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What is This?
Beyond Journalism
A Profession between Information Society and Civil Society

Jo Bardeol

Abstract
Over the past years, it has often been stated that the traditional function of journalism will erode with the advance of the 'information society'. Direct news supply by satellite television and computer networks, the explosion of information and the increasing communication autonomy of citizens, less public service and more commercial exploitation of media all suggest that critical journalism is becoming redundant. This article gives an overview of the relevant developments and discussions on the topic, and defends the thesis that because of the increasing individualization and segmentation in communication such notions as 'community' and 'public debate' should be taken less for granted. Therefore the traditional task of journalism will shift from collecting information to directing the social flow of information and public debate. Next to this 'orientating journalism', the new media offer scope for 'instrumental journalism'.

Key Words civil society, information society, journalism, new media, new technology

Is journalism becoming redundant? Is the profession, slowly but surely, losing its prominent place in communication between the citizen and government? Over the past years, it has repeatedly been said that the function of journalism is gradually being eroded. Underlying such
concerns are the changes that have taken place in the journalistic dissemination of news as a result of new media technology.

Several years ago, this concern was directed towards the steady advance of broadcasting stations like Cable News Network (CNN) and the satellites that allow them to bring direct, uncut reports of world events, from the Gulf War to peace keeping in the former Yugoslavia. Happenings at home and abroad now flash directly into the living room, leaving viewers to make their own selection. The reporter has been reduced to a mere purveyor of facts. Such new, direct reporting — especially by television — will, it is feared, lead to the end of critical journalism. Elihu Katz stated that:

News is like hot potatoes for CNN. Like other American networks, it collects its news as quickly as possible via satellite connections to reporters and other sources throughout the world. Unlike the other networks, however, it also uses the satellite to distribute the news as quickly as possible. At first glance, this sounds like the ideal deployment of the new media technology. The only trouble is that it eliminates the editor. Rather than collecting information and trying to make sense of it in time for the evening news broadcast, the CNN ideal is to do simultaneous, almost-live editing, or better yet, no editing at all. (Katz, 1992: 9)

Katz concludes: ‘Getting closer seems to mean seeing less. The combination of information management, instant news, empty analysis, and the best of intentions threatens the future of critical journalism, and our own’ (Katz, 1992: 12). ‘How far’, adds Levy in his editorial note to an issue of the Journal of Communication on ‘Journalism in Crisis and Change’, ‘would Katz and others be willing to push the notion that journalism as we knew it had come to an end, dramatically and irrevocably changed by its coverage of the Persian Gulf War and other macrofactors? Had television news, and especially CNN, “won” the journalistic war but lost forever its ability and desire to interpose editorial judgment between event and audiences?’ (Levy, 1992: 3).

More recently, the advent of new, interactive communication services such as the Internet, ‘free nets’ and ‘digital cities’ has given rise to expectations that in the future journalistic intervention in political communication will no longer be necessary. Mitchell Kapor, founder of the American digital citizens’ movement Electronic Frontier Foundation, gives the example of vice-president Al Gore’s appearance on CompuServe:

It was the first live interactive news conference by the vice-president. The New York Times observed: This actually might be like when Franklin Roosevelt went on television at the New York World Fair in 1939.
Symbolically it could be marking the beginning of an era, in which public officials are available to discuss and interact in real time. (Wiering and Schröder, 1994)

These developments pose questions as to the significance of the new information technology for the traditional task of journalism. What will the information society mean for the position of journalists in political communication? Will they become redundant, as some have suggested? Will the advance of the direct registration of news smother the journalism that seeks to explain its background? Or might it be the other way round? Will individuals lose their way on the information highway and feel a greater need for journalistic direction? In this context we are of course less interested in the changes in the day-to-day working routines of journalists that might occur (see Bardoel, 1993) than in the broader mission that is attributed to the profession in relation to political democracy and social integration in any society. Although the latter function of comment and critique is all too often identified with the written press, the same holds true, in principle, for the ‘workers of the word’ in audiovisual and electronic media.

