Although university schools of journalism are well-established in North America, they continue to be viewed skeptically by some mainstream academics and journalism practitioners. Additionally, journalism faculties are themselves sometimes divided internally between professors who identify with the practice of journalism and professors who identify with the university and its traditions of teaching and research.

The debate and sense of discontent that these external and internal conflicts have generated are reflected in a number of documents—most notably in recent years in the Oregon Report on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education published in May, 1984. As recently as June, 1986, the principal author of this document wrote in Commentaries on Journalism Education that the debate, apart from the disagreements between journalism educators, includes the unfriendly question: "Should journalism education exist at all? There are those in the academy and in the media industries who seriously doubt its value and say so with blunt force.".

The answer to the unfriendly question is, "Yes, it should exist". But the manner and method of its existence needs to be reconsidered and such a reconsideration is the purpose of this paper. Its conclusion is that both the craft and the academic wings of the schools must make adjustments and redefine their roles and methods.

* A longer version of this paper appeared under the title "Thinking Journalism" in Content July/August, 1988 pp.4-11
The Oregon Report is a 144-page document inspired by Everette Dennis who was at the time Oregon's Dean and is now executive director of the Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia University. Its full title is Planning for Curricular Change: A Report of the Project of the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication Education. It was undertaken by a task force under his direction to "study the present status and future direction of learning and advancement of knowledge in the field of journalism and mass communication within the realities of American higher education."³.

The report is diplomatic. It honours the achievements of journalism educators, salutes diversity, affirms the importance of the field in familiar ways and insists that the future is rosy. But there is at the same time a clear finding that all is not well. That finding is expressed in such statements as:

"Although journalism schools had begun with lofty ideals ... many were little more than industry-oriented trade schools by the 1970s and 1980s ... [They are] following industry, not leading it;"⁴.

"... there is little direct connection between the School [at Oregon] and its courses and the rest of the university;"⁵.

"The field of journalism education has long been beset by a conflict between faculty members who regard themselves primarily as teachers and researchers and those who identify themselves as masters of the profession ...;"⁶.

"... the notion that craft courses adhere to professional standards set by the industry and that conceptual courses are governed by the realm of scholarship is still a persistent pattern;"⁷.

"The paradigm of journalism education has not changed much in 40 years despite massive changes throughout the field of mass communication."⁸.

The report covers administrative matters. It contains the observation, for example, that journalism deans and directors rarely move into the upper administration of U.S. universities; and it says schools are underfunded and faculty members overworked. But the spirit of the document is not resentful. It is diagnostic and prescriptive; and of all its prescriptions and recommendations the most persuasive are curricular -- that is to say, internal.

The basic points of reference for these prescriptions and recommendations are the five findings I have just listed. On reflection, they are not five findings so much as five manifestations of the same problem and their central meaning is that the academic culture has failed to take hold successfully in the schools. They mean that neither the schools nor their academic mentors have figured out how to
integrate the strictly vocational dimension of journalism education into its more recognizably academic dimension.

But what to do? First, the Oregon report does not suggest that the schools should abandon their anchors in professional practice. A conclusion is, rather, that an effort must be made to integrate practice and theory. "... There needs to be a creative merger of more generalized mass communication study with the lessons of professional practice." 9

So far, so good. There is no doubt that journalism schools make no sense if they fail to make Professional Practices the touchstone of their mission. If they are not about reporting and writing they have nothing special to be about. So the Oregon report does not adopt the concepts of the university to attack the field. It looks rather to the methods and achievements of the university to strengthen it.

The authors go on to say that a generic approach to journalism education entails three responsibilities: First, the curriculum should provide "a conceptual map of the field [the students] are entering. This means a distillation of the range of knowledge of mass communication and an adequate description of the various elements and organizations that comprise the field". 10 Second, the "course structure needs to do more to help students make sense out of the rest of their education". 11 For example, the authors comment that teachers in "craft courses need to be more aware of supporting coursework ... Courses in reporting can be better connected to political science and other social science disciplines." 12 Third, "specific craft courses must be developed as part of an overall plan that is linked to the educational outcomes for the particular student." 13 This last recommendation is slightly cryptic. I take it to mean from the examples provided that, apart from the capacity to write leads and news stories efficiently, courses measure more strictly skills in grammar, language and interpretation.

