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The Communication of Parliamentary Democracy in a Digital World



Contributors

Beccy Allen, Joel Blackwell, Luke Boga-Mitchell, Aisling Bolger, Ruth Fox, Virginia Gibbons, Matt Korris, Michael Raftery, Jess Smith, and Malcolm Smith.

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Hansard Society, 5th Floor, 9 King Street, London, EC2V 8EA

Tel: 020 7710 6070. Fax: 020 7710 6088.

Email: contact@hansardsociety.org.uk

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Executive Summary

- Parliament's approach to communications must evolve in response to the developing 'social', 'mobile', 'local', 'data' and 'video' communication trends.
- What matters most is not the volume of communications and the number of devices and networks on which it is disseminated, but the quality of the content, the targeting of dissemination and the way in which it is packaged so that others can access and re-use it.
- Parliament needs to establish how to give voice to its multiple identities, mainstream a digital mindset in all areas of its work, and augment and prioritise its resources. It must devolve decision-making and activity, support creativity, initiative, experiment and accept a greater degree of risk in the future.
- It needs to be quicker, anticipatory as well as topical, provide ready access to granular, micro-themed content packaged to people's issue-driven interests, and offer a greater variety of 'glance-able' content in the form of graphics, pictures and video designed to garner people's attention.
- Its unique selling point is its authoritative place at the apex of our democracy but at present it does not get a 'hearing' commensurate with its role. Parliament could and should be one of the most trusted sources for high-quality political and public policy information.
- It can insert itself into public debate in a legitimate and appropriate way, and add value to the political conversation, by creating a useful pathway through what would otherwise be an avalanche of information. It can derive a form of soft power from its communications, by helping people to 'distinguish valuable information from background clutter'.
- It can be more 'anticipatory' in its approach, providing advance warning and foresight of interesting issues coming up and seeding links to relevant parliamentary content. On the most topical issues of the day more effort should be made to curate material from across Parliament in order to create an essential 'go to' online resource hub for any person or organisation that is interested in it – e.g. phone hacking or House of Lords reform.
- The new media landscape will increasingly be a networked sea of communities or

hubs around which a specific audience interest can be built. Each of these entities will have connections to others through social networks: the more connective capacity they possess, the greater their 'amplifying power' and influence. Developing an understanding of the 'connectivity' of one audience hub compared to another and therefore the multiplier effect that seeding material to it can have, will be an area where Parliament must prioritise its activity.

- Parliament should appoint a Community Team (for each House or on a bi-cameral basis) to maintain two-way relationships with these potential community audiences.
- It is estimated that more than a fifth of the web is linked to Facebook in some way. Parliament should therefore experiment more with Facebook: use of polls; use of Facebook groups; Facebook advertising; and development of a Facebook app for news sharing.
- Only nine percent of the online general public get their news from Twitter compared to 19% from Facebook and Google. However, Twitter has an important 'amplifier' role so it is vital that Parliament continues to develop a strong and vibrant presence on the network. But this should be in addition to and complementary to a presence on Facebook, not an alternative to it.
- Staff must become 'multi-platform' communicators with the website as the core communications medium. In order to devolve responsibility for the production, packaging and dissemination of multi-media information and content, investment in staff training will be required. Short-term secondments or shadowing opportunities with some of the devolved legislatures, and larger corporate organisations and NGOs that have developed a strong digital presence should also be considered.
- Parliament should appoint an AV media officer(s), ideally on a bi-cameral basis, to produce rich in-house content to populate the website which can then be disseminated to a variety of audiences.
- It should invest in an enhanced broadcasting feed and a compressed digital feed to enable a wide range of online sites to take material. It should also consider the merits of an 'information subsidy' to cover the bandwidth costs to enable some third-party sites to take Parliament's material.
- Consideration should be given to introducing technology to enable Members and their staff to cut their own video clips, stream them on their own websites and distribute them to their stakeholders (a system similar to the US House of Representatives HouseLive video clipping tool).
- A broad range of contextualised video news releases should be developed which

can then be proactively disseminated and shared on other sites.

- The broadcasting rules in respect of regional select committee visits must be reviewed in order to facilitate improved coverage.
- Parliament's broadcasting archive should be digitised so that it can be re-purposed for use by Parliament and third parties.
- Video of up to two minutes' duration should be made available, copyright-free with attribution, to users to both download and embed. The new Open Parliament Licence needs to be extended in relation to photographs and video.
- Use of responsive design techniques should render Parliament's material suitable for a variety of platforms and screen sizes, but particularly the tablet. In the interim, it should look to produce full colour PDFs, hyperlink references, and offer some visualisation of data in its reports and papers where appropriate.
- The official record – in the Chambers, committees, Westminster Hall or Grand Committee – could be live-logged rather than reported after the event and the XML (eXtensible Markup Language) should be time-coded, tagged and key-worded to enable people to access relevant material more quickly.
- Future business information datasets – including for written questions and deposited papers – should be released in XML or CSV (Comma-Separated Values) format, with automated feeds and APIs (Application Programming Interface).
- Improving the 'findability' and 'search' functions of the parliamentary website must be a priority through search engine optimisation and tagging of material.
- Parliamentary material should be content tagged and cross-referenced to enable users to 'follow' certain key phrases or words in order to facilitate better access for those interested in niche subjects.

Introduction

When the Hansard Society's Puttnam Commission on the Communication of Parliamentary Democracy reported in May 2005 it set out a clear warning: 'The public have a right to expect a Parliament which communicates its work promptly, clearly and usefully, which reaches out to all citizens and which invites participation and interaction.'¹

In the years since the report was published, Parliament's approach to communication has changed considerably. The parliamentary website has improved immeasurably, committees are served by a dedicated team of media officers, outreach and education services focus on improving engagement with and knowledge of the institution, and both Houses have embraced social media. Activity within Parliament is now more topical and responsive thanks to the restoration of the Urgent Question, the institution of Backbench Business Committee debates, and the introduction of e-petitions in the House of Commons and balloted topical debates in the House of Lords. Select committee inquiries and reports are now one of the most visible aspects of parliamentary activity and regularly help to influence and shape the news agenda.

But the digital era now brings new challenges. In the same way that established media companies are feeling their way as they adapt to the new economic and technology demands of the digital era, so too parliaments, like other institutions, must develop a new communications framework if they are to flourish. **The landscape of print, broadcasting and social media is changing rapidly and how it alters will affect the institution's ability to communicate and engage with the public it serves.** How will the convergence of different forms of media, new patterns of consumption, and changes in behaviour affect what, where and how Parliament communicates in the future? News and information is now disseminated and exchanged at an accelerated pace – the news cycle has been replaced by the news stream – what does this mean for long established practices and ways of working? How, amidst an avalanche of online material, will people best access information and learn about the work of Parliament? How will they 'choose' Parliament as a source of news and information when they have so many other options available to them? Access to content has been democratised – the user rather than the producer now has greater scope for decision about the way in which they consume media and anyone can now produce and disseminate their own content at very low cost – so what implications might this have for Parliament in the future?

¹ Hansard Society (2005), *Members Only? Parliament in the Public Eye. Report of the Hansard Society Commission on the Communication of Parliamentary Democracy* (London: Hansard Society/Dods), p. viii.

How the contours of the communications landscape will change remains uncertain territory, influenced by behavioural, commercial and technological factors. Ten years ago, the digital revolution was deemed likely to herald the demise of television and yet it remains the dominant news medium, and is now evolving through greater integration with the internet and the development of 'social' viewing. Traditional 'old' print media outlets – national and regional – may struggle with the long-term viability of their revenue model but a number of them have reinvented themselves as digital leaders and now have distinct on and offline identities with staff adopting a multi-platform approach. Where many feared that the internet would leave people isolated in virtual 'echo chambers', with no 'exposure to diverse opinions and contradictory viewpoints'² in practice, news consumption appears to be broadening (if not deepening) and the pattern of that consumption is less predictable than before. Just a few years ago sites like Flickr were enormously popular and yet are now being bypassed as new ways to store and share data challenge their utility. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are global phenomena, used by billions of people on every continent, but they were in their infancy or did not exist at the time of the 2005 general election.

In short, it would be foolish to predict with any certainty how things will look from the standpoint of the next election in 2015 and certainly beyond. But we do know that whatever form it takes, Parliament's communication operations will have to evolve.

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Emerging and potential future trends and developments across the media and communications landscape will pose challenges for all legislatures but it is likely that the scale of that challenge and its potential impact will be sharpened in Westminster's case. Research suggests that the percentage of the UK's GDP derived from the internet economy is double the G20 average.³ The UK leads Europe in device ownership, running behind only the US and Japan globally;⁴ smartphone take-up is currently higher in the UK than anywhere else in the world with use of mobile phones to access the internet at home running second only to the Japanese.⁵ And with 60% of all internet users in the UK maintaining some form of online profile, we have one of the highest penetration rates for social networks anywhere in the world.⁶ **Among legislatures worldwide, Westminster therefore stands at the frontier of the intersection of behavioural, commercial and technological change.** If it adapts, it can be a global leader in this arena, its innovation and best practice something for other parliaments to follow. If it fails to adapt then there could be serious, detrimental consequences for public knowledge and understanding of and engagement with the core institution of our representative democracy.

This report explores some of the key strategic trends that will have an impact on Parliament and how it might therefore need to re-shape and restructure its own approach in the

2 C. Sunstein (2009), *Republic.com 2.0* (Princeton University Press).

3 House of Lords Select Committee on Communications (2012), *Broadband For All – An Alternative Vision*, HL Paper 41, p.10, citing research by the Boston Consulting Group, 'The internet economy in the G-20', March 2012.

4 Deloitte (2012), *State of the Media Democracy Survey: How the UK public are interacting with media*, p.5.

5 Speech by Ed Richards, Chief Executive, OFCOM, to the Oxford Media Convention, 24 January 2011.

6 N. Newman (2011), *Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of social discovery* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.12.

coming years if it is to keep pace with these external changes. The first part of the report explores these trends and developments across the communications sector and why they may particularly matter for Parliament in the years ahead. The second part of the report sets out how Parliament might respond to these challenges, drawing on examples from other sectors and legislatures.

The Media and Digital Change

Each one of us now spends almost half our waking hours accessing media content and using communications services in some form.⁷ As media is the principal conduit by which people conduct their observation of politics and Parliament, what, where and how it is consumed is a pressing issue for the institution.

For *general* news consumption television remains the dominant medium; approximately 85% of the public access their news here. Fifty-three percent get their news from radio; 53% from newspapers, and 41% go online.⁸ For *political* news and information specifically, the Audit of Political Engagement results reinforce the general news trend but provide a more detailed breakdown of the range of sources upon which people draw. Television is the primary source (75%) to an even greater degree than it is for general news, followed by tabloid newspapers (27%), radio (26%), news websites (20%) and broadsheet newspapers (16%).⁹

Television and radio

On average, we watch 4.3 hours of TV per day and viewing figures have remained broadly stable among younger (under 24s) and older (55+) age groups across the last decade. Such fluctuation in viewing as there has been has largely been marginal and among those in the 25-54 year old age group. The BBC produces by far the greatest share of television news programmes consumed each day across the UK (72.5% of total news viewing). Its news share and that of Sky News (6% of total news viewing) has grown in recent years, driven by their 24-hour news channel operations; in contrast, viewing figures for ITV (4%), Channel 4 (2.5%) and Channel 5 (1.4%) have all declined over the last four years.¹¹

*Television has become 'the cockroach of the internet apocalypse', for 'whatever the internet revolution throws at it, TV survives, and survives and survives. Its resilience is conspicuous at a time of turbulent change.'*¹⁰ (Ed Richards, Chief Executive, OFCOM)

(i) Viewing

But whilst television remains a dominant medium for news and information content production, how it is consumed is changing. The average viewer is increasingly 'stacking'

7 Speech by Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, 'The Future of Digital Entertainment', Intellect Conference, 5 July 2011.

8 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.274.

9 Hansard Society (2012), *Audit of Political Engagement 9: The 2012 Report: Part Two, The Media and Politics* (London: Hansard Society), p.13.

