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## **From catch-up TV to online TV: digital broadcasting and the case of BBC**

### **iPlayer**

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In October 2013, six months after his appointment as the new Director General of the BBC, Tony Hall gave his first major speech about the future direction of the Corporation. Titled ‘Where next?’, the speech outlined a vision to personalize the BBC in ways that understood ‘how our audiences are changing’.<sup>1</sup> Arguing that audiences ‘want less distance, more involvement’ in a world of connected viewing, Hall speculated on what the BBC might look like on its hundredth birthday in 2022. At the centre of his vision was the BBC iPlayer, the Corporation’s on-demand service. In the BBC’s centenary year, Hall envisioned iPlayer as central to the reinvention of public service broadcasting in a digital media world, speaking of a transformation in the role and function of iPlayer ‘from being catch-up TV to online TV’. Rather than offer extended windows for linear broadcast content, iPlayer was positioned to become ‘the best online TV service in the world – and the front door to many people to the whole BBC’.<sup>2</sup>

This essay examines the ways in which iPlayer has been repositioned and reconceptualized at the BBC from 2010 onwards, ending with the debates

surrounding the launch of a ‘new iPlayer’ in 2014 following Hall’s repositioning of the service as online TV the year before. We argue that this particular relaunch of BBC iPlayer can be understood as a staging point in the BBC’s attempts to understand and rationalize its own role as a digital broadcaster in ways that extend and diverge from the Corporation’s previous digital strategy, which emphasized integrated multiplatform production and commissioning. While some have understood iPlayer as a compromise on the part of the BBC, a ‘product’ representing the failure of the Corporation to embrace 360-degree multiplatform opportunities,<sup>3</sup> we seek to analyse the precise ways in which, for the BBC, iPlayer became a site for navigating what it means to be a public service broadcaster in a digital world. This relates to a moment of media disruption where, as we show, distinctions between broadcasting and online were becoming increasingly blurred.

At the BBC, the period from 2010 to 2014 was transitional in organizational and discursive terms. The arrival of a new Director General and the anticipation of the review in 2016 of the BBC’s Royal Charter (which gives the BBC the right to collect the licence fee from the British public) meant that the Corporation was striving, in explicit ways, to communicate its role in a changing media environment. Online television was a key focus of debate, marked in discussions around iPlayer but also in related proposals to turn the youth-oriented BBC Three into an online-only channel that would use the digital affordances of the internet to engage sixteen-to-thirty-four-year-olds.<sup>4</sup> Within this moment, responding to Hall’s ‘Where next?’ speech, a new version of BBC iPlayer was launched in March 2014, the most substantial reiteration of the service since its first release on Christmas Day 2007.

At a technical level, the new release of iPlayer attempted to make the architecture of the service genuinely cross-platform in terms of its code bases;

through developments in ‘responsive design’ the new iPlayer was optimized for a multiscreen world, converging different variants to give viewers a consistent experience across desktop, laptop, tablet, mobile and TV devices.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the new version introduced features within iPlayer’s user interface. In the BBC’s own words, these features were designed to make it ‘easier to find something to watch, helping you quickly and easily find the programmes you know you’re looking for and, crucially, helping you discover something new’.<sup>6</sup> This ranged from advanced recommendations and smarter search and image-led navigation, to content offerings specific to iPlayer, including ‘online first’ commissions, collections of curated programming from the BBC archives, and onward journeys to informational paratexts such as BBC iWonder guides.<sup>7</sup> According to BBC audience research, which tracks iPlayer usage, forty-two per cent of visitors did not come with a particular programme in mind in 2014, a figure that sat at twenty-five per cent when iPlayer first launched.<sup>8</sup> Responding to this increase in perusal use, the new iPlayer was modified to enable different routes to content discovery; it realized the goal of making ‘BBC iPlayer a place where audiences potentially start their entertainment journey – to browse for something to watch, rather than specifically catch up on a particular title’ (figure 1).<sup>9</sup>

In 2012 and 2014 we undertook practitioner interviews with senior BBC executives responsible for iPlayer’s development in a technical, editorial and strategic sense.<sup>10</sup> In their work on cultures of management in the entertainment industry, Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare and Avi Santo note that media management involves ‘a culture of shifting discourses, dispositions and tactics that create meaning, generate value, or otherwise shape media work throughout each moment of production and consumption’.<sup>11</sup> This essay focuses on discourses, dispositions and tactics that have coalesced around iPlayer in managerial discourse, strategy documents, organizational

structures and internal thinking. Scholars in the emerging field of media industry studies have warned against the dangers of accepting uncritically the insights offered by high-level professionals providing scripted answers to questions.<sup>12</sup> However, as Denise Mann argues, ‘even the well-rehearsed sound bites of high-level professionals can shed light on a particular situation, albeit in unintended ways, so long as the scholar considers the underlying meanings of these discursive statements’.<sup>13</sup> Our approach has been to treat both interviews and industry documents as discursive statements, adopting Johnson, Kompare and Santo’s approach of understanding the field of cultural production and consumption as implicitly constituted through the practices of management. Interviews with media managers and industry documents offer an insight into the ways in which the BBC has discursively constructed an understanding of iPlayer and, beyond it, broadcasting within the digital era.

Analysing the development of mobile television in the USA in the early 2000s, Max Dawson considers the ‘identity crisis’ that often accompanies the arrival of new media technology. Drawing on Rick Altman’s concept of ‘crisis historiography’, Dawson points to the way that new media technologies frequently assume multiple identities that reflect the interests of divergent stakeholders.<sup>14</sup> Video-on-demand (VOD) players such as BBC iPlayer can be understood as existing within a similar crisis of identity to that which Dawson identifies for mobile television. Since the launch of YouTube in 2005, the technical properties and functions of VOD players have remained fluid and contested. In this context iPlayer offers a potent site for examining the ways in which the BBC has transitioned to digital. As we shall see, BBC iPlayer emerged as the lens through which the BBC’s digital strategies were most tangibly focused in the first half of the 2010s. Analysing BBC iPlayer also extends current discussion of online television beyond the commercial context of the

USA, and throws into relief specific questions about the role of public service broadcasting in a digital world. In what follows we consider the meaning of digital broadcasting as it has been parsed through BBC iPlayer in a particular moment of transformation for the BBC and for UK television more broadly. The arrival of Netflix in the UK in 2012 and the expansion of VOD services beyond broadcaster catch-up, accompanied by the rise in ownership of smartphones and tablets and increased access to superfast broadband, were seen within the industry to contribute to questions about the future of television.<sup>15</sup> Considering contexts of managerial thinking and organizational structure that have informed BBC digital strategy in the first decades of the twenty-first century, we examine the specific way that the launch of the ‘new iPlayer’ in 2014 offered a foretaste of the recalibration of the BBC’s identity, content offering and sense of relevance in what Hall unabashedly called ‘the internet era’.<sup>16</sup>

