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***The term news – its concept and definition in Anglo-Saxon tradition.  
A review and classification attempt***

**Introduction**

The term *news* comes from the word *new*, written in old English either as *newes* or *niwes*. In modern day, it is considered an acronym for the four sides of the world – *north*, *east*, *west* and *south*. At the same time, it means a specific type of information which, in contrast to *tydings*, was collected and processed as a good for mercenary aims<sup>1</sup>. In the XVII century, according to Anthony Smith, information in newspapers went through four phases of development – beginning with simple reports (*coranto*), then a summary of events from an entire week (*diurnall*), followed by type of information bulletins where journalists could express their opinions (*mercury*), and finally onto the *intelligencer* form in which the reader was addressed in a more formal manner<sup>2</sup>. It was the popularization of inexpensive, so called *penny press* in America in the 1830s, the invention of the telegraph and the establishment of dispatch agencies which resulted in the *news* becoming widely available, disputed and influential<sup>3</sup>. Undeniably, advantageous became the form of the so called inverted pyramid, shortening the length of information from bottom up. With the progress of journalism, the term *news* evolved to its present form, as we know it from modern publications. The author's goal, however, is not to present the history of *news* but to present its various definitions, available in modern journalism studies, of interest to American and British media studies researchers. It was in these two countries where standards of defining, classifying, describing and editing *news* were created.

According to Michael Schudson, a researcher of journalism history in the United States, the idea of *news* was created during Andrew Jackson's presidency (1830s), tied to the

<sup>1</sup> See B. Zelizer, *Taking journalism seriously*, Thousand Oaks 2004, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Smith, *The Newspaper. An international history*, London 1979, p. 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Allan, *Kultura newsów*, Kraków 2006; L. Downie Jr. R.G. Kaiser, *The News about The News. American Journalism in Peril*, New York 2003; J. Hohenberg, *Free Press, Free People: The Best Cause*, New York 1971; M. Schudson, *Discovering the News. A Social History of American Newspapers*, New York 1978; M. Stephens, *A History of News: From the Drum to the Satellite*, New York 1988.

idea democratization of policy, expansion of market economy and growing power of urban middle class. The developing then *penny press* treated *news* as current, accurate and complete information, focused on daily matters and personalized (*human interest story*). After the invention of the telegraph and the establishment of the first press agency, Associated Press (1848), news was understood as objective and based on fact information (*factual news*)<sup>4</sup>.

### Early definitions of *news*

The first, frequently cited and, at the same time, one of the most popular *news* definitions from late XIX century is the saying that, “*news* is when a man bites a dog”. This saying is attributed to at least two journalists. In the US, the authors are considered to be Charles Dana (“New York Times” journalist in the 1860s) or Charles Stanton, assistant to Secretary of State during Abraham Lincoln’s presidency and co-owner and publisher of “New York Sun”<sup>5</sup> or John B. Bogart (journalist for “New York Sun”)<sup>6</sup>. Regardless who was the first to come up with this early definition, it definitely outlines the characteristic traits of *news*. Firstly, it is sensational, secondly – it presents an event which is extraordinary, unusual and atypical. Thirdly – it reveals the astonishing character of human nature. Lord Northcliffe’s motto, also from late XIX century, states that “news is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress. All the rest is advertising”<sup>7</sup>.

For years, there was no official *news* definition and attempts to define were occasional and tied to journalist practices and their needs<sup>8</sup>. The *news* became a subject of scientific analysis in the XX century. The first one to analyse the issue of journalist information as the subject of academic study was Walter Lippmann (1922)<sup>9</sup>. He was one of the first who saw the *news* as a product of standardized procedures and journalist routine. Lippmann, however, did not create a typical definition of *news*. As a sociologist, he focused on the function of *news*,

<sup>4</sup> See M. Schudson, *Discovering...*, p. 4, 22–27.

<sup>5</sup> A. Boyd, *Dziennikarstwo radiowo-telewizyjne. Techniki tworzenia programów informacyjnych*, Kraków 2006, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> M.L. de Fleur, E.E. Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Boston–New York 2002, p. 80; D.T.Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts. How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism*, New York 1998, p. 70; B. Roshco, *Newsmaking*, Chicago–London 1975, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Cited from M. Mayer, *Making News*, New York 1987, p. 9. Lord Northcliffe but really Alfred Harmsworth, was the owner of two British newspapers, “Daily Mail” (1896) and “The Daily Mirror” (1903) (from: J. Harrison, *News*, London–New York 2006, p. 56–57).

