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# The Future of News

HOW TO SURVIVE THE NEW MEDIA SHIFT



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# ENTER

*News organisations cannot continue to ignore the global shift from institutionally controlled media to user controlled media. They have to redefine their processes and face the obvious question: Do we still need old media for news?*

»A good newspaper is a country speaking to itself.«<sup>1</sup> These are not the words of Internet junkie high on Web 2.0. This is ARTHUR MILLER, defining newspapers back in 1961. If Miller is right about news being a conversation,<sup>2</sup> the obvious *instrument for organizing this conversation is the Web*. It is fast, it is versatile and it is conversational in its nature.

MILLER: NEWS IS A  
CONVERSATION

There are obvious signs that the shift in the usage of media is irreversible. While the access statistics of social media sites are going through the roof, newspapers lose readers online and offline. Young people read more but read less printed materials. Ad revenue prognostics for the Internet point to stupefying future while all other media are feeling the pressure already. In a special edition on the decline of printed news The Economist stated that »the most useful bit

IRREVERSIBLE SHIFT

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1 THE ECONOMIST, Aug 24th 2006

[http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=7830218](http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=7830218)

2 Reminding us of “markets as conversation”, as coined by THE CLUETRAIN MANIFESTO, <http://www.cluetrain.com/>

of the media is disappearing. A cause for concern, but not for panic. « Given that it's never time to panic, the question is: *Concern for whom?* For the reader or the publishing houses?

CONCERN? PANIC?

### *Threats*

**1. Lowering reading experience.** Printed text is nice. It's nice to look at, nice to feel, nice to smell, it is nice to read. Newspapers are handy in a train, in a cafe, at the hairdresser's, on Sunday morning after your continental breakfast. So, yes, *everyone that likes reading as such is concerned.* Concerned not in regards to the quality of the information, but the quality of reading as an aesthetic experience.

NICE PAPER

**2. Losing journalistic quality.** The implications of losing journalistic standards are disastrous for our democratic society.

END OF DEMOCRACY

**3. Severing cultural roots.** The history of printed texts goes way back to the first papyri, the dead sea scrolls, HERAKLIT'S and PLATO'S works and first serially printed product: The bible. Losing paper would mean to lose a central part of that intellectual power and cultural magic.

LONG HISTORY

## *Opportunities*

Before answering to the raised concerns we should look at the causes for the change optimism within the new media community.

WHY THE OPTIMISM?

**I. Optimizing reading experience.** Reading newspapers is relatively stressful. Quality newspapers like THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE GUARDIAN or DIE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG are – compared to web standards – considerably user unfriendly; they are comparingly hard to scan, the print is small, the editors are stingy with subtitles, the language snobbish and esoteric beyond necessity, reader comments come in days after the article is published, the sources are hard to track.

USER UNFRIENDLY  
FORMATTING

Newspapers refer to previous events and articles that not everyone follows. Good enough in the olden days, where the gentleman had enough time to smoke his pipe in his rocking chair, have toast and tea and devote himself to read with his wall clock clicking slowly... But we are far too stressed and impatient for that kind of business. We really can't be bothered with *19th century data delivery* anymore. We want to be able to quickly see if an article is worth reading. We want to see key points, sources and logic structure

19TH CENTURY

of the story before we dedicate our sparse time to it.

ADVANTAGE  
HYPERTEXT

We are spoiled by new media technology: Hyperlinks allow to quickly get to the cited sources and verify the information or interpretation, search engines allow cross checking, article discussions open perspectives to other people's views on the subject.

DOUBLE WHAMMY

In short: The Internet is without any doubt the most useful information resource – especially when it comes to news. Most useful not just for readers. Contemporary journalists can see what effect their writing has and learn and improve with every article they write.

END OF MURDOCH?

**2. Improving democracy.** That old media loses its edge is not as bad as it may seem. Being a one way medium, old media can be easily controlled by money, power, superstition and misused as a powerful tool for propaganda. – If the death of old media means that we don't have to deal with the broad media manipulation of RUPERT MURDOCH and SILVIO BERLUSCONI, that is good news for democracies. – It is common sense that in a democratic state, news should *not* be owned. News should definitely not be owned by people using their media ownership to influence public opinion in their favour.