Before considering how, and on what terms, iPlayer has borne the responsibility for transitioning the BBC to digital, it is necessary to contextualize its relation to wider strategic and operational developments within the Corporation, specifically as this connects to changing ideas about multiplatform. In the first half of the 2000s, multiplatform production and commissioning dominated the BBC’s strategic attempt to transition from a linear broadcaster to a ‘digital destination’.<sup>17</sup> Although definitions of multiplatform over this period are not fixed, the rise of ‘360-degree commissioning’ corresponded with an understanding of multiplatform tied to transmedia. In the early to mid 2000s there was a significant amount of experimentation with multiplatform programming by public service and commercial broadcasters in the UK and overseas, with the BBC, Sky, ITV and NBC all adopting 360-degree commissioning as a strategy. This ranged from the interactive

documentary series *A Picture of Britain* (BBC, 2005) to the transmedia storytelling of *Heroes* (NBC, 2006–10). Niki Strange describes the BBC's development of multiplatform production in the mid 2000s as a shift from programmes to *projects*. In this sense, 360-degree commissioning involved the development of a range of content designed to utilize the affordances of different platforms and media (for example a website, online short, game or social media interaction) that extended beyond the broadcast programme and that developed points of audience engagement that were potentially more immersive, interactive or participative.<sup>18</sup> Within the BBC this was understood as an explicitly 'post-broadcast' strategy.<sup>19</sup>

A number of academics have noted a gradual retreat from multiplatform television by broadcasters in the second half of the 2000s. Denise Mann contends that by the 2010s US networks had stepped back from early forays in transmedia storytelling, focusing instead on using new media in ways that aligned with traditional programming, marketing and licensing practices.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Evans, Tim Coughlan and Vicky Coughlan argue that the multimedia strategies of broadcasters in the UK have become increasingly focused on issues of distribution and access.<sup>21</sup> This accords with a 2013 report by the Digital Production Partnership (an initiative formed by UK public service broadcasters) on the impact of digital technologies on creativity in the UK television industry which stated, “‘multiplatform’ as a term today refers as much to the mode of delivery as to the mode of production’.<sup>22</sup> For James Bennett and Niki Strange, the waning of multiplatform production is symptomatic of a reassertion of ‘linear thinking’ within the BBC. They argue that in the late 2000s and early 2010s the ‘profound creative experimentation’ of 360-degree commissioning at the BBC was replaced by the delivery of the same conventional television and radio programmes across digital devices, with BBC iPlayer heralding this shift.<sup>23</sup> On these

terms, the retreat from multiplatform by broadcasters has been understood as a move away from the innovative potential of transmedia programming to digital strategies that privilege traditional television business models, production and viewing practices.

Bennett and Strange examine the transformation of the BBC's multiplatform strategy between 2006 and 2011 against the background of a changing political climate in which the Corporation was subject to 'prevailing winds of neoliberalism and the Conservative government's drive against public sector expansion'.<sup>24</sup> This is evidenced in a shift in rhetoric from the Corporation's five-year strategy, *Creative Future* (2006), which cemented the concept of multiplatform production and commissioning, to its 2011 successor *Delivering Quality First (DQF)*, in which multiplatform 'is reduced to a single mention'.<sup>25</sup> In the face of a six-year licence fee freeze and additional responsibilities (for BBC World Service and Welsh public service broadcaster S4C), *DQF* signalled a shift in the BBC's digital strategy and operational focus. Setting out the Corporation's strategy for implementing budget cuts of sixteen per cent across the organization, BBC Online – the service responsible for the BBC's network of websites, iPlayer and interactive Red Button service – was the first division to go into the BBC savings programme. Under the *DQF* slogan 'fewer, bigger, better', this meant cutting spend in the BBC Online service licence by twenty-five per cent and reducing the budget from £135 million to £100 million between 2010 and 2013. These cuts included a major cull of BBC web pages, known internally as the 'bonfire of the 500 websites', and a substantial downscaling of multiplatform commissions.

If the BBC's initial multiplatform strategy represented a move from programmes to projects, Bennett and Strange argue that in the wake of the retreat

from multiplatform commissioning and the cuts implemented through *DQF*, the Corporation's digital strategy determined a second shift from projects to *products*. It is here that BBC iPlayer emerged as the 'predominant strategic innovation of the Corporation'.<sup>26</sup> A new 'ten products' strategy, introduced in 2010 by the then director of Future Media and Technology (FM&T) Eric Huggers, is indicative of this shift. As a former employee of Microsoft, Huggers championed product management as a means of focusing the multifarious activities of BBC Online. Rather than proliferate websites and multiplatform ventures, Huggers identified ten products as core to the focus of BBC Online. By his definition a product was 'a self-contained entity within BBC Online, which unites technology and editorial to meet a clearly defined audience need'.<sup>27</sup> These products included News, Sport, Weather (portfolio 1), CBBC, CBeebies (portfolio 2), Knowledge and Learning (portfolio 3), Radio and Music (portfolio 4), TV and iPlayer (portfolio 5), and Homepage and Search, the last two binding the others together.

The development of 'product' culture is read negatively by Bennett and Strange; it is seen to represent a move away from the creative potential of multiplatform content production and towards a focus on digital technological innovation. Although they acknowledge the strategic achievements of BBC iPlayer *as* a digital innovation – and are aware of it becoming something of a 'straw-man' in their account – iPlayer is nevertheless framed as a symbol of the BBC's failure to evolve from 'a *broadcast* organisation into a truly multiplatform one'.<sup>28</sup> Reinforcing 'linear legacies', iPlayer is seen by Bennett and Strange as a product less intent on catalysing change in the BBC's production cultures, values and processes than on providing, in the words of former BBC Director General Mark Thompson, a 'fancy new way of delivering a traditional experience'.<sup>29</sup> At risk of getting lost in this portrait



of multiplatform retreat, however, are the permutations of iPlayer's strategic iteration around the time of *DQF* that laid the ground for a reconceptualization of the service as something more than a technology for television catch-up. To understand the context of this reconception, it is helpful to situate iPlayer in divisional terms.

The organizational structure of the BBC is something of a moveable feast, and subject to periodic redrawing and renaming. BBC iPlayer was originally developed within FM&T, the Corporation's technology wing established in 2006 to service the newly established content production departments of Vision, Audio and Music, and Journalism.<sup>30</sup> As Dan Taylor-Watt, the BBC's Head of iPlayer, explained: 'the journey of iPlayer started as a Future Media thing which was done in a different building to television with an entirely different group of people and it was quite "other" as far as television was concerned'.<sup>31</sup> This otherness is suggestive of the cultural and managerial faultlines that existed between FM&T and Vision in the first years of iPlayer's development. Indeed, it was the conflict of cultures between technological and editorial roles that, for Bennett and Strange, contributed to broader difficulties in integrating the very different practices of new media and television necessary for multiplatform production. Echoing this conflict, FM&T was sometimes seen by Vision to 'simply distribute TV programmes via a black box, called BBC iPlayer'.<sup>32</sup>

The occasionally fractious relationship between FM&T and Vision was to some extent salvaged by the 'ten products' strategy introduced by Huggers. Each product was given its own product direction group, or PDG. These groups were cross-disciplinary in nature and were designed to enable the steering and implementation of BBC Online as a coherent digital service. Notably, PDGs introduced a new '1+1' governance model that ensured that each product was managed by two members of

staff, one with technological and one with editorial expertise. At the time of our interviews in 2014, the iPlayer PDG was steered by the Head of iPlayer, Taylor-Watt, who was based in Future Media and served as ‘product lead’, overseeing product managers, developers, testers and those involved in the build of iPlayer as a cross-screen product. However, the PDG also had an ‘editorial lead’ based in Television (formerly Vision), Victoria Jaye, who managed iPlayer commissioning and curation. Beyond these managerial leads, the PDG included eight-to-ten other staff from audience research, marketing, communications, user experience and design, business development (dealing with third-party sites) and BBC Worldwide.<sup>33</sup> The 1+1 governance model helped to facilitate more collaborative working relationships between divisional camps at the BBC and was designed to translate thinking across technological ‘capability’ and editorial ‘content’. In this sense the ‘ten products’ strategy can be understood as an attempt to address the divisions between television and new media by moving towards a hybrid TV/digital working culture that would bind together technological and editorial responsibilities and expertise.

