web 2.0 technologies evolve so too do the tools to generate more granular audience metrics for business. Murdoch highlighted this capability as a way to better target potential consumers for advertising revenue.

The following sections will analyse the ways in which News Limited has followed the business plan proposed by Murdoch during his 2005 address. Murdoch presented a strong argument for his organisation to modify the tools and technologies of journalism for a better kind of journalism. Moreover, he made his desire for a more networked approach to journalism abundantly clear when he spoke about the new participatory culture being an asset to the production practices, business principles and uses of journalism. He expressed expectations that a digital culture would improve [News Limited’s] journalism by drawing on a diversity of voices from the blogosphere that would serve to stimulate the debate, and would enhance the organisation’s ability to generate revenue.

The discussion will review News Limited’s approach to networked journalism, which will draw on the frameworks of interactivity, participation and collaboration described in Chapter 3. For example, it will review the way the Australian and the Herald Sun approach blogging, crowdsourcing and the use of social media. It begins
with background information about News Limited and a description of its business model, then discusses its transition from the print to digital environments. Finally it will describe and analyse the way it uses Web 2.0 technologies to fulfil its role as a member of the Fourth Estate.

News Limited is regarded as the most influential news outlet in Australia (Neighbour, 2011). It defines its audience as a combination of consumers and citizens, which means there is a division of labour between editors who manage editorial decisions, strategise about how to generate revenue, and ensure business obligations are fulfilled, and journalism staff who manage the organisation’s Fourth Estate obligations to citizens (P. Wilson, 2008).

This highlights two key pressure points on commercially produced journalism. The first asserts that commercial news organisations largely operate in the interest of advertisers (Atton & Hamilton, 2008b: 6) and the second is a perception that the relationship between government and commercial news organisations can become too close (Hampton, 2009: 7; Neighbour, 2011). On the first, journalist Peter Alford says News Limited journalism has never been influenced by advertising deals, “it is not expected, and it is not necessary; the idea that journalists do this is largely a myth” (Alford, 2008). He contends there are many things wrong with journalism but an editorial obligation to advertisers is not one of them, “in the real world, that rarely happens” (Alford, 2008). On the second pressure point, Clive Mathieson, the deputy editor of Australia’s national newspaper, states emphatically that the Australian, consistently aims to maintain a centrist position in the field of political debate (Mathieson, 2009). In 2006, the Editor-in-Chief Chris Mitchell contested the dominant view that the Australian’s opinion editorial was “far-right” describing it, instead, as “centre-right” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006), and “down the middle in its news coverage” (Simons, 2007). However, charges of far right political bias by the Australian continue to be expressed (Neighbour, 2011).

Where there is a high concentration of media ownership—as is the case in Australia where only two news media organisations hold 88 per cent of the “print media assets in the country” (Dwyer, 2013)— it is even more important for newspapers to “play to the centre ground” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006) to ensure the
public has access to a diversity of opinion to assist people to make their own decisions about the way they are governed. News Limited journalists reject assertions of bias and contend management does not require them to align their reports with any particular political ideology. Foreign correspondent Peter Wilson says the reality is that “Rupert Murdoch does not care what journalists write” (P. Wilson, 2008), however Wilson concedes that it may well be the case that some editors and journalists naturally self-censor (P. Wilson, 2008). Wilson’s comment aligns well with recent findings that most journalists in Australia describe their personal political views as being “left wing” (Hanusch, 2013), yet News Limited publications generally represent a conservative viewpoint (Bolt, 2009). Studies by Gans and Leigh (2012), and Hanusch (2013) show that journalists in Australia tend to lean to the left while editors tend to lean to the right (Gans & Leigh, 2012; Hanusch, 2013), which informs the differences in editorial positions.

David Marr says that not only is the Murdoch news service “peculiarly attuned to its proprietor’s whims” (Marr, 2011) but “he [Murdoch] has a long record of firing fine editors who don’t toe his line, and of finding editors who will” (Marr, 2011). Marr contends:

“[t]he crusades and bullying, the shit-lists and huckstering, the character assassinations and backroom deals, the endless investment in unprofitable newspapers in Australia, the UK and the US all have the seamless purpose of making money, entrenching the Republican Party in America and exporting its vision to the rest of the English-speaking world” (Marr, 2011).

Marr’s opinion of Rupert Murdoch’s business management style lends some credence to Wilson’s assertion that journalists have a natural tendency to self-censor.

**Digital News Strategy**

In 2006, News Corporation created a new subsidiary called *News Digital Media* (NDM), which is promoted as “the link between digital environments and advertising effectiveness” (Bass, Smith, & Samin, 2010). It oversees the online business operations of *news.com.au* (which started July 12, 1998), *carsguide.com.au*,

The central mission of NDM is to build and foster a reputation based on trust between all of its digital environments and consumers. It aims to build “premium content environments” (Bass et al., 2010: 14) with the primary objective of generating business with advertisers. According to Richard Freudenstein, CEO of News Digital Media and the Australian, News Limited aims to create and distribute high quality content to attract and engage mass audiences so it can then go on to “monetise those audiences” (Freudenstein, 2011: 1; Melbourne Press Club, 2012). With more than 1.5 billion page impressions per year for news.com.au the company aims to generate enough paying subscribers to please its advertisers and therefore be good for the business (Freudenstein, 2011: 1–3). While it does not cost anything to access news.com.au and it will remain free for the foreseeable future, Editorial Director Campbell Reid points out that this particular news site does not “publish anywhere near all of the content from the metro sites” (Mumbrella, 2013), so in other words, the public has to pay a fee to gain access to the content it needs to support enlightened self-governing.

In 2008, almost three years after Rupert Murdoch announced that his news fold would focus on its presence in the digital world (R. Murdoch, 2005), the most important objective for News Limited was to identify and produce the kind of content that would convince people to pay for it (Alford, 2008). News Limited’s Chief Executive Officer Kim Williams reiterated this in 2012, insisting that News Limited put “consumers at the absolute centre” of what it does (Melbourne Press Club, 2012). Similarly, in 2013 Campbell Reid suggested that News Limited’s first obligation was to ensure that its content increased interactivity with online advertising, to increase profits for the online platform (Mumbrella, 2013).

While this digital strategy largely focuses on the business aspect of News Limited, efforts to show that it remains true to high quality journalism are exemplified by the promotion of its news products as “news which is accurate and impartial [and] is written and edited by professional journalists” (Bass et al., 2010: 8), and ensuring its
content is of the highest quality (Melbourne Press Club, 2012). Its commitment to its role as a member of the Fourth Estate is reiterated by Freudenstein’s contention that, “when it comes to breaking stories, holding our governments and public institutions to account, newspapers are by far the most important medium” (Freudenstein, 2011: 2). This assertion is supported by Clive Mathieson who says, “people come to the Australian for opinion, and breaking, big and important, national stories” (Mathieson, 2009). For this reason, it is committed to maintaining the high quality content enjoyed by “discerning readers, business and political leaders, and anyone at the top end of the market” (Mathieson, 2009).

This description illustrates the interconnectedness between business and journalism, which generally draws considerable criticism from news media observers and theorists based on the assumption that the public interest takes a back seat to business interests (McQuail, 2005; Picard, 2004; Schechter, 2005; G. Turner, 2010). The dominant argument put forward by Fourth Estate theorists advocates that news content marketed as a commodity risks becoming superficial, derivative and standardised (Picard, 2004: 54). Commercially run newsrooms tend to focus attention toward the popular and “safe issues” (McQuail, 2005: 125) at the expense of socially responsible reportage so they do not risk losing valuable clientele. Editors and journalists at the Australian express their awareness of these practices and emphasise that their publication makes every effort to distinguish itself from competitors who engage in such practice, including those in their own stable—for example, The Courier Mail, described by Simons as “lazy populism” (Simons, 2007)—who have taken that path (Alford, 2008; Mathieson, 2009).

Another common criticism of commercial news media is that it marginalises political news coverage in favour of lighter content, because politics does not sell (Schechter, 2005: 17). In response to these kinds of statements, Murdoch assures his critics that he is aware that the public wants “good, ethical, factual journalism” (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 3) and that he is focussed on providing it with “debate on the great issues of the day with informed comment on both sides of every issue” (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 3). Certainly, those News Limited journalists interviewed for this research support his assertion (Alford, 2008; Bolt, 2009; Mathieson, 2009; Megalogenis, 2009; P.
Wilson, 2008), however management clearly states that the overarching aim of News Limited is concerned with producing content to sell products (Mumbrella, 2013).

5.1 News Limited Business Model

News Limited print and online publications are directly funded by classified advertising, transactional revenue, display advertising and subscription revenue. While the emergence of the Internet is known to have had a negative impact on the news industry’s traditional business model, particularly display advertising, the Internet is only part of the reason for the global decline in this component of the business model, as “advertisers were leaving newspapers before the Internet arrived” (Megalogenis, 2009).

As shown in Chapters 1 and 2, there is a great deal of controversy about the ethics, effectiveness and value of the subscription model for online news publications. The main points of contention revolve around the obligation and social responsibility of news providers to ensure inclusivity and equality of access to all members of society. Further, given the plethora of freely shared content across the Internet, the construction of paywalls is sometimes deemed to be a potentially unwise business decision. However, encouraged by the early subscriber numbers at the Wall Street Journal and The Times (London), Murdoch went ahead and monetised premium content in the online edition of the Australian (Mathieson, 2009), a decision he justified on the basis that, “the business model based mainly on advertising is dead” (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 19). The decision, widely rejected by critics as an exclusionary and anti-democratic practice, came about because the company’s news holdings could no longer generate enough revenue to create the financial strength required to support its journalism. Murdoch said, “with our disciplined approach to monetizing our brands, I believe we are better situated than ever to capitalise on the increasing global demand for our superior content” (News Corporation, 2012).

News Limited rejects criticisms of its social commitment by pointing out that the subscription model does not apply to interactive content, including blogs, therefore it does not prevent citizens from engaging with political debates. Furthermore, it contends the niche content that is available behind the paywall is expected to
generate support, based on the organisation’s trusted brand, its unique style of journalism (Mathieson, 2009), and the banks of archived information and useful resources that it provides (Alford, 2008).

Criticisms of the subscription model are impacted by three key developments. The first is that many news organisations throughout the industry are moving to the same model because they too are experiencing operating losses. Second, there is evidence that the model can work, for example the New York Times now generates more money from subscriptions than from advertising (Lee, 2012). More specifically, digital subscriptions were expected to account for 12 percent of the organisation’s total subscription sales for 2012 (Lee, 2012). Third, in response to the argument that everyone should have access to the news regardless of his or her ability to pay, Murdoch says the cost of producing online news is much lower than the production and distribution costs generated by the traditional print publications, so subscribers actually enjoy a lower price for online journalism than for print editions.

In addition to applying subscription fees to its key news holdings, News Corporation reviewed the possibilities for the range of mobile and reader devices that could be used to deliver news content to its customers. Further evidence of Murdoch’s desire to “propertise” (Balkin, 2006) the knowledge and information produced by his news organisations was revealed when he rejected partnering with the Kindle brand because it would have required him to relinquish the rights to his content (Tabakoff, 2009). Determined to maintain full control over content and pricing, he turned to the Apple iPad as the next viable option. Murdoch was so impressed by the ease with which the iPad could deliver content to paying customers that he launched The Daily, an iPad only application (R. Murdoch, 2010a). At a cost of ninety-nine cents per week or thirty-nine dollars per year, The Daily was promoted as a “news experience … combining world-class storytelling with the unique interactive capabilities of the iPad” (2011). However, in mid-2012 the New York Times reported that The Daily was losing $30 million a year (Chozick, 2012; Filloux, 2012).

The Daily’s problems were illustrated by reports showing the extreme differences in the levels of engagement and interactivity between The Daily and the Huffington Post during the Mitt Romney tax return issue, which saw The Daily generate 179
comments compared to the Huffington Post’s 28,464. At the time, Staci Kramer did not see this as a failure, and pointed out that new technologies need time to evolve before they take hold. While she expected The Daily to overcome its problems and to grow over the next two years (Kramer, 2012) on December 3, 2012 (Sonderman, 2012), News Corporation told The Daily staff that it was forced to close because it had not been able to build a big enough audience to sustain its business plan (Taintor, 2012). The Daily’s editor-in-chief Jesse Angelo told The Daily editorial teams that although the publication had “over 100,000 passionate paying subscribers” it simply was not enough to continue.

The Australian is now available to people as hard copy, and is accessible via their desktops, iPads and smart phones, all for a fee. Facing the controversy surrounding the Australian’s subscription fee and the global decline in print news sales, News Limited CEO Kim Williams told the Melbourne Press Club in 2012 that all of the Australian’s digital newspaper platforms were doing well (Melbourne Press Club, 2012). He reported that the print edition’s continued growth was evident in figures that showed the company was selling more than 11 million newspapers every week, and the Australian had 1.1 million unique visitors to its website and 1.14 million to its mobile website (Melbourne Press Club, 2012). Figures released by the Audit Bureau of Circulation in 2013 supported this, showing a growth of 39,539 digital subscribers to the Australian over a period of three months (NewsSpace, 2013).

5.2 Print News: Transition Online

The Wall Street Journal’s managing editor Robert Thomson believes the decline of news publications around the world is, in part, an effect of the industry’s aversion to change (Thomson, 2007). Failure to embrace the technological changes affecting the news industry is most prevalent in countries where there is a lack of media competition. In cities such as London where there are at least seventeen competing news organisations, competition drives publications to aggressively respond to professional and business challenges (Thomson, 2007). Since there are far fewer publications in competition with each other in Australia than there are in London, if Thomson (2007) is correct, then that may explain why News Limited arrived online much later than international publications such as The Times (London)125 or the
Guardian, for example. Overall, News Corporation’s global network of news publications was relatively late to adopt the online environment but News Limited was the latest of all. While Murdoch was initially unsure about how to make a profit online, as recently as ten years ago, when dial-up was the prevalent means to access the World Wide Web, there were few people online who had sufficient bandwidth to download multi-media content, so from his point of view there was little urgency to allocate a lot of resources to the online environment.

In 2005 however, in addition to his address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Murdoch announced to a News Limited editors meeting that every journalist would write for online first and print would become secondary. This was not an indication that Murdoch had given up on the future of print newspapers. On the contrary, his organisation operated with a belief that new media technologies enhanced the capacity for traditional news media organisations to produce and distribute compelling content to people on a much wider scale than was possible before the introduction of the Internet and its associated technologies (Allan, 2006). Rather, Murdoch’s move online was an attempt to regain some of the ground lost during the economic downturn, which saw a dramatic drop in newspaper sales throughout the world. Newspapers that had successfully migrated online, such as the Guardian, showed an increased readership that extended beyond its traditional reach and its national borders ("Who killed the newspaper?," 2006). News Corporation had become acutely aware that the news organisations that understood how to use modern publishing devices would lead the field (R. Murdoch, 2005; Thomson, 2007).

The decision to publish news online created a new editorial challenge that involved decisions about the kind of content that ought be posted online and when it should be posted (Thomson, 2007). News Limited journalists said their digital news sites aimed to create an interactive experience that functioned to complement rather than duplicate the print edition (Megalogenis, 2009). With the aid of communities of comment, linkages to both internal and external sites, and easy to navigate archives, the Australian website aimed to put complicated political events and issues into context with the help of the public (R. Murdoch, 2005). Like other News Corporation
news holdings such as the *Wall Street Journal* and the *The Times* (London), the *Australian* website aimed to become an “online experience” (Thomson, 2007).

One of the economic advantages to online publishing is the ability to endlessly repurpose content in different formats on multiple platforms. As such, the *Australian* sources a lot of its international content from the *The Times* (London) (Thomson, 2007), the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Dow Jones* (Mathieson, 2009). Furthermore, the stable of News Corporation news outlets take the opportunity to maximise profits by repurposing English content for publications in non-English speaking locales such as India, Dubai, Tokyo and Poland (Thomson, 2007).

In 2007, Thomson said the *Australian* was naturally positioned to seize the opportunities to increase its relevance and capitalise on the global business and finance spheres. He expected the number of Indian readers of English language publications such as the *The Times* (London) and the *Australian* to dramatically increase in the near future. Given that India is one the key countries of economic and business growth, he said the *Australian*’s geographical location and time zone positions it ahead of China and the US, which means it has the advantage of being able to aggregate and package news about commodities for India before the beginning of business hours (Thomson, 2007). This example illustrates the innovative ways in which news organisations can use Web 2.0 technologies to identify and cultivate niche audiences.

**News Limited’s Transition**

Michael Stutchbury led News Limited’s transition from print to online news (P. Wilson, 2008). In the beginning, journalists were reluctant to make the change, simply because it was new and they were more concerned with the ongoing activities and demands of the traditional newsroom. The move online represented a huge cultural shift for many news workers, with many of the lower level reporters being the first to enter the new environment. The high-level reporters did not consider the online world important until the announcement that News Limited online was to become a high priority. As the publication’s most authoritative voices began to emerge online, the growth of the platform began to increase (P. Wilson, 2008).
Each of News Limited’s mastheads has a separate identity, which creates an editorial challenge for the organisation since it shares most of its available resources across the organisation. The *Australian* is separate from and competes with the other News Limited publications, yet each of the other sites has access to most of the *Australian*’s resources (P. Wilson, 2008). The CEO continues to emphasise the need to carry on building the brand on state-by-state and national platforms. The state-based papers are primarily concerned with their own domestic issues and events, whereas the *Australian* attempts to cover national issues and events (P. Wilson, 2008).

News Limited journalists contend that Internet technology has not changed professional news values, however the emergence of many new voices has compelled the organisation to reassess the values and assets that sets it apart from the rest of the field. Based on the premise that its greatest asset is its journalism, the *Australian* continues to build its core competencies, which includes its credibility as an authoritative voice in Australian politics. Unwilling to follow the path taken by other organisations that deliberately pitch websites well below the intellectual position of their print editions to achieve “hits in the market” (P. Wilson, 2008), Wilson said that all News Limited websites aim to reflect the strength of its print publications (P. Wilson, 2008). He said failure to manage the print and online platforms with identical values risks a misrepresentation of the masthead, which could potentially decrease the overall value of the publication.  

While the *Australian* certainly makes every effort to make money too, it aims to be more considered than News Limited’s other publications (Mathieson, 2009). It focuses on a long-term goal, which is to preserve the integrity and value of the brand and ensure a seamless migration of the masthead online. Even though it is well known that “politics does not get the clicks” (P. Wilson, 2008), the online edition represents itself with an international and national political perspective. It aims to lead the news with comment and analysis on politics, finance journalism and sport (P. Wilson, 2008). Simons concedes that the paper has had some good moments, for example when it was the first to express doubt about the Howard Government’s children overboard story; but it has a healthier share of the not so good moments,
when it had been “profuse” in its praise for John Howard and his “culture warriors of the Right” (Simons, 2007).

Mathieson said the Australian serves a large and loyal audience, comprised of a diversity of interests and “people come to the Australian for opinion, for breaking, big, national, important stories” (Mathieson, 2009), which is what distinguishes it from other Australian publications. He said News International publications such as the Wall Street Journal and the Times of London maintain their quality in the same fashion (Mathieson, 2009).

**Developing a New Skill Set for Converging Platforms**

By 2009, almost everyone at News Limited was working online (Mathieson, 2009). The online environment required journalists to file more regularly, quickly, and at different points of the day. It also demanded a new skill set, which included audio, video and still photography production (Mathieson, 2009): “All of our sub-editors upload content; they sub-edit the newspaper and work across the online platform too” (Mathieson, 2009). The few people that do not work on both platforms are moderators, artwork staff, the business editor, subset business editor, and the news editor. There was only one reporter who wrote exclusively for the online environment, everyone else was expected to write for both editions (Mathieson, 2009).

The use of Web 2.0 technologies has had a profound effect on journalism at News Limited. Day-to-day operations quickly became more efficient and significantly easier (Mathieson, 2009). Web 2.0 technology has expanded traditional practice beyond the days when newsgathering involved journalists spending a lot of time in libraries, or constantly flipping through manila folders containing story files and clippings, to gain background information for their stories. Today, “the vast majority of background research can be done using the Internet” (Mathieson, 2009). In the past, journalists had to be much more resourceful, especially with stories that were hard to break into. Peter Alford recalls a story that required him to spend weeks sifting through microfiche at the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) (Alford, 2008). Clive Mathieson says journalists have always had to rely heavily on their own memory, which “is why rounds 127 people were so cherished, because they had to
carry a lot of information around in their heads” (Mathieson, 2009). Now it is much more efficient to search and research online and store information digitally (Alford, 2008; Mathieson, 2009). Journalists never need to leave their desks to find people, addresses, and formal documents, since all can be done online (Mathieson, 2009).

When journalists had to rely on paper-based archives, there was no way of identifying and correcting any errors that may have been made by the original reporter. Subsequently, the same errors were often repeated (P. Wilson, 2008). Today, there are many information networks available to journalists, which enable them to triangulate sources of information in a much more in-depth verification process than was possible in the past. Overall, it is much easier for journalists to gather news, research in preparation for interviews and for backgrounding stories, locate experts and develop a comprehensive understanding of their expertise before talking to them, to find multiple sources and deploy different methods to verify information, and to add new perspectives and greater depth to stories (Alford, 2008; P. Wilson, 2008). “Journalists are now much more informed than they were in the past” (Alford, 2008).

While some raise concern that the ease of Internet assisted reporting may lead to the erosion of journalism’s core methods (Osnos, 2009: 5), Mathieson says in addition to using the Internet, good journalists will continue to “wear out shoe leather by going out and getting the stories themselves” (Mathieson, 2009). Similarly, Andrew Bolt agrees that good practice still requires practitioners to “go out and talk to people for information”, and, where required, to physically go to the library to find documents (Bolt, 2009). Margaret Simons says that News Limited journalists are known for their commitment to “shoe leather” reporting (Simons refers specifically to the Herald-Sun) (Simons, 2007).

Before the Internet, a large proportion of correspondents’ time was taken-up trying to get to a phone to dictate stories to a copywriter, or to finding a telex machine. Now, journalists in the field can file copy from anywhere in the world at any time, using mobile technologies. Peter Alford, News Limited’s Tokyo correspondent said his mobile phone had become his mobile office (Alford, 2008). Similarly, Kevin Anderson recalled the difficulty of filing stories from the field before the availability
of digital technologies while in his different roles for the *Guardian* and the *BBC*. He too appreciates the ease of transmitting multimedia content from the scene of an event in almost any locale. The Internet and mobile technology allow journalists to transmit stories, uninterrupted, to the public by means of ongoing story updates and interactivity, which often now includes citizen-produced content (K. Anderson, 2008). Using digital platforms enables journalists to interactively engage with readers, to provide more in-depth information, to be more transparent by providing links to sources of information, and to openly engage in collaborative practice.

