

## Online newspapers: Medium, meaning and context

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Newspapers emerged as an important genre in the 17th century in relation to the social and technological context of the time. Since then, other social and technological developments have seen newspapers adapt and evolve. This evolution has involved changes in the language of newspapers, in the visual means by which events and values are construed and communicated, and in the media by which they are distributed.

This paper explores the development of online newspapers as one part of the ongoing evolution of the newspaper: an international, trans-cultural, and multimodal form of story telling. In the relatively short time that online newspapers have existed (approximately 13 years at the time of 6ICOM), identifiable conventions for multimodal communication have evolved. This paper explores a number of the conventions of online news design, and argues that they need to be understood in relation to the history of print newspapers, and the current social contexts in which online newspapers mediate communication between news organisations and mass audiences, local and international.

On the basis of the historical trajectories charted, the paper considers the short-term future of online newspapers, and the social implications of current and possible near-future news practices. The methodological approaches taken in the research underpinning this paper are outlined, and considered in relation to complementary approaches exploring the discourse of online newspapers.

### Biodata:

John Knox is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, where he teaches in the department's postgraduate programs in Applied Linguistics. His research interests include media discourse, language in education, multimodality, and Systemic Functional Linguistics.