The development of an organizational structure that invited thinking *across* the television/new media divide needs to be understood in relation to a broader change within the Corporation’s management in the 2010s of what it means to be a *digital* broadcaster. Notably, in this respect, the BBC’s digital strategy in the early 2010s was shaped by the significant growth of online video, a development that focused managerial thinking about the prospective meanings of online TV. Considering the rise of online video since the mid 2000s, Mark Harrison challenged the view that the failure of multiplatform resulted from the ‘reluctance of TV commissioners to engage with the potential of digital technologies’, arguing that since the launch of VOD services by UK broadcasters from 2006, audiences have ‘been

more interested in consuming classic (that is, passive) TV content on new platforms, than in content being redefined for those platforms'.<sup>34</sup> Since 2010 there has been a marked increase in the use of VOD services in the UK. This is concurrent with the proliferation of multiscreen technologies such as tablets, smartphones, DVRs and smart TVs, and uptake of superfast broadband, rising from 17.5 to 26.7 per cent between 2013 and 2014.<sup>35</sup> At the same time there has been an expansion in the number of VOD services from public service and commercial providers, including the emergence of over-the-top (OTT) providers such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. Although live viewing remained the principal way that people watched television in the UK (eighty-nine per cent of all television viewing in the UK in 2013 was live),<sup>36</sup> fifty per cent of UK adults claimed to have used a VOD service in 2013, according to research by Ofcom.<sup>37</sup> In 2014 BBC iPlayer dominated this market, with thirty-eight per cent of respondents claiming to have used the service in the first quarter of 2014.<sup>38</sup> According to BBC audience research, usage of iPlayer at the time of our interviews was fairly evenly split between the demographic groups of sixteen to thirty-four and thirty-five to fifty-four (forty per cent each) and also equally split between the devices of television, web browsers and mobile/tablet apps.<sup>39</sup>

In light of the expanding possibilities of connected viewing in the early to mid 2010s, the UK's main public service broadcasters all announced new strategic initiatives in 2014 that suggest a reconceptualization of the relationship between digital and broadcasting. In the same year that the BBC launched the 'new iPlayer', ITV announced a digital strategy for developing ITV Player as a destination for live television viewing. This followed growth in the use of its VOD service for watching programmes as broadcast and led to the relaunch of its on-demand player as ITV Hub in September 2015.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, Channel 4 relaunched its on-demand service 4OD

as an integrated brand platform called All 4, a new online destination that the chief executive of Channel 4 David Abraham described as not ‘linear *or* on-demand, but a creative and visual integration of the two worlds’.<sup>41</sup> Abraham’s language is suggestive of the ways in which the rise of online video has been understood through the frame of the accelerated convergence of television and the internet. Here the internet is not conceived as a way simply to redistribute or extend broadcast programmes. Rather, broadcasters’ VOD services have been discursively positioned as hybrid spaces recalibrating the very relationship between linear broadcasting, characterized by the flow of programmes in a broadcast schedule, and digital technologies where programmes exist as discrete files that can be selected by the viewer.<sup>42</sup> The primacy given to iPlayer as a ‘front door’ to the BBC – an ‘entertainment destination’ where people might start their viewing journey rather than a site to catch up on missed broadcast content – can be understood in this context. In a number of ways iPlayer became the BBC’s testing ground for what it means to be a digital broadcaster in a hybrid world where linear legacies continued to be resilient but where the promise of online television had increasingly taken hold. In short, the service helped mobilize a set of managerial discourses that informed thinking about the BBC’s online proposition moving into an age of public service media.

In the commercial context of US television, the ways in which broadcasters are responding to the rise of online and digital technologies has largely been understood in relation to the challenge they present to traditional business models and the extent to which broadcasters are colonizing online spaces.<sup>43</sup> Yet the shift from catch-up to online television articulated by Hall has specific consequences for our understanding of public service broadcasting. Hallvard Moe notes that the BBC is relatively pioneering in the way it has placed online on a par with television and radio

within its Royal Charter.<sup>44</sup> However, policy attempts to adopt a more ‘media neutral’ approach have left the BBC open to conflict with commercial competitors and raised questions of whether the tenets of public service broadcasting can be adapted to new online contexts. In this circumstance, the BBC’s decision to focus its digital strategy on iPlayer could be seen less as a retreat from the innovative potential of 360-degree commissioning, and more as an attempt to work through what ‘public service broadcasting’ might be within the culture and market of online video.

In 2014 the place of iPlayer at the BBC presented some challenges to the Corporation’s role as a public service broadcaster. Despite Hall’s vision of the BBC’s future in which iPlayer became the main gateway to the Corporation’s content, UK viewers could watch iPlayer without paying the BBC licence fee (which was specifically tied to television-set ownership), presenting a potential threat to the BBC’s revenue model. iPlayer also opened up the technological possibility of a BBC funded by subscription, a mechanism that could undermine the principle of universality foundational to public service broadcasting. In July 2015 the government promised that it would introduce legislation to close the loophole excluding iPlayer from the licence fee, and in September 2016 a change in the law meant audiences needed to be covered by a television licence to download or watch BBC programmes on iPlayer. Yet in 2014 the development of iPlayer as a primary mechanism for the delivery of BBC programming opened up fundamental questions about the economic and cultural basis of public service broadcasting. These, as we shall show, had ramifications for the ways in which the BBC itself attempted to understand and rationalize its role as a digital broadcaster and BBC iPlayer’s place within that.

When BBC iPlayer launched in 2007, its marketing tagline, ‘making the unmissable unmissable’, placed a clear emphasis on the service as a catch-up device.

