NEWS TIMES POST HERALD MIRROR

Reflections
Sparkles
Diffusions

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Editorial

by Claus Schönleber

Like bright sunbeams on fresh fallen snow ground, thoughts of others can cause a light track in our inner universe and generate reflections of those, who forced us to pay attention to their world in the time of a twinkle of their eyes. But then again, is that not the most basic part of being human? To interact constantly with our environment and, thus, create something new and pass it on to the next human sphere we are soon to meet? So mote it be! Let us reflect and create until the dawn of a new time!

News – A Brief History

Since men could talk, rumors had to be moved from brain to brain, and even from brain to plum pudding.

So man carved his thoughts and fantasies on cave walls, pews and high school tables. When they had stone, it was the Rosetta Stone, when it was papyrus, it had to be the scrolls and after Gutenberg invented his wooden revenue machine, with newspapers a new forest was made up: The *Zeitungswald*. ... *(see p.4)*

Journalism – What?

Who wants to be a journalist? No sleep, seldom glory, many haters, empty pockets. Write nothing, people cry: „Where were you?". Write something, people yell: „What a crap!", „Darn lobbyist!" or „Bullburger! Extremist!". So why to write anyway? Because somebody has to do it! It is as simple as that! Like the fireman, who never asked getting his buns burned for other people. Like the garbageman, who never asked walking in the mud, letting others eat the bananas, whose peels he peels off the street. Like the teacher, who never wanted to share the same fracking space with that bunch of drooling idiots she is standing in front of. Somebody has to do it, darn it!

Now, a journalist is a person that is writing extensive (ok, more or less) about a topic, having not the slightest clue about it, in a manner, most people would (and should!) believe, she is a brilliant expert in. That is, of course, pure art. That is art *per se*.

And it works! That is one of the seldom singularities in the universe, when science crashes and wonder comes in and takes over. A topical rookie explaining an expert's problem to a bunch of ignorants, and they suddenly understand the underlying issue – ok, not always and not all of them or in the same way, but significant often and a significant part of them. The Eighth Wonder of The World!

So, a journalist is an alchemist of nowadays, he knows the secret of making gold out of lead. Literally and metaphorically. And no society could be run without that sort of gold, at least.

Quality Of Service

Speaking about quality is first to decide, what criteria to choose, so to speak in a more scientific way, what metric one has to to apply to get a proper measured result. Otherwise it would be a *Stammtischdiskussion*.

If we speak about quality, we have to speak about a certain value, being it creating knowledge, an emotion, a purpose or a cause. So, we are speaking of money, body chemistry and time. Take two out of three. While body chemistry is hard to measure in the context of business administration – and that is what we are speaking about, aren't we? – money and time indeed are. And because time is money, we are talking about money solely, at last.

At this point it is becoming clear, that many people have certain concepts of quality.

Newspapers - Quality Newspapers? (Source: Wikipedia)

The company manager wants to generate profit out of his business, the publisher might want to make all people read his articles instead of the articles of his bitter business rival, the reader wants to be entertained or informed or both, depending on the reader's character, and the politician does not want to read anything other than nice and cuddly stories about himself, doesn't he? So we end up, saying, quality is a term depending on the point of view. Like truth. Hence, let us focus on the business revenue and the reader's satisfaction.

First, to business: To get a speakable profit out of the news printing business one has to get the attention of three key players: The reader, the advertising company and the publishing company. The mainstream reader wants two parts of entertainment (yes, that first!), one part of information, two parts of really dirty trash and finally a dash of knowledge, all stirred well (not shaken!) and then all poured into a fashionable form. And not too expensive, please, or, better, freely distributed, we are speaking of Mrs. and Mr. Mainstream, poor Jane and John Doe, who only have three TV sets, two cars and one mortgage on the house.

That sounds more like a job for a magazine, like *Sports Illustrated* or *Auto, Motor, Sport*. Yeah, now you see the problem! Ok, there are a few people, who want to get real facts, naked, unflavored facts and digits, so they think they could make their own decisions after calculating every kind of parameter. They really need to get hardwired to the stock exchange newsticker.

One can ask whether there are no other readers. Hardly.

