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INTRODUCTION

In the years since the first edition of *Understanding Journalism* was published in 2002, the emergence of social media and mobile media has transformed the way millions of people communicate. Worldwide, SMS is used five times more than any other means of data communication – including telephone. These changes also raise important questions about the definition of journalism and its role in society. The emergence of user-generated content, distributed through social networks such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, challenges journalism practices that have been largely unchanged for decades. As Clay Shirky wrote in *Here Comes Everybody*:

Television and radio changed the landscape in which the newspaper operated, but even then printed news had a monopoly on the written word – until the Web. The Web didn't introduce a new competitor into the old ecosystem ... the Web created a new ecosystem. (Shirky, 2008: 60)

There is no doubt that the Internet has transformed the way people access information. Search engine algorithms steer individual consumers through a mass of content so great that no individual will find and consume it all. Journalists need research systems to locate and evaluate the best secondary sources for their work.

The new era fundamentally shifts the journalist's relationship with the audience, who is now part of the process. User-generated content is both a source for professional journalists and a direct competitor for the interest of the audience. In this environment power resides in the individual's reputation and an ability to consistently draw an audience, rather than in privileged ownership of means of production.

Those in the pre-professional stage of their education need to think through new paradigms and graduates must be skilled in cross-platform delivery. This moves or eliminates the boundaries between communication and design, music and media production. Journalists must be visually literate and understand information design and media production.

The technical mastery required to negotiate the new environment continues to evolve and change at such a rate that books can't keep up but it is a mistake to focus on technical possibilities alone. With so many voices and so few louder than the rest, there is a renewed urgency for journalists to focus on the *writing* aspect of their craft. In this era of a multiplicity of voices, when *reputation* defines influence, it is more

important than ever than journalists are able to write eloquently and persuasively. It is a return to a view of communication that pre-dates the idea of an objective truth. As Thomas Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* in the seventeenth century:

When we believe any saying, whatsoever it be, to be true, from arguments taken, not from the thing itself, or from the principles of natural reason, but from the authority and good opinion we have of him that hath said it; then is the speaker, or person we believe in, or trust in, and whose word we take, the object of our faith; and the honour done in believing is done to him only.

Without the power to impose a particular view of the truth, the writer must return to persuading the audience through reasoned argument and deft use of language. The second edition of *Understanding Journalism* includes a renewed focus on professional writing and editing across a variety of genres from the most abbreviated forms of communication, such as Twitter and SMS, to longer formats such as magazine articles. The second core focus is the development of a clearly defined ethical framework. A reasoned individual framework for evaluating information and acting ethically is more important than ever before because it is increasingly difficult to codify practice. The importance of mindful research and the development of processes for evaluating the appropriateness of sources are equally important.

The role of the journalist in society has changed too. For almost 200 years, newspapers were the dominant medium by which society 'spoke to itself'. The newspaper seemed to be a ubiquitous and fixed part of the communication landscape and those who prepared the news were seen as similarly integral. Access to self-publishing technology changed that irrevocably.

The pattern here is simple – what seems like a fixed and abiding category like journalist turns out to be tied to an accidental scarcity created by the expense of publishing apparatus. Sometimes this scarcity is decades old (as with photographers) or even centuries old (as with journalists), but that doesn't stop it from being accidental, and when that scarcity gets undone, the seemingly stable categories turn out to be unsupportable. This is not to say that professional journalists and photographers do not exist, but it does mean that the primary distinction between the two groups is gone. What once was a chasm has now become a mere slope. (Shirky, 2008: 76)

The loss of exclusive access to the means of production and the advertising revenue stream attached to it has threatened the viability mainstream news media as never before. In Australia, the newspaper industry changed as it never has before.

In June 2012, Fairfax Media announced it would shed 1900 jobs, convert its broadsheet papers to tabloid and move to being a 'digital first' news provider. The first jobs lost were primarily for printers and sub-editors as production services were aggregated and in some cases moved off-shore.

Days later, News Limited announced that it would shrink its divisions in eastern Australia from 19 to five as part of a restructure that will 'centralize' operations in each state and cause large job losses.

