

## **Virtual News: BBC News at a `Future Media and Technology' Crossroads**

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This article assesses the strategies of BBC News as it repositions itself for the digital future, explores how impartiality is being redefined, evaluates the impact of technology-led strategies on newsgathering and notes the tensions between rival forces inside the BBC. The corporation is engaged in an internal upheaval of seismic proportions, as technological change accelerates and the largest ever round of job losses threatens. There is a titanic struggle between the technologists — who have been rebranded as über-divisional force Future Media and Technology — and the programme makers, who feel their role and resources have been cut to make way for the new platforms. In the FMT corner, its director Ashley Highfield is making apocalyptic announcements, characterized by BBC house newspaper Ariel as `Get web savvy or we die', while programme executives are saying that the BBC needs to recognize and protect its core strengths in content provision, not pretend it can compete with the cyber-cities of Google and co. It's not future technology, it's here and now, they say, but it should not be allowed to override the values and objectives of their public service remit. This article is based on research carried out for the `Spaces of the News' research project, one of five strands of the Goldsmiths Media Research Programme, Spaces, Connectivity and Control, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, which is designed to evaluate the social impact of changes in communication technology.