Chapter One

Introduction
1.1 History of Print Journalism

Historians may differ on the exact date of publication of the first newspaper in the world, but it is generally agreed that the first organised attempt to provide such a service occurred in ancient Rome. Hand-written newsletters, and not printed ones, conveyed what was going on in the capital to the farther reaches of the Roman Empire. In Julius Caesar's time there were also the *acta diurna*, daily announcements of government and other activities that were posted in the capital's public places.

The earliest printed news bulletins probably appeared in China, with a court gazette issued during the T'ang dynasty (618-906 BC) and read primarily by government officials. Scholars were later added to its readership.

A later significant development often cited by historians was the issuing of newsletters by the Fugger family of Germany, a powerful clan of merchants and bankers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Modern journalism in Britain began in the nineteenth century with the rise of *The London Times*, which had been launched in 1785 as *The Daily Universal Register* but changed its name at the beginning of 1788. (International Encyclopaedia of Communications, The Oxford University Press, 1989, pages 179-186)

**Newspapers in India**: India and Britain's other erstwhile colonies inherited the concept of journalism from the British Press. It was an Englishman, James Augustus Hickey, who founded the first newspaper *Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser*, in Calcutta, in 1780. His paper was a weekly. It folded up soon, but there were other British journalists who were instrumental in starting such newspapers as *The Times of India* and *The Statesman* in years that followed.

Educated Indians soon realised the importance of the printed word to create social and political awakening. Newspapers like *The Bengal Journal, The Oriental Magazine* and *The Calcutta Chronicle, The Madras Courier, The Indian Herald, The Bombay Herald* and *The Bombay Courier* appeared during the subsequent years of 18th century.
Such veterans as Raja Ram Mohan Roy (*Sambad Kaumudi, Mirat-ul-Akhbar*) and Gangadhar Bhattacharjee (*Bengal Gazette*, the first Indian owned English newspaper) brought out their publications in the early nineteenth century. Indian journalism, which used to be a mission for the journalists during the pre-Independence period, is now acknowledged as a business although, by and large it, continues to be a responsible instrument of social and political awakening.

Indian journalism tried to keep pace with the changes taking place in technology in the advanced countries. Newspaper owners in India in the pre-Independence era were mostly freedom fighters who printed their newspapers in small printing presses. They were unable to invest in modern machines and equipment, as also in manpower. They were content in using lithographs and later, letterpress. Gradually, some newspapers progressed to use rotary press and eventually the offset. The newspaper industry in India gradually adopted modern means of communication as the decades progressed during the last century. Telephone, telegraphs, radio cables, telex, facsimile equipment or satellite communication became an integral part of its communication system as years passed by. Some newspaper managements were quicker than others to bring in the technological innovations, but the industry, as a whole had to keep its eyes open to the changes taking place in the USA and Europe.

**Computers Introduced:** A revolution in the industry, began around 1986-87 when *The Indian Post* in Mumbai introduced computer-aided typesetting, layout and design for the first time in the industry. This researcher was the Pune-based special correspondent of *The Indian Post* and has witnessed how this newspaper set the trend in the industry though it folded up within three years. Several newspapers switched over to computers in early 1990's, which was also the beginning of an era of liberalisation of Indian economy. As prices of personal computers began falling, newspapers and journalists did not lag behind in using PCs as tools for their writing, typesetting and layout. By mid-1990's, use of PC and modem did not remain a novelty as a faster and dependable mode of communication for news and features.

This also introduced Internet to the PC-users including the newspapers and their journalists working particularly in metropolitan centres of Mumbai,
Delhi, Calcutta and Chennai. Cities like Pune and Bangalore, where Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. provided infrastructure to access Internet in subsequent years of the current decade, quickly followed suit.

The newspapers and their journalists began using Internet to search for references. Some enterprising journalists began using e-mail and chat groups to interview newsmakers. Yet managements were sceptical about the utility of putting their newspapers on the Net. Thus in this respect also, the Indian newspapers were far behind their counterparts in advanced countries where every other periodical seems to be on the Internet.

**Reluctant Publishers:** *The Hindu* reported on 14.08.1996 how publishers of newspapers shied away from the concept of shifting to electronic data publishing, or Internet. Publishers of most leading publishing houses attending the Delhi Book Fair that year indicated that they were not in a hurry to switch to Internet.

Mr. Csezlaw Jan Grycz, an Internet expert who is a consultant to many projects including the John Brothers, a publishing company in the USA, tried to impress upon the Indian publishers about the utility of the Net during several rounds of discussions. They were being aided by the USIS. Yet, the Indian publishers felt that it was too early to shift, as only in the next century would India catch up with the latest in the field. (*Vidura, Volume 33*, issue no. 4, Oct-Dec. 1996, pp 28).

Dr. Marco J. W. Bos narrated a similar experience: When talking to a publisher about online publishing, the first reaction is one of fear, suspicion or disinterest. The reaction of apprehension is justified witnessing the hype about the Internet and its potential of becoming the new mass media solution...Publishing on paper is an intrinsic part of our culture which will not be taken over by a new multimedia contestant. What online publishing offers to the publishers is an additional medium, which will happily coexist next to the printed publications.... (*Vidura, Vol. 33 No. 1*, January 1996, pp. 39)

On the other hand, in US of America, a number of newspapers had already started electronic distribution in different forms, ranging from bulletin boards to fax-on-demand. These systems did not reach Asia in a big way, but newspapers gradually began concentrating on getting a presence on the Internet, on the World Wide Web. Some publishers simply see their Internet
presence as an additional exposure, which could bring wider attention to their printed publication, and do not spend time on updating their sites.

