Anthony Lilley: Paying Attention: the changing value of media in the Internet age

This is where I wander out and let down that introduction. Thank you very much. It's great to be back at Bournemouth, this time with a Professor's hat on. It's especially great to have one of my first mentors in the room, Roger Laughton, who was the first person who got me down the train tracks from Waterloo, so it's nice to be back Roger, years later, and thank you for the first invitation and thank you for the invitation this evening.

If you haven't read your homework, the tiny, tiny illegible writing up there, I'll read it for you. The title and the sort of topic of the lecture is essentially about attention and about how getting people to pay for attention is kind of the pivotal question for the media industries going forwards and broadly speaking how some of them are reacting to that challenge and how others are taking it more easily in their stride. This is the first, this is the inaugural, so it's got to be the first lecture, so I suspect it will be more full of questions than it is of answers, which makes a pretty good model and a pretty good reflection of my professional and daily life, particularly as the father of two children under three, for whom the question 'Why?' is now absolutely paramount.

So I started, on this slide here, defining the word 'attention', or I didn't, William James, who is the author of the kind of default book about psychology for undergraduates did, which is the tiny writing that you can't read. So it says everyone knows what attention is, it's the taking possession, by the mind, in clear and vivid form of one out of what seem several, simultaneous possible objects or trains of thought. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others. And it is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state, which in French is called distraction and zes stroiheight[ph] in German.

If you now think I'm even slightly clever because I managed to read that out and it was .. it had some French and some German in it, what you should know is that's the top of the article in Wikipedia when you type in 'attention'. So what made me look a bit clever to my Dad actually was really easy, because it just involved typing into a search engine the word 'attention'.

What made me slightly less doltish than perhaps I am, is the ability to decide that that was a relevant quote for my speech. So most of this evening's going to be about how you know useful things from not useful things, how you know valid things from invalid things and then how you try and decide what you should pay attention to. Because actually it's dead easy to get a quote from William James, it's actually really easy to get one from Preust, I'm quite fond of chucking a Preust quote on the screen. I didn't make it past the second paragraph of 'Alle Research de Tomperdu'[ph]. I'm not expecting to any time soon, but if I want to look clever, it's dead easy to get Preust out to do it for me.

The skills we need going forward and the skills that media companies need are about understanding where attention is allocated, why it's allocated there and what to do to try and create what you might call 'attention traps'. Some bits of the media know how to do that better than others.

So, what is this paying attention idea about? Well paying attention is about choices. Most of what I'm going to talk about this evening, which will range lightly across bits of economics that I've picked up at the Regulator at Offcom, where often economics is a kind of .. is it a religion? It's a dismal science definitely, sometimes it's a religion. So I will range across a bit of economics through to things I actually know something about from bitter experience of mainly getting them wrong as a professional in the media, through to some things I really care about like learning, like actually, of all things, art and creativity.

But I'm going to start with choices. To pay attention you've got to make choices and choices are based on information and based upon what's presented in front of you. Not of all them, sometimes you just react, sometimes you don't think about things at all, but, in the context of media, most choices are based on some kind of information. We'll talk a lot about what I think are misreadings of the place of information, the importance of information, in our society, and particularly about some people I'm going to call information fundamentalists, who are the people at the more geeky end of the spectrum that I work with, who believe if you just have enough information, good things will necessarily result.

Now there's a great history of these kind of technological Utopianists. If you read a book called 'The Victorian Internet' by Tom Standish about the arrival of telegraph, you will read wonderful pronouncements about how the ability to communicate more quickly was going to end all war, when, in fact, it just made it a great deal more efficient to decide where you should send your troops, which is not quite what the Utopians thought.

And the problem about that is that technologies are used by people. Choices are made by people. Of course they are. Unfortunately we don't behave in a terribly rational way quite a lot of the time and we seldom use technologies for what the inventors originally envisaged. But that doesn't stop information fundamentalism. And it doesn't stop the valid and measurable rise of information. We've heard for ages 'the information society', 'the networked economy', these kind of jargon phrases that you hear a great deal about, the world we now live in, the digital world of information that surrounds us. And we've heard about those topics, essentially, from a sort of category of people who are, predominantly, selling a vision of the future. But it doesn't make some of these things untrue.

My phrase for the internet this evening, I'm not going to use it a lot, will be to describe it as the ultimate copying machine. Everything the internet does is about creating copies. Your email is copied multiple times between when you press 'Send' and the microsecond, or however long it is, that it takes to arrive in your computer. Every file that is shared across the internet is copied, multiply, perfectly, in something approaching real time and in something approaching no marginal cost, zero marginal cost. What we've invented is the perfect copying machine to a large extent and the perfect copying machine wouldn't be any use if it wasn't good at spreading copies around the place. What we haven't yet understood is the implications of the perfect copying machine for the old way of doing things, or, some people have understood it and some people are grappling with it at the moment.

The second thing we're grappling with, I believe, is a shift from a world in which the power of distribution, the power of creation, lies with and lay with large groups, large organisations, to a position now where, as a creator of media, I think about what I call

the focus group of one, the one person, the person formerly known as the audience, a member of that group who is turning up at my website, playing my game, interacting with my proposition, my work, in some shape or form. The reason that I think about them is because the internet isn't made up of audiences that turn up at 7.30 every Tuesday, it doesn't respect time, it doesn't respect geography, and so every user, every person arriving, reacts individually to my work. That didn't matter so much when they were consuming media work. It matters a great deal when they're making choices based on information about what to do with it. Most web pages that I make, and I've made hundreds of millions of them in my career now, are seen by almost nobody for almost no time at all. That's quite a levelling notion as a creative. Most people turn up to most websites and what they're looking for is the next thing to do to allow them to leave. That's very, very different to a notion of keeping people embedded within a linear story. It's very different from my original world working with the theatre where generally speaking the act of departing is quite a big statement. The act of departing a website is a default thing, it's what you do. And creating in that space is a very difficult and a very different place to creating in the linear spaces, which are, by the way, just as difficult, but in different ways. What I'm driving at here is that the skills of one are not necessarily transferable to the other. The good news is that just about anybody under 28, 29, doesn't see the difference between those two things in any case and therefore will be shortly taking over jobs like mine and that's great news as long as I can retire before that happens.

The group of people who believe this stuff more than anything are the people I've referred to already, the information fundamentalist. People who believe that if there's just more stuff, if there's more information, if there's more computing power, it will automatically result in better societies, in better life, in better experience.

Now I may just not be able to do the maths here, I may just not be able to think on the long term, but I read a bit of science fiction and I read a lot of other things and I can foresee a conceptual world in which we have sentient machines and conscious computers, I can foresee all that stuff, kind of hoping to be long dead before we get there. But I can't see the maths that far, I'm not good enough at that. I'm in this kind of bridging world, as I believe we all are, between messy, irrational, complicated people and messy, irrational, complicated information. I don't believe that we have

anything approaching the information networks that we will have. I don't believe we have anything approaching the search and discovery capabilities that we will have. Google are fond of saying they think they've cracked search maybe 5%. I think they'd be lucky if it's that much as time goes on. So search and discovery are big challenges.

And I come back to information. The reason I don't believe this idea that just the more information the better, is that I was brought up by one of my other mentors in the room, Professor Stephen Heppel, to believe that there were different categories of information. There was data, which is just basic stuff, and there's masses of that around, exobites of it, billions of gigabites of it around. But data only became useful when you put it in some form of context where it made sense to you and then it became information. It informed you in some shape or form. Data isn't valuable, date is just noisy. I once said, I was once asked by a journalist 'What do you think about the fact that the BBC says it has two million websites?' and I said I thought that was a curse not a boast. Way too much stuff with no relevance isn't that beneficial.

Information, however, has some value to me because I can do things with it and then it allows me to try and turn it into knowledge. And if I'm really, really lucky, to turn knowledge into wisdom. Wikipedia's great for information. The decision to choose that quote is in someway about knowledge. If it turns out to be enlightening in some shape or form in a few years time, it might turn out that there was some tiny grain of wisdom in there. I'm not saying there is yet, but who can tell.

