

SILICON VALLEY AND THE NEW GATEKEEPERS: AN INSTITUTIONAL VIEW OF JOURNALISM, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIAL SHARING OF NEWS

Frank Michael Russell

Dr. Tim P. Vos, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The digital disruption of journalism has raised questions about how journalism is supported financially and how citizens get access to news. In this dissertation, a quantitative content analysis and three qualitative textual analyses explored interactions between journalism, Silicon Valley, and citizens from the perspectives of gatekeeping theory, new institutionalism, and the concepts of interactivity and reciprocity. The content analysis concerned Twitter practices by 26 popular online news organizations. The analysis of posts ($n = 1,200$) found organizational-level differences in the use of technically and socially interactive characteristics of Twitter. Nonetheless, most posts had the purpose related to traditional gatekeeping of promoting news content. This traditional gatekeeping function had a slight negative association with secondary gatekeeping practices as measured by rankings of the number of retweets or likes. The textual analyses indicated that journalists and technologists discursively construct interactions between journalism, Silicon Valley, and citizens, as based on institutional-level concerns of journalism or Silicon Valley. However, these exchanges are described mainly in terms of interactions between individuals or organizations. Furthermore, the relationship is viewed as dependent on societal-level forces, such as different political or economic systems.