

John O'Sullivan and Leopoldina Fortunati

Media Convergence

Expanding Perspectives Beyond the Digital

Abstract: In this chapter we analyze the now pervasive appropriation of the concept of media convergence to encapsulate processes of digitalization in media. We interrogate this almost universally adopted notion, tracing its ramifications as delineated in cultural, technological, market, and policy terms, while also drawing attention to complementary and generally much less recognized processes of divergence. More fundamentally, we draw attention to the long-standing independence of media convergence from digital technology, illustrating processes of combination and adaptation in pre-digital media. Historical cases of newspaper supplementation and add-ons, the changing form of the serialized novel, and the relationship between the telephone and broadcast media are invoked to demonstrate the extent, variety, and dynamism of change, bringing into focus processes of remediation that have long pertained in analogue media. We conclude that a view of media change is needed that better recognizes historical convergences and that, consequently, is less inhibited by the often dualist and positivist underpinnings of much recent thinking that sets the analogue and the digital in opposition.

Keywords: media convergence, digitalization, remediation, newspapers, talk radio, television phone-in

The idea of convergence has a normalized, taken-for-granted status across disciplines concerned with the study of media. It gained its current prominence in the ICT developments of the 1990s, but its roots lie in the previous decade, most influentially in the thinking of de Sola Pool (1983). Convergence, perhaps most visibly, has motivated business mergers across media sectors and massively scales ICT enterprises, is assumed or implied in domestic uses of technology, underpins approaches to new cultures of participation – breaking down barriers between producers and users – and, in the political realm, is seen as a powerful motor for democratization or for tyranny.

Most of the time, if not invariably, discussion of convergence in media has centered on the digital, to the extent that the qualifier safely can be omitted without compromising this understanding. Often freighted with the analogue (“old”) and digital (“new”) working distinction, it has been associated with a similarly assumed notion of progress led by technology. More recently, with the deleterious effects of social media and platform capitalism becoming more manifest, a backlash – the so-called “techlash” – is under way (Doctorow 2019).

In this chapter, we trace some of the main contours of the development and application of the idea, which has grown to a point of importance, beyond media, in framing understandings of society in late capitalism (Hassan 1999) and liquid modernity (Bauman 2000). Deploying relevant case studies and associated scholarship – newspaper supplements, add-ons and serialization of the novel; and live calls in television and radio – we demonstrate how, in spite of its centrality to discourse around ICTs, convergence has had a longer-standing, more fundamental role in media and in human affairs more generally. Indeed, the incorporation in newspapers of different media formats within print and the fusion of broadcast and the telephone are of their essence forms of convergence. If the concept strictly is confined to digital media, it does, of course, disqualify this account and analysis from any consideration of convergence. Instead, however, we propose a wider understanding that does not take the digital as its first point of reference.

1 Convergence and Digital Media

The notion of the transcendence of boundaries between media forms and, with it, the wider overcoming of social, economic, and political boundaries, permeates discussion of digital media across all of its dimensions. It has moved to the core of consideration of the production and consumption of meaning and content, including economy, labor, organization, formats, diffusion, audiences, regulation and wider politics but, as articulated by Balbi (2017) in his categorization of convergence discourse, it is the technological perspective that has attained the most volume. The then optimistic idea of formerly discrete fields coming together by virtue of the possibilities of the fluid articulation of information in zeros and ones, as opposed to rigidly in atoms, found powerful institutional and popular expression in the writings of futurist Nicholas Negroponte of MIT (1996), part of the wider anticipation of the potentialities inherent in digital technologies (Dyson 1998) and the sometimes shrilly euphoric celebration of their revolutionary power. A sense of escape and liberation from material confines underpinned this digital sublime (Mosco 2005), encouraging a rehabilitation of the medium-centric, deterministic thinking of Marshall McLuhan (Levinson 1999).