<sup>8</sup> Arthur MacEwen, publisher of “San Francisco Examiner” said, “News is anything that makes a reader say »Gee Whiz«” (from T. Harcup, *Journalism. Principles and Practice*, London 2006, p. 37). Evelyn Waugh (ibidem, p. 39) states that, “news is what a chap who does not care much anything wants to read. And it is only news until he’s read it. After that it’s dead”.

<sup>9</sup> W. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, New York 1922.

on analyzing what it is and what is its relation to the truth rather than on presenting concrete situations or conditions for the creation of events which would then be transformed into *news*. He stated “[...] news and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished. The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act.[...] The news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself. The news does not tell you how the seed is germinating in the ground, but it may tell you when the first sprout breaks through the surface”<sup>10</sup>.

Lippmann was the first to use the term *news value* but he did not precisely state whether it meant the value of the event or information about it. He also did not delineate the criteria which decide whether news is more or less important.

In 1940, Robert E. Park<sup>11</sup>, one of research pioneers on information broadcasts, was the first to write about the term *news*. He considered it as a form of knowledge but not scientific knowledge. He stated that information broadcasts are actual, non systematic, ephemeral (short term), extraordinary and predictable but, at the same time, surprising. They are substitutes of knowledge and are characterized by possessing information value which is always relative and depends on the subjective assessment of potential audience. *News* is something new but it ages quickly<sup>12</sup>.

As mentioned, for Park, *news* is a form of knowledge which is not systematic and the facts it includes are not historical. Reporters focus on isolated events, do not look for relations between them and do not analyse cause and effect results. *News* focuses on the present, not on the past or the future, once it is broadcasted – it becomes history. Our first reaction to *news* is to tell somebody else about it, this way communication and discussion begin. *News* is something unexpected and it talks about something extraordinary and unanticipated. Park states that *news* events lead to sudden and decisive changes. However, if an event is to become *news*, it must be publicized.

### **Post World War II *news* definitions**

After 1945, in the United States and in England created were various definitions of *news*, among which presented here will be the most original and imperative to the history of media. Aside from ideas put forward by scientists and journalists, various professional ethics

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 226, 215.

<sup>11</sup> R. Park, *News as a Form of Knowledge: A Chapter In the Sociology of Knowledge*, “American Journal of Sociology” 1940, vol. 45, 4, p. 669–686.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 676 and on.

organizations and committees presiding over quality and legality of media products attempted to define this term. According to the Royal Commission on the Press (1949), in order for an event to be *news*, it needed to meet the following conditions – it must be new and interesting to the public, that is be about people and their various strange or funny experiences, tragedies, accidents, crime or sport events<sup>13</sup>.

An interesting point was introduced by Wilbur Schramm (1949), who pointed out that news exists in the minds of the people, “news is not the event but is the report of the event”<sup>14</sup>.

A popular and commonly cited definition of *news* was put forward by Walter Gieber in 1964. According to him, *news* is what appears in the press and more precisely, “*news* is what newspapermen make it”<sup>15</sup>. Whether an event is to become *news* or not is decided by what *newspapermen* do with it. Gieber states, “[...] news does not have an independent existence; news is a product of men who are members of a news-gathering (or a news-originating) bureaucracy”<sup>16</sup>.

The definition proposed by Gieber treats *news* as a product of media organizations. However, it does not explain how and why decisions are made regarding publicizing certain events while omitting others.

An answer to this question was offered, indirectly by Nancy Hicks Maynard, the vice-president of “The Oakland Tribune”. According to her, in the mid 1960s *news* was defined as something which is “new, weird, vivid and unexpected”. This definition is in reference to the long tradition of American journalism just as is one by Fred Morris from NBC who stated that *news* is “what is current, important and influences our life”<sup>17</sup>. Mark Henderson, a correspondent for the “Times”, defines this term similarly, “News by definition involves unexpected and dramatic, not the run-of-the-mill”<sup>18</sup>.

