

[ABC Home](#) [Radio](#) [Television](#) [News](#) [...More Subjects](#)

[The Backyard: Stories](#) | [Recipes](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Audio](#) | [Video](#) | [Weather](#) | [Event Diary](#) | [About](#) | [Site Map](#)



**702 ABC
Sydney**

your gateway to 702 ABC Local Radio and the Sydney region

More About 702 ABC Sydney

Search ABC Sydney

Go

[Onair Radio Schedule](#)
[Online Stream Schedule](#)
[The Team](#)
[About](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Listener Feedback Club](#)
[Make us your homepage](#)
[Send us a photo](#)
[Media Releases](#)
[702 Events](#)
[702 FAQs](#)

Listen live:

[in Windows Media](#)
[in Real Media](#)
[How to listen](#)
[Audio On Demand](#)
[702 Podcasts](#)

Programs

[Adam Spencer](#)
[Virginia Trioli](#)
[Richard Fidler](#)
[James Valentine](#)
[Richard Glover](#)
[Simon Marnie](#)
[James O'Loughlin](#)
[Tony Delroy's Nightlife](#)
[John Cleary](#)
[Overnights](#)
[Australia All Over](#)
[The Weekender](#)
[Grandstand](#)
[Country Hour](#)

Your Local Features

[The Big Fish](#)
[Sydney Art Space](#)
[Sydney's Open Gardens](#)
[Passion for Plants](#)
[702 Knit In](#)
[Sydney Snaps](#)
[Andrew Olle Media
Lecture](#)

[ABC Sydney](#) | [Feature Index](#) | [Story](#)

2006 Andrew Olle Lecture - Helen Coonan

Friday, 17 November 2006

The
Federal



Senator Coonan will deliver the Andrew Olle Media Lecture in Sydney in November.

Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Minister, Helen Coonan, has presented the 2006 Andrew Olle Media Lecture.

[Scroll to the bottom of the page to download the mp3 file of the lecture]

Thank you Richard.

To Annette and Nina Olle, Donald McDonald, Mark Scott, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen – good evening.

It is an honour to join you tonight. The Andrew Olle lecture is one of Australia's pre-eminent media events, held in memory of one of Australia's most respected and talented journalists.

In the long line of former speakers at this event, I rather suspect I may be the only one to have been interviewed by Andrew Olle.

I recall it vividly. The subject was the implications for the British Monarchy of the 1995 Princess Diana interview by the BBC's Martin Bashir. It had us all agog!

As an interviewer Andrew was honest, fair, persistent, incisive determined and thoroughly professional. His stature remains undiminished with his passing.

Story Indexes

[Date Published](#)

[Information and Communication](#)

What's New on the Backyard

Other Local and Regional Features

- [Farm still feeling storm one year on](#) [24/10/2007]
- [Bodyboard to fit female figure](#) [23/10/2007]
- [December Big Picture Day: Surviving Depression at Christmas](#) [23/10/2007]
- [Drive's Mid Week Conference October 17 2007 - coping with losing part of yourself](#) [23/10/2007]
- [Precious Bodily Fluids](#) [23/10/2007]

[more](#)

[Heard it on the radio](#)
[Dag's Dictionary](#)
[The Form Guide](#)
[Features](#)
[Mid Week Conference](#)
[Recipes](#)
[Real Reviews](#)
[TGIF](#)
[Self Improvement](#)
[Wednesday](#)

Your Say

[702 Guestbook - Add a comment](#)
[Guestbook - Read comments](#)
[Online Poll](#)

[Message Board](#)

Your Local Information

[Counter Disaster Information](#)

[Local Events Diary](#)
[Add an event](#)
[Local Radio Music](#)
[Local Weather](#)
[Jobs at the ABC](#)

Local TV

[TV News](#)
[Schedule](#)
[Stateline](#)

However, I do wonder what he would make of the challenges for journalists and politicians alike in the new media world in which we now operate.

A new wave of migrants
Australia is facing a new wave of migrants.

They're everywhere – riding the bus, working in your local shop; they've infiltrated the ranks of the commentariat and even stroll the corridors of Parliament House.

But far from this being a border security issue, I am referring to the thousands, or even millions, of digital migrants that currently reside in Australia.