Parallel to the technologically and economically inflected discussion of the overthrow of the old, broadcast model media order, a theme of openness, connectivity, and free communication was cultivated, echoing in part the American counterculture of the 1960s which survived, in spite of a complex of contradictions, within the palette of predominantly conservative values comprising the

Californian ideology of Silicon Valley (Barbrook and Cameron 1996). The sense of community and flattening of hierarchy perhaps was expressed most resonantly in the cultural impact of the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (Rheingold 1993). A more substantial theme of participation and power was brought within a structured framework by Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture* (2006), placing the melding of media formats at the heart of the new era of "user" activity usurping the unidirectional communication supremacy of big media. Where once audiences could be viewed as passive, or else exercising autonomy through their reception of seemingly pre-determined media texts (Hall 2006), now users could become active subjects and media producers themselves. The user-centered theme has been developed and sustained as a core characteristic of networked and converged media (Deuze 2006; Jenkins and Deuze 2008), with the widespread adoption of the neologisms of prosumer (Toffler 1980) and produsage (Bruns 2005) aimed at capturing the blurring of the demarcation between producer and audience.

Focusing on interactivity, user-generated content, and fan communities, such participation traverses categories including news, entertainment and gaming, and has been strengthened enormously by the advent of Web 2.0 and social or "spreadable" media, with a strong element of business-oriented thinking (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013; Fuchs 2014). Hardware, software and now platform intermediaries converge yet further in a networked system where categories such as quality or significance may not automatically apply, and where the emphasis is firmly on the needs of the individual (Miller 2008). The negative consequences of such accessible communication (excluding the realities of the digital divide) in turn raise the need for regulation, especially of the now near-monopolistic power of the digital intermediaries whose highly concentrated success depends on the network-enabled affordances made available to citizens, bullies, propagandists, data manipulators and pornographers alike (Siapera 2018). Where convergence had been the premise for deregulation of media industries in a global wave of liberalization and marketisation (Jin 2008; Holt 2011), it has become viable, arguably for the first time since the digital turn, to raise the prospect of stronger democratic control of networks, artificial intelligence, data and algorithms (Foer 2017). As observed by Meikle and Young, convergence has exacerbated pre-existing tensions in the "complicated and disputed realm" of media policy (2012, 195). Now, in a period of crisis for capitalism (Duménil and Lévy 2011), and as the notion of a self-governing, convergence-charged media landscape recedes, part of the discussion around reasserting societal priorities in systems of communication centers on the advocated separation of the activities of the platform behemoths (Coyle 2018). These developments are occurring simultaneously with the well-established but less recognized trends towards divergence

shown by Peil, Sparviero, and Balbi (2017) as a complementary, rather than simply opposing, process of media convergence, and as manifested in the record of industry mega-mergers and subsequent demergers (Jin 2012). Market deconvergence, perhaps most memorably instanced in the 2008 break-up of AOL-Time-Warner, therefore fits within a more fundamental configuration of deconstruction and splitting apart.

2 More than Digital

We will focus in this chapter on two elements, the convergences, firstly, within print newspapers and magazines and, secondly, between the telephone and broadcast media, aiming to demonstrate that there are forms of convergence occurring before the exclusively digital, and that the prior concept of remediation effectively captures such pre-digital evolution. The extraordinary momentum behind the concept of convergence and its generally assumed association with digital networked media has meant that the term has come to be used as shorthand or even as a synonym for the digital, carrying with it the sense of a definitive breach with the past. “New” media sells. Digitally-driven change now is orthodoxy, unquestioned by many in the academic community, with a paradoxically familiar characterization of novelty and iconoclasm. According to Balbi and Magaudda, one of the persistent myths of digital media is that digitalization is an “irresistible force” of permanent revolution and change (2018, 216). However, regardless of the original intention, it is now clear that the appropriation of the concept of convergence to capture processes of digitalization disregards its essentially non-digital nature. Convergence can be digital, but it has also been analogue, or pre-digital, and it can be postdigital (O’Sullivan et al. 2017), in the sense that the essence of a medium platform, whether it be printed news or streamed video, rests other than on whether it is digital. What is in play in convergence is not, therefore, simply the overcoming of boundaries by digital technology, but something more essential, and a persistent feature of media communication. Drawing from Boccaccio (1956, 1348–1353), we can recognize the universal opposing forces of diversification and unification as the basis for a broader theoretical and historical understanding of processes of convergence. As outlined above, this concept has been taken up and systematized within the debate on media deconvergence, as a complementary phenomenon, by Peil, Sparviero, and Balbi (2017). In this wider and deeper perspective, the tendency toward the unit historically has occurred in multifarious ways between varying domains of human activity, industries or media platforms, sometimes stemming

