Living and Working with Social Media: A media organisation perspective[1]

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Abstract

The advent of social media hails a new era for journalism, impacting on how journalist do their work and how and what stories are told. This has resulted in journalists questioning their professional role in an information rich society and engaging in work that maintains their relevance in a space where many are vying to attract attention and shape opinion. Interaction between users and producers of news, made possible by these new digital platforms, is almost ubiquitous (Singer et al., 2011) and has also lead to a continuous news cycle where stories unfold in real time when not all germane information is known (Karlsson, 2011). In this study we explore journalists' and editors' perspectives of their changing media-scape and how they position themselves within this space. Existential phenomenology guided the analysis of in-depth interviews with 19 informants who form part of legacy news media. Findings support existing evidence of a tension between old world values and new world realities/technologies. Analysis points to the importance of these old world values and practices as news legacy media actors navigate a digitally enabled world. They speak to the continued relevance of journalistic values when active on digital platforms but may not fully recognise the potential influence of social media on their inference making and thus their representation of social reality. Additionally, in navigating a complex assemblage their activities involve moving between virtual and physical worlds, with backstage activities (gathering and processing information) involving online and off line work while frontstage activities including detailed stories delivered through traditional channels with the evolving story told online. Finally, legacy news media actors see their collective expertise as the bulwark to demarcate their space in an ever changing media-scape.

Introduction

Social media usage had increased dramatically in recent years with the level of use of social network sites having reached unparalleled scales (Burns and Highfield, 2012). Perrin (2015) reports that between 2005 and 2015 social media usage, among American adults, had increased nearly 10 fold. This usage has had a significant impact on patterns of doing work, engagement in social and political debate, information gathering and sharing and communicating with friends and family. Perrin (2015) notes that usage does not differ between gender and race but younger, higher income, and urbanites are leading the way on usage. As the diffusion of social media continues, the impact of this on how we seek, use and share information and thus its influence on social realities is of interest. Importantly,

the emergence of this media has had a significant impact on media organisations both in terms of their influence on social realities and the processes they apply to determining, developing and disseminating news. Indeed, Singer et al. (2011) suggests that the interaction between producers and users of news is now almost ubiquitous due to the emergence of digital platforms and social media. This paper considers the journalist's perspective on this change in terms of how they use social media and the norms and values they impose on their work when considering the development of a news story.

Prior to the dawn of social media many researchers argued that media organisations supported the enforcement of a dominant ideology by guiding and steering citizens on what was important, what actions to take and how they should view situations (Cook, 1998, Robinson,2007). Indeed, Park (1940) suggests that it is the role of media to orient society in the actual world and in media sociology content is assumed to represent people, events and ideas; "*implicitly true representation of social reality*" (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016:392). This suggestion is reflective of the important role they played in framing citizen discussion and the journalistic authority they held which allowed their interpretation of the event/story represent truthful, accurate, relevant and interesting accounts of the important matters of a society (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Robinson, 2007). These qualities have acted as the hallmark of what is perceived as good journalism, the norms of professionalism, and consequently allowed them to be viewed as an authoritative voice on the issues of importance within a society. At a more fundamental level, through the decisions on how to frame a story, media organisations had the power to influence social realities (Tuchman, 1978). In other words, the meaning and significance of an event can be shaped by the storyteller, which historically was media organisations. Equally what constitutes a story, the story selection, was influenced by the standards and processes of these organisations and professional journalists. Their expertise, they argue, afforded them the authority to determine the news agenda. However, a deficit, from a citizen perspective, in a media environment typified by scarcity (limited number of media organisations holding the key to unlocking stories), was the lack of transparency in the determination of what was relevant and appropriate to report and indeed limited opportunity to construct the story, present alternative perspectives (on what was newsworthy and interpretations of same) or communicate with the news creator (Goode, 2009; Hermida, et al. 2012). Thus it is unsurprising that citizens embraced new avenues to express their opinions.

With the advent of social media, the dynamic between media organisations and news consumers has shifted with the boundaries becoming blurred (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016). The development of platforms, such as Web 2.0, have allowed for sharing, on publicly accessible websites/social networks, content created by 'amateur journalists' (Kaplan and Haenlien, 2010). This has led to citizens turning

to social media for news and information (Barthel et al. 2015). Furthermore, it has opened up the possibility for citizens to move from passive consumers of news to active contributors of news (Hermida, et al. 2012). Thus consumers can act as the producer of news, communicate their context and, depending on audience interest, influence social realities. Importantly this media, and particularly how news consumers are using it, has led to a new era of communication for media organisations. Indeed, Hermida et al. (2012) suggest that how news is experienced has changed, where before the experience was individualistic, sharing is now central. This has led to greater influence of friends and family in determining what is deemed as newsworthy and social media users applying their own social filter to process news rather than relying on newspapers.

