Sport and New Media:

A Profile of Internet Sport Journalists in Australia

Kirsten M. Lange

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Abstract

The Internet is now a significant medium for sport coverage, allowing fans to access the latest news about their favourite team, sport or event. To date, Internet sport journalists, the content creators of sporting news websites, have received little attention in academic research. Accordingly, the aim of this research project was to construct a profile of Australian Internet sport journalists within the context of recent developments in the field of sport and new media. In terms of print journalism, some researchers have previously examined the educational background, working practices and self-assessment of print sport journalists. Similar themes were explored in this thesis, using semi-structured interviews with thirteen Internet sport journalists. Key research questions that guided the study were: How did the subjects become Internet sport journalists? What are their work routines? What are their experiences of online sport journalism and what is their perception of the future of sport journalism? It was discovered that, with certain limitations, traditional journalism skills still apply to the Internet sport environment. In comparison to print media, Internet sport journalists tend to write shorter articles, have to respond to a continuous deadline and do not work within a traditional beat system. In addition, it can be noted that the interactivity of the Internet forces Internet sport journalists to continually re-evaluate their skills and the manner in which they respond to their audience. Overall, this thesis provides important insights into the working practices of Australian Internet sport journalists and the online environment, an occupational field that is currently in a considerable state of flux.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFL	Australian Football League
AFP	Agence France Press
APSE	Associated Press Sports Editor
CAR	Computer-assisted Reporting
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory
DVD	Digital Video Disc
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
IOC	International Olympic Committee
MEAA	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
PANDORA	Preserving and Accessing Documentary Resources of Australia
PC	Personal Computer
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SMS	Short Message Service
URL	Universal Resource Locator
WAP	Wireless Application Protocol
WWW	World Wide Web

1. Chapter 1

Introduction: Sport, Media and Society

1.1 Introduction

The study of sport and the media has been a popular topic in the past two decades. Reports and studies on media sport institutions, media sport audiences, media sport texts and sport journalism, abound in academic literature. Within this genre, a number of authors have noted the existence of a symbiotic relationship between sport and the mass media in society.[1] At the heart of this symbiosis, as both Jay Coakley and Lawrence Wenner have argued, commercial forces are clearly at work.[2] On the one hand, the increasing popularity of sport is partly due to the enormous amount of attention dedicated to it by the mass media. On the other hand, the media creates massive revenues and generates enormous sales in circulation and advertising based upon their extensive treatment of sport.[3] The mass media thus generates increased interest in sport and this increase subsequently warrants even further media attention and sport coverage throughout various media outlets, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and, more recently, the Internet.

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[1] See, for example, Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *Media, Sports, & Society*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1989; David Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1999, and Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes, *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture*, Longman, Essex, 2000.

[2] Jay Coakley, *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, sixth edition, Irwin McGraw-Hill, Boston, 1998, pp. 371-374, and Lawrence A. Wenner, 'Media, Sports, and Society: The Research Agenda' in Lawrence A. Wenner (ed.), *Media, Sports, & Society*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1989, pp. 13-15.

[3] As explained in Robert W. McChesney, 'Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States' in Lawrence Wenner (ed.), *Media, Sports, & Society*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California, 1989, p. 49.

The ever expanding volume of sport coverage, coupled with improved and changing media technology, has resulted in many media companies developing new forms of commercial distribution. The delivery of personalised sport news to Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) mobile phones or to email-enabled palm-top computers via the Short Message Service (SMS) are two very recent examples of different forms of distribution.[4] Another media form that has risen to prominence over the last two decades is the Internet. Not controlled by any one person or organisation, the Internet is a medium of multimedia content and interactive communication, with the actual content produced by millions of people, companies, governments, and others in more than 180 countries on all seven continents.[5] An increasing number of media organisations are recognising that the Internet provides a new avenue for generating greater revenues, increasing sales and expanding readership. As a result, some well established newspapers now appear online. In fact, via the Internet, the *Australian* has become the first major newspaper in the world to be available to subscribers in a digital form. Subscribers can download the newspaper page by page via the Internet as an exact colour facsimile of the print version.[6] Apart from general news sites, Australian media companies have also established specific sport websites to cater for sport fans. So far, however, sport coverage on the Internet

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[4]   Mark Day, 'Dotcom Dos and Don'ts', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 9-15 August 2000, p. 13. WAP is a method that enables a wireless device, usually a mobile phone, to view Internet pages, using text only, and very simple black and white pictures. For further details on WAP, see 'WAPDRIVE' [Online] Available: http://www.wapdrive.com/DOCS/wap_resources/what_i_wap.html, [10 September 2001].
[5]   John V. Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001, p. 61.
[6]   See, Mark Day, 'Digital Delivery', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 9-15 August 2001, p. 9.

and concomitantly, Internet sport journalists, have received little attention in academic research.[7]

For the purpose of this thesis, the term "new media" is used to emphasise a subsection in the broader field of media. "Traditional" or "old" media includes newspapers, magazines, radio, television and advertising, whereas "new" media is the result of the merging or convergence of traditional media with, for example, telecommunication (telephony, data and other information-related products and services) and information technology (computer-based systems and software).[8] The Internet is an example of new media, demonstrating the convergence of traditional media, such as text, sound and images with information technology. Additional new media forms include multimedia on CD-ROMs and, as already noted, WAP mobile phones or handheld computers with SMS compatibility.[9]

In the area of sport journalism literature, existing studies have tended to concentrate on content analysis, the self-assessment of sport journalists, and

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[7]   A discussion of the problems involved in defining Internet sport journalists can be found in chapter two of this thesis.

[8]   This definition is adopted from various sources. For example, see Trevor Barr, *newmedia.com.au: The Changing Face of Australia's Media and Communication*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. ix, and Les Free, 'Convergence and Communications Policy' in Tony Stevenson and June Lennie (eds), *Australia's Communication Futures*, Communication Centre, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 1992, pp. 96-97.

[9]   The term "multimedia" refers to programs, software, and hardware capable of using a wide variety of media such as film, video, and music, as well as text and numbers. Interactive multimedia integrate computer, memory storage, digital (binary) data, telephone, television, and other information technologies. Their most common applications include training programs, video games, electronic encyclopaedias, and travel guides. See, 'Multimedia', Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2001, [Online] Available: http://encarta.msn.com, [29 August 2001]. For further discussion of these terms, see Adrian Miles, 'The

ethical issues, as well as the working practices of sport journalists working for traditional media. The aim of this research project is to construct a profile of Internet sport journalists in Australia by identifying and analysing their current working practices. Research questions that guided this study were: How did the informants become Internet sport journalists? What are their work routines and how are they different to those of print sport journalists? What are their experiences of online sport journalism, and what is their perception of the future of sport journalism? This examination will include a consideration of their news gathering practices, their sources of information, their writing style and their technological skills. In summary, this research will explore the range of skills that an Internet sport journalist possesses in order to perform his or her duties for a sport news website. Through interviews, insights into the work routines of Internet sport journalists will be provided. General and specific differences, between the working practices of Internet sport journalists and those of print sport journalists, will also be revealed.

The Internet itself, of course, was one source that was used to gather relevant material on the topic of Internet sport journalists. Each website has a unique address, which can be located through the associated Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Research in the area of the Internet faces an inimitable problem as the content of websites can be constantly altered, condensed, extended or deleted. With the erasure of files and data, URLs and significant sources of

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Emperor's New Clothes', *Media Information Australia*, no. 81, 1996, pp. 68-76, and Bob Savage, 'A Networked Vision for Australia', *Media Information Australia*, no. 81, 1996, pp. 107-113.

information often go missing.[10] It has to be noted, therefore, that from the beginning of this research project in November 2000 until its completion in March 2002, URLs and websites which have been cited might have changed or may not be available anymore. Furthermore, such sources of information might not exist in the future due to the rapidly changing medium.

In this thesis, German language academic sources are also cited. Although the ability of the researcher to read, interpret and analyse German language literature influenced the selection of a number of the sources utilised, it should be acknowledged that a formal comparison between new media forms in Australia and Germany was not the purpose of this study. In addition, German capitalisation and punctuation was maintained throughout all of the English translations.

1.2   Australian Sporting Culture

To fully understand the significance of sport and its coverage by the media in Australia today, it is appropriate to briefly consider some historical background, focusing on the culture of sport in Australia.[11] A major theme considered in this

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[10]   A recent example of securing and preserving important parts of Australia's cultural heritage is the "Preserving and Accessing Documentary Resources of Australia" (PANDORA) project. The National Library of Australia established PANDORA to ensure that important websites, for instance, http://www.olympics.com, are preserved and made accessible for future generations. See, Des O'Driscoll, 'Relighting the Flame Online', *The Sportswire (B4Bsport Online-Newsletter)*, 9 October 2001.

[11]   For more extensive treatments of sport in Australian culture, see, for example, Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995; Daryl Adair and Wray Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997 and Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 2000.

section is the relationship between national identity and sporting success in Australia.

Organised physical activity is an essential part of the fabric of Australian society. Indeed, a number of sport historians argue that sport has always exerted a substantial influence on the shape of Australian society.[12] For instance, Brian Stoddart, in describing sport as a social phenomenon, noted that:

> far from being the 'toy department of life', sport is an integral part of the Australian social fabric and plays a significant role in constructing that fabric.[13]

Stoddart also went on to explain that sport has been a central agency in the creation of an Australian sense of community and identity and, in describing the place of sport within Australian society, he acknowledged that: "The country has a worldwide reputation for being obsessed with success in sport of all kinds".[14] Indeed, it is often reported that Australians have a unique "passionate attachment" to sport that surpasses any other nation.[15] This preoccupation with sport can be explained in historical terms, for according to Richard Cashman, when cities, towns and suburbs were initially developed in Australia, sport was incorporated into the new environment. As Cashman noted:

> Sport, more than any other form of culture – religion, ethnicity, history – appealed to many Australians as the more attractive

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[12]   See, for example, Brian Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever: Sport in the Australian Culture*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, NSW, 1986; Jim McKay, *No Pain, No Gain? Sport and Australian Culture*, Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1991, and Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

[13]   Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, p. 13.

[14]   Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, p. 3.

[15]   For a recent reflection on this notion, see Frank Farrell, 'Australian Identity' in Richard Cashman and Anthony Hughes (eds), *Staging the Olympics: The Event and its Impact*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, p. 68.

social cement to bind new communities: local, regional, colonial and national.[16]

It is appropriate to recognise that sporting activities began in Australia at least 40,000 years ago with the arrival of Aborigines.[17] Physical activities were part of Aboriginal life. Often aboriginal sport promoted the skills necessary for hunting, such as the eye-to-hand co-ordination developed in spear and boomerang-throwing contests.[18] However, current forms of Australian sport primarily evolved from a mixture of games, ideologies and traditions brought to the country after the first British settlement in the late eighteenth-century.[19] Along with the first fleet from Great Britain came popular sports such as cricket and horse-racing. Over time, British settlers introduced rugby, soccer, tennis and golf to the country.[20] In fact, most popular sports in Australia have originated in other countries. For example, gymnastics originated from Germany, surfboard-riding from Polynesia, and basketball from the United States.[21] By comparison, there are relatively few sports that originated in Australia, with Australian Rules football being the one major exception.[22]

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[16]   Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 53.

[17]   Adair and Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, p. 1.

[18]   Adair and Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, p. 1.

[19]   Brian Stoddart, 'Reflections Past and Present' in Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 269.

[20]   Richard Cashman, 'Australian Way of Sport' in Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman, and Ian Jobling (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, second edition, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 47.

[21]   For further discussion on sports and games brought to Australia by immigrants, see Philip A. Mosely, 'Australian Sport and Ethnicity' in Philip A. Mosely, Richard Cashman, John O'Hara and Hilary Weatherburn (eds), *Sporting Immigrants*, Walla Walla Press, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997, pp. 13-16.

[22]   On the history of Australian Rules football in particular see Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, Carlton, Vic., Melbourne University Press, 1998.

As a key theme in the development of Australian sporting culture, debate about Australia's national identity has occurred. Stoddart explained that the success of its sports stars has shaped Australia's self-respect at home and prestige overseas. He argued that the way Australians emphasise the importance of sport may have many root causes, such as "the immaturity of a young country, the instant gratification of sport, an Australian distrust of the intellectual, or a desperate search for identity and recognition".[23] Many commentators have observed similar attitudes when talking about Australian national characteristics, or what is known as national identity.

During the past few decades, despite its relatively small population, Australia has achieved international success in an array of sports. In 1999 alone, for example, Australian teams were victorious in the World Cups of cricket, rugby league and rugby union, the World Championships of hockey, netball and baseball and the Davis Cup tennis championship. Sporting success has been one of the most enduring symbols of Australian progress, which has contributed directly to the creation and maintenance of nationalist sentiment. Rob Lynch and Anthony Veal discussed the problematic nature of such sentiments by suggesting that sporting events and athletic achievements have been used extensively to create the shared memories of identity construction.[24] Such events as the 1956 Melbourne and 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, the Melbourne Cup, various cricket tours and football codes have contributed to this

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[23]   Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever*, p. 4.

national consciousness, along with identification with successful elite Australian athletes and an increased exposure of sport in the media. Dawn Fraser (swimming), Donald Bradman (cricket), Phar Lap (horse racing) and Cathy Freeman (athletics), to name just a few, have all gained hero/heroine status. In fact, the national self-image of Australians is described as one of an egalitarian, self-confident, mostly "manly" people who show great pride in their capacity to win at sport.[25] It is this context that has led Peter Kell to suggest that, "To be bad at sport or to be uninterested in sport is considered to be distinctly 'un-Australian'".[26]

This national interest in sport is reflected in the level of media coverage. The mainstream Australian media contains extensive coverage of sporting events, with results frequently making front-page headlines in daily metropolitan newspapers. Kell has suggested that the level of coverage is such that each person in Australia cannot only be kept informed on how their favourite team or sport star is performing at any given time, but also have this performance analysed in great depth from many different angles.[27] Information about sport is provided through newspapers, special interest magazines, live coverage on the radio, sport programs on television and now sport websites on the Internet. In order to understand how this information is created and disseminated, some

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[24]   Rob Lynch and Anthony J. Veal, *Australian Leisure*, Addison Wesley Longman, Melbourne, 1996, p. 247.

[25]   Geoffrey Lawrence and David Rowe, 'Nationalism' in Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman, and Ian Jobling (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, second edition, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 303.

[26]   Peter Kell, *Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*, Pluto Press Australia, Sydney, 2000, p. 27.

general discussion of what has come to be known as "the information society" is required.

1.3   New Media in an Information Society

The well known writer Alvin Toffler helped to popularise the concept of the information society in his book, *The Third Wave.*[28] Toffler suggested that there has been a shift from an agricultural society to an industrial society, and more recently, to an information society.[29] To strengthen his argument, Toffler went on to explain that:

> the de-massification of the civilization, which the media both reflects and intensifies, brings with it an enormous jump in the amount of information we all exchange with one another. And it is this increase that explains why we are becoming an 'information society'.[30]

The term "information society" describes a growing "informatisation" of society.[31] Trading industrial products and goods is no longer a priority.   Instead, knowledge and information is transported in bits and bytes around the globe on the information superhighway.[32] As computers have increasingly played a more significant role in society, discussion about the possibilities and risks of new information technologies have become more common. Never before have so

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[27]   Kell, *Good Sports*, p. 9.

[28]   Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, Pan Books, London, 1980.

[29]   Toffler, *The Third Wave*, pp. 155-167.

[30]   Toffler, *The Third Wave*, p. 167.

[31]   Stuart Cunningham and Terry Flew, 'Media Futures' in Cunningham and Turner (eds), *The Media in Australia*, p. 401.

[32]   David Beineke, 'Sportberichterstattung im Internet (WWW) und bei Online-Diensten' ('Sports Reporting on the Internet (WWW) and for Online-Services'), Diplomarbeit (unpublished Masters thesis), Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln, Köln, 1997, p. 18.

many people been able to generate, store, transmit and retrieve so much

information in so many different forms.[33] As Trevor Barr pointed out:

> So many new communications technologies and services have
> appeared in recent years - satellites and fibre optics to carry
> telephony and data, video cassette recorders, pay or
> subscription television, multimedia and on-line services,
> intelligent and interactive networks as electronic
> superhighways, the Internet with its World Wide Web, and so
> on.[34]

In essence, it is technical developments such as high-capacity information

networks, the Internet, the World Wide Web (WWW), and pay and digital

television that have led to the immense expansion of information systems and

services.

In line with these developments, new words and phrases have also entered the

lexicon, and terms such as "media society", "multimedia" and "new media" are

now in common usage. However, there is a sense in which the use of these

new terms is problematic. Multimedia, for example, appears to be, on the one

hand, simply a new and potentially highly efficient means of repackaging and

distributing existing media such as print, radio and television. On the other, it

can be viewed as a radically new media form with fundamentally different

creative and narrative demands from those of previous media. Viewed from the

first perspective, multimedia is an opportunity for exploitation by existing media.

Viewed from the latter, multimedia demands new skills and resources that media

organisations may not possess and will need to acquire. In broadcasting, the

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[33]   Barr, *newmedia.com.au*, p. 167.
[34]   Barr, *newmedia.com.au*, p. 167.

impact of cable and satellite television has hastened increasing internationalisation and competition that will change the hitherto relatively stable environment for free-to-air broadcasters. The use of the term multimedia therefore reflects progress and innovation in the media industry, but it also causes confusion in terms of its definition. Jürgen Wilke has provided a plausible explanation:

> Mit dem Begriff 'Multimedia' ist gemeint, daß bisher getrennte Kommunikationstechniken miteinander verschmelzen. Es findet eine Integration von gesprochener Sprache, Text, Video, Audio, Telekommunikation, Unterhaltungselektronik und Computertechnik statt (The Definition 'Multimedia' means that as yet separated Communication Technologies converge. An Integration of spoken Language, Text, Video, Audio, Telecommunication, Entertainment Electronics and Computer Technologies proceeds).[35]

While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when other terms such as new media developed, it is clear that from the early 1970s it stood as a synonym for new information and communication technologies, and it is in this context that the phrase is used in this thesis.[36]

There is little doubt that the rapid development of information and communication technologies, and the introduction of new media forms, has had a significant impact on society in general and Australian sport in particular, as

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[35]   Jürgen Wilke, 'Multimedia: Strukturwandel durch neue Kommunikationstechnologien' ('Multimedia: Structural Change through new Communication Technologies'), *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschehen (Politics and Time Events),* 1996, p. 4 [Capitalisation and punctuation in the original].

[36]   Pätzold and Tonnemacher date the evolution of discussion about "new media" at around 1972, when the video recorder was introduced. See Ulrich Pätzold and Jan Tonnemacher, 'Dimensionen neuer Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken: Bestandsaufnahme und Prognosen' ('Dimensions of New Information- and Communication Technologies: Inventory and Prognosis'), *Publizistik*, no. 4, 1981, pp. 508-529. For further discussion of this point in an Australian context, see Tony Stevenson, 'Australia's Futures: An Information or a Communication Society?' in Tony Stevenson and June Lennie (eds),

will be demonstrated later in this chapter.[37] As in 1923 with radio and 1956 with television, the Australian media has continued to re-present itself with new media forms.[38] The general increase in media forms world-wide has been recognised by a German scholar, Klaus Merten, who has suggested that:

> Je mehr Medien entstehen, umso schneller enstehen noch mehr Medien. (The more media forms develop, the faster more media forms arise).[39]

The starting point for the rapid development of mass media and mass communication was newsprint, which provided society with written news and information. The invention of the telegraph, followed by radio and television and then the computer, brought about an exponential increase in the speed of journalistic activity and reporting. At the same time, these mediums provided new services, a transformation of the communication process, and massive new audiences for their products.[40] It is in this context that writers such as Bob Savage claimed that the journalism industry transformed people's lives in Australia.[41] To this end, Savage described at the same time the implications and the advantages of the Internet on a global scale in sending and receiving emails, reading the newspaper as it is published and keeping up-to-date with news from

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Australia's Communication Futures, Communication Centre, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 1992, p. 15.

[37] See, Stevenson and Lennie, *Australia's Communication Futures*, and Barr, *newmedia.com.au*.

[38] Mark Armstrong, 'Das Rundfunksystem Australiens (The Broadcasting System of Australia)' in Hans-Bredow-Institut (ed.), *Internationales Handbuch für Rundfunk und Fernsehen (International Handbook of Radio and TV)*, Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft Baden-Baden, Hamburg, 1996/97, pp. 614-621.

[39] Klaus Merten, 'Evolution der Kommunikation' ('Evolution of Communication') in Klaus Merten, Siegfried J. Schmidt and Siegfried Weischenberg (eds), *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien – Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft (The Reality of the Media - An Introduction into Communication Science)*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, 1994, p. 153.

[40] For further information on these developments, see Cunningham and Flew, 'Media Futures', p. 397.

[41] Savage, 'A Networked Vision for Australia', p. 107.

home while overseas.[42] In terms of sport coverage, he believed that the opportunities and the "potential worldwide audiences" were enormous. For instance:

> the Ford Australian Open home page provided thousand of fans with access to live, up-to-the-minute point-by-point match results. Tournament schedules, statistical records, player biographies, Net Cam, daily images and action from the tournament were available.[43]

The information revolution is partly driven by technological changes in communication. In the past decade, the distinction between modes of delivery have become blurred. Convergence has therefore become the buzzword to describe media industries of the 1990s. Some key technological changes in this area are summarised below.

1.4   Convergence and the Internet

From the 1980s, it became obvious that different kinds of media forms were beginning to blur. Gillian Appleton described this as "the phenomenon known widely as convergence".[44] Examples of convergence in terms of technology include data and voice carried on the same wire or cable, multimedia on CD-ROMs and also the Internet. As described by Stuart Cunningham and Mark Finn:

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[42]   Savage, 'A Networked Vision for Australia', p. 107.
[43]   Savage, 'A Networked Vision for Australia', p. 111.
[44]   Gillian Appleton, 'Converging and Emerging Industries: Video, Pay TV and Multimedia' in Stuart Cunningham and GraemeTurner (eds), *The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1997, p. 163.

> Internet use combines both broadband and standard telecommunications infrastructures, requires appropriate computer hardware and software as essential componentry, is capable of and is increasingly used to 'publish' in multimedia formats to large as well as small audiences, and makes available a range of text, voice and video-based mass media content.[45]

In terms of established media and the Internet, Cunningham and Finn analysed the similarities and differences between the structure and use of the Internet and that of established media.[46] In so doing, Cunningham and Finn structured their discussion around four elements central to any media/communication form, namely the institutional or industry level, the organisational level, the content or textual level, and the arena of reception.[47] Established media is structured through multiple levels of regulation whereas the Internet is still unregulated and anarchic. This forms the institutional or industry level. In terms of the content or textual level, Cunningham and Finn wrote that "hypertextual structures pose fundamental changes to age-old linear and narrative forms".[48] In this sense, a user of the net is not limited to any one format and is able to choose to view images, read text, send e-mail, and/or participate in online chat within the one session.[49] This interactivity of the medium challenges the producer of websites, the Internet journalist, to "transform" traditional working practices.[50] The content can be structured in such a way as to allow users to follow varying pathways of information depending on which organisational hyperlinks they choose to access

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[45]   Stuart Cunningham and Mark Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', *Media Information Australia*, no. 80, 1996, p. 84.

[46]   Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', pp. 84-92.

[47]   Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', p. 86.

[48]   Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', p. 89.

[49]   Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', p. 89.

within the website. The passive relationship between the producer and the audience in the established media has also fundamentally shifted within the Internet environment. Cunningham and Finn found that the role between user/audience and website producer continually changes, particularly in an online chat environment.[51] The user can actively communicate with the producer of an Internet site, for example via email or through an online chat option. Their findings of the most significant differences and similarities between traditional media and the Internet are featured in table 1.1.

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[50]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 47.
[51]   "Multi-point" chat formats, different from point-to-point personal communication (for example, e-mail), refer to the immediate communication between users via the computer. See Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', p. 90.