from similarity, as in the established case of broadcast media, whereby radio programs are re-aired, with the radio studio becoming a set for television, but also from dissimilarity. Tourism, for example, represents a convergence of the distinct spheres of travel and hospitality that occurred in advance of ICTs. In other cases, convergence stems from complementarity, as in the disparate instances of fashion and the motor industry fusing the domains of design and production. Industrial and post-industrial societies have been replete with such convergences, with little or no digital basis, even though they can later have been digitally inflected. Media convergence, now often seen as occurring within the framework of the technology, fits within this broader phenomenon.

Shortly prior to the rise of the idea of convergence, and its wide sharing as a common theme among scholars, as outlined above, the evolution of media through incorporation already was comprehensively captured in Bolter and Grusin's conceptualization of remediation (1999), which moderated ideas of the overthrow of older media, such as radio, by new ones, such as television. This more considered model of continuity privileges the clear historical lineage of media forms and has been an effective counterweight to ahistorical fetishization of the new in media studies. Within discussion of participatory culture and the practice of bricolage, Schmidt and de Kloet (2017) integrate the perspectives of Lévi-Strauss (1962) and Derrida (1978) to capture the functional expression of convergence in the production of media content by a process of incorporation, or cannibalization, of materials, formats, and styles. Viewed this way, the creation of the unit from pre-existing elements of both media and media practices and uses owes more to social construction, rooted in historical processes, than to the unalloyed force of technology (Bijker 1995). In similar vein, Nail's explication of Deleuze and Gattari's theory of assemblages (2017) can be applied to media add-ons, such as those offered with newspapers, where, rather than producing a single, unified entity, what matters is the relationship between elements brought together. A newspaper is still a newspaper, and a book is still a book; their assemblage addresses their relationship to one another. Such theorizing forces a confrontation with the materiality and the meaning of objects (Friedman and Forde 2015), routinely overlooked in thinking confined to the digital. It is, therefore, when we look at situated instances of convergence, with their material particularities, that we can appreciate its non-technological, or not purely technological, nature and apprehend the deeper historical processes that come into play in the analogue, the digital and in-between.

3 Historical Convergences

In this section, we look in particular at analogue-to-analogue convergences that serve to demonstrate that the concept is not exclusively or predominantly digital. Convergence has long been part of human communication. If we consider writing to be the first communication technology (Ong 1982, 2007), then it is clear that it incorporated language to produce a new medium that not only laid the foundation for modernity but also changed the nature of orality. This change is evidenced in the early history of human societies, but also in the progression to print, for example, in the production of verse chapbooks in Ireland in the late eighteenth century (Carpenter 2010). Print, in turn, represents a particularly significant convergence of the technologies of writing, type and the press, but extending to the use of color in painting, as well as the inheritance of the press from wine-making (Eisenstein 1979), with the invention of moveable type, ironically in retrospect, routinely invoked in the digital context as precursor of the revolutionary power of digital media, and most markedly since McLuhan (1964) taken as a point of comparison for newer, cooler, or more liquid media. Another key phase in medium-focused theory concerns the much-aired interplay beginning in the nineteenth century between the press and the telegraph (Carey 1983; Winseck 1999), with its effects on time and space forming a theme that endures in the digital (Castells 2009). In the arena of visual culture, the connection between theatre (in all its forms, including the cabaret and the opera) and television is clear, as is the convergence between cinema and television seen in the rise of the TV movie, but this latter incorporates previous forms such as the magic lantern and the moving panorama (Huhtamo 2013). In similar vein, Walter Benjamin's consideration of the nature of art as reproduced in print (1935, 2004) instances a convergence as widely diffused as those in which the technologies of the lens and chemical processes are incorporated in photography and, later, with other technologies, in cinema.

Where convergence is centered on technologies and cultural practices, it also inevitably is framed by economic regulatory dispositions, sometimes promoting coalescence, as we have seen, but historically also sometimes aimed at suppressing trends towards monopoly (Hochfelder 2012) or, more recently, in anti-trust policies to contain the power communication of giants (Haucap and Stühmeier 2016).

