Out of Bounds: Professional Norms as Boundary Markers

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Abstract:

Journalists use norms not only as identity markers of the professional news worker but also as boundary markers between professionals and non-professionals. The distinctions they draw rest on ethical practices such as verification, principles such as independence, and promises such as accountability. After outlining responses to previous "new" media, two still-evolving journalistic forms – social journalism and entrepreneurial journalism – are explored to illustrate how this boundary marking is being enacted today.

In times of relative media stability, journalists use normative standards and ethical principles to distinguish between "good" and "bad" members of their own profession. But in times of media instability, they also – even primarily – use ethics to distinguish between insiders and outsiders: who is or is not a journalist at all.

This chapter suggests that in an open media environment that presents no limits on who can publish, journalists cite norms not only as identity markers of the professional news worker ("Who I am") but also as boundary markers between professionals and non-professionals ("Who I am not" / "Who is not me"). The distinctions they draw rest on ethical practices such as verification (getting information right vs. getting it out as quickly as possible), principles such as independence (serving the public vs. serving commercial or other vested interests), and promises such as accountability for the consequences of their actions. After outlining journalists' evocation of normative concepts in response to “new” media forms in the past, two evolving hallmarks of contemporary journalism are used to illustrate how this boundary marking works, as well as the ways in which the boundaries are being redefined.

First, as social media have become pervasive over the past decade, normative principles that initially formed the basis of resistance subsequently have helped guide journalists toward productive use of material originating outside the newsroom. The boundary related to social media – considered here in the more specific context of “social journalism” (Hermida 2012a) – is an outward-facing one, involving relationships among journalists, sources, and publics.

Second, the newer phenomenon of “entrepreneurial journalism” offers an example of the use of professional norms to delineate a different and still-salient obstacle. Here we see the norms still being applied to define and articulate resistance. The clearest boundary is a more “internal” one; it involves the need for journalists themselves to wear multiple hats within an emerging enterprise, typically involving both content-production and revenue-production roles.

In discussions of both social and entrepreneurial journalism, the professional norm of accountability, often translated as “transparency” in a networked media environment, is being evoked with increasing vigor. Less than 20 years ago, accountability was a controversial addition to professional ethics codes such as those of the US Society of Professional Journalists: “I don’t think that journalists should be accountable to anything but the truth,” one practitioner-turned-professor declared in response (Noack 1999). Now linked to the professionally desirable trait of honesty, it is emerging as a definitive norm of digital journalism (Karlsson 2011).

Professional Norms as Boundary Devices: Response to “New” Media

The survival of journalism as an occupation depends on its credibility, which is gained through the collective behavior of its practitioners (Weaver *et al*. 2007). The right to wield internal oversight over that behavior typically is fiercely protected; in democratic societies, journalists see it as a far more appropriate form of control than external or formal oversight, such as by government or another regulatory entity. Particularly in the United States, where legal structures provide enormous room for journalistic autonomy, practitioners tend to view the professional norms that they themselves develop, articulate, and (perhaps) enforce as forming the only acceptable boundaries around occupational behavior.

More broadly, journalists use normative concepts as definitional devices – and have done so at least since they began to see their occupation as a fledgling profession more than a century ago (Schudson 1981). Successive iterations of their own evolving identity as “real” journalists (as opposed not so much to “fake” ones as to “bad” ones) have, over time, created a professional ideology based in large part on broadly accepted and widely shared values (Deuze 2005). Although structural differences lead to variations in how journalists in democratic societies see their role, there are widespread commonalities in the articulation of fundamental professional norms. For example, the provision of reliable, factual information by impartial social watchdogs is seen almost universally as a central journalistic function, and Western journalists are markedly wary about active promotion of particular values or ideas (Hanitzsch *et al*. 2011).

Within the United States, where a pervasive “ethos of autonomy” (Ugland 2008, p. 287) means even European-style press councils are seen as anathema to constitutionally protected press freedom, various professional entities have developed guidelines to codify these shared occupational norms. From the “Journalist’s Creed” articulated 100 years ago by the founding dean of the Missouri School of Journalism – who declared the journalism that “best deserves success" to be "stoutly independent" and to convey only what the journalist "holds in his heart to be true" (Williams 1914) – to ongoing debates about whether professional codes should be updated to reflect digital exigencies, the fundamental norms have remained stable. The largest such organization, the Society of Professional Journalists, identifies four of them in its widely cited Code of Ethics: commitment to truth-telling, minimization of harm, independence, and accountability. Codes and guidelines from other professional organizations and news outlets are in much the same vein.

