

21st century news reporting between multimodality and social media

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FROM *MONOMODAL* TO *MULTIMODAL/MULTISEMIOTIC/CONVERGENCE* JOURNALISM



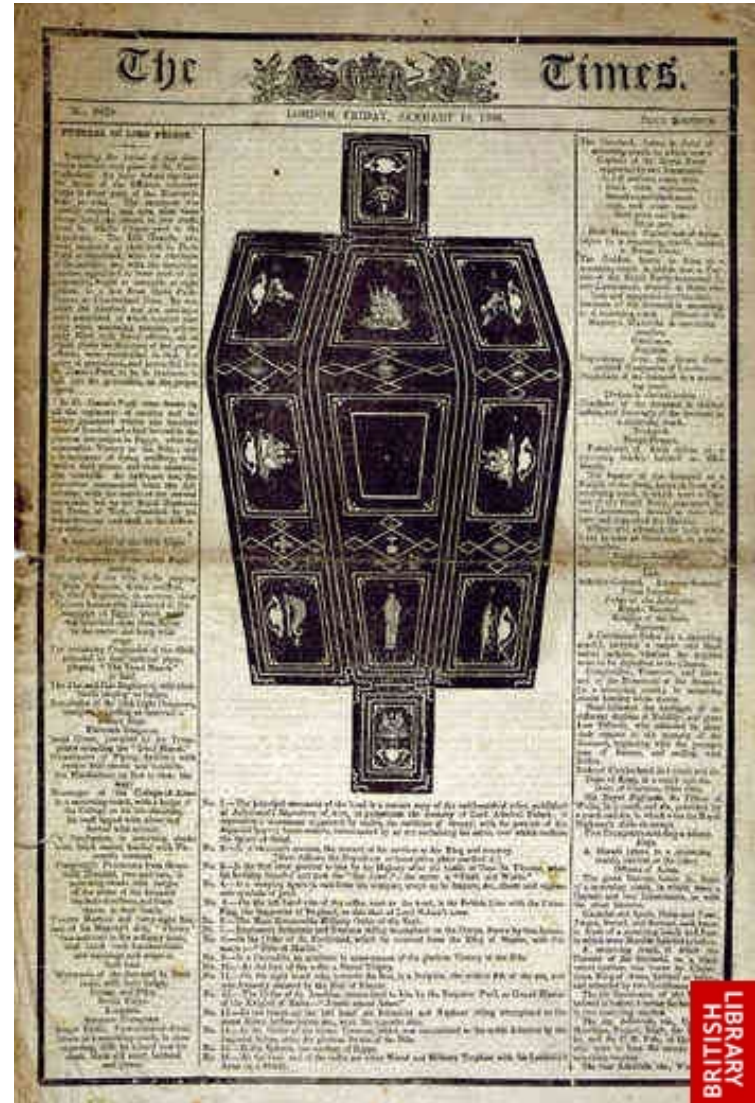
illustrated news stories

illustration

in *The Times*:

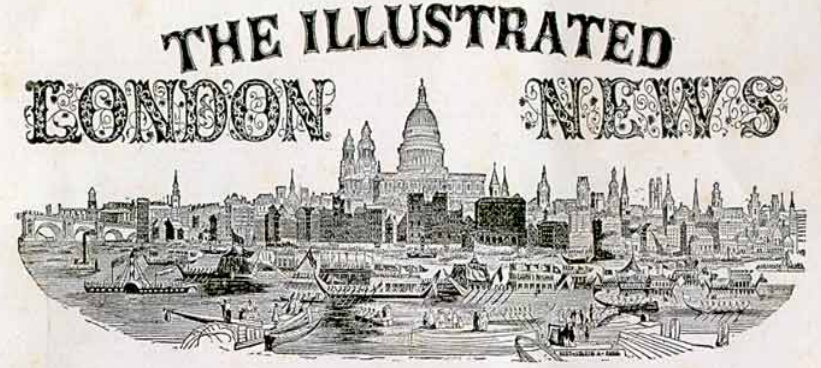
Lord Nelson's coffin

January 10, 1806



The world's first illustrated weekly news magazine: *The Illustrated London News*

- Launched on Saturday 14 May 1842
- engravings
- published weekly until 1971



No. 1.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1842. [SIXPENCE.

