

***Reviewing Global Journalism Studies:
Three Books and a Look at the Future***

Martin Löffelholz & David Weaver (Eds.), **Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future**, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, 304 pp., \$35.75 (paperback).

Charlie Beckett, **SuperMedia: Saving Journalism So it Can Save the World**, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, 205 pp., \$25 (paperback).

Richard C. Stanton, **All News is Local: The Failure of the Media to Reflect World Events in a Globalized Age**, McFarland and Company, 2007, 221 pp., \$35 (paperback).

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Even casual observers of trends in journalism know that a sea of change has taken place, one that has brought the audience into the news-making process. Events such as 9/11 in the U.S, 7/7 in the UK, and the Madrid bombings have been horrific demonstrations of the workings of global terrorism, but they have also been high points for citizen journalism. Other events of global significance, from the Burmese uprisings to Hurricane Katrina and to the 2004 Southeast Asian Tsunami have further demonstrated that that traditional media are not the only channel for information. Independent media, facilitated through the Web via blogs, wikis and social networking sites, have provided the opportunity for so-called citizen journalists to bypass the traditional workings of legacy media to provide their own coverage and analysis.

While new forms of citizen-generated news content suggest hope about the future of news, it is also important to be realistic about its potential. As the State of the News Media (2007) has reported, approximately 5% of blogs actually conduct original reporting. And citizen journalism advocate Jay Rosen has been quoted in Beckett's book (among others), for saying that 1% of this content is high quality, 10% is acceptable, and the rest is poor.

Traditional media in the West are in serious decline. U.S. newspapers have faced 25 years of circulation and profit loss, with losses accelerating in the past five years, and broadcast television having lost approximately one million viewers a year for the same time frame (State of the News Media, 2008). Standard and Poor's has reported that UK newspapers face declines in circulation and ad revenue while the rest of European newspapers are also in decline, but not to the same degree as the UK (Donald, 2006a). The French newspaper *Le Monde* has declined over the past seven years to a circulation of 350,000 (Beckett). Even in Asia, more developed countries are experiencing declines in print circulation, though both China and India have seen rapid growth (Donald, 2006b).

The three books reviewed here reflect the fact that news has been transformed on a global scale, fundamentally altering the nature of traditional media. These authors all argue, however, that traditional

media's standards of accountability, impartiality and trust are crucially important to the continued functioning of democracy. All three texts also try to address what globalization means for news, with each offering different suggestions for how academics, audiences, and traditional journalists ought to adapt.

Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future is the most focused of the three on creating new research challenges for Journalism Studies. The book is a collection of contributions from some of the best-known international scholars in the field. In the introduction, editors Martin Löffelholz of the Ilmenau University of Technology, Germany, and David Weaver, of Indiana University- Bloomington, argue that "journalism research can no longer operate within cultural borders" (p. 3). They challenge the field of journalism studies, proclaiming that too much of journalism studies has been descriptive rather than theoretical, and that it leans too heavily on other disciplines for its grounding. They hope to introduce new theoretical inquiry as well as new findings from global journalism research in Asia, Africa, North and Latin America. Löffelholz and Weaver maintain that the justification for the book is that understanding the individual, organizational, societal and extramedial influences upon journalism requires comparative research.

The theory section has two major highlights: a contribution from Manfred Rühl and one from John Hartley. Rühl's essay attempts to create some disciplinary grounding for journalism studies through the work of Nicholas Luhmann. Rühl contends that journalism is a worldwide public communication system, but considers only traditional media in his theory. He leaves an open-ended question at the end of his contribution, "What about news offered anonymously, without a traditional newspaper title. Do we trust it?" (p. 34), demonstrating his failure to engage with new forms of news media.

Hartley is one of the few contributors to directly mention that the balance of journalism may have shifted from professional control over the distribution of news to citizen journalism on the Web. He writes "everyone is a journalist," and goes so far as to say that journalism ought to be considered a human right. He argues, "If everyone is a journalist, there can be no theory of journalism based on its *professional* production, on its *industrial* organization (including ownership and control), its *textual* form (from news to PR) or even its *reception*, for none of these is essential" (p. 46). Though Hartley may be correct in his assessment that professional journalists will be the last to realize how journalism has fundamentally changed, he offers little theory upon which to build a new framework for journalism.

