

Franco-British Council

**The Media Revolution:
Liberation or Bankruptcy?**

Report of a seminar held in Paris

13 November 2009

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With thanks to Sir Peter Westmacott, UK Ambassador to France.

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Cover design by Adam Preston
Printed in Britain by TKO Print
ISBN: **978-0-9555131-9-0**

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Is the internet a problem?	5
But is the problem the internet or journalism?	6
The internet opportunity	6
Commercial pressure	7
How is the internet affecting journalism and communications?	8
Anxieties about coverage - foreign and investigative	9
Anxieties about coverage - democracy.....	9
Is truth in jeopardy?	10
Adding value	11
Conclusions	11
After Big Journalism: evolving a way forward, by Mick Fealty	12
Websites	16
British participants	17
French Participants.....	18
Agenda	19

Introduction

We are in the midst of a technological revolution as data are digitised, mashed and spread through networks and a multiplicity of channels. The commercial basis of the media is giving way as advertising moves from print to digital. New generations reject old habits of reading and the balance of paid-for and free information shifts.

And the 'we' are not just media professionals, broadcasters with dwindling ratings, beleaguered print journalists or commercial providers of news content. This is a popular revolution. Customers, readers - internet users - are setting the pace, forming themselves into new audiences that gather and dissipate, fragment and come together with dizzying speed. Some linger; others vanish overnight.

So the seminar convened by the Franco-British Council in Paris to share perspectives on journalism, cultural change and the new information economy was timely, **Jean Gueguinou**, president of the French section of the Franco-British Council, said in his introduction. Alongside him **Sir Peter Westmacott**, the UK Ambassador to France, pointed participants to the recent impact of new media on both French and British political life. In 2009 the story about President Sarkozy's son Jean had escaped news management by the political class. By the time ministers had mobilised to put their side of the story, it was too late. Bloggers and internet chatterers had defined the terms of the story their way. Meanwhile in the UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, a politician schooled in older forms of communication, had been trying to adapt to the new media, but found that reactions to his appearance on YouTube over MPs' expenses decidedly mixed.

Discussion during the day would be binary, **Quentin Peel**, the international affairs editor of the Financial Times predicted. The new media were 'social' and could bind people; they were also fragmented and could be solipsistic. This was not going to be a discussion just about newspapers and the internet, **Nicolas Beytout**, chief executive of the media group Les Echos said. It's a crisis for all media or rather multiple crises. The 'media landscape' is changing beyond recognition.

And yet participants were alert to hyperbole. News gathering and journalism had been through crises before and lived to tell the tale. When the French and UK economies pick up advertising may flow back, lifting revenues for newspapers and magazines.

But, as **Henri Pigeat**, president of Centre de formation des journalistes, argued - what if journalism's conditions of production have changed permanently? History is a poor guide to where we are, **Roy Greenslade**, Professor of journalism at City University, London said. The business model which had persisted since the middle of the 19th century was now obsolete, in the words of **Jean-Marie Colombani**, the former Le Monde editor who became founding president of Slate.fr (see list of websites). Newspapers had depended on the sale of space for advertising. Their publishers had cut the price of the product, so cover prices failed to cover the cost of content. Now that tie with advertising sundered as revenues migrated to the internet.

Some participants did believe apocalypse was nigh. **Eric Scherer**, strategy and external relations director at AFP, talked revolution of 'Marxist dimensions'. He believed the social implications of Web 2.0 messaging would have more profound effects than the internet has had so far.

This is the end of Big Media, the seminar heard, meaning large corporations heavily invested in broadcasting and newspapers. The market was over for journalism based on newspaper titles turning a profit: it had dried up. What remained was subvention, either from philanthropy or the state. Perhaps as the new generation's cultural preferences were further displayed, we could only conclude 'there is too much journalism out there'.

Is the internet a problem?

It's what one participant called 'disorders in the hierarchies of information' – an explosion of information and sources, unremitting competition for the attention of viewers who were also listeners and readers and who, simultaneously, were citizens, networkers and consumers.

During the 20th century, film, then radio, later television all competed to carry messages, subjecting the 19th century production model of print newspapers to severe competition. But it and they survived. The internet's challenge may be to the death. While radio added to the possibilities of print, the internet is protean and 'totalising'. It brooks no barriers, tolerates no rivals.

