

JOURNALISM'S CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE:

A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

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Carnegie Corporation
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**JOURNALISM'S CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE:
A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**



BY CHRISTOPHER CONNELL

**Carnegie Corporation of New York
Forum on the Future of Journalism Education**

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Introduction

We live in a very unhistorical age. Most Americans know little about the way news was disseminated in our nation's earliest days. Popular folklore presents us with the image of Paul Revere on horseback, galloping through the night to proclaim that the British were coming. But it's necessary to remember that there was also a vibrant and well-established press during Colonial times. *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic*, is thought to be the first newspaper published in America; it was printed by Richard Pierce and edited by Benjamin Harris in Boston, and first appeared on September 25, 1690. Benjamin Franklin was also a newspaperman, who began publishing and writing for the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729. In between, a half-dozen or so other newspapers appeared in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

Naturally, where there was a thriving press, there was always controversy. *Publick Occurrences* met a quick demise when “an aroused bureaucracy issued a broadside warning against future publications of any kind without ‘licence [sic] first obtained from those appointed by the Government to grant the same.’”¹ James Franklin, older brother of Benjamin and publisher of Boston's *New England Courant*, ended up in jail when he found himself opposing the views of Boston's powerful Puritan preachers, the Mathers, about smallpox inoculation. But of course, the most famous case of a journalist fighting for the right to express his opinion in the face of opposition from the colonial rulers was that of John Peter Zenger, who began publishing *The New York Weekly Journal* in New York City in 1733. His trial and subsequent acquittal on charges of “seditious libel” for printing editorials about the corrupt practices of the city's local government is arguably the first instance of freedom of the press emerging as an issue of fundamental importance for the nascent American nation. (It may actually have already been a principle worth fighting for in the minds of at least some colonists, as it has been reported that, upon hearing of the acquittal, “There followed ‘three huzzas’ and ‘shouts of joy’ from the crowd of spectators in the courtroom. [The judge] demanded order, even threatening spectators with arrest and imprisonment, but the celebration continued unabated.”²)

We've come quite a long way since then—from the days of pamphleteering and of broadsheets tacked up outside colonial shops and inns, with the public milling about,

¹ HistoryBuff.com, R.J. Brown, editor-in-chief, <http://www.historybuff.com/library/reffirstten.html>.

² University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/zenger/zengeraccount.html>

anxious to read the news of the day—to e-mail alerts about breaking developments and iPods streaming audiovisual content of our choosing right into our hands, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Of course, in-between there were myriad other news sources to turn to, from the Pony Express to the telegraph to radio broadcasts to the nightly network news, where the perceived voice of authority and objectivity—personified by the network anchorman—reported the events of consequence that had occurred across the country and around the world each day. But paralleling the enormous changes taking place in the American scene at all levels, so, too, has our trust in the news media undergone a significant shift—one that is on a markedly downward spiral. A 2005 poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, for example, reported that the percentage of Americans saying they can believe most of what they read in their daily newspaper dropped from 84 percent in 1985 to 54 percent in 2004. For televised news, whether broadcast or cable, the results are unfortunately similar. What is the cause of this apparent skepticism? Why has our trust in the news eroded while our cynicism about it seems to grow?

One answer I'd suggest is that the explosion of information itself has overwhelmed us. Experts tell us that in the year 2000, the world was annually generating two exabytes of data, or two *quintillion* bytes of information—which was equivalent to about 250 books for every man, woman and child on earth. That's an enormous amount of data, especially when you consider that since the beginning of history, humanity has created only six times that amount of information—or a total of 12 exabytes. But the way data was snowballing in 2000, researchers at the University of California at Berkeley estimated that the next 12 exabytes would be created in 2.5 years. By that timetable, we've already passed that remarkable milestone.

In the realm of the news, information comes to us from a staggering multiplicity of sources. Today, in the United States, there are about 1,700 daily and 6,800 weekly newspapers; more than 1,600 broadcast television stations; and nearly 8,500 cable systems. There are also some 13,000 radio stations, along with the newest development in radio technology, satellite radio services. Most of these media outlets, in some way or another, provide news as part of their daily fare; some of them are based on a 24-hour-a-day news model, often with other programming (often entertainment oriented) bracketing the newscasts. And that doesn't even begin to count the web-based versions of all these media, along with the independent Internet sites—such as the more than 28 million blogs³ that have appeared since the late 1990s—also providing news in one form or another. The proliferation of all this news has been accompanied by the attendant

³ “State of the Blogosphere, February 2006 Part 1: On Blogosphere Growth,” by Dave Sifry, February 06, 2006. <http://technorati.com/weblog/2006/02/81.html>

phenomenon of news being fragmented into delivery streams aimed at different groups for different reasons. For example, ethnic presses abound: in Chicago, there are approximately 250 ethnic and community publications⁴; in New York City, somewhere around 60 different ethnic groups publish 270 ethnic magazines and newspapers in 42 languages.⁵ Think also of MTV news; gender-oriented magazines; religious news services, political web sites, local community “Pennysavers,” newsletters from advocacy groups for every cause imaginable—the list is endless. But as a recent report⁶ from the Project for Excellence in Journalism concludes, this diversity does not add up to news consumers being provided with any greater depth of knowledge about issues or even a wider view of events taking place at home or abroad. “The new paradox of journalism is more outlets covering fewer stories,” the report warns.

Ironically, hand-in-hand with the ever-increasing number of news suppliers is the growing movement toward media consolidation. The media giants now own not only broadcast networks and local stations, they also own the cable companies that pipe in the signals of their competitors and the studios that produce most of the programming. To get a sense of how consolidated the industry has become, consider this: In 1990, the major broadcast networks—ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox—fully or partially owned just 12.5 percent of the new series they aired. By 2000, it was 56.3 percent. Just two years later, it had surged to 77.5 percent. In addition, 90 percent of the top 50 cable TV stations are owned by the same parent companies that own the broadcast networks; the top 20 Internet news sites are owned by the same media conglomerates that control the broadcast and cable networks.⁷ In fact, six huge corporations now control the major U.S. media: Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation (FOX, HarperCollins, the *New York Post*, the *Weekly Standard*, *TV Guide*, DirecTV and 35 TV stations), General Electric (NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, Telemundo, Bravo, Universal Pictures and 28 TV stations), Time Warner (AOL, CNN, Warner Bros., Time and its 130-plus magazines), Disney (ABC, Disney Channel, ESPN, 10 TV and 72 radio stations), Viacom (CBS, MTV, Nickelodeon, Paramount Pictures, Simon & Schuster and 183 U.S. radio stations), and Bertelsmann (Random House and its more than 120 imprints worldwide, and Gruner+Jahr and its more than 110 magazines in 10 countries).⁸

These trends have contributed to the perception that most of the news we read, hear and see is subjective, limited in relevance and relativistic in importance. As a society, we

⁴ *Telling Our Stories, Changing Our World: Why Chicago Needs an Association of Independent and Ethnic Presses*, by Jacqueline Lalley with Karen Hawkins, Independent Press Association-Chicago, 2003.

⁵ “Ethnic Press Booms in New York City,” Associated Press, July 10, 2002.

⁶ *The State of the News Media 2006*, Project for Excellence in Journalism.

⁷ “My Beef with Big Media,” by Ted Turner. *Washington Monthly*, July/August 2004.

⁸ “Why Media Ownership Matters,” *Seattle Times*, April 3, 2005.

seem to have come to the conclusion that no one speaks to us with that unshakable voice of authority anymore. Although there are some pundits whose adherents believe everything they say to be truer than true, others bemoan the fact that there really are no more Edward R. Murrows or Walter Cronkites or the like who represented the pinnacle of journalistic integrity and who never blurred the line between fact and opinion. What has taken their place—in the view of some—is an amalgam of news sources that include shock jocks, info-tainment, talking heads and podcasts, all adding up to diversity without standards, information without wisdom, pictures without explanations; events without context.

What all this means is that most of the news delivered to us comes without context, or with so little that we often remain baffled by what we've just learned. The ultra-competitive environment that now characterizes the news business, in which the generation of revenue perhaps outweighs all other measures of success, is also having an impact. In such a culture, the news becomes whatever sells newspapers or drives you to a web site or gets you to change the channel on your bigscreen TV. In such a culture, it's acceptable to have multi-page advertising inserts in even the most well-respected magazines that are meant to blend in with the news and editorial content—advertisements for drug company products, for example, in issues of a magazine dealing with health, or travel promotions inserted near articles dealing with ecology and the preservation of natural habitat—and only admit to being ads in tiny, pale type at the edge of the page. And, in such a culture, even sports events (the outcomes of which, to many American fans, as well as their international counterparts, are the most important news of all) are arranged around the need for commercial breaks.

The proliferation of choices available to most Americans, while nationally celebrated (“freedom of choice” is one of our most cherished ideals) has also made it more difficult than ever to identify quality. “As the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a multitude of options begin to appear,” writes Swarthmore psychologist Barry Schwartz in *The Paradox of Choice*.⁹ “As the number of choices grows further, the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer liberates, but debilitates. It might even be said to tyrannize.” Indeed, being presented with a multitude of choices without any contextual or objective information about how to compare and evaluate a range of selections, is counterproductive and sidesteps the consequences that may arise from uninformed choices—and these may be enormously impactful. Selecting one doctor over another, one school over another, one course of study, one neighborhood to live in, one job, one insurance plan—these things can change a person's life, for good or ill. Clearly, choice without knowledge is really no choice at all.

⁹ Ecco, 2004; Harper Perennial, 2005.

Among the different ways that American society has attempted to sort through the vast array of resources available in almost every aspect of daily life is to establish standards that can be relied on to indicate some level of excellence. Often, those standards are identified through the process of licensure: doctors, engineers, electricians, home inspectors, social workers, locksmiths—even funeral directors and barbers—have to obtain a license, but journalists do not. Anyone can be a journalist; you don't need a degree from a journalism school or any other specific or required form of education or training to be a reporter. In fact, with the advent of blogs, an individual doesn't even need to be employed by any type of media outlet to practice whatever form of personal journalism he or she fancies: all that's necessary is a computer and an Internet connection. To some degree, that puts journalists in the same category as creative writers and artists who are driven to express themselves: the difference is that, on the one hand, we understand that those who practice the arts are communicating their opinions and sharing their creativity; on the other hand, we expect journalists to be objectively reporting facts unless they explicitly state, as with an editorial, that they are presenting their individual or organizational views about an issue. As opinions and facts become more and more indistinguishable from each other, confusion about the increasingly blurry line between fact and opinion—even between what is factual news and what is presented as news but comes wrapped in ideology—and uncertainty about the trustworthiness of journalism and its practitioners grows. Widely publicized scandals involving journalists who confessed to plagiarism, or who have been manifestly inaccurate in their reporting, or whose biases seem to be leaking into their stories, probably also add to the public's increasing disillusion with reporters and the news organizations they work for, as do revelations that the government has paid to plant stories in American and Iraqi media, for example, or to encourage commentators to promote particular points of view. In a related turn of events, even the radio pay-for-play “payola” scandals of the 1950s seem to have made a comeback: in 2005, Sony BMG Music Entertainment agreed to pay a \$10 million fine to settle charges that their music stars got preferred radio airplay in exchange for trips, goods and cash. “Payola is pervasive,” said New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer who brought the charges against BMG. “It reaches to the very top of the industry.”

In light of all these troubling developments, it is important to remind ourselves of our founding fathers' belief that a healthy democracy requires vibrant—and vigilant—journalism. Such is the spirit that led Thomas Jefferson to declare, in 1787, that, “The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter.”

From my student days—first in Lebanon and later at Stanford University—and on into my professional life as a teacher, historian, and later, as the president of The New York Public Library, Brown University, and now, Carnegie Corporation of New York, it has been clear to me how critical it is that news about national *and* international events be available to all Americans and that it be provided to them in a way that offers background, context, depth and honest, factual information so that every citizen can form his or her own opinions and make decisions about the nation's policies as well as its interactions with its own people and with others around the globe. After all, helping to shape both the present and the future of our nation is the right, and the job, of a citizen in a democracy, and we are all obligated to participate.

But to do our jobs well, we need the help of journalists who are superbly trained, intellectually rigorous, steeped in knowledge about the subjects they report on, steadfast about their ethical standards and courageous in their pursuit of truth. I am convinced that our American journalism schools are the key to enabling individuals to become the kind of journalists who will strive to achieve those standards—indeed, who will require nothing less of themselves. And what we, as a society, have a right to expect of all journalism schools in general, and of those within the great research universities of our country in particular, is that they equip the next generation of journalists with not only the training but also the education that will prepare them to cope with the complex social, cultural and political challenges presented by the rapid changes taking place in our nation and by international developments, as well. Drawing on the multidisciplinary resources of American universities—unquestionably, some of the most enriching, challenging and academically excellent institutions of higher education in the world—offers journalism schools the fortunate and unparalleled opportunity to be both pragmatic in their approach to the basics of journalism training and to take advantage of the wealth of intellectual and scholarly knowledge and wisdom available at the university to develop a curriculum that emphasizes analytical thinking and a passion for learning and engaging with ideas, along with professional technique.

After all, it is the American university, with its long tradition of nurturing research, encouraging experimentation and supporting study and learning that push out to the frontiers of knowledge, where so many of the issues that affect society are often most deeply and thoroughly analyzed and debated, and where they find their first foothold onto the national agenda. The university, America's great marketplace of ideas, is also the source of breakthroughs such as those in medical research and treatment, which are more likely to emerge from medical schools than from doctors' offices. In the same way, the nation should be able to rely upon professional schools of journalism for significant advances in the means and methods of gathering and reporting the news to the American public.

It was, in large part, prompted by such considerations that Carnegie Corporation of New York created the *Carnegie Journalism Initiative*, a curriculum-enrichment effort that calls for a reinvigoration of the journalism curriculum to offer students at our nation's public and private universities a deep and multi-layered exploration of complex subjects like history, politics, classics and philosophy to undergird their journalistic skills. The effort is one element of the *Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education*, which was launched in 2005 and focuses on developing a vision of what a journalism school can be at an exemplary institution of higher education. The Carnegie-Knight Initiative also includes News 21 Incubators, annual national investigative reporting projects overseen by campus professors and distributed nationally through both traditional and innovative media and The Carnegie-Knight Task Force, which aims to carry out research and create a platform for educators to speak on policy and journalism education issues. All these efforts grew out of a partnership involving the Corporation the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the deans of four of the nation's leading journalism schools—the Graduate School of Journalism, University of California at Berkeley; the Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University; the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University; and the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California—as well as the director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

In order to continue working toward our goals, on November 16, 2005, in New York City, the Corporation brought together some of the nation's most influential news industry leaders and top journalism educators to engage in a discussion of how to prepare “the best and the brightest” to become tomorrow's journalists and how to reinvent and reinvigorate the news environment. In the view of one of America's most eminent journalists, former executive editor of *The New York Times*, Max Frankel, who attended the gathering, it is critical for leaders of both the profession of journalism and journalism education to participate in this kind of frank, wide-ranging dialogue because, as he notes, “Not only journalism schools but the self-styled ‘responsible’ print and web media have an obligation...to attack the irresponsible practice of our craft, to reject the lumping together of all ‘media’ and to redefine their understanding of important and meaningful news coverage.”