From this rough survey of medium change, it is clear that convergences, sometimes incorporating, and sometimes assembling, are present throughout the evolution of media forms. Where digital convergence processes have been perceived as categorized around platforms, content and protocols of use by audiences (Stenport et al. 2014), these processes also can be seen as applying

pre-digitally, setting in doubt the notion that convergence is exclusively digital. To illustrate analogue-to-analogue convergence more deeply, we can look at particular instances of the supposedly ill-fated print newspaper, along with the use of the telephone in conjunction with mass media.

3.1 Flexible Form in Newspapers

While their encounter with the digital domain has been comprehensively documented and interpreted in a multi-faceted array of literature and public debate, newspapers' continuous and varied record of pre-digital convergence demonstrates a resilient malleability, matching the flexibilities associated with convergence that arguably has been overlooked. The print news platform, typically seen as the static foil against which digital dynamism is made salient, has both maintained its essential formal characteristics and altered the composition of its offering to readers. A seventeenth century newspaper, in its language, layout, and typography, may be slightly unfamiliar to the late modern audience, but it is readily recognizable as a newspaper, while in its current form the object is augmented either via supplements, elements to varying degrees taking the form of a magazine contained within the newspaper, or add-ons, objects such as books or promotions offered with the edition to make a single offering on the newsstand or in the subscription package. These augmentations provide a clear demonstration that change is not wrought simply by enabling technologies, digital or analogue, but is animated in response to social and, in the immediate context, often market conditions, as part of the ever-present process of evolution of news culture (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001).

3.1.1 Magazines and Supplements

While supplementation has been especially marked over the most recent decades, its origins are older. Brake (2010, 111) explicates the serials carried in Victorian periodicals and newspapers, discussing the object's identity as one that "articulates a reference to a prior, primary text to which it is 'supplementary,' but not always preserved allied to its host." Supplements extend the range, physically and temporally, of content types and presentation modes beyond the core body of the edition, as conceived in the mass ritual of newspaper reading (Anderson 1983). Their use facilitates departmentalization, both in terms of editorial organization and consumption of content (Weibull and Nilsson 2010). Typically, news is augmented with culture, art, lifestyle, business and sport,

offering longer, deeper reading and sometimes more graphically presented content, but also palpably and economically transforming the materiality of the paper object (Stamm 2015; Fortunati et al. 2015).

This format growth is convincingly situated by Smith (1980), as being connected to advances in color printing, with gloss paper and fast-drying ink, most dramatically shown in the remarkable rise of *Life* magazine. But he emphasizes that the newspaper “mosaic . . . is a reflection of the society that gave rise to the form and the kind of technology that was available” (Smith 1980, 157), and one can observe that the magazine’s fortunes in the longer term have been determined by influences other than printing affordances.

Farmer (2019) traces the deep changes in the 1960s in the material characteristics of British newspapers, led by the introduction of color supplements in three broadsheet newspapers, *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Supplementation, in the form of standalone elements, offered a solution to the incorporation of color. Apart from organizational and professional considerations, new spaces were opened for an intensification of photography’s convergence with print. Perhaps in keeping with the notion that good design is invisible, changes in layout associated with these developments are often superficially remarked upon beyond specialist literature. Farmer, however, insightfully captures the significance of longer forms covering multiple pages, which licenses a new relationship between advertising and editorial.

To this extent, supplementation also can be seen as a form of convergence, in material but also economic terms, in which newspapers respond to the previously distinct media form of the magazine by attempting, with some success, to cannibalize it. In a recent example, the Italian daily newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*, has incorporated the formerly weekly independent and literary review *La Lettura*, so that the latter now is integrated as a non-optional supplement in the newspaper’s Sunday edition, with a price increase of 50 cents. Here, the physical, editorial and economic natures of the two publications are fused in an altered entity. Almost inevitably, and albeit enmeshed with other considerations, it is the imperatives of the market that most pressingly are the occasion of change. Supplements represent a competition response to magazines, even if that form has developed in the context of wider social change. Weibull and Nillson (2010) point out that they also are an attractive business proposition for publishers because they are cheap, with pre-produced, often freelancer-sourced content, and they generate revenue. They record that, in one week in 2000, Sweden’s *Aftonbladet* carried 324 pages over five supplements, compared with *Expressen*’s equivalent of 60 in 1980.

