

A history of anticipating the future: an analysis of the AN Smith lectures, Andrew Olle Lectures and media commentary

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Abstract

There are multiple narratives of technological and organisational change for making sense of the news media industry since the turn of the century. In Australia, the Andrew Olle and AN Smith lectures have served as key sites whereby leading members of the journalistic field have articulated narratives of change. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of 'field' and using Foucault's notion of 'commentary' as a method, we begin by analysing all Andrew Olle and AN Smith lectures from 1997 to 2015 and selected those that substantially discuss journalism and the media industry more broadly. Our analysis develops an account of the narratives of change to better understand the different negotiations and translations of the journalistic field. We found three key narratives: (1) commercial performance and concerns over the decline of 'quality journalism', (2) the role of technology in surviving industrial change and (3) fundamental change to journalistic practice.

Keywords

Bourdieu, commentary, Foucault, journalistic field, media technology, news industry

Whenever new technology emerges which is expected to play a major role in the evolution of media, researchers, scholars, business executives and practitioners alike all participate in a game of prophesying revolution.

Steenen (2011: 311)

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There have been many rapid changes to journalism over the past two decades, and stakeholders are quick to offer their expert opinions on these changes. Steen Steensen's critique of what he calls the 'techno-approach' to changes in journalism focuses on those dimensions of online journalism that he saw as relevant in 2011. He focuses on the three 'assets' (or 'affordances') of online journalism that are deemed to have the 'greatest potential impact on online journalism: hypertext, interactivity and multimedia'. Of course, the irony of Steensen's critical commentary is that the discourse within which his critique is situated is anachronistic and belongs to a specific era of 2005–2010 online journalism. Read enough of the commentaries about the shifting character of the media industry produced over the past three or four decades and patterns develop around cycles of common sense that blossom into mutual presuppositions about what will (almost) definitely happen in 3, 5 or 10 years.

Prophesying the revolutionary role of media technology is a future-oriented discourse. Future-oriented discourses use perspectives on the future state of affairs to shape the present (Kinsley, 2012). With each cycle of change and 'common sense' proselytising about what this means for the media, and journalism in particular, the future-oriented discourse changes in turn and a new territory is manifest and populated with a new terminology. Bob Franklin (2012) has noted in his critical reflection on the 'future of journalism' that these rapid changes have produced a 'proliferation of neologisms describing these developments in journalism' (p. 595). Mirroring the multiple contextual modalities of digital networked information itself, the discourses that frame changes to journalism and news media industries circulate in global and local contexts, past and future temporalities, and specialist journalist and technology-centric professions at the same time. The global news-based media industry has been heavily influenced by narratives of 'innovation' that primarily circulate in the United States. From a policy perspective, a discourse of 'convergence' has influenced debates in the United Kingdom and Australia largely due to the role of the government in partially regulating (to different degrees) ownership and control of media enterprises in the respective jurisdictions.

Contemplating the future of journalism is animated by a core tension between the 'innovation' demanded by market-centric discourses of technology platforms – associated with 'Silicon Valley' discourses of technological solutionism (Levina and Hasinoff, 2016; Morozov, 2013) – and the much slower frequencies of change in the practice-oriented communication professions such as journalism. 'Innovation' is invoked in an almost mythological fashion to describe techniques of reincorporating forces allegedly outside the journalistic field, such as 'the market' or 'technological change', so they can be domesticated and subject to the concerns of serious journalism. The prophesying can take on an evangelical tone which is unsurprising considering Slack and Wise's (2005: 23) observation that technological change has developed quasi-religious undertones; proponents of 'innovation' framed through a 'progress narrative' task others with having sufficient 'faith' in the 'deliverance' of technology. Commentators agitate to describe what is just over the horizon, so the 'next' ('next technology', 'next disruption', etc.) organises the field around itself and commentators become expert navigators as the expertise itself develops. Every editorial and business decision is framed in terms of a calculus of probability and those who jostle for position are judged by their previous 'bets'. It is only now after multiple distinct waves of structural change in the broader news-based media industry do we recognise the episodic character of the narratives and frames of reference for these changes.

To further explore this in an Australian context, we have analysed two sets of public lectures – the AN Smith lecture and the Andrew Olle lecture – and published commentary about the lectures. In effect, the lectures and reporting on the lectures are two forms of 'commentary' about the journalistic field. The key focus of the Andrew Olle lecture is addressing the role and future of the media. The Andrew Olle lecture is named after the Australian Broadcast Commission (ABC)

presenter and was created by his colleagues at the 702 ABC radio station.¹ The AN Smith lecture series started in 1938 after a bequest from the family of Arthur Norman Smith, who was a founder of the Australian Journalists' Association (the original journalists' union). Over its 70-plus year history, the lecture is 'presented each year by a leading authority on some aspect of journalism'.² The two lecture series were selected as they have the explicit goal of commentating about the state of the media and journalism industries and serving as the basis of new conversations. They present a useful way of documenting perspectives on the state of the industry that invite further positive and negative criticism. Different industry-based reports, in different national and regional contexts, present an account of 'innovation' and historical changes based on the specific context in question; in Australia, this has largely been driven by a narrative of 'decline' due to the oligarchic domination of a few big media companies in Australia and has been described as a 'crisis' which Australia had (until recently) 'avoided' (Young, 2010).

