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THE IMPACT OF NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ON TELEVISION NEWS

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the impact of new communication technologies on the production and distribution of international television news. It argues that the history of journalism has involved ongoing change to the genres of journalism and to the communities and forms of knowledge they have generated, largely in response to technological development. Hence an examination of the impact of the telegraph on journalism in the nineteenth century can provide a useful context for discussion of contemporary issues. Turning to contemporary issues, the paper examines evidence suggesting that recent technological developments have led to an increasing domination of world news by a few global news suppliers such as CNN, Reuters and AP Television. It also acknowledges counter evidence suggesting that these technologies can be used successfully to correct traditional imbalance in news flow by facilitating regional news exchanges and lowering the cost of satellite-based news gathering. The paper will also address issues of accuracy and interpretation which arise from the global trade in news images and their electronic manipulation.
News and communication technology: an historical sketch

The institutions and practices of journalism have evolved over the past two centuries in tandem with developments in communication technology. Journalism and the prevailing technologies that enable, limit and shape information gathering and distribution have always been necessarily interdependent, for the news is the end product of routinised, professional processes in every phase of which communication technologies are of the utmost importance. Journalism has been a spur to the development of new technologies and a major market for the equipment and services they made available. The commercial imperatives of journalism – to gather the news as quickly as possible; to generate and service a mass audience which, particularly in times of war, hankers after the latest news; to beat the opposition – have meant that the industry has, by and large, been quick to adopt innovation.

In journalism speed has been of the essence. In the 1830s James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York Herald, stole the march on his opposition by engaging the services of an agent in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to intercept ships heading for Boston, make a summary of the latest news, and send it by pigeon to New York. Bennett, it is said, paid his agent $500 for each hour he received major foreign news ahead of his rivals (Hohenberg, 1964, 28). Over 150 years later another American, CNN’s founder Ted Turner, revolutionised television news by transmitting major world events of the 1980’s such as the Gulf War and the shelling of Moscow’s Presidential Palace live into the living rooms of households throughout the world.
The rewards for news organizations which have embraced new technologies have been enormous. Paul Julius Reuter established his news agency empire in the latter half of the nineteenth century by 'following the cable'. Wherever telegraph cables were being laid throughout the world Reuter sought to set up offices. London's *Daily News* invested heavily in cable services in its coverage of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 paying out 1,200 pounds a month for telegrams. It was rewarded with a boost in circulation from 50,000 to 150,000 (Desmond, 1978, 246). When CNN stole the march on the major US networks in its coverage of the Gulf War its ratings boomed and it was transformed from a largely domestic cable station to a major world player.

There has, of course, been resistance to the introduction of new technologies and their associated journalistic practices. Their introduction has usually been marked by conflicts of interest and by philosophical differences between traditionalists and innovators. Rival newspaper interests tried to shoot down James Gordon Bennett's pigeons. When radio came onto the scene, press interests tried to prevent it becoming a force in news. The telegraph was seen as a threat. The editor of the London *Times*, Mowbray Thomas, wrote to that newspaper's Berlin correspondent in 1853, two years after a cable had been laid under the English Channel: 'I do not confide much in the telegraph and I would it had never been invented' (quoted in Williams, 1953, 19). Yet is soon became evident that use of cable services was absolutely vital if *The Times* was to retain the ascendancy over its rivals in foreign news that it had established. In the event, the arrival of the telegraph challenged existing journalistic practices and
indeed business practice generally just as radically, if not more so, than the arrival of computers and satellites in this era.

In discussing the interaction between journalism and various communication technologies it is important to note that the relationship goes beyond just one of transmission. The constitution of news itself has been transformed by the technologies. The telegraph privileged the qualities of brevity, speed and attention to key facts and thereby instigated a new journalism genre. There was no room on the telegraph for the more discursive, florid and subjective styles that had flourished in the era of ‘gentlemen correspondents’. Furthermore when journalism’s interaction with the telegraph became routinised and institutionalised through the development of world news agencies there was a concomitant standardisation of news product, necessary so that it could be used by papers throughout the world. Again, one might draw parallels with twentieth-century developments both with respect to the news genres that have emerged in radio and television and the ways in which the current trend towards the globalisation of news contributes to the institutionalization of particular formats.

In discussing the effects of new technologies on news discourse and on international news flow it is also important to draw a distinction between the theoretical potential that technologies bring in such areas as ‘free flow of information’, ‘global access’, ‘regional co-operation’ and ‘the creation of communities of knowledge’ with the actual implementation of technologies in
the context of existing institutions of journalism, commercial imperatives and global economic, political and cultural realities.

