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Reporting in the 'New Media' Environment: How Today's Television Journalists are Recycling Work Practices of the Past.

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Abstract

The issue of whether the practice of journalism for new mobile platforms and round-the-clock delivery represents a sharp break with the past or an adaptation of existing practices to meet new circumstances, remains unresolved within the study of Australian journalism. Some analysts see the contemporary news environment as forcing a revolutionary change in professional practice. In television news, for example, this has seen newsrooms addressing the challenges of new competition and reduced budgets by using associated online sites to present first versions of stories, requiring reporters to do more of the production work and more of their work in a 'live' environment while also drawing on the public for more of the material from which to generate news.

However, the idea that journalism is undergoing a revolutionary shift in practice may owe its appeal, in part, to the relative dearth of historical analysis of work practices within Australian journalism in general, and broadcast journalism in particular. While some practices may, in fact, represent something new occasioned by changes in news media delivery others are more evolutionary and, in some ways, the skills required of journalists working in the 'new media' environment echo those required in a very different media environment.

Drawing on archival research into television news in Australia, the objective is to compare the nature of work required of television journalists in the current mobile platform and 24-hour delivery markets with those required during a period of change in Australian television journalism in the early 1970s. These changes illustrate that, in the news media, 'the need for speed' applies to every era in its own way. In the era of mobile communication, several interrelated factors have combined to create a changing working environment for television journalists.

These factors may be broadly aggregated into four groups, consisting of (a) production technologies, (b) distribution technologies, (c) economic restraints and (d) changing audience tastes and expectations. Among the production technologies that have changed journalistic practice we may include the proliferation of satellite and microwave links, mobile phones, the ability to deliver text, video and audio to the newsroom via the web, 'user-friendly' lightweight video cameras, and desktop video editing, all of which have both changed the work that journalists themselves undertake and also made it easier for non-journalists to take a role in news production. The delivery technologies include computers, mobile phones and other

portable platforms. Of greatest significance is that these technologies offer both 24-hour delivery and greater ease of access than scheduled broadcast news.

Introduction

A combination of technological advances and changing audience tastes and expectations, have generated an assumption that news material will be delivered more quickly, often live-to-air or to line as events occur. They have also created a media environment in which the traditional requirements of fair and balanced reporting are under pressure from more opinionated forms of information delivery, including blogging, and from social media such as *Twitter*, where newsworthy information is circulated by non-journalists and journalists alike.

Of course the agents of change are in no way confined to the news media. As Flew (2008: 21-36) reminds us, the 20 concepts that define new media more generally number among them, interactivity, user-generated content, speed and ubiquity. However, these developments have occurred as the journalistic working environment is being reshaped by its changing financial fortunes, best illustrated by Network Nine's 2008 decision to cancel its prestigious and long-running news and current affairs programs, *Sunday* and *Nightline* (MEAA, 2009). In fact, so acute are concerns about the process of change in news production and consumption that, over the past few years, the 'future of journalism' has been the pre-eminent topic at industry forums. In 2008, the organisation that represents Australian journalists established a website of that name (MEAA, 2008).

In the same year, the signs of decay in the news business and their repercussions, were summarised by the head of the ABC, Mark Scott, who remained one of the more optimistic voices on the industry's future. He told an audience in Melbourne that:

The headlines written in the (past) twelve months … would have been unimaginable just a few years ago: the Nine and Seven networks effectively worth nothing; Fairfax's share price down from six dollar highs to seventy five cents; waves and waves of newsroom sackings; revolving doors for editors in Sydney and Melbourne, Canberra and Perth (Scott, 2009: 2).

The current 'media revolution', he continued:

… has no precedent. Not only is the age of the media barons disappearing; the age of the mass audience – with mass advertising that paid for much of our best journalism – is passing (Scott, 2009:3).

Certainly at a macro level, the changes in journalism may seem unique, daunting and suggest a diminished long term future. However, viewed at a micro level, some of the shifts in journalistic practice, brought on by wider changes in the media environment, seem less dramatic and more of an echo of earlier practice than something new. Perhaps we might be more optimistic about the future of journalism if we regarded the process of change as less linear and more circular.

In particular, this paper will address two inter-related features of television reporting that are both current and a throwback to a news style of nearly four decades ago: an increased focus on reporting live-to-air and the increasing injection of reporters' own opinions into the news. Despite the considerable differences between the working environments in the television of today versus the 1970s, there are some contextual similarities that may point to the way in which reporting styles, and therefore the news product that audiences see, evolve.