Media organizations have not ignored developments in the social media space and recognise that this platform has provided a voice for consumers of news. To maintain relevance in a changing news world these organisations have leveraged social media to reach and connect with audiences, and use a variety of tools for users to share and influence news content. Newsmaking processes within media organisations have adjusted to include social media in daily newsgathering and reporting activities, audience building, gauging social interest, generating advertising revenue and responding to old and new sources of competition (Pavlik, 2001; Singer et al., 2011; Hermida et al, 2012, Weiss, 2015). Thus, social media has now been integrated into journalistic workflow and is often used as a discovery mechanism. Use as a discovery mechanism can help identify scoops and leads but with this comes new challenges for the professional journalist, particularly with regard to verification of the credibility and truthfulness of information (Heravi and Harrower, 2016). Seeking to break news stories to very tight deadlines, to be first or close to first, competes with the need to verify content. Thus real-time assessment frameworks are being developed to pre-filter large volumes of social media and highlight popular breaking news. This can then help accelerate movement to the next stage involving journalists' verification of the story. These discovery mechanisms can also support the development of a story with the identification of story threads that provide for a deeper analysis of the issue (Middleton and Krivcovs, 2016). Social platforms have also supported a fundamental shift in media consumption rituals from being tied to points of the day (e.g. evening news) and forms (e.g. morning newspaper) towards continuous news, which can be consumed online and on the go. This has resulted in an increased pressure for timeliness and immediacy in reporting and communication.

Robinson (2007) noted that media organisations still hold with many of the norms and principles that have underpinned their professional identity, however she further highlights that doing this work was evolving. It is these very norms and principles that allow the professional to identify themselves as different to the citizen/amateur journalist (Ornebring, 2013) with the principles of authentic news and credibility key irrespective of the channels of communication. New digital platforms offer opportunity

to bolster this through greater transparency on the origins of the story and easy reader access to the data behind the story. Consequently, Robinson (2007) suggests that a new mission is emerging that transforms media organisations into news platforms where they "*provide a "switch" between individuals, the journalist and the news source*". Within this context, they share information and allow for citizen input and, according to Robinson, they now seek to give the news consumer a more personal and communal experience. Interestingly, Robinson concludes that this more open, transparent approach may lead to an erosion of journalistic authority. Hermida et al. (2012) share this view suggesting that authority is weakened as the 'what and when' the public need to know extends beyond the media organisation.

Citizen journalism has emerged due to this new information environment with ordinary citizens actively engaging in journalistic practices (Goode, 2009). Leveraging the digital environment as a platform to transition from solely being part of the audience to being a 'news producer' has resulted in an elevated role for the citizen journalist who is now well establish within the media landscape. Importantly the citizen journalist is characterised as unpaid, with no professional training (in reporting), using a more informal language (which lacks rigorous editing), being interactive and possibly focusing on hyper local or specialist (e.g. food or fashion) issues (Kaufhold et al. 2010). The citizen journalist, can be involved in practices of reporting new news through making sense of information and interpreting and rearticulating this to their readers. However, in addition to this Goode (2009) suggests that 'metajournalism' is an important part of what is evident within the citizen domain. The 'meta-journalist' filters and mediates stories to a wider audience. In this way they influence what is determined as significant within a society. Goode (2009:1291) concludes that citizen journalism "constitutes a complex and layered mix of *re*presentation, interpretation (and reinterpretation), translation and indeed *re*mediation". Within this process news and comments can become reshaped as they are shared and interpreted. Thus the professional journalist and media organisation news story may now represent raw material for their active audience in an evolving story (Goode, 2009).

Trust issues are significant to the journalist from the perspective of trusting and being trusted. This leads to clear distinction of the different types of sources on social media which include authority sources, the expert blogger and tweeters. Unsurprisingly, Heravi and Harrower, (2016) note that journalists tend to trust information more if linked to an organisation's or institution's website than a lay citizen. Furthermore, while the professional journalist identifies themselves with providing a public service as a "watchdog of powerful bodies/agencies" and alerting the public to malpractices through leveraging their independence, autonomy and objectivity, Holton et al. (2013) suggest that these are not the parameters upon which citizens define journalist public service. This presents an

interesting point of study as the impact of a disruptive technology on influential traditional institutions can be documented and discussed as it is experienced.

In this paper we are interested in the journalist's/editor's perspectives of a media ecosystem impacted by the disruptive nature of digital technology. In particular we are concerned with how they position themselves in a space where the traditional boundaries between the professional and the citizen are being redefined.

Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted to allow for a deep reflective insight on the matter under investigation. Analysis for this paper draws from data that formed part of a larger project exploring responses of a range stakeholders during a food crisis. This multi stakeholder (food industry, representative organisations, news media and food regulators) study explored the lived experiences of each cohort in their endeavour to communicate and manage a crisis from first indication of a potential risk to human health through to closing out the story/incident. Part of the conversations with media stakeholders involved social media. As the interest of this paper is on how legacy news media journalists' and editors' experience social media in their everyday work life, existential phenomenology guided the analysis. This offers an effective means of exploring topics on personal experience of a phenomenon and focuses on their interpretation of same (Thompson, et al., 1989). Thus interviews were guided by concepts of understanding the "life-world" of participants within a particular contextual setting. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews on the lived work experience of informants contained adaptable questions that considered, among other things, the participants' use of and experience with social media. Focusing on how they think, feel and act around a specific media story (context) provided the portal to allow respondents provide a detailed description of their experience as it is lived in their work lives. The context, through the provision of a hypothetical unfolding story around a food scare, provided the basis for an open conversation on respondent's experiences of creating and building news stories. With this approach, informants were able to provide in-depth accounts of their experiences while also allowing the researcher flexibility to probe emerging areas of interest (Smith, 1995). All interviews were conducted at the offices of the respondent, recorded and transcribed. Ethical approval was sought and got from the University Social Research Ethics Committee. Pseudonyms are used throughout the findings to ensure anonymity.

To ensure data quality, recruitment was based on clearly pre-defined parameters. Informants held decision making functions in the framing, crafting, and communication of news stories and were communicating news through at least one media channel (newspaper, radio, TV, online). The study included journalists (including presenters) and editors (including producers) from the main media

outlets across the Island of Ireland. This provided the breath in responses associated with the principle and polices, challenges and barriers, and opportunities that guide and shape the thoughts, feeling and actions evident within these media organisations. To achieve theoretical saturation within the constraints of a limited budget, a target sample size of 15 was set. It has been suggested that this may be reached with as few as 12 interviews (Guest, et al., 2006). A total of 19 media informants participated and theoretical saturation was reached.

After transcription, the authors further familiarised themselves with the data through listening to the recorded interviews, reading transcripts and taking notes and memos. Data pertaining to social media was extracted from the broader interview and these data were analysed by applying a constant comparison process and open coding. This iterative approach supported the development of meaningful themes. In making sense of these data, insights and concepts from extant literature in the areas of media communication and digital technology were drawn on (Spiggle, 1994).

Main findings

Our data are organised to represent informants' experiences and articulation of approaches taken to navigating a social media rich environment that potentially threatens their ways of knowing, doing and being in their professional lives. The analysis identified three interconnected themes that reflect how journalists and legacy media organisations traverse the murky waters of social media. One journalist referred to this as the "Wild West", suggesting not only great opportunity and risk but a battleground between old order and new rules where the hierarchy for social influence is yet unknown. In general, tensions were evident amongst media organisations around their relationship with this communication platform. It offers opportunity to reach target audiences, respond to demands for 'instant' news and scan for both news stories and reliable sources. However, it also presents significant challenges with regard to the credibility of what is communicated, their position/status in this new environment and the degree of control now held over the evolution of their story. The following themes represent this discussion.

Professional Identity

In speaking on the matter of social media, journalists were concerned with loss of control and the potential for misrepresentation of their stories. Upon release, a story may take on a life of its own, "hijacked" by amateur journalists and reshaped to fit their agenda, as such social media presents a threat to the professional journalist's ego and status. As an authoritative voice on matters of importance to society, who applies the principles of professional journalism, this restructuring and manipulating of the story, indeed taking the story crafted by the journalist as raw data, is almost an affront to some of them. This is evident in the comment "*I write good stories, original stories every day and they are stolen and scraped and shoved around the world and don't ask me not to be resentful about that, I really resent that." Martin* (journalist, broadsheet)*. Additionally, the questioning of media interpretation of the facts, along with the tone and manner of this questioning, has threatened their role and identity. This, in some cases, has resulted in a redefining of the boundaries of engagement by the journalist as a form of ego protection, "I *think it's a forum for people just to be abusive and nasty. ….I would be very careful these days of giving any personal opinions. We used to in the past. If people attack me I don't get involved in that type of thing at all." Carmel* (journalist, broadsheet)*.