Let me illustrate this basic point by considering briefly the history of the impact of new technologies on international news in Australia in relation to the 'communities of knowledge' that the technologies have facilitated.

For Australian journalism developments in communication technology have been particularly vital. The journalism of this island continent, with its vast distances, whose European settlers yearned for news from a home on the other side of the world, was centrally about overcoming, as best it could, the communication chasm that arose from geographical isolation. The various ways in which communication technologies have been applied by journalists to achieve this aim is a central concern of the history of journalism in Australia. It must be emphasised, however, that the story of Australia's overseas news links is not simply about the discovery and application of technological solutions to the problem of distance. If that were the case we could rightly assert, from the perspective of the final years of the twentieth century, that the problems of communication have been now overcome. Satellite technology has obliterated the significance of distance in matters of communication and it doesn't matter, at least from this viewpoint, whether you are in Sydney, Tokyo or London. The story of the development of Australia's news links would thereby be a simple story of progress towards this ultimate solution. But, of course, there is more to the issue than the technological capability involved. There is the way it has been deployed and utilized to reflect already existing cultural, political and economic
links with other nations and, to some degree, to forge new ones. The history of Australia's overseas news links is also a history of Australia's place in the world which, in turn, is intimately connected with questions of national identity. It is obvious that technological capabilities, as they became available, were not deployed in some evenly graduated and balanced way to 'open up the world'. There were priorities based on cultural, political, strategic and business interests. Particular lines and patterns of communication were developed and reinforced while others remained underdeveloped. Most obviously Australia's communication links to the outside world developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the framework of the British links of the majority of its people and of Australia's position as a part of the British Empire. It was London, not the world, with which Australians wanted to communicate.

Australia's early communication links were a function of Empire. The early postal services were heavily subsidised by the British government (Blainey, 1968, 216). The submarine cable which telegraphically linked Australia to the rest of the world in 1872 was a product of Britain's imperial interests. It was certainly a link to the outside world but, more particularly, it expressed the links of Empire. The structures of the British Empire were reflected, in turn, in arrangements for the gathering and distribution of world news. When the three world news agencies of the era, Agence Havas (later to become Agence France), Wolff and Reuters carved up the world into three global spheres of influence in 1870 it was in large part along imperial lines. Australia, of course, fell naturally into the province of Reuters of London.
Even by the late 1930s the vast majority of the news coming into Australia came from London. In the twelve-month period July, 1936 - June, 1937, the Australian Associated Press, the vehicle for nearly all news coming into Australia, including that provided by Reuters, cabled an average of between 27,000 and 28,000 words a week into the country. of these on average 23,200 or 85% came from London, 3,300 or 12% came from AAP's New York office while about 900 or 3% came from the rest of the world. While AAP had correspondents in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Peking (Beijing) and Shanghai, Australia nevertheless received most news from Asia via the London office. Cable costs as well as the traditional role of London as a news hub were a factor in this. It cost five times as much to send a cable message direct from Japan to Australia (two shillings and two pence per word in April, 1938) as to send a message about Japan from London to Australia (five pence per word) (Ball, 1938, 11-12).

The patterns of news distribution that arose from telegraph technology and the news agency system that it spawned were largely replicated when satellite based television news was first made available in Australia. The first regular news satellite feed to Australia was established by Visnews (now Reuters Television) from May 13, 1975. This, the world's first satellite-based daily international news feed, consisted of a ten minute selection of world stories chosen and packaged in London and transmitted to Australia via the Intelsat IV Indian Ocean satellite. As with AAP wire service material, all subscribers (in this case all Australian television stations) received the same material. Though the service was a major breakthrough in news delivery, there were concerns not overly dissimilar from
 Those relating to the wire service. In the first place there was the fact that
Australian television stations had delivered themselves into a monopoly. All
had agreed to subscribe to the same service which, it must be admitted, had no
real competitors at the time anyway. Secondly, the service was regarded by
commercial operators as very expensive. Thirdly there were concerns that the
service offered a limited perspective, a ‘rather British view of what the world is
really about’ (Minogue, 1976, 9).

The effects of new technologies: current issues

Thus far in this paper I have attempted to establish the relevance of the history of
journalism’s interactions with new technologies to an understanding of current
developments and issues. In particular I sought to point out that we have, as it
were, ‘been here before’. The laying of the world’s terrestrial and undersea cable
system in the nineteenth century, within a particular geo-political context, and
the concomitant development of news agencies and the changes that resulted in
news genres and discourses as a result of the distribution and institutionalization
of new technologies, constitutes a key process in the history of world journalism
which holds illuminating parallels to current changes to journalism genres,
practices and institutions arising from the new technologies of this era such as
satellites and the Internet.