In the recent past, a double whammy. Newspapers had been hit by big cuts in advertising revenue and loss of readers to the internet. During the past decade Le Monde had lost a quarter of its circulation, Le Figaro an eighth. And the rate of decline was accelerating. Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for UK titles made grim reading. The annual rate of decline in circulation of The Times to September 2009 was just over 10 per cent; for the Guardian just under 10 per cent (about half those figures each, after adjustment for bulk sales). The number of Americans buying papers was in free fall. Editorial staff were merging and being made redundant.

The questions before the seminar were:

- Can today's journalism and its associated markets for information and models of dissemination survive?
- Does the disappearance of print matter? What might be lost if the internet's dominance became total and newspapers folded? What might be gained?
- Is the pursuit and dissemination of truth better served by the new media?

In response, participants displayed no neat France vs UK division of view. 'We are facing the same challenges, but responding differently,' said one of the co-chairs of the morning's debate. British participants were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the internet; French participants hailed the new mixed economy, in which (incidentally) weekly print news magazines could also flourish.

Old Adam showed himself: British participants appeared more attuned to developments in American media ownership and markets. Yet both British and French participants talked mainly about the media and government in their respective countries; they mentioned wider European dimensions only infrequently. Noticeable, too, in debate was how differences of view linked with the size of participants' media organisations.

For example, **Nik Gowing** of BBC World saw the internet and its effects on traditional journalism as an opportunity for Big Media, meaning the BBC and commercial groups commanding multiple platforms and exploiting the savings (and journalistic opportunities) in 'convergence'. Big Media, branded internationally, could exploit a market for mediated material that remains large and liquid. Internet journalism could make do with large numbers good at cutting and pasting. For digging down deep, for the journalism of explication, major brands (such as the BBC and Sky) were still in the game.

Adam Boulton of Sky News was optimistic, too. Global recession had caused the slump in advertising revenues and when it lifts Big Media will go back into profit. Opportunities abounded for well-run, financially-integrated companies (such as Sky and Canal +). Supervisory regimes would catch up. Soon the regulators would get on board and look at internet companies, and today's comparative advantage would slip.

But is the problem the internet or journalism?

The volume of news you could trust was declining before the internet and, correspondingly, trust in the journalists who produced it has been slipping for years. In Italy, the threat to political pluralism posed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and his control of broadcasting was an old problem in modern guise; the internet seemed impotent in the struggle to dislodge his grasp.

Many mistrust journalism because of its tendentiousness and lack of transparency. Journalist participants criticised their profession's self-regard. Could the internet remedy these deficiencies? **Pierre Haski**, president of the website company Rue89, said blogging journalists could establish their veracity. Using the personal pronoun helped credibility, replacing the 'old collectivism' in which trust vested in an institution or title. The seminar heard from journalists, among them **Jean-Marie Colombani**, who sought to use websites (such as Youphil.com) to deliver what traditional journalism often failed to. Internet or not, the journalism teachers at the seminar affirmed the need for ethics training to run alongside acquiring media skills – the array of which was itself expanding.

The internet opportunity

By no means all participants wanted to label the internet as 'a problem'. **Mick Fealty**, a professional blogger, said it democratised distribution of news and information, world wide. Blogging was creating communities of interest and commitment, spontaneously and autonomously. Information no longer needed amplification through broadcasting. Paradoxically the internet also created 'silent spaces' and perhaps a darker side; opportunities for rejection of the 'liberal consensus'.

Other voices urged journalists and media companies to stay cool and calm in the line of fire. **Hugo Dixon** (founder of the website Breakingviews.com) said journalism's basic ethical standards were universal, and should apply online as much in print and broadcasting. Writing for the internet would cure 'digital diarrhea' since it required reporters and commentators to get the point or story across in a maximum of 350 words: this is surely healthy.

The internet allowed 'other voices' and expanded access to storylines. **Henri Pigeat** cited the outbreaks of violence in the Paris banlieue in 2009. Traditional media were embarrassed, offering superficial coverage. A blog allowed local people their say, and to air their definition of the story. Yet as well as subverting older conceptions of sources and control, the chronology of the internet challenged traditional ways. If journalism's job is analysis and criticism, that takes time. Journalism had to reconquer time.