The Oregon report goes on to make recommendations about the shape and components of the new "conceptualized" curriculum. The components are familiar. They include: mass communication and society; the history of mass communication; the economics, philosophy, legal and regulatory elements of mass communication; the technology and theory of mass communication; and international mass communication.

None of this is arguable on the surface and, if the recommendations led to a surge of energy and thought, the world of journalism education might be different. The word "might" should be stressed because there is an equal chance that this world would be the same, unless the faculty members who do the implementing take at least two methodological steps.

The first step involves a consideration of the effect of the term mass communication. The Oregon group attaches that term to each of its conceptual
categories even as it complains that the schools are little more than industry-based operations following not leading the field. It may be fair to imagine journalism as connected to mass communication systems; it may be fair to think of large newsrooms as the venue of much, perhaps most, journalistic activity; it is essential to think of the techniques of news-reporting and news-writing as essential pedagogic starting points in journalism education. But it is wrong to allow the terms journalism and mass communication to blend uncritically. If they are so blended, the inspirational vision of education will not embrace the journalism of Dorothy Day or I.F. Stone; similarly, such journals as The New Statesman, The New Republic, The American Spectator, The Nation, Harper's, The Atlantic, This Magazine, Vanity Fair, Esquire or Saturday Night — in which higher political and/or literary sensibilities are enshrined and the approaches to film documentary espoused by John Grierson and Donald Brittain will be shoved to the margins.

So a first step is to evolve a theory of journalism which diminishes the power of the term mass communication. That step involves an examination of the meaning of the term journalism and a consideration of it as a form of expression involving well-defined rules of construction and form. It means, initially, setting aside a preoccupation with journalism as a process defined principally in terms of the activities of an institution or set of institutions, the mass media, and examining it as a method of expression and communication which occurs in a variety of settings. This does not eliminate mass communication or the mass media from study. It locates them. If the first step involves a theory of journalism, the second involves examining and incorporating more deliberately the elements of the academic culture into journalism education. The Oregon report concluded that craft courses are typically governed by industry standards and conceptual courses by university standards. A step towards a more integrated curriculum is to push craft courses more firmly in the direction of the academic culture. The purpose would be to strengthen them. Put differently, I am recommending, first, that the courses in professional practices more deliberately incorporate the university's methods of classifying, analyzing, weighing and communicating knowledge.

So what is journalism and what are its elements? What are journalism educators seeking to convey and strengthen? What is an appropriate theoretical starting point with which to build a viable pedagogical system? First, a definition: journalism is comprised of reports, story-telling and commentaries in the public media about events and ideas as they occur. Its principal elements are: judgment --broadly speaking, news judgment--and reporting, language, narration, and analysis. Its meaning and utility are grounded in our notions of democracy and human interest -- in politics and literature. To teach journalism in a university setting with a view to strengthening journalism practice, it is necessary to articulate the elements of journalism--the finding, reporting, describing and assessment of things in the here and now--to the elements of academic culture. The method begins with the element of judgment implied by the notion of newsworthiness.
Every act of journalism involves a judgment on the significance or importance of an event or a series of events or the expression of an idea. There is no need to mystify that process. Some things, such as the resignation of a government, the assassination of a leader and the beginning of a war are self-evidently important. But a clearer understanding of what is judged by journalists to be important may be surmised by consulting the full range of items in the lineup of the news shows of broadcasting agencies and in the pages of every newspaper. As the mind retreats from the spectacular and self-evident to the significant but obscure, the element of judgment in journalistic terms becomes more vivid. There is considerable variation. The Suns go for sex and scandal. By contrast, The New York Times ran a story in the fall of 1987 about the dispute in the American association of professional philosophers between the analytic and moral schools. The criterion that put that item on the front page reflects a cast of mind that sees the university as an arena of human action carrying as much significance as Gary Hart’s dalliances with Donna Rice. Similarly, a careful examination of I.F. Stone and his paper reveals that the starting point in judgment and knowledge for a journalist such as Stone is dramatically different from a journeyman practitioner in the city room. This is not to diminish other forms of journalism. It is simply to illustrate that the judgment that guides journalists to certain stories and not to others is a significant element of a his or her work. It is to suggest as well how judgment varies and how practice in judgment, inspired by formal classroom study, might enrich and modify current standards. There is not much in print which interrogates formally notions of journalistic judgment. Nor is there enough on methods of reporting.

