

The Value of Networked Journalism: New Report and Conference

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Networked Presenter

Jon Snow (C4), Peter Horrocks (BBC), Douglas Alexander MP, Danny Finkelstein (Times), and Janine Gibson (Guardian) are all Networked Journalists. They were all among the dozens of great speakers at the free [Polis/BBC Value of Networked Journalism conference](#) on Friday June 11th at the LSE. I launched my report on the state of Networked Journalism there – it includes case studies at the BBC, Guardian, Sky, Times, Telegraph, Trinity Mirror, hyperlocal and Mumsnet.

You can get the full report on paper by emailing polis@lse.ac.uk or clicking on this: [networkedjournalism\[1\]](#) but this is an extract from the Introduction.

Networked Journalism Has Arrived

The British General Election of 2010 has made it absolutely clear that networked journalism has arrived. The journalism about the campaign, the result and its consequences has been a remarkable combination of online and mainstream media. On Friday May 7th the BBC website alone had more than 11.5 million unique users and 100 million page views. The Internet did not just add to the coverage, it changed it.

We now have a political news media that has audience interactivity, participation and connectivity built into every aspect. And it works. This was a uniquely exciting and interesting election for political reasons, but news media helped drive the increased engagement. The question now is whether that added value can be produced in the future and in other areas of journalism.



Out on Friday

This report is published at the Polis/BBC College of Journalism Value of Journalism conference on June 11th. It is based on four years of activity at Polis, the journalism think-tank in the Media and Communications Department at the London School of Economics. In addition, Polis researchers have also interviewed a range of networked journalists specially for this report. It follows up on my book about 'networked journalism': *SuperMedia: Saving Journalism So It Can Save The World* (Blackwell 2008).

By 'Networked Journalism' I mean a synthesis of traditional news journalism and the emerging forms of participatory media enabled by Web 2.0 technologies such as mobile phones, email, websites, blogs, micro-blogging, and social networks. Networked Journalism allows the public to be involved in every aspect of journalism production through crowd-sourcing, interactivity, hyper-linking, user generated content and forums.

It changes the creation of news from being linear and top-down to a collaborative process. Not all news production will be particularly networked. Not many citizens want to be journalists for much of their time. But the principles of networking are increasingly practiced in all forms of news media.

The TV debates were the big 'new' media story of the UK 2010 campaign. They reminded us that television is still the dominant channel for political information and the biggest media platform in general. Live event television is probably the media format that delivers most impact as it happens. However, the TV election debates in 2010 partly had appeal because of their novelty and also because they were different to conventional broadcast news: they were a direct channel to the voter, in comparison with the spin, packaging and partisan bias of so much traditional political media.



Those debates were just the tip of an iceberg of networked journalism which helped create a vastly increased space of political conversation between voters, often reacting to and with mainstream media. Across the sectors we saw traditional journalism becoming networked.

This report does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey. The examples are not supposed to be the only or best instances of networked journalism. They are a selection that we hope shows the increasing effectiveness and diversity of the new forms of news production. When I wrote about networked journalism in SuperMedia it was still a relatively fresh concept, but within two years it has become ubiquitous.



This report is designed to stimulate discussion about the state of journalism and to encourage investment in the future of new forms of news production. Above all, it is an attempt to get journalists, citizens and policy-makers to think about what journalism is for. What is its use to society, the economy and the individual? What is its value?

This report and our conference is an attempt to move the debate on. We are in the middle of sustained crisis for journalism. The global recession has accentuated the business problems for journalism in the UK, much of Europe and America. Of course, the news industry is booming in many parts of the world such as India and China and even Africa. However, underpinning the financial problems for journalism is the transformation wrought by digital technologies and the Internet.

These will effect the news media everywhere eventually. They provide unprecedented opportunities to create and reach new markets and to enhance production. However, these same technologies have created destructive competition and drastically reduced certain revenue streams.

This report does not deal directly with the business model. It does not seek to revisit the well-worn debates such as the 'Future of Newspapers'. Instead of asking how we preserve journalism or sustain the journalism business it will ask what the product is and who wants it? Then we can ask what is the best way to produce it. If we know how the new journalism is valued then we can persuade people to fund it.

Technological and other deep social shifts mean there is no way that journalism can avoid radical change. They are deeply threatening. Much of what was there will disappear. [Emily Bell's prediction of 'carnage'](#) is being realised. The opportunities, however, are much greater.

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