

Holonic Editing: New Media Responses to the *Global Problematique* A Presentation for the Australian Foresight Institute

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‘If the mainstream media covers two perspectives, we want to cover thirty.’

— Richard Metzger, cofounder,
Disinformation® (www.disinfo.com).

‘The proliferation of news outlets and the development of shorter news cycles have left news organizations increasingly unable to maintain or even define their ethical standards.’

(Kovach & Risenstiel, 1999, 51).

Historical Timeline

- **1800s** Agency France-Press and Reuters agencies.
- **1848** American Press agency founded.
- **1860s – 1930s** Age of the Newspaper Barons.
- **1960s** New Journalism (Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Didion, Michael Herr).
- **1970s** Adversary Journalism.
- **1979** Multiperspectival Journalism (Henry Gans).
- **1980s** Global satellite TV News/'The CNN Effect'.
- **1980s (late)** Computer-Assisted Journalism.
- **1992** Culture Jamming.
- **1999** IndyMedia & Open Source News.
- **2002** Google News (4800+ 'real-time' sources).

Key Definitions 1

- **News:** 'What the mass media sees fit to report.' (Alleyne, 1992, 3).
- **Journalist (1):** '... creates media news coverage.' (Gans, 1992, 193).
- **Journalist (2):** 'A person who, on a regular or on a temporary basis, creates media news coverage . . . Or a person whose regular occupation is the professional assistance of persons . . . above.' (Alleyne, 1992, 112).
- **Computer-Assisted Reportage:** 'The use of computers to gather or analyze data for the purpose of transforming that data into information used as part of a narrative to be transmitted via a medium of mass communication.' (Reavy, 2001, 2)

Key Definitions 2

- **Propaganda:** 'A structure or preconceived, systematic manipulation of symbols, aimed at promoting uniform behavior of social groups congruent with the specific aims of the communicator.' (Alleyne, 1992, 18).
- **Information Value:** Utility + Speed + Quality (Alleyne, 1992, 19).
- **Telesthesia:** 'Perception at a distance.' (Wark, 1994, 6).
- **News Templates:** 'What editors and other people who are not on the ground have decided is The Story.' *Wall Street Journal* Atlanta bureau chief Amanda Bennett (Murray, Schwartz & Lichter, 2001, 29).

‘True Gonzo reporting needs the talents of a master journalist, the eye of an artist/photographer and the heavy balls of an actor.’

— Hunter S. Thompson
(Carroll, 1993, 149).

News Values 1

- **Frequency:** The event must be as complete within the publication cycle of the news organization reporting it.
- **Threshold:** The event must pass a certain size threshold to qualify for sufficient importance to be newsworthy.
- **Clarity:** What has actually happened must be relatively clear.
- **Cultural Proximity:** It must be meaningful to the audience of the news organization in question.
- **Consonance:** The event must be in accordance with the framework of understanding which typifies the culture of the potential audience.
- **Unexpectedness:** Within the framework of meaningfulness . . . the event must be unexpected or rare.

News Values 2

- **Continuity:** If an event has already been in the news, there is a good chance it will stay there.
- **Composition:** Coverage of events is partially dictated by the internal structure of newsgathering organisations.
- **Actions of the Elite:** Events involving elite people or organisations are more likely to be covered than those of people perceived as unimportant.
- **Personification:** Events that can be seen in terms of individual people rather than abstractions.
- **Negativity:** Bad events are more newsworthy than good ones.

(Palmer, 2000, 26-27).

Determining News Values

1. Value is determined by the market: supply & demand.
2. Value is determined by those with power, such as economic classes and professional, political or cultural elites.
3. Value is determined by a calculation of an entity's future utility worth.
4. Value is based on use.

(Alleyne, 1997, 18).

Value in Niche Media formats:

Demographic Target Marketing + Database
Compilation + News Management.

(Janeway, 1999, 139).

Channels & Sources

- **Channels:** 'A *primary channel* is a person quoted in the lead paragraph and/or the person responsible for the timing of the news release; *secondary* are all others.'
- **Sources:**
 1. **Routine:** On-the-record interviews, press conferences.
 2. **Informal:** Background briefings, leaks, agency reports, non-government proceedings.
 3. **Enterprise:** Personal interviews, eyewitness accounts, individual research and analysis.

(Palmer, 2000, 5).

Computer-Assisted Reporting Cycle 1

● **Conception Phase:**

- Story idea.
- Who, what, where, when, why?
- People & Document sources.

● **Location Phase:**

- Locate Appropriate Data.

● **Acquisition Phase:**

- Actively Locate Data.

● **Transformation Phase:**

- 'Moving the data to a usable storage medium.' (Reavy, 2001, 13).

Computer-Assisted Reporting Cycle 2

● Examination Phase:

- 'Filter, sort, group & analyze records.' (Reavy, 2001, 13-14).
- Data-mining and pattern recognition.

● Exposition Phase:

- Brainstorming in newsroom.
- Story Angles.
- Search for 80% of material.
- Check documents.
- Interview people.

● Composition Phase:

- Actual news writing and composition.

(Palmer, 2001, 10-16).

News Media Challenges

- 'Real-time' news cycles.
- Inter-firm competition and cost pressures.
- Government regulation: media ownership.
- New media challenges traditional.
- Rise of individuals and Internet blogs.
- Press-release journalism.
- Demise of investigative reportage.
- Crisis in journalism education (Columbia J-School).
- Gannett Corporation (*USA Today*) paradigm.

Media Critiques 1: Propaganda Model

- Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (1988).

'Filters narrow the range of news that passes through the gates.' (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 31).

