

USE OF THE INTERNET IN NEWSGATHERING: A CASE STUDY OF *THE*
POST NEWSPAPER IN ZAMBIA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Master of Arts Degree
in
Journalism and Media Studies

of
RHODES UNIVERSITY

by
Alphonsius Hamachila

February 2005

Supervisor: Ms. Vanessa Vasques
Co-supervisor: Professor Guy Berger

DEDICATION:

To Jane and Chichi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The rough journey in the investigation of how journalists at *The Post* newspaper in Zambia relate to, and make use of, the Internet in their newsgathering routines has not been a lonely one.

Professor Jeanne Prinsloo, the MA co-ordinator's words during the very first meeting of the course that "there will be disagreements along the way, but at the end of it all, there will be harmony", have always been an inspiration to me.

I have enjoyed the company of my Principal Supervisor, Ms. Vanessa Vasques and co-supervisor, Professor Guy Berger, throughout the study. Their combined efforts provided me with the intellectual orientation and practical means that have made this study come true. Thank you.

I am indebted to *The Post's* Information Technology Manager, Chris Tshani, The Training Editor, Edem Djokotoe, the News Editor, Amos Malupenga and all the journalists who breached the hectic nature of their routine work to answer my questions. You allowed yourselves to be observed and provided pleasant conditions for my research. Without you, these pages would have been empty.

Sincere thanks to the 2004 Journalism and Media Studies MA class and all my colleagues at Rhodes who dedicated their time to this project and without whom life in Grahamstown would have been a nightmare. Adios Amigos. We shall meet again.

Finally, and most importantly, I give credit to my family for their moral support. Sorry for overstressing your patience and thank the Lord God almighty for taking care of you. Indeed we should collectively thank him for making this journey come to an end in record time.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The financial assistance from the Belgian Government Scholarship towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to Rhodes University or the donor.

ABSTRACT

The Internet and World Wide Web have become dominant newsgathering tools in a short period of time. While the body of research, particularly in the First World, has developed quickly along with the Web, many unanswered questions remain on how journalists in developing countries make use of the Internet for newsgathering purposes.

This study combined social constructivist theory with the socio-organisational and cultural approaches to news production in order to critically investigate how journalists at *The Post* newspaper in Zambia relate to, and make use of, the Internet as a newsgathering resource, in the context of Third World conditions. The study critiqued technological determinism perspectives on journalists' use of the new information technology. The technological determinism theory, which has largely been advanced by some scholars from the developed world, takes a celebratory approach to journalists' use of the Internet in the newsroom.

Using qualitative semi-structured interviews and observations, the study established that while journalists at *The Post* acknowledged the Internet's potential in newsgathering, factors such as unreliable telecommunications infrastructure, poor Internet skills, lack of local content on the World Wide Web, and organisational and occupational demands inhibited the use of the Internet as a journalistic newsgathering resource.

The study established further that online reporting is only a tool within the broader newsgathering and production process; and in the case of *The Post*, it does not replace the traditional newsgathering techniques used by journalists, particularly direct contacts with human sources. The respondents cited face-to-face interviews, a traditional means of newsgathering, as the main driving force in newsgathering routines at the newspaper.

However, although the respondents saw some mixed blessings in the Internet as a reporting tool, they also believed that the benefits outweighed the problems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Financial Assistance.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study.....	2
1.3. Objectives of the Study.....	2
1.4. Research Issues and Assumptions.....	2
1.5. Methods of Study.....	2
1.6. Thesis Outline.....	3

Chapter Two: Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction.....	5
2.2. The Evolving Practice of Newsgathering	6
2.3. The Advent of the Internet	7
2.4. The Technological Determinism Theory.....	9
2.5. The Social Constructivist Approach.....	12
2.6. ICT Industry and the Press in Zambia.....	16
2.6.1. ICT Profile.....	16
2.6.2. The Press in Zambia: Historical Context.....	18
2.6.3. <i>The Post</i> : A Case Study.....	19
2.7. Conclusion.....	20

Chapter Three: Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

3.1. Introduction.....	22
3.2. The Research Design.....	22
3.3. Observations.....	23
3.4. Semi-Structured Interviews.....	23
3.5. Physical Location of the Study.....	25
3.6. Research Procedure.....	25
3.7. Sample Selection and Size	25
3.8. Data Processing and Analysis	26
3.9. Limitations of the Study.....	26
3.10. Conclusion.....	27

Chapter Four: Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

4.1. Introduction.....	28
4.2. Organisational and Occupational Demands.....	29
4.2.1. Newsroom Policy on the Use of the Internet in Newsgathering.....	31
4.3. Newsroom Access to the Internet and the World Wide Web.....	34
4.4. How <i>The Post</i> Journalists Use the Internet for E-mail Communication and for Exploring Information Resources on Websites.....	36
4.4.1. Dominant Websites, Search Engines and Electronic Mail.....	37
4.4.2. Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of the Internet and Web-Based Tools.....	39
4.4.2 (a). E-mail's Strengths and Weaknesses.....	39
4.4.2 (b). Google's Strengths and Weaknesses.....	41
4.4.2 (c). Electronic Mailing Lists and Chat Rooms.....	42
4.4.2 (d). General Weaknesses.....	43
4.5. Cultural Constraints.....	44
4.6. Skills and Ethical Considerations.....	46
4.6.1. Information Gathering Skills.....	47
4.6.2. Competencies in Web and Information Verification.....	48
4.6.3. Ethical Considerations.....	50
4.6.4. Case Study: The Great Cruise Liner Con.....	52
4.6.5. Putting Online Tools to Work.....	53
4.6.5 (a). Ideation Phase: Internet versus Traditional Means.....	53
4.6.5 (b). E-mail.....	53
4.6.5 (c). Offline Sources Emerge.....	56
4.6.5 (d). Feed-Back via ICT.....	57
4.6.6. Summary.....	57
4.7. Conclusion.....	58

Chapter Five: General Discussion of the Findings

5.1. Introduction.....	59
5.2. Internet Optimism.....	59
5.3. Useful, but Not Indispensable.....	60
5.3.1. Poor Internet Access Due to Poor Telecommunications Infrastructure.....	60
5.3.2. The Use of E-mail Interviews.....	62
5.3.3. Routines and Sources.....	62
5.3.4. Lack of Local Content and Cultural Considerations.....	64
5.3.5. Lack of Internet skills.....	64
5.4. Conclusion.....	66

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction.....	67
6.2. Scope for Further Research.....	68
6.3. Summary.....	68

Appendix.....70

1. Interview Transcripts.....	71
-------------------------------	----

References.....111

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates how journalists at *The Post* newspaper in Zambia currently make use of the Internet, as an Information Communication Technology (ICT), within their newsgathering routines. It takes a critical view of what Slack and Fejes (1987:202) describe as the “optimistic naïve” perspective, which sees the Third World as having the most to gain from the new information technologies, based on the premise that the traditional media’s use of the Internet in their newsgathering routines facilitates the flow of information and is one of the major bases for the developing countries’ economic development. Although the study touches on web content and refers to the Internet as a technology, the focus is on Internet usage, and not the Internet as a technology. This chapter provides a general background to the study, and highlights the research problem and the significance of the study. It also outlines the objectives of the study, pertinent research issues, methods of the study and the thesis structure.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Post, a commercial and privately owned daily newspaper, was founded in 1991 in the wake of Zambia’s transformation from one party rule to multiparty politics. It reinforced the role of the media in democracy by contributing to freedom of expression and plurality of information in a country whose press was predominantly state-owned and controlled (Kasoma 2000). The newspaper committed itself to higher editorial standards by using the available information technologies and resources, and promised to produce the best quality newspaper in Zambia.¹ At its inception, however, journalists at *The Post* relied solely on telephone, face-to-face interviews, faxes and other traditional means of newsgathering – a complex social process whereby topics and events are selected as appropriate for inclusion in the news media (Hall et al 1978:53). In 1999, *The Post* became the first newspaper in Zambia to embrace the perceived power of the Internet in its newsgathering operations (Kasoma 2000:208), following the increased use of the new information technology as a newsgathering utility, particularly in the developed world (Garrison 1998). With an Information Technology (IT) support unit within the newsroom, *The Post* is the only newspaper in the country, which provides its journalists with 24-hour access to the Internet for newsgathering purposes.

¹ From *The Post*’s mission statement which was adopted in February 1999:
<http://www.zamnet.zm/zamnet/post/mission.html>.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

Electronic newsgathering resources, being relatively new to Zambia and *The Post* in particular, have come with their own challenges. As elsewhere in Africa, unreliable telecommunications infrastructure and poor Internet skills to effectively make use of the Internet are some of the limitations journalists at *The Post* face in their newsgathering routines. Yet, amidst all these challenges, much of the literature surrounding journalism and the Internet is from a Western perspective which, to a large extent, takes an optimistic view of it (see, for example, Pavlik 1996; Slack and Fejes 1987) with little or no research on how journalists perceive, and make use of the Internet in Africa, let alone at *The Post*. The significance of my study, therefore, lies in its attempt to contribute to perspectives by Africans, and particularly Zambians, on journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study has investigated factors such as journalistic routines, poor access due to poor telecommunications infrastructure, lack of local content on the World Wide Web, and lack of Internet skills that underlie the distinctive uses of the Internet in newsgathering, and the diversity of its uses by journalists at *The Post*. This has been achieved by establishing how, in reality, journalists make use of the Internet in the newsroom for newsgathering purposes.

1.4 Research Issues and Assumptions

In this study, I was guided by the view that since *The Post* operates in an African environment, I would, therefore, not assume the relevance of a Western celebratory approach to journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering. To the contrary, I took into account the social reality in which journalists at *The Post* make use of the Internet in their newsgathering routines.

1.5 Methods of the Study

This research took the form of a case study approach to investigate how *The Post* journalists relate to, and make use of, the Internet in their newsgathering routines. A case study is an empirical study that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate certain phenomena within its context (Wimmer and Dominic 1994:154). The methodological path I chose for this case study is qualitative research. This preference was made in line with an observation that several authors (see Bryman 1988:61; Lincoln and Guba 1995; Cantrell 1993) make about carrying out research. They note that qualitative research allows the use of versatile

techniques to understand social phenomena and has an express commitment to viewing events and actions from local perspectives. Observations and semi-structured interviews were the two principle techniques the study applied in data collection. Through observations, I was able to witness and record the process of electronic newsgathering. The respondents equally provided their personal experiences, views and interpretations of the use of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post* during the semi-structured interviews.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is made up of six chapters. Chapter one presents a general background to the study. It highlights the research problem and spells out the significance of the study. It also outlines the study objectives, methods of the study and pertinent research issues.

Chapter two looks at the theoretical considerations underlying the study. It presents a review of literature on the evolving practice of newsgathering and the advent and use of the Internet by journalists in newsgathering. It also addresses the debates surrounding technological determinism and the theoretical arguments concerning the social constructivist perspective and the sociological studies of news production. The chapter further provides the context within which the study is being conducted by looking at the telecommunications industry in Zambia and the operations of *The Post*. All the arguments in this chapter correspond with the research objectives, issues and assumptions outlined above.

The methods, procedures and techniques employed by the study are the focus of the third chapter. This chapter gives a rationale for the adoption of qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis. It also discusses and gives a justification for the selection of observation and semi-structured interviews as methods of research and the process of their application in the study. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations, which were encountered in the course of the study.

In chapter four, I present and discuss the findings of the study under six major themes, namely:

- Organisational and occupational demands,
- Newsroom access to the Internet,
- How *The Post* journalists use the Internet for e-mail communication and for exploring information resources on websites,

- Cultural constraints,
- Skills and ethical considerations,
- ‘The Great Cruise Liner Con’.

In this chapter, I combine findings from the semi-structured interviews and observations. The findings are presented, illustrated and corroborated with quotations arising from the extensive period of newsroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

Chapter five discusses the findings in relation to the issues raised in the introduction and revisits the theoretical perspectives and literature review raised in chapter two.

The final chapter reaches some broad conclusions on *The Post* journalists’ use of the Internet in newsgathering. It goes on to highlight some further research questions that have been raised by the study and makes recommendations in light of the study’s findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the theoretical arguments surrounding journalists' use of the Internet in their newsgathering routines and other issues relevant to the study. The study takes a critical view of what Slack and Fejes (1987:2002) describe as the "optimistic naïve" perspective, which sees the Third World as having the most to gain from the new information technologies, based on the premise that traditional media's use of the Internet in their newsgathering routines facilitates the flow of information, which is seen as the major basis for developing countries' economic development. Proponents of the theory of technological determinism have mainly advanced this view.

The discussion, thus, combines social constructivist theory with the socio-organisational and cultural approaches to news production in order to critically investigate how journalists at *The Post* relate to, and make use of, the Internet in newsgathering, in the context of Third World conditions. Although newsgathering ideologies such as objectivity and professionalism do come up, this study is not concerned with how journalists define news. It will, instead, investigate the factors (such as poor access to the Internet due to obsolete telecommunications infrastructure, lack of local content on the World Wide Web and lack of Internet skills) that underlie the distinctive uses of the Internet in newsgathering, with a view to establishing whether the use of the Internet in newsgathering translates into better opportunities, threats or ambiguous challenges for journalists at *The Post*.

Divided into five sections, this chapter begins by defining newsgathering and outlining how this journalistic practice has evolved overtime. The second section looks at the advent and characteristics of the Internet in relation to newsgathering, while the third section outlines the technological determinism theory and its assumptions in regards to journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering. The fourth section proceeds with a detailed discussion of the concepts of the constructivist approach and the sociology of news production. The two theories, combined, provide a basis to critique the technological determinism perspective. The last section is a broad overview of the operations of *The Post* and the telecommunications industry in Zambia. This is in order to give the context in which the study is being conducted.

2.2 The Evolving Practice of Newsgathering

Newsgathering refers to a complex social process whereby topics and events are selected as appropriate for inclusion in the news media (Hall et al 1978:53). Chalaby (1998:128-9) sees newsgathering as the most important feature in the evolution of journalism. In the conventional daily press, newsgathering became the newspapers' central function (Schudson 1995:78). Referring to the "rupture" that brought about journalism, Chalaby (1998) says that newsgathering is a purely journalistic practice different in character to discursive practices employed by publicists and literary authors. The essential feature of newsgathering is its claim of being fact-centered, disassociating facts from opinions as well as emotions (1998:128, 129).

A major contributing factor to the evolution of newsgathering was shorthand, which was the first in a long series of journalistic techniques, which promised the reader some semblance of reality (Smith 1978:162).

The interview is another example of the evolutionary nature of newsgathering. As Schudson (1995) and Chalaby (1998:127-8) point out, interviewing as a journalistic tool greatly affected journalism and the profession. It was one of the growing numbers of practices that identified journalism as a distinct occupation with its own patterns of behaviour (Schudson 1995:72-79). The growing corporate coherence of journalists generated social cohesion and occupational pride, on the one hand, and internal social control, on the other. By the 1920s, this pattern produced a self-conscious professionalism and the much-debated ethic of objectivity. For journalists, objectivity means seeking out the facts from all "legitimate" sides of an issue and reporting them fairly and in a balanced way (Soloski 1997). The importance of news sources in newsgathering routines is, therefore, indisputable. Journalists depend on them to validate information and also to identify and construct their stories.

Before the emergence of the interview, reporting consisted largely of observing and writing verbatim accounts of what was observed or alternatively publishing document texts (Schudson 1995). Asking questions and, even more, quoting the answers in the news text was initially so strange a practice that the pioneers of interviewing had to explain to the readers what they were doing (1995:48). The significance of the interview in newsgathering routines was that it gave them more control over reporting than before. Journalists could dictate the contents of the news report by choosing first the interviewees and then the questions

(Heinonen 1999:18). By 1923, US journalists had adopted a code of ethics called the “canons of journalism” that included the principles of sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy and impartiality, and which also included the declaration that news reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind (Schudson 1995). The newly articulated fairness doctrine was related to the sheer growth in newsgathering. A more recent newsgathering practice, especially in investigative reporting, was the revelation of information using computer-assisted methods (Meyer 1991).

Today, as Schudson (1995) has observed, news still remains a product of transactions between journalists and their sources of information. The regularity of news publication means that news organisations have a thirst for a readily available, reliable flow of information. Access to relevant information has primarily defined the work reporters do. This is because timely and accurate information is a requisite for good journalism (Reddick & King 1995:12). However, most news organisations, especially in developing countries, are constrained by limitations on time and money, and both of these are controlled by the deadlines, which are a requirement for putting out a news product on a daily basis (Schudson 1995). Reporters need to interview not just sources, but authoritative sources. This need, of course, gives great power to high-level government and other sources. Access to them is a scarce resource, and they control journalists by granting or denying access. The prevailing practice of newsgathering has, nevertheless, evolved over time, changing in response to market conditions, technological innovation and consequent changes in the bureaucratic and managerial demands of the modern newsroom (Schudson 1995). Numerous new approaches to newsgathering have developed in the past decade, in parallel with the evolution of ICTs, particularly the Internet (Garrison 1998). The next section will look at the advent and characteristics of the Internet in relation to newsgathering.

2.3 The Advent of the Internet

The Internet began in 1969 as a project of the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (Lenert 2004). As the Internet expanded, it became known as the “network of networks”, a description based on the observation that the Internet’s architecture was characterised by open interconnection where no single computer acted as a central authority (Byle 1997; in Lenert 2004). The original conception of the Internet had nothing to do with newsgathering. Its technical qualities were meditated by the military’s need for having a

communication network that did not depend on any single path of information flow or central server.

In any discussion of the Internet in relation to newsgathering, therefore, it is necessary to define which Internet we are talking about. This does not mean dwelling on the general history and development of the Internet, on which there exists abundant literature. However, it is important to clarify our perspective towards the Internet because of the complexity of the concept, which may refer to several things. On one level, the Internet is just another technology. In purely technical and organisational terms, the Internet is a global network of computer networks (Heinonen 1999). Its features can be reduced to technical concepts and its significance can be expressed by reference to bandwidth and similar concepts (Heinonen 1999:36). Another way to see the Internet is to look at its functions. The term "Internet" is often used to refer to the entity of various services available via the Internet. It provides an array of tools for information retrieval and communication in individual, group and other contexts (December 1996). Much of the content that is stored and transacted on the Internet is in English and produced by millions of people, companies, governments and others mainly from the developed world. The quality of that content varies widely, from the exceptional to the confused to the deliberately misleading (December 1996:14).

Despite this ambiguity, the Internet has a number of characteristics that define it in a way which is relevant to this study. These features, based on recent developments in communications technology, form the basis for perceiving the Internet as a newsgathering utility. These include the e-mail facility, search engines, WWW pages, newsgroups, and discussion lists, among others. As the theoretical arguments in the next section will show, there has been much excitement about the Internet's potential in newsgathering in the developed world. Meanwhile the differentiation between Internet-haves and have-nots adds a fundamental cleavage to existing sources of inequality and social exclusion in a complex interaction that appears to increase the gap between the promise of the Internet and its bleak reality for journalists in Africa. According to Mackay et al (1995), the Internet is a product of capitalism, and those countries that are already relatively affluent and educated are better placed to exploit the new technology than those that are poor. Equally, the pace of change in Internet developments means that the social and cultural gaps between different levels of adoption of the Internet would widen the gap between those who have access to the new technology and those who do not (1995:91). Given these debates, the next section examines

the technological determinism theory in relation to journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering.

2.4 The Technological Determinism Theory

Up until the late 1970s, technological determinism provided the dominant explanatory framework for understanding society's use of technology (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1992). This theory assumes that technology offers a sure vehicle for achieving organisational change and overlooks difficulties in its use, and its frequent failure to deliver predicted and desired outcomes (Williams and Edge 1996:856-899). Since the Internet is a technology, the technological determinism framework in this study will apply to the use of the Internet by journalists at *The Post*, even though the theory was advanced well before the innovation of the new information communication technology.

According to Chandler (1995) technological determinists interpret technology in general and communications technologies in particular as the basis of society in the past, present and even the future. They say that technologies such as writing or print or television or the computer changed society. In its most extreme form, the entire form of society is seen as being determined by technology: new technologies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interaction and individuals. At the least, a wide range of social and cultural phenomena are seen as shaped by technology. Human factors and social arrangements are seen as secondary.

In the context of this study, the determinism theory would, for example, overlook lack of Internet skills, inadequate telecommunications infrastructure and a general lack of access to the Internet, which pose a hindrance to the use of the Internet in newsgathering in the developing world. Thus, technological determinism is a technology-led theory of social change where technology is seen as "the prime mover" in history and other factors are held constant (Chandler 1995).

Though technological determinism is still the most popular and influential theory of the relationship between technology and society, it has increasingly been subject to critical review by scholars in recent times. Chandler (1995) further argues that the term deterministic tends to be a negative one for many social scientists, and modern sociologists, in particular, often use the word as a term of abuse.

In this thesis, technological determinism will be interrogated by combining Dahlberg's (2004) three aspects of determination influences: use determinism, technological determinism, and social determinism. Use determinism emphasises technological uses, and focuses on the ways in which we use the Internet. With this approach, the Internet is perceived as a neutral tool, which extends our capacities. As users, we determine technology. This point is illustrated further under the social constructive perspective in the next section. Technological determinism is concerned with the way the Internet form affects uses and agents. Here, the Internet is viewed as a causal agent and it (the Internet) determines our uses and has a pivotal role in social change. Social determinism is concerned with the way our uses of the Internet is affected by social and economic structures and the social construction of technological artifacts. The focus in this position is on the social and technological uses that shape the form and content of the Internet.

Dahlberg (2004) further calls for a "non-reductionist analysis that is sensitive to the complex interplay between the multiple elements of determinism". This study will, therefore, take into account the multi-dimensionality of determinism as outlined by Dahlberg (2004) rather than employing one perspective, as it would result in a research that is narrowly defined.

Chandler (1995) has associated technological determinism with futuristic commentators regarding what they refer to as the microelectronic revolution. "For instance, they have declared that the computer would transform world society at all levels" (1995: 22). Like wise, theorists operating in a technological determinism paradigm have boldly labelled the Internet as the future for news (Katz 1999:14, 15). Technological determinism has dominated Western perspectives of the Internet, which see the use of the new information technology by journalists as the path for developmental take-off of the Third World and also perceive traditionalism as a barrier to development (Slack and Fejes 1987:202). Equally, there have been calls for the increased flow of information to help promote "modernisation" and self-reliance (Slack and Fejes 1987:202; WSIS 2003). Today, like other users at information-oriented businesses, the use of the Internet by the news media in newsgathering has grown rapidly. The Internet is preferred to traditional means of newsgathering such as face-to-face interviews, primarily because it is regarded as having the "potential" to increase journalists' work efficiency and speed (Pavlik 1996:6). Further, Reddick and King argue:

The Internet has an array of tools, which can enable reporters to access important documents, government data, privately-held information, the world's greatest libraries, expert sources and government officials in a short period of time – without ever leaving their desks (1995:3).

