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New Media Technologies and the Making of the New Global Reporter
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Contemporary developments in journalistic reporting related to innovations in technology inevitably attract interest The rise of digital technology, the convergence of media into multi-media formats and the ubiquity of the Internet are focal points for contemplations about recent changes in journalism and possible future directions. Innovations in the technologies of news media production, however, also re-focus our attention on the production of 'the reporter' in these new journalistic contexts. This article argues for an ongoing focus on the human figure of the reporter in considerations of the impact of new media technologies on journalistic practice. This is not an argument which provides reporters with some 'essential humanity' nor is it an argument which denies the 'de-humanising' effects that the increasing corporatisation and mechanisation of journalism has on individual reporters. This article argues, rather, that the human figure of the reporter remains central to the generation of meaning in new media reporting contexts: the functioning of new media technologies depends on the way they interact with the human reporter, that is, the positive and negative ways the technology works on, and with, the body of the reporter. The reporter in these contexts, then, is not a static and unchanging figure, nor a mere adjunct to new media technologies. It follows that the task of reporting concerns the manufacture of contexts, or fields of proof, where the personal and professional skills of the reporter is combined with technological validation.

This article discusses the role of the journalistic reporter in a new media environment but this figure is located in an historical context. This article will neither isolate contemporary developments in journalistic reporting from their antecedents nor ignore recent changes; instead it assumes that the skills and qualities of the reporter are determined independently of specific cultural, technological and institutional contexts. I argue that the new global reporter cannot be singularly defined and arises out of complex interactions with new media technologies and particular spatial and temporal contexts as well as the persistence of certain human skills and knowledges that have always informed the identity of the modern journalist. The appellation new global reporter, then, should not be read as suggesting that these reporters perform a qualitatively different kind of practice from their predecessors. The new global reporter is not a different creature and there remains a vital historical continuity in the formation of the reporter but the new global reporter is nonetheless created by different technological, economic and institutional contexts and through initiation into changing relations of space and time. Similarly, the new global reporter is defined as such because new technologies facilitate a global reach for reporting even though such technology is also available and used in more localised contexts.

Two reporting contexts: The Urban Jungle Pack and Bloomberg journalists

I focus here on two instances of contemporary reporting: the portable reporting workstation known as the Urban Jungle Pack and the reporting and work practices of the journalists at Bloomberg (http://www.bloomberg.com/), the international financial news and data organisation. The Urban Jungle Pack reporter and the Bloomberg journalist represent two future

roles for journalists, described by Brent MacGregor as:

> the robo hack on location and the battery hen at base. In the field the harassed and harried hack is linked all too well into the system, with too many jobs to do while the desk-based journalist never leaves the building, swamped by the enormous input of material which needs to be 'packaged' (MacGregor 1997: 211).

It should be noted that MacGregor's 'battery hen' is more the conventional television journalist whom he describes as a 'journotech' who simply packages material received from incoming feeds from different news organisations. The Bloomberg journalist described here, while very much 'tied' to his/her desk, more actively 'report' in the sense of actively seeking information from outside sources. In this sense, while I agree with MacGregor when he suggests that "increasingly there is a separation of input and output, newsgathering and broadcasting" (1997: 211), this is not directly relevant to the Bloomberg journalist who remains involved in both aspects of reporting.

The Urban Jungle Pack is a wearable collection of computers and cameras which convey text, audio and video from the reporter 'in the field' to the newsroom (Clayton Powell 1999, Pavlik 1999, Tapsall 2001). The pack is designed around a Linux computer that the reporter carries in a hands-free pouch. It also includes features such as a global positioning system and a head-mounted video camera. The reporter has the option of viewing footage either on a solid 10-inch display screen or on a translucent lens-like screen in front of the reporter's eyes which allows the reporter to continue to monitor ongoing events. It was unveiled in the middle of 1999 at a Berlin street festival where its presence attracted as much news coverage as the festival itself (Clayton Powell 1999). Its very name is suggestive of a variety of reporting contexts but it would be particularly useful for foreign correspondents given the financial strictures that have been applied to foreign news in recent years (Utley 1997). The Urban Jungle Pack is an extraordinarily efficient synthesis of technologies which is important given that the professionalism of the journalistic reporter has always been partly informed by mobility and autonomy and so has considered mundane and seemingly peripheral matters such as baggage (Utley 1997).