This gathering, one in a series of meetings, was part of an ongoing national conversation among the deans, students, journalists and others involved in our initiative and aimed at creating awareness about the challenges facing the profession of journalism and about the changes that must take place in journalism schools and their curricula if tomorrow's journalists are truly going to make a meaningful contribution to our

knowledge and understanding about the forces that shape our lives. Reinventing journalism education as a richer and more rigorous pursuit is not a pipe dream—it is an unquestionable necessity, and a process that has already begun at the initial group of nine universities we are currently working with, where both the president of the university and the deans are committed to playing a leadership role. But that’s only a beginning.

Journalism has come to a crossroads, a time in history when it cannot continue as it was. There are too many new ways now that news is delivered and so much information being communicated that there is an aching need for educated, knowledgeable, ethical and objective journalists—both those who have been trained at journalism schools as well as individuals who have come to profession from other routes—to help us sort through it all. There are facts we need to be aware of, ideas we should explore, but they get lost like single blades of grass on an endless plain. We have a long tradition of looking to our universities to produce the generations of thinkers who have helped to guide our nation through social and cultural upheavals, political crises and even the dark days of war and terrorism. It is my hope that our journalism schools will rediscover the professional, intellectual and educational resources of the universities they are part of and that the universities, in turn, will act on their obligation to reach out to their journalism schools and help to deepen and enrich the education they offer. When the students of such schools become the journalists of the future, our nation and our democracy will be the true beneficiaries. ■

VARTAN GREGORIAN

President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Journalism's Crisis of Confidence

A CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

If 1775 was, in Dickens' famous trope, both the best of times and the worst of times for the English and French citizenry, then 2005 may be called simply the worst of times for American journalists. As a profession, journalism was beset by criticism and suffering from diminished credibility. The sharpest wounds were self-inflicted. As a business, the news industry trembled at the erosion of its audience and advertising base, watching its market share dwindle in the face of unrelenting competition from rival online sources of news, advertising and entertainment.

Throughout this dismal year, the audience for network news continued to shrink, and a generation of news anchors left the stage. Newspaper circulation kept dropping, and pink slips by the hundreds were handed out to reporters, editors and other staff. Payrolls were pruned with buyouts, and veteran journalists replaced with tyros—if they were replaced at all. At year's end, the nation's second largest publisher, Knight Ridder Inc., winner of 84 Pulitzer Prizes and 14 Pulitzer Gold Medals for Meritorious Public Service, put its 32 papers up for sale.

Judith Miller, a storied reporter for *The New York Times*, went to jail for 85 days to protect a source for a story she never wrote—then, confusingly, told all to a federal grand jury before leaving the newspaper amid widespread criticism of the deal she had struck with a senior White House official identifying him as “a former Hill staffer.”

CBS anchorman Dan Rather stepped down from his post six months after appearing on *Sixty Minutes II* trumpeting an exclusive about President Bush's Vietnam-era service in the Texas Air National Guard. Bloggers immediately questioned the authenticity of the documents on which the exposé was based, and two weeks later CBS acknowledged they could not be authenticated.

Hurricane Katrina served as a grim reminder of how important a role the media play in times of trouble. Radio stations served as a lifeline while the disaster unfolded, and the New Orleans-based *Times-Picayune* threw all its reporting resources onto the Web when the catastrophe kept its presses from rolling. Cable and network television put the lie to the federal government's claims of doing everything possible to help Katrina victims, and cameras showed the truth about who had been left behind.

But nonstop television coverage also exposed the media’s fallibility. The facts about filth, deprivation and even deaths inside the Louisiana Superdome and the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center were horrible enough without unsubstantiated reports of rape, murder and mayhem. And while misinformation—including projections of 10,000 dead in the flooded Crescent City—came from the mayor, those who broadcast it could not be absolved from blame.



Vartan Gregorian

By any measure it was for the Fourth Estate, to quote Queen Elizabeth II, an “*annus horribilis*.”



What is the remedy for this crisis of confidence in journalism, as both a viable business and an ethical profession?

In June 2002, Vartan Gregorian, the president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, invited the deans of four leading schools of journalism—the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University; the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University; the Graduate School of Journalism

at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California—as well as the director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University—to begin a dialogue on how to improve journalism education and, in turn, elevate the stature of a profession that plays a vital role in the democratic life of the nation. Fittingly, from the start there was a seat at the table for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which has made the education of journalists a signature of its philanthropy for more than a half century, while keeping the foundation’s commitment to bolster civic life in the 26 metropolitan communities where the Knight brothers publish their newspapers.

Improving education has been a touchstone of the work of organizations that steelmaker Andrew Carnegie created at the dawn of the 20th century to carry out his charitable philosophy of doing “real and permanent good in this world.” The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching commissioned the celebrated 1910 report by educator and researcher Abraham Flexner that led to a revolution in medical education in which dozens of schools that could not meet new higher standards were shuttered. Knowing how important books were to his own rise from poverty, Carnegie built

public libraries across the United States and the United Kingdom. He gave generously to universities, acting upon his lifelong conviction that education was the essential underpinning of democracy.

In 1997, when the trustees of Carnegie Corporation interviewed Vartan Gregorian as a candidate to lead the foundation, the then-president of Brown University singled out three initiatives he would like to see Carnegie Corporation adopt. The first (four years before 9/11) was improving Americans' understanding of Islam and the Islamic world. The second was improving U.S. schools of education—a task that had long frustrated university presidents and public school reformers. Neither proposal came as a surprise, considering Gregorian's history. Born in Tabriz, Iran, of Armenian parents, Gregorian received his primary and secondary education in Iran and Lebanon. He completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at Stanford University and was a principal architect of philanthropist Walter H. Annenberg's 1993 Challenge to the Nation, which was intended to spark a revival of public education across America.

The third initiative Gregorian proposed to the Carnegie Corporation trustees could not be so readily gathered from his resume. Gregorian told the board that the Corporation should undertake an effort to improve schools of journalism. "The job that journalists do is vitally important to our democracy, yet schools of journalism are looked down upon by and within our universities," he explained then and on many later occasions.

Gregorian's belief in the value of journalism was, ultimately, the inspiration for the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education. Early in the process, he enlisted the pro bono help of consulting firm McKinsey & Co. in canvassing leaders of the news industry about their views on the problems facing the business, specifically whether they viewed journalism schools as part of the solution or part of the problem. Forty CEOs, publishers, editors, anchors, senior correspondents and producers were interviewed in the summer of 2004, and when the initiative was formally announced a year later, Carnegie Corporation summarized the McKinsey findings in the publication, *Improving the Education of Tomorrow's Journalists*. It reported the news industry leaders' misgivings about journalism schools, yet expressed their desire to secure the schools' help in channeling the best and brightest



Jay Kernis, Phillip Dixon and Stephen B. Shepard



Susan Robinson King

and to draw upon the depth and resources of the entire university in doing so.

- Form a Carnegie-Knight Task Force on Journalism Education, housed at Harvard University's Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, to sponsor research and allow the deans to speak out on issues of importance to the practice and profession of journalism.

- Sponsor summer newsgathering workshops and training where top journalism students from the five universities would work together pursuing in-depth reports on topics of national interest, then publish their stories with partner news organizations on the Web, on the air and in print publications. This News21 project would be aimed at winning the attention of young audiences.

It was envisioned that the five founding deans would enlarge their circle by inviting deans from other leading journalism schools to endorse and join the work of the initiative, and Carnegie Corporation recently invited curriculum enrichment proposals from journalism schools at five additional research universities. These are the universities of Florida, Maryland, Missouri and Texas at Austin, and Syracuse University. Several more universities may be added to the initiative by fall 2006.

In a further effort to ensure that this dialogue about the future of journalism extends from the campus to the newsroom to the executive suite, a Forum on the Future of Journalism Education was convened at Carnegie Corporation of New York on November 16, 2005, for the expanded group of deans to discuss journalism education reform with and solicit feedback from some of the country's top editors, publishers, news executives and journalists. This report gleans insights from that wide-ranging dialogue.

Pressure Points

Susan Robinson King, Carnegie Corporation's vice president of public affairs, set the

into the profession, honing their writing and reporting skills and helping them acquire expertise, ethics and the ability to engage reading and viewing audiences.

For their part, the five deans, with the support of their university presidents and \$6 million in grant support, announced a threefold initiative to:

- Undertake reforms to make journalism curricula more rigorous

tone by offering three snapshots of contemporary journalism: 1) the aggressive coverage of Hurricane Katrina, in which government spin was no match for hard-hitting reporting; 2) the controversy over journalism ethics and confidential sources raised by the federal grand jury investigation into the leaking of undercover CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity, followed by reporter Judy Miller's incarceration and her resignation from the *New York Times*; and 3) the startling news that Knight Ridder, long a paragon of good reporting, was putting its newspapers up for sale under pressure from Wall Street*.

King, a former ABC News correspondent, said these three glimpses of the news business reveal "pressures that we all know about: pressure on the coverage front, on the content side, and on the business side—all this in a time of incredible technological change." While the focus of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative is not on the business side but on improving the practice of journalism, "you cannot walk away from all that pressure," King said. "It is very much a piece of what is in front of all of us every day.

"Without question, journalism schools today are preparing and sending out editors, producers and reporters in unprecedented numbers. What happens in the journalism schools across America is important to what's happening in the news business," said King, "and what's happening in the news business has a big effect on what's being done in journalism schools."

The job of the journalist, like that of teachers and librarians, is vital to the preservation of American democracy, Vartan Gregorian observed. All three are undervalued and all face challenges, new and old, to the way they discharge their important duties.

"Those of us who remember Orwell's *1984* or Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* knew that fiction was being substituted for fact in those novels and that we could not trust anything coming from Big Brother. But now, you don't have to deny or withhold information; you can inundate people with reams and reams of information. 'Your deadline is three days from now? I'll send you 800,000 documents tomorrow. You go figure it out.' Journalists today need a keen grasp of statistics, science, politics and history," said Gregorian, or find themselves "at the mercy of political parties, corporations and individuals."

Journalists need to be better educated and better armed to with-



Geoffrey Cowan and Terry Hynes

* The Knight-Ridder newspaper chain was sold to the McClatchey Company in March 2006.

stand attack by critics, Gregorian believes. Universities should not be allowed to ghettoize schools of journalism; but rather, journalism schools should be able to call upon the faculty and resources of the entire university for their students' education. When the school, or its graduates, is criticized, it should be seen as an attack upon the entire university.

The Carnegie Corporation president encourages the news industry to embrace the notion that the more educated and more talented reporters are, the better they will serve the industry, the community and our democracy.

As Gregorian explained, the model Carnegie Corporation took for the Journalism Initiative was based on tactics Abraham Flexner employed in 1910 to achieve bold changes in medical education. Flexner started with a small group of experts who agreed on a blueprint for change before going public with their ambitious plan. The Journalism Initiative began with five deans and their university presidents, all of whom agreed that journalism was a central mission of their institutions.

It was also significant that McKinsey canvassed industry leaders for their sentiments *before* the deans moved forward on the initiative, Gregorian said. Having those results made it harder to dismiss this project as merely an academic exercise and demonstrated that “there is no contradiction between our aspirations as academics, as professionals, and the industry’s expectations. Everybody agrees on the need to upgrade the status of journalism and the skills of its practitioners.”

Lawyers and physicians are respected as professionals, but “journalists, somehow, are not treated as professionals,” the Corporation president said. There is no requirement for continuing professional education; journalists are expected to learn what they need to know on the job, and fear of missing a big story makes them reluctant to take a year or even a semester off to broaden their expertise. “Even MBAs and lawyers go for executive

seminars,” he added. “How do we build that kind of [advanced training] so that even great reporters will be able to keep learning?”

Gregorian applauded the moves that Columbia University has made under president Lee C. Bollinger—a legal scholar and authority on free speech and First Amendment issues—to enrich the curriculum of the Graduate School of Journalism: “What President Bollinger has done is to say, ‘It’s a university priority...This is our university’s contribution to our democracy.’ That’s a very important political force.”



George Arwady

Is Journalism Education Necessary?

To launch the general discussion, Geoffrey Cowan, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, outlined the three major thrusts of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative:

- Enriching the journalism curriculum so that students take full advantage of the wealth of resources at great research universities;

- Preparing students to report stories in both traditional and cutting-edge formats;
- Providing a collective platform for the deans to speak out on issues of importance to the profession and practice of journalism.

He then raised a provocative issue: “The McKinsey study found something that a lot of us around the table who have been in journalism a long time feel, which is, maybe people don’t need to go to journalism school. Most of the deans here did not go to journalism school,” said Cowan, an Emmy Award-winning television producer who directed the Voice of America during the Clinton administration. But he added that today “most people going into journalism *are* going to journalism school—substantially more than 50 percent. It is vital that they be well educated.” Toward that end, both USC and Columbia are engaging faculty from outside the journalism school to help provide in-depth, specialized knowledge. “At USC, we think of it as swimming in those parts of the university,” he said.

Nicholas Lemann, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and press critic for the *New Yorker*, explained the new, one-year Master of Arts in Journalism that Columbia began offering in 2005–2006. The program focuses on grooming future leaders for journalism by teaching them about complicated subjects they are likely to encounter and to cover in their careers.

Lemann explained that Columbia sought “to design the smallest menu [of courses] that is truly comprehensive.” The four majors—politics, science, business and arts—are co-taught by journalism faculty and distinguished faculty from elsewhere in the university. All students also take the course “Evidence and Inference,” which offers advanced techniques for gathering and assessing information, and a course exploring the history of journalism and the cultural, political and technological forces that have shaped the profession.

Lemann often tells Columbia’s professors to think of their students as the equivalent of hospital emergency room workers who must make snap judgments based on incom-



Roderick Hart and Joan Walsh



Kathleen Carroll

plete information—an explanation that resonates well with faculty. This new approach also “resonates with funders,” he remarked. The Columbia journalism school raised twice as much last year as ever in its 94-year history.

“The idea of drawing on the [entire] university and turning out deeply educated, intellectually confident and unafraid journalists is very appealing. Frankly, a lot of people out there...are scared right now about journalism. They feel that the profession and what it cherished and stands for needs shoring

up.” The Columbia dean added that, even as many news organizations endure tough times, “they see us as a bulwark for both the core ethical values of the profession and what the profession can achieve in terms of informing the public and strengthening democracy.”

At the same time, UC Berkeley and the Medill School at Northwestern are taking their own approaches to bolstering their curricula, Susan King observed. She then asked Kathleen Carroll, executive editor and senior vice president of The Associated Press, and Lester Crystal, executive producer of the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, to comment on changes underway in the academic world from their position on the front lines of the news business.

Carroll praised the direction the deans want to move journalism education. “From my view, journalism schools had gotten to be very irrelevant,” she commented, “I used to tell kids who wanted to study journalism to study economics, languages and politics, and not journalism. We could teach them to write and ask questions, but they needed the background that’s under discussion here and that journalism schools weren’t giving to them.”

Carroll questioned whether long-tenured faculty on campuses were up to the task. “No more intransigent group of humans could you find than either a group of night city editors or a group of tenured professors,” she said. She also said that some news reporters don’t want to be classified as professionals because, under National Labor Relations Board distinctions, they would be ineligible for overtime pay.

Lemann acknowledged that tenure has posed problems for journalism schools that hire journalists who don’t have doctorates. Columbia has “tried to create a third way,” he said, by writing standards for tenure that recognize and reward these faculty for the books and documentaries they have produced. “We think for both substantive and political reasons it is complete folly in a research university to say, ‘We don’t believe in tenure and we’re not going to participate in the tenure system.’ You’ll always be a second class citizen,” Lemann maintained.