Building on these developments, we can begin to ask how field properties co-vary with various external factors, such as economic developments or political intervention. We draw on Bourdieu's field theory to enable us to evaluate how the discourse used to discuss the disruption faced by the media organisations shapes our understanding of what journalism is and the contestations that have taken place to make sense of the radical transformation the journalistic field is undergoing. Bourdieu (1998) emphasises that fields possess some autonomy from external pressures, as a field is a microcosm set within the macrocosm, and therefore 'what happens in it cannot be understood by looking only at external factors' (p. 39). This is particularly important when considering the current state of disruption to journalism. While external factors such as technological development may be impacting upon the field of journalism, it is only by analysing the discourse within the field that can we determine the impact of disruption upon the 'doxa' of journalism or what is generally held to be the practice of journalism. Our key question is therefore, how does the anticipatory logic that underpins discourse of innovation influence the doxa of the journalistic field?

We began this analysis to examine whether Australian discourses of change in the journalism and news media industries focused on 'technology' and also to identify anything unique about the Australian context. To summarise our findings, there is a disjunction between the anticipatory logics of the annual lectures and the normative journalistic narratives in the media commentary about the lectures. The discursive narratives that emerged to make sense of professional and industry changes have largely been episodic and only recently have shifted away from both nostalgia for previous forms of journalism and 'hype' about 'new' technology. Early narratives treat technological change as a single agency external to the field ('the digital', 'the Internet'), while later narratives engage with particular platforms and related problems and the way they have been incorporated in the field. We conclude by arguing that these insights are particularly important to move beyond the fishbowl effect of using what industry is doing 'now' to inform decisions that impact 3- to 5-year time frames (such as curricula mapping in tertiary institutions or technology investment in media workplaces).

The journalistic field: discursive commentary and field theory

This research brings together two distinct but related ways of carrying out social research. There is a tension between discourse theory and field theory (Phelan, 2011). Discourse-based approaches are often interpreted as being distinct from the materiality of the social worlds that Bourdieu was working to critically engage with (Benson and Neveu, 2005: 10). In some ways Zelizer's (1993) and Dahlgren's (1992) respective works on the importance of discourse for journalism provide the basis for this analysis, with an important variation. We are interested in the way the 'future' becomes an operative element of discourse and affects the contours of the field. This is distinct to

approaches that examine debates around definitions of what is news as a way of understanding who or what practices legitimately belong to the profession (Carlson, 2009). Carlson's (2016) work on metajournalistic discourse similarly extends the central question of the earlier work regarding which actors have the legitimate authority to define what practices as journalism. Definitional debates are certainly used in contestations for control over the field, as we discuss below, but our core question is regarding the differing ways the historical present (and historical 'future') is apprehended in different ways through commentary. We agree with Carlson's (2016) concluding suggestion that the explosion of metajournalistic discourse about the 'future of news' should be treated 'not as ancillary to material changes happening across newsrooms, but as the means through which public understandings of journalism are being rethought, circulated, and contested' (p. 363).

Field theory has been used by many scholars to make sense of the macro- and mezzo-level interactions and power struggles within the journalistic field (Benson and Neveu, 2005). Fields are governed by largely implicit rules or 'doxa', which map the terrain or boundaries of that field (Bourdieu, 1998). Doxa is the taken-for-granted of social practice, the seemingly natural, which we rarely make explicit (Bourdieu, 1998: 57), but in the context of this article, we will attempt to make explicit in order to chart the contestations and change. Journalistic doxa tends to manifest as evident, natural and self-explaining norms of journalistic practice. The journalistic doxa is a 'specific doxa, a system of presuppositions inherent in membership in a field' (Bourdieu, 2005: 37). The doxa informs how we understand these fields to operate and the symbolic power that they wield. However, while fields are characterised by implicit agreement on their own unique practices and outlooks, both the individuals and the organisations associated with that field compete to valorise the specific forms of capital that they possess. Bourdieu (1993) differentiates between multiple types of capital, including economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Studies of the journalistic field have been concerned with the struggle for power between economic and cultural capital, where economic capital is simply money, or assets that can be turned into money, and cultural capital encompasses such things as educational credentials, technical expertise and general skills.