Table 1.1: The Internet in Comparison to Established Media. Source: Stuart Cunningham and Mark Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet' in *Media International Australia*, no. 80, 1996, p. 85.

ESTABLISHED MEDIA	SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
• hierarchical or point-to-multipoint	• potentially mass forms of communication	• multiple modes of communication, including point-to-point
• multiple level of regulation		• unregulated, anarchic (eg., copyright)
• complex bureaucratic organisation form		• mosaic structure
• highly structured communication • high barriers to entry		• very informal communication • no legal and lowering technical skill barriers to entry
• 'public communication'	• still a form delivering information and entertainment	
• commercial or state		• increasingly commercial vs strong anti-commercial base
• stable public identity of producers		• multiple identities of producers and users
• narrative forms of content		• hypertextual forms of content
• audiences more than users		• users not audiences

The Internet is a worldwide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location. Much material currently exists about the Internet, covering history, technology and usage.[52] The following section is a brief overview of the Internet.

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[52]   Research in the different areas of the Internet and its usage was conducted by for example, Tim Berners-Lee and Mark Fischetti, *Weaving the Web: The Past, Present and Future of the World Wide Web*

The evolution of the Internet began in the 1960s, when, during the Cold War, the American Department of Defence wanted to establish a communication network based on telephone lines.[53] At the beginning of the 1970s, American universities and colleges adopted the same type of network and created the National Science Foundation Network or Advanced Research Projects Agency Network. This network connected all the universities and colleges in the United States, allowing their users to exchange information online.[54] English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee laid the foundation for the WWW in the early 1980s. He invented the WWW while working at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory in Geneva, and established the standard for addressing, linking language and transferring multimedia documents on the Web.[55] Berners-Lee created a new protocol for the distribution of information. This protocol was based on hypertext, a system of embedding links in text to other text.[56]

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by its Inventor, Orion Publishing Group, London, 1999; Lawrence G. Roberts, 'The ARPANET and Computer Networks' in Adele Goldberg (ed.), *A History of Personal Workstations*, ACM Press, New York, 1988, pp. 143-167, and J. C. R. Licklider and Albert Vezza, 'Applications of Information Networks', *Proceedings of the IEEE*, vol. 66, no. 11, 1978, pp. 43-59.

[53] For an overview of the early history and discussion of the informal political belief system associated with the organisation and development of the Internet, see Thomas Streeter, 'Notes towards a Political History of the Internet 1950-1983', *Media Information Australia*, no. 95, 2000, pp. 131-146.

[54] Michael Hauben, 'The Vision of Interactive Computing and the Future' in Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben (eds), *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, 1995, [Online Netbook], [Online] Available: http://www.columbia.edu/~rh120/ch106.x05, [15 July 2001].

[55] The name CERN derives from the name of the international council (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire), which originally started the laboratory. The council no longer exists, and "Nuclear" no longer describes the physics done there, so, while the name CERN has stayed, it is not regarded as an acronym. See Berners-Lee, *Weaving the Web*, p. 4.

[56] Hypertext is a collection of documents that contain cross-references called "hyperlinks", which allow the user to jump easily from one document to another. Hypertext is used on the Internet, Intranet, as well as in CD-ROM multimedia applications. Hypertext Markup Language is the associated computer language. See, Nathan J. Muller, *Desktop Encyclopedia of the Internet*, Artech House, Boston, 1999. For further discussion of hypertext, see Miles, 'The Emperor's New Clothes', pp. 68-76.

The Internet was introduced in Europe in the late 1980s and then continued its expansion to Eastern Europe, Asia and Australia. Until the mid 1990s, the Internet was mainly used to interconnect academic and research networks. From that period, the Internet was also used to connect commercial companies and now it is the base for a new era of electronic commerce. As Adrian Lynch noted:

> plans are well advanced for e-commerce activities such as direct trading for goods and services, debt settlement and deployment of platforms to allow a wide range of businesses to securely trade electronically in a global environment.[57]

The Internet in itself must not be seen as a single network but as many networks of computers around the world, all interconnected.[58] The following figure shows a typical architecture of the Internet.

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[57] Adrian Lynch, 'E-Future is bright, Expert says', *Australian*, [Online] Available: http://www.AustralianIT.com.au, [17 October 2000].

[58] An interconnected network can also refer to the Intranet or a Local Area Network, which is used, for example, to connect computers within a company.

Figure 1.1: The Architecture of the Internet.
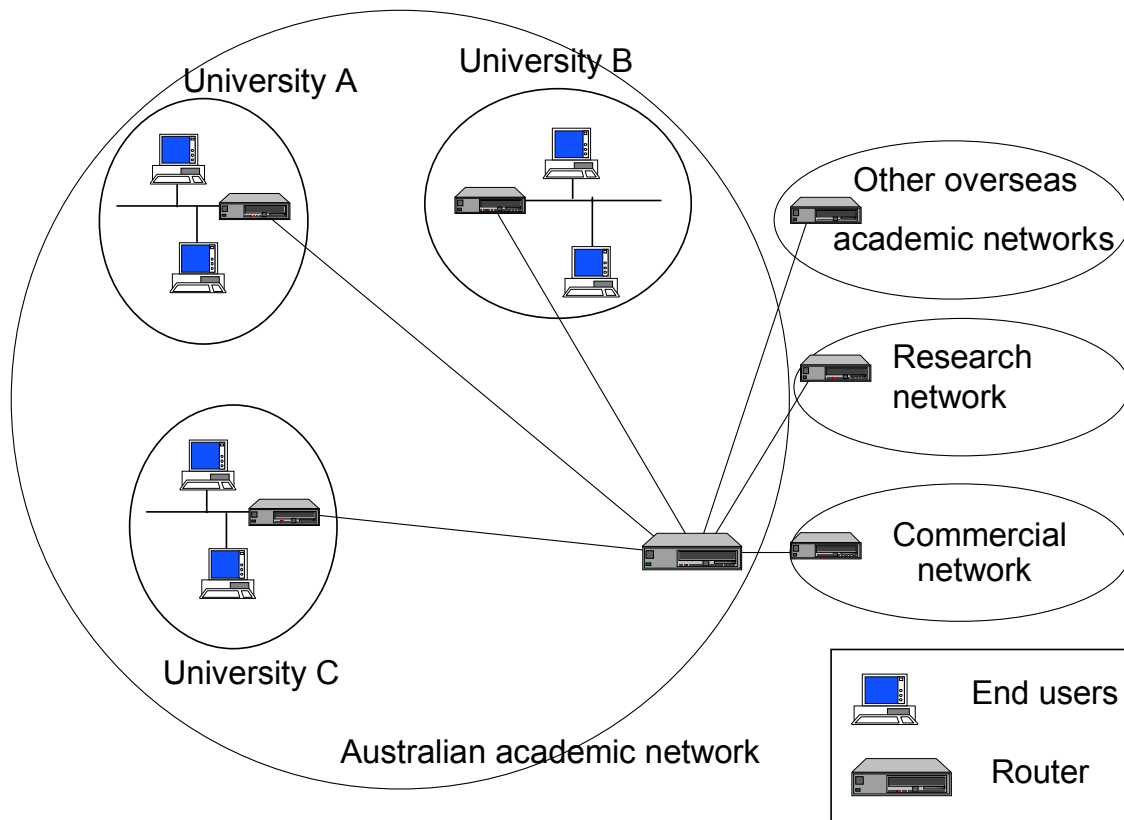
The most rapidly growing medium of the 1980s was the Internet, with its interface being the WWW.[59] In the early 1990s, the Internet was "spreading faster than cellular phones faster than fax machines".[60] This is reflected in the 'Internet Domain Survey', which documents the number of Internet hosts accessible to the public.[61] In August 1981, the first year of the survey, the number of WWW-servers totalled 213. In July 1991, the number rose to 535,000 hosts and ten years later, in July 2002, there were already over 162

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[59] The World Wide Web, commonly known as "the web", is the leading information retrieval service of the Internet (the worldwide computer network). See, Muller, *Desktop Encyclopedia of the Internet.*

[60] Bruce Sterling, 'Short History of the Internet', *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science*, February 1993 [Online] Available: http://www.forthnet.gr/forthnet/isoc/short.history.of.internet [14 November 2002].

million hosts.[62] Users quickly took advantage of this new medium (which can be accessed by anybody with a personal computer and a modem) and increasing numbers of the world's over five hundred million Internet users began to go "online" for their sport news.[63] For instance, the Sydney Olympic Games gave Internet sport sites in Australia and around the world the opportunity to demonstrate the advantages of covering major sporting events on the WWW. The official International Olympics Committee-approved site recorded more than eleven billion hits and topped the Nielsen/Netratings web Olympics table for Australian traffic. The Seven network/SOCOG site followed with about twenty million page views over the two weeks and the Fairfax site was third on the table.[64]

Technological and social forces over the past two decades have changed sports coverage and radically altered media formats. Changes which impacted on sport journalism will be discussed in the second chapter. In order to keep pace with changes in sport coverage, Internet sport journalists have had to develop

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[61]   See 'Internet Software Consortium' [Online] Available: http://www.isc.org/ds [16 November 2002].

[62]   See 'Internet Software Consortium'.

[63]   According to NUA (the acronym is unknown), 513.41 million people went online in August 2001 worldwide compared to 153.5 million in February 1999. See 'NUA Internet surveys' [Online] Available: http://www.nua.ie/survey/how_many_online/world.html, [10 September 2001]. In America, for example, 10 per cent of the 59 million Americans who go daily online check sports scores, see 'Pew Internet and American Life Project' Survey November-December 2000 [Online] Available: http://www.pewinternet.org/report/chart.asp?img=6_daily_activities.jpg, [9 September 2001] compared to 35 per cent Americans in March 2000, see 'Pew Internet and American Life Project' [Online] Available: http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/chart.asp?img=6_maractivities.gif, [26 November 2001].

[64]   See Deborah Bogle, 'Games an Online Success Story', *Australian (Media Supplement)*, 12 October 2000, p. 4. In addition, see the sport sites of the 'International Olympic Committee' [Online] Available: http://www.olympics.com, [20 September 2000], 'Seven network/SOCOG' [Online] Available: http://www.olympics.com.au, [23 September 2000] and 'Fairfax' [Online] Available: http://www.olympics.smh.com.au, [25 September 2000].

new skills for, and understandings of, their medium. Michael Meadows claimed that the Internet allows journalists to "reinvent" their craft.[65] Furthermore, Meadows stated that:

> The Internet is offering innovative and creative ways in which journalists can reinvent themselves and present information in a much more interesting and interactive way.[66]

The traditional services of newspaper, radio and television newsrooms have altered significantly, and the relationships between various media are ever-changing. It is observations such as these that have informed the purpose of this thesis, namely to survey a cross-section of Australian Internet sport journalists and analyse their work practices.

1.5   Sport and the Media

Sport forms an important part of the current media landscape. Therefore a large part of sociological theorising on sport has focused on the dynamics and ideologies of sporting culture.[67] The media, in particular television and the press, play a pivotal role in producing, reproducing and amplifying many of the issues associated with sport in the modern world. It is thus not surprising that there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of examining both the politics and the economic structures of the media-sport relationship, as well as how the

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[65]   Michael Meadows, cited in Natasha Bita, 'Is Cyberspace Bad News?', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 22-28 March 2001, p. 6.

[66]   Michael Meadows, cited in Bita, 'Is Cyberspace Bad News?', p. 6.

[67]   For an examination of the changes of the theoretical direction and new lines of research that have been explored in the field of sport sociology, see David Rowe, Jim McKay, and Geoffrey Lawrence, 'Out of the Shadows: the Critical Sociology of Sport in Australia, 1986 to 1996', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 14, 1997, pp. 340-361.

media presents sport.[68] In this context, Bruhn has coined the term "magisches Dreieck (magic triangle)", which describes the interconnected relationship between sport, economy and media.[69] Within the magic triangle, sport is often reduced to a commercial object of "supply and demand".[70] In essence, sport is treated as a general and "easy to sell" commodity in a free enterprise system.

The relationship between the media industry, popular culture and sport has interested many prominent writers who focus on media sport. The works of authors such as Richard Cashman, David Rowe, Lawrence Wenner, and Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes are briefly discussed below.[71] Each examines the transformation of sport in modern society and argue that media sport studies provide insights into the changes observed in popular culture. Their interest is reflected in the growing field of literature on sport media.

As Richard Cashman observed, sport and the media in Australia have always enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, each contributing to the growth and development of the other.[72] Cashman noted:

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[68] For further discussion of this point, see Josef Hackforth, 'Medienstruktur - Sportberichterstattung - Wirkungen: Einblicke und Ausblicke' ('Media Structure - Sports Reporting - Effects: Insights and Outlooks') in Hoffmann-Riem, Wolfgang (ed.), *Neue Medienstrukturen - neue Sportberichterstattung? (New Media Structure – New Sports Reporting?),* Baden-Baden/Hamburg, 1988, pp. 51-56. Hackforth argues that the media sets the agenda for sport, with television, for example, dictating the starting times for major sporting events.

[69] Manfred Bruhn, *Sponsoring: Unternehmen als Mäzene und Sponsoren (Sponsoring: Business as Patron and Sponsor)*, Gabler, Frankfurt/Main, 1987, p. 26.

[70] Felix Görner, *Vom Außenseiter zum Aufsteiger (From Outsider to Maverick)*, VISTAS, Köln, 1995, p. 33.

[71] See Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, David Rowe, *Popular Cultures: Rock Music, Sport and the Politics of Pleasure*, Sage Publications, London, 1995; Lawrence Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport*, Routledge, London, 1998, and Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play*.

[72] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 169.

> They [the media] have helped to popularise sport, extend its influence in Australian society and create virtually a separate moral and cultural world. Sport, the sports pages and sports segments on radio and television are a recognisable and distinct area of Australian life.[73]

The inter-relationship between sport, culture and the media is also reflected in David Rowe's assertion that "Sport is a contemporary medium for performing many tasks and carrying multiple messages and, as such, is increasingly indistinguishable from the *sports media*".[74] It is now firmly established that sport, culture and the media (not to mention large areas of the commercial world) are interwined. In recent years, an expanding number of scholars and works have explored these relations, yet there still remains room for further investigation. As Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes conclude in their book, *Power Play: Sport, the Media and Popular Culture*, "Anybody who wishes to understand sport, whether an academic, a fan or a journalist, needs to understand the economic and political forces which are shaping and reshaping the contemporary sporting experience".[75] Rowe's book, *Sport, Culture and the Media* with its detailed analysis of the links between sport, culture and the media provides the reader with some insight into an area where the rate of development of the conjunction of two of the most powerful cultural forces of times, sport and media, is higher than that of research.   The subtitle of the publication, *The Unruly Trinity,* indicates that the links between the three themes are not always as expected, nor can they be dealt with simply.

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[73]   Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 185.
[74]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 2 [Emphasis in the original].

As intimated above, sport is used to carry multiple messages in a postmodern world. The phenomena of postmodernism, which emerged in the middle of the 1960s, interested many scholars, for example Bob Stewart and Aaron Smith, who examined the impact of postmodernism on Australian sport.[76] They understood that society had become a complex mix of values and cultures where ambiguity and contradiction had undermined the search for universal truths.[77] According to Stewart and Smith, standardised forms were rejected and replaced by opposite structures and different historical styles.[78] They conclude that postmodern sport "is a cultural experience, but also has varying degrees of commercial value".[79]

In such a postmodern context, Rowe has acknowledged the role of political economy and settled on the term "the media sports cultural complex" as a theme around which to discuss a range of relevant issues relating to the symbols in modern sport and the co-dependency of sports media and sporting culture.[80] Rowe recognised three levels of power within this "media sports cultural complex". These are, firstly, the institutional level, where sport and the media relate to, and shape each other. Secondly, the symbolic level, where sports

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[75]   Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play*, p. 222.

[76]   See, Bob Stewart and Aaron Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age' in James A. Mangan and John Nauright (eds), *Sport in Australasian Society: Past and Present*, Frank Cass & Co., London, 2000, pp. 278-304.

[77]   Stewart and Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age', p. 279.

[78]   Stewart and Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age', p. 289.

[79]   Stewart and Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age', p. 300.

[80]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 4. According to Rowe, "political economy" is an analytical approach which links socio-economic power (for example, ownership of a major newspaper chain) with politico-cultural power (such as the promotion of conservative values through the owner's newspapers or the shaping of newspaper stories by commercial rather than cultural or ethical considerations). See Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, pp. 175-176.

media texts present an underlying theme rather than a definitive theory, and, finally, the relational level, which sees the massive international complex imparting social and cultural influences far beyond those of mere sport. In particular, Rowe's investigations on the symbolic level are significant, for he goes beyond the written word and explores the messages created by sport journalists, as well as their relationship with their work and audience. Following this fundamental theory, he carried out research in the field of sport journalism in Australia, aspects of which are discussed in the second chapter.[81]

Rowe, in Australia, and Wenner in the United States, both examined the role that mediated sport plays as a form of symbolic ritual in many modern industrialised societies. Wenner's exploration of popular communications cultures led to the publication of *Media, Sports, & Society*.[82] This collection was one of the first to attempt to define the contours of the relationship between media and sport and its influence on social and cultural life. *Media, Sports, & Society* helped legitimise inquiry into media and sport, and encouraged further studies from both communication and sport sociology that are treated in Wenner's subsequent anthology, *MediaSport*.[83] Wenner examines the transformation of sport in the televisual age and argues that the study of media

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[81]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 37. This research study is also found in David Rowe and Deborah Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations: Journalism, Professional Status and the Making of the Sports Text', *Media Information Australia*, vol. 75, 1995, pp. 67-79.
[82]   Wenner, *Media, Sports, & Society*.
[83]   Lawrence A. Wenner, 'Playing the MediaSport Game' in Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport*, p. 7.

sport provides special insights into the commodification of popular culture by capital.[84]

1.6   Sport Journalism and the Internet

A wide range of literature on sport in the media exists. This includes print sources such as newspapers and magazines, audio-visual material such as television and radio, and electronic multimedia such as the Internet, CD-ROM and digital videodisc (DVD). Changes in contemporary technologies and the economics of the broadcast and print media have contributed significantly to an expansion in the volume of sports texts and to the emergence of new styles of sports writing.

There has been a steady increase in the amount of coverage given to sport, and established media organisations are increasingly utilising the Internet to provide such information. A recent check of the Australian sites of the *Yahoo!* search engine revealed that 676 categories and 634 sites are currently devoted to sport. When the search is expanded to include sport-related sites on a world-wide basis, then 13,556 categories and 20,837 sites are revealed.[85] The top ranking Australian sport site, http://www.afl.com.au, ranked as the 22nd most frequently visited Australian website during August 2001, and 58th in the

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[84]   Wenner, 'Playing the MediaSport Game', pp. 3-13.

[85]   This increase is reflected in the number of checks at intervals between December 2000 and November 2001. Yahoo! Search engine [Online] Available: http://www.yahoo.com, [11 September 2001] and Yahoo! Search engine for Australia [Online] Available: http://www.au.yahoo.com, [11 September 2001].

category "All sites" (both, Australian and overseas sites).[86] All major, and most minor, sports now have websites dedicated to merchandising and marketing (among other functions), just as all major media organisations have online information services.[87]

There has been a small but significant contribution to the research in the new field of sport and the Internet as well as the Internet and multimedia in general. Two studies in particularly confirm the beginning of research into a new field within sport media and will be discussed in the second chapter.[88]

Due to the deficiency of research and literature in the field of new media, this research has relied largely on interviews as its primary form of data. This data has revealed important information, such as the skills required in the use of technology, the knowledge of the industry and the knowledge of target audiences expectations. Various sport sites, related to traditional print organisations and independent media organisations, are the base of the study from which details about Internet sport journalists have been gathered. On the

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[86]   Hitwise Australia [Online] Available: http://www.hitwise.com.au, [17 September 2001].

[87]   See, for example, the official 'Australian Football League' (AFL) site [Online] Available: http://www.afl.com.au, [22 December 2000], the 'Australian Broadcasting Cooperation' (ABC) site [Online] Available: http://www.abc.net.au, [3 January 2001], Sport site in conjunction with the 'Special Broadcasting Service' (SBS) Television [Online] Available: http://www.theworldgame.com.au, [12 January 2001] or 'InsideSport-Magazine' [Online] Available: http://www.sportcentral.com.au, [10 January 2001].

[88]   Oliver Braun, 'Sportjournalistische Berichterstattung im World Wide Web: Angebote, Spezialisierungen, Themen' ('Sports Reporting in the World Wide Web: Services, Specialisation, Themes'), Institut für Sportpublizistik, Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln, Köln, 1999, and Joachim Bacher, 'Die Sportberichterstattung im Internet (WWW): Bedürfnisse, Erwartungen und Wünsche' ('The Sports Reporting on the Internet (WWW): Requirements, Expectations and Desires'), Institut für Sportpublizistik, Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln, Köln, 1999.

basis of this information a research methodology focusing on interviews was developed.

1.7   Research Methodology

In order to address the proposed research questions and research aims in this qualitative study, an analysis of Internet sport journalists was undertaken. A detailed description of the research design employed is included in the third chapter. A number of international and national studies of "traditional" sport journalists have been conducted in the past ten years and these are discussed later in the thesis. This particular study draws on existing material in the field of print sport journalism, and contrasts this with material gleaned from interviews. The subsequent comparisons between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists were not based on a narrow, interpretative framework. Rather, it employed elements from a range of theoretical models, including some elements of ethnography and grounded theory, in order to highlight significant differences and similarities between the culture of the two occupations.[89]

The basic research instrument involved a semi-structured interview discussing Internet sport journalists' attributes and work practices. The researcher conducted the interviews as well as follow-up interviews when necessary. Open-ended questions were asked, with many questions relying on the previous

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[89]   For a brief overview of various qualitative research methodologies, see Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods For the Social Sciences*, third edition, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1998, pp. 1-10.

answer of the respondent.[90] Semi-structured interviews, as defined by Minichiello *et al.,* allowed the researcher to ask a range of questions within the topic rather then following a fixed order of questions.[91] While this type of interview can reduce the comparability of the data gathered, in-depth examination was required to gain insights into work routines, and semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the best available option to elicit relevant information. The only calculations made were simple statistics regarding such variables as age, education and salary.

1.8   Overview

First and foremost, this project aims to make a significant contribution to the current knowledge of Internet sport journalism in Australia. It also has value because very little research has been conducted in the field of the Internet and sport journalism, and the relation of these two. By examining Internet sport journalists and their work practices in detail, not only will knowledge about this new field increase, but possibilities for further comparative research with traditional media will be created.

The major part of this project aims to highlight, explain and analyse differences and similarities in work practices between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists. The relevant literature review is contained in the second

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[90]   Mark Mitchell and Janina Jolley, *Research Design Explained*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York, 1988, p. 294.

chapter. Several surveys about print journalists are introduced and themes, notably those concerned with working practices of print sport journalists, are drawn out of the literature. A critical analysis follows in order to identify and review current work routines of print sport journalists. An overview about the Internet is also provided, as well as discussion of recent studies that have been conducted in this new field. The third chapter includes the research design used to construct a profile of Internet sport journalists. The collected data and the results of this survey are then presented and discussed in the following three chapters, which constitute a critical analytical comparison of two occupations, namely "print sport journalist" and "Internet sport journalist". The primary limitation of this project, however, is the rapidity with which change occurs in such a fast growing medium. To this end, it is acknowledged that the data collected from the interviews may not remain current, or up to date, for as long as they might in other research fields. Finally, the seventh chapter stresses the author's conclusions and contains recommendations for future research.

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[91]   Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni, Eric Timewell, and Loris Alexander, *In-Depth Interviewing: Researching People*, Longman, South Melbourne, 1990, p. 92.

2. Chapter 2

Literature Review: Print Sport Journalism and New Media

2.1   Introduction

The previous chapter focused on Australian sporting culture, the relationship between sport and the mass media, as well as the introduction of new technologies.   Terms such as information society and convergence were described and discussed.   Furthermore, the field of sport journalism was introduced, and it is this topic that now becomes the focus of this chapter.   As intimated previously, the introduction and establishment of the Internet, a new, converged form of media, has had a significant influence on the development of sport journalism.   The impact of the Internet on sport journalism will therefore constitute an important part of the discussion in this chapter.