Other publishers took online efforts more seriously and provided additional services to their existing publications. The publisher can put up on the Web all, or a selection of articles, printed by his/her newspaper. Some provide access to archival information of the backdated articles. Some others, like "Wired", invite newsmakers to be online on chat groups so that readers anywhere in the world can ask questions in real time on e-mail.

**USA Leads:** The publishers in the USA were far ahead of their counterparts elsewhere in the world to exploit the new technology and launch Internet versions of their newspapers. By mid-1990's, contents of a number of print newspapers and magazines in the USA were available on the Net. Anyone with a personal computer, a modem, telephone line and an Internet connection could access these online publications from anywhere in the world. The publishers went online, as it was a medium that did not require huge investments and recurring expenses. The publishers adopted the medium to grab new opportunities, additional revenues from advertisers and reach out to the readers across the globe.

As David Haynes of *The Calgary Herald*, a daily in western Canada said, some 1500 newspapers in the USA were on the Net before his own daily launched its Internet edition in December 1995. Even these 1500 odd newspapers formed a minuscule number of the vast population of print dailies in the USA, which means that all the American publishers had not brought out online versions of their publications. By this time, in India, only *The Hindu* had begun its efforts in launching the print daily's electronic version. During the next three years, there were announcements from time to time regarding the launch of Internet editions of a few print newspapers in India. A comprehensive picture about online journalism was, however, not available at a given point of time. Neither was there any consolidated data on the readership of these online dailies of the country.

Books on History of Indian Press have not yet taken cognisance of the entry of electronic newspapers in the country. Among the latest entrants in this category of books is "Modern History of Indian Press" by Sunit Ghosh
(Genesis Publishing Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi). The author has chronicled the developments in Indian Journalism. Yet it has not mentioned the entry of Electronic Journalism, especially print newspapers launching their online editions, though the volume was published in 1998, three years after *The Hindu* went online.

A study on these aspects was therefore called for.
1.2 History of Internet and World Wide Web

Internet is a mega network of computer networks spread across the globe. It's a global community of estimated 50,000 interconnected computer networks spread across 50 countries as in 1998. (Manorama Year Book 1999). These estimates vary. None is in a position to give an accurate figure of Internet users at a particular point of time.

There is no administrator, no regulator to dictate how the Internet users should use the network. Yet it has become an information superhighway frequented by millions of surfers, by and large, in a responsible manner and for individual and common good.

The Internet has added a new dimension to human existence by placing a vast and ever-growing treasure of data, information and audio-video contents compiled by individuals, institutions, research organisations, corporates and government agencies. Anyone with a computer, a modem and telephone line can access the information or contribute to these contents through an Internet Service Provider (ISP). Anybody can become a publisher of his/her information and views by setting up a site for a nominal investment.

**Ownerless Network:** Internet is a voluntary and co-operative movement of individuals and groups and has no owners. Precisely for this reason, there is no way to state with authority the number of Internet connections and users throughout the world. According to one estimate, there were four million people who had access to Internet in 1991, most of whom were based at academic/research institutions. By 1997, the number of Internet users rose to 57 million, most of them using their personal computers. (Frequently Asked Questions from Internet Society's Home Page, accessed on August 28, 1998)

By 2000 AD, about 100 million would use Internet, exchanging information, spreading knowledge and extending online help through e-mail, bulletin boards, chats, news groups and by accessing sites of newspapers and online publications. These and other commercial sites have already become a powerful means for e-commerce in the USA and Europe.

Internet commerce, which grew from $ 12 billion in 1997 to $ 30 billion in a year, might touch $ 425 billion by 2002... Projections even suggest a figure of $ 1 trillion.... While globally, the IT industry is growing at around
10 per cent a year, spending on hardware, software and services for e-business is growing twice as fast. At that rate the IT industry should reach $1.6 trillion by 2002 of which e-business is expected to account for $600 billion. (E Raghavan, The Economic Times, July 8, 1999)

**Brief History of Internet:** The Internet began as the ARPANET during the cold war in 1969. It was developed by the US Department of Defence’s (DoD) research people in conjunction with a number of military contractors and universities to explore the possibility of a communication network that could survive a nuclear attack. It continued simply because the DoD, its contractors, and the universities found it to be a very convenient way to communicate.

For the first decade that the Internet was in existence, it was primarily used to facilitate e-mail, support online discussion groups, allow access to distant databases, and support the transfer of files between government agencies, companies, universities and individuals. (http://tdi.uregina.ca/~ursc/Internet/history.html)

During the early 1980s, all the interconnected research networks were converted to the TCP/IP protocol (this enables all of the networks of the Internet to send data back and forth). The ARPANET became the backbone (the physical connection between the major sites) of the new Internet, which comprised all TCP/IP-based networks connected to the ARPANET. This conversion to TCP/IP was completed by the end of 1983; and the Internet was born.

**HTML Arrives:** In 1990, HTML, a hypertext Internet protocol that could communicate the graphic information on the Internet, was introduced. Any individual could create graphic pages (a Web site), which then became part of a huge, virtual hypertext network called the World Wide Web (WWW or W3). The enhanced Internet was informally renamed the Web and a huge additional audience was created.