While a field's doxa may go largely undiscussed and undisputed (Bourdieu, 2005), it will undergo changes due to external pressures – in the case of the journalistic field, technological and economic as well as the internal – the changes to practice that will result from those external pressures. Indeed, Bourdieu (1998) describes the journalistic field as a structured space where 'various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field' (p. 41). Even though actors are locked in a struggle for the future of a field, they also generally share presuppositions about the nature of that field and what we find with the interplay between the lectures and commentary is a tension over these mutual presuppositions. Bourdieu offers the concepts of heterodoxy and orthodoxy to signify those values, then, which are up for debate and those which are not. As Barnard (2016) notes while the notion of doxa highlights the taken-for-granted norms and values of the journalistic field, values gain or lose acceptance through exchanges between actors taking orthodox (accepted) and heterodox (debated) positions.

We use Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of 'commentary' to develop an appropriate method to map and then navigate the historical transformations of a field (Stevens and Fuller, 2017: 111–113). Foucault (1972) argues that commentary is an articulation of what he called the internal rules of discourse, 'where discourse exercises its own control: rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution' (p. 220). Foucault calls these internal rules a 'discipline' and he means it in both senses of the word (scholarly organisation and as the outcome of power relations). Discourse is used in this article to refer to the historically contingent set of relations between a subject, institutions, events and bodies of knowledge. Bourdieu (2017) arguably developed a method for analysing the way commentary could be analysed to understand the transformation of a field through in his lectures on Manet and his analysis of the development of art criticism

(pp. 276–293). However, Foucault's method abandons any attempt to map the relationality of specific actors via a reconstructed social space (as per Bourdieu's method) and instead seeks to uncover the regularities of discourse by mapping 'statements' in terms of the conditions of possibility of a given *dispositif* (Foucault, 1972: 74, 1980: 194–195).

Each lecture included for analysis articulates a relationship between the journalistic and broader media fields in terms of the technological and professional changes that were underway in the (relative) historical present. The lectures and reporting about the lectures were treated as a direct discursive trace of the 'reflexive circulation of discourse' (Warner, 2002: 62). Foucault notes in a commentary about Maurice Blanchot's transformation from being sympathetic of fascism in pre-World War II period to developing a critical relation to it; reflexivity is not a static relation (Foucault and Blanchot, 1989: 21–22). As Stevens and Fuller (2017) argue, the 'dimensions of reflexivity shift with every micro-generational iteration of technological and professional change' (p. 116). We are approaching 'reflexivity' not as a critical discursive distance from an object of reflection (Marres and Lezaun, 2011: 490) but a critical contextualisation of a change in the dynamics of material relationality that constitute the journalistic field and the field of 'new media' technology in Australia (and the world).

There have been multiple waves of 'innovation' and 'change'; therefore, one of our hypotheses is that there is a history of 'futures' expressed through the discursive commentary of the lectures and media reports on the lectures ('blogging' and the future of journalism, 'social media' and the future of journalism, etc.). Anderson (2010) describes 'the presence of the future' as the result of anticipatory techniques that 'do more than gather the knowledge necessary to know futures' (p. 783). We are interested in the transformation of a field as agents work to incorporate 'indeterminate potentiality' (Massumi, 2015: 10) of the future as a part of anticipated technological, social and cultural changes. Our hypothesis is that commentary can play an integral role in shaping the field through practices of anticipation that work to ward off or encourage future events that are already experienced in the present. One of our surprising findings is that even though the lectures discussed below ostensibly come from within the journalistic field, they herald 'futures' that were mostly excluded from the reporting on the lectures by those who worked to maintain the doxa of the journalistic field.

Three narratives of change

We began by analysing all Andrew Olle and AN Smith lectures from 1997 to 2015 and isolated those that substantially discuss journalism and the media industry more broadly. The lecture transcripts, or video recording if a transcript was not available, were analysed in terms of the commentary offered about the (then) current state of journalism. Transcripts for the Andrew Olle lectures are posted to the ABC News website and were retrieved via keyword searches. Of the Andrew Olle lectures, 14 were included for analysis, with those from 2001 to 2004 primarily concerned with terrorism and not included. The AN Smith lectures within the target dates are archived by the University of Melbourne, 16 were included for analysis; 12 with transcripts, four of these 12 had video of the lecture, and there were two (of the 16 in total) that only had video and no transcript (interestingly, video is more common in later years, indicative of technological change itself). The second part of the analysis focused on the media commentary around the lectures. Keyword searches were carried out through the Factiva database using variations of the name of the speaker in combination with and separate to the name of the lecture. Each search covered a date range of approximately 1 year either side of the lecture itself so as to capture a sense of how the media figure was represented before the lecture and then if the specific lecture was in effect cited in later reporting. Surprisingly, there was very little commentary on the AN Smith lecture series compared to the Andrew Olle lecture series. Each Andrew Olle lecture had between 10 and 20 pieces of reportage about the lecture or person giving the lecture. The AN Smith lectures had at most eight

for Mark Scott's 2009 lecture, nine for Kim William's 2012 lecture and seven for Greg Hywood's 2011 lecture. Most other AN Smith lectures had between one and three mentions. Using Factiva to discover commentary is inherently constrained because of the 'traditional' news sources included in the database. If future analyses were to include social media commentary, which would be an appropriate extension of this research, then the archival base would be much larger and of a different character. The Factiva search for commentary was bolstered by including any professional or journalistic 'commentaries' cited in other scholarly or research publications that discuss specific lectures.