All *news* definitions include characteristics an event must possess in order for it to become *news*. They refer to news values pointed out earlier by Robert Park and, on the other hand, they correspond to definitions offered by Norwegian researchers, Johan Galtung and

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<sup>13</sup> Cited from C. Frost, *Reporting for Journalists*, London 2002, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> W. Schramm, *The Nature of News*, “Journalism Quarterly” 1949, nr 26, p. 259. On the difference between *news* and event see Frank Luter Mott (1962), “An event itself is not *news*” and Jay Newman (1989) “*News* is always a report” – cited from W. G. Bovee, *Discovering Journalism*, Westport, CT–London 1999, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> W. Gieber, *News is What Newspapermen Make It*, [in:] *People, Society and Mass Communication*, ed. by L.A. Dexter, D.M. White, New York 1964).

<sup>16</sup> W. Gieber, *News is What Newspapermen Make It*, [in:] *News. A Reader*, ed. H. Tumber, Oxford 1999, p. 223.

<sup>17</sup> Cited from A. Boyd, *Dziennikarstwo...*, p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Cited from T. Harcup, *Ethical Journalists*, London 2005, p. 54.

Maria Holmboe Ruge, who were the first to define and use in their research factors delineating event *newsworthiness*<sup>19</sup>.

A surprising definition of *news* was offered in 1973 by Leon Sigal. According to him, “*news* is what is in the news”<sup>20</sup>. *Definiendum* (term explained) is the same as *definiens* (what explains it), something is explained by using the same term (*idem per idem*). Jason Salzman calls this definition the best non-definition of *news* he’s ever come across<sup>21</sup>. He also adds that this point of view allows us to understand *news* through its consumption. It seems that Salzman’s analysis of *news* via the inductive method can lead to the creation of a synthetic definition based on common characteristics of information found in media. This way of thinking was adapted by other researchers in search of event *news value*.

According to Bernard Roshco (1975), *news* existed long before the establishment of media institutions which is why *news* definitions cannot be tied to mass media means. Such attempts generally end in lists of *newsmaking* events. Roshco points out that *news* is necessary in order to control the public and to maintain social cohesion. It is connected to time, is ephemeral and it differs from knowledge which is long term<sup>22</sup>. Time is a fundamental aspect of all *news* and it is the deciding factor in publicizing *news*. Time, according to Roshco, can be viewed on three levels which constitute its “currency”. In order to meet this criteria it must be 1) recently discovered, 2) publicized instantly, 3) relevant to present concerns<sup>23</sup>. *News* is mostly based on announcement, “we’ve just learned” rather than “it just happened”<sup>24</sup>. Recency correlates with immediacy which connects events with media that report it. Current value, based on audience interest, makes information on events *news*. In this paradigm, visible is the interaction between various sources of information, medium and the public<sup>25</sup>, and *news* is the outcome of the interactions.

Gaye Tuchman (1978)<sup>26</sup> is of the opinion that the concept of *news* developed together with American social structure. Popular press bases its existence on new capitalism and changing definitions of democracy. Tuchman believes that a so called constructive approach

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<sup>19</sup> See J. Galtung, M.H. Ruge, *The Structure of Foreign News*, “Journal of Peace Research” 1965, vol. 2, 1, p. 64–91.

<sup>20</sup> L.V.Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking*, Lexington, Mass. 1973, and states that what *news* contains is a result of journalist and source cooperation. In another work, Sigal defines news as a subject report, “*news* is not what happened but what somebody says happened or will happen” – L.K. Sigal, *Sources Make the News*, [in:] *Reading the News*, ed. R.K. Manoff, M. Schudson, New York 1986, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> J. Salzman, *Making News. A Guide for Activities and Nonprofits*, Boulder, Colo. 2003, p. 53.

<sup>22</sup> B. Roshco, *Newsmaking*, [in:] *News. A Reader*, p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34. Roshco uses the terms: *recency*, *immediacy*, *currency*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>26</sup> G. Tuchman, *Making News: a study in the construction of reality*, New York 1978.

to *news* is more creative. He focuses on the activity of media organizations employees; they decide which event possesses news value. This means that *news* do not mirror reality. *News* is constructed as a social phenomenon, in the process of describing the event; the *news* defines and shapes the event. For example, reports on deviances define what a deviance is and what the norm is – “news is perpetually defining and redefining, constituting and reconstituting social phenomena [...]. It not only defines and redefines, constitutes and reconstitutes social meanings; it also defines and redefines, constitutes and reconstitutes ways of doing things – the existing processes in existing institutions”<sup>27</sup>.