Most people use the term "Internet" to refer to the physical structure of the Net, including client and server computers and the phone lines that connect everything. They use the term "Web" to refer to the collection of sites and the information that can be accessed when one is using the Internet.
A number of different services have developed over the years to facilitate the sharing of information between the many sites on the Internet. Because the Internet was originally research-oriented, many of these services were hard to use and poorly documented. Now that the Internet has been opened to commercial and private sites, new services are being developed that are easier to use, and new interfaces to the older services make them more friendly. (Updated by Kyla Wendell for the Student Connection Programme, University of Regina, August 18, 1997)

**Net and Web:** Tim BL, inventor of the World Wide Web, explains the difference between the (Inter) Net and Web as follows:

'The Internet' (Net) is a network of networks. Basically it is made from computers and cables. Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn evolved how this could be used to send around little "packets" of information. As Vint points out, a packet is like a postcard with a simple address on it. If you put the right address on a packet, and give it to any computer which is connected as part of the Net, each computer would figure out which cable to send it down next so that it would get to its destination.

That's what the Internet does. It delivers packets, anywhere in the world, normally well under a second. Lots of different sort of programmes use the Internet: electronic mail, for example, was around long before the global hypertext system I (Tim BL) invented and called the World Wide Web ('Web). Now, videoconferencing and streamed audio channels are among other things which, like the Web, encode information in different ways and use different languages between computers ("protocols") to provide a service.

The Web is an abstract (imaginary) space of information. On the Net, you find computers, on the Web, you find document, sounds, videos,... information. On the Net, the connections are cables between computers; on the Web, connections are hypertext links. The Web exists because of programmes that communicate between computers on the Net. The Web could not be without the Net. The Web made the Net useful because people are really interested in information (not to mention knowledge and wisdom!) and don't really want to know about computers and cables.'

Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn defined the "Internet Protocol" (IP) by which packets are sent on from one computer to another until they reach their
destination. ('Cerf's Up': MCI WorldCom on technology with profile and FAQ by Vint.)

Vint says: 'The design of Internet was done in 1973 and published in 1974. This ensued about 10 years of hard work, resulting in the roll out of Internet in 1983. Prior to that, a number of demonstrations were made of the technology - such as the first three-network interconnection demonstrated in November 1977 linking SATNET, PRNET and ARPANET in a path leading from Menlo Park, CA to University College London and back to USC/ISI in Marina del Rey, CA.'

Rapid Growth of Web: The WWW came as a boon to Internet users as it enabled them to set up sites and access the Net without much difficulty. Its popularity could be gauged from the rapid growth of the Web from 130 in June 1993 to 2,215,195 in April 1998. The growth of the newspapers on the Net is also linked to the WWW.

A brief sketch of milestones in the evolution of Internet and WWW has been presented in Annexure 3.

Internet in India

Although Internet had become common in the USA and Europe, India was lagging behind in this area. Even personal computers were considered to be gadgets affordable only to the rich. The situation changed with the liberalisation of economy in 1991. Customs and excise duty on hardware and software were brought down progressively each year with the result that the PCs were within the reach of the country’s industry, institutions and the middle class people.

Though this did not bring India on par with the USA and Europe in respect of PC penetration, scores of people in the country had begun using computers. By the year 2000, PC penetration in India was expected to reach about 13 per thousand from three per thousand in 1997 (PC Quest, December 1997). A growing number of PC users in metropolitan cities had begun using Internet. Yet, Internet remained out of reach for the people because of high fees for connectivity and poor telecommunication infrastructure. Public sector Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd., the only Internet Service Provider in India, had a
small number of Net subscribers, about 150,000, in November 1998 since the
service began in August 1996.

The subscribers even in the nation’s capital, Delhi, were frustrated due
to poor connectivity because of a variety of reasons. These included poor
connectivity due to bad telephone lines and high costs. A subscriber had to pay
an average of Rs. 2,200 for VSNL fees and local telephone charges if he were
to access for only two hours a day. *(India Today*, November 16, 1998, pages
62-63)

**Promising Future:** It was, therefore, beyond the means of common
people to think of accessing Indian newspapers on the Net. The things began
changing when the Government of India announced in November 1998 a
series of measures in response to recommendations made by the Information
Technology Task Force. One of them was to allow the private sector in the
Internet Service business. By 1999, Satyam, Dishnet, Bharati and Mahanagar
Telecom Nigam Ltd., besides VSNL were in the Internet service business
competing with each other by offering cheaper subscription fees and other
packages to lure more and more subscribers. The number of Internet
subscribers went up to 200,000 while the Nasscom hoped that it would grow
eight million by the year 2002. *(PC Quest, Dec 1997)*

**Cable Connectivity:** There are plans to introduce cable connected
Internet facility for the users in India. Satyam Infoway believes that the ISPs
can tap 16 to 18 million cable connected homes in the country to offer Internet
service onto the television screens. *(R. Ramaraj, Satyam Managing Director,
*The Observer of Business and Politics*, 25.12.1998)* They would not be
required to use computers at all if they want to access the Internet for surfing
or e-mail. Dishnet, similarly, was in the process of finalising a tie-up with a
cooperative society of cable operators in Pune as its first project in cable
networking for Internet and television channels. *(Dr. Vijay Bhatkar, Dishnet
Chairman, interview with the researcher on 09.07.1999)*

These developments augured well for the Indian newspapers on the
Net, since they so far had only readers outside India accessing their Web
eDITIONS. They could now hope that readers within India would visit their sites
in greater number. The publishers could think of greater potential for
increasing their revenue from advertisements and online shopping through their sites in the near future when e-commerce would be legally permitted.