MANIPULATION

Where there is open debate, the main channels of political manipulation are under heavy attack. Of course the Chinese government tries to control the Internet, of course FOX NEWS tries to smear and defame inter-

**OLD MEDIA**

**CENTRALIZED MEDIATION**

Institutional Control  
Editing  
Publishing  
*Broadcasting*

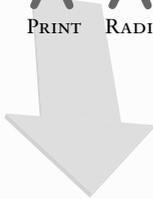
**NEW MEDIA**

**DISTRIBUTED MEDIATION**

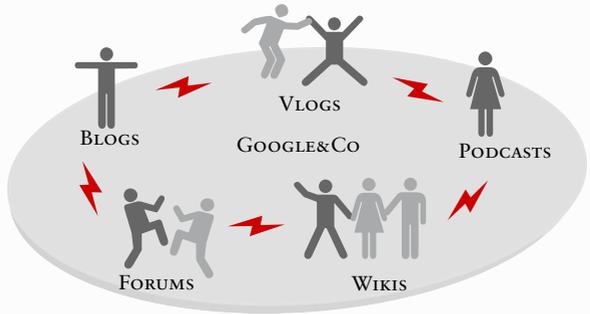
Consumer Control  
Syndication  
Contribution  
*Communication*



TV PRINT RADIO



*Individual Consumption*



*Social Consumption*

active media. But all smearing and controlling won't help on the long term. Unless the apparachiks find a way to stop time, centralised mediation is doomed to fail. Pandora's box is open.

PANDORA'S BOX

**3. Historic development.** The integration of old media into new media is inevitable. It follows considerably solid law: »The content of a medium is always another medium.«<sup>3</sup> That newspapers will turn into a luxury good within the next 10 years seems obvious. Paper cannot compete with neither the production cost nor the production time of new media. That TV is going to transform and become part of the Internet is technically obvious.

PRODUCTION COST

VIACOM&YOUTUBE

No matter how high VIACOM is suing YOUTUBE, they have to face the fact that the days of institutional media control are counted. The best shot for VIACOM is to turn YOUTUBE into another NAPSTER. But remember know what happened after NAPSTER died. Music piracy exploded all over the web. After YOUTUBE there will be more torrent action and 9,999 new YOUTUBES. Today media is already controlled the consumer to a great extent. Media as a fourth power is common democratic theory. The success of FOX NEWS in the age of global interactive communication is the swan's song of old media.

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3 MCLUHAN, *Media is the message*

*stats: skyrocketing booksales 2000-2006*

*One of the big mysteries of the Information age is the rapid increase in book sales. Why do people buy more books than ever? Simple: Literacy is increasing. Thus the need for real, printed text.*

*On the other hand the need for Radio and TV diminishes, as the Internet offers time independent and thus much more usable forms of TV and Radio.*

*The only media that cannot be fully integrated is print. That's why it deserves special attention in this book.*

# CONTROL

## *Filter*

The journalist's job description has dramatically changed in the last 5 years. News are no longer launched. Stories are no longer made. The amount of information has grown astronomically and with it the need for quality content. – To people that know both sides of media it is obvious that the journalists function is to filter the noise and make it understandable.

JOURNALIST=FILTER

The market value of reliable filters has exponentially increased in the last couple of years. And it will go on being more and more precious. With the increase of the amount of information that is generated GOOGLE becomes more and more valuable. Filtering information has replaced controlling it. Filtering is a very solid business, and it continues to be.

FILTER: BIG BUSINESS

## *Respond*

Bloggers are opinionated. On one side that makes them interesting and highly critical about whatever »the other camp« says (MAC vs PC, conservatives vs.

OPINIONATED BLOGS

liberals, MANCHESTER UNITED vs LIVERPOOL fans); on the other side it makes them dubious and manipulative to the point of blatantly lying and cheating. That is why identity disclosure is an important part of the interactive game and such is the integration of user comments on your blog. If you lie and cheat, it fires back. You are taken to responsibility for what you say online; in some cases manipulation has destroyed careers, severely harmed corporate trust and flattened sales.

SOCIAL CONTROL

Unnecessary to say that lying and distorting information is generally a bad and refutable practice. But manipulated information on a trusted news source is harder to spot and yet not a rare occasion. Bloggers are not expected to be »fair and balanced« – news organisations are. As a matter of fact, famous bloggers already work under a similar scrutiny as a journalist of the NEW YORK TIMES (in case you didn't know: good bloggers *are* journalists). The future journalist is very shrewd at discovering information and cross-checking it – he will also have the guts to expose himself to the public opinion.

FAIR&BALANCED?

Future press has to become less biased and thus more independent. The best journalists will be independent freelancers screening and recompiling data online. All this means: Future newspapers will have to change their editorial process. Current editorials are much too dependent on the

BIASED PRESS

THE MAKING OF  
NEWS ARTICLES

opinion of the editor in chief and/or whoever owns or sponsors the newspaper. Future newspapers need to make their editorial process transparent and respond to the input of their readers. *The making of a news article must become a public process.* This will greatly increase the quality and the trust in published text.

INTEGRATION

The integration of social media into the writing process is a greatest opportunity for writers and readers since the invention of the press; the more intelligent the readership of a newspaper the more intelligent the product will become.

