

**NEWSROOM CONVERGENCE AT THE MAIL & GUARDIAN: A  
QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts**

**in**

**JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES**

**of**

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

**by**

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November 2007

## Abstract

This case study researches newsroom convergence as a process at the Mail & Guardian newspaper and their online edition the Mail & Guardian Online. It focuses on the reporters' and editors' attitudes towards newsroom convergence and on cultural resistance against change; one of the major challenges in the process. With structured interviews, observations and questionnaires it was analysed that communication problems between the newsrooms, different production cycles and time management issues are other prominent difficulties. The case study furthermore provides a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a particular South African news organisation. The outcomes could not only assist other news companies with convergence plans but also be used as a pilot study for further research on converged newsrooms in South Africa.

## Acknowledgments

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Robert Brand who has made this journey so much easier. He was always there when needed, gave encouraging advice and many wise words. Robert, it was a pleasure working with you.

Thanks also to everyone at the Mail & Guardian for opening-up and letting my critical eye observe you all. Obviously, this thesis could not have been possible without you.

I would like to thank my parents, Piet and Helen van Noort, for their financial assistance, continuous encouragements and understanding. It was hard to be so far away from each other but every phone call and e-mail made it more bearable.

I also want to thank my boyfriend Brian Peltason who never complained when I was stressed. He forgave me for stacking our garage with academic readings, provided me with more-than-enough chocolate, and gave me numerous lifts to the African Media Matrix after the Benz had passed on.

Long-time friend Anneke Sterkenburg deserves a hug for all the emotional support. Your e-mails and messages were a welcoming break from work and often left me laughing out loud. Thanks for being there.

Thanks to Professor Peter Verweij, who has some years ago introduced me to online journalism and has always believed in me. I'll see you again at Madhatters!

Thanks also to all staff at the AMM and special thanks to Joe Alfes. Joe kept calm when I could not get my computer to work or when I fiddled with the air-conditioning.

Thanks to Habtamu Dugo, De Waal Steyn, Carly Ritz and Andrew Kanyeirire.

To those of you who made a difference, but are left unmentioned: thank you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research is presented in seven chapters. The first establishes the wider context by stating the origins of the research and exploring the site of the study. Chapter 2 looks into the history of the weekly South African newspaper the Mail & Guardian (M&G) and its online counterpart the Mail & Guardian Online (M&G Online) and discusses the researcher's relationship with the news company. It defines the term 'convergence' and briefly looks into the employed research methods. Lastly, the chapter clarifies the research aims.

Chapter 2 furthermore sets out the principal aims of this case study. One of the anticipated achievements will be to critically examine the reporters' and editors' attitudes towards the convergence process at the M&G and the M&G Online and to observe how their attitudes enable or inhibit newsroom convergence. The study also intends to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a particular South African news organisation.

In the developing arena of new media, theories arise continuously and the latest theories will be the foundation of the theoretical framework used in this study and described in Chapter 3. The chapter looks into convergence studies in the past and present and finds that 'cultural resistance' against newsroom convergence is one of the key challenges to overcome before media companies can integrate their newsrooms.

Several recent case studies from the USA that explore newsroom convergence primarily apply three theories that are helpful in examining the attitudes of reporters and editors. It is in this regard that Chapter 3 then goes on to discuss the three theories of intergroup bias theory, professional role conceptions and the diffusion of innovations theory. The chapter carries on with a look at two practical "convergence continuums" that help in analysing the process of newsroom convergence.

Chapter 4 examines the research methods and the related philosophical underpinnings. The chapter points out the research design and the four research

methods employed. These include: observations, interviews, document analysis and questionnaires. While the latter is not part of the usual qualitative case study paradigm it was found to be a helpful addition that enabled the researcher to get more general information about the reporters and editors attitudes.

By categorising the data from all the different methods collectively the researcher was able to see that there were three recurring themes. Chapter 5 explores these themes in-depth: communication problems between the newsrooms; a weekly production cycle against the ongoing cycle of M&G Online; and time management issues. It was also analysed that all staff seems to accept convergence as the future. The chapter concludes that there are structural and organisational challenges that inhibit newsroom convergence.

The above key findings are discussed in Chapter 6. It states that formal communication problems and a lack of policies and established structures are the foundation for many of the challenges that are encountered by the M&G in its attempts to integrate their newsrooms. It links the findings back to the theories discussed in Chapter 3 and gives a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process at the M&G.

Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to the thesis. It summarises the key findings, gives recommendations to M&G, and looks into themes and topics that could be used for further research.

## Chapter 2: Context

### 2.0 Introduction

The timing for this research could not have been better. The South African Mail & Guardian Media Limited news company decided that 2007 would be their year of change. Management decided to follow a worldwide trend towards converged newsrooms and multiple-platform publishing. Major changes in the way reporters and editors do their work, the use of multimedia in reporting, and the strengthening of its core-products, the M&G newspaper and M&G Online ([www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)), are some of the envisaged goals.

Before this study goes on to elaborate on its underlying theoretical framework, methodology and findings it first seeks to provide the context of the study. Not only does this chapter state the research aims, it also defines the term ‘convergence’ and ‘newsroom convergence’.

The M&G’s convergence process is likely to encounter a number of challenges like resistance to change from staff and a clash between the journalistic routines from the ongoing online newsroom and the weekly print newsroom. These challenges have been researched before but it is not often that they are being examined within a South African context.

### 2.1 Origins of the research

My case study of the M&G arose out of what Stake (1995:2) calls an “intrinsic interest” in this particular case. I worked at the M&G Online from August 2005 until the end of January 2006 as an online reporter. This experience helped me in gaining access to the newsrooms in that I knew who to speak to and how the organisation’s hierarchy worked. Also, working at the M&G as an online reporter got me interested in their online publication as I had noticed a lack of convergence at the time, while there seemed to be a lot of potential.

A key stage in the recent experiences at the M&G Online includes the attempt to try to get the two separate newsrooms – print and online – to become more converged

(Buckland 2006, interview, 28 September). The draft Convergence Strategy (Buckland, 2006) and later a Convergence Timeline (see Appendix A) were produced for that reason. However, the Strategy and Timeline describe large editorial changes. One of these changes includes the suggestion that the print reporters need to start writing for M&G Online as well. These changes might form a breeding ground for major challenges between the newsrooms because print reporters are expected to do more work and adapt to Online's daily routine and work ethics. This could considerably slow down the M&G's convergence process, which potentially makes it an interesting topic of research.

Lastly, this phenomenon of convergence captured my attention earlier on in my academic life while working at the online edition of the Dutch newspaper de Volkskrant ([www.devolskrant.nl](http://www.devolskrant.nl)). Whilst there, I noticed how important it is to have two newsrooms that work together. It is then that I decided to focus my research for my Bachelor with Honours in Journalism on convergence in Dutch online newspaper newsrooms (see Van Noort, 2005).

The above-mentioned reasons account for my decision to research convergence at the M&G.

## **2.2 Statement of the problem**

The M&G recognises that convergence involves the integration of cultures and that this can pose problems. The Strategy document (Buckland, 2006) lists the challenges it will most likely face: a clash between the online routines and the weekly print routines; resistance to change from staff; differences between the culture of print and online; staff capacity; training and budget; changing job descriptions; understanding blogs and legal issues; and to get the M&G staff to start blogging.

The above-mentioned challenges are the starting point for what this thesis intends to research. The first challenge deals with the M&G Online that is updated constantly during the day and the newspaper that is published weekly. These different production cycles would make it more difficult for the newspaper reporters to adjust to a converged newsroom. They may have to work under greater deadline pressure that comes with working for an online medium. The other challenges also affect the

reporters' and editors' job descriptions. For instance, they need to adapt their routines to the online news culture and work under more pressure and follow-up on training. The reporters and editors are the key players who can make or break the convergence dreams of superior staff. If the reporters and editors do not believe in the convergence plans then they might not be successful (Quinn, 2005).

### **2.3 Research aims**

Judging from the challenges mentioned in the Strategy (Buckland, 2006) there are many issues that could be examined within this case study. This study will concentrate on what reporters and editors perceive to be the main challenges while converging. To start with, some of my questions to M&G reporters and editors involved their willingness to adapt to a converged newsroom, how they feel about their changing routines, and if they see a future in converged newsrooms.

I will not be able to research the convergence process as a whole, as set out in the Timeline. The convergence process in its entirety is outside the scope of this time-bound research. I am, however, particularly interested in the early stages of the convergence process and this is probably the most difficult stage wherein the concept needs to be introduced to staff and the first steps of the Strategy are carefully implemented.

The principal aim of this research study is to research the reporters' and editors' attitudes towards the convergence process at the M&G. One of the anticipated achievements will be to critically examine how they enable or inhibit newsroom convergence. Besides these aims the study intends to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a particular South African news organisation.

### **2.4 Significance of the study**

To research newsroom convergence as a process is an exceptional experience, but what makes this study truly unique is that this is an academic study of convergence at a South African news organisation. This means that this study may offer opportunities of studying convergence from an African perspective and in an African perspective instead of the dominant USA or European – Western – perspective. This is important

because Africa is a continent with its own significant differences. For instance, the Internet remains inaccessible for many Africans while newspapers are easy to obtain and circulations are growing (see Berger, 2001).

This is a different situation from the USA and Europe where the Internet can be accessed with mobile devices and through wireless networks, and where traditional print media are in decline. These differences influence existing theories and challenge everyone to develop theories carried out in an South African context. Therefore the findings of this thesis may be useful to other South African media organisations who try to converge their newsrooms. They can make use of the findings, suggestions and conclusion in their strategies.

This case study can inform the creators of the convergence strategies at the M&G with practical information that they could implement, or use to adjust, their future plans. It may also give important insights about the staff's attitudes towards convergence.

## **2.5 Context of the site of study**

The site of this study is the M&G, an independent weekly newspaper that was launched in early 1985 as the Weekly Mail. The Weekly Mail was “a vocal apartheid critic, leading to a number of clashes with the government” (M&G Online, 2006a). Formerly a “leading crusader against apartheid”, the newspaper remains in a prominent position in the South African media landscape (Alozie, 2005:64). With its “passion for argument” (Barrell, 2005) and continuing “investigative coups” the paper promotes “freedom, justice, equality and the unity of humankind” (Forrest, 2005).

The Weekly Mail was renamed the M&G when in 1995 the British newspaper The Guardian became the majority shareholder. Today the M&G is owned by Zimbabwean publisher and entrepreneur Trevor Ncube, who is also the company's CEO. The paper remains a weekly, with a newspaper being published every Friday. It is situated in Rosebank, a hub of the corporate sector in Johannesburg. The paper has an average circulation of between 40 000 and 50 000 per week. More precise, in September 2006 the paper had a circulation of 43 102, up from 26 165 in 1994 (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007). An advertisement in the South African magazine The

Media of April 2007 states that the average circulation number is on the rise. It is given that in the last quarter of 2006 circulation numbers reached 48 291, which is 15.7% up on the 2005 figures.

The M&G today is a newspaper that regularly publishes breaking news stories and investigative reports such as the recent ‘Oilgate’ reportage (see Brümmer, Sole & Dawes, 2006) which exposed a transaction in which oil company Invume Holdings channelled 11 million Rand of taxpayer’s money to the ANC, South Africa’s biggest and ruling political party. During the Oilgate investigation the M&G newspaper was gagged from publishing (M&G reporter & Sapa, 2005) because Invume managed to get a interdict from the Johannesburg High Court. With the comparatively small staff of fifteen reporters and twenty editors at the newspaper the list of scoops is remarkable and adds to the newspaper’s prestigious image.

The M&G Online is an even smaller platform, with only nine people working on the website full-time. During the two observation periods in January and February 2007 there were two intern reporters, a sub-editor, editor, news editor, producer, advertising manager, strategist and a publisher to run the website. Today the website is owned by internet service provider MWeb and publishing company M&G Media (M&G Online, 2006b). The Strategy document discusses ownership issues and states that M&G Media wants to be the majority stakeholder in the near future.

M&G Media was the first South African newspaper to start an online version in 1995 (see M&G Online, 2006b) when public access to the Web in South Africa had been made available in November 1994 (Goldstuck, 1995). At the time the website was called the Electronic Mail & Guardian which was more an e-mail newsletter for readers outside South Africa. The next step was a “searchable online archive”, and later on a website. The website used to be an online copy of the newspaper but now it generates its own content (see M&G Online, 2006b).

The website contains daily updated news and innovative online techniques like Blogmark and the M&G Online Newsflash. More recently, the website has expanded to include Podcasts a Photos website (<http://photos.mg.co.za>) and Thought Leader blog ([www.thoughtleader.co.za](http://www.thoughtleader.co.za)) which are part of a bigger plan through which the

M&G will offer multimedia and become more interactive with its readers, in conjunction with the aims set out in its 2006 Strategy (Buckland, 2006).

The Online Publishers Association released two tables that list the Top Local Publishers in South Africa for the second quarters of 2005 and 2006 (Online Publishers Association, 2006). The tables show the M&G Online in the top ten twice, in the seventh position in 2005 and in the eighth in 2006. This is remarkable for such a small media organisation and demonstrates the M&G's unique position in South Africa's online news landscape.

## **2.6 Convergence defined**

Within the South African context convergence is a much-discussed subject. The past five Highway Africa conferences in Grahamstown have focused on convergence. The annual Highway Africa conference is the premier ICT and journalism conference on the African content (see [www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za](http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za)). Pioneering academic work (for example Berger, 2001; Berger & Mgwili-Sibanda, 2006) woke the interest for more research on this new concept.

To define the concept of newsroom convergence is not easy; this is because it has "almost as many interpretations as it has advocates" (Quinn, 2005:30). This case study defines the process of newsroom convergence, or "multiple-platform publishing" (Quinn, 2005:29), as a newly formed combination of "technologies, products, staffs and geography" (Singer, 2004a:3) from among earlier separate media.

To explore Singer's (2004a) definition and to relate it to this particular study it is helpful to divide it into four separate areas: 1) the change in technologies; 2) the products; 3) changing staff; and 4) geography. In this thesis there is an emphasis on multi-skilled reporters who produce stories for both media (see Buckland, 2006). This decision follows an interview with the M&G Online publisher on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2007 in which he stated that he wants "the newspaper journalists to work for online and vice versa".

At the moment these four areas cannot be described as converged at the M&G. First of all, both newsrooms use different technologies. The print newsroom does not use

the same Content Management System as the online newsroom (see Robertson, 2003). In addition, the online newsroom deals with different technologies like the Podcasts and Photos website. The Podcasts have been available at M&G Online since November 2006 and can be downloaded for free. In the weekly Podcast popular broadcaster Tony Lankester discusses the news stories of that week with commentary and interviews with M&G reporters and editors. The Photos website is linked to the M&G Online, but on a separate Internet address. It shows the M&G's photo of the week in breaking news and sports, and also a photo essay and photos contributed by the website's visitors.

Secondly, although there are synergies, both newsrooms produce their own product – a website and a newspaper – totally separate from each other. The newspaper publishes advertisements that promote the M&G Online and it also publishes the online poll and 'Top Ten Online stories' on a weekly basis. They share copy occasionally.

Thirdly, all staff have duties for their own medium which means that, normally, staff who work for print do not produce content for online and vice versa. Sometimes reporters from each newsroom both cover the same topic and this can be seen as a waste of time that points to a lack of efficiency (for an elaboration on this issue see Chapter 5: Findings).

With regard to Singer's last point concerning geography, it is an issue that can be analysed as a problem at the M&G. In August 2005 the whole media company moved from Auckland Park to a new modern building in Rosebank, close to the centre of Johannesburg. In the new building the two newsrooms are totally separated from each other, they cannot see each other and online staff first need to walk past the shared kitchen and adjacent toilet blocks through a small hallway to get to the print newsroom floor. This obviously poses some structural problems, for example: it obstructs the communication flow between the newsrooms (for an elaboration see Chapter 5: Findings).

If the two newsrooms converge as described in the M&G's Strategy document (Buckland, 2006) and Timeline, the four areas of Singers' definition (2004a) will

change dramatically. The first area of technologies would change because both newsrooms will work with the same production system. The second area deals with the actual media products and it involves a change in attitude. At the end of the convergence process reporters feel as though they work for one and the same product as part of a team. This means that whenever a reporter writes an article, it can be published both online and in the hard copy (see Chapter 5: Findings).