**Awaiting e-commerce:** The non-availability of e-commerce in India is a major factor for the stunted growth of Internet in India. The corporates, business houses, traders and individuals can not transact any business quoting their credit card numbers since the e-commerce does not have legal sanction in India until now (mid-1999). The Web sites and portals can not be used to place orders and receive payment. When the e-commerce is permitted these sites and portals, including those of the Indian newspapers, will be of immense help to both buyers and sellers. This in turn will increase the number of visitors to the sites and attract more advertisers to the newspaper.

The potential of e-commerce in India can be gauged from the statistics of deals effected even when cyber laws are not in place. Such deals in 1998 totalled Rs. 12 crore and were estimated at Rs. 30 crore in 1999. The e-commerce in India was projected to shoot up to Rs. 700 crore in the year 2000 by which time the cyber laws are expected to be passed. (Atul Sareen, IBM India’s senior manager, quoted in *Pune Times of India*, July 10, 1999)

### 1.3 Newspapers on Internet: The Global Scenario

Internet eventually became a medium for dissemination of information not only for academic and scientific institutions, defence establishments and government agencies, but also for commercial establishments and newspapers. Gradually, its applications like e-mail and search facilities were exploited by publishers and journalists for collection and dissemination of news. The idea of setting up Web editions of print dailies and magazines soon caught on. Non-professionals could start an online news site providing news, information and entertainment with the help of multi-media and by using metaphors of print newspapers.

Newspaper publishers, not only in the USA but also in other countries including India, realised the potential of the online ventures because of their global reach without heavy investments. Web editions of print newspapers were launched one after another in quick succession beginning with dailies in the US.
Eric K. Meyer, the managing partner of the NewsLink Online Research, and faculty at the School of Journalism at the University of Illinois, USA, regularly reports the status of the newspapers on Internet at http://ajr.newsslk.org/ajrmortjun99.html.

**Phenomenal Growth:** His report at this site on Sept. 27, 1998 said 3,622 newspapers published on the Internet, reflecting a continued trend of growth since 1994 when NewsLink began tracking these developments in online journalism. Yet, he said, there were signs that the tide of growth might ebb (in the USA).

In the meantime, however, unprecedented growth outside the USA had pushed the total number of newspapers publishing on the Internet to 3,622, nearly 80% more than the prediction for the year-end made by experts in the field.

There were signs, however, that the boom may be coming to an end. NewsLink's latest census, conducted in July and early August 1998, found more than 100 newspapers that had pulled the plug on unprofitable Web sites.

Meyer reported a plaintive note on the front page of a still-active online edition of a small newspaper from Georgia: "Unless advertisers begin supporting newspaper Web sites, publishers will have to start cutting their losses."

Even if the trend towards online publishing, which began among larger U.S. dailies, completes its spread to smaller newspapers and to newspapers outside the USA, hard questions would remain about long-term viability in a market in which less than one-third of all online newspapers expect to be profitable this year.

David Haynes had in half seriousness, half in jest, - and perhaps with total honesty-, raised a very pertinent question: *Why are we @ this internet. Business In our Co?* (CPU News, August, 1997, reproduced in Vidura Vol. 34, Issue 4, Oct-Dec 1997, Annexure 1).

Nonetheless, 1,702 additional newspapers started publishing on the Internet during the six months ending September 1998 as against 594 in the previous six months and 471 in the six months before that.

**Trend outside USA:** About 43% of all online newspapers now are based outside the United States. Rapid growth, primarily in Canada, the
United Kingdom, Norway, Brazil and Germany, has pushed the total number of non-U.S. online newspapers to 1,563.

The number of USA newspapers online also has grown markedly, from 745 a year ago to 1,290 six months ago, to 2,059 in September 1998. Among U.S. online newspapers, 492 (or 24%, down from 30% six months ago) are general-circulation dailies, offering a full range of news updated at least once a day.

Meyer reported that more rapid growth had occurred among U.S non-dailies online, as 700 community weeklies within the United States had begun publishing a full range of news online. Besides these, there were 81 business newspapers, 109 alternative newspapers, 49 other speciality newspapers, 84 campus dailies and 186 campus non-dailies.

Outside the United States, the United Kingdom, with 294 online newspapers, and Canada, with 230, lead the way. In Canada, every province or territory now has at least one online newspaper. Ontario leads the way with 91, Alberta has 44, and British Columbia has 43.

Elsewhere in North America, Mexico has 51 online newspapers, 23 in Central America and 36 the Caribbean. Europe is the next most wired continent for newspapers, with 728 online newspaper sites. After the United Kingdom, comes Norway with 53 and Germany with 43. Asia (led by India) has 223 online newspapers, South America (led by Bolivia) has 161 and Africa (led by South Africa) has 53. Australia and other islands have 64 online newspapers.

USA Scene

After recording the statistics about the dailies on Internet in the world as above, it would be worthwhile to find out how American journalists and publishers have embraced online journalism.