In contrast to the mobility of the Urban Jungle Pack, the roaming of Bloomberg journalists is largely restricted to trawling the screens of information and data which collectively constitute and represent the international financial system. The Bloomberg journalists are perhaps the most pronounced example of this kind of international financial news reporting where the pressures of real time reporting require that reporters constantly monitor the movements of markets and remain glued to their computer screens. Both the speed of story production and the nature of the reported subject, the global financial markets, mean that the sources of information are obtained from the computer screens or from telephone conversations without the journalist moving from his/her desk. The reporting of the Bloomberg journalists, as with all international financial journalists, is very much informed by their interaction with computer technology and they deploy sophisticated visual, numerical and computer literacies in the use of technology and in the processing of accessed information. Bloomberg is the focus of attention here because the company founder and chief (and now New York mayor), Michael Bloomberg, has promoted a notoriously demanding work-ethic and working environment and developed a particular corporate identity which informs the identity and practices of the journalists.

The rise of new media technologies and the greater convergence of media have, of course, played a vital role in the more general development of 'online' forms of journalism and 'computer-assisted reporting' (CAR) and also contributed to advances within 'conventional' forms of journalism (Bardoel and Dueze 2001, Dueze 2001, Pavlik 1999, Singer, Tharp and Haruta 1999). The two instances of the new global reporter examined in this article are but two examples from a range of journalistic practice that involve engagement with new media technologies. As already noted, the Bloomberg journalists are particular representations of a more generalised kind of financial reportage and it should also be noted that the Urban Jungle Pack is not the first of such reporting packs (Williams 1993). The two kinds of reportage discussed here are used as vehicles

through which we can begin to theorise the figure of 'the reporter'. The complexity and flux of contemporary journalistic reporting not only prompts speculation about future directions but also provides us with a valuable opportunity to review and distil what have always been fundamental features of reporting.

The production of reporting fields of proof

Journalistic reporting has always involved the generation of conditions by which events and information at a remove can be represented, transmitted and believed. This task of reporting raises a collection of textual, technological, institutional and epistemological concerns. The task of reporting, while crucially concerned with the individual figure of the reporter, is more the manufacture of reporting contexts which are mechanisms that produce invariable, mobile and trustworthy forms of representation. The power of the reporter, in both historical and contemporary forms, lies in this tremendous generalised ability to represent events, translate them from one site to another, and convince others remote from the event. This generalised ability informs the historical continuity of the role of the journalistic reporter which allows us to make connections between the journalist of the 21st century, resplendent in his/her Urban Jungle Pack, and the journalists, for example, who worked for W.T. Stead's Pall Mall Gazette and who ventured forth into the urban jungle which was the East End of London in the 1880s in order to raise social awareness of poverty and poor living conditions.

Successful journalistic reporting has always arisen out of conjunctions of the hardware of particular technologies in use, institutional authority, and the human skills and qualities of the observer. The developments of modern reporting have always involved the complex melding of: technological advances; the development of a 'professional' authority; and individual human capacities, qualities and a particular kind of journalistic mindset. It is tempting in assessments of such developments, particularly in contemporary reporting, to prioritise either the technology or the human capacities of the reporter. Discussions about the role of technology in journalistic practice can promote positions of technological determinism, either in its utopian or dystopian manifestations. Particularly in the area of online journalism, the proliferation of information and the easier means of access to information can be presented as the harbingers of a golden age of journalistic possibility. Alternatively, most notably in the area of multi-skilling, it can be argued that the technology will cause such an erosion of journalistic skill in some areas that it will bring about the end of journalism (Bromley 1997: 346). The significance of technological developments, however, can be overlooked in the asserted belief that an unchanging individual 'character' pre-eminently defines the figure of the reporter. Such perspectives overlook the fact that reporting contexts involve the production of a 'field of proof' which requires the necessary co-existence of technological validation and professional legitimation. It is precisely this combination of technology, institutional and professional authority, and the human skills of the journalist which, together, validate the process of observation. Increasingly, the individual figure of the successful journalistic reporter is required to be both a 'technician' and a 'professional', imbued with ethical integrity and a moral commitment to the pursuit of truth. These technical and human skills are not sufficient in themselves to generate the authority of the reporter and neither is there a contradiction implied in the co-existence of these different kinds of skills within the individual reporter. Rather, it is precisely the combination of inhuman observation and technological collection and transmission of information together with the moral authority and the very humanness of the reporter which successfully realises the process of reporting.