We start by charting the opposing points of view and then go on to develop a vision of the future of journalism. First, the arguments that state that the profession of journalism will become redundant.

Will journalism become redundant?

The gradual but inexorable shift in the current media landscape from print to audiovisual means (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1994) is not doing the profession any good, so the first assumption goes. Because of the written word and the greater level of abstraction and selectivity, the journalistic surplus-value of the old print media is, it is argued, almost by definition greater than that of the audiovisual media. Television prefers easy-to-follow problems and short ‘sound bites’ (Rosenblum, 1993). Shocking images make a greater impression than deep debate on the underlying problems. These substantive objections against television journalism will carry even more weight as people come to rely more on television for information on ‘serious’ subjects. Politicians make use of television’s strong position in order to address the electorate directly, circumventing the (critical) press. Over the past few years there have been some telling examples: Ross Perot, Bill Clinton and Silvio Berlusconi. Perot’s sudden success fuelled a debate in the United States on what
Sandel (1992) has called ‘electronic bonapartism’. In Europe, a comparable discussion on ‘tele(vision-demo)cracy’ took place after the meteorite-like rise of Silvio Berlusconi and his electoral association Forza Italia.

As well as shifts within the existing media — from print to audiovisual — there is also the impact of new technology. First, we notice the explosion of information as more new information is produced and the accessibility of existing sources of information, such as databases, increases. Within this growing flow of information, the part played by journalistic products will decrease proportionately, the assumption being that the ‘communication pressure’ it creates reduces both journalism’s scope and the citizen’s accessibility.

A primary element of this increasing communication pressure is the amount of information, the increase in the volume of information. By now it is well known that the supply of information is expanding explosively, while the amount of time available to the receiver remains more or less constant (Van Cuilenburg et al., 1992: 51–68). In order not to lose track, or to miss as little as possible, consumers have taken refuge in increasingly impatient communication behaviour of which ‘zapping’ has become the symbol.

But there is more. The speed at which news and information circulate in society is also assumed to be steadily increasing (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1994: 427). News circulates ever faster and the public adjusts its pattern of expectations accordingly. For the journalist, faster reporting means less time for selection and processing. Across the board, the time difference between event and report is decreasing, those involved are allowed less time to give their reactions (Van der Donk and Tops, 1992: 54) and increasingly, moreover, it is the public’s opinion that is sought through instant opinion polls, ‘The politicians reach the people via television; the people reach the politicians via polls’ (see Abramson et al., 1988: 90). The life of public issues is shortened as the publicity process speeds up. This whirling communication carousel of immediate action and reaction within the publicity process decreases rather than increases the scope for journalistic signification.

Finally, increased opportunities for telematic communication also lead to a greater concentration, a greater density (Münch, 1993: 262–3; Weischenberg et al., 1994: 27) of available information. In principle, each message can now reach everyone and, in principle, be received by everyone. Journalists are finding it increasingly difficult to attract the public’s attention within this densely packed public space. There is a parallel increase in employment opportunities for professional attractors of attention such as government information officials and public relations...
(PR) officers, the natural antipodes of journalists. Recent research in the Netherlands shows that the first group already outnumbers the latter by 2:1 (Van Ruler and de Lange, 1995: 24).

When we wish to summarize the preceding trends into a formula, the ‘communication pressure’ in society consists of a multiplication of volume, speed of circulation and density of public communication:

\[
\text{Communication pressure} = \text{Volume} \times \text{Speed of circulation} \times \text{Density}.
\]

The most distinguishing feature of the new communication services based on telematics, \textit{interactivity} (Bardoe, 1993: 57), undermines the position of journalism yet again. The emphasis shifts from ‘allocation’ to ‘consultation’ (Bordewijk and Van Kaam, 1982; McQuail, 1987: 41), from undirected dissemination to a directed search for information. Increasingly, it is the receiver to whom the task of selection falls. Although it is fair to say that only a limited public, as yet, will actually make use of such (inter)active opportunities, as a matter of principle their significance is considerable, for they infringe on the exclusive access to many different sources that journalists have enjoyed up till now.