This quotation highlights a number of Internet techniques and how journalists, particularly in the developed world, use them for newsgathering. These techniques include personal and group communication through e-mail; the use of search engines on the World Wide Web to supplement journalists' primary first-hand sources and to access relevant information in a short period of time (Garrison 1998); and discussion lists and newsgroups for tip-offs about story possibilities (1998:66). Newsgroups are electronic spaces where participants can leave messages, such as comments, questions and announcements. Reddick and King (1995) observe that a reporter "fishing" for people who have firsthand knowledge of newsworthy events can reach tens of thousands of potential sources in just a couple of hours. A carefully worded query posted in the proper newsgroup, entered into commercial forums, or sent out to the right electronic mail lists can quickly net a bountiful harvest of eyewitnesses to some event, victims of some plot, or people with other firsthand knowledge that qualifies them as a news source (1995:3). Berger (1996:14) adds that many journalists using these newsgroups not only find value in existing information, but also use these resources to generate new information.

E-mail is often regarded as an effective way to interview sources and receive press releases on a regular basis. It has further been argued that through e-mail, reporters and their sources can send messages back and forth to each other and sometimes people who refuse to accept a telephone call from a journalist may be willing to respond to an electronic mail message (Reddick and King 1995). For example, sending out e-mail messages to sources at 3 a.m. is much less likely to annoy them than calling them at that time. Although they lack spontaneity, reading of body language, and interview locality, e-mail interviews are regarded as superior to other forms in respect of the potential for journalists to get more considered answers and the convenience to cut and paste quotes directly from them into a story, which facilitates accuracy and speed (Berger 1996:23). Public relations agencies also frequently use online communications specifically to reach reporters with potential sources for their stories (Reddick and King 1995:25) although some journalists prefer paper copies (Berger 1996:23).

The Internet, according to optimists, gives reporters access to sources of information, both documentary and human, that they would never have known existed before. With access to relevant information, the Internet also allows reporters to develop news stories more quickly (Reddick and King 1995). The authors argue that online communication networks are the natural progression of technological evolution in newsrooms, following the printing press, telegraph, telephone, and television. As with the new technologies of the past, the Internet and other online information networks will profoundly affect the art and craft of journalism (1995:15). As such, journalists' use of the Internet is seen to have the potential to increase their work efficiency and speed (Pavlik 1996:6).

Further, Garrison (1998) argues that journalists' use of Internet in newsgathering has improved the quality of journalism. He posits that online resources have added depth and context, extended government coverage, assisted in locating sources, and built background for news coverage.

While the points cited above only make optimistic assumptions about journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering, this study will not take for granted a celebratory approach. It will, instead focus on how, in reality, journalists at *The Post* relate to, and make use of, the Internet in newsgathering given the Third World conditions under which they work. In this case, the study will employ the social constructivist approach and sociological studies of newsgathering to critique the "optimistic naïve" perspective on journalists' use of the Internet. Both the social constructivist approach and the sociology of news production, which the next section addresses, take into account the social reality in which journalists use the Internet in newsgathering, and the problems involved with this. The next section also highlights the fact that even in the developed world, the technological determinism theory is not without critics.

2.5 The Social Constructivist Approach

The social constructivist theoretical perspective draws upon a range of academic traditions. Taken together, they share a critical approach to the technological determinism thesis and investigate the ways in which social, institutional, economic, and cultural factors constrain or enhance the use of information technologies by different groups in society (William and Edge 1996). Bijker (1995; in Lenert 2004) has exposed the socially-constructed character of the Internet most explicitly by illustrating how the Internet is a social product, patterned by the conditions of its creation and use. He argues that a variety of technical options are available in

the use of the new technologies. The option selected cannot be reduced to simple technical considerations, but is constrained or enhanced by a broader range of social, economic, and cultural factors.

Subsequently, Mackay et al (1995:41, 45) argue that its users also determine the way in which the Internet is deployed: this use is not inevitable or fixed. Therefore, the Internet facilitates, it does not determine; and it may be used in a variety of ways quite unrelated to developmental ones. Central to the social constructivist perspective, therefore, is the concept that there are choices and constraints in the use of the Internet. Thus, important social constructivist assumptions, including the interplay of social and technical elements, guide the investigation of traditional issues in newsgathering such as organisational constraints, lack of skills, work routines or source organisations.

Further, social constructivist theorists (see, for example, Mackay et al 1995; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2002) have come up with what they call a “social context approach”, to investigate how cultural, educational, socio-economic, organisational and demographic differences contribute to distinct ways in which the Internet is used in newsgathering, and the success of its use. The starting point of this investigation, the authors argue, is not a particular technological field, but a particular social context within which new information technology use takes place. To understand the social context in which journalists at *The Post* use the Internet for newsgathering purposes, I have therefore adapted a sociology of newsgathering framework as used by Schudson (2000). This approach consists of three dimensions, the political economy; social organisational and cultural approaches to news production. It is the social organisational and cultural approaches that informed this inquiry. The social organisational perspective, according to Schudson, tries to understand how journalists’ efforts on the job are constrained by social, organisational and occupational routines (2000:177). A cultural approach to news production provides the journalists with ideological parameters within which they make decisions on what should be reported. This macro-sociological position on newsgathering provides a broad framework for the micro-social approach that the study used to inquire into everyday action and behaviours of journalists in relation to the use of the Internet for newsgathering purposes.

Drawing from the social constructivist approach, it can be argued that while being connected to a world-wide network of networks opens up communication possibilities for journalists,

using the Internet for newsgathering purposes has its own limitations. Some of these limitations and possibilities apply to newsgathering both in the developed and developing world. However, Third World journalists seem to have a bigger share of the limitations, largely because the centralisation of the Internet in the First World, is tantamount to marginality for those without, or with only limited access, as well as for those who are unable to use it effectively. As Castells has argued:

The differential use of the Internet in the developing world is related to the kind of content that users can find on the Internet, and to the difficulty for people without sufficient education, knowledge and skills to appropriate the technology for their own interests and values (2001:247).

Sparks (2001) follows this line of argument when he says that Internet content providers are concentrated in a few metropolitan areas of the developed world. This concentration considerably biases the usefulness and appropriateness of Internet use for much of the developed world. In the context of this study, the lack of relevant local, national or even continental information on the World Wide Web, and the concurrent needs to adopt and interpret Western world information for the local readership, is one of the many barriers to the use of the Internet by *The Post* journalists in their newsgathering routines.

Related to this constraint is the verification of First World information as most of it cannot be easily corroborated locally (Garrison 1998). Consequently, journalists, particularly from developing nations, are often frustrated by the sheer volume of foreign information and the related complexity of finding authoritative local information. The common reaction is to give up and claim there is nothing on the Internet about a subject (Garrison 1998:2). It is for this reason that Berger (1996) advises that some questions are answered faster and more accurately by using traditional means of newsgathering such as human sources, books, magazines and newspapers. Nora Paul, previously of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in the USA, is even more precise when she advises journalists not to spend more time doing online searching, but offline formulating the question (Berger, 1996: 35). Further, Nora Paul argues that online sources are typically insufficient for a story. Online searches, she argues, are only a supplementary tool, not a replacement, for direct contacts with sources, and for direct visits to places (1996:36). Spelling out the ills of electronic newsgathering, *St Petersburg Times* (US) journalist Elijah Gosier, in a column headlined “e-mail talks a lot but it doesn’t say much”, warns:

Journalists deal as much with people as they do with information. But as technology makes it easier to compile information from computer screens, it could be less appealing for some reporters to foray out into the public, and talk to people face to face. (10/6/95; in Berger, 1996:36).

In line with the above argument, academics Goldstein and Johnstone (1995; in Berger, 1996:35) state that on-the-scene reporting is devalued as more attention is focused on coping with the flood of data streaming into the newsroom. With easier access (particularly in the West) to so much information from computer screens, the question is: have reporters been reduced to simply sifting through information produced by others to pass on to their readers? Berger (1996) maintains that it would be a pity if journalists were simply to recycle information already published elsewhere. He argues that a large part of newsgathering is not collecting existing information, but eliciting and discovering new data and, therefore, online access should not displace the need to find out entirely new information (1996:36). Further, Ron Meador of the *Minneapolis Herald Tribune* warns that easy access to so much information and help can “erode original thinking”, (Steele and Cochran 1995:16; cited in Berger 1996:36). In addition, journalists may equally have difficulty, like other persons using the Internet, in separating quality information from poor information. There is also the possibility of Internet sites or files disappearing without a trace. This could become a problem if the material is controversial.

Problems in Third World conditions, such as download time of materials on the Internet, can also be a hindrance to journalists’ use of the Internet in newsgathering. Furthermore, Internet use by journalists in developing countries could equally be affected by lack of relevant skills (Delano 1996; cited in Heinonen 1999:7). Heinonen (1999) observes that the Internet entails a greater challenge in upgrading journalistic skills than the switchover from manual typewriters to electronic ones. The author has roughly grouped the set of new skills required of journalists using the Internet for newsgathering into two categories. Firstly, there are those skills that are related to information gathering. These include understanding how to create useful search criteria and strategies, mastering various Internet-based search engines, and so on. The second skill is competence in appropriate use of the information generated off the Internet and the World Wide Web (1999:51).

It is important to note that the new skills required in the use of the Internet in newsgathering do not replace journalistic skills, such as the ability to identify news and to write well; the skills requirements are augmented. This creates a vision of the journalist “doing it all”, as

Harper (1996; cited in Heinonen 1999) points out on the basis of observations of the working practices of an online newspaper, where journalists combined traditional and electronic newsgathering practices. This is particularly challenging for *The Post*, bearing in mind that most of the training for Zambian media personnel is biased towards traditional newsgathering skills alone.

Heinonen (1999) has further argued that each new communication technology does have some influence on ethical issues. Cooper (1998:82), adds that the Internet may, for instance, amplify existing ethical issues, or it may reveal new ones, or present mixtures of old and new ones. In addition, the implementation of self-regulatory sanctions in the form of codes of conduct in the newsroom may become increasingly difficult “when the technologies, participants, servers, and vendors in a global multi-medium represent numerous languages, ethical mores, and transient sites with no central control unit” (1998:73).

A frequent topic in the debate of electronic newsgathering is that of privacy. Information gathering using the Internet may, for example, place citizens under surveillance (Berger 1996; Heinonen 1999). There is also the question of sourcing, which not only refers to copyright problems but also to representing material out of its original context (Heinonen 1999:52). Whether or not to expressly state that the people cited are being quoted from an online interview or a discussion group, as opposed to a direct interview or press statement (in which there is source consent), is also an ethical issue (Berger 1996:37).

From the above literature, it can be argued, therefore, that while the Internet creates new opportunities for journalists, it also generates new problems, some of which apply to newsgathering processes in the developed world. To contextualise journalists’ use of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post* and the conditions under which they operate, the next section will give a brief background of Zambia’s ICT industry and how the Zambian press, and *The Post* in particular, has evolved.

2.6 ICT Industry and the Press in Zambia

2.6.1 ICT profile

Zambia’s telecommunications sub-sector is composed of traditional fixed telephony and mobile communications based on the Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication

standard. According to the November 2003 Draft National Information and Communication Technology Policy, a number of factors have been identified as inhibiting the growth of the local ICT industry. Among these is inadequate supporting infrastructure development in areas like telecommunications, and electric power to increase the demand for ICT services.

ZAMTEL, a state-owned company is the only provider allowed to operate a public switched telephone network (PSTN) in Zambia. It provides a range of services including national and international fixed telephone services, domestic satellite telephone (Domsat), mobile telephone, and leased line services. ZAMTEL Internet services were commissioned in May 1997. Since it is able to offer telephone services across the country, ZAMTEL is the only Internet Service Provider (ISP) with a Point of Presence (POP) in all provincial towns and has about 3000 Internet subscribers. The biggest ISP, though, is ZAMNET, a University of Zambia majority-owned company which was steadily built up into the first Sub-Saharan full Internet service provider outside South Africa with more than 5000 subscribers (Hesselmark and Esselaar 2002). Coppernet is another strong competitor to ZAMNET while Microlink and UUNET are recent start-ups in the ISP business (2002:17).

According to the November 2003 Draft National Information and Communication Technology Policy, however, the Internet market in Zambia is still developing, with approximately 10, 000 to 15, 000 Internet subscribers and an additional 30, 000 Internet users mainly patronising Internet cafes (Draft Policy, Zambia 19/11/2003). The potential for rapid growth is undermined by the inadequate telecommunications infrastructure development and poor telephony accessibility. This trend has encouraged the mushrooming of shared Internet access centers (i.e. Internet cafes) in major towns in the country. Currently, there are about 400 licensed telecentres across the country. Larger percentages are, however, along the line of rail. This is mainly due to the relatively good telecommunications infrastructure, low capital and operation costs coupled with high number of potential users. Other challenges facing the ICT sector in Zambia are the high costs of ICT tools and services whenever available and inadequate local content to support cultural promotion and traditional knowledge development.

For the majority of Zambians, access to information is mainly by way of physical means such as libraries, postal communications, and print media. Access to information via networked systems such as the Internet and mobile phones is very limited mainly due to non-availability and high access costs. The non-availability of reliable communication facilities, such as

landlines and mobile phones, as well as computers, poses a very big challenge to the Zambian media (Kantumoya 2004). “In some media houses the Internet is still regarded as a luxury and status symbol which is made available to only a few unit heads, while reporters are denied all access to the same facility” (2004:106).

2.6.2 The Press in Zambia: Historical Context

The history of the media in Zambia stretches back to the year 1906 when the first local newspaper, *The Livingstone Pioneer* was set up. In 1944, a more active and larger newspaper industry emerged with the launching of the *Bantu Mirror* published by the Bantu Press, then a subsidiary of the Southern Rhodesian (now Zimbabwean) newspapers (Jere 2003:19). The London-Rhodesian Company (LonRho) then launched *The Northern News*. From 1906 to 1960, numerous publications emerged. These included *The Mutende*, *African Eagle*, *Central African Post*, *African Times*, *Sunday Zambia News*, *Zambia Times* and *The Central African Mail*, which was later to be known as *The Zambia Daily Mail* (2003:19).

Soon after independence from Britain in 1964, Zambia inherited a press, which was largely private, but the new republic nationalised and took over *The Zambia Times*, which later became *The Times of Zambia*, and *The Central African Mail*, which was to be *The Zambia Daily Mail* (Chirwa 1996). Kasoma (2000:208) adds that the privately owned media later diminished so much in size and influence that by the dawn of the 1990s, the media in the country were largely government owned. Only one newspaper, the church-owned *National Mirror*, was able to present a dissenting voice, at the risk of being ostracised by the state through a presidential order to ban all advertising in the newspaper from government owned companies (2000:208). The advent of multiparty politics in Zambia changed the media terrain. An independent and fearless media emerged and there was a proliferation of vociferous print media within a short time (Jere 2003:21). While government still owned and controlled two dailies, *The Times of Zambia* and *The Zambia Daily Mail*, several tabloids such as *The Weekly Post*, *The Monitor* and *The Sun* joined *The National Mirror* on the private front. Thus, for the first time in the country’s history, press freedom, journalistic professionalism, and the role of the press in a democracy became issues for serious discussion (Kasoma 2000:208).

2.6.3 *The Post*: A Case Study

The Post Newspapers Limited, the publishing company that launched *The Weekly Post* was founded in 1991 in the wake of Zambia's transformation from one party rule to multiparty politics, and reinforced the importance of the media in democracy. *The Weekly Post* was later re-launched as a daily and changed its name to *The Post* newspaper. In its mission statement adopted in February, 1999, the paper made a promise to produce the best quality newspaper in Zambia and to strive continually for higher editorial standards by closely monitoring the newsgathering requirements of accuracy, fairness, balance, clarity and style of its reporting.

Until 1999, journalists at *The Post* relied solely on telephone, and face-to-face interviews, faxes and other traditional means of newsgathering. Since the use of the Internet as a newsgathering technique has increased rapidly in the past six years, particularly in the developed world (Garrison 1998), *The Post* has equally invested in new information technologies. It was the first newspaper in Zambia to embrace the perceived power of the Internet in its newsgathering routines (Kasoma 2000:208). Journalists at the newspaper combine traditional and electronic newsgathering techniques. With an IT support unit within the newsroom, *The Post* is the only newspaper in the country which provides its journalists with 24-hour access to the Internet.

Electronic newsgathering, being a relatively new phenomenon to Zambia, and *The Post* in particular, has, however, come with its own challenges. As elsewhere in Africa, unreliable telecommunications infrastructure and poor Internet skills to effectively make use of the Internet are some of the limitations journalists at *The Post* face in their newsgathering routines. Unlike in developed countries, 80 percent of Zambia's population lives in abject poverty. Thus, the majority are deprived of a wider range of economic and education opportunities as well as other basic infrastructure for telecommunication services. In one of its editorials, headlined "ICT illusions", *The Post* lamented the exclusion of most Zambians from the Internet:

We insist that until we address the imbalances of the present global system where the distribution of resources is skewed in favour of a few powerful nations, we shall never embrace the promise of cyberspace with a clear conscience (*The Post* 29/04/2004).

The Post has, however, embraced the new information technology and uses the Internet for its newsgathering and distribution. For example, the Zambian authorities banned the paper's

edition No. 401 of February 5, 1996 for revealing plans by government to hold a referendum on the adoption of a new constitution. The ban extended to the newspaper's Internet edition on the paper's website. However, the banned edition was already online outside the country, according to an Internet report titled "Net censorship and Zambian Dictators", written by Declan McCullagh (Kasoma 2000:213) and the newspaper's readers with internet access at home or abroad could access the information.

Equally, the newspaper has since relied on the Internet in its newsgathering routines. Quoting Zambian army sources with backup information from CIA documents on the Internet, *The Post*, in 1999, published a story headlined "Angola worries Zambia Army, Air Force", which compared Zambia's military strength to that of Angola at a time when the two countries were in a diplomatic stand-off over allegations that some Zambian officials were supplying arms to the rebel movement in the neighbouring country (*The Post* 09/04/1999). As a result of this article, the newspaper's managing editor and 12 of his reporters were arrested and charged with espionage for allegedly profiting Angola. However they were later acquitted, as the state failed to prove that the information published was classified since it could be accessed from the Internet.

As Reddick and King (1995:14) have argued, the Internet offers journalists increased access to documents and can also reduce reporters' reliance on specific sources, allowing them to be more independent and objective and making it more difficult for politicians and handlers to put a specific "spin" on events. In the case of *The Post*, however, and as this study will show, this assertion holds true only to a limited extent due to limited Zambian content on the World Wide Web, among other factors. It is for this reason that Phipps (1999:23, 26) has bemoaned a general lack of valuable local information on the Internet in many developing countries. This is a major limitation in newsgathering, which is outside the individual reporter's control. *The Post* journalists find little relevant local, national or even continental information on the Internet. How they adopt and interpret Western world information for the local readership is the subject of later chapters.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some theoretical concerns on journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering. It outlined how the practice of newsgathering has evolved and changed in response to the innovation of information communication technologies, particularly the

Internet. It looked at the advent and characteristics of the Internet in relation to newsgathering. The chapter used the social constructivist and the sociology of news production frameworks to critique the technological determinism thesis, which overlooks difficulties in journalists' use of the Internet in the course of their work. It equally highlighted *The Post's* historical background and the Third World context in which journalists' at the newspaper use the Internet for newsgathering. It argued that the distinct use of the Internet in the developed world, let alone at *The Post*, cannot be isolated from unreliable telecommunications infrastructure, the kind of content the journalists can find on the Internet, or from the difficulty for those without sufficient Internet skills to appropriate the new technology for their own interests and values. The next chapter presents the methodology which was used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to carry out this study. It discusses the research design and methods of data collection, the research procedure, the physical location of the study, sample selection, as well as data analysis and processing. The chapter will also highlight some of the limitations of the study. The methodological approaches will be discussed in line with the theoretical frameworks and their relevance to the goals and aims of the study.

3.2 The Research Design

This research took the form of a case study approach to investigate how *The Post* journalists relate to, and make use of, the Internet in their newsgathering routines. A case study is an empirical study that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate certain phenomena within its context (Wimmer and Dominic 1994:154). There are different situations and contexts which need to be examined when looking at a specific case study. Denzin et al (1998:91) observe that a holistic case study calls for the examination of these complexities. Patton (2002:5) further argues that case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem or unique situation in great depth. Some researchers use the case study only when their research is suited to it and will enhance the problem they are working with (Gomm et al 2000:3-5). Thus, a case study can, for example, be used to make a theoretical point or it can be used to describe or explain something (Gomm et al 2000: 4). I am, therefore, going to take *The Post* as a case study, to illustrate the opportunities and challenges involved in the use of the Internet for newsgathering.

Since a case study is not a data-gathering technique in itself, but a methodological approach with different data sources, it was used in this study only as a way of approaching the research and the phenomenon under study. The techniques employed in the collection of data included observation and semi-structured interviews.

The qualitative research tradition was chosen because it allows the use of versatile techniques to understand social phenomena. It also has an express commitment to viewing events and actions from local perspectives (Bryman 1988:61), and allows for a more focused analysis of

experiences and perceptions (Lincoln and Guba 1995; Cantrell 1993). In this vein, Lincoln and Guba observe that qualitative methods are important because of their reliance on the human being as the key instrument of research:

Qualitative methods are extensions of normal human activities: looking, listening, speaking, reading and the like. We believe the human will tend therefore, toward interviewing, observing and mining available documents and records (1995:199).

In line with Lincoln and Guba's argument, observation studies and semi-structured interviews, together, provided a solid source of evidence on journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post*. Claims and accounts from the observation period were contrasted to those from interviews; inconsistencies were recognised and interpreted; discrepancies or differences pursued further, all in pursuit of deeper, more valid interpretations. The following sub-sections will discuss and justify each of the above research techniques and the process of their application in this study.

3.3 Observations

I spent one month at *The Post's* newsroom where I observed and took note of how journalists use the Internet in the course of their work. During this period, I was also allowed to attend the newspaper's editorial meetings. The observation method gave me insights into newsroom operations and I was able to ascertain the extent of Internet access. By being present in the newsroom, I had the advantage of being able to witness and record the process of electronic newsgathering, and the social and technical limitations and utilities involved. Rather than only knowing how many reporters had access to, and actually used, the Internet for newsgathering, I was able to see who, in reality, was using the new information technology and, retrospectively, I could then select them to be asked during the interviews what the Internet meant for their journalism. As Deacon et al (1999) have argued, one of the strongest claims made by observation studies is about being there, actually witnessing the events or processes being researched. It gives one an opportunity to produce independent assessments of events and processes (1999:258-9). It is for this reason that studies of media production almost inevitably rely on some form of observation of the production process (1999:249).

3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

Further, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the IT manager, the news editor and five of the observed journalists within the same month that the observation studies were

conducted. Before embarking on the more formalised semi-structured interviews, I first conducted a pilot interview exercise with one journalist. This enabled me to assess the validity of the questions and how long the interviews for the rest of the journalists were going to take. Through the pilot study, I discovered that some of the questions were repetitive and the interview was too long for the journalists, who had a hectic work schedule. I refined those questions and timed the interview guide appropriately.

I employed semi-structured interviews in this study because, by their nature, they elicit “rich descriptions” and explanations in identifying local contexts (Miles and Huberman 1994:10). As Deacon et al put it:

Semi-structured interviews abandon the concerns with standardisation and seek to promote an active, open-ended dialogue. The interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the issues to be covered during the exchange (1999:65).