Commercial pressure

The seminar heard no dissent over the scale and imminence of the commercial crisis afflicting most paid-for media. But have we been here before? **Gerald de Roquemaurel**, former chief executive of Hachette Filipacchi Medias, recollected the panic of the 1990s, with the sale of France Soir and Le Figaro, amid anxiety about the unstoppable drift of young people from print to television. And yet people had continued to read. The press adapted.

Oddly, some newspapers were safe. Some participants noted, with puzzlement, government subsidies keeping L'Humanite and Liberation afloat. And they continued even under a president who, presumably, did not share those papers' political outlooks. The French state supported print, through exemption from value added tax and reduced rate postal charges.

The British side labelled a 'Rusbridger gap', after Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the Guardian. That newspaper, like most others in Paris and in London, faced steep declines in advertising revenue, especially from recruitment notices. The gap lay between the costs of producing a print edition in parallel with free-access online editions, while print revenues were dropping and internet advertising, while growing, was insufficient to cover costs. The gap exists both in media companies' budgets and between their historical identity and what they might be if, say, their content were available only online.

Christophe Boltanski, associate editor-in-chief of Le Nouvel Observateur, made a point about the demographics of the new media. We are inside a 'generational crisis of confidence'. Young people had stopped reading, seeing the newspaper press as irrelevant and above them. Which 'requires us to revisit the way we work and make a virtue of our journalistic identity by producing silence amid noise and confronting rumour with fact'.

Not all participants spoke in rueful tones. For **Hugo Dixon** and **Robert Shrimley**, managing editor FT.com, this crisis is a welcome moment of financial truth. Market forces are clearing the weak and wounded from the decks and the fittest would survive. Bankruptcies among news organisations would cut supply and bring the market back into balance. Survivors would flourish, said Dixon, if they

produced what consumers would pay for. So what if packaging triumphs and impresarios of content outsource the supply of news?

How is the internet affecting journalism and communications?

Journalists were suffering 'psychological disorder' in trying to cope – perhaps there was nothing new in that observation. But career paths are changing. Journalists must increasingly command several technologies, **Roy Greenslade** observed, drawing on his experience as a university teacher of journalism. **Laurent Guimier**, editorial director of Europe 1, described a new model of production in web radio. Broadcast and web journalists worked cheek by jowl in the same 'hub' or 'pod' shaping the same content for segmented audiences, putting linked or repackaged stories simultaneously on different channels. Staff swapped media, exploiting differences in 'prime time' between the internet and radio. And the journalist, by the way, had lost none of his or her existential justification as an observer constantly alert, supplying expertise in understanding a changing picture.

One of the day's key words was 'fusion'. **Pierre Beylau**, editor in chief of Le Point, saw a blurring of lines that once separated journalism from the commercial side of media organisations, or print from pictures, or weekly and daily journalism. In a 'jungle', journalists had to adapt to survive.

Journalism could survive, said **Nicolas Beytout**, provided journalists abandoned hierarchy and worked with the new media, such as wi fi television. They had to change the way they selected and packaged information. We need, he said, a true 'mutation' in our ways of working.

'Mutualisation' was **Roy Greenslade's** word as he discerned the outlines of new forms of journalism, no longer telling people what to read or think, but promoting conversations among 'readers', providing forums, encouraging the exchange of views and knowledge. Journalism had to decouple from advertising, at least as its principal source of income and seek funding in 'crowds', clubs, charities and social enterprise.

But let's neither wallow in nostalgia nor sign up to professional protectionism, said **Robert Shrimpsley**. The internet offered 'real-time confrontation' with rumour, offering vast additional data to check and test propositions and stories. The quality of reporting of events was boosted, said **Henri Pigeat**, citing the direct participation of people in reporting their own fate on the streets of Teheran during the summer of 2009. Compare the nature of reporting then with even such a recent event as the fall of the Berlin wall – extensively covered, but from the outside looking in. If, to echo phrases used more than once in debate, 'the story is out there' why regret the passing of news-gatherers' sovereignty.