The next section of *Global Journalism Research* investigates the methodologies researchers can use to investigate journalism in the era of globalization and new media. Highlights include Thomas Hanitzsch on comparative work and Thorsten Quandt on organizational research. Hanitzsch's contribution focuses on the ways that journalism researchers might construct comparative studies. However, he stresses the idea of "equivalence of concepts," meaning that the countries being compared need to have similar definitions of journalistic work and values. Hanitzsch stresses the need for studies that can create generalizable claims about journalism across borders, but in his quest for uniformity, the effect may be to downplay the different ways that globalization permeates each locale. This section offers contributions on the importance of survey research and content analysis, which do little to advance the cause of global journalism research. Another important insight comes from Quandt's contribution to the collection with his piece on organizational research, though, where he emphasizes the importance of empirical observation of

traditional newsrooms as they go through organizational change in the face of the challenges of new media.

One of the most intriguing contributions of this book is to provide a “state of” journalism research in the U.S., UK, Germany, Africa (particularly South Africa), Latin America, and Greater China. However, the contributions from authors writing about Western nations do little more than malign the lack of disciplinary foundations for journalism studies. Jane B. Singer, in her contribution on the U.S., argues for the need for a paradigm shift to account for new user-generated content and changes in the financial and structural challenges of news, but doesn’t say what this shift ought to look like.

This section on global journalism is particularly interesting for what it tells us about South African and Chinese journalism research. Arnold S. de Beer’s piece on South African journalism research outlines the difficulties of studying journalism in a country where there is a need for news to cross both language, race and ethnicity. In addition, Zhongdang Pan, Joseph M. Chan, and Ven-hwei Lo’s piece on Greater China outlines how Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China brings together the variety and future for journalism studies in each place. However, *Global Journalism Research* isolates the findings of each country/region in this section rather than uniting them according to common themes; as such, it fails to provide any integrative analysis that might aid comparative research.

Global Journalism Research also attempts to provide a look at the future of the field. Two contributions are particularly forward-oriented: one from Stephen D. Reese and another from Barbie Zelizer. Reese articulates how globalization has changed the reach and speed of global media and has fundamentally altered our experience of the world. For Reese, globalization means that global media will capture events that are not fully explained by our local settings. Reese hopes that journalism will become a “system of newsgathering, editing and distribution not based on national or regional boundaries — where it is not expected that shared national or community citizenship is the common reference uniting newsmakers, journalists and audience” (p. 242). At this point, there are too few global media to fit this definition — CNN International, BBC, and Euronews, for example. Reese wants to leave room for new voices such as independent citizen media, but it is unclear how these voices will transcend global borders.

Ultimately, the collection is primarily concerned with how traditional journalism is responding in a globalized world to the challenges of new media — and it does not look at these new forms of journalism themselves. As a close, Barbie Zelizer offers the best hope for this future trajectory, urging us to reject disciplinary boundaries in our future research to find new ways to theorize how new forms of journalism shape the public sphere as sources of information and community.

Charlie Beckett’s *SuperMedia: Saving Journalism So it Can Save the World* attempts to provide the theoretical grounding for new media journalism that *Global Journalism Research* fails to provide. Beckett believes that we have between five and 10 years to save journalism so it can remain capable of serving its traditional watchdog role of truth and accountability. His work aspires to reach practitioners, citizen journalists, and academics. He proposes “networked journalism,” a new philosophy of newsworld that integrates user-generated content with citizen journalism. Through networked journalism, the traditional news media is encouraged to view itself as having a predominately social role. Networked

journalism includes taking advantage of citizen journalism, interactivity, open sourcing, wikis, blogging, and social networking, "not just as add-ons, but as an essential part of news production and distribution itself" (p. 5). Through networked journalism, Beckett argues that we will create "SuperMedia" that will lead to good governance and enhance development across the world.

The heart of networked journalism remains with professional journalists who still have the hold on objectivity — they have the experience and skills to judge sources and arguments, and thus act as *facilitators* rather than gatekeepers of a new process of news creation. Thus, Beckett still places the importance of journalism in the hands of the news producers as we know it. But he sees expanded opportunities for global news flow as traditional journalists incorporate citizen input from across the globe.

Beckett also wants readers to understand that networked journalism is a fundamentally political approach to news. He sees networked journalism operating in concert with U.S. and UK politics as a way to enhance e-governance. Beckett even paints a sunny picture of networked journalism's potential in Africa, offering few details but arguing that mobile phones will enhance the ability of Africans to contribute to news both about Africa and to African-produced news media.