Us and Them

Such normative guidelines arguably have served multiple purposes over the past century, but one consistent purpose has been a boundary-setting one: journalists and the organizations that employ them need to be perceived by the public (aka their audience) as crucial to the provision of factual, reliable, timely, and meaningful information (Hayes *et al*. 2007). They therefore have an interest in positioning other entities as less crucial, and an excellent way to make the point is to brand them as less ethical – that is, less committed to norms that engender factualness, reliability, and so on. Although digital media have accelerated the pace of change, the successive emergence and growth of "new" media forms throughout the 20th century and into the 21st repeatedly generated defensive responses, couched in normative terms, from many of the established practitioners of the day. Over and over, attempts to delineate and safeguard occupational turf drew on eloquent evocation of ethical standards and a declaration that the "traditional" journalist would uphold them against challenges from poseurs.

Despite the intertwined early history of newspapers and radio, for example, publishers were soon protesting that radio risked becoming a propaganda instrument because of its ties to government; offered only superficial news that created public confusion if not downright ignorance; and was in any case more interested in making money than serving citizens (Lott 1970). Entertainment programming was a focus of press criticism of early television – whose "lapses in taste and judgment" made it dubious for family viewing, *The New York Times* pronounced (Murray 1993, p. 129) – but the medium in general was soon depicted as sullied by commercial motivations that undermined its ostensible devotion to the public interest. On it has gone into the 2000s, when popular "fake" news comedy shows such as the Daily Show with Jon Stewart were determined to be "interesting because sometimes they do a better job performing the functions of journalism than journalists themselves" but ultimately to fall short because presenters do not share "journalists' moral commitments" (Borden and Tew 2007, p. 300).

The rise of the Internet as a journalistic platform in the late 1990s and early 2000s ushered in a new and intense round of paradigm repair, a boundary-setting tactic used by journalists to separate appropriate from inappropriate media logic and activity (Bennett *et al*. 1985). Rather than abating as the medium has taken root in Western society, this delineation of boundaries has become something of a perpetual professional activity. In contrast to the relative stability of broadcast media over time, the Internet has continued to mutate into newly challenging forms, and a sizable contingent of traditional journalists – certainly not all but many, especially in newspaper newsrooms – have responded each time by protesting that the ethics of their online counterparts are not quite up to snuff, or at best that they can far too easily go astray.

In the Internet's earliest days as a news medium, concerns focused on ethical use of online sources. The perceived difficulty of verifying facts was seen as a major problem, compounded by a perception that the Internet was a free-for-all containing unreliable, badly sourced, and generally dubious information (Garrison, 2000) and, just as bad, that its emphasis on speed would trump attempts at accuracy. “In print, we’ve always had the luxury of, well, let’s see if what we have immediately is actually true and the whole story and can be verified,” a newspaper editor fretted way back in 1995. “The old adage was, you know, ‘Get it first, but first, get it right.’ Well, now it’s just ‘get it first’” (Singer 1997, p. 82).

In addition to concerns about accuracy, journalists in the first decade of widespread online use articulated a host of other normatively desirable activities under threat, from doing original reporting, to protecting the privacy of content and the individuals behind it, to certifying the provenance of anonymous sources (Deuze and Yeshua 2001; Singer 1997). Ruggiero (2004) found that at least up to the time of his research, many journalists viewed the Internet as housing bogus and otherwise untrustworthy news, and operating well outside the objectivity-driven norms of conventional news gathering and presentation. In response, practitioners erected cultural boundaries by applying such exclusionary characterizations as “unprofessional” and “unreliable” (p. 99). A few years later, newspaper journalists were still rating online news overall as only moderately credible – defined as believable, accurate, and fair – though they seemed willing to admit that online news provided by traditional journalistic entities might be kind of OK (Cassidy 2007). In other words, as greater newsroom effort went into maintaining an affiliated website, the definitional boundary shifted to encompass those online journalists employed by a “real” news outlet while continuing to exclude everyone else.