The evolution of reporting style has largely escaped scrutiny in the analysis of television news production. Classic US studies, such as Epstein (1973), Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979) and Australian contributions including Putnis (1994) have considered journalistic routines and

ideological frames from the perspective of a set time and market. In Australia there have been several key studies (Henningham,1988; Pearson and Brand, 2001) including two that involved comparisons of television news programs over time, Gerdes and Charlier (1985) and Philips and Tapsall (2007). These studies have been largely concerned with news content in terms of the subject matter of news stories rather than the interaction between work practices and reporting styles. As Cottle has noted, the findings in such studies "tend to exaggerate the uniformity of news output across the differentiated ecology of news forms ..." (Cottle, 2003: 12). A historical approach to news production foregrounds journalists as agents in a workplace fashioned by place and time and allows us to see beyond narrow notions of fixed professional routines and ideologies.

Methodology

Any piece of historical research into broadcast news in Australia (as elsewhere) must begin with an acknowledgement that researchers can only draw on what remains available and, in the case of Australian commercial television news prior to the late 1980s, that is very little. The technological issues and politics that inform the retention of television news programs are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice to note that, while a number of corporate and public institutions archive selected elements of Australian broadcast news, the only national collection that spans both the entire history of television and the range of public and commercial broadcasters is that held by the National Film and Sound Archive, based in Canberra.

In mid-2008, when the research for this paper was conducted, the NFSA held 137,662 items of television news. However, because an archive's first duty is to preservation, only items where there was a duplicate access copy could easily be viewed, and of these there were only 2,243 items. In this context, an 'item' is a story rather than a full program, since the catalogue is focused on story content. For the earliest years of Australian television news, there are few surviving items and full bulletins are rare for the period prior to 1988, when the NFSA began a systematic collection of television news programs from around the country that continues to this day (Alysen, 2001).

The items requested for this study were intended to be as representative as possible of the 52 years of Australian news production to that date, given the restrictions noted above. The five decades of news broadcasts were divided into three yearly segments and several items were selected for each of these, with the number varying according to the amount of material available. For the earliest years of television news in Australia, so little material was available that the sample selected itself. In all, 62 items from the NFSA's catalogue of news material, ranging in length from one minute to one hour, were selected. Some were single stories. However many came as multiple-story videos transferred from reels of film that had been collated in television news libraries. Others came as part of complete bulletins, which could be viewed in their entirety.

The material viewed included items from all Sydney and Melbourne stations and several regional ones. Each story and bulletin was examined for elements of journalistic practice rather than its content per se. The notion of journalistic practice was not fixed but included the production medium, the length of stories and the elements within them, including interview segments and whether the reporter's question was included or edited out, the positioning of a reporter's 'piece to camera', the use of ambient sound and of graphics and text on screen. Also noted was the gender balance among reporters, the number of stories each reporter produced within each bulletin, the transitions between stories in bulletins and the writing style employed, specifically whether the reporter used press-style writing or the more conversational language of today's broadcast media and also the degree to which the script was written to match the available pictures.

The research was intended to set markers for the introduction of specific reporting styles and practices. This methodology is open to criticism for its ad hoc nature. However, the composition of standard weekly samples across stations is not possible when looking at archival news. Moreover, as Gerdes and Charlier (1985, 102) observed after the first Australian longitudinal study of television news, "television news which … is not determined by numbers cannot be described by numbers." The small number of examples used here was drawn from small samples from each era of television. However, what is significant is that these practices were employed at all.

Pressures on contemporary news production

Before we consider the nature of Australian journalistic practice, it is worth reminding ourselves of the current state of the medium. Despite its problems, television news remains a cornerstone of Australia television viewing. In the final ratings period for 2009, television news programs occupied positions 3, 13, 18, 21, 22 and 37 among the 40 most popular programs in the metropolitan areas nationwide. All of those programs were broadcast by Networks Seven and Nine, representing (in order of popularity), Channel Seven's *Sunday*, Saturday and weeknight bulletins, and Channel Nine's Sunday, weeknight and Saturday's bulletins. In addition, Channel Seven's public affairs programs *Sunday Night* and *Today Tonight* occupied the 19th and 20th positions on the list (Free TV Australia, November 2009).

