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## **MACJ -101**

### **Introduction to Convergent Journalism**

#### **Unit I**

Definition, concept and implications of Convergence. Convergence in Media research, technology and convergence, recent models of convergence- Convergence Continuum, Lawson Borders model, ICTs, ICT in India

Course Title: Introduction to Convergent Journalism

Course Code: MACJ- 101

Department: Convergent Journalism

Year: 2016

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**Unit I****Convergence:**

Media convergence is the merging of mass communication outlets like print, television, and radio, the Internet along with portable and interactive technologies through various digital media platforms. Media convergence allows mass media professionals to tell stories and present information and entertainment using a variety of media. Converged communication provides multiple tools for storytelling, allowing consumers to select level of interactivity while self-directing content delivery.

Technological convergence is the tendency for different technological systems to evolve toward performing similar tasks. Convergence can refer to previously separate technologies such as voice (and telephony features), data (and productivity applications), and video that now share resources and interact with each other synergistically.

The rise of digital communication in the late 20th century has made it possible for media organizations (or individuals) to deliver text, audio, and video material over the same wired, wireless, or fiber-optic connections. At the same time, it inspired some media organizations to explore multimedia delivery of information. This digital convergence of news media, in particular, was called "Mediamorphosis" by researcher Roger Fidler, in his 1997 book by that name. Today, we are surrounded by a multi-level convergent media world where all modes of communication and information are continually reforming to adapt to the enduring demands of technologies, "changing the way we create, consume, learn and interact with each other"

Convergence in this instance is defined as the interlinking of computing and other information technologies, media content, and communication networks that has arisen

as the result of the evolution and popularization of the Internet as well as the activities, products and services that have emerged in the digital media space. Many experts view this as simply being the tip of the iceberg, as all facets of institutional activity and social life such as business, government, art, journalism, health, and education are increasingly being carried out in these digital media spaces across a growing network of information and communication technology devices.

Convergence generally means the intersection of old and new media. Jenkins states that convergence is, "The flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences."

Media convergence is not just a technological shift or a technological process, it also includes shifts within the industrial, cultural, and social paradigms that encourage the consumer to seek out new information. Convergence, simply put, is how individual consumers interact with others on a social level and use various media platforms to create new experiences, new forms of media and content that connect us socially, and not just to other consumers, but to the corporate producers of media in ways that have not been as readily accessible in the past.

Advances in technology bring the ability for technological convergence that Rheingold believes can alter the "social-side effects," in that "the virtual, social and physical world are colliding, merging and coordinating."

It was predicted in the 1990s that a digital revolution would take place, and that old media would be pushed to one side by new media. Broadcasting is increasingly being replaced by the Internet, enabling consumers all over the world the freedom to access their preferred media content more easily and at a more available rate than ever before.

Web 2.0 is a concept that takes the network as a platform for information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. A Web 2.0 site allows users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators (prosumers) of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where users (consumers) are limited to the passive viewing of

content that was created for them. Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, and video sharing sites, hosted services, web applications, mashups and folksonomies.

### **Implications of Convergence:**

The move from analog to digital information transmission has allowed for vast amounts of data to be disseminated with fewer resources. Communication technology advancements are simultaneously the cause and the result of convergence. The term convergence is currently in a state of flux. It is important to land on a definition to further our understanding. Grant (2009) gives a survey of many definitions currently in use. By blending these definitions one can surmise that convergence is an inter-textual form of content delivery using digital transmission methods. This definition mentions content delivery over communication because of its emphasis on the mass media.

To understand how these changes are affecting mass communication practitioners we must narrow our subject of inquiry further to that of convergence journalism. Criado and Kraeplin (2009) give a very functional definition. They define convergence journalism as, print, broadcast, and online news staffs forging partnerships in which journalists work and distribute content across several news platforms. Media companies have been trying to implement these strategies to increase efficiency and audience reach.

Newspapers seem to have been better at implementing these strategies than television stations. It also seems that newspapers have more to gain from convergence journalism (Criado & Kraeplin, 2009). Newspapers do certainly have a disadvantage in terms of traditional delivery compared to television stations. Newspapers must be sought out while television stations are delivered free over the air to a person's home. It is easy to see how partnering with a television station and moving to the Internet can have a profound effect for newspapers.

A positive effect of convergence is that efficiency in content creation and delivery has allowed for more information for consumers. Television stations are allowed to have more in-depth reports because of partnerships with newspapers. Newspapers and television stations are allowed to deliver full multimedia reports of events via the

Internet.