So these notions that information and data have values embedded within them are really important to me, because they're what I base the decisions I make creatively on, they're what I base the people I work with on, people who see these kind of distinctions.

Go back to the information fundamentalists for a little while. It's really, really easy to see the theory of information and the completeness that the internet appears to give to some kinds of information. But actually the internet is mainly holes. The internet is mainly stuff you don't find. Google is mainly a list of hundreds of millions of search results that are not of interest to you, with some that are marginally less not of interest

to you at the top. It's not in any way a system for finding, it's a system for searching. There's a very important difference between finding and searching.

Finding, at the moment, mainly involves human beings and a bit of searching. You're much more likely to find something of interest if you're friend tells you it's interesting than just by randomly searching Google, or if it's socially bookmarked for whatever it is. And at the moment we're in this blended space and I think the moment is going to last quite a long time.

But that doesn't stop information theories, it doesn't stop theories of all kinds. It doesn't stop the information fundamentalists and it doesn't stop this thing, which I'm going to call 'the curse of neatness', the idea that you can have a theory, a kind of straightforward little theory that will explain this incredibly complicated environment, any more, for instance, than it's turning out, or maybe would be wrong, but maybe it's not turning out and you'd have something called 'the efficient market's hypothesis'. That you could explain stock markets in this rather simplistic way that said 'Well as long as everybody has perfect information, you can never beat the market and there can't be a boom or a bust because we'll all have perfect information.' This came out of the Chicago School of Economists in the '70s, since when we know they may not turn out to be as right as they thought they were. Markets just don't work like that, because they've very much more complicated than the simplistic neat theory.

Media's the same. It's not Marshall McClewan[ph]. Marshall McClewan[ph] is drawing a rough map, fifty years ago nearly, of what the eco system might now look like. You've got to realign the experiment every day on the internet that tells you what the market, what the media environment does increasingly look like.

So over-simplification is the enemy here. Trying to get a sort of all-encompassing theory that, along the lines of the 'efficient markets hypothesis', might work for a little while, but in the end I think it's more helpful to think about the issues and to be reflexive about them, to be conscious of them.

So let's kill a few of the media buzz words that float around the place, including in some of the text books. 'Martini media'. Who's heard of 'Martini media'? OK, a

few people. ‘Martini media’ is a kind of voguish term thrown around by predominantly people from broadcasters who kind of have children who’ve been on the internet. And it’s a belief that you’ll just have all media, any time, any place, anywhere. The people over sort of 35 in the room now understand why it’s called ‘Martini media’. Everybody else is going ‘What’s that about?’. It was a drink called Martini, there still is a drink called Martini, it comes in terrible bottles or it’s mixed very expensively by bartenders, and there was advertising campaign with Joan Collins, is that right? With Joan Collins, who was a soap star, that’s a kind of actress, just keep going for a minute. And this was the catch phrase: ‘Any time, any place, anywhere’, which I always thought was a bit optimistic. Martini, six a.m., just got up, bacon sandwich, Martini. It was always struck me as being a bit of a strange idea in any case. This is kind of one of the great sort of .. this is supposed to indicate that you understand the way the media is going if you’re from a traditional media industry.

The only problem with it is, it’s arrant nonsense. Because you don’t want the same media any time, any place, anywhere, because it doesn’t match what you’re doing. It makes a lot of sense if you’re distributing media because it’s a great deal better than no time, no place, nowhere, which is the alternative. But it doesn’t make much sense as a user. Do you really want to have whatever’s being pumped out of a commercial television channel, on your phone, just at the same time it’s being pumped out, because that makes sense for the television channel, or do you want the thing you want? I want the thing I want, something straightforward. So it’s another sort of over-simplification. This idea that just getting technology to be able to take media onto any platform is necessarily good for users. I’ve lost count of the number of mobile TV trials there’ve been. The amount of companies that have tried to make these things work just because the technology can do it. ‘Martini media’ doesn’t really help.

Third one, almost every technological guru you’ll read, reads way too much science fiction and believes it. But they believe in it as a place, as an end point, when I think most science fiction, good science fiction, is incredibly informative about the kind of journey we might be on. It’s not really an end point. I’m not that good at physics but ‘The Matrix’ seems quite unlikely in the near future. But it tells you quite a lot of useful things about the way in which networks and human societies might be going.

Actually, if you want to read stuff that is kind of informative, read the work of Cory Doctoro[ph] who's a sort of technological thinker and science fiction writer, who actually works in the technology world now, or obviously William Gibson, these sorts of guys. But don't think that they're trying to describe the world in 2040 or 2050, they're trying to describe aspects of the direction of travel the world might be going in. In fact, many of the good ones are satirists, in the same way that Jonathon Swift was a satirist. They're not trying to describe it, they're trying to undermine our direction of travel, by pointing out some of the things that we don't know or some of the things that are ridiculous about what we're doing. But actually quite a lot of technological people believe science fiction. And that's OK. It just doesn't help much in the long run I don't think. That's facetious, that part, by the way, obviously.

The other thing that worries me is over-simplification again. What somebody else, not me, called 'information Newtonism', believing that the world is, in fact, as simple as Newton's description of physics, when, in fact, the eco-system in media is more like 'The Chaos Theory' of Mandel Brode[ph] or 'The Quantum Theory' of Einstein. I'm at that end and I don't understand any of the physics, but I know it's more complicated than when it used to be when you made a television programme, distribute it through television channels and people watched it on a Saturday night, some of the time, it's more complicated than that. So in trying to find simplistic is worrying.

So another great example of simplicity is what Nicholas Negraponti[ph] in being digital, one of the kind of founding texts of 'My World', 1994, Stephen, something like that? Negraponti[ph] is a professor at MIT, what he called the divide between bits and atoms, or I'm going to call it 'bits and bricks', this idea that there were completely separate domains, there was digital and there was non-digital. Well actually I think you start with the person, you start with the individual. There are never separate domains, there are things you do, some of which are digital, some of which are not digital and many of which span the two spaces at a time.

So I went crawling Wikipedia again like you do for these sorts of things, or like I do. So you see you can be a professor and look on Wikipedia to stuff students, it's good.

I went crawling Wikipedia again to try and find sort of ideas around this duality between real life and information and I found Bertram Russell, the philosopher, who said .. he was defining work, which I thought was kind of helpful. Work is of two kinds. First, altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface, relative to other such matter, moving stuff about. Second, telling other people to do so. Information is telling other people to do so. Bits are moving stuff about.

Clearly there are distinctions between these two things, but do they hold up in the digital world as much as the kind of simplicity of that theory might suggest. For the reasons I've said previously, I don't think they do, because I think, as human beings, we interact seamlessly between those two spaces. Ten minutes before I came on I was on Skype with my children, my three year old daughter in fact, who said, earlier on in the day 'Daddy I need to talk to you later on' because she had to show me something she'd made at pre-school or whatever it was, and I said 'Well I'll phone you' and she said 'No, I like to Skype because I can see you, it's better.' Which of those .. don't say ah! Although the audience did at the time actually because she was on the screen. Which of those is information and which of those is not? She's bringing the real world of observable evidence, looking at stuff, into the digital world. She can't see that distinction. At three she wouldn't see that distinction, I suspect, in any case, but she'll never see that distinction in the way that anybody in this room does. It will just not be real for her.

And I'm not sure it's as real as we think it is. Is there really a battle or a dichotomy between stuff and information, or not? Well, I think, for providers of information it suits them quite often to perpetuate the idea that there is. That you can have either a DVD or a download. You can have either a newspaper or a website. I think that's over-simplification again. The fundamental thing for me, and I'll come back to this later, is you need what you need to deliver something of value to you as a user or a participant at that moment. Sometimes, as this morning, that will be a book to read in the bath and sometimes that will be a much vaunted and imminent Apple book reading tablet or whatever it is or an i-Phone. By the way that's a phone of course, it's controlling the presentation. When did that happen? Phones just became things that did things, about two years ago, didn't they.