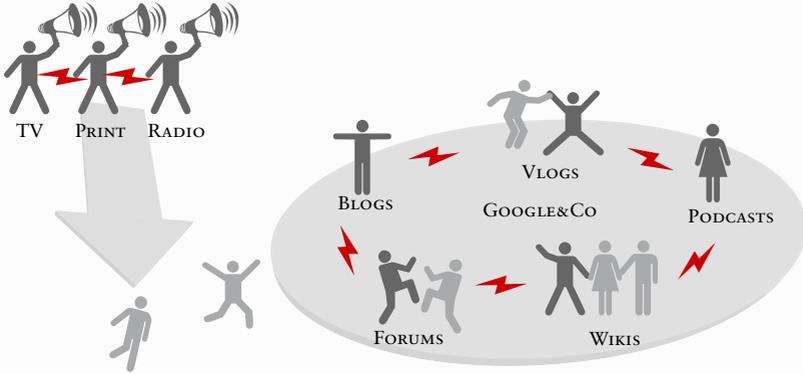
### *Divide et Impera*

WIKIPEDIA

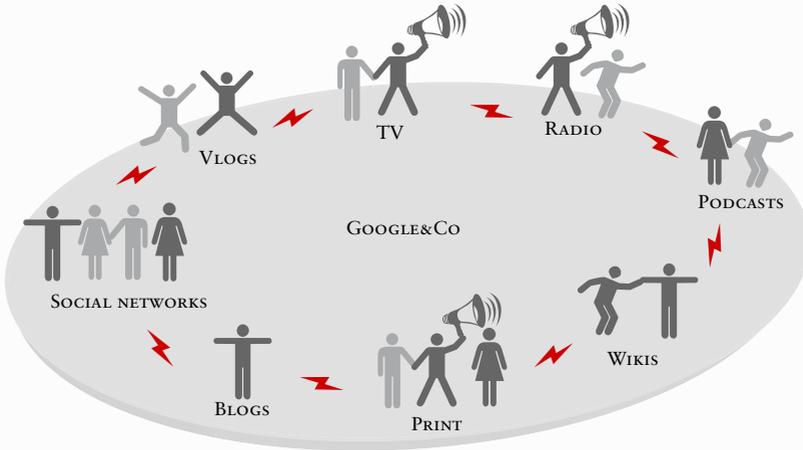
WIKIPEDIA proves that it works. The only question is: Which newspaper will allow their readers to participate in the writing an editorial process first. Participating means: You let them influence the article from the beginning to the end – and beyond. *Future newspapers will allow their readers to influence the article before and after it is published.* The only way to do this is by turning the newspaper web sites into transparent public editorial tools.

Newspaper readers need to be organized just like a state. On top you have the editor in chief. On the