Let’s recap, *news*, according to Tuchman, is of public character. Simultaneously, it is a record and a product of social reality. Reports help to shape public definition of events through selective attribution of specific details and this way they can transform, for example, amorphous riots into an event, at the same time defining what riots are.

Tuchman also uses the *news* category as a “frame”. Similarly to Ervin Goffman, he defines the frame as rules of organization which control public events and our subjective involvement. Frames organize fragments of daily life (*strips*) and transform unrecognizable events into recognizable ones.

According to Tuchman, *news* definitions have historic character. At any moment, defining what is *news* worthy is based on modern understanding of meaning of events as rules of human behaviour, institutional conduct and motives of action. The author concludes, “Telling stories of social life, news is a social resource. A source of knowledge, a source of power, news is a window on the world”<sup>28</sup>.

It was Herbert Gans (1979) who pointed out the dynamic character of creation of journalist information. According, to him, *news* is information which is transmitted from the source to recipients by journalists who are both – employees of bureaucratic, commercial organizations and also members of a professional group. They process, summarize and change what was made available to them into information appropriate to their recipients<sup>29</sup>. Gans focuses on the processing and creation of *news*, it is not what was initially presented but an end result of journalist processing.

According to W. Lance Bennett, *news* is a public construction shaped by popular taste (that is what people believe and want to hear), news agencies, communication strategies of political actors (public opinion surveys, marketing, image techniques (*news management*

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<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 184, 196.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> H.J. Gans, *Deciding What’s News: A study of CBS evening news, NBC nightly news, „Newsweek” and „Time”*, 1st ed. 1979, [in:] *News: A Reader*, p. 237.

“software”), communication technologies (“hardware” such as telegraph, TV, etc)<sup>30</sup>. News can be defined as “*what politicians promote, news organizations produce, technologies transmit, and people consume at any moment in history*”<sup>31</sup>. News is propelled by forces that commercialize it, professionalize political communication and minimize the influence of public opinion.

Jack Fuller (1988) stated, “News is a report of what a news organization has recently learned about matters of some significance or interest to the specific community that news organization serves”<sup>32</sup>. It may seem that Fuller’s definition greatly narrows the term, limiting it to key events for a select group of recipients. On the other hand, if you apply it to different types of media (in terms of form, size and scope), it turns out that it is universal in character as it talks about four imperative to *news* elements – recency of report, importance of events discussed, audience interest and agency responsibility toward its addressees. The emphasis is on media obligation to its recipients, according to the American motto, “they have a right to know”.

Wesley G. Pippert (1989) also followed this line of thought. According to him, it is the *news* addressee who decides what *news* is, it is “anything that affects or interest »the Kansas City milkman« or tha Washington decision – maker” (as old UP hands used to say)<sup>33</sup>.

Joshua Halberstam (1922) presents a short definition of *news* as a report on current events<sup>34</sup>. *News* is about events not states, an event becomes *news* only when it becomes reported. According to Halberstan, *news* is a central element of human communication, an important part of our lives, “The news is the focus of much of our anger, hopes, curiosity and ruminations”<sup>35</sup>.

Andrew Boyd (1994), after presenting definitions by Fred Morris, Charles Dana, and Arthur MacEwan, states that, “news is about what is happening now – or the first inkling of something that happened but was hushed up”<sup>36</sup>. Although Boyd focuses on the importance of currency and speed of information broadcasts, he also points out such factors as proximity, relevance and audience interest.

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<sup>30</sup> W.L. Bennett, *News. The Politics of Illusion*, New York 1983.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> J. Fuller, *News Values. Ideas for Information Age*, Chicago 1996, p. 6. The author also cites a common definition that news is whatever media organization report about.

<sup>33</sup> W.G. Pippert, *An Ethics of News. A Reporter’s search for Truth*, Washington D.C. 1989, p. 3–4.

<sup>34</sup> J. Halberstam, *A Prolegomenon for a Theory of News*, [in:] *Philosophical Issues in Journalism*, ed. E.D. Cohen, Oxford 1992, p. 11–21.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> A. Boyd, *Broadcast Journalism: techniques of radio and TV news*, Oxford 1994, p.20

It is this last aspect that Peter E. Mayeux (1986) concentrates on. For him, “news is what people need and want to know”<sup>37</sup>. This take, in accordance with Pippert’s definitions, makes *news* entirely reliant on recipients as it is their preferences which decide what happens to *news*. However, how do broadcasters know what is of interest to recipients – this the author does not explain.

