

Chapter 6

The Future Electronic News Media

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses how technological and social changes will impact electronic news operations, prompting the rise of niche subscription services for many news operations, who enter the marketplace with a concierge approach to increasing profit margins at the risk of redefining meaningful news content. Artificial intelligence, drones, and demographics will complement as well as challenge the future of journalism. Entertainment news will benefit from new technologies the most, as extreme weather keeps many seeking at-home sports and immersive activities through virtual, augmented, and mixed reality.

IMAGINE . . .

It's November 2050, the JNC (Justice News Corporation) prepared for a busy week ahead. It was Monday night and politics and weather were the main topics of the night. Up for reelection was the first Latinx woman and her openly transgendered black vice president. The women, while they reflected so much of the demographic shift in the nation, still felt the pressure from white radical groups trying to stir controversy. The country had significantly changed, but hatred and dissension had not been so easy to suppress. As the white minority's power diminished, ugly voices seemed to grow louder. A stronger America stood closer to its ideal of equity for all. The news team, a diverse array of news professionals, had been celebrated by viewers and peers for outstanding investigative news reporting over the past two years, and it showed in the ratings and revenue.

After spending a few minutes on the election results, the news team moved on to the bigger story of the night: unprecedented storms pounding across the nation. A rise in temperature brought hurricanes to the East Coast. Every town from Maine to Miami was being slammed; tornadoes spun out of a low pressure system coming up from the Gulf and cut across the lower Midwest and the South. Temperatures dropped below freezing for the 10th consecutive day in California, Oregon, and Nevada, and satellite

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imagery showed snow blanketed nearly the entire West Coast. At several junctures, viewers were invited to experience the storm on their VR visors.

Now back to the news. A breaking story about European nations frustrated with the world's failure to reign in pollution to reverse environmental damage. After a vote, they announced the withdrawal of their support for the Montreal Protocol. They argued that while their countries had implemented changes in good faith, many other nations only paid lip service to the Montreal Protocol. Young protesters picketed the White House calling for major environmental policy change based on new evidence that society was too dependent on computers, drones, robots, and other tech that required a lot of minerals from already impoverished countries.

A call among the science savvy youth to live modestly and grow their own food gained in popularity. Millions who were disgusted with a lack of affordable housing, good paying jobs, and an abundance of security monitors tracking their every move were migrating to rural areas that had previously been a strong anti-city voting block. Suddenly, rural voters who previously had enjoyed a disproportionate influence in state and federal government were not pleased to see their power base threatened by “carpetbaggers.” Soon, these young, diverse urban migrants living on the outskirts of rural towns in earthen homes half-buried underground for protection from the increasing UV rays, found themselves harassed by white-minority gangs.

On the same night of the super snowstorm and the tornadoes, the news team cross-promoted a special on its VR news channel about hate crimes on the rise in rural communities for the third consecutive month and how the viewer can “experience it for themselves.” This in-depth story about the dangers of living in rural America makes clear that the same local leaders who were trying to attract young families were fearful that the same educated, urban professionals it needed to stay viable as communities were not going to share their values.

The team sports anchor—actually his hologram sent over from the stadium locker room—reported that all local sporting events had been postponed due to raging weather. An international professional Esports tournament featuring a local college team was underway in Germany. The evening news closed with all anchors signing-off for the night and reminding their viewers to “Stay inside and stay safe.” Of course, this message was appropriate to everything that was happening in America that night, from the unpredictability of the weather to the dangers of the hate gangs.

INTRODUCTION: THE NIGHTLY NEWS HAS A NEW FACE

The loss of actual newspapers in aging, small and medium-sized U.S. towns further exacerbates the news deserts in the United States. Social media pages and amateur YouTube videos just cannot keep up and the older demographic does not have enough disposable income to attract advertisers. No local papers, no local television stations except for the unfunded, government-mandated, local cable channel, means there are no local, professional, trained reporters attending city hall meetings and no school board or sanitation committee oversight. In short, without anyone holding the glaring spotlight of scrutiny on elected officials in most of rural America, the blight of “newslessness” continues to spread. Investiga-

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