*Today: Old Media loses its audience to social media*

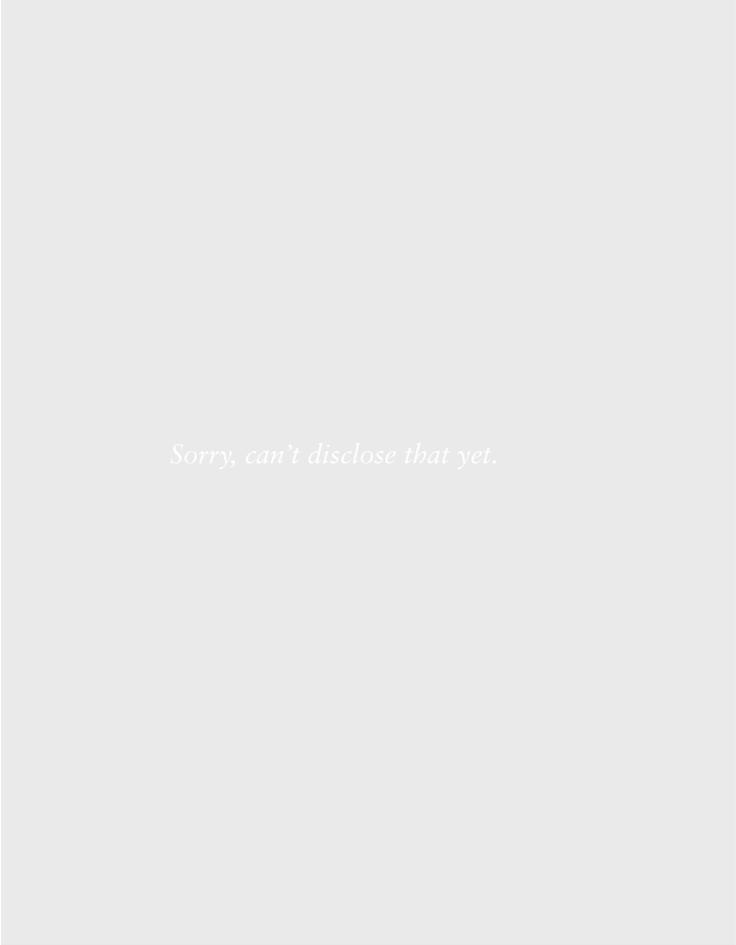


*Tomorrow: Old Media becomes part of social media*



NEWSPAPERS  
ORGANIZED LIKE  
DEMOCRATIC STATES

bottom you have the passive reader. In the middle you have journalists and active contributing readers. In order to control trolls and spammers, *readers choose and elect representatives among themselves*. Some readers have more rights (and duties) than others, due to their qualifications as readers. SLASHDOT works just like that; and it works very well. Most forums don't work because there is no organization among the readers.



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Let users control each other.*

# SHIFT

## *Branding*

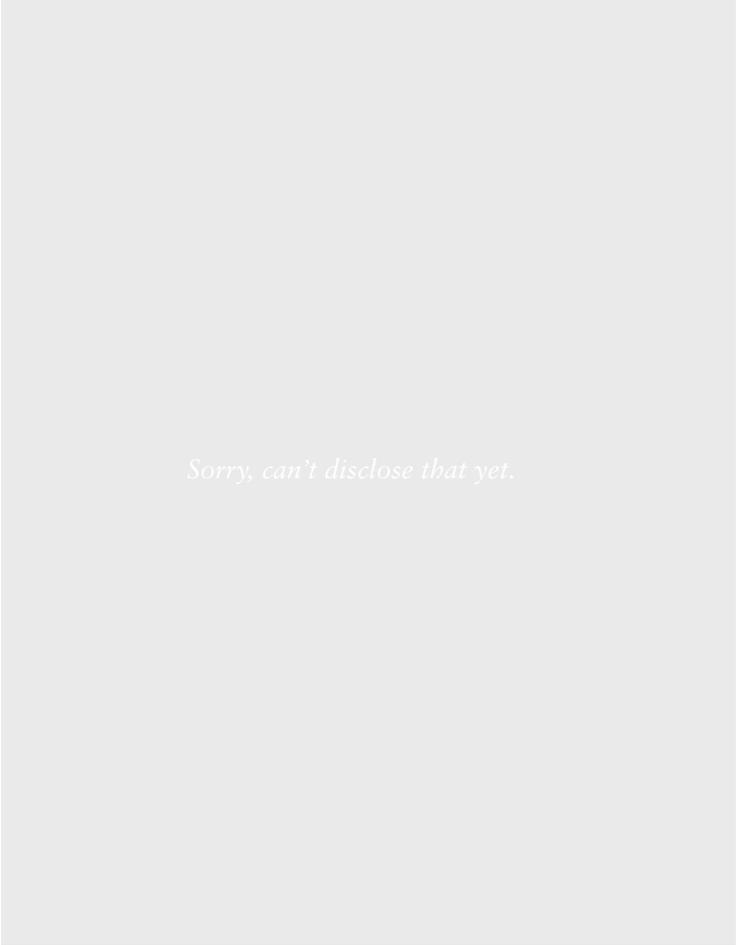
ONLINE: CONTRIBUTE  
OFFLINE: ENJOY

Printed newspapers will shift into a luxury product, an amalgam of the best information that you created online. Both products need to be extremely easy to read and incite the user constantly to go online and contribute to the next edition. The brand design must transport and reciprocally support the use of each media (online: contribute, offline: enjoy); both mediums need to constantly refer to each other.

ONE BRAND  
ONE DESIGN

1. Use the same design elements on- and offline.
2. Stop giving your website the silly and disqualifying »Online« attribute. Online news should be as reliable and brand worthy as your print edition.
3. Show in print which words are links in the online edition by either underlining linked words or coloring them. Links in print make sense as links usually denote keywords that help the user scan and thus quickly understand the article.