Nevertheless, behind this apparent buoyancy, there had been a pattern of declining viewer numbers accompanied by job losses and changes to the work expected of journalists. The organisation that represents Australian journalists both industrially and as their professional association, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, observed that while television remained the "dominant news source for most" Australians, the total viewing audience for television news bulletins had fallen by eight percent in the five years between 2004 and 2009 (MEAA, 2009:10).

As one might expect, the business pressures described above has put pressure on the numbers of journalists employed in mainstream news production and delivery and on their output. The MEAA sought to measure the impact on journalists, including on their workloads, in a survey conducted in October 2008 (MEAA, 2009: 12-19). Only a minority of ten percent of those who responded worked in television, although that figure is likely to be in line with the percentage of journalists working in the medium itself. Nonetheless, its findings may be taken as an indication of trends across the news media. In the period 2001 to 2008, the number of full time journalists working in Australia fell from 8500 to 7500, according to the Media Alliance, a drop of 13 percent. Moreover, the Alliance was of the opinion that employment would continue to contract (MEAA, 2009: 9, 21-23). The Alliance noted that with fewer journalists working in mainstream newsrooms, the amount of work being performed by each of those remaining could be expected to rise.

More than 70 percent of respondents in the MEAA's survey said that their workload had increased (MEAA, 2009:13) with the repercussion that stories were being 'pumped out' with less thought and research than was considered desirable (MEAA, 2009:13). This was the result of both cuts in newsroom staff levels and also the fact that staff who remained were expected to generate stories for multiple platforms. Significantly, it was not just the requirement to service additional delivery platforms and generate stories themselves more quickly that caused concern. The *style* of writing required for some delivery forms, particularly blogs, also raised questions, in view of the traditional expectation that journalists should separate fact from opinion, especially their own (MEAA, 2009: 4).

As a presumed professional ideology, journalistic objectivity has long been the subject of criticism both for its failings as a concept as well as in its application (Frankin et al, 2005:

176-177). However, in professional practice, the more prosaic notion that reporters should seek to present information in a balanced manner and refrain from comment on the topics on which they are reporting is enshrined in the Australian Journalists' Code of Ethics, maintained by the union, the Media Alliance. Clause four says in part:

Do not allow personal interest … to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence. (MEAA, np)

Our concern here is not merely that using reporters to write blogs as well as news might be seen to compromise their professional detachment, it is the notion that, within the profession, a balanced style of news delivery remained the preferred goal.

Since the MEAA survey cast its net widely among the different news media, some practices specific to individual media, especially those employing smaller numbers of journalists, were not touched upon. However, the demand for television journalists to deliver more of their work live and unscripted should be considered alongside other changes such as filing for multiple platforms.

Changes over time in news production

Television news in Australia has been shaped by four distinct eras of production technology, which have influenced reporting styles and journalistic work practices. These periods are: (a) the film era, from 1956 to approximately 1977 during which news material was shot exclusively on 16mm film; (b) the analogue video era, from 1977 (the dates on which various technologies were introduced or phased out varied considerably from one organisation to another) to the mid 1990s; (c) the digital video tape era, from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s; (d) the non-linear period, from the early 2000s onward.

Many other factors have, of course, also influenced the way in which reporters work. These include other technologies, such as the availability of satellite transmission, pressures on newsroom budgets, the introduction of lightweight semi-professional cameras and desktop video editing, as well as influences from competitors within television and from other media, most recently, social media. Some of the key dates in the development of Australian television news, especially as they affected news journalists, appear in Table 1.

Table 1. AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION NEWS *TIMELINE*

1956	September 16	TCN 9 start of regular transmissions, followed by -
	November 4	HSV 7
	November 5	ABN 2
	November 18	ABV 2
	December 2	ATN 7
1957	January 19	- GTV 9 begins official transmission – followed by stations in Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Hobart between 1959 and 1960.