Concerns expressed in ethical terms also have greeted changes in newsroom structures or practices in connection with new technological affordances and economic demands. In the early 2000s, as news organizations explored cross-platform production under the then-trendy label of “newsroom convergence,” journalists protested about perceived threats to accuracy from an emphasis on speed (again); the subversion of “news values” to “entertainment values” (again);

and compromised journalistic autonomy, primarily through a blending of promotion with news delivery (Singer 2006). Journalists in converged newsrooms believed that new responsibilities or work practices left them less time to investigate and verify information (Smith *et al*. 2010) and that in general, the public benefited far less than media companies (and journalists themselves far less again than either companies or audiences; Huang *et al*. 2006).

The early 2000s also saw large-scale adoption of the blogging format – a form of social media – by online users from all walks of life. The reaction of many journalists will be no surprise: skepticism and suspicion of this “mutant breed” of self-absorbed and hyper-opinionated amateurs (Regan 2003). Attention was focused on such blogging breaches as plagiarism or even fabrication of information, misrepresentation of identity, and conflicts of interest created by bloggers taking money from vested interests in return for favorable posts (Perlmutter and Schoen 2007). A survey in the mid-2000s found that sizable numbers of journalists believed blogs were neither trustworthy, credible, factual, nor well-written, with newspaper journalists more likely that those in other media to see blogs as threatening the profession (Chung *et al*. 2007; Sweetser *et al*. 2008). In short, as bloggers came to personify the growing challenge to journalists’ power as society’s authoritative storytellers (Matheson 2004), journalists responded largely by focusing on bloggers’ perceived ethical shortcomings, notably in relation to the crucial journalistic task of monitoring political actors (Carlson 2007). More broadly, bloggers’ presence as rivals on journalists’ occupational turf encouraged those journalists to redefine their own practices and processes – for instance, to emphasize normative strengths such as a professed commitment to fact-checking – as a protective strategy or boundary-setting device (Lowrey 2006).

For nearly a century, then, journalists have greeted each emerging news platform with concerns framed in normative terms. Moreover, they have applied those terms, consistently and explicitly, to distinguish themselves and their news-generating activities from those outside the magic circle that encompasses newsroom professionals. The rest of this chapter looks at how these efforts are playing out in relation to the rise of social media in the late 2000s and the more recent emergence of the "entrepreneurial journalist."

Social Journalism

Journalists' increasing use of social media to engage with audiences demonstrates not only their go-to reliance on normative principles as a boundary marker but also how both principles and boundaries have been reconceptualized over a fairly short period of time. This section considers two related aspects of social journalism that initially prompted journalists to declare their professional distance but that increasingly have come to be seen as at least potentially compatible with practitioner norms. The first involves content from outside the newsroom, and the second involves journalists' own activities in social media spaces.

User-Generated Content

By the early 2000s – after the internet was in widespread use in U.S. newsrooms but before social media had taken root – more than two-thirds of U.S. journalists claimed to believe it was very important to include ordinary citizens as sources (Weaver *et al*. 2007). But when news organizations opened their digital doors to so-called "user-generated content" (UGC), information produced outside the newsroom and housed on media websites, many journalists again reacted with alarm over perceived ethical (and legal) implications. UGC was described as unethical in its own right and as subverting practitioners' own normative standards. Comments to researchers about the perils of online populism, while never unanimous, were nonetheless ubiquitous and unambiguous. Just a few examples:

> * Users are "a bunch of bigots" shouting at each other "without ever bothering to listen … If someone did try to put a reasonable, balanced view, it was an exception" (Thurman 2008, p. 145).
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> * Because of the relative anonymity afforded by comment posts and the associated lack of accountability, "people feel licensed to say things in content and style that they wouldn't own if publishing as themselves" (Singer and Ashman 2009, p. 16).
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> * The value of UGC is "disproportionate to the excessive amount of management time which is taken up with trying to ensure it is accurate, balanced, honest, fair and – most importantly – legally safe to publish" (Singer 2010, p. 134).
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> * "Things can be construed as fact when there's nothing to back them up as facts," and it would be "pretty labor-intensive" for journalists to check user contributions out (Lewis *et al*. 2010, p. 170).