So for providers of content, particularly, they like the idea that there's a battle between these two things. Mainly because it kind of often reflects their own companies. There often is a battle between the guys in DVDs and the guys in downloading, the download department, because one of them, DVDs, currently makes more money than the other one and therefore has more sway in the institution. But actually everybody knows that if they don't start to collaborate and think collectively, in the end, all their revenues will fall away. It doesn't stop them arguing amongst themselves, perpetuating this false idea.

Because for you as the focus group of one, do you care whether it's stuff or information? You care deeply when it's relevant. You don't care if it's just the most efficient way for a distributor to send you content. It's vastly cheaper, as you know, for Netflicks or one of those DVD rental companies to send you a DVD in the post than it is to allow you to download it. At this point in time it is cheaper for them to do the post, although, of course, it might never arrive, it is cheaper for them to do that. So amazingly enough they perpetuate that model until it makes sense for them to flip for the information model, because the cost of shipping that data will be too high. I don't think it's anything like simply, anything like that's simple but there is a dichotomy, a balance, an argument between bits and bricks. It just seems too simple.

And why? Well they're coming back in again because people mess up the theory. We just don't behave rationally about these things. We are essentially irrational more than we like to think we are. That's not bad. It just happens to be more true than the theorists would believe. It doesn't make a lot of sense to keep books at home on shelves when you have read them and will never read them again. It is an irrational act to have your own private library. It doesn't make it wrong or valueless, just not rational. And I think I've two or three thousand books. I would count up in this room, there will be many, many hundreds of thousands of books between us, but that is an irrational thing to do.

In the context, if it happens, of being able to download every book that's available. Why would you need to keep them? Because they're not just about the information in the books, they remind me of where I was when I read them, they do something wonderful, which is tell people that I've read loads of books, when they come to my

house. They do something rather interesting, when people .. whether it's actually games as well works like that for me, they do something about starting conversations. It used to be albums in the day of some of us in the room. Actually, not me, it was CDs even for me. But they have social value, they have value as social signifiers that steps beyond their rational and functional capabilities.

In a way what we're seeing is a start of a kind of utilitarian argument about things should be useful against an age old argument with things should be valuable, and sometimes value comes from usefulness. You can John Stuart Mill and Lichtenstein a hundred years ago having that .. well not quite a hundred years ago, eighty years ago having that debate still, Mill would be dead, clearly. Lichtenstein would less so, although equally as incomprehensible to most of us.

The other reason people mess it up is, we're ignorant. We know almost nothing of everything there is to be known. And how would we make these incredible judgments based on the idea that we have perfect information about things. Nobody has perfect information. And even if you did you would have it for such a tiny amount of time before circumstances changed, then it would be imperfect again. This is obvious stuff that we don't have these kind of simplistic, these elements of the simplistic that can make the theories work.

But there's one real problem. The book of the year, for me, was a book called 'The Origin of Wealth' by a writer called Erik Beinhoffer[ph], which is about economics. And it's specifically about a branch of economics called 'evolutionary economics' or 'complexity economics'. And Beinhoffer's[ph] thesis is that we've been misled by the classical economic theory that has been around for so long because it's just more complicated than that. So that's kind of it really. It's just too interconnected, complex and what he calls reflexive. One thing happens which affects another thing, which affects another thing, which affects another. Reflexivity is the core tenet of George Sorris's[ph] writing, the multi-billionaire financier and actually of one of the phase writings about making vast sums of money. They understand the idea that markets are very complex and somehow in some form of necromancy they can ride them. But they don't try to over-simplify them.

The media space is like this now. It's complex. It's self-reflexive. Things feed on each other. Ideas feed on each other. Content feeds on content around the network. It isn't this simple, you feed it in, a thing happens, you get a result. I'm not sure it ever was. But it's been described that way for so long. That's Einstein against Newton. Complexity against the over-simplified model.

And I love the fact that it is irrational, that we are ignorant and that there is complexity. Thank goodness for that I'd say, because if it wasn't, I suspect, we wouldn't have any art. I'm fairly sure we wouldn't learn very much and I'm absolutely positive we'd have no adventure or fun. These are the variables. These are the exciting, confusing things that makes it worth being here. Lichtenstein and Mill again.

And actually even markets can be seen to prove that these theories don't work. If markets are just really efficient and they're just about information and the exchange of information, confidence wouldn't matter. Now I've just become involved with a PLC for the first time in my life, a floated company. Confidence matters a lot. What people think about you is actually vastly more important it seems to your stock price than what you do all day. Confidence matters a great deal. Exuberance, when stocks get over excited or over pessimistic, that wouldn't matter. And irrationality wouldn't matter. Alan Greenspam[ph] the former Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, said in a previous mini blast as it turned out, that the markets had got irrationally exuberant about .com, about investing in the internet. Well if they are logical beasts of information, they can't be confident, exuberant or irrational. And yet, whenever they go wrong, they're described as over-exuberant or irrationally exuberant. And logically therefore you couldn't have booms and busts, which is clearly evidenced very well by recent history.

And what about content? If content was so simple, if content was all there was to media, just getting the idea from my brain to yours, that would be dead easy. Why would we bother with theatres, because I could just tell you the story, it would be straightforward. We bother with theatres because of the shared experience amongst people in a room. You bother with theatres because you, as individual members of the audience, can make your decision about what you want to focus on, what you

want to pay attention to. You don't just go to the theatre to find out the ending. Or, if you do, let me tell you you're missing a few bits about theatre.

What about cinemas? I was once asked by an MP, and obviously not a paragon of intellectual rigour, how long cinemas had got. And this was on a .. I was actually giving evidence at a Teleknathy[ph]. And he said 'You know about this new technology stuff, how long have cinemas got?' And sort of the question made its way into my head eventually and I thought 'I've no idea what he's talking about.' And he said 'Well because now we've all got plasma screens, enormous plasma screens in our homes and surround sound systems. How long have cinemas got? You don't need cinemas. We've got brilliant pictures, brilliant sound.' And I had a moment of what they call esprit de scallia[ph] which is when you don't think of the right thing to say at the time, but you think of it on the way down the stairs, esprit de scallia[ph], on the way out, which is I wanted to say to him 'Have you got a kitchen? Do you ever go to restaurants? Why the hell have you got a kitchen then?' Because he was doing this sort of techno-Utopian thing. Because the technology is great, of course, that will delete out the alternative which was seen as going to the cinema. I go to the cinema, when I go, to sit in a room of five hundred people getting thrilled or laughing or whatever it is, and probably because the screen's that bit bigger, because not many of us actually have screens that big, although, of course, I'm not claiming them on my expenses so who can tell what size his plasma screen was.

But generally though it's a social thing, it's a human thing, it's a messy thing. It's about popcorn. It's about snogging at the back. It is also about the film. This kind of functionalist perspective doesn't help, just the information in the film. What happens in '2012'? Did the Olympics happen in spite of the fact that the entire world is collapsing in that film? I don't know.

If content was rational, if media was rational, can anybody in the room explain John and Edward to me? Because if it was all about the experience of the content, if it was all about the experience of, let's be honest, absolutely anything at all, apart from the fact that the British love taking the piss out of Simon Cowell and love an underdog and love subverting things that feel self-important and have confused 'X Factor' with 'Britain's Got Talent', which I think is probably pretty fair, because you tell me the

difference between Stavros Flatly and John and Edward apart from the fact that they're on the wrong programme. But whichever ones of those it is, you don't get John and Edwards in professorial lectures very often, I hope, it's not about just the stuff they're getting across, the idea, the content. Whatever we're doing, we're doing it as a society or as individuals about them at least as much as encountering what they're doing.

And for me that's because it's not about content. Where we are now is not about content, it's about experiences that you have, that I have, as a viewer, as a game player, as a participant, as somebody singing in a choir. They've invented a big participatory singing project the BBC are doing at the moment, trying to get five hundred scratch choirs to sing the 'Hallelujah Chorus', using the internet, but singing it in real life. It's about experiences. And experiences, for me, and this is only for me, have value when they're personal, when they're meaningful, i.e. when they make some sense for me, when they add something to my life, and that's because I need to value them in one form or another.

