STRANGE BEDFELLOWS?
The Diffusion of Convergence in Four News Organizations
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Abstract

This study examines newsroom convergence -- a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media -- through the framework of diffusion of innovations theory. Convergence is becoming a global trend as media companies continue to expand their holdings beyond their original core products. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data drawn from case studies of four US newsrooms, it suggests that despite culture clashes and other issues of compatibility, journalists see clear advantages to the new policy of convergence. Journalists perceive experience in a converged newsroom as a career booster, say they enjoy working with colleagues whose strengths differ from their own, and admit that convergence has led to respect for people in other parts of the news organization. At the same time, the diffusion of convergence within the newsroom may be hindered by cultural and technological differences in approaches to newsgathering and dissemination, as well as by a lack of training to alleviate concerns about the perceived complexities of new media formats.

Keywords

Convergence, Diffusion of Innovations, Journalists, Multimedia, Newsroom

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con-verge':   1: to tend or move toward one point or one another: come together
2: to come together and unite in a common interest or focus
3: to approach a limit as the number of terms increases without limit
(Merriam-Webster, 2003)

Journalists around the world who once thought that they worked for a newspaper, a television station or a Web site are realizing that they work for an information company – one that expects them to unite with former competitors in the common interest of delivering that information. Enthusiasm varies for this process that the industry terms "convergence", which seems to bring with it a limitless number of potential new tasks for journalists to fit into their workday.

Convergence, in its current media context, refers to some combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media. Processes and outcomes vary widely among the markets in which the concept is being explored. For some, convergence emphasizes information sharing. For others, it involves newspaper reporters taping a voice-over for a newscast, or television reporters phoning in breaking news details to update a Web site. In a few, journalists gather information that they turn into an immediate online story, a package for the evening news and an article for the next day's paper. Physically, it can mean working in separate buildings -- or at adjacent desks.

This exploratory study uses diffusion of innovations theory to problematize the aspects of convergence that are most salient to news managers and staffers today as they struggle to adapt to challenges to their work habits, their comfort zones, and their conceptions about what they do and why. It is based on case studies in four converged newsrooms of varying sizes and structures during January and February 2003.

A Bit About Convergence

Convergence has become a media industry buzzword, facilitated in the United States by the deregulatory environment in Washington and the resulting growth in cross-ownership. In a widely anticipated move, the Federal Communications Commission in June 2003 scrapped many of the existing rules that prevent one media company from owning multiple outlets in a single market (Ahrens, 2003). Newspapers now can own broadcast stations in the same city, and television could go the way of radio, with the biggest companies grabbing up stations across markets (Fisher, 2003). Such concentration of economic, cultural and political power in a decreasing number of media giants worries many observers of this global phenomenon (McChesney, 1999; Bagdikian, 2000; Compaine and Gomery, 2000). The impetus for newsroom convergence comes in large part from this deregulatory economic trend, but the term is not a synonym for media consolidation. Rather, it refers to what happens inside a newsroom, specifically to cooperation among print, television and online journalists to tell a story to as many audience members as possible through a variety of delivery systems (Castaneda, 2003).

Little academic research on convergence has been published to date, though a study of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) transition to multimedia production in the late 1990s did raise concerns about the "superficial nature" of the resulting news products (Cottle and Ashton, 1999, p. 22). But the trade press has been full of progress reports as well as cautions. "Convergence is a high-stakes game of musical chairs, and the big media players are reserving their seats", writes an *Online Journalism Review* correspondent. "No one can afford to sit this one out" (Anzur, 2002). A former Poynter Institute president disagrees. Even if it goes well, convergence will distract journalists "from that single most important imperative of the craft -- to create an informed society capable of intelligently governing itself. And if it does not go well, I

fear it is going to subject journalists to time, resource, craft and ethical pressures, all of which will be bad for journalists, bad for journalism and bad for the country" (Haiman, 2001).

Some trade press reports cite specific issues. "Cultural resistance is the biggest hurdle for converging newsrooms", says *Tampa Tribune* Executive Editor Gil Thelen (2002, 16). "For multimedia work to take deep root, journalists from once-competing newsrooms must learn to cooperate and collaborate -- a tall order in our highly individualistic professional mystique". Another issue is just how much one person can be asked to do -- and what sort of product that one person will turn out. "While some multimedia journalists can handle a variety of tasks efficiently and professionally, most will deliver mediocre journalism", predicts one commentator (Stone, 2002). "Quality comes from those journalists who practice a defined job, be it writer, videographer, photographer or editor". Staffing, training and compensation of the additional time and work required for convergence to succeed also are key issues (Outing, 2002; Stevens, 2002).

This study builds on this anecdotal and often contradictory material, particularly in the construction of questionnaire items. However, it takes a more theoretical approach to the topic. The purpose is neither to track the progress of convergence nor to outline its virtues and vices. It is to explore journalists' approaches to managing crucial aspects of change and thus to assess the ongoing diffusion of convergence as a new idea and a new way of doing things.

Diffusion of Innovations

Diffusion theory is well-known to communications scholars. Rogers, in his seminal work on the topic, defines diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (1995, 5). It thus involves four key elements of social change:

* The innovation itself, an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by those who face a decision about adopting it. Of particular importance here are the perceived characteristics of the innovation, including its relative advantage over whatever it is intended to supersede; its compatibility or consistency with the values, experiences and needs of potential adopters; its perceived complexity; its trialability, or the degree to which it may be tested on a limited basis; and its observability, or the extent to which its results are visible to others in the social system. Of these, only complexity is a negative influence on the likely rate of adoption (Rogers, 1995).

* The communication channel through which the message about an innovation is shared. Interpersonal channels are seen as especially effective in persuading an individual to accept a new idea if the channel links people who are similar in important ways. Most people depend on subjective evaluations by others like themselves who have adopted an innovation -- or not (ibid.).