In the 2010s, however, the functions and meanings of BBC iPlayer were refined in promotional campaigns. While ads in 2012 emphasized the availability of iPlayer on multiple platforms, by 2014 marketing was targeting everyday uses for a broad public, from sitting on a delayed train to entertaining the kids during half-term holidays.<sup>45</sup> In different ways these marketing campaigns reflect a strategic mantra that took hold around the time of *DQF* that would come to organize internal thinking about the future direction of BBC iPlayer by 2014 – ‘beyond PC, beyond catch-up, beyond the early-adopter’.<sup>46</sup> Initially the growth of iPlayer was driven by broadband; the service provided access to broadcast television through a seven-day catch-up service delivered through personal computers. Despite its clear success as a streaming service, the moniker ‘beyond PC’ signalled the BBC’s move to extend and develop the service across devices in the early 2010s. Indeed the second major wave of growth for iPlayer was driven by the rise of multiscreen media, in particular the explosion of tablets and smartphones. In developing iPlayer across 1200 devices and four screens (TV, personal computer, mobile, tablet), the product became ubiquitous in the UK. By March 2012 iPlayer was being used by forty per cent of adults who were online in the UK, and was named the UK’s number-one brand in terms of consumer perception in a YouGov poll the following year.<sup>47</sup> Yet it remained the case that users were still not part of what iPlayer’s audience research manager Alison Button called ‘the real big mainstream’.<sup>48</sup>

The redesign of BBC iPlayer in 2014 was specifically aimed at moving the service ‘beyond the early adopter’ and into the ‘mainstream’. Based on audience research into user habits and preferences, the goal of the redesign was to construct a simple, image-led interface that looked the same across all devices. As Button commented, ‘all of that redesign is about taking it to the mainstream and trying to

move into the world of telly, because we realize we sort of built [iPlayer] in the world of the internet and it is really interesting where the worlds of the TV and the internet are overlapping now'.<sup>49</sup> Taking BBC iPlayer into 'the world of telly' could be seen as confirming Bennett and Strange's argument that the development of iPlayer reflects a reassertion of 'linear legacies' by the BBC. Yet references to the 'overlapping' worlds of TV and the internet point to a reconceptualization of the relationship between linear and online in what is explicitly described as a hybrid TV/digital moment. Speaking to us in December 2014, the BBC's Controller of Digital Strategy, Kieran Clifton, explained that BBC iPlayer needs to be seen 'in the context of the BBC's transition away from a purely broadcast world, to more of a hybrid world in which broadcast continues to be important ... [but] where the internet allows you to do other things'.<sup>50</sup>

Television has arguably always been a hybrid medium and the industry has been responding to the demands of digital since the 1990s. Writing in 2011, Bennett described television's hybridity in the digital age as one that asks us, simultaneously,

to understand television as dispersed across a range of screens, sites, and devices that mix it with the properties of digital media – such as software, code, interfaces, social networking, broadband, peer-to-peer file sharing, intellectual property, and technological design – and, at the same time, recognize that the experience is still somehow television.<sup>51</sup>

By the early 2010s the BBC recognized that the dispersal of television brought with it not only challenges in utilizing and combining the affordances of television and new media, but also questions of how to respond to the fluid nature, and networks, of digital media consumption. This was evident in the BBC's 'connected strategy'

(2011), an outgrowth of Hugger's 'ten products' approach. Known internally as '1/10/4', this strategy introduced the idea of porousness *between* products; it emphasized the BBC as *one* service delivered through *ten* products on the *four* screens of TV, personal computers, mobile phones and tablets.<sup>52</sup>

The language of 'one service' is instructive and relates to the wider concept of 'digital estates' in the rhetoric of key executives and in distribution-related strategy that Elizabeth Evans suggests took hold within the UK television sector in the early 2010s. Evoking the way that 'linear broadcasting channels and traditional production processes are mixed with online-based spaces and the wider range of interactive content that they can facilitate',<sup>53</sup> Evans suggests that the discourse of digital estates reflects a realignment of the linear broadcast system. She continues, 'what is most noticeable about the emerging strategies of both Channel 4 and the BBC is their clear attempt to realign the comparative status of broadcasting and digital technologies, with the digital positioned as equal to linear broadcasting'. While the language of digital estates was used more readily by executives at Channel 4, managers at the BBC would evoke the spatial metaphor of moving beyond the Corporation's 'walled garden', of sending audiences beyond borders created by the BBC's own divisional (product) structures. During our interviews in 2014 this emerged within discussion about transitioning the BBC from the 1/10/4 digital strategy to a more agile '1/4' strategy. This involved moving away from the rigidity of ten products and conceptualizing the BBC as one 'nimble' service delivered across four platforms; it put stock in the organization's capacity to be experimental and responsive in developing the BBC 'as a thing that wraps around your life' in a connected media world.<sup>54</sup>



The movement away from ten defined products has not threatened the centrality of iPlayer within the BBC's digital strategy but it has raised questions within the Corporation about how iPlayer should function within, and as part of, the BBC's content ecosystem. Taylor-Watt said of the new iPlayer in 2014:

the kind of thing that was missing in the old version of iPlayer was that there were no onward journeys, it was basically hermetically sealed, a walled garden that created a clear product proposition where users knew exactly what they were getting [...] there were dead ends and missed opportunities in terms of a huge amount of relevant content we didn't talk about because it was outside of iPlayer.<sup>55</sup>

The strategy of making iPlayer less hermetically sealed speaks in part to the ambition of taking the service 'beyond catch-up'. As Kieran Clifton noted, 'we are always going to be connected to the linear schedule if it is just the linear schedule that appears on iPlayer'.<sup>56</sup> Positioning iPlayer as a 'front door' to the BBC would, alternatively, allow the Corporation to maximize its strengths as a public service broadcaster by providing access to a diverse mix of content. In terms of media provision, Clifton argued,

The BBC's range of quality content is our competitive advantage. We can compete with OTT services [such as Netflix] due to this breadth of content – from TV to news, from sport headlines to radio. Others tend to have one of these – we have it all.<sup>57</sup>

If iPlayer or BBC News remain distinct 'products' with little integration between them, then in a connected media landscape this competitive advantage is lost. In this respect it is the *whole* of the BBC that matters and the question, posed in managerial

discourse, becomes how to make iPlayer porous within that service, allowing journeys across and between content rather than creating silos online.

On 11 March 2014, a press launch promo for the new iPlayer told ‘the story so far’ through a range of statistics that spoke of the attempt to move ‘beyond PC, beyond catch-up, beyond the early-adopter’. Set to the Clean Bandit song ‘No place I’d rather be’, the trailer proclaimed that since its launch BBC iPlayer had received ten billion ‘requests’, the app had been downloaded twenty-eight million times, and that current user requests stood at ten million per day. While iPlayer performance statistics would point to the service’s high growth curve since 2007, it remained the case that iPlayer accounted for just two to three per cent of all BBC audience viewing in 2014, with usage principally tied to catch-up (the catch-up window extending from seven to thirty days in October 2014).<sup>58</sup> In a 2015 blog contextualizing claims of iPlayer’s audience having plateaued, Taylor-Watt remarked that ‘the challenge for us is to get everyone using iPlayer’.<sup>59</sup> More expansively, Clifton spoke of his ‘dream of iPlayer providing a better service than BBC One’. Arguing that a rating of two to three per cent suggested a failure to capitalize on the product’s potential, Clifton’s dream of iPlayer as the ‘digital expression of television and the BBC’ saw the service aggregating and commissioning content, developing greater interactivity with BBC (and other broadcasters’) output, and offering increased personalization through data.<sup>60</sup> If the first wave of iPlayer growth was driven by broadband and the second by multiscreen devices, the third wave was specifically associated with the strategic articulation of content and data. As we shall see, this next stage in iPlayer’s development raises significant questions about the meaning of public service broadcasting online.

