

News and Journalism in the UK

Fourth Edition

McNair,



NEWS AND JOURNALISM IN THE UK

News and Journalism in the UK is an accessible and comprehensive introduction to the political, economic and regulatory environments of press and broadcast journalism in Britain and Northern Ireland.

Surveying the industry in a period of radical economic and technological change, Brian McNair examines the main trends in journalistic media over the past two decades and assesses both the challenges facing the industry and its future in the new millennium.

Integrating academic and journalistic perspectives on journalism, topics addressed in this revised and updated edition include:

- ‘tabloidisation’, Americanisation and the supposed ‘dumbing down’ of journalistic standards
- changing work patterns and the feminisation of journalism
- trends in media ownership and editorial allegiances
- the impact of technological innovations such as digitalisation, on-line media and 24-hour news
- the implications of devolution for regional journalists.

Brian McNair is Reader in the Department of Film and Media Studies at Stirling University. He is the author of *An Introduction to Political Communication* (third edition, 2003), *The Sociology of Journalism* (1998) and *Journalism and Democracy* (2000).

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETY

Series editor: James Curran

GLASNOST, PERESTROIKA AND THE SOVIET MEDIA

Brian McNair

PLURALISM, POLITICS AND THE MARKETPLACE

The regulation of German broadcasting

Vincent Porter and Suzanne Hasselbach

POTBOILERS

Methods, concepts and case studies in popular fiction

Jerry Palmer

COMMUNICATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Journalism and the public sphere

Edited by Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks

SEEING AND BELIEVING

The influence of television

Greg Philo

CRITICAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Communication, history and theory in America

Hanno Hardt

MEDIA MOGULS

Jeremy Tunstall and Michael Palmer

FIELDS IN VISION

Television sport and cultural transformation

Garry Whannel

GETTING THE MESSAGE

News, truth and power

The Glasgow Media Group

ADVERTISING, THE UNEASY PERSUASION

Its dubious impact on American society

Michael Schudson

NATION, CULTURE, TEXT

Australian cultural and media studies

Edited by Graeme Turner

TELEVISION PRODUCERS

Jeremy Tunstall

WHAT NEWS?

The market, politics and the local press

Bob Franklin and David Murphy

IN GARAGELAND

Rock, youth and modernity

Johan Fornäs, Ulf Lindberg and Ove Sernhede

THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch

GLASGOW MEDIA GROUP READER, VOLUME 1

News content, language and visuals

Edited by John Eldridge

GLASGOW MEDIA GROUP READER, VOLUME 2

Industry, economy, war and politics

Edited by Greg Philo

THE GLOBAL JUKEBOX

The international music industry

Robert Burnett

INSIDE PRIME TIME

Todd Gitlin

TALK ON TELEVISION

Audience participation and public debate

Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

MEDIA EFFECTS AND BEYOND

Culture, socialization and lifestyles

Edited by Karl Erik Rosengren

WE KEEP AMERICA ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Television journalism and the public sphere

Daniel C. Hallin

A JOURNALISM READER

Edited by Michael Bromley and Tom O'Malley

TABLOID TELEVISION

Popular journalism and the 'other news'

John Langer

INTERNATIONAL RADIO JOURNALISM

History, theory and practice

Tim Crook

MEDIA, RITUAL AND IDENTITY

Edited by Tamar Liebes and James Curran

DE-WESTERNIZING MEDIA STUDIES

Edited by James Curran and Myung-Jin Park

BRITISH CINEMA IN THE FIFTIES

Christine Geraghty

ILL EFFECTS

The media violence debate, second edition

Edited by Martin Barker and Julian Petley

MEDIA AND POWER

James Curran

JOURNALISM AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

Edited by Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan

NEWS AND JOURNALISM IN THE UK

Fourth edition

Brian McNair

AN INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Third edition

Brian McNair

NEWS AND
JOURNALISM IN
THE UK

Fourth edition

Brian McNair

First published 1994
by Routledge

This edition published 2003
by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge

29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 1994, 1996, 1999, 2003 Brian McNair

Typeset in Sabon by Steven Gardiner Ltd, Cambridge
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

McNair, Brian, 1959–

News and journalism in the UK. Brian McNair – 4th ed.

p. cm. – (Communication and society)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Journalism – Great Britain – History – 20th century.