HYPERLINKS IN  
PRINTED TEXT



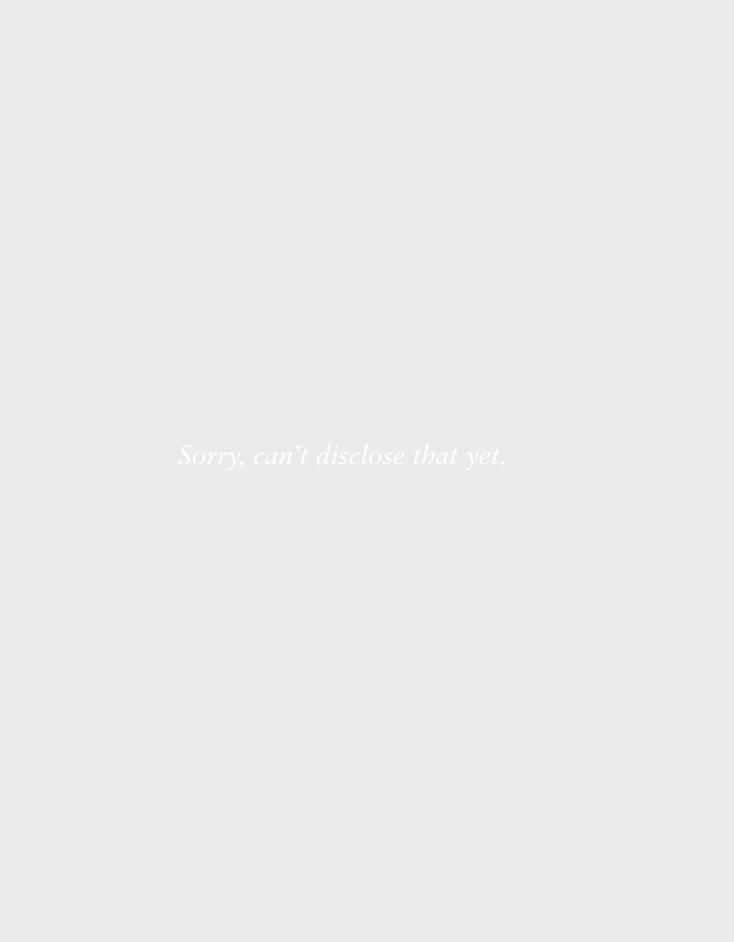
*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Identity on and offline: A question of trust.*

## Information Design

**LEARN** Newspapers will have to focus on their online editions and learn from successful information resources such as GOOGLE NEWS, TECHCRUNCH, MEMEORANDUM, ROBERT SCOBLE or JAKOB NIELSEN. *Successful websites do not only prove that relevant well made online news do have a solid future, they also show how its done.* Here are three simple rules:

- INCREASE FONT SIZES** 1. Dramatically increase font sizes on and offline. Use white space (digital white space is cost free).
- TYPOGRAPHY** 2. Care as much about online layout and typography as you care about printed information design. Sloppy information design is an insulting the intelligence of your users.
- MORE PARAGRAPHS** 3. Use more paragraphs and subtitles in print.  
4. Use left and right side bars for additional information online instead of trying to distract users with ads and »other interesting stories«.
- REDUCE** 5. Stop packing pages with other articles or annoying advertisement.  
6. Write simple, write backwards (most important information first).



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Learning from websites: Information Design in Print.*

## Advertisement

### OPEN ARCHIVES

No. Closing your archives is not smart. It is ignorant and financially stupid. How much money do you make with your paid access? *How much money would you make if you sold advertisement on those old articles instead?* Yes, it is that easy.

### REDUCE BANNER NUMBER, INCREASE BANNER SIZE

1. Reduce number of banners per page to one.<sup>4</sup>
2. Increase banner size.
3. Distinguish clearly between ads and content.
4. Kill all pop up windows.
5. Forbid animated and amateurish banners.

### BLINDTEXT

6. No GOOGLE ADS or other cheap looking ads.
7. Hire sales staff to sell proper advertisement instead of whining that there is no money online.
8. Care as much about increasing the quality of on-line advertisement as you care in print.

### SELL STUFF

9. Sell the books you cite, the CDs and DVDs you discuss, sell T-shirts from fashion designers you write about...
10. Sell print and online ad space together.
11. Value of print advertisement: Presence. Value of online advertisement: Same.
12. Continuously reduce the cost of print ads and raise the cost of online advertisement at the same paste.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://scobleizer.com/2007/03/22/did-google-turn-down-the-revenue-knob/>



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Clear distinction between ads and content. Tasteful ads can increase the value of text. No user will rebel against this prominent integration of high class ads.*