In Cowan's view, even if universities are reluctant or slow to approve new courses or launch new degree programs, journalism schools can be entrepreneurial and make it possible for faculty to experiment. Universities can avoid departmental or jurisdictional squabbles by hiring adjunct professors, Gregorian pointed out, or by appointing distinguished outsiders to visiting professorships outside the tenure track.



Beyond the quest for deeper learning, journalism school has practical benefits for its graduates. “The lower rungs of the career ladder are missing for many young journalists these days,” said Orville Schell, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, “and graduate schools help fill that gap, providing hands-on experience so students can master skills before they enter the job market.”

Berkeley has extensive ties with the PBS documentary series, *Frontline*, which gives its students opportunities to do international reporting for *Frontline/World*. “Journalism schools have the challenge to be almost newsrooms in a way, to make their courses—particularly graduate schools—places that do journalism, and maybe aspire in some modest way to occupy those lower rungs of the ladder,” Schell said. He decried meager starting salaries for reporters and wondered where students would “find jobs that will dignify what they have learned.”

When asked whether people should seek a graduate journalism degree, “my answer has always been ‘Not necessarily,’” Lester Crystal admitted. He feels that it depends on the quality of the journalism school and whether the degree will help the student secure a job with ample opportunity for learning and advancement.

“A lot of what [the deans] said sounds terrific,” Crystal commented. “There ought to be an ‘Evidence and Inference’ segment in every course. Given what we have seen recently, you can’t emphasize that enough.” While acknowledging that Hurricane Katrina showed what journalism can really be, Crystal also witnessed exaggeration and a dark side to the reporting. Schools need to teach aspiring journalists how to carefully weigh and evaluate the facts in every story they pursue, no matter how chaotic the situation, he stressed, and regardless of what management cares most about. “The person on the ground has to be educated and strengthened to operate a little bit on their own,” said Crystal, a Medill graduate and former president of NBC News.

Lemann said he would like to see Columbia graduates land jobs “one step up from



Orville Schell

general assignment.” But he added that the main objective in his eyes is “learning how to learn.” It is fine if they want to cover science or the arts for their entire career, “but if you want to switch, you’ll find it easier to master a new topic because you’ve learned to be unafraid of expert knowledge, and to teach yourself things.”

Adding depth to the curriculum is good, agrees Walt Harrington, who heads the journalism department at the University of Illinois, but he cautioned against trying to impart overly narrow and specialized expertise. Most journalists are still generalists, he said. “The challenge is understanding that journalists are not sociologists, they are not scientists, they are not psychologists; they are doing journalism in those areas.” He agrees that the most important lessons are “learning how to learn” and absorbing the history, tradition, values and ethics of the profession. Harrington, a former *Washington Post* magazine writer, said journalism schools should introduce students to the craft of writing and show them “the highest and best examples” of well executed stories so they can aspire to do such work themselves, even if it is years before they get the chance.

Real-World Experience

In a dry run for the News21 experiment, Carnegie Corporation’s Susan King and Kerry Smith, vice president of editorial quality for ABC News, arranged for 10 new graduates from the four journalism schools and Harvard to spend the summer of 2005 as interns on an ABC News investigative unit in its New York bureau, working on a network story, “Loose Nukes,” about lax safeguards at 25 nuclear reactors housed on college campuses.

Smith said that judging by these 10 students, “the state of journalism schools is not that bad, because *they* were just fabulous. We would have hired any one of them in a second, and some we did.” The interns did actual reporting during the four-month investigation. “They weren’t answering our phones, and they weren’t getting coffee—except for themselves,” she said.



Roderick Hart, Nicholas Lemann and Merrill Brown

Smith took many in the room aback when she said the interns had confided that “they were taught a lot of contempt for our industry in their classrooms.” On the job at ABC, the students were startled at how hard everybody worked, the time that was put in,

and how closely every aspect of the report was vetted before it went on the air.

On assignment for ABC, the interns had traveled the country to visit the campus reactors and posed as tourists with video cameras as they checked security at each site. Smith described how hard it was for the interns to deal with the resulting anger and harsh criticism from college officials when the students broke their cover and sought comments before the report aired. “They didn’t understand what it was like to be screamed at,” said Smith.



Kerry Smith

“Some were vilified in the press... That was a real-world experience that they had never experienced in school, and they found it quite shocking.... Of course, for the team of professionals who were working with them, that was like daily business,” she added.

“That’s just the world we live in today,” said Kathleen Carroll, “one of the new elements of how journalism gets done and is perceived, and that you can’t train enough for. I know editors who are practically paralyzed in their newsrooms because they have been exhorted to be more responsive to their communities, but there’s a community of people who just want to scream at you. They don’t want to engage in a dialogue.” Carroll believes journalists need to learn how to distinguish between the people who just want to scream at you or blog about you or attack you and those who really have something to say, even if they are angry. “That’s a very hard thing to do,” she admits.

“That’s the story of my life right now,” said Deborah Howell, ombudsman for the *Washington Post* and former Washington bureau chief for Newhouse News. “The volume of sheer rudeness is enormous. ...It affects reporters and editors who switch on the computer in the morning and there are 500 e-mails waiting. That’s literally what happens to me. Trying to keep your head when people are screaming at you is not anything anybody teaches you in journalism school or anywhere else. When I was a young reporter I might have a police chief or a couple of cops screaming at me, but I didn’t have a universe of bloggers.” Being unafraid is very important, stresses Howell, a former editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

Alex Jones, director of Harvard’s Shorenstein Center, suggested, only half facetiously, that as a service to the profession, the Columbia journalism school should start posting on its Web site the most “appallingly abusive” missives sent to reporters and editors. Jones, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 as the media reporter for *The New York Times*, bragged that he had once gotten a brickbat with the return address “Citizens to Deport Alex Jones.”

Beyond public anger and rudeness, an even greater challenge for journalists, is that



Eric Newton, Elizabeth MacDonald and Ellen Shearer

people no longer trust them or believe what they report. “Trust,” Susan King observed, “is the calling card of the business.”

Terry Hynes, dean of the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, told the group that in a recent Yankelovich survey, only 14 percent of respondents claimed that they trusted what they saw or read in the news media—half as many as three decades ago. “The notion of media integrity is no longer a concept shared by very much of the general public,” she said. Hynes feels this distrust ties in with the general incivility of our world today, with people “willing to raise questions and to scream and yell if they feel that some aspect of their world is not accurately represented.” Unless journalists are willing to reassess the methods they use to pursue stories, that trust won’t be restored, according to Hynes.

Merrill Brown, a media consultant who helped create Court TV and was MSNBC’s founder and first editor-in-chief, recalled the days when reporters “felt good when we got two letters a week in the mail.” Brown, who is directing the News21 project, recommended that journalism schools train students to respond to readers’ and viewers’ e-mails, which he believes will help “address the credibility problems we’re talking about here.”

Veteran business journalist Elizabeth MacDonald, senior editor at *Forbes*, said the attacks on the credibility of journalists have her colleagues worried “that they are now down there with used car dealers.” She commended the passion evident at the symposium, saying “I wish we could get the profession back up to the status that it deserves. It is a profession and we do have a duty to deliver the truth to readers. That’s what we are about.”

Lisa Anderson, a New York-based national correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, said the deans’ programs “sound so wonderful and [it would be] such a luxury to have that sort of education.” But she counsels students to get experience on real newspapers,

rather than in the classroom. Students should brace themselves for being ill paid, yelled at and “asked to do all kinds of things”—from farm reports to local politics—“not a bad thing,” in Anderson’s opinion. “There is no substitute for general assignment reporting,” she added, lamenting the fact that journalism students she talks with seem “uniquely resistant to the idea of getting a job in a small market.”

Ellen Shearer, assistant dean and professor at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern, sees getting experience on campus and in the real world not as mutually exclusive situations. “Our Washington graduate program is very much based in the real world; we partner with major media and our students are writing for publications around the country,” Shearer said. “But we also feel that the idea of having deep knowledge, and knowing how to get deep knowledge, is critical today. It makes students able to ask better questions. And whether or not they start out as general assignment, that’s not where they’re going to end up. We’re trying to get them to think about where their next step is.”

Media Trends

What worries John Schidlovsky, the founding director of the International Reporting Project at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, is that journalism schools are not teaching enough about covering news on the international front, even as news organizations cut back on overseas coverage. Schidlovsky, whose program provides mid-career training for journalists on global issues, was once the Beijing bureau chief for the *Baltimore Sun*, which closed the last of its five foreign bureaus this fall.

After listening to a succession of speakers from mainstream news organizations, Jonathan Mandell, editor-in-chief of the online *Gotham Gazette*, reminded the group that there is a new wave of reporters and journalists working on Web sites outside the framework of traditional newspapers, magazines and television. *Gotham Gazette* is one such entity, a nonprofit Web site that publishes an update each weekday about New York City politics and policy. Published by the Citizens Union Foundation of the City of New York, it’s named for the newspaper in Batman comics.

“I see nothing wrong with trying to get journalists jobs,” said Mandell, but he disagreed with the tendency to treat journalists “solely as careerists. My experience is that they are interested in changing the world, or being artists,” he said, adding “we seem to be neglecting the fact that there are plenty of opportunities right now for people with no background at all to be basically journalists that have a larger audience than any of the publications that we edit here.” He cited *Born into Brothels*, the Academy Award-winning documentary about the children of prostitutes in Calcutta, India, whose lives were changed when photographer Zana Briski taught them her craft. “There is no barrier over

which you must jump in order to be a journalist now,” said Mandell, a third-generation journalist and former reporter for the *Daily News* and *New York Newsday*—giving voice to the very reason Carnegie Corporation put the Journalism Initiative in place.

Returning to the topic of deep knowledge, the need for special interest coverage, particularly for stories that speak to ethnic constituencies, is the media trend of greatest concern to Jose Barreiro, senior editor of *Indian Country Today*. For example, “coverage of American Indian tribal rights and tribal life,” he said, “is an issue in American life that really can use a lot more depth.” Barreiro thinks the lack of ethnic coverage in the mainstream media has convinced many American Indian journalists and other groups that if they want in-depth coverage, they must do it themselves. “We have tremendous columnists, commentators. There’s no lack of talent out there.” Barreiro added that American Indian law is being taught at an increasing number of law schools, and he urged journalism schools to consider adding such content to their curricula.

Susan King agreed, saying, “One of the phenomena as the news business is shifting and some large mass media are losing audiences is that ethnic media have been gaining audiences...and respect.” she observed. “Ethnic publications also are becoming more sophisticated.”

Learning how to balance personal and professional perspectives is a challenge for journalists—students and professionals alike. “We’re working very hard to tell our students, ‘We’ll help you get your basics and intellect together—and we’ll also help you get your heart right’” said Phillip Dixon, chair of the journalism department at Howard University, the historically Black university in the nation’s capital. “We’ll help you get comfortable with yourself, so that you’ll be a person comfortable in your own skin, who has something to say and knows how to say it.”

A former managing editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dixon has discovered a



Jose Barreiro and Deborah Howell

broad divide between publishing and academia. For instance, he learned that as far as universities go, “speed is not part of it at all. There’s no such thing as tomorrow.” If the Carnegie-Knight reforms are to take hold, then journalism schools must find more faculty who are “steeped in journalism and steeped in specialized knowledge,” said Dixon, a Medill alumnus and Pulitzer Prize-win-



Brian Knowlton, Laura Walker and Walt Harrington

ner. “The idea is you’re going to create something that is going to be lasting, and that if it’s going to last there’s got to be faculty in place for it to last.”

One sign that the public shares academia’s and the industry’s concerns about journalism is the growing popularity of *On the Media*, National Public Radio’s weekly, hour-long media criticism program. “We have found that there is increasing interest from the public’s perspective in understanding how the media is working,” said Laura Walker, president of WNYC, which produces *On the Media*. According to Walker, WNYC, one of the largest of the nearly 800 independent public radio stations, now has well over a million listeners, up from 700,000 in 1998—“more than *The New York Times* has subscribers here in New York.” Even while news coverage is dwindling on commercial radio, the audience for news on public radio is growing robustly. National Public Radio’s audience has doubled in the past decade to 26 million weekly listeners, with the greatest jump (over 25%) prompted by the demand for news post 9/11, added Susan King.

Walker expressed her belief that journalism schools continue to focus too much of their energy and talent on producing newspaper reporters. Columbia, for example, “has a lone radio person” on its faculty, she said. “I think we have to think of journalism as kind of agnostic to the media so that we’re looking at the Web, we’re looking at radio, we’re looking at other kinds of things we’re producing, because there’s a huge amount of interest and increasingly so.”

The new president of the Knight Foundation, Alberto Ibargüen, picked up on Walker’s phrase as he spoke about Knight’s continued interest in improving journalism and the education of future journalists. “The commitment to journalism and journalism education continues as strong as ever,” said Ibargüen, the former *Miami Herald* publisher who took the foundation’s helm last July. He added a prediction that his foundation will become “even more agnostic as to platform” in its work to better journalism and bolster community life in the original 26 Knight newspaper towns. “As newspapers



Neil Grabois, Vartan Gregorian, Alberto Ibarguen and Susan King

become more and more vehicles for a leadership elite, we'll be looking for ways to fund ideas about how to connect those [civic] dots that may not be in the newspaper, but that share the values...we still believe in," he said.

Ibarguen described being surprised in his first months in the foundation world "to find how much resentment of media there is in philanthropy. I don't know why I thought that would be different than my mail as a newspaper publisher," he quipped. He described a panel he had recently moderated, which featured the heads of the American Red Cross, the Irvine Foundation and the Nature Conservancy speaking about critical press coverage of their operations. "Each said how their organization is better because of the newspaper articles—and they could not loathe us [the media] more," said Ibarguen. He questioned why the charities would be so hostile if they had actually become better from their bashing in the press, but added, "Maybe there's some [work] for us to do there."

Ibarguen expressed pride in the Journalism Initiative's emphasis on enriching the content of journalism curricula and in the News21 experiment. "We will be looking, probably toward the end of [2006], to make some other investments in 'platform agnostic' new ideas," he said.

Innovation and Ethics

The prototype for News21 is the symbiotic relationship PBS's *Frontline* has forged with the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley. Indeed, there is a spin-off Web site, *Frontline/World*, which features short stories from around the world that are researched, written and produced by a team that includes numerous Berkeley graduate students and faculty (including Schell). "We have a wonderful collaboration," said Schell. "*Frontline* has an office in our school right next to mine." The partnership "brings a real-world media outlet right into the school; it provides jobs, internships and other benefits."

Frontline/World offers internships and opportunities to graduate students from other campuses as well, but gives preference to Berkeley's students. The ambitious enterprise, including the Web site, is financed by foundation grants, and some of the stories produced with student help have been broadcast by *Frontline* on public television.

David Fanning, executive producer of *Frontline* since its 1983 inception, began his career making documentaries about apartheid in his native South Africa for the BBC and other outlets. Now the program provides fellowships to send recent graduates of leading journalism schools around the world working on stories, from nuclear arms trafficking to the treatment of Uyghurs, a Muslim minority, in China.

The impetus for *Frontline/World*, Fanning said, was a grant Schell secured to create a single show on globalization. They turned it into an ongoing production line on global issues. "In the digital era we can empower [students] with a digital camera and a plane ticket to go off to Sri Lanka and shoot something," said Fanning, who calls this approach "garage start-up" journalism. Three stories were so good that Fanning packaged them together to be aired in a regular, sixty-minute *Frontline* slot on public television. It drew a good audience and now *Frontline* runs similar programs several times a year, in addition to streaming the video on the *Frontline/World* Web site. "It's become this little engine of enterprise," Fanning said, calling it "one of the most gratifying things in my professional life."

