SUJET D'EXPRESSION

The current transformation of news is ironic: technology is reshaping the industry, **harking back to** the **vibrant** and independent pre-industrial era, before mass media business models **prevailed**.

Before the 19th century, the dissemination of news to a large audience relied on the conversations people had when meeting in marketplaces or taverns, or when writing letters to their friends. In Roman times, the members of the elite kept each other informed with letters, speech transcription, and copies of the gazette posted in the Forum on a daily basis. News travelled along social networks because there was no other **conduit**.

With the invention of the printing press, many copies of a document could be produced more quickly than before, however distribution still relied on personal connections. In early 1518, it took two weeks for Martin Luther's writings to spread around Germany. Over the following decade, as Luther and his supporters argued with his opponents, more than 6m religious pamphlets were handed out in Germany. Similarly, "News ballads" (in the form of popular songs) covered the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, among many other events.

Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense", which rallied the colonists against the British crown, was printed in a run of 1,000 copies. George Washington, when reading one of them, was so impressed that he made American officers read extracts of Paine's work to their soldiers. By July 1776, around 250,000 people had been exposed to these ideas. Back then, the -local- **circulation** of newspapers was small, and consisted mainly of a mix of **opinionated** editorials, contributions from readers and items from other papers; dedicated reporters did not exist. All these early media **conveyed** news, **gossip**, opinion and ideas within particular social circles or communities, there was little distinction between producers and consumers of information. These were nothing but social media.

The invention of the steam press in the early 19th century, and the emergence of mass-market newspapers **ushered in** a whole new era. Large numbers of people could be reached thanks to the new technologies of dissemination with unprecedented speed and efficiency; however, control of the flow of information became the **preserve** of a select few. For the first time, vertical distribution of news, from a specialist elite to a general audience, **took the upper hand** over horizontal distribution among citizens. The **advent** of the radio later on accelerated the trend, as did that of television. As a consequence,

new businesses emerged around these mass-media technologies. In the modern media organization structure, news has been gathered by specialists and then disseminated to a mass audience (advertising revenues paying for the operation).

Over the past decade, the internet has disrupted this model and allowed for the social media aspect to reassert itself. In many respects, news is going back to its pre-industrial form, with limitless possibilities thanks to the internet. Camera-phones, blogs, social media like Facebook and Twitter in many ways echo the means in which people used to collect, share and exchange information in the past. What has changed is the scale. Craig Newmark **likens** John Locke, Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin to modern bloggers. "By 2020 the media and political landscapes will be very different, because people who are accustomed to power will be complemented by social networks in different forms." According to Julian Assange, WikiLeaks operates in the tradition of the radical pamphleteers of the English civil war **bent on** disclosing the secrets of government to the public.

What is also changing is that news is becoming more diverse: publishing tools have become widely available, barriers to entry have fallen and new models have become possible, as demonstrated by the astonishing rise of newcomers in the past few years, not to mention millions of blogs. Simultaneously, news is becoming more opinionated, polarised and partisan, an echo of the days of pamphleteering.

The conventional news organisations that emerged over the past 170 years are having a lot of trouble adjusting. It is as though the mass-media era now seems like a relatively brief and anomalous period that is **coming to a close**. Several generations of journalists grew up with the old model; many thought that the laws of the mass-media were the laws of media in general, says Jay Rosen. "And when you've built your whole career on that, it isn't easy to say, 'well, actually, that was just a phase'. Many today are convinced that a generational change will solve the problem. The new generation that has grown up with digital tools is already **devising** extraordinary new things to do with them, rather than fighting to preserve the old models. It is highly likely that some existing media organisations will survive the transition while others won't.

All things considered, the biggest **upheaval** is that journalism is no longer the exclusive preserve of journalists. Along with technology firms, news start-ups and not-for-profit groups, ordinary people are playing a more active role in the news system. Social media are not a passing **fancy**, and their impact is only just beginning to be felt. The success of media organisations will depend on their degree of acceptance of this new reality. Instead of serving advertisers, they will need to reorient themselves towards serving readers, they will have to embrace social features and collaboration, **get off their high horse** and essentially stop trying to erect barriers around journalism to protect their position. The digital future of news harks back to its chaotic, ink-stained past.

Adapted from *The Economist*, July 7th 2011

- **to hark back to** : rappeler
- **vibrant** : vif, animé
- **to prevail :** prévaloir
- **conduit :** intermédiaire
- **circulation :** tirage
- **opinionated :** aux idées arrêtées
- **to convey :** véhiculer
- **gossip :** commérages
- **to usher in :** inaugurer, annoncer
- **preserve :** domaine, chasse gardé e
- **to take the upper hand over** : prévaloir

- **advent :** avènement
- **to liken :** comparer
- **to be bent on (doing something) :** être déterminé à
- **to come to a close :** toucher à sa fin, arriver à son terme
- **to devise :** imaginer, inventer
- **upheaval :** bouleversement
- **fancy :** envie
- **to get off one's high horse :** descendre de ses grands chevaux

QUESTION DE SYNTHÈSE

According to the journalist, in what sense do current developments in the news industry spell the end of "a phase"? (250 words, ± 10%)

QUESTION D'ESSAI

In your opinion, are current transformations in news-media models enhancing citizens' engagement with news? (250 words, ± 10%)

QUESTION DE SYNTHÈSE

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NOTE ATTRIBUÉE : **13/20** (premier devoir de l'année en seconde année, ECS)

COPIE 1

Question 1.