However the immediacy of the online environment has a number of drawbacks for journalism. The Internet has increased competition between news organisations and independent blog services for the public’s attention and, as a result, the *Australian* has ramped up its efforts to get stories up and out immediately. This is a significant change and challenge to the traditional operations that saw stories cleared as editorially sound then published on the following day (Mathieson, 2009). Breaking news is published instantly, however News Limited blogs, for the most part, are strategically updated to coincide with peak access times (Bolt, 2009). Most journalists file stories for multiple platforms (Bolt, 2009), which raises a number of issues for some journalists. Mathieson says the new course of action is necessary because News Limited now competes for attention on a “minute-by-minute basis rather than daily basis” (Mathieson, 2009).

The problems caused by this strategy are recognised throughout the industry. It is argued that instant publishing prevents journalists from providing the appropriate analytical elements to their stories, which ultimately causes the online platform to become little more than a “wire service” (P. Wilson, 2008). For high profile political reporters, the requirement to work across multiple platforms raises the question of whether they should immediately work toward filing online stories as they break, which may involve creating video and audio, or whether it is best for them to get on the phone, research, analyse and file a more in-depth analysis and a much better story at a later time. Keeping in mind that most people go home from work at 5pm, it is unlikely that journalists would complete their research on the same day if required to file online first (P. Wilson, 2008).
The *Australian* has addressed this problem with the appointment of a journalist to work exclusively online and attend press conferences with the political journalist. While this approach requires a doubling of resources, it meets two objectives that directly benefit the business model: it allows the news service to publish content as it happens, while also providing in-depth analytical articles, which contribute to the public debate (P. Wilson, 2008).

### 5.3 Technologies of Journalism: New Participatory and Deliberative Spaces

News Limited journalists publish news content in three distinct formats: print newspaper, online news columns, and news blogs. It hosts approximately thirty-five blogs across all of its publications, which provide information and opinion on topics including politics, finance, economics, current affairs, advice on relationships, parenting, workplace relationships, spirituality, election coverage, technology, social and cultural issues, movies, music and literature, fashion, environment and political satire. News Limited’s network of blogs is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the website and of the newspaper’s online presence (Alford, 2008).

In the early stages of blogging, there was a broad concern that the act of blogging, largely performed by people independent of mainstream media, had the potential to render the traditional news industry redundant, which led to their reputation as key enemies of traditional news media (Thomson, 2007). As shown in Chapter 1, by 2008 Murdoch revealed a different view of the blogosphere than the one he expressed during his 2005 address to the American Society of News Editors. No longer embracing the blogosphere, he decided that it was one of a number of digital apparatuses that interrupted the interaction between advertisers and consumers on his news sites, which significantly reduced his ability to generate profits. In 2010 Murdoch’s stance against the practices of independent bloggers had become more complex than the problems they caused to his companies ability to fulfil their obligations to advertisers. It now included opposition to the baseless notion that those covering the news independent of traditional news media may eventually have the support of the powerful to dominate the public debate, thereby rendering the true traditional watchdogs of society silent: “[It] would certainly serve the interests of the
powerful if professional journalists were muted – or replaced as navigators in our society by bloggers and bloviators” (R. Murdoch, 2010b). While Murdoch concedes that bloggers are entitled to hold a social role, he argues, “that role is very different to that of the professional seeking to uncover facts, however uncomfortable” (R. Murdoch, 2010b). This view is consistent with his long held concerns that the public should understand the place of independent bloggers compared to professional journalists, that bloggers are not as relevant because they are not as reliable as mainstream services, that they do not uphold the traditional principles of journalism, moreover “even the best intentioned amateur blogger doesn’t hold the same standards of accuracy or accountability as a professional journalist” (Freudentstein, 2009).

James Taranto of the *Wall Street Journal* expressed a similar view in 2008 when he said that independent blogs, for the most part, do not do original reporting, instead most of what they do in terms of politics and public policy is to take the reported information that mainstream media have produced and then comment on it (Taranto, 2008). He said journalism necessitates requires reporters to gather information, so while there are some bloggers who do their own reporting, the public still needs the mainstream media to continue to cover what is happening in the world.128 (Taranto, 2008). Andrew Bolt goes further and argues independent bloggers are too reliant upon mainstream news media for self-validation. He observes that they are often critical of mainstream media’s supposed failure to “pick up” on what they are saying about a topic. He said it is almost as though they believe their work does not count unless mainstream media acknowledge it, and even though bloggers champion their independence, paradoxically, “many bloggers consider the acknowledgement of their work by mainstream news media as a kind of legitimisation of their view” (Bolt, 2009).

Denis Muller expresses a different opinion on the value of the blogosphere by saying that the presence of bloggers provides traditional news media discourses with a new accountability (Muller, 2007). Muller’s views are significant because he was one of the pollsters whose data was used by the bloggers criticised by News Limited during the coverage of the 2007 Australian Federal Election. While the *Australian* criticised bloggers for their analysis and reports of the Newspolls showing that the Howard
government was headed for probable defeat, and that the campaign was not close or equal, nor was it entirely one sided as it had been reported by the *Australian* (Muller, 2007), Muller praised the bloggers, saying the best ones drew out more in-depth information from the data than any of the traditional news organisations (Muller, 2007). In this instance, the main problem the *Australian* had with the blogosphere was that bloggers had the capacity to publish reflective comment and analysis—which happened to be in opposition to the ideological line being promoted by some reporters at the *Australian*—derived through a range of statistical investigations of original raw data provided directly to them by a variety of media pollsters, without going through traditional news media channels. Moreover, the quality of information produced by the data analysts/bloggers proved to be something very different from the unverified and repurposed content Rupert Murdoch said bloggers were best known for (R. Murdoch, 2005).

*Australian* journalist George Megalogenis said that when blogging was new, there was uncertainty about the extent to which the blogosphere would challenge the relevance of mainstream news media, however the prevailing view now holds that there “is room for everybody in that space” (Megalogenis, 2009). Megalogenis believes that the uptake of journalism practice by independent bloggers has been helpful to journalism, and generally good for the profession, because it provides a diversity of voices and easily challenges particular points of view, bias and accounts of events (Megalogenis, 2009).

The growth of blogging by traditional news media has resulted in an explosion in opinion-based news coverage, which according to James Taranto is one of the most disturbing trends in journalism. He says it is fine for the *New York Times* to have an opinion page, just as it is fine for the *Wall Street Journal* to have an editorial page (Taranto, 2008), however opinion should complement rather than dominate the organisation’s original reporting. He says the *Wall Street Journal* produces an unusually large amount of reporting on its editorial page, which he says is good practice, as “journalistic enterprises that are moving more toward more opinion are doing themselves a disservice because they are weakening what they do best” (Taranto, 2008).
Murdoch does not see anything wrong with journalists expressing their opinion, in fact he believes they should always be forthcoming with their opinions because, he says, “they’re all citizens, they vote” (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 42). While he encourages this kind of reportage, especially where it supports News Corporation’s political goals and interests, he says all of his news publications also include political opinion that opposes the organisation’s goals and interests. Plotz contends that these are merely “window dressing” (Plotz, 2000), however regardless of political and business alliances, Murdoch insists that News Corporation journalists throughout the world are as devoted to uncovering corporate misdeeds as any other news organisations (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 44).

Andrew Bolt positions himself as politically conservative, which he contends is an advantage in Australian journalism, “if you are on the Left, it’s like a forest and it’s hard to stand out, however if you are one of the few conservatives, there are not that many people crowding in on you” (Bolt, 2009). Bolt’s estimation of the political persuasions of Australian journalists was confirmed by a 2013 study that found “more than half (51.0%) describe themselves as holding left-of-centre political views, compared with only 12.9% who consider themselves right-of-centre” (Hanusch, 2013).

Bolt is renowned for being provocative, with the *ABC’s Q&A* program describing him as:

“A conservative provocateur who delights in aggravating his critics and attacking the cultural sacred cows and superstitions of the New Age, Andrew is never far from controversy and attracts a deluge of pro and anti correspondence in the blogosphere for his commentary” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013).

Bolt says the main aim of his work is to engage people with political issues, therefore he writes to get people talking and reacting to his opinion. He says he is not interested in writing simply for the sake of creating controversy, or to provoke people, but he does want to challenge the status quo. He will not entertain the idea of using a “timid journalistic style of writing” (Bolt, 2009) because he says reading
timid prose is a bit like “reading wallpaper” (Bolt, 2009), and contends it is less likely to generate as much interest as his forthright style does.

Bolt attributes the large volume of comments and the high number of clicks he receives on his blog to his style and to his enthusiasm for interactivity. He says interactivity with the audience is paramount to his work and while he says much of his work is “endorsed by a great many people,” he gets his fair share of criticism, too. Bolt says he never shies away from “replying to even the most reactive responses” and believes that the “particularly vehement” commenters are those “who tend to hog the media square” (Bolt, 2009).

Economics specialist George Megalogenis says that journalists are in a position to be able to begin debates that perhaps neither side of politics wants to have. While they ought to argue passionately on the issues they believe are important, the case they make must be based on fact. He says people in the blogosphere are not conflicted about presenting objective arguments because they come to it from a different perspective. There are Right and Left leaning bloggers who do not shy away from their own political ideology, but unlike Bolt, Megalogenis contends that experienced journalists ought to, and generally do, know where they can and cannot go with political debates (Megalogenis, 2009). Mark Bahnisch, too, takes a slightly different view to Bolt on the impact of independent bloggers suggesting that they have a greater capacity to publish “reflective and controversial analysis, and to quickly follow up developments”, than traditional news media journalists, which he says is the “real service of the blogosphere” (Bahnisch, 2005).

Megalogenis said that the blog platform provides yet another advantage for professional journalists since it enables the public to instantly bring errors of fact to the attention of the reporter (Megalogenis, 2009), and that it is unwise for journalists to underestimate the knowledge and energy of readership. If a journalist unwittingly strikes a nerve, a deluge of abusive comments are most likely to be posted to the blog comment forum, which he says, usually undermines the quality of debate.
The Meganomics Blog

Megalogenis said that his attitude toward interactivity constantly evolves with every issue and event (Megalogenis, 2009). The *Meganomics* blog began in the lead up to the 2007 Australian Federal election and it was created with a view of increasing public engagement with public affairs and adding value to news journalism. Megalogenis said the platform was an ideal space to post content that was unable to fit into the print edition, yet important enough to the public debate to warrant further explanation and public deliberation. The readership could use the blog to absorb and discuss a greater volume of content than was possible with the print edition alone. He said the blog was particularly useful when he wanted to publish large amounts of statistical data generated during the course of his investigative work (Megalogenis, 2009). The use of the Meganomics blog to publish the raw facts behind his work was a practical approach to reporting because not only did it provide the readership with more in-depth information, it also served to make his journalism more transparent. Furthermore, it gave his readers the opportunity to analyse and draw their own conclusions about the data, which they could then share in the blog’s comment forum. Megalogenis said that he continued to use the blogging platform after the election because he saw the opportunity, not only as a way to increase interactivity between him, his readers and other bloggers, but to make those collaborations more productive. He said his readers could soundly expect to be able to continue the public conversation on the blog (Megalogenis, 2009).

Megalogenis said there are a number of points that journalists need to consider when running a blog, such as the originality and type of content, and the tone of voice. Given that readers now have access to a much wider range of content, journalists need to be aware that their view is only a small part of a much broader formation of opinion. With this in mind, it is necessary for journalists to find interesting and innovative ways to explain their topic areas and tell their stories to readers.

Megalogenis described how he used his blog to add a different perspective to one of the most important debates, Australia’s policy on professional immigrants, in the lead up to the 2007 Federal election. The debate was comprised of a number of issues, some of which were encapsulated in the charges of terrorism brought against an immigrant, Doctor Mohamed Haneef, which highlighted government policies on
terrorism and immigration. Megalogenis said, “one of the dangers of venturing online is the risk of very quickly getting caught up in information that is already available, and journalists are not really interested in presenting what is already out there, most are more interested in what is new” (Megalogenis, 2009). So with the aim of bringing something new to public knowledge, he researched the distribution of ethnic populations within the incumbent Prime Minister’s electorate, and published his findings on the blog.

He said, his approach to the issue generated a very animated response, which comprised of a diversity of viewpoints, some of which he had not previously considered. The liveliness of the readership and the capacity of the blog to enrich his network of contacts and sources was realised by Megalogenis almost immediately (Megalogenis, 2009). He describes the Internet as “one of the most exciting mediums out there” and says journalists can make whatever they want out of it (Megalogenis, 2009). The main approach to online journalism for Megalogenis has been to test what works best for him and his readers and to learn from the mistakes. He says he writes for a loyal and unique following of readers who are interested in his journalism for the same reasons he produces it. He said unless online journalists are willing to make an effort to provide something extra to what the public already knows, as he did with the immigration issue in 2007, they are likely to become “a passive vehicle online, taking in abuse and praise from readers” who are perhaps motivated by different reasons to the journalist (Megalogenis, 2009). Unfazed by whether the readers agree with his point of view, he says he writes about the issues that he finds interesting. He says that although he wants his point of view to be challenged, he expects it ought to be in a way that is socially acceptable and respectful of others (Megalogenis, 2009).

Megalogenis said he enjoys the interactive discussions enabled by the blogging platform, but also expresses concern about those who attempt to dominate the discussion with negativity. The problem with Web 2.0 platforms, he explains, is that it is easy to bully. Like many professional journalist/bloggers (See Chapter 3), Megalogenis has first hand experience with anti-social incidents involving some readers who post “toxic” (Megalogenis, 2009) comments to his blog. The intensity of the antagonism expressed in his comment forums caused him to investigate why this
was happening, which in turn led to his discovery that the readers posting anti-social comments to his blog were doing the same thing to nearly every blog on the Australian. Megalogenis responded to the problem by calling all participants to account. He said he introduced stringent new rules about the way he wanted people to address each other and the way they addressed topics on his blog. He devised a strategy to moderate comments to ensure that those containing personal abuse were excluded, and he delayed posting anything that “read like a press release by a political party” (Megalogenis, 2009) until a low traffic period.

Megalogenis describes Web 2.0 platforms as “one level more anarchic than talkback radio” (Megalogenis, 2009). He says while talkback producers can spot the axe-grinders and may choose to bait the audience, he suggests that the unfettered comments generated by this model have the potential to damage the organisation’s brand. In light of this, the Meganomics blog is not left to chance, it runs according to pre-defined social values and principles (Megalogenis, 2009).

Megalogenis aimed to encourage as many people who wanted to participate in the discussions on his blog to post comments. He said he consistently tried to motivate inactive readers to participate because he wanted to gain an understanding of their views on a range of issues and events. Blog analytics provided him with information about the ratio of clicks to responses on his blog, so if he were to see a ratio of one hundred to one, for example, he would pay greater attention to ways of bringing the inactive ninety-nine into the conversation. He says if he was unable to bring those readers on-board, at the very least he wanted to understand what they were thinking and what they expected to gain from his blog. That kind of understanding, he says, is what affects the agenda of what he posts online in the future (Megalogenis, 2009).

The Bolt Blog

Andrew Bolt, journalist and host of the Bolt Blog at the Herald Sun, says his methods of gathering and verifying information have changed in many ways since he started using Web 2.0 technologies. A traditional print journalist, he has become a significant member of the online environment too, with each platform adding value to his journalism for different reasons. Bolt says each format is “a home for a
particular type of content” (Bolt, 2009) with the blog functioning as a scrapbook of ideas, and print containing a finished story.

Bolt holds no doubt that the blog is a beneficial resource for his journalism and for his readers. He said he uses it to provide readers with a draft formulation of his ideas, to store content that interests him and that he may want to develop in the future, and to generate critical feedback. It provides a suitable and easy way to search for archived content and allows him to crowdsource information from his readers, a practice that he says often leads to the inclusion of more in-depth information in his reports. He said it allows him to tell stories with a broader range of tools, including video and graphs, which he can use much more extensively than is possible in the print edition. He says Web 2.0 tools provide him with more scope to tell stories in ways that foster a deeper understanding of complex political issues. It is the perfect solution to making use of content that is important to the public interest but is far too long to be published in the paper (Bolt, 2009). Chapter 2 showed that the allocation of space and time in traditional media sites (print and broadcast) has long been one of the key limitations of their use as sites of political expression and deliberation. Bolt’s use of the blog as a compliment and/or extension of his print journalism shows that he has overcome these limitations.

Chapter 2 presented arguments indicating that journalism has traditionally relied on a prescribed set of sources when gathering information (Goodman, 2010), which has the capacity to leave journalists open to manipulation and sometimes results in the production of news narratives based on agendas that may not necessarily be in the public interest. Bolt and Megalogenis both believe that the online media environment presents journalists with greater opportunity to include a much more diverse range of voices, which theoretically, according to McQuail, provides the public with a greater connection to each other and a better understanding of social norms (McQuail, 2005: 52).

Like Megalogenis, Bolt, too, says journalists have become much more vulnerable to instant feedback and critical analysis of their work and viewpoints, which in his experience has presented both positive and negative challenges to his and other journalists’ public profiles. Bolt came to the blogosphere as an established high
profile journalist, however his use of Web 2.0 technologies has provided him with even greater scope to raise his profile (A. Summers, 2011) and to generate significantly more engagement with public issues that he believes are important to the social, political and economic interests of Australia (Bolt, 2009).

Bolt likens the concept of ‘public interest’ to “a rolling snowball”, and said, “the hardest thing is to get the snowball started” (Bolt, 2009). As a journalist, he sees it as his responsibility to get it started. He said, “once public interest is raised and journalists begin to get feedback, then it becomes mutually reinforcing” (Bolt, 2009). This view is consistent with the theories of deliberation described in Chapter 2 where Gutmann and Thompson, for example, say online communication encourages citizens to confront their problems by listening to others (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996: 16), and Gimmler, who says the instant and direct communication enabled by digital technologies adds more depth of understanding on more issues than ever before (Gimmler, 2001).

Bolt is emphatic that the issues and concerns discussed in the Bolt Blog are grounded in Australian politics. According to Bolt, the most distinctive characteristic of his blog is its original analysis of significant issues and events. He says his main aim is to provide enough background and information to show people when they are not being told the truth. In keeping with the fundamental elements that shape an opinion blog, Bolt says: “I comment on what happens and on what I read, and I try to produce new information” (Bolt, 2009). He says he aims to use his blog to arm people with information that they would not ordinarily get: “I find the things people have not been told yet, and I tell them about it” (Bolt, 2009). He challenges popular opinion on a range issues, for example “the stolen generation” (Bolt, 2009), which he identifies as being dominated by prejudice. Bolt is largely concerned that most of the popular debate presents people with recycled information, which he says is not necessarily the truth. He says, even if people do not like the line he takes, his liberal and creative use of unrestricted Web space means at least nobody can say about his blog posts, “there is not enough information in them” (Bolt, 2009).

Bolt illustrated this point with a story he covered in 2006 about a military attack on a Red Cross ambulance in Lebanon by Israeli forces. The global news coverage
portrayed Israeli military forces as acting in violation of international humanitarian law. Early reports in Australia (Stack, 2006) said one of several hits happened when a bomb was dropped through the roof of the clearly marked ambulance. Bolt, unconvinced that the Israeli military had acted as reported, used his blog to reject the claims with a range of tools, including links to external sites, to provide video, still images and theories about what had happened. Using a series of images from a video re-enactment of the event, he presented a comparative analysis of the damage caused to the ambulance in the re-enactment and in the actual event. Bolt used his blog to present his research, analysis and findings, which shaped and supported his argument that the original story was in fact “a hoax” (Bolt, 2006) and merely “Hezbollah propaganda” (Bolt, 2006).

Bolt says the blog provides him with much more scope to talk through these kinds of issues, “more so than in the paper” (Bolt, 2009) and says it is a good way to present content that is of interest to a “niche audience” (Bolt, 2009). He further illustrated the capabilities of the blog platform, compared to print, with a description of how he used it to show what he perceived as biased news coverage by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) current affairs host, Kerry O’Brien. Bolt compared and contrasted the different approaches taken by O’Brien, when interviewing then Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Opposition leader, Malcolm Turnbull. He posted transcripts of each interview, side by side, with annotations showing the differences in style and technique. He points out that this kind of analysis is generally unsuitable for print publication due to its length and because it would not necessarily be of interest to a wider mass audience. Moreover, the available print space does not allow for this kind of side-by-side presentation.

The interactive nature of the blog platform ensures Bolt receives what he refers to as his fair share of objections, first-hand accounts and new information and perspectives from his readers. Bolt has grown a very large participatory audience, which means he receives a diversity of comment from contributors, some of which is very informative to his work (Bolt, 2009). The pay off, he says, for “putting himself out there” (Bolt, 2009), is that he gets a lot of valuable research done for him by the people “formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006). Bolt says he would never have the time to do most of what his readers do for him, however he reassures that he
still has to work hard. He contends the popularity of his blog is a direct result of the thought and effort he puts into constructing his multimedia reports (Bolt, 2009). Anne Summers believes that the popularity of his blog is more to do with the way he has constructed his conservative persona. He discovered the benefits of creating controversy, conflict and the “division of opinion” (A. Summers, 2011) rather than the contestation of knowledge and ideas.

Bolt believes traditional news media will always occupy a dominant place in the media sphere. He says, while there is a lot of value placed on the ability of new media platforms to allow people to “find a conversation that suits” (Bolt, 2009), the important function of the traditional mass media is its role as a centralised public gathering place, where particularly significant debates are contested, legitimised or rejected.

Bolt said his agenda is to have an effect on the public debate in ways that change certain things about the political policies controlling Australian society (Bolt, 2009). His primary aim is to connect with the Australian public and he has little desire to connect with the global community. He says, “if I get read in Kazakhstan, I find that very cute but it really doesn’t alter what I really want to do” (Bolt, 2009). For example, in 2009 his main aim was to ensure then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stopped what he described as “insane emissions trading” (Bolt, 2009). He said, if the people in Kazakhstan, for example, want to agree with him, then that is “very good, it’s nice” (Bolt, 2009) but their view is not going to affect Rudd’s policy, but if ten thousand people from Rudd’s electorate said, “my God you are right, I might not vote for him next time”, then that makes a difference. Bolt said, “I want to have an effect on people in Australia” (Bolt, 2009). Bolt’s description of his approach to communicating with the Australian public is more conducive to persuasive speech than to journalism. Bolt uses his blog to influence public opinion and to promote his personal view on what is the “correct policy approach” to a range of political issues instead of providing the public with the information needed to make their own decisions about the ways in which they are governed.
International Journalism and Foreign Correspondent Columnists

Chapter 2 showed that foreign reporting is the main way people learn about what is happening in other parts of the world. Moreover, as the BBC case study has shown, international journalism takes individual nations to the world and brings the world to individual nations. The history of foreign reporting shows political ideologies, conflict, economic markets, and catastrophic events—natural and man-made (Sambrook, 2010)—drive it. While the practice has always been regarded as important, globalisation and the pervasive use of digital technologies means countries, their economies, politics and people are more connected and networked now than ever before. Therefore, the value of foreign reporting is at least as important today, if not more important, than it was in the past. While most organisations deploy foreign correspondents, Chapters 1 and 2 have shown there is a growing trend to reduce the number of foreign bureaus for a range of different reasons and News Limited is one of the many organisations that have suffered cutbacks in this area. In 2008, Peter Alford and Peter Wilson were Tokyo and London correspondents, respectively, for the Australian. The London bureau closed in 2012 (Knott, 2013). Wilson is now a columnist for the The Times (London) and Alford continues to cover Asia from Jakarta for News Limited’s print and online editions. The US desks in New York, Los Angeles and Washington have each closed leaving the Australian without any correspondents in the US at all.