* Time, which affects the diffusion process in several ways. One involves the amount of time between an individual's first awareness of an innovation and his or her confirmation of an adoption decision. Time also is a measure of the speed with which the innovation is adopted. Finally, the point in time at which a given individual adopts an innovation relative to adoption by others in the social system is important (ibid.). Longitudinal data were not available for this study, and its focus is on individual journalists, so this last aspect of time is most relevant here.

* The social system, which constitutes a boundary within which an innovation diffuses. Norms within a social system define a range of tolerable behavior and serve as a standard or guide for members. Informal opinion leaders, individuals who conform closely to system norms, act as attitudinal or behavioral models for others. Decisions about whether to adopt an innovation can be made by an individual acting independently, by a collective of individuals seeking consensus or by an authority figure mandating adoption within the system as a whole (ibid.).

Diffusion of innovations theory has been widely applied throughout the social sciences, including studies of media audiences and practitioners. Many of those studies have tracked technological change. For example, Lin, Atkin and Jeffres, alone and together, have contributed significantly to the understanding of adoption dynamics for such consumer media as personal computers (Lin, 1998), the Internet (Jeffres and Atkin, 1996; Atkin, Jeffres and Neuendorf) and multimedia cable television (Lin and Jeffres, 1998). Among newsroom diffusion studies, Garrison's longitudinal investigation (2000, 2001a) of journalists' use of computer technologies for reporting has been especially useful. Adoption of interactive innovations was nearly complete by the late 1990s, with computers entrenched as newsgathering resources (Garrison, 2001b).

Other diffusion studies focusing on media practitioners' reactions to technological change have supported the theory's dimensions. A study of the diffusion of computer-assisted reporting in newspaper newsrooms found complexity to be a key factor and emphasized the importance of peer communication (Maier, 2000). Studies of the diffusion of computers in newsrooms in Michigan (Davenport, Fico and Weinstock, 1996) and Iowa (Niebauer et al., 2000) explored characteristics of innovations and adopters. Several studies in the 1990s looked at incorporation of pagination systems in both the daily routines of editors and their acceptance of the new page production method as a job skill (Russial, 1994, 1995; Stamm, Underwood and Giffard, 1995).

This study seeks to explore whether and how the theoretical concepts are manifested in journalists' reactions to convergence within their newsrooms. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research questions, each tied to a core aspect of diffusion theory as described above:

RQ1: What do journalists see as the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability of newsroom convergence?

RQ2: What newsroom communication channels are most important to convergence?

RQ3: What individual characteristics or attitudes suggest that certain journalists will be

convergence innovators?

RQ4: What newsroom social structures contribute most significantly to journalists'

attitudes about convergence?

Methodology

Four converged news organizations were selected as case study subjects, based on

information in the trade press and from the American Press Institute, an industry leader in

tracking convergence in the United States. The researcher sought to visit media outlets of

varying market sizes, ownership structures and approaches to convergence, appropriate with a

method that deals with the fundamental question of what can be learned from a particular case

(Stake, 1994). Such field research is called for when research questions involve learning about,

understanding or describing a group of interacting people (Neuman, 1991). After negotiating

access with appropriate gatekeepers in each newsroom (Lindlof, 1995), the following news

organizations were visited. Circulation figures are from the Audit Bureau of Circulations (2003).

* *Dallas Morning News*, WFAA-TV (ABC affiliate), TXCN (cable), dallasnews.com

The *Morning News* has a circulation of more than half a million on weekdays and nearly

800,000 on Sundays. WFAA-TV is the top-rated station in a market of 2.2 million

households, 7th-largest in the nation (Nielsen Media Estimates, 2003). TXCN is a 24-hour

statewide cable news network. Dallasnews.com, launched in 1996, provides original

content as well as content from the local partners. WFAA and TXCN also have their own

associated Web sites, wfaa.com and txcn.com. The Dallas-based Belo Corp. owns all of

these properties.

* *Tampa Tribune*, WFLA-TV (NBC affiliate), TBO.com

Richmond, VA-based Media General Inc. spent $40 million to build The News Center, a 120,000-square-foot "temple of convergence" by the banks of the Hillsborough River (Colon, 2000). The News Center houses three Media General properties: the *Tribune*, a 238,000 daily and 314,000 Sunday circulation newspaper; WFLA-TV, which serves 1.6 million households in the 13th-largest US market (Nielsen Media Research, 2003); and TBO.com, which provides original content plus material from print and television.

* *Sarasota* (FL) *Herald-Tribune*, SNN Channel 6 (cable), heraldtribune.com

The *Herald-Tribune*, a New York Times Company paper, has a winter circulation of 116,000 on weekdays and more than 144,000 on Sundays; the numbers dip in the summer. Sarasota is considered part of the Tampa Bay television market, but the city and county also are served by SNN (Six News Now), a 24-hour local cable news operation jointly owned by the *Herald-Tribune* and cable provider Comcast.

* *Lawrence* (KS) *Journal-World*, 6News Lawrence (cable), ljworld.com

These properties are part of the family-owned World Company, started by the current publisher's grandfather in the late 19th century. The *Journal-World* has a daily and Sunday circulation of just under 20,000. 6News Lawrence is a local cable news and entertainment channel. In addition to news-oriented ljworld.com, Web staffers produce KUsports.com, devoted to University of Kansas teams, and lawrence.com, an entertainment site targeted at a relatively young audience.

The researcher spent a week with each of these four partner organizations during January and February 2003, observing newsroom operations, attending news meetings and interviewing

journalists about convergence. This non-probability sample combined elements of a convenience sample, appropriate in exploratory studies such as this, and a purposive sample of subjects chosen on the basis of specific characteristics (Wimmer and Dominick, 2002). Experiences with convergence were key here, but the desire to include print, television and online journalists also was important. In all, 120 journalists were interviewed, including newsroom managers, editors, anchors, reporters, columnists, photographers and online content producers.