Interactive services may also provide an incentive for increased communication between citizens, for \textit{horizontal communication} in society. It has been predicted that this development will be at the expense of the existing vertical communication between the state and the citizen, in which journalism has traditionally played such an important part. The advance of what Abramson et al. (1988: 113) refer to as ‘unmediated media’ may exert extra pressure on the position and the filtering effect of the established media. Moreover, the combination of computers and networks provides additional opportunities for communication in fields of social life hitherto practically untouched by the media. We are already seeing the emergence of many new circles of communication, bound together by common interest, through services such as the Internet. The ‘media gap’ (Neuman, 1991: 9–10) between interpersonal communication and mass communication is gradually being closed. In other words, ‘civil society’ is also being ‘mediatised’ (Bardoe, 1993: 57). There is, however, little or no journalistic intervention involved in these new, direct forms of media communication.

The existing \textit{vertical communication} between citizens and the state is also expected to become easier and to bypass such traditional intermediaries as political parties and journalists. Many observers have remarked that the modern technological opportunities for direct interaction with citizens and direct democracy are even a panacea for the
limitations of representative democracy. L.K. Grossman, former head of NBC News and PBS (Nieman Reports, 1994: 53–8) said:

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Greeks invented direct democracy, in which the citizens ruled themselves. A little over 200 years ago, our Founding Fathers invented representative democracy, in which we elected officials who made the decisions for us. I would suggest that electronic democracy is representing the third great transformation in our democratic process. It already is showing indications of being, I would suggest, a hybrid between the direct democracy of the ancient Greek city states, and the representative democracy with which we have grown so familiar over the past 200 years.

And M.F. Wilson, executive editor of The San Francisco Chronicle, added at the same conference at the Harvard University:

Electronic democracy is really about decentralizing things. It is about putting computing power and communication power in every home. . . . Each of you becomes a broadcaster. Each of you becomes a journalist. Communication changes from being a one, us, to many, you, to being a one-to-one kind of thing.

Tops et al. (1995: 106) conclude that the use of new information and communication technologies creates the possibility of ‘unmediated politics’, ‘in which information about politicians and political parties is no longer coloured by interpretations of independent journalists’. Electronic ‘push button democracy’ (Abramson et al., 1988: 120) is within reach, according to these technological optimists.

The position of journalism is not only under debate as a direct result of the trends in technology, such as the advance of (satellite) television, the surplus of information and the advent of interactive media. These are also reflected in wider developments in society that are equally threatening to the journalist’s position.

This technology reinforces the tendency both to decentralization through horizontal communication and to centralization in the form of a globalized communication flow. As new and old media are linked in a global network, the individual journalist is reduced to just a cog in an ever widening ‘communication machine’. Of course, the globalization of the communication structure began long ago with the advance of internationally operating press agencies. But the pace of development is increasing with the advent of worldwide news stations such as CNN, databases and expert systems. Separate media and individual journalists are increasingly helpless in the face of this global flow of information. Münch (1993: 276) compares the modern journalist with a disc jockey playing their choice of music for a dancing public. The material is
produced elsewhere; the disc jockey’s job is simply to select and present.

A further threat is presented by the erosion of the nation-state, until now an important breeding ground and source of support for the journalistic profession. This traditional centre of political power and sovereignty is losing powers in two directions, to more central and to more decentralized centres of power: on the one hand to Europe, on the other to regional and local entities. During the greater part of the 20th century, states Sandel (1992), the nation-state was regarded as the centre of democratic self-government and as the expression of a collective social identity. In the Western world, however, the nation-state seems no longer able to fulfil those two historical functions — because it is too big to allow the expression of certain feelings of local identity and too small to maintain its hold on global economic processes. Dahlgren (1991: 12) concludes: ‘Today, the nation-state as a political entity is in deep crisis, beset not only with fiscal dilemmas but also with problems of legitimation. This crisis of course goes in tandem with the transnationalization of capital and the dispersion of production with the international economy.’