Our analysis develops an account of the narratives of change to better understand the different negotiations and translations of expertise that belong to the journalistic field. We found three key narratives:

1. Commercial performance and concerns over the decline of quality journalism, that is, quality journalism versus commercial imperatives;
2. Role of technology in surviving industrial change; technology as external force and saviour;
3. Fundamental change to journalistic practice; doxa challenged and rearticulated.

There are more or less subtle contradictions that emerge between competing narratives of change, particularly around those accounts of change that assume the public interest role of journalism will continue regardless of the prevailing commercial or technological conditions. The overarching normative assumption here is that because journalism has traditionally been understood to play a role in democracies, then it is therefore 'needed' and new commercial conditions will develop to support it.

There are also other perspectives present in the lectures or commentary about the lectures that we do not discuss. For example, Peter Beattie's 2005 AN Smith lecture does not mention digital or Internet-based challenges at all. His focus is entirely the regulatory environment for newspaper, television and radio from the perspective of audiences who have grievances against specific examples of journalism. Some of the commentary pieces, for example, from the Media section in *The Australian* newspaper during Sharri Markson's tenure as Media Editor (2014–2015), focused on the lectures mostly as 'celebrity' industry events with reporting on, for example, who sat next to whom and these pieces were therefore excluded.

Commercial performance and concerns over the decline of quality journalism

When the lectures explicitly discussed commercial pressures in the news media industry, it was often framed as nostalgia for journalistic quality. An orthodox position is taken to reinforce the existing doxa of the journalistic field to rally against change. Commentary about the lectures was framed in terms of commercialism versus quality journalism for most of the decade of the 2000s and into the early 2010s. An example is ABC journalist Maxine McKew who in her 2000 AN Smith lecture frames the contest between commercialism and journalism in terms of whether 'journalism can survive constant cost-cutting and a mind-set that appears to be put too little value on experience and depth, as opposed to volume'. Here, McKew is emphasising traditional values of journalism that focus on the strength of lengthy and in-depth research that runs contrary to the fast-paced and large quantities of information required to feed the Internet. It could be argued that McKew, in the reporter habitus, draws on journalism's cultural capital to defend against change wrought by technology.

On the other hand, Fairfax CEO Greg Hywood's AN Smith lecture in 2011 de-emphasised the role of journalism in news media companies, suggesting instead that their business was primarily advertising – a classic interpretation of the battle between economic and cultural capital within the journalistic field. Hywood's position within the journalistic habitus is 'management', therefore it relegates him to suggesting the orthodoxy of economic imperatives over those of cultural production. Hywood claims,

In the so-called 'good old days', when newspapers were a licence to print money, the journalism was an added extra, delivered by the proprietors to leverage political and social influence, and, in some cases, a dollop of public good. The business in those days was classified advertising.

This garnered a sharp rebuke from journalism academic Margaret Simons (2011) who in a commentary on the lecture pointed to the work of Sybil Nolan on the history of *The Age* newspaper. Nolan (2011) was critical of historical arguments, such as Hywood's lecture, which attempted to revise what the core 'business' of journalism in terms of the 'market'. For example, Nolan (2011) argues that instead of advertising being central and journalism secondary, she outlines a long commitment to what she calls 'social justice' journalism by *The Age*. Nolan and Simons both lament the loss of institutional identity and memory due to job loss and the outsourcing of editorial and production roles from newsrooms to interstate services.

The narrative of contestation between the cultural capital of journalists, represented by arguments about the value of journalism being commitment to social justice and similar, and the economic capital of news company management, such as Hywood's attempted market-based valorisation of Fairfax's history, is not reflected in the lectures; rather, it is indicated by the *commentary* about lectures. This distinction is manifest in different ways at different points in the lectures and commentaries analysed. For example, independent media publisher Eric Beecher used his 2000 Andre Olle lecture to address the threat to traditional journalism posed by technological change and the Internet:

I am not suggesting the Internet has not unleashed an industrial revolution that won't alter the way business operates. But will the Internet replace traditional media as a vehicle for journalism? Not likely, in my humble opinion, and that's largely because there is almost no Internet business in the world today where consumers are prepared to pay for content.