Mathew Kieran (1997) is critical of sociological interpretations of *news*. According to him, they define *news* as what is reported by the media as *news*<sup>38</sup>. Kieran does not agree since television or press sometimes omit key events and report on those which were not *news* to begin with. On the other hand, an event which is not in the media can be *news*<sup>39</sup>. He proposes the following *news* criteria, “This is a part of the very concept »news« that what is reported should be new and significant insofar as such events may or do impinge on how we choose to lead our lives”<sup>40</sup>.

He does not specify, however, who decides the meaning of an event. According to Jeremy Iggers (1998), *news* is the end product of a reporter’s daily life experiences. It is he who decides which elements are *newsworthy*. Reporter’s presence transforms an event from private to public, media, meanwhile, transform “obscure occurrences” into *news* ascribing it symbolic meaning<sup>41</sup>. Iggers states that it is characteristic of *news* to transform an event and to attribute it the status of public fact.

In order to answer the question “what is *news*?” Thomas E. Patterson (1998) uses a definition which describes how *news* is created; “News is a construct: it is a version of reality shaped in significant part by journalistic norms and conventions. Through the frames they employ and the gatekeeping role they play, journalists help to shape public opinion and debate”<sup>42</sup>.

Patterson’s definition goes along with the constructive approach, earlier adopted by G. Tuchman, W. L. Bennett, M. Schudson as well as by J. Iggers to some extent. Graeme Burton (2000) expresses similar opinions in his work, *Talking television*, in which he defines *news* as, “an ideological construction of reality”<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> P. E. Mayeux, *Broadcast news. Writing & reporting*, Madison 1996, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> M. Kieran, *Media Ethics. A Philosophical Approach*, Westport, CT 1997. Gieber, Tuchman and Schudson are of the same opinion.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23–24. According to Kieran, media at times broadcast strange or made news while omitting other key and imperative events.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> J. Iggers, *Good news, bad news. Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest*, Boulder, Colo. 1998, p. 111–113.

<sup>42</sup> T.E. Patterson, *Political Roles of the Journalists*, [in:] *The Politics of News: the News of Politics*, ed. D. Graber, D. McQuail, P. Norris, Washington D.C. 1998, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> G. Burton, *Talking television. The introduction to the study of television*, London 2000, p. 125.

For Chris Frost, “news is information we are unaware of until we read it or saw it in the media”<sup>44</sup>. To paraphrase, we could say that in order for *news* to exist two conditions must be met – the information must appear in media and it must become present in our consciousness. The author does not define the term *news* itself but provides the conditions that must present for it to exist; information out of media will not be *news*, its presence in media opens up our consciousness to meet information which, at that moment, becomes *news*.

According to Melvin de Fleur and Everette Dennis, “*news is current or fresh knowledge about an event that is gathered, processed and disseminated via medium to a significant number of interested people*”<sup>45</sup>. This definition includes three elements. Firstly, the time aspect – the event in the news must be current, secondly – it must be processed by medium, thirdly – it must be targeted at interested recipients. What differentiates de Fleur and Dennis’s definition from others is its focus on the co-relation of three aspects making up *news* – the event, the medium and the recipient. This triad is similar to the interactions which were pointed out by Roshco (source – medium – recipient).

Michael Schudson in his work, *The Sociology of News*, refers to Tuchman’s constructive *news* model. He cites her opinion that *news* is, “a consumer product that must be made fresh daily”<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, *news* must be visible publicly; it is a product of journalist activity which gives events public status. Presently, *news* has become, “a dominant force in the public construction of common experience and a popular sense of what is real and important”<sup>47</sup>. It also has a power of creating values, it establishes a hierarchy of moral significance.

Schudson’s opinions place him in sociological constructivism; *news* is not “a mirror of reality” but it is a representation of the world, with all representations of selective character. Journalists use conventions, routine techniques, customs and guidelines regarding how, why and where to gather information. Modern *news* is formatted along the lines of conflict, discord and fight; it exposes deviations rather than norms, disorder rather than order, dissonance rather than harmony. Frames in media are rules of selection, focus and presentation which create silent theories about what exists, what is happening and what is important<sup>48</sup>. All in all, *news* as a form of culture embodies what is imperative, what gives sense to our lives and what we should treat seriously.