10 Speech by Ed Richards, Chief Executive, OFCOM, to the Oxford Media Convention, 24 January 2011.

11 Mediatique, 'The Provision of News in the UK: A Report for OFCOM', June 2012, p.39.

television viewing through hard disk Personal Video Recorders (PVRs)/set-top boxes, on-demand services such as BBC iPlayer and watching television content through internet enabled devices rather than directly on the television itself. **The expansion of 'catch-up' and 'on-demand' television integrated with a range of media services and delivered through a variety of devices may increase the need to provide time-relevant 'context' to parliamentary broadcasts which are not viewed live.** Broadcasters are also increasingly seeking to integrate traditional programme content with user-generated material. At the basic end of the spectrum this may be BBC1's *Question Time* using Twitter to elicit questions from the public to be put to the panellists in real time. At the other end of the spectrum Channel 4's *Million Pound Drop Live* provides an online opportunity for the public to 'play along live with the show': and over 50,000 viewers did so during the last series.¹² Given the strong social context to new forms of communication – linking friends and communities of interest – it is likely that this will underpin the future approach to development of the television medium. New technology – the Zeebox application, for example – is now synthesising traditional television content, an electronic programme guide and social media such as Facebook and Twitter to turn a solitary, individual viewing exercise into a socially connected, contextualised visual experience. Parliamentary coverage at peak viewing moments – Prime Minister's

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The screenshot shows the Zeebox interface for the 'Horrible Histories' program. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'WHAT'S HOT' and 'GUIDE', along with 'SETTINGS' and a 'Log in to zeebox' button. Below the navigation, the video player shows '50 BBC One HD' and the time '3:05pm - 3:35pm'. The main content area features a video player with a thumbnail of three characters in historical costumes. To the right of the video player, there is a 'BUZZ' section showing 'Quiet' with a '3' and a 'Start a chat' button, and an 'AUDIENCE' section showing 'Steady' with a '90' and a bar chart. Below the video player, there is a 'TWITTER' section with a search bar and several tweets from users like MurphExperience, Iornarach, becnixx, and LouiseBradyUK. On the left side, there are navigation options for 'TWITTER', 'INFO & CREDITS', 'NEWS', 'APPS & DOWNLOADS', and 'RELATED LINKS'. At the bottom left, there is a 'POPULAR ON TV NOW' section featuring 'The Alan Titchmarsh Show'. On the right side, there is a 'LIVE ZEETAGS' sidebar with various tags like 'Florence', 'Llama', 'Andean civilizations', 'Inca Empire', 'Humphrey de Bohun, 4th...', 'Jonathan Wild', 'Newgate Prison', and 'Jack Sheppard'.

Zeebox – combining television and social media (© Zeebox)

Questions, the Queen's Speech, the Budget, or a controversial legislative debate or committee session – would all lend themselves to contextualised, social, connected viewing experiences: a scrolling multi-person live blog, tweeting, Facebook applications to comment and share, and tagging, all viewed live on television or tablet TV viewer. In some ways this is a 'back to the future' development. In the past, when viewers had only four or five TV channels to choose from, the public would largely watch the same programmes at the same time. There was a sense of shared viewing experience. The proliferation of television channels and a wealth of other forms of entertainment to choose from led to a decline in that sense of shared communal experience. But social television, creating an online community experience around shared TV moments that we can all identify with, may re-create it in a modern, digital setting.

(ii) Listening

Like television, radio has also survived, largely flourished and appears relatively stable. For many of us it is our morning alarm and is often listened to as we commute to and from work at the beginning and end of the day. On average, we listen to a little less radio per week – 22.5 hours – than we did a decade ago (24.4 hours) and almost half of this time (46%) is spent with BBC outlets, although their local stations are a little less popular than previously whilst national commercial stations continue to register modest growth.¹³ However, these latter stations tend to be music driven; news is relegated to the margins, with headline updates provided throughout the day and key bulletins during the 'drive time' peak. Indeed, on average, only 180 minutes of local news and 80 minutes of national news is broadcast each week across commercial radio stations.¹⁴ This is offset by the fact that 60% of the content produced by the BBC's network of 40 English regional radio stations must be in speech rather than musical form with a strong emphasis on news. Given that 26% claim that radio is one of their top three sources of political information,¹⁵ and that radio listeners are more likely to agree that Parliament is essential to democracy¹⁶ and to be knowledgeable about Parliament than are television viewers,¹⁷ then the stability and reliability of radio in a period of intense change may be an important bedrock communications outlet for Parliament.

Mobile / smartphone

A growth in wireless broadband coupled with developments in mobile/portable devices has helped fuel a dramatic increase in access to information and news on the move. In 2009, 20% of the public used the internet on the move; by 2011 that had grown to 40%.¹⁸ The Oxford Internet Institute has defined those who access the internet from multiple locations

13 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.55.

14 Radio Station, 'The Output and Impact of Commercial Radio', Radio Centre, 2011.

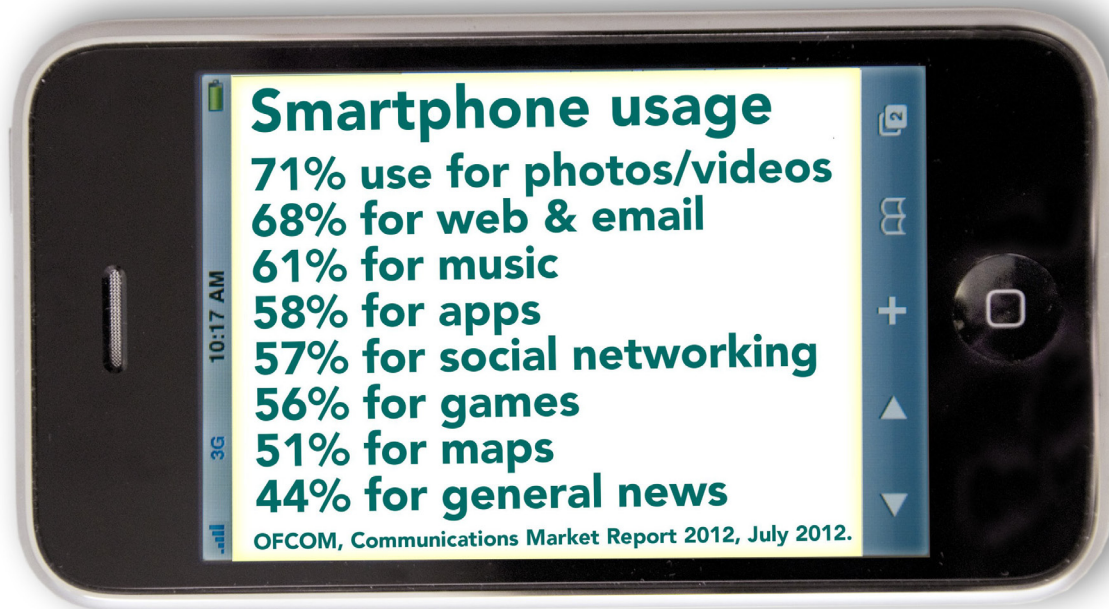
15 Hansard Society (2012), *Audit of Political Engagement 9: The 2012 Report: Part Two, The Media and Politics* (London: Hansard Society), p.13.

16 Hansard Society (2012), *Audit of Political Engagement 9: The 2012 Report: Part Two, The Media and Politics* (London: Hansard Society), dataset.

17 *Ibid.*

18 W. Dutton & G. Black (2011), *Oxford Internet Surveys, Next Generation Users: The Internet in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute), p.10.

and on multiple devices as 'next generation users' and their number has grown from 20% in 2007 to 32% in 2009 and 44% in 2011.¹⁹ From a communications perspective this group are important because they are part of a generational change in consumption patterns: they are more likely to go online for news (84%) compared with the first generation of internet users (75%).²⁰



Most UK citizens now have a mobile phone and an increasing number (39% in 2012 compared to 27% in 2011) have a smartphone. Having obtained a smartphone, just over four in 10 (44%)²¹ still choose to read a newspaper regularly, but 35% say they now read a newspaper, and access news on TV or radio (34%) less than they did previously.²² However, those who do still pick up a newspaper will on average look at only two different ones every day; but those who choose to consume their news online will, on average, choose to visit five different news sites.²³

Tablets

On average each of us now has at least three different types of internet enabled device at our disposal.²⁴ The greatest levels of growth are in the number of people that now have an eReader and a tablet. Ten percent of the UK public have an eReader (compared to just 3% in 2011) and primarily use it for reading books; but three in 10 of us (29%) also use it to access newspapers and magazines.²⁵ Growth in tablet consumption is even greater: **11% of all UK households now have a tablet (an increase of nine percentage points in a year) and there are now 3 million tablets in use across the UK compared to**

19 *Ibid.*, p.4.

20 *Ibid.*, p.6.

21 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.225.

22 *Ibid.*, p.226.

23 R. Foster (2012), *News Plurality in a Digital World* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.20, citing Oliver & Ohlbaum, Annual Media Survey 2011.

24 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.13.

25 *Ibid.*, p.70.

just 1.3 million in December 2010.²⁶

For two-thirds of us, our tablet device is a household or family item, not something we reserve for sole personal use. And though tablets are purchased for their portability, as with eReaders, the overwhelming majority of people (87%) actually use them mostly at home.²⁷ Three-quarters of tablet owners (74%) use them daily and almost four in 10 (37%) claim that they now spend more time browsing the internet as a result.²⁸ One in six households (17%) say they intend to buy a tablet in the next year.²⁹ If such a scale of growth is realised it will have a significant impact on how we access news and information for the foreseeable future.

Changing patterns of use and behaviour

Over the last five years the time each of us spends, on average, on the internet at home on either our desktop PC or laptop has increased from 14 to 27 minutes per day.³⁰ But we may now be seeing the start of a shift to an even more sustained relationship with the internet through the growth in use of internet enabled mobile devices. Thirty-seven percent of tablet owners claim to browse the internet more than ever before; although 37% of them also make less use of their laptop and 33% of them less use of their desktop PC. Forty-four percent of owners say that consuming news on a tablet is a better experience than on a PC.³¹

Consumers seem to use each device quite differently. On mobiles and tablets, attracted by the speed and portability, the quality of display, and the gestural interface, users have a more immersive experience: as a consequence they spend more time on news applications, visit more pages per sitting, and return more frequently to those sites than they do on a conventional laptop or PC. They are also more likely to juggle their access to media. Twenty percent will spend time accessing two forms of media simultaneously; rising to 30%



26 *Ibid.*, p.26.

27 *Ibid.*, p.61.

28 *Ibid.*, p.65.

29 *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

30 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.28.

31 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.14.

of younger age groups.³² However, although portable devices may be enriching rather than cannibalising the number of information sources upon which users draw, when it comes to news sources specifically the picture is less healthy. Overall, 58% of tablet owners say they use the device to access news every week.³³ But whilst tablet users do access more sources, on average they still use three sources or fewer each week. The Reuters Institute has identified a group of ‘news absorbed’ citizens but of these 57% still use three sources or fewer, and only 36% will use four or more.³⁴

There is some concern that the direction of mobile and tablet technology may result in constraints on serendipitous access to knowledge and news if the web is re-shaped by the ‘appification’ of information predicated on the consumers’ desire for quick and convenient access. Using ‘apps’, people will go straight to one news source thereby reducing the chances of alighting on new material and unexpected information in the way that can happen whilst browsing the open web. Tablets are certainly helping to fuel application downloads. The mean number of applications downloaded by a tablet owner is 17. But 45% of owners use less than half of these applications regularly. The most popular downloads are of games (75%), with applications for the weather (60%), social networking (58%) and news (57%) following close behind.³⁵

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How the debate about the merits of the ‘appification’ of information rather than access on the open web develops will have important strategic resource implications for Parliament: should it invest in ‘apps’ or in its website presence? It is perhaps too early to decide but Parliament has enormous online brand potential as an authoritative source of information and news, particularly if its role and work is pitched in the context of ‘democracy’ rather than ‘politics’. The website presence of such authoritative sources and brands may survive any shift in the way that people access information if the content of the site is properly developed, curated and accessible. **Investment in the website – specifically in the means to develop attractive, engaging and interesting content through greater resourcing of audio-visual material and the training of staff to provide that content across all services – may be a better long-term commitment.** And given the shift to mobile and tablet use, investment in how information materials – for example, committee reports – are presented will be increasingly important in the future. **Parliament needs to invest in responsive design techniques that can render its material suitable for a variety of platforms and screen sizes, but particularly the tablet.**

Search and social networks

The growth of search and social network sites has also prompted much debate about news

32 Speech by Ed Richards, Chief Executive, OFCOM, to the Oxford Media Convention, 24 January 2011.

33 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.14.

34 *Ibid.*, p.16.

35 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.67.

plurality on the web. Will the presence of and access to news and information via social networks become a 'social' or participatory experience? Will online 'gatekeepers' change the type of news and information that citizens access and, if so, how? Will 'sharing' of news through social networks – referrals by friends and family – replace 'search' through search engines such as Google, Yahoo or Bing, as a prime means by which the public access the news and information they want?

Eighty percent of the UK public now have internet access at home and choose to spend more time engaged on social networks than any other online activity.³⁶ Half the population now live in a household that accesses social networks in some form. In 2011, **71% of all UK online consumers claimed to visit a social network site at least once a day:** of these, 20% visit five times a day; 28% between two and four times a day; and 23% do so once a day.³⁷ The most popular device for accessing a social network profile was the laptop (68%), followed by the desktop (48%) and a mobile (43%).³⁸ However, this profile of consumption by device is now shifting given the accelerated growth of smartphones and tablets in the last 18 months.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of UK internet users have a Facebook account³⁹ and the site has a reach of 42% among UK mobile browser users.⁴⁰ **Globally it is estimated that a fifth of the web is connected to Facebook** in some form. On average, each Facebook visitor spends 6.5 hours per month on the site and it is estimated that one in every six page views are with Facebook.⁴¹ Approximately 35% of Facebook users in the UK engage in intensive use of the site; these 'power users' perform the full range of activities available on the site to a much greater degree than other users.⁴² **In the 12 months prior to March 2012, 25.8 million unique visitors to Facebook were recorded in the UK** and OFCOM has suggested that, per capita, its popularity is now more concentrated in the UK than in other parts of the world and may as a consequence be close to saturation point.⁴³

There has long been concern that social networks would narrow citizens' access to information by selecting information for them predicated on previously expressed taste and preferences. In the words of Eli Pariser the 'filter bubble' would crowd out serendipitous news experiences, and limit a person's exposure to different views and perspectives.⁴⁴ There are early signs that the sheer amount of activity on the Facebook site leaves users bombarded with irrelevant material, leading to more 'noise' than 'filter'.⁴⁵ Concerns about

36 *Ibid.*, p.25.