The fourth area in Singer's definition (2004a) is the only one that might not be achieved as a target because there is no space to physically put the two newsrooms together. Still, in the light of the aforementioned the M&G plans to be "converging content and resources between print and online, to create a more streamlined, efficient and interactive operation and ensure both mediums are used optimally" as the online publisher said in an early interview on 28 September in 2006.

In addition to the theoretical considerations of Singer this study also looks at the convergence phenomenon from three different theoretical perspectives: 'intergroup bias', 'professional role conceptions' and the 'diffusion of innovations' theory. It also uses two widely recognised practical formats, the 'Convergence Continuum' (Dailey, Demo & Spillman, 2003) and Gentry's measuring tool named 'Easy versus Difficult Convergence' (cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12) (for an elaboration see Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review).

## **2.7 Research approach**

This study relies on the qualitative case study approach and employs the following research methods: observation, interview, document analysis, and questionnaires in terms of carrying out the actual research. During my two separate observation periods I observed both newsrooms for five days (see Chapter 4: Methodology). Observations (see Gray, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) lie at the very heart of this research and provided me with "useful insights into *unconscious* behaviour" (Gorman & Clayton, 2005:40). Part of the interest in this 'unconscious behaviour' was to get a sense of how much the newsrooms communicate with each other and at what level and how. This is important to examine because the way they communicate with each other could enable or inhibit the process of newsroom convergence.

The two separate observation periods were both in the first two months of 2007 at the start of the convergence process at the M&G. These observation periods were followed by semi-structured interviews with reporters and editors from both newsrooms. I selected a purposive sample and chose the subjects that had “a range of characteristics that [were] relevant to my research” (Gorman et al., 2005:128). More in-depth interviews were held with the strategist, editor and publisher from the M&G Online and the news editor from the newspaper because they were the four key actors that formulated the Timeline and Strategy and hold key positions within the convergence process (see Appendix B for a list of people interviewed).

Besides observation and interviews as the main methods of data collection, I also used document analysis to critically examine the organisation’s strategic plan and other convergence documentation like the Timeline. This enabled me to gain a sense of the progress the convergence process had made so far, what was to be expected next and also what will still change in the future.

The last research method used in this case study are questionnaires because I needed some hard data to work from and shape my thoughts about the staff and their concept of convergence. I therefore designed a questionnaire (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was answered by seven reporters and two editors and it was a helpful starting point for the interviews in that I used their responses to inform the interviews. It also proved to be a practical tool to measure changes in attitude before and after the Strategy was implemented.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the necessary context in which this case study needs to be seen. The origins of the research were discussed with an exploration of the researchers’ background and relationship with the M&G Online. The following sections examined the numerous challenges faced by the M&G while trying to pursue convergence. It is in these sections that ‘convergence’ was defined as multiple-platform publishing or a combination of technologies, products, staff and geography (see Singer, 2004a:3). It then explained that this case study is the first that looks at convergence within a South African context instead of a Westernised context.

The following chapter explores current studies about newsroom convergence and looks at three influential theories namely intergroup bias, professional role conceptions and, the diffusion of innovations theory.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### 3.0 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter the aim of this study is to critically examine reporters' and editors' attitudes towards the process of newsroom convergence at the M&G. In doing this the study also attempts to investigate if their attitudes enable or inhibit the convergence process. There are many ways to explore these aims. Newsroom convergence research and current studies use numerous theories, both old and new. Established approaches like gatekeeper theories and the adoption of technologies theory are nowadays adopted in innovative ways to deal with more recent concerns like the emergence of converged newsrooms and the use of interactive tools in journalism (see for example Singer, 1998; Pavlik, 2005).

Deuze (2002) argues that the use of traditional journalism theories within the sociology of news work offers only a narrow range of options from which we can study new media. However, the more traditional theories, such as gatekeeper theories, present the possibility of examining the attitudes in a structured way, using different points of entry into the newsroom environment. But there are also new theories and concepts developed in recent case studies that help formulate an answer to this case study's research questions.

New convergence theories are slowly starting to take shape now that the number of case studies that examine converged newsrooms is growing (see for example Filak, 2004; Singer, 2004a; Cassidy, 2005; Dupagne & Garrison, 2006). One of these new theories is Deuze's (2004) framework of a 'multimedia logic in journalism'. He adopted Dahlgren's framework of media logic and extended this by "looking at multimedia through the perspectives of the institutional, the technological, the organizational, and the cultural" (Deuze, 2004:140). The same paper argues that this framework "allows the researcher to have a broad perspective on the dynamics of and resistance in adapting to new environments" (Deuze, 2004:140).

Other new convergence studies that can generate a broad perspective on the newsrooms' convergence process are two widely used scales. These are the

‘Convergence Continuum’ from Dailey, Demo, and Spillman (2003) and Gentry’s measuring tool named ‘Easy versus Difficult Convergence’ (in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12). These theoretical approaches can help us clarify how far a media company is converged at a certain point in time, whilst also assisting in elucidating information that stipulates if the convergence process will be easy or difficult to complete. Ultimately, it is hoped that the results will support one of this case study’s aims: to give a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon at the M&G.

Before discussing the above two methods more in-depth this chapter will first examine the emergence of convergence studies in the twentieth century. Drawing on various significant findings from several case studies the chapter will critically discuss the newsrooms’ biggest convergence obstacle: cultural resistance. The chapter then explicates the specific theories and studies that underpin this thesis, namely intergroup bias, professional role conceptions and, the diffusion of innovations theory. To give a more practical approach to the thesis the last section elaborates on the theories by Dailey (et al., 2003) and Gentry (in Quinn & Filak, 2005) concerning the convergence phenomenon as a process. The chapter ends with a portrayal of newsroom convergence studies in South Africa.

### **3.1 Convergence studies past and present**

During the twentieth century the term convergence was commonly used in economics to describe, for example, the process of “convergence of national economies into a global economy” (Gordon, 2003 cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005:5). Later on computers and earlier forms of the Internet gave rise to new meanings in the different context of communication technologies (Gordon, 2003 cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005:5).

Communications scholar De Sola Pool coined the term “the convergence of modes” in the 1980s (De Sola Pool, 1983 cited in Pusateri, 1984:620). It is explained that “communications formerly carried on in print forms, such as newspapers, magazines, and books are increasingly delivered electronically” and that “a universally interconnected electronic communication system” is emerging ( De Sola Pool, 1983 cited in Pusateri, 1984:620-21). New technologies like cables and satellites were then focused on “delivering to every home and office a vast variety of different kinds of mail, print, sound, and video” (De Sola Pool, 1983 cited in Pusateri, 1984:621). Since

then the term convergence has become “commonplace in connection with electronic content delivery” (Gordon, 2003 cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005). In a media context, convergence has also come to mean “a whole array of convenient work-saving devices that allowed reporters to use computers for research, analysis and writing” (Pavlik & Dennis, 1993:3).

In the meantime newspapers “were getting signals that their industry was in decline, especially with the younger generation of information seekers” and that “they would continue to suffer unless they embraced a number of technological, economic, and organizational innovations” (Kawamoto, 2003:5). These changes in the traditional newsroom environment did not go unnoticed and triggered several studies that examined the impact of the Internet in news work, and the emergence of online newspapers (for example Kopper, Kolthoff & Czepek, 2000; Garrison, 2001; Jackson, Poole & Kuhn, 2002; Hamachila, 2005). There were also studies that concentrated on the effects these changes have on the consumer (for example Higgins, 2000; Boczkowski, 2002; Nguyen, 2003).

The opening of Media General’s Tampa News Center in the USA in 2000, a project that placed a newspaper, television station, and online operation under one roof, triggered media researchers into examining the actual changes inside newsrooms and the effects this converged environment has on reporters (see Huang, Rademakers, Fayemiwo & Dunlap, 2003; Dupagne et al., 2006). Other newsroom convergence studies were conducted at media companies that were at the time implementing convergence strategies in the USA (see Singer, 2004a; Silcock & Keith, 2006; Ursell, 2001) or Europe (see Schoenbach, De Waal & Laug, 2005; O’Sullivan, 2005; Hemmingway, 2005).

To elaborate on the - at the time futuristic - Tampa News Center: it was structured in such a way that “print, broadcast and online occupy separate parts of the building and retain editorial independence” (Thelen, 2003:514). However, “the three platforms cooperate fully in news gathering and share information freely. Each is strengthened by contributions from its partners” (Thelen, 2003:514). The Tampa News Center became a research object for a number of case studies (see Huang, Davidson, Shreve, Davis, Bettendorf & Nair, 2003; Singer, 2004a; Cassidy, 2005).

Three years after opening the Tampa News Center a study of news stories at the Tampa News Center's paper found that "media convergence is still evolving at the News Center. Three years of convergence practice at the News Center may not be enough to show a complete picture of media convergence" (Huang et al., 2003:17). This is the case with most studies, numerous newsrooms are in transition and examples of fully converged newsrooms remain rare up to today. Most newsrooms seem to stay in the changeover, never fully converging (Quinn & Quinn-Allan, 2005). Since fully converged newsrooms remain rare "little research has examined how convergent news operations, such as those at the News Center in Tampa, have affected newsroom practices, roles, and culture" (Dupagne et al., 2006:241).

However, a case study by Singer (2003) that deals with the Tampa News Center highlights the effects on newsroom culture. In this study, Thelen the previous publisher of the Tampa Tribune newspaper, argues that "the greatest hurdle has not been technology but rather 'cultural resistance' from traditional journalists" (Thelen, 2002 cited in Singer, 2003:149). The next section discusses different case studies that all argue that cultural resistance is the biggest hurdle in converging newsrooms.

### **3.2 'Cultural resistance' against newsroom convergence**

The foundations of cultural resistance against convergence start with the differences between online journalism and print journalism practice (see discussions in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Not only are the writing styles different (Pape & Featherstone, 2005:165-77; also see Thurman, 2005b), the way in which online reporters do and present their work also differs from print. "The web journalist has to think about a story beyond the linear narrative" (Stovall, 2004:64; see also Deuze, 2001) and choose between the many different online formats in which news can be presented.

Both media platforms also have different distinctive qualities. Online journalism, compared to print journalism has several advantages. Online journalism offers an endless capacity, multimedia, immediacy, permanence, and interactivity (see Stovall, 2004). Kawamoto (2003) adds to this by highlighting hypertextuality, nonlinearity, customisation, and personalisation (2003:5). Some disadvantages include that "people do not read carefully online", also, there is only a small chance that a reader will stay

on a story for longer than a minute (de Wolk, 2001:91). Working with these advantages and disadvantages of online media it is important that editors and reporters utilise the superior qualities of both online and print media and find a way of working together while “thinking of the needs of their audience, maintaining ethical business practice and doing better journalism” (Quinn, 2005:37), if they want convergence to be successful.

Quinn (2005:32) considers a newsroom fully converged when it has one shared newsdesk where “multimedia editors assess news event on its merits and assign the most appropriate staff for the story”. Quinn explains that with some stories, an individual could carry multimedia tools, but that at other times teams are assigned to gather multimedia. Teams could provide content with different angles, report on big breaking news stories from different places, and supply the newsdesk with multimedia. At this hypothetical newsdesk several multimedia editors would decide which medium is the most appropriate for telling the story. This model “satisfies consumer demands and lifestyles”, “protects an organization’s journalistic franchise in the sense that multiple-platform publishing allows wider coverage of an area”, and it also “permits cross-marketing of a single product” (Quinn, 2005:30). With this future perspective in mind, it is evident that the attitudes of reporters and editors who work in a ready-to-converge-newsroom will have to change profoundly. This can pose a problem since “journalists have traditionally rejected large-scale changes that attempt to alter how they perceive themselves and their occupations” (Argyris, 1974 cited in Filak, 2004:217).

Besides Singer’s (2003) case study of the Tampa News Center other influential case studies also concluded that cultural resistance against newsroom convergence posed a barrier. One of these studies, by Silcock and Keith (2006), proved that indeed “cultural differences created the greatest problem during the cooperative process” (Silcock & Keith, 2002 cited in Filak, 2004:217). This study developed from a pilot study in 2002 and concentrates on how language and cultural differences between converged newsrooms are dealt with by reporters and editors. The study argues that “of the three media involved in most convergence efforts – print, television, and Internet – print and television have had more time to develop and nurture specific language and cultures than has online journalism and, thus, might be expected to be

the site of more contention” (Silcock et al., 2006:624). Instead of different languages Shoemaker et al. (1996) argue that cultural resistance derives from the “different media routines”. Each media platform is exposed to a different routine: a certain way of working that will not easily change. These media routines are embedded in both print and online and differ from each other.

Silcock and Keith’s (2006) study is only one example of how cultural resistance from reporters and editors inhibit the convergence process. They concluded that the different definitions of news that each platform has leads to cultural resistance. Television reporters were “actuality-oriented, trying to be responsive to breaking news” while newspaper reporters were “outcomes-oriented, seeking to deliver ‘big picture’ stories” (2006:618). In addition, “different deadline constraints and different conceptions of what is important in journalism also led to different rules and ethics standards” (2006:618). On the whole, they argue that these differences have “the potential to lead to several types of problems, including stereotyping, conflicts over staffing and time management, and problems related to news flow, all of which can limit the effectiveness of convergence” (Silcock et al., 2006:620). But the study does not identify language differences as a key shortcoming. “Journalists are able to adapt to change quickly, and newsroom slang that was at first foreign was quickly comprehended and used – though not always with full understanding of its history” (Silcock et al., 2006:623).

A different case study that was conducted at the Tampa News Center concluded that the challenges are more organisational and sociological: “In some cases, respondents noted that their positions were now more demanding because there was more to do” (Dupagne et al., 2006:247). However, “this has led to a team approach and a declining sense of internal competition and conflict over approaches and resources” (Dupagne et al., 2006:247). Also, “interviewed journalists said that they think more about multimedia at several levels. Multimedia approaches to coverage of a given news story may be first on this list” (Dupagne et al., 2006:248).

In addition, a case study by Singer (2004b) conducted at Tampa Tribune and three other American newspapers with television and online partners, provides insights into the sociology of news work. Singer looks at “professional norms, newspaper culture,

and to medium-specific routines of ‘making news’” (Singer, 2004b:844). The study then draws attention to the ‘Us versus Them’ perception between the newsrooms as a common characteristic that “supports the observation that many print journalists are resisting convergence as long as they can, though degrees of participation vary both within and among newsrooms” (Singer, 2004b:846). In addition, “many print journalists express little or no motivation to participate in convergence, sometimes citing inadequate training in different forms of storytelling as [a] justification” (Singer, 2004b:850).

The medium-specific routines of making news were changing and “print reporters were concerned about fitting new duties into their newsgathering and production routines. Used to once-a-day deadlines, they struggled with online and television products requiring more frequent feeding” (Singer, 2004b:847). Despite these obstacles reporters still “indicated a willingness to accommodate changes in perspective and practice” because they did not have “fundamental concerns with the idea of convergence itself” (Singer, 2004b:849).

As Singer’s (2004b) case study concludes:

Print journalists are indeed worried about time management, competition, and the other concrete aspects of news work. At the same time, they believe convergence is inevitable – and is a good thing for their careers, company, and readers. Many journalists see convergence enabling them to offer more information in multiple formats suited to changing audience lifestyles and needs

(Singer, 2004b:849)

Having discussed the emergence of convergence studies and several case studies that focus the discussion on cultural resistance it is now clear that the latter is a major challenge in the convergence process. The next section looks deeper into this challenge whilst also exploring some of the different theoretical vantage points such as intergroup bias, professional role conceptions, and the diffusion of innovations theory.

### **3.3 Studies that use intergroup bias theory**

Intergroup bias theory signifies the “way in which members of competing groups tend to show favour toward their own group rather than favouring members of another

group” (Hewstone & Brown, 1986 cited in Filak, 2004:220). Filak’s study (2004) further explains that “this behaviour can take place as either ingroup favouritism or outgroup derogation. It is at the group level that rules, association, and conflict are derived” (Filak, 2004:220).

Within a newsroom reporters form a social group with common goals who will “not only tend to favour fellow group members during the allocation of resources, but they are also more likely to cooperate with ingroup members when a common enemy is at hand” (Kramer & Brewer, 1984 cited in Filak, 2004:220). Filak (2004) then applies these principles to the converged newsroom, and it concludes that “would seem that journalists would be more likely to share information with other journalists who work in the same medium” (Filak, 2004:220). Filak (2004) concludes that intergroup conflict remains an issue if convergence plans or strategies are developed by “outgroup” members. “If members of both groups are not involved in creating a convergence plan, those who are left out of the planning are likely to reject the plan” (Filak, 2004:229).