But don't we speak about integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy and all the other virtues journalism is supposed to represent? Well, everybody can be bribed, with money, ideas or brute force! Fairness is no principle of this universe, ask a Gazelle hunted by a Lioness. Balance is impossible, ask your nearest physics teacher. There is always an unbalance, even if you can not see it. And, be honest: does anyone buy a newspaper that is publishing balanced articles? I am buying newspapers that show a pivot in that direction I prefer, now do I?

Accuracy means to have access to all sources on earth and heaven and to write it down properly. Alas, you do not have that kind of access, believe me, gang! An you do not have all the time in the world to write it down properly.

Center of the British Press until 1980s: Fleet Street, 1890. (Source: Wikipedia)

In summary, we need an unbalanced, merely accurate, mildly bribed and at least kind of fair, as in „cobra vs. mongoose fight"-fair newspaper to satisfy most readers. That is that for virtues and a balanced media.

For advertising companies, newspapers are way too full of articles, but articles are the infrastructure for the ads. Only articles get the people to buy a newspaper, because no one would buy a paper just full of ads. There has to be something written in it and this must not be ads!

So the articles must deal with problems, the products in the ads can solve. Ok, at least the reader has to believe that. Quality here can be directly derived from the topic of the articles and the ability of the article writer to lead the reader directly to the ads nearby. Quality is – in that case – a psychological metric. How many readers would buy my product after reading that article? Count them, and you have the quality. The higher the digits the higher the quality. Simple. Something even the marketing department can manage.

Now, the publisher wants that kind of quality from the editorial department, which causes all the readers in the world to buy just one newspaper: Theirs. To do that, you have to get the most sophisticated writers, the fastest reporters, the best information network, an efficient distribution network and access to a state-of-the-art-printing-plant. Even if there are two or more newspapers with almost identical contents, readers should decide to buy

only the publisher's edition, no other. You hear? That, of course, might never be possible in a neutral, balanced, integer way, neither in content nor in style of leading one's business.

Did we speak of the reader's satisfaction? What for? Create hope, never satisfaction! So newspaper making is a *conundrum*. If you write sophisticated articles about fierce topics, no one buys your product. If you humor the people, critics backbite. But, Alas!, what can we then do about quality? Nothing! You can't do it right to all them readers. Hence, quality is the result of a good idea, hard labor and the ability to acquire ads without completely outselling your own ideas. Period.

Online/Offline – What Next?

Newspapers are dying since „The Internet (TM)" took over. Are they? Really? The Internet is the deadly bullet and the opportunity in union for all newspapers simultaneously.

Most of them saw the bullet flying right towards their head, but only few saw the opportunity to evade, adapt and change to the new way of the art. The US *Pony Express* in 1860 was a very bright idea – and dead from the beginning. To get US-mail fast from East to West pony express riders were in the saddle night and day, in wind and weather, without any rest, and reached their destination after 10 days. Very, very fast for that time, indeed. But it was also the time of the emerging of the wire-telegraph. So, pity, Pony Express died after one year existence only. Lessons learned? Do not try to extend an old idea into new times.

A best practice example for the ongoing time of transition is *Spiegel Online*. Being no newspaper, but a weekly news magazine, the *Spiegel*

Do we read from paper in the future? - A „Lesekabinett", about 1840. Painting, Heinrich Lukas Arnold, Dresden (Source: Wikipedia)

people had recognized, that new news publishing means a mainly ad sponsored way of publishing, while protecting the own distinct character of published content. All these years downloading all sort of crap over the Internet, people got used to getting all this stuff for free, not ever paying one cent for digital content. And one can assume, there is no way of making that habit reversing.

If newspapers want to survive, they have to walk new paths. And one of that paths they must not ever go is, to try to use an old paper based business model in the Internet world. There *are* ways, but those ways are the cornerstone of new business models, paving the way of digital labor with some of the worlds analog gold. And that story is not to be told here.

Former Emblem of the US-Gov TIA-Program (2002; Source: Wikipedia)

Just my 2 Cents:

„Bypass or Backbone?"

Are newspapers a dead end in the digital age? What if? Let us visualize the one day in the future, when all newspapers may have been passed away.

Then what? Nowhere to pee for Tweety, no blanket for bums in the parks, no hiding-my-face-in-the-subway-so-I-do-not-have-to-look-to-any-one-around. And no more basic human rights preserver for society.