37 OFCOM, *International Communications Market Report 2011*, December 2011, p.50.

38 *Ibid.*, p.52.

39 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.253.

40 ComScore, *Connected Europe: How Smartphones and Tablets Are Shifting Media Consumption*, January 2012.

41 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.253.

42 K. Hampton, L. Goulet, C. Marlow & L. Rainie (2012), *Why Most Facebook Users Get More Than They Give: The Effect of Facebook 'Power Users' On Everybody Else* (New York: Pew Research Centre).

43 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.264.

44 E. Pariser (2011), *The Filter Bubble: What The Internet Is Hiding From You* (London: Viking).

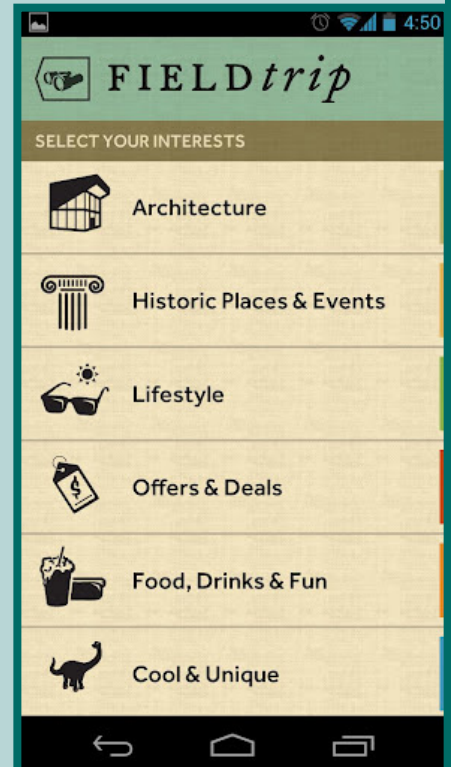
45 N. Newman, *Journalism Media and Technology Predictions 2012*, p.9 (citing a report by www.techcrunch.com).

Search without searching

The next stage in Google’s approach is to enable ‘search without searching’. Users who visit an unusual location will automatically receive information about it on their mobile device. Using location data, augmented reality and search history, Google will predict what you might want to know before you even search.

Google’s ‘Fieldtrip’ app and ‘Google Now’, an intelligent personal assistant launched with Android 4.1 (Jelly Bean) in July 2012, provide early glimpses of this vision.* In the long-term the company aims to remove the mobile device interface and replace it with a more intuitive and visual form of search (based on pictures taken of the user’s surroundings) combined with voice activated search, providing everything from contextual information for a landmark to translation of a food menu.

* <http://www.fieldtripper.com/> and <http://www.google.com/landing/now/>



Fieldtrip application (© NianticLabs@ Google)

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No digging required.

Cards appear when they're needed most, organizing the things you need to know and freeing you up to focus on what's important to you.

Get just the right information, at just the right time.

Just swipe up, and you've got the latest information you want to see, when you want to see it.

Next appointment

Lunch with Brad @ 12pm
2368 3rd Street, San Jose, CA 94107

Get directions / 23min via 101
Alternate route / 45min via 280

You're in control.

Choose exactly which cards you see. You control whether you get personalized results from your calendars, locations and searches after opting in.

privacy may also lead to a reduction in activity on the site, or at least new mechanisms to apply 'filters' to different groups of friends. Nonetheless, digital commentators like Nic Newman increasingly see a future in which Facebook is the browser experience for most people with dynamic apps that mirror the 'web' experience within the social network site replacing Facebook branded pages.⁴⁶

Google search is moving in the direction of more targeted information; not necessarily to reduce access to a range of sources but in order to be more immediately productive by providing the likely 'answer' to a search request utilising all the known data-points about the questioner.⁴⁷ The aim is 'to create a personalised search engine that "knows" its users so well that all the results are tuned directly to their interests'.⁴⁸ For some, including Sir Tim Berners-Lee, such developments will lead to 'closed silos of content' and represent a threat to the open, universality of the web.⁴⁹

At present 20% of the public access news through social networks but search engines currently remain more important (30%) as a means to find news.

However, 43% of young people now access news through their social network suggesting that a generational shift may be underway.⁵⁰ Of the social networks Facebook is dominant: **55% of all shared news in the UK is done through Facebook; 33% by email and 23% via Twitter.**⁵¹

Eighty-nine percent of social network site users reportedly use the social features of their account functionality, whilst only 22% use their network accounts as information resources.⁵² This might suggest that in future we will see a more social, participatory approach to news on social networks. However, whereas in many respects the UK is in line with emergent trends in the American communications landscape, on this issue we may buck the Anglo-Saxon model. It is estimated that 70% of Americans share and participate in some form of online news activity via a social network each week. As such, they are twice as likely as British citizens to share, engage in online discussion, or comment on a news story.⁵³

There appears to be greater emphasis on accessing local or community information or news on social networks rather than the national or international: this reflects the more personal nature of social networking. A quarter (26%) of those with a social network profile say they use it to access information about what is happening in their local area but only 16% use

46 N. Newman, *Journalism Media and Technology Predictions 2012*, p.10.

47 Google, Search history personalisation, <http://support.google.com/accounts/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=54041>

48 R. Waters, 'Google searches to become personalised', *FT.com*, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/1d8adff8-3bb6-11e1-82d3-00144feabdc0.html>

49 T. Berners-Lee, 'Long live the web', *Scientific American*, November 2010.

50 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.15.

51 *Ibid.*

52 W. Dutton & G. Black (2011), *Oxford Internet Surveys, Next Generation Users: The Internet in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute), p.35.

53 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.50.

it to gather information about national and global events.⁵⁴ **Thirty-five percent of all UK social network users report that they often learn about breaking news first from their social network.**⁵⁵ Given the predominance of women and younger people on social networks this is particularly true of these groups. However, research by Kantar Media suggests that whilst younger users are more trusting of the unfiltered nature of news referral on social networks the average user is alert to the fact that it is a significant source of unchecked opinion and gossip and the more sophisticated news consumer uses it only as one of a number of sources in order to get closer to the facts and to do so quickly. Indeed, overall, social media is deemed less trustworthy, less accurate and reliable and less impartial than news aggregators like Google and Yahoo.⁵⁶ In this environment, Parliament could therefore play an important role as a trusted, authoritative source.

But what do these changes in the direction of search and social networks mean for Parliament? The data suggests that although legislatures feel more comfortable using Twitter than Facebook, the latter should not be ignored. That may change if we see a shift in use – due, for example, to increased concerns about privacy – but for the foreseeable future it is the key online social network and the space where young people, in particular, can be reached. The importance of search engines for locating news also poses a challenge that Parliament must address. At least 50% of all visits to www.parliament.uk come via a Google referral. This reflects the trends in online search but it also reflects the very poor search function on the parliamentary website itself. Sites with a huge amount of content need structured and intelligent pathways to information but they also need an excellent search function. If a site is seeking to develop a strong online presence and brand then it cannot afford for users to be dependent on Google to find the material they want. It is unacceptable that even experienced users of the parliamentary site currently have to leave it and go to a search engine in order to find their way back to the material they want on the site. **Improving the 'findability' and 'search' functions of the parliamentary website must therefore be an absolute priority.** Sorting out the search engine

optimisation and tagging of material is vital to allow for more precise search but cultural changes in workflow processes will also be needed. At present Parliament must play 'catch-up' in order to optimise and tag historic material on the site. However, **staff must be collectively committed to ensuring that optimisation and tagging of all future material is prioritised.** It is not an administrative task but one requiring planning, creativity and intellectual

Parliament's search

A search for 'Witney' on Parliament's website brings up 3,744 results.* Of the top 10 results eight concern Early Day Motions from previous parliaments. One page links to the transcript for an online tour, and another to evidence given at the Foreign Affairs Committee in 2009. None of the top hits link to recent statements by the Prime Minister who is the MP for the Witney constituency.

* Figure correct as at 20 March 2013.

54 OFCOM, *International Communications Market Report 2011*, December 2011, p.54.

55 *Ibid.*, p.65.

56 Kantar Media (2012), *'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes'*, June 2012, p.41.

rigour: if effort is not applied to the task then any content produced on the website in the future will receive little if any attention and the investment of time in developing the content will be wasted.

Video

A growth area in online activity is the amount of time that consumers spend on video sharing sites. It is estimated that **43.4 million hours of video were consumed in the UK in March 2012** on laptops and desktop PCs alone; taking into account the significant growth in mobile and portable device use the actual viewing figures are likely to be much higher.⁵⁷ **Fifteen percent of the public will visit a site such as YouTube at least once a week**, and the time each person, on average, spends on that site has increased by 42% in a year to 1.5 hours.⁵⁸ In total, in the first six months of 2012, it is estimated that in the UK alone 3.7 billion videos have been viewed on YouTube.⁵⁹

This growth trend in the use of video is important in two ways. Firstly, as a visual, content-rich medium it is a vital way to attract and engage interest in information and news particularly on tablet devices. Secondly, it is a key driver for sharing news and information. The integration of camera and phone means, for example, that those who mainly access news online through their mobile phone are five times more likely to post a picture or a video to a news website than are those who predominantly view news via their laptop or desktop PC.⁶⁰ **Posts that include photo or video content increase engagement by 100%.⁶¹ Video is thus a vital component of citizen journalism and the development of a participatory news culture but it is an area in which Parliament is extremely weak.**

Media convergence

The pervasiveness of internet based communications and the growth in internet enabled devices has blurred the distinction between traditional and new media outlets. Conventional media such as newspapers increasingly have – indeed cannot survive without – an online presence. Daily newspapers – both broadsheets and tabloids – continue to report year on year reductions in headline print circulation and increasingly concentrate on generating growth through online page views. A significant shift to ‘online first’ strategies among traditional press outlets is now underway as they wrestle with which revenue model works best in order to take advantage of the new opportunities that a digital presence might offer them in terms of readership numbers and advertising income. In the last year, the *Guardian*, for example, announced the adoption of a digital first strategy, investing a further £25 million in its online presence. Whilst cutting its paper supplements (media,

57 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.255.

58 *Ibid.*, p.13.

59 *Ibid.*, p.253.

60 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.50.

61 Interview with Elizabeth Linder, Facebook.

education and society) it has committed to the fostering of a series of online professional networks (for example, culture, higher education, local government, media, and public service). In contrast to the *Guardian*, where consumers pay for content only on the iPad or a mobile, the *Times* operates a total online pay-wall. Its readership numbers have fallen significantly but its subscribers now provide an engaged, regular audience to whom news and information, as well as advertising and marketing can be targeted. (Although it has still had to partially lift the pay-wall in order to allow some limited content to be previewed by Google, such is the critical importance of online search).⁶² As more newspapers move to digital first strategies then, depending on the revenue model adopted, there may be an important shift to more in-depth engagement with a small group of loyal readers.

Newspaper brands

Nonetheless, despite the commercial pressures bearing down on them in the print domain, and the multiple competing sources available online, newspaper 'brand' is still important for news consumption in the digital realm. **When trying to find news, consumers are still most likely to think first of a known branded news site (51%) than they are a search engine (30%) a news aggregation site (22%), or a social network (20%).**⁶³ Nor are newspaper brands necessarily losing ground in the shift to portable and particularly tablet devices, even if the applications have to be paid for: five of the top tablet news brands are newspaper groups compared to just two on the open web.⁶⁴

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Whilst the known, trusted reputation associated with some news brands is driving traffic to their sites, online consumption is affecting behaviour in other ways. Given the tendency to roam and consume more sources online, there is evidence that consumers may consequently be accessing news and information from brand news sites on different sides of the political divide. OFCOM reports, for example, a 53.9% 'overlap' between online readership of the *Independent* and *Daily Mail* and 39.1% between *Sun* and *Guardian* online readers.⁶⁵

Networked journalism

The digital revolution has also forced journalists to fundamentally change the way they work. Writing an article by a set print deadline is no longer enough; they are expected to be multi-platform operators, blogging and tweeting throughout the day in addition to their daily article for the print edition. Each form of communication drives traffic to the other and back again. In the words of Charlie Beckett, we 'now have a political news media that has audience interactivity, participation and connectivity built into every aspect'.⁶⁶ Journalism is now 'networked' and engages the public collaboratively 'through

62 M. Sweney, 'Times and Sunday Times to allow limited content to appear on Google', *Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/sep/26/times-sunday-times-google>

63 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.16.

64 *Ibid.*, p.44.

65 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.278.