And that is a personal decision. It's a personal set of circumstances. It isn't something that I will share with everybody. These are characteristics that some media will sometimes bring together large numbers of people around, and we'll come back in a while to the overblown debt of television. It's a pretty odd medium where fourteen million are watching the 'X Factor'. It's an odd dying medium if fourteen million are watching it on a Saturday and Sunday night. Television's not going anywhere in some ways but it's going totally down the drain in others and as soon as we understand the difference, people in telly might have a chance. But it's about these things, more often than not, that are personal and valuable to me. I suspect many of you watch the 'X Factor' for different reasons to the reasons that I watch the 'X Factor' and that is the way that media consumption and the reading of media experiences always have been.

The difference for me now is that we're moving from a position where most of us were essentially in a rationed environment of media, a situation where media was relatively scarce, to the situation we're now in where it is almost ubiquitous. There is so much media around us that the onus is shifting from waiting to be fed media,

gratefully waiting, with the curtains closed for Queen Elizabeth the II's Coronation or an episode of 'Dr Who'. There was an episode of Dr Who, Andrew's in the room and he knows a bit about 'Dr Who', I worked on 'Dr Who' last year for a while, there's an episode of 'Dr Who' in Series 2 or 3 with Maureen Lipman .. you're going to tell me which now .. in the new series with Maureen Lipman who infects the nation's televisions on the day of the Queen's Coronation and takes over the televisions. You do know don't you? 'The Idiot's Lantern', thank you. I don't know whether to be proud or ashamed that you know that. Actually I know which, I don't have to be because I didn't know that. 'The Idiot's Lantern', and on the day in 1953 of the Coronation when this whole episode takes place.

Well actually, the thing I found most interesting about it talking to the children, teenage children and youngish children of friends, was that they were completely mystified by the idea that people would gather round a television programme. Utterly confused them. And people did. That's one of my Dad's sort of early experiences of television. They had the first coloured TV in the street. People came and watched TV in their room. It just doesn't have that draw. It doesn't have that mythos. It doesn't have that history. What we do now, instead of waiting for it to be fed, is sometimes it is so enormous, the next Coronation of the Queen, well it will be a King, of a King in this country probably will be bigger than the last in numerical numbers watching television. By a country mile it will be bigger than the last. But that's because it will be .. the characteristics of that event will be so big and unmissable and we'll come back to this a little bit later, but television will be one of the only ways to do them justice.

But actually, for most of us, most of our media consumption is about searching out content. It's about seeking out experiences in our lives, on line, on TV, at the Library, at the football, travelling. We're empowered increasingly to find these things for ourselves. We are doing the filtering. We, as users, as people formerly known as the audience, we're doing the filtering now and that's a very different balance from where we were.

One of the great ironies of information is economics, which is what this discipline is called, is that while information can be trivially copied and information bandwidth

continues to widen, the individual's attention span or bandwidth is as narrow as ever. It's not strictly true in the mathematical sense of how many bits of media can you be present at simultaneously. There's some fascinating research, in fact which Professor Hepple was involved in, into how much you can pay attention to. The way we spread and direct our attention is changing. You might well be looking at a twitter stream, surfing the web, radio on in the background, television happening etc., but actually what you'll be doing is switching more quickly, because you've only got one focal point. And that's not me, that's the human brain. There are things you can do to improve your background processing capability, but you'll only have one focal point of attention and the key thing is to decide what you don't watch, what you don't listen to, in that context.

And in that environment choices are really, really important. Because, in an information rich world as somebody called Mr Simon said in 1971, the wealth of information means a dearth of something else, a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes. What information consumes is rather obvious. It consumes the attention of its recipient. Hence, a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the over abundance of information sources that might consume it. There's too much stuff.

And that leads us to the position I think we're in today. As we shift from a situation of scarcity of information to abundance of information there are essentially two challenges in the digital age for media professionals and for us as media consumers. Polar challenges. Opposite ends of the spectrum. Finding and being found. And finding and being found are essentially descriptions of the getting and giving or the giving and getting to be strictly correct of attention. Not search. Not channels. It's finding and being found.

Almost every film ever made is watched by almost nobody. Almost every magazine that's ever printed is read by almost nobody and is known about by almost nobody on the ground scheme of things. Your biggest problem as a creator is not how to make your stuff seen by everybody, it is how to avoid it being seen by nobody. It is a levelling fact of life.

In a simple system it wasn't like that. In a simple system, let's go back to the 1950s and television, attention was quite straightforward. What you had was a situation in which Ed Morrow, the legendary journalist, said 'Just because your voice reaches halfway around the world, doesn't mean you are wiser than when it reached only to the end of bar.' Television could do that. It could amplify you in that way. Television sometimes still can do that, it can amplify people in that way. But actually, just because you had a strangle hold on the distribution or the production, didn't necessarily mean you had things worth saying. Just because twenty eight million people watched 'Morecambe and Wise', Christmas Day 1977, doesn't mean there was nothing they could conceivably watching better, it just means there wasn't a lot else on. It doesn't denigrate from Morecambe and Wise, but it isn't the same as the environment now.

Now some people immediately leap here and say 'Well that means loud media, big media, they're dead.' Well that's nonsense. In fact if anything, right now loudness is more important than ever. If you're in a big media, if you're in television, the most important thing you can be right now is noticed. If you're loud, loudness is more important than it ever has been. If you own the rights to Formula One, the price of them is going up. If you own the rights to the Premiership Football, the price is going up. If you create a massive hit drama, not so much like The Wire because it was a niche hit drama, but a major drama that hits around the world, or a format like the 'X Factor', I encountered Simon Fuller, one of the people behind the 'X Factor', the other day, they're suggesting it's worth a billion dollars a year now. The value of successful loud things is much greater than it ever has been, because they're more global, they're more instantaneous, they spread across more platforms, you can get money out of them in other ways. Loudness, if anything, is more important than ever.

But the problem is, it turns out, the longer stuff we thought was important, just turns out to have been loud. There's no real scarcity in programmes to fill the gap between mid-day and 3 p.m. Go and look at the schedule of ITV or Channel 4 and then look at the schedule of the same channels in the 1970s. Some of the same programmes are showing up in those dead quiet gaps. It doesn't mean you can't make loud, wonderful, things for those spaces, but maybe they're not valuable enough, maybe

they're not turning up enough cash. Maybe quite a lot of the problem with television is there's too much of it rather than it's not good enough.

But that's a difficult thing to say to someone from television. It's also something that's difficult to say to somebody from newspapers, particularly from the tabloids. We'll come on to, briefly, Rupert Murdoch's announcement about putting pay walls up around newspapers in a little while. I was briefly News International Professor of Media at another university. There's nothing to say about that, I just was. And they didn't want to hear this argument. They just didn't want to hear anything about this stuff. And they still don't. And that's fine.

Sucker[ph], NBC Universal, one of the biggest names in television, he said 'Google was built on the power of math', I think he meant maths, maths and algorithms. I think he's American. 'NBC is built on brilliant programming. Both are compelling models, but I don't think Google's model is as powerful as Viacom, blah, blah, and as the market would have you believe.' There's one minor problem with that. It's total nonsense. It's trying to compares apples with oranges. It's like saying 'Ah well actually, the water companies who distribute water, which is a necessity of life, have a different model to NBC, but NBC is better.' At what? It's not the same thing. That's not say there is no value in NBC, if you watch 30 Rock or watch some of the other things that come out of NBC, you know that they create incredible television from time to time. But to compare it against Google is to take the place, is to take the wrong point in the argument and then just get it completely wrong. It just doesn't work, that argument. Because Google doesn't do what television does.

And there's a lot of this around at the moment. Unnecessarily urgent, in my view, quite often. What the theorists call 'last gasp theory'. Just as a technology is reaching its end, it turns out to be quite good at being what it was good at. Just as everybody is worrying about the death of television, some people focus on making great television. There's some great television around the place and there will continue to be great television around the place. Its last gasp theory.