I would even go so far as to say that this room is full of them.

But you won't be able to tell them from their accent or the hue of their skin, but by the glint in their eyes when someone asks them if they understand web 2.0 applications.

Questions such as do they have a blog or vlog, have they posted an amateur video on YouTube or mashed up videos on Jumpcut.com make their palms sweaty.

As do queries about whether they rate their online news at digg or delicious.com.

In short, the new media and technological landscape can be a daunting place for these digital migrants.

The threat of obsolescence looms as large for this group as it does for those with a primary attachment to the traditional telephone, the television, the radio and newspapers.

Every week there are reports about how the existence of these traditional mediums are under threat as users move online to create and watch their own content.

Next generation networks are being rolled out, wireless broadband is on the rise, we are increasingly tied to the office by Blackberries and even more sophisticated next generation mobile phones.

The sheer pace of this change is breathtaking. It is, indeed, a brave new world for the digital migrant.

Who are the digital migrants?

Everyone born before the mid-90s could be classified as a digital migrant.

It doesn't mean those born before the mid-90s don't know how to use a computer or haven't moved their CD

collections to their iPods.
But it does mean they are living in a world that did not exist when they were born. Some cope better than others.

For example, a 21 year old – born in 1985 - was born after computers went mainstream but before the World Wide Web was invented. However, by the time this generation hit uni and now, the workforce, they were performing like digital natives. They have adapted and prospered.

Digital immigrants are, on the whole, outpaced by the hordes of digital natives who do not see technology as technology but as an appendage. It's not technology to the teens – it's routine, it's run-of-the-mill, it's life.

They don't marvel about how their mobile or their computer has made their life easier or more convenient – they can barely remember a time when these essentials did not exist.

The Pew Internet Project in the US found that the average 21 year old has, in all probability, spent 5000 hours playing video games, exchanged around 250,000 e-mails, instant messages, and phone text messages, and has spent 10,000 hours on a mobile phone and 3500 hours online.

These same 21 year olds are more likely to access their news and opinion online, do research online and shop online. They date online and can even pray online. For advertisers they are fast becoming the 'lost generation'.

They are fickle consumers, are difficult to tie to one place and they are increasingly sceptical of attempts to market to them through their online communities or other new wave mediums.

The ramifications of this new digital world are particularly relevant for two sectors that have traditionally relied on a static audience that listens to radio, watches TV and reads newspapers – the media industry itself and the political class.

Up until recently we knew how to get the eyeballs and ears. We knew where they were and when they watched TV, how long they spent in their car and whether they were likely to read a broadsheet or a tabloid newspaper.

We could tell whether someone listened to Alan Jones or Virginia Trioli, what sort of people would be captured by a newspaper insert or opinion piece and we could get to most voters by standing in a shopping centre on a Saturday afternoon.

But this has all changed. We are all grappling with how to remain relevant in the fast paced world of new media.

Perhaps none more so than politicians and journalists who are struggling to maintain the foothold into people's minds and homes they once had.

I think this is a quandary that should be of keen interest to both your mob and my mob and so an integration plan for digital immigrants is the theme I have chosen tonight.

The end of media as we know it?

Many have tolled the death knell for journalism, television and, of course, the newspaper. Clearly, the situation is not terminal, but undoubtedly traditional news organisations are being challenged by the rise of 'citizen journalism'.

The newspaper can still qualify as a cash-cow but the Internet is increasingly providing a more flexible, accessible and targeted platform for advertisers. And with advertisers, comes the resources to support quality journalism.

Traditional news organisations have recognised this and are trading off their mastheads as a launchpad for their lucrative online versions.

The Newspaper Association of America has reported that advertising for newspaper websites has grown by 35 per cent per annum which can more than offset the steady decline in print advertising – for now.

The latest readership and website visitor figures released in Australia this week show readership of news websites were up significantly while newspaper readership was down.

More broadly, while revenues may remain healthy and readerships relatively steady for newspapers, nostalgia and habit will not be enough to sustain the humble broadsheet or tabloid forever.

We may be edging closer to the tipping point where online readership outweighs newspaper readership.

As the New Yorker put it recently:

'Habit may keep readers around a while longer, but spending billions on a collection of newspapers now looks like the proverbial shuffling of deck chairs on the Titanic'.

