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An Exploration of the Impacts of Technological and Economic Changes on Journalism

The explosion of digital technologies, coupled with unfavorable economic conditions, has changed newspaper journalism in myriad ways. Converged online publications featuring photos, videos and graphics, which are assembled by fewer and fewer journalists, have quickly become the status quo in the American newspaper industry. In light of these conditions, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived impacts of technological and economic changes on both newspaper journalists’ professional ideology and their labor. The research questions asked how technological and economic changes impacted journalism ideology (a set of core values that inform journalism) and newswork (journalism labor) at metropolitan newspapers, which at one time were mainstays of local and regional information. The results indicate that most every task now gets accomplished digitally. In addition, fewer journalists now perform an ever-increasing set of tasks to update and optimize the digital newspapers. These journalists cover larger geographic areas, spend less time on each task and depend increasingly on social media and the Internet to find stories. Through periods of upheaval in the newspaper industry, the core values that inform journalistic ideology help define, and to a certain extent insulate, newsworkers from the deleterious effects of technological changes and the uncertainty of the future.

Keywords: ideology, journalistic values, newswork, technology, social media, multitasking.