I. Title. II. Series: Communication and Society (Routledge (Firm))

PN5118.M35 2003

072'.09'049 – dc21 2002152168

ISBN 0-415-30705-8 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-30706-6 (pbk)

TO THE MUGWUMP, FOR MAKING IT

CONTENTS

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	xi
<i>Preface to the fourth edition</i>	xii
PART I	
The view from the Academy	1
1 Why journalism matters	3
2 Journalism and its critics	30
3 Explaining content	54
PART II	
Issues	79
4 Broadcast journalism: the changing environment	81
5 Television journalism: the 1990s and beyond	104
6 Radio	141
7 Before and after Wapping: the changing political economy of the British press	153
8 Competition, content and Calcutt	177
9 The regional story	198
10 Conclusion: news and journalism in the twenty-first century	219

CONTENTS

<i>Notes</i>	226
<i>Bibliography</i>	235
<i>Index</i>	241

FIGURE AND TABLES

Figure

1	A news map of the United Kingdom	4
---	----------------------------------	---

Tables

1.1	Audiences for British radio, 2002	13
1.2	Circulation of British national newspapers, 1992–2002	14
1.3	Major proprietors and share of national newspaper circulation	16
1.4	Top ten UK periodicals by circulation, January–June 2002	19
5.1	Average audience figures for main news programmes, 1987–91	107
5.2	Average audience figures for main news programmes, 2002	125
8.1	Outcome of complaints to the Press Complaints Commission, January 1991–July 1992	189
9.1	Share of total advertising revenue in the regional press, 1970–90	208

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

The decade which has passed since the publication of the first and fourth editions of this book has been one of huge change for British journalism. When the first edition appeared in 1994 there was no on-line journalism and only one UK-based rolling news channel. Flagship television programmes such as *News At Ten* on ITV, and the *9 O'Clock News* on BBC One were seemingly immovable journalistic objects, fixed forever in their slots as symbols of British public service broadcasting's commitment to quality news at peak time. Likewise, the high-profile presence of *Panorama* on BBC One and *World In Action* on ITV, reflected long-standing obligations on the part of both public-funded and commercial broadcasters to produce quality current affairs programming at times in the schedule when people might actually watch it.

The press, meanwhile, fifteen years after the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, were overwhelmingly pro-Conservative in their editorial bias, and widely criticised for their propagandistic, anti-democratic contributions to British political life. The worst offender in this regard, Rupert Murdoch, was routinely at loggerheads with the public-service BBC, viewing the corporation as an unfairly subsidised obstacle to his commercial ambitions in the UK. His rolling news service, SkyNews, remained in 1994 something of an upstart in the journalistic universe, even although it was the only UK-based service of its kind.

How things have changed. Now, the BBC and ITN have joined Sky in the rolling news business, which has expanded with the proliferation of cable and satellite channels on British television. Counting CNN and Bloomberg, the UK TV viewer with the appropriate receiving equipment now has access to five 24-hour news services, as well as a channel (BBC Parliament) devoted entirely to coverage of parliaments in the UK and Europe.

More than that, after decades of open warfare between the two organisations, the BBC under Greg Dyke has joined with Murdoch's BskyB in taking over the digital terrestrial TV licence held until 2002 by ITV. Having survived the long years of Conservative government, its confident collaboration with Murdoch signalled that the BBC had by 2003 moved into a position of unquestioned dominance of British broadcasting, and the provision of broadcast journalism in particular. ITN, on the other hand, the only serious rival to the BBC on five channels of terrestrial TV, was in a state of on-going crisis, seeing its income and resources whittled away by the need to compete with such as Sky for the ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 news contracts. ITN had also been seriously damaged by battles around scheduling, which in 2000 saw *News At Ten* cancelled then, after much protest and prevarication, brought back, but only on three days a week. As ITV dithered over the scheduling of its peak time news bulletins, *News At Ten* became *News at When?* Viewers abandoned ITV in droves, and for the first time in many years ratings for BBC One's news bulletins overtook those of the commercial channel.

For the British press, change was less obviously dramatic, but still significant. From an overwhelmingly pro-Tory editorial bias in the general election of 1992, the press had become just as overwhelmingly pro-Labour, aggressively backing Tony Blair in both the 1997 and 2001 elections. Even Rupert Murdoch, the scourge of Labour before Blair's emergence as leader, had learned to love (or at least tolerate) the Left (or the version of it espoused by New Labour). Press ownership had also changed, with major new players like Ireland's Tony O'Reilly (the *Independent*) and Richard Desmond's Northern & Shell emerging (the *Express* titles) to take on the established interests.