The changing face of journalism

This metamorphosis from newspapers to online, has of course had significant consequences for traditional journalism. For while many may question the credibility of blogs, citizen journalism is now forming its own newsrooms and editorial policies.

And steadily newspapers are moving their best reporters to write for the web in the first instance and then freshen their copy for the print version later.

This shift towards legitimacy and the acceptance by traditional media of the growing importance of their online offerings, may eventually debunk the claim that the Internet lacks credibility.

But for the moment the Internet remains a voluminous addition to traditional media rather than a wholesale replacement for it.

Just as some argue that the Internet will kill the newspaper, just as many argue that this is merely the latest iteration in a long line of challenges the media has faced. It is certainly not the first instance of people calling time on the newspaper.

Most recently they were challenged by the introduction of television in the 1950s. And even the printing press was hijacked when it was first invented with political pamphlets and fringe publications popping up as an alternative to the voice of the established media.

But I suspect the rise and rise of the Internet and the transformation to a broadband economy is the closest we have come to the media industry's Armageddon. People are no longer just sounding the death knell for the newspaper but warning of dire consequences for traditional journalism.

A new paradigm for journalists?

Undeniably we are moving to a new world of journalism, in the traditional sense of the craft. Journalism will no longer be, as I have heard it put by one, 'a sermon, it will be a conversation'.

If such exchanges are not exactly at the level of Socratic dialogue, who can say that an increased level of consumer awareness and interest is not a positive step?

The mantra of the Editor in Chief of one of the biggest citizen journalism sites – OhMy News is - 'every citizen is a reporter'. The mass distribution of information used to be reliant on proprietors who could afford to own and operate a printing press, employ journalists for traditional newsgathering and analysis and transport and distribute a product around the country.

In more recent times, information distribution became the domain of those who could afford to own the airwaves. Now anyone with a fast broadband connection and a laptop can create a movie or a blog and share it with the world.

It is true that credibility, authenticity and quality are

important qualifications when it comes to a critical assessment of online material.

This is why many of the most popular news and opinion sites are linked to influential and established sources such as newspapers and television stations.

But it is equally true that the value of the unedited information on the web is in the eye of the beholder.

To quote Andreas Kluth from the Economist:

"Not everything in the 'blogosphere' is poetry, not every audio 'podcast' is a symphony, not every video 'vlog' would do well at Sundance, and not every entry on Wikipedia, the free and collaborative online encyclopaedia, is 100 per cent correct."

But surely that is the point.

Michael Kinsley in Time Magazine recently characterised the citizen journalism threat as the 'blog terror' and warned accredited journalists of the encroaching influence of what he termed 'random lunatics riffing in their underwear'.

But are we in danger here of being too dismissive and elitist? Are we, in essence, trying to kill the threat by characterising it as nothing more than a rant by an unknown? And who are we – even if by 'we' I mean established commentators – to do so?

It is clear there may be a way to go for Internet journalism to have the level of authority and credibility that traditional media has, and the respect that experienced journalists rightly command.

But provided that professional journalists are afforded opportunities to make serious and considered contributions on the Internet, probability favours the view that the quality of journalism will not be diminished and readership will likely increase.

But is it for politicians or the media industry – collectively or individually - to create the 'structures of authority' for the publication and distribution of news and information?

At the moment the very lack of structure around blogs and opinion proliferating on the Internet may be its biggest drawback. As soon as a website gets 'legitimate' or even too popular then it appears to suffer.

YouTube is already being threatened by JumpCut. MySpace founder Brad Greenspan left the company to start up two competitors, networking site Stickam.com and YouTube competitor Vidilife.com.

This comes as Google hooks up with YouTube at a hefty US\$1.65 billion price tag and Rupert Murdoch's News

Corporation flexes its muscle with MySpace.

The magnitude of these transactions are mind blowing particularly as conventional business treads a fine line when it gets into bed with online communities.

A site's street cred can vanish overnight such is the fickleness of its audience. I've already heard it said that 'YouTube is so last year!'

And while the jury is out on whether the Internet provides more diverse sources of original information than those available over traditional platforms, there is no doubt that the web does break stories, inspires debate and empowers audiences.

Rather than being inimical to the public interest and the right to be informed, the Internet could well be the best reporting medium ever invented.

