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*Career Course*  
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## News as public knowledge

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- The mass media are a central institution of modern life

Part I.

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Thanks to Philip Seib, Michael Schudson, Justin Lewis, Andrew Williams, Bob Franklin,  
and many others.

# World without journalism!

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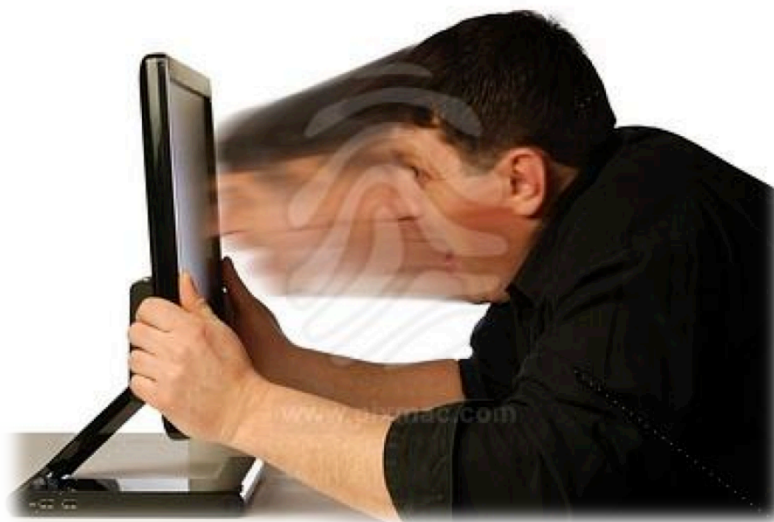
- Could you imagine a world where governments, lobbyists, candidates, churches, and social movements deliver information directly to citizens on computer?



# We are journalists

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- In such a world citizens just tap into any information source they want on computer networks, they also send their information and their own comments.
- Each one of us becomes our own journalist.



# What could be the end of the story?

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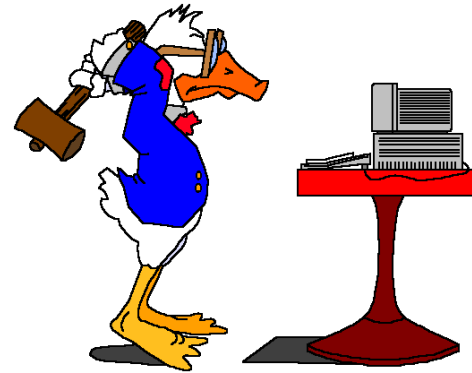
- Citizens would probably tend to rely on the most legitimate public officials for news, trusting especially what Government sends their way
- **The President, or the Government, as the symbolically the most potent and legitimate source of authority, would have greater power to set the national agenda than they have today**
- Beyond a few obvious and highly legitimate sources, people would tend to rely on local sources whose credibility on the information superhighway could be vouched for by their accessibility in person
- **Public dialogue could be endorsed, with more democratic discourse.**



# Journalism should be reinvented

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- But:
  - People would want ways **to sort** through the **endless information** available
  - **People could want help interpreting and explaining events!**
- What is important?
- What is most interesting?
- **A professional press corp would reappear.**



# News is a form of culture and it is „public knowledge“!

- It is hard to picture the contemporary world, even in the face of technology that makes each of us:

potentially equal senders and  
receivers of information,

- **without a specialized institution of journalism.**

# The mass media are a central institution of modern life.

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- In a political democracy, the media are a vital force in keeping the concerns of the many in the field of vision of the governing few.
  - News on television, radio, or in print, produced by journalist, are different from messages that a government official or corporate executive might deliver straight to the public
  - The difference is not only that journalist has the opportunity, indeed the professional obligation, to frame the message.
  - It is also that the newspaper story or television broadcast transforms an event into a **cultural form called – news.**
  - A news story is an announcement of special interest and importance.
- **It suggests that what is published has call on public attention.**





- Distributing information has visible and measurable consequences.

# Distributing information has visible and measurable consequences

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- When the media offer the public a news item, they confer upon it public legitimacy.
- They bring it into the common public forum where it can be discussed by a general audience.
- They not only distribute the report of an event or announcement to a large group, they amplify it.
- An event or speech or document in one location becomes within a day, or within an hour, or instantaneously, available to millions of people all over a region or country or the world.
- Public amplification also provides a certification of importance.
- This has enormous effects



# FOR INSTANCE:

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- If people see more stories about unemployment on television, they judge unemployment to be a more pressing national problem



- It is the same about more stories on green rainforests, terrorism, financial crisis, EU enlargement - or – the enemy is in our neighbourhood

# New age, new media and media ownership and markets, do they matter?

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- The nexus of ownership and market power spans different segments of the media and is qualitatively different from previous times.
- These factors (the nexus of ownership and market) have an important influence:
  - on the evolution of media technologies
  - the work of media professionals
  - the character of information and media content



# Let us have something more about the media

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- While new media, especially the Internet, open up unprecedented opportunities for people to access and distribute information, the emergence of a powerful nexus between both 'old' and 'new' media means that the character of media ownership and markets still matters greatly.

# Showbizification of the news

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- If the corporate structure of the media does not in itself determine news content, it still tends to subordinate news values to commercial values and we are at the door of **the showbizification of the news**.
- In all press systems, the news media are agents of those who exercise political and economic power and the content of the news media always reflects the interest of those who finance the press.

# So, let us have something more, and more about the media

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- Since the last decades of the 20th century we have been living in an age of promotion and public relations.



- Public relation, abbreviated as PR, are the actions of corporation, store, government, individual, etc., in promoting goodwill between itself and the public, the community customers, etc.



# The drive for profit

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- The drive for profit maximisation compromises the independence of the press. The line between journalism and PR—between factual reporting and partisan narrative — becomes **blurred**



- Journalists often ignore, even deny the fact that much of current journalism, both broadcast and press, is public relations in the sense that stories, ideas, features and interviews are either suggested, or in the extreme actually written by public relations people.

- The relationship between the news media and the PR industry is a complex and symbiotic
- Most journalists operate under economic, institutional and organisational constraints



which require them to draft and process too many stories for publication to be able to operate with the freedom and independence necessary to work effectively.

- What is clear from everyday practice and some studies is that the **quality and independence of the news media has been significantly affected by their increasing reliance on public relations**

# PR / Status of the Industry

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- Example :
- On the professional level, there is an organization called Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the world's largest public relations organization.
- PRSA is a community of more than 21,000 professionals that works to advance the skill set of public relations.
- In the USA, public relations professionals earn an average annual salary of \$49,800 Top earners bring home around \$89,220 annually, while entry-level public relations specialists earn around \$28,080.
- **Communications executives can earn salaries in the mid six-figures**

# What are their methods, tools and tactics

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- Public relations and publicity are not synonymous, but many public relations campaigns include provisions for publicity.
- More recently in public relations, professionals are using technology as their main tool to get their messages to target audiences.
- With the creation of social networks, blogs, and even Internet radio, public relations professionals are able to send direct messages through these mediums that attract the target audiences.

# Social media as tools

- Traditional tools include press releases
- Increasingly, companies are utilizing interactive social media outlets, such as blogs, socialmedia (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, foursquare /socialnetwork etc.) as tools in their public relations campaigns
- 'PR' is synonymous in many people's minds with "Press Release", but the tools of the PR industry are actually many and varied as well as sophisticated and subtle.



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# Their methods: **saving the network money**

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- They include media relations kits containing video and audio news releases, referred to in the industry as VNRs and ANRs, **which are often carefully produced to emulate the signature style** of a particular network news or current affairs program.



- These products are then delivered to networks and run as regular program content, with or without source acknowledgment, thereby **saving the network** tens of thousands of dollars in production costs and delivering for the client of the PR firm an extremely effective and subtle method of managing public opinion.

# Fourth estate

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- Some findings illustrate that journalists' reliance on these news sources is extensive and raises significant questions concerning claims to journalistic independence news media and journalists' **role as a fourth estate**.
- The suggestion that public relations professionals play an increasingly influential role in the news, gathering and reporting processes, has become commonplace across the last decades .

# Pressures on journalists

- At the same time, **pressures on journalists** to increase productivity, via substantive growths in the pagination of national newspapers across the last three decades, achieved with relatively static numbers of journalists, have raised questions about the impact of these **changing journalistic practices** on the quality and independence of journalists' output.



PR subsidies assist news organizations to maintain profitability by squaring the circle between cost cutting (cuts in journalism wages and numbers of journalists employed), while sustaining if not increasing news output through greater pagination, more supplements and the development of online editions and other news services.

# Source supremacy

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- Firstly, **it signals source supremacy in news making**, but secondly it offends journalists' professional culture, which emphasises independence and editorial autonomy.

# Fifth estate

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- A relationship with sources that is “too cosy” is potentially compromising to journalists’ integrity and risks becoming collusive .
- Journalists have typically favoured a more robust, conflict model, based on a crucial assumption that if the media are to function as watchdogs of powerful economic and political interests, journalists must establish their independence of sources or risk the fourth estate being driven by **the fifth estate of public relations.**



# PR people can **control access to information**

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- The media in turn has become more dependent on PR to supply content to fill air time or column inches and PR are happy to help fill the pages



# PR as necessary evil

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- As the primary point of contact between businesses and the media, PR people **can control access to information which journalists want.**
- **This gives them tremendous leverage in negotiating with journalists, as they are in a position to refuse information.**
- "Most journalists will have taken the PR shilling at some point in their career... Most of the time it is a straightforward love-hate relationship," observes Nic Paton, writing in the Guardian, **"To the journalist, the PR is a necessary evil"**. And the PR is willing to suffer all that talk about integrity and independence as long as it gets the client those valuable column inches.

# Today the media is dominated by big corporations

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- Fewer journalists are employed and less and less time is available for investigation. Instead content is supplied ever more directly from the press release. Investigative journalism becomes rarer and is supplanted by source journalism.

# „Controlling drinking problems”

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- In this environment the PR companies have become a necessary crutch for the media, but not one that the media is keen to investigate and expose to the public, **“like an alcoholic who can't believe he has a drinking problem, members of the press are too close to their own addiction to PR to realise there is anything wrong”**.

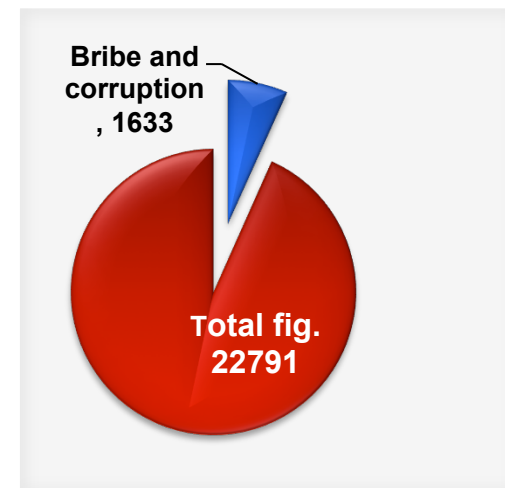
# Croatian example

- For the period from January 1 to December 31, 2006, the Judiciary and Crime category of VND online database has 22.791 processed documents/articles from 16 Croatian newspapers
- All articles in relation to the subjects have been processed:
  - bribe and corruption,
  - abuse of power and authority,
  - conflict of interest

Sources – total fig.	No.	%
Jutarnji list	5141	22.5%
Novi list	4504	19.7%
Večernji list	3967	17.4%
Slobodna Dalmacija	3744	16.4%
Vjesnik	2819	12.3%
Glas Slavonije	1026	4.50%
Poslovni Dnevnik	483	2.12%
Globus	390	1.71%
Feral	360	1.58%
Nacional	296	1.30%
Arena	24	0.11%
Sportske novosti	13	0.06%
Banka	11	0.05%
Privredni vjesnik	8	0.04%
Gloria	4	0.02%
Vijenac	1	0.00%

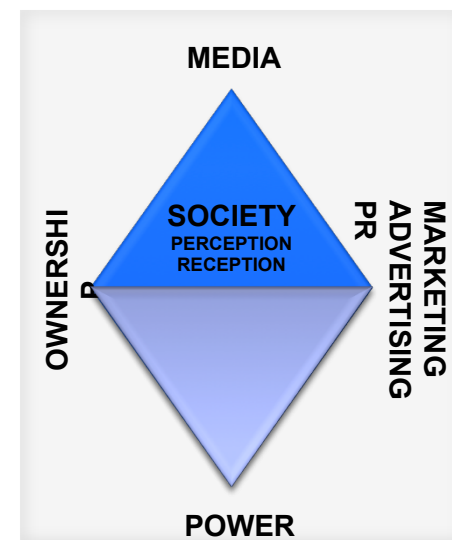
# Croatian example

- In the midst of a general campaign for fighting corruption, for achieving the so-called zero point of corruption tolerance, the processing of selected material indicated that out of all published articles related to the field of Judiciary and Crime, only 7 percent, i.e. the total of 1633 articles, referred to or implied corruption.
- For comparison, the number of articles on corruption had risen from the yearly average of 100-odd texts in early 1990s, to the mentioned number in 2006.
- Journalistic forms that influence attitudes – columns (33), commentaries (44), and so-called letters (17); point out moral principles and describe the same ten events or persons.
- In 2006 reporters did not publish as much texts as columnists and commentators. The chosen print media represent about 90 percent of newspaper editions. Information about corruption are usually »second-hand«.



# Unanswered question

- The question that remains unanswered is how is it possible that estimates of general corruption in the society, which challenges democracy per se, do not have a base in Croatian press.
- Hypothetically, it might be that – corruption is not as widespread and powerful as it is believed?
- Or – the media are corrupt and therefore such subjects are not of interest to them?
- Or something else?
- The answer to this sort of questions lies in thorough analytical and critical insight into databases, data-mining through numerous relations.
- An image of a society with its cultural artifacts, including corruption, should be observed in its totality. The two-triangle graphic is oversimplified, but it emerged as one of possible representations.



*Graphic / Media and society*



# Reviewers 2005

**Prof. Dr. Sc. Ivo Josipović**  
**Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb**  
**President of the Republic of Croatia**

*The project is very promising, and according to its potentials I believe that it should be developed as a public service. Network connections with other databases should also be a component of the project. Furthermore, the requirements of the Government and Administration should be analyzed. Additional potential of the project concerns the possibility of participation in the economy. Modern business requires round-the-clock access to information for bringing adequate business decisions.*

*Needless to say that the project is of great importance to scientific and professional work. Especially if cooperation with the corresponding foreign databases was established.*

*In conclusion, I consider this an extremely valuable project which deserves absolute support. I believe that in further development of the project its autonomous organization and professionalization should be insisted on. It would also benefit from establishing strategic partnership with public administration, science and business.»*

**Dr. Sc. Inoslav Bešker**  
**Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb**  
**Part time lecturer/correspondent in Rome**  
**Main activities Investigative Journalism**

*The sections of the »VND online« project are a sample of a public database accessible to a wide range of users, primarily those in journalism, professional education and public administration.*

*A recommendation is to develop the project into a public database with online access, as public service at a national level and of national interest, and to make a network connection to other national databases.»*



**Prof. Dr. Sc. Damir Boras, Dean**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb**  
**Department of Information Science**

*I am extremely glad to see that Croatia finally has a consistent, overall, and standardized fund of newspaper articles, which serves as a base not only for history and culture, but also for politics, i.e. a set of information items from various sources which, intertwined like this, enable us to obtain an analytical and reliable view of the events they describe.*

*A great advantage is the possibility to see different sources, different authors, attitudes of different countries etc. The organization of the database is absolutely, and more, in line with international standards of newspaper and other documentation.*

**Prof. Dr. Sc. Miroslav Tuđman,**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social**  
**Sciences of the University of Zagreb**  
**Department of Information Science**

*Collections of this kind, with newspaper articles available to a large number of users – from journalists, scientists, and lawyers, to those in cultural profession and public service – are the best grounds for establishing facts and revealing the truth about those events.*

*The project »VND online Database« can be technically upgraded in at least three new directions: a) digitalization of articles (i.e. accessibility of original documents in a digital format), b) on-line accessibility of database c) coverage of all fields, i.e. daily processing of the overall national press production.*

# Game *of* and *for* understanding

To create a system which links information about events,  
people and their activities

To create a system which supports the organization of knowledge


- a- Correlation person – event
- b- Correlation person – person
- c- Correlation event – event
- d- Recognizing network and value of links

But how to do it when we are faced with millions of facts, documents,  
data...

# Art of understanding

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- Automatic interpretation of content by identifying the value of links between people and events, understanding the correlations between subjects and the time of their occurrence.
- Move from providing information to providing knowledge.

**CLARA**

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Knowledge as new(s) agency business

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**HINA part II.**