The study of journalists as an occupational group is a surprisingly recent phenomenon.[92] While journalism is the most important textual system in the world, there has traditionally been almost a conspiracy of silence by journalists about themselves and their news gathering methods.[93] This is perhaps because

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[92]   The earliest studies about American print journalists were conducted in the early 1970s. See John W. C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski and William W. Bowman, *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1976. However, the first American studies about print sport journalists were not conducted until the 1980s. See Bruce Garrison and Michael Salwen, 'Newspaper Sports Journalists: A Profile of the "Profession"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989, pp. 57-68. It was not until the following decade that a similar study was conducted in Australia. See John Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', *ACHPER Healthy Lifestyles Journal*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1995, pp. 13-17.

[93]   Ian Marshall and Damien Kingsbury, *Media Realities: The News Media and Power in Australian Society*, Longman, South Melbourne, 1996, pp. 112-114.

journalists regard their own activities as commonplace, and assume that their work is so public that everyone knows the essential details of what they do. In fact, in terms of sport journalism, Rowe has noted that "sports journalists are among the most visible of all contemporary writers".[94] Furthermore, he stressed that:

> To be a sports journalist is to engage in an occupational specialization that combines the general responsibilities of the profession with the particular demands imposed by the object to which those professional practices and ethics are directed.[95]

Despite Rowe's definition, sport journalists have long been regarded as unprofessional. Indeed, according to Garrison and Salwen, sport journalists have suffered a number of criticisms, including "accepting freebies", "cheering for the home team", and having "an unwillingness to report in-depth issues".[96] Moreover, some critics, as well as members of the public, consider sport journalism to be less important and require less skill than other forms of journalism.[97] Sport journalism is therefore often regarded as "unprofessional" and is perceived as lacking a formal ethical code.[98] Therefore, it is not surprising that the sport department has long been referred to as the "toy department".[99] In addition, it has been suggested by Rowe that sport journalists are a "breed apart" due to the difficult standing within their profession.[100]

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[94]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 36.
[95]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 39.
[96]   Garrison and Salwen, 'Newspaper Sports Journalists', p. 57.
[97]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 70.
[98]   Bruce Garrison and Michael Salwen, 'Finding their Place in Journalism: Newspaper Sports Journalists' Professional "Problems"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, pp. 88-89.
[99]   Bruce Garrison and Mark Sabljak, *Sport Reporting*, Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1985, p. 3.
[100]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 40.

Despite the stereotypes surrounding sport journalists, there is evidence that the profession of newspaper sport journalism has been changing and is now taken more seriously. A number of studies conducted within the field reveal these changes and will be the basis of this chapter. The next section is an overview of the characteristics and working practices of a typical print sport journalist and the research which has been done in the field over the last two decades.

2.2   Education and Training of Print Sport Journalists

Entry into sport journalism in Australia has traditionally been based on a cadetship or traineeship system. Bernard Hall claimed that in the past it was often possible for a young person leaving school to obtain employment in a newspaper office as a "copy boy", with the initial aim of becoming a junior reporter.[101] Editors were then able to assess the potential of the person concerned and in many cases these "copy boys" rose through the ranks to achieve success in their field.[102] However, there is no single set of requirements for becoming a sport journalist. In fact, it is not absolutely necessary for one to have graduated from university to become a journalist, or in this case, a sport journalist, although this is increasingly seen as a basic requirement. For example, the Sydney head office of the media organisation News Limited announced that, "from 2002, cadet journalists will be recruited externally, rather than from the ranks of copy people".[103] Thus, the high education levels of

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[101]   Bernard J. Hall, *Basic Training in Journalism*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 2.

[102]   Hall, *Basic Training in Journalism*, p. 2.

[103]   Daniel Hoare, 'No more kidding around', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 5-11 July 2001, p. 14.

prospective cadet journalists is recognised and the fact that a good "copy person" does not necessarily become a good journalist is acknowledged.

In terms of the education and training of sport journalists in Australia, there is a significant paucity of academic studies and research.   The educational background and/or career path of sport journalists is often questioned as part of greater research studies in sport journalism, but the area of socio-economic background receives little attention.   Australia's first comprehensive national survey, conducted by John Henningham, revealed that 56 per cent of sport journalists had not studied beyond high school, compared to 44 per cent of non-sport journalists.[104] Moreover, 27 per cent of sport journalists had university degrees, yet no separation between undergraduate or postgraduate degrees was made, compared with 36 per cent of non-sport journalists.   According to Henningham, the findings revealed a stark contrast to the United States, where Bruce Garrison and Michael Salwen reported that 99 per cent of sport writers and editors had studies beyond high school, 71 per cent had a basic degree, while 13 per cent had undertaken postgraduate studies.[105] However, the research subjects in Henningham's Australian survey, unlike those in Garrison and Salwen's American study, had, on average, lower levels of tertiary education than non-sports journalists.

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[104]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 15.
[105]   Bruce Garrison and Michael Salwen, 'Newspaper Sports Journalists: A Profile of the "Profession"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989, pp. 57-68.

2.3   Work Routines, Values and Attitudes

When discussing the research concerning sport journalists and their working practices, values and attitudes, a number of studies are relevant to this research project.   Terry Valeriote's unpublished thesis consisted of an occupational analysis of sportswriters in Toronto, Canada.[106] He observed and interviewed thirty-five sportswriters in their working environment. Valeriote's thesis focused on a number of areas, including, a general description of the sportswriter, the sportswriters' perceptions of media impact, the role and function of the sportswriter, the writers' personal view of sport, the ethical standards of sports writing in Toronto and the content of sports pages. Valeriote noted that, on average, a sport journalist in Toronto had a post secondary school education, earned more than $20,000 per year and believed that the media influences the public. In addition, he also found that sport journalists believed their function was to inform, entertain and reflect, followed only a personal code of ethics, had an average writing ability and believed that the content of the sports pages had not changed significantly over the years. Mark Lowes conducted similar field research with both non-participant observation of activities at a Canadian newspaper's sports desk, and extensive interviews with sportswriters.[107] By examining the routine activities of sport journalists, Lowes constructed an overview of the working practices, values and attitudes of sportswriters. As a

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[106]   Terry A. Valeriote, 'An Occupational Analysis of Sportswriters in Toronto', Canada, unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1980.
[107]   Mark Douglas Lowes, 'Sports Page: A Case Study in the Manufacture of Sports News for the Daily Press', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1997, pp. 143-159; and Mark Douglas Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages: Work Routines, Professional Ideologies, and the Manufacture of Sports News*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1997.

result, Lowes provided an insight into the work of the "sports beat", that is the assignment of a sport journalist to a particular organisation, in this case a sport, in order to provide regular coverage of a subject or event.[108] Furthermore, his main aim was to reveal the decision-making processes and news gathering methods of sport journalists in their construction of a sport page. Lowes concluded that not only did sport journalists decide which sports were covered, but that "the economic logic of the daily press" determines that the construction of the sport page is dedicated almost exclusively to major-league spectator sports.[109] This is due to metropolitan newspapers being primarily dependent on advertising sales, and not circulation, to generate revenue.[110]

In a national survey of Australian sport journalists in 1992, Henningham noted that sport was the largest single speciality in Australian journalism. In his estimation, it accounted for "almost 11 per cent of all Australian journalists, 80 per cent of whom worked for newspapers (as opposed to exactly two-thirds of non-sport journalists)".[111] Henningham concluded that the typical sport journalist was mostly white, male, less educated than other journalists, less professional, but happier in their work.[112] According to Henningham's findings, "They prefer to 'report the facts', get the news out as quickly as possible to as many people as possible, and entertain as well as inform the public".[113] As a result of this study,

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[108]   Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*, p. 34.
[109]   Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*, p. 97.
[110]   Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*, p. 97.
[111]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 13.
[112]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 13.
[113]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 17.

the first comprehensive national survey of journalists was conducted, and one of the first steps was taken to define the profession of sport journalism in Australia.

David Rowe and Deborah Stevenson gave special attention to sport media texts and how they are actually produced. In their study, they focused on the producers of sport media texts and their profession.[114] In so doing, they drew upon a research study conducted by Rowe in the mid 1990s, which involved over forty interviews. In particular, Rowe and Stevenson focused on the institutional and professional context of sport journalism. They asserted that sport journalism should be considered as "a form of cultural production which requires a series of complex negotiations between sport journalists and media managements, journalists from other 'disciplines' (including editors), the personnel of sports organisations, individual athletes, their publics or readership".[115] From their findings, Rowe and Stevenson noted how the contemporary technologies and economics of the broadcast and print media significantly contributed to an expansion in the volume of sport texts. In addition, they observed an emergence of new styles of sports writing, for example, an increase in "in-depth and self-consciously literary writing".[116] Specifically, they found a relationship between the commercially driven process of expanding the volume of sport texts with the professionally motivated drive to raise the status of sport journalism to a level close to other journalistic

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[114]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', pp. 67-79.
[115]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 68.
[116]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 69.

professions.　This indicates a significant change in the nature of sport journalism.

It is appropriate at this point to consider some definitions and classifications of journalists, and the narrower field of sport journalists.　According to John Herbert, newsrooms consist basically of editors and reporters.[117] In a newsroom, journalists collect, report, edit, and distribute a special category of information called news.[118] The term "journalist", according to David Weaver and Cleveland Wilhoit, came to describe all full-time reporters, writers, correspondents, columnists, newsmen (and women) and editors.[119] Due to technological changes in the twentieth century, this term now also includes radio and television editorial personnel in news and public affairs programming.[120]

The production of a newspaper requires three basic categories of people working within each section or department of the newspaper, with each desk having its own hierarchy.[121] Collection of news and reporting of events are the basic duty of the general reporter within the newspaper production, whereas the chief reporter may well go out on jobs, but more of their work will be concerned

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[117]　John Herbert, *Journalism in the Digital Age: Theory and Practice for Broadcast, Print and On-line Media*, Focal Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 43.

[118]　John E. Newhagen and Mark R. Levy, 'The Future of Journalism in a Distributed Communication Architecture' in Diane L. Borden and Kerric Harvey (eds), *The Electronic Grapevine: Rumor, Reputation, and Reporting in the On-Line Environment*, Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, N.J., 1998, p. 10.

[119]　Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 2.

[120]　Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 2.

[121]　For more information on the handling and production of stories and news content within a newspaper organisation, see, Anthony Smith, *Goodbye Gutenberg: The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980, pp. 190-197.

with directing the movement of the reporting staff.[122] The chief reporter or news editor, depending on the size of the newsroom, assigns general or "rounds" reporters to particular jobs, briefing them on what is required and debriefing them when the job is complete.[123] The news editor has overall responsibility for all news coming into the office from general, rounds, interstate and overseas correspondents and decides which story goes on what page.[124] The editor is the person who counts most, and it is the editor alone who can control content.[125] They also liaise closely with the sub-editor, who fashions the story and presents it for setting in the form in which it finally appears in the paper, headlines the story, checks references and sees that the news is emphasised strongly before it goes to print.[126]

The sport department usually has its own head, the sport editor.[127] Reporters in the sport pages work for a sport editor whose function it is to work in conjunction with his particular group of information creators, the world of sport people.[128] Bruce Garrison and Mark Sabljak noted that the traditional sport department required its sport writers to be both sport reporters and copy editors.[129] In other

[122]   Hall, *Basic Training in Journalism*, pp. 6-7.
[123]   Sally A. White, *Reporting in Australia*, second edition, Macmillan, South Melbourne, Vic., 1996, p. 31.
[124]   White, *Reporting in Australia*, p. 31.
[125]   Herbert, *Journalism in the Digital Age*, p. 24.
[126]   Hall, *Basic Training in Journalism*, p. 10.
[127]   Herbert, *Journalism in the Digital Age*, p. 294.
[128]   Smith, *Goodbye Gutenberg*, p. 190.
[129]   Bruce Garrison and Mark Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, second edition, Iowa State University Press, Iowa, 1993, p. 11.

words, their roles within the department included both reporting assignments and desk work. In a typical situation, a sport journalist has specific beats or specialisations. This approach is still common among small newspapers, whereas sport departments of larger metropolitan newspaper have staff members working either as a reporter or as a sport desk copy editor.[130] Another aspect worth noting is that in Australia, Rowe and Stevenson recognised a distinction between highly paid "name" sport writers and the journalist "hacks" (usually of the tabloid press).[131] Rowe and Stevenson observed a prominent display of sport journalists' names and photographic portraits in sport sections.[132] This can be seen as an attempt to raise the levels of reader recognition of a number of sport journalists as well as to lift their reputation.

2.4   Professionalism of Print Sport Journalists

Bruce Garrison, a former sport reporter and professor of journalism, and Mark Sabljak, in one of their earlier works, maintained that the growing concern for increased professional respect in sport journalism during the late 1970s and the 1980s led to the adoption of professional performance guidelines. These guidelines included general newsroom codes of ethics and specific sports department codes and policies.[133]

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[130]   Garrison and Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, p. 11.
[131]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 69.
[132]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 69.
[133]   Garrison and Sabljak, *Sport Reporting*, pp. 216-217.

In another study, by Garrison and Salwen, a survey of high-profile sport journalists, all members of the Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE), was conducted.[134] They investigated the movement toward increased professionalism in sport journalism by focusing on minimal educational requirements as a means of attaining professional status. A questionnaire was mailed to 624 senior sport journalists, consisting largely of newspaper sports section managers. The questionnaire included three sections of statements, namely professionalism, education and ethics, to which participants were expected to respond. A response rate of 40 per cent was achieved, and in-depth personal telephone interviews were conducted to attain greater understanding of the findings. The demographic profile showed that the average sports section manager was overwhelmingly young (median age 36), white (98 per cent), and male (96 per cent) and this was representative of APSE members in 1989, the time of the study. All participants agreed with the statement that journalism should be regarded as a profession, and in 1993, as part of an ongoing study, Garrison and Salwen conducted a follow-up survey, and again questioned the entire population of APSE members.[135] This time the study examined sport journalists' opinions on professionalism. A total of 445 APSE members were asked questions about the most serious problems facing sport journalism in general, replicating the method of research from the previous study. The findings identified issues related to professionalism as the most serious problem in their field. The perception of sport journalism as being

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134   Garrison and Salwen, 'Newspaper Sports Journalists', pp. 57-68.
135   Garrison and Salwen, 'Finding their Place in Journalism', pp. 88-103.

entertainment rather than "serious" news no doubt contributed to this concern facing the entire field.

In fact, the sport industry itself became a significant element of the business world in the mid-1990s.[136] The popularity of sport has created greater opportunities to generate revenue from advertising, live event sponsorship and sport-related commerce. As one recent example of this, it can be noted that at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney broadcasting rights generated US$1,331 million, about 45 per cent of the overall revenue.[137]

In Australia in the mid-1990s, David Rowe focused on "sport journalists' 'self assessment of their own and their colleagues' work activities in different sports media".[138] This study involved over forty interviews with working sport journalists (mostly print) from three different English-speaking countries.[139] Rowe closely examined the structures, principles and practices which shape the overall content of the sports page. To emphasise his view that sport journalists are still a "breed apart", Rowe revealed that "many sports journalists felt professionally insecure and unappreciated".[140] It is also often the case, according to Rowe, that

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[136]   For further discussion on this point, see, Bob Stewart, 'Sport as Big Business' in David Rowe and Geoffrey Lawrence (eds), *Power Play: Essays in the Sociology of Australian Sport*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1986, pp. 64-67.

[137]   International Olympic Committee, 'Final Sydney 2000 Marketing Overview', p. 1.

[138]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, pp. 38-39.

[139]   Parts of this research study can be also found in Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations'.

[140]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 62.

the significant economic imperatives of the sport department, in terms of its importance for circulation, ratings, advertising, revenue, and so on, are in contrast with the low professional status of sport journalists.[141] Rowe also observed that due to the increase in media attention of sport, the professionalism of sport journalists has been questioned.

In Germany, Felix Görner carried out the first significant survey of sport journalists, which was a milestone in sport journalism.[142] The response rate to his written questionnaire, which was posted to 4,087 German sport journalists, was an impressive 42.54 per cent. The results of the study revealed that the reputation of sport journalists in Germany had significantly improved during the last twenty years. The current profile showed a modern, attractive and optimistic profession, which had developed a new self-confidence and a positive self-portrait. The formerly disparaged "outsiders" of the news department had transformed themselves into respected "mavericks" with a greater job satisfaction. Younger, educated journalists with more self-confidence and a greater income helped to create this more positive situation.[143]

2.5   New Technology and Sport Journalism

While there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of examining the profession of sport journalists, there are still significant aspects deserving of

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[141]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 62.
[142]   Görner, *Vom Außenseiter zum Aufsteiger (From Outsider to Maverick)*.
[143]   Görner, *Vom Außenseiter zum Aufsteiger (From Outsider to Maverick)*, pp. 413-414.

detailed analysis, notably the link between the Internet and sport journalists.

Sport journalism, like other departments of the newspaper, has undergone

substantial change as a result of developments in technology and

communication.   The telephone, satellite and the computer have substantially

improved the working practices of sportswriters.   New forms of news gathering

and working practices, such as computer-assisted reporting (CAR) have also

revolutionised journalism.[144]

By the late 1920s, radio was becoming a more commonly used news source,

thus providing print sport journalists with competition in sport reporting.   As a

result, print sport journalists were forced to change their work practices, as they

became more conscious of the impact of live coverage, and, rather than

providing statistics and a description of the events, they realised that they had to

provide in-depth analysis.[145]   Furthermore, with the emergence of television in

the 1950s, print sport journalism was radically changed.   Coakley described the

"new" sports reporting style:

> Newspapers and magazines had to cover more than scores and
> descriptions of the action. Since people now could *see* sports
> at home, sportswriters had to have stories that went beyond the
> action.[146]

Powerful computer systems are now the epicentre of new technology.

Furthermore, computers have made possible many improvements in what sport

journalism is able to do for readers.   More news is processed faster, with fewer

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[144]   Stephen Quinn, *Newsgathering on the Net*, second edition, Macmillan, Melbourne, 2001.
[145]   Garrison and Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, p. 9.
[146]   Coakley, *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, p. 39 [Emphasis in the original].

errors, and closer to deadline than ever before. Newsroom computer systems are connected with various types of photocomposition hardware, producing greater speed and accuracy in typesetting and the rest of the production process. The traditional, front-end copy flow system involved typing by a reporter and then retyping by a printer at the keyboard of a Linotype machine.[147] According to news reporter Brian Macarthur, "Journalists' working practices have changed drastically … reporters and subs [editors] seem increasingly tied to their desks …".[148] Furthermore, he describes a scenario where:

> People would spend hours – seven, eight, often more, sitting in front of screens, tapping energetically away, gazing lugubriously at them or, occasionally, making a telephone call.[149]

Electronic editing systems have gradually eliminated the second (error-prone) typing task. Reporters and editors have become, in effect, their own typesetters and proof-readers. The main reason for the newspaper industry moving toward PCs, Video Display Terminals and numerous other technological developments is economic.

The industry has covered much technological ground in just over two decades. In many cases, a newspaper company is no longer just a newspaper company, but a multi-faceted, interactive business enterprise with its own Internet subsidiaries. In the past few years, the last of the largest traditional media groups created online businesses in Australia and around the world. The

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[147]   Garrison and Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, p. 301.
[148]   Brian Macarthur, ''The Sound of Two-finger Typing', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 19-24 October 2000, p. 15.
[149]   Macarthur, 'The Sound of Two-finger Typing', p. 15.

development of media organisations might even go further. Some might even predict a convergence of a group of journalists working for one news organisation across a group of different news platforms, such as print, broadcast and online, without emphasising one above each other. One visionary along these lines is Saf Fahim, who recognises that the walls of a typical workplace are coming down. Fahim envisages the newsroom of the future as a studio shielded "by a screen displaying the status of each group's page or individual assignment, so that the newspaper in effect wallpapers the newsroom".[150]

Workplace culture in general has changed significantly in the 1990s. Peg Neuhauser, Ray Bender and Kirk Stromberg examined these changes and highlighted what they considered to be a shift from a traditional business culture to a corporate culture.[151] In their view, what is commonly referred to as a ".com culture" must develop new ways of dealing with internal communications, redistributing the power inside a company.[152] In this context, it becomes apparent that the traditional, entrenched sportswriters had to consider altering their working routines due to the increasing demands of sport coverage and speed of reporting.

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[150] Saf Fahim, cited in Sally Jackson, 'Convergent Views', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 28 June-4 July 2001, p. 12.

[151] Peg C. Neuhauser, Ray Bender and Kirk L. Stromberg, *Culture.com: Building Corporate Culture in the Connected Workplace*, John Wiley & Sons, Ontario, 2000.

[152] Neuhauser, Bender and Stromberg, *Culture.com*, p. 2.

2.6   Online Journalism

Journalism has undergone a number of significant changes in recent years.[153] Indeed, according to John Pavlik, journalism is now going through its most fundamental transformation since the rise of the penny press of the mid-nineteenth century.[154] Furthermore, Pavlik proposed that "content is becoming much more fluid than in the past".[155] In the past, a story was typically published by a newspaper and then perhaps updated the next day. Today, news is in a constant state of flux and updates are made continuously.

In the twenty-first century, a new form of journalism is emerging whereby the distinguishing qualities of ubiquitous news, global information access, instantaneous reporting, interactivity, multimedia content and extreme content customisation are paramount.[156] Although many of these aspects can be linked directly to the development of the Internet, the reasons for this transformation of journalism are neither simple nor one dimensional. Rather, a set of economic, regulatory and cultural forces, driven by technological change, are converging to bring about a significant shift in the nature of journalism. The Internet has created its own kind of journalism: online journalism.[157] Online journalism differs

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[153]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*.

[154]   Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 3.

[155]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 1.

[156]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. xi.

[157]   Mark Deuze, 'Understanding the Impact of the Internet: On New Media Professionalism, Mindsets and Buzzwords', *Ejournalist*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001, [Online] Available: http://www.ejournalism.au.com/ejournalist/deuze.pdf, [29 November 2001], p. 5.

in its characteristics from print, television and radio journalism, which are traditional types of journalism. This particular form of journalism can be functionally differentiated from other kinds of journalism by using its technological component as a determining factor in terms of (operational) definition. In this sense, Pavlik has suggested that "In many ways it represents a potentially better form of journalism".[158] He referred to the wide range of new capabilities the journalist can draw from to tell a story, including interactivity, on-demand access, user control, and customisation. In this context, it can be said that the Internet is "a journalist's medium".[159]

The definition of what constitutes an online journalist poses several problems. In the most recent publications on journalists and journalism, authors either decide against discussing issues of definition at all, or choose to replicate definitions used in survey research, such as the definition chosen by Weaver and Wilhoit. The population of journalists, as already mentioned, can be described as:

> those who have editorial responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information – all full-time reporters, writers, correspondents, columnists, newsmen, and editors. In broadcast organisations, only those in news and public affairs departments were included.[160]

This definition excludes freelancers, tabloid writers and editorial staff, talk show

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158   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. xi.
159   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 3.
160   Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 168.

hosts, cartoonists, librarians, camera operators, and video/audio technicians from any study, not to mention online writers and journalists, and those responsible for the web content of newspapers, periodicals and broadcast organisations.[161] The relevance of defining online journalism as such can be summarised, quoting Peter Dahlgren's observation that:

> Journalism is carried out in specific institutional circumstances, within concrete organisational settings and under particular technological conditions. The advent of cyberspace will inevitably impact on the factors which shape how journalism gets done – and may well even colour how we define what journalism is.[162]

The literature suggests that the essential characteristics of online journalism are interactivity, customisation of content, hypertextuality and convergence, or, rather, multimediality.[163] The online journalist has to make decisions on which media format best tells the story (multimediality), and which format allows room for the public to respond, or interact. A decision even may be made to customise certain stories (interactivity) or to consider ways to connect the story to other stories, archives, resources, and so on through hyperlinks (hypertextuality). This is deemed to be the "ideal-typical" form of online journalism.[164]

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[161] Mark Deuze, 'The WebCommunicators: Issues in Research into Online Journalism and Journalists', *First Monday*, vol. 3, no. 12, 1998, [Online] Available: http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue3_12/deuze/index.html, [29 November 2001], p. 4.