In 2008, Alford said his online articles drew little interactivity with the public (Alford, 2008). Unlike many professional news blogs, as a columnist he said that with less than a half dozen unexpected contacts in any given week, he had never experienced “a swirl of activity” (Alford, 2008) that the home blogger/journalists experience with the public. Despite the low number of respondents, he takes heart that for each article that generates a response, he says there is always at least one comment that provides constructive criticism or insight that he has not identified and exposed, which inevitably improves his journalism. While there may be a number of explanations for the limited public response to Alford’s columns, Nina Eliasoph contends people are less likely to respond to issues beyond their own borders because they feel less power to make a difference (Eliasoph, 1997: 607). Conversely, Richard Sambrook argues that the things that happen beyond people’s
national borders have a “greater direct impact” on people’s lives than ever before (Sambrook, 2010: 59).

Alford indicated that the practice of interactivity with the public could be quite difficult for foreign correspondents because they were often the only person in the bureau. The task of having to read and respond to individual comments is time consuming, therefore in the interest of time management journalists have to assess the value of the comment forum in relation to the other areas of journalism. Alford said that where people using the forums simply agree with an article’s point of view, without adding anything to the story, he says it is pointless for journalists to reply. Also, to avoid “setting up cross fires” (Alford, 2008), he said he did not react to people who expressed disagreement. Alford said that News Limited’s general experience with online comments is that many people enter the conversation “with strongly held views” (Alford, 2008) and their comments were mostly reiterations of those views (Alford, 2008). Alford’s comments indicate a concern that the deliberative element of comment forums may be undermined by the entrenched and impenetrable beliefs of some members of the public and in that case it is not the best use of correspondents’ time to engage with that. While Alford said he values the deliberative opportunities afforded by the comment forum, he also recognises the need for journalists to take a considered approach to the way they manage them, ensuring their valuable time is not unnecessarily wasted. While he said he rarely engaged with comments on his column, he said he always responds to readers who email him because he sees that as a much more “direct communication” (Alford, 2008). When the public asks him for more information about specific points in any of his stories, he said he prefers to write a follow up story rather than comment in the column’s comment forum (Alford, 2008).

Alford says, interactive journalism is “one hundred per cent better” (Alford, 2008) for journalism than the traditional lecture model. He emphasises the importance of making journalists accessible to readers. He looks back to the past and wonders how journalists ever managed to function without Internet communication technology (Alford, 2008). In the past, direct communication with the readership would involve a letter to the editor or an angry phone call, and often the journalists were never told
about these communications. Today, journalists can choose a number of ways to have direct communication with the public, and vice versa (Alford, 2008).

Wilson said he wanted to see more people offering interesting and useful comments to his columns, rather than adding simplistic criticisms telling him whether his viewpoint is over- or understated. He says many of the comments he receives are from “cranks” (P. Wilson, 2008), which is not very different to responses generated by the traditional ‘Letters to the Editor’ (P. Wilson, 2008). Of course Wilson and Alford are in completely different situations to Megalogenis and Bolt because they work alone in a foreign country and they do not host their own blogs.

The *Australian* website now has a page called *View From The Bureaus*, which is the home for all of the stories by its foreign correspondents. If readers want to gain access to Alford’s stories then they are required to subscribe to the publication (see Figure 5.1 showing ticket icon beside the story title). The news columns no longer include comment forums, which is also the case at the *BBC* and the *Guardian*.


Figure 5.1. A hyperlinked text box entitled View From The Bureaus positioned on The World page of the *Australian* http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world (retrieved June 20 2013)
Moderation
The comment forums on News Limited news blogs are pre-moderated to avoid the publication of comment policy breaches (see Chapter 3 for methods of moderation). Popular blogs such as the Bolt Blog generate a high response rate therefore a team of moderators provide Bolt with support to maintain the blog’s editorial integrity (Bolt, 2009). Bolt said he has developed his own brand of moderation guidelines, which he describes as a “common sense approach” to social interaction. He says the limitation associated with using moderators is that where the values and ideas of individual moderators differ from those of the host (Bolt’s), their decisions about the kind of comment published on the blog are likely to be inconsistent with what he would ordinarily publish (Bolt, 2009). This highlights the problem with taking a common sense approach to the comment forum guidelines, since the notion of common sense is subject to a variety of ideological positions.

Megalogenis moderated his own blog, which he said was a very time consuming process. He said moderation becomes tedious when “weeding out vitriol from a minority who are not really reflective of the general readership or what the general population is thinking” (Megalogenis, 2009). He echoed Alford’s assertion that many people would come to the discussion with closed viewpoints, and said “unfortunately, this particular group tends to be very motivated and they tend to exert a lot of energy to engage in disputes” (Megalogenis, 2009). On the positive side, he said the comment forum was a great way to connect with and gain good insight from a lot of readers. He said he was often able to form ideas for opinion pieces through his interactions with the people in the comment forum (Megalogenis, 2009). Megalogenis also gave his blog community the option to use the platform to communicate information to him privately by heading their responses with “not for publication” (Megalogenis, 2009). This was possible because the blog was pre-moderated by the host, therefore there was no risk that private information would be published in the forum. Megalogenis said readers would use this method to provide him with leads to new information (Megalogenis, 2009).

Megalogenis said that many of his colleagues did not share his passion for the blog platform mostly because they had been daunted by what is increasingly referred to as “the shrill” (Megalogenis, 2009) of comment forums. However, for Megalogenis, he
said one of the “pay-offs” for interactive public forums is that you stay “match-fit” (Megalogenis, 2009), meaning that journalists are less likely to become complacent in their dealings with the public.

**Linking**

As shown in Chapter 2, the inclusion of hyperlinks in blog posts is useful for many reasons. Links enable readers to delve deeper into stories (Gillmor, 2009) and provide access to sources of information, thereby making the journalist more transparent. Weinberger says linking creates connections between people, which gives them more information about life beyond their immediate environment (Weinberger, 2008: 190). While the practice of linking is shown to be beneficial to a participatory readership, it has also proven to be a difficult task for those newsrooms functioning in print-centric environments (C. Anderson, 2011).

Even though News Limited has emphasised its commitment to digital platforms, its workflows are designed for print and therefore not conducive to the practice of linking. Megalogenis says he did not link out to external sites because it took too much time to check each link (Megalogenis, 2009). Bolt, on the other hand, said he had a stable of sites that he regularly read and linked to. However, he made a clear distinction between linking to the work of others and “simply repeating their posts whole” (Bolt, 2009), a common criticism used against bloggers and aggregators. Consistent with the views expressed by Murdoch about aggregating content, he says, “you don’t pinch someone else’s content” (Bolt, 2009).

While each of these journalists emphasise the importance of connecting with the audience, their failure to link to views beyond their own somewhat reduces their capacity to maximise their commitment to collaboration and transparency.

**Social Media**

News Limited uses platforms such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* to drive loyal and new readers to its sites (News Limited, 2012). While Murdoch said he does not see social networks as having the capacity to change the world (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 37), most of News Corporation’s news services have incorporated a range of social media platforms into their daily practice. Renee Barnes reports that, as a result, many News
Limited journalists have done a fantastic job creating relationships with readers using Twitter and other social media, especially sports journalists (News Limited, 2012).

Caroline Overington was one of the first News Limited journalists to use Twitter to report real time news, and to generate public conversation about significant events, from the scene. At a time when very few people in the organisation were using the platform for journalism, Overington attended the bushfires in Victoria with a specific mission to cover the story using Twitter “and got enormous feedback” (Mathieson, 2009). Since then, many journalists have incorporated the tool into their daily practice.

Bolt says he has no use for Twitter, moreover there is nothing about it that interests him. He said, “this medium rewards the impulse” when individuals ought to take the time to think things through (Bolt, 2009). Describing Twitter as “ephemeral”, he suggests his blog content, by comparison, is substantial enough to take a significant place in the broader formation of political discourses. Using Twitter is “like vandals who one-day spray so they can feel like they count for something, and make a difference, and that’s why they spray trains and they don’t spray garbage tips” (Bolt, 2009). He contends that the point of journalism is to reach a lot of people and to make things impossible to ignore (Bolt, 2009). Peter Wilson said he has used Twitter since 2008, however he does not tweet, rather he uses it to monitor what is happening and as a source of information (P. Wilson, 2008).

In 2008, News Limited journalists were also using Myspace and Facebook to gather news, particularly about significant news events such as the bushfires, floods, and so on. These social media platforms were used to locate friend networks and pictures for use in stories, with Facebook in particular being extremely useful (Mathieson, 2009).

**User Generated Content**

Murdoch says his news organisations encourage interactivity with their readers. He says a lot of readers write to them, but before any of his news organisations publish user-generated content, they are required to know the contributors to find out whether they can trust them (R. Murdoch, 2010a: 37).
The decision to use user-generated content in News Limited publications is impacted by whether the organisation has to pay for it and whether the content is appropriate in terms of originality, authenticity, context and quality. Bolt assesses the value of user-generated content by following traditional journalistic verification practices. Like every reputable news organisation, he said “journalists cannot publish content that cannot be verified, regardless of how good the content appears to be” (Bolt, 2009). Where user-generated content is not skilfully produced and readable, then News Limited journalists do not have time to educate the writer on journalistic production practices, and therefore the content will not be published.

This approach to user-generated content contrasts with the BBC’s collaborative methods that use the public to tell stories to reflect the social world, which according to Helen Boaden, are used to enhance its journalism (Boaden, 2008). Where the BBC newsroom incorporates user-generated content into its routine workflows, the Australian remains averse to using it at all. Other News Limited publications, for example news.com.au, solicit eyewitness photos of events to publish on the website.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how some journalists at the Australian and the Herald Sun use Web 2.0 technologies to produce and distribute news journalism. It has shown that the reason News Limited transitioned online much later than the BBC was because its business model was designed first to maximise profits rather than provide a public service. Several of News Corporation’s business executives have provided reasons why it was not in the organisation’s best interest, financially, to transition online any earlier than it did. The study has shown that News Limited’s transition from the print to digital environment occurred much later than its UK counterparts for reasons that relate directly to its business model and Australia’s media ownership rules.

The chapter has shown that News Limited has been adversely affected by the economic aspects of the crisis in journalism (as described in Chapters 1 and 2), with a loss of advertising revenue and the aggregation of its intellectual capital by organisations such as Google and other news aggregators. It also has shown why News Limited has incorporated a subscription requirement into its business model.
The description of News Limited’s digital news strategy provides a framework from which to understand the ways its journalists use Web 2.0 tools and technologies.

While the move online has increased interactivity between journalists and its audiences, which essentially enables journalists to be more inclusive of public opinion and can therefore be seen to be using methods that serve to democratise journalism, some journalists continue to use these platforms as persuasive rather than exploratory and deliberative spaces. This contrasts with the ways in which the BBC uses the same technologies to canvas a diversity of viewpoints and to better reflect the workings of the powerful and the lives of ordinary citizens. While News Limited publications, particularly the Australian and the Herald Sun, use Web 2.0 technologies to enhance the company’s business and journalism profiles, it has yet to fully embrace the participatory culture of the new information economy to the same extent as the BBC.

111 The Leveson Inquiry is an investigation into the culture, practice and ethics of the press (newspapers).
112 In June 2013 News Corporation split into two separate companies: News Corporation, which includes its newspaper holdings and book publishing assets, and 21st Century Fox, which includes its television and film businesses: http://newscorp.com/about/our-businesses/.
113 This figure includes national, regional and local editions.
114 Rupert Murdoch is also News Corporation’s major shareholder.
115 Rupert Murdoch says he grew up in a “highly centralized world where news and information were tightly controlled by a few editors, who deemed to tell us what we could and should know” (R. Murdoch, 2005)
116 For the complete history of the Leveson Inquiry, see The Leveson Inquiry: Culture, Practice and Ethics of the Press: http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/ Also at the Guardian http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/leveson-inquiry
118 News Corporation: http://www.newscorp.com/
119 While Murdoch did not specify News Limited, it can be inferred that this company was included in his business plan.
120 This includes the sites realestate.com.au, carsguide.com.au and careerguide.com.au.
121 This includes advertising on the website and in tablet applications such as The Daily. Freudenstein (2011: 10) contends readers of the Australian are more engaged with content and place greater value on the products placed alongside that content. Advertised products are aligned with the needs of the audience. (Freudenstein, 2011)
122 Subscription fees are applicable to tablet applications and were required for the Australian website from October 2011.
123 12 percent equates to $91 million out of a total of $768.3 million (Lee, 2012). Further, the New York Times does not “separate digital ad and circulation sales figures from those in its print business” (Lee, 2012).
124 See (Benton, 2011)
125 The Times (London) is published by News International, a subsidiary of News Corporation.
126 Margaret Simons provides a description of some of the News Limited publications in (Simons, 2007). She says the Daily Telegraph is “Australia’s most tabloid of tabloids… At its best, wittily incisive. At its worst, silly and destructive” (Simons, 2007), the Herald-Sun as “sharp and sometimes creative in its coverage of local news. Populist but commits to the main stories of the day. “Stirs up
mild controversy” (Simons, 2007); and the Courier Mail and the Advertiser as “lazy populism” (Simons, 2007). Courier Mail editor David Fagan rejected Simons description of his publication arguing that it “broke one of the best national political stories of the year—the Santo Santoro shares scandal” (Simons, 2007).

Endnotes:
127 Rounds reporters are also known as “beat reporters”. These reporters have specialist knowledge about particular key areas of activity in the community. These areas may include law and order, politics including parliament sittings, health and education.

128 James Taranto is American journalist who writes for the US news media. Margaret Simons contends the US blogosphere registers more political power than the Australian blogosphere.

129 One example of Bolt’s lack of restraint is illustrated in the debate over identity in Australia. See (Fanning, 2012). See also Anne Summers’ essay that describes how Bolt challenged News Limited’s commitment to freedom of speech when his inflammatory blog posts about a political matter involving the Australian Prime Minister were removed from the Web site (A. Summers, 2011).

130 Israel contends that Hezbollah used ambulances to transfer weapons (CBS Interactive Inc./Associated Press, 2010).

131 Similarly, Meyer & Hinchman (2002) provide an example that shows the failure of traditional print and broadcast platforms to adequately represent the events on the US Presidential Campaign in 2000 due to time and space constraints.

132 The Australian has correspondents posted in five locations throughout the world: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/help/contactus


134 Richard Sambrook has a different perspective on what is presented in this section about the way people view international news. Firstly he argues that globalisation has increased interdependence between countries on a range of economic, social and political issues, which in turn has caused foreign and domestic news agendas to merge. Then, with the increased number of people continually moving across borders, the things that happen beyond national and geographically defined boundaries have the potential to directly impact the lives of everybody. Based on this, he says: “There is a strong public interest argument in informing people about the rest of the world” (Sambrook, 2010: 59).

135 Andrew Bolt lists these sites as: Instapundit; Tim Blair; Vex News; and What’s Up With That.
Chapter 6   The Guardian

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the history of the *Guardian*, a British daily newspaper. It establishes the traditional aims of the publication and briefly describes its business model. It then discusses the key problem that threatens the publication’s future, namely the crisis in journalism as explained in Chapters 1 and 2, and will show the approach taken by editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger to seeking solutions to the problem. The chapter will then move on to explain when, how and why the *Guardian* transitioned from its traditional print platform to the digital news environment, and highlight some of the economic and political challenges posed to the news provider by the resultant organisational shift. It will then describe and analyse the way *Guardian* journalists incorporate the new tools and technologies of journalism with traditional practices.

The discussion will pay particular attention to what the *Guardian* aims to achieve by using interactive, participatory and deliberative channels of online communication. Drawing from an in-depth interview with Kevin Anderson, then the *Guardian’s* blogs editor, an interpretive account of Anderson’s framework for hosting an interactive online news environment that fosters productive civic engagement is presented.

The chapter is comprised of six aspects of collaboration and interactivity. First, it describes the important editorial differences between traditional news articles and blog posts. While Anderson completely embraces the *Guardian’s* use of blogging, he explains why he believes “there is still a place for news as lecture” (K. Anderson, 2008). It then focuses on the challenges presented to journalists using comment forums by looking at the ways in which journalists approach the practice of writing blog posts. An account of the ways in which Anderson thinks journalists might encourage the public to respond enthusiastically to the topics of debate posed by the *Guardian* precedes a review of its comment and moderation practices and policies. Next, it explains the *Guardian’s* approach to citizen journalism with real world examples, including the range of tools and techniques it used to provide global coverage of the 2008 US election. Fifth, the discussion turns to the topic of networked journalism by examining the ways in which the *Guardian* used the
crowdsourcing technique to investigate the misuse of ministerial expenses in the UK. It concludes by describing and analysing the ways the Guardian uses social media platforms, investigates the ways in which user-generated content is incorporated into the Guardian’s news product, and analyses how this impacts on the politics of journalism.

6.1 The Guardian Business Model

The Guardian was founded in Manchester in 1821. Since the editorship of CP Scott (1872–1929), the publication has received international recognition for its commitment to editorial independence and the fair presentation of matters of public interest. Such recognition reflects the Guardian’s strong commitment to the principles of the Fourth Estate, which therefore positions it as one of the key institutions of democracy. Scott’s ongoing obligation to the public interest was perpetuated when his Estate bequeathed funds for a Trust to be established to subsidise the financial security of the Guardian’s independence and its commitment to liberal journalism (Guardian Media Group, 2010a). The editorial and business conditions set out by the Trust makes the Guardian’s ownership and business model somewhat unique, since the sole purpose of generating revenue is to re-invest in its own journalism. Cash flows protect its independence and promote “freedom in the press and liberal journalism, both in Britain and elsewhere” (Guardian Media Group, 2010a).

Consistent with the principles of the Fourth Estate, journalism at the Guardian aspires to “honesty, cleanness, courage, fairness, a sense of duty to the reader and the community” (Guardian Media Group, 2010a; Scott, 1921). Alan Rusbridger describes one of the key aims as “holding power to account and bringing information that is suppressed into the public domain” (Rusbridger, 2011). He says this approach to journalism requires a lot of resources, therefore he realises how fortunate the organisation is that the Scott Trust predominantly supports the organisation’s business model, especially given the current crisis within the industry (see Chapters 1 & 2). However, the Guardian is not without its own financial troubles. While the Guardian Media Group has a portfolio of assets and investments including radio, property, media and publishing and cash investments, all of which financially
support its journalism (Guardian News & Media, 2011b), like most news organisations throughout the world it too has experienced financial losses in recent years.\textsuperscript{137} If current trends continue, the financial forecast for the \textit{Guardian} is that it will be broke before 2017 (Wilby, 2012).

With its current ranking in the top five most read newspapers in the world (Wilby, 2012), the struggling news organisation has so far resisted the path taken by other major news organisations, including \textit{News International} and \textit{News Limited} publications the \textit{The Times} (London) and the \textit{Australian}, to ask its online readers to pay a subscription fee for its digital edition. Rusbridger\textsuperscript{138} says that he has carefully considered the possible social, economic and political impact of constructing a paywall at the \textit{Guardian}, and in contrast to decisions by Rupert Murdoch for example, has concluded that paywalls may isolate the organisation from global networks, thereby having a negative effect on the sociability of the \textit{Guardian}. This view is consistent with studies showing that many people would move their custom to other non-subscription sites if faced with a paywall (for example, see (Rosenstiel, 2010)). Further, he says there would be little economic payoff because the \textit{Guardian} would earn only a fraction of what it currently earns from digital advertising (Rusbridger, 2010a). Finally, the business principles associated with nurturing the performance of a paywall may alter the purpose of its journalism. Again, this view is supported by Rosenstiel, who points out that while paywalls have the capacity to generate \textit{some} revenue, those proprietors who prevent the majority of the population from accessing their content may be compromising their civic responsibility as news providers (Rosenstiel, 2009b).

Instead of constructing paywalls, the \textit{Guardian} has explored and implemented other new revenue initiatives. In 2011, it announced a major shift in focus that would see most of the organisation’s newsroom resources redirected from print to digital platforms. One of the deliverables of this initiative is the provision of subscription based news services to several mobile platforms, including tablets and smart phones. Also, with increased investments into digital initiatives (Guardian News & Media, 2011b) it has expanded its operations into the US\textsuperscript{139} and Australia.\textsuperscript{140}
6.2 Print News: Transition Online

The aim of the Guardian’s online initiative to engage readers in dialogue with journalists and other members of the public can be understood from a number of perspectives. The first, as expressed by Coleman and Blumler (2009: 15) and John Hartley (2005), is that individuals have rights as citizens to participate in the discursive deliberations that support a democratic society. Then, with the cultural shift away from traditional news cycles and toward the continuous online news cycle (Rosenstiel, 2009a), and with the knowledge that news organisations now, more than ever before, operate in a global and instantly networked environment (S. Oh, 2010), the Guardian understands that people prefer to participate in the public debate via many different kinds of interactive environments rather than the traditional one-to-many platforms.

The Guardian’s migration online was in part a response to its recognition of a broad and growing online population. It transitioned gradually over a period of four years from 1995, beginning with its computer, science and technology sections. The successful transition, first of the webzine Eurosoccer.com, then the recruitment classifieds (Wilby, 2012), which became the company’s greatest source of advertising revenue, led to the establishment in 1999 of the entire network of Guardian Unlimited websites (Guardian News & Media, 2011a). The Guardian introduced blogging in 2000 and, since then, has expanded the production of news content by professional and non-professional journalists across multiple digital platforms (Belam, 2011).

Guardian editor Emily Bell says one of the key differences between the Guardian’s online transition, and that of other mainstream news organisations, is that the Guardian had from the start a very particular aim that it wanted to achieve, which was to become “of the Web” rather than simply “on the Web” (Bell, 2011). In this respect, the Guardian operates from a digital rather than the legacy print mindset, which has spawned the development and implementation of a variety of tools and technologies to gather and distribute news. These include: Comment is Free a platform that encourages everyone to submit commentary and opinion articles to the main website; a diverse range of internal blogging platforms; the inclusion of the
external blogging platform Tumblr; and social media, including a variety of specialised Twitter and Flickr accounts, Facebook and YouTube.

It also uses metric tools that provide it with information about the kinds of content that interest the public, which in turn allow it to make editorial decisions tempered with those metrics (Bell, 2011). Further, the Guardian’s digital mindset has seen it open itself to data sharing through an initiative called Open Platform, which allows external organisations to access and use Guardian archived content (Kiss, 2010). Also, the Data Store holds spreadsheets and data visualisations of information generated through a range of newsgathering methods, all of which are accessible to anybody.

In an effort to increase its civic value, the Guardian has adopted an approach to journalism described as “open journalism – editorial content which is collaborative, linked into and networked with the rest of the web” (Guardian News & Media, 2011b). The primary aim of this initiative is to bring a greater diversity of voices with expertise in particular areas into the newsroom (Mottershead, 2012).