Professional identity is maintained and supported through approaches taken in selecting and developing stories. Central to this is a sense of duty to communicate relevant, important, accurate, trustworthy and fair accounts. "*…see that the facts they gave you stood up. That they were as important as they said they were, that they were as accurate as they said they were, and that it was certainly in broadcasting terms, because we had such a quick turnaround, trustworthy in the first*

instance" John (correspondent, national TV). This distinction is significant, affording them a level of cultural capital that allows them stand apart from the amateur **"*everybody thinks they are a journalist and everybody goes up and puts things out without verifying their facts and that's dangerous. Like I wouldn't put anything up on social media unless I was 100% sure."* Carmel** (journalist, broadsheet)*.*

In maintaining identity attention is given to what they are not, and do not want to be associated with. While bloggers are seen to play a variety of significant roles in an information society (Singer, 2007) their existence provides a means for further expressing the professional journalist's role identity. In this case, for these journalists, it may involve keeping themselves "separate" from bloggers. By not being identified as a blogger, suggested a higher standard of reporting, and thus more credibility "*I find with so many of the bloggers the integrity is gone out the window, integrity and knowledge so I stepped away from the notion of being seen as a blogger in any way…. … usually no professional training, you know, in the field of food or in the field of journalism*" Ger (journal, broadsheet). This demarcation between the professional journalist and others was important and extended beyond a dichotomisation to a hierarchy of standing. The so called "A-list" (Trammell and Keshelashvli, 2005) bloggers are judged as a key resource for professionals and importantly based on the professional journalist's 'expert judgment' they will include/exclude the blogger opinion from the narrative delivered through traditional media "*……it can also be an area where you know the well-informed amateur can ask questions [as guests on radio/TV shows], it can be the exact opposite with the ill-informed amateur, …..*" Ger (journal, broadsheet) *"I would never really repeat or publish stuff just from Twitter or anything like that" Ciaran* (journalist, tabloid). Hujanen (2016) also observed this pattern of demarcation among Finnish journalists. Thus a significant aspect of affirming their professional identity resided in their cultural capital. Filtering of truth from opinion, trollers from genuine authentic amateurs and newsworthy from clutter afforded them, in their opinion, status as an authoritative source. This translates into them taking responsibility for providing context and balance and indeed a summative account of the important days and weeks happenings. "*I think people's greatest source of news [is traditional media], you know of the real kind of what's happened today, I've heard all this bobbling around all day, ...*" Jack (presenter, national radio).

This is in keeping with Orenbrings (2013) observations on the professional journalist's identity where expertise, duty and autonomy are central. These tenets of identity allowed the journalist to stand apart from those others who seek to usurp this position. *"I mean some of the stuff that you read on social media is just pure libellous you know, absolutely defamatory, libellous, baseless, factless, the*

whole lot you know… we have a duty [traditional media] to distil you know the big stories, the relevant stories…" Jack (presenter, national radio).

The potential influence of social media on journalists' social reality and interpretations of what is important and true is not recognised, rather they see this as a cluttered space of true and false information that they must somehow help society make sense of.

"Social media is about dissemination with absolutely no boundaries or barriers or checks or balances in terms of the information. This is the information, it's up to you to decide what is real, you know, so how do you do that" Ger (journal, broadsheet).

How these professional identities play out with regard to what and how reporting is undertaken is shaped in part by the traditions of the professional journalist's organisation and how these organisations have embraced the emerging complex assemblage that forms a new media-scape.

Navigating a Complex Assemblage

Reese and Shoemarker (2016:406) define assemblage as "*a contingent set of relationships to accomplish shifting social objectives not otherwise defined by formal institutions*". The conversations with journalists and editors spoke clearly to the role of the digital platforms in networking of news and in particular the linking of sources, interpreting information and allowing for new perspectives to be added. The professional journalist brings their established values, rituals and beliefs to bear in these new spaces where the materials and practices can be at variance with their ideals on story creation and development and the role of professional media. In attempting to maintain stability of identity in this very different media-scape media organisations along with professional journalists apply a set of governance practices that mirror those of legacy media. Given the heterogeneous nature of the complex assemblage and the fluidity of materials (e.g. people and technologies) within this space the professional journalist seeks to control the meaning of their role and their identity through the forms of engagement utilised and levels of direct interactions. From their perspective, the professional journalist takes centre stage and expert sources, bloggers, citizen journalists, activists and lay citizens all contribute in different ways to the news cycle. The significance of the assemblage to the facilitation or disruption of their work was critical *"as a channel of information its [social media] hugely important now and likewise for us in terms of our news, it has to be channelled through various social media…Tweeting and Facebook but it's going beyond that now, so like there are hugely influential platforms that you just have to be there and our readers are there so we have to service them there Mike* (Editor, broadsheet). The assemblage lens offers a valuable framework to uncover how the

journalists 1) interact with and use materials; 2) traverse the range of goals that direct inputs to the assemblage by various actors and 3) filter and purify information.

