

PROOF COVER SHEET

Author(s): Toby Miller
Article title: EDITORIAL
Article no: CSID 754119
Enclosures: 1) Query sheet
2) Article proofs

Dear Author,

1. Please check these proofs carefully. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author to check these and approve or amend them. A second proof is not normally provided. Taylor & Francis cannot be held responsible for uncorrected errors, even if introduced during the production process. Once your corrections have been added to the article, it will be considered ready for publication.

Please limit changes at this stage to the correction of errors. You should not make insignificant changes, improve prose style, add new material, or delete existing material at this stage. Making a large number of small, non-essential corrections can lead to errors being introduced. We therefore reserve the right not to make such corrections.

For detailed guidance on how to check your proofs, please see <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/production/checkingproofs.asp>.

2. Please review the table of contributors below and confirm that the first and last names are structured correctly and that the authors are listed in the correct order of contribution. This check is to ensure that your name will appear correctly online and when the article is indexed.

| Sequence | Prefix | Given name(s) | Surname | Suffix |
|----------|--------|---------------|---------|--------|
| 1 | | Toby | Miller | |

Queries are marked in the margins of the proofs.

AUTHOR QUERIES

General query: You have warranted that you have secured the necessary written permission from the appropriate copyright owner for the reproduction of any text, illustration, or other material in your article. (Please see <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/preparation/permission.asp>.) Please check that any required acknowledgements have been included to reflect this.

No Queries

EDITORIAL

The new freedoms

5 *Bourgeois* economists claim that cell phones have streamlined markets in the Global South, enriching people in zones where banking and economic information are scarce thanks to the provision of market data. Exaggerated claims include ‘the complete elimination of waste’ and massive reductions of poverty and corruption through the empowerment of individuals (Jensen, 2007). This utopianism has seen a comprehensive turn in research away from unequal infrastructural and cultural exchange towards an extended dalliance with new technology and its supposedly innate capacity to endow users with transcendence (Ogan et al., 2009). Massive publicity was generated when Kelvin Doe, a 15-year-old Sierra Leonean, visited MIT in 2012. Doe had constructed a functioning radio station from *detritus* he had found in trash cans. More than two million on-line viewings of a video about him in the week to 21 November that year testified to the appeal of this tale (Lieberman, 2012; Hudson, 2012).

10
15
20 What a brand new day this is. But in William Gibson’s novel *Pattern Recognition*, Hubertus Bigend, founder of the Blue Ant advertising agency, says life is changing so quickly that ‘[w]e have only risk management’ (2003, p. 57). Those lapsed sacerdotal zealots of the new media, Chris Anderson and Michael Wolff (2010) of *Wired* magazine, say the web is dead because its social networks and software applications are supplanting the old fantasy of an open frontier with a new hegemony of guides and leaders operating inside a small number of institutions. And another former true believer, Andrew Keen, argues that the internet generates a cacophony of noise and ignorance rather than quality and knowledge. He is equally aghast at what the web has become (2007, p. 12).

25
30
35
40
45 It’s easy to mock Keen as an elitist who fails to appreciate the revolutionary qualities of new technology. It’s not so easy to prove him wrong. Consider the mad opposition to infant immunization that has gathered pace among superstitious segments of the US population and dominates YouTube videos and responses on the topic. This is just one of countless examples of perilous medical misinformation that circulate irresponsibly on the service (Keelan, Pavri-Garcia, Tomlinson, & Wilson, 2007). As fewer and fewer media outlets become available to them, tobacco companies turn voraciously to the internet. Medical researchers are concerned at evidence of product placement via ‘smoking fetish videos.’ Aimed at under-age drug users under the *soubriquet* of ‘community engagement,’ they draw massively positive reactions. Many old TV commercials for cigarettes are also slyly archived there, new life breathed into their emphysemic messages (Freeman & Chapman, 2007). Similarly, new magical freedoms associated with cell-phone usage have created new dangerous nightmares for public-health professionals, as prostitutes at risk of sexually-transmitted disease increasingly communicate with clients by phone and are less easy to educate and assist than when they are at conventional workplaces (Mahapatra, Niranjana, Halli, & Jain, 2012).

And is Kelvin Doe's story so new? Here is the great novelist Ralph Ellison's version eighty years earlier:

There were the accidents through which so much of that world beyond the Negro community became available to me. Ironically, I would have to start with some of the features of American life which it has become quite fashionable to criticize in a most unthinking way: the mass media. Like so many kids of the Twenties, I played around with radio – building crystal sets and circuits consisting of a few tubes, which I found published in radio magazines. At the time we were living in a white middle-class neighborhood, where my mother was a custodian for some apartments, and it was while searching the trash for cylindrical ice-cream cartons which were used by amateurs for winding tuning coils that I met a white boy who was looking for the same thing. I gave him some of those I'd found and we became friends. . . . I moved back into the Negro community and . . . was never to see him again. (quoted in Smith, 2003, p. 93)

Kelvin Doe was, of course, fetishized as the story of an unlikely Third World prodigy that proves the need to replace aid programs with individual initiative. Such stories matter. When recast as per Ellison's anecdote, they can point out the materiality and inequality at the heart of media innovation and question its utility – if they are analysed in a critical way that focuses on citizenship rights, not entrepreneurial fictions.

References

- Anderson, C., & Wolff, M. (2010, August 17). The web is dead: Long live the Internet." *Wired*. Retrieved from http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/08/ff_webrip/all/1
- Freeman, B., & Chapman, S. (2007). Is "YouTube" telling or selling you something? Tobacco content on the YouTube video-sharing website. *Tobacco Control*, 16(3), 207–210.
- Gibson, W. (2003). *Pattern recognition*. New York: GP Putnam's Sons.
- Hudson, H. (2012, November 19). Kelvin doe, self-taught engineering whiz from Sierra Leone, Wows MIT. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/19/kelvin-doe-self-taught-en_n_2159735.html
- Jensen, R. (2007). The digital provide: Information technology, market performance, and welfare in the South Indian fisheries sector. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3), 879–924.
- Keelan, J., Pavri-Garcia, V., Tomlinson, G., & Wilson, K. (2007). YouTube as a source of information on immunization: A content analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 298(21), 2482–2483.
- Keen, A. (2007). *The cult of the amateur: How today's internet is killing our culture and assaulting our economy*. London: Nicholas Brealey.
- Lieberman, D. (2012, November 23). Deadline's YouTube channel rankings. *Deadline.com*. Retrieved from http://www.deadline.com/2012/11/deadline%E2%80%99s-youtube-channel-rankings-2/#utm_source=sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=breakingnewsalert
- Mahapatra, B., Saggurti, N., Halli, S. S., & Jain, K. A. (2012). HIV risk behaviors among female sex workers using cell phone for client solicitation in India. *Journal of AIDS and Clinical Research*, Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2155-6113.S1-014>
- Ogan, C. L., Manaf, B., Lindita, C., Yunjuan, L., Brian, G., Rosemary, P., Sonia, R., & . . . Mohammed, S. (2009). Development communication: The state of research in an era of ICTs and globalization. *Gazette*, 71(8), 655–670.
- Smith, C. H. (2003). 'I don't like to dream about getting paid': Representations of social mobility and the emergence of the hip-hop mogul. *Social Text*, 77, 69–97.

Toby Miller
Pal Ahluwalia