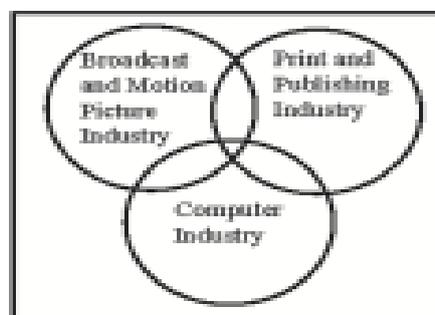
One negative effect of convergence journalism is that fewer interests are controlling the information delivered to the mass audience. This narrowing of voices is known as *Media Consolidation*. There has been a great amount of criticism waged against the resulting media giants.

Fortunately, as media consumers are becoming more technologically savvy they have taken to becoming journalists themselves. Kolodzy (2009) notes, anyone with a cell phone or camera can take photos or videos of a news event or newsmaker and post the pictures online. This has led to a democratization of information dissemination. The conventional gatekeepers are slowly losing total control over the information that is allowed to flow to widespread audiences. Of course this is a trend that is currently taking place. Grant (2009) notes that it is risky to analyze a trend that is still in process. This democratization of information could unfortunately end because of regulatory or market pressures.

## **Models of Convergence**

### **Nicholas Negroponte Model of Convergence**

The first media researcher to describe convergence was *Ithiel de Sola Pool* in his book 'Technologies of Freedom' who discussed the interdependence of various media. (Murali, 2003) The first introduction of the concept 'media convergence' into media research might have occurred even earlier, in 1979, when Nicholas Negroponte presented a convergence model based on three intersecting circles (Figure 1).



***Figure 1: Negroponte's circles describing convergence***

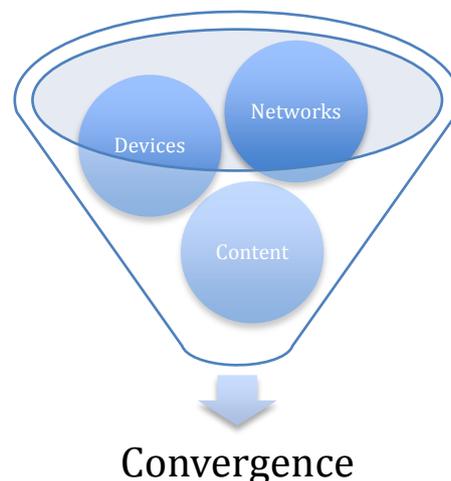
The circles illustrate how three media industries come together as a single entity. From these circles, the media convergence debate has continued. Over the years, convergence as an effect rather than as a process has been used to denote everything from organizational structures, new high-technological inventions to mergers between media companies.

### **Flynn Model of Convergence**

Flynn (2000) identifies three areas of convergence in the digital world (Figure 2).

- Devices,
- Networks and
- Content

The convergence of devices is, according to Flynn, when two devices are merged together. The challenge is whether the consumers will use these merged devices or not. Flynn claims, that if there is no consumer adaptation of the resulting hybrid, convergence will not take place. Convergence of networks originates from the discussion and development of the once popular concept 'electronic information superhighway' denoting a broadband-switched network infrastructure.



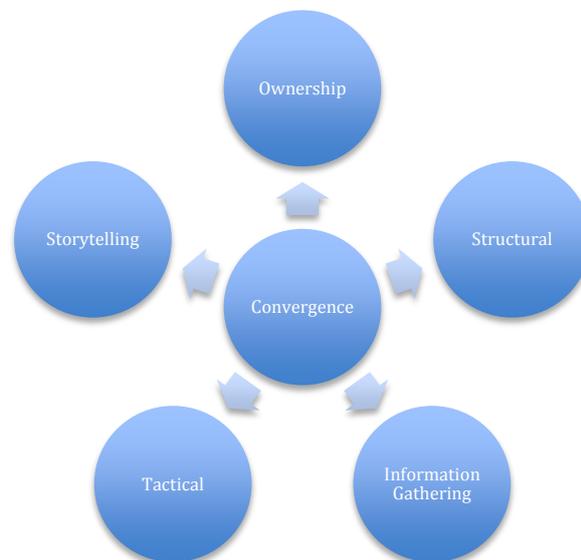
***Figure 2: Flynn's three areas of Convergence***

The content convergence, in Flynn's opinion, is limited since he believes that technological barriers still make it impossible to use the same kind of content in all the different publishing channels. Flynn argues that the conventional view on convergence

over-emphasizes the benefits to be derived from the potential advent of 'write-once-run-anywhere' content and instead suggests a fourth type of convergence, that of the consumers. Flynn seems to have adopted an almost philosophical view of convergence of devices, claiming that it does not exist if the consumers are not willing to use the new devices. However, if the devices exist, the convergence of devices must have taken place in the production of the new device, regardless of the consumers' willingness to use it.