Supplementation also has drawn normative commentary. With the opening up of the space for editorial in the publication comes a perceived softening of

content, with journalism extending beyond news (Bacon 1999), with the sense of a loss of purity encapsulated in the idea that newspaper have been magazine-ified (Brett and Holmes 2008). The freeing of space also allows ingress, beyond the traditional firewall, for advertising within texts, and, less explicitly, advertorial, which became evident to readers of British supplements in the 1960s (Farmer 2019). While criticism of such commercialization is common, Farmer argues that the supplements of the period allowed more diverse political expression than had previously pertained.

Contrary to longstanding ideas of digital impetus bringing revolutionary change to a previously static or even “dumb” medium (de Sola Pool 1982, 30), the processes of adaptation that newspapers historically have implemented around supplements demonstrate that the transcendence of boundaries between media formats is not digital in essence. Convergence can and has occurred beyond the question of whether platforms, content, or uses are digital. Moving beyond pure supplementation, another instance from media history signifying the long-extant potential for convergence is that of the combination by the *Chicago Daily News* in the 1920s of a high-quality color picture supplement with matching radio commentary (Good 2017). Here, the newspaper was engaging not only in supplementation, but also, at a distance, an early experiment in combining with an external object, or add-on.

3.1.2 Add-ons

Insofar as a clear distinction between incorporation and assemblage can be assumed, where supplements represent an expression of convergence as the former, add-ons belong to the latter category. Other than the printed novel, further discussed below, the objects most often attached to European newspapers, starting in the current period from the 1990s, have been CDs and DVDs, and, among pre-digital media, VHS tapes, books, and encyclopedia volumes. A related material and cultural coming together between print and the digital was the inclusion of computer program disks in IT magazines.

For newspapers in Italy, for example, the paid add-on was used directly to create revenue. In the case of *L'Unità*, the offer to readers of paid-for VHS movies instanced a business convergence, as the newspaper leveraged its ownership of film rights. *La Repubblica* successfully offered bound encyclopedia volumes, allowing readers to pay in stages. Finch and Geiger, viewing the newspaper-DVD hybrids offered in Britain and Ireland from a marketing perspective, refer to a slippery object that makes use of porous boundaries (2010). Here, again, the physical and economic natures of the newspaper object, or product, are in

tension with its normative and cultural existence. In the case of *The Observer*, Finch and Geiger observe that its free movie add-on, rather than solely working to attract new readers, served to underline the publication's elite cultural status. In the UK, the prominent former editor and media academic Roy Green-slade decried those who bought the hybrid and threw away the edition, keeping the DVD, asserting that newspapers participating in the add-on fray were doing so not on purely commercial grounds but also to win influence. In Italy, journalists condemned the reverse cannibalization of the newspaper by "the gadget", an object that devalued their work (Cortese and Marabese 2004). Eventually, the longer-term commercial irrationality of the add-on frenzy receded for some time, both in the UK and Italy, where publishers collectively supported tax measures discouraging the practice.

3.1.3 The Serialized Novel

Attaching novels to newspapers is a specific occasion of the add-on representing cultural but also technological and market-led convergence. French newspapers and magazines in the 1800s began to publish serialized novels in the form of the "feuilleton" – the term is a diminutive of "feuille," or sheet, indicating the lower part of the page of a newspaper, otherwise called the footer, or "rez-de-chaussée." The *Journal des Débats* created a section in the lower parts of its pages devoted to literary matters, carrying articles that previously had been printed without a fixed location in the newspaper. Other newspapers imitated the format when the initiative was well-received by the public. Honoré de Balzac was the first writer who understood the potential of this specific space in which to promote novels, when in 1831 he flagged in advance chapters on which he was still working. However, the true origin of the feuilleton came in 1836, with the foundation of the newspaper *La Presse* by Émile de Girardin. To keep costs down and build readership, de Girardin used space devoted to literary criticism to carry as yet unpublished stories in instalments, at first in the appendix, then in the last or second last page, and only later distributed in the classical form of the book. In its first year, *La Presse* published *La Comtesse de Salisbury*, by Alexandre Dumas, and *Miss Cormon (La Vieille Fille)* by Honoré de Balzac (Pellini 2015). In the following year, the *Journal des débats* published *Mémoires du diable* by Frédéric Soulié. Other cornerstones of the genre from this period were *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugène Sue, and *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas, which appeared in instalments in *Le Siècle* in 1844. *Il Capitan Fracassa* was published by Theo Fracassa between 1861 and 1863 in *Revue Nationale et Étrangère*. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* was carried in instalments from 1856 in *La Revue de Paris*.