The obvious reason for the newspaper publishers to join the cyber bandwagon has been the relatively small entry fee, as little as $5,000, a pittance compared with the cost of a printing plant, wrote David S. Jackson in *Time* (Extra! Readers Talk Back, May 1995 pp 50-51). For most of these publications, the motive is strictly commercial as the publishers hoped to
increase their revenue receipts after the initial investments. Some initially charged the users while most others look for new advertisers and later offer services other than news and advertisements, such as e-commerce, online shopping or auctions.

The number of computer users in America has been growing every year while Internet had already become a part of the Americans life by mid-1990’s. They could use this medium for placing orders for goods and commodities and transact the business through the credit cards. There is a huge market for online shopping services and the publishers of the newspapers did not want to miss out the opportunity. They compete with hosts of other non-newspaper Web sites and portals offering e-commerce to the Net users.

**Luring the Advertisers:** They hope that the strong news and information content of their newspapers will attract more visitors to their sites and the resultant hits would lure advertisers to place their ads onto these sites.

It should be interesting to find out how the journalists, who provide contents for the print editions and their Web versions, have adapted to the new medium in America.

Steven S Ross, the professor at the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University, New York, and Don Middleberg, the Chairman and CEO of Middleberg+ Associates, report the findings of a study in this respect as follows:

The study is the outcome of the third annual survey of print media use of computers, the Internet, and online services. The survey was based on 636 responses from a sample made up of 2,000 magazine editors and managing or business editors from all 1,795 daily newspapers and Sunday newspapers with independent staffs. Some key findings:

Journalists have clearly embraced online services. Only 13% of responding journalists do not have Internet access, down from 37% just a year ago.

Journalists, like the general public, are signing up for direct Internet access, faster than they have been enrolling with value-added services such as AOL and CompuServe. A quarter of the sample uses their own employer’s host to access the Internet, up from a sixth last year.
New Tools for News Gathering: E-mail is getting more important for day-to-day communications among journalists. But phones and personal contact still rule. The patterns differ for magazines and for newspapers. Magazine editors are relying more on e-mail for dialog with sources; only the phone is a more popular communications tool in the magazine world. But e-mail ranks third at newspapers — behind personal contact and phones.

Findings show 85% of the respondents, or their staffs, go online at least monthly. Two-thirds go online at least once a week. The figures show a steady, in fact explosive, growth over the past two years. Nevertheless, the Internet is not a magic bullet; almost 60% of the respondents say they still get story ideas via personal contact with sources; only 2% say their best source of story ideas is the World Wide Web.

Some 44% of the respondents write copy that ends up online, but few publications are producing material specifically for online publication. Few dailies allow their Web site to scoop the print product, but scooping is more common among magazines. There is enough variation to suggest that public relations specialists must tailor approaches for the specific publications they wish to impact.

Online publishing, as a media activity, is expanding quickly. The proportion of respondents who work for organisations with Web sites doubled in 1996 from 25% of the sample in the 1995 sample to half the sample this year. Only 11% say their publication has no plans to go online, down from 23% last year.

As in previous years, journalists are more likely to use free information services provided online by non-profit or public interest groups, than corporations. That means credibility is the key. Although substantial numbers of journalists use these services (whether provided by business, government, or non-profits), journalists are suspicious and may turn away from services that do not provide complete, reliable information.

Impact On Print Journalism

For Steve Ross, as a journalist and as a journalism professor, the challenge is to educate journalists in the new storytelling techniques. He finds that the technology has been easy to master. For the past two years, all
students at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism have learned HTML coding and digital audio editing, on top of mandatory spreadsheet and database training that has been in place for a decade.

"But journalists have to dig for the detail and logic necessary to tell more complete, more complex, more multifaceted tales," Ross said. "New medium, up to now, has exploited its large news hole to provide more complete data, entire budgets and legal texts, for instance. It has also been used to add audio and video to text stories. But it is only rarely used to make complex stories more compelling for a broader audience to tackle, or to personalise a story such as the Consumer Price Index and Social Security, so that every reader can see specifically what changes would mean in a personal context.

'Advances,' Ross said, 'will require journalists to grasp an even greater understanding of the issues they write about' for the print or online dailies.([http://www.mediasource.com/study/cont.htm, July 1997](http://www.mediasource.com/study/cont.htm, July 1997])

**New Environment:** Similarly, David S. Jackson, wrote in *Time* in May 1995 how reporters, their sources and the readers found themselves all together in a new environment. Quoting Jennifer Wolff from *Columbia Journalism Review* (CJR), he says readers have unprecedented access to reporters and editors, and journalists enjoy the opportunity to learn with lightening speed what their audience is thinking on a variety of issues.

There is fan mail and hate mail for journalists who may instantly receive via e-mail responses from the readers about the stories the online editions carry. There can be a healthy dialogue between the journalists, their sources and readers, but it can be hazardous as well. There could be the risk of treating gossip as facts passed on as tips through e-mail. The journalists have to learn rules and conventions of the Net.