The persistence of the human skills of the reporter

It is within such a context that we can continue to emphasise and elaborate upon the human skills and qualities of the journalistic reporter in any consideration of new reporting contexts where the role of technology is fore-grounded. The moral authority of the journalistic reporter has always

stemmed not so much from any particular professional training or through adherence to disciplinary strictures but it has been, and continues to be, generated through processes of practical engagement. The work of Andrew Barry (1995) is helpful here. He provides a discussion of the historical development of processes of reporting, examining the interaction and prioritising of technologies and human skills and qualities by which distant objects can be visualised, known and acted upon. Barry focuses on the human skills and qualities by which the "'reliable' modern observer" (1995: 49) reports. Doctors, scientists and anthropologists embody this type of reliable modern observer whose professional authority is ideally informed by a range of human skills, an ethical disposition and a particular kind of personality. For example, the expertise of doctors in the nineteenth century was not so much bound up in a technical knowledge, either about medical technologies or clinical process, but rather in a particular kind of experience and ethic gained at the bedside. In this sense, the doctor is an example of a mobile observer whose authority "derives precisely from a particular kind of professional competence which can only be acquired through 'experience' and 'commitment' and through "participating in an extended period of 'fieldwork' and in learning how to read and write the ethnographic text" (Barry 1995: 53). Barry ends his article by noting briefly that the journalist could also be included in this category of the reliable modern observer and this article follows on from where he ends off. The reporting skills of the modern journalist go to the heart of journalism's extraordinary communicative powers and its centrality in processes of sociality and public formation. We need to be mindful of the particular differences associated both with journalism and across different kinds of journalism which resist such easy categorisation. Journalism has not been strongly associated as a profession. Its more explicit commercial imperatives have not always rendered the trustworthiness of its observations a pre-eminent concern and it has been variously dependent on technologies in its processes of observation. Nonetheless, locating the modern journalist as a 'reliable modern observer' highlights the construction of a particular kind of self through the practical engagement of reporting and it emphasises that the human basis of the journalistic reporter cannot be erased, or relegated to a mere cipher, through which the effects of technology, market forces or ideology are realised.

No matter how armed with technologies a journalist may be, no matter how much journalistic practice is governed by institutional strictures, the individuality of the journalist is still fore-grounded; the job of the journalist is said to be best achieved by a type of self, a particular kind of personality. Generally, running throughout discussions of the impact of new media technologies on journalism, is the persistence of a particular kind of 'self' whose physical attributes, personality and acquired knowledges remain central to the job of reporting. As MacGregor writes:

> Whatever the technology there is still a need to have a 'nose for news', to go to the right place in the first place and negotiate the access needed, a delicate balancing act that no technology will aid, to ask the right people the right questions, and to possess the background knowledge needed to set the event in context. As input turns to output, as newsgathering becomes broadcasting, the multiskilled journotech must be able to write concise copy that complements pictures, have a good broadcasting voice to record those words, possess an appropriate on-screen manner that 'comes through the glass', not to mention the steady nerves and technical skill required to broadcast live to half the globe while a producer back at base is screaming in your earpiece telling you what to say and some demented zealot is unloading his AK 47 in your general direction (MacGregor 1997: 208).

For all the discussion about the capabilities and efficiencies of the new media technology associated with the 'robo hack', it is interesting to note how often an acknowledgement is finally made, grudgingly or not, about the continuing importance of the human skills and knowledges in these new reporting contexts. Discussions about camera operators doing the work of the journalist and even the possibility of supplying 'ordinary people' with cameras prompt articulations about the 'professionalism' of journalists. This professionalism, while sometimes bound up in the specialist use of the technology and knowledges of textual conventions and styles of

