

Take-Off 01

MINI-CONFERENCE

14-15 November 2019

School of Communication Studies

Toroa Communication Research



DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Thursday, 14 November 2019	
9:00	DOORS OPEN & REGISTRATION
9:30	Opening Session Petra Theunissen, Helen Sissons, Gudrun Frommherz
Practice in Teaching and Research I Chair: Helen Sissons Responder: Philippa Smith	
10:00	Pip Mules Valuing interpersonal communication in the communication curriculum
10:30	Zak Waipara My hero academia
11:00	MORNING TEA
11:30	Petra Theunissen and Deepti Bhargava Unpaid internships: an issue of gender and privilege?
Social Power, Alternative Voices, and Indigenous Practices Chair: Petra Theunissen Responder: Arezou Zalipour	
12:00	Mark Rasquinha Social Power? Adapting Bourdieu to political public relations practice in India
12:30	Stephanie Sageo-Tapungu The role of traditional <i>kastom</i> (customs) in news production and dissemination in Papua New Guinea
1:00	LUNCH
2:00	Atakohu Middleton Kia hiwa rā! Reo-Māori journalists and the balancing act between tikanga, newspaper and language revitalisation
2:30	Bernie Whelan Imagining a biculturally conscious journalism education
3:00	AFTERNOON TEA
3:30	Christina Milligan Screenwriting from another worldview
4:00	India Fremaux Indigenous connections and social media: Māori involvement in the events at Standing Rock
4:30	END OF DAY 1

Friday, 15 November 2019	
9:00	DOORS OPEN & REGISTRATION
Digital Disruption in Professional Practice Chair: Gudrun Frommherz Responder: TBC	
9:30	Chris Galloway Public relations and boundary-spanning
10:00	Helen Sissons Centralised and digitally disrupted: an ethnographic view of local journalism in New Zealand
10:30	Philippa Smith The techno-discursive architecture of new media: its implications and impact on journalism research
11:00	MORNING TEA
11:30	Danni Mulrennan Is television news on the way out? A practical approach to exploring a medium disrupted by social platforms
12:00	Kelsey Schutte Could we? Should We? Emerging tech- nologies and public relations practice
12:30	Rachel Daniels SVOD and the changes to viewer prefer- ences among New Zealand audiences
1:00	LUNCH
Practice in Teaching and Research II Chair: Helen Sissons Responder: Philippa Smith	
2:00	Matthew Guinibert Crowd-sourced m-learning
2:30	AD Narayan Digital storytelling and social empower- ment: working with marginalised youths in Auckland
3:00	Gudrun Frommherz and Justin Matthews Digital disruption in and of research
3:30	AFTERNOON TEA
4:00	Closing Session and Awards Petra Theunissen, Helen Sissons, Gudrun Frommherz
4:30	END OF DAY 2

ABSTRACTS

Digital Disruption in Professional Practice

HELEN SISSONS

Centralised and digitally disrupted: an ethnographic view of local journalism in New Zealand

The paper examines the challenges facing regional journalists in New Zealand as they navigate the requirements of multimedia reporting on breaking stories in remote locations. Through the analysis of verbal and non-verbal actions, the research highlights how, despite the pressures of deadlines, linguistic devices associated with politeness characterise relations between those working in regional newsrooms and those working at head office.

Video ethnographic participant observation was carried out over a two-week period in a newsroom in Auckland. The researcher shadowed and video recorded the interactions of the head of the regional desk with reporters and news editors. The data were analysed from a Critical Discourse Studies perspective using Ethnographic Communication Analysis to examine how the head of the regional desk (at head office) saw his role in relation to reporters in regional offices.

The example shown in this paper follows a reporter in a remote location as she covers a breaking story. All relevant communicative modes in the interaction were analysed including speech, which was examined using a combination of CDS and conversation analysis, and non-verbal actions including gaze and manual gesture. The paper finds the regional editor to be managing the rapid changes to their practice assailing news reporters through building trust. He is seen to employ a variety of strategies associated with politeness as he balances the demands of digital-first deadlines with the capabilities of the journalist on the ground in a remote location.