And more. Much more. The institutional response was to publish extensive codes of conduct for use of commenting spaces, in particular. *USA Today*, for instance, prohibits "threatening, abusive, libelous, defamatory, obscene, vulgar, pornographic, profane or indecent information of any kind"; in Britain, *The Times* bans "content or activity" that "promotes racism, terrorism, hatred or physical harm." Other news organizations all over the world have similar proscriptions.

Yet within a decade, not only have the boundaries around content become more porous but the emphasis on such boundaries also has become less prominent in journalists' discourse about UGC. As early as the mid-2000s, practitioners were acknowledging that audience members can be "very knowledgeable about certain areas" (Hermida and Thurman 2008, p. 349) and at least a "small number" can engage others in ways that "make it much more interesting for everyone else" (p. 353). Perhaps, some even suggested, journalists should be "developing ways of allowing users to add more value to debate, rather than giving them a space that interpolates them as 'inferior'" journalists (Singer and Ashman 2009, p. 13). Over time, more journalists began expressing the view that while UGC might not conform to some normative goals, it contributed substantively to others, most notably goals related to diversity of information and information sources, and thus to the provision of a more multi-faceted truth. “I’ve seen the future,” UK *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger (2009) declared, “and it’s mutual.”

Particularly after the rise of Twitter in the late 2000s and its striking demonstration of journalistic utility during crises and disasters, the construction efforts of growing numbers of journalists shifted from fences to bridges. Though the immediate reaction in some quarters predictably sought to differentiate it from proper journalism – one veteran columnist described Twitter in 2009 as “a toy for bored celebrities and high-school girls,” while another said using it to find information was “like searching for medical advice in an online world of quacks and cures” (quoted in Hermida 2010, pp. 299, 300) – many practitioners quickly saw its utility.

They saw, too, its potential to revisit some long-standing normative practices. For instance, the use of live blogging formats to cover breaking news enables journalists to be far more transparent about their news-gathering practices, as discussed further below. Journalists now can tell users “‘Look, this is out there, we can’t verify it, but this is being talked about, this is part of the story.’ We’re letting you in on the workflow of the journalist in a way,” as one reporter who helped pioneer live blogging at the *Guardian* explained (Thurman and Walters 2013, p. 93). Journalists also said they were more likely to confess to getting something wrong in a Live Blog and to apologize as well as fix the mistake promptly. In general, the transparency of the format was seen as fostering inclusivity of users in the news-making process, making the boundaries around journalistic work more porous than in even the recent past.

Other journalists have come to believe that at least for some stories, getting information out quickly actually does trump getting it perfect the first time, particularly if users are aware of the process. In including unverified tweets in their breaking news coverage of the 2008 Mumbai bombings, BBC news executives said “monitoring, selecting and passing on the information we are getting as quickly as we can” is the right approach because “many people will want to know what we know and what we are still finding out” (Hermida 2010, p. 300).

Indeed, social journalism can be seen as part of a larger conceptual shift to journalism as the creation of collective rather than exclusively individual intelligence, authority, and expertise (Hermida 2012b) and, more broadly, from “journalism as product” to “journalism as process” (Robinson 2011). The overall effect of this shift is to make boundaries – plus the need to patrol them and to control their crossing – less important by lending normative legitimacy to participation (Lewis 2012). Some of the reasons for the shift no doubt are rooted in resignation: If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em. Users are highly unlikely to fold up their laptops, toss out their cell phones, and go away, so journalists have responded in part by rationalizing their role as desirable (which they certainly are financially, regardless of any editorial merit provided) and not merely inescapable. But it also is obvious that while some users are indeed rude, ridiculous, or wrong, much of the information generated outside the newsroom – from on-the-scene reports to news tips to cogent analysis – is proving invaluable.

