How has the media changed over time

Freedom of Speechwithin the Media has progressed vastly over the recent years. National legislations restricted journalists, but asglobalizationbegan and spread quickly, along withtechnology, these national barriers disappeared, as did the legislations that go with them. The availability to a bigger and wider variety of information and news from all around the world has increased, and journalists have a larger freedom of expression. However, is absolute freedom of speech really desirable? This essay discusses changes in media over time and its influence on freedom of speech. Furthermore, it outweighs the benefits and implications that come with this freedom of speech.

Old Media refers to the more traditional methods ofcommunicationand expression that have existed prior to the invention of the Internet, e. g newspapers, magazines and books. Alternatively, New Media refers to the access of information anytime, anywhere, and interactive user feedback and creative participation. Another characteristic is its unregulated content. (Schivinski et al., 2013, p. 5).

The Old Media faced many constraints which new technology has aided to breakdown, making information today more accessible and easier to use. There are vast differences and progressions from the Old Media to the New Media. Briefly, information is easier to use and can reach wider audiences, it preserves and stores information more effectively, encourages copying, changing and growth of information, uses images and sounds instead of text and all in an instant, in faster ways, completely unimaginable before. Katsh (1988) points out 3 distinct qualities possessed by the New Media (electronic media) in transmitting, storing, organization and processing of information.

The barriers of time and space that were obstacles in the past have been overcome through electric communication. The result now is the unimaginable increase in the speed of the transmission of information. The dependency on inefficient transportation for distribution is no longer a barrier to the spread of information and through the Internet information can be transmitted instantaneously. This information can then be responded to and passed onto others equally as rapid.

The audience of this new media is much larger than that of the print era. Not only is information reaching a larger audience, but it is reaching new audiences and enabling communication between groups of people that previously couldn't, through the disintegration of the geographical barrier. As Hiltz and Turoff (1978) explain, " until now there has been no means for a group of people to adequately exchange information among themselves and reach decisions, other than to meet frequently face to face and talk it out".

The computer and New Media has introduced new means of organizing and storing information. Compare the huge, almost limitless, quantities of information stored everyday on the internet to the restricted and finite storage capacity of traditional filing cabinets or print libraries. Katsh (1988) refers to it as an ' information chain' for the process of acquiring, processing and generating information, like a chain that grows longer and longer, building on existing knowledge.

There is an obvious increase in avenues for acquiring information that coax ' the seeker of knowledge' to find alternative paths to information that are continuously being created. Katsh (1988) emphasizes that " because

information is organized differently, the electronic media encourages interaction with data that is different from reading a book".

The processing of data has also drastically reformed in New Media. The digitalization and facileness of copying electronic data aid and increase the speed of processing information electronically. Katsh (1988) explains that digitalization is the process of recording reality by breaking it down into parts and are then given a numerical value which allows for data to be manipulated in ways that enlarge the number of ways it can be used and distributed. " All digital machines copy in order to communicate. They are essential repeaters able to regenerate perfect copies without abandon" (R. Solomon, 1985).

Zuboff (1988) expands on this idea by arguing that " information technology, even when it is applied to automatically reproduce a finite activity, is not mute. It not only imposes information but produces information" and believes that New Media ' informates' as well as automates.

Many of these characteristics that at first glance make the Internet appealing, (ease of transmission, perfect reproduction etc) is essentially what could cause problems with the technology. There are difficulties in enforcing and imposing freedom of speech rights in cyberspace as the Internet does not belong to any country in particular. It doesn't belong within any geographical borders. So this leads us to the main issue: if the Internet doesn't belong to any geographical boundaries, then which/who's jurisdictions and laws does it follow?

The ability to transmit information instantaneously online, without internet control de factocensorshipand without the borders of countries, it is very hard to control the information appearing online. However, before proceeding, there appear to be many misconceptions about what free speech and its limitations and consequences are actually composed of. The U. N. Universal Declaration ofHuman Rights, Art. 19, states: " Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (U. S. Constitution).

However, when these rights to freedom and expression were actually last clarified, the use of New Media and the Internet was highly underdeveloped and limited and its actual effect on mainstream media was still under speculation (OHCHR). As Katsch (1988) explains, " censorship laws were an attempt to use law to regulate what had been controlled earlier by the inherent qualities of writing".

So, what are the benefits of complete freedom of speech and expression? The importance of free speech as a basic and valuable characteristic of Western society cannot be underestimated. As previously discussed, the internet provides an outstanding amount of resources for information and knowledge. This allows for new opportunities for expression and participation of ideas. It becomes a great social strength promoting creativity and individuality and the sharing of ideas between people from different backgrounds and views.

Practically, freedom of speech serves many functions. Arguably most importantly, freedom of speech is important at all levels of society as decision making is based on discussion and consideration of an array of various views. As well as this, governments can benefit from getting direct opinions voiced from the people, and if the criticisms towards the government are openly voiced, they have the chance to respond to these unjust comments about it's actions. If speech was otherwise restricted, these same criticisms and rumors would still circulate only another way, by word of mouth which the government is then in no position to respond or answer to these views as they aren't publicly made. (Turley, 2012).

However this freedom of speech can easily be misused. Implications of freedom of speech involves toleration of ' a great deal of nonsense' and there is the increasingly popular view that information based on ' bad taste' and offensiveness to particular groups should be censored. More extreme, what happens if a misinforming story goes viral shared between thousands of people across the world? When the right of freedom of speech was announced in the Universal Declaration of Rights, they did not foresee the power and largeness of the mass media of today. How in one second an article can be published online and the next it can be starting a huge discussion with thousands of people from opposite sides of the world.

And what about extremist groups? As well as this what about fraud, child protection, decency, libel and hate speech? Shouldn't these to a certain extent be controlled? John Stuart Mill (2007) suggests that it is only the prevention of harm to others which justifies the state in restricting our voluntary conduct (Cooray, 1997). But what does harm really entail?

To conclude, the progression the Media has made in the relatively short amount of time merited by the introduction of the Internet and other electronic communications is undeniable. Many barriers to communications present in the Old Media have been eradicated, leading to quicker exchange of information, as well as a much more varied information scope and audience, connecting people through information from all around the world.

It is these ' benefits' of diminished barriers of geography (which are irrelevant because information no longer needs to necessarily be published and distributed but can simply be posted online instantaneously) that actually pose the problem when it comes to freedom of expression. Because of these lack of borders the Internet/New Media doesn't fall under any one particular country's jurisdiction and the issue of who's laws, language or codes of conduct should be applied is raised. Furthermore, the importance of freedom of speech as a basic and valuable characteristic of Western Society cannot be denied. However there is a fine line when it comes to freedom of speech.

I believethat freedom of speech will lead to an array of views, some which you will agree with, and others that you could find offensive or wrong. However if you want the right to express you opinion, there are certainly going to be ideas you disagree with or maybe even feel insulted by. But this is the price that comes with freedom.