In a 2015 speech called the ‘BBC in the internet era’, Hall outlined what he called the ‘myBBC revolution’, a vision statement of ‘how to reinvent public service broadcasting through data’.<sup>61</sup> Acknowledging that the BBC lagged in the use of data, Hall identified personalization as one of the mechanisms for delivering BBC content in ways that were not only more tailored (such as BBC weather and news apps that find and deliver local information), but that would also allow audiences to become their own schedulers (such as BBC Playlist that enables users to save and play music from BBC programmes across music and radio websites and through iPlayer). The idea of reinventing public service broadcasting through data was in many ways a response to the rise of commercial VOD providers like Netflix and Amazon. David Beer and Roger Burrows define such services where users can search, purchase, view or stream content as ‘transactional archives’, in which cultural engagement is linked to data harvesting and based on recommendations generated through predictive analytics.<sup>62</sup> The act of gathering and using data tends to be relatively invisible to the user, inviting critique that far from providing greater power to consumers, data-mining commodifies the free labour of users.<sup>63</sup> In addressing these concerns, the BBC has moved to position its use of data within explicitly noncommercial terms, asserting that ‘we will never sell your data, let organisations track what you do with the BBC for their own purposes, or spam you’.<sup>64</sup>

However, the commodification of user behaviour on sites such as Netflix and Amazon extends beyond the commercial sale of consumer data to the ways in which user choice is determined by data. According to Ted Sarandos, chief content officer of Netflix, ‘algorithms drive our entire website – there isn’t an inch of uncalculated editorial space’.<sup>65</sup> Referring to the kinds of predictive analytics used by Netflix to shape recommendations and original productions, Beer and Burrows point to the ways

in which transactions on these sites ‘are the product of recursive data flows’ in which data generated from consumer choices constructs recommendations that shape future use of the site.<sup>66</sup> Beyond the protection of users’ privacy, the BBC’s vision of a data-driven world has stepped back from this commodification of consumer behaviour by framing its on-demand activities within a particular public service ethos of recommendation. Maintaining its role as a ‘trusted guide’, the BBC talked of the ways in which data would be used ‘to surface hidden gems that you might not otherwise have found’.<sup>67</sup> Victoria Jaye (Head of TV Content, BBC iPlayer) elaborated these principles for BBC iPlayer:

Our mission around sign-in is about delivering audiences a better public service ... we will always, even in a signed-in service, look to provide recommendations that surprise and delight, that aren’t just algorithmic. We have built new iPlayer to offer both algorithmic and editorial recommendations.<sup>68</sup>

The language of editorial recommendations moves away from the consumer address of commercial services such as Netflix and instead anchors personalization and data to the public service principle of serving the needs of viewers as citizens. In media terms, the prevailing view of the internet as a ‘pull’ medium in which viewers construct their own schedules points to a model of narrowcasting based on consumer choice. This contrasts with traditional definitions of public service broadcasting as a universal service which provides viewers not simply with what they want but also with what they need.<sup>69</sup> The BBC has sought to overcome this tension by parsing the logic of personalization through a discourse of public service recommendation delivered through sign-in. Hall summarized this as ‘not telling you what customers like you bought, but what citizens like you would love to watch and need to know’.<sup>70</sup>

For Clifton, the freedom to leverage editorial calculations beyond the data machine of taste-based algorithms was captured in a pithy equation that distinguished BBC iPlayer from both broadcast television *and* subscription VOD:

The way we will evolve from just scheduling telly is through data and we can also compete with new OTT services [such as Netflix] because we have people with editorial judgement. My view is, *people plus data beats data, and people plus data beats people.*<sup>71</sup>

For those involved in the development of strategy for BBC iPlayer, making recommendations that did not simply follow an algorithm based on transactional data required editorial skills of curation. Speaking in 2012, Jaye remarked, ‘the big C-word for us is curate ... we’re getting very obsessive about how we label, frame and promote content ... how we place one title alongside another to recreate serendipitous discovery’.<sup>72</sup> For Jaye, curation offered a means of pursuing the BBC’s public service mission to ‘inform, educate and entertain’ through combining the use of algorithms with the principle of ‘editorial recommendation’ to create links and connections between obviously popular and more unlikely content. Online curation of this sort invited thinking about the digital equivalents of linear scheduling – how the use of titles, labelling and data could help audiences navigate iPlayer, and construct journeys between different kinds of BBC output in ways that delivered public service outcomes.

By December 2014, in a further interview with Jaye following the launch of the new iPlayer, ‘content’ had joined ‘curation’ as the new big ‘C-word’. Jaye commented that ‘the next wave of innovation for iPlayer is how we develop its content offer, and that is a broader question, it’s not just for Television to answer, but

for the whole of the BBC as part of Charter renewal'.<sup>73</sup> The politics of the BBC's Charter, due for renewal in January 2017, shaped a series of questions in the mid 2010s about the Corporation's content investments, distribution strategies, governance structures, cross-sector partnerships, local and global activities, funding models and competitive media position. As the BBC geared up to defend and define its role as a publicly funded broadcaster, the issue of the Corporation's content offer (radio, TV, online) in the face of continuing budget cuts loomed large. This was framed most notably in the BBC's announcement in March 2014 that it would be transforming its youth-oriented channel BBC Three into an online-only channel. Under the proposals, which were provisionally approved by the BBC Trust in June 2015, BBC Three would cease linear broadcasting and exist only through the Corporation's website and via iPlayer. This announcement became a bellwether of the BBC's digital content ambitions. Although born of the requirement to make financial savings, the move was positioned as a means of responding to the changing viewing habits of younger audiences. Raising debate about whether young audiences were being served or sold short by the proposals, BBC Three became tied to discussion about new media ecosystems – of content being 'of the digital world, of the internet, rather than just being parked on the internet, [content] made somewhere else and just spat on to it'.<sup>74</sup> It is not within the scope of this essay to provide a detailed account of the changing role of BBC Three;<sup>75</sup> however, the proposal for an online-only channel became linked to questions of how both the BBC and iPlayer 'could redefine public service broadcasting in the digital age'.<sup>76</sup>

In the reconceptualization of BBC iPlayer from a catch-up service to an entertainment destination, the service became a locus for shaping the Corporation's 'content mix in a connected world' and, in so doing, invited the BBC 'to re-evaluate

how we make content and originate it'.<sup>77</sup> This brought with it forays into online-only commissions, programmes produced specifically for iPlayer rather than for transmission on one of the Corporation's linear television channels. As a form of content production, iPlayer commissions presented challenges in how to originate material for the online environment. BBC iPlayer is neither restricted by established conventions of scheduling that shape linear commissioning nor by particular genre expectations or channel brand identities. It is in this context that Jaye spoke of original iPlayer commissions enabling 'content diversification' – digital output that 'will not just be long-form TV shows and series, but shorter form content, feature-length films and events, all originated for the platform and aimed at on-demand audiences'.<sup>78</sup>

The 'next wave' of BBC iPlayer, as outlined by Jaye, resonates with the model of media circulation that Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green associate with the 'logic of spreadability'.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, designing content that could be dispersed through informal networks was written into the brief for commissions for iPlayer-originated content under the banner of 'Original Drama Shorts' and 'Original Comedy Shorts'. The commissions with BBC Drama in 2014, for example, invited ideas for 'a short film which might become *shareable content for young adults*'.<sup>80</sup> The first three shorts were released in March 2014 as iPlayer exclusives and were deliberately targeted at a BBC Three audience. These included *Tag*, a comedic battle of playground tag between rival teachers (figure 2); *Flea*, a spoken-word drama about a young girl's plan to protect her family from her violent stepfather (figure 3); and *My Jihad*, a romantic comedy about Muslim speed-dating (figure 4).