Globalization and the diminishing significance of the nation-state have both tangible and psychological implications. The development of individual lifestyles on the one hand and global connections on the other, leads to a sociocultural ‘Umwertung aller Werte’, in which politics are given a different, more modest role to play. These changes have been defined in such terms as postmodern culture and cultural value-relativism. McQuail (1992: 4) summarizes, referring to Harvey (1989):

Its political implication is that the ‘Enlightenment project’ of rational social progress has drawn to an end, especially in respect of applying bureaucratic means to achieve socially planned collective objectives. As a social-cultural philosophy ‘post-modernism’ stands opposed to the traditional notion of a fixed and hierarchical culture. It favours forms of culture which are transient, superficial, appealing to sense rather than reason. Postmodern culture is volatile, illogical, kaleidoscopic, inventive, hedonistic. It certainly favours the newer, audiovisual over the older, print media.

It puts an end to several old certainties, without offering a new, normative basis to replace them. This applies to both (ideas on) politics and culture in general and more specifically to journalism. In today’s culture, for example, politics occupy a less prominent place, the significance of norms and values is more relative, and the borders between
once divided domains (such as information and entertainment, high and low culture) are being blurred.

At the same time, there are fewer objections to commercial exploitation — once widely held in the field of the media — and less fear of monopolization, so that there is also less justification providing public amenities to the media. Solutions based on liberal ideas and market conformity apparently provide the foundations for an emerging ‘new consensus’ on new media policies, both in the United States and in Europe (McQuail, 1993: 196). This (post)modern (media) culture may also have implications for the special social status and protection upon which the profession of journalism has always been able to count.

Will journalism remain?

Now that technology has rendered journalistic intervention less necessary, the future of the profession will depend more than ever on other social factors and considerations. The development of a global system of communication and growing ‘communication autonomy’ of the citizen outlined above, offer new opportunities, but also create new dilemmas and problems. Against this backdrop, these developments and their significance remain, to a certain extent, questionable — both empirically and normatively.

First, it should be noted that the advance of CNN — which indeed prompted many a sombre thought — seems to have passed its zenith. The original agitation around CNN is reminiscent of the unease that accompanies each new technological development upon which new and more direct forms of reporting are based. We may expect the new direct and global television reporting to carve itself a niche alongside — and not primarily instead of — existing forms of journalism. More international news stations will join CNN in providing the daily menu of television. At a national and local level too, comparable news stations will emerge, as has long been the case in the United States.

In general, the shifts in media use outlined above, from print to audiovisual — including their assumed disadvantages to journalism — are less impressive than they appear at first sight. Research from the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Agency (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 1994) shows that ‘loss of reading’ occurs mostly in relation to ‘popular newspapers, regional papers and the tabloid press’, in short ‘newspapers and magazines that, in their presentation and simplicity, address the same broad public as broadcasting stations’ (Knulst, 1994: 334–5). The
generalizing and deprecating approach of television in the recent debate on the 'loss of reading culture' completely ignores the professionalization that television journalism has gone through in the last decades.