'This single-newsroom concept will transform our existing metro newsrooms. ... It doesn't mean that everyone will physically move to a single location. But it does mean that we will manage our editorial operation in each state as a single news network,' said Chief Executive Kim Williams at the time.

A downside of the single-newsroom is that it inevitably leads to aggregation of content. And greater aggregation of news content will, over time, hurt the quality of journalism as the editing and fact-checking takes place far from the community the news is produced.

There is already a centralized sub-editing facility at News Limited's Sydney headquarters, called News Central. The *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, always separate mastheads, will be merged into a single state-focused offering.

Consumers can expect more generalized news coverage, because there are fewer reporters on the ground in the communities. With these changes, it's most likely that the journalistic workforce will be younger, with less experience. That might be expected to have a negative impact on quality. It's very much a 'wrong but not for long' approach.

In sub-editing, what we're seeing across the sector is the end of a move that began some years ago to change the role of a sub-editor from someone who actually edits and improves work to someone who's a process worker, who really just formats and processes copy in a pre-designed template. The level of expertise that used to be applied as quality control – improving the work of reporters – has gone from most newsrooms.

In September 2012, it was announced that Australian Consolidated Press, publishers of iconic Australian magazines, had been sold to the German Bauer group, which has a number of global mastheads, with country-specific editions. While Bauer has been praised for allowing each version of a masthead to operate independently, in other Bauer publications there is regular sharing of journalistic content. For example, the magazine article discussed in Chapter 10 was published first in Australia by Emap (owned by Bauer). The camera-ready pages were then on-sold to the same publication in Malaysia and then Singapore. With space for feature length articles severely restricted in many magazines to one or two articles, this on-selling reduces the opportunities for feature writers.

For mainstream media around the world, the pressures created by the rise of self-publishing are exacerbated by a decline in public confidence in journalism as a source of truth.

Today's (mostly) tertiary-educated journalists are more likely to be denigrated as 'cappuccino sippers' of the middle class, promulgating a politically correct point of view remote from that of their audience. Modern Western journalists are criticized as peddlers of a commodity called 'information' that is marketed to commercial advantage, without reference to the individual's 'own reason, sensitivity and commitment' (McManus, 1994: 203). Underwood (1993) and Nichol and McChesney

(2008) support the view that as newsgathering became more explicitly directed by market concerns, the focus of journalism became softer and real political coverage suffered. Unfortunately, this did not stem the outward tide in readership and market share:

The issues that News workers are facing today stem directly from the changes that have occurred in the real age of mass media – that is, from the time when the contours of the 20th century mediascape were formed: the age of radio, television and the mass circulation modern newspaper. It was also in this period that the fourth estate became the dominant way of thinking about the news media even though the term itself comes from the 18th century. (Nichol and McChesney, 2008: 69)

Journalism experienced a fundamental shift in the 1970s, with the emphasis on market-driven journalism, where return to shareholders became a guiding priority. That meant news organizations were weakened when the onslaught of self-publishing came.

Even before that decline, newspaper owners were choosing short-term profits over long-term viability. ... Corporate newspaper owners abandoned any responsibility to maintain the franchise. When the Internet came along, newspapers were already heading due south. Even then journalism suffered from a generally agreed-upon professional code that relied far too heavily on official sources to set the news agenda and decide the range of debate in our political culture. That weakness of journalism has been magnified in the era of corporate control. (Nichols and McChesney, 2011)

Journalism as we know it today has been evolving continuously, sometimes as a result of developing technology, sometimes as a reflection of changes in society. For example, the invention of telegraph technology changed the language of journalism. Instead of reports taking a form more like a letter from a correspondent, pay-per-word telegraph technology deemed that reporters 'stick to the facts' and deliver them in the most economical language possible. When journalism was produced by hot-metal linotype, the technology dictated that all stories could be cut from the end up because the technology did not allow for last-minute cuts within sentences. Today, digital technologies affect the way that journalism is presented to audiences and new forms of journalism are emerging. In some ways, the new forms draw on old techniques, for example, there are parallels between telegraphic writing and writing for Twitter.

