

I guess this is a long way of getting to the fairly simple points I wanted to make.

Digitization, direct broadcast, distribution convergence will all have profound impact on the way people gather information, distribute information and consume information. They will undeniably increase choice for the consumer ( to the point of paralysis for most)and probably end centrally organized, proprietary journalism as we know it.

The practise of reporting will change beyond recognition – melding picture,sound and written word through integrated,digitized multi-media delivery. The news gatherer or reporter will use digitized technology that will free him or her of technical encumbrance, of tied linkage to points of transmission, and of the interference by authority with the means of transmission in an attempt to influence or block.

The privileged protection of journalist as quasi-certified professional will be eroded and may disappear altogether as anyone with the technical skill set will be able to assemble and transmit journalism from virtually anywhere.

The multiplicity of channels, modes of transmission and most importantly, the internet and its successors, will afford to virtually anyone a distribution outlet – ultimately as simple as downloading to an individual user's PC.. That will end the other half of the journalist's protection – the implied authority and conferred credibility of the standalone organization for whom the journalist works. The networks' primary reason for being – their distributional advantage - will have disappeared.

In fact as we have begun to see in specialty networks, there is the clear prospect of closed-loop networks – information gathering and distribution systems organized by interest groups, religious groups or market affinity groups who will employ their own reporters, distribute their own material and incur very little cost doing it. All will use the same multimedia conventions and forms – they will be virtually indistinguishable.

The ease with which image and sound can be manipulated could lead to some wretched excess without journalistic standards to be enforced by journalistic institutions in even the limited way they are now. Separating real and virtual reality will become a technical impossibility, opening up the possibility of real abuse.

Pessimists would say that among those who consume journalism, there will be terrible confusion about credentials, credibility, authority, and truth.Optimists will call it the ultimate pluralization and democratization (if that is actually a meaningful concept in this context) of information.

This is not really very new thinking.