

# How is the internet changing the nature of journalism in australia research paper...

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



# RESEARCH PAPER

## Abstract

The paper is dedicated to issues of journalism in Australia and is particularly focused on the online journalism and the usage of the Internet by journalist themselves. The research gives the information about general advantages and disadvantages of the Internet use in media sphere and provides an insight into the specific drawbacks and benefits of using this resource of information in Australia. The paper is based on several surveys that were conducted on relevant topics: use of the internet by Australian journalists, level of trust to people of this profession and most popular online news sources in the country. The case of the election campaign in 2007 is investigated in the paper to illustrate the importance of new media resources.

## Introduction

The Australia has an interesting geographical position, which forces the country to implement any technical innovation that can help people in the country feeling closer than they are. Thus the Internet is a vital part of Australian's life. It is widely used everywhere and of course for information reasons. Most newspapers have internet twins. TV and radio also try to promote themselves through the new media. Sociologists and ordinary citizens believe that newspapers in the way they exist now are going to die, because the Internet will take their place. The Internet changed the mediasphere of the country. Apart from the general benefits provided by the

Internet (zero costs, accessibility, new tools of journalism and change in the balance between audience and journalists), Australia can possess also several reasons, which characterize the specific situation. Firstly, it is feeling of freedom of freedom and trust that Australians express towards the citizen journalists. Secondly, it is the increase in salaries observed after “regular” journalists switched to the online style of working.

Australia belongs to one of the most wired nations in the world. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, there were 10.9 millions of the Internet subscribers registered in June, 2011 as well as 9.7 millions of the mobile handset subscribers (2011). This means that most of the population of Australia has access to the Internet. And obviously, this factor influences public life of the country and journalism as a part of this life. It is however unclear how exactly does the Internet change the fourth estate and whether there are positive or negative trends in such a development.

In general, wide usage of the Internet in mass media has both drawbacks and advantages. The popular analytical journal *The Economist* (2011) organized a discussion to reveal whether Internet makes journalism better or worse. Jay Rosen, the writer and journalism professor at the New York University, and Nicholas Carr, author and blogger from Berkeley took part in the discussion. Jay Rosen supported the thesis that Internet improves the situation in media and Nicholas Carr clamored against the statement. In the course of discussion Nicholas Carr stated that ‘the internet, by altering the underlying economics of the news business, has thinned the ranks of

professional journalists' (Economist, 2011). Besides, widespread usage of the Internet led to mass unemployment among journalists.

On the other hand, Jay Rosen had lots of arguments in support of his thoughts. He admitted that Internet caused unemployment. Furthermore, he said that ' the internet has increased the supply of rubbish in and around journalism: content farms, recycled PR , stories that are cheap rewrites of other stories, lists and " charticles" with no purpose other than pushing up page views' (Economist, 2011). Yet, he believes that the Internet improves journalism. He cites the following arguments: it needs zero costs of getting information to people; the user gets more information within easy reach; the Internet provides new tools for practitioners (Skype, mobile applications); it alters the balance between journalists and audience – actually, people, who were passive readers and listeners received more power: not only the power to choose what content to read or watch but also the power to provide the feedback. Moreover, the Internet and online journalism encourage government organizations to be more transparent and open. Finally, such activity empowers next generation of journalists, youngster with technical skills, who can manage the epoch of quick changes and adapt to new standards of journalism.

Nevertheless, a survey held by Jenni Metcalfe and Toss Gascoigne showed how journalists themselves used the Internet (1998, pp. 1-10).

According to the data the scientists have collected, it can be clearly seen that almost of them (95. 4%) use the Internet at their workplaces. But journalists still do not trust the online resources. The survey showed that

personal contacts are more important sources to get the idea for a new story than the Internet.

It should be mentioned that for an industrial nation with old democratic traditions Australia has a relatively undeveloped mediasphere. This can be explained by the settlement of the majority the country's population into remote major centers, and they are separated by almost deserted and unpopulated areas. Australia '...constitutes not one but perhaps four or five more or less separate media markets' (Allan, 2009). The print media is actually almost owned by two big companies: Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd., and John Fairfax Holdings. The impact of these companies is also visible in the Internet. According to the survey conducted by the Roy Morgan Research in 2005, online versions of the newspapers issued by the News Ltd., and Fairfax were the most popular results in case people were searching for the news. This also means that most of Australian has access to only one local newspaper (Roy Morgan, 2006). This causes that the international organization Reporters without Borders rank the Australian media relatively low in their annual Press Freedom Index. The media credibility survey states that the population does not respect the media because people feel that journalists does not express their own position but the point of view of the companies they are dependent on. Besides, only 10% of Australians trust in journalists. Public also believes that the information provided by the writers is inaccurate and of low esteem. Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd. is considered to be the most politically biased media in Australia (Roy Morgan, 2004). Undoubtedly, these factors led to the bloom of the Internet blogging and online journalism, especially regarding the political situation in the country.

The most famous case that showed on how important the Internet is in the media life is the election campaign of 2007. This federal campaign would be remembered for many reasons – the current Prime Minister lost his seat, the Labour Party took the dominant position in the whole country and of course the change of the whole Australian mediasphere (Bruns, 2007). Rupert Murdoch's enterprise supported the existing government and the articles in those newspapers were considered to be biased. As citizens did not receive information they wanted to get from the newspapers and other media resources they created their own online sources to provide and to receive information. It was the time when so-called citizen journalism gained importance in Australia. Online citizen blogs were newsworthy and active reaction of the local population as well as their support helped the Australian Labour Party to win the elections. This story illustrates how well the Internet could improve people's feeling of freedom and trust, and thus change the way of accessing to the information.

Furthermore, the salaries for the trained online journalists keep growing. Some reporters, who were working with the printed sources switch to the online way. This becomes more and more popular trend in the Australian media. The increase in the wage is another both reason and consequence of the good influence of the Internet to the Australian mediasphere.

Unfortunately, every coin has two sides. The online journalism is not the exception. The report of the UNESCO states that Australian journalists are not educated enough and the whole system needs accreditation (2004). The biggest problem of the online journalism is that lots of bloggers do not have

appropriate background and this generates lots of illiteracy and inaccuracy in the Internet media.

## **Conclusion**

The journalism in Australia was developed in a special unique way. Because of its geographical position and peculiarities of settlement, the country was always one of the first to implement new technical ideas. Besides, the government also supported such an initiative and this made Australia one of the most wired countries worldwide. This feature changed the journalism in Australia well. Despite it led to decrease in quality of the articles, the Internet made citizens to feel freedom and independence from the major printed resources. In the future, when the requirements for online journalists would be higher the problems with inaccuracy would be solved. Though the Internet nowadays brought several problems to the journalism, it is going to shape the future face of the media in Australia.

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