The appendix novel prospered in other countries such as England – most famously in the case of Charles Dickens – the United States, Russia, and Italy. Robert Louis Stevenson published *The Black Arrow* in the magazine *Young Folks*; excerpts from Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* were carried in the Paris periodical *transi-tion* under the title of *Work in Progress*. In the US, Edgar Allan Poe's *Manuscript Found in a Bottle* won a literary competition organized by a Baltimore magazine. *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, were first seen as appendix novels in *The Russian Messenger*. In Italy, Emilio Salgari first published as newspaper appendices his *Sandokan* cycle of novels, as did Carlo Collodi, with *The Adventures of Pinocchio*.

After the Second World War, the genre declined. It was almost entirely replaced by the more immediate picture story (fotoromanzo) and the television drama or, later, telenovela (teleromanzo), the serialized story, a sort of police cut, which remained in use in a few newspapers until the end of the 1970s. In cinema, the influence of the appendix novel extended to the melodramatic genre in vogue in the 1920s and to the European neorealism of the 40s and 50s.

Its dismemberment into short newspaper articles represented a cross-fertilization of form that was particularly beneficial to the development of the nineteenth century novel, in that it demanded the creation of suspense. Another resulting convergence was that occurring between newspapers and literature, perhaps most markedly in the case of Emile Zola with his famous *J'accuse* in the socialist newspaper *L'Aurore*. Close relations between newspapers and novels, and between journalists and novelists, can be seen in a continuum of further remediations. Appendix novels' seriality came to be reflected in the 1930s in the broadcasting of radio adaptations of such works, such as *The Four Musketeers*, and the format persists through to the digital in the rise of the podcast. For many decades up to the end of the last century, before consolidation of cultural content in supplements, the structural convergence between journalism and literature was evidenced on the third page of Italian newspapers, which had long been established as a literary and cultural space (where, by contrast, elsewhere Page Three has been infamously associated with tabloid titillation).

Further developments in television have followed a similar trajectory of convergence.

3.2 The Telephone and Broadcast Media

Another historically significant form of convergence that arose in advance of digital media is that between the telephone and broadcast media. Preceding the phase

of more direct union, telephony had been used in a form of proto-broadcasting from the late nineteenth century, with the so-called circular telephone bringing entertainment and cultural events to elite audiences and distributing news to subscribers of networks in several countries, beginning in Hungary in 1893 but quickly adopted in the US, and surviving up to World War II (Marvin 1988; Balbi 2010). Whereas in these instances the telephone incorporated mass media, later, the relationship was reversed, when broadcast incorporated the telephone. In the US, on-air radio discussion of music occurred as early as 1945, extending to political coverage in 1949 (Bobbitt 2010). Elsewhere, live telephone content has become widespread internationally as a key form of programming in entertainment, cultural and political domains, both in television and radio (e.g., Simonelli and Taggi 1985 regarding Italy; Katriel 2004 on Israel; O'Sullivan 2005 on Ireland; Lee 2014 on Hong Kong). In particular, in the context of developments in the digital domain, it has been observed that key figures in partisan websites in the US have emerged from talk radio (Newman et al. 2018).

To bring new empirical material to this topic, we report here results from formerly unpublished research by Fortunati and Manganelli in 1994 (Fortunati and Manganelli 1995). In Italy, this convergence began when, in 1969, the radio program *Chiamate Roma 3131* took the initiative to include live calls from the audience. The show's creator, Luciano Rispoli, inspired by a live phone-in segment in a French radio show hosted by a psychologist, created a two-hour daily broadcast with live calls, with the aim of including diverse, natural voices. Calls were "deferred live," i.e., a direct call with a delay of a quarter of an hour to allow time to intervene in case of foul language or abusive content. The introduction of the telephone collapsed the wall around radio as an academy of phonetic and linguistic perfection, and the beginning of a medium in which people could express themselves at home, in the streets and at work.