PHILIPPA SMITH

The techno-discursive architecture of new media: its implications and impact on journalism research

The extent of digital disruption on journalism practice has been manifold with the advent of the participatory web. The impact of social media in particular has blurred the boundaries of journalism practice and led to new ways for journalists to gather information, write stories and disseminate them. Social media also offers new outlets for both news discourse and reader/viewer commentary. Alongside these challenges are questions about how we might conduct critical analysis of the discourses of news producers and consumers under these novel circumstances. This presentation examines one emergent model of theorization and operationalisation that has the potential to contribute to journalism research, Social Media, Critical Discourse Studies. SM-CDS considers the new techno-discursive architecture of new media, yet at the same time

it prioritises discourse as the object of analysis. In this session I will investigate possibilities for the application of SM-CDS to research into discourse related to topics such as journalistic identity, online comments, and issues of verification.

DANNI MULRENNAN

Is television news on the way out? A practical approach to exploring a medium disrupted by social platforms

More than half of all New Zealand viewers (56%) continue to watch broadcast television each day. These local audiences are bucking a global trend of increasing audiences moving away from the traditional medium and towards online resources such as Netflix and Youtube, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for entertainment and news. Described as "digital disruption" it is proposed the trend is having an effect on television broadcast news in two divergent directions: not only are audiences increasingly finding their news on social media platforms, but also social media platform content is increasingly appearing in television broadcast news. The latter proposition is supported by a pilot study conducted by the researcher in 2017, that found user-generated content such as 'Tweets', Facebook images, and Instagram posts were being incorporated into television news stories at a rate of 1:3 stories per television news bulletin. In order to investigate the proposition further, a number of practice-based research approaches were reviewed to identify an effective methodology in order to investigate how digital disruption was changing the professional practices of a television journalist. These approaches are discussed in relation to the development of a PhD research project that aims to address a gap as academic enquiry into television news practice and user-generated content. Since the introduction of the Internet, there has been a 10-year lag in this area of study, as journalism academics have focused primarily on newspaper and online news journalism practices. Although not discussed here, the resultant thesis aims to take the analysis of moving images beyond representational semantics and towards more empirical practice-based evidence of change, for which there is a need.

KELSEY SCHUTTE

Could We? Should We? Emerging technologies and public relations practice

Famous philosopher, Dr Christian Lous Lange, once said, "technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master." Taking this statement into consideration, this abstract will summarise predictions for the future of public relations relationship with emerging technologies, as well as how practitioners might best equip themselves for this oncoming change. This is done through the following three steps:

Firstly, key concepts are defined and then the concept of emerging technologies is divided into two types: technological "tools" and technological "skills". "Tools" are considered to be technologies that will

help a practitioner perform their tasks in better and more efficient ways. Whereas “skills” will fill previously unnoticed gaps in the profession, as well as being capable of traditionally ‘human’ and ‘sentient’ tasks such as creativity, crisis management and emotion-based tasks. These two types are illustrated by Virtual Reality and Chatbots as examples of “tools” and “skills” that are likely to evolve the industry in the near future.

Secondly, there is philosophical discussion about how the only change practitioners can predict for certain is change itself. The reality is that everyday practitioners will need to start providing answers to ethical questions they might have never previously considered, which can perpetuate AI anxiety or overwhelming thoughts of the future. However, this presentation will argue that practitioners need not feel this unease because there is one vital future concern which can be prepared for: ethical practice.

Finally, practical instruction is provided detailing how practitioners can prepare their future ethical practices in response to emerging technological disruption. These instructions include among others: considering the ethical impacts of a new technology before it is implemented, considering the whether the proposed technology is a “tool” or “skill”, possessing a practical philosophical understanding of life-long learning in professional practice, actively employing research and logic into technological decision-making, and finally, continual reflection on the importance of authenticity.

Ultimately, emerging technologies will evolve both the day-to-day nature of the public relations industry as well as the philosophical and moral components of the practice. However, should practitioners know of this oncoming change and employ these practical instructions so they are able to fully face the revolution, grabbing hold of it with both hands and a bold, but cautionary, enthusiasm.