Much as the BBC altered the management structure for BBC iPlayer in the 2010s to bring together editorial and technological expertise, it also shifted its

commissioning structures for online-only programmes. Rather than separate multiplatform and linear television commissioners, online commissioning currently sits within the purview of linear commissioners responsible for specific genres. However it was Jaye in her role as Head of TV Content for BBC iPlayer who oversaw the commissioning of original programming for iPlayer. In this she worked with linear commissioners to produce exclusive iPlayer content that would not be transmitted on the BBC's broadcast channels. This process required the linear commissioners to grasp the attention economy of online media: the particularity of developing content of no fixed duration that will be viewable through a homepage, findable through searchable categories, promoted through social media networks and designed to spread informally through these channels. Within the realm of drama, which is typically constrained by long lead times, high costs and significant ratings pressures, online firsts were seen to offer particular scope for innovation, both in terms of formal innovation (such as the use of spoken-word poetry in the dialogue of *Flea*) and in the kinds of stories being told (such as the portrait of dating within the Muslim community in *My Jihad*). As Hilary Salmon, Executive Producer on the Original Drama Shorts, stated:

the films needed to be ambitious and extrovert enough to reach an audience where there's no inheritance, no notion of TV as wallpaper, where the audience needs to choose to press play and, hopefully, to share. It doesn't come much more exciting and challenging than that'.<sup>81</sup>

iPlayer drama shorts were positioned as a site of creative risk-taking, but were also designed to act as a 'talent pipeline' for 'up and coming writers and directors'.<sup>82</sup> In a context where the single film strand has all but disappeared from BBC television and where soap operas provide the primary training ground for television-writing



talent, Original Drama Shorts sought to provide opportunities for new writers to get work made. The commissioning process began with a workshop in which thirty writers, who were known to the BBC but had not yet had work produced for television, were invited to explore creative ideas for an online short. These were whittled down to ten ideas that were developed as scripts, with the most distinctive and original three of these taken into production. The writers were paired up with new directors, and the dramas shot over nine days on a minimal budget with only five days each for editing. Discussing *Tag*, *Flea* and *My Jihad*, Jaye said that

short-form video is not an entirely new way for TV producers to tell stories, but traditionally TV producers have not been commissioned to make short form dramas. Today, BBC iPlayer is commissioning video content, across all genres, of different shapes, sizes and durations given it is not bound by the creative parameters of the traditional linear schedule.<sup>83</sup>

Extending beyond its role as a low-budget platform for new talent, iPlayer also provided a site for established names to experiment with more unconventional material, from scabrous comedy specials such as *Frankie Boyle's Referendum Autopsy* (2014), about the result of the Scottish referendum, to long-form experiments in political documentary such as Adam Curtis's *Bitter Lake* (2015). The ratings for the BBC's early forays into online-only commissions (measured in terms of user requests over a seven-day period) suggest that they were successful in connecting with audiences. Although a prime-time BBC soap opera such as *EastEnders* might expect a million requests in a seven-day period through catch-up, a baseline for success on iPlayer, as set down by Future Media, was 150,000 requests in seven days. While *Frankie Boyle's Referendum Autopsy* reached a million requests, *Tag*, *Flea* and *My Jihad* each received 250,000 requests in seven days and ranked in iPlayer's ten

most shared pieces of content when available. This speaks to Mary DeBrett's argument that online services can support the public service principle of serving the diverse interests of minority groups by allowing broadcasters to tailor their content to suit niche audiences in ways that 'offer potential for renewed legitimacy by engaging and connecting communities in new ways'.<sup>84</sup>

While the language of content diversification, talent development and programme experimentation chimes with the BBC's public service remit, for some media observers online-only commissions threatened broadcast channels by risking blander television schedules. Noting the rise of iPlayer exclusives in 2015, *The Guardian* characterized online-only commissions as spiky and marginal 'oddballs', commenting that

The growth of iPlayer-exclusive content could be viewed as a boost for the risque and controversial. But there's an element of demographic splintering and ghetto-ising to it too. It increasingly feels as if clear lines are being drawn between the box in the corner of the room – where more traditionally minded viewers will find costume dramas and documentaries about castles and cathedrals – and the smart phone or tablet where more tech-savvy customers will have their edgier needs catered for.<sup>85</sup>

The rhetoric of ghettoization echoes the BBC's own concerns about the need to facilitate connections between its different services (both linear and online). However, the explicit address of many of iPlayer's original commissions to a younger audience exacerbates the criticism that the BBC underserves and marginalizes this specific demographic.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, the consequences of segmenting younger audiences (not all of whom are tech-savvy or naturally averse to linear viewing) on digital

platforms gave rise to broader concerns about the principle of universality that remains central to definitions of public service broadcasting. As Debrett notes, universality is challenged in the digital era by new on-demand services because they involve paying for additional technology (such as a broadband subscription).<sup>87</sup> Yet she goes on to argue that in an age of plenty the universality principle of public service broadcasting needs to be reinvented, ‘addressed across the full range of media platforms in order to aggregate sufficient fragments to reach a general public’.<sup>88</sup> Within this scenario, BBC iPlayer offers a site where experimental and innovative content that would not be produced within the current conventions of broadcast commissioning can sit alongside the full range of BBC broadcast programmes and be accessed through technologies that allow more flexible, searchable and shareable modes of interaction.

The significance of iPlayer exclusives should not be overplayed; they amounted to just twelve commissions a year in 2014. Indeed, Jaye was equivocal about the extent to which online-only commissions are disruptive in a creative sense. Alluding to her previous role as Head of Multiplatform Commissioning, Fiction and Entertainment, she spoke about developing ‘innovation at the edges’ rather than ‘the fandango stuff a few years ago which was quite complicated’.<sup>89</sup> This may seem to support the argument, made by critics such as Bennett, Strange and Mann, that television broadcasters have been reluctant to rethink their creative and business models and are more inclined to return to old patterns and profit centres. However, iPlayer firsts did function as a means of exploring the developing role of digital content within the BBC’s broader content offer. Within the political climate in 2014, the extent of this offer was shaped by financial constraints. Yet to see the development of iPlayer strategy purely as the result of budgetary cuts or as an

expression of linear thinking downplays the significant ways in which the service has catalysed organizational thought about the impact of online television on broadcasting. Alongside propositions about data, personalization and curation, iPlayer originals represented an internal working through of what it might mean for the BBC to be a digital public service broadcaster.

