

Introduction

This MECO 6900 seminar paper will identify and analyse the differences between broadcast and print media. To ensure a manageable length of discussion the paper has been divided into three parts. Part 1 briefly discusses the historical differences between broadcast and print. Part 2 examines the practical differences between the two media and is divided into two sections. The first section discusses differences in style and structure, while the second section discusses differences in audience impact. Finally, Part 3 looks at the regulatory differences between broadcast and print media. For the sake of this paper, the term *broadcast media* refers to television and radio; *print media* refers to newspapers. Also, this paper assumes that what influences broadcast and print *media* will, by association, influence broadcast and print *journalism*.

Part 1 – Historical Differences

The main historical difference between broadcast and print media is their development. Print media, and thereby print journalism, evolved from a process. Anthony Smith (1980; in Herbert 2001) states: "Printing evolved from a series of divisions of labour that had been introduced in an effort to speed up the task of manuscript copying." In short, print journalism developed from a process already in place for centuries, namely the manual transcription of manuscripts. In contrast, broadcast media (and broadcast journalism) were born of technology. The telegraph, telephone, radio, television, and Internet were not built specifically for journalism nor did they evolve from some existing process related to journalism; instead, people adapted these inventions to serve the media. In this sense, broadcast is a relatively young medium especially when compared to print.

Part 2 – Practical Differences

Style & Structure

There are numerous stylistic and structural differences between broadcast and print journalism. As it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss them all, I will refer to just three: editorial influence, structure, and pace.

Print journalism edits more than broadcast. Newspapers edit for clarity, fairness, and accuracy (Colgan, 2004). They also edit to ensure individual house style. In broadcast journalism however, exactly what you write is often exactly what airs, with little or no editing. The extensive editing process in print journalism allows more time for eloquence and prose. Conversely, the relative lack of editing in broadcast journalism warrants short, sharp, succinct language of a more conversational tone (Higgins, 2004).

Broadcast and print journalism also differ in structure. Print news stories use an inverted pyramid structure with the most important items (the facts of the story) reported in the first paragraph. Remaining facts are then presented in descending order of importance. Broadcast news stories on the other hand are broader (no pun intended). Important facts are still reported in the first paragraph, but broadcast news stories end decisively and do not trail off as do print news stories (Higgins, 2004).

Lastly, broadcast and print news stories differ in length and pace. The average radio news story is just 30 seconds long. The average television news story is one minute and 30 seconds long. Read at a pace of 180 words per minute these lengths equate to 90 and 270 words respectively for radio and television news stories. The average print news piece can vary greatly in length, but has been described as "12 snappy pars" (Ricketson, 2004). Ultimately, the newspaper journalist has little control over the pace at which the

story is read; it is the reader who dictates the pace.

Impact

Broadcast and print media also differ in how much the audience can retain and recall. Average newspaper readers retain and recall more information than do average broadcast viewers and listeners (Alysen, 2000). The reason for this difference is, in my opinion, that broadcast media can be turned on but then forgotten. Print media however cannot be ignored in this way. For it to be of any use, people must interact with print media. Consider people who come home from work with a newspaper. They walk into the house, throw the paper on the table, turn on the television and move to the kitchen to fix a snack. While in the kitchen they can still hear the television but they do not interact directly with it. Newspapers cannot interact with their audience the same way television can. Print media requires a much higher degree of interaction with its audience. This higher degree of interaction is why people retain and recall more information from print media.

Another area in which broadcast and print media differ is in permanence. It is a simple matter to read last week's news. Libraries keep newspapers dating back decades, perhaps centuries. If the actual paper itself is not available then a facsimile of some type, most likely microfiche, will be. Compare this to broadcast media where it is difficult to watch last week's television news and next to impossible to listen to radio newscasts from decades past. New technology is slowly changing this, but it will be some time before data compression and storage technologies reach a level where libraries will be able to archive broadcast media. When technologies do reach this level, will libraries have the desire to compress and store all this information? If so, will anyone want or require it? Print has posterity, while broadcast is fleeting.

Finally, broadcast and print journalism vary in how they influence their respective audiences. In broadcast media tone of voice, physical build, gender, and dress all influence the audience's

perceptions of authenticity and accuracy. People who watch broadcast news form perceptions immediately based on what they see or hear. In contrast, newspaper readers are often oblivious to the physical characteristics of the reporter. Usually all the reader knows of the reporter comes from the by-line and suggests the reporter's sex. Newspaper reporters must rely solely on their writing skills to affect reader.

Part 3 – Regulatory Differences

The most striking difference between broadcast and print media regulation is inequality. As Albon and Papandrea (1998) write: "... print media are not subject to direct regulatory controls, [however] they are indirectly influenced by cross-media ownership rules..." Australia is not alone in this fact. In other democratic countries the principle of press freedom has ensured the development of print media largely unconstrained by regulation (Ibid). In the United States, where freedom of speech and of the press is assured by the First Amendment of their constitution, the Supreme Court has stated, "it is well settled that the First Amendment has a special meaning in the broadcast context."

Reasons for the regulatory disparity between broadcast and print are too numerous and too complex to warrant discussion here. Suffice it to say that ambiguous and intangible ideals such as the 'public interest'; the electromagnetic spectrum as a 'scarce resource'; and broadcast media as 'intruders' in people's homes are cited as reasons to regulate and control broadcast media. The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Wireless Broadcasting in Australia (Gibson, 1942; in Albon & Papandrea 1998) proposed that, "...no medium of entertainment, whether it be stage, cinema or literature has such a powerful influence for good or evil as broadcasting."

In the forward to Krattenmaker and Powe's 1994 book *Regulating Broadcast Programming* Christopher C. DeMuth, the president of the

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research poses the questions:

Is federal telecommunications regulation impeding competition and innovation, and has this indeed become its principal if unstated function? Is regulation inhibiting the dissemination of ideas and information through electronic media? Does the licensing regime for the electromagnetic spectrum allocate that resource to its most productive uses?

While the answers to these questions could fill volumes, a quick way to test DeMuth's hypotheses is to apply current broadcast regulations to print media and measure the public's reaction.

Imagine if the Australian government placed restrictions on who could own and use pens, pencils, and paper. Then imagine if the government declared paper a scarce resource and that interference occurs when two or more people write simultaneously on the same sheet of paper. Now imagine that after declaring these things the government proclaims that it owns all the paper in Australia and a Federal Paper Commission will decide a) how much paper will be available and b) to whom paper will be available. Just imagine.

Conclusion

Broadcast and print media have several significant differences. This paper has focused on three main areas of difference: historical differences in the context of each medium's creation and establishment; practical differences relating to style and structure and impact on the audience; and regulatory differences in terms of governmental control.

The practical differences between broadcast and print media have made up the majority of my discussion as they were what we covered in class. However, it is the regulatory differences which are, to me, most important. Ensuring that print media remain free is vital.

Also vital is ensuring that burgeoning communication technologies such as the Internet do not fall prey to the same regulatory regime as traditional broadcast media. Just imagine.

References

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