OUR ADDRESS.
 In presenting the first number of the *Illustrated London News* to the British Public, we would fain make a grateful entree into the wide and grand arena, which will henceforth contain so many actors for our benefit, and so many spectators of our career. In plain language, we do not produce this illustrated newspaper without some vanity, much ambition, and a fond belief that we shall be pardoned the presumption of the first quality by realizing the aspirations of the last. For the past ten years we have watched with admiration and enthusiasm the progress of illustrative art, and the vast revolution which it has wrought in the world of publication, through all the length and breadth of this mighty empire. To the wonderful march of periodical literature it has given an impetus and rapidity almost coeval with the gigantic power of steam. It has converted blocks into wisdom, and given wings and spirit to ponderous and senseless wood. It has in its turn adorned, gilded, reflected, and interpreted nearly every form of thought. It has given to fancy a new dwelling-place—no imagination a more permanent throne. It has set up fresh landmarks of poetry, given sterner pungency to satire, and mapped out the geography of mind with clearer boundaries and more distinct and familiar intelligence than it ever saw alone. Art—as now fostered, and redundant in the peculiar and facile department of wood engraving—has, in fact, become the bride of literature; genius has taken her as its handmaid; and popularity has crowned her with laurels that only seem to grow the greener the longer they are worn.

And there is now no staying the advance of this art into all the departments of our social system. It begins in a few isolated volumes—stretched itself next over fields of natural history and science—penetrated the arcana of our own general literature—and made companionship with our household books. At one plunge it was in the depth of the stream of poetry—working with its every current—partaking of the glow, and adding to the sparkles of the glorious waters—and so refreshing the very soul of genius that even Shakespeare came to us clothed with a new beauty, while other kindred poets of our language seemed as it were to have put on festive garments to crown the marriage of their muse to the arts. Then it walked abroad among the people, went into the poorer cottages, and visited the humblest homes in cheap guises, and perhaps, in roughish forms; but still with the illustrative and the instructive principle strongly worked upon, and admirably developed for the general improvement of the human race. Lastly, it took the merry aspect of fun, frolic, satire, and badinage; and the school of *Clarendon* began to blend itself with the graver pabulum of *Penny Cyclopedias* and *Saturday Magazines*.

And now, when we find the art accepted in all its elements, and welcomed by every branch of reading into which it has diverged; now, when we see the spirit of the times everywhere associating with it, and heralding or recording its success; we do hold life of somewhat triumphant onset, that we are, by the publication of this very newspaper, launching the giant vessel of illustration into a channel the broadest and the widest that it has ever dared to stem. We bound at once over the billows of new ocean—we sail into the very heart and focus of public life—we take the world of newspapers by storm, and flout a banner on which the words '*Illustrated News*' become symbols of a feeble purpose, and a more enlarged design, than was ever measured in that hemisphere till now.

The public will have henceforth under their glance, and within their grasp, the very form and presence of events as they transpire, in all their substantial reality, and with evidence visible as well as circumstantial. And whatever the bold and palpable delineations of wood engraving can teach to achieve, will now be brought to bear upon every subject, which attracts the attention of mankind, with a spirit in unison with the character of such subjects, whether it be serious or satirical, trivial or of purpose grave.

And, reader, let us open something of the detail of this great intention to your view. Begin, *per example*, with the highest region of newspaper literature—*The Political*. Why, what a field! If we are strong in the creed that we adopt—if we are honest, as we pledge ourselves to be, in the purpose that we maintain—show may we wield muscle, bone, and sinew to the tone taken and the cause espoused, by bringing to bear upon our opinions, a whole battery of vigorous illustrations. What "H D" does amid the vicillations of

parties, without any prominent opinions of his own, we can do with double regularity and consistency, and therefore with more valuable effect. Moreover, regard the homely illustration which nearly every public measure will afford: your Poor-laws—your Corn-laws—your Factory-bills—your Income-taxes! Look at the field of public posturings presented in your Houses of Legislature alone, and interesting to every constituency in the land. Open your police-offices, your courts of law, your criminal tribunals—all the pulp and marrow of the administration of justice—you can have it broadly before you, with points of force, of ridicule, of character, or of crime; and if the pen be ever led into falterous argument, the pencil must at least be conciliar with the spirit of truth.