As said earlier, the Internet has offered new tools of news-gathering to journalists. The reporters can surf the Net and search for background information, reference material and also tips on scandals, new leads on news stories and so on, from the dependable sites on the Internet. News sources can reach the journalists through e-mail to provide tips, and reactions while readers can react instantly to news breaks and opinion pieces put up in the electronic editions.
Newsweek's Wall Street editor Allan Sloan (sloan@panix.com) receives about 45 e-mail messages a week from readers in the USA and outside. Robert Scheer, the contributing editor of The Los Angeles Times (rscheer@aol.com) says 'I have been corrected, turned on to new column subjects and amused by most of the response.......Through e-mail my column gets posted on bulletin boards all over the World and that vastly expands my readers.'

Daniel Kadlec, the columnist of Time (kadlec@time.com) says, 'Through e-mail, I have built a library of people out in the world who I can get in touch with to provide different perspectives on financial stories. (CJR, March/April 1997, page 13)

Easy Access: For the common people, Internet has come in handy for speedily getting from the governments the information that was not available to them before. The governments, in their zeal to demonstrate that they are transparent, have begun putting on the Net reports that could have earlier been suppressed or left on the shelves.

The new medium has helped the government and public agencies to instantly make available to the people massive volumes of data to the people. News hungry people rush to the sites of CNN, BBC or The New York Times to access these volumes, as was experienced when the Starr report on Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky affair was put on the Net. Princess Diana's accidental death was another major news story, which reached people across the globe through the newspaper sites. (Indian newspaper sites were flooded with e-mail messages after the story on Pokhran nuclear tests broke in May 1998).

Competition With Old Media: The print newspapers on the Net have to adapt to the pressures of the demand for the latest news stories and compete with AP, Reuters and other news agencies for faster coverage. Thus the competition is now with the radio and television sites of rival newspapers and also with those of news agencies. The appetite of readers for fast and trustworthy news, or Breaking the News, seems to be growing.

The news medium has brought with it new issues for the journalists and publishers to tackle. One is the mushrooming growth of sites put up by individuals who masquerade as journalists. These sites carry news stories...
without verification and without any regard for code of ethics, norms of healthy journalistic standards and traditions set in by the quality newspapers. Hundreds of such sites float in the cyberspace without caring for the bitter criticism from print journalists and their associates.

Rumours and Gossip: Some sites such as http://www.dredgereport.com thrive only on rumours and gossip. Publishers of these sites are not concerned about laws relating to defamation, libel or copyrights. Newsweek (February 8, 1999, p 28) said (the Clinton-) Lewinsky story marked the journey of rumour and innuendo to the centre of media universe. (It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the first word of the US President’s affair broke when Matt Drudge of the http://drudgereport.com used his site to convey a rumour he heard about the Newsweek working on the story.

The new journalism has brought into sharp focus old dilemmas and debates concerning a line between advertising and editorial. Jeff Chester, executive director of the Centre for Media Education, a news media watchdog group in the USA says, “In a world where marketing, advertising and editorial are all being rolled into one, the already frayed distinctions or safe guards are being obliterated.”

Many purveyors of news and information are concerned about how they would maintain journalistic integrity. The American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) had to formulate some journalistic rules of conduct for presenting information and advertising online.

Pressures From Advertisers: The Columbia Journalism Review, in its September/October 1997 issue that reported these observations in its cover story, discussed the American scenario in this regard. It reported how advertising agencies are trying to dictate terms to the editors on behalf of their clients like auto major Chrysler Corporation. They are insisting that the editors should not carry articles on ‘provocative issues’ that would not be liked by the advertisers.

The online journalists in the USA are perturbed over the developments as these had ramifications in the Net journalism as well. The situation in the new medium is more complicated because of joint ventures and cross promotions between advertisers and publishers or their affiliations. There are
apprehensions that editors may not be able to report the news without fear or favour due to self-censorship or because of anxiety to protect the interests of advertisers.

This situation may be viewed against the backdrop of the need to earn more and more ad revenue to sustain the online publication and earn profit. The online advertising in 1996, the first full year of large-scale advertising on the WWW, totalled about a meagre $300 million compared to $38.2 billion of advertising in newspapers and $9.2 billion in magazine. Analysts project that Internet advertising will rise from $3.1 billion to $5 billion by the year 2000. (Blumenthal Robin Goldwin, CJR, Sept-Oct 1997, p.34).

Challenge From New Competition: Yet another concern for print newspapers on Internet is Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates’ resolve to ‘challenge old and established businesses like newspapers, travel agencies, automobile dealers, magazines and many other areas.’ He asked the executives of his company to devise ways of working with these businesses or winning away their customers and streams. (Gates Bill, Microsoft’s internal memorandum, December 1996, quoted by CJR) Within a year, as CJR reported in its November/December 1997 issue, Gates was on his way to become a media baron. He had joined hands with all-news channel NBC news, invested in USA’s fourth largest cable system operator Comcast Corp and had set up Microsoft Web Site sidewalk.com. Earlier Slate, an online news and views magazine for Microsoft was launched in 1996. Another of the Gates’ company Corbis has been compiling from many sources the world’s largest digital archive of photos and artwork for licensing to media.

Another Gate’s venture, Web TV Networks, makes set-top boxes that allow people to explore WWW on TV sets owing computers.

Apprehensions Among Journalists: These aggressive moves have made journalist and publishers restless because the online ventures are luring away advertisers from print publications and less powerful sites. The threat is particularly in respect of ‘local’ classified ads as Microsoft’s sidewalk.com, in particular, has planned to create sub-sites for major cities. The site for Seattle, for example, will provide information on every aspect of this city in a manner a print newspaper or other online service would not be able to provide. For the purpose, a small team of senior and efficient journalists has been hired.
The editors in the USA are apprehensive about these developments and specifically about Bill Gates and other less powerful giants in the online business that would force other Web sites to close shop.