[162] Peter Dahlgren, 'Media Logic in Cyberspace: Repositioning Journalism and its Publics', *Javnost/The Public*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1996, p. 60.

[163] See, for example, Deuze, 'Understanding the Impact of the Internet', p. 5 and Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 4.

[164] M. Friedrichsen, R. Ehe, T. Janneck and M. Wysterski, 'Journalismus im Netz: Zur Veränderung der Arbeits-bzw. Selektionsprozesse von Journalisten durch das Internet' ('Net Journalism: Modifications of Work and Selectionprocesses of Journalists due to the Internet') in W. Wirth and W. Schweiger (eds),

Research into the role of journalists within the online environment is scarce. Only one author, Jane Singer, has explicity addressed issues related to research into online journalism and journalists.[165] Based on a number of existing theoretical frameworks from the United States-based journalism research literature, Singer discussed four possible approaches to journalism in the online environment, which included gatekeeping theory, diffusion of innovation theory, sociology of newswork theory and social cohesion theory.[166] Although the author admitted that the best approach in the end was a multi-disciplinary, wide-ranging one, she still did not succeed in escaping from the fact that each of these theoretical concepts can be anachronistic (explaining the new by using the old), as they aim to explain something which defies the rules and definitions that form part of the theory.

The consensus among online media professionals internationally, as expressed at a recent "NetMedia" conference, is that online journalism is definitely "a breed apart".[167] In contrast to Rowe's previous use of this phrase, it is clear that in this case there is a "breed" of newspeople that produce content primarily for the Internet. According to Mark Deuze, everything on the Internet is content, including banner ads, chatrooms, research papers, and so on. Adopting

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Selektion im Internet: Empirische Analysen zu einem Schlüsselkonzept (Selection within the Internet: Empirical Analysis of a Keyconcept), Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, 1999, pp. 139-143.

[165]   Jane B. Singer, 'Online Journalists: Foundations for Research into their Changing Roles', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1998, [Online] Available: http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue1/singer.html, [2 April 2001], pp. 1-17.

[166]   Singer, 'Online Journalists', p. 1.

[167]   Colin Meek, 'Online Journalism a breed apart, say NetMedia speakers', 16 August 2000, *DotJournalism*, [Online] Available: http://www.journalism.co.uk/ezine_plus/dotjark/story135.shtml, [3 December 2001].

Deuze's definition, editorial content is defined here as texts (including written and spoken word, moving and still images), produced and/or edited by journalists.

Online journalism is still seen by its critics and members of the profession of journalism as something "outside" journalism and has been further criticised for its lack of professional standards.[168] An example thereof are the problems that Internet sport journalists faced in obtaining press accreditation at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.[169] Such criticisms and problems might be partially due to the fact that most news sites do not produce original content, using news content that has been specifically produced for the Internet. In this context, Pavlik has suggested that, "a journalist who does original reporting online is a content creator".[170]

Concluding this brief discussion of defining online journalists, it is obvious that Dahlgren's definition also refers to the narrower field of Internet sport journalists. "Narrower" in the sense, that "online" refers to the broad field of interconnected networks, such as Local Area Networks, the Intranet and the Internet. In this thesis, sport journalists working for the Internet are the focus.

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[168]   Deuze, 'Understanding the Impact of the Internet', p. 6.
[169]   See, Daniel Fallon, 'The offline Olympics', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Icon', 14-20 October 2000, pp. 4-5 and Michael McGuire, 'IOC spurns Net', *Australian*, [Online] Available: http://www.news.com.au, [7 December 2000].
[170]   Personal e-mail received from: John Pavlik <jp35@columbia.edu>, Subject: Research Question from Melbourne, Australia, Date: 28 November 2001 1:16am.

2.7   Internet Sport Journalists

While attending a cricket match in Britain as a cricket correspondent, sport journalist Mark Day noted:

> I've been observing the rows of earnest young men toiling away
> on their laptops, keeping the world's cricket websites up to the
> minute with ball-by-ball statistics.[171]

The laptop seems to have replaced the telephone, which earlier this century radically altered reporting methods. Further on in his article, Day reflected on the days where he had "to dictate over the phone".[172] So, as the twentieth century began, communication by mail and telegraph was replaced by field reporters who telephoned stories to rewrite specialists at news desks. Communication theorist Marshall McLuhan wrote in *Understanding Media* that technological innovations changed the communication process. He stated that the typewriter created "an entirely new attitude to the written and printed word", having an immediate effect on regulating the mechanics of writing, such as grammar.[173] Today, the computer, as was the case with the telephone and the telegraph, is modifying the way sport journalists communicate and work.

Research into the new field of sport and the Internet initially began three years ago. Two Master theses completed at the 'Institut für Sportpublizistik', Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln ('Institute of Sport Journalism', German Sport University Cologne) confirmed the beginning of research into a new field within the sport

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[171]   Mark Day, 'End of the Innings', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 26 July-1 August 2001, p. 4.
[172]   Mark Day, 'End of the Innings', p. 4.
[173]   Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, Signet, New York, 1964, p. 262.

media. Oliver Braun conducted a quantitative content analysis of online services, whereas Joachim Bacher focused on the users of Internet sport sites.[174] Braun described the sports content on the WWW and created a valid definition for "Sportjournalistische Angebote im WWW" ("Sportjournalistic Services on the WWW"):

> Sportjournalistic services consist of all servers, whose information is universal, up-to-date, periodical, based on real events of sport and are accessible with a webclient, for example, Netscape Navigator 4.0 and can show a number of sufficient Page Impressions per month. The editorial component has to be of an adequate size.[175]

Bacher conducted the first study of the "Rezipienten" (the user), those who were using Internet sport sites. He defined the common Internet user as mostly male, with a tertiary education and an above average income.[176] Furthermore, Rolf Scholz constructed an "Online-Synopsis", listing five ongoing research surveys conducted by commercial organisations in Germany. This synopsis was the first of its kind to compare different research approaches and objectives to evaluate the Internet in terms of usage of the Internet, socio-demographics of the audience and future trends.[177]

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[174] Braun, 'Sportjournalistische Berichterstattung im World Wide Web' ('Sports Reporting in the World Wide Web'), 1999 and Bacher, 'Die Sportberichterstattung im Internet' ('The Sports Reporting on the Internet'), 1999.

[175] Braun, 'Sportjournalistische Berichterstattung im World Wide Web' ('Sports Reporting in the World Wide Web'), p. 39 [Capitalisation and punctuation in the original].

[176] For further discussion on this point, see Trevor Barr, *newmedia.com.au*, pp. 126-127. Barr notes, "although the Internet shows impressive rates of take-up around the world … users do need to have … a relatively high level of computer literacy". See also, Boyle and Haynes, *Power Play*, pp. 220-240.

[177] See, Rolf Scholz, 'Synopse Online-Studien: Übersicht der wichtigsten Online-Studien' ('Synopsis Online-Studies: Overview of the most important Online-Studies'), Institut für Sportpublizistik, Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln, Köln, 1999.

All of these studies contributed significantly to research in the new field of sport and the Internet. However, a key deficiency is that they fail to describe the characteristics of Internet sport journalists. While there has been no previous Australian research in the field of Internet sport journalists and their working practices, one study on this topic has been conducted in Germany. In this case, David Beineke conducted a survey of online sport editorial offices. In a brief section, he described sport reporting on the WWW and compared it with sport reporting for traditional (print) media:

> In vielen Fällen sind es auch die Journalisten der Zeitungen, Zeitschriften und TV-Sender, die maßgeblich sowohl am äußerlichen Erscheinungsbild als auch an der Erstellung der Inhalte beteiligt sind. (In most cases the Journalists of Newspapers, Magazines and TV-Stations are not only responsible for the Appearance, but also for the Content.)[178]

He came to the conclusion that there is hardly any difference between the content in the "traditional" print medium and the Internet sport site. Beineke suggested that one reason for the uniformity of the two products could be that the content creators cannot identify their target audience, while another factor could be that most online services have their origin in the traditional media.[179] However, he did not describe the content creators, the Internet sport journalists, themselves, nor did he explore their working practices or showed differences to print sport journalists.

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[178]   Beineke, 'Sportberichterstattung im Internet' ('Sports Reporting on the Internet'), p. 191 [Capitalisation in the original].
[179]   Beineke, 'Sportberichterstattung im Internet' ('Sports Reporting on the Internet'), p. 191.

2.8 Conclusion

Competing news media have changed print sport journalism in remarkable ways. Not only have technological developments modified the newspaper sports department, but also the introduction of additional media, for example radio, television and the Internet, have contributed to an expansion of media sport texts as well as their modification.

The former "toy department" was significantly improved by these technological forces. Furthermore, working practices changed in the sense that sport journalists were forced to alter their writing style. News stories became more interpretative and provided more depth, more feature material, and more analysis. According to Rowe and Stevenson, a "greater focus on gossip and reaction has occurred alongside the promotion of more in-depth and self-consciously literary writing".[180] Sport journalists started to look for different stories to those covered by television, and features on sport injuries, law and gambling, for instance, began to appear.[181]

In addition to the changes in sport journalists' work routines, some academics became interested in changes to their professional status. Ethics policies were also of concern to academics, who increasingly investigated the field of print sport journalism. The former poor reputation of sport journalists changed significantly to a more professional outlook over a period of twenty years. This

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[180] Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 69.

could be due to the expansion of sport media texts, the commercialisation of sport or the current educational background of sport journalists.

At present, debate has occurred surrounding the problem of defining journalists. However, it is clearly misleading to replicate earlier definitions of journalists since these descriptions necessarily fail to take account of recent developments in technology, especially in terms of the Internet. Concluding this brief discussion, the only definition found in the literature, wherein the technological component of journalism is explicitly incorporated, has to be mentioned. According to Jo Bardoel, journalism is defined as the professional selection of actual news facts to an audience by means of technological distribution methods.[182]

In terms of sport journalism and the Internet, the completed studies indicated a significant emergence of research interest. Despite this increase in research, however, a lack of studies in the field of Internet sport journalists is evident. It is this deficiency that will now be addressed by an investigation of the professional practices of sport journalists working for the Internet. Therefore, the research questions which will guide this study can be stated as follows: What are the current working practices of Internet sport journalists in Australia? How did the interviewees become Internet sport journalists? What differences are there between Internet sport journalists and print sport journalists? What are the

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181 Garrison and Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, p. 10.
182 Jo Bardoel cited in Mark Deuze, 'The WebCommunicators', [29 November 2001], p. 5.

distinctive experiences of online sport journalists and what is their perception of

the future of sport journalism? The research design for this project is explained

in detail in the next chapter.

3. Chapter 3

Research Design: Qualitative Methods and Approaches

3.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, research conducted in the field of print and new media was explored, and the current working practices of print sport journalists were described. The literature revealed a lack of research dealing with the Internet and their content creators, namely Internet sport journalists. It was noted that discussion concerning the work routines of Internet sport journalists is very sparse in Australian literature. Therefore, the aim of this research project is to provide insights into the working environment and explores aspects of the employment practices of this special group of sport journalists. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the research questions guiding this study are: What are the working practices of current Internet sport journalists in Australia? How did the interviewees become Internet sport journalists? What points of difference are there between them and print sport journalists? What are their experiences of online sport journalism, and what is their perception of the future of sport journalism? This chapter describes the method used to gather information about journalists working for sport websites in Australia. It has to be acknowledged that replication is part of an adequate research design. Therefore, in this study, in-depth interviews with a cross-section of Internet sport journalists in Australia have been used to explore their working practices. Through these interviews, the daily working routine, educational background and

some essential demographics of current sport journalists working for new media organisations are revealed. An essentially qualitative approach was adopted on the grounds that it would elicit the appropriate depth of responses required to gain a detailed understanding of the beliefs and experiences that impact upon the behaviour and vocational practices of Internet sport journalists.

3.2   Research Design

According to Robert Burns:

> Social reality is the product of meaningful social interaction as perceived from the perspectives of those involved, and not from the perspectives of the observer.[183]

It is important to note that it is through qualitative methods that individual definitions, descriptions and meanings of events can be captured and understood. Within social science research, qualitative approaches usually involve ethnographic surveys and action research, with observation and either unstructured or semi-structured interviews as the major techniques. This study replicates these, and other techniques used by Rowe and Stevenson, and Lowes, in their research, to provide a comparative analysis of the workplace culture of Internet sport journalists and print sport journalists in Australia.[184] In pursuit of this aim, semi-structured interviews with a sample of thirteen Internet sport journalists from Australia were conducted in the period from May to August 2001.

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[183]   Robert B. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, fourth edition, Sage Publications, London, 2000, p. 388.

[184]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations'. This particular research study is also cited in Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 37. Also, see Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*.

As an example of information gathering, Henningham, in a national survey of Australian journalists funded by the Australian Research Council, administered a detailed telephone questionnaire to 1068 journalists across all news media. This method of reaching journalists has achieved high response rates – in excess of 80 per cent – in the United States and appears more effective in eliciting responses than postal surveys.[185] For such a large sample size a high response rate was essential to the validity of Henningham's project, and, in fact, a response rate of 90.1 per cent was achieved in this particular survey. By way of contrast, Rowe conducted a survey with a relatively small sample size of twenty sport journalists from three different English-speaking countries (Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand) in 1993 and 1994 as part of an ongoing study.[186] He used semi-structured interviews, which "provided some rich 'data' on the practical consciousness of a diverse group of sport journalists whose reflections on their own everyday activities are rarely sought for the purposes of academic research".[187]

3.3   Data Sources

In order to answer the proposed research questions and achieve the research aims, both primary and secondary sources were analysed using a qualitative

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[185]   Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 171.
[186]   More interviews were conducted in the mid-1990s (not all of them conducted by Rowe). The whole project involved over 40 interviews. See Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 37. Also cited in Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', pp. 67-79.
[187]   Rowe and Stevenson, 'Negotiations and Mediations', p. 68.

approach. Data sources included a range of material such as books, newspapers, magazines, journals, WWW-sites and interviews.

Theoretical sampling was the method used to select appropriate interview subjects. Theoretical sampling relies upon the selection of informants on the basis of the relevant categories, issues, themes, and concepts that emerge prior to and during data collection.[188]

The objective of theoretical sampling is to identify a full range of possibilities that have proved to be theoretically relevant to the research question.[189] The sampling categories selected were based on the need to obtain a variety of cases within which to examine the main themes that were identified in the literature. Educational background, working practices and self-assessment were the recognised themes in the literature, which formed the base for the interviews with the Internet sport journalists. Moreover, by defining the two sampling categories, additional research questions emerged which led to a comparison between Internet sport journalists and "traditional" print sport journalists. In addition, the differences of Internet sport journalists from the two sampling categories were questioned. In this case, it was necessary to choose two different categories to constitute a substantial cross section of Internet sport journalists.

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[188] For further detail on theoretical sampling, see Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni, Eric Timewell, and Loris Alexander, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis,* second edition, Longman, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 160-168.
[189] Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research,* Sage Publications, Newbury Park, 1990, pp. 176-188.

As a starting point, two categories of websites were clearly and precisely distinguished. The first sampling category was comprised of Internet sport sites which have a connection to the traditional print media, meaning that the websites originate from a newspaper company. The online arm benefits from the support of the print parent in terms of financial and news information resources. Conversely, the second category involved Internet sport sites which did not have the support of a traditional media company. These sport sites are defined as "independent" Internet sport sites and according to Pavlik are described as "an Internet-original – or purely online – news product, it has no print or broadcast parent".[190] Although in one case an independent online company had a contract with a broadcasting station and maintained the television station's sport site, it does not mean they are necessarily linked to a traditional media company and supported in the same way as other Internet sites noted above.

The Internet was used to select relevant interviewees. With the help of search engines and other software programs, the Internet was scanned for Internet sport sites which did not have the backup of the print media.[191] In this way independent Internet sport sites were located and contact with Internet sport journalists was made. The second source was national and metropolitan newspapers, which were useful to capture Internet sport journalists in the first sampling group connected to the "traditional" media. In all cases, the

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[190]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 16.

newspapers referred in their print hard-copy to their Internet address. Contacts with these Internet sport journalists were made through their contact details on the website. In addition to the sources mentioned above, existing hard copy media guides and indexes were also used.[192] Using this approach, two different website categories were identified and represented.

In terms of the research design for the project, there were some difficulties determining the precise field of Internet sport journalists in Australia, largely due to the changing nature of the medium and the size of the WWW. While Henningham in 1992 estimated that about 500 journalists in the Australian news media worked exclusively on sport, he understandably provided little indication of how many of these were likely to be involved in new media forms such as the Internet.[193] A recent search of *Yahoo!* in Australia revealed 21 categories and 621 webpages on "sport* and news".[194] These raw "data", however, are somewhat misleading as they take no account of the relative size of the websites or those individuals or organisations that may have multiple web addresses.

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[191]   For an example of this category, see the independent Internet sport site 'Sportal' [Online] Available: http://www.sportal.com, [25 October 2000].

[192]   See Naomi Rush (ed.), *Margaret Gee's Australian Media Guide*, Information Australia-Margaret Gee Media, Melbourne, 1999/2000, which has an index of selected employees in the Australian media industry, and Randy Bable (ed.), *Australian Sports Industry Directory*, sixth edition, Immedia!, Sydney, 2000, p. 34.

[193]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 14. Henningham did not identify sport journalists working for the Internet.

[194]   The author of this study made use of "Boolean expressions" to restrict the search. The Yahoo! search engine for Australian websites was used to conduct the search, [Online] Available: http://www.au.yahoo.com, [7 August 2001]. The rapidly changing character of the Internet is reflected in

At the beginning of this study in January 2000, it was estimated that there were approximately one hundred Internet sport journalists working in Australia. However, a more accurate estimate of the size of the field was gained from the interviewees themselves. As the research progressed over the ensuing months, Internet sport journalists from three major Australian newspaper publications, as well as from two independent Internet media organisations, were identified. During the interviews the Internet sport journalists were asked for an estimate of how many sport journalists might be working within the Internet in Australia. To restrict the answers, this wide field of sport and the Internet included predominantly Internet sport journalists working for a sport site which reports exclusively on sport and news. Answers about the size of the field did vary, though, with the majority of respondents suggesting a number between twenty-five and thirty. More than half of the indicated number of Internet sport journalists are employed by Internet sport sites with a connection to print.

From the size of the field, thirteen interviewees were selected. Eight informants were in the sampling category of independent sport websites and five informants worked for online organisations connected to print. The order of interviews was not important and often relied on the availability of the informants. This process continued until both sampling categories were completed. It was anticipated that at the completion of the thirteen interviews, saturation would be reached. According to this methodology, saturation is reached when the concepts and

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the fluctuating number of Internet sites. In December 2000 a similar search produced 171 categories and 957 webpages.

clusters of meaning have been explored fully so that no new clusters of meaning and interpretations occur.[195]

3.4   Informant Selection and Profile

The informants resided either in Victoria, New South Wales or Queensland. Initial contact with the subjects was made through the contact details provided on the different Internet sport sites and was either by telephone or via e-mail. Usually the latter applied and with the first contact an information sheet outlining the research project and a consent form were forwarded to each of the participants (refer to Appendices A and B).

Thirteen participants were eventually located, comprising eight from one category (independent) and five from the other (connection to print).   The Internet sport journalists were at different stages of their career.   Some were very experienced, while others had just made the transition to new media from traditional media a few years ago. Respondent ages ranged from twenty-one to fifty years of age.   Their educational background ranged from high school to tertiary education. Ten had tertiary education qualifications, while three finished high school with one of this group undertaking a traineeship. The gross income of the informants ranged from $AUS 40,000 to over $AUS 70,000 per annum. All participants were male and employed on a full-time basis.   Apart from females working in the production of the various websites, no female Internet

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[195]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, pp. 13-14.

sport journalists across the whole field were identified. A more detailed description of the informants is provided in the first part of chapter four.

3.5   Data Collection

Once a target sample was determined, a pilot study was conducted. This pilot study was necessary to clarify the interview schedule and to familiarise the researcher with the setting, the field of exploration and the interview technique. Three trial interviews were conducted, all with sport journalists familiar with the topic. At the end of these trial interviews, in response to information provided by the informants, the interview guide was revised to enable a more adequate description of the topic. The pilot interviews were audio-taped to enhance the revision and adaptation of the questioning techniques where needed. These pilot interviews were not included as part of the subsequent interviews.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews covering Internet sport journalists' characteristics and working practices from two different categories were then conducted. Rather than utilising a specific interview schedule (as occurs in structured interviews), the semi-structured interview guide was developed so that there could be a focus on those issues that were central to the informant and the research question (see Appendix C). According to Minichiello *et al.*:

> Essentially, this process entails researchers using the broad topic in which they are interested to guide the interview. An interview guide or schedule is developed around a list of topics without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions.[196]

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[196]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Researching People*, p. 92.

This process permitted a greater amount of flexibility than the close-ended type of question and ensured that the participants' perception of reality was more valid. The structure of the interview guide resulted from the proposed research questions and covered all five areas to be questioned, which there were: education and career, working practices, differences to peer journalists, self-assessment and future outlook. The illustrative data provided a sense of reality, describing exactly what the informant felt, perceived, and how they behaved. According to Burns, this constitutes the making public of private interpretations of reality.[197] This type of interview should be used to obtain an individual's subjective experiences because, according to Burns, the only person who understands the social reality in which they live is the person themselves.[198]

Given that an interview measures "verbalisiertes Sozialverhalten" ("verbal Social Behaviour"), the purpose of the interviews was to gain information on the workplace culture of Internet sport journalists.[199] To ensure the validity of the responses for use in the project, the responses were supported by corresponding data (in most cases secondary sources).[200] The researcher conducted the interviews, as well as the follow-up interviews (where necessary). The interviews were conducted as a conversation between the researcher and the participant, focussing on the participant's educational background, his daily

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[197] Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 424.
[198] Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 425.
[199] Pürer, *Einführung in die Publizistikwissenschaft. Systematik Fragestellungen Theorieansätze Forschungsansätze (Introduction to Journalism Science: Systematics, Questions, Theory Approach, Research Approach)*, p. 179 and Kurt Holm (ed.), *Die Befragung 1 (The Interview 1)*, Tübingen, 1975.
[200] For further detail on validity measures, see Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*.

working practices, and his experiences as an Internet sport journalist. The self-developed interview guide suggested questions that could be asked about experiences in working in a new media environment and perceptions of their work as an Internet sport journalist. Some questions stemmed from the literature available on journalists and sport journalists in general, and the more narrow field of print sport journalists in particular. In addition, questions also developed from the needs of the study which was to describe the working practices of Internet sport journalists. According to Minichiello *et al.*:

> The notion of an unstructured interview with minimal direction from the interviewer even prior to the actual interview is appealing. It is one which provides the informant with little or no information about the research, aiming to avoid biasing the informant's understanding of the issues toward the researchers interests.[201]

Open-ended questions were asked, with many questions relying on the previous answer of the respondent.[202] Semi-structured interviews, as defined by Minichiello *et al.,* allowed the researcher to ask a range of questions within the topic rather than following a fixed order of questions. While this type of interview can reduce the comparability of the data gathered, to gain an insight into work routines an in-depth examination was required and this type of interview gave the best option for obtaining this.

Data were collected through in-depth interviewing using a recursive model. This model refers to a form of questioning which is associated with most forms of in-

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[201]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, p. 78.
[202]   Mitchell and Jolley, *Research Design Explained*, p. 294.

depth interviewing.[203] Recursive questioning, the most unstructured way of conducting in-depth interviews, relies on the process of conversational interaction, that is, the relationship between a current remark and a subsequent one. Responses from the subject to previous questions help to determine to what extent the interviewer will ask or refer to phenomena already covered in the research process. Thus, the process itself can be modified to accommodate each subject's particular experiences and characteristics.[204] In this case, the method allowed the researcher to elicit, directly from the subject, the beliefs, values and interpretations he attaches to work as an Internet sport journalist in Australia.