		- Start of television ratings in Australia. - Formation of Commonwealth International Newsfilm Agency which later becomes Visnews.
1961		Commercial TV news services begin the move from from 15 minute to half hour services mid-evening.
1965	April 5	TEN 10 on air with news and current affairs from first night.
1975	March 1	- Formal start of broadcasting in colour. - Start of satellite news feeds to Australian stations.
1977		- Start of adoption of ENG (Electronic news Gathering) and the slow phase out of film as news-gathering medium.
1980	October 24	Formal launch of SBS TV in Sydney and Melbourne.
1981		Ten News launches Live Eye with the first mobile transmitting unit.
1985	July 23	Launch of ABC TV's landmark news/current affairs hour *The Nationa* . Terminated in December.
1986		Introduction of remote controls for TVs, making it easier for viewers to change channels.
1988		The NFSA introduces formal collection of news and current affairs programs with the *Slice of Life* initiative for bicentennial year which continues as a weekly sample from contributing

		stations to the current day.
1994		Panasonic and Sony release small digital video cameras, paving way for citizen video journalism.
1995	February	ABC launches online news site.
	February 19	Sky News launches, first Australian -produced pay-TV news service and the first to be fully digital.
2001	January 1	Formal start of digital TV transmissions.
2004	January	Sky News becomes first Aust. TV news service to introduce desktop video editing by reporters.

The four production eras referred to above are reflected in the story formats that have been employed within news bulletins.

At the outset, television news drew together newsreel camera operators and print-trained journalists who were all but invisible in stories, and which were narrated by a presenter or unseen announcer. Reporters were seen only in the other main story format, the 'Q & A' (question and answer) interview. Former news editor of Melbourne station, GTV9, Peter Maund, recalled news gathering during the early years as "basic and slow". In 2000 he told historian Brendan Horgan that his newsroom began with two cameras, one a clockwork Bell & Howell. Use of a sound-capable camera was rare. The need to process the film meant shooting after 3 pm for the 6.30 pm news was not an option. The small camera team generated about 12 minutes of vision in a half hour program (Horgan, 2006: 214-215).

While the sophistication of film reports improved as stations acquired more equipment and personnel, the main drawbacks of using film, the early deadlines and limited capacity for editing, continued. Most stories of this era were 'single source,' that is they included comment from only a single interviewee, because of the difficulty of filming multiple interviews and then editing them into a story. It was not until the introduction of ENG (Electronic News Gathering) from the late 1970s that stories began to resemble the style familiar today. In contemporary television news programs, most stories are pre-produced as video packages in which the narration is written to complement the available pictures and the images and segments of interviews are tightly edited to make stories fast-paced in the hope that this will hold viewers' attention and stop them from clicking over to another channel. Significantly, these stories will include short comments from at least two and often four or five interviewees. The use of multiple interviews increases the pace at which a story is told and is also considered essential to maintaining balance between competing opinions in any newsworthy issue and thus journalistic detachment from the topic.

The dominance of the pre-produced packaged report from the late 1970s made the overall look of news bulletins more polished, however there have been periods when the emphasis on

production standards has given way to a more instantaneous form of delivery from a journalist at a news scene. Live-to-air reports first became a feature of Australian television news in the early 1980s when Channel Ten introduced 'Live Eye' and the other commercial channels followed with their own versions of live-from-scene reporting. Then as now, the 'live' unit was used to allow reporters to present updates on stories and conduct interviews from a news scene. These items often accompanied a pre-prepared packaged report. More recently, news programs have returned to making greater use of live-from-scene reporting. What is of interest here is not merely the comparisons that might be drawn between contemporary practice and that of the 1980s, but rather the similarities that may be seen between current television journalism that of the early 1970s.

As we have seen television news stories were initially shot on film and until the start of the 1970s, reporters had maintained a low profile within news bulletins. This changed with a significant shift in reporting styles whereby reporters stamped their identity on news delivery. What is surprising is how quickly this occurred and also that it took place independent of any shifts in television technology that have prompted other changes in journalistic practice and style. From being largely unseen writers and voices, television reporters now appeared in front of the camera, and in many cases entire stories, were constructed using a reporter speaking to the camera although in some cases part of the report was covered by a separate reel of picture overlay. While these reports were not live-to-air as they would be today, they required the same skills of the reporter since the medium employed was film, which could be used only once, was expensive, and thus required, wherever possible, reports to be presented in a single take, as is required in a live-broadcast environment. The move to a more front-of-camera role meant a significant change in the skills expected of television reporters and one that would have made elements of their work more stressful as well as giving them a high public profile, possibly the highest enjoyed by journalists in any media of that time.