Surely much better to focus on doing what you were brilliant at well, than trying to do the alternative, which is what, for instance, the music industry did for quite a long

time, which is to take your old way of operating and bring it into the new world, for instance, by trying to re-introduce scarcity. Once music got free, once we could just download music, once it became something that was on the network, you were never going to win by trying to re-introduce the idea that you would put Digital Rights Management, DRM, onto music and it would be very, very hard to download that, because you were up against something for which it was not very, very hard to download. And before you know it, it takes a technologist in Steve Joss of Apple to bang the music industry's heads and get them to remove DRM, get them to remove that only plays on your i-Pod, can only be transferred to a CD by somebody who's got a PhD in Law to read the thing that comes with it that is the click legals and all that other stuff. That's not going with the direction of consumer travel. That was trying to re-introduce scarcity. Re-introduce scarcity around a product where the value was no longer in the physical distribution of a DVD or a CD. It's somewhere else and we'll come back to that.

And we've got somebody doing it at the moment. Mr Murdoch's touching belief .. I shouldn't say that, that's terribly rude isn't it .. in the value of his product. I buy it for movies. I buy it for high value content, financial content. Briefly I buy it for exclusive content and we'll come back to some of the other categories later. I don't buy it for a picture of Katie Price coming out of a nightclub, that picture will be available wherever shortly. Only if you've got products which, generally speaking, have some aspects of units around them can you put up a wall and ask people to pay round it. People are not going to die in a ditch to pay for The Sun if they can get the same content free somewhere else. It's just not going to happen. That doesn't mean he won't try. I don't think it's about paying on the internet, by the way, I think it's about forcing people to buy newspapers for just as long as possible before they stop doing that in large numbers. We'll see if it turns out to be true. As you may tell, I don't share his belief in the value of his products in the digital space.

So let's take another intuitive leap. Surely that means that I'm saying that all information should be free of charge. I don't know. Define 'Free' is the first question. I do believe there shouldn't be artificial barriers put up around getting hold of content. That doesn't mean that it has to be free. That doesn't mean that it has to generate no value. Define 'Free'. Do you mean free speech? I do. It should be free,

it should be freely available and accessible. But I don't mean free beer. Free beer would lead to the collapse of the western civilisation as we know it. It would also lead to the collapse of industries like brewing and the hospitality industry and bottling and all sorts of other industries. Free speech is very different from free beer. And the enemies of this .. the proponents of simplicity, rather, in this debate, like to pretend they're the same.

The idea that content should be readily accessible, easily available, is not the same as the idea that it should never be charged for or that it should never have any value attached to it. I used to be a Board member of Creative Commons, the rights' organisation, I'm a lawyer by background, and those sorts of simplistic arguments just aren't helping. What's the best thing we could do to copyright, for instance? The best thing we do to copyright is flip the model from saying 'All rights reserved', so that if you're a user, if you're a documentary maker in this School, you have to go and ask permission from all kinds of people to show things. If you flip the model from 'all rights reserved', which was fine when it was a few big companies talking to each other, to 'some rights reserved', everything else is fine. Just say what you can do with content, rather than say 'you can't do anything unless you have my permission.'

If you're managing a three year old like that you'd have a very, very busy day. If you took literally every decision on the face of it and that three year old never learned to chunk information, to allow decisions of their own, you would have one almightily bad life. That's where copyright is. It's in a dysfunctional situation where the costs of getting hold of copyright are too high and are standing in the face of what's happening on digital networks. And what happens when these circumstances arise? People simply route round it and they do what they were going to do anyway. Surely something better, that can track the value, that can track the way copyright moves, is the way we've got to go.

This whole free debate, in fact, is absolutely full of these false oppositions. There's a book called 'Free'. Is it called 'Free' by Chris Anderson? Something like that. Which sort of takes you through these ideas that, you know, that free is the new whatever the catch phrase was. But this idea that free is a radical price, I think is the

catch phrase. Well maybe it is and we'll come back to some other thoughts in a moment.

But it's not an opposition. The content industries have been giving stuff away free for decades for their own reasons. There was a whole channel called MTV, there still is, there's a whole family of channels called MTV, which built rather a successful model on the promotional content of another industry, the music industry. There was a .. there still is, just about .. an organisation in the US that produced a magazine called 'TV Guide', which was nothing more than a listings magazine. But in a country the size of the US, that's quite a big deal. I'm reliably informed that there was at least one year in which the profits of 'TV Guide' were greater than the profits of all the American television networks combined, and yet they were giving away free information. False oppositions - over-simplicity.

What they mask is an argument about what we value and who's in charge, who controls it. And this is where the shift is happening, but again, let's not over-simplify. There is a shift going on between distribution and discovery, between being able to push content out and helping people find it. Google, as somebody said, is a database of the world's unfulfilled desires, which I quite like, you type it in and Google helps you find it. Imperfect slightly but better the least worst option. As a colleague of mine, Ashley Highfield, once said, 'I don't really want to watch a movie on a tiny, tiny, six inch screen that's moving around like this while I'm trying to watch it, but if the alternative is staring out the window on an aeroplane for eight hours, it's the least worst thing I've got in front of me.' Google's the least worst search engine. If power is shifting from distribution to discovery, that's a good deal. But the theorists and the information fundamentalists will say at that point 'So that's it. The old mode of distribution is dead.' So don't write distribution off just yet.

My colleague at the back, Rob Morgan, did a bit of research for me, thank you Rob, and we have charted the revenues of .. red is total UK television advertising, 2004-2008, blue is the UK revenues of Google. Now on one model that says 'Oh my God, be very afraid. Look how big Google is and look how big and look how quickly it's going.' And that is good and an important thing to think about. But television executives are absolutely terrified that Google is eating their lunch. That red number

is staying surprising solid at the top. Now that doesn't mean it will continue to stay surprisingly solid, but it's another sort of Jeth Zuckerism[ph].

The revenue out of UK television advertising is about three and a bit billion pounds a year and Google admittedly is rising very quickly to over a couple of billion in the UK, which is quite big, but it's actually not killing distribution yet. The more subtle story is that what's happening in television advertising is the value of it is moving into different slots in different parts of the schedule. So they're predicting, I don't know if it will be true, that the ad slots in the final sing off in the 'X Factor' will be a quarter of a million pounds each. I've no idea how big that is compared to ten years ago but my hunch is much bigger than it would have been for most things. But at the same time, there are television channels in the UK where we have a massive over supply of television channels in general which can't fill their slots.

So what you're seeing is not total destruction of one by the other, you're seeing a reallocation going on inside these two massive, massive and important markets. And that's because when big media, when it helps you find attention and deliver mass audiences, it's getting more valuable, but at the same time tailored, search type advertising is of greater value and greater significance to audiences and users than it ever has been previously. The money's coming from somewhere but it doesn't yet look like it's coming out of television. So when you hear that dichotomy it might just turn out to be false.

So finally to sort of wrap up, broadly speaking, how do we react to this as individuals? Well, the theory, the kind of jargon of this would be how do we find value? How do we decide what to pay attention to? So I paraphrase the title of this slide as 'Finding value or how real people pay with attention.' I think of adverts in television programmes as an attention tax. 'I turned up to watch a television programme and now you're going to make me watch two and a half minutes of adverts for the privilege.' I flip through them with a PBR, I get them in another form, I get content in another form on DVD or on line. I watched the last ad in break more than I ever did, which by the way is usually a promotion for the television broadcaster, because that's the one I know to press 'Play' on. So paradoxically the last ad in a television break is getting more valuable not less as more of us skip ads.

Anybody notice how much more vibrant ads are getting to catch your attention? How they're using comedy, how they're .. ads are changing around us to start catching attention back again, trapping attention back again. But they're not just taxing it because we're only there. I'm not sure they ever were, otherwise what about all those potentially apocryphal stories about how the national grid's always had to cope when everybody turned their kettles on in the advertising break on 'Coronation Street'. If we were all engrossed in 'Coronation Street' who's turning the kettles on. So I'm not entirely sure it was ever different actually but I think the difference is being exacerbated and scaled.

