Fortress or haven? Institutions for future media
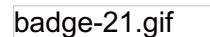
blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2009/01/22/fortress-or-haven-institutions-for-future-media/

badge-21.gif   Here at the Oxford Media Convention you have a bunch of people from a variety of media institutions arguing about how to preserve or change them.

I think this misunderstands future media flows, but it's a start.

Some like the FT's John Lloyd continue to see the virtue of institutions that have tradition, skills capital and public power. He does not want to see those walls breached.

Others like the BBC's Peter Horrocks accepts that we can no longer think in terms of what he called 'fortresses'. Of course, Peter values journalistic ethics and quality as much as any other hack. But he recognises that the BBC will have to become a partner for everyone from local newspapers to Channel 4.

And he also seems to realise – witness the BBC's incorporation of user generated content – that the public are now part of the process, not just consumers of what we choose to give them.

Of course, it may be easier for the BBC with its public funding and its dominance in the market to be so gracious. But accepting an end to the fortress mentality of competing with 'rival' journalists is just the start of the process.

Competition is vital for good journalism. Watch hacks competing to get scoops, watch rival news crews racing to get story first, watch journalists catching each other out when they lie. Competition and the free market in ideas and opinions can only be secured through diversity and plurality.

How do you reconcile that with collaboration between media outlets? How do you preserve the watchdog role if you are sponsored by the local authority?

I don't think any of this is insurmountable. The BBC itself is, of course, a state funded organisation that manages to mantain its independence and credibility.

Go here to listen to podcasts and get transcripts of the Oxford Media Convention including audio of the panel I spoke on.