

## Introduction

A new information age is taking shape, with upheavals across the globe. “The information revolution has been changing the world profoundly and irreversibly for some time now, at a breath-taking pace, and with unprecedented scope. It has made the creation, processing, management, and utilization of information vital issues” (Floridi, 2013, p. xii). According to Leah Lievrouw (2011, p. 1), “The proliferation and convergence of networked media and information technologies have helped generate a renaissance of new genres and modes of communication, and have redefined people’s engagement with media . . . Media audiences and consumers are now also media users and participants immersed in complex ecologies of divides, diversities, networks, communities and literacies.” In W. Lance Bennett’s (2016, p. ix) reflections on the news, “the media system has fragmented into broadcast and cable channels, online platforms and social media . . . an expanding mediaverse that resembles a big bang of proliferating online competitors that are stealing audiences and ad revenues and challenging the very definition of news itself.” In a special issue of *African Journalism Studies*, the new digital technologies on the African continent “have radically altered virtually every aspect of news gathering, writing and reporting” (Mabweazara, 2015, p. 2; cf. Wasserman, 2018, pp. 154–162).

The revolution in communication technologies is a worldwide phenomenon. High-tech electronic firms are re-mapping the planet into digital form. More than four thousand science parks around the world are a paradise for computer entrepreneurs. China’s Alibaba e-commerce Group is larger than Facebook, Amazon, and IBM combined. In the United States, more than five thousand communications and cyber companies are clustered in Silicon

Valley, California, and Silicon Alley, New York. Bangalore, India, is an information technology megacity, and Tel Aviv a global attraction for hi-tech start-ups and venture capital investments. South Korea has the greatest broadband penetration and is a world leader in the online-gaming phenomenon (Jin, 2010). Singapore is called “Intelligent Island,” given its aim to link every office, home, and school to a multimedia network. The AI Bridging Cloud Infrastructure (ABCI) in Japan became operational in 2018 as the world’s fastest supercomputer. Geography has been organized by political coordinates – Eastern Bloc, Global South, Cold War superpowers, nonaligned movement, European colonialism. But now the globe is being ordered by the Web 2.0 phenomenon.

The new media congeries of optical fiber, cloud data storage, wireless communication, and satellite technology, although inescapably global, are local and personal as well. DirecTV, MP3 music, pocket computers, online databases, digital imaging, Open Source Software, video games – cyberspace is becoming the everyday communication world in societies everywhere. Five billion mobile phones worldwide are the new technology leader, accounting for 10 percent of all internet usage on the planet (International Telecommunications Union, 2017). China leads the world with more mobile phones than citizens, and this technology is similarly a phenomenon in Africa: “The unprecedented diffusion and pervasiveness of the mobile phone across social classes in Africa remain one of the most significant exemplars of the impact of digital technologies on the continent. It has proved critical in shaping everyday life” (Mabweazara, 2015, p. 2). Grant Kien’s book-length study of mobile phones in North America, China, Korea, and Japan describes a “seismic shift” in the global citizens’ media to fluidity – what Zygmunt Bauman (2005) calls “liquid modernity.” Smart phones have “re-invented” electronic space as “mobile territory” and “transit itself is a new normal” (Kien, 2009, p. 2).

The new technologies are giving us communication abundance but with complications and contradictions. Schools teach computer literacy, while terrorists on four continents use online networks to coordinate planning. Finance and banking are the most advanced information systems in history; they led the world into an economic depression.<sup>1</sup> The growth of sectarianism and fundamentalism is making democracy nearly impossible. The Westphalian model of state sovereignty is in crisis, with globalization drawing the “administrative-material functions of the state into increasingly

<sup>1</sup> For Hoogvelt (2001), “The global financial network is the mother of all networks; it strides atop the entire edifice of global economic activities” (p. 128).

volatile contexts that far exceed any one state's capacities" (Benhabib, 2004, p. 4). The new technological landscape has created unprecedented opportunities for expression and interaction, while the elementary distinction between fact and fiction erodes. The inequalities of ethnicity, gender, and immigration are devastating; education is underfunded even as consumerism prospers (Commers et al., 2008). Data mining is a formidable challenge for media credibility. The unlimited amount of electronic data is a golden resource of information for reporting and persuasion, but no logical categories exist that are standardized. Big data lead to technological imperatives without transparency, with data-management techniques tending to determine what is newsworthy and cinematic.

The revolution in technology is engaging media studies across the curriculum (Curran, 2012; McChesney, 2013). Political communication gives it priority, particularly its meaning for the participation of citizens in democratic life. Communication research is probing what it entails for both quantitative and interpretive methodologies. International communication searches for the most appropriate concepts to summarize it – “digital age,” “neoliberalism,” “the era of interconnection,” for example. History is rewriting its typologies to understand media technology's continuities and discontinuities in comparative terms. The Oxford philosopher Luciano Floridi (2013) calls on his discipline to provide “a foundational treatment of the phenomenon and the ideas underlying the information revolution” (p. xii), a challenge he emulates himself (cf. Floridi, 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Media ethics has begun to engage the technological revolution also; but in theory and application it ought to foreground the philosophy-of-technology tradition to do so competently. In presenting a new perspective on international media ethics, this book demonstrates why and how our theorizing gives the philosophy of technology intellectual priority. Engaging moral philosophy as it does for the *ethics* side of the equation, the philosophy of technology anchors the *media* dimension.

#### PRINT AND BROADCAST JOURNALISM

Historically, mass communication ethics developed in parallel with print technology; in that founding period, the predilection was news. The harms

<sup>2</sup> Floridi's understanding of intellectual history leads to the provocative and illuminating conclusion that today's information revolution is as pathbreaking as those led by Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud (*The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere Is Reshaping Human Reality*, 2014).

an unregulated press could do to society were first connected to ethical principles in North America and Europe in the 1890s, when scholars began assessing journalism academically. These initial explorations inspired the first systematic work in media ethics during the 1920s in the United States. In Europe also, several ethical issues with a journalism orientation emerged in the early twentieth century. Sensationalism was considered contrary to the public service role of the newspaper. Junkets and freebies, criticized already in the nineteenth century, were treated more formally in the context of increasing business competition.

The intellectual roots of the democratic press were formed when print technology was the exclusive option, so most of the research in media ethics centered on newspaper reporting – the gathering, publication, and dissemination of news. Many of the perpetual issues in journalism ethics – invasion of privacy, conflict of interest, sensationalism, confidentiality of sources, and stereotyping – received their sharpest focus in a print context.

Edmund Lambeth's *Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession* (1992) outlines a framework for ethical journalism from the codes, values, and best practices in the field. Nicholas Russells's *Morals and the Media: Ethics in Canadian Journalism* (1994) analyzes reporters' ethical responsibility for the issues journalism faces as a profession. Philip Seib and Kathy Fitzpatrick's *Journalism Ethics* (1997) uses case studies to explore the journalist's duties. John Merrill's *Journalism Ethics: Philosophical Foundations for the News Media* (1997) explores such concepts as individualism and responsibility to understand everyday journalism practice. In Steven Knowlton's *Moral Reasoning for Journalists: Cases and Commentary* (1997), real-life cases are combined with ethical principles to teach journalists how to balance competing interests. Francis Kasoma's *Journalism Ethics in Africa* (1994) applies ethical theory to photojournalism and news reporting. Charles Frost in his *Media Ethics and Self-Regulation* (2000) concentrates on the everyday problems of working journalists in Britain. Pedro Gomes's *Direto de Ser: An Ètica da comunicacao na Amèrica Latina* (1990) applies the principles of liberation theology to journalism in the Latin American context. In their *Ethics and the Australian News Media* (1994), John Hurst and Sally White compare the moral standards of the Australian press with those of journalists in Western society generally.

The technology of news systems changed in the late twentieth century. With the decade of the 1990s, television became the primary source of news, and information radio, such as National Public Radio (NPR), was vital. Even as television established itself as the principal arbiter of news,

the norm of truthfulness from print set the standard for broadcast. Research emphasizing the news function examined cases and problems from broadcasting, the wire service agencies, and documentaries, in addition to everyday reporting. James Ettema and Theodore Glasser's *Custodians of Conscience* (1998) on investigative journalism was based on extensive interviews with award-winning newspaper and television reporters. The authors concluded that investigative journalists trained in either technology are the custodians of the public conscience.

Thomas Cooper's comprehensive bibliography, *Television and Ethics* (1988b), called for a shift to television and film ethics in their own right. And some book-length treatments began to emerge that took seriously the technological properties of the visual media. *Image Ethics* did not construct a full-scale theory of visual ethics but began articulating a coherent ethics of representation (Gross et al., 1988). Val Limburg's *Electronic Media Ethics* (1984) applied the classical principles of ethics to the broadcast era – news, advertising, and business management. Julianne Newton's *The Burden of Visual Truth* (2001) on the news media combined visual communication theory with research on photojournalism and media imagery. Despite sporadic efforts to make the new broadcast technologies a distinct variable, the content of the news profession remained the preoccupation of media ethics.

In the earliest attempts to internationalize communication ethics, journalism was the core idea also: (1) the MacBride Report and (2) comparative research on journalism's codes of ethics. For these two defining episodes in the history of media ethics, print technology was the dominant context. Broadcast news was included only when it was deemed relevant.

One significant historical event for internationalizing media ethics was the publication in 1980 of the MacBride Report, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order*. As president of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems and Irish diplomat, Sean MacBride supervised a review for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of international media policies and practices, communication and human rights, cultural diversity and professional journalism. The recommendations of *Many Voices, One World* established the debates ever since over the economic concentrations of media industries, journalism education in the developing world, the possibilities for democratic politics through the convergence of digital information systems, and the consolidation of free trade in communications products and services under the aegis of the World Trade Organization.

With the MacBride Report as background, the International Organization of Journalists produced a document called “International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism” at meetings in Prague and Paris in 1983. It emphasized the people’s right to germane information from the news media: “Mass communication ethics in terms of issues, participation, and setting – both professional and academic – had passed the international watershed” and had done so largely in categories established for newspaper reporting (Christians, 2000, pp. 29–32).

Codes of ethics were a second impetus to international media ethics. Codes of ethics for professional and academic associations had appeal in the 1990s and were seen as the conventional format for moral principles. For the most part, the journalism profession in various countries shared that understanding. The first comprehensive treatment by an international network of scholars, *Communication and Global Change*, appeared in 1989 edited by Thomas Cooper. Surveys of the codes of journalism ethics from thirteen countries were included. In the European context, Kaarle Nordenstreng’s *Reports on Media Ethics in Europe* (1995) included empirical studies on the way self-regulation was done in the European region. It advanced the earlier work of Pauli Juusela (1991) on ethics codes in twenty-four journalism organizations, and it included surveys of European media councils, examination of journalism codes of ethics in general, and research on the Finnish journalists’ adoption of their own code of ethics. Kai Hafez’s (2002) comparison of codes includes the Middle East and Muslim Asia; the detailed Bahrani “Journalism Code of Ethics” is one illustration, orienting its content to news under the traditional rubric, “free and responsible journalism” ([www.bahranijournalistics.org/References\\_and\\_documents/Meethaq](http://www.bahranijournalistics.org/References_and_documents/Meethaq)). Calling itself a “globally oriented media service,” Al Jazeera internationalized its 2006 and 2008 code of ethics in 2014 with “journalism values” its central axis (<http://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/2006/11/2008525185733692771.html>). Ita Himelboim and Yehiel Limor (2011) represent sophisticated research in this area, comparing more than two hundred media codes of ethics, while continuing the traditional emphasis on journalism.

As academic media ethics was systematized and internationalized during the eras of print and broadcasting, the essence of their technologies did not appear on the ethics agenda. The preoccupation with news content in print journalism carried over into broadcast technology. The list of ethical issues that emerged in radio and television news was not fundamentally different from those in print. Professional ethics monopolized by print became media criticism, in effect, when applied to broadcasting.

Broadcast journalism, rather than understood as electronic communication in its own right, was seen as entertaining and lacking in substance compared to print. Instead of reconceiving truth for audio and visual technologies, linearity peculiar to print was the critical standard for judging radio and television news. Only intermittently did the scholars of media ethics scrutinize the transformation in technological form.

#### THE DIGITAL ETHICS AGENDA

For communication technologies, the early twenty-first century is a period of spectacular growth and substantial change, with few intellectual resources from the ethics of print and broadcast to address them. In the current digital era of networking, search engines, computer databases, online and cyberspace, media ethics is challenged to develop an agenda that reflects the distinctive properties of the new global system.

#### Ethical Issues from Media Studies

An early version of agenda setting was Thomas Cooper's "New Technology Effects Inventory: Forty Leading Ethical Issues" in a special issue of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* devoted to new media technologies (1988a). Cooper's typology has established itself in the literature: (a) some issues continue ethical concerns of the past, (b) a few issues are new, and (c) others create levels of complexity heretofore unknown (1988a, pp. 71–82). A content analysis of academic textbooks, journal articles that survey the state of the art in media ethics, and the assessments of professionals identify eight issues, three from Cooper's first category, one in the second, and four in category three.

#### *Ongoing Issues*

(1) In today's digital world, the ethical problem of distributive justice continues as before. Justice is the defining norm for all social institutions, including the policies and practices of media organizations. Regarding the principle that products and services ought to be distributed equitably, media access should be available to everyone as an essential need, regardless of income or geographical location. An ethics of justice in which distribution is based on need defines human necessities as those related to survival or subsistence – food, housing, clothing, safety, education, and medical care; none of these is frivolous or an individual whim. Everyone is entitled, without regard for personal achievement, to that which makes

human existence possible.<sup>3</sup> The new technologies cannot be envisioned except as a necessity, so the issue of just allocation remains on the agenda.

Global media networks make the world economy run, they give access to agricultural and health care information, they organize world trade, and they are the channels through which the United Nations and political discussion flow; through them, we monitor both war and peace. Therefore, as a necessity of life in a global order, information and communication technology (ICT) systems ought to be distributed impartially, regardless of income, race, geography, or merit (Christians, 2011b, p. 7).

However, the offline inequities of print and broadcast technologies continue to exist in the digital era. Information technology compounds the injustice of the digital divide – understood in a narrow sense as between rich and poor (Norris, 2001), and on a deeper level in terms of social divides (Bugeja, 2017). “Unless we manage to solve it,” Floridi argues, “the digital divide may become a chasm, generating new forms of discrimination between those who can be denizens of the infosphere, and those who cannot” (2014, pp. 48–49). Technological societies have high levels of computer concentration with the opposite true of nonindustrial societies. In the United Nations data on internet penetration rates in 2017, developed societies score 81 percent, compared with 40 percent in developing countries and 15 percent in the least developed countries (International Telecommunications Union, 2017). There is a correlation between per capita gross national product and internet distribution, with 2017 data indicating that 84 percent of households in Europe are connected, compared with 18 percent in Africa (International Telecommunications Union, 2017). The world’s nearly one billion people in urban slums are largely disenfranchised: “The internet media do not just perpetuate social inequalities, but often multiply them. In reality, the global village is a gated community” (Debatin, 2008, p. 260).

Lev Manovich (2012) raises the justice issue for big data in somewhat different terms. He argues that big data create a new class hierarchy in which its people and organizations can be categorized into three groups: “those who create data, those who have the means to collect it, and those who have the expertise to analyze it” (p. 470). This elite stratification in the era of big data represents a new social domain that may reinforce

<sup>3</sup> This argument for distributive justice is based on the standard account of basic human needs. The capabilities approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum is another formulation, accounted for in Chapters 2 and 4.



digital inequality. It raises ethical questions such as privacy intrusion and business manipulation without informed consent from consumers.