Besides the intergroup bias between print reporters and the online reporters there is another dimension to consider within the news company: the reporters versus management. Quinn’s study (2005) points out that from the perspective of a publisher convergence means business opportunities like using “multiple-platform publishing as a tool for increased productivity and marketing” (2005:29). However, reporters believe that convergence “offers them the potential to do better journalism” and that it makes them “more marketable through gaining extra skills” (Quinn, 2005:30). Publishers could see financial benefits: the same reporters simply produce more content or write different versions of articles for the Internet. Reporters, on the other hand argue that the “quality must be maintained” (Quinn, 2005:30). Besides the intergroup bias theory other studies that examine the convergence process use the professionalism paradigm to contribute to an understanding of the situation in converging newsrooms.

### **3.4 Studies that are influenced by professional role conceptions theory**

Professionalism is a major theme in sociological studies and research (see Deuze, 2005; Tumber & Prentoulis, 2005). Singer conducted extensive research on

professional role conceptions in converged newsrooms (see Singer, 2003; 2004a; 2004b). According to Singer (2003) sociological definitions of professionalism within the realm of journalism have never been a comfortable fit because “journalism has no entrance requirements, no discrete body of knowledge, and no elite inner group with the ability to ‘de-press’ wayward members (Merrill, 1996 cited in Singer, 2003:143). On the other hand, there are researchers who “propose that how journalists see themselves, what they think about their roles and why they think that way are more important ‘than conformity with particular criteria” (Shoemaker et al.,1996 cited in Singer, 2003:143). However, there seems to be “a generalized, unspoken notion in some newsrooms that online journalism is the gangly, misfit cousin of ‘real’ journalism, that the Internet is a breeding ground for charlatans, and that perhaps online journalism operates at a level below the standards of traditional news media” (Lasica, 2001 cited in Singer, 2003:151).

While the debate about who is a professional reporter and who is not remains unresolved (see Singer, 2003:153) there is a difference between the online and print reporter that starts with the medium they work for (see Deuze, 2002). The main difference, according to print reporters, is ethical behaviour (see Berkman & Shumway, 2003). This ethical issue is exemplified in a case study by Cassidy (2005) who found that “online newspaper journalists rated getting information to the public quickly as significantly more important than did print newspaper journalists” (Cassidy, 2005:274).

Cassidy’s study furthermore seeks to assess how “online newspaper journalists view their professional roles and comparing their responses to those of print newspaper journalists” (2005:264). The main conclusion derived from Cassidy’s (2005:273) research is that “online newspaper journalists do not hold ‘traditional’ values [like analysing complex problems and investigating official claims] in as high regard and that there may be differences in conceptions of newsworthiness in the online environment”.

At this stage it is evident that both newsrooms need to be involved in setting out convergence plans and strategies like an intergroup bias study by Filak (2004) concluded. It has also been discussed that the different role conceptions of print and

online reporters poses difficulties when it comes to ethical behaviour. The final perspective on the changing newsroom and convergence process deals with technological changes.

### **3.5 Studies that use diffusion of innovations theory**

Diffusion of innovations theory is the third theory within the field of convergence studies to be discussed here and is considered to be “one of the most widely used theoretical approaches in the social sciences” (Abbott, 1999 cited in Garrison, 2001:231). The diffusion of innovations theory has “sustained four decades of communication research because of its ‘practical importance and its applied nature’” (Rogers & Singhal, 1996 cited in Garrison, 2001:231).

The diffusion of innovation is nothing more than “the process through which an idea is ‘communicated through certain channels over time to the members of a social system’” (Rogers, 1995 cited in Garrison, 2001:222). This communication process can follow five sequential stages: 1) knowledge about, or exposure to, the innovation; 2) formation of favourable or unfavourable attitudes, or persuasion; 3) a decision to adopt or reject; 4) implementation; and 5) confirmation – reinforcement (Rogers, 1995 cited in Garrison, 2001:222). Thurman (2005a) further explains that the diffusion of innovations theory holds five categories of adopters: 1) innovators; 2) early adopters; 3) early majority; 4) late majority; and 5) laggards (see Thurman, 2005a:230-31).

Garrison (2001) adopted this theoretical framework for his case study of six newspaper newsrooms in the USA and concluded that “it would seem that newsrooms and journalists would be receptive to innovative communication technologies” (2001:234). However, there is “evidence in this study of some resistance to adoption” (2001:234). Based on this, Garrison explicated the following reasons for not adopting online resources in newsrooms: “reluctance by management to lead towards adoption, lack of resources to invest in new technology, lack of training, little or no access to the new technology, lack of expertise, fear of lost time required to learn, and not enough time in the work schedule (Garrison, 2001:234).

Just like Garrison (2001), Singer (2004a) employed the diffusion of innovations theory to her case study of newsroom convergence at four American news companies. She found that “online staffs were particularly likely to include innovators, individuals interested in doing something new largely because it is new” (Singer, 2004a:13). Singer (2004a) also unearthed that while reporters see advantages of convergence over the traditional newsroom they

have concerns about the compatibility of different newsroom cultures and approaches to news; a lack of training to alleviate fears about perceived complexities of new formats; and scarcity of observable, tangible rewards for their “converged” colleagues, among other things

(Singer, 2004a:16)

And again, “cultural clashes remain a major stumbling block to convergence and may well be a hallmark of the process in every newsroom” (Singer, 2004a:16). However, using the diffusion of innovations theory, Singer (2004a:12) found that “the overall view [of newsroom convergence] was generally favourable” because of positive responses in interviews and to questionnaire statements.

Another case study found that news professionals “wished to learn skills on the job” (Huang et al., 2006:94). Other case studies that focused on new technologies in converged newsrooms found that “online reporters have adopted new technologies eagerly while their counterparts at print are still confused about the Internet” (Pavlik, 2000:235). These “cultural differences”, between the reporters and editors, lead to “resistance against change from the print side” (Pavlik, 2000:235). The cultural differences relate back to the cultural resistance between the print and online reporters as discussed earlier (see section 3.2 ‘Cultural resistance’ against newsroom convergence). “Adoption of new ideas, technologies, and practices requires time in any social system, even a small and highly focused professional system such as journalism” (Garrison, 2001:221). This issue has been studied with the help of diffusion of innovations theory.

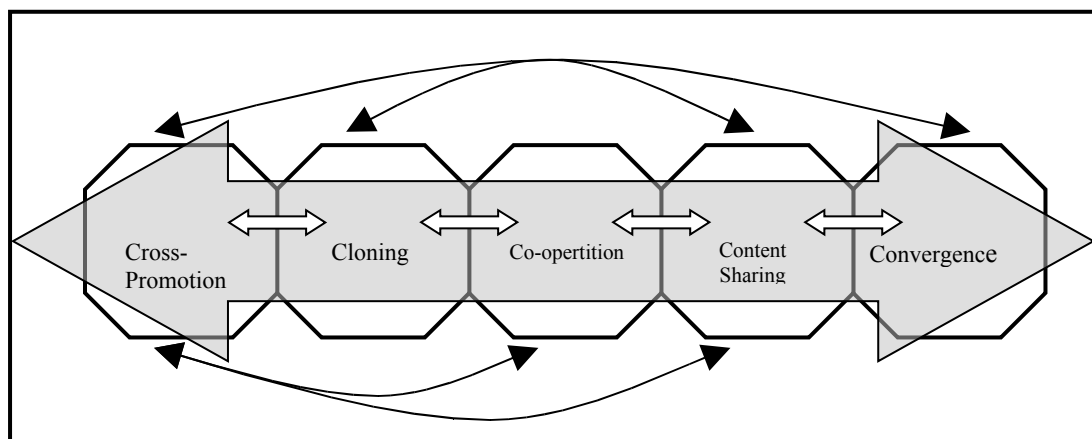
Having discussed three influential theoretical perspectives to study newsroom convergence this chapter will now move on to critically discuss the two practical continuums, the ‘Convergence Continuum’ (Dailey et al., 2003) and Gentry’s

measuring tool named ‘Easy versus Difficult convergence’ (in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12) before moving on to focus on newsroom convergence in South Africa.

### 3.6 Practical ways to measure convergence

To provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon at a South African medium it is necessary to determine where the newsroom is at the moment of the research within the convergence process. It is helpful to use established and widely used scales like the ‘Convergence Continuum’ (Dailey et al., 2003) and Gentry’s ‘Easy versus Difficult convergence’ (in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12) measuring tool to try and see if converging two newsrooms is most likely going to be an easy or difficult process. Results from both methods will clarify how far a media company is converged at a certain point in time, and help in elucidating information that stipulate if the convergence process will be easy or difficult to complete. Ultimately, the results will support one of this case study’s aims: to give a snapshot of the convergence phenomena at a South African media company. To do so, Demo, Dailey and Spillman (Dailey et al., 2003) developed a continuum that can determine how far the process of newsroom convergence has progressed:

**Figure 3.1** *Convergence Continuum* (Dailey et al., 2003)



It gives a useful indication of the different stages the newsroom convergence process has to go through and where the newsroom is positioned at the moment. Next, it will be possible to indicate how the reporters’ and editors’ attitudes are positioned during this stage and how they are responding at a later one.

The first level of ‘cross-promotion’ is determined by using words or other elements to promote content produced by the other medium and appearing in the partner’s medium (see Heifetz, 2005). This can be seen as the first step on the way to convergence. The second circle indicates ‘cloning’; this is when one medium uses the partner’s medium content without editing it. In the case of a newspaper and online newsroom this is often called shovelware by critics of online journalism. ‘Co-optition’, a neologism for co-operative competition, is the point at which both mediums share information on selected stories but then still create their own content separately from each other. ‘Content sharing’ is a step further and this exists when the two mediums meet to exchange ideas (see Dailey et al., 2003). At the end of the model is ‘full convergence’ where reporters cooperate in gathering and disseminating news (see Heifetz, 2005:26).

Their common goal is to use the strengths of the different media to tell the story in the most effective way. Under full convergence, hybrid teams of journalists from the partnering organizations work together to plan, report, and produce a story, deciding along the way which parts of the story are told most effectively in print, broadcast, and digital forms.

(Heifetz, 2005:26)

As Dailey (et al., 2003) explains, the convergence continuum “could be especially useful in identifying – in real time – how media organizations move through the stages as they adopt different behaviours that leads from one level on the continuum to the next”. A second continuum is that of Gentry who states that “there really is no such thing as easy convergence” (2004 cited in Quinn, 2005:35). Gentry (see below for table) suggests a continuum between the ‘easy’ and ‘difficult’ introduction of convergence (cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12).

This method looks at convergence between print and television, as is usually the case in the USA and Europe. It is however still applicable to print and online journalism since culturally the newsrooms are facing the same issues: they both need to find ways of working together while dealing with their ‘different media routines’ (see Shoemaker et al., 1996).

**Table 3.2** “Easy” versus “Difficult” convergence (Gentry, 2004 cited in Quinn & Filak, 2005:12)

<b>“Easy” Convergence</b>	<b>“Difficult” Convergence</b>
Central to organization’s strategy	Not central, secondary or worse
Committed and focused leadership	Other leadership priorities
Culture of innovation and risk taking	“Always done it this way”
Coordinating structure	No coordinating structure
Same ownership	Different ownership
Same values	Different values
Aligned systems and processes	Systems not aligned
Cable television partnerships	Partnerships with over-the-air broadcaster
Past successes together	Previous problems or no relationship
Cultures flexible or similar	Cultures not flexible or similar
Collocated	Located some distance apart
Lack of unions	Presence of strong unions

This practical method helps to determine how easy or difficult it is to converge two newsrooms. It lists self-explanatory items that assist in structuring an answer as to how the convergence process will develop and what the problems might be. It can also be used to extend the conclusions drawn from the previously discussed Convergence Continuum. So far, two practical methods that are potentially useful in elucidating information from observations to determine where the convergence process is at a certain point in time and what possible problems in existing structures the future could bring, have been examined. The last section of this chapter critically looks at what convergence-related studies have been implemented in South Africa in order to link this to this thesis’ particular research aims.

### **3.7 Newsroom convergence in South Africa**

Quinn & Quinn-Allan (2005) document the world-wide spread of journalism and the “global phenomenon [of convergence] that is defined differently in every country and culture” (Quinn & Quinn-Allan, 2005). They write about Europe, the USA, Asia, the Middle-East and South America but do not mention Africa.

It is necessary to study the convergence process in Africa since “convergence varies from country to country, company to company, and culture to culture” (Quinn & Quinn-Allan, 2005). But the challenges start with a journalistic landscape wherein “many African newsrooms and journalists are very far from the optimum use of

ICTs” (Berger, 2005:10), not to forget about the “cultural and language limitations concerning what is available on the Internet” (Berger, 2005:10). This means that the “contribution of African content to global cyberspace is way below its potential” (Berger & Mgwili-Sibanda, 2006:2).

The M&G has started implementing its strategies and plans for a converged newsroom, while the new daily newspaper The Times has opened the doors of its fully converged multimedia newsroom in May 2007 (see Hartley, 2007). The Times newsroom, situated in Johannesburg, consists of a single news desk where the photography editor, multimedia editor and news editors sit directly next to each other. The multimedia editor argued in an interview on 25 October 2007 that it works well, “in particular with big breaking news stories”. Hubs with four desks are spread out across the open-plan newsroom. Each hub has a beat like entertainment, news, politics or sport and consists of a photographer, reporter, multimedia producer and intern. From May up to October 2007 they produced over 600 videos and have had more than 40 000 visitors on the multimedia webpage. The multimedia editor stated that staff need to be trained and that bandwidth is a problem in South Africa but “in two years time there will be more bandwidth. In addition she went on to say that “we are doing video now to get the wheels into motion so that when that time comes, we do not need to scramble to get it all together”.

Another newspaper that works from within a fully converged newsroom is Die Burger ([www.dieburger.com](http://www.dieburger.com)), which belongs to the South African media company Media24 and is situated in Cape Town. Die Burger has a news desk where the photography editor, news editor, assistant news editor and multimedia editor sit together. They are close to the multimedia desk where two full-time multimedia content producers work on the website using photos, video and audio. Die Burger has adopted a web-first strategy and multimedia editor Steyn explained in an interview on 3 October 2007 that “this means that we will always break a story online. If we have the when, where, who, what and how we have done our job. The newspaper will do the analysis”. This strategy works well within the new Content Management System that allows for an uncomplicated flow between print stories and online.

The health reporter at Die Burger stated some of the challenges she faced trying to work with multimedia during an interview on 5 October 2007: “I’ve done about four or five videos where I did the camera work myself. I did need a lot of help with editing, I am still not confident enough to do it myself. Obviously there are time constraints; I don’t have the time to figure out the software”. On that same day another reporter said: “multimedia is cool. I don’t have a problem with it. People can read it in the newspaper and actually *see* it on the website. A lot of young people are more on the Internet so it is really nice that multimedia is possible now”. However, not all reporters are taking the initiative to ask for a camera or multimedia producer to join them on a story. In the interview Steyn said: “They [reporters] are supposed to take initiative. It is one of the difficulties that we still encounter. I think journalists are inherently lazy people and trying to get them to think about how to deliver their story, like ‘what can I add to it?’ for example, is still difficult”.

The above examples show that newsroom convergence is indeed happening and experimented with in South Africa. However, it has not extensively been studied at an academic level and within an African context. This proves that there is room for studies that concentrate on the workings of newsroom convergence in South African newsrooms.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter explored studies about newsroom convergence. It looked at the upcoming of newsroom convergence studies and how these developed into studies that mostly concentrate on cultural resistance between print and online reporters. The chapter then discussed the challenges within cultural resistance using three influential theories, namely: intergroup bias, professional role conceptions, and the diffusion of innovations theory. The last section of this chapter looked at two converged newsrooms in South Africa, namely The Times and Die Burger. It concluded that convergence is happening in South African newsrooms, but there is a lack of academic studies probing the changes and challenges. The next chapter discusses the methodology used in this case study and explains the epistemological stance and its link to the qualitative research paradigm. It will set out the adopted case study approach and look at the choice of data capturing methods and some of the ethical issues involved.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The foregoing chapters have established the context of this case study and reviewed some of the literature that is important to this research. It has been discussed that cultural resistance is the biggest challenge in converging newsrooms and that the theoretical positions influencing this study include intergroup bias, professional role conceptions, and the diffusion of innovations theory.