Rusbridger believes “readers want to have the ability to make their own judgments; express their own priorities; create their own content; articulate their own views; [and] learn from peers as much as from traditional sources of authority” (Rusbridger, 2010a), so the Guardian constantly tries to find new ways to collaborate with “readers, bloggers and other generators of ideas, words, news, analysis, pictures, and data” (Rusbridger, 2009a). Consistent with the needs of the digitally networked democratic society, as described in this thesis, the Guardian now provides interactive environments that allow multiple entry points for citizens of all levels of education and social status to participate in public debates, to create content, to contribute to the analysis of data, and to access a wide range of information, in diverse formats from multiple platforms. Like the BBC, this approach aligns with the theories of journalism that require institutions of journalism to be innovative, engaging and relevant. Kovach and Rosenstiel suggest newsrooms ought to “search for uncommon ideas from across all media” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001: 156) and to use these to experiment with new storytelling techniques. The following section shows how the
tools and technologies of journalism at the *Guardian* have evolved in the digital environment.

### 6.3 Technologies of Journalism: New Participatory and Deliberative Spaces

With a global audience of nearly 30 million people (Rusbridger, 2009b: 5), the *Guardian* continuously reflects on how best to manage the diversity of participants in the many communities it supports, with a particular focus on how to bring them into the news process (Townend, 2011). It aims to produce a form of collaborative journalism described by its editor as a “mutualised newspaper” (Rusbridger, 2009b: 21). Like the *BBC*, it functions on the premise that the readership knows more than the organisation (Rusbridger, 2009b: 21). The *Guardian*, too, has recognised the need to create a number of entry points for the public to gain access to the many interactive, deliberative and collaborative initiatives across its website. The purpose of creating multiple environments is to provide more people with a greater choice of forums and opportunity to participate (Hargittai, 2009). Some of these environments include external social media spaces, all of which are large networks that have the capacity lead more people to the *Guardian’s* main website than may have happened directly. The *Guardian’s* publics are encouraged to: participate in a wide variety of blog and column comment forums; take part in a range of crowdsourcing initiatives; contribute opinion columns; collaborate on data sharing projects, and/or submit user-generated content, such as still and video images, infographics, and audio, which contribute to and enhance the *Guardian’s* editorial story telling of an event or issue.

**Guardian Blogs**

Anderson said the *Guardian* uses blogs as a way of bringing the public into the newsroom and engaging it with the public debate. The practice of blogging encourages greater levels of interactivity between news institutions and the public, therefore is largely understood to be a positive step toward civic engagement, enhancing people’s knowledge, and fostering trust, which is what the *Guardian* aims to achieve (K. Anderson, 2008). The conversational format of the blog, its comment forum, and the qualities that enable bi-directional linkage between vast numbers of
people in disparate locations, denotes a clear shift away from the traditional one-to-
many/lecture model of news.

While the uptake of blogs by the Guardian has been successful, Kevin Anderson said
there was still a need for the traditional news story. The purpose and construction of
the traditional news story is distinctively different to a news blog post and the public
responds differently to each. The journalist doing original reporting will gather the
facts and tie as many threads together as possible to create a finished piece of
journalism (K. Anderson, 2008). Bloggers, on the other hand, may take those same
sets of facts, but use them as a basis for a conversation. So instead of tying the
threads, they tease them out, which produces a different editorial composition (K.
Anderson, 2008). While there are similarities in each process, the editorial result is
different because the goal is different. The traditional news story aims to tell the
whole story, a narrative that is created with the available facts, but a blog post takes
the narrative and turns it over to the audience to fill in the gaps and to provide
additional information and perspectives. In that light, the piece of journalism
produced at the end of the work may just be the beginning of the story (K. Anderson,
2008). Anderson’s explanation highlights the ongoing importance of traditional
articles grounded in the facts of “what is happening”, and how these can serve as a
foundation for the more conversational blog pieces that encourage individuals to
gather around to discuss, dissect and augment particular topics of debate.

While the notion of news blogging as a deliberative space is one of the ideals of
network theory (Castells, 2001; T. Meyer & Hinchman, 2002), some remain
concerned that the negligent management of blogs by some news institutions
undermines their deliberative capacity (Jarvis, 2010). Jarvis observes a tendency for
some journalists to post articles and then rather than participating in the conversation
that occurs in the comment forum, they ignore it. This thesis has earlier identified
reasons why some journalists are reticent about responding to comment forums,
however where this occurs, the principles of deliberative theory, including
reciprocation, reasoning and mutual cooperation (Dryzek, 2009; Gutmann &
Thompson, 1996: 6), are less likely to emerge.
Anderson’s observation of the difficulties associated with managing comment forums led him to conclude that the problems tended to manifest long before the public began to interact and before the journalist, hypothetically, neglected the audience. Working from the theory that productivity, interactivity and engagement with online news platforms begins with journalists, specifically with the manner in which they present their blog posts, he says journalists ought to be aware that interactive news environments require a much more conversational and inclusive tone than print, and without it, few readers will be motivated to respond. In the early days of Guardian blogging, there was a tendency for some journalist bloggers to write their posts as though they were delivering a piece to camera, which was too formal when trying to encourage people to engage in conversation with them (K. Anderson, 2008). While there is an expectation for traditional columns to exert authority and professionalism, the professional tones of broadcast do not adequately serve the purpose of a blog post.

Anderson says the public is more likely to respond to individual journalists if they express some human rapport and take a more inclusive approach (K. Anderson, 2008). However, he also points out that regardless of how inclusive journalists may be, sometimes some members of the public are simply not interested in actively participating, mainly because they believe journalists ought to be the keepers and distributors of information. He says there are times when the Guardian asks readers for their thoughts on particular topics, and the response may be: “Well, that’s your job, you are the journalist, you are supposed to tell us, why do you want us to do your job for you?” (K. Anderson, 2008).

This illustrates a paradox and exemplifies one of the many challenges for traditional journalists incorporating Web 2.0 technologies into their practice. While the professionalisation of news, in some ways, was meant to remove the humanity from journalists’ voices (see also Section 7.3), the new environment demands something different (K. Anderson, 2008). Sambrook reports similar observations and warns that while “the professional methods developed a hundred years ago may seem less relevant in this new environment” (Sambrook, 2012), one of the consequences of relaxing or abandoning these is that it is becoming increasingly harder for the public to know what to believe.
In his role at the *Guardian*, Anderson was, in part, responsible for providing journalists with guidance on ways to generate a positive public response. Looking at the problem from the bottom-up, he attributed many problems to the way journalists framed the questions presented to the public. He advised them to tell the audience why the topic requires further investigation; explain the relevance of the research to the public interest; and to explain that the newsroom does not have the resources required to do the work on its own. In this way, he said, the method becomes almost like an interview with the audience, and therefore has a greater chance of achieving a higher quality response than simply asking empty questions. Like all research methods, Anderson said interactivity and collaboration with the public, on digital platforms, is a practice that requires constant refining (K. Anderson, 2008).

**Comment Forums**

As shown in Chapter 3, there is a diversity of academic and industry opinion about the value of comment forums. The general consensus is that unmediated comment forums are not conducive to deliberative discussions. Anderson says: “Getting the comments is easy, but generating a quality conversation is much more challenging” and conversation is what the *Guardian* aims to achieve (K. Anderson, 2008).

While the main reason for using a blog platform is to generate comment (Hermida et al., 2011), Anderson says high comment counts on journalists’ blog posts are not necessarily an indication of popularity or approval. He says “198 out of 200 comments may be telling the journalist how stupid he/she is instead of engaging with the topic of the post” (K. Anderson, 2008). To avoid this, journalists ought to remain acutely mindful of their obligation to present reasoned arguments that both contain and generate a diversity of views.

While Anderson has previously established that some journalists are much more adept at managing interactive platforms than others, he says they also need to have a clear sense of the kind of conversation they are trying to cultivate. He contends, like the blogger journalists at the *Australian*, that it is reasonable for journalists to reject confrontational and provocative comments if they are not consistent with the kind of tone journalists want in their comment forums, “if the comments are negative and
antagonistic and have no bearing on the blog post, then they are of little or no use to the conversation” (K. Anderson, 2008).

Anderson suggests that most journalists know the topics and language that guarantee a large number of comments. For example, if mainstream news media refer to a member of parliament as “a raving sociopath”, then it should not be surprising when comment forums respond aggressively. If journalists “start with ad hominem attacks”, Anderson rhetorically questions, “can they really set a double standard and say, ‘well we can do this but you cannot’?” (K. Anderson, 2008). He says professional news media ought to be aware that it is responsible for the conversations it starts. And where an unexpected public response arises, journalists can usually get an idea of the cause by looking at their original content. Anderson’s view contrasts with that of Australian journalist Andrew Bolt expressed in Chapter 4, that while he does not deliberately aim to use his blog to generate controversy, he refrains from being “timid” and prefers to “put himself out there” to generate passionate responses and support for his political viewpoints (Bolt, 2009).

Anderson’s framework for public engagement also takes account of those whose responses may not necessarily target the work of the journalist, but are instead directed to the topic or the brand. He says the public might respond to the Guardian if they don’t agree with its editorial view (K. Anderson, 2008). Similarly, when Anderson worked at the BBC in 2004 at the height of the war in Iraq, the public found occasion to draw on his American nationality to attack the BBC brand. Anderson says the management of reader comments definitely requires a particular skill set that was not required in a print environment (K. Anderson, 2008).

**Moderation**

The Guardian’s comment forums are managed and operated by approximately seventeen editors and a team of comment moderators (Guardian News & Media, 2008), and the forums are creating the same kinds of problems for editorial staff as those documented by each case study included in this research, and many others (Benkler, 2006: 10) not mentioned here. Rusbridger says the conversation at the Guardian’s forums might not be ideal, for the moment, “but that is because the organisation has not yet discovered the tools to create really good conversations”
(British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011a), which indicates that the search for ways to improve the conversation is ongoing.

The Guardian is one of the major and most inclusive and accountable sites in the world for political expression. Its reputation for providing an inclusive, safe, entertaining, lively and intelligent environment for users can in part be attributed to the guidelines it has developed for online participation across the entire site. Like the BBC’s guidelines, users are encouraged to “respect other people’s views and beliefs” and urged to refrain from using divisive and threatening language. Racism is not tolerated, and libellous, defamatory and copyright infringing comments are immediately removed. This framework is consistent with the tenets of deliberation, including reasoning, reciprocation and refinement (see Chapter 2).

The Guardian has a reactive moderation policy, which means that while all comments are immediately published, they are monitored to minimise incidents of anti-social and inflammatory behaviour and to guard against the occurrence of libel or other legal issues. The Guardian also responds to complaints from its users. Anderson says the organisation is always very honest about how it manages comments. The public is advised that the Guardian receives thousands of comments per day and has a relatively small moderation team. It asks for the public’s help to keep the conversation civil by considering the kind of comment they leave, and to flag any comments they find offensive (K. Anderson, 2008). One of the key differences between the approach taken to moderation by the commercial news providers and that of the BBC comes down to the availability of resources to moderate all of the conversations. Anderson says the Guardian is a much smaller editorial organisation (K. Anderson, 2008), as is News Limited, and therefore they have less resources than the BBC at their disposal.

Guardian users are required to register with their real name and email address before they can submit comments (Willmott, 2010). It also uses a system that allows users to click on individual comments to “report abuse”. Once flagged, comments are reviewed using the moderation framework rather than an editorial agenda. The Guardian points out that there are difficulties associated with this process, especially where it may appear to be operating subjectively (Guardian News & Media, 2010).
Again, Anderson reiterates the need for journalists to take an active role in keeping comment forums civil by taking the time to respond to some of the comments (K. Anderson, 2008). However he says, “choosing which ones to respond to is challenging” (K. Anderson, 2008). Meg Pickard, suggests that journalists ought to reward good behaviour rather than focus solely on the bad (K. Anderson, 2008). In doing so, the organisation highlights the kind of participation it wants, and moves the conversation forward. Anderson says it is natural to want to respond to the commenter who calls you names, but if journalists only respond to those who shout at them, then they are actually reinforcing anti-social behaviour. Anderson says it is certainly possible to redirect conversations quite easily if the host is willing to try. Some journalists find they have too many other things to do besides tending to comment forums, a point also made by News Limited journalist Peter Alford, and Anderson, too, sees that as a “fair call”. However, in the Guardian’s case, its newsroom has moved toward a much more focused blogging proposition, where journalist/bloggers now have the time because their blogs are their primary task (K. Anderson, 2008).

The discussion about the management of blogs and comment forums shows that a whole new dimension has been added to the professional practice of journalism by the use of Web 2.0 technologies. The real value of using blogs in traditional newsrooms lies in their capacity to draw people toward participation, deliberation and collaboration. The use of blogs by the Guardian illustrates not simply willingness but rather determination to use a variety of methods to include the audience in the public debate.

**Citizen Journalism**

Anderson contends there are very few people who maintain an ongoing role as citizen journalists. Sites such as Global Voices Online that foster and promote journalism by citizens are a “relatively small part of the blogging population” (K. Anderson, 2008). He supports his assertion that the majority of bloggers, podcasters or video bloggers only perform “random acts of journalism” (K. Anderson, 2008) with an example of citizen journalism that emerged following the collapse of the Interstate Bridge in Minneapolis in 2007. He recalls that a person living near to the disaster site used his personal blog to report his eyewitness account of the event. He
also aggregated other contextual information from the Web to provide his readers with a more in-depth understanding of what had happened. The eyewitness said that he did not normally create this kind of “news report”, and that it was not something he planned to do on a daily basis. Anderson suggests that this is a common pattern for those referred to as citizen journalists: they will only take on the role of a journalist for the short period of time that they were an eyewitness (K. Anderson, 2008).

It has become equally common for professional journalists to try to find those people who happen to be living the news, or who are caught up in the story, and regularly blog about it. Such bloggers may include soldiers in Iraq, for example, who primarily post information updates to keep in touch with their family, and are often a source of information that is of interest to the public (K. Anderson, 2008). Anderson sees the random acts of journalism by citizen journalists/bloggers as a complement to professional journalism. He views the relationship between traditional and new media producers as a “partnership of equals” (K. Anderson, 2008) rather than a competition. He says, “I wouldn’t be able to do all of what I do, today, if it wasn’t for all of these eyes, ears, cameras and computers around the world” (K. Anderson, 2008).

**Comment is Free**

Inspired by the *Huffington Post*’s business model, Alan Rusbridger was fascinated by the “huge variety of voices” being carried by the publication, yet “almost nobody” was paid (Cartablog, 2009) for their contributions. Given success of the *Huffington Post*, Rusbridger became acutely aware that it was only a matter of time before it would emerge in London, so he proactively adopted a similar approach to diversifying the voice and content in the *Guardian*, by creating *Comment is Free*.

The *Guardian*’s traditional opinion section originally comprised of ten exclusive commentators. This limitation on the publication of opinion is consistent with Yochai Benkler’s 2006 observation that the commercial mass media based public sphere had a history of limiting its intake of “the observations and concerns of too many people in complex modern societies” (Benkler, 2006: 11). In 2009, Rusbridger formed the view that the idea that only the people at the *Guardian* know about the
world was “a daft way of thinking” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011a) and from that point on it began recruiting more than one thousand citizen commentators, comprising academics, lawyers, members of NGO’s, politicians, and anyone else they thought may have something interesting to contribute to the public conversation. The objective of Comment is Free was to carry “a plurality of voices” (Guardian News & Media, 2008) rather than the select few professionals that traditional news providers were accustomed to publishing (Rusbridger, 2009b). The subsequent success of this initiative has convinced news editors that the conventional way of writing comment is no longer “the right way” (Cartablog, 2009). The Guardian now receives hundreds of articles each day from the global public, from which approximately fifty are selected for publication in Comment is Free. In addition to articles, the Guardian also publishes “105,000 comments a month from 25,000 commenters” (Cartablog, 2009; Rusbridger, 2009b: 5) all of which suggests that Rusbridger clearly aims to create a social platform for civic discourse, perhaps one resembling that described by Benkler, where individuals, anywhere can “become more engaged participants in the debates about their [own] observations” (Benkler, 2006: 11) and the observations of others.

Rusbridger describes the pro-am pieces published at Comment is Free each month as a “treasure trove” (Cartablog, 2009; Rusbridger, 2009b) pointing out that the old model of comment could never capture the “hugely diverse streams of comment” (Cartablog, 2009) that the new model does today. He says “there is nothing that you can ask Guardian readers that they don’t have answers to” (Rusbridger, 2009b).

**Using the Traditional and Digital Tools and Technologies of Journalism to Engage a Global Public with the Presidential Election US08**

In September 2008, three months before the US Presidential election, the Guardian sent a sixteen member editorial crew to travel by bus through the key election battleground states in Middle America. The purpose of this initiative was to identify and investigate the main political issues that would attract the votes of US citizens in the election. The news team was comprised of filmmakers, blogger journalists, investigative journalists, editors, and a comedian/news broadcaster (Marc Maron) who did the daily Air America Media webcast, which was also broadcast to sixty affiliate radio stations across America150 (K. Anderson, 2009).
The *Guardian* used a variety of Internet tools to gather, produce and distribute information about what was happening in the key areas of the campaign. It created specialist blogs, *US08 On The Road To The Whitehouse* and *Deadline USA Blog*, to report the daily events and issues, present video reports and interviews with officials and citizens, and to display interactive maps, and calendars. It also published links to other sites of information identified by the *Guardian* as useful to further explain the complexities of the key political issues. The organisation also used the social media platform *Twitter* to provide live updates from journalists in the field, and provided links to its bookmarking account, *Delicious*, and RSS feeds. Election coverage also occurred in specialist *World News* and *Business* columns in the *Guardian’s* main news pages.

The *On The Road To The Whitehouse* and *Deadline USA* blog posts provided a vast array of information in multi-media formats, and contained a variety of spaces where ordinary citizens, from a wide cross section of societies, could express a diversity of viewpoints, exchange ideas and engage in debates about a range of election issues with journalists and other citizens. The array of Web 2.0 tools used by the *Guardian* provided the public with finer detail about the peculiarities of political issues than was possible using the *Guardian’s* traditional print platform only. Web 2.0 technologies provided editorial teams with greater access to the knowledge, experience and expertise it needed for the construction of a space where individuals, together, could freely and transparently evaluate the current state of affairs.

Kevin Anderson’s key role during the *US08* tour was to examine the content produced by the blogosphere to inform and stimulate public interest in the election. In view of this, he spoke with a large number of political bloggers throughout the journey (K. Anderson, 2009). Describing this experience as “a two-month conversation with the audience” (K. Anderson, 2009) he said the use of Web 2.0 (including social media such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and the photo sharing platform *Flickr* (K. Anderson, 2009)) and mobile technologies enabled the team to live blog, photo journal, tweet and re-tweet the debates as they unfolded. Digital technology made it possible for them to talk with global and local publics and to gather and aggregate information for distribution across multiple platforms for an international audience.
Anderson attributes a great deal of the success on his US tour to his use of Twitter. He said he would not have been able to cover as much ground in the US as he did without it. The Twitter platform provided a permanently open channel of dialogue between him and the general public, enabling him to receive and distribute real-time news (K. Anderson, 2009). He describes modern journalism as “highly distributed networked journalism” (K. Anderson, 2009) and, while he distributed his content to various static platforms on the Guardian website, he also posted content to a live blog, which was continually generating content from multiple sources, public comment and debate (K. Anderson, 2009). Journalist Dan Roberts says, “some of our best-read stories are the live blogs that report events as they unfold, often with brutal honesty about what we don't know or hope to find out” (D. Roberts, 2011).

Crowdsourcing: An Investigative Technology

This section describes the Guardian’s first major investigation using crowdsourcing. It then describes the ways in which it uses the tools and technologies of social media to encourage citizen engagement with public affairs.

Investigative journalism is expensive, however many news organisations, including the Guardian, are experimenting with ways to use the wisdom of the crowd to investigate issues and “build knowledgeable communities” around their subject matter (Rusbridger, 2009b: 4–6). The newsroom asks readers to collaborate with it on projects that require more resources than the organisation has. Readers provide feedback and contribute ideas and advice on many topic areas. Reporters draw on the knowledge and expertise of the audience where it may add to or inspire investigative work on a broad range of issues. Rusbridger says many journalism investigations that have utilised crowdsourcing methods would have been impossible without the participatory nature of today’s news oriented community (Rusbridger, 2009a). “[W]e couldn’t have produced what we did [on the MP expenses issue] without the participation and involvement of others” (Rusbridger, 2009b: 6). The Internet has provided the Guardian with the tools and human resources it needs to provide a “more diverse form of journalism” (Rusbridger, 2009a).

The Guardian has generated a number of successful crowdsourcing projects. In 2009, it undertook crowdsourcing initiatives consistent with Brabham’s Distributed
Human Intelligence Tasking Approach (Brabham, 2008), which involved asking readers to participate in its investigations into the misuse of Ministerial Expenses by some Members of Parliament (MP). This request required participants to process large batches of data to discover evidence of wrongdoings and/or compelling snippets of information (Brabham, 2008). The Guardian provided the public with access to 458,832 pages of documents, released by the UK Parliament, showing the details of its MPs’ expenses, and provided instructions on how to find the documents, assess their content, and to note those of interest and determine what needs to be further investigated (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Participants were advised to find and examine food bills, to register repeated claims for less than £250, and rejected claims (2013). The Guardian provided its readers, including crowdsourcing participants, regular updates on what it had learnt from the crowd.

Figure 6.1. The launch page for the Investigate Your MP’s Expenses initiative from the Guardian website. Adapted from Guardian News & Media (2013).
Figure 6.2. An example of an expense document provided by the Guardian for investigation by the public. Adapted from Guardian News & Media (2013).

Key: The page shows:
1. The name of the MP and the period of the Provision;
2. The expense statement;
3. The number of pages contained in the document;
4. A webform for participants to complete; and
5. A space for participants to submit observations. This section asks questions to prompt users observations.

The Guardian also asked participants to post the visualisations/infographics of their own analyses of the investigation to the Guardian Flickr group site or to the
Guardian Datastore via email. The Datastore has a webpage to display visualisations and its Twitter account was used to alert users to the publication of new visualisations. Figure 6.3 is an example of a visualisation created by a Guardian participant showing the total expense claims for 2008/2009, and second home allowance claims for 2008/2009, for all MP’s.

Figure 6.3. An example of a crowdsourced visualisation. Adapted from Guardian Datastore Flickr http://www.flickr.com/search/groups/?w=1115946%40N24&m=pool&q=MP+Expenses
Note: x axis shows the amount claimed by the MP. y axis shows the number of MP’s claiming that amount.

The MP expenses issue was seen as a successful crowdsourcing effort, especially since professional newsrooms would never have had the resources to work through the volumes of information themselves. This initiative exemplifies the new reliance upon what Brabham (2008) describes as “distributed problem solving” and, indeed, a new “production model” (Brabham, 2008: 75) of journalism.

