Chapter XV

Time and Timing in Cross-Media Production: A Case Study from Norwegian Television

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Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in two production units of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) this chapter looks at the relation between the production for television and the Internet. Different organizational models can be used in cross-media production: separated production, the recycling, added value, and integrated model can be identified. The two production units under consideration are organized in different ways. This is not only caused by differences in timing of publication on television and on the Web, but also related to differences in production cycles. The Web pages have different functions for the television programs they support—depending on genre. Although officially cross-media production units, television turns out to be the main interest for the units.
Introduction

Many television corporations have become cross-media production houses, producing for radio, television, and the Internet. These activities can be organized in different ways—texts for different media can be produced by the same personnel, by different departments, or integrated in production units. Ways of organizing this production has consequences for the texts produced—sometimes the results of organizational processes are intentional, sometimes they produce unintended results. During the first season of Idol in Norway, for example, the production of all Internet pages concerning the program was integrated with television production. When Internet activity was taken over by a more general online entertainment unit, the journalists found out that they had “better” (i.e., more daring) stories about participants. Being separated from television production, the Internet journalists retained the same loyalties with the participants for longer (Kjus 2005).

Remediation in different media has attracted scholarly attention (e.g., Bolter & Grusin 2000), as well as interactivity through a combination of multiple platforms (Christensen, 2004; Jensen & Toscan, 1999). However, little research has been carried out on how media personnel on the ground level work: how production processes are interlinked, what ideologies are involved, how the different platforms are part of more general corporate strategies, and what part of the possibilities of the Web are used. This calls for detailed studies of production processes at the ground level. Before looking at concrete production processes, I will first consider some theoretical issues.

Production Studies

During the 1970s and 1980s a number of production studies were carried out in news organizations (for an overview see Cottle, 2000; Tuchman, 2002). Most of these were in a constructivist tradition highlighting the bureaucratic, routinized, and conservative character of news production. The production of fiction was also scrutinized, but here the focus was more often on the possibilities of creative individuals working through bureaucratic structures (e.g., Etterma & Whitney, 1982; Hirsh, 2002). Even Gitlin’s (1983) critical study of prime time programming dealt with creativity. As the media quickly change there is an urgent need for what Cottle (2000) calls “a second wave of ethnographic research in production processes”. As Cottle (2002) argued in the introduction to a book he edited on media organization and production:
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