Let me now turn more specifically to the impact of new communication
technologies on television news. I will address three technologically driven
processes that have been major determinants in re-defining television news as a
genre and 'form of knowledge', over the past two decades: the three processes are product standardization, fidelity loss and simulation. While accepting that new technologies have greatly enhanced television news with respect to such matters as timeliness and access, this paper highlights ways in which technologies can impact negatively on television news diversity, accuracy and credibility. It should also be pointed out that the technologies to which I refer – sophisticated editing systems and satellite uptake and distribution systems – are not in fact particularly new but have been re-defining the nature of television news over the past couple of decades.

**Standardization**

Satellite technology promises unprecedented access to world news from all parts of the globe with a rich diversity of perspectives. In fact the satellite-based international news distribution systems from which most overseas news screened on Australian television derives encourage narrow agendas and perspectives and a standardization of news product.

This is not to argue that satellite technology has *necessarily* led to a standardization in news product and a growing dependence on a small group of wholesale suppliers. Lanispuro (1987) argued that the Asiavision news exchange system showed how new technologies can be used to correct traditional imbalances in television news flow:
Asiavision news exchange has for the first time enabled the television organisations of Asia to exchange visual news items for television directly among themselves - without 'international' (ie, British or American) agencies playing their traditional middleman role. It has also created a counter-flow of visual news items from Asia to Europe and North America, an exchange between broadcasting organisations on an equal footing and on a reciprocal basis.

(Lanispuro, 1987, p.46).

Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh (1991) also argue, based on their analysis of the Eurovision News Exchange system, that new technologies can counteract domination by major international players: 'Institutional arrangements for transmitting and exchanging television news materials, spawned by the availability of satellite technology, have transformed the global structure of news dissemination around the world towards a greater decentralization of the system' (p.197). However recent trends in Australia suggest, at least amongst commercial broadcasters, a growing standardization of product and very heavy reliance on large global suppliers.

Most overseas stories screened in Australia derive from one of the major suppliers – NBC, CNN, BBC, Reuters Television or AP Television. This range of suppliers may suggest a great diversity of news but, in fact, such is the concentration on 'headline items' and the pattern of interdependency amongst
these suppliers that their offerings constitute a quite narrow agenda despite the vast quantity of material that is delivered.

The standardizing influence of global news suppliers can be illustrated by briefly reviewing the operations of Australia’s newest supplier, AP Television.

At the end of 1995 Channel 7, Channel 10, the ABC and SBS, who operate as a consortium in dealing with global news suppliers (a fact which itself contributes to standardization), discontinued their subscription to Reuters Television. Access to BBC and NBC feeds, which had been previously purchased as part of a ‘Reuters package’, has been retained via direct contractual arrangements with the BBC and NBC. However feeds produced by Reuters itself (LANA, American Report, Asian Report) are no longer available. They have been replaced by a subscription to the Associated Press Television (APTV), a relative new player in the global news business which, while having its headquarters in New York, operates its global television service from London.

From its London hub APTV distributes regular half-hour and quarter-hour news packages to its clients throughout the globe. Its video-wire schedule as at October 1995 was as follows:
Since January 1996 the schedule has also included an Australasian feed which arrives in Sydney daily at 10 am.

Each of the feeds comprises a selection of world news packaged in London for a particular market. Hence the 'Latin America' feed consists of world news which is considered to be of interest to subscribers in Latin America, rather than news
about events in Latin America. There is, in fact, an enormous amount of overlap between the various feeds. The large number of feeds reflects APTV's desire to package news conveniently for a particular market and deliver it at a time convenient to the subscriber rather than a breadth of world news coverage. Subscribing stations in Australia have, at the time of writing, chosen to receive all of the global video wire packages rather than just the package designed for Australasia. But this does little to enhance the breadth of material available because of the great overlap between feeds. The AP global news operation is, in essence, a process of product standardization. Material is pulled in to London from throughout the world where it is processed into about 20 stories. These are then re-broadcast to clients throughout the world in a format which only requires re-voicing of pre-scripted material. All global regions receive much the same stories though transmissions from London are timed to suit the production schedules of client stations.