## Interaction

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

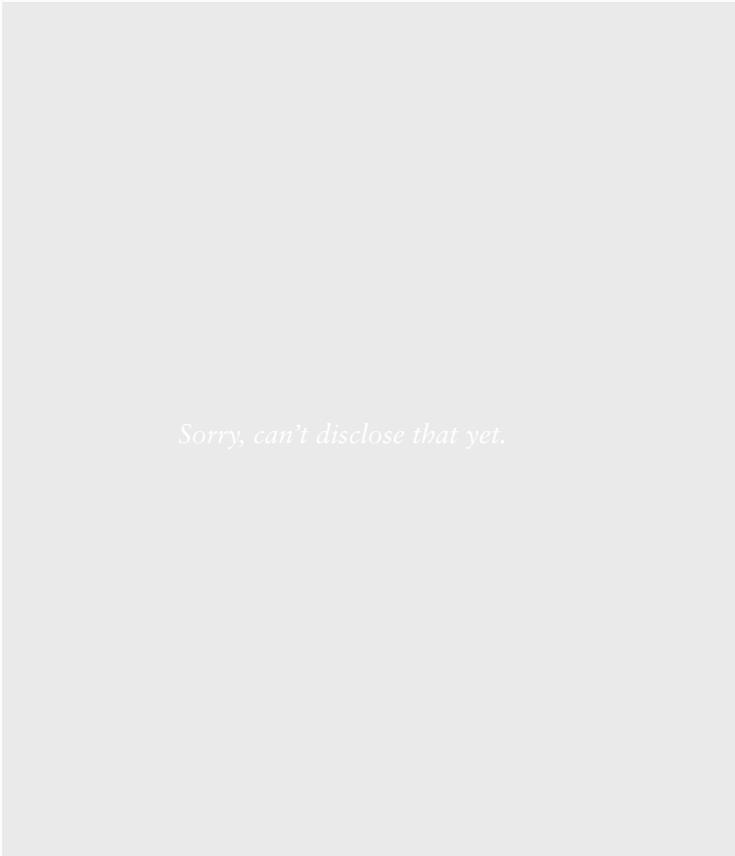
Letters to the editor is often the most successful section of a newspaper. Why is that? Because WEB 2.0 is a new fashion that will disappear soon? Or because the curiosity in what real people think is human, all too human?

### QUICKLY INTEGRATE COMMENTS IN PRINT

*Comments on articles, that have been made on the web need to be integrated the very next day.* Right beside the article. This will incite the reader to go online and write smart comments. This will also help recruiting the reader as a marketer. This is so obvious that it doesn't need more explanation.

### LET READERS WRITE

*Let your reader write articles.* Who knows more about car engines than a mechanic? The engineer? Who knows more about hairdressing than hair dressers? The fashion journalist? Who knows more about art than artists? The art critic? Give real people the opportunity to write about what they know best. Their profession, their passion, their dearest concerns. This is interesting, and if a professional editor works it over it will be a fantastic read. Reward their most talented readers by printing their articles and make them promote themselves: »Man, did you see my *article* in the NEW YORK TIMES yesterday?«



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Motivating users to write.*

1. Motivate readers on and offline to write quality comments and articles.

REWARD WRITERS

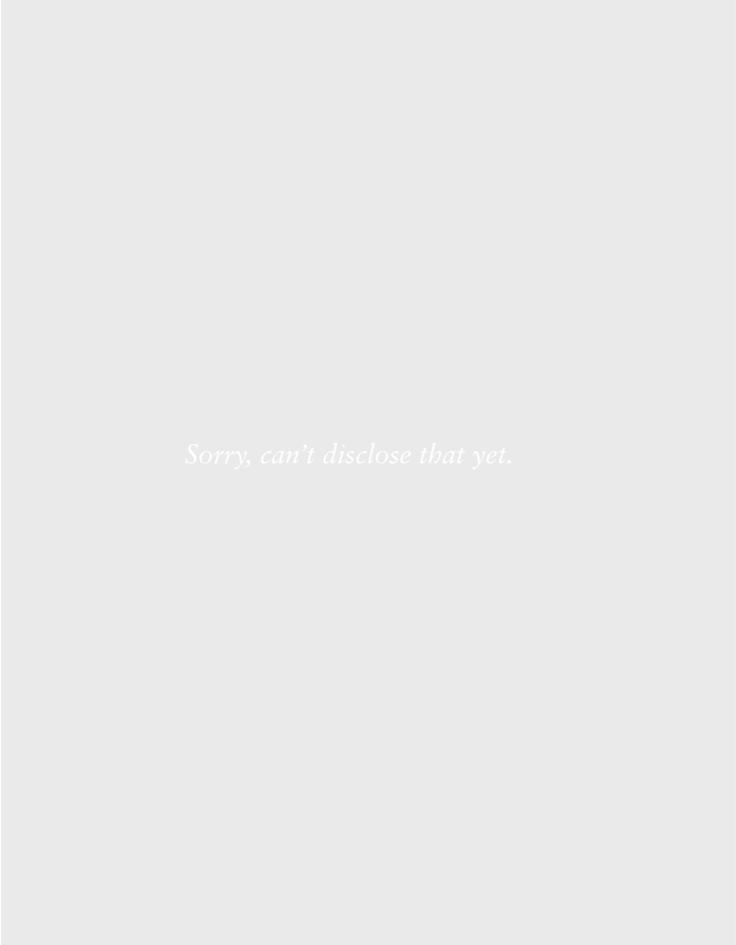
2. Reward their most talented commentators and writers for their contributions with a remarkable writer fee and by printing their articles and comments: These readers will become your biggest fans and the most passionate marketers.