So where do we find value? Well here's a few thoughts. A lot of these by the way, some of these are kind of drawn from the work of somebody called Kevin Kelly, he was the founding editor of 'Wired' magazine, who has .. he calls them 'generatives', these sorts of ad. He has more of them because he's cleverer. Although it could be that that famous phrase 'Sorry I wrote you such a long letter. I didn't have time to write you a short one.' Kevin Kelly throws out, you know, as these theorists do, lots of stuff.

But anyway, first one, if something is novel, if it's new, first night of something, it's fascinating to watch as kids from the digital media and on demand universe get used to the fact that there just won't be 'Dr Who' until Saturday next week, and that's the way it is. I'm not sure that's a good thing, but it ascribes a certain kind of value for as long as you can hang on to that scarcity. I think that's going to collapse quite quickly. I think what will happen is people will start paying more to be given things earlier. Or it's about now. The plane hits the towers or the bomb goes off in central London, the value is now, the value is immediate and knowledgeable information which you trust.

If it's a football match, unless you are really very obsessed indeed, you're probably not watching those goals back the following morning. The half life of Match of the Day for me is around about six or eight hours before I inadvertently find out what's happened when I'm trying to do it like that. We live in fear in my house of finding anything out about the 'X Factor' or 'Strictly Come Dancing' on the grounds that

we've got tiny children, we can't watch television at six and seven o'clock on Saturday night. So we don't listen to radio, we don't pick up newspapers. We should get out more, sorry about that. But whichever way that goes, the truth of it is we don't want to find out because it would spoil the experience to some extent. Actually, this year, it doesn't because we're not bothered about either of them, who wins, to be honest now. But that's just this year.

But there is something about novelty and timeless, there's something about personal content, which is deeply relevant to you. You might pay. You probably will give it more attention if it's personalised maybe, I don't know. We just got given a terrible Christening gift for our son, a CD, they obviously haven't met us, that particular part of the family, a CD of nursery rhymes with his name in them. I don't know if it's Jack and Tom went up the hill, I've no idea how they do it because I've not dared to listen to be completely honest, but there's something in there about personalising it isn't there, I don't know. There's something in there that make it personal for me. On the web, of course, there is. Amazon recommendations. Spot if I play lists. That's about personal. That's about something that I would value. I'll pay for that. I might not pay very much, but I'll pay something for it.

I want truthfulness, I want authenticity, I want what they used to call quality. Some of my life I'm a broadcasting regulator, we're not allowed to say 'quality' because that's a value laden term and that's correct. But I do want truth, I do want authenticity. And I'll pay for those, in some way, whether it's to watch ads but there's value there, for me which I'll ascribe to those. And sometimes I'm really grateful. I know people who paid for the Radiohead album just because they thought it was the right thing to do. There's a deep human psychology that says 'I want to pay tribute to these people. I'm going to bow before them' and sometimes you'll do that with money. Sometimes. Not for most fans, not most of the time, but sometimes you'll be grateful and you'll say you're grateful for something.

Actually that works much more in the real life economy than it ever will in the economy of media and content. I don't understand thank you cards. They've said thank you, why have they sent me a card as well? It's an irrational act. I love getting them though. Something that happens in the real world, this is the big one, something

that crosses over between bits and bricks. I will absolutely pay because I have no choice and because I can see the value to go to the gig. I will pay to have the once in a lifetime experience, the thing you can't buy. I will pay to go to the live match, to have the live experience, I will pay to have the live theatrical experience.

There are things which are real, there are things which are unique, there are things which can't be copied, there are things which only money can buy. And that real connection into my life that adds value, if it's learning, fascinating that books appear to remain constant in their prices, but now we have a book tour circuit where writers turn up and hundreds of people pay money just to hear them speak and to ask them questions. That's a book, is it promotional? Yes, you'll probably sell a few books. But actually I know because a friend of mine does this, she banks about £5,000 a night from it as well. There's a living in that for some people some of the time.

So the connection between the real world and the virtual is usually left way too late in debates about this territory.

What is it not? Well I don't if this is .. I'm about to get sacked or something, but it's not about commissioning content. You'll have heard this from commissioners who've given presentations, I'm sure. It's not about commissioning content for 360 degree anything. It's about integrated ideas that work across multiple platforms. Anybody who says 360 degree commissioning to you, is dad-dancing. They're trying to pretend they're in this world but in fact they're bringing their old idea in and they should have basically stayed sitting down.

It isn't about commissioning new content in a slightly different way but really television with knobs on, or really a newspaper with some webby bits, because that's not how you consume it. If it's an existing brand that works in that world, I've worked on a number of them, 'Top Gear' and 'Dr Who' and these sorts of things, then you've already got a centre of gravity in a particular medium, so of course you work like that. But that's not how you start nowadays. It just isn't how that starts. And it really doesn't help in the thinking because it sort of implies that as long as you have a bit of everything it will be fine. And usually, from my experience, creating good interactive media work is about what you leave out, in the same way as making a

great film is about what you leave out and the same as writing an essay is about what you leave out.

So what are my tips for thinking about this sort of stuff? Well where do you come to it from is very important. There's a brilliant book called 'Designing Interactions' by a guy called Moggeridge[ph]. It's essentially a set of interviews with the creators of interactive media. One of the things they all share is they have a participant perspective. They think of it as being something I do as a user, not as something that is done to me by a piece of media, participant perspective, really important. They're clear-eyed about platforms. They're pragmatic about platforms. Only ever do a project on a particular platform if you are being paid an eye-watering sum of money to do it on that platform by somebody. Unless it works.

I've done projects, loads in my career now, of trying to make content work on certain platforms. If it's not going to work, it's not going to work. I've got a sort of routine here from my theatre days. I used to show .. some of you will have seen it .. I used to show an opening DVD of two clips from the last Shakespeare play I directed, 'Romeo and Juliet', not my production. One, a very old BBC production, which was a camera slowly tracking back on these dead bodies on a stage. All very black and dark and this portents of sort of BBC Shakespeare voice saying 'Two households. Both alike in dignity ..' and you could hear the seats slamming up in Scarborough, really. And the other was Bas Loman's film, the opening on Bas Loman's film. One of them's a film, the other is a recording of a Shakespeare play. One of those understands its medium, one of them doesn't. Being pragmatic and clear-eyed about which medium you use is central to creating anything that's going to span platforms. You won't do that if you've got this 360 degree vision. You just can't do that and pay attention to the real value of the platform.

Noticeability. You've got to be found. You've got to understand how search engines work at the moment. You've got to understand how viral marketing works. You've got to understand how word of mouth works, because they will be the forces which help your work to rise or fall very, very quickly. And the life cycles of media work now are so short. Massive brands last long periods of time, but how long did Susan Boyle last in this country. An enormous flare, a hundred million, three hundred

million U-tube views and occasionally now in the paper. She might come back, I don't know. Might be being very well managed. But she'll flare and then go away for a period of time.

Noticeability, very, very important. But it's not as important as permanence or at least longevity. Because from longevity comes noticeability. The longer you're about, the more people trip over you. The more search engines find you, the more people discover what you're about. So you've got to be around for a little while, not least because most of the very noticeable, pragmatic, propositions out there, that are based on the participant's perspective, are actually communities. They're social networks or they're fan groups or they are organisations of people loosely gathered around a content organisation or a brand. They're communities, not audiences and communities take time to build and that's how long you need, enough time.

Of course you never know what enough is, but is always more than the television or print media cycle. Multi-platform projects, cross-platform projects, interactive projects, take time to build. Big games titles have a life span of a year or more. They take forty hours to play some of the big ones. Television commissioners dream of forty hours spent with a programme. Many of them dream of forty hours spent with a channel. It's an enormously distinct, it's a very distinct space to be in.

And the other thing you mustn't do, and this is the sort of closing sequence now, is you mustn't go too far. You can go too far in these ways and many others. You can believe too much in what they call the wisdom of crowds. There's a great book called 'The Wisdom of Crowds', another book called 'Here comes everybody' by Clay Shirkin[ph]. They've very interesting. It's all about the rise of what we call bottom up, mass participation media. But you can take it too far. Because the wisdom of crowds can quite rapidly become the madness of the mob.