From an Australian perspective, it is noteworthy that AP television provides a more standardized product with respect to range and format than the service it replaced, Reuters Television. So why did Australian networks shift from Reuters Television to APTV? Informal discussions with parties involved have suggested a number of possible reasons. Those supportive of the change have suggested that

- APTV provided a more useable service for commercial television because, while Reuters Television had largely confined itself to hard news, APTV provided more human interest material suitable for the 'lower half' of bulletins.
APTV provided scripts to accompany vision which were more journalistic in style than those supplied by Reuters Television.

The technical quality of APTV’s vision was better than that of Reuters Television. They also provided longer vision sequences, thus giving producers greater scope for preparing stories.

Reuters Television had allegedly taken its subscribers for granted for some years and paid insufficient attention to particular client needs. APTV as a new player was able to exploit this perception.

Those critical of the change have suggested that the APTV coverage is less comprehensive than that of Reuters Television - APTV, it is said, is poorer in its coverage of Asia and Africa and is also relatively weak in international sport. It is also suggested APTV can be slower than Reuters in providing key vision. The main reason for the shift from Reuters to APTV had nothing to do with quality of service - it was simply a question of money. The Reuters service, while recognised as the world leader, was too highly priced.

What does the loss of the Reuters services and their replacement by APTV mean for the production of television news at Channels 7, 10 and the ABC and for viewers of these channels? As noted above, opinions by those involved on the likely effects of the change on the quality of services vary. The author is currently undertaking an independent analysis of the two services in relation to
the following 'quality dimensions': breadth of global coverage, quality of script information and appropriateness of perspective. The study is based upon a systematic comparison of the Reuters service and the APTV service in the five day period 27 January 1996 - 31 January 1996. While the study is still in its initial stages the following points can be made:

• APTV tends to provide a US perspective on events while Reuters Television is more 'international'. For example, on 31 January both services carried a story relating to tension between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean. Reuters presented the story as a European one. The Reuters version of the Aegean conflict makes no mention of the US and reports that 'Greece and Turkey called on each other to pull back rival warships'. The APTV version, headed 'US: Aegean' turns the story into an American one and leads with 'The US State Department has urged Greece and Turkey not to resort to warfare over an Aegean island.'

• Reuters Television provides a greater depth of information in the print material which accompanies its vision than APTV. Reuters Television provides information which might form the basis upon which a journalist might prepare a script. APTV, on the other hand, provides completed scripts already matched to their vision. The scripts include suggested lead-ins, suggested voice-overs, sound-bites and captions. In other words APTV provide fully produced stories ready to be voiced. Such scripts are much thinner with respect to information quality than the material supplied by Reuters. Their use offers, at the least, the
potential for the 'de-skilling' of Australian television journalists since they make available a 'rip and read' approach to the production of overseas news.

Fidelity loss

International news flow is like a world-encircling merry-go-round with multiple (though ultimately very selective) points of 'uploading' and 'downloading'. The raw materials of news undergo multiple technologically-mediated transformations with a concomitant loss of fidelity.

This point will be illustrated by analysing the origins of two world political stories which appeared on Australian television and documenting their various transformations.

John Major in South Africa: Channel 10, Brisbane, 22/9/94

This story originated in BBC coverage of British Prime Minister John Major's trip to South Africa. The BBC 6.00 pm and 9.00 pm bulletins carried virtually identical stories (the first 2 min 35 secs, the second 2 min 40 secs), highlighting the issue of British investment in South Africa. The angle was disagreement between Major and his predecessor, Margaret Thatcher, over whether South Africa provided a good investment climate. The stories included reporter stand-ups and interview grabs as well as footage of Major playing cricket, passing a football and speaking at a function. The Reuters Television LANA feed for the story was a shortened version (1 min 14 secs) of the BBC footage presented 'clean', i.e. without reporter voices, but including both the sporting scenes and the
interview grabs. The following 'dope sheet', which includes script material and a shotlisting, accompanied the LANA version of the story.

STORY : 921

MAJOR

ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP, NEAR JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

SEPTEMBER 21, 1994

NATURAL WITH ENGLISH SPEECH

DURATION : 1.14

SOURCE : BBC

RESTRICTIONS : NO ACCESS UK AND EURONEWS

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER JOHN MAJOR USED A RELAXED SPORTS FUNCTION NEAR JOHANNESBURG ON WEDNESDAY (SEPTEMBER 21) TO REFUTE CRITICISM OF SOUTH AFRICA'S POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT GLOBAL INVESTMENT.

FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER HAD SAID ON WEDNESDAY THAT FEAR OF VIOLENCE AND UNREST WAS LIKELY TO DETER INVESTMENT.