Where do the news come from rhen? TV? Also dead and good riddance! Infotainment portals all over the BroadbandNet (TM), accessible via the home entertainment center with one intelligent remote control in your wrist watch, like a WII virtual device. Move your arm and your media center knows what you want to consume! Check the menu for preferred news topics, e.g. sports, cars and stock exchange, films and ... yeah, what else? Anyone want to see a documentary about the rare butterfly in the Amazon region or the problems of slum kids in Brasil or possibly a feature about ancient 12tone-music? Find the answer for yourself!

„The Government (TM)" owns half and filters the other half of the news sources. Think of Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi or Carl Bertelsmann, choose your favorite guy. What politicians say is protected by copyright laws.

What they do is protected by privacy laws and what others do is punishable by criminal law. Private contractors make and enforce those laws in their own run city halls, city parliaments, police squads and county jails. Accurate news is filtered, ads are pushed („You cannot hide!"). And critics getting re-educated.

Bad movie? No, it's all real. Bush jr. allowed his NSA not only to spy on fellow citizens but on other fellow services, in Germany (like China) a new government wants to apply Internet filters, Germany sends out government controlled Trojan Horses to infiltrate suspicious fellow citizens' PCs, cars' license plates are scanned while driving all over Europe (including Germany) and journalists lose their immunity. In Moscow they already get killed, if they try writing sort of „unbalanced" stuff. And Bertelsmann runs European city halls. No joke!

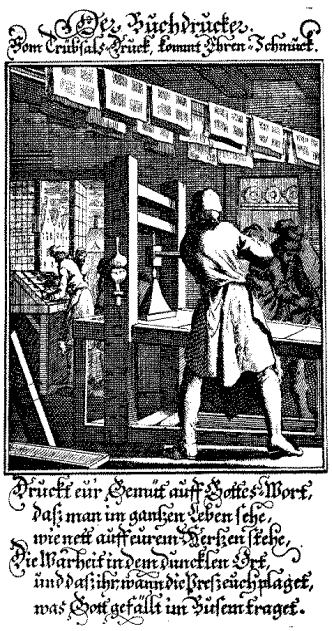
Comforting alone, that there is not enough energy in the world to feed these server farms providing billions of songs, millions of films and uncountable ad spots waiting for us. Brave, new world!

News – A Brief History

(continued from p.1)

The first newspaper – according to a well informed Italian Professor and local Wikipedia, was the „Acta Diurna", handwritten and put up daily for nearly 200 years in the main public square in Rome, from 60 B.C. on. Originator was Consul *Gaius Iulius Caesar*. Would you believe it? In Europe newspapers can be found from the 15th century on. Then, after the possibility of mechanical reproduction newspapers found their way into daily life of people and society, the first newspapers were founded in the Netherlands (1620), in France (1631) and in London (1665), just to name a few countries.

Over 500 years, newspapers were the main instrument to inform people about politics, society and arts. And sometimes they tried to indoctrinate people in times of dictatorship, with some success, one can say. Then the Internet was invented. A new military communication infrastructure at first, the ARPA-Net, later called the Internet (the „internetworking between local area networks") developed into a gigantic network for all kind of media, including the news.



Woodcut „Der Buchdrucker" („the book printer") printed on hand-made paper with an original Gutenberg-Druckerpresse
(Owner: Claus Schönleber)

Traditional newspapers first tried to ignore that technology. „Everybody needs a paper! you can not take a computer to the breakfast table or into the subway", they said. But the news one could read in today's newspaper was already published a day earlier on the Internet. So newspapers evolved into just paper. No news was no good news here. Traditional business models did not work, because no one pays today's money for yesterday's news, if she gets it fresh for free out of the Internet. Have you hugged your smart phone today in the subway? Some traditional newspapers are history nowadays, and maybe soon this history ends with the end of all other paper based products. But, then again, mankind loves tradition, and, who knows?, modern technology might fail because of shortage of material, fading of knowledge and breakdown of traditional social structures. If you want to run such an enormous network like the Internet, you need a gigantic infrastructure: Mining for rare elements, HiTec production environment, sophisticated knowledge in engineering and science, big financial resources and the political will to let that all happen. On the other side, you need just a Gutenberg-machine in a cellar, ink, paper and some leaden or wooden types to get a newspaper printed. We all might experience the outcome of that story. The time is nigh!

Humor

No Humor in this issue. Sorry.

The Masthead

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All rights reversed. Illegal copies will be transfigured and people who dare to do that will roast in publishers hell. Enjoy the content, think for yourself and keep drinking!