Or, to use another of the day's analogies, the internet was doing away with the journalist's identity as a 'secular priest'. Journalists had now to swap places with their readers, and conversely. They had to strive to find a model in which they added value and, just as importantly, were paid for their efforts. They had to find

new definitions of their status in the eyes of their readers or (perhaps a better description) their co-producers.

But what if (**Henri Pigeat**) the debatable land between journalism and publicity was shrinking and increasingly merchants posed as journalists and the converse?

As the day progressed, participants teased out these themes in detail.

Anxieties about coverage – foreign and investigative

If newspaper revenues shrink they must cut staff and bureaux. Offices in foreign countries are expensive; they are often the first to go. How to weigh the departure of what **Quentin Peel** called the 'boots on the ground' with the opportunities for self-expression granted people – citizens – by mobile phones, tweets and the internet at large? Don't be sentimental about the quality of foreign correspondence offered in 'the old days', **John Lloyd**, co-director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, warned. Often reporters parachuted into troublespots. Their local knowledge was slight. It is debatable how much value they added in their coverage. Besides, Lloyd went on, now that newspapers have cut their foreign coverage – the Boston Globe's worldwide network of bureaux has disappeared -- 'it doesn't seem that we know less about foreign countries'. Shelves are groaning with books of reportage and analysis. Governments are opening up; the public knows much more as of right.

But what about journalism that takes time to track down sources and documents, journalism that stands up to lawyers and threats – thanks to the solid backing of courageous editors and patient commercial backers? Reporters who relied on Google searches were missing stories 'on the ground'. 'Accountability journalism' was suffering.

Anxieties about coverage - democracy

The civic conversation on which informed electoral choice depended in turn depended on journalism. Newspapers and other media did not just report but commented. Journalists talk to elected politicians and share with them in voicing public choices. On that basis, **Roy Greenslade** said, journalism was an adjunct of democracy. But was the public space safe, wondered **Henri Pigeat**. Rumour seems the motor of much internet conversation and 'information'. But 'can democracy subsist on rumour'? Participants complained of under-reporting of institutions, courts, local authorities. French journalism, a participant sardonically observed, was not necessarily the best place to 'disassemble rumours'. And is there a danger, asked **Hugo Dixon**, that an anxious political class was scapegoating the internet for its own failures of adaptation?

Politicians, too, have no choice but to learn new tricks even if, as **Sir Peter Westmacott** said with a smile, their skills were still rudimentary. Politicians might be slow learners about how to deal with the internet as a source and carrier of news, but they would. Already we see the presidents in France and the United States employing dozens of people to work online, to position pictures and write blogs. Presidents were choosing how to place their photographic images online, undercutting control once enjoyed by journalists.

But does that tip the balance towards government? It may take Big Media to hold Big Government to account, a participant argued. The internet intruded into closed regimes, opening the door to pluralism and democracy. At the same time it destroyed privacy and, in countries such as France and the UK, added to an oppressive sense of ubiquitous surveillance.

In France, according to **Jean-Marie Colombani**, spending decisions by President Sarkozy, especially those about his family, should be subject to the most searching scrutiny. French citizens' capacity to judge their leaders and to criticise power was undiminished. What had changed was the state's ability to fend off investigation. We need quality journalism, not least to distinguish between the legitimate longer run interests of the state and the short run interests of incumbent politicians. But was its absence due to the rise of the internet? Sensationalist and superficial journalism – what one participant called the tabloidisation of content – had been around for a long time.

The diversity of the new media and their ease of access spelled the end of what **Alain-Gerard Slama** called electoral monopoly. But for all its diversity, the internet was paradoxically no guarantor of pluralism in opinion. New forms of internet-based consultation claimed the authority of the majority – or, perversely, allowed minorities to dominate through their energy and 'suggestiveness'. He drew a parallel with web pages and search procedures where 'the only message that matters is the one at the top'. In our welfare societies fewer and fewer people were motivated to take part and conditions grew favourable to the growth of arbitrary government. Slama cited the psychologist Stanley Milgram, whose work had shown the depth of our capacity for obedience to authority. He conjured up an atomised internet public, obedient, susceptible to mendacious appeals to instinct.