It is likely we will never be able to determine the percentage of stories that appeared in television news in this era that employed the different available construction methods. As noted, the televisual archival records of this era are patchy at best, and up until the early 1980s consist of individual news stories removed from the context of the bulletins in which they were broadcast (Alysen, 2001).

The material from the first three decades of news output, held by the National Film and Sound Archive, is dominated by the relatively small number of stations from which material was donated. Construction of representative samples of programs for analysis is not possible. Instead we can only examine what has been retained for trends and these suggest that, as reporters stepped out in front of the camera from the start of the 1970s, they did not simply change the visual style of reports, they also imbued them with a level of personal comment and opinion that would be surprising by the standards of both preceding and subsequent news reports.

Here is a striking example, from ATN 7, which resonates with contemporary public issues. The reporter was seen kneeling beside the Alexandra Canal near Sydney Airport, holding a cardboard box:

A lot of people have done a lot of talking about pollution but an American manufacturer has brought out for youngsters a pollution test kit … I won't bore you with all the details of it but it's obviously something which has taken off very well in the United States and may very well – hopefully – take off well here in Australia … While we have places like the Alexandra canal and while we have chimneys belching smoke out of the atmosphere and jet engine noises like that in the background we obviously have a need to educate children outside the classroom to take it upon themselves to go and find pollution, track it down and report it. (ATN 7, 22.10.1971)

Another example concerned a local council's opposition to a Sydney expressway and the reporter was filmed in front of a section of another expressway:

The council points out that a system like this would cost about 10 percent of the more than 200 million dollars involved in the edifice behind us now.

At least they have put a proposal up in place of the knocking which is usually associated with expressways like this (ATN 7, 16.6.1972).

In the example below, the report concerned pollution at a Sydney beach:

Well no doubt the authorities *are* trying to clean up the beaches but they do seem to be taking an awful long time. I remember doing similar stories about polluted beaches more than year ago and things don't seem to have changed much (ATN 7, 19.10.1972).

It was not only narration scripts where reporters took a stand. Many stories of this era were told in short question-and-answer interviews and reporters' leanings were sometimes evident in these too.

This is not to say that all reports of this era were coloured by the reporter's opinions. There are many examples that are told in a matter-of-fact manner. What is important is the degree to which opinion was considered acceptable. To put this into perspective, consider this report which dates from 1978, the start of the video era. In this report, the story is told in pictures and the reporter does not appear at all. It is unusual in the fact that there are no interview segments, just pictures and narration. It is used here (with identifying details removed) because the subject matter might be expected to generate some reporter comment on the nature of the incident and yet there is none.

(Name) is in hospital tonight recovering from a 12 hour ordeal on the floor of her flat in (location). Police say two young men broke into her flat around nine last night and demanded money from 87 year old (name). They then tied her up with this chenille dressing gown cord and bound her feet with the flex from a hot water jug. They shoved a scarf in her mouth and left her there. They took around 50 dollars before leaving the house. (Name) was found this morning around 9.30 by a Richmond council home helper. (Name's) condition tonight was satisfactory (TEN 10, 28.12.1978).

The shift from a detached style of reporting to one in which the journalist was the face of a story, complete with opinionated remarks, naturally raises questions about what might have driven this change in news delivery. Television news in the early 1970s was going through a period not unlike that experienced by the industry from 2005, with a combination of cost cutting combined with the influence of the new media of the time, the influence of domestic current affairs programs. For example, Channel Ten's *Telescope*, launched in 1965 made, in Davies' words "a fetish of reporter involvement" (Davies, 1981: 155), a technique that flowed onto the ABC's *This Day Tonight* two years later. Some of the news reporters in Sydney in the early 1970s had come from these programs or from Ten's *Newsbeat*. There were also influences that were essentially budgetary. Just as in the wider broadcast environment, programs built around talking heads are less expensive to produce than dramas, a story delivered by a reporter could be produced more cheaply than one constructed out of pictures at a time when Davies claims "thrifty commercial channels were pegging back the amount of film reporters and cameramen were allocated per story" (Davies, 1981: 155) and it could also be produced more quickly, allowing individual journalists to produce more stories per day.