Describing the contemporary socio-industrial context in which public service broadcasters like the BBC operate, Charlotte Higgins writes:

Online, our lives, and our routes to BBC material, increasingly pass through the great ecosystems built by American conglomerates. Instead of pouring its programmes, as in the past, through pipes that it had either invented or whose development it had aided, [the BBC] is obliged ‘to play out its digital innovations in spaces that are essentially defined by Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple’, in the words of Matt Locke, a former head of innovation at BBC new media.<sup>90</sup>

As the BBC looked forward to its role in what Hall called ‘the internet era’, it increasingly needed to navigate a path in which its service ‘won’t be as prominent in an on-demand world’.<sup>91</sup> In the hybrid TV/digital moment that was emerging in the early 2010s, the BBC faced renewed attacks on the scope of its operations and the extent to which it was exceeding the bounds of its role as a public service broadcaster. At the same time, with the emergence of new online-only television services such as Netflix and Amazon, the BBC was operating in a landscape in which television was no longer defined by broadcasting. BBC iPlayer has been a particular focus of the BBC’s attempt to reimagine itself as a digital public service broadcaster in the 2010s.

While this has involved a shift away from earlier meanings of multiplatform, this needs to be understood as more than simply the triumph of ‘linear legacies’.

Instead, as we have argued, BBC iPlayer has been developed as a hybrid TV/digital product, a service imagined by the Corporation as a ‘front door’ to the BBC but one that is porous enough to allow connections and journeys across and beyond the full range of the BBC’s content. Central here has been the ambition to move iPlayer from a catch-up service to the digital expression of the BBC online. This has involved reconceptualizing what public service broadcasting might mean beyond the experience of broadcasting itself. For the BBC this has been articulated in response and in opposition to digital rivals such as Amazon, Apple and Netflix. In its approach to the use of data, the BBC has adopted a particular public service rhetoric that attempts to resist the commercialization of data and to encourage ‘serendipitous discovery’.<sup>92</sup> Beyond experimentations in online curation, BBC iPlayer has also emerged as a way to explore how online might offer new opportunities in the commissioning of original content. While iPlayer exclusives lack the transmedia interactivity of the multiplatform projects examined by Bennett and Strange, online-only content has encouraged new thinking in terms of how, and from whom, to commission content.

Exclusive iPlayer content does present a challenge to the principle of universal access at the heart of public service broadcasting. Yet broadcasting has always involved financial outlay beyond the payment of the licence fee from citizens, be it the purchase of sets or the installation of antennae. Without significant government intervention, access to the internet will invariably require payments to commercial providers. Yet developments such as the launch of Freeview Play in the UK in October 2015 (providing access to catch-up, on-demand and live television within one

free service through connected televisions and set-top boxes) makes VOD services like BBC iPlayer a more central part of the television infrastructure. For the BBC not to explore how iPlayer might function as a ‘front door’ to the Corporation – rather than simply as a mechanism for catching up with broadcast programmes – would represent a failure to consider how to serve the UK public in a media landscape where the boundaries between linear and digital television are breaking down. In this sense BBC iPlayer is neither an expression of linear thinking nor an example of multiplatform innovation. Rather it emerges in BBC discourse as a hybrid space where the worlds of linear broadcasting and digital collide.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Director-General Tony Hall unveils his vision for the BBC’, *BBC*, 8 October 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2013/tony-hall-vision.html>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> James Bennett and Niki Strange, ‘Linear legacies: managing the multiplatform production process’, in Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare and Avi Santo (eds), *Making Media Work: Cultures of Management in the Entertainment Industries* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Despite initial public concern about the proposal for BBC Three to become online-only, the channel’s success in developing original programming was recognized by the Royal Television Society’s ‘Channel of the Year’ award in 2017.

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<sup>5</sup> Previously, BBC iPlayer had fourteen different versions that were developed for specific television platforms (Virgin Media, Sky, YouView), games consoles (Nintendo, Playstation, Xbox) and mobile devices (iPad, BlackBerry, Windows).

<sup>6</sup> Dan Taylor-Watt, 'Introducing the new BBC iPlayer', *BBC*, 11 March 2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/internet/entries/3c7c6172-c3e7-34cf-9c04-4b40458c4a6e>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>7</sup> BBC iWonder was introduced in January 2014, and described interactive educational guides that organized video and audio, infographics, written summaries, and activities around specific themed and historical topics.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Taylor-Watt, interview with authors, 16 December 2014. The BBC publishes monthly iPlayer performance packs listing the number of requests, top programmes and the devices on which people are using it.

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Jaye, interview with authors, 2 July 2012.

<sup>10</sup> This included the Head of BBC iPlayer (Dan Taylor-Watt), the Controller of Digital Strategy (Kieran Clifton), Head of TV Content, BBC iPlayer (Victoria Jaye), Audience Research Manager for BBC iPlayer (Alison Button) and Finance Business Partner (David Lain).

<sup>11</sup> Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare and Avi Santo, 'Discourses, dispositions, tactics: reconceiving management in critical media industry studies', in Johnson, Kompare and Santo (eds), *Making Media Work*, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> John T. Caldwell, 'Para-industry: researching Hollywood's backwaters', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2013), pp. 157–65.

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<sup>13</sup> Denise Mann, 'Introduction: when television and new media work worlds collide', in Mann (ed.), *Wired TV: Laboring Over an Interactive Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Max Dawson, 'Defining mobile television: the social construction and deconstruction of new and old media', *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2012), p. 254.

<sup>15</sup> See Catherine Johnson, 'Beyond catch-up: VoD interfaces, ITV Hub and the repositioning of television online', *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), pp. 121–38

<sup>16</sup> Tony Hall, 'The BBC in the internet era', *BBC*, 2 March 2015, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/2015/tony-hall-bbc-internet-era>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Niki Strange, 'Multiplatforming public service: the BBC's bundled project', in James Bennett and Niki Strange (eds), *Television as Digital Media* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> There has been a wide range of academic scholarship on the development of multiplatform programming, including: Sharon Marie Ross, *Beyond the Box* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Jennifer Gillan, *Television and New Media: Must-click TV* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Strange, 'Multiplatforming public service', p.136.

<sup>20</sup> Mann, 'Introduction', p.10. See also Michael Curtin, Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson (eds), *Distribution Revolution: Conversations about the Digital Future of Film and Television* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press,



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2014), and Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson (eds), *Connected Viewing: Selling, Streaming and Sharing Media in the Digital Era* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Evans, Tim Coughlan and Vicky Coughlan, 'Building digital estates: multiscreening, technology management and ephemeral television', *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), pp. 191–205.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Harrison, *The Creative Revolution: Is Digital Technology Changing Creativity in TV?*, report for the Digital Production Partnership (2013), p. 32, <<http://dpp-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/The-Creative-Revolution-DPP-Report.pdf>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Bennett and Strange, 'Linear legacies', pp. 75–83.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Huggers, 'BBC Online – putting quality first', *BBC*, 11 August 2010, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/aboutthebbc/2010/08/bbc-online---putting-quality-f.shtml>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Bennett and Strange, 'Linear legacies', p. 82.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>30</sup> FM&T was later shortened to Future Media and subsequently renamed BBC Digital in 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor-Watt, interview with authors.

