

Chapter 111

Journalism and Media: From Mellowed Pedagogy to New Mobile Learning Tools

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates how fast-changing mobile technology has transformed the traditional approach to journalism education at some major mass communication schools, media organizations, and institutions in the United States. This traditional approach to instruction, referred to here as its pedagogical niche, is defined as instructional methods, content, and tools used in mass communication academic, practice and training units. The first and primary objective of this chapter will be to determine how journalism academic institutions are using the rapidly changing media and communication technologies, particularly mobile tools, to reinvent themselves and to enhance their curricula and teaching effectiveness. The second objective is to determine how media organizations have adapted to the increasing use of mobile technologies in journalism.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the theory employed in journalism and mass communication research is drawn from other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, education, or political science. As a result, examining the challenge of integrating technology in the classroom is hindered by the lack of a “solid theoretical framework, which can guide effective instructional design and evaluate the quality of

programs that rely significantly on mobile technologies” (Park, 2011). In order to examine how to best integrate technology in the classroom, the current study borrows two theoretical propositions from other disciplines, mobile learning and instructional niche, to examine this phenomenon.

With the introduction of the Internet and digital mobile technologies, the needs of journalists and journalism majors have changed significantly. Journalism and media organizations compete

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for existing resources and develop specialties for making the best use of their human professional resources and communication technologies—henceforth referred to as a niche—in a way that allows them to thrive by generating more advertising dollars, audience penetration, and wider circulation or broadcast reach. Although niche, as a theory, has been primarily utilized in communication fields to understand models of competition or co-existence between media products (Dimmick & Rothenbuhler, 1984; Kayany & Yelsma, 2000), it also allows researchers to understand how entities endure under the changing environmental conditions. Furthermore, niche theory allows scholars to explain how units adapt to new and sometimes competitive conditions. Thus, niche can be used to describe how journalism and media educators reinvent themselves to meet these changing needs.

This chapter is particularly expedient and significant because journalism and media professionals considerably depend on communication technology for their daily practices. The ever-changing state-of-the-art technology has visible impacts on journalism as a profession and media as products. Journalism and media educators are constantly inundated with the need to reinvent their pedagogy to provide courses and practicum experiences that aid students in developing the skills required to adapt to the new age of journalism. So, one focus here is on communication tools that journalism and media academic institutions in the United States have adapted to facilitate journalists to better function in this burgeoning digital wireless media and mobile communication environment. Specifically, in what ways is mobile pedagogy part of the new or immediate future of the journalism and media academe? And, in what ways have media organizations adapted to the increasing use of mobile technologies in journalism?

A total of 30 in-depth interviews were conducted in twelve journalism schools, two professional journalism organizations, and twelve print, radio and television newsrooms. The conversational dis-

course was employed to analyze in-depth interview data so as to provide a better understanding of how the new technology has transformed journalism practice and education. Conversational discourse is a research design used to tap into the logic of open-ended unrestrained straight talk of one's egalitarian perspectives (Khosravinik, 2010) and to foreground reasoned spontaneous interactions that emerge as participants react to the changing environment (Kalyango, 2011).

PERSPECTIVES ON MOBILE LEARNING

Some academics and professional organizations describe mobile learning (M-learning) in terms of understanding technology and hardware. Traxler (2007), one of the seminal students of M-learning, defined the concept as “learning delivered or supported solely or mainly by handheld technologies.” Although the definition of handheld or mobile devices has ranged from the earliest Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and smart phones to wireless laptops and tablets, Traxler (2007) argued that such a definition was too “constraining” and “techno-centric” because it referred only to the most current of technologies.

Keegen (2005), an early proponent of distance learning, defined M-learning as limited to information gathering, discovery, and knowledge dissemination conducted on any small, portable device. This definition calls attention to the plethora of market-driven devices, but does little to expound upon the role innovation plays in utilizing these devices to teach—particularly within the realm of mass communication, which is our focus in this chapter.

Kukulska-Hulme (2005) interpreted M-learning as a new concept with familiar undertones from distance learning and e-learning, whereby participants are not confined to a particular location or time in order to learn. Again, this explanation is limited to pedagogical activities and formal

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