In addition, the promotion of reporters to a higher profile within bulletins helped add variety to news programs, and thus enhanced audience interest, by interspersing the newsreader's delivery with other voices, in exactly the same way that interview segments or 'soundbites' are

used today to create multiple voices within individual news stories. As journalists grew in visibility within television news, some gave their own opinions in stories, perhaps emboldened by their higher profile and also because while some pieces to camera were clearly delivered from notes (and designed to be covered by overlay) others were adlibbed and it is harder to self-censor without a script.

There is no data on the degree to the practice of reporting 'live' in Australian television has increased over the years or on the degree to which the tone of reports has changed as a consequence, and the use of live inserts from reporters varies from station to station and from one bulletin to the next. However, the increasing ease with which video from remote locations may be inserted into a newscast in real time has contributed to greater use of the technique. We might also surmise that the wider media environment, characterised by instant news delivery, greater use of social media and more personal forms of delivery, such as blogging, have encouraged both the greater visibility of reporters within news stories and also a more personal and opinionated style of delivery. Consider these examples, from the penultimate mid evening news services for 2009. Most services included live inserts from the Western Australian bushfires from where one reporter told the audience:

Amazingly nobody's has lost their life yet, which is a great thing (TEN 30.12.09).

The other major story of the day on the commercial services was a car crash on a section of road that two days earlier had seen a multiple-fatality accident. At one station, the live exchange between the studio and the reporter at the scene began:

Studio: Alison what do we know about this accident?

Reporter: Oh Peter I just went cold when I heard it. It happened on the Princess Highway at … (the driver) was in a green Camry with his family when for some reason he decided to do a u-turn and he slammed into the car that was trying to overtake (TCN 9, 30.12.09).

The following day, a story updating the consequences of the earlier multiple vehicle crash had the reporter speaking live from outside a hospital and offering:

This really is a tragedy. This family is innocent (TCN, 1.1.10).

The four or five years from approximately 1970 onwards, saw the greatest reporter presence on screen until very recent times and the move towards more live-from-scene reporting. By the mid 1970s the visibility of reporters within stories had been reduced substantially, perhaps because of the influence of foreign news stories of the time, which were more tightly edited and picture-driven. This process towards picture-driven news was completed once news moved to video with the introduction of electronic news gathering (ENG).

The switch to ENG from the end of the 1970s was accompanied by speculation that it would damage news credibility by preferencing vision over words (see Gerdes & Charlier, 1985) and also by increasing reporters' workloads as stories became more complex and took longer to produce. In fact, the long standing effect was to cement the news 'package' as the primary story format in news programs. 'Package' stories consist of a reporter's narration wrapped around soundbites and a piece to camera, with an average total running time in the vicinity of one minute 20 seconds, of which perhaps 10 seconds will be the piece-to-camera and 30 or 40 seconds will be soundbites. The news package as a format is highly formulaic and also highly polished. There is an emphasis on tight scripting which discourages unnecessary words and tightly edited soundbites where reporters know the types of comments that will best fit into their stories and conduct interviews in a way that generates the style of comments they can use. It is likely that the drive towards a more polished style of story production, in tandem with a similar approach to bulletins as a whole, reflected another change in television journalism

over this period: a diminution in the autonomy of reporters and a rise in the power of news producers who set the style for entire bulletins and each individual item within them.

In its 50 plus years, Australian television news has gone from being a defining element in each station or network's image to something more taken-for-granted, less resourced and more stretched as content generated for one medium is 'reversioned' for use across multiple delivery systems. Metropolitan television journalists are still among the most privileged reporters in terms of pay and prestige. However the nature of their work and their status is changing. They are spending more time working in the high-stress live-to-air environment and over the coming years they are likely to be expected to take on more of the technical functions of the medium, particularly the video editing of stories since this can most easily be accommodated alongside the work of reporting and scripting.

Many of the changes occurring in news have been prompted by new technologies and contemporary business circumstances. Even so, elements of 'new' journalistic practice have echoes in the past. Today's live-to-air reports remind us of an era when reporters worked live-to-film. In a media environment in which some reporters generate 'blogs' for their station's online arm, it is worth remembering that, in every different media environment, reporters were also given the freedom to be opinionated.

In an era when 24-hour news and interactive news formats are giving the public more of a role in news production we might also recall that mainstream television news once gave the public a far greater role in stories than is the case now with the inclusion of question and answer segments within news stories. And at a time when the money available to news production is being squeezed, with consequences for the kinds of reporting journalists can undertake, it is important to recall that this too has happened before and that the medium adapted and recovered.

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