The main focus of Beecher's lecture was primarily the challenge posed by the Internet and online journalism, and the dearth of business models that would fund quality journalism because of technological change, surely crucial topics for any discussion of the state of journalism in Australia, but the reports in the major newspapers did not focus on this. Instead they focused on Beecher's comments about the new managing director of the ABC, Jonathan Shier, and the way Beecher allegedly framed the journalistic present as a battle of 'quality journalism' versus 'commercialism' (Barnsley, 2000). Only Banham's (2000) commentary mentions the Internet and then it is in the context of commercialism and the Internet having impinging effects on 'quality journalism' rather than 'quality journalism' being something which has to be discovered anew in the Internet age.

Similarly, when sportscaster and television identity John Doyle presented the 2005 Andrew Olle lecture, it was reported in terms of a critique of the commercial media. *The Australian* newspaper ran a story derived from an edited version of wire copy from AAP (2005) with the lead that Doyle 'delivered a scathing attack on commercial media last night'. *The Australian* actually used the AAP's second par as its lead, with the AAP copy (Coopes, 2005) beginning,

In an age where terrorism cuts to the 'violent brutal core' of humanity and digital and media ownership changes threaten to neuter voices of dissent, the Australian media must remain vigilant, John Doyle says.

(Confusingly, *The Australian* newspaper published the piece with AAP in the byline, while Factiva entry for the original AAP wire copy lists journalist Amy Coopes.) Doyle's more complex points about the quality and character of information changing were similarly not included in *The Australian's* version of the AAP wire copy. The below text was in AAP's copy, but not in *The Australian's* story, and emphasises the larger context of the newly emerging media culture that was developing as a result of 'information technology' transforming the field:

The information age was dangerous because, in an era where populism and economy drove the media, culture and public accountability was falling by the wayside, Mr Doyle said.

'In the past information bound culture. There was a shared sense of a gradually expanding library of sensible and responsible scholarship, whereas now information is serving more to fracture culture', he said. (Coopes, 2005)

Doyle was attempting to point to impending shifts in the character of 'information' itself because of technological change, and this was identified in the AAP wire copy, but it was literally excluded from the field by *The Australian's* version of the wire copy published.

The clearest example of how the contemporaneous coverage on the media lectures served to rearticulate the orthodox understandings of the field understood in terms of hierarchies of commercial power against which journalistic professionalism was in a continual contest is the commentary on Helen Coonan's 2006 Andrew Olle Lecture. Coonan was the Communications Minister in the Howard Government at the time and had orchestrated legislative reform that grappled with the social, cultural and industrial changes being wrought by the Internet. It was an articulation of one of the last major pre-NBN communications policy positions in Australia. Her lecture explicitly addressed some of the key themes regarding technological change, journalism and the emerging role of the Internet in servicing the public need for quality information that would later be taken for granted. Coonan's speech could not have been clearer in the way it set out how the Australian government anticipated changes to what Coonan described as the Australian public's 'information diet'. *The Canberra Times*, current newspaper cousin to Melbourne's *Age* and Sydney's *Sydney Morning Herald*, published an editorial that simply underscores the poverty of commentary:

[Coonan's lecture] was a heaven-sent opportunity to explain exactly what the changes to Australia's media laws were all about. She chose not to use it. Instead the minister in charge of those changes spoke for the best part of an hour about the exciting new world of computers.

The evidently disdainful tone of the editorial belies a catastrophic blind spot in appreciating the future that Coonan was working to articulate involving the Internet and digital technologies. Doyle and Coonan's lectures represent the pessimistic and optimistic perspectives, respectively, on what impact the 'Internet' and 'digital' technology will present to the broader Australian public. The media commentary on these pieces largely ignores the positive and negative aspects of the 'future' that they were working to articulate.

Role of technology in surviving industrial change

The version of this argument that nevertheless is congruent with the commercial determinism of the first narrative: technology to appease business woes. Here, a heterodox position is taken whereby technology here is a specific agency that operates and adapts the field.

In his 2007 Andrew Olle lecture, Former News Limited boss John Hartigan, outlines how the Internet will bring more readers and viewers to journalism.

The internet hasn't induced passive browsing in the same way but I think the content that achieves this will attract a huge audience ... Quality is taking on greater meaning, not less ... Competition for talent is intensifying. We will need to pay more and offer better opportunities to attract – and retain – the best people. This will enrich our craft and deliver a better return for audiences, for journalists, and for proprietors.

Only one piece of reportage on Hartigan's lecture engaged with his focus on the changes wrought by the Internet and digital technology (Vallejo, 2007). His lecture and in particular comments about press freedom found traction in reports a few days later. There was an Australian Federal election in 2007 and part of the election was a debate between the leaders of the two major political parties. The debate was hosted by the Australian Press Club in Canberra and commercial broadcaster Channel Nine produced their own broadcast based on a live feed from the ABC at the Press Club. The feed to Nine was cut halfway into the debate. Nine's director of news and current affairs John Westacott cited Hartigan's comments about press freedom arguing that cutting the feed to Nine was censorship (Clark, 2007).