(2) Harold Innis's *Empire and Communication* (1952) identified political empire as an issue with print technology, and it continues for digital ethics today. Printed documents enabled the control of geographical space; for Innis, strengthening the power of the political elite by print technologies was a profound moral issue. Print enabled governments to standardize, administer, and hold accountable their political regimes.

With digital technology, the empire problem means state surveillance in unprecedented terms (Ess, 2012, p. 54).<sup>4</sup> Six weeks after the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York's World Trade Center, President George W. Bush signed the USA Patriot (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act into law. The act shifted the Department of Justice's goal from prosecuting terrorists to preventing terrorism, and that historic change in U.S. policy continues with only minor modifications. Within U.S. borders, it initiated the relentless campaign to tighten security. Protection against terrorism has allowed a secret information-gathering process, not for probable cause, but for any alleged reason to investigate insurgency. Upon its frequent renewal, the technicalities of the USA Patriot Act have been refined, but its expansive powers remain intact. In the revelations of Eric Snowden and their aftermath, the U.S. National Security Agency is abusively intrusive into private affairs at home and into government affairs internationally. Historical archives, ethnographic research, and media content analysis verify that terrorism, anti-democratic state secrecy, and speculative technological practices are organizing U.S. security policy with negative consequences long term.

Expanded judicial authority to detain and profile also appeared after 9/11 in Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act; in the United Kingdom's counterterrorism laws (tightened even further after the July 7, 2005, attacks in London); and in France, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Singapore, and Austria. India's Home Ministry now has the right to monitor and decrypt digital messages whenever it judges eavesdropping to be vital to national security (Bajaj & Austen, 2010, pp. B1, B8). In 2005, Australia passed a stringent Anti-Terrorism Act, adding counterterrorism amendments in 2015 that its critics consider a breach of human rights and politically divisive. These are international illustrations that the pressure toward allowing abusive

<sup>4</sup> Carlson & Ebel (2012) focus the empire issue on the power that military technology gives to the state (for summary, see p. 225).

police and military force has taken the foreground; searching for alternative approaches and fresh thinking on surveillance is rarely on the agenda. In international counter-terrorism, new media technologies and networks are making high-technology surveillance intractable.

Harris Breslow argues for “flow and mobility” as two “emergent properties” of globalization, and this networked apparatus redefines the scope and character of surveillance in “supermodernity” (Breslow & Ziethen, 2015, pp. 6–7):

People, materiel, finances, information, and cultural objects circulate among hubs within a network of delimited routes whose smooth functioning requires the continuous surveillance of everything that is moving therein. The surveillance of these circulatory networks enables the establishment of behavioral norms based upon the protocols of movement and behavior across a network and within any of the hubs found within a network. (Breslow & Ziethen, 2015, p. 10; cf. pp. vii–xx, 3–23; cf. Breslow & Mousoutzanis, 2012)

In the globalized era of network space, in Breslow’s terms, “Subjects . . . move through at least two types of nodes: Nodes of surveillance and control, where they are observed and disciplined, and ideological nodes where subjectivity is inculcated and informed” (Breslow & Ziethen, 2015, p. 15). Given the “flow and mobility” understanding of surveillance in supermodernity, democratic societies everywhere face a conundrum – aggressive data gathering is judged to be essential even though the process erodes the very democratic values that warrant protection.

(3) The issues of political economy are salient for today’s digital media as they were for print and broadcast. With the new electronic technologies radically rupturing media systems worldwide, institutional structures are of special importance to global media ethics. A long-term study of thirty countries indicates that the concentration of media ownership continues to escalate, with the internet amplifying cross-national condensation (Noam, 2016). With the new “distribution technologies and deregulated markets . . . a handful of conglomerates dominate the media landscape . . . and produce a synergy that maximizes profits and decreases risk” (Wasko, 2014, pp. 67–68). Christian Fuchs (2014) makes the ongoing importance of political economy a scholarly imperative: “The information economy is not new, postmodern or radically discontinuous. It is rather a highly complex formation in which various contemporary and historical forms of labour, exploitation, different forms of organization of the productive forces, and different modes of production are articulated with each other and form a dialectic of exploitation” (p. 296).