**Fundamentals of Cyber Media**

On-line or Cyber Journalism to get ‘online’, meaning to connect to the Internet, you need to have: A Computer: Computer equipment is a sizeable investment and thus you should select a computer carefully.

Before buying a computer, understand your needs and then choose one accordingly. See that it comes with a warranty and that after sales service is available in case you need it.

Internet Service Provider: This is the software that you will require to get online. You can now choose from a dial-up service or 24-hour broadband services. This is the service that will help you to connect to the Internet and start your surfing experiences.

The World Wide Web has spawned the newest medium for journalism, on-line or Cyber journalism. The speed at which news can be disseminated on the web, and the profound penetration to anyone with a computer and web browser, have greatly increased the quantity and variety of news reports available to the average web user. The bulk of on-line journalism has been the extension of existing print and broadcast media into the web via web versions of their primary products. News reports that were set to be released at expected times can now be published as soon as they are written and edited, increasing the deadline pressure and fear of being scooped which many journalists must deal with. The digitalization of news production and the diffusion capabilities of the internet are challenging the traditional journalistic professional culture. The concept of participatory or citizen journalism proposes that amateur reporters can actually produce their own stories either inside or outside professional media outlets. Most news websites are free to their users, except some websites, for which a subscription is required to view its contents. But some outlets, such as the New York Times website, offer current news free, but archived reports and access to opinion columnists and other non-news sections for a periodic fee.

Many newspapers are branching into new mediums because of the Internet. Their websites may now include video, podcasts, blogs and slideshows. Story chat, where readers may post comments on an article, has changed the dialogue newspapers foster. Traditionally kept to the confines of the opinion section as letters to the editor, story chat has allowed readers to express opinions without the time delay of a letter or the approval of an editor. The growth of blogs as a source of news and especially opinion on the news has changed journalism forever. Blogs now can create news as well as report it, and blur the dividing line between news and opinion. The debate about whether blogging is really journalism rages on. Cyber journalism is a term coined after the merging of various traditional media brought about by the proliferation of media industries due to current influx of new technology and globalization. Cyber journalism made possible by the Internet technology has gained importance and is functioning as a pervasive medium along with the traditional media such as print and electronic. However, cyber journalism has created a big vacuum in journalism education and training since it is a recent development in journalism and journalism educators are caught unprepared.

**Characteristics of new media**

Significant attributes of the new media are interactivity, demassification and synchronization. So it allows for more individualized communication. ‘First rule of journalism is show. Do not tell’. Online medium provides it. Faceless community all over the world consume eagerly the service of this media. New media provide multifaceted facilities, along with certain characteristics. Immediacy Speed and immediacy are two greatest virtues of new media. With the help of a mouse click whole world comes before the person. 3G and 4G technologies now turn the entire scenario. Information superhighway is revolutionizing the world. The challenge facing online journalists is to balance the legitimate desires of the online audience for breaking news reports with the professional’s tradition of fairness, completeness, balance and accuracy. Interactivity -New media is known for its ability to involve the audience. This is known as interactivity. Hence, we can say that compared to other media forms, new media has the most evolved feedback system in place. Digital media offer us a significant increase in our opportunity to manipulate and intervene in media. These multiple opportunities are often referred to as the interactive potential of new media. Interactivity is understood as one of the key ‘value added’ characteristics of new media as it offers opportunities for making connections between individuals, within organisations and individuals and organisations. Much of this connectivity will be of the registration interactivity mode defined above where individuals add to, change, or synthesise the texts received from others. However, when email and chat sites are considered from the point of view of human communication, ideas about the degree of reciprocity between participants in an exchange are brought into play. So, from Communication studies point of view, degrees of interactivity are further broken- down on the basis of the kinds of communication that occur within computer- mediated communication (CMC).

**Universality- Web Journalism** is a global media. It is not limited by time and space. New media is a platform which connects the whole world. New media provide multifaceted facilities. News about every incident happen anywhere is reachable to any other extent within a few minutes. Internet and World Wide Web point out another era of journalism. The wire services were primary link into the outside world. They provide a world view solidly within the social constructs of journalism. Online communication is an opportunity to communicate, learn, share, buy and sell. It is user controlled highly user controlled and essentially egalitarian.