Through it all, debates about the quality of British journalism have occupied audiences, academics and journalists alike. 'Dumbing down', 'tabloidisation', 'Americanisation', 'commercialisation' – all have been brandished as accusations at the producers of British journalism, in both the broadcast and print sectors. Commercial pressures have been blamed for an alleged marginalisation of what its advocates tend to call 'serious' current affairs and documentary. Outrage at the excesses of some news organisations – such as the *News of the World's* 'naming and shaming' campaign against alleged paedophiles – has continued to erupt, if not quite with the regularity of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Kelvin Mackenzie and other tabloid editors placed the British system of

press self-regulation at serious risk with their intrusive coverage of the Hillsborough disaster and other stories.

But the legitimate criticism of those sub-sectors of British journalism which deserve it should not be allowed to obscure an interesting and welcome fact: that the story of news and journalism in the UK since 1994 is one of remarkable growth. The emergence of on-line journalism may well turn out to be the most significant aspect of this trend, though it remains as yet peripheral to the provision of news through established press and broadcast platforms. When the first edition of this book was researched and published, there was no such thing as news on the Internet. Today, no self-respecting journalistic organisation is without its on-line portal, supplying an estimated global market, in mid-2002, of about 600 million net surfers. Many journalistic sites are independent of the established news providers, offering information alternatives to the mainstream. Others, such as FT.com, are developing new ways of packaging journalism for a world in which geographical and cultural borders are breaking down.

And then there is the dramatic expansion of rolling news, bringing with it the creation of a global news audience for events such as the September 11 al-Quaida attacks, as well as the hugely expanded availability of broadcast journalism all day, every day, for those who want it. Although still, by 2002, reaching only a fraction of the audience for news programmes on the free-to-air terrestrial channels, there is no doubt that in the multi-channel, digitalised, globalised future, rolling news will be a key sub-sector of the British media market.

Alongside the globalisation of journalism which 24-hour channels have delivered, regional and local news has expanded in the UK, especially in the print sector. A point made in the first edition of this book is even more obvious a decade later – cultural globalisation does not reduce the need for local media; on the contrary, it increases that need, and the robust health of regional publishers in the UK proves that fact.

Audiences for radio have increased too, and have been doing so throughout the lifetime of this book. Despite the explosion of television news and on-line services, people still want to listen to radio, for news as well as entertainment. There are many more radio channels operating today, servicing larger audiences, than there were twenty or ten years ago.

And the national press, though declining in its total circulation over the decade or so since 1992, remains in the main popular and

profitable, given that the range of journalistic alternatives to the humble newspaper or magazine has increased to include even the mobile phone. Thus far at least, the expansion of broadcast and on-line news media has not meant the death of print, and there is no evidence that such an eventuality is likely in the foreseeable future.

This edition incorporates all of these trends, and to that extent paints a picture of the state of news and journalism in the UK which is rather more positive and optimistic than some would accept. Many justified criticisms of the British news media are discussed and acknowledged in the following chapters, such as the precarious state of current affairs on peak-time television, and continuing deficiencies in the sphere of press regulation. But there can be no doubt that, contrary to the cultural pessimism which has characterised academic debate on the subject for decades, the production of British news and journalism is, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, remarkably healthy and robust. Indeed, we inhabit an exponentially expanding public sphere of news, analysis and commentary, disseminating far more information than any one individual could possibly absorb. The key issue is not, as many feared it would become at the height of Thatcherism, how to ensure the survival of quality journalism in the UK, well-resourced and politically balanced, against the brutal logic of the free market; it is how to justify the vast quantities of journalistic output now produced across print, broadcast and on-line media, both public and commercially funded, at local, national and international level, given the finite capacity of the audience to consume it. How long, for example, can the British media market support three UK-based rolling news services, none of them reaching more than a minuscule fraction of the TV audience?

As well as providing an up-to-date snapshot of how the British news media looked in the first decade of the twenty-first century, this book aims to address these and other issues in an accessible, thought-provoking way. Whether the reader agrees with all my conclusions or not, I trust that he or she will find it a useful map through the expanding, rapidly changing network of organisations and individuals which make up the British news media.