MAJOR'S COMMENTS CAME AFTER MOCK CRICKET PRACTICE AGAINST SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICIANS AND CHILDREN TO MARK THE OPENING OF NEW CRICKET NETS IN THE ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP.

MAJOR SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE AND ANYONE COULD FEEL THE CHANGED ATMOSPHERE.

BRITAIN IS THE LARGEST FOREIGN INVESTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA, WITH 10 BILLION POUNDS (15.7 BILLION UNITED STATES (US) DOLLARS) INVESTED IN ITS FORMER COLONY.

BRITISH SPORTS PERSONALITIES SIR BOBBY CHARLTON AND JUDY SIMPSON ACCOMPANIED MAJOR ON HIS VISIT. MAJOR ALSO ANNOUNCED A LARGE BRITISH AID PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SPORT.
SIMPSON SAID SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH HAD OLYMPIC POTENTIAL AND NEEDED THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO BREAK THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID.

SHOWS: ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP, NEAR JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
(SEPTMBER 21, 1994).
(BBC–NO ACCESS UK/EURONEWS)

1. VARIOUS OF BRITISH PRIME MINISTER JOHN MAJOR PLAYING CRICKET.
2. MAJOR TAKING WICKET/SPECTATORS APPLAUD.
3. MAJOR SAYS INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SHOULD INVEST IN SOUTH AFRICA. SAYS HE HAS NOT A SHRED OF DOUBT ABOUT THE CONFIDENT FUTURE SOUTH AFRICA CAN LOOK FORWARD TO. SAYS ANYONE CAN FEEL THE CHANGED ATMOSPHERE (ENGLISH).
4. MAJOR THROWING AND CATCHING BALL WITH LOCAL CHILDREN.
5. LOCAL CHILDREN PLAYING CRICKET.
6. SIR BOBBY CHARLTON THROWING FOOTBALL WITH LOCAL CHILDREN.
7. ATHLETE JUDY SIMPSON INSTRUCTING CHILDREN ON TRACK.
8. PEOPLE WATCHING.
9. SIMPSON SAYS THESE YOUNG PEOPLE NEED THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO DESTROY THE LEGACY LEFT BY APARTHEID. SAYS THEY HAVE GREAT POTENTIAL FOR THE NEXT OLYMPICS (ENGLISH).
10. VIEW OF CHILDREN PLAYING CRICKET.

As indicated earlier, the LANA feed was derived from BBC Reports. The script material broadly follows the pattern of the first two-thirds of the BBC stories though the language is more discursive and less pointed than the actual BBC scripts.

The newsreader intro for the BBC 6.00 pm version foregrounds the conflict between Major and Thatcher:
The Prime Minister and Lady Thatcher are at odds over the prospects for investment in South Africa. Mr Major, who’s in Johannesburg called on business to invest in the country saying he has no doubts about its stability and political future. But Lady Thatcher who’s also on a foreign tour singled out South Africa as a place where the fear of violence means low priority for foreign investment.

The report is, however, careful to point out that, when making his comments at the sportsfield, Major was unaware of Thatcher’s comments: ‘Unaware at that point of Lady Thatcher’s remarks, he was forthright in his criticism of those who doubted the wisdom of investing in South Africa.’

The Channel 10 version, produced as a 25-second newsreader voice-over, is derived from the BBC and LANA versions. It further highlights the conflict between Major and Thatcher. It uses image sequences 1, 2, and 4 of the LANA footage, accompanied by a script which further personalises and dramatises the story, but also introduces inaccuracies.
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<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>SCRIPT</th>
<th>IMAGES</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Controversy over the tour of South Africa by British Prime Minister John Major. He’s had to interrupt</td>
<td>Newsreader intro to Camera</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[Newsreader voice-over] a friendly cricket game to take a swipe at his predecessor. Former leader, Margaret Thatcher has undermined</td>
<td>Major batting in an informal cricket match with black South Africans [LANA image-Sequence 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[Newsreader voice-over cont.] him by publicly questioning the</td>
<td>Crowd of onlookers clapping [LANA image-Sequence 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[Newsreader voice-over cont.] willingness of international companies to invest in South Africa. Thatcher’s office is now backing away from the remark.</td>
<td>Major bowling in the cricket match. [LANA image-Sequence 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[Newsreader voice-over cont.] Mr Major says Nelson Mandela has laid the</td>
<td>Crowd scene of onlooker at ‘football’, photo opportunity [LANA image-Sequence 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>[Newsreader voice-over cont.] groundwork for stability and growing business confidence in South Africa.</td>
<td>Mr Major passing a football. [LANA image-Sequence 4]</td>
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What points emerge from a comparison of the BBC stories, the Reuters raw materials and the final Channel 10 product? The much shorter Channel 10 version highlights and, indeed, ‘enhances’ the theme of conflict between present and past leaders. In the Channel 10 version there is a ‘controversy’, while in the 6.00 pm BBC version Major and Thatcher are merely ‘at odds’. With the
foreshortening of the story comes a compression of the action and an injection of urgency. In the LANA script Major’s comments ‘came after mock cricket practice’ while Channel 10 has him ‘interrupt a friendly cricket game.’ There is no suggestion of ‘interruption’ in the Reuters or BBC reports. The BBC reports also make it clear that when Major made his comment at the sportsfield, he was referring generally to critics of South Africa and was unaware of Thatcher’s comments. The LANA material sourced from the BBC is less clear on this, arguably implying that Major was responding to Thatcher. The Channel 10 report, however, leaves us (wrongly) in no doubt, asserting that Major was reacting to Thatcher with a ‘swipe.’ In short, the Channel 10 story is written in Ten’s colloquial, dramatic, ‘personalised’, style, but at a significant cost to accuracy.