Moreover, the first articulated fears that the public would literally be flooded out by the rising tide of information are disappearing. It is becoming clear that receivers develop their own strategies for dealing with the flow. At the same time, technology — itself partly responsible for the flood in the first place — also provides solutions. Artificial memories such as the answering machine, video recorder, fax and personal computer (PC) afford an escape from the pressure of permanent accessibility and direct communication and allow messages to be received later — or not at all. According to Van Cuijlenburg (1994: 146–54), in the midst of this surfeit, the modern citizen has an increasing need to be 'absently present', to reserve the right of non-communication. The increase of directed consultation and interaction services at the expense of undirected 'allocutive' communication also provides a defence against an embarrassment of unsolicited communication. The increase in segmentation and 'targeting' may prove a social anomaly. The well-known 'information gap', the inequality between citizens in terms of access to information and participation in the political process, is increasing, and reinforces existing social and political inequality. The fact that certain groups of the population (well-educated, young, male) seem better able to deal with new forms of communication, merely serves to reinforce that inequality further.

Again, the suggestion that the new technology provides a solution for a different gap — the participation gap in democracy, shall we say — is at least questionable. As we have seen, techno-optimists argue that electronic networks offer hitherto unknown opportunities for such matters as dialogue, participation and direct democracy. The technological opportunities for self-representation allow citizens to participate directly in political debate and decision-making and are said to negate the reason for the existence of intermediary agencies such as political parties and the mass media. While the first experimental experiences have shown that electronic meetings may contribute to sociopolitical debate, they cannot replace representative democracy (Van Dijk, 1991: 80–90). Electronic communication differs too much from face-to-face communication, like in gatherings. Via electronic networks citizens are approached separately, without there being a common identity or a shared signification system. The handling of the agenda proves to be a problem in electronic meetings. This direct democracy lacks the mechanisms of
common consideration and compromising that are inherent in representa-
tive democracy.

The nature of direct, electronic communication is often elusive: it is
well suited to consumerism marketing (in politics too), but does not
provide an alternative to existing forms of opinion formation and
decision-making. According to Van Dijk (1994: 9), it is primarily
populist political movements such as that of Ross Perot and short-lived
campaign organizations (à la Clinton) that make use of media and
information technology.

The assumption that the individual citizen will make the most of all
of the political and personal opportunities that unlimited information
affords, is also receiving more and more criticism. The most important
consequence of the new media situation may well lie, as is increasingly
acknowledged, in the field of social integration and political participation
(Weischenberg et al., 1994). In an electronic and individualized society,
such notions as ‘community’ and ‘debate’ will inevitably be less self-
evident. Abramson et al. (1988) point to the function that the national
media have had as an important source of common civic culture, in which
the goals are a common political vocabulary, a common political agenda
and the formation of public opinion. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of the
new technology is that, in principle, it greatly increases the opportunities
for getting together, but in practice decreases the chances of that
happening accordingly. At best, once stable communities evaporate into
’shared moments’ (Tracey, 1993: 14–16).

The transformation from traditional, physical community to a
modern, abstract public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) renders the organization
of social debate increasingly difficult. The concept of ‘debate’ itself suggests
still a unity of time, place and action that is, in the modern media reality,
‘stretched out’ to a process of — in relation to time and place — scattered
contributions to the discussion. Nevertheless, terms such as ‘conversation’
(Hallin, 1992: 10) or ‘debate’ remain the dominant metaphors in relation
to the public sphere, a position that the ‘market’ metaphor holds in the
economic sector.

Despite the reduced chance of getting together, modern society
shows an increasing need for common orientation and debate. Absolute
norms and values, derived from conviction or religion, are less and less
functional. More and more, we live according to relative guidelines,
permanently redetermined and adapted in mutual debate. Knapen (1994:
362) has concluded correctly: ‘Whoever is unable or unwilling to draw
socio-political guidance from the Bible, from Allah or the Pope, will have
to get it from mutual discourse.’
New journalistic practices