For this edition, the contents of each chapter are outlined in bullet points, and most chapters end with suggestions for further reading. Readers will also find a guide to further reading in the notes and bibliographical references.

Brian McNair
February 2003

Part I

THE VIEW FROM
THE ACADEMY

1

WHY JOURNALISM MATTERS

This chapter contains:

- An outline of the organisational structure of the British news media, including details of ownership, newspaper circulation, and broadcast ratings
- An introduction to the key academic perspectives on British journalism.

In the twenty-first century the production of news, and journalism of all kinds, is big business. The supply of information (whether as journalism or as rawer forms of data) occupies an industry of major economic importance, employing huge human and financial resources, and enjoying high status. Across the world, top news-readers, anchor men and women, and newspaper columnists acquire the glamour of movie stars and exert the influence of politicians. Broadcasting companies judge themselves, and are judged, by the perceived quality of their news services.

Journalism is also an expanding business. At the beginning of the 1980s there were just two organisations supplying televised news and current affairs to the United Kingdom: the British Broadcasting Corporation and Independent Television News. Each provided around two hours of news per day. Now, there are three UK-based providers of television journalism accessible to the British audience (BBC, ITN, Sky), transmitting on five terrestrial channels, and a host of satellite and cable channels. The number of hours of television news available to the dedicated viewer has increased exponentially as 24-hour services have come on air, and the established terrestrial producers have augmented their services

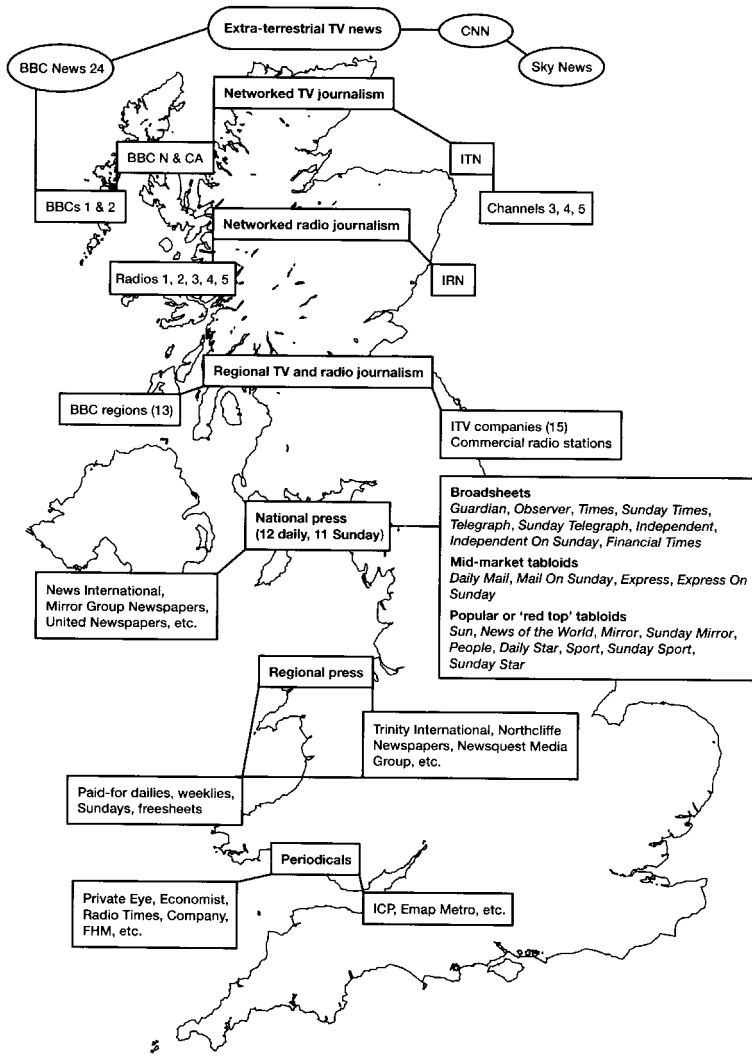


Figure 1 A news map of the United Kingdom.

with breakfast news, round-the-clock bulletins and coverage of Parliament.

Radio journalism is also expanding as more national and local channels are set up. There are, if one counts such upstarts as the *Sport*, *Sunday Sport* and *Sunday Star*, more national newspapers than there were twenty years ago. At local level a large ‘freesheet’ sector exists alongside the ‘paid-fors’.