CHRIS GALLOWAY

PR and boundary-spanning

This paper calls for re-interpreting the established idea of public relations professionals as boundary-spanners, arguing that in the age of fast-advancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications, the very notion of boundary is itself in question. AI “should be understood as systems of computational components together with human behavior (human actors), and institutional arrangements and meaning.” Such systems together with quickening digital transformation are altering organizations’ makeup: for example, one can have not only a virtual organization but also a network incorporating machines and AI-enabled systems as well as humans.

While “boundary spanning” implies defined limits to organizations, organizational communication literature has for some time recognized that boundaries may be fluid and porous rather than static and easily delineable. However, when organizational operations combine not only humans but also intelligent interfaces to AI-based systems and other capabilities, some of whose contribution may be opaque, “boundary” becomes a potentially illimitable descriptor.

Public relations practitioners will need to build new capabilities as they confront these shape-shifting landscapes, including “liminality competence”. This is the ability to function effectively in dynamic work conditions characteristic of “in-between” positions operating across employee groups and interacting with related organizations. Such competence goes beyond the proficiency called for by traditional boundary-spanning or even “boundary-dwelling”. Rather, it is particularly – though not exclusively – an attribute of those the Arthur Page Society terms “pace-setters”: top-of-the-tree public relations practitioners whose experience as “liminars” (those who work in liminal spaces) makes them “rovers” who traverse limits, both real or imagined, established by employee groups and those of corporations with which they engage. As practitioners do so, they not only help create but also operate within a dynamic “invisible college” of specialists, recruiting their expertise and applying it to serve clients’ and employers’ interests. Such activity may include, and is likely increasingly to encompass, AI-augmented analysis or interpretation of assessments produced by AI-driven systems. Against this background, industry bodies and the PR academy need to consider how they can offer, and prepare graduates to provide, relevant communication counsel that accommodates fresh formulations of boundaries and how to navigate them.

RACHEL DANIELS

SVOD and the changes to viewer preferences among New Zealand audiences

Changing audience viewing behaviour has disrupted the broadcasting industry over the last few years. Viewership has fragmented with audiences moving away from traditional linear broadcasting towards subscription video on demand (SVOD) streaming services such as Lightbox, Netflix, Neon, & Amazon Prime, or advertising-funded video on demand services (AVOD) like TVNZ on demand, ThreeNow and Maori Television on demand. My qualitative study of viewer engagement, experiences, expectations and preferences found that audiences are leaning in towards more autonomous viewing behaviours. As SVOD and AVOD give viewers the control to determine what, when, where and how much they watch so viewers have substantially embraced these new modes, preferring the freedom to binge on content and personalise their viewing choices. Selective viewer preferences are heavily skewed towards high quality original content which contain complex characters and narratives with interwoven story arcs. If traditional linear television is to survive the shift in audience preference it will need to change the delivery and revenue models, from broadcaster controlled to viewer-controlled models and will need to find innovative ways for audiences to remain engaged. This presentation delivers some of the key findings of a qualitative study of user engagement that highlights the digital disruption challenges for traditional television and makes suggestions for the television industry to digitally transform.

Social Power, Alternative Voices, and Indigenous Practices

MARK RASQUINHA

Social Power? Adapting Bourdieu to political public relations practice in India

In the recent past, several political campaigns have made use of modern-day Political public relations services to influence public opinion not only in India but across the world. Political organisations and political actors have embraced political public relations services because they help them create favourable opinions. However, citizen groups and critics highlight the use of these tools as a means to manipulate voters and undermine democratic processes. Hence, the need for academic scrutiny of political public relations practice.

Given this backdrop, this study is born out of a larger ethnographic study that aims at understanding the influence of interactions on communication practices amongst political public relations practitioners in India. The interaction in this article investigates the power structure between a manager and lower-level practitioners captured on video, as they discuss the posting of a video on opinions of Indians over an impending war with Pakistan over a terrorist attack in Pulwama. The Pulwama attack, an attack on a convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber in Kashmir, on 14 February 2019 forms the backdrop of the interaction. The content under discussion was to be posted on the clients’ official Facebook page.