Bryman (1988:46) further notes that semi-structured interviews in particular, are important in generating a well-rounded account of a particular group or organisation since they require minimum guidance from the researcher and allow “considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves freely”. The flexibility of semi-structured interviewing in this study was important to get a wider understanding and description of the research problem from the respondents’ personal experiences as well as easy interpretation of their responses and data analysis. As Arksey and Knight have noted:

Semi-structured interviews are able to go where few other forms of research can, into the minds of the people they are researching to access the perspective of the person being interviewed...to find out from them things that we cannot directly observe. Not only can the researcher get the interviewees’ perspective, but the semi-structured interviews also give insight into the context, feelings and dynamic relationships that are created in different situations (1999:32).

In line with the above argument, the study did not only examine *The Post* journalists’ use of the Internet from their own perspective, but also clarified the theoretical concepts and issues which were raised in the literature review.

3.5 Physical Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Lusaka, Zambia at the editorial offices of *The Post*. Since the methods of data collection entailed interviewing and observing how journalists make use of the Internet in newsgathering, it was logical to conduct the study at the newspaper's editorial offices. These offices host a variety of *The Post's* activities, including the newsroom from where the primary informants – the journalists, editors and IT support staff – operate. These premises, therefore, provided an appropriate study area for my research.

3.6 Research Procedure

Since observation was one of the methods of data collection I used, my first task before going into the field was to ensure that I had access to the newsroom and the journalists I needed to observe and interview. I, therefore, contacted the relevant authorities at the newspaper and explained clearly the purpose of my research, what access I required and what disturbance my research might cause. I was successful in this regard, more so because one of the editors of the newspaper, Edem Djokotoe, is an alumnus of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. The IT Manager, Chris Tshani, availed me with copies of the newspaper's IT annual reports which contained relevant data on the progress and hurdles involved in the operations of the Internet at *The Post*. These shed light on the research issues and interview guides.

Based on the observation studies and IT annual reports analysis, I then proceeded with the interviews. From the IT manager, the news editor and selected journalists' own perspectives and explanations, I was able to obtain the most applicable information, which was tape-recorded. I made appointments with various respondents at their own time and venues of their own choice and convenience. The IT manager and the news editor were interviewed in their offices while most interviews with the journalists were carried out in *The Post* library. At the onset of each interview, I explained to the respondents the purpose of the study, thus their consent was obtained in all cases. The duration of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and largely depended on the kind of information each interviewee was able to provide.

3.7 Sample Selection and Size

Given the qualitative nature of this study, purposive sampling was used to select a total of seven respondents. This approach is justifiable in terms of Deacon et al's view that qualitative research methods do not always follow the conventional sampling procedures but, instead,

depend upon the creativity and resourcefulness of the researcher (1999:54). The respondents included the IT manager, the news editor and five journalists purposefully chosen during the observation period. The IT manager was chosen for his role in overseeing the smooth operations of the Internet at *The Post*, while the news editor provided organisational data and information on how his subordinates made use of the Internet in newsgathering and the kind of news stories they generated there from

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Notes and documents generated from the observation period were analysed by producing an index of all the material based on extant themes and issues. I equally analysed the interviews thematically, using a rudimentary content analysis approach (Berg 1998:225). Each interview was transcribed and later analysed by drawing on the statements, ideas, opinions and explanations which emerged as categories for thematic analysis. Answers from different respondents were then compared to establish the most frequently occurring responses and differences in statements and opinions, which were used in the analysis and interpretation of data. The data was summarised in a narrative form and the most significant quotations are used to illustrate the major findings of the study presented in chapter four. Relevant and reviewed literature is also used to discuss the findings of the study guided by the theoretical frameworks set out in chapter two, to make sense of the themes identified during the interviews and the observation period. As Jensen and Jankowski (1991:64) have pointed out, drawing of conclusions centrally involves the researcher as an agent of analysis and interpretation.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

A few practical limitations were encountered during the course of study. Where as the IT manager and the news editor were readily available for the interviews this was not the case with the journalists as they were always operating on tight deadlines. Some of them were not patient enough and often resorted to “yes” and “no” answers so that they could quickly go back to their busy work schedules. In spite of this limitation, the study was successfully conducted, as I employed the probing technique if the respondents had not clearly or adequately answered the questions. I also repeatedly explained to these respondents the importance of the study and this helped a great deal in shaping the trend of the interviews.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology used to carry out the study. I have shown that observation and semi-structured interviews were the main qualitative data collection tools the study employed. With these techniques, I was able to obtain vital information from the respondents. The chapter also highlighted the research procedure, the physical location of the study, sample selection, as well as data analysis and processing, and the limitations which were encountered in the course of the study. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study, in accordance with the theoretical perspectives addressed in chapter two.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The study focused on how journalists at *The Post* currently make use of the Internet within their newsgathering routines. It attempted to contribute to perspectives by Africans, particularly Zambians, on the subject matter using the sociology of news production, and the social constructivist theory which critique technological determinism theory. The study aimed at investigating factors which underlie the distinctive uses of the Internet in newsgathering, and the diversity of its uses by journalists at *The Post*. These factors are journalistic routines, poor access due to poor telecommunications infrastructure, the lack of local content on the World Wide Web, ethical issues, and the lack of Internet skills. In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the study. The interpretation and discussion will be dictated by the objectives of the study and informed by the theoretical considerations and literature review. I will combine findings from the semi-structured interviews and observations. The findings will be presented, illustrated and corroborated with quotations arising from the extensive period of newsroom observation and semi-structured interviews with the following interviewees:

- The Information Technology (IT) Manager: Chris Tshani,
- The News Editor: Amos Malupenga,
- Journalist: George Chellah,
- Journalist: Mwila Nkonge,
- Journalist: Masuzyo Chakwe,
- Journalist: Kingsley Kaswende,
- Journalist: Sandra Lombe.

The data is presented and discussed concurrently in a narrative form based on six major themes namely:

- Organisational and occupational demands,
- Newsroom access to the Internet,
- How *The Post* journalists use the Internet for e-mail communication and for exploring information resources on websites,
- Cultural constraints,

- Skills and ethical considerations
- “The Great Cruise Liner Con”.

Although these themes are in practice intertwined, for analytical reasons it is useful to treat them separately.

4.2 Organisational and Occupational Demands

In line with the focus of the study, I investigated how *The Post* journalists’ use of the Internet in newsgathering was framed by organisational and occupational demands. Drawing from Schudson’s (2000) sociological studies of news production, this section will look at the bureaucratic nature of news production and the routines and conventions by which newsgathering is accomplished.

From the newsroom observation, the study established that a day in *The Post* newsroom began with an editorial meeting at 8 a.m. where journalists and their editors critiqued each other’s work. This took the form of marking up a copy of the current edition, and pointing out general reporting problems. After this, the journalists gave three story ideas each for the next day’s publication. For all the story ideas given, *The Post* journalists indicated whether they would use face-to-face or telephone interviews to get the required information. The use of online resources to gather the required information was not discussed.

By midmorning, most of the journalists and photographers would go for their newsgathering assignments based on the story ideas agreed on at the editorial meeting. It was noted that the element of time was key to the accomplishment of news work at *The Post* as journalists were supposed to have their stories ready for editing by 3 p.m. every day. The study further established that since journalists were operating under newsroom constraints, principally deadlines, they were dependent on scheduled events such as press conferences and other news events. When time was of the essence, most reporters said the Internet could not help beat their deadlines due to various constraining factors. One journalist noted:

You cannot bank on the Internet, actually... there are instances where everything will just freeze, (and) what happens to your story? You have to meet your deadlines (Interview, Chellah, 18/11/2004).

Another respondent, Sandra Lombe, claimed that she only found “bits and pieces of information” on the Internet, which would not enable her to make her deadlines (Interview,

29/11/2004). Mwila Nkonge, on the other hand, argued that the Internet was a useful tool in meeting his deadlines as it helped reduce the problem of “running up and down chasing for live sources” (Interview, 19/11/2004).

However, it was generally observed that the more stories a reporter was expected to write, the more likely he or she was to rely on press conferences as an efficient means of gathering information. Writing on general newsroom production pressures, Dunwoody has commented thus:

The selection of news may be governed by a host of constraints built into a journalist's job. Few reporters are free to cover what they please; among other things, they are limited by deadlines, by knowledge of what competing reporters are doing, and by the amount of equipment needed to do their jobs. (1978; in Berkowitz 1997:156).

In line with Dunwoody's argument, the study found that newsgathering at *The Post* was largely shaped by organisational constraints. The editorial meetings were valuable for helping this study understand how the editors controlled the content of the newspaper because it was during these meetings that the editors decided which stories to cover or ignore. It was also from these meetings that editors assigned reporters to news beats. The most common beats were police news, court and parliament sessions, and other scheduled events such as press briefings. Almost all the respondents maintained that it was virtually impossible for them to use the Internet or the World Wide Web on news beats, as the nature of these assignments required journalists' physical presence at particular news sites. In addition, when unexpected events occurred such as accidents and deaths, the editors deployed journalists to those news scenes and encouraged them to talk to routine news sources such as health and police authorities. Except for background information, rarely did reporters use the Internet and the World Wide Web on those routines. As Ettema et al have argued, the beat system disperses reporters to where news is most likely to occur (1987; in Berkowitz 1997:35). Most respondents agreed with this view arguing that if they were to cover a press conference, for example, or any other news beat, they would make direct visits to news places. The news editor put it this way:

On the police beats, we just contact the police spokesperson for information on what has happened throughout the country; in that regard the Internet does not apply (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

In the developed world, however, the Internet is regarded as the only ICT with an array of tools which can enable reporters to access information without ever leaving the newsroom. Reddick and King (1995:14) have noted that a court reporter in the West can access court filings and decisions online. While government departments and local institutions lag behind in the provision of online information to journalists in Zambia, in the USA, the White House, for example, had aggressively developed its electronic communications links by 1993 and more than 1,600 documents were published electronically, by that year, including transcripts of daily press briefings by the president's press secretary (1995:14). It can be argued, however, that even in the developed world, court and police reporters often do on-the-scene reporting and make minor use of the web for their newsgathering. Journalists covering a White House briefing, for example, would prefer physical attendance, as transcripts of the press briefings are not instantly made available online. Similarly, Garrison (1998) has found that most American journalists perceive online government information to be "too public relations oriented and a recipe for one-source reporting" (1998:124). In this vein, Berger (1996:35) stresses that access to online records only gives reporters a starting point to their reporting.

4.2.1 Newsroom Policy on the Use of the Internet in Newsgathering

It was established further that *The Post* had no written newsroom policy on journalists' use of the Internet for e-mail communication and for exploring information resources on websites. The study noted that newsroom rules on the use of the Internet tended to be unwritten and informal. Consequently, there were gaps regarding the range of policies that would have a bearing on the use of the new ICT by journalists for newsgathering purposes. The IT manager observed:

There are no written rules which govern journalists' use of Internet tools in the newsroom. They (journalists) are just free to do anything; only that we advise them against surfing porno sites because of viruses, but there are no other restrictions. (Interview, Tshani, 30/10/2004).

It was found that there were some inconsistencies even with this *laissez faire* policy as regards some limits of Internet use. For example, whereas the IT manager said journalists were discouraged from visiting pornographic sites since they bred viruses, the news editor argued that reporters were adults who were at liberty to surf various sites in their own free time:

Journalists are free to do what they want; these are adults, so we haven't restricted any Internet use. They can use it in their own way when they are free, but not during working hours. (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

It can be argued that news editors are uniquely placed to serve as respondents in a study aimed at assessing newsgathering operations of a newspaper. At the top of the newsroom hierarchy, Malupenga was in touch with everyday journalistic work and was the symbol of the newspaper's management in the newsroom. On that basis, his comments above reflected the official Internet policy (however informal) of the newspaper which he was supposed to enforce. As one respondent, Kingsley Kaswende, revealed:

Actually the news editor says everyone in the newsroom is an adult and they are entitled to view pornographic materials, no one can stop them. There are no rules at all (Interview, 27/11/2004).

While Kaswende and several other respondents acknowledged the non-existence of Internet rules in the newsroom, others argued that the newspaper had Internet rules, but accessible to journalists only through organisational socialisation:

One of them is that you do not use the Internet for pornography, you do not use it to download stuff, you just get information, and of course you do not spend too much time on the Net. The freedom (to surf pornography) we do have, but we also realised that we have a responsibility and agreed that the workplace is not somewhere to surf pornography from (Interview, Mwila Nkonge, 19/11/2004).

Every newspaper, according to Warren Breed, "has a policy, admitted or not" (1955; in Berkowitz 1997:108). Definitions of media policy range from general ones like Lee's (1976; in Oosthuizen 1989:2) which says that "communication policies are sets of principles and norms established to guide the behaviour of communication systems", to ones that refer more specifically to the object of communication policy. An example of the latter type of definition is that of Sommerlad:

The ways in which communication is used, the networks through which it flows, the structure of the media system and the decisions of the people who operate it, are all the outcome of communication policies (1975; in Oosthuizen 1989:2).

In line with the above argument, it would be imperative for *The Post* to come up with an internal policy framework with specific requirements that should guide the action of journalists at the newspaper as they use the Internet for newsgathering purposes. Breed states

that if worked out explicitly, policy would have to include motivations, reasons, alternatives, historical developments and other relevant material (Breed 1955; in Berkowitz 1997:116). It can be noted, though, that the way a newspaper's policy is formulated differs from one news organisation to the other. Berger (2004) has suggested the following theory paradigms to analyse policy: functional, liberal pluralism, power view, participative and chaos view. The functional view focuses on policy harmonisation for the reproduction of the whole system, the liberal pluralism paradigm highlights competing interests, while the power view draws attention to management or the rulers. He adds that the participative policy paradigm draws attention to the extent to which policy is consultative, while the chaos theory takes policy as a piecemeal muddle, which is disorderly and *ad hoc*. In whichever way it is formulated, the importance of policy as one of the determinants of a newsgathering process cannot be over emphasised. Although journalists can impose their individual values during newsgathering processes, researchers suggest that organisational forces ultimately win (Shoemaker 1991).

The views obtained from all the respondents showed that the norms of policy in regard to the use of the Internet in *The Post* newsroom for newsgathering purposes were not entirely clear. To state more exactly how this policy is maintained would be difficult in view of the IT manager, the news editor and the journalists' contradictory statements. For example, the inconsistent agreement by journalists to have a policy of no pornography seems to reflect some *ad hoc* and, therefore, disorderly policy scenario akin to that highlighted by chaos theory.

It can be noted that the general data presented under this theme underlined the organisational and occupational demands which, according to Schudson, frame journalists' efforts on the job (2000:177). As was pointed out by various interviewees, journalists relied on certain repetitive methods in their newsgathering assignments. The essence of these professional routines or rituals was that they were a necessary means with which journalists navigated through the day and managed their work. On the other hand, the routines tended to lead to the use of routine sources, usually official channels of communication. In this way, professional routines, and not the Internet, shaped journalists' newsgathering practices. In the next section I present the respondents' viewpoints in relation to Internet access in *The Post* newsroom. These views will be corroborated by my own observations.

4.3 Newsroom Access to the Internet and the World Wide Web

Internet access means different things to different people. The viewpoints on access range from universal access and service (Audenhove 2003:140; ITU 2003), and social capability like education and skills to make use of new information technologies (McNamara and O'Brien 2000); to the availability of relevant content and applications that promote their appropriation (Wyatt et al 2000:21-24). For the purpose of this study, access shall refer to any physical connection to the Internet for web-based and stand-alone e-mail communication, and for exploring information resources on websites.

According to *The Post's* 2004 IT report, the number of computers in various departments which make up the newspaper totals 40, with an Internet connection at each through the local area network. The local area network houses two in-house personal computer servers responsible for all information processing. One server establishes a wireless connection to ZAMNET, the newspaper's ISP. This enables users to browse the Internet for continued information retrieval. The report indicates that as long as the computer used stays connected to the local area network and the link to the ISP is up and running, a user can browse the Internet 24 hours round-the-clock (*The Post*, IT Annual Report, 2004).

The second server handles all data processed within *The Post*. This server houses shared folders that can be accessed and viewed by all users on the local area network. Though *The Post* has improved its Internet connection from a dial up system to a wireless connection, there was a general theme of frustration from the interviewees at the constant Internet failures in the newsroom. Almost all the respondents attributed problems in constant Internet disconnections to ZAMNET, the service provider:

Given that the telecommunications infrastructure our service provider, ZAMNET, is using is quite old, Internet speed is not as good although the wireless link has helped us a lot in that regard (Interview, Tshani, 30/10/2004).

The news editor was even more explicit:

I think three quarters of the time; the constraints arise from outside forces. Whenever there are problems at ZAMNET, we also get affected. Maybe it is because we are technologically backward compared to developed nations (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

These comments were in line with views held by social constructivist theorists, as they highlighted inadequate telecommunications facilities that, like in many developing countries, have affected Zambia's ICT development. This has created barriers to accessing the new information technologies. In most developing nations, access to the Internet is even difficult to measure. For example, the World Telecommunication Development Report indicates that while some developed nations (which have largely advanced the technological determinism theory) are racing ahead in ICT usage, many developing nations are struggling to produce even basic indicators (2003:4). Mbarika (2002) has stated that most Third World countries in Africa do not have access to the Internet and this is exacerbated by poor telecommunications infrastructures.

During the observation period, the study found, for example, that there were Internet disconnections on a weekly basis in the newsroom due to frequent power cuts and other technical failures. Further, the study established that poor infrastructure has a role to play in constraining the newsgathering process. Certain pre-requisites, such as reliable power supply to operate the computers and a well functioning wireless link to transmit data, are necessary for the successful use of the Internet and such infrastructural elements remain inadequate at *The Post*:

Yesterday we could not connect because we had a power black-out. We do not have a power generator yet or a bigger uninterrupted power system to protect our equipment from such kind of black-outs. We had to shift the newsroom to the industrial area where we have the printing offices. (Interview, Tshani, 30/10/2004).

Some respondents described Internet access in the newsroom as: "24 hours a day, seven days a week" (Interview, Chakwe 27/11/2004); "hundred percent, because everyone has an opportunity to access it" (Interview, Lombe 29/1/2004); "very, very good" (interview, Kaswende 27/11/2004). But it was observed that journalists outnumbered personal computers in the newsroom. The study established that the number of Lusaka-based journalists was 20 while the newsroom had 15 computers with four laptops for the four editors. Of the 15 computers, one was solely used for word processing, as it could not connect to the Internet during the whole observation period. Mwila Nkonge acknowledged this inadequacy:

The problem is that there are more reporters than the PCs available. It would be better if we could get to a situation where each reporter has his or her own workstation (Interview, 19/11/2004).

Due to this limited number of computers in the newsroom, it was further observed that in some instances, the journalists would queue up for computers. However, this was not a severe constraint because, after the editorial meetings, not all journalists could be in the newsroom at the same time:

I cannot really call it queuing up because if I want, I can start browsing just as I come to the office at 8 am in the morning. You find that those who were browsing in the morning will give chance to others at a later stage, so we alternate. (Interview, Chellah, Journalist, 18/11/2004).

It can be noted that the scenario presented under this theme is far removed from societies with advanced telecommunications infrastructure. While access to the Internet at *The Post* is constrained by power black-outs, inadequate technological infrastructure and insufficient computer workstations, Garrison (2001) has spoken of heavy computerisation of newsgathering in the developed world. He argues, for example, that as of 1999, almost 90 percent of U.S. daily newspapers had unlimited access to, and were actively using new online resources to research for articles (2001:ix). Further, as early as 1995, a survey of 287 daily newspapers in the USA by the School of Communication at the University of Miami found that 64 percent had some type of online services ranging from government bulletin boards to commercial services to access the World Wide Web and gopher sites (Berger, 1995:6).

The next section looks at how *The Post* journalists use the World Wide Web, e-mail, electronic mailing lists, search engines, discussion lists and other Internet and web-based tools in newsgathering.

o

4.4 How *The Post* Journalists Use the Internet for E-mail Communication and for Exploring Information Resources on Websites

As noted in the second chapter of this thesis, there are a number of Internet resources in use for newsgathering purposes. These techniques include personal and group communication through e-mail; the use of search engines on the World Wide Web to supplement journalists' primary first hand sources, and to access relevant information in a short period of time (Garrison 1998); and discussion lists and newsgroups for tip-offs about story possibilities (1998:66). Therefore, this section seeks to address the major research issue of how *The Post* journalists use the available web-based and Internet tools in their newsgathering routines. In this section, I present and discuss data on how the respondents made use of, and related to, the

Internet and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the new information technology in newsgathering.

4.4.1 Dominant Websites, Search Engines and Electronic Mail

While there are numerous newsgathering resources available on the Internet and the web, as cited above, it was established that *The Post* journalists predominantly used electronic search engines and e-mail. Three respondents said they were not aware of the existence of electronic mailing lists, discussion lists and newsgroups, while one said he was aware of newsgroups and discussion lists, but had not yet used them in his newsgathering duties. He was, however, using mailing lists for news updates. Another journalist said he did not know anything about electronic mailing lists, but had used newsgroups and chat rooms. He applauded chat rooms for news tips, but said the resource was not reliable as it depended on whether other users were logged on (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004). All the respondents did not know about, and had not knowingly used, other potential information retrieval resources on the Internet, such as file transfer protocol and telnet. The IMF, World Bank, European Union, AllAfrica.com, BBC and CNN websites dominated the categories of most-often used sites on the Internet. Journalists visited the IMF, World Bank and European Union websites for updates on these international organisations' activities in Zambia. The BBC, CNN and African newspaper websites, particularly those with searchable archives such as *The Monitor* of Uganda, *The Daily Nation* of Kenya, and the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian* of South Africa, were also in wide use by respondents for story ideas and current world and African affairs.

It was further observed that Google was the most-used search engine in the journalists' newsgathering routines. While some respondents reported that they selected Google due to familiarity with the search tool, others said they used the search engine because it was the one they were exposed to by early adopters when they first started using the Internet. One journalist, George Chellah, noted: "I am more familiar with Google because that is the one I was introduced to. I haven't explored the others" (Interview, 18/11/2004). Another respondent, Kingsley Kaswende, said he additionally, but rarely, used Metacrawler and Yahoo! search engines (interview, 27/11/2004). The study found, though, that the journalists were not solely dependent on Google for their stories as the search engine was only used as a supplementary resource. Information retrieved from the search engines was perceived to add

depth and context, and build background for their news stories. The news editor observed that Google was mostly used for confirming certain information and statistics.

My investigations further established that e-mail was commonly employed for communicating with sources and gathering information through interviews and electronic press releases:

I use e-mail to try and establish contact with people I did not know as well as sending questionnaires to my sources. If somebody gives me a business card so that I can discuss some issues, I e-mail such people. (Interview, Chellah, 18/11/2004).

Since the Internet tools available for locating people's e-mail addresses are still rudimentary, the most direct method is to contact the person telephonically and ask for the appropriate address (Reddick and King 1995: 91). It can be noted from the above comment that sending individuals e-mails as a form of interviewing sources relies, to a large degree, on the prior building of rapport between the reporter and the source of information. The building of rapport involves physical contact with sources, a traditional way of newsgathering. Reddick and King (1995) state further that once you have established a relationship with a source, you will find that person-to-person e-mail can be an invaluable tool. They posit that if you blindly send e-mails to people you do not know well enough to contact through another method first, you will have no way to evaluate the information they send you, if they respond at all. "Indeed you cannot be sure if the person to whom you thought you were sending the message actually responded rather than a subordinate or assistant" (1995:91).