This chapter examines current thinking on how these proliferating journalistic media might affect individuals and social processes. Most of us assume that journalism matters: but does it really, and if so, in what ways? We begin, however, with a description of the British journalism industry: the types and structures of organisations which provide us with journalistic information; who owns them; the extent of their reach and the size of their audiences. In this way, and as a prelude to discussion of why journalism matters sociologically, we can draw a ‘news map’ of the UK (see Figure 1), beginning with the most popular and pervasive medium, television.

Television

The earliest provider of television journalism in the UK, the British Broadcasting Corporation, began life in 1922 as the Broadcasting Company. Originally a cartel of radio manufacturers, the Broadcasting Company was financed by a licence fee, and by a share of the royalties on the sale of radio receivers. The Broadcasting Company was nationalised and became the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1926, from which time it was licensed to serve as ‘a cultural, moral and educative force for the improvement of knowledge, taste and manners’ (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991, p. 8).

Operating under the provisions of a Royal Charter, the BBC was constituted as a ‘public service’, funded by public taxation. It will continue to play this role for the foreseeable future, subject to periodic charter renewal.

From the outset the BBC interpreted its public service role to mean that it should be a major provider of information to the British people, devoting a large proportion of its resources to news and current affairs broadcasting, first on radio, and then on two channels of television. In 1990–1 BBC One devoted 1,164 hours to news and current affairs, and 992 to the broader category of ‘current affairs, features, and documentaries’. For BBC Two the figures were 268 and 1,384 hours respectively. The Directorate of

News and Current Affairs – the department responsible for BBC journalism – had a budget in 1991 of £130 million (about 24 per cent of total TV costs).¹ In 2002, BBC journalism had an annual budget of more than £300 million. The News and Current Affairs directorate employed 2,500 staff, who produced some 55,000 hours of journalism across the range of TV and radio channels.

Until 1955 the BBC had a monopoly on British television news. That year a commercial network was launched, producing its own news and current affairs. The independent television (ITV) companies shared out the making of current affairs and documentary programmes, while their news was provided by Independent Television News (ITN). ITN was to be owned collectively by all the ITV companies, and run on a non-profit-making basis to supply them with news bulletins. This it did very successfully, winning the contract to provide Channel 4 with news when it came on the air in 1981. By 1988 ITN employed more than a thousand people to produce over twenty-five hours of news per week (Dunnett, 1990, p. 132). In 1997, ITN won the £6 million contract to produce news for the new Channel 5. In 2001, despite vigorous competition from Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, it won the contract to continue producing news for the ITV network, and in 2002 its long-standing Channel 4 news contract was renewed, at a value of £20 million per annum for five years.

Regional TV news

The bulk of the BBC's news and current affairs, and all of ITN's, is produced in London and networked throughout the UK. But both the BBC and ITV also provide regional news services. Since the merger of Yorkshire TV and Tyne Tees TV in 1992 there are fifteen ITV companies covering the country, each with its own locally produced magazines, news bulletins and current affairs output.

The BBC has six 'Nations and Regions' (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and North, Midland and South in England) and thirteen regional departments (such as BBC London, BBC South East) producing television news and current affairs at local level.

Breakfast TV

Breakfast television services were established in Britain in 1985, reflecting the trend throughout the 1980s towards more hours of news programming on television. The BBC was the first to provide

a full three-hour breakfast programme, and was quickly followed by TV-am on ITV, owned by a consortium of banking and financial interests led by the Australian Bruce Gyngell, who had previously been chief executive of Australia's Channel 9. TV-am thus became the first new provider of national television journalism in the UK since ITN was established in 1955.

From the outset TV-am, like the BBC, built its service around news and current affairs, although with a markedly 'lighter' touch than the latter's more analytical, in-depth coverage. Paralleling the distinction between the BBC's Birtian approach and that of ITN (see Chapters 4 and 5), TV-am attempted to construct a distinctive brand image for its product which laid much more stress on human interest and 'lifestyle' coverage than on 'hard' news. The TV-am formula, as described in its 1991 application for the ITV breakfast-time licence, was a 'live, fast-moving mixture of news, information and entertainment in short self-contained segments which viewers can dip in and out of, listen to as well as watch, as they start the day'. Its style was 'warm and friendly', with a 'human face', combining regional, national and international news feeds with cosy studio chats between Benetton-jumpered presenters and guests from the entertainment and political worlds.