66 C. Beckett (2010), *The Value of Networked Journalism* (POLIS: LSE), p.1.

crowd-sourcing, interactivity, hyper-linking, user generated content and forums'.⁶⁷ To accommodate this change, the organisational structure and workflow of the newsroom is significantly different to what it was just a few years ago. Almost all articles for print must have a 'value added' angle to be exploited through online and social network activity. Here, Twitter is a particularly important part of the media convergence story for, given its news-wire approach, it has proven particularly popular among journalists. It had 6.2 million unique visitors in March 2012⁶⁸ and 6.6% of its audience is 'unduplicated' on other social networks.⁶⁹ **The general public who are online do not generally get their news from the network: only 9% do so compared to 19% from Facebook and Google.**⁷⁰ However, because of the high-level presence of the lobby and an array of politicians on the network, Westminster news regularly breaks on Twitter and the volume of noise it creates reverberates across other media both on and offline. **The value of Twitter lies in its 'amplifier' role and for this reason it is vital that Parliament continues to develop a strong and vibrant presence on the network if it is to be part of the political news mix.** But this should be in addition to and complementary to a presence on Facebook, not an alternative to it.

Local and hyperlocal focus

Local newspapers are one of the most trusted forms of media available. All told there are around 1,100 regional and local titles and 1,600 associated regional or local newspaper websites today. Importantly, there are few demographic differences in terms of consumption: men and women access the material almost equally (71.2% v 70.3% respectively); as do all ages, albeit with a small bias towards those in older, more affluent age groups. Critically, a local/regional newspaper is the primary source of newspaper content for just over a quarter of these readers because they do not consume a national newspaper.⁷²

32.9 million

people visit local and regional newspaper websites every year⁷¹

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Nonetheless, local/regional press are struggling to develop a sustainable business model: around 200 titles have closed over the last decade and many other papers have transitioned from daily to weekly outlets, and from paid to free content providers. Such growth as there is in the sector is almost all online: reduced print circulation has meant print press advertising revenue has, on average, declined by 40%, but digital advertising revenue driven by their online presence has started to grow. Like national papers the local/regional news providers are increasingly shifting to a 'digital first' strategy and are hungry for rich, audio-visual (AV) content to supplement the now modest amount of political, and particularly parliamentary, news gathering that can be conducted by their own journalists.

67 *Ibid.* For a good example of this in practice, see how the *Guardian* has weaved user-generated content, expert opinion and real-time investigation into a news story at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/reality-check-with-polly-curtis/2012/apr/24/housing-housing-benefit>

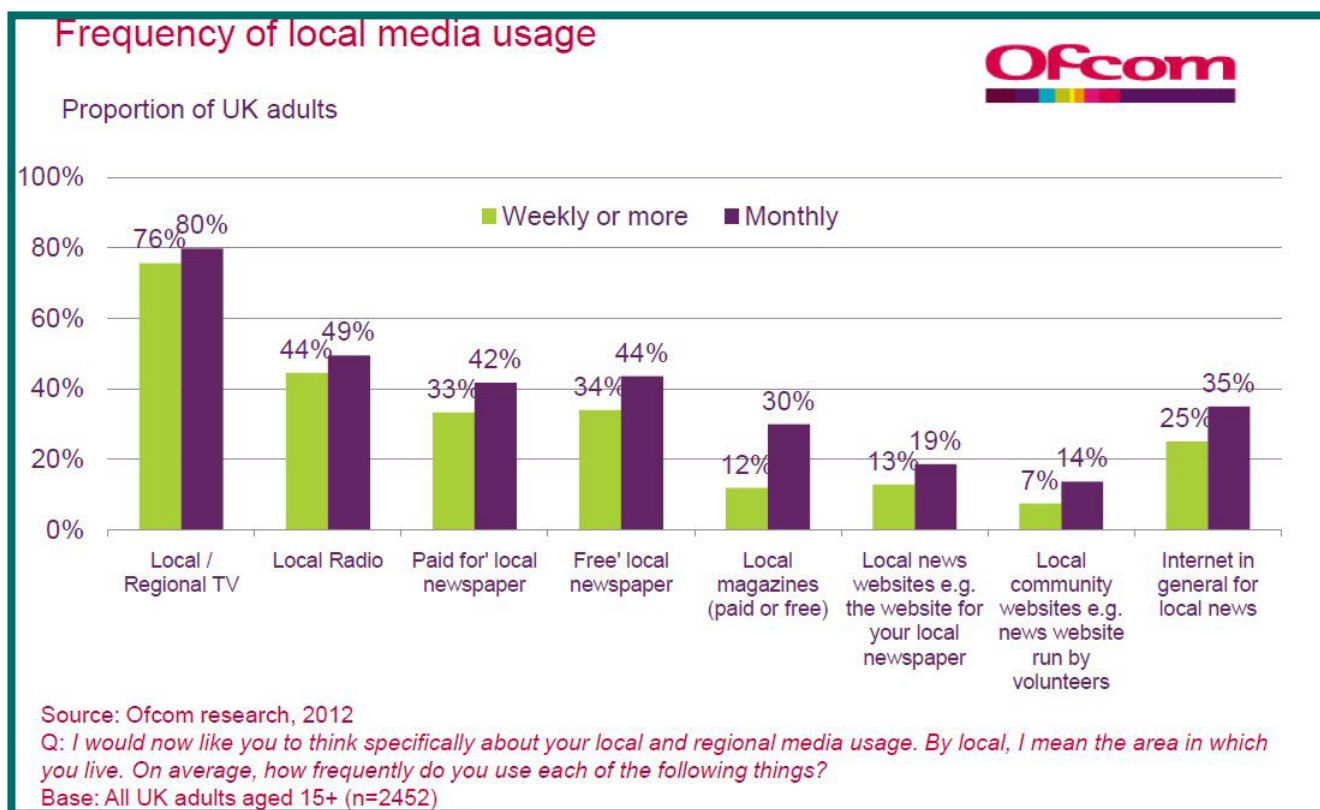
68 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.257. Note that these are UKOM/Nielsen figures and therefore refer only to desktop and laptop access.

69 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.266.

70 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.38.

71 Newspaper Society, Readership and Coverage, <http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk/readership-and-coverage>

72 *Ibid.*



OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.104.

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However, internet growth coupled with low cost content production and dissemination means anyone can be a 'journalist' or 'commentator' today: each of us has a printing press at our disposal via our desktop, laptop or mobile phone. At a time when regional and local newspapers are struggling to survive there is now evidence of a growth in local community based or 'hyperlocal'⁷³ websites focused around information and news about particular community issues and services. At present there are approximately 400 hyperlocal sites across the UK, although the vast majority (93%) of them are based in England and usually around large urban centres: there are, for example, at least 77 sites in London and 28 in Birmingham.⁷⁴

The hyperlocal trend is still at an embryonic stage but given its popularity among younger consumers, the decline of regional and local press, and the level of interest the public have in 'local' issues and services, it could develop rapidly in the years ahead. Around 14% of online users access a local community website at least once a month, rising to 22% of those in the 35-44 age bracket. Those who do use these sites also rate them highly: 37% consider their service to be important compared to 27% who say the same of local newspaper websites.⁷⁵ The size and scale of activity on hyperlocals is difficult to assess at present but some sites claim a substantial user base: the Sheffield Forum for example has 163,413 registered users.⁷⁶ If this sector continues to grow then it could offer Parliament a valuable new outlet for its information and news: the localised nature of interest and story content

⁷³ Hyperlocal media is described by NESTA as 'online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small geographically-defined community.' See D. Radcliffe (2012), *Here and Now – UK Hyperlocal Media Today* (London: NESTA), p.9.

⁷⁴ OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.103.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ www.sheffieldforum.co.uk. Figure correct as at 20 March 2013.

would allow for targeted, content-rich stories to be disseminated, and for new data and information to be picked up that would normally be bypassed by the mainstream media.

Lichfield Live, www.lichfieldlive.co.uk

LichfieldLive is a not-for-profit community-run news site with an estimated 10,000 site visitors each month.* The site is run by Lichfield Community Media (LCM) (<http://lichfieldcommunitymedia.org/>), a volunteer-run organisation (at least one of whose members has a journalistic background)** which 'aims to provide news and information to the communities of Lichfield District through the use of digital technologies'.† LCM has recently secured funding for a community radio station to be established in conjunction with a local school and Staffordshire University.‡

* <http://lichfieldlive.co.uk/advertising/>

** D. Radcliffe (2012), *Here and Now – UK Hyperlocal Media Today* (NESTA: London), p.10.

† <http://lichfieldcommunitymedia.org/about/>

‡ <http://lichfieldcommunitymedia.org/2012/07/04/weve-secured-11000-for-lichfield-radio-history-projects/>

Lichfieldlive.co.uk

The screenshot shows the Lichfield Live website interface. At the top left is the 'LICHFIELD LIVE' logo. To the right is a sponsored advertisement for 'Arthur Price Factory Shop' with contact details. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links to Home, News, What's On, Sport, Business, Politics, Education, Transport, Heritage, T-Shirts, and Book Shop. The main content area is divided into several sections: a 'WHAT'S ON IN LICHFIELD' list, a 'RECENT COMMENTS' section, a large featured article about a 'Police and Crime Commissioner candidate outlines specials plan' with a 'POLICE' sign image, two smaller news snippets about local football matches, a 'Submit Your News!' form, a 'WEEKLY UPDATES' subscription form, a 'POLL' titled 'What are your views on wind turbines in/around Lichfield?', and a 'TODAY'S FORECAST' section. On the right side, there are vertical advertisements for 'Lich Vegas', 'Love LICH FIELD Lichfield', and 'Niva Lich Vegas'.

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Offline but not forgotten

For every eight people in 10 who have internet access at home there are two who do not and 16% of the population have never been online.⁷⁷ Although it must shift to a digital communications mindset, Parliament cannot and should not forget or ignore this 20% of the population for whom traditional media are the outlets through which they will access

news and information about Parliament. For these people, television, radio and newspapers will continue to be the core mediums of communication. But they too will benefit from a digitally centred approach due to the amplifying effects of social media activity aimed at mainstream journalists.

Interest in news and politics

One of the big challenges facing Westminster is how to interest the public in news and information about politics and Parliament given the UK public's low level of interest in it.

Globally, access to news is one of the most popular daily activities online, second only to email.⁷⁸ But whilst three-quarters of the UK population access news at least once a day in some form, interest in it is low compared to many other countries. Here, citizens who are active online are more likely to be interested in music (59%), film and cinema (48%), books (45%) and sport (44%) than they are in news and current affairs (43%).⁷⁹ What kind of news interests the UK public is also markedly different: here consumers are more likely to prioritise celebrity news, economic and business news, and the weather, and perceive political news to be less important than do people in other parts of Europe. The Reuters Institute found that **only 37% of UK citizens rate political news to be important; nearly 20 percentage points lower than the other countries included in its international survey.**⁸⁰

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A study by Kantar Media confirms that politics comes low down in the public's prioritisation of news topics: the most popular topic of personal interest to respondents was 'the weather' (58%), followed by 'local events where I live' (43%), 'crime' (42%), 'UK wide current affairs' (41%), 'sports' (40%), 'world wide current affairs' (39%), 'current affairs in region/nation' (39%); then 'UK wide politics' (36%), and 'politics in region/nation' (27%).⁸¹ Nonetheless, the public recognise the importance of news even if they themselves do not express particular interest in it. When asked to think about the UK as a whole, rather than themselves personally, 58% thought it was important for people to know about 'UK wide current affairs', 58% 'crime', 57% 'UK wide politics', 55% 'the weather', 52% 'world wide politics', 47% 'financial matters', and 44% 'politics in region/nation'.⁸²

That said, the Reuters Institute study shows that 80% of the public agree that it is important to keep up-to-date with what is happening in politics. Forty-four percent claim to keep up with political news on a daily basis; 40% of them access it several times a week; and only 16% say they look at political news infrequently.⁸³ The public thus recognise

78 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.50. (Citing TNS Global Digital Life (2010)).

79 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.6.

80 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.33.

81 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, pp.8-9.

82 *Ibid.*, p.9.

83 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.33.

the overall importance of news and political news, even if they themselves do not feel personally interested in it and consequently do not prioritise it. Part of the problem is that many do not necessarily consider politics to be news: only 56% say they consider 'UK wide politics' to be news and an even lower 45% say the same about 'politics in region/nation'. In contrast, 68% consider 'the weather' to be news, and 63% say the same about 'crime'. Reinforcing the relevance of local and community activity as a prism for news, 'local events where I live' (53%) rates more highly than 'politics in the region/nation' and almost as highly as 'UK wide politics'.

