

Social media transforms journalism

By Nicole Lanzer

Community. Connection. Information.

These are the characterizing words of a society that now relies on the revolutionary realm of social media. It's a growing phenomenon that is not only transforming the life of the individual, but—as stated in an [article](#) by Eugenia Siapera of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism—it has caused the world of journalism to undergo a significant metamorphosis as well.

What happens when news content shifts its focus from traditional media and enters the social networking domain? Information becomes available *to* all and *by* all, and—according to Siapera—it distributes the role of the journalist to the average citizen.



“Gone are the days of the lone muckraking reporter,” wrote Siapera. “Readers are now an integral part of journalism.”

In this ultra-connected cyber world, *everybody* becomes an active participant in the publication and diffusion of current events.

But if news is now more plentiful and accessible, then what's the problem?

[Aidan White](#), British journalist and director of the Coalition for Ethical Journalism, believes that journalistic material follows a

stricter set of standards than the general content on social networks.

“Journalists are bound by rules and ethics,” said White. “Unlike social media, journalists are required to give information in a responsible way.”

In the example of the Boston Bombing, stories began circulating so rapidly that there was hardly enough time to separate the false accounts from the valid ones. Imprudent speculation through social media caused people to pursue the wrong suspect. The faulty investigation eventually led officials to the dead body of a young man with no link to the marathon tragedy whatsoever.

This event clearly demonstrates how the filters of truth and accuracy—those that give traditional news platforms their heightened level of credibility—were completely stripped away through social media.

One writer for the Huffington Post, [Jayson DeMers](#), described the miscommunication as an “important and extremely tragic learning experience—[one that displays society's] inevitable movement to a decentralized information sharing system.”

So what can one conclude about the role of social media in journalism? Is it good? Bad? Dangerous? Perhaps to embrace this high-speed, interconnected era of reporting is merely to wield a powerful—yet problematic—double-edged sword.