However, in the main, it has also been realised that readers often lose interest in participating in the investigative process following the initial flurry of activity, and as such perhaps only half of the data is processed (Marsh, 2011). While crowdsourcing initiatives have the potential to generate new and interesting
information, *Guardian* reporter, Laura Oliver, says even though the people involved in the open data movement are doing jobs that journalists are employed to do, it is still largely up to journalists to do the data analysis (Oliver, 2011). While professional news organisations such as the *Guardian* are yet to determine how to maintain reader interest in this kind of work, Oliver’s view suggests that complex digital data analysis is increasingly becoming an important mainstream skill for journalists. The reasons why it is so valuable is its capacity to make the consumption of news easier, faster and more interesting, and it adds credibility to stories too. Visualisations such as those shown in Figure 6.3, for example, enable the audience to more easily see the facts and draw their own conclusions. Data journalist, Simon Rogers, points out that when the *Guardian* launched its Datablog in 2009, people were still wondering whether stories generated from data were really journalism (Rogers, 2011).

For the *Guardian*, Rusbridger says data has been a core component of its coverage for “the full duration of its 190–year history” (Rusbridger, 2013). The differences now, not only for the *Guardian*, but everybody, is open access to data that was once locked away from public view, and the availability of computers and digital tools such as spreadsheets and graphics software to create both static and interactive visualisations. The *Guardian Datastore* aims to “act as a bridge between the data… and the people out there in the real world who want to understand what the story is really about” (Rogers, 2011), which is exactly how it approached the *WikiLeaks* data, for example.

*WikiLeaks* became widely known to the world and a significant part of the mainstream news media in 2010 when it shared a large cache of classified data, described by Rusbridger as “the biggest leak in the history of the world” (Leigh & Harding, 2011: 2), with three of the most valued international news organisations, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*. This collaboration led to the worldwide publication of a series of stories about professional and personal activities of the world’s governments and diplomatic leaders.

While *WikiLeaks* came to possess banks of raw data that potentially held relevance to the world, it lacked the necessary resources needed to give it the treatment it required
for consumption by a mass audience. The *Guardian, New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* evaluated, verified, analysed, contextualised and distributed the information found in the diplomatic cables provided by WikiLeaks (Beckett & Ball, 2012: 116). Assange’s personal role was seen by the media organisations as a source (Hendler, 2010) (B. Keller, 2011: 2). The *New York Times* explains:

“*WikiLeaks* was not involved in the news organisations’ research, reporting, analysis and writing. The *Times* spent about a month mining the data for disclosures and patterns, verifying and cross-checking with other information sources, and preparing the articles that are published today” ("Piecing together the reports, and deciding what to publish," 2010).

Journalists interviewed Assange, as they would any other source, “to be able to write a profile of him, explain various things about the material, [and] challenge him on various points” (Hendler, 2010).

After the three news organisations storified and distributed the content, Assange then published the raw data on the *WikiLeaks* website for the remainder of the world media to access. Assange decided to first exclusively provide three of the world’s dominant international media organisations with equal access to its content, because he wanted a guarantee that the large cache of data would be received in a way that ensured wide ranging global scrutiny and he believed the high profile of the three organisations selected would maximise public reach (Hendler, 2010).

Evgeny Morozov says, “*WikiLeaks* badly needs its media partners”, but “it’s not clear that media partners actually need *WikiLeaks*” (Morozov, 2011). His argument suggests that the analysis and contextualisation of the data required for mass audience consumption, the kind Assange hoped for, could not have been done by *WikiLeaks* alone. He believes that while *WikiLeaks* “has the capacity to attract more leaks… it doesn’t have the matching capacity to make sense of them” (Morozov, 2011). While WikiLeaks policy is to make all of the data it receives available on its website so that its readers can analyse, scrutinise and make up their own minds about what they think is the truth, in this case the cache of cables was not published on the
WikiLeaks website until after they were storified and distributed to a global audience by the professional news media. Evgeny Morozov says one of the problems with publishing raw data such as this for crowdsourced analysis is that it risks being hijacked by those with political agendas (Morozov, 2011). Kate Crawford says the notion of “data” is often equated with “fact” based on its relationship with “math” and as such, offers a promise of certainty. However, like Rogers (2011), she points out that data is “only as good as the people using it” (Hardy, 2013). Rogers suggests that while the technology has improved the ways in which data is managed, it is still essential to have “humans who understand the issues” (Rogers, 2011) to tell the story.

Anthony Lilley sees professionals as the bearers of wisdom and the crowd as sources of information and combined “these elements of content creation have the capacity to be ‘hugely powerful’” (Lilley, 2007). He argues traditional news media “should be aiming to embody an army of experts with real heartbeats and social capital” (Lilley, 2007), which is exactly the Guardian’s objective.

**Topic Indexation**

Information published on the Guardian website is much more complex than that which is available in print editions. With metadata such as ‘Help’ pages, ‘About’ pages, tags, links columns, embedded links, and so on, there is much more to story production than there was in the past. An advantage of publishing in digital environments is that it is much easier to search for content using digital classification and indexing systems. Approximately 8,500 topic indexes had been generated to 2011 (Belam & Martin, 2011). Tags, that is, a set of keywords, are embedded into the metadata of each story on every page of the Guardian website. The indexes are automatically searched for the tags of each story to generate related topic pages, a task that if done manually would take more resources than the organisation has access to (Belam & Martin, 2011).

**Social Media**

In efforts to create a bridge between the audience and the organisation, the Guardian has created new news positions, called community coordinators, to present the voice of the community to the newsroom (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011b).
Community coordinators use social media to encourage conversation and extend relationships with the public, to identify gaps in community engagement and to find and develop new ideas about interactivity and story telling. Coordinators maintain metrics, which track the number of reader assisted stories and maintains contact lists of the readers who have contributed to story development (Tinworth, 2012).

While the Guardian now competes to some extent with social media, it also uses it as part of its daily operations to help tell better stories, to reflect its values, to enhance interactivity and conversation with audiences on and off site, and to improve its role as a service for the public interest by providing information and/or “changing the world’s perspectives on a particular situation” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2011b). Platforms such as Twitter are used to find out what is happening, search, harness the knowledge of the crowd, aggregate information and content, report and distribute information, market itself, participate in conversations, listen, collaborate, collect feedback and to create community (Rusbridger, 2010b) (Cartablog, 2009). In an effort to gather and present diverse perspectives on issues and events, and to encourage public engagement with the news, and interactivity with the newsroom, the Guardian will ask the public to find and tweet the most interesting and important comment and analysis emerging in the hours immediately following a significant news event (Indvik, 2012). The Guardian will highlight the issue or event by summarising what has happened, and signifying the certainties and uncertainties about how the issue impacts the social world. The newsroom asks the public to flag news, political, expert and academic opinion using the hashtag #smartlakes (Indvik, 2012). While the idea to use Twitter to aggregate content is not original, the idea to use it to crowdsource a specific kind of content was developed by Alexis Madrigal at the Atlantic in 2010 during the WikiLeaks event (Madrigal, 2010).

Comparing the use of Twitter as a search tool to Google, Rusbridger argues that Twitter harnesses “the mass capabilities of human intelligence to the power of millions in order to find information that is new, valuable, relevant or entertaining” (Rusbridger, 2010b). He says Twitter provides him with the daily news of the world for free, when in the past gathering the same news may have cost him more than 100,000 pounds.
The crowd now, to an extent, influences the news values in *Guardian* newsrooms and peer-to-peer authority is replacing the opinions of those traditionally referred to as experts (Rusbridger, 2010b). While Rusbridger suggests the *Guardian* has embraced *Twitter*, he also points to its flaws and makes it clear that many of the links on *Twitter* are to “legacy-media companies” (Rusbridger, 2010b).

The power of the *Twitter* platform and the phenomenon of the “mutualisation” of news media became evident to Rusbridger when users of the social media platform took on the task of reporting events that traditional news media were prevented from reporting. A case in point was when an injunction prevented the *Guardian* from reporting that a company called Trafigura had released toxic waste in the Ivory Coast, causing illness and fatalities.\(^{157}\)

The *Guardian* also uses *Tumblr*\(^{158}\) to publish stories, photos, video and audio. It provides a diverse range of topics and connects with multiple and equally diverse websites which are listed and remain static on the front page. The site is largely read only, however the audience can “like” posts, an activity that publishes a link to the reader’s personal website. This is an interactive and collaborative activity since it provides *Guardian* readers with links to external sites of information.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has described the founding principles of the *Guardian*’s business model, which show its interconnectedness with the principles of the Fourth Estate. This is somewhat consistent with the *BBC*’s public service ethic, however it contrasts with News Limited’s primary business strategy, which is to generate profits for shareholders. While the Scott Trust was set up for the sole purpose of providing financial support for the *Guardian*’s journalism, the global financial crisis and the cultural shift from the industrial to the information economy have caused problems for other aspects of its business model. In keeping with its mission to provide a civic service, Editor-in-Chief Rusbridger has fully embraced the participatory and collaborative practices of the new online-networked culture.

This chapter has shown that the *Guardian* was one of the first traditional news media organisations to transition from its print platform to the online news environment and
to incorporate the participatory tools and technologies of the Internet into its everyday practice. The reason for its early online transition came in response to the growing online population and the organisation’s observation that the public’s news consumption habits were changing. Like the BBC, the Guardian began to develop a variety of interactive environments to ensure public debates were accessible to people at all levels of education and social status.

The chapter presented editor/journalist/blogger Kevin Anderson’s account of best practice for journalist/bloggers. This provided valuable insight into how Guardian bloggers approach interaction with the public. While Chapter 3 described the challenges of blogging, Anderson’s account of blogging at the Guardian provided a real world example of how to effectively engage the public in ways that generate considered and deliberative responses. Although Anderson agrees that blogging has its challenges, he also believes, if managed thoughtfully, it can be an effective way for journalists to have a meaningful conversation with the public.

The chapter has also shown that the Guardian has grown to realise that the sum of public knowledge is greater than that contained in any newsroom, and as a result it has taken a range of approaches to harnessing knowledge as part of their conversation with the public. The Guardian’s opinion forum, Comment is Free, is part of its initiative to create a more participatory, interactive and open style of journalism. The chapter also provided examples of the ways in which the Guardian uses crowdsourcing and networked journalism to fulfil its role as the Fourth Estate.

The Guardian’s crowdsourced investigation of UK MP’s expenses, and its collaboration with WikiLeaks and other more traditional news organisations on sorting, verifying, contextualising and analysing large amounts of leaked top-secret data, exemplifies its enthusiasm to use Web 2.0 tools and technologies to tackle a broad range of new challenges to the ever evolving politics of journalism.

136 The Scott Trust Foundation supports the Scott Trust Charitable Fund and the Guardian Foundation for the distribution of bursaries and grants. It also maintains archive material and organises education activities and exhibitions. http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/the-scott-trust/purpose/.
137 The Guardian suffered a financial loss of nearly £37m in 2011, £5m more than the previous year, with a higher loss expected in 2012 (Wilby, 2012).
The Guardian US was launched by Editor-in-Chief Janine Gibson in 2012.
http://www.guardiannews.com/

The Guardian Australia was launched by Editor-in-Chief Katharine Viner, May 27 2013.
http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/insideguardian/2013/may/26/welcome-to-guardian-australia

Comment is Free publishes comment and debate. It was created and named in accordance with the tradition and values espoused by CP Scott in his 1921 essay A Hundred Years: “Comment is free but facts are sacred” (Scott, 1921).

Guardian Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/search/groups/?q=the%20guardian
Guardian YouTube Channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/theguardian?feature=results_main
Guardian Open Platform: http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/may/20/guardian-open-platform

Guardian: guardian.co.uk

The contact details of editors and the moderation team—cif.moderation@Guardian.co.uk—are published on the Guardian website (Guardian News & Media, 2008).

The Guardian’s guidelines for participation are available here:
http://www.Guardian.co.uk/community-standards

The Guardian is receptive to particular circumstances where anonymity reduces risk to personal safety (Willmott, 2010)

The Huffington Post entered the UK news market in 2011.

Air America Media: http://airamerica.com/

Guardian Datastore Flickr Group Pool: http://www.flickr.com/groups/Guardiandatastore/pool/
Guardian Datastore: http://www.Guardian.co.uk/data
Guardian Datastore: http://twitter.com/#!/datastore

The Guardian’s final tally of the number of documents supports this assertion (see Figure 5.1):
“We have 458,832 pages of documents. 28,755 of you have reviewed 224,485 of them. Only 234,347 to go...” (2013).


See Columbia Journalism Review for detailed description about how the Guardian’s reporter, Nick Davies, persuaded Julian Assange to share the leaked documents with the Guardian before the rest of the world. This account also describes the way The New York Times and Der Spiegel became involved.


The Guardian Tumblr is published at http://guardian.tumblr.com/
Chapter 7    The Elements that Shape the Politics of Journalism

“I am struck by the fact that what the BBC does is covered by quite different rules to what the Guardian or News International does, and yet you could look at their websites and on the face of it, they’re doing similar things” (Leveson Inquiry, 2012).

The transition from traditional news platforms to the digital environment has had a profound impact on the politics of journalism in a number of key areas, including the business, the practice, its values and ethics, and its relationships with professional and non-professional entities and with the public.

This chapter will show that the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the politics of journalism in discrete media models is varied and complex, mainly because journalism is created in a diversity of particular institutional and organisational frameworks and conditions. Therefore, the practices and uses of journalism are not only multidimensional but are often distinct, since they serve different purposes. The chapter is framed by theories of journalism, including Fourth Estate, networked journalism and objectivity, and theories of deliberation and participation.

Fourth Estate theory proposes that news media have a responsibility to the public to ensure individuals are informed about the complexities of the social, political and economic spheres of society. It requires news media to be inclusive of a diversity of viewpoints on a wide range of topics. This thesis supports the notion that the role of the journalist is to monitor the powerful, to ensure government fulfils its obligations to citizens and to expose corruption. However, it has found that different news organisations throughout the world function for different purposes and, in some instances the values and interests of particular media owners may be what provide the framework for some media messages, rather than serving the best interests of the public.
The Web 2.0 environment has provided traditional news media and new independent journalism entities, such as OhmyNews and WikiLeaks for example, with new opportunities to cultivate participation and collaboration, and to contribute to the public conversation in what has now become a digitally networked model of journalism. Each news media entity, whether a traditional or non-traditional model, now uses a much broader range of tools and technologies of journalism to tell stories about the world.

This research has shown there are distinct differences in the ways in which the different models of news approach the notion of deliberation, participation and networked journalism, each of which is governed by the values and interests of the particular organisation.

Taking a bottom-up approach, the following discussion begins with a comparative analysis of the business and value systems for each media model to provide a basis from which to understand how each approaches journalism. It then briefly compares the reasons for the online transition of each of the traditional news organisations. In this section, the discussion focuses on the ways in which elements of participatory, interactive and networked journalism impact on the way news organisations determine news values, set the agenda and serve the public interest. The final section examines the impact of the democratisation of journalism on the elements that shape journalism, including objectivity and impartiality.

### 7.1 Business and Value Systems

Each media organisation is defined by a particular business model, which ultimately determines its value system. BBC News aims to provide a trusted and truthful news service that is inclusive of individuals in all sections of UK society and of international publics. Since it is funded by a license fee paid by every UK household, it has the unique financial capacity to extend its public service beyond the fundamental requirements of journalism as defined by theories of the Fourth Estate. This means it can conduct research and development initiatives that allow the BBC to foster the uptake of digital technologies by the general public and to ensure citizens are equipped with the skills required to participate in the discursive, computer-based
network of public spheres. Research initiatives undertaken by the BBC also maintain the newsroom’s professional standards of journalism practice and innovation, and ensure the services provided by BBC News meet the aims and objectives set by the Royal Charter.

As a commercially funded news organisation, News Limited’s journalism is often observed in terms of how well it can maintain its independence from parent company News Corporation’s business and political interests, and how well it can preserve its obligation to its role as a member of the Fourth Estate while simultaneously maximising profit and increasing shareholder value. News Limited’s business model is heavily reliant on financial returns gained through its journalism. The review of the literature has shown that News Corporation’s news holdings are struggling financially, and rely on the profits of its other holdings to sustain them. For most businesses such ongoing losses would be untenable, however News Corporation, perhaps uniquely, is—so far—willing and able to absorb such losses.

Economist Diane Coyle contends that there is currently very little reason for established businesses to stick with their failing business models other than “they have done it for a very long time” (Confino, 2012) and are therefore reluctant to change. While there are several narratives driving technological change, Coyle highlights two key points. The first is that much of the social and economic system is in a state of distress as a result of outdated strategies deeply embedded in business culture, and the second is that participation is a crucial new business strategy. In the context of these points, she suggests that struggling companies may do well, first to respond to the social changes that are having a dramatic impact on their existence, and second to reconsider the purpose of their business, their core competencies and the products they want to focus on. Then, she suggests companies ought to consider what kind of good they aim to do for the economy, society and their business. She calls for business aims and strategies to return to their broader role of providing a service to society, and to re-focus on customers rather than profit maximisation (Confino, 2012). It is from this perspective that she identifies one of the key challenges for business, which is to embrace participatory practices into its culture.
This is particularly important for news organisations struggling with their business models and attempting to better connect with the public. The public ought to be able to trust that news media institutions reflect honest and reliable representations of the social world, particularly the key issues affecting the lives of individuals, and society at large. When news media fail to address social problems, especially society’s inherent inequalities, the public are more likely to bypass mainstream news media and form social movements independent of traditional communication channels. The *Occupy* movement is an example of a networked social revolution that traditional news media did not see coming and was “hard-pressed” to understand and represent truthfully (Castells, 2011).

Chapter 5 has shown that one of the main problems for News Limited has long been the conflict between its obligation to shareholders and its social responsibility to the public interest. It also showed that it was reluctant to move its business online while its traditional print journalism business model continued to support these divergent factors. In contrast the *Guardian* does not suffer the same conflict because in addition to its commercial revenues, its operations are largely funded by a private Trust. Therefore it does not have any obligation to shareholders, but rather its financial returns are used only to support its journalism.

The literature shows that the *Guardian’s* Editor-in-Chief Alan Rusbridger recognises the risks of not serving the public interest, and not being inclusive of its audience. The *Guardian’s* approach to networked journalism, or as Rusbridger describes it, “open journalism”, can be understood as the organisation’s response to the social and cultural changes brought about by rapidly changing technologies. Moreover, its approach to innovation sees it step beyond the traditional practices of journalism to find new ways to encourage further innovation.

Chapter 6 has shown that the *Guardian* takes a more participatory approach to journalism than News Limited, for instance, mainly because its purpose is grounded in its obligation to the public interest and connecting with the social world. This is evident in the range of interactive channels it has created for citizen entry to the public debate. The inclusion of a diversity of voices on a wide range of topics in the *Comment is Free* section, and the comprehensive social networking, blogging, and
comment forums, collectively contribute to the fulfilment of some of the key elements of journalism—objectivity, impartiality, balance and transparency—which enhances the organisation’s role as a member of the Fourth Estate and can also be seen as a democratising mechanism.

Financial Problems, Paywalls And The Fourth Estate

This research has placed considerable emphasis on the financial problems facing the commercial news media compared to the publicly funded media model. However, the BBC is not without its own financial problems. While some of the BBC’s competitors have expressed resentment for some of the benefits afforded to BBC News by virtue of the corporation’s business model (J. Murdoch, 2009), recent problems surrounding certain editorial processes within the BBC News fold have cast doubt over its financial capacity to continue to produce the high quality investigative reports that the public has grown to expect and feels entitled to. Cutbacks to the budgets of a number of popular journalism programs, including Newsnight, have left editors and journalists over worked and under resourced. The impact of the “succession of cutbacks” (Tillotson, 2012) on the BBC’s ability to produce reliable investigative journalism has been described as nothing short of disastrous. Newsnight presenter Jeremy Paxman says:

“Over the last three years we've been required to make budget cuts of 15%… We have lost producers, researchers and reporters. Nor can we make the films we once made. “Now we're told we are likely to have to make more cuts: at least a further 20% over five years. It is unsustainable, and I cannot see how the programme can survive in anything like its current form if the cuts are implemented” (Plunkett, 2012).

Aside from undermining its credibility as a reliable source of news, recent events in the Newsnight newsroom have provided the BBC’s ideological opponents with arguments, based on trust and relevance, that are being used as justification for calls to dismantle BBC news services even further. While the ideological divide between the BBC and others is beyond the scope of this research, the financial strain being imposed has without a doubt had a negative impact on the BBC’s ability to meet the
obligations of its Charter in the fashion that the British public has grown accustomed to. In that light, the structures that maintain BBC’s reputation as the most trusted news service in the UK are at risk of being removed or at least reduced by its “commercial rivals” (Beckett, 2013).

The financial difficulties experienced by News Limited publications and the Guardian were described and analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. Although Kim Williams contends that News Limited is “doing well”, as mentioned earlier the broader picture of News Limited shows that it continues to be financially supported by the profits of other areas of the parent corporation holdings. While the Guardian is partially supported by income generated through commercial means, it too is increasingly experiencing financial strain due to the declining holdings of its private Trust.

News Limited’s financial problems have led to the implementation of a subscription model for online journalism as a way of generating income. In contrast, the Guardian has refrained from doing the same for fears that it will have a negative impact on its ability to interact with all sectors of society. According to News Limited, one of the added benefits of its subscription model is that it enables the organisation to better know and market to its audience. The subscription process is said to improve its ability to match advertisers with a niche online audience comprised of a demographic most likely to positively interact with the marketing of its products. A clearly defined demographic enables consumer-oriented companies to better target audiences, which makes their investment in the online environment more financially beneficial to them and to News Limited shareholders. Kim Williams’ recent lecture to the Melbourne Press Club presented a strong focus on ways of “managing new opportunities for advertising and other forms of revenue generation such as different payment models” (Melbourne Press Club, 2012). This contrasts with the views of the Guardian’s Editor-in-Chief, whose approach to open journalism, labelled by Williams as “woolly” (Melbourne Press Club, 2012), aims to ensure the publication remains inclusive of and accessible to every individual regardless of his or her willingness or capacity to pay.

This research has shown that the Guardian’s methods of addressing its financial problems are rooted in how it perceives its obligation as a member of the Fourth
Editor-in-Chief Rusbridger has intensified the publication’s capacity to use a variety of channels for communication, all of which convey a diversity of voices on a broad range of topics, that in turn generates more information and more interest in the news site. The introduction of Comment is Free and the daily publication of its news list are examples of this commitment. Rusbridger takes a similar view to network analyst Castells (2012), who suggests that in order for a network to grow, it needs to connect. If people are prevented from connecting to the network, for example because of a paywall, then that not only limits equality of access, but it also limits the organisation’s growth.

At the Guardian and the BBC websites, everyone has access and anybody can enter and participate in any and all of the many deliberative environments, whereas at the Australian for instance, only those who pay can participate in certain forums. News Limited editors respond to criticisms that paywalls limit participation by pointing out that only its niche content requires a subscription fee, and so non-subscribers can still access its blogs free of charge. However, the blogs do not offer the same niche content that is available behind the paywall. Opinions about the benefits and challenges of paywalls continue to be divided, and while this thesis does not attempt to provide a solution to the question of how best to raise revenue, it does identify the challenges it poses to the role of journalism as a member of the Fourth Estate, and thus to the democratisation of journalism.

