Public Abstract

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Title: Poor media, rich democracy: How economics and technology affect construction of news processes

The journalism industry currently resides in a state of perpetual change, with technology and economics affecting both how journalists produce news and what news looks like when consumed. This ethnography examines the news construction processes at a digitally native news nonprofit. Gatekeeping theory, Edgar Schein's theory of culture and John McManus' market theory for news production guide this investigation of how influences affect news coverage on five levels: the individual, the communication routines, the organizational, the social institution and the social system. Through more than 360 hours of observation over a 10-week period and 18 long form, in-depth interviews with professional journalists at the St. Louis Beacon, this study found that in the absence of a traditional newsroom, new routines develop; leadership impacts the culture of a news organization more than a traditional one; a weak market orientation significantly affects news construction processes; and the Beacon engages in a new type of public journalism. These findings suggest that organizational-level influences are increasingly becoming more powerful than any other level of influence on news construction.