Haiti: Channel 10, Brisbane, 22/9/94

At the 10.00 am news conference Ten’s Canberra bureau offered to prepare a network package on events in Haiti, given that there was a Canberra angle because of the news that the Australian Government had agreed to send an Australian police contingent to Haiti for peacekeeping purposes. The story would combine political material from Canberra with overseas news feeds. The 1 min 30 second story combined interview grabs with a reporter voice-over by Canberra-based reporter Jane Henshke.
'Haiti', Channel 10, 22 September, 1994.

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<th>SEGMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Australia is rallying to help another world trouble spot...responding to pressure from the US and the United Nations the Federal Police will commit a peacekeeping force to the Caribbean nation of Haiti. Jane Henshke reports.</td>
<td>Newsreader to camera</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>[Reporter voice-over] This is the type of violence which thirty Australian Federal police officers could be involved in...Haitian police beating supporters of exiled President Aristide as frustrated American soldiers looked on.</td>
<td>Haitian police striking civilians: 4 different 'beating' sequences</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>[Interview grab with two American soldiers] ‘They just beat them with crowbars right in front of our faces.’ ‘A man just died over there—for what?’</td>
<td>US soldiers on tanks behind a concrete fence—interview grab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[Reporter voice-over] Bowing to international pressure ten thousand American troops now have the power to order Haiti’s troops to stop using unnecessary force.</td>
<td>American troop scenes and a Haitian police scene.</td>
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| 5    | [Interview grab with President Clinton]  
  ‘The multinational force which was enhanced today by the decision of Australia to join will soon be in a position to carry out its over-riding mission.’  
  Clinton speech grab. |
| 6    | [Interview grab with Australian Federal Justice Minister, Duncan Kerr]  
  ‘What the Australian Police will be doing is working with the local police to ensure that best practices in policing are followed.’  
  Kerr interview grab. |
| 7    | [Reporter voice-over]  
  An advance party of officers will leave shortly for the troubled Caribbean nation. The rest of the contingent will join them within a month.  
  Haitian police and troop scenes. |
| 8    | [Reporter voice-over cont.]  
  And in Washington some diplomatic arm-twisting finally saw the exiled President utter the words President Clinton had been waiting to hear.  
  Washington ‘gun salute’ to Aristide as part of official reception. Aristide moving to podium to present speech. |
| 9    | [Grab of Aristide speech]  
  ‘President Clinton. Thank you.’  
  Scene of ceremonial welcome. Aristide speech grab. |
| 10   | [Reporter voice-over cont.]  
  But with the American peacekeeping force expected to reach 15,000 by the end of the week, Haitian military leader Lieutenant General Cedras, says he won’t leave Haiti after stepping down from power, a decision guaranteed to keep Haiti tense for some time.  
Channel Ten’s report draws on a variety of image sources. Many of the image sequences in Segments 2, 4, 7, 8 and 10 are identical to those used in the NBC Nightly News clean feed of 22/9/94. However, NBC uses different Aristide and Clinton speech grabs than Ten (though they are from the same occasions) and there a large number of images in the Ten story which do not appear in the NBC version.

Ten supplemented NBC footage itself probably drawn from U.S. ‘pool footage’ with further overseas and local material:

- The previous morning’s satellite feeds—this was necessary because the angle of the Australian story required an emphasis on the violence of Haitian police actions, most of which had occurred the previous day.