Reporting is the cornerstone of journalism. Reporting is to journalism as research and evidence-gathering is to scholarship. Traditionally, journalists have relied on the interview, observation, dead copy and documents—especially the interview—to construct their stories. To these techniques may be added survey research methods and the archival systems provided by computer-stored data. The incorporation of computer-based data systems and survey methodology into reporting adds new dimensions. But these do not eliminate the necessity to interview individuals and to observe events such as the Olympics. They have not altered the fact that journalists must consult documents. Journalism schools do not make reporting methods a formal object of inquiry. Although there are texts on the interview, for example, there is little in print which examines the realities and requirements of reporting in the light of the epistemological concerns of scholars. Nor is there much which borrows from other professional disciplines. For example, academic lawyers reflect on rules of evidence for their own purposes. Journalists have something to learn from them.

News judgment and evidence translate into words and images and the choice of words and/or images is a reflection of a journalist’s abilities and training. The standard style manuals promote the adoption of a vocabulary that avoids 50-cent words and so they should. They rarely speak of the power of metaphor and other
literary devices to convey meaning. But the higher journalism incorporates the metaphors of poetry and fiction. Academic journalists might look more critically and carefully at the linguistic gifts of the very best practitioners. They might examine literary and critical texts in order to strengthen the journalistic understanding of language and the imagination. This applies equally to the art of narration.

Every article, whether a simple news brief or a complex feature, whether it announces the death of Baby Gabriel's father or provides a detailed Truman Capote account of the murder of a family and an investigation in an obscure town in Kansas, represents a puzzle in narration. The narrative structure is the solution. The same style books that promote simple words also promote a declarative style and the use of the active voice. Writers in fiction such as Henry James have written extensively on narration and dramatization and he and others might be consulted in the name of journalism.

Finally, many articles of substance incorporate ideas which guide the assessment and interpretation of the facts they report. Sometimes these are a conscious part of the journalist's method. A vivid set of examples was contained in the editions of Vanity Fair starting September 1987 in which Gail Sheehy published profiles of the candidates for the Presidency. Her work may be termed 'psychojournalism' and for better or for worse—I would say for worse for reasons which have no bearing here—she incorporates the techniques of psychoanalysis into the empirical tasks of reporting. Another vivid example is in a recent edition of Esquire in which Robert Timberg, White House correspondent for The Baltimore Sun, describes the relationship of Oliver North, the Iran-Contra culprit, and James Webb, a secretary of the navy in the Reagan administration. Ollie and Jim were classmates at Annapolis, officers in the American services in Vietnam, and genuine heroes. Timberg foraged carefully into the lore of Annapolis and the experience of Vietnam in order to provide a view of what each of these men enshrine, in their individual ways, in the subsequent drama of U.S. politics. The ideas such journalists use can be a conscious object of study. The meaning of the here and now can reflect in a more orderly way the world of ideas which is the university's special province.

To summarize, the journalist in his or her simplest and most complex tasks expresses a judgment on the importance of an item, engages in reporting, adopts words and metaphors, solves a narrative puzzle and assesses and interprets. The capacity to do these things efficiently and effectively is a reflection of a journalist's education and training. It is a reflection of his or her training in judgment and interpretation inspired by the study of politics and the social sciences as well as the established conventions of journalism; it is a reflection of linguistic skill and narrative techniques that earns as much from poetry and prose as it does from journalism; it is a reflection of an imagination for reporting that comes as much from scholarship and law as it comes from journalism. So the elements which the
academic culture studies, and promotes and formalizes so thoroughly can be articulated to the elements of journalism. By inclination and obligation, the academy formalizes the study of these elements. By inclination and habit, journalists do not. They are stored in the heads of editors. The step into the academic culture requires that editors and journalism educators formalize what they know—to organize, reflect and comment on the storehouse of standards and method over which they preside—so that the heritage may be efficiently and thoughtfully transmitted.