Once he had established a relationship with his source, respondent Mwila Nkonge found e-mail useful for his information gathering:

I established contact with the managing director of a Zambian mining company who is based in Australia. He updates me via e-mail on the mining activities, and since the company is here, we are able to verify the information. (Interview, Nkonge, 19/11/2004).

It was further observed that while e-mail was the most widely-used feature of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post*, some journalists used the technique for their personal businesses. Mwila Nkonge stated that he regularly used the Internet to send personal e-mails in his free time (Interview, 19/11/2004). Kingsley Kaswende echoed Nkonge's statement saying that he sometimes used the Internet for personal entertainment (Interview, 27/11/2004). These

respondents' comments are in line with social constructivist theorists' views. They point out that its users also determine the way in which the Internet is deployed, and this use is not inevitable or fixed. In their critique of the technological determinism perspective, social constructivists have argued that the Internet facilitates, it does not determine; and that it may be used in a variety of ways quite unrelated to developmental ones (Mackay et al 1995: 41, 45).

4.4.2 Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of the Internet and Web-Based Tools

Almost all the respondents spoke of successes and failures in relation to Google and e-mail, the most commonly used newsgathering electronic tools at *The Post*. Only one respondent who had used electronic mailing lists talked about their weaknesses and strengths, while advantages and disadvantages of using chat rooms in newsgathering were spelt out by another respondent.

4.4.2 (a) E-mail's Strengths and Weaknesses

Almost all the respondents acknowledged the potential of e-mail to increase their newsgathering efficiency and speed. As chapter two of this study has shown, futurists have argued that e-mail is often regarded as an effective way to interview sources and receive press releases on a regular basis. It has further been argued that through e-mail, reporters and their sources can send messages back and forth to each other and sometimes people who refuse to accept a telephone call from a journalist may be willing to respond to an electronic mail message (Reddick and King 1995).

My investigations established that most journalists at *The Post* agreed with these optimistic views on the use of e-mail in newsgathering. They applauded e-mail as an efficient newsgathering resource which enabled them to communicate with their sources in a short period of time regardless of the distance involved. The IT manager further observed that a reporter on an assignment can deliver material to the newsroom via e-mail, and on the other hand receive information on the spot from the newsroom:

If our journalists are outside Lusaka and want to file a story, they can easily find an Internet café nearby and send it. It is easier and has really facilitated their work. (Interview, Chris, 30/10/2004).

Further, as Schudson (1995) has argued, reporters need to interview not just sources, but authoritative sources. This need, of course, gives great power to high-level government and other officials. Access to them is a scarce resource, since the bureaucratic systems surrounding these high-level government and other public personalities control journalists by granting or denying access to them. One respondent argued that she used the e-mail facility to beat this bureaucracy:

Sometimes the source's secretary will tell you that you cannot talk to my boss. So I use e-mails to directly make appointments with such sources. (Interview, Chakwe, 27/11/2004).

One respondent argued, however, that if the source were not in the office, he or she would not respond to that e-mail. "They won't even see it in the first place, and this takes up most your time". (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004).

Unlike those who perceive traditionalism as a barrier to development, all seven respondents, however, cited face-to-face interviews, a traditional means of newsgathering, as the main driving force in newsgathering routines at *The Post*. A respondent said: "I believe in personal interviews and other briefings; you know there are other events that are not on the Internet or cannot be accessed through e-mail which are newsworthy" (Interview, Lombe, 29/11/2004). Another one argued: "e-mail, compared to face-to-face interviews, is not effective because you do not have the control of the interview. You also do not follow up on the questions" (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004). The study established that *The Post* journalists used e-mail as a supplementary newsgathering technique only, just like they did with Google:

The advantage with e-mail is that I would give you the questions and you would answer back and then you would give me a call that I check my mail box. I would just re-arrange the answers and in no time, the story would be there. (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

The "re-arranging of e-mail interview answers", which the news editor is referring to above, has led e-mail interviews to be regarded as superior to other forms in respect of the convenience for journalists to cut and paste quotes into a story, which facilitates accuracy and speed (Berger 1996:23). However, Schudson (1995) and Chalaby (1998:127-8) have argued that the face-to-face interview is one example of the long-standing technique of newsgathering. It is regarded as one of the practices that identified journalism as a distinct occupation with its own patterns of behaviour (Schudson 1995:72-79). In applauding the

continued relevance of this long-standing technique, most respondents argued that e-mail interviews lacked spontaneity, reading of body language, and interview locality:

Face-to-face interviews enable you to see things for yourself. Someone can tell you something and yet their body language is telling a different story. So when you are directly chatting with them you can see that there is an inconsistency. You can find ways of exploring it until you get that which the person does not want to tell. (Interview, Nkonge, 18/11/2004).

Further, Garrison (1998) says that one characteristic of e-mail in newsgathering, which is anonymity of location and role of the sender, and even whether the name of the sender is actually the individual sending the message, can be problematic. Similarly, the absence of social context clues is often troubling to journalists who must evaluate the quality of the information provided before it is used.

4.4.2 (b) Google's Strengths and Weaknesses

Amongst the resources available on the Internet are a mass of tools that can make life easier in locating the exact information a journalist wants (Berger 1995:30). As outlined in earlier sections of this thesis, journalists at *The Post* used Google searches to generate background information for their stories. While some respondents argued that Google searches were used to effectively obtain information for their stories, others posited that they wasted a lot of time searching for information, which was not there. One respondent noted: "I spend about five hours on the Internet every day; I wouldn't spend that time if I had direct contact with sources or physical visits to news places" (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004). George Chellah had a different view:

On Google, I think within seconds I would access what I want. I just type the subject matter and I would choose what I want from the various responses (Interview, 18/11/2004).

Garrison (1998:117) has highlighted the research challenge given that there are billions of words on the World Wide Web. For one respondent, refining an overload of information in return to a query was one of the biggest challenges when using Google. Mwila Nkonge observed that Google would generate a lot of information related to what he was looking for and his biggest problem was to refine that information (Interview, 19/11/2004). George Chellah, however, said evaluating an overload of online information depended on what he knew about the subject: "If I have little information on a subject, then I am likely to take a lot

of time. But if I have so much information, I will quickly pick on the relevant topics I want” (Interview, 18/11/2004). One respondent maintained that he would prefer online searches to *The Post* library if he wanted a particular piece of information because “the Internet is quicker than the manual searches we do in the library” (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004). However, George Chellah maintained he would weigh his options:

It is a two-way thing. If it were something that is to do with my country, I would prefer going to the library because I think Google is not really updated so much; it cannot give you everything you want. But if it has to do with a common subject such as an IMF project, then I would use Google. (Interview, Chellah, 18/11/2004).

It can be argued that the above argument emanates from the lack of African, particularly Zambian content on the Internet, and the fact that most of the First World information on the World Wide Web cannot be easily corroborated locally (Garrison 1998). As chapter two of this thesis has shown, journalists, particularly from developing nations, are often frustrated by the sheer volume of foreign information and the related complexity of finding authoritative local information. Chellah’s claim that “...Google is not really updated so much...”, is what Garrison has described as a common reaction by journalists doing online searches, which is to give up and claim there is nothing on the Internet about the subject (1998:2). One problem with searching the Internet, therefore, is that “if you have not found it, you do not know that it is not there” (Berger 1996:31). It is for this reason that Berger (1996) further advises that some questions are answered faster and more accurately by using traditional means of newsgathering such as human sources, books, magazines and newspapers. Nora Paul, previously of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in the USA, has further argued that online searches are only a supplementary tool, not a replacement, for direct contacts with sources, for direct visits to places (1996:36).

Internet search criteria and strategies are further discussed under “skills and ethical considerations”.

4.4.2 (c) Electronic Mailing Lists and Chat Rooms

Chapter two of this thesis has shown that electronic mailing lists and chat rooms are e-mail related resources on the Internet that journalists use for a variety of reasons ranging from tip-offs about story possibilities to generating new information. As discussed earlier in this thesis, Reddick and King (1995), in summary, say that a carefully worded query posted in the proper

news groups can quickly net a bountiful harvest of people with firsthand knowledge that qualifies them as news sources. The study established that only one respondent used electronic mailing lists and another one used chat rooms. While electronic mailing lists were said to be good for news scoops, they were used to generate a lot of spam at the same time. Another respondent who used chat rooms put it this way: “if you have good friends, chat rooms will give you what you want, but most of the time you find that your colleagues are not logged on to the net so you will not communicate with them” (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004).

4.4.2 (d) General Weaknesses

The leading concerns expressed by most respondents on the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web were the lack of local content and outdated information on government and other local sites. While several respondents observed that they would find Zambian stories on BBC websites, theZambian.com, and on Google searches, there was little authoritative African, regional or local information which they could rely on for their stories. The respondents also bemoaned outdated information on government and other local websites:

The update is so poor save for international organisations that are based in Zambia such as the World Bank, World Vision and others. Sometimes you can find that the information which was there last week will still be there even next week. (Interview, Chellah, 18/11/2004).

Further, one respondent agreed with a point that has also been made by Meador who has warned that easy access to so much information and help can “erode original thinking” (Steele and Cochran 1995:16; in Berger 1996:36). George Chellah argued that heavy reliance on the Internet for newsgathering purposes would inculcate a culture of laziness in reporters:

What is needed is that we do our groundwork first. We try and find possible ways and means on how to get factual information, unlike just getting something which was written by someone who is not even in Africa. (Interview, 18/11/2004).

Chellah’s sentiment has also been expressed by Berger (1996) when he observes that it would be a pity if journalists were simply to recycle information already published elsewhere. He writes that a large part of newsgathering is not collecting existing information, but eliciting and discovering new data and, therefore, online access should not displace the need to find out entirely new information (1996:36). However, as technology makes it easier to compile

information from computer screens, it could become less appealing for some reporters to foray out into the public, and talk to people face-to-face (Gosier 1995; in Berger 1996:36).

In the next section, I present the respondents' viewpoints in relation to cultural constraints in the use of the Internet for newsgathering.

4.5 Cultural Constraints

In line with the objectives of the study, I wished to investigate cultural issues which *The Post* journalists took into consideration when using the Internet for newsgathering purposes. This theme has been drawn from the sociology of newsgathering framework as spelt out by Schudson (2000) in chapter two of this study. According to Schudson, a cultural approach to news production provides the journalists with ideological parameters within which they make decisions on what should be reported and what should not be (2000:177).

Almost all the respondents were of the view that some of the pictures and foreign content on the World Wide Web were offensive to their readers. Some of the journalists said they strive to keep the Zambian society's religious and cultural concept 'clean' and were troubled by the web content that did not fit pre-conceived categories of Zambian culture. The previous government declared Zambia to be a Christian nation, and the study established that some of the journalists combined high Christian values and norms with a diversity of traditional beliefs. One respondent noted:

We operate in an environment that has these many taboos, these many don'ts, and as journalists we have to make sure that we are within the limits set by the general society for which we are writing (Interview, Nkonge, 19/11/2004).

Many respondents cited articles on homosexuality, and texts with derogatory and sexist language as some examples of web content, which were at variance with the Zambian culture. This cultural approach to the practice of newsgathering assumes that news definitions and news values differ across cultures and that the journalists are obliged to use accepted cultural symbols in a given social context in judging what news is and what it is not. Schudson (2000) argues that the most important filter through which news is gathered is "the cultural air we breathe, the whole ideological atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said and that others had best not be said".

In agreeing with Schudson's sentiments, one respondent, Kingsley Kaswende, further defined the Internet as one window through which people view the entire world with different cultures. He added that journalists have to be very conscious of their local cultural beliefs when seeing the news through this window:

I have seen a number of pictures, which would be considered obscene here, but they would not necessarily be so in other countries. For example, pictures from the reed dances in Swaziland generated a lot of debate here. (Interview, 27/11/2004).

One respondent indicated further, that even when he personally saw nothing wrong with specific web content, he resonated to the same cultural moods as his readers when doing online searches. This was in order to avoid offensive content in the selection of news so as not to offend the readership:

There are some Internet texts, which are unacceptable in the Zambian context, and you have to toe a certain line. I personally don't find anything unacceptable but I am writing for people who may find certain things unacceptable and I shouldn't offend them. (Interview, Nkonge, 19/11/2004).

Nkonge's assertion that "he personally does not find anything unacceptable on the Internet, but is writing for people who may", is important as it touches on the individual journalist's cultural background in relation to the use of e-mail and websites for newsgathering. While Nkonge had no constraints on which Internet text he should use, other than the fear of offending his readers, my investigations found that gender and religious beliefs played an important role on how some respondents used these online resources in *The Post* newsroom. Although the use of the Internet in the newsroom was not an exclusive male domain, the news editor revealed, for example, that there was some resistance from female reporters when it came to surfing sexist materials and nude pictures from the web. In addition, while cultural beliefs did not stop the journalists from surfing the World Wide Web, it barred them from using certain web content.

The next section discusses the journalists' skills in using the Internet for newsgathering and ethical considerations in relation to information obtained off the World Wide Web.

4.6 Skills and Ethical Considerations

As outlined in chapter two of this thesis, the Internet entails a greater challenge in upgrading journalistic skills than the switchover from manual typewriters to electronic ones. While the technological determinism theory overlooks barriers to journalists' use of the Internet for newsgathering, the social constructivist theory and the sociology of newsgathering frameworks acknowledge lack of Internet skills as some of the constraints in the effective use of the new information technologies in the newsroom in most developing countries.

The study found that most respondents first came into contact with the Internet while pursuing journalism studies in colleges and universities. It was further established that *The Post* offered some in-house training to new journalists, which largely dealt with orientating them to the newspaper's writing style with scanty training on the use of the Internet for newsgathering due to inadequate training facilities and a policy vacuum in the use of the Internet for newsgathering. Other limiting factors included time constraints and the cost of conducting such training.

Information from the IT manager, which was corroborated by the news editor, indicated that most of the journalists had basic knowledge in the use of e-mail and the Google search engine. This basic knowledge will be elaborated in more detail in the next section.

Asked whether he had any formal training in the use of the Internet for newsgathering purposes, one respondent revealed: "I taught myself... learning by doing..." (Interview, Nkonge, 19/11/2004). He claimed that he had not experienced any problems with the any of the electronic newsgathering tools and maintained that he did not ask for any assistance from anyone in the newsroom. "Should I need any assistance, the IT people will definitely come in because I am not a specialist" (Interview, 19/11/2004). Other respondents, however, said they often sought help from their colleagues in the newsroom or the IT department when using the Internet for newsgathering. The nature of assistance asked for varied from one respondent to the other: "if I am failing to access some certain sites I want to use for my research, the IT people would help me out" (Interview, Chellah, 18/11/2004). Sandra Lombe on the other hand argued that she only sought assistance from the IT staff if she was experiencing hardware related problems. "If it is something basic, I seek help from my colleagues or the editors" (Interview, 29/11/2004).

Garrison (2001) observes that many new media researchers have given computer education and Internet training for working journalists a significant amount of thought. He posits that these researchers are, however, not completely in agreement about the best way to approach computer literacy in the newsroom. *The Post* journalists' heavy reliance on the IT department when conducting online searches, for example, raises some questions about the newspaper's approach to Internet training in the newsroom. It can be argued that information technicians are not journalists or media academics. They do not have the insight into the kinds of information retrieval skills, such as the evaluation and verification techniques, that are useful to journalists in their newsgathering routines. Unlike newspaper librarians who have been promoting the use of computer assisted reporting in technologically advanced newsrooms, the IT department at *The Post* may not understand the required skills for the use of the Internet as a journalistic newsgathering resource.

Heinonen (1999) has roughly categorised the new skills required by journalists using the Internet for newsgathering as those skills that are related to information gathering, and the competence in using the information generated from the online resources (1999:51). I will present my findings on *The Post* journalists' skills in electronic newsgathering under these two categories.

4.6.1 Information Gathering Skills

The study found that almost all the journalists had not competently mastered the various Internet-based search engines and did not know how to create useful search criteria and strategies. As shown earlier in this study, Google was the most used search engine by all the respondents with only one respondent additionally using Metacrawler and the Yahoo! Search engines. Already, by 1998 there were 1, 800 search engines available on the World Wide Web (Garrison 1998:117). According to Berger (1996:31), some search engines scour the surfaces and give you what they find in catalogue headings, while others like Alta Vista take you deeper into the data. Garrison (1998) further adds that some search engines are general use search tools, but others are specialised for specific content or purposes. Some search engines, called meta-search engines, will also search several engines at a single command (1998:117).

My investigations further showed that even on the Google search engine, almost all the respondents were not aware of a number of features such as the advanced search preferences, relevance rankings of the search results, and news headline search, which enhances search

results with the latest related news stories. Equally, some respondents did not know how to use phrase or subject search options. As one respondent revealed:

If you are looking for investment in Zambia on Google, it will give all the low-down on investment without any refined options such as agriculture investment, tourism and manufacturing (Interview, Nkonge, 19/11/2004).

Due to the limited knowledge of the basic search options, Nkonge further argued that search engines would not give him parameters or options in which to refine his search further (Interview, 19/11/2004), while George Chellah claimed that “Google was not really updated so much” (Interview, 18/11/2004). It can be argued that Chellah’s claim demonstrates his lack of understanding of search engines in general. Unlike other websites which are frequently updated, Google searches information already in existence on the World Wide Web that has been put online by different people across the globe.

However, observation studies and further interviews with the journalists suggested certain interesting behaviours in the use of Google search engine. The general observation was that information search habits were still evolving, as search strategies used by respondents showed a wide range of personal approaches. Equally, there was considerable experimentation and trial-and-error when doing online searches on Google. Asked how he dealt with an overload of responses in return to a query, Mwila Nkonge, for example, said he used a method he referred to as gambling:

You would pick at random that I am going to read this and that, and then you open those documents to get a general picture. Since it was randomly done, you assume it gives a fair representation of what you need to do. (Interview, 19/11/2004).

The next sub-section presents information on *The Post* journalists’ competences in assessing and using the information generated from websites.

4.6.2 Competencies in Web and Information Verification

It was observed that journalists treated the World Wide Web as an information resource with caution. Because of the lack of control of information placed on websites, journalists were concerned about the usefulness of website information. The study established that most respondents used online information in the same way they did with other, more traditional information such as faxes, mailed documents, or information obtained from personal interviews. The news editor stated, for instance, that the journalists were encouraged to use

well-established websites and those that adequately attributed information. He said journalists were not allowed to quote material from new and suspicious-looking websites as they tended to have unreliable information. Asked how the journalists would identify suspicious websites on the Internet, the news editor said journalists had to take into account the various websites' obvious characteristics. He later on gave an example of how *The Post* website had been reproduced on the Internet, but with different news stories from their original online editions:

That website was almost similar to ours, but when you critically looked at it, you would see that it was just fake, because there was a story of which we published and was appearing on that bogus site in a distorted manner (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

In line with the above scenario, Reddick and King (1995) have warned that anybody can set up a computer, get an Internet address, and put information online. The authors have advised journalists using the Internet for newsgathering purposes to have the skills needed to verify information and test the credibility of Internet sources.

On the other hand, Garrison has made some suggestions about how journalists can assess the quality of an electronic information source. He argues that from the address, a user can determine the type of site: "is it government (.gov), education (.edu), nonprofit organization (.org), military (.mil), commercial (.com), or other types of networks (.net)?" (1998:121).

It was noted that although journalists at *The Post* did not exactly evaluate websites and assess the quality of their information in the same way that Garrison is suggesting, they often visited established and well-known websites for their information retrieval. As this thesis has shown, the most used websites during the study period were the IMF, World Bank, European Union, AllAfrica.com, BBC and CNN websites. Others included African newspaper websites particularly those with searchable archives such as *The Monitor* of Uganda, *The Daily Nation* of Kenya, and the *Sunday Times* and the *Mail & Guardian* of South Africa.

The next sub-section presents my findings on the ethical considerations which emanated from how the respondents practically made use of the information generated off the Internet.

4.6.3 Ethical Considerations

Chapter two of this thesis has shown that each new communication technology has some influence on ethical issues. Cooper (1998:82) has argued that the Internet may, for instance, amplify existing ethical issues, or it may reveal new ones, or present mixtures of old and new ones. Berger (1996:35) lists some of the new ethical questions arising from online services in regard to sourcing, authenticity, plagiarism and permission. These ethical factors came up in this study and are further discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

The study observed that on a daily basis, *The Post* reproduced selected news articles from international news websites, which were fully credited. As Reddick and King have argued, attribution is an essential element of journalism. "...at the same time, you should not claim credit for information that somebody has published on a network without crediting that source..." (1995:215).

But when it came to the use of e-mail, *The Post* journalists did not expressly state in their stories that the people cited were being quoted from an e-mail interview. Asked why they did not, almost all the respondents said it was the newspaper's in-house writing style. In agreeing with his journalists, the news editor revealed that in such e-mail interviews, the journalists were only allowed to state where the person was sending the e-mail from: "...we do not indicate that in an e-mail interview with *The Post*, we just say in an interview with *The Post*, from where this source is..." (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

Commenting on whether journalists have to include a phrase such as "...in an e-mail message..." when writing their stories, Reddick and King argue the following: "Probably not. After all, people are quoted from press releases every day and reporters seldom add 'in a press release'..." (1995). The authors have, however, argued that the same complexities that exist in the reporter-source relationship in other kinds of interviewing are operative in e-mail as well. "You do have to be sure, however, that sources with whom you are in contact via e-mail know that you are writing an article and what they say is on the record" (1995:92). In line with Reddick and King's argument, Malupenga further said that journalists at *The Post* used information obtained through e-mail only when the people involved knew that the information given was for publication.

In the case of a press release sent through e-mail, one respondent, Masuzyo Chakwe, said that she would reproduce it the way it was sent to her mailbox without checking its authenticity (Interview, 27/11/2004). Other respondents had a different view: “mostly it is good that you get back to the person who sent it for clarification or just to confirm they are the ones who have sent it” (Interview, Lombe 29/11/2004). Another one argued: “in terms of press releases, I do not just parrot what the source says; I get back to them, though I do not tell them which angle my story will take” (Interview, Chellah 18/11/2004).

Chellah’s assertion that he would not tell his sources which angle the story would take raises another ethical question. Some authors (see Reddick and King 1995) have argued that e-mail makes it easy for reporters to check quotes with their sources, but allowing sources to check quotes in the story is controversial among professional reporters. While some have argued that if you want your story to be as accurate and authentic as possible, you will want to have the source take another look at it, others have maintained that sources will often want to change the angle of the story so that they can appear better (1995:92). The key question, however, would not be whether or not the source reviews the information, but what steps the reporter takes to craft an accurate and honest story with the least amount of “spin”. Whichever the case, the study established that *The Post*, as a rule, did not allow its sources of information to have a preview of the story.

Further, all the respondents said they properly attributed the origins of the material used and sought permission from the people involved before using information obtained from chat rooms and mailing lists. Mwila Nkonge put it this way:

When I was signing up on AllAfrica.com mailing list, for example, I even told them that they could give me news tips and I should be free to explore and publish them, to which they agreed (Interview, 19/11/2004).

As the study has earlier established, *The Post* journalists were at liberty to surf pornographic material in their own free time. Though this material did not end up in their stories, this scenario poses new media ethical questions in a country where pornography is outlawed. This ethical consideration is, however, open for debate. As Reddick and King (1995) have argued, online journalism promises to open a whole new arena for discussion of media ethics. And the ethical boundaries, what journalists morally should and should not do online, will only be worked out over time as more journalists use electronic services and more debate their use.