3. Print comments the next day or turn intelligent comments into online articles. Print very intelligent comments as separate articles

LET READERS EDIT

4. Integrate your readers in the news generating process by allowing them to have insight in and comment on *upcoming articles*.

5. Create a section called *Informants wanted*.



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Seamlessly integrating users into the editing process.*

## Technology

### THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

Opening the archives is not enough. You have to link new news to related old news. Good newspapers are intelligent soap operas. Why do you make it so hard for your reader to review the old episodes of the amazing macho show THE WAR ON TERROR or the award winning political thriller series SCOOTER LIBBY or the award winning tragedy BRITNEY SPEARS?

### BEST CMS AROUND

1. Use the best editorial tool around; the most powerful *multiuser CMS system*, engaging intelligent users in collective content creation is WIKIMEDIA. All you need is a good information designer that cleans up the currently somewhat messy user interfaces.
2. Wiki technology allows us to collectively edit, discuss, crosslink, easily follow a story back to its roots. Wikis well done could turn newspapers in a information wonderland.
3. For print: Use better print quality, better paper.



*Sorry, can't disclose that yet.*

*Wikibased Newspaper with user friendly interface.*



# ESCAPE

Sooner or later online news will replace up to 95 percent of printed news. The mere fact that printed news cannot compete with either production speed or reproduction cost of digital media is in itself a killing economical argument.

KILLER ARGUMENT

The true reason though is that digital news are more useful and more democratic and thus more appealing to a democratic society. The end of old media is, all in all, a positive and overdue socio-political development. Old-school editors that try to resist the inevitable change that is happening throughout all levels of society »will be punished by life«.

DIGITAL NEWS:  
MORE USEFUL

The only thing websites cannot and will not be able to compete with in the near future is the physical presence and the magic of printed text. Instead of using that edge and leveraging it with the intelligent power of social media, newspapers comfort themselves with user-repulsing information design in print and an often disastrous online presence. Truth is: We need paper for books, yet we don't absolutely need paper for news – it is just a nice to have option.

LEVERAGE READER  
INTELLIGENCE

REESTABLISHING  
NEWS AS RELIABLE  
DATA FILTERS

If newspapers adapt and change their processes soon, the online edition can (re)establish itself as a reliable data filter in its democratic function as a center of political debate.

PAPER=MAGIC

Paper is not going to lose its cultural-historic magic. In contrary. The less paper we use, the more it regains its preciousness. The print edition of a newspaper can become a premium product that incites users to contribute to it – online. In order to establish itself as the info extravaganza, it needs to learn contemporary information design principles and significantly improve its interface. Newspapers that manage to join online and print soon, will get significant advantage over the competition.

Reading paper is an extraordinary experience. Discussing news online is highly addictive. If news organisations manage to leverage and connect both powers you have a chance to escape oblivion and re-occupy one of the many future centers of public attention.





# SOURCES

## *Websites*

Doc Searls Weblog: *How to Save Newspapers*

Robert Scoble: *Newspapers are dead...*

Don Dodge: *Has the Internet killed newspapers, magazines, music and video?*

Mathew: *Print may be dying, but the news is not*

Larry Digman: *How journalism education should change*

Rafat Ali: *IDG's InfoWorld Magazine To Close Down; Focus on On-line/Events*

Scott Karp: *Can InfoWorld Survive The Transition From Print To On-line Publishing? and Reinventing The News Business Requires A Little Imagination*

Dan Gillmor *Save-the-Newspapers Columnist Fires Back, Misses*

Dave Winer *Trouble At The Chronicle*

Ryan: *2 obstacles to improving online newspapers*

Drumsnwhistles: *Local Newspapers Are NOT Dead, But They Must Evolve*

Recoveringjournalist: *Internet ad revenue is going up, print ad revenue is going down*