Interaction with and use of materials within the assemblage by professional journalists is primarily around identifying and establishing newsworthiness and identifying and engaging with sources. The lay citizen and blogger offer a point of departure for reporting on breaking news, in that through watching activities on social media the professional journalist gets alerted to potential stories of significance and accounts of the day's happenings "*… I'd have Twitter search open. … you'll see what the world was thinking, mad and otherwise…*" *Ciaran* (journalist, tabloid). Importantly, as evident in Ciaran's comment, the lay citizen's role within this assemblage is becoming more significant in directly determining what is deemed as important within society. Additionally, to facilitate this relationship traditional media organisations use their own digital platforms to both generate source material and post stories. Using data analytics, they are positioned to establish how their target audiences are receiving and responding to stories. Such analytics further enhances that role of the citizen and consumer in shaping social realities. "*Twitter is a great starting point for stories because people will tell you exactly what's going on in their area, and then you can go check it out…. it's not always that they go straight to social media, sometimes they just come straight to us and we have a tick box on the app as well so people can send us what's happening or whatever*" *Jackie* (editor, online). Thus discourse on social media platforms and responses to early versions of emerging story can strongly influence the direction taken in story framing and development.

The impact of this new assemblage, as a disruptive force, is evident in determining news cycles and use of sources throughout the various stages of story development. However, not all platforms or types of social interaction are equal in terms of quality of information and source. Journalists generally judge the personal Facebook pages as merely banal accounts of everyday living that provides boring insights on the who I am and what I am doing aspects of self-affirmation. These pages have little broader news value, save a means to track down potential sources of case studies "*… it isn't quite as news orientated, you probably know it yourself you know. It can be as much people boring us with their holiday pictures*" *Carmel* (journalist, broadsheet). Thus while important to the individual's self-presentation these communications generally do not have a wide audience appeal. In tapping into social media platforms, journalists recognise the influential role of opinion leaders and celebrities who blog frequently on specialist or topical issues and draw on this for story development. Hence, there is an interesting interplay between the use of social media to establish newsworthiness and to identify sources and content for development of the story. Indeed, Facebook offers a means to put a 'face to

the story' and allows the journalist to quickly create their emotive story line. This allowed the journalist 'to do their job' more efficiently and effectively, with a focus on identifying the right face and angle. "*It has made our job a lot easier to be honest, well a lot more instantaneous, so that would be the first port of call on something [like that]*"; *Aoife* (journalist, tabloid).Thus the platforms underpinning the emergence of this assemblage allows the journalist to invest less time and energy in sourcing and accessing information related to story building, particularity when creating social commentary on the phenomenon under inquiry. "*Twitter. I mean, a lot of journalists are on it. So you can get great tip offs and people sometimes tweet from court cases and you're getting live updates then. You know, that's quite good if you're not able to get there yourself. And then sometimes you'd use Facebook then to make contact with people or to find people, or to source materials, such as photographs or video and stuff like that as well. It's amazing what people put up on their Facebook*" PJ (editor, tabloid). Importantly the process of relationship building with such sources becomes more transient as information on who they are and what they believe is easily accessible online.

The main challenge for the professional journalist within this assemblage is the fluidity in makeup of materials (changes in people and technology), and the range of goals that characterises the various actors engaging in these spaces. This lack of stability prompts the professional journalist to act in the assemblage in a rather measured manner as described above (e.g. gauging responses) to protect their journalistic integrity. Materials within the assemblage change depending on the issues under discussion and can include 'trollers' and 'activists' with very specific agendas to either disrupt or direct the flow of the discourse. While having volition over their engagement in the assemblage they do not have influence on its overall configuration, indeed such assemblages are characterised by blurred and often changing boundaries. Heterogeneity in materials is very evident and compounds the concerns of journalists around the integrity of their profession and the impact of misinformation and biased information on what is viewed as facts and consequently the beliefs and values of a society, *"repeating the heresies that they hear and becoming less and less open to outside, even if it's objective, views and information." Martin (*journalist, broadsheet). Interestingly, *Mark* speaks to the concept of homophily with regard to information use and opinion sharing in these assemblages *"it's probably very dangerous for politics and things because it just self-reinforces all the time, you know and an awful lot of abuse you know, perform for Twitter and all that, it's probably not doing us a lot of good as a society*" *Mark* (producer, national radio)**.** It was evident that some were of the view that the audience can self-select the news they wish to engage with and thus use alternative platforms that fit with their need.