The Internet sport journalists were divided into two groups. One group was Internet sport journalists working for an Internet sport site linked to the traditional print media.[205] In this case, the researcher selected the interviewees according to the size and circulation rates of the newspaper. A larger newspaper with a higher circulation rate was preferred. Journalists from three major metropolitan newspapers were selected. The second group was comprised of Internet sport journalists employed by an independent online organisation.[206] Again, a website

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[203]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Researching People*, p. 92.
[204]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis* and Howard Schwartz and Jerry Jacobs, *Qualitative Sociology: A Method to the Madness*, Collier MacMillan, London, 1979.
[205]   For an example of an Internet sport site connected to the print medium, see the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* [Online] Available: http://www.sportstoday.com.au, [17 September 2000] or the Official Site of 'News Interactive' [Online] Available: http://www.news.com.au, [2 October 2000].
[206]   The following sites are examples for independent sport websites with no connection to print, see 'Sportal' [Online] Available: http://www.sportal.com, [25 October 2000]; 'InsideSport' [Online] Available: http://www.sportcentral.com.au, [12 November 2000] and 'Zoomsports' [Online] Available: http://www.zoomsports.com, [19 November 2000].

with a higher rate of page views was preferred.[207] These two groups therefore represented a cross-section of Internet sport journalists, with the majority of the interviewees residing in either Sydney or Melbourne, with two of the informants living and working in Brisbane.

Once the informants were identified, they were telephoned to request that they take part in an interview. If they agreed, an interview time and place was arranged to suit them. If a subject declined to be interviewed, they were then replaced by another possible subject. Fortunately, it never occurred that an informant declined to be interviewed. In fact, most people were enthusiastic when asked to participate in this research project. The expectation was that the interviews would be conducted at the workplace of the subjects and would take approximately one hour to complete. In approximately 50 per cent of the cases, the interviews were conducted over the telephone due to busy working schedules of the informants or when the informant did not reside in the same city as the interviewer.[208] The interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 90 minutes. Telephone interviews were usually shorter and more to the point than personal interviews, perhaps because of a lack of non-verbal communication. In this respect, it should be noted that according to Burns, non-verbal signals, such

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[207]   This is measured by the total number of times a web page has been 'seen' by the web population (page views). One example would be: 'For the week of Oct 18th, the ESPN web site was seen 25,000 times by web surfers.' Any web surfer can view a page many times. According to 'Hitwise', see [Online] Available: http://www.hitwise.com.au [12 December 2002].
[208]   A telephone pick-up was used to tape the interviews.

as gestures, facial expressions, body movements and body positions, can be an important part of the interview data.[209]

Prior to the commencement of each interview, the research procedure was explained to the informant, who was given the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher. The informant was then asked to read the information sheet (Appendix A) for him to retain, and sign a consent form (Appendix B). In the case of a telephone interview, the information sheet and the consent form was faxed or sent via email to the informant prior to the interview. Signed forms were then sent back to the researcher. Anonymity and confidentiality were discussed along with how data were to be used for the research project. Informants were told that all personal names would be changed and new names (pseudonyms) given to protect the identity of the participants. Once this information was provided, the interview commenced. Interviews were taped using a MD-Player. This enabled the researcher to recall the interview with accuracy. Minichiello *et al.* recommend audio-tape recording because it allows for greater support by allowing a more conversational style of interview. Audio-tape recording also provides a more accurate "picture" because both questions and answers are recorded and "the raw data remains on the record".[210] The researcher is able to concentrate on the content of the interview and therefore analytical questioning techniques can be utilised.

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[209]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 427.
[210]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, p. 98.

Personal background information including age, educational background, gross income (per annum) and current employment status were noted at the start of the interview in a pro forma, which the participant was required to fill out (Appendix D). If the interview was conducted over the phone, the demographic data form was read out to the interviewee and then completed by the researcher. The interview then commenced with informants being asked about their educational background and how it was that they became a sport journalist working for the Internet. This proved to be an effective means of opening up discussion as the informant was able to talk candidly about their career path. It also enabled the researcher to appreciate each informant's knowledge and commitment to their chosen occupation.

The major part of the interview was concerned with discussing the professional career of the subjects, including how they became involved, their educational background, where they worked before, and what is it that they actually do as an Internet sport journalist. The focus then shifted to their working experiences, and they were asked to describe their daily routine. A number of specific questions were then asked including what skills they needed to possess and what influenced their news gathering techniques. They were also questioned about what they considered to be significant changes in sport journalism, and the perceived interactions between athletes, other sport journalists and professional organisations. Self-assessment issues were also discussed as they arose in the interview, including questions of operating in a television- and

print-dominated profession, as well as whether they felt accepted and regarded as professionals among their peers.

The final part of the interview focused on differences between traditional sport journalists and Internet sport journalists. Specific questions were asked, such as what they perceived as a significant difference between them and a sport journalist working for print, television or radio as well as the difference between an Internet sport journalist working for an online organisation connected to print and an independent website. A question was also asked concerning the number of Internet sport journalists currently working in Australia. Near the conclusion of the interview, the participants were asked to speculate about the future of their profession. Their opinion on the continuing modification of their workplace was also solicited. The interview then provided the informant with an opportunity to talk about issues that he found important and concluded with a general discussion on sport journalism and the Internet. All informants generously shared their experiences and appeared comfortable with the questions being asked by the researcher. Furthermore, they also offered to answer additional questions where necessary.

Qualitative research of this type is a useful investigative tool, as it takes a holistic and contextual view. It allows for an examination of the interpretations, meanings and significance of the comments made by the informants. This chosen approach elicited both spontaneous responses and considered reasoning. Expressed values and meanings of the informants were recorded.

As suggested by Minichiello *et al*., clusters of meaning, and ultimately theory, can be generated from particular responses.[211] Due to the direct contact with the informant during the interview, a degree of trust was established which enabled the researcher to explore the complexities of each informant's working situation, and to probe the subtleties in meanings and interpretations discussed by him.

A personal log was filled in immediately following the interview, providing a full account of descriptions of informants, locations, where the interview took place, ethical considerations and the researcher's own behaviour. The information in this journal included thoughts on the impressions of the informant's commitment, confidence and enthusiasm.

An analytical log was also kept. This included reflective notes on the questions asked in the course of the interviews and the ideas emerging from the data. This assisted the researcher in maintaining threads between the issues covered and identifying what issues needed to be followed up. Following Minichiello *et al*., the aim was "to collect information that will generate insightful propositions relevant to the study and to develop, refine and reformulate the questions asked".[212]

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[211]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, pp. 68-70.
[212]   Minichiello *et al.*, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, p. 237.

3.6   Data Analysis and Limitations

The interviews were an extremely valuable data source, as they provided insights into the production of news content on the Internet and the work of Internet sport journalists. Conclusions, particularly from surveys conducted about print sport journalists, were used to identify themes for the interviews.[213] Transcription of the interview material did not occur in a formal, comprehensive manner. However, important statements by the interviewees were drawn out of the interview material and reproduced as quotations in the following chapters. According to Burns, "the purpose of analysing data is to find meaning in the data, and this is done by systematically arranging and presenting the information".[214] In so doing, the data were organised in different categories and are presented in the following three chapters, so that comparisons, contrasts and insights are represented within each chapter. The chapters vary in length according to the amount of data analysis and comparison of meanings within a category.

Issues concerning the educational background of Internet sport journalists and a profile of the interviewed Internet sport journalists are presented in chapter four. Additionally, categories which describe the perception of the working environment, the differences of working practices between print sport journalists

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[213]   As noted earlier, some of these surveys are contained in Baird, 'Attitudes of Australian Women Sports Journalists', pp. 231-253; Görner, *Vom Außenseiter zum Aufsteiger (From Outsider to Maverick)*; Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', pp. 13-17 and Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, pp. 36-63.
[214]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 430.

and Internet sport journalists, and differences between independent and "connected to print" sport websites, are discussed in the fifth chapter. Chapter five also outlines self-assessment issues of Internet sport journalists. Moreover, views of the future and concerns of Internet sport journalists in terms of the development of sport and the Internet are presented in chapter six. Each category or sub-section concludes with a summary. The aim was to represent the findings with reference to secondary sources while also explicating how meanings and concepts are constituted and constructed. As James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium suggested, "rather than adhering to the ideal of letting the data 'speak for themselves', the active analyst empirically documents the meaning-making process".[215] Holstein and Gubrium also go on to explain that:

> Interviews are traditionally analysed as more or less accurate descriptions of experience, as reports or representations (literally, re-presentations) of reality.[216]

Therefore, the "analytic objective" was not only to describe the interview process between the interviewer and the informant, but also to show what was said and how it related to the experiences of the respondents.

In terms of limitations, it should be noted that the sample size was relatively small and broad generalisations were not meant to follow from this methodology. For this reason the discussion does not address problems within various fields of media. Even though each media field, for instance television and radio, has different cultures and traditions, it was determined that there was not the scope

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[215]   James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, 'Active Interviewing' in David Silverman (ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, Sage Publications, London, 1997, p. 127.

in this research project to explore the specific environments of each media field. Problems associated with discrimination based on gender, age, sexual orientation and disability were also not addressed in this research. In addition, the effects of ethnic diversity in the Internet sport journalism environment were also not within the scope of this research project.

The recordings of the interviews were kept by the researcher during the research period and post research. Each interviewee was asked for permission to store these recordings and for other people to be given access as required. The researcher kept the recordings if permission was not given. To insure confidentiality the informants were identified by their occupational title (for example, editor, site manager, deputy editor) and were given pseudonyms. In so doing, the researcher created a formal list with all participants of the study and manually changed all their names to pseudonyms. This list was kept by the researcher under lock and key. The recordings were not edited. In all cases the name of the company was changed and either replaced with a synonym or generally described as an "independent online organisation" or "online organisation connected to print".

3.7   Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, social reality is an artefact of significant interplay as perceived from the informants and not from the

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216   Holstein and Gubrium, 'Active Interviewing', p. 126.

interviewer.   Humans are conscious of their own behaviour and through their thoughts, feelings and perceptions create meaning.   Only qualitative methods, such as unstructured or semi-structured interviewing and participant observation, permit access to the meaning of individuals in the context of their environment.   The major part of this project aims to highlight and describe the working routines of Internet sport journalists with the help of qualitative research methods.   An explanation and analysis of the differences and similarities in work practices between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists is then provided. To capture and understand individual meanings and definitions of Internet sport journalists, and descriptions of events, information-gathering techniques as previously noted, such as unstructured or semi-structured interviewing were central.   Quantitative methods, in contrast, count and measure occurrences.   In this case, these methods were not deemed appropriate.

Qualitative research attempts to explore social reality, but, on the other hand, it can never be objective because of the informants' subjective perception of reality, as argued by Burns.[217] This is a disadvantage and a problem in terms of validity.   However, while no claims to comprehensiveness or statistical representativeness are made, the interviews provided some rich data on the practical consciousness of a diverse group of sport journalists whose reflections on their own everyday activities are rarely sought for the purpose of academic research.

The collection, compilation and analysis of this material will thus generate a greater understanding of the work of Internet sport journalists, as well as the field of new media in Australia. In so doing, this research project provides an insight into the working environment of Internet sport sites and the working practices of Internet sport journalists. Moreover, differences to "traditional" sport journalists and between the two categories of Internet sport journalists are explored.

A number of issues developed from the interviews are presented in the discussion in the following three chapters, along with references to other related literature. The conclusion and recommendations for further study, as well as recommendations to increase the awareness of the Internet and sport journalism in Australia have been included in chapter seven. To this end, it is acknowledged that the primary limitation of this project, however, is the rapidity with which change occurs in such a fast growing medium.

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[217]   Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, p. 426.

4. Chapter 4

Profile: Educational Background and Career Path

4.1   Introduction

In qualitative or interpretive research, academics have recently begun to consider the impact postmodernism has on "written" reports. As mentioned previously, the term "postmodernism" refers to a time where the modernist concern for standardized forms was rejected in favour of mixing opposite structures and different historical styles.[218] Postmodern writers also began to discover and explore new ways of writing.[219] In this context, Toni Bruce comments that, "Vital texts are (re)presented in the 'voices' of those whose experience is being written".[220] In addition, Bruce goes on to explain that:

> In a postmodern world, no form of narrative has a lock on representing truth/s. There is no one right way to "write" postmodern texts, only myriad ways which may explored.[221]

The following discussion attempts to remain true to the voices of Internet sport journalists and avoids changing their experiences into abstract concepts. Instead, the analytic objective was not merely to describe the communication process, but to show how what was being said related to the experiences and lives being studied.[222] To this end, an approach based around reproducing the

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[218]   Stewart and Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age', p. 289.

[219]   Toni Bruce, 'Postmodernism and the Possibilities for Writing "Vital" Sports Texts' in Geneviève Rail (ed.), *Sport and Postmodern Times*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 1.

[220]   Bruce, 'Postmodernism and the Possibilities for Writing', p. 9.

[221]   Bruce, 'Postmodernism and the Possibilities for Writing', p. 14.

[222]   Holstein and Gubrium, 'Active Interviewing', p. 127.

actual responses of the informants seemed to be an appropriate technique in which to present the findings of this research project. It should be noted, however, that some minor grammatical changes have been made to excerpts from the interviews in order to assist the flow of the text, and in some cases, parts of the same excerpt are included in different sections. Before the qualitative material can be considered, it is necessary to provide some background information about the interviewees.

4.2   Background of Internet Sport Journalists

As noted previously, thirteen sport journalists, who work exclusively on the Internet, were interviewed in the period from May to August 2001. Two categories of Internet sport journalists were identified. The first category comprised five Internet sport journalists, who worked for sport websites benefiting from the financial and news resources of a print media organisation, while the second category involved eight sport journalists who worked for an purely online organisation without a parent company. All of the informants were male and no female Internet sport journalists were identified during the process of research.

Before discussing the responses of the interviewees, it is appropriate to consider some background information of the participants, noting that, as mentioned previously, all personal names were changed and pseudonyms were given to protect the identity of the informants. Also, company names, newspaper and

website titles were changed to ensure confidentiality. The following profiles are drawn from the interview material as well as the evaluation form distributed to the interviewees.

George Thomson and Henry Unwin both work for the print-based media organisation, *Daily News*, in Sydney. They are the two journalists covering sport for the online arm of *Daily News*. Both men are in their mid-twenties and have followed similar career paths culminating in them entering the online workforce at the *Daily News*. George Thomson, after finishing his Bachelor of Arts in history and film studies in 1994, started as a copy boy. Two years later an opportunity arose for Thomson to commence with the online arm of the *Daily News*, where he is currently the site editor of the sport website. His colleague, Henry Unwin, also holds a Bachelor of Arts in history and worked for four years as a copy boy before moving to online journalism. He has been the site producer and manager for three years.

The same media organisation has an additional publication, the *Post*, in Melbourne, where Kenneth Yannis is employed as a site producer. Aged in his mid-twenties, Yannis finished his Bachelor of Arts majoring in journalism in 1998 and went directly from university to the online section of the newspaper. Yannis had been working as a casual Internet sport reporter during his studies before he became a full-time Internet sport journalist. Apart from work experience in radio and a local newspaper he has had no other experience with traditional

print media. In addition to Yannis, there are also two sport journalists working for the *Post* online, both of whom were unavailable for interview purposes.

The traditional print based media organisation, *Daily Advertiser* has its online arm, *Daily Advertiser Interactive*, in Sydney and employs seven Internet sport journalists. Ian van Dyk and Josh Willmott are two of them. Van Dyk is in his late-forties and began working as a print sport journalist thirty-four years ago. Upon finishing high school he wanted to be a sport journalist and served three years as a cadet at a Sunday newspaper in Ireland. Van Dyk worked in Britain, New Zealand and Australia as a print sport journalist before joining *Daily Advertiser Interactive* two years ago as a senior news editor and co-ordinator. Aged in his late-twenties, Josh Willmott started to work for *Daily Advertiser Interactive* as a senior editor from April 2000. Willmott completed his Bachelor's degree in communication with a major in broadcast journalism. He started his career at a suburban weekly newspaper reporting on sport and general news. In addition to sport reporting for newspapers he also worked for music and fashion magazines.

The second sampling category comprised eight Internet sport journalists working for an independent/purely online media organisation that was not linked to a parent company via their sport website. The following profiles reflect the data obtained from the interviews.

Two years ago, *Generalsport.com*, a provider of interactive sport content was established in Europe. A global company, *Generalsport.com* set up an office in Melbourne in January 2000, employing six Internet sport journalists and a number of producers. Adam McKinley is the managing editor and has twenty-five years of experience in sport journalism. After completing high school, McKinley worked part-time as a sport reporter with a regional newspaper and then worked for ten years at the *Post* before joining their online arm. McKinley then joined *Generalsport.com* at its inception, as did Bob Newman. Newman is the deputy editor and also works for a partner site of *Generalsport.com*, which is connected to a television station. Newman, in his mid-forties, has a Bachelor of Arts in politics and history and an extensive background in television and radio. He started his journalism career as a cadet with the ABC in various areas, but the last ten years have been dedicated solely to sport. Senior news editor, Chris O'Connell, and soccer producer, Damien Parker, are both in their mid-twenties and work from Sydney. After studying journalism for almost three years, O'Connell left University following a job offer from a television station. He worked there as a sport reporter before joining the team of *Generalsport.com* in July 2000. Parker holds a degree in sport management and worked for two years as a sport administrator. This is his first position as a sport journalist working for the Internet. *Generalsport.com* also has two sport reporters in Brisbane, namely senior editors Ewen Roberts and Frank Saunders. Roberts, in his late-twenties, has a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in journalism and history. He started as a print journalist working for a sport publication and then moved to a newspaper covering general news. While overseas, he joined

Generalsport.com in their London office and has stayed with the company since returning to Australia. Similarly to Roberts, Frank Saunders, in his mid-thirties, also first contacted *Generalsport.com* while he was working for a sister broadcasting company in London. Saunders finished a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and started his journalistic career in print working for a regional newspaper, where he advanced to the sport department after twelve months.

Danny Tregalia and Nick White both work for the independent online company *Firm.com.au* which was established in Melbourne in 1999. Tregalia is the senior editor and is in his late-forties. He has been working in print sport journalism for more than eighteen years. After high school, he started with *Enquirer* newspaper as a copy boy and worked there for three years, reporting on general news and sport before working for daily and weekly newspapers as a football and sport journalist. Tregalia joined *Firm.com.au* in June 1999 as the senior editor, working to produce a weekly online publication reporting on sport and business. Nick White is in his late-twenties and holds a diploma in professional writing and editing from a technical and further education college as well as a Bachelor of Arts in journalism. Apart from working for a local newspaper as a volunteer sport writer he had no previous journalism experience before he joined *Firm.com.au* as an Internet sport journalist. Elsewhere, *Firm.com.au* employs two additional Internet sport journalists.

It is difficult to write in general about the characteristics of Internet sport journalists, because they are a relatively diverse group. Furthermore, it has to

be pointed out that the following claims, made on the basis of information provided by this relatively small sample group of thirteen Internet sport journalists, have to be handled with care. However, some preliminary investigations, based on biographical data obtained during the interviews, allow some generalisations to be made. As illustrated in the following three figures, the "typical" Internet sport journalist in Australia seems to be a thirty-year-old, white male with about ten years experience in sport journalism, and around two years experience reporting for the Internet. They hold a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from a tertiary institution and have an average gross income per annum of AUS$ 57,000 (as shown in Figures 4.1-4.3).

Figure 4.1: Age Range of Internet Sport Journalists.

Age Range (n=13)

15%

23%

62%

□ Under 20 ■ 21 - 30 □ 31 - 40 ■ 41 - 50 □ Over 50
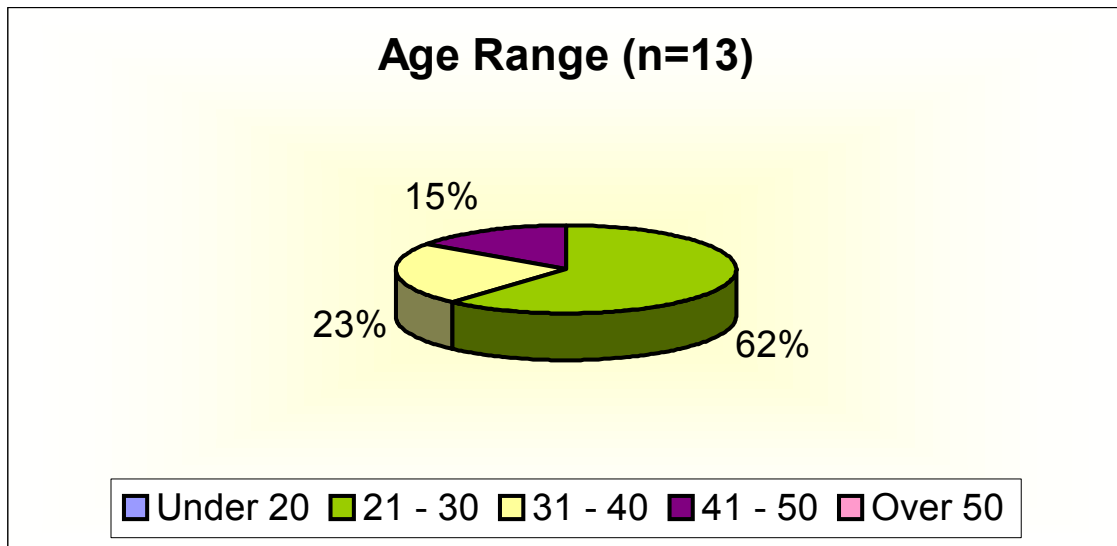
Figure 4.2: Educational Background of Internet Sport Journalists.

Educational Background (n=13)

8%   15%

77%

☐ High School ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate ☐ Traineeship
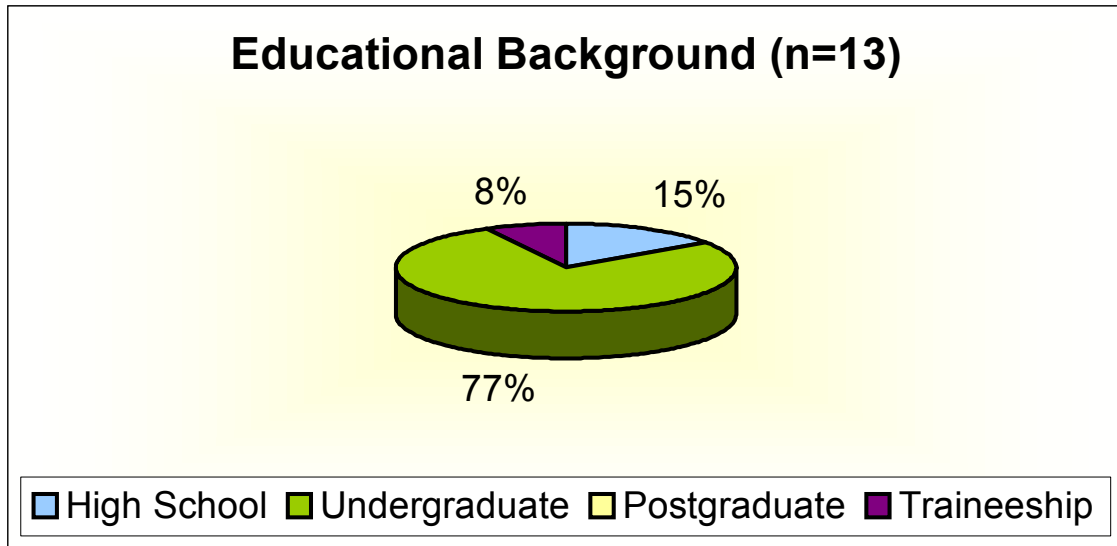
Figure 4.3: Gross Income of Internet Sport Journalists.