- Material used by the BBC—Segment 3 of Channel 10’s story, interview grabs with two American soldiers, is the same footage as used in the 6.00 pm and 9.00 pm news of the previous evening (UK time). The Aristide speech grab in Segment 9 appears to be taken from the BBC 9.00 pm news.

- The grab of President Clinton mentioning Australia, which did not appear in any of the standard overseas feeds but was a ‘unilateral feed’, presumably identified and sent by staff of Ten’s Los Angeles bureau.
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- A Canberra-sourced interview with Australian Federal Justice Minister, Duncan Kerr.

The story composition illustrates the diversity of sources available to the network and shows the Australian reporter of overseas news in the role of collator and packager of information, words and images from various sources, rather than in the more widely understood role of presenting an eye-witness account. The fact that events in this story unfolded in three locations—Haiti, Washington and Canberra—suggests the necessity of having a reporter who draws the material together into an acceptable package. This inevitably means, of course, that the Australian reporter is relying upon the constructions given to events by other reporters. The dangers of this become evident if we consider in detail the sources for Segments 8 and 9 in Ten’s story, those involving President Aristide’s speech.

A large excerpt of President Aristide’s speech would have been available to Ten’s Canberra reporter both via the LANA feed and CNN. The same material would have been available to the BBC reporter preparing the story for the 9.00 pm news.

The LANA footage, shot in Washington on 21/9/94, shows us Aristide coming to the podium in the same way as Segment 8 of Ten’s story. We then get an extended excerpt of his speech. The relevant section for our purposes reads:

In these past three days something has happened in Haiti.

Operation Uphold Democracy was peacefully deployed. President Clinton, this is the result of the decision that you made. This is the
result of your leadership. Thank you and the people of the United States for your commitment to lead the multinational effort in carrying out the will of the United Nations to help restore democracy in Haiti [my emphasis].

In the Channel Ten version, the two phrases highlighted above are edited together to form a single grab: 'President Clinton, Thank you.' The edit is disguised by overlaying the words 'President Clinton' with a scene from the official reception and only showing the words 'Thank you' as actually spoken. Yet the clear implication from the way the material is presented is that Aristide actually commenced his speech with the words, 'President Clinton, Thank you.'

Why did the Channel Ten report include such a deceptive edit which constructed a quote which never existed? As it turns out, Channel 10 were simply copying the BBC 9 o'clock news. The BBC's version of what Aristide said was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCRIPT</th>
<th>IMAGES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Reporter voice-over]</td>
<td>Scenes of Aristide's welcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hero's welcome at the Pentagon and some heavy-weight arm-twisting by the administration helped produce at least a public show of gratitude.</td>
<td>Aristide moving to podium to present speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Identical to Ten's images]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The BBC, therefore, was responsible for the deceptive edit which constructed the words ‘President Clinton, Thank you.’ However, Channel 10 further edited the already edited BBC version to reduce Aristide to one simple sentiment presented, given the Ten reporter’s introduction to the speech grab, as a very specific and pointed response to President Clinton’s wishes.

The ‘John Major’ and ‘Haiti’ stories analysed above illustrate the loss of fidelity that can arise from the technologically mediated multi-media transformations that characterize television news production processes. The stories raise questions about the role of reporters of overseas news. Popularly, they are thought of as presenting eye-witness accounts of events around the globe and, of course, they do this. But, more commonly, they are working in a newsroom either in Australia or overseas collating, packaging and voicing material from various sources to suit particular formats and styles. In adapting material they interpret what others have written and edited. They write to the edited images they see on the screen: As we cut from John Major playing cricket to his interview grab, it looks as if he has interrupted his match and, if we are going to continue this vision of cricketing, it surely makes sense to say he took a ‘swipe’ at Thatcher. Such are the dangers of working to pre-edited images. Arguably, as a further consequence of the
interdependence of the major English-language news organisations, 'standard Western' ways of seeing emerge out of the process. The 'Haiti-Aristide' story was presented in much the same way in Britain, the US and Australia. We not only have the same images, but the same interpretations. The idea that 'Aristide uttered the words President Clinton wanted to hear' became the standard way of constructing and interpreting Aristide's speech. The important phrase (even though it was never actually uttered in that form) became 'President Clinton, Thank you.' Little wonder, perhaps, that it came to be constructed.

Simulation

The power of computer technology to generate simulations undistinguishable from actuality footage strikes at the heart of television news credibility. Reuven Frank, former President of NBC News, complains that there is a trend in US news and current affairs to 'fill in the gaps of real coverage with made-up things'. He notes that it is possible to fabricate news footage with computer graphics that look as good as, or better than, the real thing (Washington Post, 27/7/89).