**Newsroom Cutbacks**

The global economic downturn, failing business models, and the increased flow of information enabled by the Internet, has forced many traditional news organisations, print in particular, to undertake dramatic budget cuts. This translates to a loss of staff, largely those responsible for essential specialist and international reporting, and a collapse of news media share prices. Newsroom closures and staff cuts have been most prevalent in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain (S. Oh, 2010: 4).

Contemporary newsrooms are now largely under-resourced, meaning there is less scope for the levels of in-depth investigations, “less foreign and national news, less space devoted to science, the arts, features and a range of specialized subjects”
(Rosenstiel, 2008) and less original reporting than was possible with more staff in the past. The industry is now comprised of fewer journalists, mostly “younger, more tech-savvy… serving the demands of both print and the web… [with] less institutional memory, less knowledge of the community… [and] fewer editors to catch mistakes” (Edmonds, 2006) and who are required to do more work than their predecessors.

Instead of deploying most of their journalists to the field, many newsrooms have now become more reliant upon news wire services, social media and independent, digitally native journalism entities such as Storyful, Demotix and Ushahidi (See Appendix F for a description of each of these). There is now less time for professional journalists to follow-up and expand on public interest issues and topics, particularly since in the new highly competitive 24/7 digital news cycle, journalists are required to file instantly. BBC editor, Kevin Marsh, says “it is hard for journalists to file immediately; editors and managers need to identify good stories and give them more time” (Marsh, 2011).

The consequence of cutbacks is reduced quality—an “erosion of substance” (Edmonds, 2006)—and reduced quantity of published content. The predicament in which the news industry finds itself manifests as a public perception that professional journalism sometimes appears to take a superficial approach to “monitoring the powerful” (Gitlin, 2009) and that it fails to provide the kind of service expected by the civic public. Rosenstiel contends the problem is more acute at bigger news publications than smaller ones. He says when the numbers of news workers fall, “more of life occurs in shadows” (Rosenstiel, 2009a). In the wake of WikiLeaks, and in the glow of entities such as Storyful, Demotix and Ushahidi, the practice of networked journalism considerably alleviates this concern. News organisations can now draw from and triangulate the specialist work of these organisations to provide more in-depth context and analysis for a wide range of issues and events. Rather than independent media supplanting traditional media as originally feared, it has become an essential support network.
**International Journalism: Wounded in the Crisis, Patched Up by the Web**

A 2000 study by Barnett, Seymour and Gaber on the changing trends in British television news 1975–1999 identified the disparity between the coverage of foreign news by commercial organisations outside of the UK and the BBC. The study found “a healthy balance of serious, light and international” news coverage in the UK, which contrasted with other parts of the world where “highly commercialised” organisations focused on “crime, showbiz, trivia or human-interest stories” (Barnett, Seymour, & Gaber, 2000: 12). It also found that all of the content on Britain’s television news was dominated by “foreign and broadsheet content” (Barnett et al., 2000: 12). Barnett et al. concluded that the UK had maintained a remarkably robust and broadly serious approach to television news, due partly to “the presence of a well-funded public broadcaster” and partly to the regulatory obligations that enabled healthy commercial competition, which produced an environment where important home and foreign news could co-exist alongside lighter content (Barnett et al., 2000: 13).

The inclusion of international journalism in mainstream news coverage has always been supported by the desire of people to know what is happening beyond their own community, and for the high levels of prestige that it generated for news organisations (Sambrook, 2011). As mentioned in previous chapters, the last 20 years has seen a significant decline in the number of foreign bureaus and in the incidence of investigative reporting. This loss is counterproductive to journalism’s primary civic responsibility and is the outcome of three major changes: the economy, new technology and globalisation (Sambrook, 2011).

Sambrook says it was initially the global economic crisis that forced many organisations to reduce staffing levels in their foreign bureaus, with many simply shutting down. As a result, the demand for higher productivity levels in the remaining bureaus has increased, with fewer journalists covering more territory and filing more stories “on all sorts of different platforms” (Alford, 2008; Sambrook, 2011).

The impact of Web 2.0 technologies on foreign newsgathering has posed both challenges and benefits to the business models and practices of journalism. The cost
of the industry’s transition online has been extraordinarily high, with all news organisations having to invest in new digital and mobile services and platforms, websites and broadcasting that requires 24–hour channels. The need to service multiple channels has meant that, “rather than taking savings out of new technology, costs have gone into [creating and maintaining] new platforms” (Sambrook, 2011).

News organisations are no longer the only sources of news information available to the public, because Internet technologies allow people to go directly to the original source. Many Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and businesses now distribute their own news using a variety of communication channels including social media (Sambrook, 2010: 2; 2011). While social media has been shown to play a significant role during political conflicts, natural disasters and crises, society still places great value on those foreign correspondents that risk their lives to report events in hard to reach places such as Libya, for example (Sambrook, 2011). Sambrook says that without their “first-hand, eye-witness reports” (Sambrook, 2011), the world would have known nothing of what was happening there during the 2011 civil war.

Sambrook contends the impact of globalisation on news has been two fold (Sambrook, 2011). First, Web 2.0 technologies have enabled the globalisation of news, which means it is much more difficult for journalists to get away with inaccurate and/or incomplete reports about remote locales because the people in those places can now instantly respond online to explain what is really happening. Second, with the increased movement of people across borders, less of the news is foreign. That is, given that countries like the UK and Australia are now comprised of a higher percentage of multicultural residents than in the past, news audiences may view news stories about particular parts of Asia, for example, as home news rather than foreign news (Sambrook, 2010: 59; 2011).

Maria Balinska, a former editor of World Current Affairs Radio at the BBC, adds another dimension to the impact of globalisation on international news. She says journalists can now use Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate international debate on a range of issues by using the practices of networked journalism to “engage the audience as never before” (Balinska, 2010). For example, given that health insurance organisations now provide services on a global scale, questions about equity of care,
the costs and benefits of health insurance and the value of health insurance to health systems are topics that the news media can explore in an international context via Web 2.0 environments.

Before the Internet, most foreign correspondents were white, male and middle class, and they often relied on locals to help them with language barriers, but now traditional newsrooms frequently use freelancers who are multilingual and local to the region (Sambrook, 2011). Digital technologies have created more opportunities for newsrooms to network with a more culturally diverse cohort of staff who have in-depth knowledge of the region, and therefore can provide better context to issues and events than perhaps an outsider can (Sambrook, 2011). Sambrook emphasises the importance for world news to include a cultural connection between what they are reporting and the people they are reporting to. He says: “it is more important than ever that when we report this interconnected world, that [foreign correspondents/journalists] make that bridge, a cultural bridge, to the people they are reporting to” (Sambrook, 2011).

Similarly, Solana Larsen, managing editor of Global Voices, recognises the importance of reporting stories in ways that are “respectful of the culture, opinions and interests” (Larsen, 2010) from which they originate. She uses Web 2.0 technologies to provide a platform to give voice to people “from almost everywhere” in the world and to help “international journalists reach bloggers who offer a citizen’s perspective” (Larsen, 2010). She suggests that “if all foreign news was told by reporters who are native to the country where events happen… it would change which stories are told, how they are reported, and how audiences respond to them” (Larsen, 2010). This aligns with Nick Davies’ observation that the current method of reporting international news generally involves journalists being flown into a “trouble spot” and consulting with journalism’s traditional sources, which mostly include their own embassy and other official sources. He contends these reports ultimately produce “a consensus—and conservative—account of the world” (Davies, 2009: 100).

Bill Schiller, the Asia bureau chief for The Toronto Star, expresses concern that international journalism is now largely comprised of reports gathered from the
Internet rather than “shoe leather” reporting (Schiller, 2010). He says that even though reporters have become increasingly “tech savvy” the need remains for them to “get close enough to listen” and to understand what they hear (Schiller, 2010).

**Challenges To The Fourth Estate By Commercial Journalism And/Or Ideology**

This research has shown that it is not only the financial bases of news organisations that distinguish one culture of journalism from another. Each case included in this study is governed by different regulations depending on its country of origin and its platform. The *Guardian*, for example, is subject to regulations defined by the Press Complaints Commission, whereas the Australian Press Council\(^{164}\) regulates News Limited, and Ofcom the *BBC*. Each regulatory body is as significant to democracy as the other, and each news organisation functions within the framework particular to the regulatory body to which it answers. Each regulatory framework aims to ensure its members function within the defined rules and standards, which ultimately are framed to ensure they maintain the trust and therefore the custom of the public. These clearly defined frameworks are important considerations for any comparative analysis between disparate media models because they each aim to guide the performance of journalism in the public interest.\(^{165}\) Ideally, each organisation will uphold its obligation to these principles, which correlate with those outlined in theories of the Fourth Estate.

Concerns about the way media owners frame their publications in the context of their own ideological interests rather than those of the public were amplified by the recent Leveson Inquiry into the conduct of News Corporation’s News International publication, *News of the World*, which was brought about by an in-depth investigative journalism initiative carried out by the *Guardian*. The inquiry highlighted the extent to which News Corporation’s news holdings have developed connections between media, business, and the legal and political spheres that enable the organisation to easily diffuse its ideological interests and mobilise power in ways that impact on political decisions. This problem exemplifies one of the key challenges to the theory of the Fourth Estate as it is described and defined in Chapter 2. Commercial news media that channel the commercial and ideological interests of its proprietors have a different commitment to the interests and values of the citizenry than the organisations primarily framed by a public service ethic.
The Leveson Inquiry has generated a lot of criticism and renewed uncertainty about how news organisations should approach their role as news providers. The quote of Lord Chief Justice Leveson that leads this chapter highlights the difficulty of discerning the points of difference between the models. Indeed this thesis has explained that the concerns about the commercial imperatives of journalism are multidimensional, since they encompass the issues of raising revenue to fund journalism, satisfying shareholders, and ensuring their methods do not conflict with the law, the ethical standards of journalism as defined by the relevant regulatory frameworks, and the founding principles of journalism as the Fourth Estate. On the face of it, as Leveson points out, it appears the models in question are all very similar (Bartlett, 2012), yet only by examining each from the bottom up, as has been done in this thesis, can the points of difference become clear.

### 7.2 Web 2.0 Transforms Journalism

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 explained the reasons why each traditional news media model transitioned from its traditional platform to the online environment. For the BBC, the transition began as a way to draw audiences to its traditional broadcast platform. The online platform was also perceived to be another way to interact with audiences, which would enhance its understanding of the public interest. For the Guardian, the transition occurred in response to growing online patronage and the realisation that the Web would enable it to increase its civic value through interactivity with the public. News Limited’s online transition occurred later than its UK counterparts, for a number of reasons. The first is because it was uncertain about how it could make a profit online. The second is because Australia had a slower uptake of broadband technology than many countries in the Northern hemisphere, including the UK and the US. In 2007, Robert Thomson said there was still a large number of people in Australia using dial-up, which meant people could not quickly or easily download multimedia content (Thomson, 2007). Therefore there was little benefit to the organisation providing online content that was difficult for people to access, and to do so would most likely frustrate individuals rather than help them. Finally, News Limited was not pressured by competitors to establish an online presence because, again unlike its counterparts in the Northern Hemisphere, the absence of significant competition between media outlets in Australia (Carson, Wake, McNair, & Lidberg,
2012), resulting from News Limited’s high concentration of media ownership, meant Australians had little choice but to continue to consume News Limited’s print publications, particularly for local news.

While News Limited continued to remain profitable, there seemed to be no imperative for it to invest financial and/or human resources into the incorporation of interactive and participatory technologies into its day-to-day operations. News Limited’s delayed transition online provides a clear contrast between the main aims and objectives of each news organisation studied here, and it shows that News Limited aims to use the platform that provides it with the most reach to transmit its journalism for the purpose of generating profits for its shareholders. Conversely, from the very beginning, the BBC and the Guardian were primarily concerned with using the online platform to create a range of participatory environments.

Chapters 4 and 5 have shown the reasons why participation has become a key part of the Guardian’s and the BBC’s professional strategy. Each media model, including News Limited, now provides interactive environments to encourage different degrees of participation in the deliberative process. However, there are benefits and challenges to creating online deliberative environments. For instance, the BBC comment forums provide citizens with an opportunity to engage with a range of topics in the public interest. A forum may be associated with an article written by a journalist or editor, or a question or topic posed by the Have Your Say program to generate debate and conversation. Anyone is free to engage with the content via the forum. A recurring concern about comment forums, as shown in Chapter 2, is the question of whether participants are deliberative and whether their views are representative of wider public opinion.

The forum attached to a BBC News story about the assassination of Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, is an example that shows there was little understanding and moral respect between participants holding opposing points of view. Disrespect between participants eventually reached a critical stage, whereby the BBC was obligated to intervene, and to later provide the public with an explanation of its intervention. While there was little reasoning and evaluation displayed by the public
in the comment thread, the *BBC*'s theoretical analysis reflected the qualities of reciprocation, in itself an essential element of deliberation (Parkinson, 2006: 1381).

The following discussion draws on the reflections of *BBC* editor, Peter Horrocks, expressed in a lecture to the University of Leeds' Institute of Communications Studies on the *BBC*'s editorial policy, including its use of comment forums. It describes and analyses the ethical difficulties experienced by the news organisation during exchanges of public opinion in the comment forums, *Have Your Say* and the *BBC Blog Network*.

One of the *BBC*'s concerns while covering the Bhutto assassination, beyond the primary news reports, was how much attention and consideration—in other words, *BBC News* resources—should be allocated to the large public response in the comment forums, particularly the *Have Your Say* forum. A large percentage of the comments expressed anti-Muslim sentiment, which raised questions in the newsroom about their relevance and whether they added value to the conversation. The moderation policy for the comment forum, at the time, was designed to allow users to post comments and to recommend the comments of others as most useful. Horrocks said the posts that comprehensively attacked Islam generated the highest number of recommendations, “most of them weren’t making distinctions between different aspects of Islam, they were simply damning the religion as a whole” (Horrocks, 2008a). At this point, editors faced a dilemma. They became concerned that the significant imbalance of viewpoints might be seen as being representative of *BBC* news values, while at the same time they had to consider whether the comments should influence the editorial direction of this topic at the *BBC*.

This highlights a significant problem faced by many news organisations providing comment forums for user participation. In this instance the majority of comments were not inclusive of others, they were not amenable to the position of those with opposing views, and a moral understanding between participants was not reached on any level. Horrocks said the most valuable comments, “insights from those who had met Benazir or knew her” and “valuable eyewitness comments from people who were at the scene in Rawalpindi” were not as highly recommended as those opposing
Muslims (Horrocks, 2008a). Overall, the forum failed to add any useful information to that which was already available to the public.

Horrocks’ reflection reveals the BBC’s strong commitment to providing all citizens with equal access to a forum enabling the expression of individual viewpoints on a particular topic, even though the dominant view, in this case, was in opposition to the values of the BBC and the wider public. On the question of whether the comments in this instance ought to have influenced the editorial direction of the newsroom, Horrocks points out that the news site receives ten thousand emails and posts each day compared to five million daily visitors, which means approximately 0.2 per cent of all visitors choose to comment. He says,

“We cannot just take the views that we receive via e-mails and texts and let them dictate our agenda. Nor should they give us a slant around which we should orient our take on a story. At their best, they are an invaluable information resource and an important corrective to groupthink. They very often ask direct or apparently naïve questions that get to the heart of the subject” (Horrocks, 2008a).

The BBC platforms available to the public for comment and discussion provided an opportunity for citizens to deliberate on a topic of public interest within a defined public sphere. Citizens were able to retain and modify their own views and also had the opportunity to coerce those holding dissenting views (Horrocks, 2008a). While this particular forum was dominated by a specific line of thinking, BBC journalists were able to extract “thoughtful or surprising views and opinion” (Horrocks, 2008a), which were buried deep in the forum, for its own editorial purposes. It also provided citizens with the opportunity to deliberate on what was an important topic for UK and international publics.

The comments in this forum exemplify the impenetrable, entrenched cultural and political beliefs that have persisted across generations. Arguments based on religious, ethnic and social groupings stir the emotions of people in a way that undermine the possibility for an effective exchange of ideas and opinion. The event serves as an example of the kind of situation described by Jane Mansbridge, where conflict
continues regardless of the opportunities for deliberation. This particular example is indicative of what Mansbridge describes as an “enclave” model of democratic deliberation, whereby groups exclude others from their conversation and simply reject anything outside of their own beliefs. This prevents others from critiquing their viewpoint (Mansbridge, 1999: 47), which therefore negates the act of deliberation. Again, in the context of the BBC’s position, it is shown to be inclusive even where some of the expressed views were in opposition to its own values. This example shows the BBC theorizing and reflecting on its position and actions and thus represents a move toward the democratisation of journalism.

Regardless of the outcomes represented in the BBC Benazir Bhutto forums, people in deliberative democracies still require equal right of expression, which include speaking time, access to channels of speech, and the right of response (Parkinson, 2006: 3). There is no reason to force people to accept a particular point of view and equally “there is no reason to force people to be informed” (Parkinson, 2006). It is not always the case that people react with the kind of emotion exhibited in the Bhutto example. The deliberation process has the capacity to offer considered thought to specific social and cultural identities (Dryzek, 2009: 1318). People approach political debates in many ways: some are listeners, some participants, others uninterested or unable to participate for a whole range of reasons (Parkinson, 2006: 3), and the existence of multi-dimensional inequality prevents many from participating.

The single overarching concern in democratic societies is ensuring people have the opportunity to be adequately informed (Coleman, 1999: 17) and to participate in public debates. The use of comment forums by news organisations is one approach to widening the scope of public discussion agendas. As news organisations develop and reflect on the purpose, limitations and effectiveness of their comment systems, their role as facilitators of democratic deliberation will further mature.

**Citizen Participation: News Values, the Public Interest and Setting the Agenda**

Citizen participation has a significant impact on journalism’s ability to monitor power, to get a sense of the stories that matter to people, and to set the news agenda. The BBC describes the way it communicates with the public as a “two way street” (Eltringham, 2008). Vicky Taylor says the use of Web 2.0 technologies provides the
BBC newsroom with “a true voice and a true reflection of what is happening” (Taylor, 2008). Even with technology as simple as email newsrooms can quickly identify the mood, popularity and reach of any story (Taylor, 2008).

For the most part, the BBC sets the topics for discussion and then the people have the conversation. The newsroom sees itself as a global notice board and having a conversation with the world. Interactive spaces are designed to ensure everybody is included in the conversation, and anybody can participate (see Figure 7.1). In keeping with its Charter, the BBC seeks to ensure all topics of discussion are of international interest, and encourages a macro conversation amongst many, rather than micro conversation between a couple of individuals (Taylor, 2008). In that light, it has incorporated particular courses of action into the moderation process to discourage individuals seeking to dominate message and blog comment forums.

Each of the traditional news organisations included in this research has expressed concern about people who try to hijack conversations with specific ideological viewpoints. For example the Guardian “website publishes around 600,000 comments a month, with 2,600 people [each] posting more than 40 comments a month” (Elliott, 2012). A closer examination of these statistics by Martin Belam found at least four commenters who had left over 1,500 comments between them in a single month. Similarly, George Megalogenis found that some individuals consistently posted large numbers of comments across the Australian’s website (Megalogenis, 2009).

All of the journalists who participated in this research said that they constantly check the comment forums for interesting angles in every debate. According to Taylor, the BBC aims to identify a diversity of viewpoints so that it may present interviews that depart from traditional and dominant opinion (Taylor, 2008). Stories that exhibit a strong social resonance are usually pushed high on the agenda. An example of this occurred following a BBC radio interview in which the Archbishop of Canterbury made comments proposing the adoption of some portions of Sharia Law in the UK. To the surprise of BBC producers, thousands of lunchtime audience members responded to the Archbishop’s comments. The reaction was “dramatic, unusual and unexpected” (Eltringham, 2008). By 6 pm, and following 37,000 emails, the BBC had responded to the public interest by pushing the story up the agenda to lead the
news bulletin. Eltringham said, on this occasion, “the media had underestimated the resonance that the Archbishop’s remarks had on the audience” (Eltringham, 2008, 2010). While the story originated in the UK where the dominant view opposes the adoption of Sharia Law, it generated public opinion from around the world. The international view, which in this case was mostly from the Middle East, was largely supportive of the Archbishop’s viewpoint (Taylor, 2008).

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Figure 7.1. The range of participatory channels of communication used by each of the media models included in this study. The News Limited column describes the communication channels used by its national publication, the *Australian*. 
Taylor says, when the newsroom receives a flood of emails on a particular topic, it provides a strong sense of the range of views (Taylor, 2008). A diversity of viewpoints on any issue makes the debate more interesting and therefore it is more likely that the public will engage. Moreover, in terms of views that cross the political spectrum, the Internet serves as a ubiquitous platform. And for the BBC, which has to be global, the use of Web 2.0 technologies enables it to harness a diversity of opinion (Taylor, 2008).

**User-generated Content**

A clear point of difference between each of the organisations studied here is the extent to which each includes citizen-produced content into their news feeds. The Guardian and the BBC are much more likely to incorporate solicited and un-solicited user-generated content into their news feed than the Australian, for example, with the BBC also incorporating it explicitly into its organisational workflow. Both the Guardian and the BBC have stated that the reason behind their inclusion of user-generated content is to create diversity and to enable more of the public more opportunity to see their own lives reflected in the news. They contend they have explicitly aimed to find ways to bring the public into the news process, to collaborate and converse with individuals on as many levels as is possible.

News Limited, on the other hand, retains a more traditional approach, placing greater value on the perspectives of its own journalists when presenting debates about issues such as “contemporary racism” (Melbourne Press Club, 2012) or the impact of the Australian government’s carbon tax on Australian citizens and/or the economy, for example. Australia’s national newspaper continues to prefer to dominate the conversation with the viewpoints of its own journalists rather than those of the public, which suggests it continues to position itself as a gatekeeper of information. While the discussion with Andrew Bolt in Chapter 5 showed that he welcomes comments from the public, his responses suggest he prefers the blog participants to either be persuaded to adopt his point of view or agree with it and support it. Kevin Anderson embraces the blog platform for its interactive capacities, but unlike Bolt he says he never uses it to try to persuade people to accept his opinion. Rather, he uses it as a method of conversing with the public on a range of issues and to identify and understand the diverse elements of public opinion.
In contrast to the Guardian, which crowdsources opinion pieces for Comment is Free, the Australian includes a Send Us Your Story Tips page on its website with the link to it accessible on the website’s static footer. The page provides a form for readers to send in their tips for stories that they think are important or that Australian journalists might like to write about (Appendix E).

**Collaboration**

Each of the news organisations included in this study now engage, to various degrees, in multiple collaborative practices with the audience and with independent media entities. They can draw on the wisdom of the crowd for content and data analysis, to assist with their reports, to encourage deliberative conversations on their blogs and columns, and/or simply generate comments and traffic to their website via social network channels.

Traditional journalism is now much more interactive and networked, which means it is more inclusive of the audience, and therefore better able to reflect the public’s shared experiences. Networked journalism comprises the old and new tools and technologies of journalism to form partnerships and collaborations between professional, independent and citizen informants, whether experts, witnesses or other interested parties. Networked journalism has arrived on the back of the notion that news media are no longer the gatekeepers of information and the idea that the knowledge, expertise and life experience of the public outweighs that of most newsrooms.