Gross Income - Per Annum (n=13)

23%   8%

23%

23%

23%

☐ Under$30K   ☐ $30K - $40K   ☐ $40K - $50K
☐ $50K - $60K   ☐ $60 - $70K   ■ Over $70K
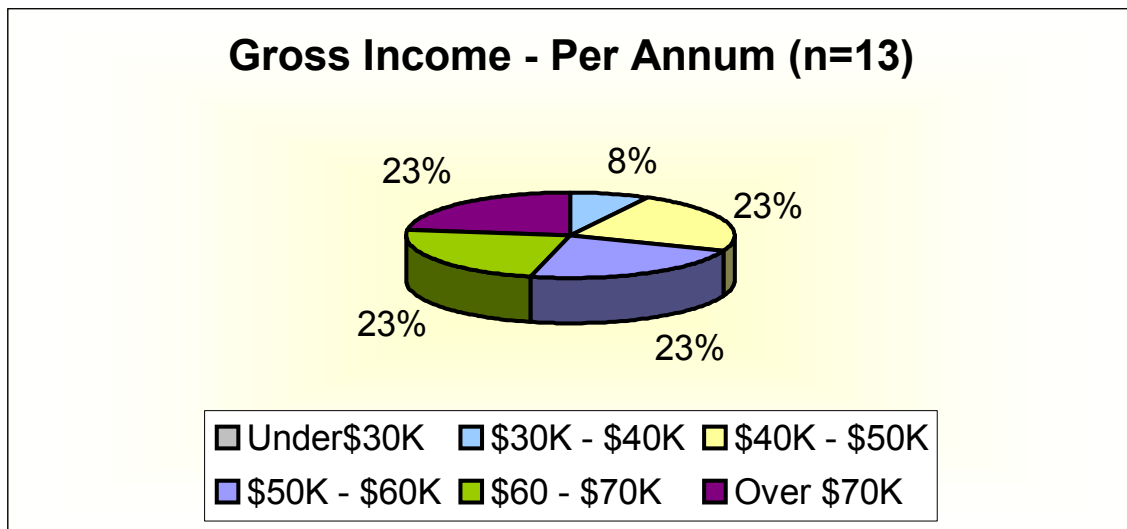
4.3   Education and Career Path

The educational background and subsequent career path of the informants working for the Internet was the first topic raised in the interviews. Most of the informants in the twenty-one to thirty years age group held an undergraduate

degree from a tertiary institution, generally a Bachelor of Arts in communications or journalism. Some of the Internet sport journalists, however, felt that their university course did not prepare them adequately to enter the new media field. As Nick White stated, "we learned to use the Internet strictly as a research tool". Moreover, Chris O'Connell also felt that he had "more experience from working outside uni[versity]". In the past, tertiary education has not necessarily played a pivotal role in the career paths of sport journalists. According to Van Dyk:

> some of the best journalists I've ever worked with, they've never been near a university. They were just good journalists, because they had a good broad training or just a gift for it. You cannot mass produce journalists.

This view coincides with the online training manager for the Herald and Weekly Times, Kim Lockwood, who stated that despite a solid media education provided by journalism schools it "doesn't help cadets prepare a story or do an interview".[223] In terms of journalistic training, some of the informants completed a cadetship with a media organisation or started as copy boys. The latter applied to George Thomson and his colleague Henry Unwin. As Thomson reveals:

> He [a colleague] got in through a friend as a copy boy on the ground level and basically from then it's just trying to impress the right people that we were worthy of being given a gig.

One informant felt that it had now become more important to have tertiary qualifications. In Van Dyk's view, "They [employers] now almost always insist you have a degree". While ten Internet sport journalists from the sample had an

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[223]   Lockwood, cited in Matthew Ricketson, 'How to School a Scribe', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 31 May-6 June 2001, p. 14.

undergraduate degree, they all had little or no experience in terms of working for the Internet, before they attained a position with an online media company. As Tregalia stated, "I'd been working on a laptop so I was reasonably versed in the workings of the Internet, but in terms of online reporting, I'd never experienced it". Similar sentiments were expressed by Van Dyk, who was offered a job in this area about two years ago and said, "basically I didn't know the Internet and still probably don't know a great deal about it. All I do is provide a breaking news service for the web". From the statements of the respondents, it can be stated that most Internet sport journalists are autodidacts. Despite the high formal education of journalists in general, autodidactic journalistic training seemed legitimate but rather unusual for the profession. The high degree of "self-educated" Internet sport journalists can again be explained with this very young medium. The development of adequate educational models in this field could not keep pace with the rapidly increasing demand in Internet sport journalists during the initial boom of the WWW.

Furthermore, the informants talked about their involvement in Internet sport journalism. Six of the informants had a background in print journalism and then moved to the online arm of their newspaper. Adam McKinley, for example, stated that:

> they [the newspaper] were looking for people to move into online and I thought it would be a chance to try and I knew that's where journalism was heading.

Bob Newman felt it was a natural step from radio and television to the Internet, because of the similarities of the mediums. In his view, the audio-visual media is "very similar to online, only the 'print' version of television and radio". All of the respondents had practical journalistic experience from working in different parts of the media, such as print or television. Most of the Internet sport journalists worked in print which provided them with a fundamental journalistic knowledge before they joined an Internet sport news service. However, as mentioned above, some informants stated that they were not satisfied with the training they received, because it did not prepare them for a career in an online environment.

McKinley revealed why he joined an online company, by stating that he felt he was "being a bit of a pioneer … [and] that the .com world was probably a bit more lucrative than print". The notion that salaries for workers in online industries are comparatively higher than in other sectors of the field has been supported by other commentators. For example, Alexandra Marks has stated that the "online world generally pays far better than print or even broadcast, especially for beginners".[224]

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[224]   Alexandra Marks, 'Hyperlinked to the Future of Journalism', *Christian Science Monitor*, [Online] Available: http://www.britannica.com/magazine, [3 August 1999].

4.4   Conclusion

From the evidence presented, most Internet sport journalists are relatively young and fall into the twenty-one to thirty years age group. The reasons for the apparent rejuvenation of journalists can be essentially found in the relatively short existence of the Internet. Very few Internet sport news services are older than five years and the boom of recent years caused a high demand in talented and young Internet sport journalists on the job market. In addition, it has to be assumed that the Internet, which is still in its infancy, hardly attracted journalists already established in different areas of the media. A high level of computer technological knowledge could have caused another entry barrier for mature journalists. Therefore, an up-and-coming generation confident with the workings of the computer moved towards new media.

From the above responses, it seems apparent that tertiary courses do not currently prepare their students to work in an online environment. Aspiring Internet sport journalists started working with the Internet with little or no experience using it. The same applied to the more mature sport journalists. In the late 1950s, journalistic training was provided by media organisations as part of a cadetship or traineeship.[225] Most of the Internet sport journalists learned the journalistic trade while working for newspapers, followed by television and radio.

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[225]   See, Hoare, 'No more kidding around', p. 14, and Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, pp. 41-44.

Nearly all of the informants had to become familiar with the workings of the Internet through autodidactic approaches. From this relatively small sample group, 77 per cent of the respondents had tertiary education, whereas Henningham in his 1995 survey of sport journalists in Australia found that 27 per cent had university degrees.[226] Therefore, it can be said that Internet sport journalists in Australia show a high level of tertiary education as a basic requirement. However, as noted above, claims made on the basis of information provided by this relatively small sample group of thirteen Internet sport journalists, should be handled with a degree of caution.

Generalisations cannot be made as to whether Internet sport journalists with tertiary qualifications in Australia find it easier to gain employment than those without. This could be caused by two factors. Firstly, there appears to be no specific university program training students for Internet journalism, and, secondly, there are no signs of new media organisations applying uniform practices in employing Internet sport journalists. However five years ago, Christina Ianzito observed that "Journalism-school grads, semi-seasoned reporters, and untested twenty-year-olds" were all heading to online jobs for "the money, the opportunities, and the excitement".[227] In her view, the online environment has been an easy first step to a successful career in journalism.

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[226]   Henningham, 'A Profile of Australian Sports Journalists', p. 15.
[227]   Christina Ianzito, 'It's a Job, but is it Journalism?: Answers from the First Generation of Content-Providers', 1996, [Online] Available: http://www.cjr.org/year/96/6/newmedia.asp, [3 December 2001].

As the respondents revealed, academic institutions rarely suggest that students should see the Internet as a prospective employer. On the other hand, it has to be taken into account that the educational and training environment has changed significantly in recent years. These days, as noted by Pavlik, a growing number of universities offer entire degree programs online.[228] Furthermore, in the paper "Best Practices in Journalism Education", it was suggested that not only have the tools changed for teaching students, but the role of the journalism and mass communication educator has shifted from "omnipotent teacher" to "experienced and critical guide", perhaps signifying a new era of journalism education.[229] In a research report from the European Journalism Centre, it was also noted that "the number of new institutes and organisations offering training has grown rapidly in recent years".[230] It is worthwhile to acknowledge that many of the new media programs aim at the training of multi-skilled, content production professionals. Finally, no significant differences between sport journalists working for an independent sport site or a site connected to print were identified in terms of educational background.

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[228]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 207.
[229]   John Pavlik and Adam Powell, 'New Media and Journalism and MassCommunication Education', Paper presented at the Online Conference 'Best Practices in Journalism Education', 25 March-7 April, Pennsylvania State University 2001, [Online] Available: http://www.courses.worldcampus.psu.edu/welcome/bestpractices/, [29 November 2001], pp. 5-6.
[230]   Jan Bierhoff, Mark Deuze and Claes de Vreese, 'Media Innovation, Professional Debate and Media Training: A European Analysis', *Report*, European Journalism Centre, Maastricht, 2000, p. 10.

5. Chapter 5

Profile: Working Practices and Self-Assessment

5.1   Introduction

The work of an Internet sport journalist involves different aspects than that of a print sport journalist. Indeed, Singer has stated that the traditional sender of media messages – the journalist – is now faced not just with a new delivery method but with what may be a fundamental shift in his or her role in the communication process.[231] The exploration of this "new" role is the scope of this chapter. Furthermore, working practices that were different from print sport journalists, differences between the two sampling categories and self-assessment issues are identified and discussed in subsequent sections.

At this point, however, it is appropriate to consider some responses Internet sport journalists gave when asked to talk about the relevance of the medium of the Internet and the role it plays in terms of sport coverage. Not surprisingly, all respondents suggested that the Internet was an important addition to traditional media.

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[231]   Singer, 'Online Journalists', p. 2.

5.2   Sport Reporting on the Internet

According to Cunningham and Finn, the Internet is a converged medium, whereby text, vision and audio blur into one.[232] A similar explanation is provided by Sarah Bryden-Brown, who wrote that convergence is "combining the power of three mass communication media: the telephone, the computer and the television set".[233] In this sense, all the informants perceived the Internet as a converged medium. Roberts, for example, felt that:

> the words, the vision and the sound complement each other
> beautifully on the Internet. I mean, there's no other place where
> you can do that. You can't do it in the newspaper or just on
> radio. You've got everything, all in one.

Similar to the above notion on convergence of the medium, McKinley explained the advantages of interactivity on the Internet:

> It's nice to have opinion on the Internet, people's opinion. The
> Internet allows … [the opinion] … of the fan in the street. You
> don't get that chance in the newspaper.

This concurs with the view of Pavlik, who wrote that audience involvement is much greater online, since the Internet is an active medium of communication rather than a passive medium such as traditional analog print and broadcast media.[234]

In terms of sport reporting, some compared the Internet to traditional media and then pointed out the differences.   Willmott, for instance, noted that the

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[232]   Cunningham and Finn, 'Media Theory and the Internet', p. 68.
[233]   Sarah Bryden-Brown, 'Big Picture Puzzle', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 30 November-6 December 2000, p. 6.
[234]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 20.

immediacy of the Internet is similar to television and radio. On the other hand,

the medium is completely different to newspapers because, being in the

Southern Hemisphere, newspapers are running, for example, the US or British

Open golf stories twelve hours later. Furthermore, Willmott stated that:

> we are running them as they happen, so we are constantly
> scooping and trumping the newspapers in terms of relevancy
> and up-to-date and currency of the stories. The Internet leaves
> newspapers for dead.

Findings from an ongoing case study of online newspapers verified the above

statement and suggested that changes in production practices (towards a

broadcast, rather than a print journalism, model of operation) now provide the

user with up-to-the-minute reporting.[235]

On the Internet, news stories need constant updating. All informants agreed

that continuously changing and up-dating a sport site is very important. In

Parker's view, the modification of a website appearance is significant, because

"With the Internet you can't leave things the same too long. You not only need to

change the info[rmation], but need to change the look". The Internet sport

journalists also suggested using the interactivity of the medium in the future.

Parker expounded in the following manner:

> Before, just having text was enough. Now you need to have
> audio, pictures, you need to have different aspects, you need to
> make it more interactive for the people … You need to be able
> to give them an option for competition, certain things they might
> get involved with.

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[235] Patricia Riley, Colleen M. Keough, Thora Christiansen, Ofer Meilich, and Jillian Pierson, 'Community or Colony: The Case of Online Newspapers and the Web', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1998, [Online] Available: http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol4/issue1/keough.html, [2 April 2001], p. 7.

In fact, according to Singer, "interactivity is only one aspect of the way the production and construction of news may be changing".[236] Additional aspects are hypertextuality, customisation of content and multimediality. On the other hand, one informant pointed out that the Internet is still developing. Willmott stated that, "It [the Internet environment] is all pretty small, which goes to show that no one's really producing too much original content".

In summary, it is clear that the Internet is a converged medium, which interconnects text, vision and audio, and is a significant addition to traditional media. All the informants expressed excitement while talking about the Internet and pointed out the advantages in comparison to traditional media. The Internet offers the same features that print, television and radio do, however, it also possesses interactive attributes and can supply distinctive services. Due to its immediacy, the Internet is a rival to newspapers, although nearly all newspapers in Australia are presented on the Internet.[237] The sport websites are continuously up-dated by Internet sport journalists and this may undermine the presence of newspapers. One informant suggested that only radio and television could be a rival to the Internet in terms of immediacy. One Internet sport journalist, however, perceived that new media companies are still in a stage of infancy and do not produce enough original content to be a threat to traditional media.

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[236]   Singer, 'Online Journalists', p. 8.
[237]   A total of 229 Australian newspapers appear online. See Anonymous, 'Australian Newspapers on the Internet', [Online] Available: http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/npapers.html, [28 July 2001].

5.3   Working Practices

Most of the informants were working as site editors, which involves particular production steps and techniques.   Yannis explained that his current work involved "just doing editorial production".   He described his typical working day as follows:

> So, I get in about 5 o'clock when it's not a weekend. Just put up some stories from those that have come in during the day, put them onto the site of the wire service, AAP … and so stuff, which is not in the paper and then the rest of the day spent putting stuff from the paper onto the site … cutting and pasting basically … re-writing here and there, publishing it all and making sure that it all works.

Similarly, Thomson's day predominately involved production and sub-editing of copy images and, "keeping the site updated and fresh".   Yannis provided some reflections on the varied workloads, "On the weekends it's a bit different … more photos, more stuff, which is not in the paper, it's still off the wire, but more".   In addition, informants were asked about the sources they used to gather news. O'Connell disclosed that:

> I have to come up with stories myself. Essentially I cover AAP wires, which is a big source of our news content … [I] re-write stories, put pictures up.

The biggest advantage of the Internet is its immediacy.   The Internet is as fast as radio and television, and as detailed and in-depth as newspapers.   Hence, up-to-the-minute reporting and "being current" was most important for nearly all of the informants interviewed.   Apparently, Internet sport journalists used a large amount of news content from wire services or from their host newspaper (in those cases where a sport website was associated with a newspaper) in order to

keep the sport site up-dated. In most cases, news content and articles from wire services were only rudimentally edited or modified before they were published online. Sport news services can thus claim to be as current as possible. Internet sport journalism therefore perceives itself to be a forever-changing breaking-news form of journalism. However, high quality and a high standard in sport reporting can only be warranted with a maximum of personnel, but the number of Internet sport journalists working for sport websites seemed to be very low as the interviews revealed. On average two Internet sport journalists worked for one online sport news service. Quality, however, played an important role for nearly all of the informants in terms of sport reporting for the Internet, but this claim seemed to be hardly implemented in most cases. Only a few informants pointed to "exclusiveness" as an important aspect to stand out of the "more of the same" Internet sport services. It would seem, due to the lack of staff and time, only a few Internet sport journalists actually produce exclusive, original content for their website.

In particular, one informant expressed disappointment when describing his work. According to Willmott, "It's not rocket science, it's not journalism. It's just being sub-editor really". Willmott's view about the lack of original news on the Internet supports findings from other research. According to Pavlik, news content on the Internet has been evolving through three stages.[238] In the past, online journalists

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[238]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 43.

mostly just republished content from their host newspaper. According to Mark Deuze, these were generally mainstream news sites, offering a selection of editorial content.[239] In stage two, the journalists created original content, augmenting it with hyperlinks, some interactive features, some multimedia content and some customisation capabilities.[240] Stage three has just begun to emerge, and is characterised by original news content designed specifically for the Web.

Apart from simple editorial techniques and "cutting and pasting" sport news onto the website, Internet sport journalists also produce original content (even though this is a relatively small part of their overall workload). Thomson outlined how he and his colleague covered the 'Super 12' Rugby Union final. They wrote stories and match reports, did live text coverage and utilised audio and video records. An additional explanation was given by Yannis:

> just as a sporting event is on and you set up a little live box [on the website] … you just type in what's happening as it happens and so people can see. Well, it's not live-live because it obviously takes up to a minute maybe to get to people … it's not as quick as speaking.

Only a limited number of Internet journalists have the opportunity to leave the office. Some informants are "tied" to the computer, which seem to be a negative

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[239] Mark Deuze, 'Online Journalism: Modelling the First Generation of News Media on the World Wide Web', *First Monday*, vol. 6, no. 10, 2001, [Online] Available: http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_10/deuze/index.html, [29 November 2001], p. 4.

[240] Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 43.

aspect of their job. O'Connell, for example, noted that his company did do some newsgathering outside office boundaries, but he lamented his lack of opportunities in this regard. Roberts also expressed a similar dissatisfaction, noting that "you are tied to the computer a lot, as doing … all this other basic programming type stuff". Such a view is reflected by Macarthur, who comments that journalists now spend hours sitting in front of screens, just typing away.[241] Willmott also missed the practical side of sport journalism and defined the role in the following manner:

> It's going out and doing it [sport journalism] yourself. That's what kind of journalism it is, otherwise you are a sub-editor. Which is what 80 per cent of my job is.

Most Internet sport journalists used news content from their own host newspaper and wire services, except independent Internet sport journalists who only used wire services as their source of information. At present, the work of Internet sport journalists involves selecting stories, re-writing and editing and finally publishing them on the sport site. Researching original stories and interviewing relevant subjects was only undertaken infrequently. Although very few Internet sport journalists lamented that their current work might not involve exclusive original content production, they certainly carried out other journalistic duties, such as, selecting, editing, re-writing and publishing sport news.[242]

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[241] Macarthur, 'The Sound of Two-finger Typing', p. 15.
[242] For the definition of a journalist, see, Newhagen and Levy, 'The Future of Journalism in a Distributed Communication Architecture', 1998, p. 10, and Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 2.

O'Connell reflected on the continuing demands of his role. He said that to a certain degree, "We have to cover every single sport". Print sport journalists are usually assigned to a particular sport in order to provide regular coverage, whereas for Internet sport journalists this only applies to a certain extent. Lowes, in his book *Inside the Sports Pages*, gave an in-depth description of the workings of the sports beat and how it influences the construction of the sports pages.[243] Usually a newspaper organisation employs a beat system to cover the commercial sports scene. In this respect, O'Connell noted a definition of roles:

> to a certain degree we do have people designated to certain sports. We have people that have their own sports that they find that they are experts in.

Unwin made a similar point in describing the broadness of his role:

> The sort of work that I do is extremely different to what the sport journalists for the paper do. For a start they work a round, so they have to know what's happening in their round … Whereas I have to cover a few different sports and obviously I go down a level than they would, the level of knowledge. I cover a few things much more generally.

It seems obvious, from the above responses, that the traditional "round" or "beat" system is not common in an online environment. However, Parker stated that he has to "go to press conferences, interview coaches and players and things like that and there is also the option to ring the club or players". Although the traditional means of working a beat does not necessarily apply for Internet sport journalists, very few informants made use of "human resources" similar to print sport journalists. Lowes described these "human resources" in his fieldwork as routine resources which includes athletes, coaches, and

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[243]   Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages,* pp. 33-48.

management types, as well as not so obvious sources, such as player agents, team doctors and trainers, and so on.[244] One informant mentioned a particular problem with interviewing people. Van Dyk identified that:

> They [interview subjects] still appreciate trust and knowing who they are dealing with and to that end the trust has been somewhat broken because so much of newsgathering now is being done over the net or over the phone and there is no space for that context. I think journalism has lost something because of that.

A few informants addressed various reasons that they felt that it was more difficult for them to gather news than for a print sport journalist. Willmott reasoned that:

> It [newsgathering] is much harder. It's much harder for so many reasons. That's one [lack of knowledge about what an Internet sport journalist is and does] of them, the other one is, we are not the newsroom scenario here. There is not as much bouncing of ideas of, the ideas are not coming into the office. You know, you are working in a newspaper newsroom, you have people ring you up all the time with tips, saying something like so-and-so is doing this … the whole interconnected bunch of ideas and energy flying around is, doesn't exist in a place like this, a place this small.

This was a view that Saunders shared. He indicated that:

> certainly at the moment with the resources the way they are we sort of … we can't go quite as deeply as some of what the newspapers, purely the fact they've got greater resources, but that's probably going to change.

Again, Willmott observed that, "It [the Internet environment] is all pretty small, which goes to show that no one's really producing too much original content". In this context, it should be recognised that some Internet media organisations are still at a starting point in terms of the sport services they provide and the

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[244]   Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*, p. 48.

resources they have available to them. At present, hardly any online sport news services are profitable which means that the production of exclusive original content production suffers under these circumstances.

To this end, Tregalia had a more circumspect outlook on the working practices in Internet media organisations.   He believed that obtaining information for stories became easier:

> Newsgathering is easier and quicker, [and] elements have suffered because of that. It [accessibility of information] made journalists lazier. Journalists can [now] get a story and push a button, they hardly go out. The downside of it … because there is so much information and information can be released so quickly, it probably makes it more difficult for journalists to actually obtain that scoop or the exclusive story … so, from that respect it's a little disappointing that technology has meant that maybe initiative has been lost. It's too easy.

Clearly, in contrast to newspapers, the Internet provides news and information twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As a result, some Internet sport journalists work in various shifts in order to keep the sport webpage as up-to-date as they can. In addition, Internet sport journalists have to be very flexible and willing to work night-shifts and on the weekend.

The fact that the Internet is an instant medium is reflected in the similar answers all the informants gave when asked about "deadlines". For instance, McKinley felt that, "You have either no deadlines or you have deadlines whenever you choose them to be, rather than once a day. That's quite exciting". Similarly, Saunders' view was that, "We sort of don't have deadlines with the Internet,

because once you write something you put it up straight away". Newman also concurred with this argument and stressed its importance:

> We do it [report on sport] every hour and the site can be updated 18 hours a day, and that means we do it often 18 hours ahead of newspapers. In that sense we are doing still what they [print sport journalists] are doing, except our information is much more available than theirs.