The expanding uses of increasingly advanced media technology have fundamentally changed media *content* as well as its production. Some argue this has led to a victory of style over substance (Grattan, 1998). For news providers seeking to win back audiences drawn to niche magazines, technological advances have made it easier for daily publications to adopt the presentation of less frequent publications. Over

time, media presentation techniques, which began as artists' illustrations, or humble graphics on the screen behind a news reader, have been transformed into seamless 're-enactments', hidden camera scoops, and digitally altered photographs, sounds and television images purporting to represent 'truth'. Marshall and Kingsbury found that media techniques also profoundly affect content:

In terms of production of media content, as distinct from the technology itself, the activities of the American Cable News Network (CNN) have been steadily transforming ideas of what news can and should be. ... Not least there was the generation of the 'mega' event in which the media's reporting of its own activities is virtually as important as the news itself. (Marshall and Kingsbury, 1996: 87)

JOURNALISTS AND THEIR AUDIENCES

The all-important mass audience was once considered to be homogeneous. A reporter could simply be instructed to 'write for Mrs Smith down the street'. Residents of today's streets are known to be diverse in their culture, interests and values. As journalists in the 1970s, we saw our job as telling the people 'the facts' about what they needed to know. We felt confident that we knew what that was because the readers were exactly like us. We did not consider our news sense to be subjective, just 'professional'. As Australian journalist and author Craig McGregor recalled in *Soundtrack for the Eighties*:

When I was a cadet reporter on the *Sydney Morning Herald*, we were lectured on the virtues of objectivity, detachment and lack of bias (unless you were writing about a subject in which your proprietor was involved, in which case you were expected to show a certain pragmatic common sense). (McGregor, 1983: 135)

The prioritization of news values from industrialization to near the end of the twentieth century were very directly tied to the demographic profile of the target audience. These profiles were on-sold to advertisers as likely consumers of their goods and services. The more 'eyeballs' you could sell to an advertisers, the more you could charge. Lord Northcliffe, founder of the popular press in the UK, described huge circulations as 'having the whip hand over advertisers' and it was a model that largely worked until social media fractured audiences into constantly changing groupings. The definition of news and the role of journalism have always been much more complex activities than simply providing 'a window on the world' because 'the view through the window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear' (Koch, 1990: 20). It was once said that the role of journalism is to 'comfort the afflicted and

afflict the comfortable', but the trend towards market-driven journalism means that the perceived interests of the audience and the advertisers take priority. In an online article in *The Nation*, Nichols and McChesney (2011) described the effect on American journalism:

The news media blew the coverage of the Iraq invasion, spoon-feeding us lies masquerading as fact-checked verities. They missed the past decade of corporate scandals. They cheered on the housing bubble and genuflected before the financial sector (and Gilded Age levels of wealth and inequality) as it blasted debt and speculation far beyond what the real economy could sustain. Today they do almost no investigation into where the trillions of public dollars being spent by the Federal Reserve and Treasury are going but spare not a moment to update us on the 'Otomom'. They trade in trivia and reduce everything to spin, even matters of life and death.

Critics such as Hall (1992) and Chomsky and Herman (1988) argued that twentieth-century media aimed at 'production of consent' not 'reflection of consensus'. According to this view, the media plays a crucial role, for example, in whether industrial action is represented as a defence of workers' rights or as a minority group holding the public to ransom. The position from which the journalist observes the 'facts' unfold determines the presentation of the 'truth'. This truth is, in turn, a calculated reinforcement of the position thought to be held by the audience. The effect is that stories are often written from only one, often narrow, point of view. Alternative outlooks are ignored or dismissed. Those who challenge or confront the preferred image of society are marginalized or not heard. Some media critics see these failings as the reasons for the mainstream media's decline:

Some observers, confident of the blessings of technology, refused to shed any tears for the traditional giants of journalism on the grounds that their troubles are of their own making and of little consequence to the general welfare. In this view, regardless of whether newspapers successfully adapt to the Internet, new and better sources of news will continue developing online, and they will fill whatever the week newspapers leave. Others are so angry at the mainstream media – the reviled MSM – that they see the economic misery of the press as a deserved comeuppance. (Starr, 2009: 19)

But Starr argues that social media are no substitute for mainstream journalism. The profusion of opinion online, but there is little fact-based reporting and even less reporting that subject to any rigorous fact-checking or editorial scrutiny. He also argues that apart from news aggregators such as Google News – which link to articles from publications that still derive most of their revenue from print – the most successful news sites are oriented to specialized audiences. Hedges (2011) supports this gloomy view:

The world will not be a better place when bees in fact-based news organisations die. We will be propelled into a culture where facts and opinions will be interchangeable, where lives will become true, and where fantasy will be peddled as news. I will lament the loss of traditional news. It will unmoor us from reality. The tragedy is that the moral void of the news business contributed as much to its own annihilation as the proto-fascists who feed on its carcass. (Hedges, 2011: 213)

Others take a much more positive view of the impact of Internet-based communication in all its forms. Deitz (2010) sees much to anticipate as social media becomes ubiquitous in the communication landscape and a wider range of media platforms are used to identify and disseminate news:

People of all ages are getting news: it's just not the news as we think we know it. The contemporary media scape has been referred to as 'networked journalism' – and networked practice of producing, editing, forwarding, sharing and debasing – and media were intermediation, mediamorphosis and hybridisation. The now outmoded concepts of Web 2.0, often simply referred to as social media – Facebook and others, and photo sharing site Flickr – showcases possibilities of mass participation in collaborative work.

These entities, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, are media platforms. They are not replacing journalism or journalists, but through their very existence are questioning the conventions of traditional news and current affairs, including how such conventions may constrain what and who is regarded as newsworthy. (Deitz, 2010: 7)

So the challenge for modern journalists is to find a way to negotiate the often-competing professional, commercial and ethical considerations involved in finding and presenting news, while adhering to the responsibility of journalism as an important role in society. The work of journalists has never been more important – as a means of guiding citizens through the clamour of communication to the information they need to know. Andrew Keen (2007) laments the relegation of the professional as a reliable source:

Before the Web 2.0, our collective intellectual history has been one driven by the careful aggregation of truth – through professionally edited books and reference materials, newspapers, radio and television. But as all information becomes digitalised and democratised, and is made universally and permanently available, the media of record becomes an Internet on which misinformation never goes away. As a result, our banks have collected information becomes infected by mistakes and fraud blogs are connected through a single link or series of links, to countless other blogs, and MySpace pages are connected to countless other MySpace pages which link to countless YouTube

videos, Wikipedia entries, and websites with various origins and purposes. It's impossible to stop the spread of misinformation, let alone identify its source. Future readers often inherit and repeat this misinformation, compounding the problem, creating a collective memory that is deeply flawed. (Keen, 2007: 75)

JOURNALISTS AND SOCIETY

Splichal and Sparks (1994) conducted a study of first-year journalism students from 22 countries. They sought to identify professional attitudes about the power and responsibility of journalism in society among those undertaking journalism education. Splichal and Sparks concluded that journalism occupied a difficult position when it came to protecting freedom and avoiding marginalization of the media's power for good.

The dilemma for journalism is that it is an occupation whose proper discharge is fundamental to a theory of democracy and that must, therefore, at one and the same time, avoid the dangers of elitism inherent in professionalization and of amateurism inherent in the free press. It must avoid the dependent relation upon established power that follows from the exercise of self-regulation while at the same time avoiding the marginalization that can follow complete deregulation. (Splichal and Sparks, 1994: 86)

Another outcome of the Splichal and Sparks study was further evidence of the extent to which journalism is a cultural practice. What may appear to be the internationally dominant perception of journalists' goals is not always the dominant opinion or ethical standard within particular countries (Splichal and Sparks, 1994: 167). The culture of the newsroom is every bit as influential on the work of journalists as the broader social culture. In fact, the 'reality' of any journalist's working life is most likely to be shaped by the images held by the individual and the organizations for which he or she works. On an individual level, the role and image of the journalist is affected by the details of their own experience – their training, the size, type and culture of organization(s) worked for, editorial pressures and personal idiosyncrasies.