This chapter sets out the adopted epistemological stance and links the study to qualitative research. The choice to adopt a case study approach is explained just as the four research methods: interview, observation, document analysis and questionnaires. While questionnaires are not considered part of the qualitative research paradigm this method was adopted to give the researcher a general idea of the reporters' and editors' attitudes at a certain point in time. The last sections discuss potential ethical problems in the actual research and at the same time reviews the case study approach.

### **4.1 Philosophical underpinnings**

There are two key philosophies of social inquiry that inform this study's approach to the research methods include phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Phenomenology supposes that the world is socially constructed and subjective, the observer is a party to what is being observed, science is driven by human interests, and that there should be a focus on meanings (Gray, 2004:22). Also, it uses an inductive approach, multiple methods to establish different views of a phenomenon; small samples researched in depth or over time and qualitative methods (see Gray 2004:22).

Symbolic interactionism assumes that our behaviour and perceptions derive from processes of interaction with other people (Silverman, 2005:98) and that the actor's interpretations need to be examined (Bryman, 1988:55). These theories are both commonly used as the philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative methodology (Bryman, 1988:106). More specifically and in line with the aforementioned

concerning philosophical influences vis-à-vis research methods, qualitative research may be defined as:

...a process of enquiry that draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe these occurrences, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events, using induction to derive possible explanations based on observed phenomena

(Gorman & Clayton, 2005:3)

This definition touches on many of the key characteristics of qualitative research. It states that qualitative research draws data from natural settings; that qualitative researchers try to understand the ways in which people act; and that they use an inductive approach. Within the inductive approach, "...plans are made for data collection, after which the data are analysed to see if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables" (Gray, 2004:6). With the use of the case study approach the data was analysed to try and find a pattern in the reporters' and editors' attitudes that can influence the convergence process at the M&G.

Qualitative research sees the social world from the point of view of the actor (Bryman, 1988:106). Other than naturalistic inquiry or quantitative research (see Lindlof, 1995:21), qualitative research often focuses on "only some partial set of relationships in group life or on one aspect of a scene" (Lindlof, 1995:21). This is the case within this particular research study, where I focus on the phenomenon of newsroom convergence but leave many other aspects of the newsrooms, like interactivity and the actual productions, for what they are. Most important is that, following this phenomenological view of knowledge, I do not wish to generalise any findings from this case study. I will try to "provide readers with good raw material for their own generalizing" because "the reader can make his or her own generalisations and interpret it their way" (Stake, 1995:102).

Furthermore, to explain my choice for a qualitative approach, I want to understand what the reporters at the M&G are thinking: to study the case from "their perspective, from their point of view" because "the meaning of events, occurrences and interactions can be understood only through the eyes of actual participants in specific

situations” (Gorman et al., 2005:3). The methods of data collection that were employed for this research are considered to be part of the case study paradigm. These methods or “*multiple sources of evidence*” (Gray, 2004:129) include “the use of structured, semi-structured or open interviews, field observation or document analysis” (Gray, 2004:129; see also Stake, 1995:114; Gorman et al., 2005:40; Bryman, 1988:106). They are discussed in-depth in the next section.

## **4.2 The research design**

### 4.2.1 Case study

This research intends to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a South African news organisation. In an attempt to answer the research questions the ‘case study’ approach seems the most plausible choice because it concentrates on “an intensive investigation of a single unit” (Babbie & Mouton, 1998:281). That unit is in this thesis the M&G (for the origins of the case study approach see Babbie et al., 1998:281). With its phenomenological underpinnings and reliance on qualitative research methods, such as observation and interviews, the case study method provides me with a ‘thick description’ to develop what is to be perceived as “the case’s own issues, contexts, and interpretations...” (Stake, 1994:450).

This ‘thick description’ is the result of large amounts of data concerning people’s experiences or perspectives within their natural settings (Gray, 2004:28). Because of the use of interviews and observations within the case study design, I am bound to generate thick descriptions which give me the material to come to understand the process of convergence at the M&G. It provides me with the opportunity to “find out *how*” (Gray, 2004:123) the convergence process is enabled or inhibited by reporters’ and editors’ attitudes in the M&G newsrooms.

The case study is a particular type of qualitative research that “contrasts with two other influential kinds of social research: the experiment and social survey” (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000:2). To exemplify this statement is simple: “In experiments, the researcher *creates* the case(s) studied, whereas case study researchers construct cases out of naturally occurring social situations” (Gomm et al.,

2000:3). In this case, the ‘naturally occurring situations’ are the two newsrooms at the M&G (for more on case study design see Babbie et al., 1998:282-83).

As stated before, this study uses three different methods of data collection that are considered to be part of the case study paradigm: interviews (in person, by phone and by e-mail), observation and document analysis. However, during the data collection stage I found it necessary to e-mail all newspaper reporters and editors a questionnaire. Although this method is not considered part of the case study paradigm it proved to be useful in collecting general information about how the reporters and editors feel about convergence and what they know about the phenomenon. Methodological triangulation (see Denzin, 1978) can provide a range of different perspectives, ultimately mounting to ‘multiple realities’, which I – as a qualitative researcher – will try to preserve (Stake, 1995:12).

#### 4.2.2 Research setting

The M&G Online has its own entrance and exit, the M&G newspaper uses the main entrance to get into the building. The newspaper reporters and editors only walk past the online newsroom if they need to speak to photography, situated behind the M&G Online. They also pass when they buy snacks in the hallway next to photography. This is a serious obstruction since reporters and editors have to make an effort to visit each other or are prone to use phone and e-mail as a first choice.

#### 4.2.3 Gaining access

As a former co-worker at the M&G Online it was possible for me to gain access to the newsrooms, its staff, and all important documents. Right from the start of the research process there was regular contact between me, the publisher and news editor. They knew what I was working on and both provided me with documents. Because we know each other these subjects trusted me. Also, the publisher pointed out that this research will be interesting for the news organisation itself.

During the research period permission for observations and interviews was secured with the newspapers’ news editor and the M&G Online publisher. To ensure that everyone at the M&G was aware of my research intentions I sent out an e-mail to both newsrooms one month before the first observation period. I also sent a reminder a

week before starting the research. Both e-mails carefully explain what I will observe and who I will interview. After I had sent the e-mails most staff had a sense of what I was there for. And just as in the online newsroom the participants recognised me and helped me wherever they could.

#### 4.2.4 Observation

The first method of data collection that was employed in this case study is observations. This method first of all provided me with “useful insights into *unconscious* behaviour” (Gorman et al., 2005:40). This ‘unconscious behaviour’ plays an enormous part in trying to determine if the reporters’ and editors’ attitudes influence the process of newsroom convergence.

The subjects can say whatever they want in an interview, but their behaviour and actions during observation “have a ‘reality verifying’ character, whereby what people say they do can be compared with what they actually do” (Gorman et al., 2005:104).

There are two general types of observation as in participant and structured (see Gray, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). The major difference between the two is that participant observation focuses on “the meanings that people give to their actions” whereas structured observation centres “the frequency of their actions” (Gray, 2004:239).

The objective of this data collection method was to count the number of human interactions between the newspaper and online newsroom, I therefore employed structured observation, or “‘simple observation’ where the researcher remains an outside observer” (Babbie et al., 1998:293). I counted and made note if a reporter or editor from the newspaper discussed newsroom production issues with online reporters or editors and vice versa. This gave me an indication about the number of times that both newsrooms communicate and thus provided me with evidence in relation to the willingness of reporters and editors to work more closely with reporters and editors from the other newsroom (for an elaboration see Chapter 5: Findings).

Simple observation also made it possible to observe the attitudes that go with the human interactions. These attitudes are constructed through observing the different ways of behaviour that reporters and editors of the different newsrooms have towards

each other, the way the reporters or editors talk to each other and their body language during the interactions. The data was collected by note-taking in a separate notebook whenever there was an interaction between workers from each newsroom. The notes describe the people involved, snippets of what they are discussing, and their body language. I noted down if the contact was relevant for this research or not. If it was unclear what happened or if I could not understand what the issue was about I would go to the subjects involved and ask them questions to clarify. These were written down in the same notebook. This information, although subjective, reassured my existing notions of the differences between the newsrooms. It enabled me to give evidence about how willing the reporters or editors are to work together at this point in time (see Chapter 5: Findings).

Ultimately, evidence can be relied upon to make sense of where the newsrooms are in terms of their progress towards convergence. This includes references towards issues that are pending in terms of attaining full convergence, changes that need to be made and what part of the subjects' attitudes is enabling or inhibiting the process of newsroom convergence at the M&G.

There were two separate periods of observation in 2007. The first period started on Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> of January until Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of January and the second observation period was from Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of February up to Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> of February. Permission for observation was secured with the newspaper's editor and the online publisher. During both observation weeks I chose to sit in the online newsroom for several reasons. First of all, because the small size of the online newsroom would allow for a better overview of all the activities. It also enabled me to see who walked in and out and how they interacted. This would have been difficult in the newspaper newsroom where I could have easily lost track of where everyone was heading as soon as they left their desks. For instance, a newspaper reporter or editor might have left their desk and headed to the hallway that connects the main newsroom to the online section, but they might be going outside for another reason altogether then to interact with M&G Online. I would have frantically followed every single person who goes into the hallway to find out that they are on their way to a lunch appointment.

Secondly, the online newsroom offered me a desk where I was able to sit down and work while observing thereby making it more practical and convenient. The desk was situated in the middle of the newsroom, facing the hallway that connects the two newsrooms. In this way it was impossible to miss any direct human interactions. Thirdly, observing from the online newsroom enabled me to blend in with the other reporters and editors at work. As observation tends to change the behaviour of people who are aware that they are being observed it was important that I blend into the environment and be taken for granted (Gorman et al., 2005:105). Lastly, I am a former reporter at the M&G Online and far more comfortable sitting with my ex-colleagues who do not see me as an intruder in that newsroom. They know who I am, what I do, and would therefore be less obstructive in letting me carry on with my observations. Being a former co-worker made it difficult to not get involved with the production process happening around me. There were a number of occasions whereby I either had story ideas to share or helpful tips, contact numbers and suggestions for the other reporters. I also felt a sense of despair when the M&G Online website was offline for a couple of hours due to a lack of service from their Internet provider. All of these factors, I argue, could not have had a major impact on my observations because they did not have anything to do with the interactions between the two newsrooms.

Many qualitative researchers see the latter as a weakness of the observation method (for example Babbie et al., 1998; Gorman et al., 2005). It can also be a strength because it helps the researcher to understand newsroom interactions better than an “outsider”. Other weaknesses that are of importance to this research include that “... observation can be very time consuming, even when appropriate events and situations are chosen; and the subjectivity of the observer must always be taken into account” (Gorman et al., 2005:105; for more limitations see Yin, 1994 cited in Gray, 2004:135).

A complementary set of strengths is also listed by Gorman et al. (2005): “It has a present orientation, recording what occurs as it occurs; ...it allows behaviour to be observed in its natural setting; it permits the study of people who may be unwilling to give their own reports of their activities” (2005:104; also see Yin, 1994 cited in Gray, 2004:135).

With regard to this study, I would like to argue that the strengths of observations outweigh the weaknesses. In addition, there is simply no other method that applies better to what I want to investigate and that is actions in practice. The data collected from the observation periods provided a basis for more in-depth information which helped me in constructing interview questions.

#### 4.2.5 The interview method

My second method of data collection is the interview method because it is a “valuable adjunct to observation” and “interviews also have the potential to offer balance and corroboration where observed phenomena are complex or involve a number of factors” (Gorman et al., 2005:41). When it was unclear what the interaction between two subjects was about I would then go on to interview them both straight afterwards. This gave me the opportunity to collect diverse views and use interviews as my “main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995:64).

For this research it was necessary to use three different types of interviews: the elite interview, the semi-structured interview and the focused or deep interview. The difference between these types is in the “extent to which the interview is *structured*, and the degree to which the interviewee is allowed to ‘lead’ the content of the interview” (Gillham, 2000:2). An elite interview was conducted with the four most relevant respondents in this research and these included the M&G Online’s publisher, strategist, editor, and the newspaper’s news editor. These four people established the convergence process and are therefore the key players in my research. Not only do they have expert knowledge, they were also able to help me conduct my research at the M&G. Their perspectives were different and they have access to information that is withheld from others. They also have a comprehensive grasp of the wider context at M&G.

These interviews took place during the second observation period or immediately afterwards by phone. I was able to ask what I wanted and extracted the information that was needed quite easily. Every third week after the interviews I sent out an e-mail to each interviewee to ask for any significant updates on the convergence process. This provided me with little information because the convergence process actually progressed slowly. I did receive an e-mail from the online news editor informing me

about a new blogging tool that was about to be launched on the website and that it involved the newspaper's reporters (for an elaboration see Chapter 5: Findings). The four elite interviews were semi-structured. This type of interview allows for "probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers" (Gray, 2004: 215). This means that in semi-structured interviews the main questions are open-ended – "where you are raising the topic and indicating the *kind* of answer but where the actual answers are entirely up to the interviewee" (Gillham, 2000:41). At the same time, the interviewer stays in control of the terms of the discussion (see Deacon et al., 1999:65). I did so by holding on to an interview guide with topics and questions that needed to be discussed during the interviews.

Other semi-structured interviews were conducted with reporters and editors from the newspaper newsroom. There are 31 reporters and editors so I had to make a purposive sample and choose respondents with a range of characteristics that are relevant to my research (Gorman et al., 2005:128). Five reporters and two editors were selected after the first observation period. These respondents were a mix of people who have regular contact with the online newsroom and others who, I noticed, never interacted. Each one of them received an e-mail with an explanation about my research and an invite to participate. By the end of the second observation period I had received three responses. Two of the newspaper reporters and one editor agreed to be interviewed. When I tried to ask other reporters and editors in the newspaper newsroom for their co-operation I received the same answer from a number of people: "I don't have time". I concluded that three semi-structured in-depth interviews would give me appropriate in-depth information to work with. One of these interviews took place face-to-face during the second observation period. The other two were conducted afterwards by phone. I was only able to record the face-to-face interview on tape.

The interviews with the newspaper reporters and editor provided me with plenty information. Gillham (2000) explains that this is one of the strengths of the interview method: "The strength of the interview lies in its richness and vividness of the material it turns up" (2000:10). In addition, it also adds in both "depth and breadth to one's understanding of the issues" (Gorman et al., 2005:41). Gorman et al. (2005) asserts that the information gained from interviews is of "inestimable value in

understanding contexts and creating links that are such key aspects of qualitative research” (2005:41).

Weaknesses of the interview method mostly lie in the danger of bias and inaccuracies (Yin, 1994 cited in Gray, 2004:135). Admittedly, I noticed I have a biased image of the M&G newsrooms while I was transcribing some of the interviews that I had recorded on tape. I sometimes identified myself with the online newsroom. This resulted in saying ‘us’ (meaning the online newsroom) in interviews with reporters and editors. This could also mean that reporters and editors from the newspaper newsroom identified me as ‘one of them’. I cannot determine in how far this influenced my research, but as Babbie et al. (1998) note: “Ultimately, anything the observer does or does not do will have some effect on what is being observed; it is simply inevitable” (1998:296).

I approached the one online reporter and two online editors in a different way. During the second week of observations I noticed that there would be no time for interviews; everyone was glued onto their screens updating whenever possible. I wanted to interview all three. I therefore decided to send my questions to them via e-mail. This worked out very well: only the online news editor did not reply. The other two provided useful answers and I was able to contact them if there was a problem, misunderstanding, or if I had any further questions. Lastly, document analysis as a research method is discussed in the next section. It is considered part of the qualitative research paradigm and helps in two ways: checking my interpretations against the creator’s interpretations, and checking the data’s accuracy and faithfulness (Gray, 2004:342).