When it comes to the news industry, history seems to have been drawing backwards recently. The author states that the surge of new technologies in the field of journalism ~~announces~~ [ushers in] the end of an era.

[50]
[2 piece of news / Ø news]

Since the early 19th century, mass market newspaper have been a very potent way of / conveying ~~piece of~~ news. This journalistic "phase" relied on technologies such as the steam press, and enabled newly established news organisations to spread information quickly

[information (nom indénombrable) + verbe singulier]

and to a large number of people. But ~~that~~ [this] information ~~were~~ [was] actually outfield by very few people, by very few

[100]

specialists who were to later deliver the ~~pieces~~ of news to an audience ✓

[vertical dissemination / top down journalism]

However, this verticality-based era in journalism was recently disrupted by the use of new technologies in the field. The old news organisations now have to deal

[the media]

with new challengers such as social media (Twitter, Facebook) or blogs. The news industry is currently being

[150]

reshaped by the new technologies. The author believes that this new approach to news-delivering is bringing

[the time when]

us back to the "pre-mass market newspaper" era, when most [when]

↳ avoid quoting

was

news were readily spread. In fact, it is easier to convey one's opinion through social networks than it used to be when news were controlled by a very elite/ experts.

Thus, the point made by the author is that the old verticality is being abolished by the new technologies. Indeed, now anyone who owns a computer and a camera can be a journalist. This new reality is very hard for the established news organizations to get used to, since / they now need to share the field with new protagonists. And this, according to the author, this constitutes the end of a phase.

en elite

MÉTHODOLOGIE

LES POINTS POSITIFS

- ◆ Contextualisation
- ◆ Rappel des termes de la synthèse
- ◆ Choix pertinent des idées majeures
- ◆ Présentation claire

STRUCTURATION DE LA SYNTHÈSE

1. Le modèle de dissémination vertical de l'information depuis le XIXe siècle
2. La fin de la verticalité et l'émergence des nouvelles organisations et des réseaux sociaux
3. Les nouvelles technologies et le journalisme à portée de tous

LES POINTS NÉGATIFS

- ◆ Omission de certains éléments : intérêt médiatique, rôle des revenus publicitaires
- ◆ Répétition de la notion de verticalité
- ◆ Des erreurs grammaticales (accords des verbes), des calques du français
- ◆ Le lexique peut être enrichi pour mieux se détacher de l'article

PROPOSITION DE CORRIGÉ

The history of news media is described here as a four-act **narrative**, the third stage of which is coming to an end. In many ways, this constitutes a return to the pre-19th century paradigms of the first two stages.

First, the "mass media" era marked a turning point with regards to communication and the very notion of newsworthiness. **Nascent** distribution patterns today replicate the kind of **free-flowing**, **unmediated** communication networks which defined the ancient and early modern eras. This is to be contrasted with top-down distribution as **implemented** among post-18th century major groups, which went hand-in-hand with control over news contents **geared towards** maximising avertising revenue. Accordingly, the breadth of subjects and polemical **edge** of new media is **reminiscent of** the days of informal tablets and pamphlets.

Likewise, in terms of role distribution, one common feature from Roman times through to late 18ᵗʰ century culture was the **blurring** of lines between news producers, distributors and consumers. The advent of mass media signalled the rise of journalism as an exclusive profession, as well as of business models based on advertising revenues.

However, although modern developments do **allow for** renewed **grass-roots** involvement in news-making, they also superimpose business structures – **albeit** flexible ones – onto the equation and thus slightly **depart from** pre-modern models. With regards to technological progress – and therefore the potential **reach** of news contents – the mass media era is part of an overall continuum stretching from the first printing press to Internet technologies, suggesting it may have been more than a digression in the history of news.

[256 Words]

VOCABULARY

- **narrative** : récit
- **nascent :** naissant
- **free-flowing :** libre, sans obstacle
- **unmediated :** sans intermédiaire, spontané, direct
- **to implement :** mettre en oeuvre
- **to be geared towards :** être destiné à
- **edge :** avantage

- **reminiscent of :** qui rappelle
- **to blur :** brouiller, estomper
- **to allow for :** permettre
- **grass-roots :** de base
- **albeit** : quoique
- **to depart from :** dévier de
- **reach :** portée

QUESTION D'ESSAI

In your opinion, are current transformations in news media models enhancing citizens' engagement with news? (250 words+/-%)

COPIE 2

2. In your opinion, are current transformations in news media models enhancing citizens' engagement with news?

Today, citizens seem more involved than ever in the news partly because they often produce it themselves or convey it through different information networks. But does this really improve their experience of the news?

Giving everyone the ability to receive the information he wants whenever and wherever he wants is obviously more democratic than a physically or financially restricted system. The internet offers a wider range of sources and opportunities to watch the news via live streams, like on Facebook for instance. During the riots against

maladroit