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<sup>44</sup> Ch. Frost, *Reporting...*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> M.L. de Fleur, E.E. Dennis, *Understanding...*, p. 73–74.

<sup>46</sup> M. Schudson, *The Sociology of News*, New York 2003, p. 4; G. Tuchman, *Making News...*, p. 179.

<sup>47</sup> M. Schudson, *The Sociology...*, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34–35, 47.

Schudson notices two key tendencies in the development of *news*. Firstly, reports on politics result in the promotion of cynicism among the audience. Secondly, media organizations' products, the so called *soft news* or *infotainment* are a mix of entertainment values and sometimes become tabloid, losing their professional value in exchange for free market value<sup>49</sup>.

The author notes that lately there has been an increase of negative *news* regarding private life and reports based on scandals.

In the last chapter, Schudson focuses on the significance of *news* in public life – it creates community, it “becomes a part of the daily rethinking and reconstructing of the common social world”<sup>50</sup>.

Sarah Niblock analyses academic definitions which include the terms *news values* and notes they are not well known among journalists who in their daily work use routine and internalize ideals and aspirations of media organization of which they are part<sup>51</sup>. She explains the etymology of the word “news” from Latin “nova” which means “new things”. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines *news* as topical information worth noting. She comments, “to put at its simplest, *news* is a record of latest events, incidents and developments that in some way touch on the lives of newspaper’s and magazine’s readers”<sup>52</sup>.

Chosen is information which will be of most interest to target the audience. For example, crime statistics, new tax rates, witness accounts on humanitarian crises in other countries or information about how people deal with adversity and become successful. *News* packages new and significant facts into set order and language which make it interesting and valuable in terms of information<sup>53</sup>.

Jackie Harrison, in her extensive work, *News*, recapitulates previous deliberations on the theory and definition of *news*<sup>54</sup>. Several generations of writers and theoreticians have questioned, writes Harrison, *what makes news?* and *what is news?* According to the author, we all need information about current events. Some influence us directly, others do not but they can still be interesting since they are significant as a result of their value (ie. discovery of water on Mars). She analyses the nature of *news* and states that key is its relevance to truth and current events. Harrison notes that whole truth is not possible to achieve, nevertheless,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, p. 90–91.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, p. 212.

<sup>51</sup> S. Niblock, *Practice and Theory: What Is News?*, [in:] *Print Journalism. A critical introduction*, ed. R. Keeble, New York 2005, p. 73–82.

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem, p. 75.

<sup>53</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>54</sup> J. Harrison, *News*, London–New York 2006.

search for the truth is an imperative characteristic of *news*. The author researches news' constitutional features and environment in which it is produced and consumed<sup>55</sup>.

An in-depth characterization of the term focuses on several levels of analysis, its philosophical orientation, predisposition and interests, key values, public role and influence of these features on practice. The author wishes to answer the question what *news* is and what it should be. She also wants to delineate factors which shape the character of information transmitted to the public.

Harrison analyses ethical and professional values. She states that sincerity and accuracy are directly related to truthfulness. The interest in current events is tied to being "here" (time/space) and "now" (present time)<sup>56</sup>. These values are dependent on changeable factors such as technological development, internationalization of *news*, growing commercialization, competition between media, audience fragmentation, media de-regulation, etc. These phenomena influence how *news* is selected, packaged and consumed. The development of technology (telegraph, telephone) has changed the space and time relations and separated time from place (where the event happens), meaning that individuals can simultaneously experience the same event in many different places. Television broadcasting allows for the transmission of image and sound over large distances and overcomes space and time limitations<sup>57</sup>.

Harrison states that *news* is what is considered to be newsworthy by journalists who gain this ability to "sense" the *news*, in accordance with the needs of media organizations where they work<sup>58</sup>. The author also cites Kevin Williams'<sup>59</sup> opinion who differentiated three levels of discussion about *news* – *common sense*, *practitioner* and *academic*<sup>60</sup> this way pointing to the three types of discourse related to the term *news*.