While the principle of networking has always been at the heart of journalism practice, the use of Web 2.0 technologies by journalists to connect with sources has added a new dimension to newsgathering and the distribution of information. This research has shown that some journalists and organisations are more digitally connected or networked than others. Another aspect of networked journalism now includes alternative news media that operate independently of, yet complementary to, traditional news organisations. The value of independently produced news media is the inclusion of a greater diversity of opinion and different ways of seeing more of the world incorporated into the public conversation.
7.3 The Impact of the Democratisation of Journalism on Objectivity and Impartiality

Each of the established media organisations in this study has built a reputation for authoritativeness and trust with the public over many years. Institutional journalism has long been strengthened by key principles including independence, objectivity, impartiality, truth, verification, accuracy and trust. The case studies have shown the wide range of Web 2.0 tools and technologies used by different media models to produce journalism that upholds these principles. The Internet has provided opportunities for the public to be exposed to a greater diversity of voices and opinion, which has made it much more difficult for incorrect or false reports to remain unchallenged.

The concept of objectivity was first applied to the practice of journalism at the end of the nineteenth century, and aims to provide news reports with a foundation of fact and evidence (Sambrook, 2004; 2012: 3). It is on this basis that it is widely held to be a legitimate element of journalism, used to produce independent, unbiased, credible, accurate and reliable information (Atton & Hamilton, 2008b: 5; P. Meyer, 1991: 4; Zelizer, 2004: 172).

However, many have highlighted problems with the concept of objectivity and have argued that it is an inadequate framework for reporting the news (McNair, 2005: 32). A common concern with objectivity focuses on the philosophical meaning of truth. Nick Davies says the idea that a news organisation “simply collects and reproduces the objective truth is a “classic Flat Earth tale… devoid of any reality” (Davies, 2009: 111). Others argue that the public does not read journalism as an “absolute truth”, rather it understands that “a certain degree of relativism and subjectivity is inevitable” (McNair, 2005: 32).

The normative view of objectivity argues that it is possible for reporters to identify reality and truth, and can present these accurately and without bias (Windschuttle, 1998: 23). Sambrook contends that many of the assertions about the failings of objectivity arise where the concepts of objectivity (used to identify and verify facts and evidence) and impartiality (used to detect bias) are assumed to mean the same
thing (Sambrook, 2012: 5). The principles of objectivity involve the presentation of the facts, which are supported with evidence, while the principles of impartiality are used to “guarantee some accuracy, fairness and a proper range of views” (Tillotson, 2010). In this light, objectivity is about accountability (Hudson & Temple, 2010; Singer, 2007: 64-86), examining the evidence to discover whether an account of an event or situation holds up under scrutiny (Rosen, 2010b), and analysing journalism’s findings and criticisms based on their relevance and value to the public.

Maurice Dunlevy describes two distinct approaches to reporting stories—using an active and neutral voice—however he contends most journalists subscribe to elements of both (Dunlevy, 1998: 122).

The neutral position means journalists detach their personal opinions from the story and present a disinterested truth about events, issues and people (Davies, 2009). Those who are seen to comply with this practice are usually regarded as watchdogs of the public interest (McQuail, 2005: 284), who provide descriptive accounts of issues and events using the usual elite and authoritative voices (for example, politicians). The problem with this approach is that journalists’ decisions about which voices audiences ought to hear are based on the “moral philosophy and a political commitment” (Schudson, 1978: 8) of the journalist or the news organisation producing the account.

Charlie Beckett argues that this formula for objectivity is not as solid as it is perceived to be and, like Schudson (1978) and others, he says it is applied relative to the purpose and “prevailing political norms” (Beckett, 2008a: 62) of any given organisation (Hackett & Zhao, 1998; Zhao, 2012: 165). In other words, there is scope for different organisations to attach different meaning and value to their principles for their own purpose. However, Beckett remains confident that professional journalists have the ability to independently judge sources, evaluate competing arguments and represent a truthful version of reality (Beckett, 2008a: 63).

Jay Rosen criticises the notion of objectivity, arguing that it reduces reports to a “he said, she said” (Rosen, 2009) formula, which largely serves to create “false balance” (Rosen, 2009). While journalists are naturally expected to actively engage with
political affairs, some argue that the methods required to be non-partisan do not allow them to impart all that they know in a way that provides the public with the most accurate account of what happened and why (McQuail, 2005: 285). The result is that readers are presented with a range of conflicting opinions, which according to Rosen, often leaves them “helpless in understanding where truth lies” (Rosen, 2009). He contends that objectivity is “not so much a truth-telling strategy” as it is a “refuge-seeking behavior” (Rosen, 2009). Gaye Tuchman said similar things more than forty years ago when she argued that objectivity is little more than a “strategic ritual protecting newspapermen from the risks of their trade” (Tuchman, 1972: 660). Similarly, Cunningham says objectivity simply functions to protect journalists from the consequences of what they write (Cunningham, 2003).

Rosen says that although the US political press believes itself to be savvy\(^\text{170}\) (Rosen, 2012b), it knowingly reports false and/or misleading assertions made by high profile politicians without question or context during election campaigns. He says there is a tendency for journalists to perpetuate popular narratives without grounding assertions in “observable reality” (Rosen, 2010c), generally because they feel obligated to remain detached from any kind of ideological position. Then, it is only after politicians have used mainstream media channels to push their own political ideologies before a mass audience that journalists begin a “post-truth”\(^\text{171}\) exposition (Rosen, 2012b). In their attempt to appear impartial/even-handed, journalists proceed to make flippant assertions, such as all politicians are the same or as Rosen puts it, “there are no angels in politics” (Rosen, 2012a). Rosen says the picture of what is happening “can be fatally distorted by the journalist’s need to demonstrate even-handedness” (Rosen).

While calling for “a news standard that can better guide journalists and the public [in a political environment] where government is bent on constructing a reality narrative seemingly at odds with the facts and even with the democratic system itself” (W. Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007: 179),\(^\text{172}\) Bennett et al. also point to a further problem where “journalists who depart from the narratives reported by the rest of the press pack are typically challenged by their editors for not getting the story right” (W. Bennett et al., 2007: 178).
Impartiality

Newspaper editor Kelvin MacKenzie contends nobody is impartial about anything anymore, and says the concept has become irrelevant in the Web 2.0 enabled multi-channel environment. Others argue that regardless of the high or low number of news media channels, the public does not afford all organisations the same degree of trust (Greenslade, 2010), with more confidence and reliance being placed in news services that maintain a moral obligation to the public interest than those whose purpose is to create “rich media owners” (Tillotson, 2010).

Sambrook observes that the increased number of channels of communication enabled by Web 2.0 technologies has amplified opinion over evidence. Similarly, Tim Markham raises concern that journalists have become more reliant upon sourcing information from online environments, in place of original research (Markham, 2010: 87). Compounded by the shortage of newsroom resources required to implement the discovery and verification procedures needed to produce impartial reports, online information is increasingly filtered through second and third-hand sources, which by those stages have been recycled to the point where they are part of an “echo chamber” (Markham, 2010: 87) rather than sources of original information. Additionally, while digital environments provide news organisations with more publishing space than was available to them on print and broadcast platforms, smaller cohorts of journalists and other newsroom resources place limitations on what issues and events can be covered.

All news organisations are accused of political bias. Questions are consistently raised about the way different media models approach their coverage of a wide range of political topics (see for instance Chapter 5 for discussion on News Limited’s commercial and ideological imperatives). The veracity of the BBC’s commitment to impartiality when reporting topic areas such as religion, immigration and European politics is regularly criticised for “liberal and leftwing bias from politicians and other sections of the media” (Halliday, 2012), which has led to regular reviews by the BBC Trust of the news division’s performance. In fact the BBC Trust is currently reviewing the newsroom’s approach to these topics for a report to be released in 2013. The report will compare the way the BBC currently deals with immigration and religion topics compared with its coverage in 2007, when its adherence to
impartiality was last reviewed. It will also look at whether the BBC has ensured that those who hold minority views are aware they can take part in on-air debates” (Halliday, 2012). The 2007 report, From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel, found that while there was no evidence of deliberate bias at the BBC, several executive level staff members felt there was a level of “group think” in program-making areas that had led to a “lack of intellectual curiosity”, a narrowed agenda, and reduced diversity of opinion and ideas throughout BBC News services (Tait, 2007: 66).

While, as Halliday points out, “[r]ightwing sections of the media routinely lambast the corporation over its alleged liberal bias” (Halliday, 2012), Mark Byford, then BBC Deputy Director-General, took heed from a report that showed the audience understands impartiality from a more intelligent perspective. He said the audience “didn’t define it [impartiality] as balance. They didn’t define it as left/right. Although they said it was complex, they also said it was about open-mindedness to ideas” (Tait, 2007: 67). Given that the BBC’s first priority is to serve the public interest, Byford was clearly more concerned with how the audience perceived the BBC’s performance than the perceptions of media critics.

Journalism practice, values and ethics at the Guardian and News Limited are not officially scrutinised to the extent that BBC journalism is, nor are they subjected to the same kind of review processes. The fact that public broadcasters continue to be rewarded with the highest level of public trust (Tillotson, 2010) can in part be attributed to their strong commitment to impartiality and objectivity. Since the regulatory process at the BBC is much more defined and rigorous than other regulatory bodies such as the PCC, the BBC may be seen to be providing a more balanced and reliable news service.

Without trust in journalism, there is genuine concern that “ignorance, misconceptions and conspiracy theories will flourish” (Sambrook, 2004). In 2009, Todd Gitlin warned that journalism would not regain trust until its failings were realised and addressed (Gitlin, 2009: 7). Five years earlier, Sambrook had already begun to identify such failings, observing a tendency for professional journalism to polarise opinion by looking for people at the extremity of any argument, then putting those people into the studio and letting them “go at each other” (Sambrook, 2004). The
Problem with this approach is that the public knows the world is not black and white, and as such they expect to see shades of grey. They also prefer unity over conflict and they know “that argument on TV is often a sham and doesn't deal with the world as they experience it” (Sambrook, 2004).

Independent news media are positioned to challenge inaccurate and false assertions made by traditional news media. They comprise a wide range of interconnected eyewitness accounts, a diversity of viewpoints, are key sources of information and many now connect with the traditional news media institutions, which has a positive impact on the democratisation of journalism. Traditional news media are positioned to partner with independent news organisations and to use Web 2.0 technologies (such as blogging, comment forums and hyperlinking) to provide people with a greater depth of information and provide the means to allow them to engage in their own verification process, thereby creating a more transparent news environment.

The use of blogs provides news organisations with more space to tell a story and additional ways to enable the public to follow it as it transpires. It also provides the organisation with a way to explain/theorise its editorial decisions that may be challenged either by individuals they report on or members of the public, thereby providing greater transparency. Comment forums attached to blogs provide the public with opportunities to add new perspectives, which also serves to provide journalists with an additional method of fact checking.

The use of hyperlinks by journalists enables their editorial decisions to become more transparent than publications that do not provide information about how they know, and why the information is relevant to the public. Crowdsourced fact checking enhances the contextualisation of the facts, which is beneficial for both the public and journalists when evaluating information.

The use of blogs, comment forums, hyperlinks to additional information, and fact checking initiatives by traditional news organisations, provides additional scope for the basic facts to be further scrutinised, verified and contextualised through deliberative discussion.
Conclusion

This chapter has shown the complexities of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the politics of journalism in three different media models. It highlighted some of the tangible differences between each model and identified those differences that are not visible by simply looking at their websites. These include the effects of business and value systems on professional practice, the allocation of space and resources to deliberation, collaboration and participation, and the effects of the democratisation of journalism on elements of journalism, including objectivity and impartiality. It has shown how the collaboration between traditional news organisations, independent news entities and the public can generate a more balanced, authentic and reliable news sphere.

The next chapter will provide a clear explanation and analysis for the question of how the three media models use Web 2.0 tools and technologies to provide the public with new participatory and deliberative spaces. The discussion is framed according to the four dimensions of theory building. Drawing on the previous chapters, it restates the variables of each of the case studies in the context of the conceptual definitions underpinning journalism. In doing so, it shows a range of dynamics—political, economic and social—that connect the cases. It concludes by highlighting some limitations of this research and suggesting future ways to research this domain.

159 See (Holmes, 2012) for descriptive summary of events.
160 The Guardian’s open news list allows the public to talk to editors and reporters about upcoming stories as they work on them http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/series/open-newslist?INTCMP=SRCH
161 The authors cite the US and some European countries as an example.
162 For example, the closure of News Limited’s London and US Bureaus is described in Chapter 5. Also, Nick Davies provides analysis of cutbacks to foreign bureau in the US (Davies, 2009: 99).
163 While this statement was made in relation to a specific issue—the coup in Madagascar—Global Voices describes itself thus: “Global Voices seeks to aggregate, curate, and amplify the global conversation online – shining light on places and people other media often ignore. We work to develop tools, institutions and relationships that will help all voices, everywhere, to be heard” (Global Voices, 2012).
164 The Australian Press Council (APC) will be replaced by the News Media Council (NMC).
165 The public interest as defined by the PCC includes, but is not confined to: Detecting or exposing crime or serious impropriety; Protecting public health and safety; and Preventing the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation. Adapted from the Press Complaints Commission: http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html
166 A bottom-up approach draws from empirical evidence that describes the aims and objectives, and the values and principles that provide the framework for each case. It identifies the key journalistic features of each case, and it examines unique patterns of journalism practice. Conversely, a top-down approach would take a general view of each case based on common understandings of journalism.
Belam’s figures show that 2,600 users produce twenty per cent of the comments but comprise only 0.0037 per cent of the Guardian’s monthly audience. See Martin Belam’s Blog http://www.currybet.net/cbet_blog/2012/12/guardian-comments-part-1057.php

Sharia Law is the moral code and religious law of Islam.

Jay Rosen defines Savviness as “that quality of being shrewd, practical, well-informed, perceptive, ironic, “with it,” and unsentimental in all things political—is, in a sense, their professional religion” (Rosen 2012) http://pressthink.org/2012/08/everything-thats-wrong-with-political-journalism-in-one-washington-post-item/.

Bennett et al. also provide an account of the failure by the US press to satisfactorily apply the methods of objectivity in its coverage of intelligence reports describing the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

At the time of this interview Kelvin MacKenzie was an editor in the News International fold. He now works for The Daily Telegraph.

Richard Sambrook in Tillotson.

Original research includes interviews, eyewitness accounts and attendance at press conferences.


See comic writer Graham Linehan’s blog for an example of this practice from the perspective of an interviewee. Linehan blogs his disappointment in the BBC’s Radio Four Today program. He said the program producers invited him to speak about his adaption of the film Ladykillers for theatre but unbeknownst to him had also invited theatre critic Michael Billington to debate the relevance of Linehan’s adaption of the work to contemporary society. Linehan argues “the style of debate [squabbling] practiced by the Today programme poisons discourse.” Moreover, Linehan refers to the program as a “little fight club” (Linehan, 2011). Furthermore, this incident started a new debate, involving personal blogs, the BBC and social media, about the practice of this style of reporting. Links to the debate are listed in Linehan’s follow-up post where he provides detail about communication between himself and the program producers in the lead-up to the interview in question.

Hackett and Zhao (1998: 34) point out that independence of professional journalism from power does not always lead to objectivity and impartiality. This also applies to news entities, which are independent of traditional news organisations.

Examples of fact checking sites include the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Conversation. While these site check facts, they do not perform the journalistic task of providing context to the facts.
Chapter 8  Conclusion

This thesis set out to discover the impact of the changes to journalism arising from the professional and general use of Web 2.0 technologies during the period 1997–2011 and whether the changes have contributed to a democratisation of journalism. A comparative case study, which included a variety of some of the most significant internationally acclaimed news media models, provided the basis for an in-depth examination of how established public and commercial news providers, including the BBC, the Guardian and the Australian, transitioned from traditional news platforms to the online environment.

The research aimed to discover how each news model uses Internet communication technologies to meet its journalistic objectives, and thereby continue to fulfil its role as a member of the Fourth Estate. It also aimed to show the extent to which each model of journalism has incorporated networked journalism, which is comprised of technologies such as interactivity, collaboration and sharing, for the purpose of creating spaces more conducive to participation and deliberation.

An extensive literature review was undertaken to provide the theoretical framework from which to understand the practice of journalism and the evolving challenges for its role in democratic society. The review was divided into two logical sections. The first critically reviewed the crisis in journalism, and the civic elements of the problem domain, including theories of journalism, particularly of the Fourth Estate, deliberative democracy, the public sphere and citizenship. The second reviewed the elements that constitute the tools and technologies of journalism, including network theory, network journalism, participation, crowdsourcing, user-generated content, blogs and social media. These theoretical frameworks provided a foundation from which to undertake the case study.

The research question posed in Chapter 1 sought to examine how the selected news media models have migrated from traditional print and broadcast platforms to the online news environment, to examine the extent to which each model uses new/emerging participatory and deliberative spaces, and to reflect on the ways in which the use of Web 2.0 technologies has affected the professional practice of
journalism. The comparative case study, which builds a relationship between each case using the social, political and economic dynamics and variables that connect the cases, was guided throughout by a set of criteria derived from the research question. The outcomes of this research are briefly summarised against each criterion below.

**Social, Economic and Political Objectives Frame Business Strategies**

The business and value systems of each media model frame their social, economic and political objectives, which directly affect how they approach their role as members of the Fourth Estate. A review of the *BBC’s* mission statement as described in the Royal Charter provided a foundation for understanding how and why its business model is underpinned by an ongoing commitment to social responsibility journalism. It explained that a licence fee paid by every household in the UK funds *BBC* journalism, thereby establishing its obligation to ensure it satisfies the civic needs of its audience. It has devised a number of strategies that enable it to fulfil its obligation, one of which includes the creation of participatory and interactive environments that are inclusive of a diverse demographic. In addition, it has developed ways to ensure citizens have the skills to access these environments. The study also emphasised the importance the *BBC* places on understanding how best to build strong relationships with the audience and how to ensure that its journalists are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to practice journalism in the new online environment.

All of the above demonstrates the *BBC’s* strong sense of civic duty. This research has shown that *BBC* journalism’s commitment to its role in a democracy is framed by the premise that the health of a liberal democracy is dependent upon an informed and active citizenry. It is produced within a framework that conceptualises citizens as political entities with rights to participate in the political process in the UK and internationally, and therefore ought to have access and opportunities to interact with accurate and balanced coverage of a wide range of social and political issues and events and their subsequent debates. Drawing from the literature in Chapters 2 and 3, the research illustrates the *BBC’s* understanding that conversations about public policy ought to include as many participants as possible to ensure the deliberative process takes account of competing interests. Furthermore, the *BBC’s* use of Web 2.0 technologies to provide individuals with the skills required to use interactive media
in multiple participatory environments (encompassing/hosting a diversity of public spheres) shows it not only understands the importance of digital literacy but also takes action to facilitate it.

The founding principles of the *Guardian*, like the *BBC*, interconnect with the principles of the Fourth Estate. Its journalism aims to show people what is happening, to stimulate public debate, and to enable people to share their experience of the world with others, thereby providing them with a range of opportunities to develop a better understanding of the world. Neither organisation is driven by the need to generate revenue for profit. While the *Guardian* is primarily funded by the Scott Trust, like News Limited, advertising revenue is a component of its business model. However, the *Guardian*’s business model is unique because, while one of the components is commercial dependency, this source of revenue is wholly used to sustain its journalism. This means the *Guardian*’s editorial decisions, much like the *BBC*’s, are free from market interference and therefore may be better able to consider a greater range of viewpoints and produce news services with higher democratic value than those organisations with major commercial dependencies.

A review of News Corporation’s *News Digital Media* showed the interconnected relationship between the business and editorial components of News Limited. While News Limited executives and editors say they place a high value on the organisation’s production of quality journalism, its primary motivation for doing so is to generate the kind of reputation that draws large niche audiences, which thereby creates a healthy platform for advertisers and higher return for its shareholders. This contrasts with the *Guardian*, which for more than ten years has embraced the participatory practices of the new online environment as a way to interact and collaborate with the public in a manner that enables it to fulfil its civic obligations. News Limited’s late transition into the digital environment highlighted two key problems for Australian citizens. First, commercial news organisations outside of Australia were more motivated than News Limited to transition online because they faced heavy competition from multiple competitors. Given the highly concentrated circulation of News Corporation’s titles in Australia, News Limited had little competition compared to *The Times* (London), for example, and therefore it could comfortably continue to generate profits for its shareholders on the print platform.
News Limited transitioned its core editorial cohort online only when Rupert Murdoch deemed it made good business sense, moreover when it began to face competition from other online news media services such as the ABC, Fairfax Media, Crikey, ninemsn and Yahoo!7. The second problem, a consequence of the first, concerns the extent to which commercial interests impact on the democratic value of the dominant news service in Australia. Drawing from interviews with journalists, the literature (Chapter 2 and 3), unobtrusive observation of News Corporation’s website, publicly available transcripts of press conferences and the Rupert Murdoch’s address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 2005, this thesis has surmised that News Limited is primarily concerned with maximising profits, at the expense of opening deliberative spaces for public debate, as the Guardian and the BBC have done. Others further argue that the maximisation of profits enables News Corporation to further increase and exploit its network of power (Arsenault & Castells, 2008; Manne, 2011).

The examination of each traditional business model has shown how the new digital environment has impacted on the ways in which each organisation approaches news journalism. It explained how the new digital environment has forced commercial news organisations to seek new ways to generate revenue to compensate for the loss of income from declining classified and display advertising revenues. In doing so, it has explained the benefits and challenges of News Limited’s subscription model to its capacity to create a diversity of participatory, interactive, deliberative and collaborative spaces where people can engage with and contribute ideas to matters of public interest. It has also highlighted the Guardian’s resistance to the revenue raising practices that limit any individual’s ability to contribute to the conversations that shape the public debate, by opting for more participatory-directed business strategies.

**Transition Online Transforms Traditional News Media**

Traditional news media models have transitioned from traditional platforms to online news media environments for a variety of reasons. Initially, the BBC’s motivation for its online transition was to draw audiences to its broadcast platform. It soon came to realise the participatory and interactive benefits of Web 2.0 technologies to enhance its connections with the public, and began to develop strategies to use these to better
fulfil its Charter obligations. The commitment of BBC News to participatory strategies was illustrated by the reorganisation of its newsroom’s traditional workflow to explicitly incorporate the interactive and networking components of the online environment, including user-generated content, crowdsourcing, collaboration and social media.

Some of the ways in which the BBC’s collaborative approach to newsgathering was exemplified included a description and analysis of the crowdsourcing techniques it used to investigate the misuse of MP expenses, and a descriptive analysis of how it incorporates user-generated content into its own journalism to better reflect what is happening to individuals in diverse and dispersed locations. This illustrated how the BBC uses Web 2.0 technologies to monitor power. The study also showed the BBC’s provision of multiple entry points to public debates to ensure equality of access for its diverse social demographic. It showed that these entry points extend beyond the walls of the BBC to include multiple social media platforms.