Journalists also were asked to complete a 54-item questionnaire about convergence. Triangulation of methods, such as this combination of case studies and surveys, helps guard against the danger that findings will reflect the method of inquiry in potentially misleading ways (Babbie, 2000). Diverse indicators improve measurement (Neuman, 1991). Each journalist was provided with a questionnaire immediately following his or her interview, with the exception of senior executives outside the focus of this study of newsroom staffers and one bureau reporter interviewed by phone. This approach allowed respondents to complete the questionnaire at their leisure, important because the interviews already took a big chunk out of their workday. The questionnaire, which used a 7-point Likert scale, asked respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements related to the perceived impact of convergence on careers, work routines, public service and the profession of journalism. Room for demographic information and open-ended comments also was provided.

A total of 67 of the 110 journalists given questionnaires promptly completed and returned them. An e-mail version was sent to non-respondents in mid-March 2003 and again in late March, resulting in 23 more responses. The final response rate was 81.8% of all journalists who received questionnaires; it was 84.5% for newspaper journalists, 75% for television journalists and 85.7% for online journalists. Mean scores for relevant items are provided here.

All journalists were promised confidentiality so that they felt comfortable speaking and completing the questionnaire honestly, and no names are used in this paper. The researcher's institution did not require human subjects board approval for these case studies.

Findings

This section is organized to correspond with the components of diffusion theory outlined above -- the innovation, communication channels, time and social system -- and the four associated research questions. Tables 1 and 2 provide mean responses to questionnaire statements referred to in the text.

The Innovation

The innovation here is both the idea of convergence and, because the study involves newsrooms where it is under way, the actual process. Each subhead below indicates a characteristic of the innovation, as outlined by diffusion theory.

Relative Advantage*:* Though not universally enthusiastic, most journalists perceived convergence as having a number of advantages relative to the long-standing arrangement in which each news organization is independent and, in the case of the newspaper and the television station, competitive. At a personal level, they agreed that the ability to work in more than one medium is a career booster or at least a savvy insurance policy. "I've got a lot more options now", said a print reporter with considerable on-air time. "I've demonstrated my versatility". Television journalists were especially likely to feel that newspaper "clips" were a major portfolio plus. Journalists generally agreed with the questionnaire statement "working in a converged environment is good for my career", and many cited its benefits in their interviews. Even those

firmly entrenched in one medium saw pluses. "Doing live TV really sharpens you", said one print reporter with on-air experience. "You have to think sharply and clearly".

Journalists also said access to expanded resources and avenues for storytelling enhanced the public service value of local media, and they agreed with the questionnaire statement "my company is better able to serve our audience because of our decision to converge news operations". "The customer is better served with more information, usually better targeted", a television reporter wrote on his questionnaire. An online editor cited "touching more lives" by telling a story in "multiple ways to reach multiple audiences". Questionnaire responses also indicated mild agreement that audience reaction to convergence generally had been positive.

Moreover, journalists overwhelmingly believed their company was on the right track in seeking to converge newsrooms. "What's great about this place is that they like to take leaps", one online journalist in Dallas said. "I agree with the philosophy", she added. "If you hit on something before everyone else does, you're a rock star". In their questionnaire responses, journalists agreed that convergence had given them a "leg up" on their competition and disagreed with the idea that "convergence has cost this company more than convergence is worth". On the contrary, it provides "the ability to reach new audiences, (to) target specific audiences, and to play to each partner's strength", another online journalist wrote on his questionnaire.

Compatibility: The idea of convergence clashes with traditional newsroom values in two major areas: medium-specific culture and professional competition. Of the two, the cultural compatibility issues may be harder to overcome. Many print journalists, in particular, admitted to being appalled when they learned they would be converging with their television counterparts. Journalists expressed mild agreement with the questionnaire statement "integrating different newsroom cultures has been the hardest part about convergence".

The current study revealed concerns of both style, such as the need to wear ironed shirts, and substance, such as differences between short and visual television stories and the more literary narrative form of print storytelling. Journalists said they chose the medium they did because it suited their interests and talents -- and still does. Several also suggested that having journalists work in a medium to which they feel unsuited is a recipe for mediocrity. "Any time you try to do a million different things, chances are you don't do them all that well", a newspaper editor said. However, the questionnaire did not indicate widespread agreement with the idea that convergence produced mediocre journalism.

Another area of tension over compatibility stems from the disparity in professional skills, particularly in the smaller markets where newspaper people feel their less-experienced television counterparts "need to be spoon-fed a lot of times". In the bigger markets, print journalists also were likely to see themselves as giving more than they got. "They don't do a damned thing for the newspaper", said one. "It has to go both ways. Otherwise, you're not converged". Overall, journalists disagreed with the proposition that the effort necessary to make convergence work was shared equitably throughout the organization.

Salary inequity also is a source of incompatibility -- and irritation. In big markets, many television journalists earn more than those at the newspaper and have agent-negotiated contracts; in smaller markets, cable journalists are at the bottom of the pay scale. One editor said that when his cable counterpart has stacks of resumes from people willing to work for free, he finds it hard to hold cable reporters to standards he expects of a better-paid, more-experienced print person.

However, there were indications that cultural compatibility problems are not permanent. A number of journalists said that anticipated problems had either not materialized or vanished with the realization that what people in other media did was real work. "It gave me a lot more

respect for television reporters", a newspaper reporter said. "I had always sort of dismissed them as hair spray, bow ties, vapid airheads". In fact, not a single journalist who completed the questionnaire disagreed with the statement "I enjoy working with people who have professional strengths different from my own". Most also agreed that they had gained respect for journalists in other parts of the news organization as a result of convergence. "It's been good for us to break out of the little print world we existed in. That bubble is self-defining and self-limiting", said one newspaper editor. "It's been good to get some of that arrogance shaken out of us".

A second challenge to compatibility involves competition. "Reporters are competitive by nature. In that sense, it's a hard psychological barrier", a veteran television journalist explained, adding that he "grew up" seeing as competitors the print reporters whom he now is asked to regard as colleagues. Intellectually, journalists may understand and even appreciate the logic of convergence, but many are still uncomfortable about sharing ideas, information or sources. The quantitative results underscored ambivalence with the statement "there is a great deal of cooperation among people working in our converged newsroom".