Looking specifically at politics and Parliament, **only 25% of the public say they are interested in the work of select committees, 34% the debates and discussions that take place in Parliament, and 36% in the processes by which decisions are made in Parliament.**⁸⁴ This interest in 'process' is also reflected in the findings of focus group research conducted into the characterisation and root causes of the public's 'anti-politics' attitude in the last year.⁸⁵ What exactly characterises 'process' is unclear but the focus group research hints at a desire on the part of the public to get 'behind the scenes' or 'under the bonnet' of parliamentary activity in some way.⁸⁶ As reflected in the Audit of Political Engagement, public attitudes perk up a little when the focus is on a respondent's particular local MP: 41% express interest in their work.⁸⁷ Interest levels are higher still in relation to the decisions that MPs take about particular policy areas: 68% are interested in decisions about healthcare policy; 66% in crime and policing; 65% in local area matters; 64% in general economic policy; 63% in immigration policy; 55% in issues affecting the industry or work sector of the respondent; and 51% in foreign and defence policy.⁸⁸

There is a clear gender divide in terms of how the public approach news generally, with distinctly different levels of interest in what might be deemed 'soft' and 'hard' news topics. Men tend to be more interested in sports news (59%), general politics (38%), technology (37%) and science (35%) followed by financial matters (31%) and city and business news (20%). In contrast, women are more likely to prioritise the weather (63%), entertainment news (42%), human-interest stories (42%), local events (49%), and regional current affairs (41%).⁸⁹ The gender divide evidences itself in the way that men and women treat local as opposed to national news. Whereas 41% of men are likely to access local news about the town or city where they live, many more women (58%) are likely to do the same; similarly, while only 36% of men report accessing news about their region, 48% of women do so. Conversely, however, 44% of men confirm accessing news for UK politics, but only

84 Britain Thinks, *Political Engagement Survey*, 6-8 January 2012.

85 Research conducted by the Hansard Society, Southampton and Sheffield Universities. See G. Stoker, 'Reforming Politics – Citizens Priorities', April 2012, for interim findings presented at the launch of the Audit of Political Engagement 9 in April 2012.

86 This was also reflected in focus group research conducted in 2010. See Hansard Society (2010), *Audit of Political Engagement 7: The 2010 Report* (London: Hansard Society), pp.42-43.

87 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.9.

88 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.32.

89 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.10.

30% of women say the same.⁹⁰ This difference reflects similar gender differences around perceptions of efficacy, desire for involvement, and perceived influence over decision-making locally and nationally as reported in successive Audits of Political Engagement.⁹¹ Women are also much more likely than men to express interest in news about celebrities (21% versus 8%).⁹² Younger women (16-24s) in particular (50%) are interested in celebrity and entertainment news; twice as many of them are interested in this than in the economy. Here the *MailOnline* site is particularly predominant as a source: 29% of its users say they are interested in celebrity news compared to just 19% of the readers of the *Daily Mail* who say the same.⁹³

How news about politics and Parliament is packaged is therefore critically important if the public's interest is to be aroused. A thematic, issue-driven focus to content matters more than the mechanism by which the news is produced and accessed: no network or device will persuade the public to consume political and parliamentary news if the content and narrative of that news is not sufficiently interesting, engaging and relevant to them. Given the degree to which the public lacks interest in news, and particularly political news, compared to other topics, **Parliament needs to find creative, imaginative and topical ways to weave its news and content into the topics that do interest people such as cinema, sport, and music.**

90 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.31.

91 See for example, Hansard Society (2012), *Audit of Political Engagement 9: The 2012 Report: Part One* (London: Hansard Society), pp.55-63.

92 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.9.

93 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.32.

Parliament's Response

How then should Parliament respond to these recent developments in the media landscape and the direction of emerging trends? A digital communications strategy that incorporates information, media and outreach work is required. It must prioritise content over platform and reflect the shift in emphasis to content that recognises 'social', 'mobile', 'local', 'data' and 'video' trends. This must be underpinned by changes in working practices, organisational culture, and the allocation of resources.

Parliament cannot and should not respond to 'fads' and it has to avoid any avenues that would open it up to being hijacked by corporate or campaign lobby interests linked particularly to the media or technology world. But it can and must play to its strengths with a greater degree of sophistication than in the past: **it has to be quicker, anticipatory as well as topical, provide ready access to granular, micro-themed content packaged to people's issue-driven interests, and offer a greater variety of 'glance-able' content in the form of graphics, pictures and video designed to garner people's attention.** The array of content-rich material on both the 'business' and the 'non-business' side of the institution's work has to be maximised to a much greater degree than at present. There is already internal recognition that the most effective way to communicate the work of Parliament in all its aspects is to make the material available for others to consume as they wish, and to push the material to particular groups / individuals who might be interested in it. However, although the institution has a large volume of content, much of it is fragmented and in a form no longer suited to the ways in which the public are consuming media. The website may be an excellent platform but it remains largely a repository for PDF documents; the search capability is abysmal; and the audio-visual content is limited.

As set out below, even modest, relatively low-cost initiatives could thus provide a significant 'value added' benefit in the future. But above all, **Parliament must prioritise and focus: it cannot do everything, across all platforms and devices, for all forms of media. Decisions must be made about how, where and with whom it wishes to be involved in the national political conversation and its efforts directed accordingly.** Both Houses therefore need to decide what they want to achieve in terms of future communications, what success would look like, and then develop linked communications strategies to this end. Does Parliament want to simply provide information in order to enhance knowledge levels? Does it want to increase transparency by letting people see the interior workings of the institution and access data about it? Does it want to

help people understand the legislative process in more detail? Does it want to give people a voice in the legislative and scrutiny process?

Whatever the ultimate objective(s), **implementing linked and complementary communications strategies in both Houses to achieve these aims in a rapidly changing environment will mean adopting a new digital mindset, relinquishing control, devolving decision-making and activity, supporting creativity, initiative, experimenting and accepting a greater degree of risk.**

Who are the media in a fragmented communications environment?

Parliament's media operations as currently configured, are largely built around a traditional interpretation of media that primarily emphasises print and broadcast outlets. But increasingly the media landscape needs to be seen not as a pyramidal ranking of outlets according to perceived influence, whose foundational base is television, radio and newspapers, but as a flat, networked sea in which are interspersed a series of 'hubs' which represent a particular brand or community around which a specific audience interest can be built. Each of these entities will have connections to others through social networks, meaningful connections between them being drawn through a series of 'likes', 'recommends', '+1s', 'follows' and re-tweets. Audience 'reach' still matters but rather than being based on viewing or sales figures what matters is the inter-connectedness of each entity; where they sit in the networked sea. The more connective capacity they possess, the greater their 'amplifying' power and influence. The landscape is unstructured and in a state of permanent evolution. As such it represents a significant communications challenge but may also afford many new opportunities for innovation and experimentation.

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For Parliament the challenge in this fragmented, networked media sea is to clearly delineate the institution's strategic communication objectives – and the objectives of each communication initiative to be undertaken – and then identify the community interest hubs and connections that will best enable it to meet those objectives at any one time.

It has to tap into existing communities of interest and seed content and build relationships accordingly.

Television and radio will remain critical sources although the number of outlets for political news and information, particularly at the BBC, may be streamlined in response to budget reductions. Only those newspapers with a strong online presence may survive beyond the end of the decade which points to sites like *MailOnline*, the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* as being among the most influential and 'connected'. A core number of regional/local newspapers will likewise survive with an online presence, many of them linked to and drawing on niche geographically rooted blogs like londonist.com or hyperlocal community websites like KingsCrossEnvironment.com. Niche, specialist media outlets will remain a

core outlet for thematic, issue-driven material. Beyond this, the community hubs will vary considerably depending on the audience interest that is being targeted. Large community forums – for example, [Mumsnet](#) with its two million unique visitors per month – offer a relatively untapped audience though targeted content has to be carefully seeded to them to avoid the danger of early saturation or rejection.

The role of commercial news aggregators such as Dods and DeHavilland, as well as public affairs and PR companies, in this networked media sea, raise challenging questions for legislatures. These have a particular interest in important aspects of the work of Parliament and have significant 'amplification' potential in terms of their capacity to disseminate information, reports and AV content to their clients in both the public and private sectors. They need not equal traditional media outlets in terms of importance and reach, but in specialist niche policy areas they do have the capacity to seed parliamentary content through their networks. They should therefore be part of the network of community hubs with whom Parliament fosters links and relationships, and be sent information and material according to their interests and capacity to disseminate it. The Northern Ireland Assembly, for example, regularly sends their new video news releases to public affairs companies and Parliament could do the same.

Blogs

The key area of uncertainty is in relation to the blogosphere. Political blogs are part of the 'Westminster media sea' but most of them have only a limited connection to a broader audience. In a political engagement poll undertaken in January 2012, 46% of the public reported that they had viewed the politics section of the [BBC News](#) website at some point and 40% reported visiting the website of a broadsheet newspaper. In contrast, the highest rated political blog, [Conservative Home](#), had been viewed at some point by only 12% of the population. Other political blogs – [politics.co.uk](#); [PoliticsHome](#), [Left Foot Forward](#), [Labour List](#) and even [GuidoFawkes](#) – had all been viewed by 10% or fewer.⁹⁴ Given that political blogs tend to have a partisan angle, other sites in the mainstream media may be better sources for the targeting of general parliamentary news and information.

However, a number of specialist policy blogs, usually the product of single authors, are increasingly developing a profile and readership. These generally have no greater – indeed often smaller – readerships than the political blogs but they provide a more specialist outlet for the kind of niche, detailed policy-oriented issues that the more mainstream media outlets are not covering. For example, in the health sector there is the [Patientexperience.com](#); in the legal sector the [UKhumanrightsblog.com](#), [jackofkent](#), and the [policeinspectorblog](#); and in the economic/finance field [Tax Research UK](#). All have developed their own niche and loyal band of readers and, crucially, often attract a high number of comments from their readers, the quality of which also tends to be higher and

more acutely relevant to the issue being discussed than is often found on more general news sites.

As a further sign of the deepening convergence of old and new media outlets, some blog authors are expanding their influence through columns in newspaper outlets: Ben Goldacre, author of the [BadScience](#) blog is a leading example of this. In addition to his blog, and his *Guardian* column, he has 17,473 'likes' on Facebook and 264,469 followers on Twitter. By way of contrast, [Tax Research UK](#) has 16,880 followers on Twitter and 940 'likes' on Facebook; Iain Dale has 38,745 followers on Twitter and 775 'likes' on Facebook.⁹⁵ It is the multi-platform operation across convergent media streams that enhances Goldacre's connectivity and makes him a leading audience hub; but he is very much the exception not the rule.

As a consequence, **Parliament's communications approach will have to be much more granular and fine-grained than in the past, customising the flow of information to suit the particular interests of these community hub blogs.** Each one offers the opportunity not just for a one-directional flow of information but a two-way engagement, building partnerships on issues of mutual interest to facilitate committee inquiry consultations or other forms of public engagement. Those community hubs with influence are likely to change over time so the connections will have to be reviewed regularly. **Parliament will not have the resources to reach out to every one. Developing an understanding of the 'connectivity' of one audience hub compared to another and therefore the multiplier effect that seeding material to it can have will thus be a core way to prioritise activity, bearing in mind other strategic aims** such as focusing on Parliament's key audiences, whether that be young people or hard-to-reach groups. Beyond this, it must place strong emphasis on developing a proactive, promotional campaign dedicated to raising general awareness across all potential audiences of what material Parliament has, where, and how they can access it and use it themselves.

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New multi-platform working practices

At present, Parliament's media operation is based around two core areas: the work of committees and the corporate face of the organisation (Speaker and Commission/Lord Speaker/education and outreach etc.). The media teams are primarily focused on promoting content to the print and broadcast media and responding to their inquiries. Although there is, in theory, a degree of devolved online and social media activity, in practice online content and social media activity are an 'add on' to the communications operation rather than a core, integrated aspect of it. Too often, drafting interesting content for the website and priming activity on Twitter or Facebook is seen by clerks working on the business side of Parliament as of lesser importance than the drafting of reports or the preparation of a

press release, and is consequently perceived in some quarters as a junior administrative task rather than a fundamental aspect of modern communications that should be driven throughout the organisation as mainstream activity.

If Parliament is to be positioned to respond flexibly to the emerging trends in the digital era then its information, communication and outreach operations need to be overhauled in the same way that newsrooms have had to reform. **Each official needs to become a 'multi-platform' communicator ideally around an interest driven 'community' audience such as education, health, or science. The website should be the core communications medium from which Parliament's other communications outlets hang and draw their messages.** New skills will consequently need to be incorporated into the staff mix: for example, **consideration should be given to appointing a Community Team** (an editor plus a small number of co-ordinators) for each House or on a bi-cameral basis, to lead the new community hub approach. Embedded with relevant business and outward-facing service teams, their role, as at newspapers like the *Guardian*, would be to maintain two-way relationships with community hubs particularly through online and social media networks. If a community is to thrive, relationships between its constituent parts need to be tended and maintained. Parliament has had success in the past in developing links between committees and outlets like the *Local Government Chronicle* and MoneySavingExpert.com, but the value of these collaborations quickly deteriorates if some form of contact is not maintained. A community team could also work closely with Members and their staff to ensure up-to-date intelligence about these communities where relevant at a constituency or regional level.

Social media: transforming content into conversation and community⁹⁶

Westminster, like many other legislatures, has found an effective way to use Twitter, at least in broadcast mode. The emergence of a plethora of Twitter feeds reflecting different House services (outreach, education, archives, library, Hansard etc) in addition to the core UK Parliament and House of Lords feeds provides an opportunity to engage with interest groups around specialist aspects of the work of Parliament. Many of these feeds are in their infancy and lack the communication scale of the main @UKParliament feed (129,637 followers).⁹⁷ Whilst effective use of Twitter should not be predicated purely on numbers, there is nonetheless a fine balance to be struck: there is a risk that further increases in the number of Twitter feeds could fragment the audience and diminish the communications impact desired. One of the core advantages of Twitter is the 'amplifier' effect it can have if a feed is being followed and messages re-tweeted sufficiently by key opinion formers. The smaller and less influential the circle of followers, the less prospect there is that the message will be amplified.