Sixty-three per cent of TV-am's airtime and 75 per cent of its programme budget was devoted to news and current affairs, supplied by foreign bureaux in Washington, Moscow, Cyprus, and Hong Kong, with local news coming from eight regional centres. Video material was supplied by Visnews.

TV-am was a highly popular service, achieving some 70 per cent of the national audience and making substantial profits for its owners. The company's finances were greatly helped by the successful outcome of its dispute with the broadcasting unions in 1988. The defeat of the ACTT made possible a reallocation of resources from the technical side of the production process to journalism. Jeff Berliner, TV-am's head of news explained in 1991 that 'before the ACTT dispute we had 82 journalists. We've now got 120. Twenty-four per cent of TV-am's workforce are journalists. Most people at TV-am work on news and current affairs programming. Not finance, or management, or anything else.'

In this respect TV-am was a pioneer and a mould-breaker in British television news. And having 'resolved the issue of who manages the industry' with the unions, the company looked set to go into the 1990s providing what Jeff Berliner called 'a fast, accurate, credible and creditable news service, within a sensible

financial base'. Unfortunately for TV-am, and to the surprise of many in the industry, the company was destined to become the most prominent victim of the changes to the procedures for allocating franchises introduced by the 1990 Broadcasting Act (see Chapter 5).

The ITV breakfast-time licence was always going to be much sought after, given the profits which it had generated for TV-am, and when invitations to tender were issued, TV-am found itself competing with two rival consortia: Daybreak Television, consisting of ITN, Carlton Communications, the *Daily Telegraph*, and NBC among others; and Sunrise (now GMTV), the majority of which was owned by the Guardian and Manchester Evening News Group, Scottish Television, London Weekend Television, and the Walt Disney Company.

Both Daybreak and Sunrise based their bids on the alleged weakness of TV-am's service. What to TV-am was 'warm and friendly' with 'a human face' was to Daybreak 'trite'. TV-am's 'soft approach' to news and current affairs would, it warned, lead in the future to a loss of ITV's breakfast audience and thus its advertising revenue.

Sunrise criticised TV-am for its poor regional service. Although TV-am took pride in having eight 'regional centres' feeding material which was then integrated into a national package, critics suggested that the centres – in reality remote-controlled studios on the premises of the regional companies – were 'cosmetic investments', with little input into the finished TV-am product. Sunrise proposed to farm out its regional news to the established regional companies, who would provide regular opt-out segments for viewers in different parts of the country,² while the resources of LWT and Visnews would be employed to produce national and international coverage.

When the ITC allocated the ITV breakfast licence in October 1991, Sunrise emerged as its favoured candidate to provide early morning television journalism in the 1990s. TV-am's application was deemed inferior to that of the Sunrise consortium, which began broadcasting on 1 January 1993 under the name Good Morning TV (GMTV).

The Channel 4 breakfast franchise was won by the independent company Planet 24, offering a mix of 'middle market tabloid and mainstream Radio 1'. The Big Breakfast was launched in October 1992, to a generally positive critical reaction, while its audience ratings from the outset exceeded those of its predecessor, the Channel 4 Daily. In April 2002 the Big Breakfast was replaced by

Ri:se, a similarly targeted two-hour mix of news and entertainment. The news bulletins for Ri:se were supplied by BSkyB, which in January 2002 also won a contract to provide bulletins (Sky News Sunrise) to Channel 5's breakfast schedule.

Satellite and cable

In 1989 Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation launched Sky News, Britain's first 24-hour television news channel, as part of its Sky Television service, transmitting from the Astra satellite. Sky News brought the number of UK national news providers to four. For a brief period of some six months there was another satellite provider of news – British Satellite Broadcasting – which launched fourteen months after Sky on the DBS system. Between April and October 1990 BSB and Sky fought an expensive battle for subscribers to their two completely incompatible systems, losing an estimated £1.25 billion between them. Neither Rupert Murdoch nor the consortium which owned BSB could sustain such losses for very long, and at the end of October 1990 it was announced that the two satellite networks would merge to form BSkyB, 50 per cent of which would be owned by News Corporation, 16 per cent by Pearson, 12 per cent by Granada Television, and 3.7 per cent by Reed International.³

Although Sky News has been something of a critical success (perhaps surprisingly, given the widespread contempt in which the media establishment has traditionally held Rupert Murdoch's tabloid newspapers), its profitability was hampered for many years by the relatively slow initial take-up of satellite television by the British public, and the failure of cable services to penetrate the British media market to any significant degree until the end of the 1990s. Had it not been for the safety net provided by Murdoch's immensely profitable newspaper interests (see Chapter 7), Sky News's ongoing losses would, in the view of many industry observers, have been unsustainable. By the mid-1990s, however, BSkyB had entered a healthier phase, and with it Sky News. At the beginning of 1992 the *Observer* reported that the company was on the verge of profitability, with 100,000 dishes per month being sold, and 2.8 million homes by then being reached in the UK.⁴ By 1998, BSkyB was available through satellite in 3.8 million homes, and through cable in another 2.4 million, generating profits substantial enough to make a significant contribution to such audacious moves as the attempted £620 million purchase of Manchester United

football club in September 1998 (rejected by the British government on competition grounds).

Sky News was Britain's first domestically produced 24-hour television news service, although the US-produced Cable Network News, owned by American entrepreneur Ted Turner, had been available since 1985 to those with the appropriate receiving technology. Despite the global impact made by CNN with its coverage of such events as the 1991 Gulf War and the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, its audience in the UK remains small, although it dominates the European market with more than 17 per cent of audience share.

The BBC has also established itself in the 24-hour television news market. In November 1991, after years of planning, the World Service launched a global satellite television service – World Service Television News (WSTN) – which aimed to do for the global TV audience what the World Service has traditionally done for radio listeners. Moreover, the BBC hoped to make this service the base for its own 24-hour domestic TV news channel, which would compete with Sky News and CNN for the British audience. This plan came to fruition in November 1997 with the launch of BBC News 24 on cable (the service was also made available to terrestrial TV viewers on BBC One during the night). By that time, too, BBC's global television news service, BBC World, was transmitting to more than 100 countries. By 2002 BBC News 24 was reaching audiences of seven million viewers per week, and 33 million tuned in to the channel's coverage of the September 11 events, attracted by what were claimed by managers to be the BBC's 'hallmarks of authority, classic reporting and responsibility'. Benefiting from access to the substantial news-gathering resources of the BBC, News 24 was claimed to have overtaken Sky News, its main competitor, on the quality of, for example, its overseas and regional coverage, covering some 80–90 original stories on an average day.⁵

In 2000 ITN, anxious not to be left behind in the UK 'rolling' news market, launched a 24-hour service of its own, though lack of resources meant that, as of this writing, the channel had failed to match either the reputation or the audiences of BBC News 24 and Sky News. On 11 September 2001, of the three UK-based rolling news services Sky News got most viewers with 5.9 per cent of the multi-channel audience. BBC News 24 got 2.5 per cent and ITN's News Channel only 0.6 per cent.

Taking all the above together, we can reasonably argue that the television journalism industry in the UK is in a state of robust good

health as it enters the twenty-first century. News, current affairs and related information services have expanded both latitudinally, with new providers such as Sky News and CNN coming into the market, and longitudinally, with the time devoted to journalism on television increasing relentlessly. On an average weekday in 2002 the BBC produced some five hours of TV news and current affairs on its two terrestrial channels, ITN about the same across Channels 3, 4 and 5. Viewers had access to another hour or so of local coverage on ITV, while those with satellite dishes or cable could watch Sky News, BBC News 24, ITN, or CNN for 24 hours per day, every day, if they wished.

Teletext

Before leaving television, we should note the continuing importance of the electronic news and information services, Ceefax (produced by the BBC) and Teletext (its commercial rival). These are in effect subscription services, which enable the owners of specially adapted (and accordingly priced) television receivers to access 'electronic' data about everything from current events to transport timetables and recipes. Although the view of some observers that teletext services function as 'electronic newspapers' and will eventually make redundant the more familiar paper-and-ink variety has been overtaken by the emergence of the Internet, they are still important as information sources, not least to the journalism industry itself. It has been estimated that some twenty million people use Teletext each week, with eighteen million using Ceefax.