Journalists’ primary response, then, has shifted from disapprobation to accommodation, particularly as the dominant forms of UGC have expanded from post-publication commentary (which continues to attract ranters) to pre-publication alerts about both news and newsworthiness through newly prominent formats such as Twitter. Where a few years ago journalists were restricting user contributions to the final interpretation stage of the news-production process (Domingo *et al*. 2008), users today are important in stages previously closed to them, including observation of news and selection of newsworthiness. That is indeed a boundary-breaching change: Rather than trying to seal their ethical borders, practitioners are looking for ways to bring UGC within their own ethical sphere.

Journalists' use of social media

They have done so in two ways: in using UGC as source material, and in crafting their own social media presence. The growing reliance on material originating outside the newsroom already has been outlined, but its incorporation in journalists' stories as distinct from their own tweets, live blogs, or other transitory messages deserves a bit more attention.

Beyond using tweets from ordinary people as a digital *vox populi* to illustrate public opinion on a topic (Broersma and Graham 2012), journalists continue to maintain more rigid rules around full-fledged stories compared with social media flutters. The Associated Press guidelines for use of information derived from social media – which add a complex layer to existing verification procedures – are indicative. The AP's multi-faceted verification process includes, among other steps, checking the source's social history, comparing the content with AP reporting, running material past regional experts, and verifying the context. "Even if something is incredibly compelling and it doesn't pass one of our steps, then it doesn't go out," says AP social media and UGC editor Fergus Bell. "That's how we stop from being wrong" (Silverman 2012). The BBC responded to the explosion in UGC by setting up a special verification Hub, staffed by as many as 20 journalists, to sift through potentially newsworthy textual and visual material and assess its credibility using tools ranging from search engines to Twitter trend data to online discussions among trusted contacts (Turner 2012).

When information can't be definitively verified, however, disclosure again becomes key. The primary norm remains the long-standing one of truth-telling, but where supporting standards in a traditional environment might be independence or objectivity, the fallback principle in social spaces is transparency. Karlsson (2011) connects this shift to the nature of an interactive, participatory medium: "When more than one version of events is made public … it becomes necessary to demonstrate why one version is better than another" (p. 286). For journalists, "the barriers are broken down," as a *Guardian* editor said. "Users do expect more journalists to step out from behind articles, defend, and discuss them" (Singer and Ashman 2009, p. 16).

The focus so far has been on journalists' use of material generated outside the newsroom. But of course, journalists also actively use social media platforms to distribute their own work. Here, too, they and their employers have wrestled with where the lines should be drawn. In addition to concern about the potential to undermine credibility by posting bogus information – dealt with primarily through the verification processes already discussed – this practice raises another ethical issue: the threat to their status as impartial observers and reporters.

The neutrality norm offers a fresh aspect of ongoing boundary negotiation. Some news organizations, notably national "newspapers of record," have sought to maintain impermeable boundaries between journalists' private views and public voices. "The bedrock of our authority as a publication is our impartiality," states the social media policy of South Africa's *Mail and Guardian*. "Your profiles, retweets, likes and postings can reveal your political and ideological affiliations. Be very sure that your audience either understands that you are professional enough to put those aside in the workplace, or that those affiliations will not be construed as having an effect on your ability to do objective journalism." Similarly, *The New York Times* advises circumspection about online posts – at least on some topics. "Bloggers may write lively commentary on their preferences in food, music, sports or other avocations, but as journalists, they must avoid taking stands on divisive public issues," its policy states. "A blog that takes a political stand is as far out of bounds as letter to the editor supporting or opposing a candidate."

But journalists who work extensively with social media are coming to see that stance as unrealistic, even counterproductive. Researchers have been saying for some time that the shift to an interactive environment would necessarily challenge a traditional commitment to strict objectivity (Deuze 2005), and recent work has indicated at least some journalists now agree. A study of journalists' use of Twitter (Lasorsa *et al*. 2012), for example, found that their views about the normative importance of neutrality were shifting, with 43% of coded tweets containing an expression of opinion. Vis (2013) found opinion to be a significant part of the Twitter coverage of the north London riots in 2011, suggesting "the watering down of an established journalistic norm, possibly giving rise to a new hybrid norm on Twitter" (pp. 43-44). And a 2012 study of US online journalists by Agarwal and Barthel (2013) found that many interviewees "roundly rejected" norms of objectivity and neutrality, describing the need to get a point across "without first burying it in equivocations or false political stances and *New York Times*-y stuff." They were more interested in getting at "the truth as you see it" rather than adhering to what many described as outdated rituals of objectivity.