"It's an exciting time to be in journalism. We're right in the middle of a revolution," according to Linda Mason, senior vice president of CBS News for standards and special projects. Journalism schools would be doing a great service for the news industry if, like Berkeley and *Frontline*, they played a seedbed role in developing innovative ways to cover stories around the world—stories that have become increasingly and sometimes prohibitively expensive for the networks to cover with full teams of correspondents, producers and camera crews.

"The expense is very real," stressed Mason, a veteran producer with thirteen Emmys and three Peabody awards. She suggested that the journalism deans might help pioneer new ways to use new technology, such as using handheld cameras. Journalism schools would be performing a very valuable service if "instead of just concentrating on the traditional media ... [they also] opened their minds to the new media and how we can do these things better and cheaper," she said.

Mason was elevated to be the number-two CBS news executive in January 2005 at the same time that the network fired four executives and producers over the flawed *Sixty Minutes II* report on President Bush's Vietnam-era service in the Texas Air National Guard.

"In going around and talking to all the shops at CBS News about our standards and what we're looking for, somebody said, 'You must have a very difficult job,'" Mason



David Rubin and Linda Mason

with that,” she said.

Schell reiterated to the CBS news executive that “the whole point of News21 is to set up a laboratory to help the industry reinvent the future. We need people like you,” he stressed.

“When most people talk about the media, they’re not just talking about the prestige media, the high-level media that we have represented here, but also that reckless, assaultive and polarized media that has sprung up in recent years,” said Brian Knowlton, a U.S.-based correspondent for the *International Herald Tribune*. “How do we detach ourselves from that in the public mind?” he asked. “Should there be more of a public education effort by the media, or do we simply have to rely on doing the best, most diligent, most fair-minded journalism we can?”

“I guess the kind of journalism that we and many other people around the room represent [is] in retreat,” suggested George Arwady, publisher of the *Star Ledger* of Newark, New Jersey, the nation’s 15th largest newspaper, with a circulation of 600,000, “That’s why commercial radio is dying. That’s why there are not a lot of good jobs for the kids coming out of Berkeley.” Arwady, a Columbia journalism graduate, said the major news organizations produce top-flight journalism, but the public’s interest is flagging. In his view, the problem lies not with the media, but “with the other side of the equation”—the audience. Perhaps, Arwady said starkly, it is “the rest of the university that needs the sermons and classes in ‘evidence and inference.’”

The publisher went on to say that many of the angry e-mails that flood reporters’ and editors’ in-boxes are driven by agendas, representing the triumph of public relations over news. Instead of investing in traditional advertising, which supports traditional news media that hold themselves to high standards, those interests are spending their dollars on public relations efforts “designed to spin and confuse and create distrust,” in Arwady’s words. Perhaps the industry needs to help the public understand who we are more than it needs to hone skills that many news organizations use very well every day, he said.

Licenses for Journalists?

Time Inc. editor-in-chief Norman Pearlstine said the invocation of the Flexner report raised in his mind the question of whether consideration should be given to some form of credentialing for journalists. Pearlstine, former executive editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* magazine, and only the fifth editor-in-chief in the 83-year history of *Time*, said, “One of the things that as journalists we almost take pride in is the total absence of standards within the profession, in the sense that anyone can be a journalist. Indeed, if you think of 18 to 20 million bloggers now participating, that takes it a step further.” And, he pointed out, if you go back to the purpose of the First Amendment, it wasn’t to protect major media companies but pamphleteers who could come from any place to render opinions or do reporting.

Pearlstine wondered whether we should automatically assume that “there should be no credential as such that certifies a journalist as having a level of education, as having learned about professional responsibility, as having learned basics. Medical licenses help give people faith in doctors, he observed, and although that’s anathema to all of us in terms of our own training, there might be some kind of middle ground.” Licenses help breed confidence in Certified Financial Planners and Chartered Life Underwriters, who tend to get more respect than people who simply sell life insurance, Pearlstine added, and he questioned whether licensing is the opposite of everything journalism believes, or “whether the idea of national standards or even a certification of some kind is worth considering.”

Putting the idea to the test, Susan King asked those in the room to raise their hands if they liked the idea of certification of journalists. Not a single hand went up—not even Pearlstine’s. Amid the laughter, he admitted, “I’m not sure I do myself.” King called it a topic that “everyone is scared to death to mention,” but is still worth discussing.

Lemann said the model he likes is the MBA, which “is required nowhere but has a highly meaningful credential value everywhere. If journalism graduate degrees achieved that cachet,” the Columbia dean commented, “we could all die happy without having to establish a formal tollbooth system.”

Pearlstine also said that the Carnegie-Knight Initiative participants would be doing the news industry a great service if they could define what “on the record” and “off the record” mean and produce a consensus on use of anonymous sources.

According to Lemann, this is an area where the deans can play a part, by producing something in writing that says, “This is what ethical conduct is for journalists. This is what on the record and off the record mean. This is the regime for source protection that we endorse.’ I would really welcome that, and that is part of our job,” he added. “I think if we do it right and consultatively, people will listen to us and it will have an impact.”

In fact, questions like that are exactly the kind of issues that the Carnegie-Knight Task Force of journalism deans hope to tackle in their effort to become a conscience and voice of moral authority for educators and the news industry.

Task Force Issues

Alex Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center, said the five deans hope to speak with a louder voice by coming together to address issues of import to journalists and the news industry. They also will carry out scholarly research as the basis for their pronouncements.

“Now, if you say ‘scholarly research’ to a bunch of journalists, their eyes usually start to glaze over fast,” said Jones. “What we are setting out to do, given our size and resources, is to choose areas that we think are both important and that we can do something useful about.” The first four topics that they will address are:

- Gathering definitive information on Americans’ changing news habits;
- Engaging new kinds of media to weigh what standards to embrace in reporting and disseminating news;
- Taking a new look at how widely and how well news products are used to teach civics, history, writing and other subjects in the United States;
- Creating and sharing journalism syllabi and resources for continuing professional education.

Jones stressed that these are only the first topics that the task force will tackle, and he encouraged the industry leaders and other academics to pose additional questions and



John Schidlovsky, Alex Jones and Lester Crystal



Dean Mills, Jonathon Mandell and Norman Pearlstine

troublesome issues. The whole purpose of this effort, he said, is to give journalists tools that will allow them “to do their jobs better.”

Jones said Merrill Brown’s article, “Abandoning the News,” in the Spring 2005 *Carnegie Reporter* makes a convincing case that the landscape has permanently shifted for the news industry. The burgeoning number of nontraditional news organizations and bloggers who are trying to shape public opinion and policy “need to be thought of journalistically on their own terms,” according to Jones, “not on the basis of being *The New York Times* or NPR or ABC News.” He said the task force hopes “to convene representatives of these new kinds of media and start to engage them in what they think their standards should be—not our standards imposed, but standards that are genuinely applicable to what they do and how they do it.”

The data on the lack of interest in conventional news consumption by those under age 40 “is utterly persuasive,” in Brown’s view. “There is no reason to believe a 21-year-old is ever going to consume print as we did.” But, Jones countered, “that doesn’t mean you can’t get them to go the NYTimes.com site.”

“I don’t think we really know the correct picture. In some ways we’re trying to measure an atomic explosion from the inside,” said Eric Newton, Knight Foundation director of journalism initiatives. “To say Americans are getting off the news is like saying they are getting off food. It’s just not true.” The Knight Foundation recently sponsored a study of 100,000 high school students, and 56 percent said they were consuming some news daily. “I’m willing to agree,” he conceded, “that they’re not getting it from that nightly network news broadcast, those giant sequoias in the forest, the tallest trees with the most lumber. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t more lumber in the forest than there has ever been.”

Daily newspapers and the network newscasts may be suffering, but “people are

spending more time with the media today than at any other time in American history,” said Newton, former managing editor of the *Oakland Tribune*. “We’re moving from a time when the paradigm of journalism was, you shine the light, and people will see, to a time when we’re living in a world that’s just full of bright light all the time. Now we have to get peoples’ attention by giving them some kind of sunglasses so they can see.

“It’s a different world,” Newton said, “and I don’t think we really understand it, because our measurements are set up to measure the traditional media, all of which are shrinking.” We don’t measure the ethnic press, the alternative media, blogs or streaming news feeds, all of which are booming, he explained. “I think we’re confused, and then once we decide what people are consuming, we’re probably going to find it’s a lot like food: they are probably eating a lot of things that aren’t good for them.”

“While it may be true that lots of young people are in fact getting news, the definition of news is changing quite extraordinarily,” Pearlstine added. Newsstand sales of celebrity magazines are shooting up while the news and business weeklies are having a very hard time breaking even. “This year, *In Style* magazine’s profits will be significantly greater than *Time* and *Fortune*’s combined,” he said. “That’s not to denigrate the journalism that’s there, but it’s a very different kind of journalism from what we’re talking about here.”

According to Pearlstine, advertisers who have provided the backbone of revenues for the traditional media “are finding ways to reach their customers faster than we as editors are figuring out ways to get information to those customers. The one real question that I find myself coming back to is: If you spend [\$50,000 on a journalism graduate degree], where are you going to find the employment when you come out? I think that’s going to require us not only to think about journalism education, but also about creating new forms of content that people in fact will put value on.”

Stephen B. Shepard, the founding dean of the new Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York, which will open its doors in September with a three-semester master of arts program, questioned how a common set of standards can be found for journalism schools when the schools themselves vary so widely. Some are for graduate students; others are principally undergraduate programs. Some teach public relations and advertising as part of a communications curriculum and “don’t even have the name ‘journalism’ in their title,” said Shepard, the former editor-in-chief of *Business Week*.

“We don’t want all schools to be the same, but journalism is unique,” remarked Shepard. “If you look at law schools, it’s three years at just about any law school I can think of. If you look at MBA programs, they’re two years just about everywhere and they are more or less the same.... Journalism schools are all over the lot.”

Thomas Kunkel, dean of the University of Maryland’s Philip Merrill College of Journalism, disagreed. While there may be a dozen or more models for journalism education,

“they all have journalism somewhere at the center, and we’re all very passionate about that.” The power of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative is not only that it unites a significant number of universities, but also that it brings them together with the industry. “To reform journalism education,” Kunkel said, “we need the help of friends in the industry. We can’t do it on our own. We’re not on different sides... We’re all basically in the same boat.”



Thomas Kunkel and Kathleen Hall Jamieson

“What is news?” might be a good starting question for the deans’ task force, suggested the *Washington Post’s* Howell, “because what is news to us is not necessarily news to a lot of people. What they view as getting news often to us might be getting opinion. And that line between news and opinion is blurry, especially for young people.”

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, agreed, saying some people surveyed by the Annenberg Center responded that they regarded Rush Limbaugh as a journalist—even though Limbaugh himself does not. People generally agreed that the late Peter Jennings was a journalist, but were less certain about Chris Matthews. The results raise “a very interesting question: When you say to the public, ‘What’s wrong with journalism?’ and they’re thinking Rush Limbaugh, and we’re thinking *Network Evening News* or the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, we’re actually existing in very different worlds,” said Jamieson.

The Annenberg Center survey also asked how likely reporters were to correct serious errors. According to Jamieson, while journalists said they always corrected mistakes immediately, “the public said, ‘No, you don’t.’ There’s a disjuncture between what the public thinks journalism does, and what journalists think journalism does.”

To those who believe that the industry’s biggest challenge is to entice young adults to follow the news, Les Crystal opined, “for the most part they never were there in the first place.” He recalled that the commercials shown during the evening news a quarter-century ago were mostly for things like Excedrin and hemorrhoid treatments.

Seeking Meaning

Near the end of the symposium, Thomas Easton, New York bureau chief for the *Economist*, offered a tribute to several journalists in the room who had encouraged and

inspired him over the course of his 20-year career, including Max Frankel, the legendary correspondent and former executive editor for the *New York Times*, who was seated beside him. Easton said he grew up “very skeptical of the media,” but was lured into the profession after a serendipitous experience he had as an undergraduate at Brown University. “I’ve never met Mr. Frankel before but I actually became a reporter when I was walking across a lawn one day and he was giving a speech. I didn’t mean to attend his speech, but I sat down and listened—and it was a wonderful speech,” he said. “But he’s not the only person in this room I learned from. I competed with Mr. Shepard’s publications for many years. You learn from your competitors. There was visceral pain every time they got a story that I didn’t,” said Easton.

Journalism students would be better served, according to Easton, by learning how to cover the police beat in the Bronx rather than politics. “I would emphasize visceral reporting,” he stressed. “At the *Economist* we get a lot of bright people from a lot of good colleges, and they wander in and they want to write about politics, and they’re kind of useless. They don’t really have an expertise. ...They never gain traction, they never engage.” Learning how to write and report in journalism school would help them, he believes. In the news magazine world, editors are willing to cross Ts and dot Is, “but they don’t want to rewrite your stuff and they don’t really care about you. They want you to solve *their* problems; they’re not there to advance your career.”

Easton expressed excitement about the advent of the CUNY graduate school because it will provide advanced education in the field at a bargain price. It would be difficult, he said, if not impossible, for someone with huge student loans to follow the route into journalism that he did, working marathon hours for a small weekly at \$100 a week. And for those who want to be journalists despite the drawbacks, Easton said it might be helpful for someone “to take a hammer, hit you over the head, and say, ‘This is what your



Stephen B. Shepard, Max Frankel and Thomas Easton



Norman Pearlstine and Neil Grabois

career will be like, and we're going to do it every day until you retire, because that's what it is.' This is a very difficult profession, and it's never going to be easy."

Joan Walsh, the editor-in-chief of Salon.com, which just turned 10 years old, was happy to hear "the openness, the outreach to the younger generation and the generation of bloggers," even if people are not yet sure what will become of these new sources of news. To write it off or be fearful of it would be wrong, she warned.

Yet, "there is a little too much romanticizing of the Web," Walsh believes. She was troubled when a Stanford journalism student recently told her of plans to turn down a job reporting for the *Wall Street Journal* to take a public relations post with Google. "If there isn't content there for people to consume, then people who are going to the Web [to work] are in trouble. Both the news industry and journalism schools are in search of a business model." Echoing Pearlstine, Walsh asked, "How do you justify the kind of tuition people pay at elite schools, and in news organizations how do you pay for news, which is extremely expensive? This dialogue is really important."

To find out what attracted students to graduate school in journalism, Columbia recently ran a focus group, Lemann said. The image that elicited the greatest response was a picture of a helmeted reporter with a notebook, in Iraq. "That's what they wanted to hear we were going to get them to be," Lemann explained, "They just said they want to go out and be reporters. They want to report on things that matter." Newton of the Knight Foundation agreed, citing the results of a survey in which undergraduates expressed their aspiration for an interesting life. "After all," he added, "isn't that why we went into the field ourselves?"

Gregorian, who has two sons who are journalists, believes most students enter college as idealists, seeking meaning in their lives. "Somehow, between entrance and graduation,



something happens; maybe we scare them a bit,” he said. “They enter as idealists, they want to have meaning and they wind up worrying about jobs and careers.

“We’re the ones who tell students to get scared. Students don’t come to the university scared. They think the university provides four years of learning, a wonderful experience. And then we fail them as professors,” said the Carnegie Corporation president. “Maybe we should have more Frankels lecturing on the green.”