The view of the informants that the definition of the deadline changed within the online environment is supported by Singer, who stated that "Deadlines are erased – or perhaps more accurately – become more continuous".[245]

Some of the respondents perceived their journalistic duties as not different at all from what they used to do when they worked for a newspaper. Saunders said, "It's mostly the same then, back at the newspaper". In regards to the writing style of Internet sport journalists, he was emphatic that "The writing style doesn't change or anything like that, it's still the same". All interviewees suggested that there were only minor changes in the way sport reports were written on the Internet. Internet sport sites are, in general, more result orientated. However, Willmott pointed to one significant difference in terms of the writing style and stated that, "I think everything got probably a bit shorter, much more concise, less features, less opinion pieces for us now as well". This was a viewpoint supported by Van Dyk who noted that, "… We tend to write shorter pieces, less comment". Furthermore, White's opinion was, "Personally for me, I think the Internet is a visual medium more then anything else and I think that … anything

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[245]   Singer, 'Online Journalists', p. 7.

more than five or six pars [paragraphs] is too much". Besides the length of the articles, there are additional "writing" differences from the traditional media, as Newman described:

> The writing style is slightly different for print and text. There is a clear radio-style and there is a clear television-style, and they are both quite different. Radio tends to be short and to the point. Television, naturally you need to write to complement the pictures. With print you don't have these restrictions, and you can go into a bit more depth, more detail and a bit more colour, and you can be a bit more creative, I think, online.

This view about the length of news stories on the Internet is confirmed by James Fallows who stated that "Online articles are rarely more than 2,000 words long".[246]

Another important aspect for all the Internet sport journalists was the freedom in working for the Internet. In this sense, Marks noted that today many young journalists perceive the online environment as one which "allows them time for a life outside of the newsroom".[247] This is reflected by Tregalia who said:

> Stories are generated more quickly, which means I have more time to do other things away from my professional life which I wouldn't have had occasion to do in print media.

Finally, informants were asked to sum up the most important skills which applied to an Internet sport journalist. For O'Connell, "The biggest skill is probably news judgement, as being able to know what story is relevant to Australian fans". Roberts supported this by stating the necessity of "being able to decide which

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[246]   James Fallows, 'But is it Journalism?', *American Prospect*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1999, [Online] Available: http://www.americanprospect.com/archives/V11-1/fallows.html, [15 November 2001], p. 2.
[247]   Marks, 'Hyperlinked to the Future of Journalism', p. 2.

stories are bigger than others. That can be really tricky". Furthermore, Newman

suggested that time puts pressure on journalists and that they have to "Be quick,

be able to meet a deadline. The deadline is … five seconds before you did it. It

has to be as it happens". Unwin mentioned that a whole gamut of skills was

required, "At the moment, because there are so little resources there, you pretty

much have to know how to do everything. The technical stuff is really tricky …"

In essence, it seems that Internet sport journalism combines technological skills

(working with certain software or learning HTML for example) with specific news

writing skills.

Journalists working in an online environment do so under a range of titles. Jim

Hall in his book, *Online Journalism*, suggested that, "the multimedia format of

online journalism is recognised in the role of producer".[248] Indeed, in this case,

the job titles of the respondents ranged from "senior news editor" to "site editor"

to "site/online producer". Critics of the new "breed" of journalists, such as

Steven Ross, have argued that

> Journalism jobs within new media organisations are often
> glorified production positions, especially when those new media
> organisations are associated with newspaper websites.[249]

However, academic supporters of online journalism, such as Pavlik, claimed that

"the Internet is a journalist's medium".[250] Thus using the new media tools

available via the Internet, online journalists can tell stories using whatever

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[248]   Jim Hall, *Online Journalism: A Critical Primer*, Pluto Press, London, 2001, p. 86.
[249]   Steven S. Ross, 'Journalists' Use of On-Line Technology and Sources' in Diane L. Borden and Kerric Harvey (eds), *The Electronic Grapevine: Rumor, Reputation, and Reporting in the New On-Line Environment*, Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, N.J., 1998, p. 143.
[250]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 3.

modalities and communication features are needed and appropriate for a particular story. In this context, Pavlik suggested that a new form of news is emerging.[251]

5.4   Differences: Print and Internet Sport Journalists

As for the working routines of print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists, this sub-section seeks to reveal the differences between the two occupations. Two informants perceived that there is little difference between the two occupations. McKinley noted that:

> At the moment, there is not much of a difference. A print journalist is still reporting the news and an online journalist is still reporting the news as well, but a print journalist, as they are not reporting fresh news any more, they will increasingly be doing analysis, interpretations, features. Online journalism is always going to be more skewed towards news and interactivity, getting chats and forums and that sort of thing going, and reporting hard news.

Furthermore, Van Dyk expressed similar sentiments:

> The difference now, of course, I mean basically there is not such a huge difference. We can do perhaps a little bit more - we can do audio and video and things like that. I don't do that myself, but I sort of steer people into doing it.

In terms of journalism practices, two informants suggested that there is no difference. As White stated, "Journalism is journalism. It [the difference] is just the form it's delivered in". Tregalia also asserted that "the fundamentals still apply" and added:

> it's why I think despite the advances in technology there will always be work for journalists, because journalists still have to

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[251]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 4.

> get the story. People have to physically obtain stories. I don't
> think they just appear. So, to that extent it hasn't changed a lot,
> but I think where it has changed maybe is that certainly the
> Internet has allowed reporters to gain more stories and to
> access them quicker …

Nevertheless, one Internet journalist disagreed that the working practices do not

differ. Unwin felt that:

> The sort of work that I do is extremely different to what the sport
> journalists for the paper do. For a start they work a round, so
> they have to know what's happening in their round … Whereas I
> have to cover a few different sports and obviously I go down a
> level than they would, the level of knowledge. I cover a few
> things much more generally.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that Internet sport journalists possessed a

specific knowledge of particular sports. Furthermore, the question arose if it

would be necessary or an advantage for Internet sport journalists to have a

specific sport knowledge as he or she has to meet a range of additional and

diverse requirements, for example, replying to e-mails from users, monitoring

chat-options on the site and computer related knowledge. As a result,

specialised Internet sport journalists would not be affordable for a media

company.

Building on this, two experienced sport journalists noticed a general change in

sport journalism. According to Van Dyk, newsgathering techniques altered and

advanced sports reporting:

> I think sport journalism has changed dramatically over the years
> because all these people used to go and write a report on the
> event and that was all they did. Now, the journalist doesn't write
> a line until he goes into the dressing room after the match and
> he talks to the players and the coaches and instead of just a

straight report you are looking now for an angle on the match perhaps your rival newspaper won't have. We are looking for an angle on stories now that has changed. Sometimes it's going right over the top and you wonder sometimes what sport reporting is all about.

Also, Tregalia reflected on past sports reporting methods:

I am old enough to say that I would consider myself as being the tail end of what they called the 'foot in the door' journalism, which were the journalists which used to physically go to a house and bang on a door to get the story. That doesn't really happen anymore, not to the extent that it did.

As mentioned previously in the discussion concerning working practices, the informants remarked on the differences in terms of deadlines. Former television reporter, O'Connell, pointed out that there is a "totally different deadline obviously … because there is a deadline with television". While Newman, who has an extensive radio background, mentioned similarities to the radio medium:

Online, the dynamics and the deadlines are very similar to radio, where you need to be immediate, you need to be responsive, you need to up-date. Usually you have to up-date on the hour for a news service for sport or it is live. But it is very similar to online, except it intends to be in print or text driven.

One informant mentioned an additional issue. Tregalia went on to say:

You always had to be so careful when you were writing for a newspaper, because it's there in print for the whole day, whereas if you are a reporter on television or radio what you say or report is then gone … You certainly get away with a lot more through the electronic medium …

In addition to the last statement, another Internet sport journalist, O'Connell, perceived that the quality on the Internet might be poorer than in newspapers:

There is a desire and there is a need for far more experienced people, but it's seen as an entry point for journalists. So, in that essence there is a lot of young people and a lot of

inexperienced people, and that can lead to a degree of poor
quality of work.

As mentioned above, the Internet lacks, so far, a substantial amount of

exclusive, original content.

A few Internet sport journalists suggested that they feel they have more freedom

and autonomy. Saunders, for example, stated that, "For me personally, I've got

a lot more autonomy … more freedom. I'm still let loose to do what I want." In

this respect, Tregalia related:

> Stories are generated more quickly which means I have more
> time to do other things away from my professional life which I
> wouldn't have had occasion to do in print media.

In summary, the working practices of an Internet sport journalist can be quite

different to a print sport journalist, particularly in regard to the medium in which it

is delivered. Internet sport journalists have to respond quickly to issues, update

their sites on the hour, respond to user e-mails or provide electronic live

coverage. As a result, all the informants mentioned the difference in deadlines

when compared to the newspaper. Print sport journalists have a daily deadline

at night, where they have to submit their copy, while Internet sport journalists

continuously update their sport website. In one particular case, two informants

had to work towards a weekly deadline. In addition to collecting news from

various wire services, re-writing them and then cutting and pasting them onto

the site as quickly as possible, Internet sport journalists also work with picture

edit programs and in rare cases with audio and video files. Some Internet

journalists attend sport events and provide live text coverage out of the venue

with the help of a laptop and modem, directly transmitting material onto the sport webpage. Most of the Internet sport journalists agreed that the same journalistic patterns and traditions still apply to them. They use the same writing style, but their published articles tend to be shorter and with less depth than those published in newspapers. While some said newsgathering these days is much easier due to the endless flood of information and improved telecommunication technologies, others disagreed and stated that it is much harder than in a newspaper newsroom. The perceived reason for this is that Internet sport journalists still suffer from a lack of interpersonal resources. In a broader sense, they have to be multi-skilled, have a wide knowledge of sport and possess various skills not only in terms of journalistic techniques, but computer skills. In this area there are no significant differences between independent Internet sport journalists and those connected to print.

5.5   Differences: The Two Sampling Categories

While discussing the differences between the print and online medium, the informants were asked if they believed that there were additional differences between purely online sport websites and sites which are associated with the print medium. One Internet sport journalist, who works for an online media company with a connection to print, drew a distinction between his company and ordinary newspaper websites. Van Dyk made the point that:

> What you find on those newspaper websites, they give you the stories that were in that particular day's newspaper and the

pictures, but they won't give you an up-date news service as well, and that's what we are providing.

In support of this statement, Saunders added, "Most of these sites represent newspapers of print media. They just portray the stories that are in that issue".

Roberts also made the observation:

> all they are doing is taking stuff from the newspapers and putting it on the net. So, they are not writing. It's [a] cutting and pasting job. They are not creating anything on their own. That's the difference.

All independent Internet sport journalists were of the opinion that purely online sport websites differ from "more of the same" sport news services. This can be traced back to obvious attempts to implement exclusive and original content on independent sport sites.

Two sport journalists stated that because of the connection to the print medium they have easier access to sources. Firstly, Willmott mentioned that:

> [The] major difference is that with access to print journalists you've got access to pretty well the best journalists in the country in any given field. You've got access to … the rounds men, the hacks, the people who live for this particular sport. You've got names people can trust … That's a huge advantage … You've got instant credibility … Not a lot of companies have the time to build up this credibility.

On this issue, Van Dyk also added the observation that:

> We have all the wiring services - AAP, AFP - all those sorts of things, which … [an independent sport website] would have of course, but on top of that we have got the experts from the newspapers as well and we feature them. Say for instance Wimbledon is on, well we can take the wire service stories from Wimbledon, but we also got a couple of blokes from the newspapers who are at Wimbledon. So, we have access to their copy as well, which just gives us a broader sweep.

In addition, Van Dyk went on to question the trustworthiness of independent sport sites: "That's the big question at the end of the day. Where do you get your material from?" Again, another online sport journalist, George Thomson, perceived that being connected to print is an advantage:

> It's harder for them [an independent sport site] to find that brand … whereas the huge advantage we have is that people know we are the *Daily News* [newspaper name] or *Post* [newspaper name] branding our work and with that comes a 100 years of reliability and integrity.

Whereas, one informant, who is working for an independent sport site, recognised the challenge in terms of credibility. Roberts was of the opinion that:

> it [an independent online sport site] starts to establish its brand … See, that's the hardest part, people getting to recognise it, where you don't have to explain yourself and who you are continuously.

To summarise the previous statements, both types of sport webpages provide up-to-date sport news, whether it is an independent sport site or one which is connected to the print medium. But to draw a distinction between the two, it has to be questioned which resources an independent online company uses. On the other hand, purely Internet sport news services showed greater attempts in producing original content for their sites in order to stand out from the mass. Many Internet sport journalists who work for a new media company with print connection suggested that it might be harder for the independent online company to gain credibility. They already have the trust of the readership of the newspaper and therefore instant credibility. The independent Internet journalists agreed, but also perceived that this problem in terms of credibility has already changed and will still undergo changes in the future. The independent sport

journalists see themselves as experts in the field. An additional distinction has to be made between two separate forms of print online sport sites, one with "pure" newspaper content and one that also provides a breaking news service.

Changes in the nature of storytelling and working practices may point to more subtle changes in the sociology of news work, changes in the ways Internet sport journalists perceive themselves. The discussion surrounding changes in Internet sport journalists' self-perceptions will form the next sub-section.

5.6   Self-Assessment

During the interviews, the informants were asked to reflect upon themselves and the work they do as an Internet sport journalist. They were asked questions such as whether they feel accepted and respected among other journalists and if they think being an Internet sport journalist is regarded as a profession. Print sport journalists, according to Rowe, suffer from a "shabby reputation" and professional problems. Furthermore, he described the "hierarchy of esteem" which places the "serious" disciplines, such as the politics round, at the top end and the "lighter" ones, like the entertainment page, at the bottom. In Rowe's view, print sport journalists tend to gravitate towards the lower echelons.[252]

Similarly to print sport journalists, some online sport journalists perceived a virtual barrier towards their occupation. For example, Willmott stated:

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[252]   Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*, p. 39.

A lot of the people I speak to, Rugby League and that sort of thing, don't even know what the Internet is. Well, some of them do. Seventy-five year old, working class, football coaches, they don't need to know about it, they don't care about it. But they sure as hell heard about the *Daily Advertiser* [newspaper name] and *Headlines* [media organisation].

Along similar lines, Van Dyk added:

When you talk to print journalists, they don't have a clue of what we do … and a lot of them don't see the importance of what we do in terms of what they do.

In support, Roberts asserted:

These people [print journalists] have had their established reputations and they've been involved in these traditional types [of] mediums for so long that … they do think that … I'll give you an example, when you go out, say go to a press conference or something, you notice that like all the old type style journalists they all stick together in their same cliques, but some people find out you work for the Internet they are always a bit wary of you. What's your background? Where have you come from?

Some informants did not feel accepted. Yannis, for example, claimed:

You don't get the same respect for what you are doing as the other people there, they just see it as a bit of a novelty and not very serious … they certainly see what they are doing is much more important. That might be part arrogance, part of not being used to.

In addition, Willmott supported this by saying, "Feel accepted? Not particularly.

No". In agreement, Unwin felt inclined to report that:

[it] changes from journalist to journalist. Some are very much behind it and fully respect for what we do, and others less and find it's not going to go anywhere.

On the other hand, some online sport journalists indicated that they felt very much accepted. Parker, for example, was confident that:

we are all as accepted as anybody else in regards to newspapers and magazines. There is no conflict at all … we [all the different kinds of journalists] usually end up sharing most of

the info[rmation]. We all try to find the same thing from the clubs, the players.

Nick White also believed that, "we've gained a lot more respect within the industry and we are finding a lot of press releases are coming through now".

In addition, the informants were asked if being an Internet sport journalist is regarded as a profession. Van Dyk responded:

> I would say that. I mean it may [be] some of the younger people might perhaps feel that, but certainly someone like myself who has been in newspapers for 30 odd years would never accept that sort of criticism. … I've had that sort of criticism. I had people say to me, why don't you get a real job?

Willmott also believed that his occupation was a profession. He perceived that online sport journalists would, in the future, receive accreditation for major sport events and related that:

> It's already changed. Salt Lake City is going to be the first Olympics that has given out Internet accreditation, Winter Olympics. So, it's already changing.

Moreover, Yannis described the following problem:

> at the tennis in particular they were cracking down on people doing [sport reporting for the Internet] in opposition to their live coverage. They didn't like other people doing live coverage.

Furthermore, one sport journalist, White, pointed out that there is so far no recognition by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance [MEAA]:

> … They [MEAA] had, this is probably in September 1999, absolutely no information whatsoever or anything to do with [payment rates] … there was no such thing … [as] an Internet journalist in their eyes.

According to the last statement, the poor acceptance level of Internet sport journalists might be reflected by the fact that there is still no award system for Internet journalists. Moreover, there is a noticeable lack of knowledge about the role of an Internet sport journalist. This means that online sport journalists are forced to overcome barriers to perform their job. One such barrier, as mentioned previously, is the difficulties Internet sport journalists experience in newsgathering. In this respect Internet sport journalists do not feel accepted by journalists of other departments because of the "novelty" or stigma attached to them. However, informants who had already worked in print for a number of years took the opposing stance and felt particularly well accepted, seeing their occupation as a well regarded profession. A lack of self-confidence was not noticeable. Changes to increase the current negative reputation of Internet sport journalists are already occurring with the distribution of accreditation for major international sport events. This is one example of how Internet sport journalists are now more accepted by the sports community.

Print sport journalists used to suffer from a bad reputation, due to a perceived lack of professionalism, and it seems that Internet sport journalists also suffer "prejudices". In fact, according to some respondents working in Internet sport journalism, one of the greatest difficulties is gaining "acceptance", possibly due to their sport journalist colleagues knowing little about their actual working routines. However, the level of professionalism for print sport journalists has significantly increased over the past two decades, which might indicate that similar developments will occur within the field of Internet sport journalism. In

summary, independent and online sport journalists connected to print face exactly the same difficulties in regards to acceptance within the field of the media.

5.7   Conclusion

Sport journalists collect and analyse facts about newsworthy events through interviews, investigation, or observation for all mediums. From that perspective there are hardly any differences between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists. Some informants, however, mentioned a subtle distinction between reporting for print, and reporting for the net. In contrast to print, the Internet has options for sound and moving pictures, so in terms of interactivity, Internet sport journalists also gather audio and video footage. Therefore, online sport journalists not only have to possess journalistic skills, but must possess extensive computer skills.

Internet sport journalism is constantly-changing, news-breaking journalism. Stories are generated more quickly than print, and therefore much of the material is only lightly edited or modified before being published on the sport website. In cases where Internet sport journalists write stories, the articles seemed to be more compact and shorter, and perhaps less opinionated, but the writing style did not change. Most of the daily working routines involved selecting, re-writing and publishing sport news for the site. In general, sport websites currently lack exclusive and original content which is partly due to

financial and staff problems. Moreover, the interactivity of the Internet shifted journalistic roles from "informer and explorer" to "presenter" of selected editorial content. Indeed, duties of this new breed of sport journalist focused on the presentation of editorial content. Thus, the entire "package" of online presentation becomes important, rather than just individual news items.

In terms of differences to print sport journalists, the traditional beat system did not apply to the online environment. Therefore, informants saw themselves as "generalists" as they had to cover a range of sports. Most of the respondents agreed that the same journalistic patterns and traditions still applied to them. One significant difference, however, is the continuous deadline due to the immediacy of the medium which is one reason why some informants suggested that they have more freedom and autonomy than their peers who work for the paper.

Independent Internet sport journalists mostly used wire services to gather news, whereas Internet sport journalists (connected to print) also had the newspapers' sources available to them. As a result, the question arose as to how credible purely online news services were in terms of reporting.

All Internet sport journalists did not suffer from a lack of self-confidence when talking about their current profession. They perceived themselves as professional journalists. Although, informants revealed that, due to sport

journalist colleagues knowing little about their actual working practices, they had to sometimes overcome prejudices and a bad reputation within the field.

Finally, two informants mentioned possible problems which could lead to poor news content on the web. Those problems identified were, firstly, that the Internet's ever-changing character could lead Internet journalists to careless writing, and, secondly, young inexperienced journalists could see the Internet merely as a convenient entry point to a sport journalism career.

6. Chapter 6

Profile: Future Perceptions and New Challenges

6.1   Introduction

At the conclusion of each interview, the informants were asked to provide predictions about sport reporting, the Internet and its possible future developments. While it is acknowledged that the following material is based on the personal opinions of the respondents and are only speculations about the future of Internet sport journalism, the views expressed represent a valuable "snapshot" of how one occupational group view the future of their profession. As part of their reflections, Internet sport journalists also commented on possible business models for profitable sport news websites.

6.2   Challenges for Internet Sport Journalists

At present the Internet and Internet sport journalism is in a state of flux. Daily changes are quite common in the online environment. Therefore, informants were invited to talk about possible changes of sport news services on the Internet in the future. Some Internet sport journalists suggested that they would add supplementary features onto the site. For example, Newman speculated that:

> There are lots of different features we will be adding down the track, in terms of audio and video, and I think some of the problems that people are encountering now in terms of downloading time there is no question that this will improve.

Saunders stated that, "multimedia and video and broadband access is all going to become part of the site, otherwise it's not much point having it, I think". The integration of new and advanced technologies might have an impact on the appearance of sport websites, but Parker suggested that the function of their Internet sport site might change:

> We might change to become more of a sports wire service of our own, where we don't need AAP. Rather than having them, we have got our own stuff.

Another interviewee, Willmott, also had a similar view and perceived that, "The priority is not the original content, whereas it used to be and it will be again". As mentioned elsewhere, Internet sport journalists, for various reasons, do not produce a great amount of original content. Instead, Internet sport journalists often select, edit, re-write and publish news content taken from wire services. Willmott, however, believed that Internet sport journalists will increasingly produce original content in the future.

Unwin perceived that there might not be a change in terms of Internet sport journalism:

> I don't think it [online sport] is going to probably change more. I mean, basically it's immediate news. Basically it's adapting a wire service combined sort of with radio. It's more sort of skills that are already out there and exist in a lot of different ways, coming to a new medium.

Nearly all Internet sport journalists were of the opinion that the Internet and television could possibly converge. Yannis summed this up by saying:

> It'll get like television, I'd say, because once you get stream audio and vision immediately over the Internet into people's

> television that'll be essentially the same as television. You just buy the rights and only one person would be able to show it, one organisation. Like if you have AFL football, Channel 7 has got the rights so you can only watch AFL football on Channel 7. So in the future AFL.com.au might be the only place where you can watch football.

Whereas Van Dyk asked himself, "you could in addition to watching your favourite television program click on a website on your television. How much more attractive would it be?" Along this line, Parker also remarked that:

> That's why you see television stations with [a] big Internet presence like Channel Nine has the biggest Internet site in Australia, nine.msn, Channel Seven has got i7 … So, they all know. The television stations will still have it, but it will also go through their Internet site.

As for Internet sport journalists, Willmott suggested that with a possible convergence of traditional and new media forms, it might entail all Internet sport journalists coming together:

> The implications for this in terms of a place like this, the journalists, is that there are already journalists working on the newspapers and the wire service and then there is the television. I think … eventually there will be some kind of pool of journalists, who are skilled up in the Internet as well, who work on the newspapers as well as work on television, particularly when data casting and that kind of thing is happening finally in Australia.

In particular, O'Connell believed that the Internet represents the end of traditional media:

> I know they said stuff like radio wouldn't last with the advent of television and I think the Internet and sport on the Internet can beat mainstream media … It's certainly got the potential to beat all other media.

Two informants also perceived that the Internet might change the way newspapers cover sport. According to Willmott, "We will force or have already forced the newspaper to run … more feature sport stories, rather than hard news stories". Interestingly, Van Dyk pointed out that:

> We are starting to bring some problems in terms of print media,
> for instance classified advertising. Newspapers are terrified of
> losing classified advertising because that's their life plug [line].

However, a handful of sport journalists suggested that the Internet might not have such a large impact on traditional media. Newman remarked that, "It [the Internet] will never replace live radio, it will never replace live television". Van Dyk supported this statement by saying "There is a place for it all". One of the most significant findings in communication science was the "Riepelsche Gesetz (Riepelsche Law)".[253] It says that existing media forms will not be displaced by new ones, but rather arising media forms will partly adopt the functions of existing media forms and fulfil additional functions, or satisfy needs which did not exist before.