Journalists' view of themselves, as disseminators, interpreters, investigators or adversaries, depends on 'the society they live in, the image of the press in general, and the image of the organization in which they work. (Gaunt, 1990: 142)

A survey in 2000, by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and *Columbia Journalism Review*, reinforces this view. The study, which surveyed almost 300 journalists in the United States, found that four out of 10 journalists purposely avoid or soften stories to preserve the interests of their news organization (Associated Press, 2000). The poll found that most journalists blamed market pressure for the tendency to steer clear of stories considered too complicated or too boring. About

one-third of the journalists surveyed conceded that they avoided stories that might harm the financial interests of the news organization or embarrass advertisers, but few said such censorship was common. Hall (1992) and others argue that while journalists always give some 'spin', conscious or otherwise, to the news of the day, they always retain some control in this process. Their activities are not determined by hegemonic influences but are a reflection of the way they respond to often-competing commercial, professional and ethical pressures of professional practice.

One way in which the 'realities' of journalism impact on the daily lives of journalists is in their ability to give the degree of attention to their reporting that they professionally consider necessary. The reality is that smaller staffs and earlier production deadlines mean that journalists are less independent in their research than ever before. Newsroom influences, such as deadlines, space and staffing, place heavy constraints on those journalists who are responsible for news selection. As a result, journalists tend to take the line of least resistance and select those news items that are the easiest to find and edit. Underwood describes the temptations:

By tradition, albeit a shaky one, daily newspapers do much of the work extracting the information on which our Information Age depends – at least the information that is hard to extract. At the same time, legions of public relations agents and corporate and government image-makers are standing by, eager to be the brokers of information that is easy to gather. (Underwood, 1993: 147)

The dual rhetorics of commercial imperative and journalistic idealism can combine to support a culture of rationalization, which ultimately 'exonerates' journalists who succumb to the market. For example, a metropolitan TV news editor who tailors the evening bulletin to fit a pattern of 'hard' and 'soft' news that has been unchanged for 30 years, hotly denies that the news is 'constructed' or manipulated to reflect a certain worldview. But he is happy to acknowledge his preoccupation with the audience's 'comfort zone'. 'You don't want to be putting the viewers off their dinners', he tells young journalists. Altschull (1984) describes how some journalists reconcile the contrast between what they might do and what they most often do by assigning the first with the romantic qualities of an heroic but impossible dream. He says that while it is possible for journalism to induce positive changes in society, political and economic realities severely circumscribe the potential of journalists to do so.

Gaunt (1990) also ponders the dilemma facing journalists who aspire to live up to the definition of journalism as 'not just another business' (Schultz, 1994). Bacon agrees that it is increasingly harder for journalists to reconcile their professional ideologies with the disenchantment of increasingly sophisticated audiences. She found that journalists are openly troubled about many aspects of journalism:

Journalists constantly talk about which stories get a run and which do not; or what the likely impact of a new owner or editor is likely to be. They question the way news agendas are influenced by marketing research. (Bacon, 1999: 90)

This ongoing conversation among media practitioners may be described as ‘shop talk’ – a form of reflection on practice. This book argues that every individual journalist at some point chooses the words they use to describe the world. Each is empowered to be part of the problem or part of the solution. Each has the power to resist the ‘easy’ story that is fed to them by obliging media relations personnel. Each has the power to choose a different interviewee, to seek another point of view before writing. Each has the power to choose their own words to describe events, rather than duplicate what is provided to them in a media release. Today’s journalists, either with their editors or despite them, must find ways to fit challenging ideas into conservative news agendas. The same newsroom culture that can limit the potential of journalism can work to a journalist’s advantage. The crucial factors are determination, a sound understanding of the organization’s news values, and a willingness to accept responsibility for the kind of journalism you write, and therefore the kind of journalist you are.

NEGOTIATING THE CHALLENGES

Sometimes beginners think that knowing *how* to write journalism is the same as being *able* to do it. In truth, the second is the most difficult of the two because it requires applying conceptual knowledge and understanding to new and unfamiliar situations. This book provides a methodology to guide beginning practitioners through the process required to produce thoughtful, quality journalism that is also attractive in the marketplace. This text is aimed at students of journalism, but is equally relevant to those who have come to journalism without formal training. For those making the transition from students of journalism to active practitioners, information learned in lectures can be hard to put into action under the pressure of new and exacting circumstances. For those who are ‘learning journalism’ in the workplace, the question ‘Where to begin?’ is equally crucial whether tracking down an interviewee or undertaking a report based on archive files.