ABC managing director Mark Scott expanded on this theme in his 2009 AN Smith lecture:

The only media organisations that will survive will be those who know and accept that all the rules have changed. That the media business has gone from one of the most simple to one of the most complex. Only those who can see now what many generals only see after devastating loss – that the tactics that won them the last battle might just be the ones that deliver them defeat in the next.

Margaret Simons' commentary on Mark Scott's 2009 AN Smith lecture is framed as a critique of plans by News Corp to introduce paywalls in this way. Quoting Scott's speech, Simons (2009b) writes that

Scott depicts this as the last frantic efforts of a media emperor to 'deny a revolution that's already taken place by attempting to use a power that no longer exists, by trying to impose on the world a law that is impossible to enforce'.

The timing of Scott's lecture coincided with a period of government-directed enquiries into broadcasting, media industry and in particular the public broadcasters, ABC and SBS (Special Broadcast Service). Simons' commentary on Scott's lecture is in part an extension of ongoing critical discussions over the preceding year or so. In a contemporaneous piece, Simons (2009a) developed sophisticated points about the shifting character of public broadcasters and engaged positively with senate submissions from academics Terry Flew and Stuart Cunningham about the impact of technology on the institutional function of public broadcasters. Of relevance to our article is the way Flew (2009) describes two models of innovation that straddle a historical divide of socio-technological development: the older model of 'centralised innovation' from the centre to the periphery and a newer model of 'social innovation' that inverts this relationship with innovation occurring on the periphery. He is describing two ways that the dynamics of 'change' are

incorporated in a field with different modalities of ‘control’. One rearticulates established positions in the field associated with the orthodoxy, while the other sees established players sacrificing some authority for the sake of the competitive advantage of recognising heterodox responses and new forms of capital.

Technological change is also framed as disruption to push back against potential regulation and government intervention at public broadcasters ABC and BBC. Here, an orthodox position is taken to reinforce existing journalism agencies and structures by deprecating the force of technology. Former editor and chief of *The Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, used his 2010 Andrew Olle address to draw attention to the commercial media’s attempts to call an end to public broadcaster funding.

As digital eats into the press, so the press has turned its fire on public broadcasters, imagining that if only they went away everything in the garden would once more come out in bloom. We all know that digital forces are threatening to weaken, or even destroy, the traditional basis, role and funding of the press, and we know that digital enables everyone to disrupt everyone else’s business.

ABC journalist Mark Colvin continued this theme in the 2012 Andrew Olle lecture:

At News Corp, James Murdoch and Kim Williams have both in their different ways argued for restrictions on the BBC’s and the ABC’s new media operations.

But the ABC will be just one more player in this brave new world – that’s the reality you’ll be competing with, whether or not future governments fund public broadcasting.

Again this contestation, while taken under the guise of technological change, forms a classical journalistic field contestation in which those media organisations with higher cultural capital, arguably public broadcasters and newspapers like *The Guardian*, struggle for agency and power in determining the doxa with commercial media organisations.

The embrace of ‘innovation’ against rigid forms of hierarchical organisation begins to sour with the 2013 Andrew Olle lecture delivered by experienced television journalist Lisa Wilkinson. Wilkinson emphasised the traditional values of journalism as the saviour of the industry.

For despite this engulfing tide of social media, the rock of solid journalism is still there, still needed! And in a world of swirling communications on so many different platforms, the eternal values of traditional journalism have never been more crucial in establishing what the truth of a matter is, and putting it on the public record.

The metaphor of the ‘tide’ engulfing traditional journalistic professionalism was largely framed in terms of the (negative) experience of the journalist in this enlarged networked or participatory public sphere rather than the impact of such development on the public sphere itself. Hence, when Wilkinson discussed social media, it was reported in the commentary primarily in the context of Wilkinson’s overall message to do with the gendered character of institutional sexism and the ‘dangerous social media cycle of abuse’ (McMahon, 2013):

It has an anonymity and a narcissism and a nasty side to it. I was bullied as a kid and it’s that nasty bullying of the schoolyard you used to be able to leave behind. That was what I did. When I left school I decided, ‘I’m wiping the slate clean, I’m not going to let other people decide who I am’, and that’s the trouble with social media.

Conservative columnist for *The Australian*, Chris Kenny, used Wilkinson's remarks as evidence of how 'pervasive the power of social media is becoming in mainstream media' (Kenny, 2013). He was highly critical of the way journalism has changed because of social media, taking an orthodox approach. Hence, Wilkinson's ostensibly progressive feminist argument about the experience of the gendered public sphere can be used in a conservative critique of social media.

By the 2015 Andrew Olle Media Lecture, the *Women's Weekly* editor Helen McCabe dismissed the often-refrained heterodox responses to the decline of quality journalism but still pronounces the inevitability of technological-lead change in terms of its banality, and thus it is part of the (new) doxa:

I will not say 'content is king';

Or that 'this is the most exciting time to be in journalism'.