Not only might the Internet change in the future, but perhaps also the working practices of an online sport journalist. O'Connell pointed out that, "They might look at it in the future, the journalists that can understand HTML and all that sort of stuff". Furthermore, Saunders came to the conclusion that:

> Print stays, but on the Internet everyone will learn how to do
> everything - how to change photos, crop them, and go up and

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[253]   Journalist and social scholar, Wolfgang Riepl, in his 1911 dissertation, found that simple, once established methods of communication transfer do not disappear despite the development of more efficient means.   See, Josef Hackforth and Christoph Fischer, *ABC des Sportjournalismus (ABC of Sport Journalism)*, Ölschläger, München, 1994, pp. 47-50.

down the size, writing stories themselves, do their own headlines, whatever else what's going on.

Yannis saw traditional and new media journalistic roles merging because in his opinion companies cannot afford to have two journalists do one job:

> I imagine down the line they want an Internet journalist who quickly writes six parts about something and they have a print journalist who tags along and has all day to write the story, when the print journalist could easily do six parts on the spot and then still do their proper paper story for print later.

Moreover, Tregalia was of the opinion that additional job opportunities would be created:

> I would like to think there would be more journalists as a result of technology … New media outlets and the thirst for information means more people are going to be needed to glean that information …

In summary, the clear belief from all the informants was that Internet sport sites will change in the future. In terms of interactivity, the potential of the Internet has not yet been used to its full capacity. Some Internet sport journalists suggested that their new media organisations are looking into adding supplementary features on their site. The sport websites might run more "tabloid stories" and might force the newspapers into some significant changes in terms of news reporting, as a few online sport journalists perceived. As for Internet sport journalists, it was stated by some informants that they would need to acquire additional computer skills. Moreover, nearly all informants suggested that the Internet and television might converge, with the Internet perhaps just becoming another television channel. However, there was a common view that print media organisations might not play a significant role in this development,

as it is television stations, rather than newspapers, that already possess the required resources. In that case, independent online organisations might have an advantage because they are not tied to a large print media organisation and therefore could gain valuable and profitable sponsorship deals. Nevertheless, some informants were rather skeptical about the way the Internet will head in the future and perceived that it might not have such a significant impact on traditional media after all.

6.3   Profitability of Sport Websites

The financial aspect of maintaining a sport website was one issue online sport journalists in particular seemed to identify with while discussing the future. All the informants stated that the current business model, which involves advertising banners shown on the different sport sites, is not profitable. Jeremy Horey, a reporter for the *Australian*, stated that "Online ads have not proved as useful to the advertisers as more traditional forms of advertising".[254] One informant mentioned another means of revenue generating, where links are integrated on the site for a fee. Van Dyk expressed the view that:

> Sometimes, as well, we will point to sites that we think are particularly good for readers, who want a bit more [than] even what we are offering … but usually when that happens, you try and work out some kind of financial arrangement with them that you are going to plug into their sites.

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[254]   Jeremy Horey, 'Numbers don't ad up online', *Australian*, 'I.T. Section', [Online] Available: http://www.news.com.au, [12 December 2000].

The question arose as to whether people should be charged to see sport content on the web, and how much this service should cost. An example for this business model is the *Wall Street Journal Online*, which offers extra articles to readers who pay to subscribe to its service.[255] The following quotations reflect the differing opinions of each of the informants on this issue. One informant, for example, disapproved of charging users a subscription fee. Unwin was adamant that:

> It [the Internet] has been built on being free and I think it would be an incredible late move trying to charge now … It's still so competitive, it's been downsizing for quite some time purely because any man with a dog can jump on and start publishing, but making money is going be a different thing. I think it will downsize until people can make money, but I don't think that charging is the way to go. I don't think that would work, I mean you have got to have some pretty bloody special and independent content to be able to charge.

Other sport journalists believed that having a sponsor or advertisement on the site would solve the problem. Unwin then went on to say:

> I think sponsorship will be the best way for people to advertise on the site. I think, sponsorship of the scoreboard, or the live text coverage or photo gallery or, you know, 'brought to you by …', that sort of stuff, I think. Or competitions, win something, go to their site.

As noted previously, several interviewees expressed the view that television and the Internet may merge to become one. In this case, some online sport journalists expressed a range of opinions in regard to content. Unwin for example claimed:

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[255]   Bita, 'Is Cyberspace Bad News?', p. 6.

> to the market I think it [sport on the Internet] would be incredibly successful. Watch what you want, when you want it. Pay-TV? People are more than happy to pay for that.

In regard to this, Yannis also added, "If they, Channel Seven, can have the football broadcasting on its Internet site as well, they can charge people overseas to watch it". Furthermore, O'Connell stated that:

> if you think of everybody out there … [paying] … one dollar in their own currency to watch a soccer match in England for instance, the money that could generate for that company would be astronomical … blows your mind just to think.

However, one Internet sport journalist suggested a different approach. Roberts was of the opinion that:

> Sporting websites [have] got to be your one-stop-shop for sporting fans. They want to be able to log onto the website, see the latest news … immediately, whatever is happening in the world … If they want to buy tickets to go to a game, they should be able to do it, if you want to get merchandise, you should be able to do it from that website, if you want to book a trip that should be on that website … a multi-level platform, your business model. You just can't start sporting websites and say all right here comes the advertisement … we all found out it's a concept which doesn't work. You have to offer numerous things to people …

This last remark represents the unpredictability of the future of the Internet in general. This was substantiated by Tregalia when he said:

> I feel a bit disappointed that I didn't answer your question about the future, because I honestly don't know where it's going to go … and the problem that we have in working in this industry is that it is a new industry, therefore there is nothing to compare it with. So, there is no working model out there. So, who knows?

The previous statements constitute predictions by Internet sport journalists on how to generate money or make a financial profit with sport content on the web.

In Australia, few media organisations are yet to make a profit from their websites and most have invested millions of dollars with little return from their online operations. The journalist Mark Day has counted some of the casualties:

> News [Limited] is spending about $30 million a year in Australia, with online income of about $10 million. The Fairfax spend is reportedly comparable, but with a $15 million income. Kerry Packer's ninemsn operation has reportedly spent more than $50 million in its first two years, but is now trimming costs and concentrating on turning ideas into business.[256]

Some of the products of the media "business" evidently do work on the Internet. According to *The Economist*, "sports, which are both time-sensitive and heavy on data" and "pornography" work best and are profitable.[257] Every single informant suggested a different business model, but banner advertising was only mentioned twice. Nearly all of the interviewees remained unconvinced that banner advertising would generate enough revenue to keep a new media organisation profitable. Banner advertising, and in fact any other form of online advertising, does not pay well. The classified advertising revenues that pay for many of the major newspapers disappear into specialist sites online, so that revenue is lost to the content provider. Recapping the comments of the informants, it becomes clear that a substantial shift is required in business practices for companies to make profit from the Internet with pure sport content in the future.

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[256] Mark Day, 'Digital Darwinism', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 12-17 July 2000, p. 6.
[257] *The Economist*, cited in Anonymous, 'Down the New Media Drain', *Australian*, 'Media Supplement', 31 August-6 September 2000, p. 8.

6.4   Conclusion

From the predictions Internet sport journalists made, whether they were working for a purely online sport website or not, it is obvious that further changes in sport journalism will occur. In the case of the Riepelsche Law, as mentioned above, nearly all respondents believed that the Internet will not displace traditional media but is an important addition. In the meantime, the predicted ousting of print media due to rival news websites did not take place. However, some informants believed that Internet and television might converge.

As for Internet sport journalism, informants showed a rather reserved attitude. Some suggested that perhaps the writing-style might change to an even shorter and more tabloid-oriented style. Some respondents said that the up-and-coming generation of Internet sport journalists might have to acquire more extensive computer skills.

The future for sport news sites might not be as gloomy as Internet sport journalists described it, as there is no significant financial return as yet and most sport news services are not profitable. A substantial shift in business practices has to change the current situation, because the common practice in the past to place banner advertising on the site pays very little. One Internet sport journalist perceived that sport websites might become a wire service, where exclusive original online content will be sold. Others thought about possible sponsor partnerships with companies. This could be a threat to journalistic

independence when editorial content and e-commerce merge and is therefore

not desirable. However, overall Internet sport journalists had a positive attitude

towards the future, and were confident that the use of the Internet will become

as important as reading and writing.

7. Chapter 7

Conclusion

Internet sport journalism is not a new form of sport journalism. Internet sport journalism is a different form of sport journalism. Additionally, it is still a form of journalism where most traditional journalistic patterns apply. This is the conclusion of the first explorative research about Internet sport journalists in Australia.

There are interesting parallels between the culture of the Internet and the traditional values of print. Some of the shared values include the promotion of the free flow of information and ideas, the encouragement of a diversity of viewpoints and the pursuit of access and equity in the delivery of content. Moreover, there are similarities and differences in the working practices of Internet sport journalists and print sport journalists. As mentioned previously, generalisations cannot be made from this relatively small sample size, however, some significant characteristics of Internet sport journalists can be presented.

For instance, rather than being assigned to one particular sport or, beat, nearly all Internet sport journalists interviewed covered a range of sports. Only a few Internet journalists had a "favourite" sport which they covered, but they still were involved with other sports. This means Internet sport journalists, in contrast to print sport journalists, have to possess a broader and wider knowledge of sport

in general. This also leads to more freedom and autonomy of online sport journalists in terms of decision making.

Internet sport journalists pointed out the difference of the Internet medium to the print medium. According to the answers of the online sport journalists, the continuous deadline allows them to put up stories instantly and offer their users an up-to-date sport website. The newspaper cannot offer such a service with only a daily or twice daily deadline. This means that the published articles of Internet sport journalists tend to be shorter and more result-orientated than articles in a newspaper. Internet sport journalists have to possess extensive computer skills due to the nature of the interactive medium. The Internet, as their publishing ground, allows interactive and multimedia supplements, which the newspaper cannot offer.

A lot of the interviewees agreed that their job role merely involved editing stories, re-writing them and putting them up onto a site. Therefore, print sport journalists would seem to have a more "active" role, in terms of gathering news and writing stories. However, traditional journalistic skills still apply. At present, exclusive and original content is only occasionally produced for Internet sport sites, mainly due to financial and staffing problems. Internet sport journalists seemed to only present editorial news content. However, Pavlik stated that Internet sport journalism is currently in a state of flux. He predicted a stage which is characterised by exclusive news content designed specifically for the

Internet as a new medium of communication and of increasingly specialised focus, in this case sport.[258]

Some Internet sport journalists pointed out the difficulties they face when they go out and gather news. This might depend upon the fact that print sport journalists have a long established reputation, whereas online sport journalists are fairly new in the field and still have to overcome this barrier. In particular Willmott best described this problem of acceptance among other journalists:

> Journalists are an incredibly, traditionally, intransigent, conservative, suspicious bunch of people. They don't like change, most of them are luddites.

The most common thread, when asked about the differences of independent Internet sport journalists and those connected to print, is credibility. The problem that independent sport sites face, is that they do not have the connection to print, which gives them "instant" credibility. The newspaper sites can divert their readership from the hard-copy to their Internet site, whereas the independent sites have to start from scratch and "earn" their readership. Sport web sites with the connection to print media, however, cannot simply rely on their reputation and the loyalty of its established audiences. They need to reinvent their content and support, building existing, and attracting new, audiences. This also adds to the fact that the Internet is a new medium, which still has to establish its reputation. Furthermore, the working practices of independent online sport journalists and those connected to print are different primarily in terms of interactivity. The independent Internet sport journalists felt

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[258]   Pavlik, *Journalism and New Media*, p. 43.

as if they were experts in the field who can offer the user more features such as audio, video, competition, opinion and live-text coverage.

In terms of the Internet, Internet sport journalists generally agreed that sport sites will change in the future. More interactive features like audio and video supplements will be added along with the development of the Internet medium and the improvement of access. The dynamics of interaction on the Internet illustrates the challenges for Internet sport journalists and their media organisations. The Internet excels at person-to-person communication and targeting specialised audiences. Any media organisation that ignores this opportunity or behaves in a remote or autocratic manner might therefore risk isolation and alienation from its audience.

Nearly all Internet sport journalists predicted a merging with the television medium, where the Internet will be integrated into the television set as an additional channel or vice versa. In the future, an online sport journalist might become a multi-skilled journalist, a journalistic all-round talent who is highly computer literate and could also gather audio and video footage. More likely greater readership, and hence larger numbers of people, will get involved with producing content on sites. On the other had, not only have traditional media merged, but the traditional journalism roles, such as reporter, editor, production staff have also merged. After all, Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze suggested that:

> The journalist of tomorrow is a professional who serves as a
> node in a complex environment between technology and

society, between news and analysis, between annotation and selection, between orientation and investigation.[259]

The internet sport journalists, therefore, becomes a "multi-tasker" in an online environment.

One should not conclude that the Internet has finished changing. For instance, it is now changing to provide such new services as real time transport, in order to support, for example, audio and video streams.[260] The availability of pervasive networking, such as the Internet, along with powerful affordable computing and communications in portable form, for example laptop computers and mobile phones, is making possible a new paradigm of nomadic computing and communications.

Finally, the following recommendations are provided with the aim of encouraging researchers to build on the issues explored in this study. For this research project, a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews was chosen. This method revealed important data on Internet sport journalists and their work practices. However, a different theoretical approach, for example interpretative interactionism, could have made a further contribution. According to Toni Bruce, in interpretative interactionism it is not enough to collect and make public official

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[259]   Jo Bardoel and Mark Deuze, "'Network Journalism': Converging Competencies of Old and New Media Professionals", Paper presented at the VSOM-Conference 'Horizon 1999', Utrecht, Netherlands 12-15 May 1999.
[260]   For clarification purposes, "audio and video streams" refers to, for example video films, which are compressed through specific software programs, so they can be received and viewed from websites.

stories told by authoritative voices.[261] Instead, ethnographic relationships should be seen as two-way exchanges in which researchers must not only present their research in terms that subjects can understand, but they must also give something back to the groups they study.[262] In this sense, a more grounded ethnographic approach might provide further insights into the lives and working world of Internet sport journalists. Participant observation, for example, might reveal contradictory practices to information revealed in interviews, or it might strengthen the claims made by the Internet journalists concerned. In this context, further international comparative studies would be useful, as it is not altogether clear that the practices and work routines of Internet journalists in Australia are unique in any way. The dominant masculine paradigm of Internet journalism is also worthy of further investigation, for it is likely that the current dominance of men in the field will be challenged by some females in the future. A study based around changing gender dimensions and new media is a potentially fruitful and challenging line of enquiry. Moreover, future research might also consider a detailed content analysis of sporting news websites in order to flesh out some of the similarities and differences identified in this thesis. A focus on the audience for this material would also bear analysis, for it cannot be assumed that the consumers of sporting news remain static or homogeneous, a point that is especially relevant in terms of the interactive

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[261] For more information on ethnographic fieldwork, see, Toni Bruce, 'Second Sight: Experiencing Life Through the Eyes of Women Sports Writers' in Chris Hallinan and John Hughson (eds), *Sporting Tales*, Australian Society for Sport History, Campbelltown, 2001, pp. 31-45.

[262] Bruce, 'Second Sight', p. 40.

component of new media forms. Indeed, the segmented nature of the market place is a challenge for all media forms, not just the Internet.

Finally, prior to the research, two categories of web sites were distinguished. The first sampling category was comprised of Internet sport sites, which have a connection to print, whereas the second category involved individual Internet sport sites. As the research progressed, it become obvious that a third category could have been added. This category would have involved Internet sport sites which have a connection to print, but operate in a different way than "print sport sites" that only put newspaper content on the site. These sites offer an up-to-date news service, similar to a wire service. In particular in Australia, where large media companies not only own publishing houses but also provide broadcasting services, a comparison with these types of sport sites would probably reveal further information on the production of sport media texts on the Internet.

With these suggestions and speculations in mind, it would seem that the potential for further research in the area of sport and new media is a rather daunting prospect. However, it is also clear that the field is replete with exciting possibilities and challenges for dedicated researchers. It is hoped that this thesis, in constructing the first profile of Internet sport journalists in Australia, has not only provided a valuable snapshot of the profession, but established a worthwhile foundation for any subsequent academic studies.

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Australian Sport site

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Australian Yahoo! Search engine

http://www.au.yahoo.com

Britannica Encyclopaedia online

http://www.britannica.com

InsideSport-Magazine

http://www.sportcentral.com.au

International Olympic Committee

http://www.olympics.com

Internet Software Consortium

http://www.isc.org/ds

Hitwise Australia

http://www.hitwise.com.au

Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia

http://encarta.msn.com

News Limited

http://www.news.com.au

Nielsen/Netrating

http://www.nielsennetratings.com

Nine Network

http://www.ninemsn.com.au

NUA Internet surveys

http://www.nua.ie

Pew Internet and American Life Project

http://www.pewinternet.org

Seven Network

http://www.seven.com.au

Seven Network/SOCOG site

http://www.olympics.com.au

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)

http://www.theworldgame.com

Sportal.com (Independent sport site)

http://www.sportal.com

Sydney Morning Herald (Fairfax Olympic site)

http://www.olympics.smh.com.au

Ten Network

http://www.ten.com.au

WAPDRIVE

http://www.wapdrive.com

Yahoo! Search engine

http://www.yahoo.com

Zoomsports.com (International independent sport site)

http://www.zoomsports.com

Interviews

Note: All personal names were changed and new names (pseudonyms) were given to protect the identity of the participants.

Sport news websites with a connection to print:

Thomson, George (Site Editor), Sydney.

Interview conducted in person: 30 June 2001.

Unwin, Henry (Site Producer and Manager), Sydney.

Telephone interview: 3 July 2001.

Van Dyk, Ian (Sport journalist), Sydney.

Telephone interview: 5 July 2001.

Willmott, Josh (Sport journalist), Sydney.

Telephone interview: 25 July 2001.

Yannis, Kenneth (Site producer), Melbourne.

Interview conducted in person: 8 August 2001.

Individual sport news websites:

McKinley, Adam (Managing Editor), Melbourne.

Interview conducted in person: 6 May 2001.

Newman, Bob (Deputy Editor), Melbourne.

Interview conducted in person: 6 May 2001.

O'Connell, Chris (Senior News Editor), Sydney.

Interview conducted in person: 2 July 2001.

Parker, Damien (Soccer Producer), Sydney.

Telephone interview: 3 July 2001.

Roberts, Ewen (Senior Editor), Brisbane.

Telephone interview: 3 July 2001.

Saunders, Frank (Senior Editor), Brisbane.

Telephone interview: 3 July 2001.

Tregalia, Danny (Senior Editor), Melbourne.

Interview conducted in person: 3 August 2001.

White, Nick (Sport journalist), Melbourne.

Interview conducted in person: 3 August 2001.

Appendices

Appendix A: Information Form

Sport Journalism and New Media
Interview on Working Practices of Internet Sport Journalists

INTRODUCTION:

Currently, as researchers, we do not yet understand the impact of new media forms on sport journalism. However, we do know that there are significant differences between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists. Much of the research literature has focussed on 'traditional' sport journalists (print). It is the goal of this research to increase the understanding of a new form of sport journalism by talking to Internet sport journalists who work in this environment. The research objective is to provide useful information for Internet sport journalists, employers, academics and researchers that are interested in a new media form, the Internet.

PROCEDURES:

As a participant in this study, you will be requested to take part in an interview, expected to last 45-60 min. (max. 90 min.), which gives you the opportunity to recall your experience working as an Internet sport journalist. The interview will focus on your working practices. Questions will cover topics such as your history of employment, your educational background, and situational variables surrounding your working practices, such as computer skills, newsgathering skills and changes in sports coverage. The interview will be audiotaped.

IMPORTANT ISSUES:

Should you have any questions at any time prior to, during, or after participation in the research, contact details for the investigators are provided at the bottom of this page. Furthermore, contact details for the Victoria University Ethics Committee are also provided should there be a need to address any ethical concerns about the procedures or any other aspects of the research project.

Please be aware that the strictest confidentiality will be upheld: all information will only be used for the purpose of the investigation; it will be stored under lock and key; it will only be accessed by the research investigators; and will be coded such that individuals cannot be identified (ie., your name will not be associated with any information provided by you, and any personally identifying information, such as on the consent form, will be stored separately from the data.)

Please also note that if anything is upsetting you to the point that you do not wish to continue at any time during the interview, you may end the interview and postpone it until a time convenient for you or you may withdraw completely without continuing the interview at a later time. Please be advised that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardising you in any way.

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher, Dr Rob Hess, ph. 03-9688 4062. You may also contact the associate researcher, Matthew Nicholson, ph. 03-9218 3269 or the student researcher, Kirsten Lange, ph. 03-9688 4066 or mob. 0416-376 917. If you require counselling, please feel free to contact the Counselling Service of Victoria University/Footscray Park, ph. 03-9688 4418. Furthermore, if you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (ph. 03-9688 4710).

Appendix B: Consent Form

Sport Journalism and New Media
Interview on Working Practices of Internet Sport Journalists

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study investigating the working practices of Internet sport journalists. Currently, as researchers, we do not yet understand the impact of new media forms on sport journalism. However, we do know that there are significant differences between print sport journalists and Internet sport journalists. Much of the research literature has focussed on 'traditional' sport journalists (print). It is the goal of this research to increase the understanding of a new form of sport journalism by talking to Internet sport journalists who work in this environment. The research objective is to provide useful information for Internet sport journalists, employers, academics and researchers that are interested in a new media form, the Internet.

CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT:

I,

of

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study entitled **Sport Journalism and the New Media**, being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by: *Dr Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson and Kirsten Lange*.
I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the study, have been fully explained to me by **KIRSTEN LANGE** and that I freely consent to participation involving these procedures.

PROCEDURES:

As a participant in this study, you will be requested to take part in an interview, expected to last 45-60 min. (max. 90 min.), which gives you the opportunity to recall your experience working as an Internet sport journalist. The interview will focus on your working practices. Questions will cover topics such as your history of employment, your educational background, and situational variables surrounding your working practices, such as computer skills, newsgathering skills and changes in sport coverage. The interview will be audiotaped.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:..}

Witness other than the researcher: ....}

Date: ....}

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher, Dr Rob Hess, ph. 03-9688 4062. You may also contact the associate researcher, Matthew Nicholson, ph. 03-9218 3269 or the student researcher, Kirsten Lange, ph. 03-9688 4066 or mob. 0416-376 917. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (ph. 03-9688 4710).

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Sport Journalism and New Media:
Working Practices of Internet Sport Journalists

Warm-Up Question:
What is your favourite sport or do you even play yourself?

Question 1:
Education & Career
How did you become a sport journalist working for the Internet?
Please tell me about your educational background.

Question 2:
Working Practices
Please describe a typical working day for me.
- skills
- news gathering, etc.

Question 3:
Differences
What do you think makes you different from a sport journalist working for print/television/radio?
- online independent and online connected to print

Question 4:
Self-Assessment
Do you feel accepted and regarded as a professional among your peers?
How many Internet sport journalists do you think there are in Australia?

Question 5:
Future Outlook
How do you think sport journalism will be changed in the future?
Where will the Internet and Sport head in the future?

Appendix D: Evaluation Form

Sport Journalism and New Media
Interview on Working Practices of Internet Sport Journalists

DEMOGRAPHY

(Please tick the appropriate box)

1. Gender

❏   Male   ❏   Female

2. Age Range

❏   Under 20 years   ❏   41 – 50 years
❏   21 – 30 years   ❏   Over 50 years
❏   31 – 40 years

3. Gross Income (per annum)

❏   Under $AUS 30.000   ❏ $AUS 50.000 – $AUS 60.000
❏ $AUS 30.000 – $AUS 40.000   ❏ $AUS 60.000 – $AUS 70.000
❏ $AUS 40.000 – $AUS 50.000   ❏   Over $AUS 70.000

4. Educational Background

❏   High School   ❏   Traineeship
❏   Undergraduate Studies
❏   Postgraduate Studies

5. Current Employment Situation

❏   Full-time
❏   Part-time
❏   Casual
❏   Freelancer