representation, is more usually oriented around factors such as a certain kind of personality, an ability to deal with people, an experience which provides the journalist with a 'vision' which quickly assesses the newsworthiness of an event. It has also been argued that single person newsgathering, made possible by sophisticated technology such as the Urban Jungle Pack, cannot experience the benefits gained from a range of people working in a reporting team. A small team of reporter, camera operator and locally hired interpreter/fixer are able to cover the event more comprehensively and efficiently and such a division of labour highlights the importance of the human skills and knowledges intrinsic to reporting (MacGregor 1997: 207-208). Certainly the Urban Jungle Pack must pose considerable difficulties in those reporting situations where the visibility of the reporter is a pertinent issue. Such situations highlight the irreducible identity of the reporter as human figure and the vital importance of the reporter's ability to negotiate specific local and cultural contexts. The reporter as observer and as inquisitor, in both local and foreign contexts, while often culturally and professionally rendered visible as reporter, often requires a degree of anonymity or invisibility. The success of the Urban Jungle Pack may well be dependent upon the ability of the journalist to shed his/her 'technological skin' in order to be even more mobile and/or not rendered visible as reporter. Alternatively, the successful use of the Urban Jungle Pack may be limited to occasions when, as with any television camera operator, it is judged that the reporter's work is not limited by his/her identification as reporter.

The discipline and productivity of the new global reporter

Across the range of different forms of journalism, the new global reporter is very much disciplined by economic and technological factors. The introduction of new media technologies can result in limits on the freedoms of the journalist and there has also been a greater push to extract greater productivity out of journalists and align them more with particular corporate interests. The Bloomberg journalist, for example, is often strongly marked as a corporate person. As previously noted, Michael Bloomberg has cultivated a distinct corporate identity for the company, distinguishing it as a new player against the other older and established international financial news organisations such as Reuters and AP-Dow Jones. Bloomberg prides himself on the high levels of staff retention and is scathing towards anyone who has the temerity to leave (Goldman 1993). Journalists have always worked for large corporations, of course, and the development of the journalist as disciplined corporate subject may merely locate the journalist within a more widespread phenomenon. The corporatisation of the Bloomberg reporter and the more general expansion of financial journalism, however, can be located within recent journalism research which expresses concern about the increasing corporatisation of journalism (Lawe Davies 1999) and the more explicit development of the corporate persona of the reporter carries special weight for an occupation that has always defined itself through its independence and autonomy.

The making of the new global reporter as corporate subject, however, is perhaps less a process of 'de-humanising' the journalist and more the explicit production of a flexible and differentiated self. On the one hand, the communicative basis of journalistic practice, with sources, audiences and the general public, means that journalism always involves the production of a particular 'personable' self. Journalism, even the rarefied domain of international financial journalism, can be classified, employing John Hartley's term, as one of the "smiling professions" where "performance is measured by consumer satisfaction, where self is dedicated to other, success to service, where knowledge is niceness and education is entertainment" (Hartley 1992: 134-135). At the bottom of each Bloomberg story is the name and telephone number of the reporter and, as one Bloomberg subscriber noted, "You can call them up, and they're always friendly and willing to talk" (quoted in Holley 1995). Alternatively, the Bloomberg journalist is a highly disciplined subject who must be able to flourish under a punishing work schedule and survive the competitive and sometimes caustic environment of the newsroom floor.

While it is important to retrieve and note those 'human' qualities and skills which have always

informed and continue to inform the role of the reporter and the production of a particular kind of 'self', we also need to consider how the new media environment works to shape the journalistic reporter, acting on him/her physically. The site of the body as the bearer and initiator of discursive values has generated a wide field of study (Falk 1994, Featherstone and Turner 1995, Gatens 1996) but there has been little discussion of how the bodies of journalists are both the target of power and the means by which agency is expressed. Technologies more directly impact on the bodies of the new global reporters than previous manifestations of the reporter who were comparatively unencumbered. The body of the new global reporter, using either the Urban Jungle Pack or computer technology in a newsroom, is rendered a more disciplined body through interaction with technology. The new global reporter is sometimes quite literally weighed down by the technology, as in the case of the Urban Jungle Pack. The body of the Bloomberg journalist is also disciplined through constant monitoring of the computer screens, a process which is consolidated through the organisation of the newsroom floor where kiosks supply virtually free food, coffee and tea. This results in fewer breaks by the journalists, more comprehensive surveillance of the markets and greater productivity; reporters "grimly joke about the 'Bloomberg waistline', the result of the free Snapple, lunches, and snacks that are always available, enabling them ... to remain tied to their computers" (Holley 1995). Bloomberg journalists are required to work very long hours and produce a great number of stories per day. A former Bloomberg staffer has noted the costs of such work-place discipline: "They've got young kids wearing bandages on their wrists. ... The kids don't complain, but their bodies do. They're grinding people into the ground" (quoted in Holley 1995). The new media technologies and the contexts of their use, however, not only discipline and punish the bodies of the new global reporter but they also extend and supplement the human capacities of the reporter. Video and computer-based technologies such as the translucent screen of the Urban Jungle Pack reporter which allows them to view, simultaneously, recorded footage and real-time events enhance the 'vision' of the reporter. Such examples do not suggest the continuing dominance of technology, rendering the reporter a mechanised being, a kind of 'cyborg', but rather function to underline the requirement for the technology to serve the human capacities of the reporter. One of the concerns expressed in discussions of the Urban Jungle Pack is the need to miniaturize the technology in order to make it more 'user-friendly' (Clayton Powell 1999).