Carnegie Corporation has challenged some of the best minds in the field to reconceptualize journalism education for the 21st century, enriching the curriculum in order to address changes and challenges the news industry now faces and meet the needs of a complex, knowledge-based society. Achieving this goal will afford better and more comprehensive reporting leadership and a more fully informed public. It will also serve to elevate the profession that many, including Andrew Carnegie, have viewed as a linchpin of democracy. After three years of research and planning, how far have we come?

A wealth of innovative ideas has emerged for integrating journalism schools with the larger university community in order to help students gain deep knowledge on a range of subjects, from science to business to government. Top graduates from five flagship institutions have participated in the first round of Corporation-sponsored real-world journalism training, a bold experiment that has yielded impressive results. These accomplishments may represent only the first steps on a long road. But it is to be hoped that the next generation of journalists, armed with a richer education, will be well prepared to find solutions to the widespread crises in the profession, recapturing public confidence and helping to rescue the business of news. ■■

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Journalism is a profession that intrigued Andrew Carnegie. In the late 1800s, he owned or held a controlling interest in seven daily newspapers and ten weeklies in Britain. Although his attempt to create a newspaper syndicate aimed at promoting liberal reform ultimately failed, he never wavered in his belief that men and women were entitled to read about and understand the forces that shaped the world they lived in. His concern that access to knowledge and information were critical to the progress of society is evident in the fact that, in creating Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911, his mandate to the foundation was to promote “the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding,” a mission we continue to pursue today.

“Contributing to the national dialogue about issues of importance to our country and our society is one aspect of the Corporation’s work that we consider vital,” says Carnegie Corporation president Vartan Gregorian, whose leadership has informed the development of the Carnegie Journalism Initiative, a curriculum-enrichment effort and one element of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, which was launched in 2005 and focuses on developing a vision of what a journalism school can be at an exemplary institution of higher education. The initiative also includes News 21 Incubators to help young journalists develop innovative media projects and The Carnegie-Knight Task Force to create a platform for educators to speak on policy and journalism education issues.

Through its publications, the Corporation has also explored other aspects of how the field of journalism intersects with the ongoing evolution of a vibrant democracy, even as the way that most Americans get their news continues to change and the pressure on news sources to adapt to a globalizing world constantly mounts. The three articles in this appendix first appeared in the *Carnegie Reporter*, the magazine of Carnegie Corporation and focus on current issues, trends and developments surrounding journalism and the public it serves.



New Americans

FRESH OFF THE PRESSES

BY DANIEL AKST

The reach—and influence—of the ethnic media in the United States continues to grow. Assimilation, acculturation, citizenship and news from home are only some of the subjects that ethnic media outlets present to millions of eager readers in dozens of different languages every day.

The tragic death of Sandra Bonaventure, a pregnant 20-year-old whose battered corpse was discovered by a homeless man in Manhattan last June, didn't make *The New York Times*—which is perhaps why Garry Pierre-Pierre works for the *Haitian Times* instead.

He spent seven years as a reporter at *The New York Times* before founding the Brooklyn-based Haitian weekly, and since Bonaventure was the daughter of Haitian parents,

hers is the kind of story his paper jumps all over.

There are thousands of ethnic periodicals and broadcast outlets all across America, and the *Haitian Times* is in some ways atypical. Its editor and publisher is a Haitian-American with rare experience at the most exalted levels of mainstream media, and he publishes the *Haitian Times* in English rather than the language of the home country (in this case, a French patois known as Creole).

But in other ways the *Haitian Times* is quite typical indeed. Operating on a shoestring, it strives to serve one of America's fast-growing new immigrant groups, and its editor wears so many hats that Medusa herself would have trouble accommodating them all. The photos are fuzzy and the layout wouldn't be out of place in a high school paper, but Pierre-Pierre and his tiny team know their community intimately and strive every day to live up to the paper's motto—"Bridging the Gap"—by covering news of Haitians in America as well as Haiti itself. It is a gap that will be familiar to the editors—and readers—of any ethnic newspaper: the gap between old country and new, between traditional ways and a new life, between Haitian and American.

Thus, a recent issue covered not just the Bonaventure murder, but an attack on Haiti's National Palace, as well as the life and work of a Haitian painter who lives in Harlem. "My goal is to get young Haitians involved in the community," Pierre-Pierre says, adding that, "Citizen-building is our whole mission."

Like the immigrants they are springing up to serve, ethnic newspapers, broadcast media and even web sites are cropping up all over America. Nobody seems to know how many such outlets are operating just now, but one good answer is: "a lot." In New York, the Independent Press Association counts 274 ethnic papers and magazines just in the metropolitan area, even while acknowledging that this figure isn't comprehensive. The Association counts 27 ethnic dailies in New York City alone.

In markets such as New York and Los Angeles, Spanish-language radio and TV stations are among the most watched. The large number of Hispanic immigrants and their common language have produced a handful of Latino media juggernauts including Univision Communications Inc., which is the nation's fifth largest TV network.

"The ethnic press is very important, particularly these days," says Carnegie Corporation's Geri Mannion, who reports that her elderly mother still reads the *Irish Echo*. Mannion runs the Corporation's Strengthening U.S. Democracy program, which has the goal of promoting citizenship and voter participation and raising the level of civic literacy in an age of large-scale immigration. Civics aren't taught much in school anymore, and changes in technology, attitudes and official policy have made it easier than ever for immigrants to retain a separate language and culture. Under these circumstances, says Mannion, the ethnic media serves a vital role as "a conduit to the immigrant community."

As a sign of the influence these new ethnic papers and broadcasters are having, a recent study commissioned by New California Media, a nonprofit organization of more than 400 ethnic media outlets, found that ethnic media reach 84 percent of California's three largest minority groups: Latinos, blacks and Asians. Together, these groups make up something like half the population. Sandy Close, as the organization's director—perhaps not the most objective person on the subject—nevertheless makes a persuasive case when

“My goal is to get young Haitians involved in the community,” Pierre-Pierre says, adding that, “Citizen-building is our whole mission.”

she says of the new ethnic press, “This segment is the most powerful force in American journalism since the emergence of the alternative media in the 1960s.”

Accordingly, the mainstream media is paying attention—from a weekly Bosnian-language column in the *Utica Observer Dispatch* (there are perhaps 5,000 Bosnian refugees in and around Utica, N.Y.) to a full-blown Vietnamese-language edition published by the San Jose Mercury News. Mainstream media companies have also invested in established ethnic organizations. NBC (itself a unit of General Electric Company), owns the No. 2 Spanish-language TV network, Telemundo, and in Southern California, the Times-Mirror Company, parent company of the *Los Angeles Times*, bought a 50 percent stake in *La Opinión*, America's oldest and largest Spanish-language daily, from the founding Lozano family. José Ignacio Lozano is now chief executive.

At *La Opinión*, in Los Angeles, Gerardo Lopez wrestles with challenges not unlike those facing Garry

Pierre-Pierre, albeit on an altogether different scale. Lopez is editor of *La Opinión*, with a daily circulation of 130,000 and 86 editorial staffers. Immigration issues are bread-and-butter topics at his newspaper going back to the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration law of 1986, which offered amnesty to many illegal immigrants. “We had an avalanche of readers asking, Do I qualify? How do I do it?” In response, Lopez says, “We published a special supplement on that particular law, explaining in very simple terms, Who can help? What documents are needed?”

La Opinión has undertaken similar explanatory efforts for the Census and at election time. During election season, it even includes a voter registration form right in the newspaper. Periodically, it tells readers how to become a citizen and how to register to vote. And before the last mayoral election in Los Angeles, Lopez says, the paper convened groups of 20 to 30 people in various parts of town and, in an effort to better serve

its community, questioned them closely about the issues most important to them. What readers wanted to know about, the editor says, “guided our coverage.”

Accelerating Acculturation

To historians, the rise of the ethnic media in recent years is far from surprising, since the same thing happened in the 19th century, the last time America saw sustained immigration on this scale. Barbara Reed, a Rutgers University historian who has studied the ethnic media, notes that the first Jewish newspaper in this country sprang up in 1823, the first black paper in 1827 and the first Indian paper in 1828.

One big difference this time around is technology. Immigrants can stay in touch with their country of origin—by telephone, e-mail and cheap airfares—in ways they never could in the old days. Indeed, thanks to the Internet, immigrants can often read their home newspaper, just as the people back home can read an ethnic paper here. Even the tiny *Haitian Times* puts some of its articles on the web.

The nature of immigration has changed, too; the heavily Latino component means that some immigrant communities, particularly Mexican-Americans, remain physically closer to home and are continually refreshed with newcomers in a process that shows no signs of abating. America nowadays is much more willing to accommodate the newcomers’ language and culture, both officially and unofficially. Even illegal immigrants are protected from certain forms of discrimination and have witnessed, instead of the old-fashioned roundups, periodic amnesties. Given its aging native population, appetite for eager workers and even its historic image of itself (as expressed in the words of Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty), America is likely to see continued high levels of immigration for a long time to come.

If the ethnic media are an essential conduit to immigrants, then it’s fair to ask: to what extent are the ethnic media helping new arrivals become Americans? Do these papers and broadcasters build citizens? Do they promote assimilation? Or do these new media act to sustain ethnic and linguistic segregation?

The vastness and diversity of America’s ethnic media make generalizing extremely difficult, but those who’ve studied the subject tend to agree that the ethnic press is not accelerating immigrant assimilation, a concept that is itself out of favor in some circles. “The growth of the ethnic media is helping to slow the process of assimilation and thereby making this a much more complex country,” says Sergio Bendixen, a Miami pollster who conducted the New California Media survey.

If anything, the new ethnic media are accelerating the process of assimilation to a different national identity altogether. “By covering the life of the home country or region, the papers often dissolve distinctions that had been active back home, creating

a broader solidarity,” writes Abby Scher, director of the Independent Press Association-New York, in its latest member directory. “Robert Park observed this process early in the century, when large New York dailies dealt with ‘Italy’ or ‘Germany,’ not Genoa, Naples or Saxony.”

A more recent example is *India Abroad*, a colorful New York-based weekly owned by the Indian media conglomerate rediff.com. India is a vast nation of many languages and cultures, but publications like *India Abroad* help cement émigrés into a group made cohesive by their Indianness in America, as well as by their economic success. While some ethnic papers have as a central narrative the struggle of an oppressed people (their readers), this is peripheral in *India Abroad*, which focuses heavily on successful Indian-Americans. The paper, produced partly in India, features matrimonial advertisements rife with teachers, engineers and medical professionals, and also carries extensive business coverage. It, too, is engaged in acculturation, regularly publishing essays by successful Indians on immigration, identity and other such issues. One, by a young journalist, was headlined “Assam, where’s that?”

Carlos Cortes, a retired historian at the University of California, Riverside, who has studied the ethnic press—and who recalls that his own grandparents banned Spanish at home when they arrived in this country from Mexico—agrees that assimilation is being delayed. But he insists on a distinction between assimilation and acculturation. And the ethnic media, he says “are accelerating acculturation.”

That’s in fact what most students of the ethnic media seem to think—that the ethnic media are simultaneously acclimatizing newcomers to America while helping them retain their native culture. What ethnic papers and broadcasters are doing, in other words, is “bridging the gap,” just as Garry Pierre-Pierre tries to do with the *Haitian Times* in Brooklyn, and just as the ethnic press has always done.

In fact, the role of the ethnic media hasn’t changed all that much in the last hundred years or so, even if immigration—and America—have changed plenty. Barbara Reed says the ethnic press historically has performed a variety of functions. It gave immigrants a chance to “control their own message,” and thereby shape their own image of themselves. It was a forum of opinion, and also provided editorial leadership to a given community of immigrants. Another role was what Reed calls “surveillance,” meaning that an ethnic paper would monitor how the rest of society was looking at “us.” Are they accepting? What is the nature of the stereotypes they have for us?

And let’s not forget commerce. The ethnic press gave advertisers a way to reach immigrants, who in turn got a way to obtain goods and services of special interest to them, or at least provided by someone who might speak their language or, quite literally, understand where they were coming from. Ethnic papers have also served to keep im-

migrants to one city apprised of their countrymen's doings in other parts of America, as well as to keep everyone up on the news of the home country. Finally, says Reed, "many of these publications acted as a teacher" of group heritage to a younger generation that might have been born in America and thus lack first-hand knowledge of the old country.

Pashree Super Pat says this is why he puts money from his other business ventures into *InterThai/Pacific Rim News*, an English-language paper he publishes in Los Angeles: "It's almost like a donation. We do this for the education of young people, to continue the Thai culture and tradition."

Another thing the ethnic media historically have taught was "what it means to be a citizen in this country," Barbara Reed says, adding that, "Usually these publications didn't tell people for whom to vote. But they did tell them to vote."

A Presence in the Community

Walking the streets of central Brooklyn with the editor of the *Haitian Times* is an eye-opening experience, especially if you grew up there, as this reporter did. It's summer, stifflingly hot, and this is a neighborhood that was once on the ropes. It's still relatively poor, but there are no vacant shops, and the streets aren't menacing in the least. Once overwhelmingly African-American, this section of Brooklyn is now largely Caribbean, with Haitians living among Jamaicans, Barbadians and other island immigrants. French signs make Haitian churches and shops obvious, and Haitian foods are available from sidewalk vendors. Pierre-Pierre points out a storefront he finds particularly interesting; it's a business that helps immigrants send money home, one that has succeeded despite the size and prominence of Western Union because, says Pierre-Pierre, they understand the Haitian market and speak the people's language. They know, for instance, that some immigrants want to send not just money but food, so they handle this as well, arranging for the purchase of items in Haiti that customers can pay for here.

There is a constant flow of money and goods from Haitian neighborhoods back to the island, which is why, in Brooklyn, you often see someone wrestling a large cardboard barrel into or out of a vehicle. These are shipping containers, but they are not to be confused with the battered metal barrels seen on the streets of the same neighborhoods.

The ethnic media, many observers agree, is simultaneously acclimatizing newcomers to America while helping them retain their native culture.

“These are jerk cans,” Pierre-Pierre explains, used to prepare a popular form of Caribbean barbecue.

On this particular day, Pierre-Pierre heads for the offices of Brooklyn’s annual Caribbean parade, where he wants the *Haitian Times* to have a modest presence. The parade is a big deal, but not that many Haitians participate. “We’re trying to change that,” he says. (*La Opinión* participates in a similar parade in East Los Angeles.) The parade office is in a storefront, and one of the women working there takes an interest in his venture. She works for an HMO and asks for his business card, which Pierre-Pierre obligingly provides.

“The *Haitian Times* plays a very important role in the community,” says the Reverend Philius Nicolas, pastor of the Evangelical Crusade of Fishers of Men, a Haitian-oriented church in Brooklyn’s Flatbush section. Nicolas is an uncle to Abner Louima (a Haitian immigrant who was the victim of a notorious and brutal 1997 attack by former police officer Justin Volpe inside a Brooklyn police station) and praises Pierre-Pierre for his coverage of that case as well as for his overall knowledge of Haitian life in Brooklyn. He adds that the paper is important for another reason: “There are several other newspapers, but this one is unique because it’s published in English, so other people will learn what’s going on in the Haitian community.”

The soft-spoken 40-year-old Pierre-Pierre says he decided to publish the *Haitian Times* because he saw the need for a Haitian paper focused on Haitians in this country, one that was free of the strong factionalism he says infects the two main Haitian papers that were already publishing. His target audience, he says, is the younger, better-educated generation—his own cohort—rather than those who refuse to make the mental leap from Creole-speaking exile to English-speaking American. He wants young, upwardly mobile Haitians to stay put and, more important, get involved, which is why he publishes in English. Culturally, he says, Haitians value education highly, but “a lot of educated Haitians stay away from the community.”