The next section presents a realistic picture of the use of e-mail and websites as tools in newsgathering at *The Post*.

4.6.4 Case Study: The Great Cruise Liner Con

On September 22, 2003, *The Post* carried an advertisement which promised successful applicants a job like no other – a job that came with free meals, free accommodation, a free air ticket, a tax-free US dollar salary, and a chance to see the world at absolutely no charge. It would be the first in a series of nine insertions, all of which read the same:

"New Jobs! 5,000 Jobs on Cruise Ships. Positions available: administrative staff; cleaners; pool attendants; bellboys; hostesses; dining room staff; GP-repairmen; receptionists; room stewards; cruise staff; shop staff; electricians; seamen and many other positions. US\$15,000 – US\$45,000 annually. Many new job vacancies onboard cruise ships in the Caribbean for qualified individuals between 18-40 years old. Inexperienced applicants may also apply for trainee positions. Round trip airfare, free accommodation and free on-the-job training provided. For more information, only send your name and address through our web page: www.jobsoncruises.com or by email: to "ships@jobsoncruises.com" (*The Post*, 22/09/2003).

After reading this advertisement, *The Post*'s Training Editor, Edem Djokotoe, was "naturally sceptical." He says: "I asked whether any of the journalists in the newsroom had presented it as a story idea, but no one saw the story in the ad at all!" (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004). He said that the only contact address the advert carried was a website and an e-mail address. "In short, there was no physical address, no company name, no telephone number, no fax numbers and no contact person to call for details" (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004). Djokotoe then decided to follow his intuitive scepticism which resulted in a month-long newsgathering process, as an example to *The Post* journalists, of an investigative story any reporter with access to the Internet could do.

In line with the focus of this study, I wish to elaborate the challenges Djokotoe went through during his 'Great Cruise Liner Con' investigation and newsgathering process. I will illustrate some of the salient points made in the theoretical perspective and literature review chapter, as well as those raised by this chapter so far. The article has deliberately been segmented and italicised for analytical purposes.

4.6.5 Putting Online Tools to Work

4.6.5 (a) Ideation Phase: Internet versus Traditional Means

Condensing the literature in chapter two of this study on the use of the Internet as a journalistic newsgathering tool, it can be argued that in principle, the Internet can be used throughout the newsgathering process. In the ideation phase, the journalist can surf around the Internet, examining websites, probing electronic mailing lists and e-mails (Heinonen 1999). In a typical scenario, a reporter could monitor discussion lists and network newsgroups trolling for new story ideas. "...it is like listening in on conversations among people who are deeply interested in a specific subject..." (Reddick and King 1995:189). In this case study, however, a simple and seemingly ordinary advertisement in the traditional media aroused Djokotoe's suspicions and became the source of a story idea. As we shall see, he later combined traditional and online newsgathering strategies to shed light on the advertisement under examination. It can be argued that synergy between the two newsgathering practices – traditional and online – could broaden *The Post* journalists' capabilities to free their newsgathering routines from the technical and social limitations of electronic newsgathering at the institution, which the preceding themes have highlighted. As it will be noted, Djokotoe's story idea required journalistic skills in verifying and probing online information and sources. His newsgathering process began by sending an e-mail to ships@jobsoncruises.com as indicated in *The Post* article below:

4.6.5 (b) E-mail

"...so, with this advertisement on my table, I went ahead and did what any curious journalist would do under the circumstances, and that is, send in my name and my address - even though I was way over the stipulated age limit and had no intention of leaving the firmness of dry land for a job on the high seas. I got a response to my e-mail almost immediately in which I was asked to pay US\$300 as an application fee. Attached to the Cruise Employment Application was a letter which read:

"...thank you for your interest in the cruise industry. The cruise industry is the most important industry in the hospitality sector for thousands of jobs every year in many countries around the world. If you are looking for a well-paid job, want to meet new friends and to travel the world for free, you have taken the first important step to achieve your goal. Your new career in the cruise industry is just a few weeks away. Please check our website...complete a Cruise Employment Application and discover

all the magic and the wonderful things that the cruise industry has to offer you... ”
(*The Post*, 19/10/2003)

Though the above e-mail did not have relevant details, Djokotoe went ahead to complete the Cruise Employment Application form, but since he was over the stipulated age limit, he revealed in an interview that he falsified his age and other personal details: “for instance, I put my age at 37, declared that I worked in public relations and had some experience in customer relations” (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004). This method intensifies some ethical questions which have already been cited in this thesis because of the ease with which a journalist can falsify his or her identity online. Nevertheless, Kantumoya (2004:78) has argued that: “if we accept that the public’s right to know is the media’s overriding mission, it follows that overlooking some ethical impediments during an investigative story is justified only if its publication will be for the public good”. Reddick and King (1995) argue on the other hand, that while from time to time in traditional media journalism the benefit of posing to reveal a significant social wrong may outweigh the deception involved, which will probably not be the case in online journalism. They maintain, however, that “to lurk on a discussion list and then quote people who did not know that what they wrote would be used in a different context is as deceptive as posing or going undercover to report a story” (1995:200-207).

The fact that Djokotoe got a response to his e-mail almost immediately is significant in the light of the dominant thread in the theoretical debates in chapter two of this thesis. Authors arguing within the technological determinism paradigm have applauded the Internet’s potential to increase journalists’ work efficiency and speed. Judging by the volumes of literature dealing with the Internet as a journalistic resource, it can be argued that this is by far the most important advantage of the Internet for journalists’ work. In this case study, however, the author had little sense of how long it would take to pull the story together. Though he got an immediate response acknowledging receipt of his e-mail, the information he wanted wasn’t there:

“...firstly, I wanted to know about visa requirements and who would pick up the tab for processing the necessary visas. Secondly, I wanted to know about insurance. Did the jobs on offer come with insurance, and if they did, who would pay for the premiums? Thirdly, would there be gratuities after tours of duty and what was the minimum tour of duty an employee would be expected to serve? Fourthly, I wanted a physical address of the operators of the

company as well as a company name—something more than an e-mail address or a website. After all, it would be necessary to know where they were, just in case... Besides, in the event of the employers breaching a contract, on the basis of which law could one sue? And who would you sue...?” (The Post 19/10/2003).

Thus, Djokotoe ignored the daily deadline pressures of the newsroom and took five weeks of online and traditional newsgathering before breaking the story. It can be argued that if he had direct contacts with sources and physical visits to the company under investigation, Djokotoe’s newsgathering process could not have taken this long. On the other hand, this was not a practical option for him.

An important feature of the Internet in this case study, however, is its global reach which made it possible for Djokotoe to widen the scope of information gathering across continents without leaving his desk. Reddick and King (1995) have observed thus: “as the use and availability of online information grows, the constraints time and space impose on reporters is diminishing” (1995:200).

As the e-mail advised him, Djokotoe went to the company’s website: www.jobsoncruises.com where he discovered that a waiter could earn up to US\$3,500 in tips alone; a disc jockey can earn between \$1,300 and US\$1,650 per month for entertaining guests, an electrician, between US\$1,825 and US\$2,150, a cook between US\$1,700 and US\$2,000. When he visited <http://www.shipsoncruises.com>, Djokotoe revealed that: “all I found was advertising spiel, no concrete detail” (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004).

As Garrison (1998) has observed, the lack of reliable and authoritative information on the World Wide Web is one of the biggest challenges facing journalists using the Internet for newsgathering purposes. Berger (1995) advises, nevertheless, that a journalist needs to be patient. “Some reporters tend to be impatient, saying it takes too long to search the web and find information they immediately need, if they can find it at all” (1995:32). But Djokotoe was patient enough and did a lot of background research on the Internet:

“...though the advert had said “new job vacancies onboard cruise ships in the Caribbean”, it did not specify which countries in the Caribbean...” (The Post 19/10/2003).

He checked the Internet and found that the territory defined as the Caribbean comprises over 25 countries. When used effectively, Reddick and King (1995) posit that the Internet can help a journalist in every aspect of his or her reporting. It can be argued that in the above scenario, Djokotoe used electronic resources to elaborate his information. As Heinenon (1999) puts it, the overall benefits of the Internet in journalistic information gathering is the improvement of journalists' standing in relation to their sources as the Internet can provide them with quick and detailed information equal to, or greater than, that held by the people they are supposed to interview.

4.6.5 (c) Offline Sources Emerge

As can be seen from his article, Djokotoe's online investigation took a new twist as it led him to traditional sources of information. He writes that nine applicants phoned *The Post* to complain that they had been taken for a ride by the advertisers. Djokotoe says a tenth applicant revealed to him that a friend of hers sent the dollar equivalent of K1 million to an agency representing the cruise company, reportedly to facilitate the procurement of the necessary visas and to pay for the processing of relevant documents. Since he sent the money, he had not heard from them. In his article, Djokotoe asks the following questions:

"...where did the advert come from? How had it found itself in the local press? And where exactly did the money that applicants paid go...?" (The Post 19/10/2003).

Reddick and King observe that when doing online searches, "you have to be ready to pursue new leads" (1995:189). On the other hand, Nora Paul (1994; in Berger 1996) has argued that computer assisted reporting is just that – a form of assistance: "it is not called computer completed reporting" (1996:35). Berger (1995) has further advised that some questions are answered faster and more accurately by using traditional means of newsgathering such as human sources, books, magazines and newspapers. As if heeding Berger's advice, Djokotoe went 'offline' searching for answers: "I did a bit of desk research. I looked through *The Post's* advertisement log on cruise ships in the Caribbean" (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004).

Djokotoe's local offline sources revealed further that the advertisements had been placed in *The Post* and *The Times of Zambia* by a local advertising agency, FCB Zambia which stood for Foote, Cone and Belding, an affiliate of FCB Africa, on behalf of another advertising agency called I-Direct based in Panama City. The agency received the advertisement and a

bank draft of US\$1,000 by FedEx with the instruction that a total of 18 insertions be placed in the local press. Consequently, nine adverts were placed in *The Post*.

4.6.5 (d) Feed-Back via ICT

After *The Post* published the article on October 19, 2003, Djokotoe got several response from the newspaper's readers: "my e-mail box was clogged with mail from readers who had either sent money to the Sea Cruise Enterprise or were about to do so" (Interview, Djokotoe, 30/11/2004). In addition, the General Manager of I-Direct Advertising Agency, Tito Cordoba e-mailed *The Post* with the Sea Cruise Enterprise's registration certificate certifying that the company in question was supposedly legitimate.

It can be noted that through this reader feedback, the Internet allowed for a level of interactive communication between Djokotoe and his potential sources. This diverse use of ICTs in newsgathering can improve the quality of reporting, as it helps journalists to generate new information.

It was further established that *The Post* did a follow-up story and a set of press questions were sent to Cordoba by e-mail to which he did not reply. Online searches by Djokotoe to verify the legitimacy of the registration certificate sent by Cordoba failed to yield the required information. He conducted online searches for the company details using Google and the search did not yield any relevant information.

However, apart from sending a few e-mails and visiting the Cruise Ship Company's website, Djokotoe did not use other potential newsgathering resources on the Internet such as discussion lists and newsgroups.

4.6.6 Summary

This case study demonstrates that the Internet and other online resources can aid reporters for enterprise articles. In this vein, the new resources allowed Djokotoe to tackle his investigative story in ways that would have been impossible in the past. However, while the case study shows some positive aspects in the use of e-mail and website resources, it also highlights the limits of these resources and the skills available to use them effectively.

4.6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the findings of the research under six different themes, namely organisational and occupational demands, newsroom access, how journalists made use of the Internet, cultural constraints, skills and ethical considerations and a case study, 'Great Cruise Liner Con'. The chapter has demonstrated that while being connected to a world-wide network of networks opens up communication possibilities for journalists, using the Internet for newsgathering purposes has its own limitations. In summary, the chapter has shown that use of the Internet by journalists at *The Post* is framed by such factors as poor telecommunications infrastructure, non-availability of local content on the Web, and the organisational and occupational demands. The next chapter presents a general discussion of the study findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the results of the research and connects the various trends and responses. It highlights salient points which came out of the study's findings on journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post*. The general discussion of the study's findings is guided by the aims and objectives of the research and the theoretical frameworks informing it. Other issues which are not reflected in the responses, such as legal barriers in accessing public information, are also discussed.

5.2 Internet Optimism

Though this study has highlighted several barriers to the operations of the Internet in the newsroom as advanced by the social constructivist theorists and the sociology of news production, some respondents spoke alongside the views expressed by theorists who have argued in the technological determinism paradigm. From the point of view of technological determinism, the usefulness of the Internet is related to its features as a device for the gathering of information. Its potential lies in the ability to make journalists' work faster and easier. Optimists argue further that the Internet has also improved the quality of journalism. The interviewees also did consider the Internet as an asset in their reporting. One journalist noted: "The Internet has really assisted us as journalists to do our work thoroughly" (Interview Chellah, 18/11/2004). The news editor put it this way:

At the moment we are inseparable from the Internet. Although we are ahead of our competitors in ICT investment, we feel that we have not done much. (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

Coming from the news editor, this remark is important in assessing how *The Post* management perceives the potential of the Internet. Despite this optimism, however, the findings show that the news editor had a dichotomous view on the future of newsgathering in the age of the Internet. He argued, for instance, that given a choice, he would insist on personal interviews and only resort to e-mail interviews as a matter of convenience. On the basis of this argument, it would seem that the newspaper wants to retain its traditional

position even in the changing technological environment, but at the same time benefit from the perceived potential of the Internet in newsgathering as seen in the 'Great Cruise Liner Con' article. As the next section will show, the Internet was not the main driving force in the newsgathering process at the newspaper.

5.3 Useful, but Not Indispensable

The responses from this study indicate that for *The Post* journalists in general, the Internet is a useful tool in newsgathering, but not a necessity. Based on the study's findings, it was usually possible to complete one's assignments without using the new information technology. This general observation can be analysed in more detail from the angle of the technological, social-organisational and occupational routines.

While the technological determinism perspective considers the Internet to be a faster newsgathering resource than traditional means, the study's findings show that it often appeared to be slow for the hectic needs of the daily newspaper's newsgathering routines. "I would prefer face-to-face interviews to the Internet", was a dominant theme among the interviewees. This preference would have been a reflection of several factors that included the constant Internet failures in the newsroom, which lie in the inadequate capacity of the entire country's telecommunications infrastructure, poor access to the Internet, lack of follow-up questions when conducting e-mail interviews, journalistic routines, and the lack of Internet skills. These factors are discussed in more detail in the ensuing sub-sections.

5.3.1 Poor Internet Access Due to Poor Telecommunications Infrastructure

Although Zambia can boast some form of Internet access, such access is largely confined to the capital, Lusaka, as chapter two of this study has shown. Further, Zambia's Internet access costs are generally high compared to the developed world due to infrastructural limitations and regulatory barriers. The infrastructural limitations include problems such as inadequate and poor telephone lines, unreliable power supplies and outdated equipment, while regulatory barriers include government monopoly on the telecommunications sector, resulting in private service providers charging high Internet access rates. The news editor saw these barriers as characteristic of Third World countries: "we are backward technologically, we are not so advanced compared to developed nations" (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004). Almost all respondents attributed poor Internet access in the newsroom to technical failures at ZAMNET, the newspaper's ISP. As the findings indicate, the problem of access at *The Post* was equally

accentuated by limited accessibility to the Internet as the 20 reporters had to sometimes queue up for the 15 connected computers which also doubled as their workstations, though this factor was not perceived as severe. In addition, the newspaper did not have a power generator or a bigger uninterrupted power system to protect the equipment in the event of a power black-out.

Further, my investigations established that although *The Post* has invested in the promise of the Internet, the legal and technical environment in Zambia makes it difficult for online journalists to access government documents. Garrison (1998) has argued that because of their dependence on public information, journalists are using online government resources as quickly as they become available. The main hurdle in this aspect of online research and newsgathering at *The Post* was that the Zambian government rarely made public records accessible for online users, as most government operations were not yet computerised. Even government departments that were fully computerised did not put public documents online due to the existence of legal barriers in Zambia regarding the accessibility of government-held information. According to Kantumoya (2004), the greatest drawback is the absence of a law that places government-generated documents in the public domain. He argues that in the USA, for example, the Freedom of Information Act gives the public, and the media, the right to examine any document held by the executive branch of government, though with some exceptions. In contrast, the Zambian government usually invokes General Orders that prevent any officer in the civil service from releasing government information to the media, let alone putting it online (2004:108).

It can be argued, nevertheless, that the Internet was useful in overcoming some legal barriers as *The Post* had occasionally accessed classified Zambian documents put online by international organisations, as seen in chapter two of this study. In one of its editorials, the paper wrote:

In the age of Internet and transparency in the United Nations institutions, we can get any public documents – we do not need to steal them from government. (*The Post* 29/01/2005).

The next subsection looks at how respondents perceived the role of e-mail interviews in newsgathering.

5.3.2 The Use of E-mail Interviews

Throughout the observation period, the role of e-mail in the interview process remained unclear. Most journalists in this study did not often use e-mail to conduct interviews.

Telephone and in-person interviews remained dominant. It was apparent, however, that some journalists were using e-mail for receiving press releases on a regular basis and sending press queries to sources they could not physically reach. As the 'Great Cruise Liner Con' article in chapter four of this study has shown, e-mail can be said to be journalistically convenient as it shrinks distances required to communicate, and can be edited and changed before transmitted (Garrison 2001).

However, the study established that e-mail has led to general impatience among journalists at *The Post* seeking instant responses. Concerns were raised about sources that did not regularly check their e-mail messages. One journalist noted that if the source was not online at the time the e-mail was being sent, he or she would not respond to it. "They won't even see it in the first place" (Interview, Kaswende, 27/11/2004). Many respondents spoke of establishing a relationship with sources before they could contact them by e-mail. In this vein, it can be argued that e-mail as a journalistic newsgathering resource changed little in the process of newsgathering because two parties were still required as in the traditional way of newsgathering, and an e-mail address was supposed to be known. This required an initial face-to-face meeting between journalists and their sources before they could communicate via e-mail.

5.3.3 Routines and Sources

From the social-organisational and occupational routines aspect, the implication of the study's findings is that the Internet did not signify a great change in newsgathering routines. If we consider the relationship between journalists and their sources, it seemed that the Internet was just another way of reaching traditional sources. One reason for this is that the maze of the Internet is at the same time convenient and safe to pick up those sources that are known to be reliable. In *The Post* newsroom, e-mail and the Google search engine were the most used features of the Internet, while features like chat, newsgroups or mailing lists were used rarely or hardly ever. These Internet features were used to follow up traditional sources such as government authorities. International organisations like the IMF and the World Bank's websites were also monitored, while CNN and BBC sites were visited to keep an eye on breaking news. As the news editor observed:

“we realised that there were some bogus sites on the Internet and have since advised our reporters to quote from established sites” (interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004).

This development made *The Post* journalists use familiar sources for their articles that are now available on the Internet as well. Journalists used the Internet largely for following up routine sources, rather than for major information gathering projects. Garrison (1998) has argued that the use of e-mail interviews with traditional sources, and government websites in newsgathering during a newsgathering process underscores that news organisations are merely using the new technologies in old ways – simply to use existing credible sources of information faster and, perhaps, in a more comprehensive manner.

The interviewees indicated that one reason for the continuity of routine sources was the nature of their tasks and news routines. The news routines at *The Post* consisted of an editorial meeting, field work and piling up separate raw news items and notes for which the basic material was received at least half-way ready-made in press releases or at press conferences. The journalists’ information-gathering task on the Internet was, therefore, limited to checking occasional facts or getting background information for their stories. And, as was mentioned repeatedly in the interviews, there was also the constant pressure of deadlines which did not encourage ambitious explorations of the Internet at the expense of coming up with three stories by 3 p.m. on a daily basis.

The overall picture of the Internet in *The Post* journalists’ newsgathering work presented the new tool as something that was being adjusted to the settled pattern of the occupational routines. It could be argued, however, that the pressure and hectic nature of the journalists’ routine work was used as an excuse for not utilising the Internet to find alternative sources. Some interviewees argued, for instance, that because of their workload, they did not have enough time to use the Internet. The findings indicate that from story ideations in the editorial meetings through to the actual process of newsgathering, the Internet seemed to have fairly limited significance, as the traditional routines were continued despite the rise of an online world.

Compared to the technological determinism promise attached to the use of the Internet in newsgathering, this could be somewhat a conservative view. Technological determinism perspectives see the use of the Internet by journalists as the path for developmental take-off of

the Third World (Slack and Fejes 1987:202). This has led to the heavy computerisation of newsrooms in developed and developing nations, as is the case with *The Post*.

5.3.4 Lack of Local Content and Cultural Considerations

Further, cultural considerations equally posed a challenge in determining what information the journalists should collect from the World Wide Web. Sparks (2001) has argued that Internet content providers are concentrated in a few metropolitan areas of the developed world and this concentration considerably biases the usefulness and appropriateness of Internet use for much of the developed world. It was for this reason that the respondents claimed they could not relate to the foreign content on the web, some of which was equally not culturally suitable to the Zambian readership. In line with this discourse, Bijker (1995; in Lenert 2004) argues that while a variety of technical options are available in the use of the Internet, the option is selected cannot be reduced to simple technical considerations, but is constrained or enhanced by a broader range of social, economic, and cultural factors.

5.3.5 Lack of Internet skills

My observations established that journalists at *The Post* were well aware of the usefulness of the Internet as a newsgathering resource. While it was clearly used as a tool for background research, location of sources, locating story ideas, and confirmation of certain types of information, other uses had not yet been fully explored. Journalists did not seem to take advantage of the common advanced search procedures and tools available from most major search tools. Almost all the respondents did not use or did not know whether they used advanced search options. This could be attributed to their lack of training and resultant lack of sophistication as web researchers. It was observed that their job was often laden with obligatory tasks, leaving no room to learn new Internet skills in information gathering.

Though most of the journalists claimed that they had no problems in the use of the Internet, the limited knowledge and use of Internet and web-based tools such as discussion lists, newsgroups and electronic mailing lists, generated more questions about their Internet competencies. It was also observed that the journalists' need to upgrade their Internet research skills was not considered a priority as there was heavy reliance on the IT department for assistance. The news editor noted, for example, that in cases where journalists needed more information from the Internet, they involved the IT department (Interview, Malupenga, 1/11/2004). As chapter four of this thesis has highlighted, the dangers of using IT staff

members who are not journalists in the newsgathering process cannot be overemphasised. For example, Garrison (2001) has warned that becoming computer literate at the individual level and developing a technologically advanced newsroom bring with it more than IT-sounding labels. The transition brings a change in the way news reporting is approached and the types of information that are reported. With the advent of the Internet, Heinonen (1999) has seen the need for journalists to learn new skills and adapt to the new technology. This adaptation is not entirely about the departure from traditional journalism skills, but rather about adding technical skills that capitalise on the different kinds of story presentation that the Internet makes possible. Garrison (2001) has further stated that Internet literacy regarding newsgathering cannot occur overnight. He argues that prioritisation of skills must occur, perhaps even prioritisation of departments within the newsroom. According to him, these decisions are in the hands of newsroom management, but can be influenced from the bottom up. Heinonen (1999), however, posits that newspapers are bound to examine the need for Internet skills in the newsroom from the vantage-point of current journalistic conventions. "For example, new working methods will be weighed against existing routines and old familiar ways of organising the newsgathering process" (1999: 60-64).

Similarly, Internet training needs for journalists at *The Post* have most probably been understood in terms of how they would serve and support the tried and tested journalistic methods of newsgathering. But this basic attitude seems erroneous if the Internet and its underlying communication technology are, as they appear to be, radically different by nature to other technological innovations such as faxes and telephones, which *The Post* had been using for newsgathering.

From the study findings, it can be deduced that although the respondents saw some mixed blessings in the Internet and the web as a reporting tool, they also believed that benefits outweighed the problems. Having invested heavily in the promise of the Internet, for better or for worse, there is a need for *The Post* to have a policy on the use of the new information technology in the newsroom. This should address, among other things, updating journalists' Internet skills and formulating Internet policy as a guide for journalists in their newsgathering routines.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted the salient points, which came out of the study's findings on journalists' use of the Internet in newsgathering at *The Post*. The general discussion of the study findings was guided by the theoretical frameworks informing it. While the technological determinism theory considers traditionalism as a hindrance to newsgathering, the findings of the study in this regard have revealed a different picture. In line with the social constructivist theory, this chapter has highlighted some possibilities and limitations associated with journalists' use of the Internet in the developed world. It has shown that online reporting is only a tool. It cannot replace the traditional newsgathering techniques used by journalists, particularly direct contacts with human sources. The next chapter gives a broad conclusion to the whole study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the key issues that arose out of the study. The research was an investigation of how journalists at *The Post* newspaper in Zambia currently make use of the Internet, as an ICT, within their newsgathering routines. The study aimed at investigating such factors as journalistic routines, poor access due to poor telecommunications infrastructure, lack of local content on the World Wide Web, and lack of Internet skills, that underlie the distinctive uses of the Internet in newsgathering, and the diversity of its uses by journalists at *The Post*.

The introductory chapter of this thesis briefly introduced and placed the study within the context of electronic newsgathering as well as highlighting its challenges in the context of *The Post* as a Third World newspaper. The chapter also discussed the research problem, the aims and objectives of the study, and the methods and procedures that were going to be employed to address the research issues at hand.

Chapter two looked at the theoretical considerations underlying the study. It presented a review of literature on the evolving practice of newsgathering and the advent and use of the Internet by journalists in newsgathering. It also addressed the debates surrounding technological determinism and the theoretical arguments concerning social constructivist perspective and the sociological studies of news production. The chapter further provided the context within which the study was going to be conducted by looking at the telecommunications industry in Zambia and the operations of *The Post*.

Chapter three discussed the methods, procedures and techniques the research employed. It gave a detailed step-by-step analysis of how these methods and procedures would be applied to the research question. It also provided a theoretical foundation for the relevant qualitative methods used in the study. Finally, the chapter outlined the limitations which were encountered in the course of the study.

Chapter four embarked on a presentation of the study results and used them as a basis for informed discussions and interpretations of the research. The interpretations and discussion

were dictated by the objectives of the study and informed by the theoretical considerations and literature review. Chapter five highlighted some of the salient points which came out of the study's findings.

6.2 Scope for Further Research

While this research was exploratory in many ways, it leads to some useful areas for further inquiry on how the Internet is used to seek information in newsrooms. The study undertook a holistic approach in investigating the use of the Internet by journalists at *The Post* and addressed such factors as journalistic routines, poor access due to poor telecommunications infrastructure, lack of local content on the World Wide Web, and lack of Internet skills by journalists. Further research should take a micro approach and look at these factors individually in order to have a deeper insight on how they enhance or inhibit electronic newsgathering in an African setting. It could also focus on the use of individual features of the Internet and World Wide Web such as e-mails as a newsgathering resource.

Clearly, using Internet search engines requires sophisticated knowledge and extensive experience involving the advantages and disadvantages of a particular search site. The data shows that Google search engine is the most used by journalists at the newspaper. There are individual approaches on how journalists use Google, with one respondent resorting to what he termed "gambling" when sorting out an overload of responses in return to a query. The adoption of individual search habits could be attributed to lack of skills and the dominant use of Google could have been due to influence from early Internet adopters or the IT department – there are likely to be other factors and additional research is necessary for better understanding of this finding.

The other question raised by this research is in regard to Internet content. The concerns raised by the respondents in this regard were in relation to limited locally-created content and cultural constraints in using some of the Western world information from the web. This cultural interplay in defining the "correct" web content for the Zambian readership could be interesting material for a study.

6.3 Summary

The fact that most of the literature on the use of the Internet as a newsgathering resource takes a Western perspective makes the deficiency of literature on the above research issues

especially apparent within the African context. It is my hope that this study contributes to a knowledge-base of literature and research from which other media scholars can draw, but most certainly one that they can work with and develop in relation to the issues of electronic newsgathering within the African context.

APPENDIX

Interview with the Information Technology (IT) Manager: Chris Tshani (October 30, 2004)

- Alphonsius: Kindly give me your name and your daily responsibilities at *The Post*.
- Chris: My full names are Chris Tshani. I am the IT manager for *The Post*.
- A: When was the IT support Unit established?
- C: It was established last year in August - 5th of August.
- A: And why was it established?
- C: *The Post* didn't have an IT department, so they had to look for someone in the IT domain to help with their local Internet network.
- A: What computer and Internet facilities do journalists have access to?
- C: They have got desktop computers, laptop computers for editors. And all these are Macintosh computers.
- A: And they are all connected to the Internet?
- C: They are all connected to the local network area linked to a wireless connection.
- A: In many organisations, you find that there are rules regulating the use of the World Wide Web and the Internet. Are there any ways that you regulate the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web by journalists in the newsroom?
- C: Yes, we regulate the Internet in terms of speed, for example. From the beginning, we have been running on 64 megabytes but now we run on 128 megabytes because a lot of reporters are doing research.
- A: But are there any rules written or not which govern journalists' use of Internet tools and the World Wide Web in the newsroom?
- C: No. Actually, they are just free to do anything; only that we advise them especially against viruses. There are some sites we advise them against.
- A: Like which sites?
- C: Porno sites. Some people will start surfing these sites for whatever reason. We just advise them against but there are no other restrictions.
- A: What top sites do journalists usually visit? Do you have any way to monitor which sites they are visiting at a particular time?
- C: That cannot be the work of the IT. Most of the time, journalists are out in the field. They have no time to waste and when they come back they are busy compiling their stories.

- A: From your own assessment, do the journalists have relevant skills to effectively make use of:
- a) Email
 - b) Electronic mailing lists
 - c) Search engines
 - d) Newsgroups
 - e) And other we-based tools?
- C: At the beginning, you could see that they had problems but eventually they got used to it. They discovered how to use these Internet and web-based tools.
- A: So what kind of assistance would they come to your office for?
- C: Most of the things can be software problems or maybe cables but mostly they don't experience problems.
- A: Okay.
- A: You said you don't have an archiving system where journalists could, instead of going to the library, use *The Post* website for some relevant information?
- C: We have a problem right now; we are still using a static website which has no archiving system that's why we are going to change very soon to a dynamic one which is database oriented. On that one, they will be able to visit the site.
- A: In this country, access to the Internet is restricted by factors such as high cost of equipment, and lack of enabling telecommunications infrastructure. How have these factors affected Internet service at *The Post*?
- C: Yah. But the type of link we have, that's why I said we have a wireless link, and we have improved in terms of speed for example. The dial up system, which we previously had, was a problem. Journalists could queue for one computer that was connected to the Internet and there were frequent drops in connection. And given that the telecommunications infrastructure our service provider ZAMNET is using is quite old, the speed was not as good. So we could not get a good service during browsing, especially when downloading, but when we went wireless, I think there has been no problem.
- A: So, you are saying that the wireless connection is very reliable?
- C: It is very reliable, very reliable. Even during the rainy season we do not experience some drops and so on unless we have a problem with the service providers themselves.

- A: What problems do you have with the service providers?
- C: The base of their satellite connection is on another building, yah, that's why sometimes when they have a power blackout in that building, the main building where the server is, is not affected but the connection to the satellite is down, so they have to start looking for the owner of the building because they are renting that building. It would have been different if the base of their satellite connection was housed in their building and if they had a generator that could minimise the problem.
- A: What do you see as the main constraints in journalists' use of the Internet for newsgathering purposes?
- C: Aah, we never get any complaint from them. If they come to us most of the time, it will be problems dealing with the computer itself, not in terms of Internet, most of them; they know how to use the Internet
- A: But just this morning there was no connection to the Internet and the Web in the newsroom?
- C: There was no access because the server was down because we had a blackout yester night because of electricity problem. We do not have a generator yet or a bigger uninterrupted power system to protect our equipment from such kind of blackouts. We will have a generator soon.
- A: Okay.
- C: That is why we could not connect...we had to shift the newsroom to the industrial area where we have the printing offices. We took some of the computers that side.
- A: So you are saying you quite often experience these disruptions?
- C: No, no, not so often. The only problem is just the power, given the rainy season that's why we are planning to have a generator. It's quite a big network we have now. We need a generator but most of the time, the connection is just stable.
- A: You mentioned this morning that *The Post* is coming up with its own Internet Service provision (ISP). How will this improve the operations of journalists in terms of newsgathering?
- C: Yes, because we will be controlling our Internet connection and ourselves. Now we are connected to an ISP, a local ISP but we will be connecting directly to a satellite and we will have our own generator. We will open Internet cafes

across the country and give Internet services to local communities at a small fee and those who want to send news to us will be doing so free of charge.

- A: In your view, how would journalist operate if they didn't have access to Internet or the web?
- C: I think they used to operate without all those facilities, but we have seen that ICTs are there to improve what they used to do manually, to get information faster, because how could they get international news? They had to listen to radio or watch TV and couldn't report exactly on what they heard or watched. But with the Internet they can even get information from other districts.
- A: Within the country?
- C: Yes, within the country. It also used to be a problem getting information from districts. Using a phone is very expensive. For someone to call you and give you a full story is quite costly. You can easily use e-mail to get the story.
- A: But most of the rural Zambia is not connected nor has poor telecommunications infrastructure?
- C: Yes, but am talking about the districts. To get information even from the districts they had to use phones but now if our journalists are outside Lusaka and want to file a story, they can easily find an Internet café nearby and send the story. Even outside the country, they can easily send an e-mail...it is quite easier and has really facilitated their work.
- A: Are there any issues that you need to comment on which I did not raise in this interview?
- C: Yaah, there is no much but what we are trying to do now is to improve on communication information technology. We are trying to get to rural areas. There is more information that side but people have no access even sometimes transport is a problem to get there but if we reach there by opening our offices and set up our Internet services, I think those people will be able to communicate with us. Rural people are not even aware about computers and I don't think it can take a lot of time for them to learn.
- A: Thank you so much for your time.
- C: You are welcome.

Interview with the News Editor: Amos Malupenga (November 1, 2004).

Alphonsius: If you can just give me your full names and your daily responsibilities at *The Post*?

Amos: My full names are Amos Malupenga and I am the news editor. Basically am in charge of the news desk, which comprises the news desk itself, business and sports but there are also some people who assist me to ensure that all these areas are coordinated.

Alph: So you are in charge of reporters as well?

Amos: Yes.

Alph: From your own experience as the person in charge of the news desk, how do journalists get information for the stories they write?

Amos: We have various sources, we communicate...in terms of communication, and we use the phone, fax and Internet facilities, e-mail and Internet in general.

Alph: So, coming to e-mail, search engines, discussion groups or the web in general, do journalists have the necessary skills to use these facilities in their newsgathering routines?

Amos: Well, in my view I think they have got the basic knowledge maybe we need to improve on that but in terms of dealing with the basic stuff such as e-mail, well, they have the skills but where we need more information we involve our colleagues in the IT department.

Alph: How do you involve them?

Amos: Eehh, basically through consultations in case there is something specific we are looking for and we are having difficulties, we consult them and they come over to give us a few tips.

Alph: Would you know how many stories per day, which are generated using e-mail, newsgroups, discussion lists, search engines or other Internet and web-based tools?

Amos: Aaah, I wouldn't give the figures or the numbers but I think from time to time we do use especially search engines when it comes to confirming certain

information, figures or some background that is how we use the search engines. If for example a prominent personality has died and we want background information, when they were born or what they have achieved, we do use the search engines to get that information. If we are looking for certain figures also we would eeh, certain statistics, we would use search engines, the so called Google, yaah, if we want to confirm certain information in terms of ...maybe organisations, maybe to know more about some organisations or generally, even about other companies, we would use the Internet to get that information.

Alph: Most of the information on the Internet...there are some sites, which are not so credible. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the stories generated using Internet and web-based tools?

Amos: Aah, what we usually do is that we want to quote from sites, which are well known by everyone. The sites, which look suspicious, we usually ignore them. When it comes to obtaining official information, we confine ourselves to well established sites.

Alph: Which suspicious sites do you ignore?

Amos: Ahh, well, the sites which are very new, like something similar... because I can give you an example, there was a reproduction of *The Post* website which was almost similar to ours but when you critically look at it you will see that it was just fake. There was a specific name, if you ask this guy in the IT department, he will tell you. There were so many web sites that were sort of reproduced the IT department can give you the information...there was a special name they called it. So we realised that there were some bogus sites because there was a story, which we published and was appearing on that bogus site in a distorted manner.

Alph: To the extent that the journalists use Internet and web based tools for newsgathering, do they acknowledge the origins of the material used?

Amos: Yes they do, there are those stories, which we just republish, and there are some sites, which we visit just to get some information and whatever information we get from those sites we do attribute this information is coming

from this site, but in case we reproduce, we just write the way it appears then we write at the bottom that the source is from this site.

Alph: In telephone interviews, for example, you would say “the source said this in a telephone interview with *The Post*”, is it the case when the material is gotten through e-mail?

Amos: Ahh, we avoid that because there are so many people who are outside the country because e-mail is the cheapest and easiest so we do both telephone interviews, international phone calls but e-mail is the most convenient for us, in case we obtain information through e-mail, we do not indicate that it is through e-mail, we just say in interview with *The Post* from where this source is without indicating that it is through e-mail.

Alph: Are there any newsroom rules regarding the use of the Internet and the information generated thereof?

Amos: Yes there are. Usually we discourage the journalists from visiting sites that cannot give us useful information but they are adults and they are at liberty to do whatever they wish to do. But as a policy, we do not encourage, especially during working hours journalists to surf sites, which are not useful. In fact, the IT department was looking at ways of blocking those who were visiting pornographic sites as the stuff from there was slowing down the network and so they were trying to find ways of restricting and then there was an uproar. But people are free to do what they want; these are adults, so we haven't restricted any Internet use. They can use it in their own way when they are free but not during working hours. We usually encourage them to visit sites, which are very educational, where they will learn something or will pick new stuff, which might be useful to the newspaper. For example, if there is some UN conference, we want to visit that site and check what is happening almost every hour. There are so many other similar sites that we would encourage, they will give a lot of information and a lot of background information, you can go there and find what you want to know on a lot of issues.

Alph: At *The Post*, you have really made a lot of huge investments in ICTs, are you saying that the Internet or the web are the main driving force in the newsroom or you can do without the new information technology?

Amos: At the moment where we are, I think we are inseparable from the Internet. It would be very difficult for us to operate as a newspaper without these facilities looking at the way we have been operating and that is the more reason we needed to expand and invest much more in information technology because when we travel around we see how our friends are working. With the Internet it's much easier to function as a reporter. Although it looks like we have invested much in ICTs compared to our competitors, we feel that we haven't done much. We feel like there's much more we can achieve in that area. There are so many programs now, which we feel like we can equip the IT department with and make so many improvements. The next time you come here, you will find that.... have you seen this building?

Alph: Yes.

Amos: That is the IT centre, by the time you come here it will be fully fledged. Actually there will be a lot of expansion programs.

Alph: As a newspaper you operate on deadlines. You would want stories to be ready and take the paper for printing at a particular time, how has the Internet impacted on journalists meeting their news deadlines?

Amos: I think it has assisted, especially when it comes to international news. Because as you know, we are not all over, so some international events are easily monitored through the Internet facility and we are bale to pick the latest information and which information assist us to wrap up the newspaper in good time so that it can go to bed, but we are also dealing with e-mail facilities to communicate to anyone virtually around the globe because there are certain stories which come from some people from around the globe and we use e-mail. There are certain pictures, which are transmitted using the same facility, not just from colleagues abroad but even locally. When a reporter goes out of town, usually we use the same facilities to get pictures and stories. The fax is used as a last resort.

Alph: From the editorial meetings that I have attended, I have found that you assign journalists on particular beats, like police round up for example; do reporters still use internet tools or the World Wide Web on those beats?

Amos: That is not possible because like on the police round up, basically we just... three quarters of the information comes from the police. But there are certain times when we treat information from the police just as tips and then we would follow up using our own sources. But basically we just contact the police spokesperson and then she would give us information on what has happened throughout the country as she receives information through their network. So there, the Internet does not apply.

Alph: Your newsroom is composed of different journalists from different backgrounds; in your view, has cultural, educational and demographic differences in the newsroom affected the journalists' use of the Internet in their newsgathering routines?

Amos: Cultural no. Maybe religious. Yes, because I remember there was one gentleman who said that.... each time his friends were visiting pornographic sites he would cover his face...he didn't want to be part of that (laughter). But in terms of culture, I haven't come across.

Alph: Gender?

Amos: Gender, not strongly aah...well, when it just comes to these porno stuff, we have a bit of resistance on religious basis and gender sometimes, ladies would be very uncomfortable but as regards other issues and information, there hasn't been any hindrance.

Alph: What has been the newsroom's main constraint in the use of the Internet for newsgathering purposes?

Amos: ahh ...I ...we...maybe you can expand on that?

Alph: As an organisation you run a fleet of vehicles, you have invested heavily in ICTs, do you face any organisational constraints in the use of the Internet or the web? In the event of a power blackout, you do not have a power generator, for example?

Amos: Ok I see. Aah, I think three quarters of the time; the constraints arise from outside forces. You know we use ZAMNET, so whenever there are problems at ZAMNET, we get affected also. Internally, it is very rare that we have those constraints. Maybe because we are backwards in some cases, we are not so advanced compared to developed nations.

Alph: In terms of telecommunications infrastructure?

Amos: Yah, but in terms of operations, the constraints are usually with ZAMNET. Whenever there is a problem or a fault, we automatically get affected. But on our own we seem to be very established especially from the time we started using the wireless link. When we were using the dial up system, we had difficulties once in a while but the wireless connection, I think has eased up a lot of things, we don't experience any problems.

Alph: As the person who is in charge of newsgathering, given a choice, would you prefer e-mail, search engines, discussion groups or other web-based tools to traditional newsgathering techniques?

Amos: I don't ...ah...I would still insist on the same old way of doing things where we conduct interviews on one to one...ah, the advantage with the Internet is that I would give you the questions and you would answer back and then you would give me a call that I check my mail box, then I would just re-arrange the answers and in not time, the story would be there. But in terms of information, I feel like I can lose out because when am conducting an interview on one to one, am likely to get much more information as opposed to using the Internet and that is the only ...for me I would still insist on the same traditional ways as the main method. The Internet, I would resort to it as a matter of convenience.

Alph: Are there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to comment on?

Amos: We...we... basically, I think you have raised almost ...unless you feel there is certain...yah! Just to emphasise that I think in this modern world, without the Internet, the work would be very difficult, because you can imagine like most of the journalists outside town...we have to...the usage of the Internet would work like we are in the same place as opposed to previously the way we used to do it, one would fax the story, we get through the fax papers, you start keying in or alternatively they would phone and someone starts dictating through the phone but now they would just phone and say check the mail box. The story is done, you just edit it and it goes.

Alph: Thank you so much for your time.

Amos: You are welcome.

Interview with the five Journalists:

George Chellah (November 18, 2004).

Alphonsius: If you can just give me your full names and what you do at *The Post*.

George: Well my name is George Chellah and I am a reporter at *The Post*.

A: Okay. What do you report on?

G: Well, I am on the news desk.

A: So you basically report on news?

G: Yes I report on news.

A: How do you get your stories?

G: Well, I get my information through various ways, mostly I get my information through tips and I also get my information through other tips, which I have. But I also get my information through research on the Internet.

A: What in your view is the Internet?

G: I think the Internet isI can say the Internet...it has really assisted us as journalists to do our work thoroughly more especially for research purposes. It also guides us on how to go about our work.

A: What do you use e-mail for?

G: E-mail...I also...like in my case I use e-mail to try and establish contact with people I didn't know as well as sending questionnaires through the very facility to my sources.

A: You are saying through e-mail you get to know the people you didn't know, how do you do that?

G: Let's take for instance I attend a certain function then somebody decides to give me a business card so that I can make some follow-ups and discuss some issues, of course I e-mail such people.

A: Okay. What about electronic mailing lists. Are you aware about them?

G: No. I am not.

A: Search engines?

G: Search engines, yes I am.

A: How do you use them?

G: I use them for my research purposes and I think it is the easiest way.

A: What about newsgroups?

G: Am not aware of them.

A: What other Internet tools are you aware of?

G: Basically it is the e-mail and the search engines.

A: Which search engine do you usually use?

G: I usually use Google.

A: What are the perceived successes and failures of e-mail in newsgathering?

G: Well, mostly e-mail is not reliable. It is not reliable.

A: Meaning?

G: I have said so in ...meaning that there are instances whereby...you, you ...your messages haven't really like come on time there are derailments in the time that sources have to respond to you and sometimes there are also some technical faults so you cannot rely on them.

A: So you cannot meet your deadlines using e-mails?

G: It's not possible. You cannot bank on it actually.

A: Okay. I will come back to that later. How would you describe newsroom access to e-mail and search engines or the net in general?

G: Like in our case, I think we have so much access to that. We have no problems, because like in our situation, every computer is connected to the Internet.

A: So you are saying the Internet service is 100 percent reliable?

G: Not really. I can't say much on that one because we mostly encouraged doing our own work, to come up with our own ideas so basically we refer to the Internet for research purposes and current affairs.

A: What newsroom constraints do you face when using e-mail or search engines in your newsgathering routines?

G: Constraints?

A: You mentioned of technical faults for example?

G: Yes.

A: Maybe you can elaborate on that?

G: Technical faults, I mean there are instances where everything will just freeze which means you can't proceed. That is why I said you couldn't bank on it because in an event where everything decides to freeze, what happens to your story... and you have to meet your deadlines.

A: Are there newsroom policies or rules, formal or informal, which guide Internet usage in the newsroom?

G: Not as far as am concerned, but if it has to do with work, I think it is open to everybody. You just have to feel free to do you work.

A: Did you receive any formal training in the use of e-mail, search engines or the Internet in general?

G: I did, during my orientation course when I just joined *The Post*.

A: Is there any assistance that you would ask for or any problems that you encounter as you use the e-mail or search engines in the newsroom?

G: Problems as in?

A: Would you go to the IT section, for example, if you wanted something?

G: Yes, we would just call them and they would be there.

A: Okay. What kind of help would you get from them?

G: Maybe I am failing to access some certain sites I want to use for my research and they would help me.

A: You mentioned that you underwent Internet training here at *The Post*.

G: Yes.

A: Have you discovered any other Internet or web uses on your own which you did not learn formally?

G: Well, I would not say that there are other uses I have discovered on my own. Basically, the course I underwent, they just taught us much on search engines. I haven't explored others. I am more familiar with Google because that is the one I was introduced to.

A: How effective is a face-to-face interview over e-mail?

G: Face to face interviews are better. They are very effective because you are likely to make follow ups instantly and you are likely to get factual information than you will get through e-mail.

A: So you would prefer traditional newsgathering methods to e-mail, search engines and others?

G: Certainly.

A: Okay. How much time do you spend conducting news searches on Google?

G: On Google, basically, I think within seconds I would access what I want.

A: Okay. How would you go about it?

G: I just type what I want to access and it will come and I would just choose what I want.

- A: Would you use *The Post* library for information searches or you would rather use Google?
- G: Aaah... I would prefer...it s a two-way thing here. If it was something that is to do with my country, I would prefer going to the library because I think Google...it is not really updated so much, that's what I have discovered.
- A: There is no information on your country?
- G: Yes...it's.... usually ...it cannot give you everything you want so I would rather use the library for research. But if it has to do with common subjects, lets say if am writing on the IMF and others I think I use Google.
- A: When conducting Google searches, how do you deal with an overload of returns in response to queries? How do you evaluate such kind of information?
- G: That also I have to rely on what I know on the subject I am researching on. So it is that which will guide me. If I have little information on a subject then I am likely to take a lot of time. But if I have so much information, I will quickly pick on the relevant topics I want.
- A: Okay. When you are using information obtained off Google or e-mail, do you indicate in your story that this information has been obtained using e-mail or Google?
- G: Let's say maybe if I access Google and I do a research, I get the information maybe from a particular document; yes I have to attribute the source of that information.
- A: What about e-mails?
- G: I have never used that one to be frank, so I cannot say much.
- A: But when you receive press releases through e-mail, do you just reproduce them the way they are sent to you get back to the source for clarification?
- G: Mostly, like in my case, I have used e-mail to send questionnaires and make appointments. I have never relied on e-mails for interviews. In terms of press releases, I don't just parrot what the source says; I get back to them though I do not tell them which angle my story will take.
- A: What, in your view, does e-mail, search engines, or the web mean for your journalism?
- G: What I can say is that e-mail and search engines, the Internet, basically the way I can describe them is that they really assist on...if you have to research and not ...you can't bank on them so much as to...they can't help you to write

comprehensively, to do comprehensive interviews. Yes let's use them for researches alone, lets just restrict ourselves to that but if we rely on them they will bring an aspect of laziness on our part and we will not do our work effectively. I believe in face-to-face interviews.

A: Do you often use e-mail and search engines in ways quite unrelated to newsgathering?

G: No.

A: What about for personal reasons...communicating to friends for example?

G: Yes I do. I do that.

A: And there are no newsroom restrictions on that?

G: No.

A: To the extent that most of the information you have found on the web is foreign, how do you adopt and interpret it for the local readership?

G: I have to interpret it in a way that will make some sense to the local readership, meaning it will really have some bearing on their lives. They should be familiar with it. Yes, that is the kind of interpretation I would give to foreign content.

A: Have you found African or Zambian alternatives to US and European online information? Is there Zambian information on the web?

G: Not so much.... not so much. If it is African, mostly it will just be African and that will be general and the far north.

A: How reliable are government sites and those for local organisations?

G: The update is so poor unless for international organisations that are based in Zambia such as the World Bank, World Vision, withy those you expect their websites to be better but with our own organisations I can't say they are better because the update is so poor sometimes you can find that the information which was there last week will still be there even next week, so the updating system is poor.

A: You have just been assigned to do some stories outside Lusaka. You will be going to Luapula province, tell me what you will be doing there?

G: I am going there to....I am accompanying the Program Against Malnutrition; I will be monitoring their food security pact program

A: of course that is a news beat...

G: Yes.

- A: How would you use e-mail and search engines on that beat?
- G: On this one...it was just yesterday I was trying to acquaint myself with information concerning the Program against Malnutrition on the Internet and the poverty situation in the countryside; I did that yesterday so as I go there I will have background information already.
- A: What if your occupational routines dictated that you cover court proceedings, would you still use e-mail, or search engines?
- G: Aaa...no, no, we don't use that.
- A: Are there articles or information on the web, which you would say, are not morally or culturally right for your readers?
- G: Yes they are there. Especially when I look at our arrangement as Africans. I mean there are obviously certain things, which are offensive to our culture.
- A: Give me an example?
- G: I mean, issues of homosexuality, even as I write...I have to ...because sometimes if you just have to get them the way they are it will be offensive to others so I will have to find a better way of communicating it because, I mean these are foreign vices which do not exist in our society. So everyone is apprehensive about such issues when they are mentioned. Of course homosexuality is there currently, it is common but you have to find a way of explaining it to your readers.
- A: So how would you write a story about homosexuality?
- G: Yes, I have to put it plain but not so much plain that it raises some offensive....it offends some other sectors of society.
- A: How would you describe the newsroom set up? Are journalists comfortable in using the net in terms of gender and different religious and cultural backgrounds?
- G: Everyone is comfortable, I think according to what I have noticed, and everyone is comfortable with the Internet use. If you are not as informed in IT, the IT people are there to assist. Even as colleagues we guide ourselves, you ask for assistance and you will be helped.
- A: How much do you queue up for computers because I have noticed that there are so many reporters chasing few computers?
- G: What I can say on that one is that it is...I cannot really call it queue because like in our newsroom for instance there are no restrictions as to when you can

access the net. So if I want, just as I come to the office at 8 in the morning, I can start browsing...no one will question me...that's one thing I have seen. So you find that those who were browsing in the morning will give chance to others at a later stage, so we alternate.

A: What other disruptions in Internet connection do you experience apart from power cuts?

G: Since we have our own tower, I can't really say that we have problems.

A: Are there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to comment on?

G: Well, what I just want to say concerning the issue of the Internet and e-mail is that for the sake of our profession, yes it is a good development but it has also an element of trying to inculcate a culture of laziness in reporters because if we just bank on it so much, I don't think we will be doing justice to ourselves. What is needed is that we do our groundwork first. We try and find possible ways and means on how to get factual information unlike just getting something which was written by someone who is not even in Africa.... lets say for instance.... it will be silly of me...I am here in Zambia and I rely on what someone in the west will write about my country and I try to be guided by that. I am here, I have to get the facts first and compare it with that before I do my work. So basically, it might be good but let's also ensure that we try and do our own work first. Let's not be lazy.

A: Well, thank you very much for your time.

G: You are welcome.

2. Mwila Nkonge (November 19, 2004).

Alphonsius: If you can just give me your full names and what you do at *The Post*?

Nkonge: My name is Mwila Nkonge and I am a business reporter at *The Post*.

A: So you report purely on business?

N: I report purely on business though on Fridays and Saturdays since we do not have business pages, I report on news...Sunday its back to business.

A: How do you collect your information?

N: Ahh...the main mode of collecting information is interviews. In a few cases we go to scheduled events but mostly through interviews. We read through some reports and identify some issues, then we talk to people about them and sometimes we pick information off the net and see how you can localise it which angle will be of particular interest to the people you are writing for.

A: So what, in your view, is the Internet?

N: The Internet? In my view it is more like an information highway, a central depository of information where you can access information so easily.

A: Okay. You said you sometimes collect your information off the net, how do you use e-mail in your newsgathering routines?

N: I use e-mail to contact sources that I can't get on the phone or I can't get physically for example, there is one company that is exploring gold and copper east of Lusaka all the way up to the Copper belt. The Managing Director for that company is based in Australia so he keeps updating me via e-mail, we do communicate via e-mail. He gives me latest developments of the company, because the company is here, we are able to verify it. I rarely use e-mail for personal communication.

A: What are the success and failures of e-mail in newsgathering?

N: The successesit is pretty helpful because it has information on almost everything but it becomes frustrating when the Internet is the only place you are getting your background information from and you find that the host server is down and you cannot access the net, it becomes really frustrating.

A: Are you aware about electronic mailing lists?

N: Electronic mailing lists? Yes, am aware of them.

A: How do you use them?

N: I do not use them but I think I am on a number of them. I am on one that is done by the World Bank; they give me regular updates, weekly updates of what is going on with World Bank funded projects in the country.

A: So you use them to get news updates?

N: Yes, and I am on the one from European Union and one from the Metallurgical Engineering Institute, the international Metallurgical Engineering Institute, they also give me online updates.

A: What are the successes and failures of electronic mailing lists?

N: Successes.... it gives you, ... for example when you get listed up you filter what information you want, so you can get information which is of particular interest to you...that is one of the successes, you tend to get relevant information and of course the listing is voluntary so you can unsubscribe if you so wish. Another success is, my experience with the European Union and the World Bank mailing lists is that you get information mostly before someone else gets it.... so it keeps you ahead of your competitors.... the biggest failure really is that mailing lists are used to generate Spam. So you tend to receive a lot of unsolicited mails in the process.

A: Okay. What about search engines? How do you use them?

N: Search engines...I use search engines quite regularly...the most frequent one that I use is Google

A: Okay.

N: I use them, you know basically like an archive, when you need information that fast you just go to Google and key in the key words of what you are looking for and it will generate a lot of information related to what you are looking for. The task is for you to refine it and that is where it becomes maybe quite problematic because there are very few search engines that will give you parameters in which to refine or options to your search further...most.... if you are looking for investment in Zambia, then they will give you all the low-down on investment in Zambia without giving you refined options such as agriculture investment, tourism, manufacturing...so you get this general information and you have to refine it.

A: How would you describe newsroom access to e-mail, search engines, newsgroups and electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general?

N: In the newsroom?

A: yes.

N: I think it's pretty...it is okay because every personal computer in the newsroom is connected to the Internet. I think the problem is that the staff compliment is more that the PCs available and that is where it could be a problem...if we could get to a situation where each reporter has his or her own workstation, that will be fine.

A: So you are saying that the service is hundred percent reliable?

- N: The service, from our side it is but because we are hosted by ZAMNET, from the host's side we sometimes experience problems but just recently our IT department put up a server specifically for *The Post* so that if you have to get information via e-mail and ZAMNET is down you can still get it from *The Post* as long as you have an e-mail account on *The Post* server.
- A: Are there any rules, formal or informal, which govern Internet usage in the newsroom?
- N: There are. One is that you do not use the Internet for pornography, you do not use it to download stuff, you just get information, that is all and of course you do not spend too much time on the net otherwise how are you going to beat your deadlines?
- A: Are these written rules or they are informal?
- N: They are not...if they are written, I haven't seen them.
- A: Okay, so they have been communicated to you by word of mouth?
- N: They have been communicated to us by word of mouth and they are not rules that were imposed by our superiors, we actually agreed amongst ourselves.
- A: But the news editor told me you are free to surf pornography since you are adults who know what you are doing?
- N: That freedom we do have yes, but we also realise that there is a responsibility...we have a responsibility and agreed that the workplace is not somewhere to surf pornography from.
- A: Okay. Did you receive any formal training in the use of e-mail, search engines, mailing lists or discussion lists?
- N: No. Everything I taught myself...learning by doing.
- A: You attended an orientation course when you joined *The Post*, they didn't teach you how to use the Internet facilities?
- N: No. It was just practical issues of journalism. Using the Internet wasn't part of the course.
- A: What assistance would you ask for as you use the net for newsgathering?
- N: So far I haven't experienced any problem but should I need any assistance the IT people will definitely come in because I am not a specialist. But again within our staff compliment in editorial, we have some friends who have a background in IT.
- A: Within the newsroom?

- N: Yes.
- A: Like which ones?
- N: Like Kelvin Chambwa...he has a degree in computer science from the Copperbelt University so if there is a problem and we cannot get hold of the IT people he can at least help.
- A: How effective is e-mail over face to face interviews in newsgathering?
- N: I think a face to face interview is better...you know with e-mail, if you are seeking information through e-mail, you write a set of questions and the recipient of that e-mail will write back the answers. Now, if it is a face-to-face interview, I may pose a question, you give me an answer, and the answer you give me will prompt me to ask another question which I did not even plan to ask.
- A: So there are follow up question in face-to-face interviews?
- N: Yes, there are follow up questions which you cannot get via e-mail because if an e-mail response prompts another question, then you have to write back and time is very critical in journalism, in fact by the time you get through that process you would have passed your deadline and you end up with no product to sell at the end of the day.
- A: So, in your view, what would be the advantage of having direct contact with sources or physical visits to places?
- N: The advantage ...firstly, it enables you to see things for yourself instead of relying on someone because someone can tell you something and yet their body language is telling a different story, so when you are directly chatting with them you can see that there is an inconsistency, the person is telling me this yet the body is telling me that and you will find ways of exploring the inconsistency until you get that which the person does not want to tell.
- A: What sites do you most usually visit?
- N: I normally visit IMF, World Bank, European Union, and AllAfrica.com and of course sites for local institutions like banks and government sites.
- A: How reliable are government and other local sites?
- N: The problem is that they are not regularly updated because, like for example, you go to the Bank of Zambia site and you are looking for the latest fortnightly statistics, probably this is...today is 19th, the latest statistics you will find on the Bank of Zambia site are those for end of October...and this is a problem.

- A: Do you spend most of your time doing online searches than you would if you had direct contact with sources?
- N: Not exactly. I think I spend little time surfing then net for information...unless in the process of discussing with the source he or she tells me to get some of the information from the net, I have to do that and get back to the source so that they can explain the link if I cannot get it directly.
- A: How do you deal with an overload of information in response to a query when using the Google search engine for example?
- N: That becomes difficult, so what you do, sometimes what we would do is employ what we call, for lack of a better term, gambling...where you pick at random that I am going to read this and that and that and then you open those documents, you read and get a general picture and then you assume, since it was randomly done, you assume it gives a fair representation of what you need to do.
- A: Okay, how much do you acknowledge the origins of the material generated off e-mail, mailing lists or search engines?
- N: All the time I get information on the Internet, I acknowledge that I got it from this site so that should someone feel they need to confirm my story, they can always refer to the website.
- A: In case you get some tips through e-mail, discussion lists or mailing lists, do you contact the people involved before publishing the stories from those tips?
- N: Yes I do, when I get such tips, I do and that usually happens with AllAfrica.com because they even carry some of our stories so when I was signing up, I even told them that you guys can give me tips and I should be free to publish, explore them and publish them, then they gave me a clearance.
- A: To what extent would you say the use of e-mail; search engines or mailing lists have impacted on your story deadlines?
- N: I think in a number of cases it has happened quite often. You know in this country it is quite difficult to access information from the legal perspective...information that someone cannot give you on hard copy; you can find it on the Internet that helps reduce the problem of running up and down and in the end beat your deadlines.
- A: So would you say e-mail, newsgroups, discussion lists, search engines or mailing lists are the main driving force in newsgathering at *The Post*?

- N: No. I wouldn't say that. The driving force is one on one interview. The Internet only supplements that where people are trying withholding certain information.
- A: Would use e-mail, newsgroups, discussion lists, search engines or mailing lists in ways quite unrelated to newsgathering?
- N: Yes, sometimes I do. That is after I have done my work. For example, by 3 o'clock mostly the stories should be in so if I do not have anything I need to do by that time, after 3 o'clock, then I can spend time looking for mail sent by friends and see which ones I can respond to and which ones I can just let to pass.
- A: Have you found African or Zambian alternatives to western content on the World Wide Web?
- N: Sometimes yes. There is one site TheZambian.com, except it is not regularly updated. That is a site dedicated to Zambia. Problem you do not find latest information.
- A: When you get western information off the web, how do you adopt and interpret it for the local readership?
- N: Normally you look at the issues raised and the weight and you look at how relevant the issue will be to the reader. If you find a point of relevance, then the next thing normally is that we discuss with the editor. Okay, there is this information on the net and I think it is relevant to our situation in this, and that manner then you gets guidance on how to explore the subject and develop it into something the local readership can appreciate.
- A: In case you got a press release through e-mail, do you use it passively or you seek clarification from the source?
- N: Mostly I get back to the person who sent it. Because you read through and the statement raises a number of questions so you get back to the authors to clarify whatever questions might have arisen.
- A: Would you still use e-mail, newsgroups, discussion lists, search engines or mailing lists in instances where you are assigned to cover specific news beat?
- N: When am on a specific beat? I do not think I would use the Internet. I would rather I am there physically but if it is not possible for me to be there, then I would monitor the Internet. For example, if the president is in Tanzania and we are not there, if we have to get what he is saying then we have to rely on the Internet or international broadcasters like BBC or CNN to get what is

happening and if you get something which these guys haven't explained enough, you get to the president's special assistant for press to clarify matters.

A: Going back to content, what are some of the cultural considerations for you and your readership as you collect western information off the web?

N: Of course there are some pictures the Western world would find to be okay but the Zambia audience would frown, even certain expressions so you have to watch out because we operate in this environment which has this many taboos, this many don'ts and as a journalists you have to make sure you are within the limits set by the general society for which you are writing to whom you hold responsibility and that I think is the major point at which you have to determine what, as you pick stuff from the net, what you should communicate, what you should totally leave out, what you need to modify so that you do not offend your readers. But the biggest thing is about pictures. There are pictures, which are unacceptable in the Zambian context, and you have to toe a certain line. I personally don't find anything unacceptable but I am writing for people who may find certain things unacceptable and I shouldn't offend them.

A: What other ethical issues would you consider in relation to the use of e-mail, newsgroups, discussion lists, search engines or mailing lists for newsgathering?

N: Of course the public interest. Because much as my job is to give out information, I must assess the kind of information I am giving out. What effects is it likely to have both in the short and long term.

A: Are there any other issues not raised in this interview, which you would like to comment on?

N: In the Zambian context, you find that a lot of newsrooms are not electronic. You find most newsrooms have no access to the Internet, which is quite different here at *The Post*.

A: Thank you so much for your time.

N: You are welcome.

3. Masuzyo Chakwe (November 27, 2004).

Alphonsius: If you can just give me your name and tell me what you do at *The Post*?

Masuzyo: My name is Masuzyo Chakwe and I am a reporter.

A: What do you report on?

M: News...basically just anything.

A: How would you define the Internet?

M: Ahh...the Internet ishow can I put it?is a form of communication between people in different places, can be here, countries across Africa, can also be between countries outside this continent.

A: Okay.

A: What do you use e-mail for?

M: For greeting people, sometimes conducting interviews on the net like send a source a query and that person will respond through the net.

A: What about electronic mailing lists?

M: I have heard about it even though I have never used it.

A: Search engines?

M: That's what you call the Google?

A: Yes

M: Yes, I have used that one.

A: How do you use it?

M: When am looking for information on a certain topic

A: What about news groups, do you use them?

M: No.

A: So what are the perceived successes and failures of e-mail in newsgathering?

M: As for the successes, at least when you send e-mail, you are assured that the person will receive it at that particular time even replying is usually very easy.

The failures: maybe I can say at times you send mail to somebody, depending on... maybe the e-mail address.... you find that the mail has failed to go.

A: What about search engines, the failures and successes?

M: For the failures I would.... I have never experienced any failures, so I wouldn't talk about failures. For the successes, I think the search engine gives you all the information that you are looking for.

A: Okay.

M: Any topic at least there will be something.

A: So how would you describe newsroom access to e-mail, search engines, or the web in general?

M: At *The Post*, we have access to the net, 24 seven.

A: Okay.

A: How reliable is the service?

M: Sometimes it goes off, but eventually it does start working.

A: Okay.

A: As you use e-mail, search engines or the net, what are the constraints that you encounter in the newsroom?

M: As for the e-mail, sometimes there are some delays in responding, maybe the source is far away, yes and most of the people who are out of the country are usually busy so usually basically I think that is it.

A: Is there any newsroom policy (formal or informal) on the use of the Internet in the newsroom that you are aware of?

M: Here I don't think there are any policies or rules.

A: So you can go on pornographic sites anytime you wish?

M: We don't do that here. Maybe for those who want to. But I don't think we are allowed to do that.

A: How has the use of e-mail, search engines or the web in general impacted on your newsgathering routines?

M: Most of the times...since it is difficult to talk to sources, like sometimes you go to their offices, the secretary will tell you, and you can't talk to the source,

so when you get to them directly through e-mail it is easy to make appointments that way.

A: Did you receive any training in the use of email; electronic mailing lists search engines or newsgroups?

M: When I was in college, I did a course in desktop publishing and when we underwent the in-house training here at *The Post* we were also shown how to use the Internet.

A: What kind of assistance would you usually ask for when using the Internet facilities or the web for newsgathering purposes?

M: What I would want to learn is ...I don't know what you call it when you are directly chatting with someone on e-mail and that instant response system.

A: You said that you learnt desktop publishing at college and had some in-house training on the use of the Internet, what new things have you discovered on the web on your own?

M: There is nothing much really that I have taught myself, most of the things I learnt in college and here.

A: Okay.

A: How effective is telephone or face to face interviews, for example? Or what, in your view, would be the advantage of having direct contact with sources rather than e-mailing them?

M: In certain circumstances, face-to-face interviews are okay, but if the person is far away then it is cheaper to use e-mail than calling that person.

A: And if the person is within Zambia?

M: If the person is within Zambia then, I would rather talk, have a face to face interview with them.

A: Why?

M: Because that way you get a lot of information from that person.

A: Okay.

M: With e-mail interviews, people are sometimes busy so they won't have time to sit on the computer to answer the questions. On the other hand, if you are sitting on the net, since you are just alone, you can write down and ask everything but on face-to-face interviews, time is usually limited so you end up forgetting to ask some things.

A: Okay.

A: What sites do you usually visit in your newsgathering routines?

M: My mail box of course, and what do you call it, Google?

A: Yes.

M: Yes, and the BBC website.

A: How much time do you spend doing online searches given the sheer volume and complexity of finding authoritative information?

M: Maybe I check my...I check the net three times a day.

A: Now, that is checking your mails and doing engine searches?

M: Yes.

A: Would you spend the same time if you made direct contacts with sources or direct visits to places?

M: Mmm, no. Usually face-to-face interviews are shorter but with the net you can take quite some time.

A: When you are conducting Google searches, so much information comes out...

M: No, but when you click on Google, you put in the subject...what you are looking for then you go to search...

A: But how do you deal with an overload of returns in response to queries?

M: You check issue by issue, you check for what is relevant to your story.

A: Okay.

A: When you source your information using Internet or web-based tools, do you expressly state in your story that the people cited are being quoted off an online interview or a discussion group?

M: No, we don't.

A: Why?

M: I don't know. The policy...the company policy...but in telephone interviews yes we do, but e-mail I don't think we write that. We just acknowledge that the source was commenting from Canada, for example, without mentioning he was doing so through e-mail.

A: Okay.

A: When you get your information from newsgroups or discussion lists, do you contact the people involved before quoting them by name?

M: Yes, we say, according to whatever, whatever online publications, yes we do that and also tell e-mail sources the information is for publication.

A: To what extent does a deadline impact on Internet use?

M: There are times when you send mail to somebody. You expect the person to reply but he doesn't.

A: So sometimes you can't meet the deadlines?

M: No you can't. This is not on the part of the net, but the person you sent the mail.

A: What difference has the e-mail, search engines and the web made to your journalism?

M: I think it has made it a bit easier, instead of... every time you want to go to look for background information, you just click on the computer and the computer will give you the information you want.