A similar concern has been voiced by Chip Brown (chipbrown@aol.com), a former reporter for The Washington Post and contributing editor of Esquire. He points out there are portal sites such as Yahoo! and Lycos that were threatening newspapers because they provided access to Associated Press, Reuters and Bloomberg wire service news, and they ran classified ads too.

America Online (AOL) had blended Web content into its proprietary, subscription-based online service and had emerged as one of the traffic kingpins of everything from e-commerce to New Media. Even the entertainment conglomerate Disney had forged an alliance with the portal Infoseek and cobbled together the Go Network, which featured ESPN's popular sports coverage. Hundreds of other sites threatened to usurp the social and commercial niches newspapers had traditionally occupied. They ranged from e-commerce giant www.amazon.com and virtual auction house eBay to such community sites as www.theglobe.com and Tripod to specialty classified ad sites devoted to jobs, houses and cars. (http://ajr.newslink.org/special/part12.html)

Copyrights and Language Issue

Senior American journalists are worried on account of the easy access for children to Net sites that use language and details that no respectable newspaper would print. Parents are already worried over the exposure to pornographic sites. There were protests when the Starr report (on Clinton-Lewinsky) was put on the Web without editing or deleting words, expressions and details of sex. Journalists themselves were embarrassed and editors devised ways to circumvent these words and expressions imposing self-censorship. (T V Parasuram, PTI feature in The Times of India, August 7, 1998)

New aspects of Copyrights issues are also being raised in the journalistic field. Some journalists object when their articles in print dailies are included also in the Web editions without making additional payment to them.
Mass media/communication schools have also taken cognisance of the rapid growth of online journalism. Moorhead State University and Ellon College, E.C, for example, devised three courses to introduce Internet to the students, one each for Reporting, Copy Editing and International communication. (Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, Summer 1996, 51/2 p 25-35)

1.4 Indian Newspapers on Internet:

In the absence of a reliable study about the nascent online journalism in India, it is difficult to make assertive statements the way Steven S Ross and Don Middleberg could document the scenario in the USA. There has been no research on Indian newspapers on Internet, except for demographic profiles studied by a few newspapers such as *The Times of India* and *The Economic Times* and the online-only site The Rediff On The Net. There was, therefore, the need to make a beginning to study various aspects of online journalism in India.

**Brief History:** The Business India group with its market research units MARG and ORG were the first to capitalise on the changing trends in the medium of receiving and disseminating news and information. In October 1994, the group launched India’s first electronic newspaper, India Newsnet, as a precursor to their planned 24-hour TV news channel. India Newsnet was launched via Business India’s Online Service aXcess that provided Business India, Computer Mart (yellow pages) and airline timetables (domestic airlines) free of charge to its e-mail subscribers.

**No Substitute To Newspaper:** Darryl D’Monte, the former resident editor of *The Times of India*, was chief of the editorial unit of BiTV and Newsnet, his office being located in Parel in central Mumbai.

D’Monte had said then that “it (electronic newspaper) can in no way substitute for the newspaper. This medium of news is really for decision-makers whose decisions and moves are affected by changes in political or financial fields. News that afternoon papers have missed will also be available as we will be updating our information by the hour.”

D’Monte had planned that news carried by newspapers like *The Pioneer* and *The Telegraph*, which are not printed in Mumbai, would be
available to the reader first thing in the morning as correspondents in various cities would be on the job updating information and news slants. ‘It is for the busy businessman who does not have the time to read the papers. It will be of interest to people who want the day’s news at a glance.’ (A.J. Jayant, The Sunday Observer, 6/11/94). The ambitious plan, however, did not sustain for long.

Earlier Networks: It needs to be noted that though media has been hailing the arrival of Internet in India since mid-1990’s, it has actually been around since Education & Research Network (ERNET) began during the seventh plan between 1985-90.

There were Indian networks, both closed user-groups and open. They include the ERNET from the Department of Electronics, the National Informatics Centre Network (NICNET), Remote Area Business Message Network (RABMN), BankNet (of the RBI), Dataline, Research Technologies Network (DART) and Jurix. Most are government-run but private networks too are increasingly entering the public information networks business, DART being one of the earliest. (S. Chandrashekhar, The Economic Times, 04/02/1996)

The Net editions of print newspapers were not even thought of owing to the lack of Internet facility in the country till mid 1995 when VSNL started the Gateway Internet Access Service (GAIS). Few enterprising organisations such as Ravi Data Base and Redifussion On The Net, in anticipation of the potential business started hosting Web sites to provide India-related information. They had arrangements with some select Indian newspapers for India-related news items which were posted as a feature at their sites maintained on servers abroad.

As the Net was promising a bright future for content-related sites, the Indian newspapers started looking at proposals to have their own sites on the Net as a business opportunity. Since the server and communication facilities were much better abroad, large Indian newspaper groups started in a small way and set up their own Web sites instead of providing the contents to third party sites such as India World and Rediff On The Net.