New York University Professor of Journalism Jay Rosen's recent initiative NewAssignment.Net sees a case for journalism that transcends traditional media, where donors pay journalists to write about 'stories the regular news media didn't do, can't do, wouldn't do or already screwed up'.

As journalism moves to the Internet, democracy can only be enhanced. No longer is debate shaped and limited only by mainstream newsrooms. Surely this is a healthy trend?

As the Economist puts it:

"The usefulness of the press goes much wider than investigating abuses or even spreading general news; it lies in holding governments to account – trying them in the court of public opinion – the Internet has expanded this court."

Just as the court of accountability has broadened, so has the communications platform for politicians, political parties and their message.

And so, if consumers now control the media they wish to consume rather than it controlling them, what might it mean for the political class?

Politics and New Media

Well, according to recent reports it has meant the introduction of some of the 'newest and blackest' arts of politics.

The margin for error for politicians has become even more minute with YouTube acting as a distribution point for footage of unwary polities falling asleep in Congressional

hearings and, worse, mouthing racist remarks at errant cameramen.

Former Democrat Presidential candidate John Kerry's recent remarks to US college students that if they did not study hard enough they could "get stuck in Iraq" were recorded by television and radio.

But it was the Internet that ensured that the story spun around the globe at breakneck speed. Senator Kerry was subsequently relieved of his high profile campaigning duties in the mid-term elections.

These examples demonstrate the danger to the political class of news, events and everyday living being not only scrutinised but also perverted on the Internet. But what happens when politicians become the users?

Politicians' flirtation with online means of communicating with their constituents is also fraught with danger. It's almost like savvy online communities can sense the vulnerability of those that dare to tread on their familiar turf.

For, more than any other medium, the world of video or audio podcasting can expose an unsuspecting politician to ridicule. No doubt unwittingly, politicians are delivering the masters of manipulation – and by that I mean the users, not the politicians – the means by which to mock them.

In the UK, Tory leader David Cameron has embarked on a flirtation with YouTube by starting his own video podcast – Webcameron. And a few enterprising Conservative Party supporters have edited together some flattering footage of Cameron into mini-movies that run like very polished political ad campaigns on YouTube.

Cameron was subsequently mocked by the British media for his efforts, but it may yet have been a canny political strategy as the ensuing media coverage boosted his profile in the short term.

Another Democrat Presidential hopeful Howard Dean was hailed in the US as the pioneer of integrating the Internet into campaigning.

He ventured into the Internet community as a novice and, while not universally popular, he was hailed by both supporters and detractors for attempting an online campaign.

Ultimately, of course, his strategy in the 2004 race for the Democrat Presidential nomination was unsuccessful– as he eventually lost out to John Kerry. Whether a political campaign on the Internet is a positive move, is yet to be proven.

Also, using the Internet to deliver a political message depends on being able to entice your intended audience to search for your material. Some of the David Cameron content on YouTube had only been viewed a couple of hundred times – most likely by journalists, staffers and supporters.

In comparison a spoof political ad for youngsters running for president of their local pre-school in the US had been viewed more than 420,000 times!

It's clear – at least in this instance – that YouTube is not necessarily the first port of call for those seeking out information on their potential leaders.

One commentator in the Guardian lamented recently that attempts such as this are surely just politicians 'co-opting new media to old media spin'.

He likened a video podcast without authenticity as 'a low rent party-political broadcast with the added benefit of being instantly available to be mashed-up, parodied and otherwise appropriated'.

Clearly authenticity and a genuine desire to communicate with their constituents must underpin any efforts to campaign online if they are to succeed. For without it, they could be a turn-off for voters, a means for mockery or cast as nothing more than online spin.

The battle between politicians across the ideological divide has also moved into cyberspace with tales of Wikipedia wars and 'Google bombing'. In the recent US elections Democrats were accused of 'Google bombing' which ensures that unflattering articles appear higher up when someone searches for a Republican candidate's name.

One tale has it that the manipulation went so far as anyone typing in the words 'miserable failure' was led directly to the White House website. And another example was where a Democrat Senator's Wikipedia entry was doctored to increase his age from 86 to 100. I wonder who noticed?