Within this framework, individualization of communication can be seen as a threat to social dialogue. Habermas (1992: 438) emphasizes the importance of a discursive public sphere that is more than a mere statistical majority. The social basis for an active political Öffentlichkeit in this sense is ‘civil society’ (Dekker, 1994). This concept has become increasingly popular in social science over the past years. It stands for the organizations, societies and movements that, at an intermediate level, determine political democracy and social cohesion in a given society. It presupposes an open and pluralistic field of voluntary organizations and informal groups, as an alternative to relationships between people that are governed by market forces or a hierarchical, state-dominated model of opinion formation and power blocs (Edwards, 1994: 317). In a notion of ‘civil society’, a certain involvement is expected of the citizen, and in that sense there is a link with recent debate in the Netherlands on citizenship and civic consciousness. More generally, there are arguments in favour of broadening the concept of ‘citizenship’, from its classical, rational-political content to a more (post)modern, sociocultural interpretation. This is in line with the above-mentioned eroding primacy of politics in society and with the real, not compartmentalized, outlook of people on life and society.

According to Habermas (1992: 461), the power of the civic society, that he defines as peripheral to the political centre, lies in its sensitivity to new social issues. He points to recent examples such as the arms race, nuclear energy, the environment, the Third World, feminism and ethnicity: all issues that were not introduced by the political centre. He paints a social pattern of communication in which issues are launched from the periphery (by intellectuals and other advocates, involved or self-appointed) and taken up by journals or associations, after which they develop into social movements or new subcultures and, finally reaching the general public via the mass media, make it on to the public and political agenda.

Concepts such as ‘public sphere’ and ‘civil society’ allow us to reach a more well-considered conclusion on the effect of the new media on public communication and the position of journalism within these developments. Taking the concept of civil society as a starting point, the new technology is easily recognized as a facilitating device for social contact and relationships at a meso-level, positioning between traditional mass media and person-to-person communication. We have already seen that this technology, based on computers and networks, is likely to affect
society at a meso-level most, a domain that as yet is barely ‘mediatised’ (Bardoeel, 1993: 57), overcoming the limitations of distance/space and time and offering more opportunity for horizontal communication between citizens. If it is true that, to paraphrase Peters (1993: 566), that mass media are splendid in representation but horrid for participation, the opposite may hold for the new information and communication technology. According to Tops et al. (1995: 104–5), the use of this new technology opens up opportunities for forms of direct democracy and for a more ‘responsive’ representational democracy. Although we should be very cautious not to fall into the trap of technological determinism we must acknowledge that certainly there are new opportunities. The extensive interest in the Internet could be possibly interpreted as the first sign of this development.

However, it is a very different matter to assume that new opportunities for communication will make the old intermediary frameworks (like mass media and political parties) superfluous. Inevitably, they will be somewhat crowded, but not crowded out, for in general we may assume that new relationships will add to rather than replace old ones. Both old and new media will assist in recognizing and defining the problems that politics must address. Compared to the new communication technology and information services, the mass media and political parties mainly operate at a different stage of social issue formation. It is possible to represent the mechanism of public cq. political debate graphically. Unlike Habermas, who seems to think of social communication in terms of concentric circles (he refers to it as centre and periphery), our figure (Figure 1) — following McQuail’s (1987: 6) figure of ‘communication processes in society’ — contains a communication pyramid.

The shape of a pyramid has been chosen to illustrate the bottom–up process of problem selection and definition by citizens and the top–down process of producing decisions, measures and solutions by the political establishment. Going up in the pyramid means more support and fewer issues (issue filtration). It shows the position of the mass media (and therefore also of journalists) and of political parties as ‘higher up’ in the pyramid than the new interactive communication technology. If new technological developments further down in the pyramid — so the assumption goes — lead to greater opportunities for mediated communication on the meso-level, the selection and filtering of relevant issues higher up in the pyramid may be expected to gain in significance. Journalism will therefore, in my view, continue to play a crucial part in recruiting and processing relevant issues from the growing plurality of
Figure 1 Communication pyramid—public/political debate

public spheres towards the political centre (Habermas) or towards the top (in my model). Therefore the function of journalism as a director of social debate will be more essential than ever in a society in which the pressure of communication is steadily increasing. Journalism will not, as in the era of mass media, control the public debate, but can take the lead in directing and defining the public agenda. As journalists are no longer the indispensable intermediaries between the outside world and the public, they must prove their position in this respect. It is important that journalists take this aspect of their intermediary task more seriously than they seem to do at present.