The paper argues professional interactions influence the social media agenda in modern-day political communication practice, and power structures in political communication departments limit the individual autonomy of political public relations practitioners. Further, lower-level political public relations practitioners display autonomy while interacting with the online mainstream media and set the online social media agenda. The influence of interactions, power structures within the department and limited autonomy of lower-level practitioners suggest political content is a product of conflict between professional groups.

The study applies Pierre Bourdieu’s formulation of capital and symbolic power as a theoretical framework to the professional environment of political public relations. The framework establishes a link between the professional practices of political public relations and the social effects of the profession. The analysis adds knowledge to help understand the nature of power in political public relations practice.

The research used a combination of data gathering methods, including video ethnography and semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The interaction is a part of 26 hours of video ethnographic data. The data were gathered in one of the regional offices of a national-level political party in India. The data is analysed using Ethnographic Communication Analysis (ECA), which uses a combination of methods to analyse verbal and non-verbal actions.

The paper contributes to debates on how professional interactions influence political public relations practitioners’ reasoning, practices, interpretation and description of events. The article suggests managers in political public relations practice are dependent on lower-level practitioners for content creation skills, thereby increasing the autonomy practitioners have over the content creation process. However, These interactions also show how managers use power structures to limit the autonomy of professional political public relations practitioners.

STEPHANIE SAGEO-TAPUNGU

The role of traditional *kastom* (customs) in news production and dissemination in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea journalists are challenged with many issues, some of which would be familiar to Western journalists, while others are unique to the country and can be confusing to people who are not familiar with the cultural and geographical diversities of the country. This paper examines the current journalism and communication practices in PNG by focusing on the aspects of PNG’s socio-cultural environment, which emerged as important during interviews with participants.

The paper draws on the concept of *kastom* and how it influences the way journalism is practiced in the country. It will explore the impact of *kastom* on news translation in PNG, providing specific examples of how *kastom* interferes, impacts, and influences the processes of news gathering, writing, editing, and news delivery.

The core argument in this paper is that an approach focused on the cultural context and particularities of a Melanesian society like PNG can enhance our understanding of the challenges faced by the contemporary PNG journalists and allows us to gain a better understanding of these journalists’ practices and activities.

The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews, video ethnography, and document collection and fieldnotes.

This paper attempts to refresh and add to the admittedly scant literature on media and journalism in Papua New Guinea and contributes to the discussion that journalism can be practiced on culturally appropriate frameworks that can support and empower journalists to uphold their role as the fourth estate of democracy.

ATAKOHU MIDDLETON

Kia hiwa rā! Reo-Māori journalists and the balancing act between tikanga, newswork and the language revitalisation agenda

Tikanga Māori, or Māori ways of seeing, being and doing, is an important influence on the outlook of Māori journalists producing news in te reo Māori. Like indigenous journalists in other colonised countries, Māori have adapted the Anglo-American reporting tradition to tell indigenous stories, creating a hybrid formation. There are three daily news shows in te reo Māori, two on television and one on radio; however,

there is limited research on the ways in which Māori culture manifests in newswork.

In addition, Māori journalism operates on a different plane to other state-owned and commercial counterparts; it is funded as a vehicle for language revitalisation under the national agenda to protect and promote te reo, which is “somewhere between definitely endangered and severely endangered”. The funding regime requires journalists to broadcast stories 70-100% in te reo. However, finding subject experts who can also speak te reo fluently is a challenge when just 11% of Māori adults speak te reo ‘well or very well’ but four times that number are learning.

The doctoral study from which this presentation derives involved journalists from all three daily reo-Māori news shows. The research examined the interplay of newswork, tikanga and the language revitalisation agenda to explicate Māori journalism, looking closely at the ways in which journalists tried to balance competing demands. This presentation will provide an overview, focusing on how tikanga informed newswork, how journalists reworked oral traditions for news, and the culturally-informed approaches they took to help less-fluent interviewees express themselves.

Multimodal data was gathered through video-ethnography (227 hours of film, representing 11 reporters over 32 days) and semi-structured qualitative interview (34 people). The dataset also included journalists’ scripts and other material pertinent to their newswork. The data was analysed using lenses from critical discourse studies, in particular thematic analysis, textual analysis and intertextual analysis; conversational analysis and non-verbal analysis were also used.