YouTube has now become the dumping ground for negative political adverts deemed too tasteless for TV – providing a convenient bypass of the regulated platforms and making the adverts almost 'edgy'.

It is a predicament, but I can imagine it will only be a matter of time before the political turf war in Australia moves to similar ground. I think this is inevitable and, like many in the media industry, politicians also may lament the passing of traditional means of communications when we were able to exert a greater level of control over our own message.

Influencer or Influence?

When the Internet was first invented and innovative people began to contemplate how to make money out of it, it was assumed the Net would simply be a distribution pipe for content as opposed to something that users might be able to influence.

But quickly it has become the domain for largely untrammelled free thought and free speech. It has been shaped by its users and it responds to the changing needs of consumers. Its potential is limitless. And the faster broadband speeds are, the more dynamic its uses.

Perhaps understandably, it is simply the unknown dimensions of participatory media that most alarms both the traditional media and even the political class. And if it doesn't, they're in denial.

I appreciate that some in the media resist change, are risk averse and sincerely wish to preserve the status quo or even turn back the clock. But stemming the tide of technology that has fundamentally altered the way we communicate is impossible. And to be frank, it is undesirable.

The world has well and truly moved beyond being able to control the news diet of a passive audience or insisting on how it is to be consumed. And when high speed networks are now being rolled out across the nation, primed to deliver a triple play of voice, data and video it is increasingly apparent that those whose business is in old media must adapt, innovate and invest in order to survive.

The ABC is a good example. Its online presence has extended the reach of its news and current affairs content. ABC New Media is going from strength to strength and finding new audiences for ABC content and appealing to younger generations with innovative and interactive online content.

More broadly, the initial reaction to new media is a typical one. The process has been described as: Stop, control and then co-opt the new medium. I think we can see this in Rupert Murdoch – the self-described ultimate digital migrant.

A late arrival to the Internet, he has now taken to it with gusto and is setting a trend for takeovers of online communities. After buying MySpace – which he has described as an extremely effective form of advertising – will he now countenance taking over any new online community that has captured the world's imagination and has advertising potential?

The saving grace in such a scenario is that barriers to new entrants on the Internet are only limited by the

imagination and imagination is in plentiful supply.

Conclusion

And so where is all this heading for the so called 'old media'? In a world where the blogosphere has become the new 'normal', the media organisations that play to their strengths will be the ones that prosper.

In an endless stream of similar content, product differentiation and editorial quality will continue to attract the digital migrants and potentially even digital natives.

Simon Kelner Editor of The Independent said recently:

"In a world where everyone has a blog, there will be a premium on sober analysis, skilled editing, and authoritative comment".

None of us know for sure what the future media will look like. We do know it is likely to be different from what we are used to. The delivery platforms may change, newspapers may well be replaced by multi-media operations, television will go interactive and probably even mobile but I strongly believe good journalism can and will prevail.

There are significant opportunities for the Fourth Estate to evolve and to seize the potential of reaching almost limitless audiences through a ubiquitous medium.

But despite all the excitement about the Internet there is no defining moment here – just the continual evolution of new ways to create and consume media.

In trying to make sense of the challenge of new media, I am reminded of a passage from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy where the hapless Arthur Dent says to Slartibartfast:

"All my life I've had this strange feeling that there's something big and sinister going on in the world".

Slartibartfast replies:

"No, that's perfectly normal paranoia. Everyone in the universe gets that."

And, so ladies and gentlemen, paranoia or not, it's never too late for any one of us to become a more integrated digital migrant. I wish you all a successful journey.

[To find out more about the Andrew Olle Media Lecture.](#)

[Listen/ download mp3](#)

The 2006 Andrew Olle Lecture by Senator Helen Coonan. Listen here or download to your mp3 player.

Dur: 34'00"

Last Updated: 23/11/2006 10:42:00 AM AEDT

Search ABC Sydney

 [print friendly version of this page](#) |  [Email this page](#)

Around The Backyard

[ACT](#) | [New South Wales](#) | [Northern Territory](#) | [Queensland](#) | [South Australia](#) | [Tasmania](#) | [Victoria](#) | [Western Australia](#)

Select a region:

[ABC SYDNEY HOME](#)



© 2007 ABC | [Privacy Policy](#) | Information about the use of [cookies](#) on this site