<sup>32</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 2 July 2012.

<sup>33</sup> BBC Worldwide launched a global pilot version of iPlayer in Canada, Australia and parts of Europe in 2011. The service was cancelled in June 2015, however, as the

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Corporation sought to focus its international proposition around its overseas website (BBC.com) and the development of BBC Store, a service that allowed users to buy BBC content on a ‘download-to-own’ basis but that was also closed in November 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Harrison, *The Creative Revolution*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Ofcom, ‘Facts and figures’, <<http://media.ofcom.org.uk/facts/>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Ofcom, *The Communications Market 2014*, p. 141, <<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr14>> accessed 23 November 2017.

<sup>37</sup> By 2016, 82.2 per cent of all television viewing in the UK was live and seventy-nine per cent of adults used a VOD service. Ofcom, *The Communications Market 2017*, <<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2017>> accessed 23 December 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Ofcom, *The Communications Market 2014*, pp.144–45.

<sup>39</sup> Alison Button, interview with authors, 16 December 2014. The average age of iPlayer user in 2014 was thirty-five, significantly lower than the average age of the BBC One viewer which was fifty-five to fifty-seven.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, ‘Beyond catch-up’.

<sup>41</sup> David Abrahams, ‘Assessing the health of broadcast TV’, *Channel 4*, 11 September 2014 <<http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/assessing-the-health-of-broadcast-tv-david-abrahams-ibc-keynote>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>42</sup> See Johnson, ‘Beyond catch-up’, pp. 133–34.

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- <sup>43</sup> Mann, *Wired TV*; Curtin, Holt and Sanson, *Distribution Revolution*; Holt and Sanson, *Connected Viewing*.
- <sup>44</sup> Hallvard Moe, 'Defining public service beyond broadcasting: the legitimacy of different approaches', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2011), p. 61.
- <sup>45</sup> See Paul Grainge, 'Moments and opportunities: interstitials and the promotional imagination of BBC iPlayer', *Critical Studies in Television*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), pp. 139–55.
- <sup>46</sup> Taylor-Watt, interview with authors.
- <sup>47</sup> See Harris Macleod, 'BBC iPlayer, Samsung and John Lewis top YouGov half-year brand rankings', *YouGov*, 10 July 2013, <<https://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/07/10/bbc-iplayer-samsung-and-john-lewis-top-yougov-half/>> accessed 21 November 2017.
- <sup>48</sup> Button, interview with authors.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Kieran Clifton, interview with authors, 16 December 2014.
- <sup>51</sup> James Bennett, 'Introduction: television as digital media', in Bennett and Strange (eds), *Television as Digital Media*, p. 7.
- <sup>52</sup> As Clifton, who wrote the strategy, mentioned in interview, radio and wearables are mysteriously missing, with the focus more overtly on television rather than audio.
- <sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Evans, 'Building digital estates: transmedia television in industry and daily life', paper presented at Transmedial Narratives: New Ways to Create Fictional Worlds, University of Granada, 28 April 2015.
- <sup>54</sup> Clifton, interview with authors.
- <sup>55</sup> Taylor-Watt, interview with authors.

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<sup>56</sup> Clifton, interview with authors.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Only around ten per cent of TV requests on iPlayer in 2014–15 were for live programmes. This alters for radio, where live requests dominated on-demand on BBC iPlayer radio, standing at between seventy-three and eighty per cent. See Mimmi Andersson, ‘Monthly performance pack, May 2015’, *BBC*, <<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/iplayer/iplayer-performance-may15.pdf>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Dan Taylor-Watt, ‘Putting BBC iPlayer performance in context’, *BBC*, 29 May 2015, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/6be54086-c2e4-4e85-a777-0fc72be30010>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Clifton, interview with authors.

<sup>61</sup> Hall, ‘The BBC in the internet era’.

<sup>62</sup> David Beer and Roger Burrows, ‘Popular culture, digital archives and the new social life of data’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2013), pp. 47–71.

<sup>63</sup> Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Phil Fearnley, ‘myBBC: transforming the BBC to make it personal’, *BBC*, 2 March 2015 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/46a896ea-e587-4c63-ae7e-9781bca58dd3>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>65</sup> See ‘Ted Sarandos, Chief Content Officer, Netflix’, in Curtin, Holt and Sanson, *Distribution Revolution*, p. 144.

<sup>66</sup> Beer and Burrows, ‘Popular culture’, pp. 59–60.

<sup>67</sup> Fearnley, ‘myBBC’.

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<sup>68</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 16 December 2014.

<sup>69</sup> David Hendy, *Public Service Broadcasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> Hall, 'The BBC in the internet era'.

<sup>71</sup> Clifton, interview with authors.

<sup>72</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 2 July 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 16 December 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Button, interview with authors.

<sup>75</sup> On the move of BBC Three online, see Gillian Doyle, 'Resistance of channels: television distribution in the multiplatform era', *Telematics and Informatics*, no. 33 (2016), pp. 693–702, and Phil Ramsey, "'It could redefine public service broadcasting in the digital age": assessing the rationale for moving BBC Three online', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 27 July 2016, <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354856516659001>> accessed 21 November 2017

<sup>76</sup> Damian Kavanagh, 'Blazing a trail for new BBC Three', 10 December 2014, *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/posts/Blazing-a-trail-for-new-BBC-Three>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>77</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 16 December 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).

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<sup>80</sup> Hilary Salmon, 'Outside the box – original drama shorts on iPlayer', *BBC*, 5 March 2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/0ce9aaea-2d62-37d5-bf20-175164dde634>> accessed 21 November 2017 (our emphasis).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 16 December 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Debrett, 'Riding the wave: public service television in the multi-platform era', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 31, no. 5 (2009), p. 813.

<sup>85</sup> Phil Harrison, 'Will oddball BBC iPlayer exclusives lead to blander TV schedules?', *The Guardian*, 9 June 2015, <<http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2015/jun/09/will-oddball-bbc-iplayer-exclusives-lead-to-blander-tv-schedules>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>86</sup> See 'Reasons to fight for BBC3', *SaveThree*, <<http://savebbc3.com/reasons-to-fight-for-bbc-3/>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Ofcom research in 2014 suggested that three per cent of UK households lacked access to basic broadband (2Mbits/s) and fifteen per cent lacked access to standard broadband (10Mbits/s). See 'Ofcom infrastructure report 2014', 8 December 2014, <<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/infrastructure/2014/infrastructure-14.pdf>> accessed 21 November 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Debrett, 'Riding the wave', p. 810.

<sup>89</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 16 December 2014. See also Elizabeth Evans, 'The evolving media ecosystem: an interview with Victoria Jaye', in Paul Grainge (ed.), *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* (London: BFI Publishing, 2011).

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<sup>90</sup> Charlotte Higgins, *This New Noise* (London: Guardian Books 2015), p. 223.

<sup>91</sup> Hall, 'The BBC in the internet era'.

<sup>92</sup> Jaye, interview with authors, 2 July 2012