Our informants hold with the position taken by Aiello, et al. (2012) and were of view that in the case of Facebook new ties form based on sharing particular beliefs and values. They were concerned that this homophile tendency was leading to the "shrinking" of an individual's world to one containing like-minded individuals who affirmed existing views and attitudes and propagated, at least in some cases, evidence of dubious origins and opinion. Interestingly if taken with the observations that credibility of information can be enhanced based on number of likes or retweets it gets, thus social media can offer a platform for not only opening up the world to citizen participation in debate and shaping social realities but can also lead to what could be described as a tribal tendency, where minds may become more closed to the perspectives of others in society who reside outside their group.

"I think people now haven't the patience or appetite. I don't even want all those stories there. And you can allow your own biases to come through. That's the terrible thing about it, in a sort of a global story as terrible - those people in some awful plight in some country. But really, I'm not interested. And then you can be selfish about it whereas you'd tend to sit and watch it" Dave (reporter, national radio).

As with any relationship trust is important and this is nowhere more evident than with the *professional* journalist's interaction in this assemblage. Fluidity leads to short cycle relationships and loose ties between the professional journalist and many of their sources. Caution in their interactions with such sources is characteristic of the relationship, this prompts selective use of social media sources. They start from the position that information shared on these platforms may offer up a potential story but verification of this is sought from official sources as well others active in the assemblage such as expert bloggers. "S*o it's very good in some ways as long as you can verify that what people are saying is true. Yet it's instantaneous, it's happening there and then, so it's very good for that but it's to be used with so much caution and you have to be so careful. …….." Carmel* (journalist, broadsheet). Given its immediacy, accuracy in reporting of emerging stories presents an ongoing challenge for professional journalists, however practices are embedded to minimise the risk of miss-reporting. While such inaccuracy does not undermine professional journalists' trust in various sources, reports that are "blatantly wrong" do so. Hence there is a clear distinction between information that emerges within the assemblage that reflect errors due to interpretations of observations and those motivated by malice or specific agendas.

Drawing on Douglas' (1966) ideas of pollution in social spaces as "matters out of place" we see the professional journalist seeking to maintain order and purity of objects created and used within the assemblage. Information can be contaminated by trollers that seek to misinform or misrepresent. The journalists perform purification practices in the rituals they enact when developing a story. These rituals involve the classification of information as pure or contaminated. Once classified as pure they

elevate this within and outside the assemblage. In this manner the professional journalist seeks to sense check what is happening in the physical world.

Demarcation of place

Within this context there is a suggestion that the journalist is taking on a new role where control lies in the direction that discussion takes. In raising a particular stance or position they have the capacity to continue to shape what is important through crafting stories that generate debate. This is central to what we speak to in this final theme, where attention focuses on the institution and demarcation of their place.

Professional journalists and editors together endeavour to employ their collective expertise as the bulwark to the changing environment within which news is created, interpreted and disseminated. This offers them a means of protection in a tempestuous space affording them a sense of stability regarding the institution's future role. They see the institution's value lying in their expertise in inquiry, rapid investigation and providing an evaluation of opinion. Their capacity to rapidly digest information and provide context and explanation for the public, through utilisation of the tools offered by digital technology, is central to how they construct their space in the online world while also preserving traditional channels. "*I'd hate to see newspapers die out. I think what newspapers are is being refined. It's not the case anymore, because we have online, it's not the case anymore that it's enough just to tell people you know there was a shooting last night. You have to actually then give opinion analysis, context, say what it means, what does it mean for the peace process if that's what it is, or if a politician is resigning. You know you have to offer a lot more, it's about the analysis and everything else. It's the expertise that people can bring*", *Mary* (editor, online).

This speaks to the importance of a sense of identity at the institution level. In negotiating a path through what may be described as a liminal space, the media institution seeks to address structural ambiguity characterised by new possibilities for sharing information, relationship delineation and story creation. In other words, they seek to understand the new media-scape and use what this offers to position themselves as an authoritative voice. This is further expressed in their consideration of how audiences may still use traditional/ mainstream media as the filter to identifying the important issues and true nature of an issue. "*I think you know the mainstream media, you know the six o clock news ... is still…... people's greatest source of news, of the real kind of what's happened today, I've heard all this bobbling around all day, but what's the real story here*" *Jack* (presenter, national radio).

Evident within the discourse is a general belief among media professionals that citizens trust the organisation's account and interpretation of events. Based on track record this trust is protected through the implementation of a professional standard across all their communication platforms and reporters. As part of the demarcation of their space the watchdog role of these media institutions continues to hold significance. Investment in investigative journalists is integral to their character and as such they pride themselves in being news breakers on matters of significance to safeguard the public from unknown/unrevealed threats to society. Indeed, some go so far as to suggest it is these institutions that still champion and highlight serious societal matters. *"95% of the news, the original news, that's provided in the world today still comes from old media employing journalists like myself to dig that news up. Very little else is there. All the rest is just stuff moving around in the ecosphere being batted back and forth," Martin* (journalist, broadsheet). Thus while there is a recognition that the traditional ritual of waiting for the 6 or 9 o'clock news or purchasing the daily newspaper to get a full account of the important happenings of the day is no more, these forms of news delivery still have relevance in the determination of what is important and 'true'.

