On journalism and the Olympics

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That I can comment on the Olympics is only possible because media organisations pay journalists to report on them. I get my Olympics information from the mainstream news media. I interpret it through a sociological lens, but I am not there and can only interpret what I have access to, which is the news coverage.

I mention this because the mainstream print news media is undergoing major changes at the moment. The Australian media, already very concentrated, is further ‘streamlining’ its news operations. More shared stories and journalists are on the cards, less local news. The popular discourse is that the Internet has killed the news. Why pay for content when you can get it for free online?

For Olympics news to be reported quickly and accurately, news organisations pay professional journalists to get the stories. Some stories, like who won or lost an event, are relatively simple to uncover by following official press releases or watching the match, but others, such as those investigating drug use or successful training regimes in sport, require more skill and time. It is these latter stories that are at risk if we are to rely on amateurs for our news.

It will be interesting to see what type of coverage we'll have at the next Olympics. Hopefully an alternative model of news provision will emerge that will foster professional journalism while maintaining the viability of media companies.