

## NATIONAL MEDIA IN THE NEW INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

This is not going to be a discussion of global television, CNN, or the cause and effect of fax machines on the spread of information in societies with controlled media. Those phenomena, whether overstated or not, have probably run their course of useful discussion.

Nor am I prepared to speak with any great certainty about where Information Technology Development is likely to take all of us. It is an obvious proposition that we are in a transitional phase, heading down a number of diverging roads, many of which look like dead ends or detours.

I would rather talk about the intersection of media, technology and governance and the dilemmas that are currently foreseeable.

Let me begin by laying out current national media reality. None of this will surprise you very much, but we need a starting point.

1. The traditional media economic paradigm is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The strategy of assembling a mass audience with its inherent mass marketing weight to fund large integrated media organizations has become a suspect proposition.

Those audiences are fragmenting and reconstituting themselves at an astonishing rate and as Life magazine discovered in the early 1960s, there are much more efficient ways to reach subsets of those audiences.

Audiences are stratifying along new lines that sometimes reflect socio-economic cleavages but that now, increasingly, reflect information absorption skills and education levels. The traditional information audience – always a minority in Canada – is increasingly using non-traditional sourcing.

Most national news organizations have had to enter into joint ventures, reconfigure foreign bureaus to cut costs and alter their news judgement model to try to attract non-traditional audience. They've been forced into those changes despite the advent of consistently more cost effective news gathering and distribution technology.

Though there has always been an economic imperative in media organizations, they are now almost wholly consumer driven, with ensuing consequences to professional standards for news judgment, selection, and editing.