In the world of diplomacy, in the architecture of foreign policy, we can give you every trick of the great Babel that other empires are seeking to level or to raise. Is there peace? then shall its arts, implements, and manufactures be spread upon our page. The literature—the customs—the dress—say, the institutions and localities of other lands, shall be brought home to you with spirit, with fidelity, and, we hope, with discretion and taste. Is there war? then shall its seat and action be laid naked before the eye. No *estafette*—no telegraph—no steam-winged vessel—no over-land mail, shall bring intelligence to our shores that shall not be sifted with industry, and illustrated with skill in the best historical detail of both us, while it gratifies general curiosity, shall minister to the natural anxieties at home of those who have friends and relations amid the scenes delineated and the events described.

Take another fruitful branch of illustration, the pleasures of the people!—their theatres, their concerts, their palaces, their races, and their fairs! Again, the pleasures of the poetry—your court festivals, their *debut* seasons, their levees, their drawing-rooms—the completion of their grandeur and the circumstance of all their pomp!

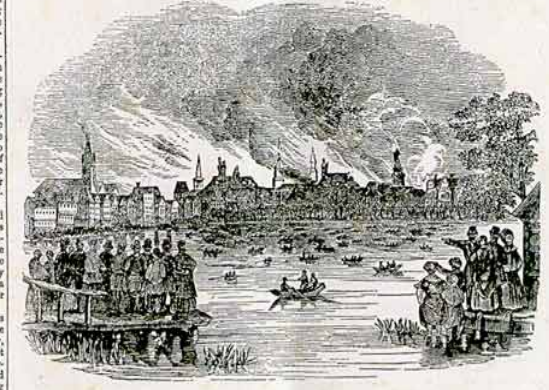
In literature, a truly beautiful arena will be entered upon; for we shall not only, in most instances, have the opportunity of illustrating our own reviews, but of borrowing selections from the illustrations of the numerous works which the press is daily pouring forth, so elaborately embellished with woodcuts in the highest style of art.

In the field of fine arts—but let the future speak, and let us clip promise in the wing. We have perhaps said enough, without condescending to the littleness of too much detail, to mark the general outline of our design; and we trust to the kindness and intelligence of our readers to imagine for us a great deal more than we have been able to crowd into the compass of an introductory lecture. Moreover, we would strongly premise an expression of gratitude for all suggestions that may hereafter reach us, and assure our volunteers of these, that wherever there seems a possibility of acting upon them creditably, that course shall be taken with promptitude, vigor, and effect.

Here we make our bow, determined to pursue our great experiment with boldness; to associate its principle with a purity of tone that may secure and hold fast for our journal the fearless patronage of families; to seek in all things to uphold the great cause of public morality; to keep continually before the eye of the world a living and moving panorama of all its actions and adventures; and to withhold from society no point that its literature can furnish or its art adorn, so long as the genius of that literature, and the spirit of that art, can be brought within the reach and compass of the Editors of the *Illustrated London News*!

DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF HAMBURG BY FIRE.