In addressing the emergence of digital technology there was a general recognition of a need to be present in this space but, from an institution perspective, engagement in this space should be controlled and content should be held to the same standard as with traditional media. This technology is viewed as an infrastructure, a new communication channel for media organisations that must be effectively managed and leveraged appropriately to maximise audience reach;. "*if we do have an extra angle that gives us a deeper story. If it's something that's turned up in court, we'll hold on for that deeper angle if we have an exclusive for ourselves and we'll wait and we'll use that [in paper] then. So in a sense [social media] tees up the story for us ... and then you can get to read the full story [in paper]. So in that sense, again, it's kind of a self-promotion thing*" PJ (editor, tabloid). Within this context various strategies are employed ranging from using the platform for "*framing it digitally first", Mike* (Editor, broadsheet), with detail and critical evaluations provided via more traditional channels through to using the digital platform as the main delivery channel, "*70% of our audience would come through Facebook not even the website homepage, you know, and so we play on that*." *Aoife* (journalist, tabloid). Additionally, the organisation was concerned with quality of content due to the diminishing timelines between identification and release of a story. This quality-immediacy tension is partly alleviated by releasing stories in a staged manner where the story is built in the public domain and added to as new and relevant information is verified. Context and critical evaluation become key to building the story and through the staged release approach the institution creates temporal space that allows the organisation adhere to their fundamental professional tenets. Thus in attempting to maintain this professional identity the media organisation, while responding to the demand for

immediate information by releasing what is known, provides basic information in digital form and informs their audience that the investigation is afoot. In this case the principles of professionalism still stand with the practice of not including unverified content on their digital platform. "*We're respected for a reason, for the stance we take on things, for our standard of journalism and everything else. So, you know we still try and reflect that online but we maybe just take a slightly different approach*", *Mary* (editor, online). As part of this "*slightly different approach"* the form and depth of content included changes with much less detail generally provided on digital platforms and critical consideration given to how to make this engaging. The digital piece/story bears a number of hallmarks and characteristics of the traditional headline, attention grabbing, engaging, enticing the person into the story. *"It has to be short and snappy. It has to be engaging. …..if they don't want to get involved in it they won't click on it so there is a way around writing snappier headlines, certain buzzwords you should put in and the call to actions …." Aoife* (journalist, tabloid).

Overall two forces drive motivation, the first relates to maintaining status and esteem and the second was the risk of a law suit. Thus, they position themselves as holding a high standard of account but also are held to a higher standard by the rules and laws of society.

Discussion and Conclusion

The introduction of digital platforms and use by some citizens to share, deliberate and debate news has blurred the boundaries between the citizen and media organisations (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016; Lewis, 2012).

As consumers make sense of news they draw on existing cognitive frameworks that have been shaped by the environments they interact with over time. Importantly these frameworks impact upon, not only how information is transformed into knowledge but, what is noticed, deemed salient and even what sources to use and trust (Pentina and Tarafdar, 2014). This presents an interesting challenge when considering the types and forms of information that are now drawn on by citizens. If we take the journalist's interpretation of the changing media-scape, social media can present a platform for the wide dissemination of unconfirmed stories (rumours), unsubstantiated opinion or even what is now termed as 'fake news'. The dilution/elimination of the journalist role in this sense making process has led to greater diversity in perspectives of what is important, what is true. This, many argue, is a positive development as positions taken by media organisations are contested and critically evaluated allowing citizens to use their own evaluative criteria to form judgments. However as social media platforms also facilitate trollers and agitators some information provided could build and support

existing biases and lead to vague or poor interpretation and understanding of important societal issues. In combating this our legacy news media informants consider their expert status as important to combat what they view as devious agenda driven mistruths/misdirection which may negatively influence social realities. To exert their 'expert' influence a digital presence is pressing but the form of this presence is shaped by the need to maintain their identity as separate from all others who enact roles as opinion leaders on matters of societal importance.