On-line journalism

While access to teletext services is limited to conventional TV sets, computer users now have access to practically unlimited quantities of electronic information through the Internet, including journalistic material such as on-line 'newspapers', bulletin boards and gossip pages like the Drudge report, which famously placed the Monica Lewinsky scandal in the public domain early in 1998. The emergence of the Internet, like teletext before it, has provoked speculation about the impending death of print, and one can see why this new medium might in the future pose a threat to the traditional means of dissemination of news and journalism. The speed, interactivity and comprehensiveness of the Internet as an information source are unprecedented in the history of

communication media, and the implications of its introduction to the mass market (a process now well under way) are difficult to foresee (see McNair, 1998a, c). In drawing our contemporary news map, however, it remains the case that on-line news media represent for the time being a peripheral sector of the information system as a whole – a complement to, rather than replacement for, traditional sources of broadcast and print journalism, accessed mainly by business, academic and journalistic users. Most major broadcast and print news organisations in the UK now have on-line versions, and some, such as FT.com, are able to charge for access to their specialist data and information services. As of 2000, some 50–80,000 people used the *Guardian's* website each day. BBC Online is one of the world's leading news sites, competing for global domination with CNN, Yahoo! News, Fox.com and others seeking to establish themselves as on-line providers of choice for the discerning news junkie.

But while virtually everyone in a country like the UK has a TV set, fewer as yet have easy, unrestricted access to a computer terminal (although that number is increasing all the time, with an estimated 553 million on-line users worldwide by July 2002, 29 million of them in the UK). At least until this situation changes, and probably for a long time after, broadcast and print will continue to be the main sources of news, in the UK and comparable countries. That said, the Internet is gradually eating into the advertising revenue which has sustained the commercial media. In the UK it is estimated that newspapers will lose about £140 million of their approximately £2 billion advertising revenue to the Internet by 2003.

Radio

Despite the expansion of television, radio has retained its share of the British audience and, in the commercial sector, of advertising revenues.⁶ Indeed, like television, radio has been in a period of expansion since the early 1990s. In the ten years from 1992 to 2002 audiences for radio increased from 88 per cent to 90 per cent of the population, with listeners tuning in for an average of 21.5 hours per week (see Table 1.1). Commercial radio's share of UK advertising revenue increased from 2 per cent to 6.4 per cent by 2002.

The dominant force in UK radio journalism remains by far the BBC, which reaches 53 per cent of the adult population and broadcasts some 4,000 hours per annum of national news, current affairs

Table 1.1 Audiences for British radio, 2002

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Weekly reach (000s and %)</i>	<i>Average hours per head</i>	<i>Share of all radio listening (%)</i>	
All radio	44,070	90	21.5	100.00
All BBC	32,585	66	11.3	52.6
BBC Radio 1	10,526	21	1.8	8.3
BBC Radio 2	13,042	27	3.4	15.6
BBC Radio 3	2021	4	0.2	1.1
BBC Radio 4	9756	20	2.4	11.3
BBC Radio 5 Live	6659	14	1.0	4.9
All commercial	31,583	64	9.8	45.5
Talk Sport	2401	5	0.3	1.8
All local commercial	26,905	55	8.0	40.8

Source: RAJAR/IPSOS-RSL, 25 March to 23 June 2002

and documentary features across its five channels – some 30 per cent of its total radio output.⁷ In addition, regional stations like Radio Scotland and Radio Ulster broadcast substantial quantities of their own news and current affairs output. The BBC also produces radio journalism, through the World Service, for an estimated global audience of 120 million people.⁸

At home, the BBC management in 1992 announced its intention to establish a 24-hour ‘rolling’ news service on network radio.⁹ ‘Radio 5 Live’ is now firmly established, with a weekly audience of over five million (see Table 1.1).

The supply of news to the commercial radio stations has traditionally been undertaken by Independent Radio News (IRN), the major part of which was until October 1992 owned by the Crown Communications Group. That month IRN merged with ITN and moved into the latter’s headquarters in London’s Gray’s Inn Road. From here, a networked service of hourly news bulletins is transmitted to commercial companies across the country.

As a result of the 1990 Broadcasting Act dozens of small community stations on the one hand, and several new national channels on the other, have come into being, broadcasting news services as part of their programming. IRN continues to supply these stations, but has now been joined by rival providers, such as National Network News and Europe FM. The larger (and richer) local stations, such as Radio Clyde in Glasgow, produce a large proportion of their own news and current affairs.