#### 4.2.6 Document analysis

Before and during the research period there were a couple of informal conversations with the publisher of the M&G Online wherein I found that it was necessary to obtain at least two documents referred to before: the Strategy document (Buckland, 2006) and Timeline. The Strategy and Timeline documents were obtained just before the observation periods because they were only officially discussed and drafted at that time. Both documents are crucial to this research. The Strategy document sets out the M&G’s definitions of convergence, the challenges they’re facing, and what the

newsroom environments should change into. It also states different ideas about incorporating newspaper reporters into the online newsroom, highlights new online features whilst also identifying some of the long term plans.

The Timeline is a two-page document that lists tasks such as “Change staff home page to *M&G Online*” and “Launch new blogging platform for journalists, educate journalists and columnists, and get them blogging” (see Appendix A). It also points out the duration of the tasks, the deadline, and responsible person. This document is important because it shows convergence as a process: I can use it to track the M&G’s progress and it contains precise details (see Gray, 2004:135 for more strengths of document analysis).

However, despite the obvious strengths that accompany document analysis there are two weaknesses worth pointing out. The Strategy document was drafted by the publisher and the Timeline by the news editor of the M&G Online. This means that both documents can “reflect an unknown bias from the authors” (Gray, 2004:135), since both documents are from the online newsroom. Also, both documents are to be kept confidential. But the online publisher told the researcher in an interview on 15 February 2007 that all is fine “...as long as it is not widely available”. He explained that the documents can be circulated on an academic level but are not to be published, for example, on my personal weblog.

During the research period I realised that there were other ways to communicate between the newsrooms than just human interaction. Often contact is via e-mail and phone. I therefore asked everyone in the online newsroom to count the phone calls they make to the newspaper and how many they receive. Only the phone calls that deal with news production issues were to be counted. It proved more difficult to intercept e-mails given that one of the online editors did not want to participate and another simply forgot about forwarding them to me. During the second week of observations I decided to personally ask each subject on a daily basis to forward me any e-mails they received from the other newsroom or that they had sent. This was fruitful, a total amount of fifteen e-mails about newsroom production issues were collected.

#### 4.2.7 Questionnaires

As argued before, at the very last moment of the data collection process I decided to e-mail all newspaper reporters and editors a carefully thought-out questionnaire (see Appendix C). There was a lack of general knowledge and information about the attitudes of the reporters' and editors' as they were at that time. It was impossible to probe into all of their minds at the same time and to know what everyone was thinking about convergence generally. A questionnaire was the easiest way out, providing me with systematic and standardised data (Gray, 2004:99).

This particular method of data collection is not genuinely part of the qualitative research paradigm. However, the questionnaires were not intended for qualitative analysis, but should rather be seen as a form of structured interview via e-mail. But as Stake (1995) argues: “[w]ith multiple approaches within a single case study, we are likely to illuminate or nullify some extraneous influences” (1995:114) that, in this case, can occur during observations. In his book *The Research Act* (1978) Denzin identifies this type of triangulation as “methodological triangulation”. This key concept is used here to validate the use of questionnaires within a qualitative research paradigm. The questionnaire dealt with some general issues surrounding newsroom convergence like what they think the process entails and the reporters' willingness to write for the M&G Online. There was no trial period due to a lack of time, but I had an accurate idea of the questions I wanted to ask (and the answers that I needed).

A total of 31 subjects in the newspaper newsroom received the questionnaire. Within a month I received nine completely filled in questionnaires back into my e-mail inbox with seven coming in from reporters and two from editors. These immediately helped me to improve the interview questions whilst also enabling me to put my observations into perspective. Having discussed the research methods used in this case study the next sections critically look at the ethics involved and provide a review of the chosen approach.

### **4.3 Ethics**

From the first e-mail that I sent to the newspaper newsroom it was made clear that everyone would stay anonymous, which meant that there would be no names in the actual thesis unless I had received permission. I also promised in both e-mails that

everyone would receive a digital copy of my work. At the end of both e-mails I stated that everyone should feel free to contact me. Also, attached to both e-mails was the thesis proposal as accepted by the Higher Degrees Committee at Rhodes University. The e-mail was sent out again before the second observation period. Because of this careful planning and all the notices beforehand I did not encounter difficulties during the research process while dealing with respondents. Most reporters and editors were comfortable forwarding me their e-mails, counting their phone calls, and observing them in their natural setting.

#### **4.4 Review**

As argued before, it was difficult not get involved with the production process around me while observing. Also, during some of the interviews I could hear myself refer to the online newsroom as 'us'. I could have improved the research design by looking into the problems that occur when researching a former workplace or a situation wherein the respondents know the researcher.

Given the wisdom of hindsight, the research design did not fully cover all aspects that I needed to cover for a complete understanding of the situation at the M&G. I should have conducted a questionnaire right at the beginning of the research process instead of halfway through so that I would start the observation period with a better understanding of the attitudes at that time.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

There are two key philosophies of social inquiry that inform this study's methodological approach and these include symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. It was argued that the qualitative methodology and more specifically the case study design suited the aims of this thesis.

The main operational method of this case study is field observations and it was operationalised in two separate weeks. In total seven in-depth semi-structured interviews were held and ten questionnaires were handed in. The obtained Strategy and Timeline documents are also used in the analysis. Potential ethical issues were dealt with before the research started and there were no major difficulties

encountered. However, I did point out that it was difficult to not get involved in the production process and to not refer to my former workplace as ‘us’.

The next chapter presents the main themes in the research data organised in topic-related categories. Four themes kept on recurring: communication problems between the newsrooms; a weekly production cycle versus the ongoing cycle of M&G Online; time management issues; and all staff seem to accept convergence as the future.

## **Chapter 5: Findings**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the methodology and research methods used in this case study approach. This chapter goes a step further with a look at the data collected by means of interviews, observation, document analysis, and questionnaires.

By categorising the data during the analysis process the main themes in the data became apparent. The data from every single method was analysed with the help of these categories, which not only simplified the process, but also enabled the researcher to see which themes kept on recurring. Different respondents repeated the same themes: communication problems between the newsrooms; the weekly production cycle of the M&G against the ongoing cycle of M&G Online; and time management issues. It was also notable that all staffers seemed to accept convergence as the future. For them the question is not ‘if’ it will happen but ‘when’ it will happen. However, as this chapter will explore, what staffers said in interviews and questionnaires does not always coincide with how they acted during observation.

This chapter is divided up according to the above recurring topics which represent the main themes of this case study. Using evidence from the questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents the recurring themes are uncovered and explained. The last section looks at other issues that were mentioned in interviews and questionnaires that could be of significance to this case study.

To address the research questions (see section 2.3 in Chapter 2) this chapter flags enabling and inhibiting factors throughout to arrive at an understanding of the reporters’ and editors’ attitudes towards the convergence process at the M&G. The Discussion chapter will discuss these attitudes in more depth and relate them to existing theory.

### **5.1 Communication problems between the newsrooms**

From the data collected it is clear that there are communication problems between the newsrooms. During both observation periods there were 33 interactions between staff

of the newspaper and website. Most of these interactions, around 26, did not involve newsroom production issues, but could be described as social dealings.

Inadequate communication inhibits the possibilities of cross-media projects. Publishing a photo slideshow or large documents that were used in an investigative journalism article by newspaper staffers onto the M&G Online are simple examples of such cross-media projects. Other issues like duplicating stories in the newspaper and on the website and the sharing of resources could be resolved with an increase in communication between the newsrooms.

There are two underlying challenges that undermine communication possibilities and these include the consideration that the newsrooms are physically separate and that there are no formal policies or established procedures to enable communication between the newsrooms.

#### 5.1.1 Separate newsrooms and a lack of formal policies

The separate newsrooms are the main factor in inhibiting communication. The M&G Online has its own entrance and exit while the M&G newspaper uses the main entrance to get into the building. The kitchen and bathrooms are in the hallway that separates the two newsrooms. The newspaper reporters have to walk through this hallway and pass the online newsroom if they need to speak to photographers, located in a room behind the M&G Online newsroom.

Previous studies about newsroom convergence argue that it is necessary for a successfully converged news company to have one common newsroom where all different media share the same workspace (Harrower, 2006:156). The M&G editor-in-chief agreed: “The first problem is the current set-up; it is not as bad as it was in the old building but we need to knock down that wall”. The ‘wall’ is not only physical: “We need to sit in the same place with one news desk that assigns people stories to write for a certain platform; there where the story would work best”.

A newspaper reporter shared the same opinion: “We could [...] all benefit from greater contact with each other – they could at the very least be in the same room as editorial”. The online sub-editor gave a practical example of how communication

between the newsrooms could improve news production: “There may be a case where the paper wants to run a story for next Friday that online may want to put up or has put up earlier in the week”. One of the online reporters gave an example of this in the questionnaire: “A journalist in print started researching a story about online gambling. I saw some of the papers lying on his desk and asked him what he was doing about online gambling. He told me his angle. To his disappointment, I had written that exact story in much more detail three months before him. If he had read the site or did a search on our site for the words online gambling, he would have saved himself a lot of time.” The lack of communication therefore brings a danger of duplicating work. Instead of reinforcing each other by looking at each news article individually and deciding on which platform it works best, as the editor-in-chief suggests, the platforms seemed to compete against each other.

To enable newsroom convergence the online strategist argued that “all that is really necessary is a kind of converged diary meeting where everyone discusses what extra media they can produce and so on, and how that works on the different platforms”. He added that that is part of the plan of “setting up more formal channels of communication between the different news desks like print and online”. And again: “a lot of it has to do with just being in the same kind of physical space as us”. Print editorial staff and online staff therefore agreed that the separate newsrooms inhibited newsroom convergence.

Like the online strategist, the publisher of the M&G Online said that the communication problem has to do with the fact that there are no formal policies or established procedures that deal with convergence initiatives. “Journalists are encouraged if the story has been cut to publish the longer story online, and we have been doing that. The problem is that there is no policy or official strategy for these initiatives. It has been done on a very ad hoc basis, according to the initiative of a journalist who is kind of thinking on the bigger picture”.

During the second observation week the online news editor visited the newspaper’s regular diary meeting on Monday. However, the online publisher said: “I don’t think it is working because I don’t see any results”. Unfortunately, the news editor did not want to comment. On the whole, this diary meeting is not a ‘converged’ meeting like

the online strategist suggests. In a converged meeting both platforms would be equal and discuss their story ideas, in the newspaper diary meeting the M&G Online does not have a voice.

On the other hand, it does enable communication between the two newsrooms about production issues. The M&G Online now knows what is happening at the newspaper. Still, during these observations the online news editor did not tell the other online staffers what he had heard at the meeting, in fact: he did not say a word about the meeting. This might be a reason why the online publisher did not see any results.

Even though the newsrooms are separate and there are no formal communication policies or established procedures, staff in the online newsroom argued that the other newsroom is so close that they could, as one said: “just get up and go there”. Nevertheless, what was said in interviews and written in questionnaires often differed from what happened in reality. The next section takes a closer look at this matter.

#### 5.1.2 Communication issues: perception versus reality

First of all, five out of eight newspaper respondents answered in the questionnaire that they would like to work more closely with the online team. Responses ranged from a simple “yes, I do” to: “they have a readership and as a writer one needs readers” and: “yes, there is much we can do on the Internet that will fill gaps that have arisen because we don’t have space in the paper”.

Another newspaper reporter wrote that communicating generally happens at an editorial level, but that “reporters barely know who’s who [...] – they could seriously benefit by being encouraged to get to know and talk to each other”. All these newspaper staffers recognised communication as an essential element in the process of newsroom convergence. This finding could enable management and editorial staff to put in place formal lines of communication to make sure print and online production start to converge.

One of the two online reporters agreed that communication is a major problem; going back to the incident about the online gambling story she argued that communication

could have prevented the newspaper reporter duplicating her story. It seems that both print and online staff believe that communication is a key problem.

Other respondents looked at possible solutions. The film editor said: “[print and online can work more closely together by] planning ahead [and] participating in each other diary meetings”. The questionnaire also asked a related question: “how often do you visit the online newsroom?” The number of visits relates directly to the communication problem because visits enable direct communication. Seven print staffers answered this question. The arts and features editor of the newspaper did not, but that is probably because I observed that he visited the online newsroom several times a day so it was rather obvious for me to make note of his visits. Four respondents agreed that they “should visit the online newsroom more often”.

Part B of the same question asked about the frequency of visits. Three out of seven answered that they visit the online newsroom “more than once a week”. However, observations revealed that none of these staffers were seen in the online newsroom in either observation week. Overall, from the fourteen reporters and twenty-one editors that work in the newspaper newsroom only six print staffers visited the online newsroom during both observation weeks. The researcher understands that there were only two weeks of observation and that a lot of these outcomes have to do with coincidence but the conclusion that can be drawn carefully is that some people say they visit the online newsroom when they actually do not.

The situation was different with online staff who tended to visit the newspaper newsroom on numerous occasions. The news editor regularly paid brief visits, but unfortunately he did not co-operate fully and only gave little information. Another editor frequently visited the newspaper and said that he mostly does so to make quick checks with the newsroom on production issues. “I check on all sorts of things. Sometimes it is fact-checking, other times I ask if they maybe have something, like photos, for us to publish online.”

While the online editors seemed to frequently visit their print counterpart, the two online reporters only visited three times in total. Each visited once in the first week and in the second week of observations there was only one reporter present, who

visited the newspaper once. All three occasions were not social interactions but dealt with newsroom production issues such as the sharing of news sources and asking for phone numbers. From these last interactions it is clear that both newsrooms work with separate phone lists and sources. It seems a lot easier for production to have one common list that both newsrooms share. If one newsroom feels protective about a phone list and does not want to share it with the other newsroom this could point to an “Us versus Them” culture between the newsrooms, all of which inhibit the process of newsroom convergence.

Because direct or verbal communication is not the only possible way to communicate the e-mails and phone calls between the newsrooms were also counted during both weeks of observation. It was thought that the reporters and editors would be prone to using these because of the distance between the two newsrooms. In the end there was only a small number of e-mails and phone calls and none were of significance to this study. The next section describes some of the unplanned interactions about newsroom production issues that were recorded during both observation weeks.

### 5.1.3 Examples of unplanned interactions between the newsrooms

Each encounter between newspaper staff and online staff was recorded. Noted down were the date and time, names of the staff involved and the actual observation with quotes and context. During the data analysis process it was possible to compile three lists: a list of the staffers who walked in to discuss newsroom production issues; notable convergence happenings (like cross-media productions); and interesting quotes. During the first week of observation there was a coincidental collaboration between the environmental reporter at the newspaper and one of the online reporters. It is necessary to report this interaction in detail because it shows how the two platforms work together at the moment...and how far away they still are from a more ideal situation with shorter communication lines.

A source phoned the newspaper and online newsroom with the same information for an article. Both the environmental reporter and the online reporter started working on the story. A day later the source tells the newspaper reporter that an online reporter is working on the same story.

The newspaper reporter walks to the online newsroom and says to the online reporter: “Write it as you see and I’ll write it as it develops. You have to do

what you have to do.” With this she means that the online reporter should publish immediately, which is required and possible on the website.

The online reporter explains that “other dailies cover this today, and I have enough for a news story. [The environmental reporter] can try and find a different angle for her story”. The environmental reporter says: “I’ll check out her story and use elements of it, definitely. But I will make it into a more in-depth article, I still need to look for an angle and see what the dailies write and do.”

After the brief meeting between the two reporters the online news editor leaves his desk and tells the online reporter to “go [to the site] today and not tomorrow [with the print reporter]”. The news editor explains that he said so because he: “want[s] to get the news as fast as possible”.

In the early hours of the next day the newspaper reporter returns to the online newsroom and asks the online reporter: “Did you go yesterday?” She answers: “Yes, the story is online”. The print reporter then responds “OK, please e-mail it to me so I can start investigating”. The online reporter answers without looking up from her screen “yes”.

There are a number of interesting aspects in this interaction. To start with, the reporters had to find out from the source that they were working on the same story. Without discussing the content of the article with the online reporter the environmental reporter seemed to assume that the online article would not have enough ‘depth’ for the newspaper. This finding seems to again point out an underlying ‘Us versus Them’ culture between the newsrooms that, obviously, inhibits newsroom convergence.

The news editor explained that he wanted to get the news as fast as possible. Not saying this in front of the print reporter again points to an “Us versus Them” culture between the newsrooms. If there was a culture of equality in the news company this would have been discussed in the open with all parties involved. At the end of the interaction the print reporter asked the online reporter if the story has been published. It is a bit strange that the print reporter did not look for the article on the website. She also wanted the article to be e-mailed to her, suggesting that again she did not (want to) look at the website. Also, the example pointed out how the “Us versus Them” culture works between the newsrooms and how it inhibits the convergence process. And again, a shared newsroom and formal policies or established structures like a converged diary meeting could have avoided the duplicating of work.