### **Globalization, tabloidisation and Internetization of *news***

The cited above definitions of *news* were in accordance with the tradition of objective journalism dating back to mid XIX century and reflecting the old *news* paradigm, based on

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<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 1 and on.

<sup>56</sup> On truth and truthfulness see B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, Princeton, NJ 2002, for more on space and time limitations see J.B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: the social theory of the media*, Cambridge 1995. J. Harrison bases and cites the above.

<sup>57</sup> J. Harrison, *News*, p.10.

<sup>58</sup> Ibidem, p.13. The author also points out other news aspects, "News is a complex social, economic, and cultural institution" (p.14), "it must be unusual and out of the ordinary [...] and make people talk" (p. 21).

<sup>59</sup> K. Williams, *Understanding Media Theory*, London 2003, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> J. Harrison, *News*, p. 17.

*hard news*, that is on important and uneasy events. Meanwhile, since the late XX century in American and European journalism more prevalent became trends of *news* tabloidisation, globalization and internetization. As a result of these processes, a new *news* paradigm was created.

The tabloid is an invention dating back to late XIX century. It means a particular type of press, easy to read, addressed to an undemanding audience and characterized by specific content and form broadcast. Throughout the last several decades, tabloidisation has gained popularity. Tabloid content analysis (press as well as radio and TV programmes) indicates text trivialization, creation of fact, simplification and domination of scandals and swindles with human interest stories focused on criminal affairs. Tabloids apply the rule, *it bleeds, it leads*, and devote a lot of space to gossip, unclear situations and schematic interpretations of reality. In other words, the tabloid world is portrayed via the prism of emotions, trivia, scandals and crime. It transmits incomplete and distorted information about the world. In tabloids, news is *infotainment*, simplified information, half-true, manipulated newspaper gossip served in order to entertain, make profit and *dumbing down*<sup>61</sup>.

The process of tabloidisation is proliferating, also due to the Internet which further globalizes media. A proper term to use here would be internetization of *news*. On the one hand, the Internet is considered a blessing for human communication (easy access to information, fast speed of transmission, democratization and freedom in exchange of thought). On the other, there are phenomena such as web anonymity which leads to impunity in defaming others, populism, domination of mediocrity, amateur journalism and less possibility to verify facts<sup>62</sup>. In consequence, despite quick, interactive information circulation, the development of *civic journalism* and resulting non-stop *rolling news*, the profit loss ratio is dubious. Regardless, the onset of the Internet has made *news* more readily available to recipients. For media and journalists, the challenge is to provide people with more and more *news* in less and less time.

Tied to the processes of *news* tabloidisation and internetization is the phenomenon of globalization. It is based on, among other things, the presence of the same formats and forms of *news* in media from various cultures as well as general availability of information anywhere around the world. Based on this, created is global *agenda setting* via which

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. N.R. Harris, *Tabloidization in the Modern American Press: A Textual Analysis and Assessment of Newspaper and Tabloid Coverage of the Runaway Bride Case* – [http://etd.gsu.edu/theses/available/etd-11242005-000721/unrestricted/harris\\_nichola\\_r\\_200512\\_ma.pdf](http://etd.gsu.edu/theses/available/etd-11242005-000721/unrestricted/harris_nichola_r_200512_ma.pdf) [accessed: 19.05.2009].

<sup>62</sup> See A. Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How today's Internet is killing our culture*, New York 2007.

commented is media and outside media reality, events are transformed and produced in the form of *news* based on universal information values<sup>63</sup>.

The presented above tendencies regarding *news* have been visible in media and present in the publications analysed above over the last several years.

In the late 1990s, the term *newszak*<sup>64</sup> was coined as a reaction to changing *news* values as well as the creation of new formats, especially evident in TV journalism. The term refers to an older word, *muzak*, first used by Benjamin Franklin to describe music played in public places<sup>65</sup>.

*Newszak* is:

- doing away with *hard news* and preference for easy to intake reports and stories on lifestyles,
- focus on entertainment rather than information and the creation, as a result, of *infotainment*,
  - journalist preference for reports about people and public affairs,
  - reports focused on sensationalism rather than on objective assessment,
  - triumph of trivia over key events (including gossip on celebrities),
  - less focus on international affairs and more on domestic and crime related.