BERNIE WHELAN

Imagining a biculturally conscious journalism education

We exist in stories. Storytelling defines what it means to be a human being daily, externally in our interaction with the world around us, and internally with our identity. As academic researchers we seek out, analyse and retell stories newly. Journalists do something similar, just in different ways. It makes sense, then, to use a fundamental professional practice and norm of research and journalism as a way of understanding biculturally conscious journalism education in Aotearoa New Zealand. By understanding how the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are embedded in journalism education, this research intends to solve a longstanding puzzle. Despite journalism schools and their graduates having access to two highly regarded texts on performing the role of journalism in relationship with Māori, the practice of journalism continues to be accused of institutional racism. By understanding the stories that institutions and journalism educators tell about biculturally conscious education, this study intends to inform and influence both the schools and the organisations which practice journalism.

The generative intent of the study is reflected in the theoretical framework and methodology being

used. Social constructionism is being relied on as the framework because of its relational basis and the idea that knowledge is generated from intent, inquiry and understanding in the space between people. Narrative Inquiry and its capacity to use stories to understand experience is the methodology being applied to the study. Interviews have been conducted at journalism schools and institutional document analysis is currently being undertaken with documents from the universities. A personal diary being kept by myself as the research will also contribute to the study.

In keeping with the praxis-based intent of this presentation, storytelling from an interview narrative will be used to consider how the methodology is working. Narrative Inquiry’s three-dimensional analytical space created by time, place and relations will be brought alive in the room to walk through and around stories within a narrative. The story will be retold, and then those in the room will be encouraged to imagine what is going on in the space with the critical intent of informing practice in education.

At the heart of the study is the potential for stories of experience to imagine future possibilities for a biculturally conscious practice which informs not just journalism education and practice, but teaching and learning for any field. This presentation will also contribute to the development of a journalism education conference presentation and a paper.

CHRISTINA MILLIGAN

Screenwriting from another worldview

The script development process of a feature film conventionally involves a writer, a producer, perhaps a script editor or development executive, and perhaps the director. It is a time of intense collaboration during which the participants through their practice negotiate continually to reconcile their various creative intentions, an aim achievable partly because they all speak the same creative language and share similar views of what makes a good screenplay. In New Zealand as in other Western countries, the default approach to writing the screenplay has been strongly influenced by Hollywood theorists including Robert McKee and Christopher Vogler. For Māori screenwriters, particularly for women, such approaches, based on Joseph Campbell’s principles of the ‘Hero’s Journey’, do not necessarily resonate with the worldview from which their own creativity emerges.

The recent growth of digital niche markets and what feels like an explosion of interest in indigenous stories have helped open up commercial investors like Netflix, and government policy-makers like the NZ Film Commission, to the richness inherent in different ways of thinking and different approaches to the development of feature films. This presentation examines the 2017 feature film *Waru*, written by nine Māori women and directed by eight of them. It discusses how the script development process was informed by the filmmakers’ perception of the world – their deep engagement with te ao Māori – and how this imbued the characterizations and mise-en-

scene of the film. The unusual development and production processes of the film were informed by the filmmakers’ personal and political commitments to addressing a polarizing social issue in New Zealand, that of child deaths at the hands of caregivers. The film was able to reach beyond the indigenous audience at home and abroad which is a commentary on the success of the writer/directors in facing a difficult subject with honesty, integrity and a willingness to engage with a wide audience; it is also a testament to how impoverished our screen storytelling in New Zealand will be if we remain wedded solely to a European worldview.

INDIA FREMAUX

Indigenous connections and social media: Māori involvement in the events at Standing Rock

The whirlwind development of digital ICTs has had significant implications for Indigenous peoples and their movements towards social and political change. Digital ICTs facilitate global Indigenous connections, assist the rapid diffusion of information and present a decentralised outlet for Indigenous perspectives. However, for Indigenous groups, issues of access, cultural appropriation and misrepresentation remain. With the aid of digital ICTs, the Standing Rock movement successfully united Indigenous cultures across the world.