By the arrival of the General Steam Navigation Company's boat *Saladillo*, on Tuesday evening, news has been brought of an immense conflagration which took place on Thursday morning, the 5th instant, at one o'clock, in that city. The district in which the fire broke out consists entirely of wood structures, chiefly of five and six stories high, and covering an area of ground of about thirty to forty acres. The whole of the buildings on this large space have been totally consumed to the number of more than 1000. The fire was by some thought to have originated in the street known by the name of the *Sixth Twins*, in the warehouse of a Jew, named *Cole*, a cigar manufacturer, and who, upon good grounds, has been taken up on suspicion as the incendiary. The wind at the time blew a stout north-wester, causing the flames rapidly to spread; and proceeding in the direction of *Roding's-market*, and from thence to *Deuch-street*, entirely consuming the whole of the following streets, among which is the *Herrn-markt*, and *St. Nicholas Church*, a fine stone fabric, and the *Handsmest* in *Hamburg*. Great *Tobac*, *Cocoon* (silk and wool), *Gyomer*, *Darsnah*, *Mullen*, *Drucke*, *Alte Base*, *Isoken*, *Strasse*, *Mank-*



View of the Conflagration of the City of Hamburg.

1855: Colored News



The 1990s and the new millennium: the Information Age

“A new media platform, the Internet: its birth, with the proliferation of information sources and criss-crossing interconnected networks, has changed the way information is gathered and assessed to the point that “the audience relationship with the news is transformed from passive to active, enabling them to contribute, challenge and correct the journalism” (Lee Wright, Peter 2010: 76).

→ Information has gone GLOBAL (global coverage)



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THESE ONLINE
NEWS PAPERS ARE
HELL ON THE
TEETH!

Multimodality in the Media:

Through the centuries: from pictures to photos, from videos to sound, from intra-textual to inter-textual links, the ‘news piece’ has given way to the - ‘news package’ / ‘multimodal story’ (Kolodzy 2013).

→ these modalities are constitutively intertwined.

“Multimodality refuses the idea of the ‘priority’ of the linguistic modes; it regards them as partial means of making meaning. (Kress 2011: 46)

At present

- the ‘monovocality’ of traditional Media has given way to the ‘multivocality’ of digital networks
- the communicative material is not an end-text, but rather can constantly be updated with further information and comment at different levels
- the very term *text* encompasses not only the spoken and written language, but also sounds, music, videos, and graphs, among other modes.

Susan BEDNAREK / Helen CAPLE (2012) *News Discourse*,
London: Sage

“we consider discourse as multimodal, or **multisemiotic**, that is, not being restricted to the semiotic system of language alone but, crucially, also incorporating the semiotic system of images.”

HEADLINE: title of the story; when clicked, it often takes a reader to a separate page for a more detailed presentation

TEXT: body of the story; it may be either contained in one page or broken up into several connected links

PICTURE(S), including thumbnails

GRAPHIC: the logo, drawings, illustrations related to the news story

- **RELATED LINKS:** either highlighted within the paragraphs of a story or to the side or bottom of a page. This is a unique feature of the web that allows a reader to have a deeper understanding of the background of the story.
- **AUDIO:** sound, music or voice-over recorded as a stand alone or mixed with a slide show or video
- **VIDEO:** with a sound bite or a separate news video package that accompanies the text of the story

- Each medium does not replace or outrun the others, but rather “carries different aspects of the story to ensure cross-promotion and retain reader/viewer interest” ([Harrison 2008: 46](#)), thus enhancing knowledge and making it easily accessible to everybody.
- **dynamic** rather than static integration of each Media component: the end users actively contributes to the communicative act by personalizing the final output according to their own interests.

The age of social networks and of citizen journalism

- News transmitted via social media sites is the typical example of **unmediated journalism**.
- Every single news update reaches us in the form of a(n instant) message;
- once the message has been received, if we intend to read on, we click on the link, widen up the scope of our knowledge and may also reply by providing further data easily accessible to everybody;
- **‘real-time reaction’ → instant feedback** (replies or re-tweets) → from the once ‘one-to-one/few’ e-mail communication to **mass communication**.

Tra gli egiziani in festa dopo le dimissioni di Mubarak, è circolata una barzelletta sui tre presidenti.

Mubarak è il primo capo di Stato egiziano a lasciare, vivo, il potere.

Il suo predecessore, Anwar Sadat, fu ucciso nell'ottobre del 1981, mentre dal palco autorità assisteva a una parata militare.