However, for both the Bloomberg financial news correspondent and the Urban Jungle Pack reporter, an important factor informing such changes to journalistic practice is the desire to extract greater productivity out of the reporters. Pressures on costs and the 'flexibility' of multi-media journalism certainly have resulted in greater workloads. The influence of such economic factors on journalistic reporting is best encapsulated in debates about 'multi-skilling'. As Michael Bromley notes, multiskilling "has been used loosely to describe the dismantling of demarcations between journalists and technicians, writers and camera operators, news gatherers and news processors, and between print, radio and television journalism" (Bromley 1997: 341). The single journalist wearing the Urban Jungle Pack, for example, has the capacity to video the footage, edit it, write a script for print, television or radio, and can also download it directly to the Internet. Such developments have prompted a range of responses. Some have argued that multi-skilling is merely an extension of an ongoing process of deploying technologies in journalism, which goes back to the issuing of cameras to reporters. Some have noted that multi-skilling has not changed or undermined the basic skills and standards of journalism while others have welcomed multi-skilling as the re-assertion of the primacy of journalists over technicians (Bromley 1997). Perhaps the greatest concern has been that 'multiskilling' is more the result of economic pressures which cut back on resources while increasing workloads, leading to a loss of specialised skills and overall decline in quality. In this sense, some argue that 'multi-skilling' is more a matter of 'de-skilling' (MacGregor 1997, Bromley 1997: 342).

Such changes to journalistic reporting, however, also need to be considered in the broader contexts of journalistic 'professionalism'. The characteristics of the practice of the new global reporter, which are the effect of such economic strictures, are worked into the mix of skills and

qualities which inform contemporary notions of journalistic professionalism. The ability to work across different media, the ability to synthesise huge amounts of material and produce more stories more quickly are integrated into existing understandings of quality journalism. There is a continual reworking of the mix of professional skills and a negotiation of apparent contradictions: the ability of the journalist to work at greater speed must not also undermine the ability of the journalist to produce balanced and well-researched stories. That is, the professionalism of the new global journalist is not contained in a pre-existing, ahistorical set of ideals but rather it is a repertoire of skills and attributes which are realised through various technologies of production and technologies of the self; their professionalism is the complex composite of a particular kind of personality, a particular set of human qualities and knowledges which have persisted throughout recent journalistic history together with certain techniques and skills which are the more immediate product of the interaction of the journalist with his/her contemporary working environment.

Spatial and temporal contexts of the new global reporter

Different and changing relations of time and space are significant factors which distinguish not only the new global reporter from the reporters who have preceded them but also different kinds of the new global reporter. As I have noted elsewhere (Craig 1999a), the international financial news journalist, tied to his/her desk and computer screen, is no longer a mobile observer which has been historically one of the defining characteristics of the journalist. The Bloomberg journalist is such a disciplined subject that even news-room interaction, for so long a pivotal feature of journalistic practice, is said to be diminishing. As Goldman notes, the Bloomberg journalists "make more eye contact with their Bloombergs [computers] than with each other" (Goldman 1993). And yet, the international financial journalist cannot be characterised as a "battery hen" simply processing and packaging information. The global financial news reporter may be no longer trudging the streets of the city or hanging around particular institutional sites such as the stock exchange but they do, nonetheless, perform extraordinary feats of reporting, reading and assessing the views and speculations of the virtual collection of traders and other financial figures who cumulatively produce that strangely intangible yet peculiarly powerful entity known as 'market sentiment'. The international financial news journalist performs the vital function of managing the logics of the international financial system and its relationship with the material economy and the political and public realms (Craig 1999a: 122). For other kinds of new global reporters, however, the need to master physical space is still a high priority. In this particular feature, there is more of a continuity between the contemporary city reporter and the archetypal city reporter of the earlier part of the century. The Urban Jungle Pack is built to enhance the mobility of the reporter, whether they are reporting on foreign assignment in a place such as East Timor or at a street festival in downtown Berlin. This new global reporter must not only be out there on the streets talking to the inhabitants of the city but they must also acquire the ability to master the geography of the city, a not insignificant factor in a grid-locked metropolis. As MacGregor has noted:

> Channel One in New York use ordinary taxicabs to get around, and Channel One in London has its own cab. Channel One originally had a chauffeured motorbike to take VJ's [video journalists] through the London traffic, but the motorbike driver has now become the capital's most mobile cameraman (MacGregor 1997: 209).

The new global reporters may be differentiated by their various orientations to the spatial contexts in which they report but they are perhaps united in that all have their particular journalistic practice increasingly influenced by factors of time. Of course, the timeliness of news stories and the speed of transmission have always been a factor for journalism since technologies such as the telegraph overcame barriers of distance. Increasingly, however, new forms of journalism place greater time pressures on reporters. The development of online journalism means that journalism is increasingly moving away from a news cycle with time-specific bulletins,

which divide up the day, to rolling bulletins with continuous updates. The technologies of both the Urban Jungle Pack journalist and the Bloomberg journalist are of value primarily because they enable the faster compilation and transmission of news stories. The new global reporter, however, must do more than just compile stories quickly and transmit them around the planet within seconds. There is also a growing need for them to be able to master more complex temporal contexts. The international financial journalist, for example, must be able not only to work quickly with 'real-time' events but also with historical data-bases. For both the journalist in the compilation of stories and for their clients assessing the markets, what is important is not only the speed of delivery of information subsequent to the 'real-life' occurrence but also the speed of access to more historically-based information (such as the Managing Director's speech at the latest AGM). In this sense, information can be rendered newsworthy not only on the basis of its immediacy to real-life occurrences but also because it offers particular conjunctions of real-time and historical information vis-a-vis a news event and/or trading situation. As one Reuters journalist put it:

> I think what's happened is that the distinctions between real-time and historical are getting blurred a little bit. Mainly because they're arbitrary... So what I think we're doing is giving historical information the same immediacy, in terms of delivery. For some people, that's what's important. They need information whether it's real-time or historical. It doesn't make that much difference, but they need it immediately. So I think that's what we focus on. It's not really when the information is happening that's critical to our service, it's how fast you can get any information in the right context to your client (Reuters Financial Television editor, quoted in Craig 1999b: 215).

Conclusion

The new global reporter, then, is a complex creature. He/she is not a singularly defined, new figure, but more of an evolving type of journalist, perhaps defined more through a pluralism of possible types. The discussion of the Urban Jungle Pack reporter and the Bloomberg financial journalist does not provide us with any singular definitive judgement about the future directions of reporting. Such a conclusion highlights the ongoing need to be sensitive to the specificities of journalistic reportage as different technological innovations arise as a proliferation of different types of journalism continue to occur and as journalists engage with increasingly more complex economic, political and cultural contexts. Such a situation, however, also prompts us to consider the fundamental features of the journalistic reporter, not to protect any essential identity of the journalist but to better understand the communicative and social functions of the journalist. The discussion of the two contemporary forms of journalism has demonstrated that successful reporting, while centred on the individual figure of the reporter, more fundamentally involves the production of reporting contexts in which information can be represented, conveyed and believed by the recipients of the information. A consideration of the new global journalism highlights the making of the reporter: it highlights that contemporary journalism, while partly defined by its engagement with new media technologies, more broadly involves the particular production of a journalistic self. Journalists have always been made through the doing of the job and the new global reporter is partly defined through the relationship he/she has with new media technologies which usher the journalist into changing spatial and temporal orientations, and partly defined through the persistence of human skills and attributes which have always informed the identity of the modern journalist.

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