The book’s premise is that journalism practice consists of a series of ill-structured problems that are resolved by a series of decisions. Modern journalists resolve these problems in a context where ‘every decision is at once an ethical decision, a professional decision and a commercial decision’ (Sheridan Burns, 1996a). The book contends that while the answers a journalist reaches will depend on contextual factors, the questions he or she asks are the same around the globe. In 2000, the author tested this hypothesis at a workshop of journalism educators from nine countries. Some of these countries were poor or developing, others were rich developed nations. Some of the countries were communist, some capitalist. As the workshop progressed, it quickly became apparent that all the journalists were using the same framework to take on the tasks assigned to them. This book therefore focuses on what Schön (1983) called ‘the conversations we have with ourselves’ – the processes used by journalists to define, identify, evaluate and create journalism.

This book sets out to show that no matter how much natural talent as a writer you bring to it, journalism is not an organic or intrinsic practice but an approach to writing that can be taken apart and understood. The answers journalists find to their questions may depend on the sensitivities of the individuals, and the rhythm of the sentences may owe much to an intrinsic affinity with words; the questions the best journalists ask themselves and those asked by the least talented are the same. The answers will differ because each journalist's thinking processes and values are unique. This book offers questions to guide the way to reliable, consistent decisions.

The central proposition is that a journalist who is conscious of and understands the active decisions that make up daily practice is best prepared to negotiate the challenges involved.

The second major proposition in this book is that every journalist has some power to practise responsibly, thoughtfully and effectively. The power is literally within the individual and is demonstrated with every decision he or she makes about what news is, what questions to ask, what to include and omit, and so on. Every one of these decisions has professional, commercial and ethical dimensions that must be brought into balance in the context of the story. This applies to everything a journalist writes, no matter how 'small'. For example, a fair reported in the local newspaper responsibly and with flair can do real good in a small community. In the same way, a metropolitan daily's thoughtless wording from a police brief about a road death in a suburb of the city may cause lasting harm to those affected. It is not the owner of the news medium who has that power, however powerless an individual journalist feels in the newsroom. It is a complicated business and individual journalists are expected to bring many qualities to their decision making.

The third proposition is that every journalist should acknowledge and accept the responsibility that comes with the media's potential to affect people's lives. Professional integrity is not something you have when you are feeling a bit down at the end of a long week. It is a state of mindfulness that you bring to everything you write, no matter how humble the topic.

As a journalist, you face the unknown every day and make the best of it. The person who writes the story helps set the agenda. If this is done thoughtfully, mindful of the values brought to decision making and aware of the potential consequences of those decisions, then ethical journalism is more than feasible – it is a reasonable expectation. Put simply, given the power that you have to do good or harm by virtue of the decisions you make, under pressure each day, the least you can do is think about it. That is not the same thing as relinquishing control to the media consumer, it is reasserting your professional status. Hartley criticized journalism education as 'aspiring to produce architects while actually turning out real estate salesman' (Hartley, 1996: 35). In this statement he makes a distinction between the architect, who works in the best interest of the client, and the real estate agent, whose only priority is making a sale.

For some journalists, the concepts in this book may represent a writing-down of what is simply 'common sense'. The trouble with common sense, of course, is that it is not common to you until someone tells you. Everyday journalism consists of a series

of decisions. These include decisions about what constitutes news; decisions about the nature and scope of the public interest; decisions about the accuracy of information and the reliability of sources; decisions about the ethical considerations applicable to the situation; and decisions about the best way to organize information into news. This text offers a process for decision making that centres on developing skills in critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection has always been a feature of the work of a professional journalist:

Critical self-reflection is a hallmark of good professional practice. When other groups, such as accountants or doctors, engage in debate about their professions, it is part of their practice, not a remote and separate intellectual discussion. ... Most journalists don't deny the power that the media has to define the 'taken-for-granted-world'. Instead they blend the development of professional writing skills with the ability to critically reflect on what they do and why. (Sheridan Burns, 1999: 4)

This book presents journalistic tasks, strips back the layers of the tasks and identifies and considers strategies for selecting and implementing resolutions. Then it reflects critically on the appropriateness of those choices. This approach integrates media, communication and cultural theory with the conscious development of writing skills. The book is not primarily a critique of media practices, but offers a means by which to negotiate the challenges.