As well as — and not primarily instead of — the existing media, modern communication technology will lead to new information services and to new journalistic practices. These will not be ‘the same old journalism but with better tools’ (see Koch, 1991: xv, xxiii). As is always the case at the start of major technological innovations, only first ideas and experiments provide a glimpse now of what the future may hold. In the beginning, new services are apt to resemble the old and it will take some time before they are applied according to their own functionality. The first automobiles were coaches without horses and for a long time, television was regarded — and still is by some — as a mixture of radio, cinema and theatre. If we look at the first experiments with the
'electronic newspaper', we see two prototypes. Following Van Kaam (1988: 32–4; 1991: 150–1), I call them the 'fax paper' and the 'PC paper’. Knight Ridder's 'news tablet' seems to be an example of the former, MIT's 'Fish Wrap' of the latter. In this way, the new communication technology has already led to product differentiation in the public dissemination of information, filling the gap between direct communication and mass communication. New information services are being developed for new publics (or, if you prefer: new product/market combinations) that offer new forms of employment in information-processing professions. Let us, for the time being, call these workers 'information brokers'. Meanwhile, users have an increasingly wide choice, at least in a formal sense. They may opt for information that has been selected and processed by journalists or for information that other professionals (in PR and documentation) have collected, or they may choose to consult any one of a number of information files directly. This changes the journalist from an unavoidable to an avoidable link in the chain of information provision.

Orientating and instrumental journalism

The position of journalism as a 'unified' profession that encompasses many very different activities at very different levels, seems no longer tenable. The advent of new media formats, based on multimedia applications and the increasing (inter)activity of the user, make this presumption less realistic then it already was. Ideal-typically, I see two sorts of journalism developing (Bardoe, 1993: 117–20). First, there is orientating journalism whose job it is to provide a general orientation (background, commentary, explanation) to a general public. Second, there is instrumental journalism, geared to providing information (functional, specialist) to interested customers. (I gladly leave to the reader the question of whether all of these activities should be called journalism.)

The main differences between these journalistic ideal-types are indicated in Figure 2. It will be clear that the new information services require mostly 'new' journalists (or information brokers), while the classical media seek 'old' journalists. As we have said, these are ideal-types; all sorts of mixtures are possible.

We can see, therefore, that as the media sector segments, the integrating, centripetal task gains in importance as well. There will be employment for journalists in both fields in the future. The difference is that the first task will expand while the second will shrink, and thus
journalistic intervention will be threatened, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

What will happen to classical journalism? In a society held together less by geographical and physical relationships than by medial and symbolic links, the good journalist functions as a conductor of social debate and a broker of social consensus. Peters’ (1993: 550) thesis that — referring to Bentham and Mill — the press functions as the ‘social superego’ and the ‘moral regulator’ for the coordination of society contains more truth then ever before. In the new surfeit of information, the traditional task of journalism will evolve from sending messages to offering orientation to the citizen and the emphasis will shift from ‘content’ to ‘context’. We have already suggested that the emphasis in journalistic intervention will shift from ‘getting’ information to ‘bringing’ information (Bardoel, 1989: 49). Within the profession itself, however, the emphasis is still very much on collecting information (the traditional ‘Tintin romanticism’ in journalism) and less on directing the social flow of information and public debate. More than ever, the task of journalism will lie in filtering relevant issues from an increasing supply of information in a crowded public domain and its fragmented segments. Journalism evolves from the provision of facts to the provision of meaning. In the new ocean of information, ‘navigation’ is desperately needed. Information in itself is less important than information shared with others. Communication rather than information becomes the key word, and journalists have a long tradition in bringing minds together. In fulfilling this function the — higher educated — public expects the journalist to put aside all traces of old-fashioned paternalism.