Sadat era diventato presidente nel 1970, dopo la morte improvvisa per un attacco di cuore di Gamal Abdel Nasser.

La barzelletta parte dall'incontro dei tre in paradiso. Quando Nasser e Sadat vedono arrivare Mubarak, gli chiedono come sia morto.

«È stato il veleno o eri sul palco?».

«Nessuna delle due. È stato Facebook», risponde Mubarak.

Loccatelli, Giovanna (2011) *Twitter e le rivoluzioni. La primavera araba dei social network: nulla sarà più come prima*. Roma: Editori Internazionali Riuniti, p. 81.

Citizen journalism

Arianna Huffington, co-founder of the *Huffington Post*, a news website in the vanguard of integrating news with social media, remarks that **people “don’t just consume news, they share it, develop it, add to it—it’s a very dynamic relationship with news”** (quoted in the *Economist*, special report on “The news industry”, July 9, 2011).



CITIZEN JOURNALISM /'sɪtɪzn 'dʒɜ:(r)nə,lɪz(ə)m/

PARTICIPATORY JOURNALISM /pɑ:'tɪsɪpət(ə)ri 'dʒɜ:(r)nə,lɪz(ə)m/

*Notable examples of **citizen journalism** reporting from major world events are the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the 2013 protests in Turkey.*

*Critics of the phenomenon, including professional journalists, claim that **participatory journalism** is unregulated, too subjective, amateurish, and haphazard in quality and coverage.*



JOURNALISM /'dʒɜ:(r)nə,lɪz(ə)m/

*The role and status of **journalism**, along with mass media, have undergone profound changes.*

*The essence of **journalism** is to provide citizens with reliable information through the discipline of verification.*



CITIZEN JOURNALISM /'sɪtɪzn 'dʒɜ:(r)nə,lɪz(ə)m/

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Social media place us on a live microphone, or even camera, all the time;

KEY DIFFERENCE from institutional, mainstream forms of journalism, of news-reporting and news-making: social networks are unmediated.

EX: *Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and YouTube*

Twitter

- Launched in 2006
- the SMS portal of the Internet, offering a social networking and micro-blogging service which enables “its users to send and read messages called *tweets*.”
- Tweets are text-based posts of that until 2018 were up to 140 characters displayed on the user’s profile page” (*Twitter* website) in reversed chronological order and posted via a range of technologies such as mobile phone, instant messaging clients and the web.
- Now they are 280 characters. But Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said that the expanded tweet length hasn’t actually changed the length of messages people are sending out — but it has led to more engagement.
- It has been the main communication channel among Iranian protesters in the aftermath of the 2009 elections and one of the most exploited communicative tools for news-sharing in the 2011 Arab spring as well.

Facebook

- launched in 2004
- not been intended for exchanging news, though now it connects millions of people around the world and helps to share information on any topic;
- Present: over 750 million active users exploit this social network to exchange messages which are also news-related;
- yet the specificity of personal profiles set up on *Facebook* tends to produce **opinionated texts**, rather than actual breaking news updates.

Blogs

- the epitome of unmediated journalism
- they can be opened by professional journalists and by ordinary citizens, thus leading to the so-called ‘citizen journalism’ of the web, which anybody can read and which can uncover mines of information.
- the most basic unit is the ‘post’, an individual message, frequently a comment to a previous post, logged in by a submitter with identifiable date and time of logging and—like tweets—presented in reversed chronological order on the blog page.

YouTube

- *YouTube* is an unmediated web TV, a worldwide **video-sharing** community where the participants upload any sort of video clips.
- Launched in February 2005 under the slogan ‘**Broadcast Yourself**’
- It now witnesses a massive circulation of news-related videos;
- by means of the ‘**video-response**’ option, *YouTubers* can post videos to reply to and comment on previously posted videos;
- on *YouTube* dialogue the interaction is mostly by means of video clips.
- Hence, any sort of material, including news stories, can be constantly updated and integrated with further details, which are first and foremost visual, but which may also include—as they frequently do—spoken and written language, sounds, and music.

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