Thus, unlike many journalists working primarily in traditional formats who continue to value a more impartial stance (Skovsgaard *et al*. 2013), the evidences suggests those embedded in social spaces are finding that traditional boundaries no longer function in the same ways they once did – if indeed they function at all. The fluidity of information on platforms such as Twitter means that material produced by journalists intermingles in myriad ways with material produced by users, bringing to the fore an emphasis on verification and transparency while lessening the importance of traditional norms such as objectivity. The incorporation of social media practices in journalistic work and practitioners' understanding of that work has brought a rethinking of normative values, with norms that enable ongoing relationships emerging as more valuable than those that seek to distance journalists from the outside world.

Entrepreneurial Journalism

If social journalism offers an exemplar of journalists' use of normative markers to establish their relationship with outsiders, the application of normative principles to entrepreneurial journalism suggests a more inward focus. The concern is primarily with how journalists do their own job, specifically how they maintain distinctions between roles that require loyalty to both audiences and advertisers or other sources of financial support. In other words, the boundary here is the vaunted "wall" separating editorial and commercial considerations. There has been far less academic or industry discourse to date about entrepreneurial journalism in comparison with the extensive and ongoing conversation about social media, but the point that successful innovation hinges on overlap among the needs of customers, content producers, and financiers (Picard 2000) explicitly calls into question the nature and viability of boundaries separating them.

As suggested above, American journalists in particular have long seen autonomy, a fundamental norm of all professions (Larson, 1977), as vital to the public service enterprise they seek to perform (Beam *et al*. 2009). Pressures on that norm abound, and even before the rise of Web 2.0 interactivity, the Internet was recognized as posing particular pressures on journalistic autonomy because of its vulnerability to market influence (Cohen 2002). The prevalence of sponsored content and the relatively close working relationships between online editorial and marketing departments have been among the causes for concern (Deuze and Yeshua 2001).

Entrepreneurial journalism not only makes such pressures overt but also concentrates them in the activities of a single person or small team. Journalists who form a start-up business wear multiple hats every day, from the relatively familiar one of content producer to the far less familiar ones of marketer, advertising executive, and business manager. Issues of journalistic independence and conflicts of interest "will soon become the dominant theme in journalism ethics," media ethicist Stephen Ward (2009) predicts, necessitating construction of guidelines to safeguard norms and respond to public skepticism. Ward urges rigorous editorial oversight combined with disclosure of any potential conflicts to address "the looming ethical problems of an entrepreneurial age." Similarly, Poynter Institute ethicist Kelly McBride cautions that "Money itself isn't tainted, but it comes with stipulations always" (Briggs 2010).

Nor are the concerns limited to for-profit enterprises. Scholars and other observers have asked whether sufficient boundaries exist between journalists and their foundation benefactors in the nonprofit start-ups that have gained traction in the 21st century – or, for that matter, whether foundations in general are subjected to the journalistic scrutiny they deserve as ideological institutions wielding considerable social and political power. "By what means would this become manifest in reporting, and how might such manifestations be detected?" Browne asks. "Interests come in many shapes and sizes, and operate on all sorts of potentially competing and hidden agendas" (2010, p. 901).

So whether the pressures are exerted by foundations and donors, as in many non-profit endeavors, or by commercial entities such as advertisers or sponsors, the rise of the content producer who doubles as revenue generator clearly suggests potential pitfalls. With social media, as we have seen, the primary ethical concerns have related to truth-telling (addressed by a re-engagement with the forms and functions of verification processes as boundary devices) and impartiality (addressed by an apparent willingness to reconsider the ongoing value of such a norm altogether). With entrepreneurial journalism, the norm of independence is the dominant one, and the tension so far seems unresolved. A recent study of media trade press coverage of entrepreneurial journalism (Vos and Singer 2014) suggests that journalists actually are broadly supportive of the idea in general, but some trip over the ethical considerations, expressing concern about a potential "willingness to transgress time-honored barriers – for instance, by blurring the division between reporting and advertising" (Rice 2010).