Is truth in jeopardy?

Yes, said **Henri Pigeat**. Perhaps the idea of information itself was under threat, with citizens' capacity to make informed and proportionate judgements about the world around them. Data and information had expanded mightily in quantity. So much more was available. And yet the internet ground this harvest of information into dust. Information became noise, confused sound. And what if internet news was shorter, flimsier, and less reliable yet a credulous public lapped it up?

Internet testimony was fallible. In coverage of foreign countries, indigenous sources were untrustworthy – or at least journalists had to subject them to challenge and scrutiny. **Quentin Peel** saw flaws in blogs and other internet sources. They lacked 'that sense of what I can rely on'. To present the truth you needed intermediaries to interpret and place in context.

Why privilege the 'truth' of journalists, others responded. Tens of millions of people on the ground embodied the truth the internet afforded. But, a participant came back, who was to make sense of what the millions saw and reported?

Verification could also be done online. **Pierre Haski** is part of the group around Rue89, a website spun off from the newspaper Liberation. It was a model adapted to the new eco-system, in which websites users and sympathisers making donations to keep the site running bought the journalism of assurance and

analysis, literally brick by brick. We are changing the very definition of journalism, he said. All readers can respond whatever the time or their situation. They are witnesses, simultaneously and serially; they are the experts, analysts, commentators, enriching the flow of information. As editors we confirm or challenge. Moderators of the site were not so much tamers of the 'wild beast' as transformers of the raw energy of the internet into positive use, and public understanding. It was not easy: he cited Rue89's difficulties in holding true to its principles over the Israeli invasion of the Gaza strip in January 2009. But don't blame the medium. Instead he urged colleagues to muster for the 'battle for quality'.

Adding value

The future for journalism was specialisation and differentiation, said **Nicolas Beytout**. The internet opened opportunities for media businesses to add value by standing back from the turbulent flow of data, and offering (selling?) analysis, criticism and perspective.

Journalism would survive, but in niches or 'elite' forms. The public would increasingly rely on the internet for random access to information, whetting the appetite of groups and audience segments for refined communications. Even in a 24/7 market for information, we might exploit opportunities to 'step back and reflect' said **Sophie Pedder**, the Economist's Paris bureau chief. Look at the way French news magazines were prospering. They had opened themselves to the internet, of course, but made a virtue still in their print identities of carrying much of France's political conversation.

General news had no future but the horizon was brighter for regional news organisations and those with a brand that made them more like a club, such as The Economist or the online magazine Slate.

People wanted 'branded news', news they could trace to a source they could trust, affirmed **Nik Gowing**. And, yes, his employer the BBC continued to offer brand strength. From a different angle, **Robert Shrimley** agreed with the proposition. Brands that got close to their customers would survive. He cited how some companies had risen from the ashes of the end of the dot com boom to flourish, because they had provided a service.

Big Media would survive, **Adam Boulton** predicted. Picking up on recently announced plans by The Times and other media owned by Rupert Murdoch, he said content providers would retreat behind firewalls and technological barriers, ending the free use of their material and winning paying customers.

Conclusions

The seminar broadly agreed 'general information has no future'. People, especially younger people, would get their news from the internet. But news gathering – and journalism – could thrive by specialising, and moving into niches and genres. Journalists had to add value, to relegitimise themselves by moving beyond what was trite and free and 'show proof every day it is worthwhile to be a journalist'

After Big Journalism: evolving a way forward

A personal view by Mick Fealty

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives.

It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

Charles Darwin

When I began *Slugger O'Toole*, I barely realised I might be joining a slowly accelerating revolution in how news is created, distributed and consumed: and a revolution in which readers would become ever more integral to both the production and distribution process.

The one-to-many broadcast media – newspapers, radio and television – was the *de facto* choice of several succeeding generations. That *status quo* is now rapidly giving way to a much less predictable but increasingly intelligent set of user-generated networks in the Internet age.

In the golden age of broadcasting, much of the proprietary value of news lay in brigading journalistic talent into a central space (with attached print works or broadcast studios) and then mass-distributing the agreed product out into a world where knowledge, and especially news, was a scarce resource – and consequently valuable.