**Hypertext-** The prefix ‘hyper’ is derived from a Greek word which has the meaning of ‘Above, beyond, or outside’. Hence hypertext has come to describe a text which provides a network of links to other texts that are ‘outside, above, and beyond’ itself. It can be defined as a work which is made up from discrete units of material in which each one carries a number of pathways to other units. The work is a web of connection which the user explores using the navigational aids of the interface design. Each discrete ‘node’ in the web has a number of entrances and exits or links. Common, hypertext media are called non-linear media.

Implications are that

(a) one need not read documents in a prescribed order;

(b) authors, styles and permissible rules of content may vary as one reads linked documents;

(c) responsibility and control is diffused - as is ownership of the resulting content;

(d) form and structure is easily changed, composed on demand for individuals Multimedia Online platforms have a greater advantage over other media and that is Multimedia facilities. Whenever stories are supported by cartoons, moving pictures, sound and music, it is called multimedia. The word Convergence means “come towards each other and meet at a point”. So media convergence is, computer and telecommunication technologies used in the multimedia systems for the transfer and exchange of information, data, graphics and sound. E.g. watch video and films on the computer, Read a news paper on the net.

**CYBER MEDIA AESTHETICS**

Content

News in the web is displayed in a particular way. They will be short. Quality online content is timely, informative, entertaining, clear, concise, accurate, balanced and fair. Above all, online content must be conversational. The content should be simple and informative. Creating, compelling, engaging, interesting and entertaining copy is critical when writing news online. Audio, video, photos, graphics and the text itself must attract and hold readers. All of the bells and whistles of interactivity, movement sound and colour that can be found on many web sites go for naught if the copy falls flat. The intent and type of the content varies and they should be catchy.

Design

The design of online media became simple and interactive nowadays. The design allows connection, discussion and impact on readers. Basically it is the design of web pages through which, audience has the option; what to view, hear and read. Visual logic should be incorporated with design. New media commonly exist in smart (computing) devices and networks. As such, these systems can be instructed to customize, individualize information for each user. The idea of mass media is challenged in an environment where different messages are crafted for each member of an audience.

Colours and Fonts

Web pages have sound movements and interactivity. Reading on a computer screen is difficult so it is necessary to make news presentation scan able, and by highlighting the key words or sentences by different colour or underline or by text font/variations. The three layers; spoken, written and image language together form single text in online platforms. Using light colours and simple and easily readable fonts still continues as a trend.

Template

This is a busy world and the facility in online platforms help to save time for the users and it is known as template. A template is a file that serves as a starting point for a new document. Templates can either come with a program or be created by the user. Most major programs support templates, so if anyone is creating similar documents over and over again, it might be a good idea to save one of them as a template. Then they won't have to format their documents each time they want to make a new one. Just open the template and start from there.

Navigation Bars

Navigation Bars are a set of buttons or images in a row or column that serves as a control point to link the user to sections on a Web site. The navigation bar may also be a single graphic image with multiple selections. A navigation bar (or navigation system) is a section of a graphical user interface intended to aid visitors in accessing information. Navigation bars are implemented in file browsers, web browsers and as a design element of some web sites.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are primarily used to initiate inter activity. Links are provided in between texts in blue colour or with underline. For example, if the text says about the people who had miraculous escape from the collapsed WTC building, there will be link to the list of escaped people. A click on it will reach the web pages listing the names. From there anyone can click to the list of Indians or Keralites. Users can find out if somebody known to them is there or not. Sometimes the link can be given to other sites as well.