II

To turn now to the more self-consciously academic wing of the schools. There are, of course, worthy and interesting scholars soldiering away in such wings. Nothing said here is intended to insult their standards or intentions. However, there is a persistent problem or set of problems in the academic wings for which the search for solutions is no less important than the search for methods to strengthen the teaching of professional practices. To begin with, all teaching and research in journalism schools should be conducted in the name of professional practices. Medical schools produce doctors and the knowledge generated within such schools is intended to strengthen the methods of the physician in his or her clinical incarnation. Conceptually, journalism schools should be no different. Sometimes they are; sometimes they are not. And if they are not it is because the communications scholar imagines politicians or policy-makers rather than journalists as the primary clients for their studies. If their scholarship were to speak more naturally and thoughtfully to journalists, a major problem would be overcome. However, they would still face a serious structural obstacle.

The current realities and arrangement of priorities require that academic instructors must struggle for status and time with students who are largely consumed with the acquisition of craft skills. The courses of academic instructors are, accordingly, sometimes downgraded and considered as extras, not sufficiently valued by the professors of professional practices. So much of the tension between the professional and scholarly casts of mind is not simply expressed in tension between the schools and the university at large, but is internal to the structure of priorities within the schools themselves.

But there is yet an even more basic problem in the academic wing. It is that despite the interdisciplinary character of journalism the social sciences have for too long dominated the agenda for research and academic teaching. This is not all bad, of course. However, if by scholarship we mean the study of mass media institutions and communication processes—a study which fits nicely into sociology or a part of political science—then the scholarly task has been conceived too narrowly to fit the needs and aims of professional education. It means that the moral, the literary, and the philosophical faces of journalism education—not to mention its more manifestly professional faces—are not given the kind of academic
attention they deserve. The view of journalism education I am promoting borrows as heavily from the humanities—particularly from literature—as it does from the social sciences. In my view, it speaks to the professionals in a voice they recognize because it starts with journalism, makes sense of it and thereby strengthens what journalists themselves value.

The solution to the problem or problems lies not in the correction of the skills these scholars possess, but in the development of a vision of the aims of journalism scholarship which turns it more manifestly and practically towards professional ends. The solution lies in providing a vision of the field that minimizes the importance of the current division of labour and gives journalism education a unitary character embracing both wings. Here is what I suggest.

Traditionally, the fields of journalism have been neatly divided into professional practices, ethics, communication and society, communication theory, communication law, and so on. While these categories of interest and knowledge are sound, they are not linked in a manner which makes them seem like elements in a single body of knowledge. They seem to have an independence, one from another, connected neither by method nor object of inquiry.

They need to be reorganized into a single field of Journalism Studies. Study in journalism should be integrated just as political science represents an integration of separate approaches to the single subject of politics. As before, the step towards integration requires the adoption of journalism, not mass communication, as the primary point of reference. With journalism as the unambiguous point of reference, the field should then be divided into five sub-fields which themselves would include further areas of specialization. The sub-fields are derived from the notions of meaning, operations, social and political context, criticism and methodology. Here in brief is what I suggest.

By meaning I am referring to the Philosophy of Journalism or at least that part of it which speaks to the conscious intentions of journalists. The sub-field of the Philosophy of Journalism would be constructed out of texts in political, moral and literary philosophy. For example, the history of the idea of freedom of expression, the examination of moral claims made on behalf of journalism, and even the writings of members of the functionalist school of social science such as Robert Park and Harold Lasswell provide opportunities to speak to the "meaning" of journalism. The meaning of journalistic work is to be found in the realm of that part of culture defined by politics and literature. Even a writer like Orwell, with a well-defined set of political aims, sought meaning in the purely literary dimensions of his work. The journalism educator starts his work accordingly with the inspiration contained in the analysis of intentions and goals.

By operations I am referring to the range of Professional Practices and methods, from newsgathering, newswriting and editing to layout and design; from
radio and television production techniques to documentary film. It is the primary sub-field in Journalism Studies, not standing on its own, but making sense of all the rest. It corresponds in journalism education, as I have already said, to clinical work in medical education. Furthermore, Professional Practices encompasses ethics, law and public or current affairs and, as the Oregon Report prescribed, it presents opportunities and obligations to link up with traditional disciplines such as political science, literature, economics and law.