⁹⁶ This draws on a description of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's social media strategy outline: 'Social media provides a platform from which content transforms into community', <http://www.noaa.gov/socialmedia/>

⁹⁷ Figure correct as at 20 March 2013.

Careful thought also needs to be given to how the audience for all of these feeds will be maintained given the parliamentary life-cycle: what communications, for example, will be tweeted when Parliament is in recess or electoral purdah? If committees want a presence on Twitter what happens to the specialist issue-driven audience if there are machinery of government changes and one area of policy is hived off into another area under a different committee remit?

Greater consideration also needs to be paid to whether the material that is being tweeted is what the audience on Twitter really wants. For example, the @CommonsHansard Twitter feed highlights when the day's record of proceedings is publicly available for both the Chamber and committees and may be a useful resource to some researchers. However, the information is hardly topical and timely as it emerges several hours after the events have taken place. Based on our discussions with journalists and other stakeholders, of far more timely impact and interest would be messages on a parliamentary feed that report voting results, highlight and explain unusual procedural developments, and announce not just that an urgent question will be taking place and why, but who will be speaking on both front benches about it. Above all, **there is space for Parliament to be more 'anticipatory' in its approach: to provide advance warning and foresight of interesting issues coming up and to seed links to relevant parliamentary content. Parliament is uniquely placed to provide this type of information: it has earliest access to it and the tweets will carry its imprimatur as a trusted, authoritative source.** This makes it more likely that it will be the information source that others re-tweet, thereby disseminating its information and news quickly across a range of networks.

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There is also room for Parliament to proactively insert itself into online political conversations without stepping over the line of neutrality. For example, when think tanks, research institutions or campaign groups publish something, Parliament could be tweeting links to relevant parliamentary material on its website – a committee report, an evidence session transcript, video recording, or a library briefing paper. Journalists on Twitter like Paul Waugh or Sam Coates regularly cross-reference material from other sources including their competitors: Parliament needs to be an active participant in these political conversations.

On the most topical issues of the day more effort should also be made to curate material from across Parliament about them, thereby creating an essential 'go to' resource hub for any person or organisation that is interested in it. At present, for example, it is possible to get to House of Commons material about phone hacking in one place but users have to dig down five layers into the parliamentary website to locate it via the business page, then the news page, then the crime-civil-law-justice and rights theme, then the privacy sub-heading where the viewer will finally alight on phone hacking via a further sub-heading. The access route is neither obvious nor quick; the best route to it is via Google Search where it is the top hit on the list. But on arrival what is provided is in effect a series of

links to the press notices that have been issued about phone hacking by two departmental select committees. What is needed is a topic page that curates in one location all the key reports, evidence sessions, parliamentary questions, and library briefing papers about the topic which can then be disseminated through social media networks. On House of Lords reform, for example, a curated topic page could have brought together in one place all the past reports on this issue alongside the most recent proposals, with links to other relevant material produced by government and other bodies. In this way **Parliament can insert itself into the debate in a legitimate and appropriate way, and add value to the political conversation by creating a useful pathway through what would otherwise be an avalanche of information.**

Using social media for engagement rather than in broadcast mode is a far more difficult challenge. In the House of Commons the Education Select Committee's #AskGove initiative and the Transport Committee's engagement with the cycling community (#AskCycleMinisters) are early examples of how it is feeling its way and indeed it is further ahead in this sphere than most other legislatures. However, engagement if done well is a resource intensive exercise and Parliament must be careful to calibrate what it can offer: if it stimulates public interest and participation it has a responsibility to be responsive to that interest. There is also a risk in placing all its engagement apples in the Twitter basket: it has a far smaller reach than Facebook, less news is shared on it (although more news is broken) and in many ways, given the number of politicians, journalists, campaigners and lobbyists on the site, it replicates the traditional Westminster bubble.

However, at present, Parliament is struggling to know what to do with Facebook. With the exception of a regular video link to Prime Minister's Questions the majority of content on the UK Parliament account relates to the visits, outreach and educational side of Parliament's work rather than Chamber or committee business but even this appears to be *ad hoc*. For example, the Speaker's 'Eminent Parliamentarians' lecture series was never mentioned in the 2012 posts. The number and regularity of posts made each month is also uneven, with sometimes a week passing between posts, and there is little or no interaction with those who comment on them. The site does not appear wedded to any coherent, systematic communications and engagement strategy. In contrast, the new House of Lords Facebook account, launched in November 2012, appears to place greater emphasis on House business and there are more posts each day and on a regular basis. When compared to the new Scottish Parliament Facebook feed, the UK Parliament also makes poor use of photographs and images and consequently its account is less visually appealing

Almost all legislatures are, like Westminster, unsure what to do with a Facebook presence. More personal and conversational in tone than Twitter, it requires a 'personality' and 'voice' that is difficult for a legislature to provide on a collective basis. The rabid tone of many of the comments posted on the site is also a concern; rather than two-way engagement it can easily lend itself to a one-way rant. The European Parliament utilises Facebook in a more



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the most often used words

Word cloud terms: States, decisions, European, Europe, union, political, means, national, Commission, countries, reform, economic, market, world, President, values, create, citizen, monetary, institutions, crisis, time, day, social, Treaty, Member, Honourable, debate, proposals, new, confidence, fairness, 109, 143, 226, 272, 297, 336, 259, 114, 150, 105, 241, 177, 68, 199, 154, 187, 119, 124, 136, 37, 101, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500.

European Parliament
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Should EU leaders be minding their language? Our graphic shows which words were used the most often in yesterday's debate on what the EU should be doing next, but have they been talking about the right things? Share and let us know.

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European Parliament and NATO Facebook pages

NATO shared NATO's photo. 25 September

Did you know more children are in school than ever before in Afghanistan?
| Did you know more children are in school than ever before in Afghanistan's history?



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[Ovi Holy, Paula Tuziak, Sakis Osfp and 302 others like this.](#)

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innovative manner than most legislatures: it too places greater emphasis on what might be considered 'soft' rather than 'hard' news but it curates the content in more creative ways and is more conversational in tone, although the nature of real engagement remains limited.

NATO is, like Parliament, a complex multi-stakeholder organisation that attracts its fair share of negative and abusive comments. But it has a strong presence on the network and has developed a communications strategy to take advantage of the opportunities offered. Almost all posts have some form of multi-media content and the type of material posted conveys the full range of NATO's work. Events, speeches and press conferences are streamed live and press statements are often released first on the network. It also uses its Facebook presence to educate and engage: posts regularly begin 'Did you know...the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have a substantial training and education base?' or 'Did you know... more children are in school than ever before in Afghanistan?'

The House of Commons has had some success with Facebook, notably when it used the site to facilitate contributions to the Health Committee's web forum on PIP breast implants. Here, it was able to target a pre-existing community of users who were keen to provide personal testimony about their experiences. But there are other targeted ways in which Parliament could use Facebook more effectively. A committee could, for example, experiment with the use of polls. As with the Twitter #AskGove experiment, a similar consultation about questions to a witness or the scope of an inquiry could be discussed on the network. If desired, a more tailored approach could be pursued through Facebook groups designed for 250 or fewer participants with an online feedback group recruited to test the best methods to manage comments and secure genuinely useful feedback. Committees that want to reach specific demographic, geographic or interest groups could also use Facebook to advertise their inquiries and call for evidence. Staffordshire Police, for example, have made effective use of Facebook adverts to target information about escaped convicts they think are in certain locations. If a community of interest that Parliament wishes to engage with can be identified, defined and targeted, then Parliament should take advantage of Facebook to reach a broader range of people in this way. Given the number and profile of Facebook users it is likely that fairly representative samples of those under 55 years of age can be reached via the network. There are concerns about Facebook in relation to privacy and any engagement would have to be managed carefully, but precisely because Parliament does not have a financial or data interest in the relationship – purely one of knowledge exchange and engagement with the audience – it could become a strong brand on the network as a 'trusted and authoritative' news and information source. **It is estimated that more than a fifth of the web is linked to Facebook in some way; it is a sphere of activity that Parliament cannot afford to vacate.**⁹⁸ A number of legislatures, including the Scottish Parliament, are actively developing new social media strategies and thinking about how to develop their Facebook presence: their approach will

therefore be one to watch and learn from in the future.

Other platforms to keep an eye on

Google+: This network has not yet taken off and remains a long way from challenging Twitter and Facebook but having secured 60 million users globally in its first six months it is the one to watch (even if many of those users have been automatically enrolled). Google have the resources to commit to its development and have indicated that it will be included in their search engine algorithm, a factor that is likely to drive an increasing volume of users to the network. If it takes off, it may offer two advantages over

Facebook for Parliament:

it is particularly focused on engaging opinion formers and it has a video 'hangout' capacity to enable people to meet together online at any time.



Google hangout (© Google)

Chocolate company Cadbury has integrated Google+ Hangouts as part of its product development and promotion strategy. It has hosted online discussions

with its brand ambassador, and Olympic swimmer, Rebecca Adlington, as well as hosting a 'Tasters Circle' for a smaller number of invited followers to talk about its products with a developer, to sample the products, and to comment on their own preferences. 'What's different about a Hangout is that it's eye-to-eye, face-to-face contact' according to the company's community manager Jerry Daykin. 'We can't directly connect with every person who buys our chocolate, but we can connect with some of them. Then, more people see the Hangout and feel they're part of the experience. It's a new frontier.' Since hosting the hangouts Cadbury has seen its follower base grow by 154,000.*

Should the network grow, this might be a useful tool to enable parliamentary committees to engage key stakeholder groups in online discussions and share them via YouTube. **The question for Parliament is how it should pitch its online brand: people care more about democracy than they do politics.**

Pinterest: A virtual pinboard, this site allows users to 'organise and share things you love' primarily through photographs and other still visual forms. It's not an obvious

choice for political news and information from the business side of Parliament's work but it is suited to the wider public engagement strategy around the institution's role as a World Heritage site and its accompanying art and other treasures. It is widely tipped to be the next big social network and is particularly popular with women (19% of all online women in the USA use the site).**

* <http://services.google.com/fh/files/blogs/cadburyhoacasestudy2.pdf>

** <http://mashable.com/2012/09/14/women-prefer-pinterest/>

The content gap: audio-visual strategy

Video is one of the growth areas in online activity, a trend that is likely to sharpen and become more urgent as ownership of tablet devices expands. At present however, Parliament is woefully ill-placed to deal with this trend: such are the broadcast arrangements that it does not even have its own film footage of the recent, historic visits of President Obama and Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi for use on its own website and in its education materials.

Parliament already has an in-house photographer and **the appointment of an AV media officer(s) is now a pressing need to enable Parliament to produce rich in-house content to populate its website which can then be disseminated to a variety of audiences via its social networks where posts that include photo or video content increase engagement by 100%.**⁹⁹ Beyond this however, there is much else that needs to be done. Each sitting day, up to 70 hours of live coverage of the Chamber and committees in both Houses is captured but only the www.parliamentlive.tv site shows it all and audiences are small. The BBC captures a portion of it on BBC Parliament and BBC Democracy Live but a vast amount of material across many subject areas is simply never viewed or re-used. The archive, for example, is a treasure trove – BritishPathe¹⁰⁰ has shown how value can be unlocked from such material – but it has not been digitised and so largely cannot be used either by Parliament or any other organisation.

There is a potentially large audience for current and historic material, but not on Parliament's own website: the **material needs to be proactively disseminated and shared to sites where it can be contextualised to meet the needs of that particular audience interest.** Since changes were made to the parliamentary broadcasting contract last year there is now nothing to stop Parliament having a free hand in terms of how it wants to deliver current content and on what terms. It could and should be disseminating content to external sites in order to engage wider audiences with the work of Parliament. However, there are two challenges to be overcome: infrastructure and the editorialisation of content.

At present, even existing demand is being choked off because the broadcast quality

feed can supply only four or five concurrent live feeds which means that once the main broadcasters have decided which select committee feeds they want each day there is little capacity available to anyone else. As a consequence, regional television, for example, can lose out.

Parliament also lacks a compressed digital feed to enable a wide range of online sites to take material. National newspaper websites currently pay the broadcasters to facilitate access for them so that they can live-stream coverage on their websites. A six month trial has been established to set up a digital feed for the newspapers and if successful this would address the needs of many of the national media outlets. It will not, however, address the needs of sub-national outlets for which there may be a considerable audience for this material such as regional/local newspaper websites, hyperlocal sites, blogs, and community forum sites, often with large viewing audiences, such as [Mumsnet](#). These generally lack the technical infrastructure to take a broadcast quality feed and in most instances won't be able to afford the cost of a digital feed particularly if they cannot overlay the coverage with advertising to monetise the material. There are already examples of Parliament missing out on coverage because of this problem. The House of Commons Backbench Business Committee debate on Hillsborough, for example, was covered live by Liverpool Football Club TV. The *Liverpool Echo* newspaper might also have liked to live-stream it on their website but was unable to do so because they lacked the infrastructure for a broadcast feed and didn't have the resource budget to pay for a digital one.