Radar.oreilly.com: *The San Francisco Chronicle is in financial trouble*

Publishing2.com: *InfoWorld stops printing*

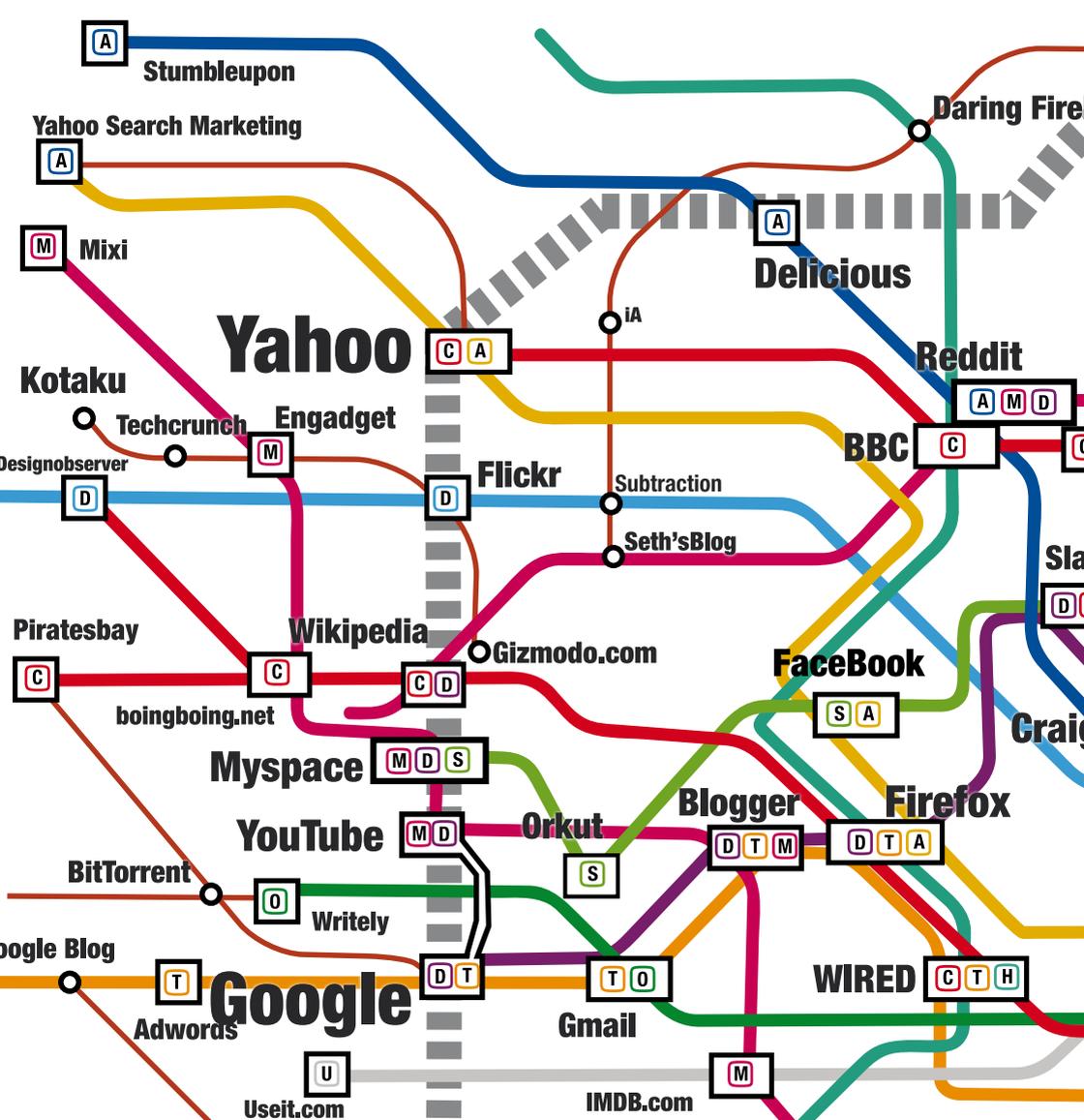
Randomtech: *Time Magazine redesigns its print edition and fires 50 people*

The Guardian: *New stars of the newsroom*  
Asiamedia: *Malaysia tells media to ignore online news sites*  
Ryan Sholin: *Two obstacles to improving online newspapers*  
Crunchnotes: *Print Media Demise, Cont.*  
InfoWorld: *Info World Brand Moves Online and InfoWorld folds print mag to focus on online and events*  
Adage: *The Post Advertising Age*  
*[list incomplete]*

## Books

Jef Raskin: *The Humane Interface: New Directions for Designing Interactive Systems*  
Andrew Hunt, David Thomas: *The Pragmatic Programmer*  
Jakob Nielsen: *Prioritizing Web Usability*  
Steve Krug: *Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability*  
Dan Gillmor: *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*  
Kim H. Veltman: *Understanding New Media: Augmented Knowledge & Culture*  
Philip Meyer: *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism In The Information Age*  
Chris Anderson : *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More (Hardcover)*  
*[list incomplete]*





Oliver Reichenstein is the CEO of ia Japan, a strategic design agency, creating brand identities and user interfaces following three obvious rules:

- User Interface = Brand.
- Design is how it looks works.
- Be simple.

ia was founded in 2000 with the idea that usability and branding should be brought together, as for the users they are essentially one.

More under: <http://www.informationarchitects.jp>