Although the strongest antagonism was between newspaper and television journalists, competition also was a factor in acceptance of the online journalists. Of particular concern was that by putting a story on the Web, a reporter both tipped off outside competitors and "scooped" himself or herself. That said, this study suggests the concern is being mitigated. "We're reporters. It doesn't matter what platform we're a reporter for", one journalist said. "It's a different place to put your reporting". The questionnaire statement "The fact that we now are continually `scooping ourselves' bothers me" elicited mild disagreement, with newspaper journalists -- whose core product comes out once a day -- expressing the most concern.

Complexity: Here, too, the innovation of convergence faces challenges, but this study suggests the passage of time and increased familiarity with the various media formats is reducing whatever generalized fear still exists. Many of the journalists who have been the first to produce stories across media emphasize that what one described as "massive insecurities" are overblown. "I spent a lot of time convincing people it's not that hard", a converged reporter said.

Universally, though, they add that hard or not, producing products for other media is time-consuming -- more time-consuming than they believe their bosses realize. Time pressures can create considerable stress; one reporter confessed feeling stretched to the point of a nervous breakdown on days when he had to produce both print and television stories. For many of these journalists, the demands of their primary medium have not been lessened as new demands for "converged" content have increased. And many feel the time required to gather material for a different medium could be better spent in other ways. A print reporter said television duties mean he no longer can roam City Hall, talking to people or just seeing what's tacked on the wall. "You never know about the lost opportunities that could make a story better", a colleague agreed.

Added to these pressures is a perception among journalists that they received inadequate training for work in a different medium, if indeed they received any training at all. Newspaper journalists wanted training with production and delivery of television content. Television journalists wanted help with writing. Questionnaire responses indicated most journalists felt they had not received appropriate training for the transition to a converged news environment.

Notably, journalists did not express a great deal of concern about technology per se -- that is, they were not generally intimidated by the tools needed to create content in different formats and felt that given just a little guidance and explanation, they could master those tools. On the questionnaire, most denied being frustrated by the technological aspects of convergence. In their

interviews, journalists expressed the belief that they could readily handle the technology if only management would give them help in doing so -- and free up time for them to learn.

Trialability: Lack of training obviously limits the trialability of convergence by individual journalists. But more broadly, all these newsrooms are ongoing trials of convergence. Although some journalists are sharing information or even producing content across platforms, the majority in the larger markets are watching and waiting to see what happens next.

Among these newsrooms, the larger the market, the fewer people were actually trying out full-scale convergence. In Dallas, where the term "synergy" was widely used instead, journalists were being asked mainly to share information rather than produce content for the other media products. A few newspaper journalists had done stand-ups for the cable news channel, and even fewer had appeared on a WFAA newscast; cooperation with dallasnews.com also was spotty. In contrast, most of the journalists in Lawrence, by far the smallest of these four markets, were at least dabbling in cross-media content production, though the degree of participation still varied. Overall, many journalists in this study seemed comfortable sitting out the dance. "Among the news reporters, it's really still a pretty unusual thing", one reporter in a larger market said.

In general, the degree of trialability in these newsrooms seems high -- perhaps higher than management, hoping their staffs would jump at the opportunity, would like. Diffusion theory, however, suggests that watching and waiting is not only a typical strategy but also an effective one if an innovation is ultimately to succeed -- if, of course, results of the trial are positive in ways that potential adopters find meaningful.

Observability: Market size also affects observability. The larger the market among these four, the more physically distant journalists were from cross-media counterparts and the harder it was to observe colleagues in action. In Dallas, the newspaper, cable and network newsrooms are

in separate buildings; though a few Web staffers work in the WFAA or print newsroom, most are on a separate floor of the *Morning News* building. Everyone in Tampa is in the News Center, but the print staff is on the third floor while television and online staffs are on the second; an atrium creates open space between floors. In Sarasota, the cable unit occupies a corner of the print newsroom, with the online desk a few feet away. Only in Lawrence do print, cable and some Web staffers work side by side, with desks grouped by content area rather than medium.

But while it can be difficult to "see" cross-media convergence taking place, it is easy to observe a face on television or a byline in the newspaper. Newspaper reporters are learning what it is like to be semi-famous: "It's cool to have people recognize you on the street", said one. Television journalists rejoice in actually getting a compliment from the print side. In Dallas, an award-winning WFAA reporter keeps pinned to his cubicle wall a hand-written note from the *Morning News* managing editor commending him for "kick-ass journalism" on a major story. Recognition from the profession, such as prizes, was especially meaningful for television and online journalists -- especially when the prizes were from print-oriented organizations. An investigative television reporter talked with pride of a Society of Professional Journalists award for his front-page newspaper piece about an issue he had covered for the station. "After all these years", he said, "I've finally established that I'm not a second-class journalist".

One final aspect of observability was more problematic. Journalists trained to "follow the money" are well aware of whether colleagues are being rewarded financially for contributions to convergence. For the most part, they are not. Managers say convergence is simply part of the job now -- though "thank yous" are occasionally forthcoming, such as a monthly award to one Dallas journalist deemed to be "fighting the good synergy fight" or a $50 amazon.com gift certificate for Sarasota reporters. Journalists in Lawrence got "a little round of raises" for their convergence

efforts. In Tampa, most reporters felt strongly that they were being asked to do a lot more work for little or no extra pay. The impact on morale -- and on openness to the idea of convergence -- was striking. "It's like throwing an extra 10 percent workload on you without giving extra compensation", said a reporter. "I'm like a duck. I'm already paddling as fast as I can". "I wish it paid something beyond skill building and experience and job security. Money would be nice", another Tampa reporter wrote on his questionnaire. "Leaves us feeling a bit used now and then".

In summary, and in response to RQ1, convergence shows a range of attributes that would suggest its ultimate successful diffusion -- and others that tend in the opposite direction. Though most journalists acknowledge and even appreciate its relative advantages, comments and survey responses indicate concerns with compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. Still, the overall view was generally favorable, judging by both their interviews and positive responses to such questionnaire statements as "overall, converged newsrooms are a good idea" and "convergence will prove to be a successful editorial strategy for the news industry as a whole".