Another example of unplanned communication during the first period of observation showed how the lack of formal policies or established structured inhibits newsroom convergence. It also returns to the issue of sharing resources.

One of the online reporters is writing a story about Zambia but needs extra information. Hearing her cry for help the online news editor jumps up and walks to the newspaper newsroom. When he comes back he turns to the online reporter and says: “[...] [a journalist from the Africa desk at the newspaper] is looking to see if we have a stringer in Zambia”. The news editor said that is all he asked for at the Africa desk.

Because the newsrooms are not sharing their resources and have separate lists with sources and phone numbers the online reporter got stuck. The news editor knew about the Africa desk while the online reporter did not. If there were a formal policy about the sharing of resources, or if they were sharing the same workspace, the online reporter might have been able to solve the problem herself because she would see the contact details of the stringer. And if there were a shared newsroom she would have seen the Africa desk and most likely familiarised herself with it because she is close to it.

On the other hand, the news editor could also have told the newspaper what the story was about and why they needed the stringer. In turn, the Africa desk never asked what the story is about. Does that mean they were not interested in each others work? While both platforms could have worked together, using the knowledge of the Africa desk and the online platform and reporter, the ‘Us versus Them’ culture was enforced.

Another interesting production issue involved a document that was used for an investigative article in the newspaper. The online editor by chance discovered that the document was referred to as evidence in the article. Because there is no space for a copy of the document in the newspaper he asked the reporter for a digital copy to publish online. The newspaper would then run a link to the site for readers who want to see the document. The next day the reporter gave a copy of the document to the online editor. Online was not able to use it because it was in the “wrong format” and therefore was not able to add to the newspaper’s content. Again, with a formal policy in place the reporter would have to immediately supply the online editor with the document in the right format. Also, sharing a newsroom and having converged diary

meetings, it is likely that the online editor would have received the documents quicker. The online editor needs these documents as fast as possible because he works with an ongoing production cycle. However, because of the newspaper's weekly cycle he cannot publish. He needs the newspaper's article and is not allowed to scoop the news before its counterpart. This is not a formal policy but an unwritten rule that seems to hold.

These different production cycles cause different organisational structures, journalistic routines, and ways of time management in each newsroom. These aspects will need to change if convergence is to work at the M&G. The next section takes a closer look at these different cycles and routines.

## **5.2 Weekly versus daily production cycles and different journalistic routines**

The M&G newspaper is published every Friday while M&G Online is in real-time and updated continuously. The newspaper has a diary meeting on Monday and Wednesday with the deadline for their work on Thursday. Online does not have fixed meetings but meets when necessary and because of their ongoing production cycle there are no fixed deadlines either. As explained in Chapter 2, each media platform is exposed to a different routine: a certain way of working that will not easily change (see Shoemaker et al., 1996). These media routines are embedded in both print and online and they both differ from each other.

The M&G Online publisher explained in an interview on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2007, that “a daily website with a daily newspaper has different imperatives and production processes. For instance, convergence would be a lot easier and a lot more automatic if M&G was a daily newspaper but there is a different production cycle going on”.

He added that “we are a very tightly run organisation in terms of the amount of journalists that we have writing stories. I don't believe we have as much room to manoeuvre as let's say... a Washington Post or a New York Times.” The two problems that the publisher names - dealing with two different production cycles and staff workload - are major issues and both inhibit newsroom convergence at the M&G. The publisher argued that he needs to “find a balance between not

overworking staff and not losing focus of their core product. For print staff that core product is the newspaper.

He emphasised that it is a “very sensitive thing from a staff point of view because it might mean staff members doing different things, learning different things, taking on extra tasks... so it is an incredibly sensitive process and we are going to do it carefully, slowly, and collaboratively.” He names the M&G Online’s blogging site Thought Leader ([www.thoughtleader.co.za](http://www.thoughtleader.co.za)) as an example: “Some newspaper reporters are blogging, which is extra work. But we don’t force them to write”. These newspaper reporters are slowly adjusting to a daily cycle as soon as they realise they can publish on their blog whenever they want. At the end of the second observation period the editor-in-chief of the newspaper was blogging, just as the M&G’s CEO. The next chapter will discuss this in more depth because it seems to be a major inhibiting factor of convergence at the M&G. The next section looks at the issues of an increased workload that comes with the change-over from a weekly cycle to a daily or ongoing cycle.

### 5.2.1 An increased workload and time constraints

There are two ways to look at the increased workload and time constraints that come with newspaper staffers who need to get used to a continuous production cycle. These are the online newsroom’s perspective and the newspaper newsroom’s perspective.

The arts and features editor of the newspaper was able to put in words what the exact concern is of many newspaper staffers: “We would have to be working on a daily deadline and what would happen to the weekly deadline? ... I don’t think anybody really knows. So it would work for the website but then people will be running around in a state of hysteria trying to get their daily deadlines together for their multimedia project... and what would happen to the weekly deadline... I’m not entirely sure.” Two newspaper reporters agree with him: one said “I doubt that I have the time” and the other was “not too crazy about it [the idea]”.

While the newspaper’s perspective is more negative the online perspective differs: “Sometimes it looks like we do more in a day than the paper in a week, you know. For us...taping an interview for our Podcast...that would be good enough.” The online

editor, who was interviewed on 19 February 2007, seemed to give an underlying message, stating that the newspaper's staff does not work hard at all and that online is busier and can be easily helped out; for example by providing a taped interview. Also, working together in that way will not directly increase the workload of the newspaper reporter because the interview is taped anyway. This is often a question of understanding. The online strategist explained in an interview on 15 February 2007: "When you explain to them [newspaper staff] what its all about they are quite sort of open minded about it". However, he adds that "it is going to be perceived as extra [work]. Like the core job is to do this journalism-thing related to the paper. To take photos or to be shooting video is just not really part of the job requirement and their daily routine."

All in all, it is unclear if the newspaper staffers have the time to write stories for the website. It is not of importance to this case study if they do or do not but it is important that they *think* they do not have the time. This relates to their attitudes towards the process of newsroom convergence and could be considered as an inhibiting factor. The next and last section explicates other challenges that appeared in the data and that have to do with the differences between a weekly and ongoing production cycle.

### 5.2.2 Other challenges with the weekly versus ongoing production cycle

Other challenges that inhibit newsroom convergence at the M&G and are linked to the different production cycles are the different workflow systems and work ethics that are part of each media routine.

A workflow system or Content Management System (CMS) enables each person in a newsroom to see who is working on what story, where that story is in the line of production (still being written or already published), and it gives access to an automated archive. At the moment both newsrooms at the M&G work with separate CMS's. If there were a single CMS duplicating stories would be almost impossible because everyone would be able to see what is being published. A combined CMS can enable a converged newsroom to have more cross-media publishing because it is easier to link the stories from both platforms together.

However, just as bigger newspapers have more staff, they also have more articles. Therefore the online publisher argued: “It doesn’t make sense to invest all the time, energy and political currency in launching one of those [shared CMS] when you actually have only fifty stories coming out of the newspaper every week.” Because the M&G is a relatively small news company it does not see the value of acquiring a shared CMS, which is a major inhibiting factor in the convergence process. With a shared CMS out of the question for some time it looks like improvements in communication and an ongoing production flow between the newsrooms is a step further away than at bigger news companies.

As discussed earlier, different media have different media routines. With these routines come different ways of working and different ethics. Two of the principal differences between the weekly newspaper and the M&G website are ethical: the speed of publishing and accuracy. For instance, as the online strategist explained: “The daily newspaper and online culture is to provide ongoing progress reports and there is this understanding in a sense that you can get it wrong but tomorrow you can get it right. [But] when you write something for a weekly you are trying to have a final say on a particular issue.”

While a newspaper can only be printed once, an online article can always be updated. Note that, online publishing is faster but can be less accurate because of the publishing speed. Two newspaper reporters pointed this out in the questionnaire. To these print reporters the media routines of the M&G Online are inhibiting the process of newsroom convergence because they give prevalence to the slower publishing rate of the newspaper.

Deciding which platform publishes a breaking news story first is closely related to issues around speed and accuracy. At the moment the online editors often wait for the newspaper to break a story on Friday. The online strategist argues that “[to make convergence work] we would have to make a decision on a per story basis because some stories are just too big to leak before the final report is finished.” He added that “not all stories lend themselves to daily progress updates online.” In an interview a newspaper editor expressed his concerns: “Breaking the story on the website and that not appearing in print; that is my one thought. We need those stories”. The

implication is that the M&G newspaper cannot survive without its scoops given that this is what the paper is best known for. For that reason the draft Strategy document states that there should be ‘breaking news alerts’ and that “these are short stories which are really a promo for the bigger story in the newspaper. It is not considered an ‘article’ and will get a different treatment. We should be careful not to give details of the scoop away and the main aim of this would be to get readers to buy the newspaper or visit the website on Friday when the full story hits the streets” (Buckland, 2006). The Strategy is still a draft and needs to be discussed by management and staff but so far it seems that this could be a solution to one of the challenges of convergence. The next chapter, titled ‘Discussion’, will elaborate on the Strategy and its purpose.

So far this chapter has presented and initially discussed two of the three recurring themes in the data, namely the communication problems between the newsrooms and the weekly versus daily production cycles and different journalistic routines. The next section deals with the third and last theme: convergence as the accepted future. With all the above mentioned inhibiting factors it looks like the M&G’s converged newsroom is still in the future. However, every single person interviewed in this case study believes that convergence will happen. Not one respondent doubted that convergence will ever happen at the M&G. All accepted it as the future of the newsroom.

### **5.3 Newsroom convergence as the accepted future**

From the start of the data collection process the researcher became aware of a shared view amongst all editorial staff with regard to their acceptance that newsroom convergence is the way forward for the M&G. This attitude towards convergence could enable editorial staff to change their journalistic routines or to start cross-media projects and so push the convergence process forward or even drive it. To give a detailed overview of the data this section is divided into two parts. The first part looks at the perspective of the instigators of the convergence process – the online publisher, strategist and news editor and the newspaper’s news editor – and the second part at the perspective of the ones who are supposed to adhere to the new strategies and policies that is the newspaper and online staff.

### 5.3.1 The instigators' point of view

The length of the convergence process might be different to every instigator – from “a distant kind of future thing” to “in the next two years” – but all agree that it is the way forward. The online publisher said in February 2007: “I have been thinking about convergence for the last six years...ever since I arrived at M&G”. After six years of slow progress he still sees a converged news desk at the M&G in the near future. “I think probably at the end of two years we will be kind of closer to that ideal. And we will eventually get there. But that is a complete guess. But the point is that we are moving in that direction”.

To still believe in the convergence concept after six years is “common sense” said the publisher. “From an organisational point of view it allows us to be more creative in reporting and more efficient with the content that the reporter produces”. In an interview four months later, June 2007, the publisher had not lost any of his previous enthusiasm and said that: “they [print staff] understand that it is something that must be done. We are now on the ‘how’, we are going to do it.”

At the same time the newspaper's editor-in-chief said: “My philosophy of convergence is that it is something that we have to do; because it enables us to do what we have to do. The next generation of readers will read the news on their cell phone or read it online.” The online strategist takes this idea a step further: “While the global trend is that newspaper circulation is going down, ours is going up. This poses a problem because it is kind of hard to convince people that the way the future is to kind of go online...but what happens if Internet access and whatever kind of devices become cheap enough here that a generation can actually leapfrog over reading newspapers as a way of getting their information?”

To start with this long term vision within the M&G, the online strategist first wanted the newspaper reporters to move into blogging and the photographers into video and to experiment a bit before the newsroom is structurally converged. The newspapers' editor-in-chief is content with this approach because “journalists must do it when they want to do it, they cannot be forced”. The online editor thinks of a converged newsroom in “years from now” because “it is difficult to change job descriptions”; one of the other inhibiting factors in the convergence process.

To the instigators, who all believe that convergence will happen, it is important that staff accept their strategies and future plans for the news company. Launching an idea like newsroom convergence brings with it major changes and the instigators need the staff's support if it wants to succeed. From interviews and questionnaires staff seem to have already accepted convergence as the future.

### 5.3.2 The staffs' point of view

All eight newspaper respondents answered positively to the first question in the questionnaire: 'What do you think about newsroom convergence?' All the answers differ greatly in meaning and understanding of the concept but show that they all accept that newsroom convergence is the future at M&G.

The arts and features editor at the newspaper said that convergence would benefit the readers and that he could "see the usefulness of it". A newspaper reporter said: "I do understand why this convergence process needs to happen. I suppose it is purely for the survival of the newspaper industry in the future. News companies need to cater for both an online audience and their print readers. It is about trying to make sure that the newspaper doesn't die as such." Other comments read from "it has great potential" to "obviously it has to happen" and "we need it to keep up with international trends". Accepting convergence as the future enables the instigators to push the convergence process forward since it is going to happen anyway it does not make sense for staff to fight the changes. Having discussed the three recurring themes the next section will look at other issues that were mentioned in interviews and questionnaires that could be of significance to this case study.

### **5.4 Other issues mentioned during interviews and questionnaires**

This section sums up other issues that surfaced during the data analysis process. These include the new M&G Online projects, fear of technologies, and training and education.

New M&G Online projects like the Photos website, the Thought Leader blog and Podcasts all emerged in 2007. The Photos website enables staff and readers to publish photos online. The Thought Leader blog contains blogs from so-called 'thought leaders' who have been invited to blog on this platform. The M&G Online moderates

all entries before publishing. The Podcasts focus on M&G news stories of the week and gives commentary on the news and does interviews with M&G reporters. South African broadcaster and radio personality Tony Lankester presents the Podcast. These new projects introduce staff to multimedia and gives them the possibility to try it out. Still, one print reporter stated that his knowledge about the Internet and technical devices needs to improve. Another stated that there is a lack of knowledge about the Internet on the newspaper's side. These might relate to a fear of technologies and theories around the adoption of technologies. The online strategist argued that "training and education are key" and will enable staff to make use of the new media offered.

This issue of education and training also surfaced in the questionnaire. One reporter and an editor from the newspaper both pointed out that they see this as an inhibiting factor towards the convergence process. In the interviews two reporters and one editor spoke about training. "I wouldn't mind workshops about multimedia like learning about radio and TV technologies because I don't know anything about that" said one newspaper reporter. The editor eagerly said: Yes, yes, I am absolutely open to training. I must learn HTML and I must learn In-Design because I am basically completely unqualified". All the instigators agreed that staff needs to be trained but that new staff will have to adhere to new job descriptions.

A number of respondents also referred to broader challenges and argued that African newsrooms are under-resourced and can therefore not yet think about newsroom convergence. Comments about the poorly organised and slow Internet industry in South Africa were also frequent.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the analysed research data that was collected through two periods of simple observation, interviews, and questionnaires. It used rigorous categorisation to eventually give prevalence to three themes that recurred at every stage of the data collection and analysis process. The three themes – communication problems between the newsrooms; weekly versus daily production; and newsroom convergence as the accepted future - directly relate to the research aims. It permits the researcher to connect the findings with the research questions to see if the attitudes of

the reporters and editors enable or inhibit newsroom convergence at the M&G. so far, it would seem that the challenges towards the convergence process have more to do with the lack of policies and established structures than with the attitudes of the reporter and editors. The upcoming Discussion chapter will look into this and discuss the findings by linking them to previous research as discussed in Chapter 2.

The Discussion chapter will also attempt to give an overview of the process of newsroom convergence at M&G with the use of two Convergence Continuums. These two practical tools to measure convergence also point out the structural and organisational challenges that M&G faces before converging. At the same time it tries to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a particular South African news organisation.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

### 6.0 Introduction

After presenting and initially analysing the findings in the previous chapter it seems that some of the inhibiting factors towards the convergence process relate to the reporters' and editors' attitudes. However, it was found that there are many structural and organisational challenges that need to be dealt with first before researching the full-scale convergence process.

Without formal communication policies and established structures between the newsrooms it seems too early to research the attitudes of the reporters and editors. The problems they mention are related to structural and organisational matters that should be solved by management. Only with these structures in place can research find that the attitudes enable or inhibit communication and thus newsroom convergence.

