

History of Online Journalism

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Introduction

- Online journalism is, most importantly, **journalism**. Online simply defines the method of delivery.
- In tonight's session, you will come to understand the roots of online journalism and how quickly it has emerged.
- Why did you select this class this semester?

Key pieces along the way



Roots of online journalism

1970

- 25 cents for a gallon of gas
- Vietnam
- IBM PC ...
10 years away
- Teletext



Teletext

- Noninteractive system for transmission of text and graphics for display on a television set.



Teletext

- The TV set must be equipped with a decoder box or built-in chip in order to capture and display the teletext information.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) files for patent of "Teledata" in 1971
- Later that same year, Teletext tested in Reston, Va.

Videotext

- Computer-based interactive systems that electronically deliver:
 - text
 - numbers
 - graphics
 - ...



Videotext

- Via
 - telephone lines
 - two-way cable
 - computer networks
 - or any combination of the three
 - ...

Videotext

- For display on a:
 - television set
 - video monitoror
 - a personal computer.

Videotext

Every interactive online system that has existed, including the Internet, falls under the videotext umbrella.

Videotext

However, videotext never gained popularity.

What went wrong?

Videotext

- 1. Dedicated terminals were required for access.
 - \$900 to buy or \$30 per month to rent
- 2. Tied up the family TV and telephone
 - Most homes in the '70s and '80s had just one phone line and one TV
- 3. High cost and complex pricing
 - Monthly fees plus additional costs based on usage
- 4. Poor messaging capabilities
 - Email proved to be popular, and it clogged early videotext systems

Bulletin Board Systems

- 1978: BBS software packages invented
 - Personal computer can house a complete interactive online system. Computer is hooked to a modem and answers calls from other computers for information -- news, email, discussion boards.

Bulletin Board Systems

- 1982: StarText, the only early newspaper videotext system intended for display on computers, opens in Fort Worth, Texas
- 1985: IBM, Sears and CBS announce a partnership to create Trintex, eventually renamed Prodigy.
- StarText and Trintex were intended for delivery to personal computers -- not television sets.

Bulletin Board Systems

- Star-Telegram posts its news and information AND it encouraged Startext users to contribute content to the online service.
- User-contributed
 - movie reviews
 - columns
 - short stories
- They built an active online community

What is the Internet?

The Internet is
a network of computers

What is the World Wide Web?

- Created in 1990 when Englishman Tim Berners-Lee and colleagues at the European Center for Particle Physics developed a computer language that enabled users to navigate by clicking on underlined words called links.



Tim Berners-Lee

What is the World Wide Web?

- The language:

Hypertext **M**arkup **L**anguage.

What is the World Wide Web?

- The Web is a place where people do things
 - buy airline tickets
 - search for recipes
 - read about disease
 - read and interact with the news
 - buy computers
 - listen to the radio
 - other things?

What makes the Web different?

- **Capacity**
 - Nearly unlimited space, limited only by human decisions and high-capacity servers
- **Flexibility**
 - words, pictures, audio, video, graphics
- **Immediacy**
 - Information as events unfold
 - Sept. 11, tsunami, hurricanes
 - Breadth, or expansion (several angles to the same topic)
 - Depth (quality and depth of information about an individual story)
- **Permanence**
 - Nothing need be lost
- **Interactivity**
 - Immediate feedback channel
 - email links, forums, polls

Lessons learned

- Online services must be personally useful
 - Popularity of email and search engines
- Interactivity is a key element
 - weakness of traditional media, but not online journalism
- Content must be free unless it is very specialized
 - Wall Street Journal sells subscriptions
 - Ebay makes commissions
 - Second layer (page 2) to espn.com
 - Adult sites make money
- Real money is not in the technology but in the programming
 - Advertisers will pay money if the audience is there for the **content**

Summary

- Roots of the WWW go back three decades
- Like most inventions, the WWW was more like an evolution than an invention
- Teletext → Videotext → BBS → WWW
- WWW gives journalists a new, unique and interactive way to tell the story.

Bibliography

- “Web Journalism: Practice and Promise of a New Medium” by James Glen Stovall
- “Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism”, edited by Kevin Kawamoto with a chapter by David Carlson
- David Carlson’s online timeline (<http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/carlson/timeline.shtml>)