A: So mostly you use the search engines for background information?

M: Yes, maybe you want to write about a certain subject or you want to know more about it, you just go on the net.

A: Do you sometimes use the Internet in ways quite unrelated from newsgathering?

M: Yes, like when you just try to chat with friends, I use e-mail.

A: And there is no problem with that?

M: In the newsroom?

A: Yes?

M: No.

A: To the extent that most of the information you have found on the web/Internet is foreign, how do you adopt and interpret it for the local readership?

M: You relate it to the situation like in Zambia right now... whatever you are trying to tell the people, I will relate it to what is happening in Zambia.

A: How would you go about it, give me an example?

M: Like... let me talk about the hunger situation or reports that there will be hunger in Zimbabwe, so you relate such information to how we had a bumper harvest in Zambia and so on.

A: That is African, what about European or American information?

M: Actually, I have never really quoted a publication or gotten information out of Africa.

- A: But do you usually find local content or Zambian information on the World Wide Web, which is useful to your stories?
- M: No, most of it is foreign.
- A: Okay.
- M: Actually, there is little information on Zambia on the web. Most of it is on Zimbabwe, South Africa or Angola.
- A: Sometimes your editors assign you to cover court sessions or police beats, for example, would you still use the Internet facility or the web on those beats?
- M: Yes.
- A: How?
- M: Like on the business desk, most of those bank updates are gotten through e-mail.
- A: What about the stories that the editors would assign you to cover on a daily basis, such as press conferences?
- M: It depends, like if you are assigned to do something, you just have to go there physically without using the net.
- A: How, if at all, has your upbringing, your gender and cultural affiliation affected the way you use e-mail, search, engines, electronic mailing lists and the web in general?
- M: These have not affected my newsgathering in any way.
- A: Language barriers, because most of the content is in foreign languages?
- M: Yes, but times have changed and I can access the information in English.
- A: There is so much foreign content mostly western, on the web, how do you determine that this information is culturally or morally right for my readers?
- M: It also depends on the policy of the organisation. But basically, it is up to you as a reporter to gauge what is suitable for the local readership.
- A: Generally sources would send you press releases on a daily basis through e-mail, do you just write stories in a passive form or you get back to them for clarifications?
- M: No. I would just write the story the way the press releases have been sent to my mailbox.
- A: Are there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to comment on?
- M: No, I think you have covered all the relevant areas.

A: Thank you very much for your time.

M: You are welcome.

4. Kingsley Kaswende (November 27, 2004).

Alphonsius: If you can just give your full names and what you do at *The Post*.

Kingsley: My name is Kingsley Kaswende, I am a business reporter.

A: So you just report on business?

K: Yah, just business, although sometimes we venture also into news. But basically I am a business reporter.

A: How do you get your stories?

K: Most of my stories come from my sources. Some I follow up. Then others I get from the Internet. Yes I get tips from the Internet.

A: In your own words, how would you define the Internet?

K: Well, I would define the Internet as an electronic network of information.

A: What do you use e-mail for?

K: I use e-mail to communicate to my friends, relatives and news sources.

A: What about electronic mailing lists?

K: Electronic mailing lists? Well, am not aware of them.

A: And Search engines?

K: I know about them.

A: Which ones do you most often use?

K: Most of the time I use Google. But I also use Metacrawler. I also use the Yahoo! Search.

A: Are you aware about newsgroups?

K: Yes I am.

A: Do you use them?

K: Very rarely.... maybe once in a month or so.

A: What other Internet or web based tools do you know?

K: Ahh.... chat rooms.

A: How do you use them in newsgathering?

K: Basically, I have a few friends, some of them in South Africa, if I want to find out something, I just log on to chat rooms and find tips on specific issues.

- A: What, in your view could be the strengths and weaknesses of e-mail in newsgathering?
- K: Well, the successes are that they are speedy, very speedy; you can communicate to someone regardless of distance in a very few seconds. But the problem is, if the person is not in the office, they won't respond to that e-mail. They won't even see it in the first place so it takes up most of the time.
- A: What about search engines, successes and failures?
- K: Well, I can tell you of successes. Very rarely that you can't find something you are looking for, most of the time you will find it.
- A: What about newsgroups and chat rooms?
- K: Chat rooms, they are good if you have good friends they will give you what you want but most of the time you find that your colleagues are not logged on to the net so you will not communicate with them.
- A: How would you describe access to these web-based and Internet programs in the newsroom?
- K: It is very, very good. Actually it is available 24 hours a day.
- A: How reliable is the service, in terms of connection and speed?
- K: Very, very reliable, except when the host, which is ZAMNET, has a problem. Otherwise it is very reliable.
- A: Is there any newsroom policy, formal or informal, on the use of the Internet or the World Wide Web that you are aware of?
- K: Not at all.
- A: So you can do anything you want on the Internet, even visit pornographic sites?
- K: Yes, actually the news editor says everyone in the newsroom is an adult and they are entitled to watch pornographic materials, no one can stop them. There are no rules at all.
- A: How has the use of e-mail, search engines, newsgroups and chat rooms impacted on your journalism?
- K: I think it has broadened my scope of coverage, as I can cover things that happen elsewhere and put them in the Zambian context.
- A: Did you receive any formal training in the use of e-mail, search engines or the Internet in general?
- K: No...not all. I taught myself.

A: You taught yourself?

K: Yes.

A: How easy is it to teach yourself?

K: Well, it is quite easy but it takes a little bit of time than it would if someone was to teach you.

A: Okay. What assistance would you ask for from your colleagues or the IT department when you are online?

K: I wouldn't ask for any help.

A: How effective is e-mail over face to face interviews?

K: It is...compared to face-to-face interviews; it is not effective because you do not have the control of the interview. You also do not follow up on the questions.

A: So what would be the advantage of having direct contact with sources physical visits to places?

K: It would be better to have direct contact with sources because you tend to control the interview. The interview can even take another direction than what you originally intended.

A: What sites do you usually visit in your newsgathering routines?

K: I usually visit Mbendi.co.za that is a South African website...

A: What kind of information do you

K: Business, it's a business website.

A: Okay.

K: Then I also check allAfrica.com and then I check sites for various newspapers in other countries especially in Africa.

A: How much time do you spend searching for information on the web given the sheer volume of material there?

K: To calculate from 24 hours... I spend about five hours on the Internet every day.

A: Would you find authoritative stories in those five hours?

K: Yes I would. Most of the time I would.

A: Would you spend the same time if you were to have direct contact with sources?

K: Well, I do not think so. Because, when I am on the Internet, it is not only newsgathering that I do, I also check on entertainment ...

- A: Personal entertainment?
- K: Yes, not for the newspaper. Specifically speaking, for the newspaper maybe I spend three hours and the two hours is for personal business.
- A: How many stories would you do using e-mail, search engines or chat rooms in a day?
- K: Using the Internet, maybe four per week, I would get four to five.
- A: Okay. When doing online searches, how do you deal with an overload of returns in response to queries?
- K: I check for those, which are closely related to what I am looking for. You cannot look for everything. There could be more returns that talk about the same subject but not everything is more direct with what you want.
- A: So, how do you evaluate relevant information for your story?
- K: Well, I look at...there are some introductory words that come...those are the ones I look at.
- A: Would you go to *The Post* library if you want a particular piece of information or you would rather use the web?
- K: I would rather use the Internet because it is quicker than the manual searches we do in the library. Though there are some library electronic searches, they still take longer.
- A: How much do you acknowledge the material that you generate using e-mail, search engines or chat rooms?
- K: I do acknowledge all the time.
- A: Would you, for example, say that in an e-mail interview, the source said...
- K: No, no except maybe it is from the website and if I get exactly the same story, I would acknowledge but if I got it off an e-mail interview I don't normally do that.
- A: When you get your information from chat rooms or discussion lists, do you contact the people involved before quoting them by name?
- K: Well, I don't normally write full stories from chat rooms or discussion lists. I just get some tips.
- A: To what extent do Internet facilities impact on story deadlines?
- K: Well, normally if am using search engines, I tend to spend less time. So I meet my deadlines.

- A: To the extent that most of the information you have found on web is foreign, how do you adopt and interpret it for the local readership?
- K: I then use, like I said before, when I get something that could be relevant to the Zambia situation, I localise it by talking to authorities in Zambia.
- A: Have you found Zambian or African alternatives to Western content on the web?
- K: Yes I have.
- A: On which sites?
- K: There is a website called the Zambian.com.
- A: Could you still use search engines, e-mails or chat rooms if you were assigned to cover a press conference or any other news beat?
- K: No, not in the Zambian situation. Normally in Zambia, you just have to...I prefer that I actually physically go there.
- A: In terms of western content, how would you determine that this particular information is culturally right for my readers?
- K: Definitely there could be differences in terms ethics but I don't normally find problems in written text. I normally find that in pictures.
- A: Like what kind of pictures?
- K: Well... lets say...I have seen a number of pictures that we have used in the paper especially on foreign news, some would be considered obscene here but they would not necessary be so in other countries. For example, we have used some pictures from the reed dances in Swaziland, which generated a lot of debate here.
- A: So as a journalist, what are the ethical challenges that you encounter as you use the net for newsgathering?
- K: The only problem comes when others are viewing pornography, given my religious background I wouldn't do that.
- A: Are there any issues not raised in this interview that you would like to comment on?
- K: Basically you have raised most of the issues but maybe I think it is generally the ethical issues. You see the Internet is one window through which people view the entire world with different cultures and that kind of thing. I think we have to be very careful when using the Internet. You have to be very conscious of what your local culture needs.

- A: In Zambia, what are the cultural issues that you would consider when looking at that window?
- K: Yah, in Zambia, definitely it is language and pictures like I said.... well, I cannot think of any.
- A: Thank you so much for your time.
- K: You are welcome.

5. Sandra Lombe (November 29, 2004).

- Alphonsius: If you can give me your name and what you do at *The Post*?
- Sandra: My name is Sandra Lombe and I am a journalist or reporter for *The Post*.
- A: So, what do you report on?
- S: Well, different aspects, basically I report on general news.
- A: How do you collect information for your news stories?
- S: Either through the Internet or personal interviews.
- A: What, in your view, is the Internet?
- S: The Internet...well...this is an electronic way of receiving and sending mail.
- A: Okay, what do you use e-mail for?
- S: How I use e-mail?
- A: Yes.
- S: Either for sending press queries or asking for clarifications through e-mail and then you get the responses
- A: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using e-mail for newsgathering?
- S: The advantages are that it is quicker with a wider base of information and it is easier to collect than moving up and down searching for information. The disadvantage is that the Internet is a bit expensive in our country. Very few people have been able to access and very few people have the privilege of knowing how to use the Internet.
- A: Which search engine do you often use?
- S: Google.
- A: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Google for newsgathering?
- S: Well, the advantage is that it is easier and quicker, like today I was searching for some information and I got it in no time. I cannot speak of disadvantages.

A: Are you aware about mailing lists?

S: Yes I am but I am not on any.

A: What about discussion lists?

S: No.

A: And news groups?

S: Yes, I have heard about them but haven't used them yet.

A: How would you describe access to e-mail or search engines in the newsroom?

S: In the newsroom...as for *The Post*, I would say it is hundred percent because everyone has an opportunity to access it. Am not sure about other news organisations.

A: So you are saying there are no disruptions or problems with access to the Internet or the World Wide Web?

S: What do you mean disruptions?

A: Well, am talking about problems with the service provider in terms of connection and speed?

S: I do not think so. I haven't experienced any.

A: Are there any rules written or unwritten which govern Internet usage in the newsroom?

S: Yes, like any institution, there has to be rules. It has to be strictly for work purposes.

A: Did you receive any formal training in the use of email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general?

S: Not really as formal. But I had a privilege at college where I had to learn about computers and all.

A: You underwent an orientation course when you just joined *The Post*...

S: Yes

A: You were no taught how to use Internet or web based tools for newsgathering?

S: That wasn't part of our training programme. If it was then I should have missed it.

A: What kind of assistance would you ask for when you are using email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general?

S: It all depends on the nature of the problem I am encountering. ...If it is access, the mouse, or the hardware itself...

A: Where would you get the assistance?

- S: If it is something that is basic I will ask from my friends or the editors, if it is something that is quite serious, we have an IT department here but I haven't experienced any problems so far.
- A: How effective is e-mail over face to face interviews in newsgathering?
- S: I cannot say that it is really effective because when it is face to face you can ask reading questions and you can get other comments but as for e-mail, it just comes straight and all, and you don't even have the privilege of asking any further questions or clarifications.
- A: So you would prefer personal interviews to e-mail?
- S: That is a very difficult question, but again I think both will do depending on the situation. If the source were within reach I would rather have face-to-face interviews if that person were a little bit far then e-mail would do.
- A: What websites do you often visit?
- S: BBC, CNN, AFP.... basically I am interested in news.
- A: And these sites will give you tips or leads for your own stories?
- S: You know like our career, it entails you to be updated with what is happening in the world, so I would really want to know what is happening in my neighbouring country and the world at large.
- A: How much time would you spend using email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general for newsgathering purposes?
- S: It depends on how busy I am if I were not busy I would spend 30 minutes or 40 minutes or one hour.
- A: Would you spend the same time if you had direct contact with sources?
- S: No, you wouldn't spend the same time. If I sent in a query today on e-mail, the reply will come tomorrow, if I went to see the person physically, it will be there and then, if they say I cannot comment, it will be just that unlike waiting till the next day only to be told that the source cannot comment.
- A: Can you just tell me how you would go about searching for a particular piece of information on Google search?
- S: Like I was searching for the Cancer Ward at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, you just type...UTH...Zambia...and cancer ward and then everything will come...
- A: What would you do in case there was an overload of responses to that query?

- S: I would specifically go to what I want ...I mean choose through the list of responses.
- A: Would you then acknowledge the origins of you material?
- S: Acknowledgement is smothering that should always be there. Even if it is a statement you have to say I got his from a press briefing or if it was an interview and all.... yes I will but mostly we use Google for clarification purposes.
- A: How has the use of email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general impacted on your story deadlines?
- S: If all the information you are looking for was there, yes we would beat deadlines, but unfortunately you only have bits and pieces of information on the net.
- A: Would you say email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general is the main driving force in newsgathering?
- S: It wouldn't be because I believe interviews and other briefings; you know there are other events that are not on the Internet which are also newsworthy.
- A: But what difference has email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general meant for your journalism?
- S: It has made me get so much information on what is happening in the world in a very short period of time...so it is faster and quicker.
- A: Do you find Zambian or local content on the web?
- S: Zambian content? Yes you find it. Sometimes you even find Zambian stories on BBC websites, if you are to search on Google, you also find Zambian information.
- A: But the stories you find on the BBC website for example carry a western perspective...
- S: No, BBC has correspondents in Zambia...
- A: How reliable are government and other local websites?
- S: I haven't really had time to look at them.
- A: Would you use email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general if you were to be assigned a particular news beat?
- S: A particular assignment?
- A: Yes.

- S: No, if it is an assignment you would rather go and talk to the people involved or attend the press conference in case of a press conference.
- A: What are some of the cultural issues that you encounter as you use of email, search engines, electronic mailing lists or the Internet in general for newsgathering?
- S: I would look at issues that would not corrupt the Zambia picture...like insults; in our culture you cannot use them.
- A: Have you ever come across such culturally offensive content on the web?
- S: Not as yet.
- A: When you receive a press statement through e-mail, would you use it the way it has been sent or you would get back to the source?
- S: Mostly it is good that you get back to the person who sent it for clarification or just to confirm they are the ones who have sent it.
- A: Are there any other issues you would like to comment on which I did not raise in this interview?
- S: There is need for the Zambian people to have access to ICTs because we are moving in a fast world technologically.
- A: Thank you very much for your time.
- S: You are welcome.

References

- Arksey, H. and Knight, P. 1999. Interviewing for Social Scientists. London: Sage.
- Bassey, M. 1999. Case Study Research in Educational Settings. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Berg, B. L. 1998. Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Berger, G. 2004. Master of Arts and Postgraduate Diploma in Media Management 2004 course. Retrieved 11th January, 2005, from: <http://journ.ru.ac.za/staff/guy/Teaching/Policy/mapdm04.htm>.
- Berger, G. 1996. The Internet: A Goldmine for Editors and Reporters. Grahamstown: Times Media Limited.
- Berkowitz, D. 1997. Social Meanings of News: A Text Reader. California: Sage.
- Bryman, A. 1988. Quantity and Quality in Social Research. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Cantrell, C. D. 1993. Alternative Paradigms in Environmental Research: The Interpretative Perspective. In Miazek, R. (ed). Alternative Paradigms in Environmental Research. London: Lithbridge.
- Castells, M. 2001. The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society. Oxford: University Press.
- Chalaby, J. K. 1998. The Invention of Journalism. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Chandler, D. 1995. 'Technological or Media Determinism'. <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html>. Retrieved 20th August, 2004.
- Chirwa, C. 1963. Press Freedom in Zambia. Lusaka: MISA.
- Cooper, T. W. 1998. New Technology Effects Inventory: Forty Leading Ethical Issues. Journal of Mass Media Ethics. Vol.3 (2): 71-92.
- Dahlberg, L. 2004. Internet Research Tracings: Towards Non-Reductionist Methodology. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication. Vol.9 (3). Retrieved May 14, 2005 from: <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol9/issue3/dahlberg.html>
- Dahlgren, P. 1996. Media Logic in Cyberspace: Repositioning Journalism and Its Publics. The Public. Vol.3 (3): 59-72.
- Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding., P., Murdock, G. 1999. Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis. London: Arnold.
- December, J. 1996. Units of Analysis for the Internet Communication. Journal of Communication. Vol. 46 (1): 14 -38.

- Douglas, S.J. 1987. Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Garrison, B. 1998. Computer Assisted Reporting. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Garrison, B. 2001. Diffusion of Online Information Technologies in Newspaper Newsrooms. Journalism and New Technologies. Vol.2 (2): 221-239.
- Gomm, R. Hammersley, M and Foster P. 2000. Case Study Method. London: Sage
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. 1978. Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and the Law and Order. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hesselmark, O. and Esselaar, P. 2002. A country Information Communication Technology (ICT) Survey for Zambia: Stockholm: SIDA.
- Heinonen, A. 1999. Journalism in the Age of the Net. Changing Society, Changing Profession. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 685, Tampere: University of Tampere.
- ITU. 2003. World Telecommunication Development Report. Access Indicators for the Information Society. Executive summary. Retrieved on January 10 2005. http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/wtdr_03/index.htm/. Accessed 10th January 2005.
- Jensen, K. and Jankowski, N. (eds). 1991. A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research. Routledge: London.
- Jere, C. 2003. An Investigation of the Relative Importance of the Media in Influencing the Voter Behavior of Evelyn Hone College Students in Lusaka. A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts. Rhodes University: Grahamstown.
- Kantumoya, L. M. 2004. Investigative Reporting in Zambia: A Practitioner's Handbook. Lusaka: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Kasoma, F. 2000. Press and Politics in Zambia: In M'buyo, R. & Nwanka, C. (eds). Press and Politics in Africa. London: Mellen.
- Katz, J. 1999. The Future is the Net, Media Studies Journal. Vol.13 (2), Spring-Summer 1999: 14-15.
- Lenert, E. 2004. A Social Shaping Perspective on the Development of the World Wide Web. New Media and Society. London: Sage. Vol. 2 (2): 235-258.
- Lievrouw, L.A. and Livingstone, S. 2002. Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs. London: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G.1995. Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N.R. and Lincoln, Y.S., (eds). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage: London.

- Mackay, H. and Gillespie, G. 1992. Extending the Social Shaping of Technology Approach: Ideology and Appropriation. Social Studies of Science. Vol. 22 (4): 685-716.
- Mackay, H., Heap, N., Thomas, R. and Mason, R. 1995. Information Technology and Society. London: Sage.
- MacKenzie, D. and Wajcman, J. (Eds.)1992. The Social Shaping of Technology: How the Refrigerator Got its Hum. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- McNamara, K. & O'Brien, R. 2000. Access to Information and Communication for Sustainable Development. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Retrieved January 8 2005 from: <http://www.web.net/~robrien/papers/gk2access.html>.
- Mbarika, V. W. A. 2002. Re-thinking Information and Communications Technology Policy on Internet versus Teledensity Diffusion for Africa's Lease developed Countries. The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries. Vol. 9 (1):1-13.
- Meyer, P. 1991. The New Precision Journalism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Miles, B. M. and Huberman, M.A. 1994. Qualitative Data Analysis: Second edition. London: Sage.
- Oosthuizen, L.M. 1989. Media Policy and Ethics. Cape Town: Juta & Co.
- Patton, M. Q. 2002. Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. London: Sage
- Pavlik, V. J. 1996. New Media and Information Superhighway. London: Allyn & Bacon.
- Phipps, J. L. 1999. Local is Everything on Newspaper Web Sites. Editor & Publisher Mediainfo.com, pp. 23, 26.
- Reddick, R. and King, E. 1995. The Online Journalist: Using the Internet and Other Electronic Resources. Orlando: Harcourt.
- Rose, M. and Smith, J. 1986. The Organisational Challenge of New Engineering Systems: some themes for a research agenda', in Voss, C.A.(ed.) Managing Advanced Manufacturing Technology. Bedford: IFS. pp. 393-406.
- Schudson, M. 1995. The Power of News. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Schudson, M. 2000. The Sociology of News Revisited Again. In Curran, J & Gurevitch, M (eds). Mass Media and Society. London: Arnold.
- Shoemaker, P. J. 1991. Gatekeeping, Communication Concepts 3. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Slack, J. and Fejes, F. 1987. The Ideology of the Information Age. New Jersey: Alex.
- Smith, A. 1978. The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again. The Kinds of Truth We Get in Journalism. In Boyce, G. Curran, J. and Wingate, P. (eds). Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day. London: Constable.

Soloski, J. 1997. News Reporting and Professionalism. In Berrowitz, D. Social Meaning and News: A Text Reader. London: Sage.

Sparks, C. 1996. Newspapers, the Internet and Democracy. The Public. Vol. 3 (3): 43-57.

Streeter, T. 1996. Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

The Post. 9th March 1999: Angola Worries Zambia Army, Air Force.

The Post. 29th March 2004: ICT Illusions.

The Post: Information Technology Annual Report: 2004.

The Post. 29th January 2005: Magande's Budget Disaster – A Sick Joke.

The Post. 19th October, 2003: The Great Cruise Liner Con: Special Investigative Report.

Van Audenhove, L. 2003. Towards a More Integrated Information Society Policy in South Africa: An Overview of Political Rhetoric and Policy Initiatives Between 1994 and 2000. Communicatio Special Edition, Vol.29 (1&2): 129-147.

Van Dijk, J. 1999. The Network Society. London: Sage.

Williams, R. and Edge, D. 1996. The Social Shaping of Technology. *Research Policy*, 25: 865-99.

Wimmer, R. and Dominic, J. 1991. Mass Media Research: An Introduction. California: Wadsworth.

WSIS. 2003. Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. Retrieved 8th August, 2004, from "<http://www.itu.int/wsis>." www.itu.int/wsis.

Wyatt, S., Henwood, F., Miller N., Senker, P. 2000. Technology and In/equality: Questioning the Information Society. London: Routledge.

Zambian Government: First Draft National Information & Communication Technology:19 November 2003. Lusaka: Ministry of Communications & Transport.