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Rather than live-streaming entire debates or committee sessions some websites might be interested in a two to three minute story about a local community issue, or a specialist niche subject of interest to their audience, as well as the major set-piece parliamentary events such as Prime Minister's Questions or the Budget debate. Westminster Hall debates – which are rarely covered in any form of media but which often have a strong local/regional or specialist subject element to them – or balloted House of Lords debates would be prime material for these sub-national online outlets. To take one example, the 13 June 2012 Westminster Hall debate on Railways in Kettering might seem a rather narrow subject but in fact dealt with the broader question of the upgrading and electrification of the Midland main line, a critical issue of strategic economic investment of interest to many residents and businesses along the proposed route. Were it possible to cut and contextualise a three-minute video news release for distribution to local online news sites, blogs and forums it is the kind of material that might have been taken up by, for example, the *Northamptonshire Telegraph*, or specialist niche sites like *Railway Magazine* that has a subscriber list of just under 37,000 people.¹⁰¹ Looking ahead, the HS2 railway line bill will attract huge interest from constituents affected by the proposed route and campaigners on both sides of the debate. Providing the options of live-stream or contextualised video news releases of some of the major debates on the bill may be of interest to organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. With a magazine subscriber

base of 608,851 it has a bigger audience than either the *Economist*, *Vogue*, or *Good Housekeeping*.¹⁰² With an audience on this scale any investment of time in promoting specialist or niche content to it is likely to have a better value-added amplifier effect than will be derived from promoting such content to more traditional media outlets.

For some outlets provision of a video stream will be enough to persuade them to pick up some of the parliamentary content and run it live on their sites. However, most online sites, whatever their provenance, will want some contextualisation which requires an editorial approach, but one which they themselves may not be able to resource. Parliament therefore needs to think about how this challenge might be overcome.

Case study: The Northern Ireland Assembly's use of AV content

The Northern Ireland Assembly has been producing video news releases for some time, curating content particularly around committee inquiry recommendations that can then be pushed out to local media and stakeholders for online streaming. They have found that there is a willing audience for this material among stakeholders and community groups, but less so among the traditional media sites, national or local. Anecdotally, this may be because the content of the video is deemed too 'soft' for press outlets; Assembly staff are less likely than professional journalists to ask a confrontational question of those featured in the videos. The use of AV content has led to an increase in traffic to their own website and had a multiplier effect in their relationships with stakeholders for the future. Whereas a traditional text based press release would generally result in a one-day media hit, the use of AV facilitates greater re-use.

The House of Lords, which has piloted video news releases for some of its committees, has already demonstrated the potential interest and multiplier effect of this approach at Westminster. Having filmed several committee chairs talking about their inquiries and placed the material on YouTube, mainstream news outlets – the *Guardian* and the *Today* programme – have utilised the material, repurposing it for web-content and audioclips.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has also begun producing its own web-based programme, *Assembly Extra*. It provides viewers with an insight into how the Assembly works with a mix of informative features, interviews and behind-the-scenes pieces. Each film is about 15 minutes long but is also provided in Bitesize clips and is disseminated to journalists, lobbyists, public affairs specialists, civic society and education stakeholders. Seven programmes were broadcast in 2012. The last programme of the year showcased the role of a Committee chair, went behind the scenes to look at the work of the Research and Information Service, and showed viewers the preparations made for Christmas at the Assembly, including the erection and decoration of the Christmas tree outside the Parliament building. Previous programmes have explained the legislative process, explored the work of the Speaker, and taken a peek behind

the scenes to watch the Assembly broadcasting team and the Hansard reporters at work. One programme visited the Balmoral Show 'to outline why it is important for Committees and MLAs to meet stakeholders and hear their views', showed viewers how to identify and contact their MLA, and explored the artwork on display in the Great Hall. Assembly Extra does not concentrate on the business of the day and information that's readily available on the website such as what's going on in committees. It is designed to take viewers behind the scenes to those places they wouldn't normally see. In 2010 the BBC also broadcast a fly-on-the wall documentary about the Assembly, 'House on the Hill', which was very popular with viewers and highlighted their interest in finding out more about how the institution works behind the scenes.

NEWS AND MEDIA > Assembly Extra > Bitesize

NEWS AND MEDIA

Assembly Round Up

Press Releases

Assembly Extra

Media Operational Notices

Video Archive

Social Media

Video Press Releases

Press Enquiries

Information for Journalists

Media Handbook

Assembly Extra Bitesize

Only have a few minutes? We've broken down Assembly Extra into friendly bitesize chunks.

Programme 1



School Report

Programme 2



Meet the Speaker

Programme 3



The Official Report



Bills and Laws



Committee Inquiries



Visiting & Tours



Behind the scenes



Event Montage



Commonwealth & St Patrick's Day

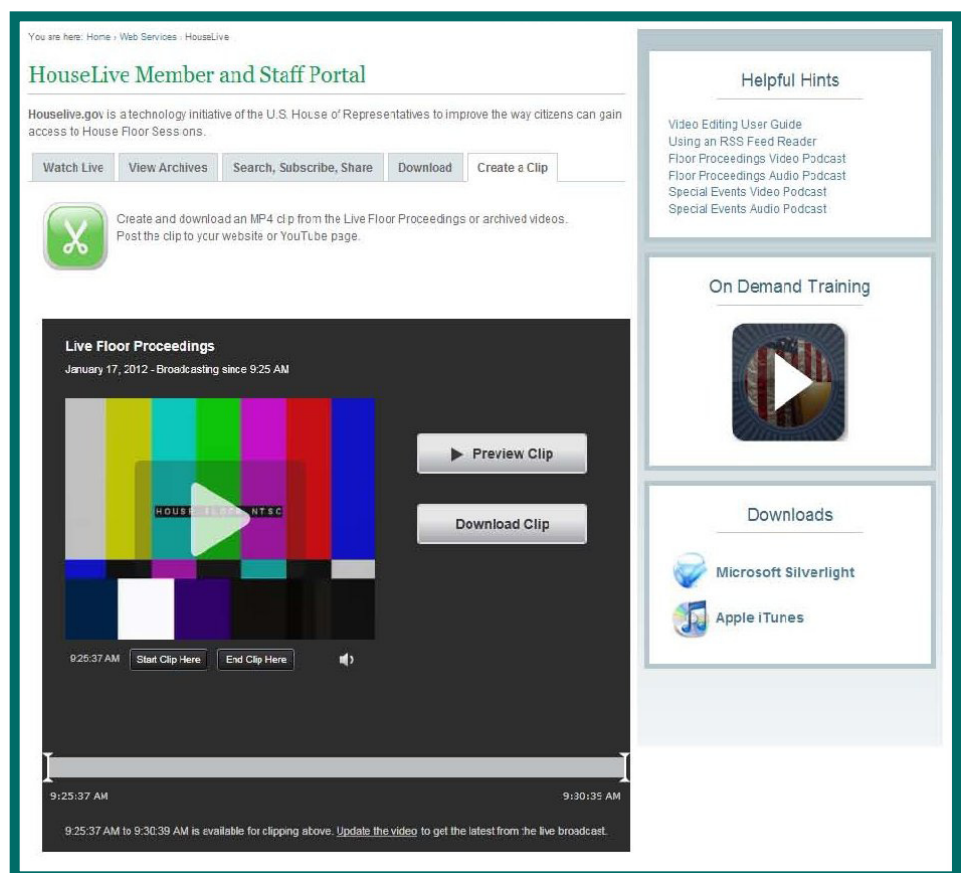
Northern Ireland Assembly, <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/News-and-Media/Assembly-Extra/Bitesize/>

If the technological infrastructure were provided, Members and their staff could cut video clips and stream them on their own websites as well as distribute them to their press and community stakeholder contacts. In the USA, the House of Representatives has introduced a HouseLive video clipping tool that allows Members to easily cut clips (in .mp4 format) from the Chamber and committee debates for dissemination to their constituents and media.¹⁰³ A similar system in Parliament would enable Members of both Houses to do the same, thereby significantly expanding

the volume and range of material being disseminated. However, whilst this would increase the volume of online video being streamed and shared, it would not be in the form of **contextualised video news releases** of the kind that are more likely to be taken up on third-party sites. For this, an editorial role is required. Parliament's own in-house staff could take on this role; as media professionals they should be trusted to know what material will be of interest

to which audiences and promote it appropriately. On occasion, and to inject greater attention to the product, a 'guest editor' for the day or week could be appointed to make decisions about the coverage. There will undoubtedly be some resistance to the idea that parliamentary officials should decide what constitutes news each week but **across the institution staff already have to make editorial judgements in order to make the sheer volume of information about issues in Parliament accessible to those outside**. In the House of Commons Library, for example, researchers necessarily have to pick and choose the most interesting and salient points made by Members during debates in order to evidence the arguments in research papers and briefing notes. In the House of Lords, officials have been providing contextual background information about upcoming ballot debates to the press in order to provide greater clarity about the likely content of and participation in the debates.

If however, concerns about editorialisation are insurmountable, then an alternative approach would be to experiment and test what alternative production models might work. On a demand-led basis, an independent producer could be appointed, provided with the feed and office space and left to get on with promoting the material and developing their own sustainable revenue model from it. Alternatively, regional/local newspapers, magazines and other larger blogs, aggregation sites and forums (e.g. Huffington Post, PoliticsHome, or DodsOnline) could be approached to see if there would be any interest in investing in the collective appointment of a video editor to produce edited clips for their sites on a regular basis. If sufficient partners could be found, in exchange for a few thousand



US Congress, HouseLive video clip creator



European Parliament Facebook page

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pounds a year they would be guaranteed a steady stream of high quality video content. As with the broadcasting contract, whilst the video editor would be independent, their work would come under the auspices of the Director of Parliamentary Broadcasting for quality control purposes.

Whatever the preferred route, ultimately **Parliament needs to start prioritising digital material which means actively dedicating resources to it.** The appointment of an AV media officer(s) should be done sooner rather than later with a clear remit to work to improve the website content. Investment in the broadcasting budget over the coming years needs to ensure wider access and better value for money, particularly given that much of the broadcast coverage is never seen. A key question is then whether Parliament should also invest to cover the bandwidth costs to enable third-party online sites to take its material and if so whether this should only apply to non-commercial sites? This is a more complex question but given the economic challenges particularly facing the newspaper sector, there is a suggestion that increasingly, in order to ensure plurality and a range of media voices, some form of 'information subsidy' will have to be provided. Supporting the infrastructure costs to enable third-parties to take parliamentary content would be a form of mutually beneficial 'information subsidy'.

Parliament also needs to revise its broadcasting rules. At present select committee regional visits are governed by the same rules as those for Westminster sittings. This means that two cameras are required at regional visits and no cut-away reaction shots are permitted in the film. This is an unattractive and costly proposition for television

companies. As a consequence, some committees have not received as much coverage for their regional visits as might have been the case were a more flexible approach adopted. This shortcoming is compounded by the fact that external visits are not filmed for web-streaming on the Parliament website (either live or at a later date) and the transcripts are not produced until days later in most cases. In a communications environment where the speed, topicality and repurposing of content is paramount, this situation diminishes the value derived from regional visits.

Multi-media storytelling: convergence of text, data, audio and video

To accompany the improved use of AV material, a new approach to other parliamentary outputs is required, particularly Hansard and datasets. In the same way that newspapers have had to cope with the convergence of text, audio, and video, so too **Parliament needs to think about how the convergence of its outputs can be marshalled in order to provide an all-round multi-media experience of stories of interest before, during and after the event.** Immediacy is increasingly what matters: the provision of reliable information in real-time, at speed. Yet, at best, users have to wait three hours for an initial Hansard transcript to be made available and often select committees do not release relevant material (e.g. written evidence statements) before an oral evidence inquiry session with key witnesses. **The official record – in the Chambers or committees – could be live-logged rather than reported after the event and the XML (eXtensible Markup Language) should be time-coded, tagged and key-worded to enable people to access relevant material more quickly.** If short pieces of video of up to two minutes duration could then be made available, copyright-free with attribution, to users to both download and embed, take-up of parliamentary material would be much higher, particularly among political bloggers. The new Open Parliament Licence is an important step in the right direction but it needs to go further and apply to photographs and video. Parliament has been risk-averse when it comes to making copyright-free video content available, largely because Members have wanted to avoid it being abused, particularly for satire purposes. In practice, however, any blogger that wants to run a 30 second humorous or satirical clip depicting events in one of the Chambers or committees can do so. Some bloggers are recording broadcast proceedings around the clock so that they can 'rip' a short piece for use on their own site if they wish. The current arrangements are not stopping abuse (of which there is actually very little) but are choking off legitimate and useful dissemination of video content among a wider array of potential online users.

