Lucy Küng, Robert G. Picard & Ruth Towse (Eds.): *The Internet and the Mass Media.* London: Sage 2008

The title of the book would suggest it to be a comparative analysis of the Internet and the mass media, or an analysis of the whole set of interrelations between these media. But as stated in the introduction, it only aims to be "a comprehensive analysis" of a more limited set of issues, namely "of the impact of the internet on the production and consumption of the mass media". It looks at the media through the lens of mass media. There are significant differences between these perspectives as the latter is only concerned with the Internet in so far as it directly impacts the mass media. It is striking that media scholars well versed in the history of mass media still maintain a mass media-centric perspective when examining digital media and hesitate when it comes to understanding digital media per se, and the whole scale of interrelations between mass media and digital media. With very few exceptions, the literature on digital media is still divided between predominantly IT-centrist and predominantly mass media-centrist traditions, especially when considering the underlying and implicit assumptions. This said, the book is still highly relevant as it presents a number of social science perspectives on the impact of the internet on the mass media ranging from economic theory to technology, user behavior, media content, media policy, regulation, copyright law and organizational strategies and structures.

The chapter on economic theory introduces a broad range of existing theories assumed to be useful (and maybe sufficient?) in the analysis of how the Internet may change media economies. Compared to the so-called "new economy" prophecies of the 1990s, the chapter does a nice job of pinning down many of the illusions while still maintaining the need to analyze a number of possible "network" effects further. However, since the Internet is not simply a marketplace where businesses meet other businesses and consumers, but also a medium for civil society initiatives, the book lacks any attempt to analyze how business and industry is affected by their moving into these new cultural, social and political surroundings. Later in the book there is a chapter on business models, including some examples of typical business failures associated with the Internet in the 1990s. In the following years, "the second era", focus is on the cross media development and what they label as *coopetition* strategies. These are relevant and informative overviews. Still, the book lacks a discussion of the strategies concerned with commercialization of user-generated content, the combination of free services and adds of relevance, crowd sourcing, the long tail, the "word of mouse" viral strategies, wikonomics, and so forth. Though a bit reluctant to discuss too much network ideology, the book also overlooks the issue of how both old and new centralized commercial corporations actually cope with civil networks as they integrate some sort of networking into their business models, while maintaining their closed, hierarchical structures. Google is probably the most dominant and striking example of this development, but Google is only touched upon briefly in the book, while we hear a lot about the old mass media corporations. Amazon, eBay and most of the other new corporations that are close to being mass media on the Internet are not mentioned at all.

It would be unfair not to mention that a few of the chapters do actually look more at the Internet. In his analysis of the impact of the Internet on media content, Richard van der Wurff takes a look at the content of online news media. Unlike in most of the chapters he also looks at the content on the Internet as a whole, including user-generated content produced on various social network sites and elsewhere on the Net. Thus he is able to see that the news media on the Net depends heavily on the content formats developed within the mass media framework. The online editions of old media provide much *more* content, rather than new content and new formats. Strong path dependence (and not simply "remediation") is still visible. At least that is how it was in the first few years of this century. To be precise, until the old media finally found their first sustainable business models in 2004-2005, which also allowed them to exploit archival functions, user-generated content, streaming, podcasting and a whole range of other new features. More important, however, is the fact that van der Wurff also points to issues of content, language, global reach, and of the more radical innovations provided by the Internet. The most important of these is that individuals can now also generate their own web pages on the fly by accessing the "deep web", extracting information from a variety of databases by defining their own search requests. Mechanical searching is by far the most fundamental and important function of all digital media, including the Internet. Unfortunately, the significance and meaning of this for cultures, societies and media corporations is one of the most overlooked impacts of the Internet.

I would also like to mention the important issues of media policies, regulation, the Anglophone copyright law and continental, European "authors' right" laws. Even if the chapter dealing with these issues is a bit uneven, it gives a fine introduction. The authors admit that the chapter is a bit Eurocentric. This may be the reason that it does not touch upon central issues in the American debate, such as the Net neutrality debate and the various attempts to define new principles for intellectual property rights, such as copy–left, the creative commons principles (Lawrence Lessig) and others.

Finally, as a devoted critic of the use of the notions convergence and web 2.0, I am pleased that the book does not use the buzzword web 2.0 more than once, while I find it unpleasant that the word convergence is used with at least five, and probably many more, quite different, and to some extent contradictory, meanings. Both of these buzzwords refer, of course, to something that is not completely false, but they refer in very inconsistent ways to phenomena that are better understood if they are kept apart. The notion web 2.0 is, for example, not simply misleading because there is no such thing as www 2.0. It is much more misleading because it refers to three basically different tendencies which do not follow each other in one package: Firstly, it refers to user-generated content. The history of user-generated content can be traced at least as far back as the father of all social networks on the internet, the WELL, made famous by Howard Rheingold, among others, but one could also argue that Usenet (dating back to the late 1970s) and the e-mail (originating back in the early 1970s) are significant examples of user-generated content. Secondly, web 2.0 refers to a loosely defined set of software features, primarily those which provide some sort of automatized service to civil users, possibly delivered in real time over the internet (often described as cloud computing, which is another fuzzy metaphor). Thirdly, web 2.0 is used as a notion for new business models based on the commercial use of user-generated content. As demonstrated by a huge number of student papers, this notion leads to a number of misinterpretations. It seems that Tim O'Reilly's paper on web 2.0 is one of the most difficult texts students have ever met. It also seems that the notion is often used as a justification for not learning about the history of the Internet. This is ignorance on the IT side, but it is to some extent shared on the media side. While the book rightly mentions the web as a fundamental precondition for the breakthrough of the Internet in the early 1990s, there is no mention of the second fundamental precondition: the opening up of the Net for commercial activities provided by the Boucher's Bill passed by the American Congress in 1992, with Al Gore paving the political way for the "information superhighway" in the years before.

If the IT-centrist literature of recent years has grown up around the web 2.0 rhetoric, the mass media-centric literature has done so around the old media corporations. And indeed the arrival of old media on the Internet has been an important part of the Internet's development in the 21st century. Like Bill Gates in the early 1990s, Rupert Murdoch also ignored the Internet, doing so until as recently as 2005. But, unlike some mass media scholars who in 2008 still consider digital media from the perspective of the old media, Murdoch changed the focal point of his Newscorp in 2005, first buying Myspace, and then looking at his own old media though the lens of digital media, asking his editors to understand this historical watershed for the free flow of information. From the perspective of media co-evolution this is of course the right thing to do, as you cannot understand the more complex media matrix from the perspective of the less complex, but have to look at the less complex fourth matrix of media through the lenses of the fifth matrix. A major difference here might be that the mass media could be made subject to top-down media management within each media corporation, while the management of the Internet is both more complex, and distributed among a large number of institutions outside the reach of any single media corporation. The Internet drives the processes of digitization, which will also creep into and absorb older media and transform the overall media system. If printed news media survive, they will not do so because they are necessary for the production, distribution, or consumption of news. They are not. They will survive only in so far as people prefer to receive their news in that specific physical format. So far this change in the role of paper from being a necessity to being an optional choice is the basic impact of the Internet on the printed news media. The strange thing is that many people still prefer to pay for a paper they don't need to get their news, just as many people still also prefer to be tied to the schedules of the television news services. The question today is, why?

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