

## **Introduction**

The Internet, and its graphical partition the World Wide Web, are technologies that have transformed the prospects of global communication, commerce and mass media. The arrival of such potential is the latest in a long line of technologies that have confronted printed newspapers. The cultural conditions of modernity, photography, radio and television have all competed in shaping the form of printed news. The inevitable propagation of the Web into every aspect of established media has forced news organisations to rethink their content and delivery method at a time when news consumption is on a decline (Greenslade 2003a, BBCi 2003). In particular daily newspapers, for ambiguous reasons, have adapted their content to a print alternative for the first time since the invention of the press. Inspired by a fear of the unknown, combined with the prospect of financial, political and audience incentives, most daily newspapers have developed an Online presence.

Online, newspapers are able to provide services physically impossible in a printed medium. Archives of back copies, sound and video clips, and the Webs most influencing factor, interactivity. There is also the element of immediacy that for the first time gives newspapers the ability to deliver current news as it happens, in the manner of a broadcast. On September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, CNN reported more than nine million attempts to log onto its site every hour. The BBC reported that the same phenomenon reduced its service to a standstill (Gibson 2001). In this context comparisons between the Web, printing and distribution on this scale are beyond relevance.

This study will address the issues that shape the form of Online newspapers, and will attempt to expand on the steady stream of criticism that has focused predominantly on the physical benefits of print. The research will begin with by summarising the underpinning concepts of technology, determinism and remediation. It will then use a framework developed for the categorisation of virtual organisations to bring some order and sense to the shape of Online newspapers in their current form. Finally, an analysis of the results combined with empirical evidence will allow the suggestion of some vital determinants that contribute to the shaping of Online newspapers.