Datasets are also a coveted resource and data driven journalism is a growth industry. There is considerable interest in Parliament's own procedural data such as voting records, attendance lists, expenses, or the number of amendments made to each bill. Above all, what journalists, bloggers and researchers want is datasets released in XML or CSV (Comma-Separated Values) format, with automated feeds and APIs (Application

Programming Interface). Parliament is currently engaged in a major project to curate and make available an array of datasets through a new 'data.parliament.uk' portal. But in addition to the procedural data there is a vast amount of material provided through written questions and deposited papers that largely goes unnoticed each day. **These materials could also be opened up through alternative forms of presentation, content tagging and cross-referencing rather than the current restricted offer in PDF files. Being able to 'follow' certain key phrases or words would facilitate much better access for those interested in niche subjects.**

Finally, the growth in smartphone and tablet ownership is leading consumers to place an increased emphasis on elegant design and the physicality of products, all reinforced by navigation through voice, gesture and touch. It is not enough for content to be intellectually rich it must also have a rich look and feel in the digital realm. Greater thought therefore needs to be paid not just to where Parliament presents its news and information but how it presents it. For example, traditional-style committee reports, in two-colour, with a photograph on the front in rare cases, and presented in PDF form or HTML are all going to struggle in the tablet age. No Parliament has cracked this challenge and very few have yet begun to think about it: most, like Westminster, are focused on efficiency and productivity strategies to deliver business papers to Members via mobile and tablet technology in order to reduce paper and save costs. **Report design is not an issue of pressing urgency and certainly not a top priority for change, but increasingly, if staff move to multi-platform working and place greater emphasis on website and social media content development, then applying a digital mindset to presentation of committee reports must follow. In the interim, producing full colour PDFs, hyperlinking references, and offering some visualisation of data where appropriate would be a useful step forward.**

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Building and resourcing a digital identity

If Parliament is to flourish in the digital age it has to assert its role and relevance in the swirling political debate, both on and offline. Few people are interested in Parliament as a whole; they are interested in aspects of its work, in issues and micro-themes. But finding the information that might interest them – either through deliberate search or serendipitous web surfing – is always going to be difficult given the sheer volume of material available. When they are overwhelmed people tend to lack focus: **Parliament can thus derive a form of soft power from its communications, by helping people to 'distinguish valuable information from background clutter'**.¹⁰⁴ What matters is not the volume of communications and the number of devices and networks on which it is disseminated, but the quality of the content, the targeting of dissemination and the way in which it is packaged so that others can access and re-use it. But to achieve this Parliament needs to establish how to give voice to its multiple identities; mainstream a digital mindset

in all areas of its work; and augment and prioritise its resources.

In an online, networked world in which people are overwhelmed with information and don't know what and who to trust, Parliament could develop a stronger digital identity or brand in the political domain by leveraging to greater advantage the institutional **neutrality, gravitas, and authority of both Houses**. Rather than a 'drag' or 'constraint' on its communications and social network engagement, Parliament's neutrality and gravitas could, if handled adroitly, be the making of its online presence. In the same way that BBC News Online is the most trusted and authoritative source for general news, **Parliament could and should be one of the most trusted sources for high-quality political and public policy information**. In anyone's multi-source consumption of politics and policy news, Parliament should be one of those sources, providing a window on what many currently perceive to be a secret world. Both Houses have the content at their disposal to do this: what is lacking is linked communications strategies and infrastructure to bring the individual building blocks of multi-sensory content – text, sound, image, video – together in a constant stream of compelling news and information packages to convey the work of Parliament in all its aspects.

Operating in a complex multi-stakeholder environment, legislatures are traditionally slow to adapt to change: steeped in the value of neutrality, risk-averse and hierarchical and bureaucratic in structure, culture often trumps strategy. **Parliament does face complex constitutional, staffing, and stakeholder issues that are quite different to those found in many other institutions but these are not insurmountable**. The proposals set out in this report, if pursued, would challenge people to think and work differently, but they would not infringe on traditionally understood concepts such as editorial balance, neutrality and constitutional relations between both Houses and between Members and staff. They fit with the grain of Parliament's culture. Parliament needs to reform the way it works so that what it does can be conveyed to the world more quickly; but this should never be at the expense of accuracy. It needs to be more adept at packaging and promoting information about itself in order to stimulate public interest and engagement but not at the expense of being perceived as lacking dignity.

Its unique selling point is its authoritative place at the apex of our democracy but at present it does not get a 'hearing' commensurate with its role. To rectify this both staff and Members need to adopt a mindset that places new emphasis on the maintenance and development of the institution's digital presence and adapts structures and working practices accordingly. But changes to working patterns cannot disguise the fact that the current resourcing of Parliament's communication operations is inadequate for the challenges ahead. The institution's ability to get a 'hearing' in the public square is directly connected to its ability to resource the development of proactive, linked communications strategies in both the House of

Commons and the House of Lords, targeting both traditional and digital media.

At present the House of Commons has six media officers resourcing 39 committees and the temporary Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards and a further six staff (including a photographer and assistant) resourcing the House's corporate activity including the Speaker's office, the House of Commons Commission and the education and public engagement services. In the House of Lords three media officers service all its committees and corporate activity. There are a further 20 staff and two contractors deployed on a bi-cameral basis to support Parliament's web, intranet and social media services with further support (up to seven staff) from PICT's web development team. Additional resources to buttress communications are also deployed across both Houses through the broadcasting, education, public engagement and outreach teams and via some committee clerks.

Placing an exact figure on the number of staff deployed to support Parliament's outward-facing communications activity is inevitably a fraught process given differing interpretations of what constitutes 'communications'. However, whatever the total figure, it is relatively small, particularly when compared to what other organisations of similar size and influence can deploy, and especially when compared to the resources available within government departments. Again, it is difficult to be absolute about the resources the government devotes to communications given the challenges of interpretation in relation to roles and responsibilities, but even the most cursory examination of the Civil Service White Book shows that the two institutions are operating in wholly different leagues.

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Yet Parliament has a constitutional responsibility to scrutinise and hold government to account. An important way in which it does this, and is seen to do so, is through public communication of and engagement with its work. Parliament's work – particularly that of its committees – is increasingly visible and influential, but it is still crowded out of the broad political debate. **Given the serious communications disparity factor between the executive and Parliament it should not be a surprise that so many members of the public do not understand the difference between the two institutions.**¹⁰⁵

On the current resource base it is not possible for Parliament to develop the close relationships and collaborations with the array of general and specialist journalists, policy experts, and community hub networks that are necessary to flourish in the digital environment in the future. **The aim should not be just an increase in coverage but the fostering of a more informed perspective among key opinion formers and stakeholders:** even a small increase in resources dedicated to outward-facing communications would allow for a greater investment of time in providing more focused, higher quality briefings and multi-media content packages. The House of Commons Liaison Committee has recently recommended that a modest increase in media resources be made available to committees and similar consideration should be given to resources for the

House as a whole.¹⁰⁶

These proposals do not require a significant augmentation of existing resources but a modest long-term investment in several AV editorial staff, a small Community Team and some broadcasting infrastructure. Some investment in on-going training and professional development will also be required in order to devolve responsibility for the production, packaging and dissemination of multi-media information and content to a wider range of staff. Short-term staff secondments to some of the larger corporate organisations and NGOs that have developed a strong digital presence should be considered. Similar secondments or shadowing opportunities with the devolved legislatures – particularly the Northern Ireland Assembly – should also be pursued. **Together, such a package of investment could deliver real democratic value for the future;** helping to enhance public knowledge, understanding and engagement with the core institution of our representative democracy.

Appendix: Demographic Differences

Gender, age and social class are all important drivers of political engagement. It is therefore important to understand how these demographics currently influence access to media and possible trends for the future.

Age

Young people, particularly those under 24 years of age, are more likely to engage with a broader range of technology and be early adopters of new devices or applications than are older citizens aged 55 and above. The gap is narrowing in some areas – particularly basic internet access – but older people remain slow adopters of new technology. Sixty-four percent of those aged 65-74 now have home internet access (a rise of 9 percentage points in a year),¹⁰⁷ and 68% have a mobile phone (compared to just 47% five years ago) but only 2% have a smartphone.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, only 6% own an eReader, and ownership of tablets is equally low.¹⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, then, just 4% of this age group use social networks regularly;¹¹⁰ they are much more likely to access information through traditional mediums (69% of those aged 75+ read a newspaper, compared to 53% of those under 34 years of age) and are more likely to be heavy consumers of television and radio than younger age groups.¹¹¹

Young people watch less TV (61%) in order to access news, but more online (88%) than those aged over 45.¹¹² The age difference is even more acute with radio: only 22% of young people claim to listen to radio news bulletins compared to 55% of those aged 45 and above.¹¹³ However, although younger people consume less television overall they are more likely to access a broader variety of content. They are also heavy users of online video sites: 35% of 16-24 year olds visit sites like YouTube at least once a week (compared to 25% of 25-34 year olds and the 15% national average).¹¹⁴ In line with their role as early adopters of new technology, they are also more likely than older age groups to use a wider range of devices in order to access that content, particularly a smartphone. For example, 98% of 16-24 year olds own a mobile phone of some kind and two-thirds of them have a smartphone; unsurprisingly they are therefore particularly intense users of data.¹¹⁵ Younger

107 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.13.

108 *Ibid.*, p.50.

109 *Ibid.*, p.71.

110 *Ibid.*, p.35.

111 *Ibid.*, p.49.

112 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.23.

113 *Ibid.*

114 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.57.

115 *Ibid.*, p.50.

age groups are consequently more likely to access news via their mobile phone than any other age group. Among those aged 25-34, 27% do so, as do 22% of 16-24 year olds and 20% of those in the 35-44 age bracket. In contrast, only 7% of 45-54 year olds and 2% of those aged 55 and above do so.¹¹⁶

Younger age groups are also heavy users of social networking (73% of them do so daily)¹¹⁷ with 62% using their mobile phone for this purpose at least once a week, placing them significantly ahead of the national average (29%) and even those in the next age range above them (53% of 25-34 year olds).¹¹⁸ Younger people are much more likely to share a link (21%) or comment on a news story via a social network (17%) than they are on a traditional news site (7%).¹¹⁹ However, almost half of 16-24 year olds (49%) also continue to read a newspaper or magazine in print form; although many of them do not personally pay for it but pick it up around the house, from family or friends.¹²⁰

Tablet devices tend to be more the preserve of those aged 35-44 (20% market penetration in the last year) and those aged 45-54 (16% ownership).¹²¹ However, these age groups are also most likely to have children who are of an age to use a tablet device and 85% of those with children aged 16 or under claim that their offspring have used their tablet at some point in the last year.¹²² Indeed, 16% of all households with children now own a tablet device.¹²³ Conversely, tablet owners who are aged 34 or below are much less likely to share their tablet with fellow members of their household: only 29% claim to do so.¹²⁴

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Social Class

Given the cost involved it is unsurprising that tablet ownership is greatest among professionals with incomes of £30,000 (22%) and above and those in the AB social classes (19%).¹²⁵ At the opposite end of the spectrum those in social classes DE are more likely to use a games console than a mobile device, laptop or desktop PC. The class difference consequently also exhibits itself in relation to news access: those in the C1 lower middle class category are more likely to access news via a mobile phone (38%), whereas accessing news on tablet devices is more apparent among those in the higher AB social classes (43%).¹²⁶

Internet use across all income groups has increased a little in the last few years but in 2011 those in the highest income groups were more than twice as likely to use the internet

116 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.39.

117 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.5.

118 *Ibid.*, p.57.

119 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.49.

120 *Ibid.*, p.23.

121 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.7.

122 *Ibid.*, p.68.

123 *Ibid.*, p.61.

124 *Ibid.*, p.68.

125 *Ibid.*, p.61.

126 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.40.

than those in the lowest income groups (99% versus 43%).¹²⁷ What is unclear at present is whether, if prices for mobile and tablet devices fall in the years ahead, these differences will continue to hold true or whether penetration across all social classes and among lower income groups will be achieved.

Gender

Women are likely, on average, to spend more time on social networks than are men; conversely, men are likely to spend 300% more time watching online videos than are women.¹²⁸ Men are consequently much more likely to use video as a source for news (47%) than are women (32%).¹²⁹ However, the demographic profile of Facebook users skews equally as heavily in favour of women (57%) compared to men (43%).¹³⁰ Smartphone (55%) and tablet usage (60%) are also more male dominated than general computer news usage.¹³¹

127 W. Dutton & G. Black (2011), *Oxford Internet Surveys, Next Generation Users: The Internet in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford Internet Institute), p.17.
128 OFCOM, *Communications Market Report 2012*, July 2012, p.271.
129 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.42.
130 Kantar Media (2012), 'Measuring News Consumption and Attitudes', June 2012, p.39.
131 N. Newman (ed.) (2012), *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the Future of News* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), p.40.

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A plethora of reports and datasets about the role and function of the media, both now and in the future is now available, particularly as a result of the Leveson Inquiry. Each one adopts a different methodology, sample size and question terminology. For this report we have therefore chosen to utilise just three or four key statistical sources. Produced by respected research bodies these have been relied on in part because, as longitudinal studies, they offer the possibility of future tracking and benchmarking should Parliament wish to revisit these issues in future years. **To facilitate such a study, Parliament might consider a university partnership to co-sponsor a PhD student to undertake such a tracking and benchmarking exercise in the future.**

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