

The Impact of New Technologies on Journalistic Routines

Michelle Seelig

[WJMCR 6:1 December 2002]

Sections:

Abstract|Introduction|Social Construction of Reality|Research Questions|Research Design|Procedures|Findings|Conclusions and Implications

Abstract

Technology continues to provide news professionals with sophisticated tools indispensable to the photo-editorial decision process. Thus, this paper offers a theoretical and practical look at how new technologies have influenced the social construction of news photos. Using a major metropolitan “prestige” newspaper as a case study, this research documents the significance of the professional routine of assigning, selecting, and presenting news photographs. Findings reveal that in addition to roles and responsibilities of news professionals, and story type, newer technologies are built into journalistic routines. In this way, technology makes it easier for news professionals to produce the news quickly and efficiently.

Introduction

Technology again has changed the process in which the news, particularly news photos, are selected and constructed for the final news package. The purpose of this research is to offer a theoretical and practical look at how new technologies have influenced the social construction of news photos. This study demonstrates how technology is a tool embedded in journalistic routines, which provides the means for photo editors to select and construct news photos in a functional and efficient manner.

Social Construction of Reality

Media scholars have examined the social construction of the news within the theoretical context the social construction of reality.¹ This research suggests that interaction between journalism professionals is integral to the establishment, maintenance, behavior, meaning, and language of people in a social system. People that engage in social systems collectively make sense out of their everyday lives by interpreting their experiences with others. The social structure reinforces shared meaning through everyday routines and interaction with others.

The literature on professional routinization may, in fact, be seen as a very specific subset of social construction theory, known as social construction of the news.² The notion that the indoctrination of individuals into specific professions involves the establishing of norms, values, judgments and so forth, that often function as central and rote choices outside of the consciousness of their practitioners suggests that the profession and its practice are a social construction with specific reference to journalistic routinization. In so doing, it is the everyday interaction and sharing of knowledge that enables the social construction of news to occur.

In many of these studies, journalistic routines have been identified as the key element making it possible for news professionals to construct the news.³ For instance, Tuchman studied four news organizations over a ten-year period to make sense of the news process.⁴ Tuchman discovered that news routines and categories of news are embedded in the newsmaking process to manage the abundance of daily newswork. By adhering to news routines, news professionals were better prepared when an unexpected news event occurred. Their success was the categorization of news stories, as well as news occurrences and incorporating them into their news routines.

Gans also observed the social construction of the news in four news organizations.⁵ Like Tuchman, Gans found that news routines existed in order for news organizations to function. Specifically, journalistic efficiency exists in order to allocate precious airtime or print space, as well as time to produce a news story.

Fishman's ethnography of two newspapers also focused on how journalists socially construct reality for readers.⁶ He maintains that journalists engage in everyday routines as they gather and report the news. In this way, journalists do not recreate methods for gathering and reporting the news; rather these routines enable journalists to simplify the newsmaking process. Fishman suggests that routine journalism sets the standard by which all news professionals collect, produce, and report the day's events.

Albeit some research does exist regarding the social meaning of the news, very little research considers

how and why photos appear on the printed page. Newton⁷ investigated photojournalism professionals within a similar context; yet here the focus was news photos. Newton's study of photojournalism professionals was an important step in describing the social construction of news photos. Similarly, Bissell⁸ looked at photographic gatekeepers and examined the way decisions are made regarding photographic news. Bissell specifically addressed the gates in the photographic news process and photojournalists' decisions pertaining to photographic news. Bissell⁹ also examined the culture of the newsroom and gender of gatekeepers as variables in the photographic decision process.

Further, Lowrey¹⁰ believes that, "graphics and design have become an increasingly important part of the news as product, and it is therefore important for researchers of visual journalism to uncover the routines which help create the visual news." Lowrey also considers social construction useful for visual communication scholars interested in recent technological trends and organizational restructuring pertaining to newspapers.

Research Questions

Thus, to the extent that journalistic routines have a role in constructing news photos, the following research questions served as a guide for this study:

RQ 1: How are news photos socially constructed?

RQ 2: How does technology influence the social construction of news photos?

Research Design

To answer the aforementioned research questions, this study followed the basic characteristics of qualitative research. Information was gathered using ethnomethodology,¹¹ because the emphasis of this research was on the everyday behaviors and actions of news professionals. The study of a newspaper organization such as the *Inquirer*, lends to ethnomethodology because as Garfinkel¹² suggests, it is an environment in which daily activities are observable, "countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable-in short, *accountable*." Hence, ethnomethodology is used here to identify and understand news professionals and their behaviors within this organization.

The *Inquirer* was selected because of its reputation as a strong newspaper organization and its

overwhelming presence in a major metropolitan city. It is a daily newspaper with a circulation of about 400,000, published in the Northeast,¹³ and employs more than 500 employees including editors, reporters, graphic artists, photographers, and page designers.¹⁴ Similar to other newspapers of its size and circulation, as well as parent company,¹⁵ *The Inquirer* is a news organization open to new technology as well as new ideas.¹⁶ In order to stay competitive in this rapidly changing environment of the communications industry, the *Inquirer* continues to move forward. Specifically, “that means stretching the boundaries of how newspapers have traditionally defined themselves, reaching deeply into their core activities and developing new products to benefit their customers, both readers and advertisers.”¹⁷

Lastly, the *Inquirer* was also selected because like other newspapers of their stature, they were about to undergo several technological advancements in the newsroom. According to the director of photography (DP), an internal study revealed that the *Inquirer* was bridging the gap between old and new technology in the newsroom just as several other news organizations were. So, in order for the *Inquirer* to stay competitive, it needed to embrace new technology and be receptive to change. In part, this influenced the decision to select this newspaper for this case study. Similar to other newspapers like the *Inquirer*,¹⁸ it has a major presence in the news industry, open to new technology, and receptive to change. It was also willing to grant access for observation and interviews with the people pertinent to photo-editorial decisions. Thus, it can also be said that the *Inquirer* was selected because of ease and accessibility; also that as a news organization, provided access to relevant evidence pertinent to the given research issues.

Procedures

Over a three-month period, starting late November 1999 and ending mid February 2000,¹⁹ news professionals with direct authority over the assigning, selection, and presentation of photos because of their editorial functions were observed and formally interviewed.²⁰ This included all nine photo editors, seven news editors,²¹ two page designers, two graphic artists, the DP, the deputy director of photography (DDP), the deputy managing editor (DME), and the art director. Five key informants were also identified—the DDP, the national/foreign photo editor (NFP), the metro-biz-smash photo editor (MP), the weekend photo editor (WP), and the weekend page one news editor—because they work on a different section of the newspaper; thus, they offer different perspectives on the photo-editorial decision process.

To capture the subtle nuances that occur in everyday life and how news professionals make sense out of their everyday occurrences, research was conducted by observing everyday routines and informal social interactions, patterns of behavior, and habits of news professionals. News professionals were interviewed about one’s job, their memories, as well as insight to individual performances. Artifact analysis also supplemented observations and interviews in an effort to provide an understanding of the social construction of news photos.

Information gathered was continually organized, coded, and reviewed following the analytic technique of grounded theory.²² The findings presented here were constructed through the systematic selection of important points. Low levels of patterns emerge from the information collected and inferences and interpretations are reviewed and discussed next.

Findings

Evidence gathered at the *Inquirer* revealed that the social construction of news photos encompassed several activities. In order to perform these activities quickly and efficiently, news professionals relied on technology to carry out journalistic routines.

Social construction of news photos

In response to the first research question, news photos are constructed based on specific roles and responsibilities of photo editors as well as the category of news. Roles and responsibilities encompassed news meetings, photo gathering, coordinating photos and story information, preparing images for the final product (e.g. cropping photos, size recommendations, checking outline information, sending images to the lab for toning and color correction), as well as placement of photos in the final product. Photo editors also worked with assigning news editors, photographers, wire services, page designers and news editors.²³

Emphasis however, was placed on story type when selecting and constructing news photos.²⁴ Similar to previous research, news professionals also considered categories of news-“hard” or “soft” news-based on story type.²⁵ Even though news professionals at the *Inquirer* did not specifically apply the categories of “hard and soft news,” it was apparent that news professionals gathered photos and story information in a routine like fashion with these categories in mind.

For instance, news photos are visual representations of factual news occurrences that are deemed newsworthy by the social structure at the *Inquirer*, and fall within the newsroom typification of hard news. These images are strict interpretations of a news event. These photos typically appear on the cover of the newspaper and within section A, and consist of local, national, and international news, and often business, science, technology, health, and sports.

Soft news photos however, consisted of images of human interest, science, technology, sports, and arts and entertainment (e.g. photos of food, travel, books, life, etc.). Similar to hard news photos, these images are also of factual news occurrences, but these types of news stories and images are regarded as interesting matters and appear in the *Metro/Biz/SMASH*, sports, science, technology and features

sections of the newspaper. Apart from hard and soft news photos, graphics, illustrations, and photo illustrations are other types of visual imagery used to portray news. Their function is to explain things that are either too technical or complicated and hard to show in a straight photo, but with a combination of photo and art explained the information better. These categories were reinforced in journalistic routines by gathering visual information based on story type.

In response to the second research question, new photographic technologies influence the selection and construction of news photos on two levels-the newsmaking process and the photographic delivery process. This includes both the hardware of publication and dissemination (e.g. the latest in computers, storage, digital cameras, scanners, etc.), as well as the software and related techniques that are employed in post-production and pre-distribution (e.g. computerized information database including access to an intranet, wire services, writing and editing tools, photoimaging software, pagination software etc.). Considerably more emphasis is placed on the post-production technology and its influence on news photos and the reinforcement of gathering visual information based on story type.

Changes in the Post-production process The findings reported here reflect the adoption of new post-production technology, as well as the changes to the newsmaking process, and in a larger sense, the photo-editorial decision process; thus, creating for a speedy, efficient, and easy to use routine for selecting news photos. First, the post-production process started to change in the late 1980s. The first of these changes resulted in the *Inquirer* scanning photos into the computer, as well as digitizing the layout of pages. Then, in the early 1990s, they switched from black and white newsprint to color. By the end of 1990s, it was time to overhaul the photo-editorial decision process in conjunction with the latest purchase of technology. This occurred because first, the old system-AT&T was not "Y2K" compliant. Secondly, AT&T was a pagination system that prevented you from seeing anything on the screen; rather, information was typed into the system, printed and completed by hand. In the new system, everything is gathered and produced in the computer. Technology allows news professionals to visually see the newspaper layout and design on the computer screen long before the final product makes it to print.²⁶ These changes also occurred because the *Inquirer* was interested in purchasing technology that would help reduce overhead, while at the same time increase productivity and the ease of production. This was part of an effort by the new editor, Maxwell E.P. King, to work through economic hardships while improving technology and the production of news.²⁷

Easy to use.

The new technology also helps news professionals perform their jobs efficiently because the technology is easy to use. The new system allows information to be stored in computer databases called Wire Center and Hermes. Wire Center is the computerized database that stores news copy, news budgets, staff photos, graphics, stories, as well as access to an Intranet, wire services, e-mail, and the Internet. Hermes is the production database equipped with the latest pagination and photo imaging software.

Photo imaging software also changed the physical essence of the darkroom. The chemical-based darkroom is obsolete. Before, everything was produced using water and various chemicals, now production is the “digital darkroom” so to speak, all with the push of a button. The digital darkroom consists of several computer-editing stations. Photos are input into the system allowing one to view image(s) either singly or batches, and apply various enhancements or alterations. Photographers and photo editors view images on monitors and perform various functions such as cropping photos, changing contrast, dodging and burning, lightening or darkening images, rotating images, reversing, sharpening images, flipping and zooming, as well as perform gradation changes. After the images are made suitable for print, caption information is added and photos are sent through the system to be placed on pages for final output with text. Here, pagination tools are used to fit photos and text on pages together. All this occurs because of newer photographic technologies and the elimination of chemicals and manual processing.

The new technology also makes it easier for photo editors to search and retrieve photos from the news wire services and stored staff photos in Wire Center. Photos are put into the system allowing one to view image(s) either singly or in batches. Photo editors can mark photos in the computer so when they search, they can retrieve only those photos marked. This helps photo editors sift through the enormous amounts of images posted on the wires daily. It is also helpful when a photo editor needs to make a decision between several photos for a news story. Once all the photos are marked, photo editors retrieve only marked photos for review and narrow the process of selection.

The computer interface is easy to use and does not require photo editors to go to a lot of different places to look at images and story information. It is structured so that everyone approaches Wire Center and Hermes in a similar manner. For example, the DP taught the Sports Photo Editor (SP editor) how to set up searches for photos. “You can create a query in Wire Center to search for photos to match a topic, such as search for national or foreign images, or sports photos.” This query search is similar to using a search engine on the World Wide Web. The new technology is also forgiving. “If you mess up, you can always go in and fix it, at least before a page is sent to print,” said the DP.

Speedy and efficient.

In addition to easy to use, the new Intranet and pagination software create a speedy and efficient process for tracking the status of news photos and closing out pages to release for print. During each stage of the production process, news professional track story information such as photos, body copy, headlines, etc. with a color-coding system built into Hermes. For instance, photos are temporarily placed on the page, sometimes for hours; however, it is not until the deadline approaches that photo editors turn images green in the system giving the okay to release for print.

Digital cameras also have the potential to speed up the production process. For example, some photographers have started to capture images with a digital camera. Digital cameras make possible

cropping, image size calculations, and color correction on a small monitor screen accessible on the back of the camera. There is also the option of printing or transmitting images in color or black and white, and instantaneous transmission.

Images that are stored digitally can be transmitted directly from a digital camera, or downloaded into a computer (with the proper connectivity kit). To illustrate, images captured during the Miss America Pageant were quickly transmitted back to the newsroom, because the pageant staff provided an area for news photographers to set-up equipment and have access to the necessary technology to transmit images. Both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions also pre-planned for the press to have access to all the necessary technology. Photographers as well as reporters were provided with the means to transmit text and images directly from the news event back to their respective newsrooms immediately after they were captured.

On the other hand, there have been problems when trying to transmit images from remote locations. For example, one staff photographer was on assignment in the Golan Heights, Israel. Transmission was not easy. The staff photographer had to arrange for a satellite to transmit images. This meant he used the digital camera at the location, but later arranged satellite hook-up to transmit images. Though this was a rare instance, it can be anticipated that the more photographers are sent on assignment to remote locations, finding a satellite hook-up may be difficult. By then, it is hoped more sophisticated technology will be available to transmit images back to the newsroom.

Agreeably, new technology is easy to use and it can increase the speed and efficiency of the photo-editorial decision process. Yet despite improvements in technology and the ability to find better ways of doing things, it is also problematic, and should not be overlooked. Some negative consequences that were apparent at the *Inquirer* included the cost of technology, often redundant and time-consuming tasks, to news professionals encumbered with a fear of isolation and job security.

Technology is costly.

Even though new technology improves the production process, these technological innovations are also expensive. News organizations such as the *Inquirer* must consider is the system about to be implemented the best for right now, and how will it hold up in the future? They also need to consider how often to update current versions of software and hardware, as well as how to expand existing resources.

These high costs also come at the expense of other things. Consider this. At the time of this research, a partially decent digital camera cost about \$15,000, not including lenses and accessories. So, the *Inquirer* limited use of digital cameras due to their high costs in addition to the reluctance of

photographers to use them. Instead, they focused on the new technology in the newsroom and the new process.

The DDP did say however, "once the technology is adopted and implemented well, they will shift focus on the transition to completely digital cameras." Similarly, Newton found several newspapers holding off purchasing digital cameras until quality improved and prices lowered.²⁸ Yet, despite how costly new technology is, the *Inquirer* expects that in time newer technologies will lower costs and create new and profitable ways to deliver the final news product. Therefore, they are willing to wait to purchase more digital cameras, especially when a quality product is the bottom line. This is not only a prudent technology decision, but also a sound business decision.

Redundant and time consuming.

For the most part, technology is easy to use and efficient. However, some photo editors complained that they were often swamped with work. Photo editors blamed the inadequacies with the new technology for the reason their work was deficient. For instance, the NFP and the night photo editor (NP editor) said the new system was hard to learn. But, according to the DP, the DDP and assistant managing editor (AME), photo editors had plenty of training on the new system; rather, people were reluctant to change.

The *Inquirer* also provided internal documents regarding how to use the new system; this included instructions regarding how to search for photos in Wire Center, as well as handouts explaining new procedures for caption and budget information. In addition to these handouts, the new system has a built-in help feature available at the click of a button. Careful examination of several self-reports and internal documents revealed that the only photo editors truly bogged down in the process were, lacking or reluctant to acquire the new skills necessary to fulfill their responsibilities-even though ample training was provided.²⁹

Perhaps these feelings of trepidation were because these photo editors lacked experience with technology, or that kinks in the new system still needed to be worked out. Mostly, these photo editors were unwilling to recognize the potential the new technology offered the newsmaking process. Rather, they felt the "old" process was working just fine, "why fix what is not broken." However, the *Inquirer* was not trying to fix anything; instead, it was looking to catch up with technology and other news organizations' methods for gathering the news.

Still, some of their concerns were not completely unfounded. The new system and process was up and running since November 1999, yet it was obvious, there were still many kinks to be worked out. For instance, photo editors' first cropped photos in Wire Center, then again in Hermes, and, within Hermes,

there is Newscrop. Photo editors' cropped the photo again, and put size suggestions and placement on it; then placed on the page. Why this extra step? In the old system, photo editors' just opened up the photo and cropped it; it was much easier and quicker. Now they have to crop the photo twice, once in Wire Center and again in Hermes.

The transfer process of photos from one database to the other database was at times problematic too. Photos cropped and sent through the system in black and white often came through in color. In addition to these problems, caption information did not always come through the system with images. The computers often froze or locked on photo editors. Photo editors also experienced problems printing. Despite these problems, the *Inquirer* appeared to be working hard to eliminate the bugs in the system; though, it would take some time.

Fear of isolation.

In addition to easy to use and increased speed and efficiency, new technology was thought to offer better internal communication. The Intranet³⁰ as well as the new system expanded possibilities and the range of discussion between photo editors and news editors. In other ways, however, photo editors felt stifled by the new system, particularly a fear of isolation.

Observation analysis however, revealed that news professionals worked together to make the final selection of news photos. That is, news professionals used the Intranet as well as face-to-face communication to discuss news matters. In fact, most interpersonal communication occurred in person instead of through e-mail. In all likelihood, this occurred because the newsroom was re-organized according to the section of the newspaper-news editor and photo editors worked side-by-side on the sections they produced. Therefore, it was easier to communicate via traditional communication methods, rather than through e-mail.

Suffice-it-to say, face-to-face communication is at times easier and more efficient than technology. According to one photo editor, "it is just as easy to talk to someone sitting right across from you, than it is to send e-mail. It is a counterproductive to send e-mail if the person is available and willing to communicate face-to-face." Also, it can be difficult explaining why a photo is appropriate for a news story in an e-mail message, rather it is easier to print news photos and discuss selections face-to-face. To illustrate, photo editors print out photos or pull them up on their computer monitor and discuss selections in person-this allows for better communication between news professionals, whereas e-mail can make this part of the process awkward to say the least.

Still, some photo editors disclosed that they felt stifled by the new system and the new process. These photo editors also reported that there was less communication between news professionals. For

example, one photo editor did say, "the technology created an environment similar to working in a box." By that, he meant that, "the new technology creates an environment in which virtually everything can be accessed and completed right from [your] desk. Now communication can occur via technology, rather than face-to-face." Yet, except for two photo editors, most photo editors discussed selection of photos with news editors face-to-face. Photo editors were not isolated from each other, or other news professionals; mostly photo editors were encouraged to work in teams.

Perhaps photo editors felt they were working in isolation because the new system was structured so that everything is accessible right from one's computer. Maybe they felt pressure from management to work more on their computer and less face-to-face. Nevertheless, observation analysis revealed that photo editors seldom used the new Intranet and e-mail to discuss picture selection. They used them only to check the wires for photos and news budgets for assignments, tracking stories, etc.

Photo editors were also troubled because technology provided others in the newsroom-news editors and even other photo editors, or the director or deputy director-access to their work. Photo editors felt that because news editors and management have access to the same information their work was questioned. To some extent, this was true. After all, everyone in the newsroom has access to Wire Center and Hermes. Therefore, anyone has the ability to access pages in production, the wires, news budgets, as well as stories in progress, or photos in the system.

However, that is not to say that this happened, or if it did, that everyone was looking over everyone else's shoulder. Though, two news editors did comment that, they often felt photo editors were not offering the best photos for news stories. So, when this happened, these news editors looked in the system for photos-thus, confirming some photo editors' fear that news editors' were second-guessing their work. Mostly, though, if a news editor did look at photos on the wires, it was to get an idea of the news for the day, and if the story had page one potential, it was never to do a photo editor's job. If, however, the DP or the DDP checked photo editors' work, it was to make sure things were getting done, and that those photo editors lagging behind were covering their assignments. After all, their position is one of management; it is their responsibility to see that work is performed appropriately and efficiently.

Job security.

Perhaps the fear of isolation really was that technology threatened job security. Photo editors voiced concern that new technology will result in problems with photo editing. Partly, because of technology, photographers were often asked to edit their own work instead of photo editors. Also, when a photographer uses a digital camera, they transmit only those images they feel are newsworthy and discard the remaining images. If this continues, photo editors fear they will only see two to five images of an event; or worse, that they will not participate in the editing process at all.

Photo editors also expressed concern that photographers would not edit for the reader, rather what looks good or is the best photo to them. Photo editors implied that photographers are not properly trained to make editing decisions; however, this is not so. Indeed, photojournalists and photo editors have quite a lot of experience when it comes to picture editing. The *Inquirer* hires photojournalists and photo editors that have the ability to recognize and understand ideas conveyed through visible actions or images (pictures). They are guided by a visual sense of how to tell a story visually, and understand the power of photographic storytelling to convey information. Therefore, it is unfair to assume that photojournalists do not have the necessary experience for picture editing.

On the other hand, before these new technologies, the *Inquirer* produced black and white prints and sent them off to an engraver. The engraver would copy it and make a plate of it. This took place in another department; this was someone else's job. When computers pervaded the newsroom, this process changed. Instead, photo editors became engravers. Now, with even newer computers, photo editors are not only engravers, they are also the Scitex lab, which handled color and toning, and presses. While they were downsizing positions in other departments through fruition, others have consumed their work in the newsroom. So the *Inquirer* did not increase staff as was originally thought, rather the work was redistributed; and at times staff was reduced.

Photo editors' concern then, that they might not have a job in the future is not entirely without merit. If photo editors are no longer part of the initial edit, then it stands to reason that the *Inquirer* will reduce the number of photo editors needed to participate in the photo-editorial decision process. In that case, this fear is reasonable considering that in the past other jobs were restructured or cut back because of technology. The same can be said to occur as new technology continues to be adopted here and at other news organizations. However, that is not to say, that all photo editors will be eliminated. Rather, it is expected that there will be fewer photo editors and, once again, a redistribution of roles and responsibilities in the photo department, and possibly the newsroom too.

For now, anyway, newsrooms will use photo editors as picture selectors. However, with a more automated process, it is likely less photo editors will be needed. This will also create shared picture selection responsibility between the photographer (pushing the button to produce many more recorded frames than on film), and the photo editor, who will have many more pictures to select from than the handful that the photographer used to send from the darkroom. At some point, though, technology will in fact reduce (and at some point eliminate) dependence on mechanical and chemical processes. That is not to say, however, that artificial intelligence will replace the vision, the imagination, and the personality of a photo editor. Ultimately, control over digital processing will guarantee that photo editors will retain some power over news photos, but it is likely that these positions will be fewer and far between.

Conclusions and Implications

This research investigated how new technologies have impacted the routine process of socially constructing news photos at one news organization—the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Through interaction and shared interpretations, news professionals have once again looked for everyday journalistic routines to help maintain the social construction of news photos. Similar to previous research, the routinization process in fact provides the means for news professionals to carry out their responsibilities in the newsmaking process.³¹ Embedded in these routines, news professionals consider story type because it is easier to assign and select stories and photos. The routine process of socially constructing news photos by story type is also reinforced by the post-production technology as well as the social structure at the *Inquirer*. In so doing, news professionals are able to carry out routines in an easy, speedy and efficient manner; as well as foster better internal communication. Despite increased complexities, fear concerning job security, as well as the high cost of technology, new technologies have the potential to create new and profitable ways to deliver news photos. Given this, it makes sense that the *Inquirer* considers the new technology a tool integral to the social construction of news photos.

It is evident that this technology is playing a significant role in helping the photo editorial-decision process at the *Inquirer* move beyond the confines of traditional news gathering methods. As with any change, there is always uncertainty. It is not uncommon for people to resist change. Familiar routines and processes are comforting and give people a sense of security, particularly in that they know what to do and how to do it. In an age where technological competence is taking a leading role, it is not surprising that people worry that the inability to adapt to new technologies could have serious consequences. Regardless of the apprehension and uneasiness some may have about technology, news professionals seemed to be progressively upbeat about change and the new technology as my research ended. With any system, there are good and bad features, as well as potential for technical problems. The need for troubleshooting not only applies to technology—it applies to people too. It is the knowledge, the interaction with others, and the everyday routines that help news professionals adapt to these changes. The DME feels the paper is adapting well to the changes. “It is hard, but given the magnitude of the change, people have come to appreciate the things that they couldn’t do before.”

Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the photo-editorial decision process is a complex process grounded in a set of journalistic routines executed on a daily basis by photo editors, news editors, page designers, and graphic artists. It can also be said that the greater the complexity of the task involved, the greater the emphasis of technology on these routines. In this way, technology is a tool to capture, create, and select or locate photos and story information easier and quicker, and carry out routines in an efficient manner. For these reasons, it is fair to say that new photographic technologies have the potential to create new and profitable ways to deliver news photos. Technology in this area can have a positive effect on the photo-editorial decision process as the *Inquirer* strives to produce a quality news product.

In conclusion, this paper is an exploratory look into adoption of new technologies at one news organization. Therefore, the interpretations presented here are only the beginning of an important area of study—one that is worth pursuing. Perhaps a larger sampling investigation will help to flesh out if these findings hold true at other news gathering agencies. Even so, it is hoped that this investigation provides practitioners with valuable responses pertaining to incorporating new technology into

journalistic routines.

About the Author: The author is an assistant professor in the School of Communication at the University of Miami. An earlier draft was presented to the Communication and Technology Division of BEA, at the 2002 Convention. This manuscript was derived from her doctoral dissertation completed under the direction of Professor W. James Potter at Florida State University.