Based on the study's analysis of a week's broadcasts, in which 474 live calls were logged, it can be extrapolated that there would be about 25,000 annually, mixed with other narrative units, so that the identity of radio can be viewed as shared between the microphone and the telephone. Since both devices are "voices," the relation between radio and telephone has always been closer, historically and structurally, than that between the telephone and television. This makes a less unequal, and potentially more participative, discursive contract between host and listener. The invitation to call or contact the radio station is oral only and responds to three basic functions of the palimpsest as macro-text. The first is the self-referencing function, i.e. the creation, strengthening, and improvement of the network image, enhancing the quality of domesticity and familiarity between the network and its "loyal audience." The second is the phatic function, shown in the continuous quest for contact with the listener,

repeatedly invited to be part of the “big radio family.” The third is pragmatic, in the sense that the invitation to call is a commercial communication practice, widely used in advertising. The live radio call expands the phatic function most of all. To the cold, unidirectional language of mass media, the live call adds the warmth of intimacy and relationality.

In the case of television, the study logged 269 live calls, equating to 14,000 annually. A fifth of those surveyed said that they had tried to call a television program, but only 3.4% of these had succeeded in getting through. The majority said they had called in the hope of winning a prize or taking part in a game, and only 7.8% said they had telephoned to express their opinion. This can be understood as relating less to a lack of interest in participation and more to the operation of television, which called for the staging of live calls. Calls took on only the phatic function. They lowered the iconicity of the television text and enriched the audio band, which on the small screen is otherwise sacrificed to subordinate functions (Giaccardi 1995). In this sense, the phone-in had the potential to effect change through converging not only technologies but also audience and producer roles, even as the immediate and spontaneous live call ultimately has been subordinated to the rigid medium demands of TV.

From its convergence with television, the telephone, now including the mobile phone (Goggin and Hjorth 2014), has acquired a new form of existence in the world of entertainment and mass communications, from the screen overlay telephone (and fax) numbers to the telephone interviews and to the live telephone dialogues with the public. The telephone also acquired a public dimension. From its existence as a medium of personal communication, it has moved to also being a medium of mass communication, positioned as a bridge between audiences and electronic media. The language of the telephone has powerfully added a personal dimension to public dialogue. In the digitalized world, television and radio, as digitalized analogue media, have experienced divergent evolutions in this respect. While television has dropped live calls as a means of engaging the audience, radio has continued on this path. Television has achieved the involvement of the public by proposing new broadcast formats, such as reality or entertainment shows including the audience by means of tele-voting, often via smartphones (Hay and Kanafani 2017), or by leaning more on already tested formats such as talk shows and quizzes. The process of convergence now persists into the digital, as both television and radio have acquired new space and time through the use of the internet and, especially, social media.

Conclusion

This discussion of convergence has attempted to place the concept in a broader historical context of media history and theoretical evolution, and to problematize its near-exclusive latter association with the digital. We have used a number of historical case studies centered on specific media platforms to demonstrate processes of convergence that are pre-digital but that spring from or relate to aspects of media change commonly associated with the digital, namely evolving formats, content, and uses, with implications for producers, institutions, markets, and audiences. Convergence is as old as the earliest mass medium but connecting in cultural terms from the medieval period to the nineteenth century romantic novel and, hence, beyond to the twenty-first century (Gabriele 2016). It has been seen to be agnostic as to the “digitalness” or otherwise of media types: it has occurred in many guises, and will continue to arise within digital media, within analogue forms, and, post-digitally, between the two, depending on many forces including but not confined to the technological. Convergence has proven useful as an analytic tool to understand media change, but it is not the first or only such concept to have done so, and its often technological and market-led framing carries with it a risk of narrowing understanding and, consequently, the discourse around such processes. Many of the categories of media springing from the more positivist interpretations of convergence and related concepts, such as commonly-deployed dualities of “legacy” and “new,” “static” and “dynamic” or “traditional” and “digital,” are limited in scope, unhelpful and misleading. Convergence and remediation, both of which capture change and the relationships between diverse media forms, are not mutually exclusive, and it is perhaps wise to consider them together to support a more nuanced, inclusive and historically-based view of evolution and continuity in media communication.

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