Here it is relevant to note that in recent years the credibility of US network news services, particularly those of NBC, has been severely dented, largely because key news images which the public had accepted as a true record, were later found to lack authenticity. Recent events that have dented news credibility amongst United States networks have included the following:
• In 1989 ABC (American Broadcasting Corporation) illustrated a story about Felix S Bloch, a diplomat who allegedly spied for the Russians in Vienna, with unmarked simulated vision of spying activity. The Washington Times gave these details:

The ABC simulation, on the screen for about 10 seconds, included two grainy, still-photo shots of one man handing a briefcase to another. These were made to look like they were extracted from the FBI’s video footage, but in fact, they were extracted from the imaginations of artists at ABC News in New York. The narration...contributed to the scam: ‘It was not until earlier this year that Bloch was videotaped handing over a briefcase to a known Soviet agent on the streets of a European capital’ (Washington Times, 26/7/89).

After the simulation was exposed, the ABC broadcast an apology to viewers of World News Tonight.

• In November 1992 Dateline NBC broadcast a 15-minute investigative report on gas tank problems in General Motors pickup trucks involving side-impact crashes. The report culminated in vision of such an impact which resulted in a dramatic fire-ball. Subsequently it was discovered that the fiery crash had been staged: small rockets had been attached to the truck’s undercarriage to ensure that any spilled petrol would ignite. Faced with defamation action, NBC broadcast an apology.
In July 1989 CBS broadcast a News Special about man’s first landing on the moon. All the footage was presented as though it were taken on the Apollo 11 Mission in 1969. Subsequently, it was admitted that some of it was drawn from vision of later lunar landings (San Francisco Chronicle, 19/7/89).

In January 1993 NBC Nightly News reported a story which claimed that over-cutting at the Clearwater National Forest had led to water pollution, killing fish in the streams. The story was accompanied by images of floating fish. Subsequently it was found that the fish were from another area and were not dead but had been stunned for testing purposes. NBC broadcast an apology regretting its use of ‘inappropriate video’.

In September 1990 The New York Post reported that a freelance cameraman used by CBS in 1987 in its reports on the war in Afghanistan faked footage: ‘On one occasion, it was alleged, scenes of Afghan rebels blowing up electric pylons had been recreated days after the event had actually occurred’ (The Economist, 14/10/89).

These instances of misleading footage sparked outrage in the United States. The Clearwater National Forest case was discussed in the US Senate; there were calls for the resignation of NBC News President Michael Gartner which eventually succeeded in forcing his departure; there were dire predictions from columnists and journalism professors that cases like these would irreparably damage television news credibility. Writing of the General Motors affair in the Los...
Angeles Times Howard Rosenberg commented: ‘It is one more blemish – the indelible big one–on the integrity of a once-admired news organisation. From now on, NBC News will wear this mark like a “Scarlet Letter”’ (15/2/93). The Director of the USC School of Journalism commented of the Clearwater National Forest case, ‘In general many people feel they cannot trust TV news and this is just another blow. Once someone lies or cheats on you, you tend to lose faith in that entity’ (Los Angeles Times, 26/2/93). Press reports reflected concern that these were not isolated instances but signalled a more general decline in news credibility which can in part be attributed to simulation capacity of computer technology.

Conclusion

The particular products, practices and institutions of journalism are, in large part, functions of communication technologies. Hence, as the technologies change so do journalistic products, practices and institutions. It is difficult to map these changes since they involve an ongoing process. This paper suggests that the study of the history of journalism as a set of responses to new technologies can help us understand current developments. The current impact of new technologies on journalism are manifold. Hence any discussion is necessarily selective. This paper has discerned three trends in television news which are facilitated by new technology - standardization, loss of fidelity, and simulation. It is not, of course, suggested that these are the only trends, nor even the most important ones. Nor should it be inferred that the impact of technology is necessarily negative. Of course it is true that new technologies have enabled
journalists to access and distribute stories in ways hardly thought possible just a
decade or two ago (see, for example, Edgerley, 1995/96 and Von Gamm, 1996 for
reports on the impact of light-weighted digital camera/editing equipment on the
emergence of the ‘video-journalist’ discussed at the 1995 ‘News World’
tradeshow in Berlin). At the same time, as argued in this paper, the technologies
enable the centralization of global news production and facilitate the routine
manipulation of text and images in ways which result in a loss of news
credibility.
References