Or that readers are 'time poor'.

But in all seriousness I will assume that we are all online, trying new things, and facing significant commercial challenges.

Fundamental change to journalistic practice; doxa challenged and rearticulated

In the final theme identified, technology is the pronounced agency of change. In this theme, a heterodox approach is taken where technology as the agent of change which is accepted as fundamentally changing the contours of the journalistic field and therefore the doxa. In the 2011 Andrew Olle lecture, Laurie Oakes proclaimed the Internet was good for journalism:

Anyone who thinks they're being short-changed by the mainstream media can access directly most of the material available to political journalists – major speeches, press conference transcripts, policy announcements and the rest.

If there has been a dumbing down, the trend is now the other way. Which is good news.

The 'material available to political journalists – major speeches, press conference transcripts, policy announcements and the rest' is understood as the substance of the political public sphere and, exemplified by Oakes' lecture, 'access' is understood in the liberal democratic sense of access to the public sphere. Similarly, News Ltd chief executive Kim Williams delivered the 2012 AN Smith lecture and emphasised that the so-called 'digital revolution' has allegedly increased diversity: 'In a world with multiplying news websites, blogs and tweets, why do we need to regulate for more diversity?' The multiplication of possible news sources is understood from the perspective of a pre-network media concept of diversity. Williams was critical of the recommendations handed down by the Independent Media Inquiry, which he framed in terms of increased media regulation.

The assumed importance of news media and the profession of journalism in liberal democracies is based on a normative belief that there is a positive relationship between number and diversity of news publishers and quality of democracy (McNair, 2012). In the previous era dominated by broadcast and print media, this relationship, and therefore an indirect account of democracy itself, could be represented in terms of number and diversity of news sources to which news consumers had access. This was because news publishers largely also controlled the distribution of news.

Therefore, an increase in the number of news sources meant an increase in the health of liberal democratic societies. This discourse demonstrates a power shift in which fundamental norms of journalism are discarded or replaced reflecting changes to the journalistic doxa. In an era now characterised by the networked distribution of news-based media content and a scarcity of news consumer attention for – rather than a scarcity of access to – news-based media content, it is no longer appropriate to assume a relationship between number and diversity of news sources and the health of liberal democratic society (Picone et al., 2015).

At the end of his 2011 Andrew Olle lecture, Oakes made a series of four predictions that sought to map the future of journalism. At least one prediction has been proved to be entirely correct.

Political journalists will be bypassed more and more. I'm not talking politicians using talkback radio as John Howard did. Nor am I talking about Julia Gillard going on The 7pm Project or Julie Bishop starring on The Chaser, though there'll be more of that, too. [...]

But what I'm referring to here is politicians, parties, governments, interest groups and so on contacting voters directly via the internet. GetUp already does this very effectively.

In the US, Barack Obama's communications director has taunted members of the Washington press corps that eventually they could be rendered obsolete through the use of presidential messages posted directly on YouTube and other internet sites. (Oakes, 2011)

Oakes is describing what political communications scholars call 'disintermediation'. According to Fisher (2017), disintermediation

means not being 'mediated' or having your message edited, interpreted or filtered by the news media. On the one hand, this shift offers greater opportunity for community participation in the political process and engagement with elected representatives. On the other hand, it offers politicians and parties an opportunity to skilfully target members of the community with unfiltered and one-sided spin.

From the perspective of political journalists, this is a profound reconfiguration of the field of journalistic practice, understood in terms of the necessary relations between journalists, politicians and the civic-oriented public sphere. A second of Oakes' predictions was that '[b]loggers will start to usurp the role of determining what is news'. He cites chairman of the Australian Press Council, Julian Disney, who similarly argued that the 'greatest challenge is the risk that the blogosphere, with its tendency to rush to judgment and circulate scuttlebutt, will push the mainstream media into a race to the bottom' (Oakes, 2011). The 'blogosphere' does exist in the same way it did in 2011, and even in 2011 Oakes is using the language of the mid-2000s blogging era to describe broader reconfigurations of disintermediation and a news cycle that follow the affective contours of 'outrage' rather than print or broadcast schedules.

A nuanced appreciation of the role of the 'public' in the work of journalism was presented in the AN Smith 2013 lecture, by then *Guardian Australia* editor, Katherine Viner, who articulates the changes of journalistic practice wrought by technology:

Digital is not about putting up your story on the web. It's about a fundamental redrawing of journalists' relationship with our audience, how we think about our readers, our perception of our role in society, our status.

Commentary about Viner's lecture focused on paywalls and the economic viability of *The Guardian* newspaper, again invoking the orthodox approach to examining journalism as the eternal

struggle between economic and cultural capital. Writing in *The Australian* newspaper, Sally Jackson (2013) emphasised the commercial aspects of Viner's comments about 'open journalism', quoting a related section:

Delivering the AN Smith Lecture at the University of Melbourne's Centre for Advancing Journalism last night, Viner said it was too early, economically, to rule out the idea of newspaper paywalls.