Networked journalism's approach to terrorism connects the ideas of global and local. Beckett draws upon familiar refrains about terror being rooted in both global constructions and local cells, but offers a different argument: networked journalism can create ways to connect people on a global scale and bring previously ignored communities into a larger discourse about the need for security. Again, much of Beckett's ideas are aspirational and he provides few practical strategies for implementation.

For networked journalism and SuperMedia to work, Beckett acknowledges the need for media literacy. In fact, he argues that media and journalism studies ought to be renamed media literacy — and sees the concept as beyond the typical definition of the ability to understand and create communication (p. 157). Beckett wants people to learn media literacy through blogging, games, and social networking, but he is thin on the details. As he acknowledges about the premise of his text, Beckett is "more interested in the dynamics than the details" (p. 169).

Overall, networked journalism provides an important contribution to the way that we currently think about the relationship between citizen media content and traditional journalism. But Beckett's work remains unclear about how we can practically advise journalists how to move into the facilitator role rather than the gatekeeper role. It is not a failure that Beckett can't provide these details — his work is precisely what Western newsrooms across the world are struggling with.

Just as Beckett provides bright optimism about the future of news in a globalized world, Richard C. Stanton's *All News is Local: The Failure of the Media to Reflect World Events in a Globalized Age* does precisely the opposite. In fact, Stanton argues that Western news media has operated in a 300-year-old model that can no longer handle the increasing complexity of globalization. Traditionally, Western news media has used a frame of localization to construct stories, but this model can no longer lead to informed decision making. Stanton argues that news media constructs stories "in a way that might resonate with citizens at a personal level" (p. 7). His primary case study for this attack is *The Economist*.

But there is a difference between crafting news that is a style of literary journalism which creates emotional connections between reader and text and stories and journalism that fails to adequately explain events. Good journalism, arguably, can do both. However, Stanton believes that the news media, envisioned here as primarily as print media, can no longer write in 10-paragraph stories that seek to explain global phenomena — and that all journalism is this personified, local journalism. Notably, his critique only focuses on print media and ignores other forms of traditional and new media journalism.

Stanton identifies what he sees as the crisis in news reporting to 9/11. He argues that the media (writ large) has failed to truly provide global analysis of events by localizing terror. The influence of terrorism on journalism has halted experimentation, in his view, and made new forms of “imagining” impossible, making it impossible for the news media to cope with the issues, events, agents and institutions of globalization.

Stanton makes a number of predictable critiques that are common to those who are critical of the political economy of news ownership (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2000). He claims that news is a commodity traded between elites, for instance, and that reporters are stuck in that they are influenced in their reporting by global stakeholders (including media conglomerates).

However, he does advance a new critique that forces some reconsideration of the alignment of the place of the news media in the public sphere. Stanton argues that we should see the news media not as an institution, as imagined by Macaulay and Habermas, but as an agent of institutions such as trade, the rule of law, national sovereignty, and democracy. Positioning the news media as an agent rather than institution makes it easier to critique it for being subservient to the needs of various stakeholders.

Much of the text is devoted to Stanton explaining how various world organizations, from the EU to the UN use the news media as an agent. But he is inconsistent in his claim that there is no global news media — his analysis relies on the preeminently global *The Economist*. Similarly, he argues that there is no way for readers to participate in the creation of media — a direct countermand to Beckett's networked journalism and one that seems out of touch with the efforts of media outlets to encourage reader participation.

His main support for his claim that all media is local is the textual analysis of self-selected articles from *The Economist* and a few other internationally known newspapers and magazines. As such, his study lacks the rigor to make such a bold claim. Despite these critiques, Stanton's work is nonetheless provoking: what if, after all, all news *were* local?

All three texts provide new ways to think about the influences of globalization on journalism and journalism research — and they also challenge us to think about the ways that user-produced content can become part of the process of news production. Each text places its center of analysis in traditional news media— and this may be part of the problem facing journalism studies and the media industry as a whole. Even Beckett, who envisions networked journalism as embracing citizen content, still sees traditional news

media as the final storyteller for the public. But in a globalizing world, journalists and scholars alike need to understand how citizen media will shape both their work and their analysis.

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