The Guardian’s online transition was initially a response to the cultural shift of audiences to the digital environment. As it began to incorporate the use of Web 2.0 technologies into its journalism it saw a number of possibilities to better engage readers in dialogue with its journalists and other members of the public, thereby increasing its civic value. The Guardian case study shows how its digital mindset evolved to the extent that it expressed a desire to become of the Web rather than simply on the Web (Bell, 2011). This involved opening its journalism to the world, asking the public to help it investigate important issues (British MP expenses), collaborating with new sources of information (WikiLeaks), sharing information with other international news providers, interacting with the public on a variety of issues using a range of Web 2.0 tools and technologies (for example blogs, comment forums, hyperlinks and social media), opening its news agenda to the public for suggestions, and the use of user-generated content and a much wider range of freelance opinion writers than that of many other news organisations, which serves to better reflect the diversity of lifestyle and culture of the world. Each tool and technology of the Web is used to open the Guardian’s editorial framework to the world, to enhance its accountability, transparency and trust, thereby enriching its civic purpose and value.
Chapter 5 has shown that News Limited aims to produce professional journalism based on traditional journalistic values to ensure it maintains a dominant position in the news industry and continues to be attractive to commercial clients. It promotes itself as “one of Australia’s leading online publishers” and has been described by outsiders as Australia’s “most important newspaper” (Manne, 2011). As such, it continually explores innovative ways of developing content that engages readers and most importantly “offers new opportunities for our clients to build their brands online” (Bass et al., 2010): 26. The publication’s readership is largely comprised of the political and business elite (Mathieson, 2009) and politically engaged citizens. As such, whether the political class loves or loathes the publication, they will not disregard it (Manne, 2011) and that particular demographic has shown a willingness to pay for it.

The study showed that News Limited has successfully integrated its online platform with the print edition in ways that are inclusive of the public, albeit much later and to a lesser extent than the BBC and Guardian. Chapter 5 described and analysed News Limited’s transition from print to the online environment and focused on the benefits and challenges to the organisation’s approach to journalism. In particular, it showed that while its journalists have generally embraced Internet technologies for their capacity to create more interactive connections with the public, the mission of the organisation is more concerned with keeping the readership within the confines its own environment where it has more control over the message, and can better provide advertisers with the niche audiences they demand. Like the BBC and Guardian, the online environment, particularly the blog format, provides News Limited journalists with more space to explain complex issues, and comment forums provide them with supplementary information, and at times serve as a research tool.

A point of difference between each of the media models studied here, however, is that News Limited publications rarely use outbound hyperlinks, which are described in Chapters 3, 4 and 6 as an effective way to provide readers with extra information and a greater diversity of viewpoints, thereby enhancing readers’ knowledge and understanding of perhaps complex matters.
The study positioned News Limited within a global media conglomeration, which spans three continents, however it also showed that each of its publications aim to serve a local rather than international audience. As such, News Limited places more emphasis on national rather than international priorities in its news coverage to enable the development of niche audiences, which can then be targeted by a stable of advertisers from within their particular locale.

**Web 2.0 Technologies Better Enable the Fourth Estate**

A consequence of the cultural shift caused by the new information economy is the transformation of traditional media business models to include participatory strategies, to differing degrees, which as a result will necessarily move them from a profit oriented focus to a more public service oriented one.

The research has shown the similarities and differences between the ways in which each media model uses Web 2.0 technologies to enact the principles of the Fourth Estate, which includes the creation of a variety of spaces/forums where the public is exposed to a diversity of viewpoints formed independent of government and commercial interests, where they are free to engage in deliberative dialogue about public affairs. It showed the many and often innovative ways in which each case of study has approached the development and use of the new tools and technologies of journalism, derived from Web 2.0. Journalism practice in each case has evolved at different rates and to different degrees to become more participatory, interactive, collaborative and networked. As such, the use of various Web 2.0 technologies by news media has seen journalism become more open and more inclusive of public opinion and more transparent, especially in the organisations whose remit is primarily concerned with the provision of news services based on civic/democratic values.

Where only a small percentage of the public could ever participate in the limited print and broadcast spaces available to the public in the past, the use of blogs and their associated comment forums (*BBC, Guardian* and News Limited), message boards (*BBC*), citizen content pages (*Guardian: Comment is Free*), the inclusion of editorialised citizen generated content (images, video and audio) on a variety of news platforms (*BBC, Guardian* and News Limited, but excluding the *Australian*), and
social media platforms such as Facebook (BBC, the Guardian), Twitter (BBC, Guardian and News Limited), and YouTube channels (BBC and the Guardian) has enabled greater opportunity for individual participation.

Chapter 2 established the importance for news organisations to provide the public with a range of entry points into the public debate. It described two dimensions of participation, individual participation where the public engages in the deliberative process (illustrated in Chapter 7), and collective intelligence, which involves citizens contributing to crowdsourcing initiatives such as the Guardian and BBC’s MP expenses projects. Each of these draws on the crowd’s knowledge and analytical skills to solve complex problems. Chapter 2 showed that one of the main concerns about democratic theory regards the levels of participation in public policy debates and the freedom to participate. The use of Web 2.0 tools (blogs and so on) and technologies (crowdsourcing) by each of the media models studied here have enabled more interactivity between journalists and citizens, and provided more scope for the further development of new tools and technologies that enable journalists to provide greater depth and identify the finer peculiarities of complex issues (Chapters 4 and 6), thereby creating a greater capacity for news media to reflect public life and the lives of the public than was possible using only print and broadcast technologies.

Changing media technologies and social attitudes have driven the demand for increased interaction between journalists and the public. One of the consequences of these changes has been a cultural shift in the way that people view the fundamental authoritativeness once held by traditional news producers. The ease with which the public can now create and share content on any topic, from any location, using a range of digital devices, means the public has now come to expect interactive news services in which they can see more of themselves reflected. In keeping with the BBC’s mission to “help deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services, and to sustain citizenship and civil society” (2010a), its newsroom welcomes the increased public interaction opportunities offered by new media technologies, whether via emails, photos, Facebook ‘likes’, blog comments, and so on, and aims to form more “two-way relationships” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2007c: 6) with the public. In doing so, it believes that this will
strengthen its position as an authoritative service, derived from its long held commitment to its stated journalistic principles.

While the tools of journalism have changed, the technologies of journalism, which at their most basic is about talking to people to discover what matters to them, have not, nor have the professional ethics and values of journalism (Eltringham, 2008). The BBC study has shown that while BBC News takes care to listen to the interests of the public, it also asserts an appropriate level of editorial control to ensure it serves the purposes set out by the BBC Royal Charter and meets the aims of BBC news journalism (as shown in Chapter 4). It has also shown how the newsroom uses Internet technologies to take greater measures to be more transparent, thereby engendering greater trust with those it aims to serve.

The study also described the technologies of journalism utilised by the BBC to generate conversations with the public. It showed how the methods of interactivity constantly evolve with the array of issues and events that pass through the BBC newsroom. From message boards and blogs, to the changing processes of comment moderation and linking policies, the BBC consistently takes a proactive approach to engaging the community with the issues in ways that cater to a diversity of social and political interests. The study also identified and analysed the BBC’s methods of creating deliberative spaces for social and political expression. It described the new found capacities for journalists to bring questions delivered by individual audience members directly into the newsroom using a range of devices such as webcam, SMS text and email messages. These are presented directly to authority figures, in front of live television and radio broadcasts, or streamed online. This study has shown that the innovative use of Internet technologies by BBC News iteratively fashions cultural and political changes from the news as a lecture toward the democratisation of journalism.

The study of the Guardian described the ways in which its newsroom develops and uses the tools and technologies of journalism. The section included a thick description of the ways in which journalist Kevin Anderson incorporates the use of Web 2.0 technologies with his traditional journalism practices to increase interactivity between himself and the public for mutual benefit. Anderson’s
framework for interactivity is representative of journalism practice at the *Guardian* and complies with the expectations of Fourth Estate theories.

The study of News Limited described and analysed the way journalist bloggers at the *Australian* and the *Herald Sun* use news blogs. In particular, Andrew Bolt and George Megalogenis, both originally print journalists, explained the value of the digital platform to their practice and more broadly to democracy. The study also described and analysed the use of social media technologies by News Limited journalists. It showed that while many News Limited journalists have embraced social media as a way of increasing interactivity with the public, others are satisfied with limiting their interactivity to their own blog platforms, which means they do not engage with social media platforms such as *Twitter* or *Facebook*.

**Web 2.0 Technologies Challenge and Benefit the Politics of Journalism**

The big issues that comprise the politics of journalism are concerned with the business model, the capacity for journalism to fulfil its role as the Fourth Estate, and the impact of the participatory model on its traditional ideals. The research analysed some of the tangible differences between each model, including the effects of business and value systems on professional practice, the effects of the economic crisis on journalism’s ability to report the world beyond what is happening in people’s immediate locale, the allocation of space and resources to deliberation, collaboration and participation, and the effects of the democratisation of journalism on elements of journalism, including objectivity and impartiality.

The News Limited study highlighted concerns about the unequal distribution of power than ensues in countries with concentrated ownership of news media, such as Australia. It presented existing arguments that this kind of power may not serve the best interests of the public. It also described the concerns underpinning theoretical debates about the ability of commercial news organisations to balance their obligations to their business stakeholders with their social responsibility to the citizenry.

The research also discussed how the collaboration between traditional news organisations and independent journalism entities such as *WikiLeak*, *Ushahidi*,
Demotix and Storyful generates a more balanced, authentic and reliable news sphere. Each of the independent organisations are curating and making sense of large volumes of data produced by ordinary citizens from all over the world that would not usually be accessible using traditional methods of journalism. These organisations serve a number of purposes, as news gatherers, to identify disparate voices, and to provide the necessary checks and balances for mainstream news media. In this way they can be seen to alleviate some of the problems associated with objectivity and impartiality. Collaboration between traditional and independent news media entities provides an even broader range of voices and perspectives than traditional media can provide on its own.

Limitations
A limitation of this research is that a sample of media organisations is not exhaustive. It also confines the study mainly to Australian and UK news industries.

There are many different models of public service and commercial news media. As such, this research does not seek to present a generalised view of “public service media”, for example, based on one case. Rather it seeks to show the varied ways in which particular journalists use Web 2.0 technologies and how such uses impact on the each model’s approach to its role as a member of the Fourth Estate.

Similarly, the research did not use an exhaustive sample of journalists; instead it sought out those who were early adopters of Web 2.0 tools and technologies in each organisation.

Ideally, future research on this topic would include a wider range of journalists, editors and organisations to provide a more representative sample, and therefore build on the findings of this thesis.

Future Research
The findings of this research suggest a number of areas for future investigation. The first area concerns how participatory environments may be used to generate the revenue required to sustain journalism and, in the case of commercial organisations, to satisfy shareholders.
The research raises questions about the usefulness of comments forums as deliberative spaces. The example discussed in Chapter 7, regarding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, illustrates that the conversations in these forums are not necessarily representative of the wider audience and may not be deliberative. Given that some organisations are moving toward more restrictive models, while simultaneously retaining their commitment to participatory strategies, a useful research topic might investigate which models produce the most effective conversations.

Future research might also build on this research by applying the same research methodology to extend the comparative analysis to include Australian news entities such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC), Sky News, Fairfax, ninemsn and Crikey with the view of providing a deeper comparison with the cases studied here.

The research could be further enhanced by interleaving it with Stephen Cushion’s (2012) research that sought to discover the democratic value of the news provided by a variety of media models.

The gatekeeping mindset characteristic of all traditional news media is slowly eroding as journalism evolves to become more participatory, collaborative and networked. The ongoing challenge for news media is to ensure it can maximise the benefits arising from Web 2.0 technologies in ways that enable it to continue to fulfil its role as the Fourth Estate. Each of the cases studied in this research exhibit unique qualities that have to varying degrees contributed to a democratisation of journalism.
## Appendix A: Research Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 James Taranto</td>
<td><em>Wall Street Journal</em></td>
<td>Editor Opinion Journal Member of <em>WSJ</em> Editorial Board.</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kevin Anderson</td>
<td><em>Guardian/BBC</em></td>
<td><em>Guardian</em> Blogs Editor</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Richard Sambrook</td>
<td><em>BBC</em></td>
<td>Director of Global News.</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Vicky Taylor</td>
<td><em>BBC</em></td>
<td>Editor, Interactivity.</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Matthew Eltringham</td>
<td><em>BBC</em></td>
<td>Assistant Editor, Interactivity and Social Media Development at <em>BBC</em> News.</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Jean K. Min</td>
<td><em>OhmyNews</em></td>
<td>Communications Director.</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Peter Wilson</td>
<td><em>Australian</em></td>
<td>Foreign Correspondent London Bureau</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Peter Alford</td>
<td><em>Australian</em></td>
<td>Foreign Correspondent Tokyo Bureau</td>
<td>Face-to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Andrew Bolt</td>
<td><em>Herald Sun</em></td>
<td>Senior Journalist</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Clive Mathieson</td>
<td><em>Australian</em></td>
<td>Deputy Editor</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 George Megalogenis</td>
<td><em>Australian</em></td>
<td>Senior Journalist</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: The BBC Royal Charter

The Charter describes the public purpose of the BBC in six distinct fields:

1. To sustain citizenship and civil society;
2. To stimulate creativity and cultural excellence;
3. To promote education and learning;
4. To represent the UK, its nations, regions and communities;
5. Global: To bring the UK to the world and the world to the UK; and
6. Digital: To promote its other purposes including:
   - To help to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services; and
   - To take a leading role in the switchover to digital television (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2006, 2010a) (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2006: 3).
Appendix C: BBC Floor Plan
Appendix D: Nick Robinson Newslog

The beauty of blogging

Now I never thought I'd find myself writing this but... My name's Nick Robinson and I am a blogger.

Yes, like me, you're not a trainspotter of all things on the web you might not know what a blogger is and might not much fancy the sound of it. Worry not, it's harmless. Please read on, though, because this blogging business is something special.

You see, the funny thing about broadcasting is that you speak to a vast number of people but you all too rarely have a conversation with them - beyond perhaps with someone who asks 'Are you that guy on the telly?' or 'Why do you wear those ridiculous specs?'

Which is where Newslog - this weblog - comes in. It's a chance for me to add a thought or an observation from my political front row seat. I may also invite you to listen, watch or read something that's particularly interested me. It's a chance too for you to add your thoughts or pose a question (though preferably not about my choice of glasses).

As well as being a conversation, weblogs can be more personal, which is why the format is finding ever more uses in the mainstream media.

A good weblog can really change the relationship between author and reader. And the politicians themselves are in on the game too - as my colleagues Alan Connor argues in this article, a good weblog can...
Appendix E: The Australian’s Story Tip Page
Appendix F: Independent News Entities

This Appendix describes three independent news entities, Storyful, Ushahidi and Demotix, each a product of Web 2.0 technologies that curate, crowdsourced and corroborate content for collaboration with traditional news media. Each organisation is seen to complement the traditional news sphere.

Storyful

“Storyful uses the power of social networks to create an authentic, cooperative and socially useful journalism” (Little, 2011).

Founded by journalist Mark Little in 2010, Storyful is an online curatorial service with two dimensions. First, it provides a story-building tool for anyone who wants to create and share a story with others, and secondly it describes itself as a tool-kit for newsrooms working to incorporate social media into their newsgathering. Storyful acts “as a social media ‘field producer’” that alerts news organisations to breaking stories and connects them with field operatives such as “freelance journalists, activists, talented amateurs, aid workers” and ordinary citizens. It uses a range of social Web technologies to monitor and curate the many conversations on the Web about the news of the world as it happens. It identifies, verifies, and monitors the global, national and local news issues and events that matter to citizens all over the world. It then seeks to locate authentic authorities and content which shape the narratives that inform audiences about what is happening.

The idea for this service evolved from Little’s desire to produce a new kind of journalism, one that is based on discovery, participation, interactivity and collaboration. It aims to form partnerships with traditional news media brands, professional and citizen journalists and other informants. One of its key objectives is to provide curation tools that enable anyone to generate and distribute original news content online. Storyful is used to both extract and post raw content from and to multiple social media and blog platforms. The organisation provides services for “major global news organisations” (Little, 2011) whereby it passes on specific journalistically treated content for many of the breaking news stories.
Any individual or organisation can monitor *Storyful* for breaking news, however those wishing to be supplied with content for repackaging are required to enter into a business transaction with it. As previously discussed, one of the greatest concerns for many traditional news organisations using social media is about filtering and authenticating the continually large volumes of content being produced by individuals with different agendas and levels of media production literacy. Organisations such as *Reuters* purchase content from *Storyful* that has undergone rigorous professional journalism treatment, which saves it using its own newsroom resources to perform those tasks.

The interesting aspect of *Storyful* is that it sources a much broader range of news and information than that which is covered by traditional news media. It carries both firsthand accounts of people who are on the scene of breaking news and events and curated content generated by professional and citizen curators throughout the world. For example, as Typhoon Roke threatened Tokyo, professional curator Aine Kerr, based in Ireland, curated content about the typhoon from NASA, *Twitter*, various Airlines, *YouTube*, Japan’s meteorological agency and Tokyo reporters, to provide both official and citizen information about the event. Kerr’s report showed a satellite picture of the typhoon, linked to flood hazard maps, alerted people to the threat of breaking dams, floods and landslides, and used a range of citizen produced still and video images to show the intensity of the weather, and its impact on human life, motorways and infrastructure such as public transport. Following concerns that the Fukushima nuclear plant may have been disturbed by the typhoon, Kerr was able to investigate and report that it had been unaffected (Kerr, 2011). The *Storyful* website contains a number of case studies that exemplify the kind of work it undertakes. For instance, it claims to have verified and published almost three thousand files related to the Syrian political movement over a period of four months during 2011 and its footage has been used by traditional news media globally more than 14,000 times (Storyful, 2010).

*Storyful* uses a blog to inform the public of the latest news and events at *Storyful* and to crowdsourse content about particular events. For example, it used the blog to ask the public to create and curate content about the 2011 Royal Wedding between Prince William and Kate Middleton (Nolan, 2011). The blog is also used to post tips
and information recommending useful tools that can be used to gather and create content and data visualisations. *Storyful* aims to provide information about the tools and technologies of journalism for journalists, journalism technology programmers and journalism students (Sheridan, 2012).

**Demotix**

*Demotix* is a freelance photography agency launched in 2009. It crowdsources photographic content from ordinary citizens worldwide. *Demotix* contributors produce pictures of everyday life that would not normally be obtained by traditional news media. The organisation aims to maximise the benefits arising from the use of digital technologies by the general population, to capture newsworthy events and everyday life, and to bring it to the world. It also aims to fill the gaps left by the cutbacks to traditional newsroom resources.

Demotix was acquired by Corbis Corporation in 2012. Corbis was founded in 1989, and is wholly owned, by Bill Gates. It licences the rights to its collection of 100 million visual media images to advertising, marketing and media organisations (Corbis Corporation, 2012).

*Demotix* acts as a broker between news organisations and its contributors, with a business model based on the idea that people would prefer to be remunerated for their content instead of supplying it to news organisations for free. With a community of 30,000 users and 4,750 active photo and video journalists it aims to sell licences to use crowdsourced content to established media organisations including the *Guardian*, the *BBC*, the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and others (Demotix, 2011). *Demotix* guarantees that contributors will retain copyright of the content they contribute however the remuneration is split equally between *Demotix* and the contributor.

Since its acquisition by Corbis Corporation, Corbis also has access to the *Demotix* image library, which means it too can attempt to sell content to its own clients. Where that occurs, Corbis attracts a small fee and passes the remaining fee to *Demotix* who splits the fee equally with the contributor. *Demotix* uses Facebook, Twitter and its own blog to connect with the public and to crowdsource content. In
April 2012 *Storyful* joined forces with *Demotix* in an initiative that aimed to create a unique real-time newswire.

**Ushahidi**

*Ushahidi*\(^{187}\) is a non-profit technology company that develops open source software for the collection of information, the visualisation of data, and interactive mapping (Ushahidi, 2008) of crises as they happen anywhere in the world. It states its aims as being to “build tools for democratizing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories” (Ushahidi, 2008).

Since its beginnings in 2008, *Ushahidi* has grown to become a large organisation, with developers based in Africa, Europe, South America and the US. The organisation began as a group of volunteers who mapped reports of peace efforts and violence arising in Kenya following the 2008 elections (Conde, 2010; Ushahidi, 2008). It has since been used to map and monitor unrest in the Congo, to track violence in Gaza, to monitor the 2009 Indian election, to gather reports about Swine Flu outbreaks throughout the world and to map the BP oil spill (Ushahidi, 2012b). The product has also been used worldwide by those wanting to display real time visualisations of “pro-democracy protests and the government crackdowns” (Meier, 2011). This method of crisis mapping, described by Meier as “new type of geography” (Meier, 2011), is interactive, and “provides immediate situational awareness” (Meier, 2011).

Information, including user-generated content, is received via a range of Internet and digital technologies and then visualised on a map. Meier contends the information gathered and produced by multiple participants at the scene of events helps to “synchronise shared awareness” of social movements (Meier, 2011) and other important issues such as incidents of genocide in South Africa, sexual violence against women in Syria and more general information, such as mobile Internet connection in Brazil (Ushahidi, 2012a). Moreover, the software enables anyone to curate, map and triangulate information produced by anyone anywhere in the world, to show an easily verifiable map of events and issues. The technology has proven to be useful for professional journalists covering news in areas that are hard to access. Maria Conde contends it “has a lot to offer to journalists and the information
gathered by both journalists and average citizens… complement each other” (Conde, 2010). Furthermore, she says it has the capacity to compensate for the information flows lost following the closure of many foreign news bureaus.

**Summary**

*Storyful* generates revenue by providing consultancies and curatorial services to other news organisations. It provides its contributors with editorial advice freely available on its website, which indicates that it too has recognised and adopted a participatory business strategy. Similarly, Ushahidi’s website provides free advice about how to use its platform and software, and provides tutorials on how to verify content and monitor elections. While *Demotix* is now owned by Corbis, it was initially funded by advertising and consultancies. It too is modelled on participatory strategies.

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181 These are also *variables* since their value and application differs in each media model.
182 Democratic value is defined here as “news [that] conveys information likely to enhance people’s understanding of the world on issues likely to empower them as citizens in a democracy (Cushion, 2012: 204). This includes international, investigative and local news that is produced in line with the values of verification, objectivity, impartiality and transparency.
183 Flew reports, “Newspaper sales per 100 Australians were 9.7 in 2011, as compared to 21.9 in 1987 and 13.0 in 2000” (Flew, 2013).
184 Cushion refers to “the democratic value of news” (Cushion, 2012). The phrase is used here to describe information that increases people’s knowledge and understanding of the world and of matters that affect the way they go about their daily lives. It incorporates activities such as interactive participation, deliberation and collaboration.
185 A comprehensive explanation of *Storyful’s* verification process is provided by Malachy Browne on its Website (Browne, 2012).
186 See *Storyful* Case Studies http://storyful.com/case-studies/case-study-ongoing-syria-coverage
187 Ushahidi is a Swahili word, which means “testimony or witness” (Ushahidi, 2012b).
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