1. The size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media.
2. Advertising as the main source of revenue for the media.
3. Media reliance on information from readily available sources (news wires, government and business contacts, public relations experts, conferences).
4. Flak that marginalizes minority/opposing views.
5. Anti-Communism as a control mechanism (post-9/11 'War on Terror').
6. Dichotomization and Propaganda campaigns.

‘Suppose that as a reporter you go outside vested interests. You will find, first of all, that the level of evidence that’s required is far higher. You don’t need verification when you go to vested interests, they’re self-verifying.’

— Noam Chomsky
(Mitchell & Schoeffel, 2002, 25).

‘So, what the media do, in effect, is to take the set of assumptions which express the basic ideas of the propaganda system And then present a range of debate *within* that framework—so the debate only enhances the strength of the assumptions, ingraining them in people’s minds as the entire possible spectrum of opinion that there is . . . it’s implicit, it’s presupposed, it provides the framework for debate among the people who are admitted into mainstream discussion.’

— Noam Chomsky
(Mitchell & Schoeffel, 2002, 13).

‘Remember, there really are conflicting values in these systems, and those conflicts allow for possibilities. One value is service to power; another value is professional integrity—and journalists can’t do their job of serving power effectively unless they know how to work with some integrity, but if they know how to work with some integrity, they’re also going to want to exercise that value in other areas. It’s extremely hard to control that conflict, and things certainly do get through sometimes.’

— Noam Chomsky
(Mitchell & Schoeffel, 2002, 28).

‘According to this “Propaganda Model,” the media serve their societal purpose by things like the way they select topics, distribute their concerns, frame issues, filter information, focus their analyses, through emphasis, tone, and a whole range of other techniques like that.’

— Noam Chomsky
(Mitchell & Schoeffel, 2002, 15).

Media Critiques 2: Mixed Media Model

● Bill Kovach & Tom Riesenstiel's *Warp Speed* (1999).

1. A never-ending news cycle makes journalism less complete.
2. Sources are gaining power over journalists.
3. There are no more gatekeepers.
4. Argument is overwhelming reportage.
5. The “blockbuster mentality”.

(Kovach & Riesenstiel, 1999, 6-8).

‘Commentary, chat, speculation, opinions, arguments, controversy, and punditry cost far less than assembling a team of reporters, producers, fact checkers and editors to cover the far-flung corners of the globe.’

(Kovac & Riesenstiel, 1999, 7).

Media Critiques 3: Multiperspectivalism

- Herbert Gan's *Deciding What's News* (1979).
- A study of CBS, NBC, *Time* Magazine and *Newsweek* news.
- **Multiperspectival**: multiple perspectives, different sources (not just traditional sources/institutions or 'privileged' voices).
- A forerunner to Internet-based journalism and the Open Source movement.

'The primary purpose of the news derives from the journalists' functions as constructors of nation and society, and as managers of the symbolic arena.'

(Gans, 1992, 193).

'Story selectors can only be objective by choosing news from several perspectives.'

(Gans, 1992, 196).

Media Critiques 4: Compassion Fatigue 1

- Susan Moeller's *Compassion Fatigue* (1999).

“The media in their reporting on terrorism tend to be judgmental, inflammatory, and sensationalistic.”
(Moeller, 1999, 169).

Assassination/Terrorism news cycle:

1. The initial event: replays key imagery and sound-bites.
2. The dominant story becomes disclosing the perpetrator's identity and seeking justice.
3. Funerals and public mourning.
4. A sense of closure: “when the media reassert the supremacy of the established political and social order.”

(Moeller, Routledge, 1999, 160, 166, 167).

Media Critiques 4: Compassion Fatigue 2

‘There is rarely any cognizance that the media’s reindition is itself “framed.” Only if multiple similar events are compared is it made evident that conscious choices guided the media’s coverage. Many news frames appear to be natural, unforced, perhaps even self-evident ways of reporting a story.’

(Moeller, 1999, 160).

Foresight Solutions 1

Reporters:

- Reporter exposure to philosophical traditions: Social Construction, Critical Realism, Hermeneutics.
- Intelligence Augmentation (IA) tools during brainstorming process for stories.
- Use of General Semantics and NLP Milton Model to prevent 'mis-mapping territory' and cognitive biases.
- Systems thinking and actor analysis for 'beat' coverage.

Foresight Solutions 2

Editorial Level:

- Embed Critical, Epistemological and Macrohistorical layers within publication design and editorial focus, not just Pop-oriented 'litany' and Problem-oriented op-ed pieces.
- Strategic Anticipation (Slywotzky) and Scenarios at news management level. Wild Cards analysis (Arlington Institute).
- Causal Layered Analysis as 'conceptual space' tool during newsroom discussions.
- Integral-based Strategic Scanning of global news flows.
- Address Digital Continuity and Knowledge Management issues.
- Spiral Dynamics® and 'Wilber-4' perspective on issues and sources as 'layered' and open-ended. Use of notation system (Voros) to 'chunk' issues.

Media Critique Sources

- Media Channel (www.mediachannel.org).
- Jim Romesko's Media News (www.poynter.org/medianews).
- Stephen Mayne's Crikey (www.crikey.com.au).
- Media Watch (www.abc.net.au/mediawatch).
- One World (www.oneworld.net).
- Disinformation (www.disinfo.com).
- IndyMedia Network (www.indymedia.org).
- Slashdot (www.slashdot.org).
- Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (www.fair.org).
- PR Watch (www.prwatch.org).
- Project Censored (www.projectcensored.org).



Questions, Comments, Discussion

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