'But, journalistically, paywalls are utterly antithetical to the open web', she said. 'A paywalled website is just print in another form, making collaboration with the people formerly known as the audience much more difficult.'

You can't take advantage of the benefits of the open web if you're hidden away.

'Print' in this context is not only a medium but a kind of commodity. Jackson's commentary juxtaposes Viner's comments about 'open journalism' in the context of questioning *The Guardian's* ongoing viability and therefore should be understood as an implicit defence of paywalls as a business model. The online news platform, *Crikey*, also ran an editorial on Viner's lecture, albeit largely sympathetic to Viner's claims about 'open' journalism while being critical of the way Viner allegedly did not address the economics of journalism. The *Crikey* editorial garnered a response from Viner and this was run in *Crikey* the next day. In her response, Viner distinguishes between a 'journalistic' approach and economics in clarifying her comments: 'Just because something is preferable journalistically doesn't mean it will always make economic sense' (Crikey, 2013). Similarly, the choice of Guardian Editor Alan Rusbridger for the 2010 Andrew Olle lecture was questioned by Caroline Overington (2010) in *The Australian* newspaper's The Diary section where the choice is described as 'odd': 'The white-hot issue for media right now is: how can we make money? So they invite the editor of The Guardian?' The occasion of Rusbridger's lecture served to focus arguments for and against the use of paywalls by legacy newspaper brands, which became a de facto debate about pre-Internet journalism doxa compared with multiple developing forms across multiple platforms.

Conclusion

This article sought to chart how the narratives of innovation associated with technological disruption have shaped the discourse of the journalistic field in the Australian context. Overall, it set out to address the question of how the anticipatory logic that underpins the discourse of innovation influences the doxa of the journalistic field. To do this, we analysed two sets of public lectures – the AN Smith lecture and the Andrew Olle lecture – and published commentary about the lectures. The lectures and commentary about the lectures were found to be two forms of 'commentary' about the journalistic field ostensibly produced by participants in the field. If viewed historically, we can see that the discursive construction of the journalistic field is dominated by three narrative frames:

1. Commercial performance and concerns over the decline of quality journalism; a.k.a. quality journalism versus commercial imperatives;
2. Role of technology in surviving industrial change; technology as external force and saviour;
3. Fundamental change to journalistic practice; core professional assumptions are being challenged and rearticulated.

Drawing on field theory, other scholars have argued that changes in journalistic practices (e.g. those brought on by unravelling traditional business models and technological change) lead to a shift in journalism's cultural capital, and that shift should be evident in the normative discourse within the field itself (Craft et al., 2015; Vos and Singer, 2016). Bourdieu's (1998) field theory emphasises that a crisis is necessary for changes to occur in the doxa. The economic and technological shifts impacting the field of journalism have been articulated in the field as a 'crisis', and as a result many scholars have used the lens of field theory to analyse these emergent shifts (Barnard, 2016; Compton and Benedetti, 2010; Craft et al., 2015; Hellmueller et al., 2013; Vos and Singer, 2016).

By analysing the discourse outlined in the lectures and the surrounding media commentary, many of the fields' orthodox and heterodox values were shown to be shifting, suggesting an overall change in journalistic practice. Altogether, because the field's elements of practice come to constitute the field itself, the ongoing transformations outlined here provide more nuanced understanding of Australian journalism. Those presenting the lectures either presented an orthodox or heterodox approach to explain the shifts in the journalistic doxa at a macro and mezzo level. When an orthodox approach was taken, it was overall used to justify the decline of normative journalism practices as radical shift based on technology takes place. When a heterodox approach was taken, it was used to try to reshape the doxa of the journalistic field, which is a way of anticipating the future beyond the 'decline' of journalism.

The analysis did show a contestation between the commentary and the content of the lectures whereby an orthodox approach is consistently taken in the published reporting on the lectures. This could perhaps be explained by viewing these commentaries in terms of the position that those writing the commentaries have within the journalistic habitus. As journalists, they have traditionally struggled against the economic machine drawing on their cultural capital and that of journalism more broadly to establish their agency and power. A heterodox subject position emerges across the three narratives that explicitly works to articulate a version of the field that is transformed from the historical present – by technology and market changes – into something else. Conservative orthodox positions within the field were largely unable to articulate narratives of change that rearticulated the field in ways that reproduced the normative distributions of social, cultural and economic capital that characterised journalism in a pre-Internet era.

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Notes

1. The Andrew Olle Memorial Trust raises funds for research into neuroscience, with an emphasis on brain tumours. <https://www.abccommercial.com/librarysales/program/andrew-olle-media-lecture>
2. <http://caj.unimelb.edu.au/engagement/resources-library/a-n-smith-lecture-in-journalism>

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