Communication Channels

Diffusion theory suggests that in deciding whether to adopt an innovation, most people depend mainly on subjective evaluations by others like themselves (Rogers, 1995). The current study supports this idea in the context of the successful diffusion of convergence, in several ways.

The first is the virtually universal sentiment that convergence works best as a one-to-one process -- that the relationships necessary for people with different backgrounds and skills to not only work together but trust one another can develop only through interpersonal communication and lots of it. When journalists sit "elbow to elbow", a news manager said, "proximity breeds collegiality, not contempt". Several compared convergence to a marriage; in Tampa, negotiations prior to convergence were referred to as "pre-nups". Journalists emphasized that "commitment

and trust" must be developed over time. You "have to work at it, understand each other's idiosyncrasies, go from there", said a television reporter. "It's a marriage of convenience".

However, journalists in all four markets saw the initial impetus for convergence as coming from above. Converging newsroom operations was something their bosses and their bosses' bosses wanted to do -- and the change was not contestable. At the same time, there was a strong sense, among all levels of the newsroom organization, that a top-down approach to adoption, in which managers simply tell staffers what to do, would be a disaster. Instead, the process must take place "at a molecular level", as a news manager put it. So upper management has positioned convergence as an unavoidable part of the way the news business will be done but has largely avoided mandating how the transition will take place at an individual level. The strategy seems successful; journalists generally disagreed with the questionnaire statement "I feel pressured to cooperate in our convergence efforts even though I don't really want to".

There are drawbacks to this approach. It becomes fairly simple to ignore the whole thing, especially in larger organizations, as described above. It also leaves room for a lot of ambiguity. The newspaper reporter who takes 10 seconds to e-mail a source's phone number to a television journalist and the television reporter who takes five hours to craft a newspaper piece both are contributing to convergence, but clearly the amount of effort is different. And some people want stronger leadership. "You've got people on nine different pages", a reporter said. "Overall, you do need someone inspirational" to lead convergence efforts. Still, the strategy of encouraging convergence while letting news workers use interpersonal communication channels to sort out the details for making it work is in line with what diffusion theory suggests as a good approach.

In summary, and in response to RQ2, the theorized importance of interpersonal communication channels is supported here, with management leaving it largely to individual

journalists to work out the convergence details. The role of opinion leaders within the

newsrooms, also relevant here, is discussed under "Social System" below.

Time

Convergence is a relatively new experiment, and the current study is not a longitudinal one.

Neither the innovation-decision process, through which an individual passes from first

knowledge of an innovation to confirmation of an adoption decision, nor the rate of adoption

within the social system (Rogers, 1995) can be adequately assessed here. However, it is possible

to identify a few characteristics of individual journalists in these newsrooms that would suggest

their fit with adopter categories identified by diffusion theory, the third component of the time

dimension. The categories are innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority and laggard.

The online staffs were particularly likely to include innovators, individuals interested in

doing something new largely because it is new. "We're all in the mode of `let's try this'", one

online manager said of herself and her staff. But the more salient concerns of journalists in this

study were more likely to relate to interactions between newspaper and television journalists,

with the Web seen as a relatively unobtrusive and unobjectionable addition. As diffusion theory

would predict, true innovators among the newspaper and television staff seemed to be fairly few.

Of course, the researcher could not conduct a census of all the journalists in these newsrooms,

nor was a random sample drawn. But in talking with more than 90 print and television

journalists, only a sprinkling of comments suggested attitudes likely to be held by innovators.

Because of a desire to talk with those journalists who had experience with convergence,

this study over-sampled early adopters. Comments from convergence participants suggest early

adopter characteristics to a striking degree. For example, earlier adopters exhibit a greater

amount of upward mobility and have higher aspirations than later adopters (Rogers, 1995), and

converged journalists interviewed here almost all cited their participation as a good career move. "If I was to update my resume tomorrow, it would definitely be a prominent part of my experience", said one print reporter. "CNN might call!" Earlier adopters also are likely to be less dogmatic than later adopters and to have a more favorable attitude about change; converged journalists stressed the need for flexibility and enthusiasm for new ideas. "You'll never get bored", one such journalist wrote. "You can let your imagination take you to new heights".

Most of the rest of the journalists interviewed here seemed to fall, as diffusion theory would predict, into early and late majority categories. Again, because this was not a longitudinal study, this is a tentative finding. But the comments of many journalists who were still on the sidelines suggested deliberation and skepticism about convergence, a weighing of its pros and cons and uncertainty about its advisability. One print reporter summed up the situation. The message from management, he said, involves long-term payoffs and declarations that convergence is "the wave of the future." But the short-term payoffs are less obvious: "Doing new things creates headaches and work for the people who have to make them happen".

Few of the journalists interviewed here seemed to be true laggards, though they may simply have been hesitant to tell a note-taking outsider of their resistance to company policy. Only a handful, mostly among the newspaper staffs, expressed a deep suspicion about convergence and even flatly asserted that they wanted no part of it. "I went to j-school to be a journalist, not to be a multimedia person, not to be a TV person, not to multitask", said one print reporter. "I have never liked TV journalism. I've always thought it's abhorrent, a subspecies. … To be told mid-life you have to morph into a TV person doesn't set well with me".

In general, and again emphasizing the tentative nature of conclusions in this area, these interviews suggest the outlines of a theoretically predictable adopter curve within the newsrooms

studied here. Most journalists are weighing the pros and cons, perhaps participating on a small scale while they do. A smaller group already has dived right in, but a few plan to stay out of the pool as long as they can. In response to RQ3, characteristics suggestive of relatively early adoption include perception of convergence as offering an avenue for upward professional mobility and a generally favorable attitude toward change.

Social System

Newsrooms are complex social structures with distinct cultures, routines and norms. More than half a century of research into the sociology of news work details how the newsroom as a social system shapes what journalists do (Breed, 1955; Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 2003). In the present study, the clash of cultures among newspaper, television and online newsrooms was a common theme, covered above in the discussion of compatibility. Several other aspects of the social system relevant to the diffusion of the innovation of convergence are noteworthy here.