At the same time, it should be noted that journalism does not seem adequately equipped to deal with this new task. Blumler (1992: 104) has said: ‘A threading suture of these analyses is that a weakened political
sphere confers on journalism functions and responsibilities that it is at best half-equipped to assume: agenda definition, interest aggregation, civic correlation, and sense-making. The recent increase in news 'hypes' in the Netherlands and elsewhere — as a result of the speeding up, competition and concentration in the dissemination of news — shows that journalistic ethics and practice vis-a-vis its role in public communication are lagging behind. The new challenges require responsibilities beyond traditional journalism.

On the other hand, the new media offer scope for 'instrumental journalism', as I have called the work in the new information services. As yet there are no clear professional profiles or training requirements in this field. The new information broker appears to be an unspecialized Jack-or-Jane-of-all-trades. The emphasis will be, for the time being, on exploring and developing new techniques in the direction of meaningful and profitable exploitation by information services (product development). A knowledge of the technology, of layout (computer graphics) and of the compact, brief and sequential presentation of information via menus and trees, is essential. Of course, basic journalistic skills remain important. Moreover, information and database management — skills thus far mostly found among documentation professionals — will gain in importance, while knowledge of and orientation towards target groups are basic conditions. Indeed, the individual user pays the piper and calls the tune, thanks to direct feedback via interactive techniques and paying per unit used. Journalism and marketing will have more to do with each other than many an old press dog would wish.

A number of these changes will have repercussions for journalism in general. Digital techniques join previously separate flows of information in networks and increase the options for users. The importance of journalistic distinction, the recognizable surplus value of journalism vis-a-vis the products of documentation professionals (such as documentalists) and publicity professionals (such as PR agents) is increasing, not in the last instance because journalistic information has its price.

Moreover, the journalist's work will be increasingly less bound to specific media. 'Single source, multiple media' is a term often heard in this connection. This means that journalists will find themselves more frequently on publishing desks, together with layout and marketing staff, and that they will work individually and from a distance as modern teleworkers. This threatens the collective culture of the editorial desk, always an important factor in and guarantee for the transfer of professional skills and values. The threat will increase as the different provisions that have always served to protect editorial space against
commercial and political interests, come under pressure. Public broadcasting is in deep water here, both as a matter of principle (legitimation) and of practice (finance). The scope of responsible journalism — in practice especially the press — in the market sector, is increasingly dependent on a decreasing number of owners. There is a risk that the 'enlightened' media owner of yesteryear, with their understanding of journalism's specific position, will be replaced by owners with an eye to 'return on investment' only. The risk increases as new players flow in from 'outside' as a result of the convergence of media and telecommunication, but by definition lacking all affinity with media culture. In that light, it may be necessary to create new guarantees or to develop new media ethics (Dennis, 1994; Harwood Group, 1995). It goes without saying that training and education should play an important role here.

At the end of the 20th century, journalism must once again seek its place in a changing society. A society that is secular, open, more dependent on media, transnational and whose members are relatively well educated. This implies that the profession can be bypassed more easily, but it makes journalism more valuable at the same time. The concerns outlined in the introduction are legitimate. There is ever more direct, unmediated television reporting — both worldwide and local. There are ever more interactive communication media. The social dissemination of information is increasingly individual and it is increasingly difficult to organize getting together and debate. 'Journalism' — if it ever existed as such — is falling apart. On the one hand, there is a need for information brokers, on the other, for directors and conductors of the public debate.

The function of classical journalism will probably shift to the latter position, also because the profession is one of the last strongholds of generalism in an increasingly specialized and fragmented society (Bardoel, 1988: 157). Greater individual freedom for citizens produces, more than ever, the need for common orientation. This might be the most important mission for journalists in the future — a mission that calls for responsibilities and skills beyond the present journalistic practice.

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