In a talk given to the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufacture & Commerce (RSA) – founded in 1754 when the industrial revolution was gathering momentum – in London in March 2007, Adriana Lukas of the Big Blog Company described the cultural process underlying this change:

The pre-internet age was the age of mass production that was based on the age of engineering. This was a time when complex problems called for complex solutions. But computing and the Internet assumes that a few simple rules can lead to complexity. Consider, for example, the Internet as a 'stupid network' with one simple rule – move packets from one end to another and then some. What we see today was built on one of the simplest architectures around, but with inbuilt flexibility and rules to allow complexity.

In this post-industrial world, news is now abundant. The generalist commentary of trained journalists – once rare when access to knowledge, and consequent expertise, was scarce – is rapidly losing that value. Because today, the opportunity for a population of smart people in the world to publish intelligent, thought-provoking and distracting thoughts has skyrocketed.

Now non-generalists – specialists including both experts and local people possessed of the kind of precise knowledge 'shoe leather' journalists once had a nose for – can make their thoughts publicly available at near zero cost.

This 'work' is a practical outcropping of individual commitment and passion and is most often accomplished within interstitial moments when those individuals would otherwise be least economically active.

As this 'free' process grows, the amount of public goods in a newly intelligent and differentiated 'commons' also grows. The new class of freely produced and often high quality information thus intensifies the challenge to conventional business models – as well as the inherited 'authority' of the big media brands themselves.

An almost predictable appeal to that authority – as opposed to more robust notions of truth – ensues. Murdoch's threat to decouple his print empire from the Google machine is a good example of the weakness of such a move. It betokens an irrational attachment to 'the way things have always been done'. As Francis Bacon noted in his *Novum Organum*:

Men fall in love with particular pieces of knowledge and thoughts: either because they believe themselves to be their authors and inventors; or because they have put a great deal of labour into them, and have got very used to them. If such men betake themselves to philosophy and universal speculation, they distort and corrupt them to suit their prior fancies.

Big journalism's historical authority today lies principally in the enduring power of its brand; which endures even as it is being eroded by disruptive technologies that rapaciously churn the ground all around it.

The problem is not that there are ever more millions of bad bloggers and Twitterers writing incontinent rubbish (there clearly are). Nor is it that these distributed networks will rob big media of their business, and eventually replace them (some may, most won't).

The nub of the problem is that at its best, these new media networks throw up insights that consistently falsify the official narratives crafted by some of the most outstanding journalists in the country.

As blogger Wendy Grossman noted recently: "one reason blogs have become such an entrenched medium is that they cover things that no newspaper will allow you to write about in any detail." That being so, the problem remains how do you find the good stuff?

If it is true, as is sometimes claimed – and doesn't seem entirely unlikely – that for every recent professionally-written article by a salaried journalist, a blogger somewhere has written a better one, then it may only be a matter of time before one of the collaborative filtering tools like Google Buzz, Google Reader, or Delicious achieves critical mass, and delivers a mortal blow to big media.

At least for the coming generations.

The erosion of trust resulting from "churnalism" is well documented. There's also a destructive addiction to 'balance' to consider, in which, according to Chris Hedges of *Common Dreams*, "the creed of objectivity becomes a convenient and

profitable vehicle to avoid confronting unpleasant truths or angering a power structure on which news organizations depend for access and profits.”

In a less revolutionary vein, Paul Gillespie, a veteran reporter and columnist at the Irish Times, points to a further problem: the loss of legitimate authority – not least insofar as it relates to the general wellbeing of a given country and its society:

‘If the media are to live up to their self-proclaimed role as critics and accountants of power rather than its mere corporate stenographers, they must accept some blame for such a lack of foresight’

Currently none of these circumstances are fatal, or – as yet – widespread.

In Ireland and the UK, blogs like Slugger O’Toole or Guido Fawkes are well dug in with the media and political class. So, for example, according to a 2008 ComRes poll, some 96% of Stormont’s MLAs read Slugger O’Toole on a regular basis.

However, even high profile blogs lack the kind of mass audiences on a day-to-day basis that continue to give the older brands their power. So blogs continue to exert merely secondary effects on the general nature of the news outputs for their respective areas of interest.