At this stage it is more about how the reporters and editors *think* convergence will change their jobs and how they *think* it will work out. Without a proper definition no one is on the same page. The M&G could start off by making sure that all staff understand what convergence means within the context of media production and the organisation. It could then start putting structures and policies in place that not directly interfere with job descriptions like engaging staff from both newsrooms to communicate during diary meetings.

This chapter continues to discuss the findings by linking them to previous studies and theories (see Chapter 2). It then attempts to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process to fulfil the third aim of this case study. The two continuums used for this analysis name a number of the structural and organisational challenges that M&G faces.

### 6.1 Links to previous studies and theories

In sum, it has been observed that there are many structural and organisation challenges need to be addressed before it is possible to fully examine and grasp the

reporters' and editors' attitudes in such a way that was done by Singer (see 2003; 2004a; 2004b) at the Tampa Bay News Centre (see section 3.1 in Chapter 3). At the News Centre the structures were already put into place and Singer found that "cultural clashes remain a stumbling block to convergence" (2004a:16).

Singer (2004a) used the diffusion of innovations theory, section 3.5 in Chapter 3, that looks at how an idea is communicated "through certain channels over time to the members of a social system" (Rogers, 1995 cited in Garrison, 2001:222). This communication process can follow five sequential stages: "1) knowledge about, or exposure to, the innovation; 2) formation of favourable or unfavourable attitudes, or persuasion; 3) a decision to adopt or reject; 4) implementation; and 5) confirmation – reinforcement" (Rogers, 1995 cited in Garrison, 2001:222). The M&G is still in stage one because staff do not have the knowledge about convergence that they need in order to adopt the idea. This means that reporters and editors will not yet form favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards convergence that are based on profound issues and challenges this is in part because they do not understand the concept or share the same definition. It is possible at this early stage to look at what Rogers (2005a) calls the five categories of adopters: "1) innovators; 2) early adopters; 3) early majority; 4) late majority; and 5) laggards" (see Thurman, 2005a:230-31). The so-called 'innovators' are the M&G Online staff. So far they've had the biggest say in the Strategy, are the instigators of newsroom convergence and the first to adopt new innovations like Podcasts and blogs.

There are around four early adopters from the print newsroom who are involved in the Podcasts and are blogging. However, there are not enough of them to establish an early majority. This links back to a more structural problem: print staff do not share the same definition of newsroom convergence and do not see why participation in Podcasts or blogs is needed at this point in time. If staff understand that it will prepare them for their changed job descriptions in the future they might be willing to try it out. Only when staff recognise the importance of new innovations within the process of newsroom convergence will the formation of favourable and unfavourable attitudes start to form.

Garrison (2001) adopted this diffusion of innovations framework for his case study of six newspaper newsrooms in the USA and concluded that “it would seem that newsrooms and journalists would be receptive to innovative communication technologies” (2001:234). However, he also found evidence “of some resistance to adoption” (2001:234). Garrison found that resistance derived from a number of grounds: “reluctance by management to lead towards adoption; lack of resources to invest in new technology; lack of training; little or no access to the new technology; lack of expertise; fear of lost time required to learn; and not enough time in the work schedule (Garrison, 2001:234). Two of these grounds, such as the lack of resources and lack of time in the work schedule, seem to apply to the M&G newsrooms. These appear to be common problems in the convergence process. Again, these are more structural and organisational problems. The Strategy document (Buckland, 2006) does mention the lack of resources and training and states that “it is believed we can do quite a bit on minimal budget using internal resources and ensuring sponsored equipment etc...”

Another theory used in many convergence case studies is the intergroup bias theory as explained in section 3.5 in Chapter 3. Filak (2004:220) concluded that reporters prefer to share information with reporters who work in the same medium. At the M&G it seems that there is reluctance to share resources or to ask for help from the other newsroom when a reporter gets stuck. It was observed that reporters keep information to themselves rather than sharing it. Singer (2004a) argued the same: “Intellectually journalists may understand and even appreciate the logic of convergence, but many are still uncomfortable about sharing ideas, information or sources” (2004a:10).

In the case of the M&G there is also bias between the four editors who’ve set up the convergence plan and the staff who did not have a say. Also, only one editor from the newspaper was involved in setting up the plan against three people from M&G Online. This can also leave staff of the newspaper feeling as though they should discard the strategy since they would *theoretically* favour a strategy put out by their own newsroom or in which they had had a say. This intergroup bias theory relates closely to the ‘Us versus Them’ issues discussed in Chapter 5. ‘Us versus Them’ attitudes have to do with the different role conceptions that print and online reporters hold and pose many challenges like conflicting work ethics (see Cassidy, 2005).

Cassidy (2005) found that online reporters do not hold so-called traditional journalistic role conceptions, such as wanting to analyse complex problems and partake in investigative journalism, as high in regard as print reporters. The case is not different at the M&G where two out of nine print respondents had difficulties accepting a faster publishing rate than once a week.

Singer (2004b:152) also found that reporters recognise “the online medium’s capacity for speed as a concern” and that “print reporters were concerned about fitting new duties into their newsgathering and production routines” (2004b:847). However, as argued before, this is the changed role reporters and editors *think* they will fulfil. They are unclear about how they could fit online routines into their traditional routine. Staff do not have an idea because there are no structures in place to aid them into changing their roles in an effective way for both parties (themselves *and* management). So, M&G management, or whoever is implementing a convergence strategy, needs to keep the staff’s role conceptions in the back of their heads and put the structures in place accordingly. They could start with changing the newspaper’s diary meeting to accommodate M&G Online’s needs, for example by addressing the Podcasts and online reporter’s work. This could serve as a starting point for formalised communication between the newsrooms that does not involve changing job descriptions. As Singer (2004a) argues, “convergence works best as a one-to-one process – [...] the relationships necessary for people with different backgrounds and skills not only to work together but to trust one another can develop only through interpersonal communication and lots of it” (2004a:13).

In the end of the convergence process the aim is to have editors and reporters who “approach every story looking for potential multimedia coverage” (Quinn & Filak, 2005:148). The newly implemented structures and policies should enable staff to change their routines and create a “willingness to think in terms of the strengths and power of each medium” (Quinn & Filak, 2005:149). The next section analyses the convergence process at the M&G with the help of two Convergence Continuums that further stress the need for structural and organisation changes.

## **6.2 A snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process at the M&G**

The two continuums used for this snapshot are outlined in section 3.6 in Chapter 3. They will not only provide an overview of the process of newsroom convergence at M&G but also name additional structural and organisational challenges.

With Dailey's et al. (2003) Convergence Continuum (see Table 3.1 in section 3.6) it is possible to determine how the process of newsroom convergence has developed at a certain point in time. The five different stages in the Continuum are: cross-promotion, cloning, co-opertition, content sharing and convergence (Dailey et al., 2003).

The time period under discussion here is from the first period of observation in January until the end of May 2007, when the researcher visited the M&G for the last time. In these five months the M&G seemed to move backwards and forwards between different stages of the continuum, all depending on observations and interviews at the time. It must be said that they never reached the final stage of convergence. But the publisher of M&G Online said: they will get closer to that ideal in two years time (see section 5.3.1 in Chapter 5).

### 6.2.1 Stage one: cross-promotion

The first stage in the Convergence Continuum is cross-promotion. This is where words or elements promote content produced by the one medium appear in the partner medium (Dailey et al., 2003). To determine the level of cross-promotion at the M&G the researcher analysed six newspapers in January and February 2007, from the start of the first observation week to the end of the second week of observation.

On the front-page of each newspaper the link to the M&G Online '[www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)' is included in the nameplate underneath the title of the newspaper. Each inserted supplement, like the jobs and arts sections, includes links to the website in the headings. For example: under the sports heading on the sports page it reads '[www.mg.co.za/sport](http://www.mg.co.za/sport)' and with the art listings it reads '[www.mg.co.za/art](http://www.mg.co.za/art)'. Even when there are special supplements that not appear every week, the website is featured. The first page of the 'Budget 2007' supplement includes the link '[www.mg.co.za/budget2007](http://www.mg.co.za/budget2007)' in the nameplate while the first page of the 'Greening

the Future' and 'Motoring' supplement includes a link to the M&G Online homepage '[www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)' in the nameplate.

Besides links to the website in various strategic places the newspaper also publishes a table called the 'Top 10 most-read stories' on page two. The Top 10 is bordered by a thin black line and uses the spot colour red. Within this box it is easy to distinguish it from the other articles. The Top 10 consists of M&G Online's most-read stories in the last week. Directly under the Top 10, inside the same box, is the 'Talkback' question of the week. Readers of M&G can discuss and answer this question online. The question always relates to a news subject. Underneath the Talkback question is a link to the M&G Online homepage. The table is supposed to feature in every newspaper but the newspaper of February 15, 2007, did not have a box. Instead, there is a short article called "The Mail and Guardian's sales soar". The article tells about the rising circulation of the newspaper but does not mention the website or its readers.

The newspaper of February 23, 2007, promotes the Newsflash. The Newsflash is software that the reader can download from the M&G Online. With the Newsflash the reader receives a pop-up on their desktop twice a day and when there is breaking news of great importance. The promotion is published in the Friday supplement on page 6 and takes up about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the page. It reads "the news on your desktop" and it explains how to download the tool and provides all the links. The same newspaper includes a "BEE supplement". There is a half page advertisement in full-colour promoting the M&G Online's Podcasts. The text invites M&G readers to download and listen to the Podcasts that discuss the M&G's headlines.

Cross-promotion at the M&G works because the website also promotes the newspaper. Not only does it carry their title, it also shows the front-page of the newspaper on the homepage. There are also regular advertisements that invite readers to subscribe to the newspaper or alert people to special supplements.

It is evident that the M&G is at the stage of cross-promotion, but two arguments can be made. First of all, there is no formal policy that states that the website needs to be featured in the newspaper or vice versa. However, informal conversations between the newsrooms made it happen. This start might open the door for cross-promotion at a

deeper level: links to online stories could be added in the newspaper more often and readers could get a discount on the newspaper if they visit the website regularly. This adds to a second argument about the possibilities of cross-promotion. During the period of this research it would appear to be the case that the M&G does not seem to use all the available options that are open to it.

However, the Strategy includes a section on cross-promotion that discusses the incorporation of '[www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)' into the company logo, links in the newspaper to specific components of the site, the use of online documents that support newspaper reports, and much more. The 'breaking news alerts' are another example of cross-promotion. There are no deadlines for these developments and the plans still need to be discussed by management and editorial staff.

#### 6.2.2 Stage two: cloning

The second stage in the Convergence Continuum signifies 'cloning'. In this stage one medium uses the other medium's content without editing it. Critics of online journalism often call this 'shovelware' because it sounds as if a website just shovels the content online without paying any attention to it.

In this particular case study of the M&G there are no formal policies or arrangements to do with using each other's content without editing. The M&G Online publishes the content from the newspaper every week whilst also holding back some special features to publish later on in the week. Sometimes the news editor of the M&G Online edits the stories slightly as in checking for spelling mistakes, or he changes a headline. Now and again a print reporter or editor will offer a story for publishing online because of space restrictions in the newspaper. However, the same does not often apply to the weekly newsroom taking on online content. Stories written by online reporters do not automatically end up in the newspaper. It occasionally happens that a story from an online reporter is considered 'good enough' and picked up for publishing. As the Strategy states "there is a tendency to view the online product as less important than the newspaper", giving examples like the "newspaper is better than the website" or "hold the good stuff for the newspaper" (Buckland, 2006).

An example of this was outlined earlier in the previous chapter, in section 5.1.3, where an online reporter's story was used by the environmental reporter from the newspaper who was about to embark on a bigger investigation. The investigative story was good enough for the newspaper; the short and factual story was not.

The above implies that cloning occurs mainly one-directional: online clones weekly and the newspaper occasionally. This relates to several discussions in Chapter 4: duplicating work, organising cross-media productions and the 'Us versus Them' culture. All of these issues seem to be interconnected and all relate to the fact that there are no formal policies or agreements that encourage cloning from both sides. If cloning would happen on a more equal level duplicating work could be detected faster, organising cross-promotions can become easier, and the 'Us versus Them' culture might subside. Within the Convergence Continuum, according to the above analysis, cloning might be the first stage where the M&G does not score full points. The next stage is Co-opertition.

### 6.2.3 Stage three: co-opertition

Co-opertition is the point at which both mediums share information on selected stories but then still create their own content separately from each other (see Dailey et al., 2003). At this moment the M&G newspaper and the M&G Online do not share the same telephone and source lists. However, if there is a question at M&G Online that relates to someone's beat at the newspaper the online reporter might go there to ask for information and phone numbers. This happened, during both observation periods, five times in total. Still this is not the same as sharing information on a selected story.

At some level co-opertition happens. In fact, one could argue that the newspaper's environmental reporter (see section 5.1.3 in Chapter 5) shared information with the online reporter but both still produced content separately from each other. On the other hand one can state that the problem is that the environmental reporter only found out by accident that an online reporter was working on her story; this means that there was no such thing as a *selected* story for sharing since it happened unintentionally.

It needs to be noted that there is a certain competitive aspect to this level of co-opterition. The online and print newsrooms do sometimes regards themselves as rivals in some way which makes working together more difficult (see section 5.1 in Chapter 5).

The Strategy does mention co-opterition: “a newspaper editor assigns articles for writing online. These can often be a shorter version of a longer article to be published in the newspaper, or an entirely standalone online-only article” (Buckland, 2006). There is no deadline for this Strategy and it has not been seen during both observation periods.

The M&G has not yet reached this stage of co-opterition but there seems to be a gap or necessity to introduce the concept so that reporters from both newsrooms can get used to working together. The next stage in the Convergence Continuum is content sharing.

#### 6.2.4 Stage four: content sharing

Content sharing is a step further and this exists when the two mediums meet to exchange ideas (see Dailey et al., 2003). It has been discussed earlier in this thesis that the two mediums do not meet with each other in a formal way but on an ad hoc basis. Sometimes the online editor sits in with the newspapers’ diary meetings but he does not have a voice. The M&G Online does not have diary meetings. The Strategy does state that there should be “new, daily newsgathering meetings to be created with the print news editor and online news editor or editor” (Buckland, 2006).

When two reporters from both sides meet casually there might be a discussion about an article but it is still not content sharing. In the end one person will write the article and if it is ‘good enough’ or if there is space it will be published in the newspaper, otherwise it goes to the website.

An example of where content sharing could work so early in the process of convergence is the special supplements in the M&G newspaper. During the observation weeks it was noted that cross-promotion in the special supplements in the newspaper include a link to the website and an advertisement for the supplement on

the website. It also includes a bit of cloning where the online editors will copy the articles from the supplement onto the website. Online can then update the supplement with new articles but there is still no co-operation or content sharing. That would only occur when the supplement is the work of both newsrooms and when they share the content between the mediums because some benefit from the possibilities of online while other content does better in print (see section 3.2 in Chapter 3).

#### 6.2.5 Stage five: convergence

At the end of the Convergence Continuum is full convergence. In this stage most production occurs in teams and is centralised from one multimedia news desk. The Strategy document states that full multimedia convergence is a long-term plan to be looked at in 2008 or 2009. By that time some of the points of discussion are: the use of online video, Vodcasting, vlogging, publishing on mobile platforms, and live online chats with reporters (Buckland, 2006).

It can be concluded that the M&G is not converged as yet in that it still needs to go through a number of stages and incorporate structural and organisational changes. So far the M&G has implemented cross-promotion and cloning but both are not perfected as the discussion above illustrated. The next section analyses the M&G within the 'Easy versus Difficult convergence continuum' (Quinn & Filak, 2005:12) as shown in section 3.6 in Chapter 3.

#### 6.2.6 The 'Easy versus Difficult convergence continuum'

This 'Easy versus Difficult convergence continuum' (Quinn & Filak, 2005:12) helps to determine how easy or difficult it is to converge two newsrooms in a particular news company. This continuum looks at the situation in the newsroom as it is and uses those observations to determine what the challenges are within the M&G as a whole. This analysis adds to the outcomes of the Convergence Continuum because it outlines the main problems and challenges in a simple overview as below.