The First To Go Online: The Hindu has been the first newspaper from India to go on Internet way back in 1995. Soon the Net had The Times of
India, The Indian Express, and The Deccan Herald on the Net by early 1996. While the Net has been hosting mostly contents in English, attempts were made by publications in Indian languages to host contents in their respective languages. Nai Dunia was the first Hindi newspaper to go on the Net. Initially some language publications (popular weeklies such as Kumudam and Vikatan) hosted their contents as images rather than in the text form since the browsers were not supporting the language fonts. Now many of the language publications make the fonts available as downloads at their sites to view the pages in the respective languages.

At present (1998) it is estimated that about 100 Indian publications, mostly newspapers and magazines, are on the Net. The search at Yahoo! on ‘news’ and ‘India’ provides reference to a select few (about 40 newspapers and about 20 magazines as per the search results) since many of the news sites do not properly register their sites with search engines/Web directories.

The site, Samachar, (promoted by India World) picks up the headlines from the various Indian newspaper sites and presents these headlines under different headings such as National, Business, Sports, World News, etc. Further it allows the reader to personalise his/her own news contents from the select sources. (H.R. Mohan, Chief Systems Manager, The Hindu, conference paper, November 1998)

Many newspapers in India have by mid-1999 spruced up their sites on the Net. The Times of India, The Indian Express and The Hindustan Times are part of larger portals that attempt to provide entry points for anyone who wants news and information about any thing in India.

Non-English dailies: English newspapers in India have an advantage over their counterparts in non-English dailies. These non-English dailies (Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and so on) had to get fonts developed for their contents to be put on the Net. In some cases, the fonts presented difficulty in downloading at the readers’ end. The readers complained that it required a good deal of time to see the text of these online publications on their screens.

As stated earlier, the impact of Information Technology is being felt in India only recently and that too in metropolitan centres and cities like Pune, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Reporters and sub-editors in most English
newspapers have been using computers for word processing and page layout. Yet, few journalists in newspapers use e-mail for collection of data for their news and features. There are not many journalists who access Internet for background material or to get ideas for coverage.

**Personal Experience:** This researcher, who is the Pune-based Special Correspondent of Delhi’s *The Observer of Business & Politics*, is in a position to make such observations on the basis of his interaction with journalists in several cities in India. He has been a journalist himself for the last 29 years and has had interaction with fellow journalists elsewhere because of his involvement in associations of journalists. As the one involved in teaching at the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Pune, for the last 19 years, the researcher is in a position to get first hand information about changes in technology and its effect on journalism from scores of alumni of this department. These alumni are working in various capacities in news agencies, and English and non-English dailies in important places in the country.

In the absence of empirical data from qualitative or quantitative studies, feedback from these alumni and fellow journalists is the only source of information about the trends in print and Internet journalism.

Some observations about impact of Internet on journalism in India vis-à-vis its counterpart in the West, notably in the USA, can be made on the basis of this feedback and interaction, as follows:

**Limited Exposure to Internet:** Increasing number of journalists in India have been using computers in their offices, but there exposure to Internet is limited to only a few of them, that too working in major newspapers in metropolitan cities. Use of e-mail for newsgathering is limited to a handful among them. Sources of news, mostly from leading corporate offices, rarely use e-mail to contact the journalists. ‘Letters to Editor’ through e-mail is not common because all readers and newspapers do not have access to Internet. Fan mail or hate mail is a distant possibility.

Indian newspapers on the Net do not have to compete with PTI, UNI, television news channels, Doordarshan, Star or Zee News. The pressure of demands from readers for the latest news or Breaking the News is not being felt as yet.
**No Threats:** The editors and publishers of the print dailies are not yet seen moaning about loss of advertisement revenue because of competition from electronic publications and Web sites. Journalists’ associations have not yet talked about loss of their independence due to pressures from advertisers and ad agencies, as voiced by their counterparts in the USA. The publishers of print dailies have not complained about loss of revenue from classified ads. They do not seem to be worried about the possible threat from the sites such as sidewalk.com or slate set up by Microsoft’s Bill Gates.

The only cognisance, taken by the Indian Newspaper Society (INS), was by its former President P K Roy in the following manner:

‘The world over growth of electronic media has been phenomenal and advertisements are now shared between print media and TV. The press is no longer the only medium. And now Internet, the always present, always available source of information is vying with newspapers, they can not be ignored. In the US and elsewhere, Internet is being used by newspapers augmenting their area of coverage.’ (Keynote address during diamond jubilee celebrations of the INS, April 1999)

**Copyrights Issue:** Similarly, issues such as Copyrights and additional payment for using print articles in Web editions have not been raised in India. However, The National Law School of India has proposed amendments to the Indian Copyright Act to take care of infringement of copyright, in the changed scenario brought about among others by Internet and electronic media. The school has noted that, for instance, taking temporary printouts from the Internet even for personal use, or downloading of a file from a Web site, might be an infringement if not carrying out with the original performers their dues. (*The Times of India*, August 22, 1998).

Journalism schools are yet to take cognisance of the need to provide training in online journalism. The Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Pune, has made a beginning by including a unit on Introduction to Internet journalism, in its Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes. (Sadhu Arun, personal interview with the researcher, December 1998).

**Conclusion:** This is, therefore, the right time to make a beginning to study the status of Indian online journalism. It should help all those involved in Indian
print and electronic publications to find out how effective the Indian Newspapers on Internet in serving the needs of their readers during the initial phase of online journalism.

The present study on India is a modest attempt to find out answers to this question.