**CONSTITUTENTS OF CYBER MEDIA**

**A blog** (short for weblog) is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Blogs are defined by their format: a series of entries posted to a single page in reverse-chronological order. Blogs generally represent the personality of the author or reflect the purpose of the Web site that hosts the blog. Topics sometimes include brief philosophical musings, commentary on Internet and other social issues, and links to other sites the author favours, especially those that support a point being made on a post. Blogs represent a significant shift in information flow, where information flows from many to many seamlessly. It is a serious challenge to traditional journalism. Blogs do not have gatekeepers, so they are raw, honest, immediate passionate, opinionated and strike an emotional chord. At times they may not be credible as there are no gatekeepers. It is professional journalism versus amateur journalism. Media has realised the growing power of blogs. So news websites nowadays encourage blogging by their employees on their site.Many celebrities too have their own blogs. Blogs are on varied topics. They are easy to start but difficult to sustain. Those who wish to start a blog will have higher cyber space without payments and start to use the space. Add text, colours, paintings, photos, audio, visual, animation, graphics and more. Publish advertisements, persuasive pieces, and campaign materials; make money by business promotion, public relation activity, reviews etc. The ówner’of the blog decides the content and design. Seamless freedom is the major attraction of blogs. This is a global space. Any person around the world with internet accessibility can open the page and read. Blogs offer such an international opportunity to interact with the real faceless community. Though there is an international accepted code of ethics in journalism, all laws and regulations regarding publications in one country are applicable for a blog. The advantages of blogs are creative freedom, instantaneity, interactivity, lack of marketing constraints. The key features of a blog includes content area, archives, comments, feeds, plug ins, widgets, themes, templates, trackbacks, pingbacks.

**A vlog** (or video blog) is a blog that contains video content. The small, but growing, segment of the blogosphere devoted to vlogs is sometimes referred to as the vlogosphere. is a form of web television. Vlog entries often combine embedded video (or a video link) with supporting text, images, and other metadata. Entries can be recorded in one take or cut into multiple parts. The vlog category is popular on YouTube. Some bloggers have included video content for years. However, vlogging is becoming more common as equipment becomes cheaper and supporting software and hosting and aggregation sites become more prevalent. Both Yahoo and Google feature video sections and most MP3 players, such as iPod , support video. Anyone with access to a video-capable camera and a relatively recent computer with a high-speed connection can create a vlog and publish and distribute it online.

**A podcast** is an audio file that is automatically received from the internet and then synced to an MP3 player. The files are received by subscribing to what's called a podcast feed. A podcast is a digital medium that consists of an episodic series of audio or digital radio, subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer or mobile device. A list of all the audio or video files associated with a given series is maintained centrally on the distributor's server as a web feed, and the listener or viewer employs special client application software, known as a pod catcher, that can access this web feed, check it for updates, and download any new files in the series. This process can be automated so that new files are downloaded. Files are stored locally on the user's computer or other device ready for offline use. Podcasting contrasts with webcasting (Internet streaming), which generally isn't designed for offline listening to user-selected content. There are now thousands of podcasts and the number is growing rapidly. Podcasters (as they are called) are not restricted by traditional broadcast formats and regulations. This allows for numerous subjects and formats.

**Search Engines** The better way to locate specific information is to use a search engine. It is a web tool that helps to find specific sites on the internet. These are searchable indexes running on powerful computers that look up information, using key words. When enter a word or phrase to look up, the search engine locates any document containing the key words. The listed documents are called hits. The search results are generally presented in a line of results often referred to as search engine results pages (SERPs).

**Social media** are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual and networks. Social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of techno self studies. Social media differ from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking , social bookmarking, and wikis are among the different types of social media.

**CYBER MEDIA ETHICS**

A media revolution is transforming the nature of journalism and its ethics. The means to publish is now in the hands of citizens, while the internet encourages new forms of journalism that are interactive and immediate. Theorists often define ethics in terms of a set of principles of right or moral conduct. Digital technologies raise a host of thorny and troubling ethical challenges for journalists and media practitioners, whether professional or citizen journalists. Following is a sampling of some of the issues digital technologies raise for students, scholars and practitioners of media. Plagiarism has become an often-accepted practice and international cultural norm due at least in part to the ease and temptation of copying online sources. Digitally altering images or video is common in advertising and sometimes in news. Using anonymous sources is frequently an accepted practice in online journalism. Omni directional imaging is more than science fiction. . Ethics in new media concern various issues such as portrayal of violence, pornography, cyber crime, addiction, copyright, digital divide and so on.