- 1) *Central to the organisation's strategy/ Not central, secondary or worse* – while there is a Strategy document and a Timeline both documents were developed without input from the newspaper newsroom;

- 2) *Committed and focused leadership/ Other leadership priorities* – the M&G Online newsroom lost some of its initial enthusiasm to converge the newsrooms but still works according to the Timeline. The newspaper’s editor-in-chief is interested in the concept of convergence but not committed to it. She focuses on the quality of the content in the newspaper and the job descriptions of her staff before convergence (Haffajee, 2007, interview, 2 April);
- 3) *Culture of innovation and risk taking/ “Always done it this way”* - the M&G newspaper takes risks when publishing stories that have political implications but there is no culture of innovation comparable to the M&G Online where new platforms have been launched in just a couple of months. M&G Online has published a Photos website, Podcast and Thought Leader blog. The newsroom took a risk publishing blog African aggregator Amatomu ([www.amatomu.com](http://www.amatomu.com)) and blog hosting service Amagama ([www.amagama.com](http://www.amagama.com)) but later chose to not put these under the M&G Online flag because it cannot control what bloggers write;
- 4) *Coordinating structure/ No coordinating structure* – there is no formal coordination between the newsrooms, for example meetings and shared policies;
- 5) *Same ownership/ Different ownership* – the M&G Online has an external stakeholder which makes converging more difficult;
- 6) *Same values/ Different values* – newspaper reporters and editors worry about the speed with which M&G Online publishes. They question the accuracy of the breaking news stories (see section 5.2.2 in Chapter 5). These values are part of different newsroom routines (see section 3.2 in Chapter 3);
- 7) *Aligned systems and processes/ Systems not aligned* – the systems are not aligned since both newsrooms work with their own CMS and workflow system;
- 8) *Past successes together/ Previous problems or no relationship* – there are so-called ‘political problems’ (Buckland, 2007, interview, 13 June) and no policies that tie the two newsrooms together. Also, the relationship between the newsrooms is based on ad hoc decision making, mostly from the online newsroom (see section 5.1.1 in Chapter 5);

- 9) *Cultures flexible or similar/ Cultures not flexible or similar* – the culture in the online newsroom seems to be flexible. The reporters and editors adapt around new tools and seem keen to try out new ways of reporting like Podcasting. However, the differences between working for a weekly publication and a continuously-updated website are significant and it would be challenging for print reporters and editors to adapt to online routines (see discussion in section 5.2 in Chapter 5);
- 10) *Collocated/ Located some distance apart* – the newsrooms are separated from each other and located in different parts of the building;
- 11) *Lack of unions/ presence of strong unions* – the job descriptions of newspaper reporters and editors can not just change because labour legislation prohibits unilateral changes in terms of employment.

With the help of the Continuum it was analysed that the newsrooms face several challenges that make convergence more difficult. It could also conclude that the newspaper newsroom will have a more difficult task in converging than the online newsroom since they were not involved in the production of the Strategy document and Timeline.

However, the challenges in both newsrooms seem numerous and the Strategy does not give solutions for leadership issues, the lack of innovation at the newspaper and the fact that both newsrooms are located some distance apart from each other. This all relates back to a point made earlier on and that is that because there are no formal policies or established structures the organisational problems that appear in the continuums will remain unsolved until an official strategy is implemented. It is only then that research can say something meaningful about the attitudes of reporters and editors towards the process.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discussion about the findings in Chapter 4 by linking them to the theories and literature reviews in Chapter 2: the diffusion of innovations, intergroup bias, and professional role conceptions theories. It is argued that the many structural and organisational challenges at M&G make it difficult to study the reporters' and editors' attitudes towards the convergence process. The chapter then

used the two Convergence Continuums to analyse the convergence phenomenon as a process and to have a closer look at the structural and organisational challenges. In sum, it pointed out that integration is probably more difficult to achieve for the print newsroom than the online newsroom.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion: Limitations and Recommendations

There are some key points to be made that summarise the progress in achieving the aims of the research. The principal aim of this research study was to research the reporters' and editors' attitudes towards the convergence process at the M&G. However, it was found difficult to state something about the attitudes in general. There are simply too many different attitudes and they seem to be changing continuously while the M&G goes through their integration process.

With hindsight, the aim of this research study could have been achieved in a more comprehensive manner if there was a clear start of the convergence process and a set end with goals. The start of the process could be with the implementation of a new strategy that sets out the developments and anticipated goals in a certain timeframe. In that case a researcher would be able to work more systematically and analyse the reporters and editors attitudes at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the process.

While 2007 was supposed to be the year of convergence for the M&G, a lack of structures and policies did not make it the ideal site to study attitudes. It is necessary to have longer research periods to be able to identify changes in attitude correctly and a better idea of what management wants to achieve by when. The researcher therefore feels as though the aims have been partially achieved but that some useful key conclusions can still be drawn.

First of all, it was found that different respondents repeated the same themes: communication problems between the newsrooms; a weekly production cycle against the ongoing cycle of M&G Online; and time management issues. It appears that staff are most concerned about these themes and these should therefore be explored by M&G management while drawing a strategy or new policies.

Secondly, there is a positive response to convergence as the future but all staff has different definitions. M&G management should work on defining what they want from convergence and how they see it work within the company's context. Thirdly,

the lack of communication policies and established structures needs to be addressed. This relates to earlier points that were made but it is crucial to note that these policies, or the strategy, should not be created by the online publisher only. It was analysed that print staff are more likely to reject a strategy produced by the online newsroom than one that was collectively written. Also, with the help of the Convergence Continuums (see section 3.6 in Chapter 3) it was analysed that the newspaper newsroom will have a more difficult task in integrating with the online newsroom than vice versa. This is yet another reason to not exclude the views and opinions of the print newsroom while drawing up a strategy.

While the physically separate newsrooms could still be a problem there needs to be an understanding of what it is that M&G Online does so that print reporters and editors understand where they fit in. It needs to be clear to all reporters and editors how they could cooperatively work to expand the company's brand name and investigative reports to a bigger audience. At the moment it seems as if everyone accepts convergence as the future but does not know how to practically implement convergence into their daily routines. The M&G Online could give short workshops and presentations in multimedia and convergence for those reporters and editors who are interested and have the time. It might be useful to send a weekly convergence report or update via e-mail to let staff know what is new and happening. It could give examples of convergence, praises from management and ideas and comments from staff.

The next step could be pilot projects wherein an M&G Online editor teams up with a willing print editor to help set up a cross-media project that involves a Podcast, photo slideshow and a blog post so that readers can comment. This could then be featured in the newspaper and online, creating a synergy wherein the best qualities of both platforms are used to bring the news to a wider audience.

Another aim of this study was to provide a snapshot of the convergence phenomenon as a process in a particular South African news organisation. The researcher feels as though this aim has been achieved because the thesis as a whole shows how convergence works at the M&G and what the challenges are. Although the process is chaotic without any policies and a clear understanding of the goals this study was able

to put those observations together and show how the actual process works, or fail to work, in reality.

To elaborate on the situation of the convergence process at M&G, I've often heard that I should have gone to The Times or Die Burger (see section 3.7 in Chapter 3) to observe. However, as a former reporter at the M&G Online it was the workings in that newsroom that triggered my thoughts for this study. It would have also been more difficult to put interviews and observations in the right perspective since I understand the M&G newsrooms and know them from inside out. I would not have this context or understanding at The Times or Die Burger. It has to be mentioned that the M&G Online is a profitable website and a separate business unit unlike at The Times and Die Burger.

After visiting both The Times and Die Burger newsrooms in October 2007, they also offer good case study opportunities. Further research could take place at these media companies where convergence has already happened. It could be a better place to look at attitudes especially with the clearly inhibiting factors I found during my visits (see section 3.7 in Chapter 3). It is necessary to look at other news companies because the findings of this case study at the M&G cannot be generalised, not only because of its unique position in the newspaper landscape (see section 2.5 in Chapter 2), but also because they are in reference to a *weekly* newspaper (see section 5.2 in Chapter 5).

However, this research may play the role of a pilot study offering useful insights that could be probed in future studies of newsroom convergence in South Africa. Of course other research will take place in the future as newsroom convergence becomes more of a norm in South African newsrooms, following American and European trends. Further research could make a comparison between different converged newsrooms in South Africa to see what worked better and what challenges they need to overcome. Also, it might prove useful to establish an African theoretical context or to see how African converged newsrooms differ from the USA or Europe. Other areas of research could include the changing job descriptions, how reporters and editors adapt to different media routines, and the importance of converged newsrooms in Africa where newspaper circulations soar and Internet access is limited.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Convergence Timeline 2007

#### **MAIL & GUARDIAN CONVERGENCE TIMELINE: 2007**

Task	Duration	Deadline	Responsibility
Change <b>staff home page</b> to <i>M&amp;G Online</i>	One day	<b>January 19</b>	<b>Riaan</b>
Subscribe all staff to <i>M&amp;G Online</i> <b>newsletter</b>	One day	<b>January 19</b>	<b>Riaan</b>
Change <b>M&amp;G Mobile</b> number in newspaper, place promotional ads	Two weeks	<b>January 26</b>	<b>Vincent, Riaan</b>
<i>M&amp;G</i> <b>diary meetings</b> attended by online staff	Weekly	<b>From January 22</b>	<b>Riaan</b>
<b>Convergence presentation</b> to staff members (could take form of workshop)	Monthly/every second month	<b>From January 22</b>	<b>Vincent</b>
Convergence <b>progress meetings</b>	Monthly	<b>From February</b>	<b>Riaan, Matt, Vincent, Ferial</b>
Various new <b>newspaper design elements</b> to refer readers to the web	Two weeks	<b>February 16</b>	<b>Riaan, Vincent</b>
Add <i>M&amp;G Online</i> <b>URLs</b> to all necessary sections in <i>M&amp;G</i> and increase prominence	One week	<b>February 16</b>	<b>Riaan</b>
Larger <i>M&amp;G Online</i> <b>content section</b> in <i>M&amp;G</i> , with top 10, hero/villain, talkback on Talkback, best of blogs, top searches, online poll (when implemented)	One week	<b>February 16</b>	<b>Riaan, Ferial</b>
Implement <b>more podcasts</b> and promote in newspaper	One month	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Vincent, Matt, Riaan</b>
Plan <b>interactive guides</b> for year ahead	One week	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Riaan, Vincent, Matt, Ferial</b>
New <b>online promotional areas</b> for weekly newspaper	One month	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Riaan, Matt, Vincent</b>
Add journalists' <b>email addresses</b> to stories in <i>M&amp;G</i>	One week	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Riaan, Vincent</b>
<b>Budget provision</b> for convergence – extra staff	One month	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Matt, Ferial</b>

member, training, equipment etc			
Message/presentation by <b>Trevor Ncube</b> to company on convergence future	One day	<b>End of February</b>	<b>Matt, Ferial</b>
Launch new <b>blogging platform</b> for journalists, educate journalists and columnists, and get them blogging	One month	Almost ready for launch; training etc to be completed by <b>end of February</b>	<b>Vincent</b>
Enhance <b>RSS feeds</b> as required	One month	First batch already submitted to MWeb, could be completed by <b>end of February</b>	<b>Riaan</b>
Course for journalists on <b>using internet</b> for research and reporting	One month	<b>End of March</b>	<b>Vincent, Riaan, Matt</b>
Expand newspaper freelancers and columnists' <b>contracts</b> for online purposes	One month	<b>End of March</b>	<b>Ferial</b>
Find more ways to <b>promote subscriptions</b> online – giveaways, emails, competitions, advertising, try before you buy, SMS subscription etc	Two months	<b>End of March</b>	<b>Riaan, Matt, Vincent</b>
Weekly <b>online poll</b> and promotion in newspaper	One month	<b>End of March</b>	<b>Vincent, Matt, Riaan</b>
Acquire <b>multimedia equipment</b> as needed	One month	<b>End of April</b>	<b>Vincent, Matt</b>
<b>Train individuals</b> for multimedia news gathering	One month	<b>End of April</b>	<b>Vincent</b>
<i>M&amp;G Online</i> <b>video</b> from AFP, Irin and cross-promotion in newspaper	Five months	<b>End of May</b>	<b>Riaan, Matt, Vincent</b>
Change newspaper journalists' <b>job descriptions</b> for online purposes	One year	<b>End of 2007</b>	<b>Ferial, Riaan, Vincent</b>
Investigate integrating online and print <b>newsdesks</b>	One year	<b>End of 2007</b>	<b>Matt, Vincent, Riaan, Ferial</b>
Investigate integrating <b>production systems</b> between print and online	One year	<b>End of 2007</b>	<b>Matt, Vincent, Riaan, Ferial</b>
Investigate hosting <b>live online chats</b> with journalists and	<b>One year</b>	End of 2007	<b>Matt, Vincent</b>

**Journalists to be briefed on:**

- Meaning of convergence
- Blogging
- Multimedia news gathering – photographs, audio, video
- Writing stories specifically for online, besides usual reports for newspaper (for example, attending a press conference and doing a shorter news story for online, followed by an longer insight story for the newspaper)
- Writing stories for online that relate to specific events, such as the World Cup or the ANC leadership issue
- Providing and preparing longer versions of stories for online
- Providing online with extra stories related to that published in the newspaper
- Providing and preparing supporting documentation for online
- Ways to update stories after publication on Friday

Appendix B: List of people interviewed

- Atson, L. 2007. Interview, 5 October, Cape Town
- Buckland, M. 2006. Telephonic interview, 28 September
- Buckland, M. 2007. Interview, 15 February 2007, Johannesburg
- Buckland, M. 2007. Interview, 13 June, Johannesburg
- Haffajee, F. 2007. Interview, 2 April, Johannesburg
- Maher, V. 2007. Interview, 15 February, Johannesburg
- Ritz, C. 2007. Interview, 25 October, Johannesburg
- Steyn, D. 2007. Interview, 3 October, Cape Town
- Strydom, D. 2007. Interview, 5 October, Cape Town
- Wolmarans, R. 2007. Interview, 15 February, Johannesburg

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

### **Questionnaire**

#### Definition of newsroom convergence:

-- Newsroom convergence, or multiple-platform publishing, refers to a combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among earlier separate media. In this case study, those media are the M&G newspaper and the M&G Online --

**1.** What do you think about convergence?

**2a.** When did you hear about newsroom convergence for the first time?

**2b.** Overall, of all the times that you've heard about newsroom convergence, was this in a more negative or positive way?

**3a.** Do you think the print and online newsrooms can work more closely together?

Yes – Maybe – No – I do not know

**3b.** How?

**4a.** Would you like to work closer together with the M&G Online? Underline most appropriate answer: Yes – Maybe – No – I do not know

**4b.** Why?

**5.** What do you think will be the biggest problem(s) while trying to converge?

Underline a maximum of two answers:

- Lack of knowledge about the Internet from newspaper's side
- Fears against the adoption of more technologies in the newsroom
- Different backgrounds and education
- Lack of knowledge about newspaper production from online's side
- The 'us' versus 'them' culture
- Changing existing job descriptions (from newspaper reporter to multi-skilled reporter)
- Train and educate everyone accordingly
- Newsroom production issues (where to break a story: online or in the newspaper?)
- Other: .....
- None

**6.** What would you prefer not to change? Underline one answer:

- My job description as it is now
- My boss / editor/ publisher
- My knowledge about the Internet and technological devices
- The 'us' and 'them' culture
- The way in which we solve newsroom production issues (where to break a story?)
- Other: .....
- None of the above

**7a.** How often do you visit the M&G Online newsroom to discuss journalistic and production issues with editors and/ or reporters?

Never – Less than once a week – Less than once a day – Daily – More than once a day

**7b.** Do you think this is (underline most appropriate answer):

A lot – enough – not so much – it should be more

**8a.** What do you think the people at the M&G Online do on a daily basis?

**8b.** Can you compare their work to yours? Underline most appropriate answer:

Yes, it is the same – Yes, most of what they do I can do to – I'm not so sure – No, only a small bit of it is the same – No, everything they do is different from what we do

**9.** Would you feel comfortable blogging? Underline most appropriate answer:

Yes, I would love to – Yes, if I have to – Maybe – No, but I'll try – No, I do not want to – What is blogging? – I already blog

**10.** Please feel free to comment on this questionnaire, or say anything that you want to about newsroom convergence and the M&G:...

General questions (to be filled in by everyone):

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Newspaper/ Online:**

**Current position at M&G:**

**Former work experience/ work at different media:**

**Years as journalist:**