Like other professionals, individual journalists exercise considerable autonomy over their day-to-day activities (Daniels, 1973). Yet newspaper newsrooms, in particular, are hierarchical in nature: Each reporter has a line editor, each line editor has another editor and so on up to the publisher. Convergence introduces what one journalist called "dotted-line relationships". Others put it more bluntly. "All of a sudden, I have two different bosses", said a television journalist, and the fact that those bosses don't necessarily communicate well with one another adds to the frustration. These new relationships can cause confusion and stress, and the questionnaire indicated many journalists felt the new chain of command was unclear. Indeed, confusion seemed inherent in management structures at the larger organizations, where no one has authority to make a decision should the heads of individual news outlets disagree. In contrast, news executives in Sarasota and Lawrence have stalemate-breaking power. In Sarasota, the

Herald-Tribune executive editor also oversees the broadcast and online operations; in Lawrence, a "multimedia managing editor" is a "half-step above" the top print, cable and online managers.

The relationships between employees and managers also are important in connection with theoretical concerns with the types of innovation decisions -- optional, collective and authority -- and with differences between the initiation and implementation phases of innovation (Rogers, 1995). Again, the idea of convergence came from management in each organization, and initiating the process was clearly an authority decision. But newsroom managers have sought to foster an environment in which journalists make optional and/or collective innovation-decisions to implement convergence, using the interpersonal communication channels already discussed. While some are impatient -- "You either change the people, or you change the people", one online manager said, more than once -- most seem willing to wait for the transition to play out. "It's easy to say `Do it, goddammit', but that doesn't work", said a print manager. The implementation processes of restructuring to accommodate convergence, then clearing away uncertainty surrounding it, are far from over even in these pioneering newsrooms. "If someone had written an instruction manual, this would be so much easier!" one editor exclaimed.

Nor are journalists necessarily convinced by management pronouncements that convergence is driven by a desire "to put the best news out there in the streets". Trained skeptics, they are skeptical of their employers' motives -- even when they personally think convergence is a good idea. They agree only mildly with the statement "my company converged newsrooms in order to do a better job providing information to various audiences". Instead, many suspect an economic impetus. As one print reporter put it, "It seems to me that it's a lot about converging costs". Despite a lack of evidence of convergence-inspired layoffs and repeated assurances of

good intentions from management, journalists' disagreement with the statement "my company has converged its newsrooms primarily as a way to eventually reduce staffing" is tentative.

The final stage of diffusion, at which the innovation has been fully incorporated into the routine activities of the organization (Rogers, 1995), has not been attained at any of the newsrooms studied here. But the smaller markets seem closer, as a cable journalist wrote, to "truly advancing from being pioneers into homesteaders" in the land of convergence. Further study is needed to determine why that is so, but several possibilities emerged. One, of course, is that there are fewer folks to convince -- and with greater turnover, fewer entrenched habits. Smaller operations also are more easily able to afford the cost of creating physical proximity. Sarasota folded cable operations into its print newsroom as far back as 1995, a relative longevity that contributes to acceptance there. In Lawrence, having neighboring desks seems to help. "I'm having a lot more fun now than in the old newsroom", a print reporter said. If nothing else, it's nice to have "a larger group of people to bounce ideas off of and bitch to".

The trust-building benefits of physical proximity seem to extend outside the newsroom and into the corporate realm. Every journalist in Lawrence personally knows the company's owner, who often wanders into the newsroom from his office around the corner, and even the crustiest veteran reporter referred to him as "VERY cool". At the other end of the size scale, Dallas journalists still see themselves as working for a local company -- albeit a huge and wealthy one -- with deep roots in the community. In contrast, Tampa journalists were unflattering in their remarks about Media General, headquartered 800 miles away in Virginia. And the mean questionnaire scores of Tampa journalists as a group were more negative on nearly every item than those of journalists in the other markets.

Finally, if the success of convergence rests on interpersonal relationships and communication among newsroom personnel, exactly who is "converging" -- and who is not -- becomes extremely important. This study is too small-scale and too short-term to allow a reliable assessment of whether the early adopters of convergence are also opinion leaders within their newsroom social system. But a few observations are appropriate.

First, both the interview and questionnaire data indicate that online journalists are among the most enthusiastic about convergence. This is hardly surprising; by definition, these journalists are "converged" in the sense that they work with content produced by both the newspaper and television staffs. But while the online journalists may be innovators, as described above, they are unlikely to be opinion leaders for the news organization as a whole because other journalists are not likely to look up to them. Online journalists are generally young and inexperienced relative to their print and television counterparts. Of the 21 online journalists who completed a questionnaire and provided their age, the median was 31; most non-management staffers were in their 20s. The median age was in the low 40s for both newspaper and television journalists in this study. Online journalists had an average of 12.5 years in the news business (including the managers), compared with about 19 for newspapers and 16 for television.

The more likely opinion leaders, then, are newspaper or television journalists. In each of the news organizations visited, the researcher interviewed journalists who were participating in convergence efforts, as well as those who were not. Participants were likely candidates for the role of opinion leaders, at least according to the theoretical criteria. Most were journalists in their 30s and 40s -- neither the most junior nor the most senior in their newsrooms -- with relative longevity in their jobs, making frequent and visible contributions to their core products.

In summary, complexities of social systems in the various news organizations studied here affect the likelihood of successful convergence in various ways, but full implementation of the idea has not yet been achieved in these newsrooms. In response to RQ4, convergence appears to be aided by a physical structure that facilitates proximity to cross-media colleagues and a management structure that includes local authority and in-market presence. Opinion leaders seem to be playing a role, though more in-depth and long-term exploration in needed.

Summary and Discussion

This article has examined newsroom convergence through the application of diffusion of innovations theory. Using the four key components of diffusion theory as the basis for its research questions, its findings suggests:

* **RQ1:** Journalists see numerous advantages of convergence over traditional newsrooms, including factors involving external competition, public service and personal career growth. But they have concerns about the compatibility of different newsroom cultures and approaches to news; a lack of training to alleviate fears about perceived complexities of new formats; and scarcity of observable, tangible rewards for their "converged" colleagues, among other things.

