

The Australian's Melissa Hoyes [reported the other day on Sydney Fashion Week](#), and how the “ongoing digital revolution” is impacting on a creative industry for which innovation is core. Not very well, it seems. “The fashion world has been relatively slow to understand the power and business model of the digital space”, she reported, resistant to the growing presence of bloggers as part of fashion culture, failing to grasp the communicative power of social media.

She recalled how, when she was a newspaper editor just seven years ago, Facebook was used by proud parents to share baby pics, or red-eyed party snaps, and not much else. Back then, Twitter had barely got going. Pinterest? Schminterest!

Things are very different now, of course. Alongside familiar digital media brands such as Facebook and Twitter, competing for online traffic are a myriad online startups, social media sites, digital news outlets, and bloggers by the hundreds of millions. Despite the slow speed of our broadband internet by international standards, Australia has been in the lead in adopting many of them, such as Instagram.

But the digital media revolution is not just a matter of new toys for us to play with. Behind the screen and the wonderful things we are enabled to do with networked communications, digital transformation is destabilizing every service sector, every business model, every aspect of personal and professional life in ways that we as societies struggling to keep up with, let alone understand and harness for the common good.

Traditional power relations and status hierarchies in many creative industries are being upended, familiar job descriptions rendered obsolete. Melissa Hoyes observes that in the fashion industry, bloggers increasingly challenge the once pre-eminent magazine and print writers in their importance as news sources, taste arbiters and trend setters. A few short years ago, she writes, “fashion bloggers could hardly secure an invite to frock week. As for working across multiple media platforms, boy, it just wasn't done. Now, fashion bloggers seem to have ruffled the feathers of many traditional media players”.

In the industry which is my own research specialism, journalism, thousands of newsroom jobs have gone from the print sector in the last three years, as newspaper circulations decline. Those journalists who remain employed in what is now a multiplatform industry, and those who enter the profession in the future, must have command of a very different skillset than those of

even five years ago. That fact in turn impacts on those universities, such as QUT, which educate journalists. The same is true for most professions, and those who educate and train them.

Not just the content of what we teach, but the pedagogy and tools we teach it with, are being transformed at root by digital media. Why have lectures in a physical lecture theatre, for example, when more and more students prefer to access content using Screencast-o-matic or YouTube on a laptop or smartphone from the comfort of their bedrooms or the local coffee shop? Why, indeed, have lecturers at all, teaching very similar courses in every campus in every country and city? Why not just record global academic stars such as Richard Dawkins doing their thing and make them available to students all over the planet? Is the physical campus no longer necessary? In my opinion it still plays a key role in the student experience, but we do need to rethink how universities serve their publics in the digital age.

Everywhere you look, digital media are disrupting traditional ways of doing things. Taxi drivers were on the streets of Perth yesterday, [protesting about the mobile app Uber](#), which threatens a traditional business model which not long ago enjoyed a virtual monopoly. In a few short years the driverless car will be here, and the Uber debate may well have become moot.

For some time now the creative industries have been grappling with the collapse of long-established digital rights regimes, illegal downloading, and the rise of new distribution platforms such as Spotify and Netflix. Many of the big beasts of the analogue jungle are struggling for survival.

All of which sounds alarming and apocalyptic, and for many industries it has been. But the benefits of digital media are also immense, and with careful management can be expected to outweigh the costs. The economic potential of digital communications for developing countries is already clear, as they leapfrog generations of analogue telecoms infrastructure and go straight to lightweight, relatively inexpensive online and mobile platforms.

In Australia, the potential of social media to improve disaster management systems is already being felt in Queensland and other states. As extreme weather events become more common in the years and decades ahead, Twitter and as yet-unthought of communication tools coming down the track will save lives and property.

Driverless cars remind us of dystopian sci fi movies starring Tom Cruise, but think how many lives could be saved from the reduction in traffic accidents caused by human error in a country such as Australia. Think of the implications for fuel efficiency and reduced carbon emissions of vehicles regulated by onboard computers. Scale that up to countries like China and India, and we are indeed looking at a brave new digital world.

Harnessing those benefits requires research, however, and today Queensland University of Technology [announces the launch](#) of a [Digital Media Research Centre](#), dedicated to studying the implications of digital transition across a wide spectrum of industries and sectors, from journalism and entertainment to government. Its remit will extend from news and politics to crisis management, mobile dating apps and the challenges facing the Australian film and TV industry in a digital environment. Its aim will be to produce new, useful knowledge about the digital media that both informs and guides policy makers, publics and stakeholders in the creative and culture industries as they negotiate this complex, turbulent environment.

Disclosure

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Read more <http://theconversation.com/quts-digital-media-research-centre-reining-in-the-technological-revolution-40636>