Entrepreneurial journalism demands a reconsideration of the value (or not) of independence from audiences as well as advertisers or sponsors. Although social media have created new relationships between journalists and audiences, the resulting ethical issues have mostly revolved around sourcing, as shown earlier. For the entrepreneur, the conception of an audience potentially shifts from "the public, the people who rely on me for credible information" to "my customers, the people whom I rely on to keep my journalistic enterprise going (and who also continue to rely on me for the credible information that forms the basis of my enterprise)." In a traditional news environment, keeping audiences happy was only indirectly the job of the journalist. The extent to which a start-up's audience-as-customer must be catered to in order to survive financially, balanced against the value of autonomous editorial judgment and the journalist's traditional norm of public service broadly defined, is another topic ripe for exploration from a normative perspective.

Considerably more work is needed on entrepreneurial journalism in order to understand how and whether normative boundaries are being reimagined, reconciled with new exigencies, or reified along traditional lines. As growing numbers of journalists, willingly or unwillingly, become independent operators, just what will that "independence" look like?

Transparency as the New Norm(al)

The discussion above indicated the growing view of transparency, a somewhat undervalued and even contested norm in traditional media, as a prominent norm in social journalism. There is some evidence that it is being called upon in ethical considerations of entrepreneurial journalism, as well, whether involving a commercial or a nonprofit enterprise. “As important as having ethics is letting people know that you do,” advises Briggs (2012, p. 54). “A startup has no track record to establish its credibility. As a journalism entrepreneur, it’s crucial to be open about the goals and standards of your site.”

Transparency, of course, is all about communication across boundaries. The inherent function of the norm of truthful forthrightness (Plaisance 2007) is to make clear what otherwise might be hidden, from processes to beliefs to motives. Although journalists have for some time been willing (reluctantly, in some cases) to acknowledge a need to be accountable for their decisions and actions, transparency involves a more proactive stance: a before-the-fact profession of goals or interests that supplements but also goes beyond an after-the-fact admission of responsibility. The fluidity and interactivity of a digital environment create both a need and an opportunity that seemed to most journalists considerably less self-evident in a traditional media world. Indeed, the nature and extent of disclosure facilitated by digital media was arguably not even feasible in the past (Hayes *et al*. 2007); its current use extends journalistic authority as well as credibility (Karlsson 2011), providing a sound ethical foundation for the honest relationships on which both social journalism and entrepreneurial journalism rest.

In addition to those just cited, a growing number of other scholars also have urged the adoption of this boundary-breaching norm. Phillips (2010), for example, calls for an increased emphasis on transparency, especially about the origin of reported information, as a safeguard of truth. Particularly given the online emphasis on speed of delivery, she says, “accuracy and sincerity reside in transparency,” with clear attribution and increased use of links making it “rather more difficult for journalists to quote selectively and in so doing completely distort the facts” (pp. 379-380). In their exploration of shifts in journalistic capital, Hellmueller and her colleagues (2103) connected the immediacy of networked online journalism to emerging forms of professional responsibility. Showing audiences where facts originated “shifts the responsibility from the journalist’s judgment to its source of origin,” with journalists and audiences collaborating as “mutually reliant tellers of the truth” (p. 301). Van der Wurff and Schönbach (2011) see transparency as an overarching norm and “the major measure to secure the quality of modern-day journalism” without giving up their professional autonomy in the process (p. 418).

In short, it appears that journalism’s ideological commitment to control, rooted in an institutional instinct toward protecting legitimacy and boundaries, may be giving way to a hybrid logic of adaptability and openness: a willingness to see audiences more as peers, to appreciate their contributions, and to find normative purpose in transparency and participation (Lewis 2012, p. 851). Early indications are that audiences, in turn, see value in the change. For example, the provision of supporting evidence and other transparent attribution practices in the *Guardian*’s Live Blogs contributed to readers’ assessment of these as a more objective form of journalism than the newspaper itself; they described the feeds as more factual, less opinion-based, and more balanced (Thurman and Walters 2013).

When we begin to tear down the walls that separate us – including normative walls – our commonalities really do become clearer. In a social and entrepreneurial environment where the boundaries around journalists have become steadily more porous, those commonalities are arguably the key to the survival of a profession that can no longer thrive in splendid isolation.

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