In the rough-and-tumble of old-style learning 'on the job', if you made a mistake you were called to account for it, usually in no uncertain terms. In the newsrooms where I learned the craft, the only sin that was completely unforgivable was to not know *why* something had been done a certain way. Making mistakes was inevitable, but there was no excuse for a blank stare when asked 'Why?' If you could articulate the factors you prioritized, you were still wrong but at least you were 'being professional' in your approach to your work.

This book investigates the way that journalists work through consideration of news events commonly reported around the world. It reveals that while the context in which journalism is produced is defined by the culture of the society, the questions faced in making a journalistic decision are the same. For example, while reporting the death of a prominent individual is likely to have global news value, how that death is reported is a direct reflection of the society's attitudes about the privacy of public figures, community standards about reporting grief and any restrictions imposed by the society's laws.

You will notice that the book resists categorizing news as 'hard' or 'soft' and does not deal separately with, for example, sports stories or community news. This book does not set out to describe 'how to', but emphasizes the thinking processes involved in journalism. It may be argued that while a court story may illustrate different priorities to community news, the thinking processes used are the same. The book does not provide exemplars because 'best practice' is defined by the professional, social

and cultural context in which the story is written. This complex context is constantly changing and evolving. Chapters 9 and 10 consider the editing process and so include first and final drafts of stories, but these are not intended to be definitive.

The first part of the book, 'From Knowing How to Being Able', considers how professional journalists develop their skills and understanding.

- Chapter 2 considers who can claim the title of journalist in an era of multiple journalism and platforms. It argues that the changing and changeable nature of media practices is such that it makes no sense to teach it as a set of skills because the required skills are evolving all the time. It is through identifying and internalizing the underlying processes used in decision making that professional knowledge is realized in action.
- Chapter 3 explores the methodology underlying professional practice as a process of critical reflection, which Schön (1983), Adam (1993), Meadows (1997) and others have identified as central to media's professional role in society. The chapter explores professional ethics and provides a structure by which to make explicit what is implicit in the professional decision making and to consider these factors in relation to the media's ethical, professional and commercial obligations. Instead of relying on theoretical knowledge to explain everything, the reflective practitioner is constantly testing ideas against practical experience. Instead of making problems fit existing categories, the reflective practitioner constructs the categories that will enable him or her to find a suitable response.

The second part of the book, 'Journalism in Action', is specifically concerned with fundamental journalistic activities – identifying potential news; evaluating information and the reliability of sources; writing news; editing news for an audience; and the role of journalism in society. It uses working examples commonly experienced by journalists around the world.

- Chapter 4 explores the nature of news and the factors influencing the exercise of news judgement, particularly the role of the audience. It provides a methodology for identifying news and critically reflecting on processes through the consideration of a specified journalism task.
- Chapter 5 focuses on the way that journalists exercise power in choosing the information that will be presented as news. It offers a methodology for reliable ethical decision making in any circumstances.
- Chapter 6 looks at the ways that journalists source news and the challenges faced in judging the veracity and usefulness of information provided by a range of secondary sources, including those found on social media sites.
- Chapter 7 considers the processes used by journalists to gather information from human sources, focusing on the issues inherent in reporting on grief.

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- Chapter 8 explores the processes used in transforming 'raw material' into journalism, through the creation of a piece of journalism and critical reflection on the processes underlying the inclusion and omission of information.
- Chapter 9 considers the editing process as applied to news. It also provides a methodology by which readers can strip their own writing back to its parts and critically reflect on the decisions underlying style, tone and content.
- Chapter 10 looks at a more complex editing process, as the final form of a news feature is negotiated between the writer and the commissioning editor.

As with any text, this book describes decision making in journalism in its own context. That the questions posed in this book might give rise to other questions not raised here is further evidence of 'the conversations we have with ourselves' in action. When you finish reading this book, you will have already made hundreds of professional journalistic decisions. If the book has done its job, you should also be confident you know how you made those decisions and the values that you brought to bear. This combination of active decision making and critical reflection is the most important thing a journalist needs. Since you will also know how to make a sound ethical decision in any circumstances, anything is possible.