This research focuses on Māori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) who expressed passionate support on social media and even travelled thousands of kilometres to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux. The aim of this study is to determine the interest and involvement of Māori in these events via the qualitative analysis of two data sets drawn from participants; in-depth interviews and personal social media posts. Each participant was chosen for their vociferous support of the Standing Rock movement and their identification as Māori.

The findings revealed that while participant interest stemmed from a number of areas, particularly pertaining to Indigenous affinity and kinship, it was social media that initiated and sustained that interest. These results indicate that there are deep connections between Māori and the Standing Rock Sioux and the role of social media in facilitating and maintaining those connections was complex. Social media was used by participants to share information, encourage involvement, post updates on the events and present Indigenous perspectives and content. On this basis, it is recommended that more specific research on social media and its uses for Indigenous connection is completed to achieve exhaustive results. This study provides a solid base that may be applied to other Indigenous groups in their movements toward change.

Practice in Teaching and Research

PIP MULES

Valuing interpersonal communication in the communication curriculum

This paper is a call for educationalists to recognise the affordances of the medium of interpersonal communication as a valuable medium for coming to know about the world. The philosopher Walter J. Ong theorised that oral, dialogic ways of knowing (such as conversation) have unique communicative and pedagogical affordances and the potential to enhance knowing in ways that are probably unachievable by any other medium. He argued that the mutual presence of interlocutors, which is the primary sensory influence in oral ways of knowing, has special epistemological affordances as the “primordial attunement of one human existent to another” and is intensely, experientially powerful. Ong further claimed that oral ways of knowing have the potential to mediate great depth of feeling, intense imaginative experiences, intuition and insight, and deep levels of self-reflection. He believed that more interpersonal ways of knowing had the potential to bring about more harmonious and balanced worldviews.

However, the medium of interpersonal connectedness is not particularly recognised or valued by teachers. According to Ong, the reason that orality, as a medium of knowing, is often perceived as artificial and often ‘mere rhetoric’ is because it has been devalued as a medium through being framed in terms of literacy. From a literate point of view, oral forms of sharing and storing of knowledge have become perceptually associated with the oral performance of literature, and thus orality is perceived as artificial and formulaic, associated more with superficial artifice such as enunciation, elocution and rhetorical (one to many) performance. Correspondingly, the social component of coming to know has not been particularly valued in the formal classroom context where such pedagogical practices are frequently dismissed as merely ‘transmission teaching’ and ‘chalk and talk’.

Despite its evanescent and fragile materiality, interpersonal communication has unique communication affordances that can enhance learning in ways that are probably unachievable by any other medium. This research calls for a re-evaluation of the pedagogical practices associated with the era of mass print and the emerging era of digital engagement, and a recognition and valuing of the least visible and most powerful knowledge medium—each other.

ZAK WAIPARA

My hero academia

One of the biggest issues facing academics drawn from industry is relevancy. And, as time spent away from industry increases, it becomes harder to remain relevant. The demands of academia, with its emphasis on teaching, research and service, makes maintaining industry or professional experience difficult.

It is at the intersection of teaching practice, research and industry practice (what some might call professional practice), that an academic could be said to be of greatest value to the academic institution. But in fact these are all facets of professional practice, or rather, as a whole they make up what it is to be professional in the academic sphere. Is it possible to balance these demands?

My own areas of interest, interrelated digital media disciplines, fall under a transmedia umbrella, including comics (analogue and digital), motion graphics and motion comics, illustration, game design, and general media of visual communication. They are related via a transmedia lens because even though some project elements may begin life in analogue forms, once digitised these assets lend themselves to transmediation.

Lev Manovich took the idea of remix (sampling existing media to create new material) and coined the term 'deep remixability' – the creation of a new hybrid visual language, "or rather numerous languages that share the basic logic of remixability." In other words, remix is a practice which evolved from multimedia existing inside the same digital space. "Remix and remixability are also closely related to transmedia, because assets are often transformed via remix into divergent digital media, and because transmedia requires versatility".

This is a practice I have endeavoured to encourage with different student cohorts. Using one case study from the classroom, and a philosophy developed in curriculum design referred to as Making by Doing, I hope to explicate how the intersection between teaching, research and practice is perhaps itself its own answer to this question of balance.

Though the curriculum was broad in scope and the 'Making by Doing' practice was varied in its application, I will focus on one aspect – using comics in the classroom. Teaching on this subject area, assisting students with their projects, modelling exemplars and testing curriculum through hands on development, led to a renewed interest in the artform for myself as a creative person. In doing so it opened up new research interests, which led me to try experiments in practice. These in turn fed into my professional/industry practice, which in turn can make for a more experienced and invested teacher and practitioner.

GUDRUN FROMMHERZ & JUSTIN MATTHEWS Digital disruption in and of research

"Digital disruption" is currently one of the hottest buzz phrases in the digital economy. It is a "do or die" mantra for almost all organisations, both commercial and public. Technological innovation pressures enterprises from two directions – inward-oriented in form of raised customer expectations and outward-directed by a need to build and maintain increasingly efficient operations.

Ubiquitous digital connectivity and social lobbying catalyse old and new customer expectations that demand novel forms of interaction with and accountability towards consumers-as-users. Increasingly,

customers no longer take "no" as an answer. On the operational level, the speed, scalability and efficiency of novel business technologies erode existing value propositions and necessitate new business models that are more fluid, timely, individualized, and agile in responsiveness.

Little of this digital dynamic seems to have been recognised in academic research – although, as the authors argue, digital disruption in research is as prevalent as it is in the industries and perhaps even longer-standing than in commercial activities.

This presentation outlines areas of digital disruption in and of academic research and illustrates the existence of a profound research crisis in form of real-world examples. Special attention is placed on the illumination of digital disruption in the processes and formats of research articulation/presentation and research dissemination.

The presentation prepares for a paper that aims to critically evaluate the application of the digital journey process in and to academic research practice.

PETRA THEUNISSEN & DEEPTI BHARGAVA Unpaid internships: an issue of gender and privilege?

Internships are a growing part of the workforce, but little has been done to examine this precarious segment. The prevalence of a neoliberal discourse, in both higher education and the job market, has somewhat normalised the idealisation of work and made internships appear as the path to achieving a rewarding career.

In public relations, they are seen as important for developing the necessary applied skills by providing experiential learning whereby students can "experience the occupation" and can "become more independent, ambitious, and focused". Some also argue they could be a solution to rising unemployment, providing students (and companies) a competitive edge. But internships are not without controversy. Unpaid internships are often more popular in creative industries, such as public relations, and considered as training and nurturing ground to prepare talent that can then 'fit' these practices. Furthermore, females appear to be overrepresented in unpaid internships, which fuels ongoing concerns about unequal pay and devaluation of labour in a feminised occupation. What is also alarming is the likelihood that only those with the financial wherewithal to work unpaid and a strong desire to build social capital will possibly be entering the job market through these internships. This raises the question of privilege and paints entry-level public relations as breeding ground for a "pink profession", possibly dominated by white middle-class females.

The current study confirms some of these concerns. Through an anonymous survey of 57 respondents, it was found that female respondents were proportionally over-represented in unpaid internships. Yet, these respondents remained hopeful that the internship (which was mostly extra-mural) would increase their chances of getting a job upon graduation. The most beneficial aspect of the internship was

that it looked good on their CV, which possibly hints at their perception that it might help them acquire the desired capital of the occupation. Does this imply that perceptions of future 'fit' (as opposed to internship acting as a learning ground) dominates young entrants' desire to accept unpaid work?