In keeping with Bennett's (2016) observation we found that journalists seek to hold closely to traditional values and practices associated with professional journalism, while needing to use more "non official sources" to quickly develop their angle on a story. This creates a tension between old-world values and new-world realities/technologies where the matter of trust becomes central. It appears that the value system, that supports the journalist's expression of their identity and allows them stand apart from those others who seek to usurp their position, frames the practices used when engaging with unofficial sources and working within online platforms. Journalists' perceive that their expertise in filtering, verifying and sense making underpins their ability to use these new platforms in a manner that is congruent with their self-perception and thus allows them continue as an authoritative voice on matters of significance to society. However, in the determination of what is significant to society the journalists have ceded, somewhat, to discourse driven by lay citizens in this digital media space. Nonetheless, they continue to hold traditional values and adhere to established journalistic practices when verifying and building of content of their story.

The assemblage that journalists now finds themselves operating within is presenting new challenges as well as solutions to old problems. Importantly within this assemblage they have positioned themselves as an authoritative voice by filtering through the vast quantities of data that are generated to extract and provide a balanced account of the key happening of the day. This involves them moving between virtual and physical worlds to gather multiple pieces of evidence, verifying what is factual from what is alleged and communicating through digital as well as traditional channels. Stability appears to emerge for the journalist through their movement between: 1) virtual and physical worlds, 2) new online unknown sources and official/well-established sources and 3) on-line and traditional channels of communication. Thus they endeavour to stay true to the values and principles of their profession. Anderson and McFarlane's (2011) observation that the assemblage components exist independently of the whole was very evident in professional journalists' interactions and engagements on this stage. Nothing is true until confirmed and what they add to the script is carefully

considered and in keeping with their professional standard. However, the challenge for many journalists resides around distributed agency on this stage where each component becomes involved with a story process and generates inputs that result in an emerging narrative.

Fundamentally within this assemblage the transformation of information into news that shapes social realities involves a negotiated process between a range of amateur and professional journalists where each draws on and uses the other to contribute to the dialogue and influence thinking. Indeed, the traditional backstage and frontstage become visible (Karlsson, 2011). However, journalist tend to gravitate towards a hierarchical rather than a peer to peer relationship and consequently engage the digital platform as a resource and to a degree endeavour to maintain separation from social media platform contributors. This is most explicit in the use of twitter to identify the story, establish newsworthiness and promote their story. As such citizens are increasingly influencing social narrative and realities. While journalists recognise the influence on newsworthiness there was little evidence of awareness of this narrative on their representations of social reality. However, they suggest that some citizens in choosing what stories to follow are ignoring alternative perspectives and align themselves with those who hold likeminded views. This speaks to the concept of homophily where ties are formed based on similar interests between individuals. While the influence of homophily in social platforms is contested with in the literature our informants support Aiello et al (2012).

Curran (2010) speaks to the dominance of established media organisations within this new media scape. He suggests, based on evidence, that the established media have leveraged the digital platform to reach audiences and integrated this platform as part of their 'news estate'. In doing so they have held the lion's share of media consumption. This perspective resonates in the current study. Being part of the digital space is critical to legacy news media current and future position and key to this is how the platform can attract and hold audiences and bring them further into their wider 'estate'. Furthermore, the approaches adopted by media organisations resembles Curran's notion of 'colonisation' of digital spaces.

In their examination of future positioning of journalists, Kovach and Rosentiel (2001:51) refer to the role of watchdogs as "*watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny*" and suggest that this role has been diluted with the advent of 24hour news and the weekly investigative type of programmes. In the intervening years with the emergence of social media the

opportunity for some forms of watchdog activities have been further weakened. Original investigative reporting appears less evident as individuals (potential informants of the past) use social media to reveal issues, however one could argue that the basic tools of "shoe leather, public records, and informants" are still evident in the work that is completed save the mouse and screen replace shoe leather.

Previous studies have drawn attention to the reluctance of legacy news media to relinquish their traditionally held control over the news agenda (Westlund, 2012). While a defensive stance is evident among our informants, this study reveals what ~~underpins such a stance and considers the~~ is sacrosanct and negotiable in maintaining professional identity and authority as they and others colonise digital spaces. Backstage activities (gathering and processing) are enhanced by using these new platforms to identify stories and sources and establish what is newsworthy. However, in the minds of the legacy media actors, nothing is true until they use their expertise to verified content. Identification of sources and determination of newsworthiness offer clear benefits from their engagement with various social media platforms while verification and getting to the 'real truth' relies on long established practices. In story development their expertise affords them the means to reveal the real story. Frontstage activities (distribution and presentation of news) are also augmented by using this platform as a tool to inform their audiences of what important news should concern them and alert them to unfolding stories. Legacy news media have integrated frontstage spaces for audiences to share their opinion, feelings and experiences of events, however many legacy media journalists have set their boundary to exclude direct two way open conversations with their news consumers. This affords them some ego protection and equally is a means of maintaining their professional identity by allowing them stand apart from those others occupying this new media-scape.

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