Pierre-Pierre’s own route to the community was a circuitous one. His middle-class family brought him to America from Haiti when he was eight years old, and he grew up in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Like many Haitian immigrants, he experienced some friction with American-born blacks, yet decided to attend predominantly black Florida A&M University, out of a desire, he says, to attend college with high-achieving blacks in an environment where being black was more the norm. He also did a stint in the Peace Corps, during which he met his American wife, who is white.

Although a major goal of the paper is raising its readers’ political consciousness—it encourages them to become citizens and urges the citizens to vote—it doesn’t endorse candidates. “Not yet,” says Pierre-Pierre. “You have to develop your base, grow your community, develop an identity, develop credibility. It’s a step you evolve into.” Still,

covering politics is a top priority; recently, for example, the *Haitian Times* carried an interview with New York State Comptroller and Democratic gubernatorial candidate H. Carl McCall (who was later defeated by incumbent governor George Pataki), and the paper covered the 42nd Assembly District race in Brooklyn. “We guide,” Pierre-Pierre says of his philosophy. “We let people know the importance of registering and voting, what it means to their kids’ education.”

Like the many ethnic papers that have come before it, the *Haitian Times* focuses on helping readers—in this case, the 500,000 Haitians in the New York metropolitan area—find their way in their new country. “They’re making the transition from exiles to an immigrant group,” Pierre-Pierre says. “As they make that transition, I’d like the *Haitian Times* to be dead center guiding that.”

One challenge has been making sure the *Haitian Times* is dead center rather than merely dead. Unable to raise as much financing as he’d hoped before launching the tabloid-sized paper in October 1999, Pierre-Pierre puts out his 15,000 circulation weekly on a budget so tight he can’t even pay himself a salary. The *Haitian Times* claims a dozen staffers and has paid reporters in Miami and Haiti, but a number of functions, including some writing and editing, are performed by volunteers.

Pierre-Pierre spends his time juggling business and journalistic obligations, and when a potential advertiser is on the phone he takes the call personally, although he insists he doesn’t let this influence the paper’s coverage. “We don’t accept ads that are tied up to a story,” he said in a recent interview. “We don’t accept money to write stories. We write stories because we believe they’re worth printing.”

The remarkable July 24, 2002 issue of the *Haitian Times* was full of such stories, including one about the rise of Haitian-American Republicans; a follow-up on the case of Abner Louima; a profile of an up-and-coming Haitian-American middleweight boxer; an essay about Alexandre Dumas on the occasion of his 200th birthday; a couple of articles about immigration; an account of the abduction and beating of an investigative reporter in Haiti; an Associated Press story about the collapse of a Haitian banking scheme that cost some depositors their life savings; Haitian entertainment listings for Haiti as well as America; TV and radio listings; a horoscope, a gossip column, an advice column and a recipe for Haitian cabbage rolls.

The cover story of that same issue, about the mysterious “suicide” of a young Haitian-American entrepreneur near Buffalo, New York, was written by Macollvie Jean-Francois, a wry and energetic novice Pierre-Pierre hired as a college student. She has since developed into a mainstay of the paper. That’s another of the ethnic media’s unsung roles: providing jobs and training for journalists covering communities unlikely to get much ink in the mainstream media.

Passions and Divisions

The idealism of editors like Pierre-Pierre notwithstanding, it's easy to idealize America's ethnic press, but by and large these are not great papers; most have small news budgets and editorial staffs, and this lack of resources makes it almost impossible for them to conduct the kind of in-depth enterprise reporting required to expose corruption or thoroughly cover complex issues. Even *La Opinión*, which communications professor Federico Subervi of Pace University calls “the most sophisticated and complete of the Spanish-language dailies in the country,” doesn't have a regular city hall reporter and

One of the challenges facing every ethnic publication in acculturating immigrants is keeping up with evolving readers.

finds it impossible to closely cover labor. About five years ago, perhaps as a reflection of staffing constraints, it went off the beat system altogether.

Subervi blames the media—mainstream and Latino—for the low electoral participation of Latinos, noting that in Puerto Rico and Mexico, to cite a couple of examples, voter turnout is much higher than it is here among native-born Americans, never mind naturalized Latino voters. “The current Latino ethnic media are doing a lukewarm job in promoting the political knowledge and participation of Latinos,” he says. “It could be a lot better, and it should be a lot better.”

The media can make the difference, he says, citing Miami's Cuban immigrants. When they first arrived, they had low political participation, but when Dade County adopted an English-only ordinance for government purposes in 1980 (it was later rolled back), a local Spanish-language TV station was able to galvanize

Cuban political energies around the slogan “Vota para que te respeten” (Vote to be respected). The Abner Louima case had a similar effect on Brooklyn's Haitians, according to Pierre-Pierre.

This is not to say ethnic papers stand apart from politics, although they sometimes stand apart from American politics. In general, among ethnic papers, “the content is much more advocacy-oriented towards a particular world view or perspective shaped by the conditions of the community, albeit filtered through the part of the community most represented by the paper and the owner's perspective,” says John Anner, executive director of the Independent Press Association.

Ethnic papers often reflect the passions and divisions of the home country. In Brooklyn, for instance, Pierre-Pierre says, there is a Haitian paper identified with the pro-Arist-

ede forces, and another considered anti-Aristede. Both are in French. Most of California's dozens of Vietnamese-language papers, on the other hand, are strongly anti-Communist, like their readers, yet here, too, there are sharp divisions. Five Vietnamese immigrant journalists have been murdered since 1981 while doing their jobs in this country, according to Jeff Brody, a Cal State Fullerton journalism professor who has studied these newspapers. Their deaths were part of a climate of political violence surrounding the Vietnamese media in this country as a result of tensions between conciliatory factions and anti-Communist extremists, says Brody, who notes that while Vietnam has no tradition of a free press, Vietnamese-American journalists quickly adapted to ours. The violence has subsided in the past decade or so as Vietnamese immigrants have accepted the idea that the Communist regime is more likely to collapse of its own contradictions than as a result of violent overthrow.

Even in the absence of murder, journalistic ethics are sometimes a problem in the ethnic press. Kang & Lee, a New York-based advertising agency that specializes in the Asian-American market, warns, in its online *Asian Media Reference Guide*, "that there is a very close relationship between the advertising sales and the editorial departments of these media... In fact, many publications allocate editorial space according to the advertising volume of the client." Kang & Lee urges clients to leverage their ad spending to get more editorial coverage, but warns clients not to be surprised by a shakedown, either: such publications may use their editorial clout to pry some ad dollars out of you, "perhaps even threatening to print a negative article regarding your company or product, or heavily endorsing your competitors."

Challenges and Change

If the ethnic media has its ethical lapses, well, plenty of mainstream newspapers are beholden to their advertisers too, especially to the holy trinity of supermarkets, auto dealers and real estate agents. On the other hand, they don't provide the kind of coverage the ethnic papers do. Last year, for instance, *India-West*, a 25,000-circulation weekly in San Leandro, California, made national news by reporting that McDonald's was using beef extract to flavor its French fries—anathema to the Hindus who make up the bulk of the paper's readers. Vegetarians were appalled and a class-action suit was filed against the fast-food chain. A McDonald's in India was even vandalized.

One of the challenges facing every ethnic publication in acculturating immigrants is keeping up with evolving readers. Brody says that when Vietnamese-language newspapers first sprang up to serve new immigrants in California's Orange County, they provided news of the homeland, news of the growing local Vietnamese community, and also information about negotiating the place they had come to live. That means information about

English classes, becoming a citizen, American holidays and how to enroll your children in school. But Brody says that as the Vietnamese community became more established, the Vietnamese newspapers became less focused on matters of civics. Instead they expanded feature coverage of celebrities, movies and fashion.

No matter how much their readers change, one thing that doesn't change in the ethnic media is the need to explain world events to their readers. When terrorists attacked New York's World Trade Center, for example, workers and residents in the nearby Chinatown section of Manhattan turned to Sinocast, a radio station that broadcasts over 92.3 FM. Sinocast listeners must have a specially adapted radio to pick up the station, but such devices are sold by the station and local stores, and by September 11, 2001, they were common all over the neighborhood.

Across the country, you can find similar radios under the palm trees of West Hollywood, California, a center of the 600,000 Russian-speaking immigrants who have settled in Southern California. There, listeners can subscribe to all-day broadcasts from the Panorama Media Group, which also publishes Russian newspapers in Los Angeles. Eugene Levin, who owns the business, says he believes the paper serves the dual function of making its readers into Americans while keeping them up on their own culture and interests. "We try to help them as much as possible adjust to the American way of life," he says.

From his company's offices above Hollywood Boulevard, Levin has constructed a Russian-language media empire, complete with radio and television studios, an entertainment newspaper, a Russian yellow pages, and *Panorama*, probably the leading Russian paper in Southern California. His newspapers and radio service carry English lessons and the business section of *Panorama* has published articles about American laws and how to conduct yourself inside an American company.

A genial 50-year-old, Levin is politically active; he acknowledges donating money to political campaigns and attending political dinners and the like. His wife is a county commissioner of consumer affairs as well as director of West Hollywood's Russian Community Center, and Levin heads an association of Russian immigrants. Lately, he's trying harder to get his readers and listeners more politically active as well. While *Panorama* has long encouraged readers to vote, it only recently started endorsing political candidates, and politics, especially the Middle East, are a staple on his radio service. He says politicians in southern California understand the importance of the ethnic media and seek their endorsement.

Among the Haitians of Brooklyn, radio is probably the single biggest source of news and information, eclipsing the various Haitian newspapers. Reverend Nicolas and Garry Pierre-Pierre agree that this is because of the relatively low literacy rate among Haitian

immigrants. Using a license for a station in Asbury Park, New Jersey, which in recent years has gained a concentration of Haitians, Nicolas himself began broadcasting in Creole from Brooklyn using a relay device, but the Federal Communications Commission made him stop. The three remaining Haitian radio outlets in Brooklyn all use subcarrier frequencies to broadcast, meaning that, like the Sinocast broadcasts, they require a specially adapted radio.

Meanwhile, at the end of a long day at the paper's storefront office, I chat with Macollvie Jean-Francois, the *Haitian Times* 23-year-old reporter, who says many of the people she meets in her work "see themselves as Haitians living in New York" rather than as Americans. Jean-Francois is a Haitian-born graduate of John Dewey High School and Baruch College, a branch of the low-cost City University system, but when I casually ask whether she is a citizen, I'm surprised to learn she is not. "I've applied," she says. "I finally realized I've spent more time being in America than in Haiti. I'm more comfortable speaking English than French." And travel, she says, is easy on an American passport.

Citizen or not, Jean-Francois loves writing about the Haitian community—"I like to see immediately the impact of what I write"—and ticks off the issues she's covered, including health care, education and immigration. She recalls writing about a group of women arrested for marrying men to make them eligible for citizenship, and now she's working on a piece about how noisy it is in Haitian Flatbush—a neighborhood that always seemed so quiet when I grew up there. Like her boss, she believes in the mission of the *Haitian Times*, and when she talks about it, her enthusiasm is obviously genuine. As she puts it, "If you don't know yourself, how can you ever aspire to become someone else?" ■

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Abandoning the News

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF THE NEWS BUSINESS? THIS REPORT TO CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK OFFERS SOME PROVOCATIVE IDEAS.  BY MERRILL BROWN

There's a dramatic revolution taking place in the news business today and it isn't about TV anchor changes, scandals at storied newspapers or embedded reporters. The future course of the news, including the basic assumptions about how we consume news and information and make decisions in a democratic society are being altered by technology-savvy young people no longer wedded to traditional news outlets or even accessing news in traditional ways.

In short, the future of the U.S. news industry is seriously threatened by the seemingly irrevocable move by young people away from traditional sources of news.

Through Internet portal sites, handheld devices, blogs and instant messaging, we are

accessing and processing information in ways that challenge the historic function of the news business and raise fundamental questions about the future of the news field. Meanwhile, new forms of newsgathering and distribution, grassroots or citizen journalism and blogging sites are changing the very nature of who produces news. With these elemental shifts in mind, Carnegie Corporation of New York has launched a major initiative on the future of news and commissioned this report, based on a survey of 18-to-34-year-olds carried out by Frank N. Magid Associates in May 2004. (A set of PowerPoint slides comprising a distillation of the survey data is available on the Corporation's web site, www.carnegie.org.) The goal of this effort is to assess where 18-to-34-year-olds get their news today and how they think they'll access news in the future.

For news professionals coming out of the traditions of conventional national and local journalism, fields long influenced by national news organizations and dominant local broadcasting and print media, the revolution in how individuals relate to the news is often viewed as threatening. For digital media professionals, members of the blogging community and other participants in the new media wave, these trends are, conversely, considered liberating and indications that an "old media" oligopoly is being supplemented, if not necessarily replaced, by new forms of journalism created by freelancers and interested members of the public without conventional training.

The Internet Migration

At the heart of the assessment of the news-related habits of adults age 18-to-34 are fundamental changes driven by technology and market forces. Data indicate that this segment of the population intends to continue to increase their use of the Internet as a primary news source in the coming years and that it is a medium embraced in meaningful ways. Newspapers and national television broadcast news fare poorly with this critical demographic group.

Surprisingly to some, among 18-to-34-year-olds, local TV is ranked as the most used source of news, with over 70 percent of the age group using it at least once a week and over half of those surveyed using local TV news at least three times a week. The local TV ranking is driven in an overall sense by women and low- and middle-income groups. Meanwhile, the second-most-used weekly news source, the Internet, is number one among men, high-income groups, and broadband users.

With over half of Internet users now connecting via high-speed broadband services, daily use of the Internet among all groups is likely to climb, because broadband access, the way an increasing number of households go online, makes daily usage more likely. Already, Internet portals—widely used, general interest web sites such as Yahoo.com and MSN.com that include news streams all day, every day—have emerged in the survey as

the most frequently cited *daily* news source, with 44 percent of the group using portals at least once a day for news. Measured by daily use, local TV comes in second at 37 percent, followed by network or cable TV web sites at 19 percent, newspapers at 19 percent, cable networks at 18 percent and national broadcast networks at 16 percent.

And by other measures, the Internet is already clearly ahead of other media among the young. According to the Magid survey, young news consumers say that the Internet, by a 41-to-15 percent margin over second ranked local TV, is “the most useful way to learn.” And 49 percent say the Internet provides news “only when I want it” (a critical factor to this age group) versus 15 percent for second-ranked local TV. This audience, the future news consumers and leaders of a complex, modern society, are abandoning the news as we’ve known it, and it’s increasingly clear that a great number of them will never return to daily newspapers and the national broadcast news programs.

Other notable findings revealed by the survey: although ranked as the third most important news source, newspapers have no clear strengths and are the least preferred choice for local, national and international news. On the TV front, cable news is the fourth most valuable news source just ahead of national network programs. Those broadcast newscasts are, however, considered the number-one source for national news. Cable is considered up-to-date and accessible, but not as informative as the Internet.

A Revolution In News And In Public Discourse

The dramatic shift in how young people access the news raises a question about how democracy and the flow of information will interact in the years ahead. Not only is a large segment of the population moving away from traditional news institutions, but there has also been an explosion of alternative news sources. Some have been assembled by traditional news organizations delivering information in print, on television and on the radio as well as via the Internet and mobile devices. Others include the thousands of blogs created by journalists, activists and citizens at large.