Additionally, the survey found that males were marginally more challenged by the work they did than female respondents. However, they also felt that, sometimes, the internship providers expected too much of them, more so than females. On the other hand, female respondents were less sure of what was expected from them in the internships, thus suggesting a lack of clarity in the job role and possibly even a gendered inequity. This corroborates what Shade and Jacobson (2015) found in their study of Canadian youth who felt female interns were more likely to be asked to do menial unrelated tasks (such as getting coffee for a meeting), whereas male interns would be tasked for writing meeting minutes. But it can be argued that the lack of clarity in the role and the varied expectations are linked to the level of pay. For instance, based on his semantic analysis of internship offer letters, Maynard (1997) concluded that there were subtle differences between the message structure of unpaid internship offers versus paid offers. Not only did unpaid internship offers use more words to justify the offer (focusing on perceived benefits) but they tended to ask for more 'general communication assistance' than paid internships thereby producing what can only be described as ambiguous job descriptions. Paid internships, Maynard (1997) asserted, move the role closer to a professional role as they have clear expectations and skill requirements. Given the over-representation of males in paid roles, it makes therefore sense that there are greater expectations placed on them in terms of role performance. The reverse is also true of female respondents.

But this has implications for a profession that is female dominated. If paid internships move the roles closer to the profession with clear expectations, job descriptions and less emphasis on the fringe benefits, then what does it mean when females are under-represented in these paid positions? Is it possible that there is unconscious bias at work? Could this also lead to unintentional occupational closure where only the privileged can 'prop up' their CVs with unpaid roles?

As one respondent of this survey pointed out, "I think unpaid internships are problematic for a number of reasons. Usually, only people who come from privilege (i.e. live at home, parents paying for university, other sources of income) are able to take on unpaid internships. As a result, the people with privilege gain experience from the internships, which means they are more likely to secure paid work after the internship as they have developed the skills, connections and experience to go on a CV."

Whatever the reason, rather than accepting that internships by their very nature are unpaid, there should be a continued effort to encourage pay of interns and a renewed awareness of who is offered the paid internship and who is not.

AD NARAYAN

Digital storytelling and social empowerment: working with marginalised youths in Auckland

Several authors have agreed that New Zealand faces a crisis of minority representation and negative stereotyping in the media, which leads to an oppressive power structure, and an experience of marginalisation. This research will provide a case study of the 312 Hub, a community hub in south-central Auckland, formed to prioritise minority youth voices in urban development consultations for the suburb of Onehunga. With a focus on participatory film making, this research will analyse their use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in enabling developmental goals. The research will address two key gaps in literature: it will provide a case study for the use of participatory video to facilitate marginalised youth to analyse causes of their disadvantages and act to change this; and it will identify methodologies for facilitating youth-led participatory video practices.

MATTHEW GUINIBERT

Crowd-sourced m-learning

Changing technology has created new demands on how people communicate, with the average person now needing to communicate more visually to fully participate in the contemporary world. This has prompted renewed interest in the learning of visual literacy skills. Based on the presupposition that visual literacy skills are not usually learned unaided "by osmosis" but require targeted learning support, this research explores how everyday encounters with visuals can be leveraged as contingent learning opportunities. The study proposes that a learner's environment can become a visual learning space if appropriate learning support is provided. This learning support may be delivered via the "anytime and anywhere" capabilities of mobile learning (m-learning), which facilitates peer learning in informal settings. The study found that personalised learning, situated learning, and collaborative learning significantly assist visual literacy learning.

Informed by a review of existing learning models, the study propositions a rhizomatic m-learning model of visual skills. The learning model describes how everyday visuals may be leveraged as visual literacy learning opportunities. By devising a tailor-made practice-based research approach, the visual learning model was implemented and tested as an m-learning app. Usability testing and interviews were used to evaluate the app as a learning application, as well as the underlying learning model. The outcomes of the study demonstrate that visual literacy can be achieved by novice learners from contingent learning encounters in informal learning environments through collaboration and by providing context-aware learning support. This finding is encouraging for teaching visual literacy, as it shifts the onus of visual literacy learning away from academic programmes and, in this way, opens an alternative pathway for the learning of visual skills.

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in applied digital communication by researching the nexus of relationships between practice, research and scholarship, by promoting practice-informed research, and by facilitating practice-enabled researchers.

TCR members, associates and interested researchers (new and established) meet every last Friday in a month. Visitors and new members are welcome.

Contact: toroa@aut.ac.nz

TOROA TAKE-OFF 01 MINI-CONFERENCE

14-15 November 2019

Auckland University of Technology

School of Communication Studies

City Campus

Sir Paul Reeves Building, WG801

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