Big media organisations also retain other residual advantages, not least the convening power of their brands, particularly with senior figures in public life. Yet few have yet understood their potential to connect profitably with that cacophonous market that is the Internet.

Despite the rush to wrest ownership of some of these distributed technologies from the small brigades, big media has remained deeply attached to more traditional forms of bureaucratic centralization. One result of that is that they have a deepening problem with news replication.

Journalists hunt in packs. They tend to hover within eyesight and earshot of each other, afraid to engage with “the bleedin’ obvious” or to ask the awkward question that might just bring greater enlightenment or, rather more to the point, that could possibly diminish their cherished ‘access’.

This is what Hugo Dixon terms “me too Journalism”,

Increasingly this insider dealing becomes an irritant to the growing band of intelligent and interconnected outsiders. As such, by using blogs and other, shorter, forms of social collaboration, which utilize the new knowledge networks, many have become adept at disrupting the closed consensus offered by previously inaccessible elites.

“Tell me” is no longer “good enough”. Slowly, iteratively, we are moving to a “show me” paradigm. We are seeing the erosion of a mass production habit, established and reinforced by what Yochai Benkler, in *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, calls *the incumbency*:

The rise of greater scope for individual and cooperative nonmarket production of information and culture, however, threatens the

incumbents of the industrial information economy...the state in both the United States and Europe has played a role in supporting the market-based industrial incumbents of the twentieth-century information production system at the expense of the individuals who make up the emerging networked information economy. Most state interventions have been in the form of either captured legislation catering to incumbents, or, at best, well-intentioned but wrongheaded efforts to optimize the institutional ecology for outdated modes of information and cultural production.

To use some core concepts derived from evolutionary theory, broadcast media has been operating in the information ecosystem as both a *selector on*, and an *amplifier of*, the initial *variation* 'out there'.

Yet in this age of networked and interconnected audiences, not only is there an increasing amount of variation occurring in the ecosystem on which to operate, but the unique privilege of selecting and amplifying is no longer confined to a few dominant 'species' crowding out the light.

Further, new media technologies are forcing us through a period of *punctuated equilibrium* in which those 'species' hitherto best fitted to the established 'ecosystem' find that these sudden changes force them into rapid new adaptations.

The critical editorial skill will continue to involve picking out those variations that work best in a given environment, and then amplifying it within that differentiated space. In pure marketing terms it requires a definitive shift from the 'channel' to the 'network'.

Blogs have been doing this for years now with little sense or recognition from the mainstream of the nature of what is essentially an opportunistic trick.

Yet now we have an oversupply of amplification.

Editors must therefore build new means to encourage variation and open out the range of ways by which selection occurs. And then – and only then – should they amplify with confidence.

"When you change the way people communicate, you change society"
Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*

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www.youphil.com

www.rue89.com

www.breakingviews.com

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Patrimoine

The Media Revolution; liberation or bankruptcy?

13 November 2009, British Embassy in Paris

Agenda

- 0900-0925 Welcome by Sir Peter Westmacott, UK Ambassador to France
- 0925-0945 Introduction by Quentin Peel and Henri Pigeat
- 0945-1230 Session I
- The economic impact of the internet on traditional journalism**
- (i) Print and News Agencies** introduced by Nicolas Beytout and Roy Greenslade
- (ii) Broadcasting** introduced by Laurent Guimier and Nik Gowing
- New forms of media
 - Convergence of different forms of the media
 - New ways of accessing information
 - Dissolution of traditional economic models
- 1230-1400 Lunch with guest speaker Alain- Gérard Slama
- 1400-1530 Session II
- The New World of the Internet** introduced by Pierre Haski and Hugo Dixon
- What advantages and new opportunities do the new media offer?
 - New ways of collecting information?
 - Continuous information streams and “bite-sized” news nuggets
 - Changes in the role of the journalist
- 1530-1700 Session III
- New Media and Ethics** introduced by John Lloyd and Jean-Marie Colombani
- Citizen journalists
 - Blogs
 - Privacy issues
- 1700-1730 Conclusions and close

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<input type="checkbox"/> Creative ways forward: culture in the 21st Century Philip Hensher	2007
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