Clearly, young people don’t want to rely on the morning paper on their doorstep or the dinnertime newscast for up-to-date information; in fact, they—as well as others—want their news on demand, when it works for them. And, say many experts, in this new world of journalism, young people want a personal level of engagement and want those presenting the news to them to be transparent in their assumptions, biases and history.

While it is premature to definitively judge the impact of this revolution on public affairs, political discourse or on journalism itself, the writing is on the wall: the course of how the news will be delivered in the future has already been altered and more changes are undoubtedly on the way. How can we expect anything else, when the

average age of a print newspaper reader is 53 and the average age of both broadcast and cable news viewers is about the same? Baby boomers read newspapers one-third less than their parents and the Gen Xers read newspapers another one-third less than the Boomers.

Whether the industry is reacting fast enough to these dramatic changes is another question altogether. “By and large, the major news companies are still turning a blind eye to what is happening because it’s challenging and they need to consider radical change,” says researcher Rusty Coats, Director of New Media at Minnesota Opinion Research, Inc. (MORI). “[Change is] way too incremental at this point,” he continues. “Major newspaper companies are embracing the Internet but are still using it as a supplement or as a means to sell print subscriptions and not seeing its unique value.” Coats points out that there’s a “big buzz” within the newspaper industry about developing “loyalty programs,” marketing efforts designed to deepen the customer’s commitment to a given product. So a subscriber to the *Chicago Tribune*, for example, might receive airline discounts as part of a program. “I’m all for rewarding valuable customers but I wish there was more thought devoted to developing new products. Does a newspaper publishing a youth-oriented web site once a month or once a week really think this will cause fundamental change? The real issue is how are we going to [compete with] Yahoo?” In that regard, Coats suggests that maybe big papers “need to own cellular services” or other large distribution vehicles to reach new audiences. What is needed, Coats and others argue, is a substantial commitment to new product development, investments that news companies—even in their triumphant days of dominance and vast profitability—were reluctant to make.

But these issues can no longer be swept aside by the news oligopolies that have dominated the latter part of the 20th century, as news executives and researchers generally agree. Indeed, those who gather, report and administer the delivery of news are increasingly focusing on the reality that technology, the enormous variety of media choices, demographics and to a certain extent, the struggles of traditional news organizations and the journalism community to adjust to change, have left mass audience, mass media newsgathering and dissemination in peril. And that’s unlikely to change. As Lewis Dvorkin, AOL’s top editorial executive and a long-time news executive warns, “I don’t think that with the lifestyles of people today, the demands on people’s time, today’s family life and the extended hours of work, people will come back to the old ways of consuming the news.”

Until recently, however, managers in the newspaper industry, for example, generally avoided confronting the decades of data about declining use of newspapers among the younger members of society. Instead, they took what is turning out to be false comfort

in historic data that generally affirmed the view that older citizens always wind up with the familiar local newspaper because of their interest in world affairs, their pocketbooks, concern with local schools and the issues of modern life. But there's no denying that the numbers are changing. The deterioration of the newspaper marketplace has been steady among young people and would appear to be accelerating. From 1972 to 1998, the percentage of people age 30-to-39 who read a paper every day dropped from 73 to 30 percent. And in just the years between 1997 and 2000, the percentage of 18-to-24-year-olds who say they read yesterday's newspaper dropped by 14 percent, according to the Newspaper Association of America. The only conclusion to be reached after noting these trends is that no future generation of new consumers will fit earlier profiles since their expectations and their habits have changed forever—and technology is a big part of the reason why.

“Young people are more curious than ever but define news on their own terms,” says Jeff Jarvis, who is president of Advance.net, a unit of Advance Publications, and who publishes a widely read blog, Buzzmachine.com. “They get news where they want it, when they want it. Media is about control now. We used to wait for the news to come to us. Now news waits for us to come to it. That's their expectation. We get news on cable and on the Internet any time, any place.”

What this means is that American journalism institutions face risks of extraordinary magnitude. To be sure, the news industry is an evolving business, but even within that context, recent changes in the news business must be viewed as a wake-up call for all involved. Consider the fact that broadcast television's evening news programs, for example, are no longer the family hearth that brings people throughout the country together at meal time. Or that television networks, which used to employ dozens of high-profile correspondents around the world, now deploy just a few. (Certainly, in the years leading up to September 11, 2001, international reporting on television was in rapid decline, often almost invisible on national television.) Afternoon newspapers have disappeared from American life and cities that for decades had multiple newspaper choices now often have but one. *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* are available on street corners throughout the country. The daily audiences of national news web sites dwarf those of their print counterparts.

Even the accepted, historic premise of how a free press and the skills of journalism bind together democratic institutions similarly merits a certain reassessment and reality check. There is little evidence that today's politicians accept the notion that it's mandatory to connect to the population via a “national press corps,” often choosing to go around the press and communicate through their own Internet sites, through friendly talk shows and blog forums.

A Time For Radical Thinking

In a world where national leaders are turning away from the news media, citizens have an increasing lack of confidence in the press and young people are moving perhaps permanently away from traditional newsgathering organizations, a radical rethinking of how news is delivered seems necessary—even overdue. Press watchers and public figures have varying, though often critical views on the performance of the national press, and many critics claim that new forms of citizen or Internet media can help fix general media inadequacies and gaping holes in coverage of important issues. Nevertheless, many feel that the country still needs strengthened newsgathering capabilities to help Americans develop a true understanding of an increasingly complex world, and argue that only strong, national media organizations cover wars, elections, news from around the world and in metropolitan communities in ways that help inform large numbers of citizens.

Efforts to stave off what seem like catastrophic times ahead for the news business and its deteriorating relationship with young news consumers are already underway. Some examples:

- Mainstream news services, after the traditional news industry's usual angst about new products and threats to core values, have begun to embrace weblogs (or blogs), the interactive, constantly updated web pages now so widespread online. Acceptance of blogging went so far this year that NBC News actually hired bloggers to comment during election night coverage.

- An increasing number of younger anchors and reporters, some with web backgrounds, are showing up on television news programs. CNN's Anderson Cooper is positioned for the younger audience, ABC News correspondent Jake Tapper is a former Salon.com writer, and Slate.com contributes regularly to National Public Radio.

- The distribution challenge only gets more complex with time, but new means for reaching new audiences continue to develop. For instance, through MobiTV, a product available from Sprint and other cellular carriers, subscribers can now watch programs from NBC News and MSNBC cable on their cell phones. Throughout Europe, giant cellular carrier Vodaphone is now offering Vodaphone live!, providing video from television services ITN in the United Kingdom, N24 in Germany, Rai News in Italy and El Mundo in Spain.

Despite these innovations, some experts still warn that the news business—and with it, perhaps, the nation itself—faces a troubled future. As David Mindich, author of *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News* (Oxford University Press, 2004) concluded in a recent interview on an industry web site that today's young citizens “are still just as thoughtful, intelligent—and I would argue, literate—as ever before. What has changed is that young people no longer see a need to keep up with the news.”

Says Mindich in his recent book: “America is facing the greatest exodus of informed citizenship in its history.”

The Challenge: Retaining Audiences While Building New Ones

At its essence, the conclusions of the Magid survey support much of what many researchers and careful students of the media have been saying and raises a set of dramatic red flags about newsgathering in the 21st century. One such scholar, Betsy Frank, Executive Vice President, Research and Planning, Viacom’s Cable Networks, Film and Publishing, is a preeminent researcher and thinker about young people and media use and calls them “media actives.” The media revolution, she says, “affects so many aspects of their lives and news just happens to be one of them. Nothing we see in their comfort with technology will go away as they get older. They have no loyalty to media institutions like their parents did.”

Similarly, CBS News President Andrew Heyward says that young people are “information impressionists. News is gathered by the impressions they receive from many sources around them.” How news executives today deal with the ways news is consumed, in the form of an image here, an instant message there, a cell phone text message headline, a web portal story or a newspaper shoved into a passing hand while racing to the bus, will say a great deal about the future of news as we know it.

For Heyward and other media executives interviewed for this report, the challenge is real. Whether it is thinking about the recrafting of the CBS Evening News in the post-Dan Rather-era or how to distribute CBS news content on new and evolving platforms Heyward, for example, says he’s constantly thinking about ways to engage younger viewers. “We are going to have to be accessible without just being bite-sized,” he says. “We are way behind in translating the strengths of television to the new media. We are nowhere on storytelling for the new media and for these younger audiences. We have to figure out how to use the new technologies in ways that address our strengths—immediacy and personality. There is a broader, new definition of news that we will need to develop for this next generation.”

History suggests that news products tailored to meet the emerging needs of different times and different generations is not a far-fetched idea. Business coverage, for example, an afterthought in many newspapers until the 1980s and 90s, now gets vastly more attention from most news organizations than in previous eras. But perhaps an even more pressing concern, beyond simply beefing up coverage in one category or another or adding younger faces to a network newscast, is whether approaches to stories and prevailing traditions can really change. Can storytelling evolve to add more interactivity, citizen participation, inclusion of younger newsmakers and the use of music, innovative pacing

and more engaging graphic and presentation elements? These changes—which represent many once widely observed taboos against embellishing straight news in any way—are at the core of what many in the business wrestle with today.

Progress toward those new definitions of news and public affairs may have been accelerated by the unpredictability and unexpected developments that were the media and new technology story underpinning last November's general election. The 2004 campaign provided any number of examples—both anecdotal and from the research already available—about the impact of the revolution at hand and how it engaged young news consumers. Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean built his campaign on connecting young Internet-savvy activists and both the ultimate Democratic nominee, Senator John Kerry, and the Republican victor, President George W. Bush, used the Internet as a critical part of their public relations and fundraising efforts, strategies directed largely at young people. Campaign commentary and coverage from bloggers moved from being perceived as idiosyncratic and away from the mainstream to being a critical part of the debate about the CBS News reporting on President Bush's military record and ultimately, the blogging phenomenon reached the level of attention that comes with a cover story in *The New York Times Magazine*. From a more concrete point of view:

■ The Pew Internet and American Life Project determined that among 18-to-34-year-olds with high-speed Internet access, 40 percent said the Internet was their main campaign news source, twice the percentage that cited newspapers. The Pew Center also reported that 21 percent of all Americans identified the Internet as their main campaign news source, twice the percentage as in the 2000 election.

■ A study of 18-to-29-year-olds carried out as part of “Declare Yourself,” a national nonpartisan effort to register voters for last year's election, reported that 25 percent of young voters named the Internet as the first or second most important source for news compared to just 15 percent for newspapers. In that same study, Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show* on the Comedy Central network was identified as the most trusted of the TV anchors among the group that chose the Internet as their top news source, while among the entire group, Stewart tied with then-NBC anchor Tom Brokaw and came in ahead of ABC's Peter Jennings and former CBS anchor Dan Rather when asked about who they “trust the most” to provide “information about politics and politicians.”

It is widely believed that this election year data represents, in some ways, a sea change in both consumption patterns and in how news is consumed. Those Jon Stewart viewers or consumers of popular blogs like Talking Points Memo (talkingpointsmemo.com) on the left side of the political spectrum and Power Line (www.powerlineblog.com) on the right have, it would seem, changed the way they approach and view the news. Active consumers are unlikely any longer to rely on single sources for coverage of issues that

matter to them. And they'll never be consuming news without clear chunks of opinion as part of the mix.

Few news executives are active, widely read bloggers. But for the one who can make that claim, journalist and blogger Jeff Jarvis, the election-year attention on Jon Stewart, the blogging phenomena and the surging growth of Internet use for both business and personal activities points out that attitude and voice matter more to today's young news consumers than earlier notions of journalistic objectivity and fact gathering. And Jarvis observes that today's young people want to understand—on an entirely different level from previous generations—the politics and attitudes of those who write and deliver the news.

That kind of transparency is what pundits like Jarvis are often most passionate about and indicates why, as perceived from the right and the left, Fox News Channel, Jon Stewart and bloggers have a lot in common. All three both dish and dig and combine opinion and fact gathering in ways that have caught on with significant numbers of consumers. Opinionated reporting, seen most clearly from bloggers, raised questions about the documents in the Dan Rather–George Bush scandal about use of unverified documents in CBS News reporting about President Bush's military record, and had stunning impact. Jon Stewart, meanwhile, hosts politicians of all persuasions while at the same time calling his program “phony news.” Jarvis says that rather than be alarmed about Stewart's popularity and credibility as a “news source,” news professionals ought to view Stewart's ascent as “as an endorsement of a new honesty in the news, of the importance of bringing news down off its pedestal and presenting it at eye-level.” He adds: “I think we [are seeing] a phenomenon in news that cuts across age groups but includes young people: we are coming to prefer our news with opinion, or at least an admission of opinion.”

What's more, Jarvis and others talk a great deal about giving audiences and especially young people a level of control about when they access news or choose to participate in public affairs. For the Internet world of the Howard Dean campaign with its reliance on online “meetings,” web-based communications and fundraising and the blog world, in which anybody with a keyboard is a publisher in a new community referred to as the “blogosphere,” everybody who wants to be involved not only can be, but can also make choices about when and at what level to become or stay involved. It's as easy, now, as turning on a computer.

New Products For A Different Consumer

In a growing number of urban areas, if you've gotten off a train or bus lately, it's likely you've been offered a free newspaper—or at least, a new version of a newspaper. Around 50 newspapers (and Luxembourg-based Metro International with editions

in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia) have launched pared-down versions of their product, generally for free distribution at commuter locations. The goal: introduce busy young professionals and others to publications that highlight headlines, weather, sports scores and news you can use on the run. It's an Internet-inspired phenomenon, in part, because it serves a similar purpose: providing quick snapshots of what's happening in the world of culture, news and entertainment, and placing it directly in the hands of consumers.

Says Chris Ma, publisher of *The Washington Post's* giveaway paper, *Express*, "We're reaching commuters who are infrequent or non-newspaper readers and building an advertising business at the same time." About 175,000 copies of *Express* are given away daily. In Miami, Knight Ridder's *Miami Herald* now publishes *Street Weekly*, or *Street* for short, which it cheerfully refers to as an "alternative arts and entertainment free publication." *Street* has a free circulation of 70,000 throughout the Miami-Dade region and promotes itself as "Edgy, colorful and irreverent."

The development of these free papers represents the largest single media industry response yet to the readership collapse. What's less clear, though, is what the production of these "newspaper-lite" products means for journalism. Will these papers merely summarize the work of the parent publication or create their own voice and journalistic traditions? Will they make original reporting obsolete by a concentration on summaries, wire stories, graphics, stock data, sports scores and weather?

At the parent companies of these papers and at the large news organizations, talented producers and editors are wrestling with these same issues but often approaching them from a different direction, working on methods of bringing in younger audiences without disturbing powerful news products which, in most cases, continue to enrich their owners with consequential profit margins. Media executives like Sandra Rowe, editor of *The Oregonian* and a former chair of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, have their hands full trying to evolve their publications with the profitability paradigm as the vexing, short-term conundrum.

Rowe thinks there are many things her paper can do and is doing in terms of story selection, story telling, packaging and creative use of the Internet to engage young people, but wishes the resources were available to do more, especially to develop new products. "I look at this age group as really smart young adults," she says. "They don't have any patience for us wasting time and approaching things in predictable ways. So part of what newspapers can do is tell them something they don't know about something interesting." Just covering City Hall isn't enough, she says. "What they're looking for is a closer lens... [In order to be that for them] we have to be plugged in at City Hall so we can tell them how money is used and how they are affected. With this crowd, newspa-

pers and magazines have to be visually strong and focused on what the story is—a story with a beginning, middle and end. If papers could do that, we could satisfy that age group.” She also believes that editors who look at newspaper beats as independent sources of newsroom information are missing the boat, particularly when it comes to assessing the interests of younger readers. “Arts, business, commerce and education...these areas are no longer discrete and what’s most interesting are the places where they intersect.”

