



The shifting temporalities of journalism

In memory of Kevin Barnhurst

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This Special Issue of *Journalism* grows out of the ‘Pushing the Boundaries of Journalism Studies’ panel organized by Henrik Bødker and Julia Sonnevend at the International Communication Association (ICA) conference in Puerto Rico (May 2015). The panel, entitled *Shifting Temporalities of Journalism*, sought to investigate how temporalities are constructed by journalistic texts, technologies and the consumption of journalism in diverse cultural settings.

While links between journalism and time are often acknowledged, there is a sense, says Rantanen (2009), in which the ‘temporality of news has been neglected, or taken for granted, in academic research’; perhaps, she says, ‘because it is considered too obvious’ (1; emphasis in the original). Indeed, apart from recent work on journalism and memory, as well as ongoing discussions of speeded-up news cycles, an explicit focus on temporality has largely been missing from journalism studies. This Special Issue intends to further research on temporality by bringing together innovative work on how temporalities are constructed by texts, technologies, processes of globalization and contexts of production and consumption.

Journalism constitutes a series of interrelated practices for the social construction of time. It arrests the ordinary and the unusual in various forms of texts that create feelings of simultaneity, help define the contemporary, outline possible futures, and shape our understanding and memories of the past. Digital technologies allow journalism an

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ever closer monitoring of the present, multi-modal constructions of simultaneity and a range of new possibilities for connecting with and contextualizing various pasts. As such possibilities are developed, the overall temporal landscape of journalism is being reconfigured in both digital and analogue media.

Each paper in this issue focuses on the shifting temporalities of journalism in relation to recent developments. Most papers of the original ICA panel have been substantially revised or replaced by new articles. The line-up is mostly the same, apart from one author, Nikki Usher, and three co-authors: Niels Brügger (with Henrik Bødker), John Downey (with Emily Keightley) and Andrew Nightingale (with Kevin Barnhurst). Barbie Zelizer served as respondent on the panel and has contributed a concluding article to this issue.

It was an honour to have Kevin Barnhurst as moderator on our ICA panel in 2015. He did far more than simple moderation: he provided brilliant commentary, which will not surprise anybody who knew him. He later turned these ideas – together with Andrew Nightingale – into an article for this issue. In June 2016, Kevin Barnhurst suddenly passed away. We, and many others in the communication studies community, still have a hard time processing his untimely passing. Given Kevin's involvement in this issue, his influential work on journalism and time (e.g. Barnhurst, 2011) and – not least – his always curious and inspiring presence, we dedicate this Special Issue to the memory of Kevin Barnhurst.

The Nightingale/Barnhurst piece is conceptually framing the rest of the contributions; therefore, the issue starts with this article. The following articles are ordered from a focus on contexts of production, media texts, and consumption practices towards broader conceptual and historical approaches.

In 'Time, Realism, News', Kevin Barnhurst and Andrew Nightingale outline major shifts in the temporal orientation of US journalism from its inception to the present. They argue that a shift from realism to modernism meant a move away from the more concrete 'who', 'where' and 'what' to a stronger emphasis on broader contexts linked to 'when' and 'why'. Throughout the article, Barnhurst and Nightingale make an ambitious leap to see current news practices through Arendt's (1958) distinction between work and labour and the conception of time in Whitehead's (1929) process philosophy. (The editors would like to note that Kevin Barnhurst passed away before the final revision of the paper; Andrew Nightingale addressed the reviewers' requests.)

The following article is 'Breaking News Production Processes in US Metropolitan Newspapers: Immediacy and Journalistic Authority' by Nikki Usher. What is investigated here is how the online competition between local newspapers and television stations pushes immediacy into a position that creates new relations within what Usher terms 'relational authority'. Based on interviews with journalists from four metropolitan newspapers, Usher identifies how the pressure for online updating, or the coverage of 'incremental news', creates a growing tension within the constructions of relational authority, that is, between authority linked to particular types of stories and authority linked to speed. Thus, while the effort to be up-to-date online (regardless of the nature of the story) is grounded in a fear of not being relevant within the local community, this might simultaneously undermine the authority linked to the ability to decide what is important and what is not.

In 'Temporal Affordances in the News', Keren Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Motti Neiger also consider contexts of production but do so by linking these to representations of time in media texts. This is done through the notion of 'temporal affordances', which connects time-related possibilities and/or constraints of media technologies with the temporal characteristics of news narratives. The article identifies six temporal affordances from interviews with journalists and existing research. Based on these, the authors conduct a content analysis of Israeli and US print and online journalism at four points in time from the 1950s to the present. This article raises important questions about the interplay of media technologies, journalism practices and wider cultural contexts in constituting different temporal orientations.

In 'The Shifting Temporalities of Online News: The *Guardian's* Website from 1996–2015', Henrik Bødker and Niels Brügger focus on how the form of online news constitute interlinked notions of time. This article also employs the notion of temporal affordances as a way of identifying new possibilities for digital news: speed, accumulation and interactivity. Based on a frame for website analysis that sees meaning as a product of syntactical and morphological aspects, the article investigates how temporal affordances have been textually manifested on *The Guardian's* website from 1996 to the present. While the analysis challenges the overall argument about speed as the ultimate concept through which we can understand how journalism has developed its web presence, it also underlines the necessity of seeing the textual construction of journalism as an interplay between various more or less fixed and more dynamic textual elements.

Julia Sonnevend, in 'Interruptions of Time: The Coverage of the Missing Malaysian Plane MH370 and the Concept of "Events" in Media Research', argues for the foregrounding of the concept of 'event' within journalism studies. Through reviewing existing research on events in philosophy, sociology, historiography and journalism studies, she shows that the concept of 'event' has not received sufficient attention among journalism scholars. The article subsequently applies the concept in a case study: the news coverage of the disappeared Malaysian plane MH370 (2014) in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *CNN*. The paper argues that journalists employed two strategies while covering this event: (1) they turned to the past and to the future for events in their reporting and (2) covered what the paper calls 'substitute events', defined as minor events in the present that journalists perceived as new happenings and that led to further reporting.

In 'The Intermediate Time of News Consumption', Emily Keightley and John Downey move beyond media texts and contexts of production in order to investigate how the temporality of news is constructed through consumption. This article challenges the popular argument that the growing speed of news delivery makes a deep engagement with news virtually impossible. Moreover, the authors offer a more nuanced account of how the temporalities of news are constructed through the interplay between mediated time and socially constructed time within contexts of consumption. The authors approach this by developing and applying the concept of 'intermediate time' to two detailed, interview-based cases.

In the epilogue to this Special Issue, Barbie Zelizer weaves aspects from the contributions into a series of arguments about the development of the study of news temporalities. A central thread is a continuing need to replace simple and linear assumptions of time with

more ‘differentiated, nuanced ... active’ and contradictory temporalities in relation to the digital environment and, more specifically, to production and consumption. Zelizer offers useful comments on how such considerations may challenge larger discourses about the temporality of journalism, for instance, debates about journalism’s ‘shelf life’ and related ‘end-of-news’ frames. Overall, she argues that an ‘embrace of a simple notion of temporality has strategic value not only for journalists themselves but also for scholars invested in upholding journalism’s singularity’ and, with that, ‘allaying anxieties’ about where journalism may be heading.

Issues linked to the temporality of journalism are, indeed, continuously evolving along with new technologies and changing socio-cultural attitudes towards time. At the same time, some of our perceptions of time still remain the same or mostly the same. It is our hope that the contributions to this Special Issue – individually or collectively – will inspire new innovative studies on the complex and shifting temporalities of journalism.

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