Media Studies or Mass Communications are the titles normally applied to the sub-field of inquiry which leaves intentions and/or meaning and operations behind and locates communications systems in the landscape of power, social structure, culture and behaviour. In a sense, the sub-field examines how intentions and practices of journalists and the manner in which they are organized turn out in society. It is the business mainly of historians and social scientists, some of whom have an identity with or attachment to journalism practice, some of whom do not. The many communications programs divorced from journalism, that have emerged in Canada, the U.S. and Europe are concerned with refining this portrait of the place of communication in society. For some scholars an independent discipline has been established. From the point of view of journalism education, the work of such scholars—at least the part that provides data and theorizes about the relationship between journalism/communication processes, on the one hand, and social and political effects on the other—constitutes a sub-field of Journalism Studies.

Criticism is criticism—thoughtful reflections on the moral, technical, intellectual and artistic achievements of journalists. It is itself an artful blend of the materials of the other three sub-fields. It is comprised of the opinion of the world’s best editor or producer. Methodology is the self-conscious development and evaluation of the methods by which we create knowledge. Journalism Studies is a branch of the humanities and the social sciences and shares with them the methodological dilemmas, curiosities and disputes of the other disciplines.

So, in order to create a unitary and coherent field of study, I suggest, in summary, that it be organized into five sub-fields: (a) the philosophy of journalism, (b) professional practices, (c) mass media studies, (d) criticism, and (e) methodology.

III

I have concentrated on curriculum and not on research. That is because the problems are not very different. The problem of research—the agenda for study by journalism educators—is the same as the problem of curriculum. It makes no sense at this stage of the development of journalism knowledge to say that there are tasks for the classroom or workshop and tasks for the scholar in his or her private incarnation. Journalism educators must compare themselves to scholars working in older fields in order to get a picture of their problems and
responsibilities. As a political scientist with the job of teaching undergraduate courses in the Canadian politics, one can readily borrow from extant work—textbooks, anthologies, and articles in the field's journals—in order to stitch together a coursebook of materials for undergraduates or graduate students. A teacher of law charged by his dean with the responsibility of teaching constitutional law can similarly go to existing texts, commentaries and law reports.

The journalism educator is not in a similar situation. True, there are some reliable books and commentaries, learned articles and thoughtful reviews. But the environment of scholarship and learning is utterly different and, to a large extent, must be created. So, the work, initially, is to provide a clear picture of what we need to know in order to provide good courses; those materials must be organized and formalized so that they can be easily recovered -- so that they may form, subject of course to review and re-examination, part of the equity in journalism knowledge created by journalism scholars for journalism students and practitioners. As this is being done, the research agenda will fall into place.

ENDNOTES


3. Report, p. 1
4. Report, p. 5
5. Report, p. 10
6. Report, p. 10
7. Report, p. 11
8. Report, p. 11
9. Report, p. 79
10. Report, p. 79
11. Report, p. 79
12. Report, p. 79
13. Report, p. 80

14. Baby Gabriel was born without a brain, but she was kept alive on a life-support system so that her organs could be used for transplants. Less than a month after her heart saved the life of a British Columbia infant, Baby Gabriel's father, Fred Schouten, died of a heart attack. The reference here is to the page one account of his death in *The London Free Press*, Thursday, Dec. 10, 1987. The reference to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and, more particularly, to the art of narration is taken from Alfred Kazin's commentary on it and other works of the so-called New Journalism in "The World as a Novel: From Capote to Mailer", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XVI, No. 6, April 8, 1971, pp. 26-30


17. See George Orwell, *Collectsed Essays*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961). In "The Prevention of Literature" Orwell writes (p. 332) ...literature is an attempt to influence the viewpoint of one's contemporaries by recording experience. And so far as freedom of expression is concerned, there is not much difference between a mere journalist and the most 'unpolitical' imaginative writer. The journalist is unfree, and is conscious of unfreedom, when he is forced to write lies or suppress what seems to him important news; the imaginative writer is unfree when he has to falsify his subjective feelings, which from his point of view are facts."