Though frustrated at the industry’s slow pace, Rowe sees a day ahead when newspaper editors will have more products and ways to leverage their expertise. In this model, she says, her paper would be reaching different sensibilities with, for example, an alternative weekly, community papers, the leading regional portal and a network of sites. By managing multiple products and building a stronger economic base, Rowe thinks that such an organization would have the resources to put “the interest back in public interest reporting. If you can be the primary information source in the community,” she adds, “and do so because it’s your responsibility, the commercial argument would work and would be designed to support that.”

The view that the traditional news organization, whether it’s a daily newspaper or television network news operation, is effectively a “mother ship” feeding material to multiple products on multiple platforms isn’t necessarily a brand-new one. But the scale of what Rowe is proposing is a start at rethinking fading traditions.

That’s why it’s already an overwhelmingly challenging time in the worlds of cable television and broadcast news, as well as in print media. Young people are moving away not just from television news to the Internet, but also away from television in general, a fact that makes it difficult for TV marketing organizations to even reach the next generation of news consumers since many have already abandoned TV for their computers. Still, enterprising television executives do have a variety of new tools and distribution mechanisms at their disposal. Within the new NBC Universal family, for example, there’s an abundance of opportunities with CNBC, MSNBC, USA Network, the Sci Fi Channel and Bravo. Meanwhile, CBS News management is focused on CBSnews.com, and the assets of Viacom, the parent of CBS. Viacom owns Nickelodeon, Black Entertainment Television, MTV, and mtvU, formerly the College Television Network. On mtvU.com, today you can find CBS News headlines.

Like his competitors at ABC, CBS News President Andrew Heyward says he is committed to developing products for the broadband marketplace, a means to find potential television news consumers at their desktops at home or at work. Some news organizations have already made a promising start. Last summer, ABC News launched ABC News Now, a subscription-based news network designed to capture the desktop audience at work, at school or on the move. It will be available on broadband services,

digital cable and wireless services. Nothing like it has ever been tried before in the U.S. and it clearly fills a void in the ABC News distribution plan.

Success in these areas is critical for the networks. “We would like to attract younger viewers,” says Bill Wheatley, Vice President, News at NBC News. “We know advertisers will pay us more to reach them and NBC has long been accepted as a network with appeal to younger people. But in news, the challenge is great. The trick is that we are a mass medium and if we target young people too regularly and too narrowly, we will lose other parts of the audience. We may, though, come to a point where we will have to create programs just for younger viewers.”

That is very likely what it’s going to take to change current trends for mainstream news organizations. They are going to have to program for the demographic if they are to retain consequential news franchises. For CBS News, that means using those networks in their corporate family. For others with less obvious ways to reach younger viewers, an investment strategy will be required. And at some point along the way, game-changing strategies, what Rusty Coats would call “radical” or business strategists term “disruptive” tactics, are required. (Disruptive meaning along the lines of a model that has technology and telecommunications companies merging or aligning with news companies.) As Ted Turner changed the game at a much different moment in time with the invention of CNN, and as Apple changed another game by providing accessible music downloads, dramatic moves—accompanied by the simultaneous but deft, prudent tinkering of skilled print editors, television producers and digital media journalists and technologists—are unquestionably required.

Summing Up: The Message Is Clear

What the survey data commissioned by the Corporation—as well as the message that’s coming in loud and clear from bloggers and their readers—are telling us is that there are new forms of participatory or citizen journalism that can engage those who had been outside today’s news environments. Last spring, *The Bakersfield Californian* launched *The Northwest Voice* (<http://www.northwestvoice.com>), a community weekly paper and Internet site. Most of the content is produced by members of the community and submitted via the Internet. Similarly, The Command Post (<http://www.commandpost.org/>) is a site created by a worldwide network of bloggers set up to cover stories and package links to other sites that add documentation. Many news executives cringe at the idea of such projects. But these are bold concepts and their premise—that news can actually be generated by readers—may be precisely what many young, dissatisfied news consumers will respond to. Similarly, news organizations need to connect to consumers through e-mail and instant messaging services, need to join the virtual online conversa-

tions that are a central place where news is discussed and need to not only embrace these approaches but also use new technologies in order to reach out to younger audiences.

It is also apparent that news has to be produced specifically for and directed to the audiences of the future, and reach them in the ways they want. In developing news products for this audience, what's required is to understand that yesterday's news is literally that and recognize that daily news delivery mechanisms, ranging from television newscasts to magazine shows to newspapers and their giveaway stepchildren, need an approach to the news focused on techniques that go far beyond who said what yesterday or the day before. New products could be built around information services designed for the Internet, or for cellular and multimedia delivery. These could include, for example, innovative, even risky programming models delivered over broadband with unique voices and tied into related blogs on specific topics, ranging from national security to local restaurants.

News executives need to quickly mobilize around what are today their secondary platforms, at least measured in terms of where, currently, their largest revenue opportunities exist. In other words, even if the daily newspaper industry's advertising revenue dwarfs its Internet business, the future of the American newspaper will be defined online from both a future readership point of view and perhaps in terms of future revenue streams as well. It is time for print industry investments in Internet products to match the online audience size and the extraordinary magnitude of the migration to digital news delivery.

While making investments is imperative, the news industry needs to do so while simultaneously inventing new, creative business approaches. Few news organizations think methodically and creatively about product development, and resources allocated to studying and inventing new news products are generally miniscule. Even at universities and think tanks, research on these critical topics is limited. Nevertheless, the time has come to forge new liaisons between the disparate worlds of research, education and news organizations in order to maximize intellectual capability and limited resources.

Meanwhile, the news industry should recognize the importance of what's going on in places like Bakersfield and work hand-in-hand with bloggers and other independent journalists and citizens to experiment with the formation of new alliances and the development of new products. With safeguards, and appropriate standards as an early requirement, news organizations large and small should bring the public—including their local community—into their news gathering and news delivery planning processes in ways that were probably unimaginable just a few years ago. From the simple touches, like making every news professional's e-mail address available, to the more complex, such as engaging with news sources and the citizenry at large in meaningful dialogue,

there are clearly methods for providing the accessibility younger audiences are likely to embrace. In other words, news executives need to think about their products as participatory community institutions, not merely as distributors of their own creative output, and open themselves to input, feedback, ideas and journalism from outside their own organizations. In addition, news organizations must recognize the value of the one piece of technology that's in virtually every hand around the world—the cell phone—so that the mobile revolution is, in fact, part of a news revolution.

Ironically, some large news organizations don't even adequately leverage the know-how and expertise within their own companies. There are hundreds of very capable, technologically savvy Internet executives within large news organizations whose views about the future and whose ideas for new products and initiatives are dismissed or ignored altogether. Every major broadcast and cable news organization exists today within a corporate family that includes Hollywood studios, institutions where new technologies, new distribution channels, new production techniques and new storytelling techniques are developed. They talk infrequently and awkwardly.

Without this kind of dramatic rethinking, without a new openness to new approaches, the news industry is in peril. Certainly, the newspaper revenue model based in large part on classified and job advertising will never be the same, with so much revenue disappearing to the Internet. One recent study said the popular, free Internet site, craigslist (www.craigslist.com), had cost San Francisco Bay Area newspapers \$50-\$65 million in job listing revenue alone.


While the outright collapse of large news organizations is hardly imminent, as the new century progresses, it's hard to escape the fact that their franchises have eroded and their futures are far from certain. A turnaround is certainly possible, but only for those news organizations willing to invest time, thought and resources into engaging their audiences, especially younger consumers. The trend lines are clear. So is the importance of a dynamic news business to our civic life, to our educational future, and to our democracy. ■

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Nonprofit Journalism

REMOVING THE PRESSURE OF THE BOTTOM LINE

When newsgathering isn't tied into company profits, does journalism—and the public—benefit?  BY DANIEL AKST

In the media cacophony that is New York, whoever heard of Gotham Gazette? Apparently lots of people. The web site, devoted to news of the city and its neighborhoods, gets more than 105,000 unique visitors per month. “In May [2005],” says Sara Stuart, Gotham’s director of marketing and communications, “when you Googled ‘New York City politics,’ Gotham Gazette was the first of 26 million results.”

National Public Radio (NPR), by contrast, is a household name. In the early 1980s it had only two million weekly listeners, but since then what was once the province of a band of self-selected cognoscenti has grown into nothing short of a mass phenomenon. NPR now reports 26 million weekly listeners—a figure that has doubled in just the past

decade. NPR programming reaches listeners on more than 780 independent public radio stations blanketing the country, not to mention on the Internet.

Gotham Gazette and NPR are both fast-growing media organizations, but they have something more interesting in common: they are both private, not-for-profit organizations. In fact, at a time of growing concern over whether quality journalism and high profit margins can continue to coexist in the traditional media, nonprofit journalism is flourishing.

From individual bloggers to influential public affairs magazines, from community newspapers to broadcasting outlets, nonprofit media are multiplying in number, increasing their audiences and stretching the boundaries of journalism itself. Thanks to the Internet, barriers to entry into the news business may well be lower than at any time since wandering minstrels carried news from place to place in verse. And while nonprofits can't ignore markets any more than they can ignore budgets, a news organization that hopes only to break even can focus less on what will sell and more on the kinds of coverage it believes society needs. Thus, while for-profit broadcasters appear to have scaled back their commitment to news, NPR has been adding journalists and ramping up coverage.

Of course, profit and excellence in the media are hardly mutually exclusive. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, which deploy masses of relatively well-paid professional journalists and maintain the highest standards, are all profit-seeking enterprises that also produce enormous social good. Princeton University sociologist and Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Starr, in his 2004 study, *The Creation of the Media* (Basic Books), is clear-eyed about the role of profit in all this, observing that, in general, "Markets in liberal societies enrich the public sphere far more than they impoverish it."

But in some situations the market mechanism—pressured by cultural, social and political changes—may not always be adequate, and some thoughtful people are suggesting that this is the case with respect to the profit-oriented media that dominate the American news landscape. The traditional postwar mainstays of American news—the big three television networks and the many daily newspapers that provide most local coverage—seem to be caught in a dispiriting cycle of cutbacks and declining audiences that they lack the ability to break. At the same time, consolidation and the decline of family ownership have left media organizations subject to the same profit pressures as other publicly traded companies—despite the special mission media companies have always claimed for themselves. Under the circumstances, it's fair to ask whether the news organizations of today—and tomorrow—are up to the task of sustaining the informed citizenry on which democracy depends.

“I think there is a fundamental role for nonprofit entities in our media system,” says Robert McChesney, a University of Illinois communications professor who founded a nonprofit organization of his own (freepress.org) to advocate media reform. To critics like McChesney, the problem is a consequence of concentration and the obligations public companies of all kinds have to their shareholders. McChesney argues that the current system “is set up to maximize profit for a relative handful of large companies. The system works well for them, but it is a disaster for the communication needs of a healthy and self-governing society.”

James T. Hamilton, an economist and political scientist at Duke University whose works include *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News* (Princeton University Press, 2003), advocates outright nonprofit ownership as one of several means to generate more hard news coverage. “One way to increase the attention reporters pay to politics and government is to shift the objectives of some owners away from profit maximization,” he writes. “A foundation concerned with the quantity and quality of public affairs coverage might decide to purchase or run a news outlet that emphasized hard news.”

Sometimes when markets fail, the path is clear for government intervention and in fact, some advocates of a greater role for nonprofits support changes in tax and other public policies to promote this form of media ownership. In other advanced nations, after all, government plays a much bigger role, particularly in funding public broadcasting. In America, by contrast, the federal government only provides about fifteen percent of what is spent on public broadcasting, an amount roughly matched by the states. McChesney, for one, believes the most cost-effective way for nonprofits to improve the media is by focusing on government policy. He cites as a precedent the original Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, underwritten by Carnegie Corporation of New York during the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. The Commission’s landmark report led to the creation of the U.S. public broadcasting system in 1967.

But there are times when markets fail and government can’t fill the gap, particularly in the wary and decentralized American tradition, which makes even modest government funding for the arts controversial, let alone the kind of national television tax that pays for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Often, in such circumstances, private, nonprofit organizations can step effectively into the breach—and the seeming marketplace shortfall in quality journalism may be just the kind of breach they can ably help to fill. A shortage of quality television for kids was addressed in just this way when Carnegie Corporation commissioned the feasibility study (by Joan Ganz Cooney) that led to the birth of the Children’s Television Workshop—creator of *Sesame Street*.

Nonprofits have succeeded in other complex, costly and socially critical ventures,

including most notably higher education. America's colleges and universities are decentralized, overwhelmingly not-for-profit, dependent on a mix of funding sources—and despite a little grade inflation, the envy of the world. What they supply is both vital and, with some rare exceptions, unavailable from profit-making businesses. In the media, “the nonprofit sector shows promise,” affirms University of North Carolina journalism professor Philip Meyer, who wrote a book called *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism In The Information Age* (University of Missouri Press, 2004). He observes that, rather than being left entirely to a competitive marketplace, news coverage in this country has long been buttressed by various kinds of charitable or government benefits. McChesney points out that low postal rates, broadcast licenses, local cable monopolies and even the nature of copyright protections are among the many government policies that subsidize and shape the American media outside the free market system.

Nonprofits can also help fill an important coverage gap inherent in the structure of America's advertising-driven media business model. Since daily newspapers, for example, get four-fifths of their revenue from advertising, the places that need coverage most—places where people don't have a lot of money—typically get it least. This is why newspapers in some places have dropped the names of their older, struggling host cities from their names—the better to follow their affluent readers to the suburbs. At the same time, papers “covering” entertainment, home design and restaurants have proliferated, all of them appealing to the affluent and many carrying nothing like news. Nonprofit media could pay more attention to the Americans who don't shop or eat out quite so much.

The role of nonprofits in the media is being taken seriously enough that last year it was the subject of a symposium (co-moderated by James Hamilton) at Louisiana State University's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, where discussion focused on five proposals:

- More media outlets should be operated by nonprofits, and government policy should support this.
- Foundations should subsidize information and analyses for journalists and for use in policy debates.
- The tax code and public policy generally should encourage individuals and families to own media companies.
- Public policy should encourage partisan media outlets supported by interest groups or political parties.
- The government should subsidize information about public affairs and the infrastructure to deliver it.

Such ideas are hardly mere academic fantasies. Nonprofits already deliver a lot more of our news than many people realize, and they have been doing so for a long time. The

venerable Associated Press (AP) was founded in 1848 and now bills itself as “the largest and oldest news organization in the world.” A mainstay of American journalism without which much of the nation’s media simply could not function, AP is a not-for-profit cooperative of its member publishers and broadcasters, whose fees support a global network of 3,700 staff members—some 2,500 of them journalists.

The Christian Science Monitor, meanwhile, has been publishing what a *Boston Globe* columnist called its “distinctive brand of nonhysterical journalism” on a nonprofit basis since 1908. Although down to just 59,000 subscribers and sorely tested by an unsuccessful TV venture, the paper has achieved great popularity on the Internet, where it gets 1.8 million individual users per month. Several local daily newspapers, including the *St. Petersburg Times*, the *Delaware State News* in Dover, and *The Day* in New London, