Chapter 2: Foundations: Newspapers

2.1 Introduction

Newspapers are the oldest surviving form of the mass media, and remain as one of the most powerful social institutions of our time. Online newspapers communicate using a number of modalities (visual, aural) and are therefore multimodal, and also use a number of semiotic resources (language, image, page design, video, audio, animation) and are therefore multi-semiotic (see Chapter 3).

In this chapter, newspapers are defined, described, and re-read from a visual perspective, and research into visual communication in online newspapers is also considered.

2.2 Defining newspapers: A historical perspective

The previous chapter began by illustrating the rapid rise of online newspapers as the world wide web first spread in the 1990s. A remarkably similar social and technological contagion took place after the invention of the first European printing press in 1450.5

By 1500, presses had been established in more than 250 places in Europe - 80 of them in Italy, 52 in Germany and 43 in France. Printers had reached Basel by 1466, Rome by 1467, Paris and Pilsen by 1468, Venice by 1469, Leuven, Valencia, Cracow and Buda by 1473, Westminster (distinct from the city of London) by 1467, and Prague by 1477. Between them, these presses produced about 27,000 editions by the year 1500, which means that - assuming an

5 This was, incidentally, well after printing presses had been invented in China, Japan and Korea (Briggs & Burke, 2002, p. 15; cf. Smith, 1979)
average print run of 500 copies per edition - about thirteen million books were circulating by that date in a Europe of 100 million people. (Briggs & Burke, 2002, pp. 15-6)

The rapid spread of print had ramifications for access to knowledge and therefore the (re-)distribution of power, a story similar again to that told in section 1.1.1 above.

As Briggs & Burke are careful to point out though, printing (of written text and images) did not replace existing oral traditions, and the rise of printing was related to other technological advances such as the improvement and development of transport and postal systems (see also Smith, 1979). Thus, at the same time printing presses were spreading across Europe, people and information were able to travel long distances relatively quickly. The rapid reproduction and dissemination of information had become technologically possible.

The continuation of the oral tradition, and the spread of the printing press combined in a multimodal genre:

which appears to have flourished most in England, and which we usually call broadsides. The Germans call them flegende Blätter, and the French feuilles volantes, both comparatively modern terms, and the last perhaps translated from the other. The broadsides became far more popular in England than in other countries, and during a long period they have been the usual mode of publishing popular ballads. ... [It is not until around the middle of the sixteenth century that we find examples] of what we now understand more specifically by the name of ballad, - of that peculiar class of popular literature which belonged to the long period of transition in our country between mediæval society and the society of our own times. We soon find the printed broadside employed in the various circumstances of temporary agitation, whether political or social. In fact, the press was defined very soon to become the most powerful agent in all social agitation. (Lilly, 1867, pp. vii-viii; cf. Baldwin, 2003).
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tr>
<td>relation or relacioun</td>
<td>account of a single story published long after the event</td>
<td>1610s</td>
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<tr>
<td>coranto</td>
<td>publication of a series of relations on a weekly basis (with gaps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>diurnall</td>
<td>“a weekly account of the occurrences of successive days” (Smith, 1979, p. 11)</td>
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<td>“most of them were described as A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament, followed by the first and last dates on which the events described took place” (ibid.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>mercury</td>
<td>“a book of news published section by section; the pages were numbered consecutively throughout the series” (ibid.)</td>
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<td>intelligencer</td>
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Table 2.1: Evolutionary pre-cursors to newspapers (following Smith, 1979)

Broadside, along with pamphlets and other printed publications circulating in Europe at this time, reported news and views in various ways (Baldwin, 2003; Smith, 1979). Growing out of the public discourses embodied in broadsides and pamphlets, other forms of printed publication emerged, and Smith (1979) traces a number of stages through which printed news texts progressed before coming to what we might now recognise as a newspaper (Table 2.1).

This raises the question of what, exactly, is a newspaper.

Historians in the twentieth century seemed to have settled on a definition that was succinctly rendered in a 1930 Journalism Quarterly article by Eric W. Allen. Allen's definition of a newspaper was actually adapted from Otto Groth’s Die Zeitung - Ein System des Zeitungskunde published in 1928. ... [A] true newspaper must be periodic, mechanically reproduced, and available to all who pay for it. In addition, the content must be varied, general, timely, and organized. (S. Martin, 2003, p. 2)
Smith (1979) identifies another, fundamental feature of the first newspapers which distinguishes them from their contemporary publications, and which is crucial to understanding this genre: in newspapers, “a continuing relationship is set up between reader, printer, and the originator of the information” (p.9; see Chapter 8 below).

The first English newspaper was the *Oxford Gazette*, which was first published in 1665, before it was moved to London and renamed as the *London Gazette* (Baldwin, 2003, p. 93; Smith, 1979, pp. 41-4). Smith characterises the paper as “an elegant and precise instrument of information. Even today its pages convey to the twentieth century reader its proud sense of its own modernity as it replaced the chaotic squabblings of the interregnum” (1979, p. 44). Baldwin also comments on the importance of the *Gazette*.

The paper is significant because it carried features that are common to newspapers today. Its pages were printed in two columns rather than in the familiar pamphlet form, and it included datelines and the place of origin at the beginning of each piece of news, a practice that modern newspaper readers are familiar with. The paper also began to be called a “newspaper”, a name that is still used today. (Baldwin, 2003, p. 93)

In Asia, print technology was available before the print revolution took place in Europe. Further, in China, a network for the collection and distribution of news to the governing groups of society had been in place since the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 219), with an ‘official newspaper’ (*ti pao*) distributed to these groups (including some specialised versions for different groups) since at least the T’ang dynasty (AD 618 - 907) (Smith, 1979, p. 14).

However:

the public, printed and periodical distribution of news did not begin until European traders and missionaries started foreign-language
newspapers on the Chinese mainland, for their own purposes, in the nineteenth century. (Smith, 1979, p. 14)

The first foreign newspaper was established in China in 1815, and from 1840-1890 around 300 Chinese-language newspapers were established by foreigners, primarily in Shanghai (Yan, 2000). The first Chinese-run Chinese newspaper that meets the definition of newspaper given earlier was the Zhaowen Xinbao, first published in 1873 (Hamm, 2003, p. 50; Yan, 2000, p. 499). What this tells us is that the emergence of newspapers was primarily a social phenomenon, not simply an outcome of advances in technology. Smith again, this time on the evolution of newspapers in ‘the Far East’:

the newspaper developed interconnectedly throughout the world, as a form dependent on printing which emerged from the economic and political conditions of Europe and spread only so far as those conditions spread to other societies. (1979, p. 15)

The emergence of newspapers in Thailand tells a similar story. Thailand’s first newspaper, the Bangkok Recorder, was first published on July 4, 1844, about a decade after the first Thai printing press (the ‘Thai moveable-metal type’) was brought to Thailand by missionaries, and, as in China, was founded by a foreigner (McCargo, 2000, p. 7). Until the turn of the 20th century, there were relatively few newspapers in Thailand (probably less than twenty) most of which were short-lived and had a readership of probably a few hundred people (Ekachai, 2000). It wasn’t until the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), when Thailand’s political and military engagement with the West increased, and postal, rail, and telegraph systems were developed, that newspapers became more widespread in Thailand (see Ekachai, 2000, p. 432).
In short, in both Europe and Asia, the technology of the printing press, together with the development of railways, roads, shipping, and postal systems, made possible the reproduction and distribution of information on a scale and with a speed formerly not possible. Equally important was the development of social conditions which generated demand for newspapers: interest in national and international politics, economy, and society; and an interest in public opinion and debate. The place where these technological possibilities and social conditions first met was 17th-century Europe, but in historical terms, newspapers quickly became an intercontinental phenomenon.

2.3 Describing Newspapers: A discourse perspective

From the emergence of print newspapers in the 17th century, to the emergence of online newspapers at the end of the 20th century, newspapers changed in many ways, including: their commercial environment and operations and their use of technology in production (Chapman, 2005); their visual form and their use of images (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Bicket & Packer, 2004); and in their use of language (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1994; Iedema, 1997; Iedema, Feez & White, 1994). In this section, the language of newspapers is considered from a historical perspective, after which the notion of discourse is explored, and the institutional practices by which newspaper discourse is produced are considered.
2.3.1 Tracing newspaper discourse

The historical development of the hard-news story as a media genre in English-language newspapers has been discussed by Iedema, Feez & White (1994, pp. 90-106; see also Iedema, 1995, 1997) whose account is now summarised and supplemented.

The earliest newspaper discourse emerged in Europe from the political tracts published in pamphlets; the social and political ballads published in broadsides; and the accounts of speeches, wars, and political events published in relations and diurnalls (section 2.2.1). These written genres emerged as spoken genres continued, and the two co-existed in homes, coffee houses, and other private and public spaces (Briggs & Burke, 2002).

Barnhurst & Nerone (2001) describe the ‘stories’ found in colonial papers in the United States in the 18th century, which were often texts reproduced verbatim from elsewhere (e.g. newspapers abroad, letters, naval reports). Such stories were understandable, and of interest, only to those who were well informed of the background and surrounding events (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001):

their content was coded and elliptical, indicating their printers’ awareness that, although a newspaper might appear before anyone, even the most vulgar reader, the public prints should be intelligible only to truly public men, gentlemen, and sometimes their women. (p. 32)

In the early 19th century in Australia, news stories were presented as chronological accounts of relatively routine events. Throughout that century, news increasingly became a commodity, as printing became cheaper, newspapers more affordable and widely available, and publishers competed for readers and for profit (Iedema, Feez & White, 1994; see also Machin & Niblock, 2006, pp. 10-11).
Barnhurst & Nerone (2001) have named newspapers of the period preceding this transformation in the United States the *editor’s paper*, and those after this transformation the *publisher’s paper*.

The editor’s newspaper was a partisan advocate in the courtroom of political opinion. The publisher’s newspaper was a commercial tool and a marketed good. In combination, the twin movements of political and commercial transformation produced a newspaper that was expansive in appeal to the public. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, pp. 16-17)

As newspaper audiences grew, it became necessary to indicate the relevance of a given story to readers, whose values and interests were now more diverse. By the mid 19th century, news stories opened with a summary of the events, then gave a chronological account including explanations, and closed with a consideration of the consequences of the event (Iedema, Feez & White, 1994).

By the turn of the 20th century, the opening summary had developed into a headline and lead, the function of which was to foreground the climax of the story in terms of its relevance as an event which may “destabilise or consolidate (‘stabilise’) the social order” (Iedema, Feez & White, 1994, p. 107; cf. Bell, 1991, pp. 172-3). Additionally, by this time, visual devices of font and layout were used to indicate this “Nucleus” of headline and lead (cf. Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, pp. 196-200; Evans, 1976; Machin & Niblock, 2006, p. 11). The remaining paragraphs functioned as “Satellites” expanding on the Nucleus, but remaining textually independent of other Satellites (Figure 2.1). This text structure resulted in a news story which presents events in an order highlighting importance rather than chronological order (cf. Bell, 1991, 1996; van Dijk, 1988; White, 1997), and which reflected an increasing tendency to report stories that may not be resolved at the time of publication (or that may never

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6 Newspapers in the US were probably ahead of their British and Australian counterparts in this regard. See Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, Chapter 3), and Evans (1976, Chapter 2).
be resolved). Although there have been further developments over the 20th century, such as longer newspaper stories, and a focus on analysis, interpretation and abstract themes over events and actors (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1994), this Nucleus-Satellite structure (also known commonly as the ‘inverted pyramid’) has remained as the rhetorical mainstay of hard-news stories in English-language newspapers.

Figure 2.1: Illustration of Nucleus-Satellite structure: Story from The Nation, October 26, 2004 (source: Knox & Patpong, 2008, p. 193)

Iedema, Feez & White (1994) comment that the Nucleus tells a complete story on its own. It has achieved the text’s social function - describing an event in terms of its potential for ‘destabilisation/stabilisation’ - even if the remaining sentences of the story were to be removed. (Iedema, Feez & White, 1994, p. 115, italics in original; cf. Bell, 1991, pp. 175ff., 1996, p. 10)

In the multimodal macro-genre of online-newspapers, this property of the Nucleus makes it possible for the institutional authors of the newspaper home page to present news stories without expanding on the ‘essential’ elements in the Nucleus. Longer news stories (Nucleus plus Satellites) are relegated to story pages (see Chapter 5).
The Nucleus-Satellite structure of hard-news stories is not the only rhetorical structure used in newspaper stories. Other media genres identified by Iedema, Feez & White (1994) have a headline and introductory paragraph which realise various functions, including:

- an Orientation (in media exemplums, media anecdotes, and sometimes in media features)
- a Thesis (in media expositions)
- a Position Challenged (in media challenges)
- a Statement of Issue (in media discussions)
- a Context (in media reviews).  

These other genres are born of the same institutional history as the hard news story, and therefore have also evolved in such a way that the early elements of the text can stand alone (or stand out) from the remainder of the text. In print newspapers, this is sometimes done by means of typography, with an introductory paragraph and headline being featured on the page (cf. Economou, 2006), and it is from this history that terms such as ‘write-off’ and ‘stand-alone’ - used by journalists and editors to refer to newsbites (the short headline-plus-lead-plus-link news stories typical on online newspaper home pages) - have emerged.

In addition to the different genres of newspaper discourse, it is important to consider the extent to which the journalistic traditions of Thailand (for the Bangkok Post) and China (for the People’s Daily) are related to the verbal design of home page news in these newspapers.

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7 The ability of the same class element to realise a range of different functions in communication is the basis for the distinction between class and Function elements in SF theory (see Chapter 5).
The *Bangkok Post (BKP)* was founded by a former American newspaper journalist with a Bachelor of Journalism from Boston University (MacDonald, 1990; see Chapter 1). From the earliest days of the newspaper, the principles of the ‘inverted pyramid’ bore on the discourse of the paper. In discussing the production of the first edition of the *BKP*, MacDonald discusses the reporters working on the paper at the time.

The work of all three reporters obviously had to be rewritten, and this was largely Karl Melcher’s task. But even Karl would need time to learn the inverted style of American news writing which summarises the content of a story in the first paragraph or two, and then strings the rest of the details out as they decrease in importance. (MacDonald, 1990, pp. 117-8)

The editor took it upon himself to oversee this work, and for readers of the *BKP* today it is apparent that the influence of this Western approach to English-language newspaper discourse has remained central to the story-telling practices of the *BKP* (cf. Knox & Patpong’s, 2008 comparison of *The Nation* (the *BKP*’s current English-language competitor) and the Thai-language daily, the *Thairath*).

The situation at the *People’s Daily (PD)* is less straightforward. The *PD* online English-language edition is a translation, so Western conventions of English-language news discourse are not so easily attributed to this English-language newspaper.

Scollon & Scollon (1997) report on a study of fourteen Chinese and English versions of the same story in mainland Chinese and Hong Kong newspapers. On the basis of their review of relevant studies and their own research, they conclude that regardless of whether news stories in Chinese newspapers are published in English or Chinese, they may:
• follow the Western ‘inverted pyramid’ structure
• follow the classic Chinese qi-cheng-zhuan-he structure\(^8\)
• combine the two (by introducing a second topic near the middle of the story)
• use another structure (e.g. an inductive structure where the main topic of the story is delayed).

In another paper, Ron Scollon observes of the same study:

the choice of different rhetorical structures in the case of these 14 stories was made as rhetorical choice; the writers or sub-editors were strategizing in the presentation of the same basic story to achieve different effects. (Scollon, 2000, p. 763)

As with the BKP and the SMH, there are examples in the corpus of the current study of newsbites on the home page of the PD having the same, slightly different, and very different wording from the headline and first paragraph of the story page in the same edition (see Chapter 7 for further discussion of this practice). What appears to be most relevant for the current study is that the English-language version of the PD began its life as an online newspaper in 1998, and has, from its beginning, competed in an international English-language market place for an audience (or perhaps more accurately, has presented itself as competing in such a marketplace). The PD home page (and the design of the stories appearing on it) have been largely consistent with the conventions of the home pages of other English-language online newspapers (see Chapter 6 below).

Editorial decisions about which stories need to be re-written for the home page and which headline+lead combinations ‘shovelled’ across have not been considered in this thesis; nor have the relations between these decisions and the genre and rhetorical

\(^8\) The ‘traditional’ four-part Chinese rhetorical structure of \textit{beginning - continuing - transition - summary} (see Kirkpatrick, 1997).
structure of the ‘full-length’ stories. The impact of news story genre on the (re-)wording of newsbites on home pages is one obvious area for further study, as is an explicit comparison of the language of newsbites hyperlinked to texts instantiating different media genres.

Turning from the relations between genre and discourse, to the relations between news values and discourse, it is widely recognised that news institutions choose stories, and make decisions about how they will construct stories, based on news values: the institutional ideology that determines what is and is not newsworthy. There are different inventories of news values in the literature (e.g. Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). Bell (1991) groups news values into three superordinate categories: values in news actors and events (negativity, recency, proximity, consonance, unambiguity, unexpectedness, superlativeness, relevance, personalization, eliteness, attribution, facticity), values in the news process (continuity, competition, co-option, composition, predictability, prefabrication), and values in the news text (clarity, brevity, colour). According to different combinations of these values, certain events and actors may or may not appear in the news, and if they do appear they may be construed in different kinds of news stories.

It is generally accepted that newspaper institutions and their readers see a particular kind of news as the core of the newspaper’s business: what is commonly known as hard news.

Hard news is [newsworkers’] staple product: reports of accidents, conflicts, crimes, announcements, discoveries and other events which have occurred or come to light since the previous issue of their paper or programme. (Bell, 1991, p. 14)
Bell (1991) identifies a number of different kinds of news, including hard (or spot) news, soft news (incorporating commentary, features, etc.), and special-topic news. Bell’s three primary categories include the “body copy” of stories, and his classification includes a fourth category (including headlines, subheads, bylines, and photo captions) which cuts across the other three. A simplified representation of Bell’s classification is presented visually in Figure 2.2.

Bell’s categories “are generally the categories newsworkers themselves use” (1991, p. 14). In contrast, Iedema, Feez & White (1994) present a different classification of print news based on linguistic analysis of news stories. Their basic classificatory division is based on the purpose of news articles: whether they chronicle, argue, interpret, or enable. These different purposes have ramifications for the linguistic choices made in stories (including the structure of stories, the kind of evaluation found in them, and choices in lexis and grammar). The classification scheme of Iedema, Feez & White is presented in Figure 2.3.
These different classification systems use different criteria to classify news: Bell relies on the categories used by media workers, Iedema, Feez & White on the linguistic realisations of media stories. While the two can be reconciled (e.g. ‘News Story’ is a hard news genre - see Iedema, Feez & White, 1994, p. 200), the point here is that classifications inevitably vary according to the criteria used.

Online newspaper home pages also classify news, and do so by means of page design. This classification is made by page-level devices such as positioning, white space, and borders; and by story-level devices such as headline size and colour, and the use or absence of explicit verbal hyperlinks to other stories (see Chapters 6 and 7). In these ways, the visual design of home pages forces the authors of the page to choose explicitly (by the positioning of stories and the design choices that positioning entails) how a story will be classified (cf. Barnhurst, 1991).

So what are the classification choices for online newspaper home pages? Commonly, online newspapers verbally classify the content on their home page (e.g.
Local, Political, Sport - see Bell’s (1991) ‘special-topic news’). However, unnamed and implicit categorisation is also a useful approach (the ‘design as map’ metaphor - e.g. Lowrey, 1999). In practice, both approaches are commonly used in online newspapers, and this is described in relation to the current corpus in Chapters 5 and 6 below.

In implicit categorisation, the common distinction between hard and soft news becomes important. It is possible to conceive of the hard/soft distinction from a topological perspective (i.e. as a cline) rather than from a typological perspective (i.e. as a clear-cut dichotomy), with hard news falling towards an end of a spectrum defined by chronicling of events where (de)stabilisation is at issue, and soft news falling towards an end defined by reflecting on events, where interpretation is at issue (cf. Iedema, Feez & White, 1994, p. 88).

Another distinction discussed by Iedema, Feez & White (1994, pp. 152-4) concerns ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ news. Stories may be construed as belonging to the public sphere (and therefore highbrow), or to the private sphere (and therefore lowbrow), and it is this distinction which, historically, has set apart broadsheet and tabloid newspapers.

Certain papers and broadcasters position their audience as being purely interested in the ‘private’ sphere, and they portray both political events (‘sayings’) and material events (‘doings’ and ‘happenings’) in terms of what individual people think and feel. Other papers and broadcasters position their audience as being interested purely in the ‘public’ sphere, and so they construct events as if brought about not by individuals but by social forces whose impact far exceeds that of any individual. (Iedema, Feez & White, 1994, p. 152)
Combining these two perspectives, we can map a topology of news with two axes: the first opposing chronicling/(de)stabilisation with reflecting/interpretation, and the second opposing public with private. This topology is represented visually in Figure 2.4.

![Figure 2.4: A topological perspective on classifying news stories](image)

The boundaries between hard, soft, and lite news are permeable and overlap, and are traditionally grounded in language-based understandings of news content. Visual and verbal semiotic resources, however, do not construe meaning in the same way, and meanings can not be neatly mapped across from one to the other (Lemke, 2002). The visual design of the home pages in this corpus does not afford the construal of permeable, overlapping boundaries between hard, lite, and soft news, so the authors of the page are forced to classify each story visually according to their
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placement. Exactly how they do so is considered briefly in Chapter 5, and explored in detail in Chapter 6.

In summary, the historical development of English newspaper discourse has led to the common practice of moving the most important part of a story to the front. For online newspapers, this has meant that this part of the story can be easily brought into service on online newspaper home pages in order to achieve the institutional goals of the newspaper. Online newspapers which have different discursive histories, but which are published in English (such as the PD), compete in the same marketplace, and must follow or choose to break the emerging conventions of this global macro-genre. The traditional distinction in hard and soft news is also evident in the visual discourse of home pages, and the ways in which home-page news is designed and presented.

To this point then, it is possible to see the following. With the social conditions of 17th-century Europe, the construction and communication of human experience as ‘news’ emerged in the budding macro-genre of the newspaper, a genre which also appeared elsewhere (e.g. Asia) under (at least partially) similar social conditions. Further, over time, the way that news was constructed in newspapers evolved in line with developments in the social and institutional contexts of production and reception. Thus, the ways in which ‘news’ has been expressed historically can be seen as closely related to social context.

Print newspaper genres have emerged and developed over three-and-a-half centuries. With the development of the internet and the world wide web, the social
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conditions of news production and reception have changed rapidly. Later chapters demonstrate that rapid changes in social context have been matched by rapid changes in news genres. In Chapter 3 below, the theoretical approach taken in this thesis is described, a theory which posits an explicit and systematic relationship between discourse and context. But first, the question of what discourse is must be addressed.

2.3.2 Defining discourse

The previous section considered language from a discursive perspective - as more than items of vocabulary and sets of rules by which they are combined into sentences (cf. Martin & Rose, 2007). But discourse is not limited to language. For instance, discourse is defined by Fairclough (1992, p. 63) as “a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation”. In online newspapers, the meanings constructed in the different semiotic systems - language, image, and others - are all part of the discourse.

The definition from Fairclough as given above provides two complementary perspectives. The first views discursive acts as social action. The second views discursive acts as construing experience. As is argued below, social action and representation are complementary perspectives on discourse. These two perspectives are now discussed in turn, following which the notions of text and orders of discourse are explored.

To begin with the discourse-as-social-action perspective:

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful
Gee’s definition foregrounds language, but does not limit discourse to a linguistic concept. The other focus in Gee’s definition is social groups: discourse signifies group membership (cf. Swales, 1990).

With ways of speaking, and more broadly with ways of meaning, we signify not only membership of one or more particular groups, but also particular roles in those groups. Our discursive practices vary according to the social role(s) we are playing at any given location in time and space. We participate in different discourses, and simultaneously contribute to (and therefore collectively construct) these discourses and negotiate their conventions ongoingly.

The view of discourse as an essentially group-based concept is also expressed by Bhatia (2001), who argues that because discourse entails convergent ways of writing, speaking, reading, and listening, which conform to and/or challenge conventionally accepted and understood forms, discourses structure knowledge. Similarly, Pennycook (1994, p. 128) characterises discourses as “ways of organising meaning” and “systems of power and knowledge”. Thus, knowledge is viewed from a social perspective (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1966) (for related cognitive perspectives, see van Dijk, 1998; Vygotsky, 1986).

The social construction of knowledge brings us to the second of the two perspectives on discourse, that of representation.

A discourse is the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view. ... For instance, the social practice of politics is differently signified in liberal, socialist and
Marxist political discourses; or again illness and health are
differently represented in conventional (‘allopathic’) and
homeopathic medical discourses. (Fairclough 1995, p. 56)

Our experience of the world is constructed differently according to the social roles we
are playing at any given time: according to the social relationships we are enacting in
discourse.

Social interaction is related to our discursive representation of the world
through the context of situation (see Chapter 3). We make communicative choices
according to the prevailing conventions of the social context, which we may choose to
follow or flout. How we choose to communicate in context is central to what we
communicate (both in terms of what we choose and choose not to communicate, and
also what meanings are actually conveyed). So, as a member of certain social groups,
playing particular social roles in a particular context, social actors choose to represent
their social experience (or ‘reality’) in ways which conform to or flout the
conventions typically expected. This essential relationship between context and
discourse is one of the fundamental tenets of systemic functional (SF) theory (e.g.
Halliday 1994; Halliday and Hasan 1989; Martin 1992; see Chapter 3).

The two perspectives on discourse outlined above - discourse as social action
and as representation - are inseparable. Discourses are ways of meaning by which we
act socially, by which we identify ourselves as members of particular groups and as
playing particular social roles, and in these roles we construct and re-present
(represent) our experience of the world in certain ways. In turn, by representing
experience in certain ways, we identify ourselves as members of certain groups, and
as playing particular social roles.
Discourses are negotiated in an ongoing manner: they are social processes. The artefacts of these processes are texts, which embody the exchange and creation of interpersonal (social action) and experiential (representational) meanings negotiated in discourse.

A text, then, is both an object in its own right ... and an instance - an instance of social meaning in a particular context of situation. It is a product of its environment, a product of a continuous process of choices ... . (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 11)

Text and discourse are complementary perspectives on the same phenomenon - discourse is a process perspective, and this process is embodied in the product of discourse - text. From this perspective, texts embody social action, social roles and relationships, and the representation of social reality. Like discourses, they are not limited to language.

One final concept is worth discussing at this point. Orders of discourse refers to all the different ‘discourse types’ which are used in a particular social domain (such as a particular social institution). These networks of discourse types exist in relation to other such networks, and within them different discourse types also exist in relation to one another (Fairclough, 1995).

What is an educational system, after all, if not a ritualisation of the word; if not a qualification of some fixing of roles for speakers; if not the constitution of a (diffuse) doctrinal group; if not a distribution and an appropriation of discourse, with all its learning and its powers? What is “writing” (that of “writers”) if not a similar form of subjection, perhaps taking rather different forms, but whose main stresses are nonetheless analogous? May we not also say that the judicial system also, as well as institutionalised medicine, constitute similar systems for the subjection of discourse? (Foucault, 1971, pp. 19-20)
So within a social domain (such as the school), there is an order of discourse in which particular discourses and genres are more typical than others. More than this though, certain discourses (such as the discourse of mathematics) are typically articulated in certain genres (such as the genre of a lesson). Similarly, in the order of discourse of the mass media, the texts produced for public consumption see certain discourses (such as politics, and law and order) typically occurring in other genres (such as the ‘hard news story’).

The order of discourse of the media has been shaped by the tension between its contradictory public sources and private targets, which act as contrary poles of attraction for media discourse; it is constantly being reshaped through redefining its relationship to - redrawing its boundaries with - these public and private orders of discourse. (Fairclough, 1995, p. 63)

For the texts analysed here, the recent shift in medium (from print to pixels) and in potential audience (from local to international) means that the order of discourse within which online newspapers are produced is currently relatively unstable. New genres are evolving, and new configurations of genres and discourses are emerging.

### 2.3.3 Producing discourse

Throughout this thesis, the terms *institutional author(s)*, *collective authors*, and *author(s)* are used to describe those who produce the texts of online newspapers: news stories, images, and entire editions of newspapers as texts in their own right. This reflects the fact that the process of authoring news texts is complex, and typically involves many people. For example, McCargo (2000) describes the institutional processes involved in writing political news stories in the *Thairath*, a Thai-language daily, as summarised in the following quote from Knox & Patpong (2008, p. 177):

\[9\] *Genre* is defined and discussed in Chapter 3 below.
up to twelve political reporters might be sending in dispatches, with a political rewriter compiling and integrating them (sometimes with other material) into a story. The front-page editor supervises the work of the political rewriters, and the editor-in-chief in turn supervises the decisions of the front-page editor, ensuring that the wishes of the newspaper’s owners are put into practice (McCargo 2000: 38-42).

News images go through a similar process, with institutional decisions at news meetings about what stories will be photographed; professional decisions about the subject and framing of images based on the conventions of the community of photojournalists; aesthetic decisions about ‘pushing’ / ‘pulling’, and other aspects of image production; and editorial decisions about the selection, cropping, and positioning of images to fit the discursive requirements of the newspaper (see Barthes, 1977; Huxford, 2001; Wardle, 2007; Schwartz, 2003).

Such complex processes have been theorised by Bell (1991, pp. 36-55), who, following Hymes and Goffman, outlines a model of producer roles in news which breaks the concept of *speaker* into four separate roles. These roles are principal, author, editor, and animator. All of these roles are potentially filled by one person, but typically they are filled by a large number of people (see Table 2.2). A brief discussion of each of the four roles follows (see also Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003).

Bell’s principal includes two groups: the proprietor(s) of the business, and the news executives. The former “set the editorial policies which affect news language. A proprietor’s definition of what will be treated as news and how it will be covered has linguistic repercussions”, and this may include “[d]ecisions on how certain individuals or groups should be labelled” (Bell, 1991, p. 40). News executives, as the title suggests, execute the editorial policies of the proprietor(s).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Subroles</th>
<th>Newsroom position</th>
<th>Language function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Commercial: business institution&lt;br&gt;Proprietor&lt;br&gt;Managers</td>
<td>No direct, overt language input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional: news institution&lt;br&gt;Editorial executives</td>
<td>General language prescription, rare specific prescription</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Generates news language, responsible for original syntactic and discourse form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>Overseer&lt;br&gt;Chief reporter (press)&lt;br&gt;Chief subeditor (press)&lt;br&gt;News editor (broadcast)</td>
<td>General and specific language prescription</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy editor&lt;br&gt;Subeditor&lt;br&gt;Copy editor&lt;br&gt;News editor (press)</td>
<td>Modifies language, responsible for its intermediate and final form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpreter&lt;br&gt;News editor (press)&lt;br&gt;Subeditor&lt;br&gt;Duty editor (broadcast)&lt;br&gt;Newsreader/newscaster</td>
<td>Responsible for prominence and presentation - order, headlines, links, visuals, graphological form, verbal interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animater</td>
<td>Transmitter&lt;br&gt;Newsreader&lt;br&gt;Typesetter&lt;br&gt;Proofreader&lt;br&gt;Compositor</td>
<td>Responsible for accurate phonological / graphological transmission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technician&lt;br&gt;Printer&lt;br&gt;Sound technician&lt;br&gt;Camera operator</td>
<td>No language input&lt;br&gt;Keeps channel open and noise free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.2: Roles in producing news (source: Bell, 1991, p. 39)*

Specifically, they may prescribe the ideological framing of news and its linguistic expression, such as who will be referred to as a ‘terrorist’ and who as a ‘guerrilla’ (Schlesinger, 1987: 229). More generally, they also set guidelines for their journalists’ language use. (Bell, 1991, p. 40)

**Author** refers most simply and ideally to the journalist responsible for writing a news story. In practice though, embedding - the incorporation of one speech event
into another - plays an integral role in the author’s production of text: quoting, paraphrasing, and even cut-and-pasting the language of witnesses, previous stories, press releases, speech notes, and other verbal and written sources is standard practice in the production of news (Bell, 1991, p. 41). As stated above, while Bell’s concern in this model is the language of news organisations, photographers can also be considered as authors.

The role of editor is split into three subroles by Bell. Ultimately, though, editors in some way modify (or choose not to) the text of the author, whether that be by deleting, adding or changing the language of the text, or by presenting the text in a particular way (such as under a certain headline, or with a photograph, or as first story on the home page as opposed to the eight story on the ‘national’ page), or, in the case of images, embedding, cropping, selecting, and so on.

Animators “play the physical and technical roles necessary to communicate authors’ stories to their audience” (Bell, 1991, p. 43).

The distribution of these roles among individuals may (e.g. Cawley, 2008) or may not (e.g. Appendix C) be different in an online newsroom, but each edition of an online newspaper, and each news text within it is a product of the practices and structures of the institution in which it is published, not simply of an individual journalist, photographer, or sub-editor (see Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Reese, 1997; Zelizer, Park & Gudelunas, 2002).
2.3.4 Newspaper discourse: Conclusion

As Barnhurst & Mutz (1994) explain: “Shit happens, but that is not necessarily news”. What is news is the discursive output of large institutions, which have evolved historically to create texts of certain kinds, which make certain kinds of meaning. The discourse of newspapers is a social construction, which represents a chosen sub-set of the events of the world in institutionally valued ways to readers, thus creating a particular kind of social, discursive relationship between newspaper and audience.

2.4 Re-reading print newspapers: A visual perspective

The language of newspapers has been the subject of critical analysis from a range of perspectives for a long period of time (e.g. Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997; Bell, 1991; Bednarek, 2006; Bell & Garrett, 1998; Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Iyengar & Reeves, 1997; Trew, 1979; van Dijk, 1988; White, 2003). However, as stated above, newspaper discourse is not limited to language.

Like newspaper language, news images have been critically studied from a range of perspectives, and the development of photojournalism and studies into this discursive practice are discussed in section 2.4.1. Following this, the visual discourse of newspaper design is discussed in section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Print news images

The origins of images in newspapers have been traced to the illustrated broadsides of the late 16th century (Bicket & Packer, 2004), but it was the mid 19th century that saw a significant increase in the use of illustrations in newspapers. “Beginning in the
Chapter Two: Newspapers

1830s, in Great Britain and the United States, newspaper and magazine publishers began to experiment with the use of various kinds of illustrations” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 113).

At this time, artists’ drawings were converted into metal ‘stereotypes’ for the printing press by the process of woodcutting, and by the last decade of the 19th century the use of images in newspapers was well established. While it is not clear whether the reference is a US or international figure, Time-Life Books states that “in 1891 there were 1,000 artists turning out more than 10,000 drawings a week for the press” (1971, p. 16). Eventually, on “January 21, 1897, the New York Tribune published the first halftone reproduction to appear in a mass circulation daily paper” (Time-Life Books, 1971, p. 15).

Hand drawn illustrations remained the dominant form of newspaper images, even as the technology necessary to take documentary photographs (e.g. smaller cameras, roll film, flash powder), and the technology necessary to mass produce photographs (e.g. the collodion, or wet-plate exposure process; the half-tone printing process) improved and became more widespread in the second half of the 19th, and early into the 20th century (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Caple, in press).

Over time, the use of photographic images increased in the popular tabloids of the early 20th century, and innovations such as using one large image to dominate the front page, and using ‘composographs’ (literal ‘cut-and-paste’ photographic images to represent events where photographs were not available) became characteristic of English-language tabloids throughout the first half of the 20th century (Bicket &
Packer, 2004; Huxford, 2001; Schwartz, 2003; Wheeler, 2002). Yet, the use of photographs in newspapers grew slowly in the early decades of the 20th century, and was still resisted by some quarters in the newspaper industry even in the 1920s and 1930s (Bicket & Packer, 2004; Caple, in press).

The course of change cannot be summarized as the emergence of photography or the development of photographic realism - that is too neat and proleptic a narrative. The things represented and the modes of representation shifted over time in a complicated pattern. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 118)

Despite the slow, and in some quarters reluctant take-up of photography, the technological ‘autonomy’ of the camera gave the early 20th century newspapers that used them a claim to objectivity that hand-drawn illustrations and verbiage had been unable to impress upon audiences in quite the same way (Bicket & Packer, 2004; Schwartz, 2003).

Even the abundant use of photo fabrications such as the “composographs” that had appeared in the tabloid newspapers since the early twentieth century did not dislodge photojournalism’s credibility, and the privileged status of news photographs has endured intact until recently. (Schwartz, 2003, p. 29)

But photography did not ‘bring’ realism to illustrated news. Rather, the shift to realism in illustrated news which began in the US in the 1890s created the social conditions for the technological developments in photography to be taken up in newspapers (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001).

The privileged status of ‘objectivity’ and ‘autonomy’ enjoyed by photography can be largely attributed to the ‘natural’ relationship between the signifier and the signified in photographic images. That is, a packet of pasta (for example) is signified in a photograph by a visual reproduction of a packet of pasta, and the reader of the
This popularly-held view of photography - i.e. that it is a direct representation of reality - has contributed significantly to its status as providing evidence for the verbal reports of hard-news events in newspapers: “purveyors of journalism have increasingly relied upon the camera to promote news presentations as unproblematic reflections of events occurring beyond viewers’ direct experience” (Griffin, 2004, p. 381; see also Hall, 1981; Hartley & Rennie, 2004; Schwartz, 2003; Trivundza, 2004; Wardle, 2007). Due to the conventions of press photography, and the way that news images interact with other images, captions, and the verbiage of news stories, this ‘evidential’ function of hard-news images persists even where photographs provide no visual documentation of the facts claimed in verbal news reports (Hall, 1981; Huxford, 2001; cf. Griffin, 2004, p. 384).

This status of the photograph was developing at the same time as the early-to-mid-20th century tabloids began competing with the ‘high-brow’ newspapers of the day for the same audience and ideological space. Partly as a result of this competition, the ‘high-brow’ newspapers of the early-mid twentieth century used photographs more and more (Bicket & Packer, 2004). Eventually, news photographs became an accepted part of newspaper discourse, due to factors such as the ‘evidential’ function of ‘objective’ news photographs (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Schwartz, 2003; Sontag, 1979; Zelizer, 2005); the increasing acceptance of photojournalism as a practice of...
‘highbrow’ newspapers (Bicket & Packer, 2004; Caple, in press); technological developments in film, lighting, processing, printing, and camera size and mechanics (Caple, in press; Sontag, 2003); and economic factors (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001). The ‘high point’ of photographic news discourse can be seen in the capture (or construction) of “critical moments” (Caple, 2009) such as those seen in iconic news images of the 20th and 21st centuries, or “big pictures” in Perlmutter’s (2003) terms (see Table 2.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of photograph</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Photographer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the explosion of the Hindenburg airship</td>
<td>Lakehurst, New Jersey, U.S.A.</td>
<td>May 6, 1937</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Murray Becker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American soldiers raising the United States flag</td>
<td>Iwo Jima, Japan</td>
<td>Feb 23, 1945</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Joe Rosenthal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the point-blank shooting of a Vietnamese man</td>
<td>Saigon, Vietnam</td>
<td>Feb 1, 1968</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Eddie Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a solitary man holding a shopping bag and standing before a line of tanks</td>
<td>Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China</td>
<td>Jun 5, 1989</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Jeff Widener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a jet airliner about to crash into the second of the World Trade twin towers</td>
<td>New York, U.S.A.</td>
<td>Sep 11, 2001</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>Sean Adair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Examples of iconic hard-news images

Like the verbiage of news stories, news images are authored through the journalistic and editorial process of the news institution. This selection and production process is ideological (see Barthes, 1977; Hall, 1981; Fishman & Marvin, 2003; Wardle, 2007; cf. Bell 1991), and as part of the discourse of the newspaper, news images contribute to the discursive construction of the newspaper’s ideology over time - both individually and collectively (e.g. Darling-Wolf, 2004; Griffin, 2004; Hall, 1981; Trivundza, 2004).
One example of the photographic construal of ideology in newspaper discourse is the use of close-up shots of faces, or ‘mug shots’. In contrast to the ‘big pictures’ discussed above (and others like them), mug shots portray the social actors in news events and in doing so position them visually in the discourse of the newspaper, but tell the reader nothing of ‘what happened’.

Newspapers have a history of using mug shots (Barnhurst, 2002; Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Darling-Wolf, 2001; Gibbs & Warhover, 2002; Hall, 1981; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In print and online newspapers, what mug shots do particularly well is to foreground the interpersonal aspect of a story. This is a function they share with many other news photographs (e.g. Hall, 1981). Also like other news photographs, they:

- have high impact and can be ‘read’ quickly (cf. Griffin, 2004)
- reduce complex events and issues to the persons involved with them (cf. Hall, 1981; Machin & Niblock, 2006)
- increase the salience of their associated verbal story on the page (cf. Griffin, 2004)
- provide readers with recognition of, and more importantly proximity to the social actors in the image, so a collective visual memory of ‘who’ (if not ‘what happened’) can develop (cf. Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Hall, 1981; Trivundza, 2004)
- provide a hook, or lead-in point to a story (cf. Bicket & Packer, 2004; Griffin, 2004)
• evoke a response, and ‘sensation-alise’ the reader’s experience and memory of
the story (cf. Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Bicket & Packer, 2004; Hartley &
Rennie, 2004; Sontag, 1979, 2003)
• are selected and ‘authored’ in a process which is both institutional and
ideological (cf. Barthes, 1977; Darling-Wolf, 2004; Hall, 1981; Wardle, 2007,
p. 265).

In this way, while they contribute little to the reporting of news events, they
contribute significantly to the commercial and ideological imperatives of the news
institution which the discourse of newspapers serves. The use of mug shots in
thumbnail images on home pages is discussed in Chapter 8.

Over time, the visual design of newspapers has changed (section 2.4.2
following), and so too have the roles of photographs in newspapers. Photojournalism
has always been an interpretive practice, and in something of a return to the 19th and
eyearly 20th centuries, recent technological developments have made it easier to
‘author’ news images in ways which were not practical, even not possible before the
advent of digital photography (Huxford, 2001; Schwartz, 2003; Zavoina & Davidson,
2002; cf. Bicket & Packer, 2004). More fundamentally though, as the distinction
between information and entertainment in newspapers (and between broadsheet and
-tabloid) has become less of a dichotomy and more of a cline (Ursell, 2001; cf. Bicket
&Packer, 2004), the visual discourse of photojournalism has reflected this shift.
Some broadsheets have begun to use images in novel ways in reporting hard news
(see Caple 2007, 2008), in addition to the more flexible practices in image
construction and use already common in broadsheet feature stories (e.g. Economou,
Indeed, the boundaries between press photography and photography in other fields have been challenged by Hartley (2007), and by Hartley & Rennie (2004) who argue that the boundaries between photojournalism and fashion photography, both in terms of practices and the images these practices generate, are not necessarily as distinct as historically portrayed:

> in the context of the practice and study of photojournalism, we argue against the habit of assigning photojournalism to the province of news and fashion photography to that of commercial consumption. Fashion and photojournalism should not be understood as distinct or opposing forms. Equally we want to blur the habitual boundaries that are drawn between ‘truth’ (science and journalism) and ‘beauty’ (art and entertainment); and between public (governmental and masculine) and private (commercial and female) domains. (Hartley & Rennie, 2004, p. 461; italics in original)

This questioning of the fundamental boundaries of photojournalism is particularly relevant to thumbnail images on online newspaper home pages, and this is taken up in Chapter 8.

In summary, newspapers have a long history of using images, with woodcut illustrations the dominant form up until the early 20th century, and the gradual rise of news photography in the decades after the introduction of the half-tone image the late 19th century. The move to the online medium has seen further changes to the ways in which news images are used, and this is investigated in Chapter 8.
2.4.2 Print newspaper design

As discussed in section 1.1.2 above, graphic design has only existed as a profession for a few decades. Despite this, the visual design of newspapers has been an expression of their social purpose and production practices since their emergence, and the ideology of newspapers has always been construed visually as well as verbally (see Barnhurst, 1994).

The importance of visual design was recognised by printers from early times.

In the 18th century:

The newspaper’s appearance reflected its impartiality as a public print and open press. Its columns were broad, calm, and orderly; its text typography undifferentiated; its items unheadlined. Everything about its appearance announced that it was the reader’s job, not the newspaper’s, to make sense of the world. Its pages, flat and plain, set a stage for others to act upon.

The look of the newspaper also cued its readers as gentlemen. Printers congratulated each other on the neatness of the productions. They gravitated toward typefaces that looked bookish, and they put together newspapers meant to be read like books. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 39)

In the 20th century, visual design found a central place in the institutionalised practices of newspaper production (even if this space was ceded grudgingly - see below). In addition to recognition by newsworkers, the importance of visual communication in achieving the ideological and commercial objectives of newspapers has also been increasingly recognised in studies of the mass media.

One approach that has been taken to studying news design in newspapers is to examine design features such as headlines, images, graphics, column width, number of columns, number of stories on the front page, colour, font type, and the justification of type. Studies which focus on such features have documented changes in newspaper
design, such as the rise of the ‘modernist’ paper, with which the metaphor of ‘design as map’ has been associated. So-called ‘modernist’ newspaper design became:

nearly universal in the print industry of the past 20-to-30 years. The modernist layout is a road map in which the route markers are headline size, dominant imagery, story placement and story length. It is the designer’s job to make sure readers do not stray from the correct editorial route. (Lowrey, 1999, p. 14; see Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001)

Utt & Pasternack’s (2003) survey of 300 newspapers (130 of whom responded) follows on from their previous studies of front page design (published in 1984, 1989, and 1994). Their longitudinal study looks at the design practices of a large number of newspapers, and their 2003 findings are based on responses from “the newspaper’s staff member who was primarily responsible and/or most knowledgeable of the layout and design of both the print and the online editions” (p. 52). They find that approximately three in five of the responding newspapers had re-designed their front page in the five years prior to the survey; that almost 30% of responding newspapers had a front page designed by someone who did not have a journalism degree; that the use of a ‘modular’ front page design had increased significantly over the twenty years prior to the survey to become almost universal among their sample;10 that almost all newspapers use colour photos; and that print front pages of newspapers tend to vary from day to day, but that the dominant photo tends to be placed in the middle of the page regardless.

Coleman (2000) investigates whether the visual communication of news in public journalism differs from that in non-public journalism. Public journalism is defined as “an approach designed to address issues that readers say are important, rather than only those issues identified by experts” (p. 18). The study uses content

10 See Barnhurst & Nerone (2001, pp. 213-6) who reject this use of the term modular.
analysis of six newspapers over one week. The rationale behind Coleman’s study is that the choice to ‘do’ (or not) public journalism drives content. Because content supposedly drives design, it would seem that the choice to do public journalism would lead to differences in design between public journalism and non-public journalism newspapers.

In Coleman’s study, the ways in which various visual devices were used are studied in terms of their content (e.g. stage-managed photographs versus genuine photographs of non-elite actors; the inclusion of boxes with summaries of key issues and areas of ‘common ground’), and differences are identified between public journalism newspapers and non-public journalism newspapers (some statistically significant). Overall though, “there is not enough significance [in the differences] to say that it represents a radical departure from non-public journalism” (Coleman, 2000, p. 34).

Studies such as those by Utt & Pasternack, and Coleman attempt to get at the importance of design by quantifying and comparing readily identifiable features of the visual communication of news. Another approach is to look at design from the perspective of news producers. Machin & Niblock (2006) include a case study of design changes of a British regional daily newspaper, the Liverpool Daily Post, including a semiotic analysis of the changes and interview data from the design editor involved.
The design editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post* came into the role as someone who had worked in newspapers as a sub-editor, reporter, and designer. In response to market research, he was to ‘retarget’ and ‘rebrand’ the newspaper.

Gary’s job was to redesign the look of the newspaper in order to change [the perceptions of the target audience as identified in the market research]. In other words, the newspaper had to visually communicate the kinds of values associated with a particular lifestyle. (Machin & Niblock, 2006, p. 150)

This led to a number of changes to the newspaper, including the use of supplements, changes to the masthead, changes in fonts, colour, paper, spacing, arrangement, and images, all intended to construe “a set of core values. These core values are part of the discourses of the new professional, self-conscious consumerist, city dweller ... . The formula is very successful and has boosted circulations” (Machin & Niblock, 2006, p. 158; cf. Machin & Thornborrow, 2006; Raeymaeckers, 2004).

De Vries, a newspaper designer, characterises newspaper design as cultural change (2008), and provides a first-hand account of the redesign of the *South China Morning Post*. He provides a technician’s perspective on aspects of design such as colour and font, combined with a professional’s perspective on the cultural and institutional processes of newspaper production and visual design. He identifies “three spheres of design discipline that [his company] use[s] in a typical design project.

“1. **Technical** Print and Typographic know-how and specialist, detailed knowledge and specification

“2. **Editorial** Understanding Content and the creation of devices and components to benefit the reader

“3. **Systems** Examining and rebuilding work processes and relationships” (de Vries, 2008, Figure 2, p. 7).
His paper demonstrates the centrality of design to communicating the news, and how the design of newspaper pages is fundamentally related to the practices and values of the news institution.

Another ‘insider’ account of visual design is given by Evans (1976). For Evans, a former editor of The Times, newspaper design is communication, and he provides a news editor’s perspective on the ways in which layout, typography, image, and the wording of stories should work together, looking at a number of newspapers and their development over time.

In his book, Evans stresses that the design of print newspapers is first and foremost functional. Decisions regarding the size of the page, the length of stories, the positioning of sections within the newspaper, and font type are related to the readers and their situation, and to the mission of the newspaper and its content (Evans, 1976, pp. 1-3). He also identifies a number of classificatory schemes which are useful background for the analysis which follows in later chapters.

For instance, Evans identifies two kinds of front pages. The first is the **signal-and-text front page** where a selection of the most important stories of the newspaper are placed on the front page with extended text from their story (i.e. ‘supporting text’). Their relative importance of these stories is signalled by design features such as headline size, story size, and positioning on the page (1976, p. 57). The second is the **poster front page**, which publishes as many important stories on the front page as
possible with headline, or headline and lead only (p. 58)\textsuperscript{11}. Front pages can be a combination of the two, in which case they typically dedicate “a part of the front page every day to encapsulate the main news and features presented inside. The device is called a \textbf{summary index} in the United States” (p. 60, bold added).

In addition to front pages, Evans discusses page layout more generally, and identifies a range of devices by which relative importance of stories on the page can be signalled.

The reader needs signals to indicate priorities - but look at the signals that are available:

- Page - front or inside, etc.
- Position on page
- Length of text
- Style of text setting
- Size of headline
- Weight of headline
- Spread of headline
- ‘Colour’ elements, i.e. not in the chromatic sense but the contrast of blacks, greys and whites in type, reverse blocks, pictures.

It is wasteful and distracting for a designer to use all these signals. There should be economy and there should be consistency. (Evans, (1976, p. 66)

He also describes a range of layout options available to newspaper page designers:

- static (the same layout everyday) or dynamic (layout changes everyday)
- modular (consistent shapes - square or rectangular on the page) or irregular (story shapes are interlocking in a jigsaw manner)
- vertical layout (the oldest and most basic use of the page grid, with stories appearing in vertical columns)

\textsuperscript{11} Ironically, front pages dominated by a single image with minimal verbiage of a single story are examples of signal-and-text front pages in this scheme.
horizontal layout (stories span columns in an overall page design where stories are ‘stacked’ upon each other, rather than appearing in columns)

quadrant / diagonal (pages are divided into four quarters, each of which has an attention-getting device such as a headline, image, or panel)

frame layout (the right and left column on the page are solid text, and therefore work with the masthead to ‘frame’ the page visually)

brace layout (headlines are visually supported by shorter headlines beneath them, like a brace supporting a shelf)

circus layout (visually sensational, combining a variety of visually arresting devices).

These categories provide the kind of analysis semioticians can build on, as Evans sets out the meaningful choices in expression, with discussion of the day to day realities of news production and dissemination that impact on such choices.

Barnhurst & Nerone’s (2001) book-length treatment of the form of news is similarly grounded in the meaningful choices made in newspaper design over time. Their work spans the design of print newspapers in the US in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and proceeds on the premise “that form embodies the imagined relationship of a medium to its society and polity” (p. 3). For them, the form of a newspaper is:

the persisting visible structure of the newspaper, the things that make the New York Times, for example, recognizable as the same newspaper day after day although its content changes. Form includes the things that are traditionally labelled layout and design and typography; but it also includes habits of illustration, genres of reportage, and schemes of departmentalization. Form is everything a newspaper does to present the look of the news. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p.3)
Barnhurst & Nerone (2001) relate the design of newspapers in different historical periods to social conditions. For instance, the consistent formatting and typography in colonial newspapers, the chronological structure of stories, and the overall ordering of stories reflected the printers’ expectation that everything in the newspaper would be read, and that the reader could make sense of the relative importance of stories without guidance from the form of the newspaper (pp. 39-40). Similarly, the political role taken on by newspapers during the American Revolution led to a change in format to a larger page to accommodate their new ideological functions alongside their existing commercial and cultural roles (pp. 44-5). Changes such as these, and others in the 20th century (see below) evolved together with changes in the practices of news workers, including the division of labour and the social and spatial geography of newsrooms (Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003).

While taking the role of technology, and advances in technology as given, Barnhurst & Nerone on the whole reject the idea that technology is the driver behind developments in the visual design of news. They identify two key motivations behind the changes in the visual design of newspapers in the 20th century. The first is the broad cultural shift to modernism, and the second is the move to professionalism in the newspaper industry.

New techniques, extrasocial and disembodied, did not simply invade and transform the newspaper. The introduction of technology occurred adventitiously. Newspaper publishers resisted the risks and costs of change, but by invoking technology editors and designers made change seem inevitable. Technology took the blame, removing the onus from those urging change and pressing those who resisted. The rationale itself was an artifact of the internal politics of newspaper publishing. Technology supplied an important element in the background, but was not the cause of newspaper change. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 214; cf. Cooke, 2003)
Studies such as those by Evans (1976), Barnhurst & Nerone (2001), Nerone & Barnhurst (2003), and the perspective of de Vries (2008) relate the social and institutional conditions of production and reception of newspaper texts to the technical details of visual news presentation such as those reported by Utt & Pasternack (2003) and Coleman (2000). That is, they provide an explanation of the relation between context and text, and in this way they resonate with the theoretical approach to analysing the visual communication of news that is pursued in this thesis.

Based on their grammar of visual design (see Chapter 3), Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 1998) take a social semiotic approach to the design of newspaper pages and the meaning of composition. Newspaper pages may use a number of compositional techniques, including triptychs, or having a number of minor items around a visually central element, instantiating a Centre-Margin paradigm in Kress & van Leeuwen’s terms. Front pages which are relatively static, signal-and-text pages (typically with a modular layout) in Evans’ (1976) terms (see above) instantiate Given-New (left-right) and Ideal-Real (top bottom) paradigms in Kress & van Leeuwen’s analysis. Dynamic, poster front pages (which may have modular or irregular layout) do not draw on such paradigms, and the relative chaos in their composition means that the relative salience of items on the page takes on greater importance than composition (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 229).

Drawing on the work of Kress & van Leeuwen and on the research reported in this thesis, Knox, Patpong & Piriyasilpa (2010) study the front pages of two Thai-language print newspapers, the Thairath and the Matichon, each of which occupies a different position on the broadsheet-tabloid spectrum. Both newspapers use poster
front pages with a seemingly random design of ‘visual blocks’ which contain
headlines, images, leads, advertisements, and the newspaper masthead in a
configuration which changes on a daily basis. At first glance, the ‘chaotic’ design
principle underlying each newspaper’s front page is remarkably similar. But
differences in the use of colour between the two newspapers are consistent with
differences in content (both language and image), reflecting important differences in
the choices each newspaper makes in the construing the news in spite of similarities in
the layout of their respective front pages. The differences and similarities between the
pages are related to the community of readers of each newspaper, and illustrate the
fundamentally multi-semiotic nature of print newspaper discourse.

In conclusion to this section, the visual presentation of news on the page has
traditionally been viewed as secondary to the ‘real’ business of writing the news.

Everybody agrees that we are living in an increasingly visualized
world, yet few newspapers seem interested in understanding how to
really harness modern visual communication. They are most likely
to still think of the visual as a decorative afterthought to the content.
(de Vries, 2008, p. 5)

And ‘staying out of the way’ of the words is still seen as the hallmark of good
newspaper design (cf. Evans, 1976; Utt & Pasternack, 2003, pp. 49-50). As the design
“Pages must project the stories in the best possible way. The best page design should
be indiscernible to the reader”.

From the standpoint of the early 21st century, such traditional views of ‘visual
journalism’ (see Machin & Niblock, 2006) may be surprising, especially when one
considers the importance of the visual design of tabloids to their successful rise in the
early 20th century (section 2.4.1 above), and the centrality of visual design to the identity of all newspapers and to their construal of the news.

However, media professionals and media researchers are paying increasing attention to the design of newspapers. The importance of visual design is institutionalised in the changing role of sub-editors, the emergence of new institutional roles such as design editors, an increasing role for newspaper design consultants, and the widespread re-design or ‘re-branding’ of newspapers to ensure that their visual identity is consistent with the expectations of their target audience (Machin & Niblock, 2006, pp. 138-141; see also de Vries, 2008). As in other domains, it is becoming untenable to produce, critique, describe, or research newspaper discourse without taking account of the ways in which news is communicated visually; a situation which points to the need for theoretical accounts of such communication that can ultimately be applied by researchers, practitioners, and educators alike.

2.4.3 Visualising news in print: Conclusion

Historically, language is the institutionally dominant semiotic resource in the print newspaper world. In the early 20th century as tabloids increasingly used image and layout to distinguish themselves from the broadsheet press, the so-called ‘quality’ newspapers bemoaned the intrusion of image into the text-dominated world of journalism, even as they were forced to adopt it (Bicket & Packer, 2004). In newsrooms today, the visual aspects of news stories are often still the last thing to be considered, and staff responsible for design are often physically and institutionally
isolated from authoring and decision-making processes (de Vries, 2008). ‘Prestigious’ newspapers still pride themselves primarily on the written quality of their stories.

Yet the ‘rise of visual culture’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; see also Bicket & Packer, 2004) has forced newspaper professionals and researchers to take explicit account of how news is communicated visually on the pages of newspapers, something which has always been central to newspaper discourse, whether explicitly acknowledged or not.

2.5 Re-making newspapers: A pixel perspective

In this section, research which investigates online newspapers, and particularly the visual design of news in online newspapers, is reviewed. Section 2.5.1 gives an overview of some areas of investigation into online newspapers. Section 2.5.2 focuses on research into the visual.

2.5.1 Researching online newspapers

As discussed in Chapter 1, online newspapers emerged on the world wide web in the early to mid-1990s, and have quickly grown to become a major feature of the mass media landscape. They have been researched from a number of perspectives, generating a number of monographs (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004; Allan, 2006) and edited volumes (e.g. Li, 2006b; Paterson & Domingo, 2006; Salwen, Garison & Driscoll, 2005a) in addition to numerous book chapters and journal articles.
Ethnographic studies of online newsrooms have shown that there are diverse practices in producing online newspapers, from integrated newsrooms where the online and print editions are considered complementary media for the same news production processes, to institutions where online and print newsrooms are physically separated and populated by different staff (e.g. Boczkowski, 2004a, 2004b; S. Martin, 1998; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; cf. Arant & Anderson, 2001; Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003; Ursell, 2001).

Closely related to considerations of newsrooms are examinations of the roles and practices of journalists in online newspapers (Deuze, 2004), which suggest that as online journalists change what they do, the nature of their profession is also changing (e.g. Deuze, Neuberger & Paulussen, 2004; Singer, 2003a). As the roles of online journalism are in flux, so too are the relationships between journalists and readers as journalists write in new fora (such as blogs), and as their work is immediately comparable with alternative reports and accounts of the same events, once inaccessible to the reading public (Allan, 2006; cf. Singer, 2005).

Smith Ekstrand (2002) looks at the relationship between online newspapers and their readers through the lens of the legalistic user agreements included on newspaper websites. “Online distribution changes the conditions under which news consumers may be informed about their world. Where previously readers bought their news, now they must access it - and in the process, agree to the provisions spelled out in user agreements” (Smith Ekstrand, 2002, p. 612). Changes in the legal relations between newspapers and readers are also found in online newspapers’ practices in the use of “cookies”, in information collection, and in the disclosure of privacy policies as
identified by Hong et al. (2005). A significant minority of online users in one survey reported by Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll (2005b) are concerned about such issues. Together, these changes in legal - and therefore social - status create a new relationship between newspaper and reader, and the potential ramifications - legal, commercial, and social - are far-reaching (cf. Driscoll, 2005).

Research into the readers of online newspapers uses a range of methods to explore a range of questions. Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll’s (2005b) ‘baseline surveys’ investigated who did and did not consume online news, how and why, using five national telephone surveys in the US in 2001 and 2002. Online news consumers tended to be younger and more educated than non-web users, and have a higher income; appeared not to be influenced to buy goods and services by online advertising; favoured online news because it is “easy and convenient”; and preferred national and international news over local news (though Singer’s (2001) content analysis of six Colorado newspapers found that their online editions are “much more” local in content than their print editions). Another telephone survey by Stempel & Hargrove’s (2004) found that people who use the internet do not necessarily use it as a news source, and that many internet users prefer print newspapers and television for news. Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll, (2005b) also found a preference for television over online news, though not for print over online. Wu & Bechtel (2002) followed the daily traffic on the New York Times website, and compared it against content analyses of the top stories broadcast on CNN and ABC each day for one year. The authors interpret the findings as suggesting that readers turn to particular online newspapers for particular kinds of stories (e.g. accessing the New York Times for international news, but not for crime stories).
Research has also examined the ways in which online newspapers use the affordances of the medium of the world wide web in news reporting. A number of studies have set out to investigate so-called non-linear stories, which are:

- part of a larger news narrative made up of layers of related text and audio-visual content that are hyperlinked together. This format sets up an “interactive reading process” in which readers actively choose their own paths through the narrative by accessing its constituent parts nonlinearly, in any order that suits them. (Massey, 2004, p. 96)

Though many curricula for online journalism encourage non-linear stories (Lowrey, 2004; Massey, 2004), Massey found them to be used relatively little in a content analysis of 38 US newspapers, and Lowrey found little or no benefit to readers in a controlled experiment comparing readers’ responses to ‘linear’ and ‘non-linear’ stories (cf. Engebresten, 2000; Vargo et al., 2000).

Singer’s (2003b) survey of editors found that online newspapers covering the 2000 presidential election in the US took advantage of a number of affordances of the medium, including using discussion boards, including extra content (that simply could not be included in print due to limitations of space), and updating information rapidly in order to ‘beat television’. In contrast, Dimitrova et al.’s (2003) content analysis of the reporting of the 2001 execution of Timothy McVeigh in 15 US online newspapers “showed that online newspapers are not taking full advantage of the Internet in general and hypertext in particular” (p. 412).

The sample of studies of online newspapers discussed in this sub-section - and there are many others - gives an indication of the kinds of research questions and methodological approaches in the literature dedicated to this relatively recent social
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phenomenon. A number of studies reviewed in this section touch on aspects of news design such as ‘interactivity’, the use of hyperlinks in story-design, and the use of multimedia. These factors are clearly related to the visual design of news, but this has not been their main focus.

2.5.2 Visual communication and online newspapers

Of more direct interest to the research reported in this thesis are studies examining the visual communication of news in online newspapers, which have also taken a variety of methodological approaches to addressing a variety of questions.

Eyetracking studies have been used to study the impact of visual design on reading online newspapers, by measuring the eye movements and eye fixations of readers on screens, sometimes supplemented with questionnaires, retrospection, and/or semiotic analysis. Together with eyetracking studies of print newspapers (e.g. Holsanova, Holmqvist & Rahm, 2006; Holmqvist & Wartenberg, 2005; Poynter’s 1990 EyeTrack study - see Stark Adam, Quinn & Edmonds, 2007), eyetracking studies of online newspapers provide empirical data which aims to document reading behaviour, and indicate which aspects of design attract readers’ attention first, and for longest, and also what ‘reading paths’ their eyes follow on the page.

Barthelson (2002) studied the reading behaviour of 12 subjects, using a survey, eyetracking measurement with two newspapers, retrospection from the subjects using video data of their eye-tracked reading behaviour, and interviews. The top-left of the page first attracted the subjects’ attention in both newspapers, and text attracted their attention before images, though layout affected order of reading the
The subjects scanned newsbites (the short headline+lead+hyperlink stories found on home pages) on the home page and read few stories, but those that they ‘followed’ to story pages were read in full. Subjects followed their own interests in choosing which stories to follow, but typical ‘hard news’ stories (accidents, disasters and the like) were commonly followed by all subjects (see Holmqvist et al., 2003 for the same finding).

Reading behaviours varied between the subjects, and for some individual subjects when interacting with different texts. But when asked about their purposes for reading online newspapers, the subjects “unanimously claimed that the purpose is to quickly find out if anything has happened. This results in a ruthless hunt for interesting headlines and briefs” (Barthelson, 2002, p. 19). Based on their reports, the subjects’ average time spent at reading online newspapers is six minutes, and is done when breaks arise in their computer-based work.

In order to investigate differences in the ways that readers read print and online newspapers, Holmqvist et al. (2003) used eyetracking measurements and post-experiment questionnaires. In their first experiment, 12 subjects read two online newspapers, 15 subjects read one print newspaper, and 14 subjects read a different print newspaper (a total of 41 subjects). The subjects reading online newspapers read them for a considerably shorter time than the subjects reading the print newspapers. The authors found that the subjects reading online newspapers read less and scanned more than those reading print newspapers.
Their second experiment, intended to explain the findings of the first, required 12 subjects to read two online newspapers for 5 minutes each, and also collected retrospection data from the subjects using video data of their eyetracked reading behaviour. They found that the subjects scanned home pages, and then read stories on story pages. They conclude in part that:

scanning a [print] newspaper is made in search of entry points. When no interesting entry points are found, the reader does not continue to scan the fold but turns the page. For the folds with the lowest reading rates (below 15%), this happens after 3–5 seconds.

The non-existent correlation with net papers shows that if you do not find an interesting entry point in a net paper, you cannot turn the page. You have to keep scanning. Net paper readers choose their own path through the paper, and the majority of net paper pages are never seen. (Holmqvist et al., 2003, p. 668)

Layout on story pages in online newspapers is far less important than page layout in print newspapers: the links and newsbites on home pages are the entry points for online newspaper readers (pp. 668-9).

Zambarbieri, Carniglia & Robino’s (2008) study required 14 subjects to read two pages (the home page and one story page) from two online newspapers. Due to the design of the experiment, the findings were limited, though subjects tended to scan the home page and read the story page in greater depth, as might be expected.

The most well-known and most often cited eyetracking studies of online newspapers are the Poynter studies: the Stanford-Poynter Project (Lewenstein et al., 2000), EyeTrack III (Outing & Ruel, 2004), and EyeTrack07 (Stark Adam, Quinn & Edmonds, 2007). The first of these studies involved 67 subjects in 2 US cities, who read their own bookmarked sites as they wanted, in real time, switching between sites as they wished. The second study used 46 participants who read five mock newspaper
websites (populated with real stories), completed tasks to test their comprehension and recall of stories using different visual designs, and completed a short demographic survey. The third study involved 605 participants from four US cities, who read one of two online newspapers, or one of two broadsheets, or one of two tabloids as published on the day of the research. A second task required subjects to read a mock story in order to measure comprehension and recall (there were three print and three online mocks of the same verbal story).

The different designs have led to some degree of variation in the findings across these three studies. However, there are important findings from these three studies which are consistent with the other eyetracking studies reviewed above. These include the findings that readers of online newspapers tend to:

- choose relatively few stories to read, but do read those stories that they follow beyond the home page in depth (Barthelson, 2002; Holmqvist et al., 2003; Stark Adam, Quinn & Edmonds, 2007; Zambardi, Carniglia & Robino, 2008)
- read in depth crime and disaster stories, and other stories specific to their personal interests (Barthelson, 2002; Holmqvist et al., 2003; Lewenstein et al., 2000)
- on the home page, start top-left and move down, at least initially (Barthelson, 2002; Outing & Ruel, 2004; Zambardi, Carniglia & Robino, 2008)
- look at text (including navigation menus) before images (Barthelson, 2002; Lewenstein et al., 2000; Stark Adam, Quinn & Edmonds, 2007; Outing & Ruel, 2004).
Eyetracking studies (particularly the Poynter studies) are often cited in the literature on online newspapers, and appear also to be well-known to media institutions (see Appendix C). While they obviously provide important information for researchers and practitioners alike, measuring eye fixations does not equate with measuring reading (cf. Alderson, 2000), nor does it describe the meanings in online newspapers and how these meanings are communicated (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The findings from eyetracking studies make an important contribution to our understanding of the emerging genres of online news and how readers interact with them, but there are other research perspectives on the design of online news that provide us with insights that eyetracking studies cannot.

Similar to eyetracking studies, an interest in ‘news retrieval efficiency’ drives Li’s (2002) content analysis of five US online newspapers. Efficiency was operationalised “by recording the options available for readers to select news items, steps to access a news story, time needed to retrieve the content of a story and the amount of information retrieved through certain steps and during a certain period of time” (Li, 2002, p. 42). Li uses the findings to compare the relative efficiency of each website. “The newspapers with a higher level of retrieval efficiency were more likely to offer readers more choices and a larger volume of information while demanding less time for information retrieval” (p. 46). As acknowledged by the author though, the approach taken in this study (which aligns well with web useability studies - see Chapter 5) makes assumptions about the relation between the methodology on one hand, and reader expectations and practices on the other which cannot be verified.

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12 It should be pointed out that the authors of the eyetracking studies reviewed here make no such claims for their research.
As with studies into the print medium, studies of online newspapers have used surveys of the news producers to investigate news design. Utt & Pasternack (2003) surveyed editors about their online editions (in addition to print editions - see section 2.5.1 above), and found that of the 130 respondents:

- 69.7 [percent] use a dominant photo;
- 66.9 percent use a different typeface from the text typeface for both cutlines and bylines;
- 58.9 percent use the same flag as is used in the print edition;
- 40.3 percent change the size of the typeface for all headlines;
- 32 percent set the type in columns;
- 31.3 percent justify the body text;...
- 16.5 percent use a dominant info graphic [and] 82.1 percent use a left column navigator bar with links to major content areas within the site. (pp. 56-7)

On the whole, the editors seemed relatively dissatisfied with online newspapers in general, and their own online editions in particular.

In their content analysis of over 80 online newspapers in the US from 1997 to 2003, Greer & Mensing (2004) found:

- online newspapers are offering more of everything - content, multimedia, interactivity and revenue-generating features. ...
- Second, size matters for online newspapers. While medium and large newspapers have become more similar, small papers lag behind. (p. 108)

Lin & Jeffres’ (2001) content analysis of the websites of newspapers, radio stations, and television stations (a total of 422 websites in all) examines content elements (e.g. news vs advertising), communication elements (e.g. email links and bulletin boards), and technical elements (e.g. hyperlinks, search engines, photos and photo galleries). They find that content does vary according to media type (newspaper vs. radio vs. television), but not according to market size.
In a study conducted in 1998 in the relatively early years of the world wide web and online newspapers, Lowrey (1999) held interviews with four newspaper creative directors. The focus of this study was on identifying issues rather than documenting textual practices (or reader behaviour). The issues in online newspaper design identified by the designers in Lowrey’s study are the importance of credibility, shorter texts, speed, and simplicity (the directors were very mindful of the issues of bandwidth, screen resolution, and CPU speeds, which were much more limiting in 1998 than they are in 2009). The designers believed that content should drive design, had differing views on the importance of interactivity (however conceived), but three of the four agreed that ‘control’ should be shared between the newspaper and reader (the other believed that the reader should have ultimate control).

Other research into online newspapers has used methods similar in some cases to the studies reviewed above, but has sought to account for the social significance of online newspapers and their emergence. In popular discourses, the emergence of online newspapers (and the internet more broadly) are understood in relation to the ‘rise of the visual’ (section 1.1.2). While these technological and social developments are obviously related, these relations are easily (and often) oversimplified and over-hyped (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 295).

The possibilities for video, sound and animation that online newspapers offer, and the ability to include as many photographs as desired, have obviously contributed to the common perception that online newspapers are somehow ‘more visual’ than their print counterparts:
as one photo editor described it to me in citing the advantages of his newspaper’s Web site over the paper itself: “more pictures” and “all of them in colour.” (Perlmutter, 2003, p. 10)

And the use of visual story-telling media such as video, slide shows, and still photo galleries is undoubtedly of increasing importance to online newspapers. As a senior editor at the Sydney Morning Herald explained:

one of the most popular things on our site when we do them are our photo galleries where we gather together a whole range of pictures you can flick through and look at, and also slide shows, which are the ones which have pictures that move through automatically, and those slide shows sometimes have music, or they might have a voice-over to them. Those elements are very very popular on our site. So while they may not be displayed on our front page, ... those pictorial elements of the site and obviously videos are very popular. (interview with author, July 2007 - see Appendix C)

Overall though, impressions that online newspapers are more visually oriented than their print counterparts do not appear to be borne out by the evidence available to date. A number of studies have examined the use of images in online newspapers, and found, variously, that of the newspapers in their respective samples, the majority do use a dominant photograph on their home page (Utt & Pasternack, 2003); but more than half use exactly the same photos as in the print edition (Arant & Anderson, 2001); and there are in general few images (far fewer than in the same newspapers’ print editions), and those that are run are smaller (Barnhurst, 2002). Anecdotally, the situation appears to have changed since these research papers were published, and future research may find that the use of images in online newspapers has increased. Certainly, the findings presented in Chapter 8 indicate that at least in some online newspapers, the use of images has increased over time on home pages, and thumbnail images in particular are used extensively on some home pages. But visual design has always been central to print news (section 2.4 above), and there are arguments that the
flexibility in visual design afforded by print is actually restricted by the online medium (see below).

Arguing against simplified, popular accounts, Barnhurst & Nerone (2001) see the visual design of online newspapers as a historical development, best understood in relation to prevailing social and economic conditions. Though their focus is primarily on print newspapers (online newspapers only existed for around six of the three hundred years their work covers), they nonetheless argue that online newspapers are related to print newspapers as advertising is to journalism (in a promotional capacity), and also as VCRs are to film theatres (in a supplementary capacity): while not spelling the demise of print, online newspapers may be part of the demise of modernism in newspaper design.

Their description of the visual design of online newspapers, while not supported by the depth of analysis of other aspects of design dealt with in their monograph, still bears quoting at length:

newspaper sites on the Web align with pushy salesmanship of the supermarket tabloid and the new, emphatic broadsheet. ... They all adopt a promotional vocabulary to push events at consumers, selling their moral charge rather than the considered discourse of civic culture. Perhaps they point to a new, postmodern formation. In place of the coffeehouse metaphor, they propose the discotheque. Bright colours, many small items, a disorderly and disordered abundance, and howling diction reign. Consumers distractedly dance along with the pirouetting crowd or watch in stunned amazement. (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, pp. 296-7)

Other studies have had an explicit focus on the similarities and differences in print and online newspapers. Barnhurst’s (2002) content analysis of three US newspapers (one national, one regional, one local) looks at these online newspapers in relation to their respective print counterparts. His findings suggest that the
communicative potential of online newspapers is far from realised. Barnhurst argues that corporations are colonising the virtual space of the world wide web for their news institutions, constructing their online newspapers as the place for geographically distant readers to access information about a given place (e.g. the New York Times for the US), while at the same time building relatively ‘leaky vessels’ that encourage local readers to buy print editions. His analysis of factors such as placement of stories, source (e.g. newspaper staff or wire), typography, types of links, and images leads him to conclude that:

The patterns in online content reiterate the importance of economic concerns and corporate control in the structure and form of newspaper web editions. The printed newspaper is still the true home of daily journalism, with better imagery and user-friendliness, although journalists appear to be pushing for web editions that serve readers better and provide the journalists themselves with more control over the use of their work. (Barnhurst, 2002, p. 486)

Like Barnhurst, Bateman and colleagues (Bateman, 2008; Bateman, Delin & Henschel, 2007) compare the design of online newspaper home pages with the front pages of their print editions. Their methodology draws on genre theory and systemic functional semiotic theory (SFS - see Chapter 3), as well as the information design approach of Waller (e.g. 1982, 1985). Bateman, Delin & Henschel (2007) demonstrate that online newspaper home pages vary in the extent to which they are similar or different to the front pages of their print editions. While the conventions of newspaper design have been shared between authors and audiences over centuries, the conventions of online newspaper design are still emerging and in a state of relative flux.

Constraints set by production processes and the medium of the world wide web are related to limitations in the design of online newspaper pages, which
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According to Bateman (2008) and Bateman, Delin & Henschel (2007), is less ‘multidimensional’ than the design of their print counterparts (see Chapter 7). Techniques historically employed to differentiate news in print (increasing the number of columns, using different headline sizes and fonts) are constrained by the size and resolution of screens, which restricts the possibilities available to the authors of online newspapers in designing the news (Bateman, Delin & Henschel, 2007). Online newspaper pages are also forced to dedicate a large portion of their space to navigation (and a much larger portion that print newspapers) given the nature of web pages (see Chapter 5).

Bateman and colleagues argue that “the properties of the online newspaper align with very different sets of co-generic texts than might have originally been thought on the basis of its informal classification as a ‘newspaper’” (Bateman, 2008, p. 181). Or, in other words: “Whatever else it is - a dictionary, an encyclopedia, a library, a card catalog, a data network - an electronic newspaper is not a map” (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001, p. 297). This has fundamental implications for researchers in the way that genres are identified and classified, for readers in the kinds of ‘interpretive schemes’ they bring to reading such texts, but also broader social implications in terms of the social functions of online newspapers and how these functions are realised.

Like Bateman and colleagues, Paganoni (2008) draws on studies in SFS (see Chapter 3) in her study of the Al Jazeera website. Rather than comparing print versus online, Paganoni provides a descriptive analysis comparing the English and Arabic websites of Al Jazeera in order to consider the teaching of critical understanding of
Chapter Two: Newspapers

new media in higher education. She concludes in part that “the entire site works as a metaphor for a transnational pan-Arab identity translated for a global market, an identity which is arguably more imagined than real” (p. 345). She argues for the importance of a multimodal perspective in analysing news discourse, and in teaching language learners how to read and use multimodal texts.

While not directly comparing print front pages with online home pages from the same newspapers, Cooke (2003) uses grounded theory methodology to identify historical developments in the visual presentation of news across media. She argues that print front pages, television news presentation, and news website home pages (including those of online newspapers) show a long-term trend towards more ‘modular’ designs, and a ‘visual convergence’ of different kinds of media.

On newspaper front pages and news website home pages, modules departmentalize information and increase the number of points of entry. On television, modules afford viewers simultaneous access to different types of information. This visual convergence, like the previous information design trends that emerged from a culture of information acceleration, reinforces the dynamic relationships that exist between media. (Cooke, 2003, p. 176)

Overall, it is apparent from the literature that the design of news in online newspapers draws on the history of news design from their print counterparts - hardly surprising given the consistency in institutional practices between print and online. At the same time, there are differences in the production processes and the medium of online newspapers when compared to print, and these are leading to differences in the practices of news workers, in the design of online newspapers when compared to print, and in the way readers use these texts. Online news - in its infancy and in a state of flux - is still developing a visual character independent of print news, something to
be expected given that newspaper institutions have been producing newsprint for centuries, and websites for barely 15 years.

2.5.3 Newspapers on screen: Conclusion

Online newspapers have been studied using a range of methodological approaches, in order to address a wide range of questions. Online newspapers are a development of print newspapers in a number of ways. They have grown out of the newsrooms and institutional practices of print newspapers, and the photographers, journalists, editors, and other news workers who produce them have taken their corresponding roles in the production of news print as their starting point. Newsrooms and news production practices are changing, and with them the complex relations between news authors, news audiences, and the texts that mediate these relations, including the visual design of these texts.

2.6 Newspapers: Conclusion

Newspapers are an important and powerful social institution, and have grown into this social role over three-and-a-half centuries. Social and technological developments associated with the emergence of the internet and the world wide web have led to a situation where the social function of print newspapers is in flux, and a new and suddenly ubiquitous kind of text - the online newspaper - has emerged.

Online newspapers are related socially, institutionally, and textually to their print counterparts, but as a relatively new genre in a relatively new medium, their
social functions and discursive practices are still emerging, and therefore relatively unstable at this point of their evolution.

Researchers have studied online newspapers from a range of perspectives, and studies examining their visual design have documented textual practices and reader behaviours, and explored the social significance of the emerging visual discourse of online newspapers.

The current study aims to contribute to this body of work by applying the theoretical tools of social semiotics to the analysis of online newspapers. This theoretical approach has been widely employed in the study of the language of newspapers, but its application to the visual discourse of newspapers has been more limited. Some studies of online newspapers have applied social semiotic theory, but have either drawn on this theory to inform the development of a related analytical framework (Bateman, 2008; Bateman, Delin & Henschel, 2007), or have been relatively limited in their scale, scope, and findings (Paganoni, 2008).

The strength of applying the analytical tools of social semiotics is that they require the researcher to ground their analysis (and therefore their interpretations and explanations) empirically, socially, and theoretically. For this reason, social semiotics - a theory which accounts for text, social context, and the systematic relations between them - can make an important contribution to the study of online newspapers, adding to the body of knowledge as developed from the research perspectives reviewed above. This theoretical and methodological approach, as applied to
researching the three online newspapers in this study, is outlined in the following sections.