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In 1974, Picard got his bachelor degree at the Department of Communication at Loma Linda University in California. After graduation, he did not continue to study; he worked as a publication editor of the Freedom of Information Center (the national research center on controls of information) and an editor of the Ontario (California) Daily Report and the Riverside (California) Community news. These professional experiences enabled Picard to examine media problems from industry's point of view. Therefore, when returning to graduate study at California State University at Fullerton, Picard concentrated his research from the economic aspects of mass media.

"My interest in media economics started before I began my master's degree. I was an employee in journalism and had a good deal of questions about the whys and hows of the business side and its influences on journalism. When I returned to university do my master's I began to focus on questions of media economics. I continued that focus in my doctoral work and for the past twenty years of my academic career."

Compared to a scholar without professional experience, Picard is more aware of questions faced by media Industry. According to Picard's (1989) Media Economics, he said that he intended to answer questions such as how USA Today could be established when hundreds of daily newspapers have died nationwide and why Home Box Office, Showtime, USA Network, the Family Network, and other cable channels have significantly diminished broadcast network affiliates' audience but not as strongly affected independent stations' audience. He made a further point for me:

"I think it [professional experience] has helped me understand the real workings of media and allows me to raise questions that are relevant not only for scholarly knowledge development but for professional practice. It also gives depth to my research and allows me to convey results of that research to the industry as well as to other scholars."

As Picard mentioned earlier, he has focused on media economics for the past twenty more years of his graduate study and academic career. He acquires a great deal of knowledge from business and economics. He had said that it is necessary to understand the economic milieu in which the media operate in order to consider questions about media operations and activities (Picard, 1989).

"In my undergraduate education [I took] many business courses as well as journalism courses. In my graduate work I also took a good deal of economic and business coursework. Beyond that, I have constantly read a good deal of economics and business literature.

Because I was one of the first working in the field, there was little literature about media economics available. As a result, I would study economics and business literature and apply theories and research approaches from those fields to questions about media operations and activities.

The motivation [of media operations and activities] was really to be able to explain why we have the kind of media we do, why they operate as they do, and ultimately to find ways to improve and change those activities. To effectively carry out those goals required a clear understanding of the economic forces that compel and constrain media company actions."

If we classify scholars into two styles: one is broad and shallow; the other is narrow and deep, I think Picard belongs to the second one. The good thing is he combines all possible combinations of media economics studies. The bad thing is he may ignore or de-emphasize other aspects of media research. In addition, Picard (2003) classified himself in an applied tradition of the media economics study. Compared to a critical tradition within which political economists try to correct the social structure and political system, Picard concerns about topics within and under the organizational level and tries to do some good to the media industry. To me, his direction is what I am trying to pursue now.

There are not few critiques to Picard's definition of media economics. Media economists are most criticized for decentralizing media and society and for locating economy as focal point. Picard gave me a good explanation.

I would argue that economics are a major cause of the media and social impact. Without the clear understanding of media economics, much criticism of media becomes irrelevant because it cannot produce change. Only with deep understanding of the economic bases of media, can one fashion reasonable policies and strategies to improve behavior and achieve positive social impact.

Picard is one of the most productive scholars in the field of media economics. Since publishing a book *The Press and the Decline of Democracy* in 1985, he has written 16 books among which *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues* (1989) is the most cited by other media economists. Besides, Picard wrote 46 book chapters, 47 journal articles, 37 monographs, and 121 other publications on newspapers, magazines, and trade journals all over the world. Particularly, Picard authored several economic and management software programs, including *NewspaperCosts*, which analyzes internal costs and pricing for newspaper. However, when I asked him what his secrets are for being productive, his answer cannot be simpler.

If you have a lot of questions, you want a lot of answers. Many answers have not been available so I have gone out to find them and convey the answers to others.

In terms of craftsmanship, Mills (1959) mentioned, "The sociological imagination

can also be cultivated; certainly it seldom occurs without a great deal of often routine work.” (p.211) The “often routine work” in Picard’s sense is writing. He keeps himself doing different projects at the same time but in different stages. He said:

"I write regularly—the old journalism training helps—and tend to work early in the morning when no one bothers me. I devote a great deal of time to my work. I often have several projects underway at the same time. One may be in early stages of understanding the issue and formulating the research questions, another may be in information and data gathering, another may be in the data processing phase, and another may be in the writing stage. "

When it comes to life style, it seems to me that Picard spends most of his time on scholarly work. I feel disappointed that he did not mention his family life. Maybe he is just like other successful people who tend to put their career on the top of their priority list. However, rather than feeling guilty all the time, Picard enjoys his choice and has never considered leaving the media economic field.

"I greatly enjoy being a scholar and educator. It is a significant part of my life and provides rewards beyond mere employment. My scholarly work has also enabled me to travel widely and develop relationships with persons with similar interests worldwide. I have no regrets about my choices. "

In general, I learn at least three things from Picard. First, listen to myself. My professional experience tells me that economic fluctuation has great impact on media performance, thus I should devote myself to find out the solutions. I should not follow some popular trends and change my interests. Secondly, don’t be afraid of writing. No matter Mills (1959), Becker (1986), or Picard, they write regularly. As Becker said, “Writing anything—letters, journal entries, memoranda—will take some of the mystery and danger out of writing.” (p.165) Thirdly, be curious. Maybe the biggest secret of being productive is being curious about everything happened in your life. Mills pointed out that various ideas may be by-products of everyday life.

References

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