Downie and Kaiser pointed out the new trends in *news* evolution and stated that presently the definition of the term *news* is not as obvious as it may seem; today there is no distinction between *news* and entertainment, between trivia and serious *news*, between information and opinion, between *news* that says something and one which is solely designed to attract and amuse the audience, to sell advertising and to make money<sup>66</sup>.

The authors call this process *news corruption*. They devote a lot attention to the process of *news* tabloidisation which is taking place not only in the tabloids but in serious media as well<sup>67</sup>.

Finally, the last work analysed was *Making the News. Journalism and news cultures in Europe* by Paschal Preston<sup>68</sup>. The author states that presently being created is a new news

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<sup>63</sup> On globalization in electronic journalism see M. Gurevitch, *The Globalization of Electronic Journalism*, [in:] J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, *Mass Media and Society*, London 1991, p. 178–193; Cf. *Media in Global Context. A Reader*, ed. A. Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., London 1997; P. Seib, *The Global Journalist. News and Conscience in a World of Conflict*, Boston–Oxford 2002.

<sup>64</sup> *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*, (ed. B. Franklin et al, London 2005, p. 175 and on.

<sup>65</sup> B. Franklin, *Newszak and News Media*, London 1997, p. 4 and on.

<sup>66</sup> L. Downie Jr., R.G. Kaiser, *The News about The News. American Journalism in Peril*, New York 2003, p. 243.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 224–228, 263.

paradigm. Established have been new *news* forms such as *happy news* and *entertainment news* and taking place is a gradual transfer from *hard* to *soft news*, consumerist entertainment and a greater focus on sport. Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of international *news* and current events. Other *news* phenomena are: self-reference, inter-media “intertextuality” (interviews of journalists with other journalists, journalism on journalism), personalization of *news values* and popularization of celebrity culture within journalism itself. The reasons for these trends, according to Preston, are growing commercialization, competition between media, growing role of business values and financial criteria in the assessment of journalist work<sup>69</sup>.

### ***News definition typology attempt***

The definitions presented in the above article can be classified into several groups, depending on their dominant aspects. Some definitions focus on characteristic (*news values*) events which are then transformed into *news*. Others focus on answering the question who decides what *news* is. Another group concentrates on the function of *news*. Finally, the last one treats *news* as a processed by media product which fits within organizational, social, cultural and ideological frames of reality.

Based on the above, *news* definitions can be divided into the following categories<sup>70</sup>:

– Object – news values are the deciding factor which determines which events are newsworthy. It could include: recency, topicality (Halberstam, Morris), drama, oddity, surprise (Maynard, Henderson, Dana) or a collection of *news values* (Lippmann, Park, Niblock, Boyd)<sup>71</sup>.

– Subject – man decides what *news* is. It could be a journalist, publisher (Gieber, Iggers, Harrison), source/informer (Sigal, Gans) or recipient (Pippert, Mayeux).

In the subject-organization variant, media organizations, their systems, professional routines, etc. have a large influence on the decisions made regarding *news* (Iggers).

– Functional – describing various functions of *news* (Lippmann, Roshco, Fuller, Franklin, Downie and Kaiser, Niblock, Preston).

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<sup>68</sup> P. Preston, *Making the News. Journalism and news cultures in Europe*, New York 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem, p. 165–168.

<sup>70</sup> In some cases, more complex definitions can be classified into more than one category.

<sup>71</sup> The first who delineated a wide range of *news values* in the theory of *gatekeeping* were Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge (*The Structure of Foreign News*, “Journal of Peace Research” 1965, vol. 2, 1, p. 64–91).

– Constructive – *news* presents reality in frames and creates a product according to specific social, political, cultural and ideological rules (Tuchman, Patterson, Schudson, Bennett, Burton).

The author's presentation shows numerous ways of defining *news*, the most important information genre in Anglo-Saxon journalism. A large diversity of definitions mainly stems from various research perspectives. *News* is defined in a different way by journalists, by sociologists, by political scientists and by recipients themselves. Yet, despite the variations, we can see one predominant tendency, particularly prevalent within the last years – that is for *news* (which appears in media) to be presented in the categories of functions it plays with regard to recipients and their daily lives, the shaping of opinions, ideas and codes of conduct. *News* has become a key social, political and cultural phenomenon and an indispensable source of knowledge, a common experience thanks to which we can interpret, define and recreate the world around us.