### **Gordon Model of Convergence**

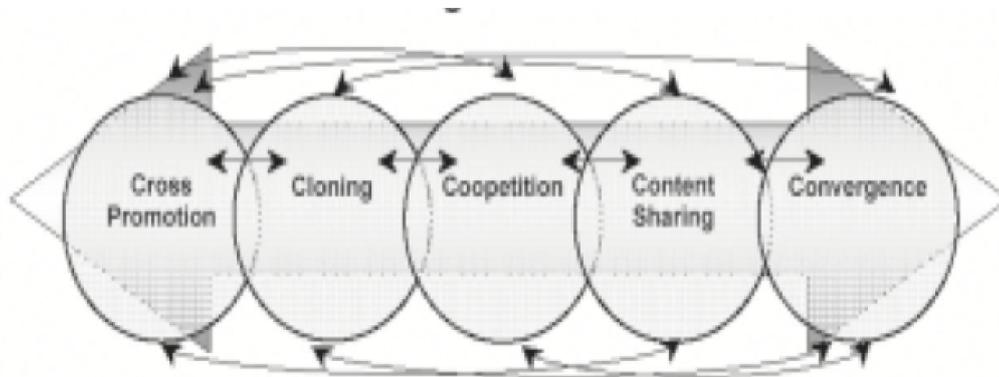
Gordon (2002) identifies five types of convergence: ownership, tactical, structural, information gathering and storytelling convergence (see Figure 3). Ownership convergence could be compared to merging of companies. Tactical convergence is a form of cross promotion, structural convergence is a process taking place within the editorial departments, influencing the editors to become more of multimedia editors. The information-gathering convergence, as described by Gordon, could best be summarized as a form of backpacking journalism where the reporters carry all their equipment with them, producing content for all imaginable publishing channels. Storytelling convergence is, according to Gordon, about new ways to present information in the different publishing channels.



***Figure 3: Gordon's types of Convergence***

### **DDS Model of Convergence**

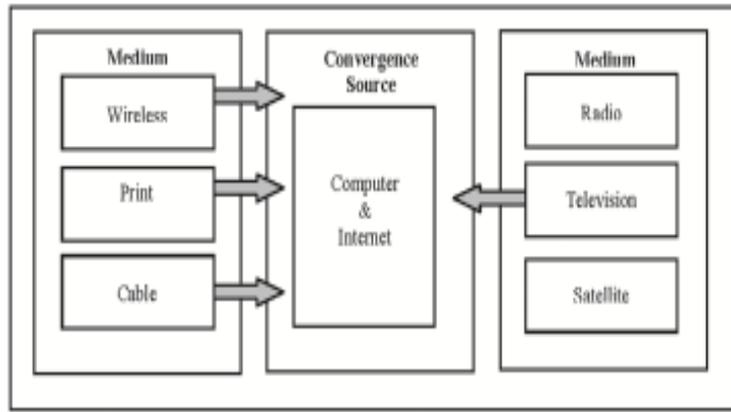
Dailey, Demo and Spillman (2003) have presented a model of convergence called 'The Convergence Continuum'. The model has been created because of the authors' belief that there is a lack of a common, behaviour-based definition of convergence and a lack of a common instrument for measuring convergence effects. They therefore suggest a model for convergence in newsroom content sharing with the purpose of making it easier for researchers all over the world to compare results. The model consists of five partly overlapping areas, 5 Cs of convergence. (see Figure 4)



**Figure 4: DDS Model of Convergence-Continuum**

### **Lawson-Borders Model of Convergence**

Lawson-Borders (2006) suggests another model of convergence, where the starting point is that convergence is a 'concept as well as a process'. She does not discuss creation of content to the same extent as is discussed in the Convergence Continuum, but has more of a technological approach. She claims that convergence could be described as a wedding of technology and content delivery by means of computer technology. (see Figure 5).