There's something very complex about the way markets and democracy work and the way that they condition themselves. Something I suspect an incoming Tory government, if there is one, is going to learn, an interesting balance between preserving things, conservatism, at one level, and the rise of the free market in the media age is another. Because many of the things that one hand wants to preserve,

are likely to get decimated by choices of mass audiences pulling together their views of what they want. That's been a plaintiff cry because it's art versus utility, the second point, that's been a plaintiff cry forever. It's an elitist cry and I make no bones about that and I make no apology for it.

Because I don't believe the crowds would have created Mozart's Great Mass in C Minor. I also don't believe the crowds could have painted a Van Gogh. I don't believe the crowds can write Shakespeare. I do believe, however, they can tell me about things that they want. They can critique and give me information that is helpful to me as a creator. They can destroy and/or make me with the things that they do and choose to do with their time. But they're not necessarily going to have the spark. The crowds don't have sparks in that way. So you can over-believe in the wisdom of crowds. You can forget this argument which has been around forever, the art versus utility argument. Read a bit of John Stuart Mill, have a look at Lichtenstein's Aesthetics.

These arguments have been around for a long time and they will remain around us until we have sentient computers and all the other things from science fiction and hopefully I am a disembodied head in a Matt Gronin[ph] cartoon. We also need to remember that markets can undermine what we call quality. This is a kind of plea for understanding the need to manage markets. I'm not going to use the word 'regulate' in this context, but to manage them in some shape or form. We manage them with old fashioned tools some of the time, tools we use in news for instance around balance, impartiality. We manage them using economics by asking for consideration to be given to the dominance of a player in a particular market, whether it's telecom or whether it's sports' rights or something.

But actually we shouldn't get too dogmatic because markets will find their level and often that will drive innovation, but not always and not unregulated and unstructured. We aren't hearing about this at the moment thankfully in the media, maybe we'll hear it shortly. We aren't hearing it enough, I suspect, in the financial services institutions for my liking.

We also need to get rid of the wishful thinking. Most local newspapers, does anybody actually believe that local newspapers hold local democracy to account at any time in the last fifty years? Because I don't. I believe they printed press releases and they're a very valuable force at other things, but I think they may have been out there contributing to the amount of information, they may be very valuable to the primary school, but I'm not sure they were holding news to account, they were holding power to account, which I think is one of their primary functions. And if they weren't doing that, let's not put in place a solution now, which we're talking about in policy circles at Offcom and elsewhere, to save newspapers, let's put in place the answer to the problem, which is holding power to account, understanding how to make democracy work. And if newspapers are part of that, great, if they're not, thank you very much, goodnight Vienna. But it's not about protecting those institutions. They don't have a monopoly on the core idea. And many of them actually haven't been fulfilling that core idea for a long time. It is sacrilege for me to say it because it's not an official Offcom position, but I would apply the same logic to television, local news. It needs some serious work on what it's for, not just on how it's funded.

And that brings us finally to the last sort of set of wishful thinking. Regulation. Safety. I'm writing a book at the moment with Professor Tanya Byron who did a Government Review last year on internet safety. She, I think, brought a sort of level headed calm to the debate about what needs to happen with social networks, what should happen with computer games and our children, not least because she said it was partly about safety and it was partly about digital literacy.

If my overriding theme has been anything tonight, it has been about empowerment of us as individual users. That means we have to understand and accept that sometimes there are people out there that need protection. It would interest you to know, maybe you already know, that the number of complaints to Offcom and the Press Complaints Commission are higher this year than any year on record and they were last year and they were the year before. People aren't ready for the new world necessarily of being able to look after themselves. Children and the vulnerable need to be thought about and protected in some shape or form.

But actually that doesn't mean putting red ropes outside of everything and saying 'Do not go here'. There need to be spaces for risk. There need to be sensible approaches for this stuff. We think about it as a form of literacy. We, as participants in this big eco-system, just as we do in the green eco-system, need to think about the implications of what we do and what might happen as a result. Because, in the end, we are heading towards empowerment. The general direction of travel is to shift the locus of control towards us, the people formerly known as the audience, because it's our attention that has to do the paying. And as long as our attention has to do the paying, we will be, to some extent, in the driving seat. And that is the end of the lecture. Thank you very much.

[inaudible – off mic.]

I'll start with one question. You talked about the removal of the scarcity into ubiquitousness, whatever the noun is for ubiquitous. What's the dynamic of that? Is the scarcity of content static, scarcer? Or has everybody cottoned on to that and therefore it's getting bigger? Or, and is the amount ubiquitous content, that junk out there, is that growing exponentially? What's the relationship between the two?

Well, I think one person's junk is another person's car boot sale. So finding value is something that's done by an individual person at an individual level. So it's junk, for me, to go and look at a forum about classic cars, but it's not junk to a very great friend of mine. So one of the things I think is happening is that our kind of values of systems is about how, or if, we bother defining good from bad, are changing. I think what makes the .. one way of describing it is that content that has a very high signal to noise ratio, that sticks out. And that sticks out, I think, for the same reason it always did, it's good, it's of high quality, it's well made, it's thoughtful, but actually, increasingly, it's about how open it is to interactivity. So, for me, the question pivots on how much I as a member of the audience, or the people formerly known as the audience, can sort of adopt content and take it to be my own. I would have always done that by talking about it down the pub, but for me now, I want to talk about it wherever I want to talk about it. So there's less, a specific answer to the question, I think there's less content that cuts through in a given country, but there are larger projects and larger content propositions that cut through globally, for mass, big sports

rights, that kind of thing. And there's masses more stuff out there, but it's of value to small niches. And the niches are really small. You can make money on a few thousand people, if they're really passionate about the thing that they're a niche in. So the values are shifting around.

I wonder if you're actually being a bit hard on Murdoch and maybe he's playing a smarter game than we give him credit for and I think part of his strategy is that he's saying 'I'm trying to charge for this content and I can't make any money out of it because the BBC's giving it away for free.' And so actually it's a kind of tactic to try and get rid of the BBC News website.

I feel there's some truth in that. I'm deliberately being hard on Murdoch. It's a lecture isn't it. Yeah, I think there's definitely some truth in that. I think there's also truth in the idea that kind of in the old world of physical distribution enough newspapers doing something would have inflected the newspaper market, but it's way bigger than the newspaper market. I think it's also kind of interesting that it's sort of smoked Google out slightly to start saying 'Well we share revenues' and that's not really understood enough in the debate actually, I think. I think where it's sort of Canutian is the idea that you just a price on and everything and people will start paying. There are lots of examples where people tried that and generally it utterly decimates their traffic. So if he's got a problem funding now I don't think it's going to get vastly better. And, by the way, he does have a genuine problem. News organisations have a massive genuine problem with funding what they're doing. I worked for The Guardian for years, it's shelling money out the door.

I wonder if you have comments on the reason Google books they're selling them also with copyrights?

With the out of copyright stuff or the in copyright?

They have, they made available like millions of orphaned books whose copyright holders are not fund.

Yeah, well I mean, temperamentally I'm inclined to believe it's a good thing for them to have done. And I can understand the complex dynamics of why they are doing it, it drives more search to Google. There's an interesting thing about UK copyright law and what happens to an orphaned work, a work where nobody knows who really owns it. So they sort of sit on a shelf as opposed to what might happen soon, they'll just be able to be released to the sort of public domain. And so I'm kind of in favour of opening the public domain up as much as possible and getting it on line and digitized. But I'm not sure that's the same as some of the more extreme sort of positions that some of the search engines take about digitizing books in print and books already in copyright. I think that's a commercial problem. I don't think that's a legal problem at all. I think it's about working out who's going to pay who what and as soon as they do that I think they'll be fine. And in fact lots of this is about the balance between how much money the search guys make and how much money the content guys make and most of it's posturing still. And that's true of books. It's absolutely true of U-tube. Susan Boyne not going on U-tube was heavily about an argument between who got the money. It wasn't a point of principle about who owned the copyright. It was an argument about who got what share. The same is true of bigger books and going forwards into the copyright space.

Given what you were saying about the importance of literacy and free and the production of the kind of regulatory environments that would facilitate that sort of thing, what are your views on the proposals that the Government are putting forward, such as three strikes and you're disconnected?

I think there's a grain of interestingness in them in the sense that I'm fairly confident and I've seen research suggesting that one strike would deter a very large number of people from doing anything, but it won't fix the sort of hard core question about piracy. I don't believe it will. I think there is then a genuine problem about the idea .. the thing I have the most discomfort with it, whether it's three strikes, whatever period it is, is that I don't think these are administrative decisions to be made by politicians. I think there absolutely have to be legal, proper legal processes involved in anything which involves the suspension of what I believe is basically a primary service. Whether it's a human right is something for the courts to determine, but you don't suspend people's water like that, you don't suspend people's electric like that.

So I think the thing that discomforts me the most about the initial proposals was, as I saw them, was that they were essentially riding roughshod over that kind of protection. And I saw lots of other drafts of them for reasons to do with Offcom and things and they veered from being worse than that and better than that, all over the place. I think there's a sort of value in something being done, but I think we've got to be very careful about effectively allowing the content industries to become the police on this one. I don't think that's helpful to anybody, including them actually. I think the idea of suspension terrifies them. The interesting sub-story, which did come out in a bit of the press, was that the security services are absolutely terrified of the entire thing, because they believe it will ratchet up encryption. They believe that it will drive the market, for encryption technology, in this country, so that the really bad people out there are unfindable. And there's something in that. There's something deeply terrifying about that. And if we're protecting the record industry at that kind of cost, I think we've got to talk to the record industry about it.

This is the worst bit. This is much worse than doing a lecture.

Anthony that was a great lecture, thanks for that.

Thank you.

I'm just interested to know, you've talked about 'too much stuff' being out there. Do you think there's still a place for people to mediate between the person and the stuff?

Yes. Totally. I absolutely do. There's a book called 'The Paradox of Choice' which sort of goes into that territory. I'm sorry, I do sound a bibliography tonight, I'm trying to be a Professor a bit. Yeah, I absolutely do. I think that's what happens at the social group level anyway. That's what we do for each other as social groups. And the more you have trust and the more you believe in the authenticity of the person's voice, whether it's because you know them because they're related to you or a close friend or whatever it is, or because you feel you have that kind of projection onto them because they're a star name or a celebrity or an academic or whatever it is, I think the value of that capability to act as a filter is rising, absolutely rising. And, you know, we see that to some extent in a kind of slightly sort of dishevelled sort of

way in the blogasphere. You know, some blogs rise because people are active at them but also because they're experts and those expert voices may not have been heard before. Now I'm not suddenly suggesting that that's the death of .. that's the rise of a Fifth Estate or the death of the press as we know it, but there's something in there about authenticity. You find it actually, paradoxically, I found it most in my professional career working with the utterly uncontroversial figure of Jeremy Clarkson, because those who believe Jeremy and believe in his views on cars really believe Jeremy and his views on cars and they search for him like mad on Google. And whatever you think about him, what you learn from that is that that is a signal in a noisy environment and that people gather round that signal. So I think, if anything, that capability rises more than ever. And who the hell is Simon Cowell telling us again? And why am I obsessing with Simon Cowell this evening? But I mean it's that filtering capability. And there is talent in that, there is incredible talent in that. There really is.

I'm not a media person. I'm very conscious of your admonition on the screen at the moment about subsequent lectures. It does seem to me that there's a tiny, tiny pacaderm just tucked over there in the corner at an inaugural lecture which seemed to me to be an absolutely splendid lecture and treated a whole set of issues which are particularly relevant to education. I don't think you used the word education once. You did have a slide which said 'It's not the content, it's the experience' and I wonder if you have any views about virtual learning environments?

Yeah, the Plc I'm involved with is in that space. I very deliberately didn't talk about it this evening. I didn't use the word 'education' because I prefer the word 'learning', because I think it's focused on the right part of the chain. So for me the complexities in the education space, and I do a fair bit of work there but I didn't cover it tonight as you say, maybe next time, are all about empowering learners whilst, at the same time, accepting and acknowledging that there's going to be a change in the role of teachers. There is already a change in the role of teachers. But that does not mean the abolition of teachers. In the same way that there needs to be changes in the way we relate the physical institution of a university or the school to the learn, Magic Lantern doesn't exist as a physical institution any more. We disbanded the company's physical presence. We get together now where we need to get together as teams and groups

and everything else happens on the move or virtually or however it can happen. To do that you need to go to a certain place and actually we find we like to see each other more than we do, but if you take that logic to the learning environment, what you're actually saying is it's about relationships and connections between people. But there's something about trust, there's something about wisdom, there's something about experience in there. I think it's about mentoring. I think it's about supporting. But also, I can't talk about the future of learning with Professor Heppel in the room. I mean it's just not the right thing to do, you know, you don't hire a dog and then bark. He's gone now, I can say that.

What value do you place on information these days? You know, data is so readily available, do we still value it the same as we did do you think? The amount of conversations I've had recently in the pub and everyone will get out their i-Phone and Google what someone's said because they don't believe them.

There's something really fascinating in there. It sort of comes to this thing about learning as well. The kind of hidden message about learning at the front of the lecture was 'I can get the quote from Preust from Wikipedia'. Do I need to know the date of the Battle of Hastings? No, but I do need to know why I need to know the date of the Battle of Hastings. And there's something in there about whether it's about factual data .. it's back to data and knowledge and wisdom and information again. Factual data I think you can find, but being a digitally literate citizen, knowing what you need to search for is about being a literate citizen and about being an educated citizen. And my worries are not in find and retrieve information. You know, winning pub quizzes, there's a great sequence in 'The Office' isn't there about how one of the characters is brilliant at pub quizzes, he reads a book a week and they're all pub quiz books. So there's something in there about, you know, winning pub quizzes is not necessarily going to help the world. It will, of course, be able to describe precisely all the things that went wrong as we let the world burn, but it won't help particularly. So there's a sort of thing in there about we rebalance that notion. I think it's going to be fascinating watching the Tories struggle with it, because I think they're split, if they come in. I think Labour has been split on it, split between back to education, but split between standards, learning, split between these ideas that are about measuring things you can measure. My worry is that if you count that much you end up counting only

the things you know how to count and count things that are countable and the alternative, which is finding a value in it. So, for me, I don't think there was every any value in data, but there is enormous value in knowing how to apply and knowing how to filter it, back to the previous question actually, the previous question but one, how to filter it, how to find it, how to package it up in meaningful ways. And that, in a strange sort of way, that's why I'm not in this sort of conscious computers semantic web sort of thing. I know it will occur and it will become more like that as time goes on, but I still think there's more goes on here. I really believe in people at the end of the day.

OK, seeing as there's so much stuff out there, I'm assuming most things have already been done, you know. Trying to come up with original things is very difficult. So where is there really room for innovation? Is it in coming up with new products, new things? Or is it just re-presenting existing products? Or is it a bit of both? Where do you actually work towards?

I'm sure the easy answer is it's in a bit of both. Well, for a start, I'm never too sure about innovation as a word for its own sake. That just means new isn't necessarily good. But I think there's an incredible skill in repackaging. What's that .. somebody's going to tell me now .. which poet is it that say .. is it Dahli or somebody, great poets play .. no, good poets plagiarise, great poets steal' or something. Is that a quote? Somebody's going to find it. Somebody Google it. But there's something in there about how, you know, how repackaging things that previously existed.

[comment off mic.]

That's the one, that's the one I'm going for, yeah. So Romeo and Juliet is based on a renaissance poem or play or whatever it is and there's that sort of thing about the artistic equivalent of that Newton quote 'We see further because I stand on the shoulders of giants' or whatever it is. There's something in that, which of course is always going to be true. But there's also something about genuine sparks of just unimaginable genius.