* **RQ2:** Interpersonal communication channels are of primary importance in the diffusion of convergence within these newsrooms.

* **RQ3:** Characteristics suggestive of relatively early adoption of convergence among journalists include a perception that it offers an avenue for upward professional mobility and a generally favorable attitude toward change.

* **RQ4:** Cultural clashes remain a major stumbling block to convergence and may well be a hallmark of the process in every newsroom. Physical and management structures can be put in

place to facilitate convergence, but their application is neither easy nor universal. Although more research is needed, opinion leaders appear to be emerging from among the reporting staffs.

Ultimately, the question is whether convergence will succeed -- not just in these particular newsrooms but also throughout the news industry worldwide. The use of a case study methodology means the findings cannot be generalized, but the four US newsrooms studied here are among those being closely watched throughout the industry. As more newspaper and television stations join forces, complemented by their online affiliates, the pressure on competitors will increase. The results are already apparent in Tampa Bay, for instance, where the *Tribune*'s rival, the *St. Petersburg Times*, recently entered a partnership with the local CBS affiliate -- which it does not own and with which it has no other formal relationship.

Although convergence faces numerous challenges and ongoing modification to particular market needs and newsroom "personalities", application of diffusion theory to the diverse cases studied here suggests probable success. While the innovation is not now fully compatible with newsroom perceptions and norms, the challenges do not seem insurmountable. The interpersonal communication channels necessary for acceptance of convergence are in place and operating. The pattern of adoption within these newsrooms suggests a normal curve, at least insofar as such a pattern can be determined by this "snapshot in time" study. Newsroom social -- and physical -- structures are difficult to change, and the implementation phase of convergence is likely to continue to be slower than executives who have invested heavily in it might like. But this study suggests that while many journalists have problems with the current practice of convergence, far fewer have problems with the idea or principle itself. That is, their objections, while serious and important, are to things that can be addressed through revised management policies, structural changes or, over time, increased comfort with the people and tasks associated with convergence.

The passage of time also will make the consequences of the diffusion of convergence apparent -- consequences that are desirable and undesirable, anticipated and unanticipated. Some of these already have surfaced. Many journalists say they have gained respect for people in other parts of the news operation, surely a desirable consequence. Less desirable is the perception, also voiced by many, that convergence is a way for management to take advantage of employees by demanding more work without more pay. Plenty of other examples are detailed above.

Convergence will yield countless opportunities for ongoing research as today's converged newsrooms work out the kinks, tomorrow's new hires come on board and additional journalists in additional newsrooms mold the process in new directions. As this study indicates, there are many different ways to converge, and models will evolve to suit unique organizations, markets and cultures. Longitudinal studies are especially needed to better understand challenges raised by convergence and to allow both academy and industry to address those challenges.

In the meantime, this study suggests journalists are finding ways to make convergence workable and potentially even rewarding. To close with an anecdote: News executives in Sarasota offer visitors a packet containing clips and press releases related to their convergence efforts over the years. The packet includes a 1995 newspaper column headlined "Klingons Coming", in which the author compares himself to *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk, suddenly ordered to make peace with aliens who will be, among other things, "elbowing us out of the way to do their makeup at our restroom mirrors". And it isn't enough, he writes, that we will have to work with the enemy. "We are supposed to become them! Well, it will never happen to me", he concludes. Flash forward eight years, and he says things turned out pretty much the way they did on *Star Trek*: The Klingons became allies, radically different styles and all.

Table 1: Results by medium

This table shows the mean score (with the standard deviation in parentheses below each score) for all journalists who completed and returned a questionnaire, as well as for journalists whose primary affiliation was with the indicated medium. The statements are part of a 54-item questionnaire given to all interviewees, using a 7-point Likert scale in which "1" corresponds to "strongly disagree", "4" corresponds to "neutral", and "7" corresponds to "strongly agree".

Questionnaire Statement	All Journalists (n = 90)	Newspaper Journalists[a] (n = 49)	Online Journalists (n = 23)	Television Journalists[b] (n = 18)
Working in a converged newsroom environment is good for my career.	5.86 (1.40)	5.51 (1.54)	6.48 (.90)	6.00 (1.28)
My company is better able to serve our audience because of our decision to converge news operations.	5.61 (1.45)	5.45 (1.54)	6.17 (.83)	5.33 (1.68)
The reaction of our audience to our converged news operation generally has been positive.	5.02 (1.27)	4.74 (1.27)	5.61 (1.27)	5.00 (1.03)
Converging our newsrooms has given us a leg up on the competition here in our market.	5.48 (1.60)	5.01 (1.78)	6.04 (1.15)	6.06 (1.18)
Convergence has cost this company more than convergence is worth.	2.62 (1.57)	3.11 (1.63)	1.65 (.83)	2.56 (1.63)
Integrating different newsroom cultures has been the hardest part about convergence.	5.19 (1.69)	5.08 (1.72)	5.39 (1.59)	5.22 (1.80)
Asking journalists to work across converged media results in mediocre journalism.	2.93 (1.63)	3.27 (1.67)	2.22 (1.59)	2.94 (1.30)
The effort necessary to make convergence work is shared equitably throughout our news operation.	2.91 (1.60)	2.69 (1.57)	3.09 (1.56)	3.29 (1.72)
I enjoy working with people who have professional strengths different from my own.	6.48 (.75)	6.61 (.64)	6.22 (.85)	6.44 (.86)
I have gained respect for the people in other parts of the news operation as a result of convergence.	5.71 (1.46)	5.45 (1.70)	5.91 (1.16)	6.17 (.92)
There is a great deal of cooperation among people working in our converged newsroom.	4.23 (1.38)	4.15 (1.59)	4.35 (.93)	4.28 (1.27)
The fact that we now are continually "scooping ourselves" bothers me.	3.07 (1.93)	3.66 (2.00)	2.04 (1.46)	2.81 (1.72)
My company provided appropriate training for me to make the transition to work in a converged newsroom.	3.11 (1.66)	2.97 (1.67)	3.50 (1.71)	3.00 (1.57)
The technological aspects of convergence frustrate me.	3.14 (1.80)	3.29 (1.89)	3.22 (1.83)	2.67 (1.50)
Overall, converged newsrooms are a good idea.	5.66 (1.44)	5.39 (1.59)	6.22 (1.17)	5.67 (1.14)
Convergence will prove to be a successful editorial strategy for the news industry as a whole.	5.39 (1.47)	5.25 (1.49)	6.09 (1.47)	4.89 (1.08)
I feel pressured to cooperate in our convergence efforts even though I don't really want to.	2.51 (1.78)	2.98 (1.94)	1.65 (1.47)	2.33 (1.24)
The "chain of command" in our converged newsroom is clear.	3.48 (1.66)	3.34 (1.90)	4.04 (1.11)	3.17 (1.47)
My company converged newsrooms in order to do a better job providing information to various audiences.	4.98 (1.78)	4.72 (1.92)	5.48 (1.47)	5.00 (1.71)
My company's motivation for convergence is economic rather than journalistic.	4.69 (1.84)	5.18 (1.61)	3.30 (1.66)	5.25 (1.77)
My company has converged its newsrooms primarily as a way to eventually reduce staffing.	3.51 (1.91)	3.43 (1.93)	3.26 (1.66)	4.13 (2.19)

a) One journalist who splits his time between print and television is included with the newspaper respondents, the medium in which he has the most longevity.
b) One journalist who serves all three media as a multimedia coordinator is included with the television respondents because of his physical location in the news organization.

Table 2: Results by market

This table shows the mean score (with the standard deviation in parentheses below each score) for all journalists who completed and returned a questionnaire, as well as for journalists by market. The statements are part of a 54-item questionnaire given to all interviewees, using a 7-point Likert scale in which "1" corresponds to "strongly disagree", "4" corresponds to "neutral" and "7" corresponds to "strongly agree".

Questionnaire Statement	All Journalists (n = 90)	Dallas (n = 26)	Tampa (n= 22)	Sarasota (N = 23)	Lawrence (N = 19)
Working in a converged newsroom environment is good for my career.	5.86 (1.40)	5.89 (1.14)	5.50 (1.79)	6.09 (1.08)	5.95 (1.58)
My company is better able to serve our audience because of our decision to converge news operations.	5.61 (1.45)	5.69 (1.54)	5.23 (1.77)	5.91 (1.08)	5.58 (1.30)
The reaction of our audience to our converged news operation generally has been positive.	5.02 (1.27)	5.12 (1.20)	4.64 (1.18)	5.35 (1.15)	4.92 (1.53)
Converging our newsrooms has given us a leg up on the competition here in our market.	5.48 (1.60)	5.92 (1.22)	5.14 (2.01)	5.70 (1.61)	4.97 (1.42)
Convergence has cost this company more than convergence is worth.	2.62 (1.57)	2.32 (1.44)	3.14 (1.93)	2.44 (1.53)	2.65 (1.27)
Integrating different newsroom cultures has been the hardest part about convergence.	5.19 (1.69)	5.58 (1.63)	5.68 (1.32)	5.17 (1.83)	4.11 (1.59)
Asking journalists to work across converged media results in mediocre journalism.	2.93 (1.63)	2.77 (1.63)	2.73 (1.45)	3.09 (1.81)	3.21 (1.65)
The effort necessary to make convergence work is shared equitably throughout our news operation.	2.91 (1.60)	2.92 (1.38)	2.50 (1.50)	3.04 (2.08)	3.22 (1.31)
I enjoy working with people who have professional strengths different from my own.	6.48 (.75)	6.27 (.83)	6.36 (.85)	6.61 (.66)	6.74 (.56)
I have gained respect for the people in other parts of the news operation as a result of convergence.	5.71 (1.46)	5.81 (1.27)	5.41 (1.82)	5.61 (1.41)	6.05 (1.35)
There is a great deal of cooperation among people working in our converged newsroom.	4.23 (1.38)	4.23 (1.24)	3.82 (1.56)	4.04 (1.26)	4.92 (1.29)
The fact that we now are continually "scooping ourselves" bothers me.	3.07 (1.93)	3.12 (2.13)	3.52 (2.04)	2.57 (1.70)	3.12 (1.80)
My company provided appropriate training for me to make the transition to work in a converged newsroom.	3.11 (1.66)	3.19 (1.79)	3.73 (1.93)	2.68 (1.36)	2.75 (1.26)
The technological aspects of convergence frustrate me.	3.14 (1.80)	2.96 (1.48)	3.00 (1.77)	4.13 (2.14)	2.37 (1.34)
Overall, converged newsrooms are a good idea.	5.66 (1.44)	5.54 (1.61)	5.32 (1.49)	6.13 (1.14)	5.63 (1.42)
Convergence will prove to be a successful editorial strategy for the news industry as a whole.	5.39 (1.47)	5.69 (1.44)	5.05 (1.46)	5.48 (1.53)	5.26 (1.45)
I feel pressured to cooperate in our convergence efforts even though I don't really want to.	2.51 (1.78)	2.40 (1.94)	2.68 (1.62)	2.39 (1.95)	2.58 (1.64)
The "chain of command" in our converged newsroom is clear.	3.48 (1.66)	3.50 (1.42)	3.36 (1.89)	4.15 (1.59)	2.79 (1.58)
My company converged newsrooms in order to do a better job providing information to various audiences.	4.98 (1.78)	5.12 (1.83)	4.14 (2.08)	5.17 (1.56)	5.53 (1.33)
My company's motivation for convergence is economic rather than journalistic.	4.69 (1.84)	4.64 (1.89)	5.52 (1.47)	4.74 (1.81)	3.68 (1.83)
My company has converged its newsrooms primarily as a way to eventually reduce staffing.	3.51 (1.91)	3.92 (1.78)	4.10 (2.12)	2.61 (1.62)	3.41 (1.91)

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