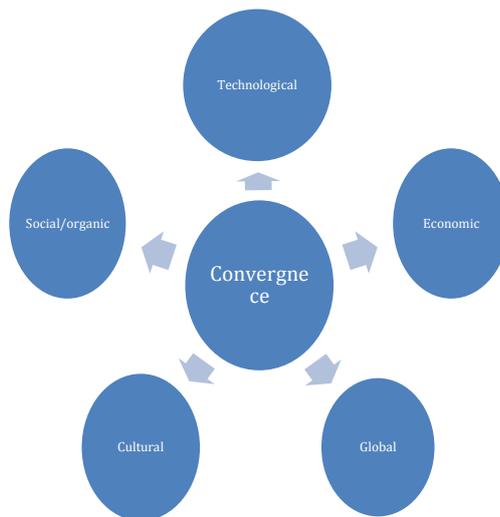


**Figure 5: Lawson-Borders' model of Convergence**

Lawson-Borders has identified seven '*observations*' of convergence all beginning with the letter C: Communication, commitment, cooperation, compensation, culture, competition, and customer. These seven areas are partly overlapping and can serve as a guideline for best practices to expound on convergence both as a concept and a process.

### **Henry Jenkins Model of Convergence**

Jenkins (2001) does not try to combine many types of convergence into one model. He explains the confusion when attempting to define convergence to originate from the fact that people talk about convergence in several contexts. He divides convergence into five areas, technological, economic, social or organic, cultural and global convergence. Technological convergence is the digitalization of all media content, economic convergence deals with the integration of the entertainment industry and the social or organic version of the process handles the consumers' multitasking strategies for navigating the new information environment.



***Figure 6: Henry Jenkins' model of Convergence***

## **ICT in India**

The closing decade of twentieth century was the opening of historic information and communication technology interventions for development. This period has witnessed enormous and unprecedented changes in every aspect of communications technologies, policies, infrastructure development and services. Political leaders of India have begun abandoning archaic, government control over communication that has lately moved from government to national and international private players. Finally, airwaves and electronic signals have achieved their freedom from centuries old colonial bondage to reach out and connect people through a privately owned and operated communication network and infrastructure. Both international and national private players have taken a dominant role in redefining, reshaping and providing telecommunication, broadcasting and information services for national development. It has initiated an era of partnership of public and private entrepreneurial skills and abilities to bring about unlimited connectivity. There has been a gradual transformation from industrial society to information society.

New communication technologies such as satellites, cable television, wireless telephony, the Internet and computers are bringing about noticeable changes in the society.

Communication technology includes the hardware equipment, organizational structures and social values by which individuals collect process and exchange information. The new media have certain characteristics that are similar in some respects to those of both interpersonal and mass media communication, but that are different in many other respects. Interpersonal communication consists of a face-to-face exchange between two or more individuals. The message flow is from one to a few individuals, feedback is immediate and usually plentiful and the messages are often relatively high in socio-emotional content. In contrast, mass media communication includes all those means of transmitting messages such as radio, television, newspapers and film, which enable a source of one or a few individuals to reach a large audience. Some type of hardware equipment is always involved in mass communication feedback is limited and delayed and the messages are often relatively low in socio-emotional content.

The new media integrate the characteristics of both interpersonal and mass communication. Communication that occurs through these media often links two individuals or a small number of people. In this sense, the new media are like interpersonal communication, in that the messages are targeted to specific individuals which is often called de-massification . But interactive communication via the new media, like email on the internet, is somewhat like mass media communication in that hardware equipment –computers, satellites and telephone lines in this case is necessarily involved. Information exchange via the new media is interactive, meaning that the participants in a communication process have control over and can change roles in their mutual discourse. Such interactivity is also particularly characteristic of face –to-face interpersonal communication.

The term “Information Society” came into use along with new information and communication technologies (ICTs) –internet, e-mail , mobile telephones .These interactive , performative and participatory technologies of communication are at the heart of the communication revolution that is occurring in India. The ICTs are driving the social changes in India. These technologies, once distinctive, are converging today to deliver data, voice and video in ways not possible before. Technological determinism is an approach that considers technology as the main cause of social change. However, certain changes in society occur because of non- technological forces, such as

government policies, international politics and public opinion. These are social forces and their use in explaining social change is called social determinism. The social forces like government policies combined with technological innovations fostered the communication revolution in India.