

**САЙМОНС Г. Д.**  
Уральский федеральный университет,  
Институт Российских и евразийских исследований Упсалы,  
Университет Турибы (Латвия)

## **МИССИИ И РОЛИ ЖУРНАЛИСТИКИ В ТРАНСФОРМИРУЮЩЕЙСЯ ИНФОРМАЦИОННОЙ СРЕДЕ<sup>1</sup>**

**Аннотация:** Журналистика как дефиниция возникла более двух веков назад и стала активно применяться при изучении медиа. Между тем этот термин часто интерпретируется слишком свободно. С одной стороны, это сопровождается отсутствием комплексного понимания журналистики. С другой, сбалансированному пониманию ее сути мешают современные политические, социальные, экономические и технологические проблемы, возникающие на пути развития. Аргументы относительно роли и миссии журналистики помещают ее где-то между сторожевым псом и комнатной собачкой. Прежние аналоговые традиции журналистской культуры развиваются в новой цифровой среде, и это изменение меняет коммуникативную и культурную память института журналистики.

**Ключевые слова:** журналистика, СМИ, трансформация, идентичность.

**SIMONS G.**

## **DEFINING MISSIONS AND ROLES OF JOURNALISM IN A TRANSFORMING INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

**Abstract:** Journalism as a definition emerged more than two centuries ago and became actively promulgated in the study of media. Meanwhile, this term is often interpreted too freely. On the one hand, it is followed with a lack of complex understanding of journalism, furthermore, a balanced comprehension of its essence is hindered by contemporary political, social, economic and technological challenges that occur in the way of its development. Arguments concerning the role and mission of journalism place it anywhere between watchdog and lapdog. The older analog traditions of journalistic culture are evolving with the new digital environment, and this change is altering the communicative and cultural memory of the institution of journalism.

**Keywords:** journalism, mass media, transformation, identity.

The conceptual ideas of journalism carries with it connotations and expectations associated with the notion of the fourth estate. In an idealised and utopian understanding of journalism as a profession and what its priorities should be within a framework of

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idealised ethical concepts and ideal pragmatic practice. McNair defines the function of the fourth estate as being «an independent institutional source of political and cultural power which monitors and scrutinises the actions of the powerful in other spheres»[6, p.19-20]. This is tied to classical liberal theory that postulates the press as a defender of public interests and a watchdog on the workings of the branches of government.

A contradiction of the current news environment has been noted, in the age of the 24-hour news cycle, where the population is constantly bombarded with information. Yet the public remains quite uninformed of events, trends and processes in their environment [5]. Following this, what is the connection between the ideal of truth telling and objectivity in journalism? The exact meaning of 'objectivity' is deeply problematic, even if this is a yardstick of 'good' journalism. Truth telling and objectivity as key aspects of journalism were a construct that developed in the 20th century, being driven by an economic model pitching the «news product» to mass audiences at an affordable price [2]. Furthermore, scarcity of resources in the early broadcasting era solidified the idea of a necessary separation between news and opinion [7, p.569]. However, the advent of cable news and social media has had a dramatic effect on the information sphere by making obsolete the issues of scarcity and creating an environment where almost anyone can be a producer as well as a consumer of information. These evolutions of central norms and values in journalism are having an influence on the quality of the information sphere as well as impacting on the senses of identity and purpose of the profession.

Often journalism and media are deemed as being an essential element of a healthy democracy. These arguments, however, are often misleading and definitely missing context to be meaningful. But the «relationship between media and democracy also depends on the existing state of the media and of the market and indeed on the state of actually existing democracy in each individual context — where context is likely to be state-led because of the prevailing dominance of state legislatures but not state-bound due to globalisation»[3, p.31]. The trend of concentration of mass media outlets into fewer hands has a potentially negative effect on level of transparency and accountability in a political system[1, p.6-37] argues strongly for maintaining diversity and plurality concerning the media ownership.

The schism of the contemporary media and information environment is symptomatic of the wider splits and fractures in global politics and society, which is formed along value and norm-based projected realities. This in turn leads to the next ethical question of interpretation and opinion. «The era of news objectivity as “just the facts” is dead and gone. Interpretative journalism grows» [8, p.51]. This necessitates understanding the separation and implications of commentary, opinion, analysis and facts. This fits with the views of other academics that speak of a decline and renewal in news media with the emergence of “neo-journalism”, which speaks of journalism adapting to the changing environment as ‘non-professionals’ begin to take over and are assisted by progress in mobile communication technologies and newly created news media outlets carrying the content produced [4]. The changes that are taking place within contemporary journalism are sometimes referred to as being in a «crisis», where a crisis is understood as being an extra-ordinary situation that are potentially harmful. This in turn often causes moments to pause and ponder ethical and normative issues as

an underlying cause, but also a possible cure. At times there is a tendency to look back to perceived «golden» periods in history as a guiding force to overcome the 'crisis' and thus prevent any evolution.

But these transformations do not really account for why the changes are currently occurring. Andrew Fowler attributes the «decline in journalism» to the following reasons: 1) mainstream media disconnect (in terms quality/relevance of information product and declining public confidence); 2) the loss of money and power by news media; 3) failing business models; 4) acting as echo chambers for powerful interests. In meeting these challenges, different media outlets have attempted different solutions to overcoming the challenges and obstacles, which some observers describe as a «splintering» of the fourth estate from a model that was viewed as being homogenous.

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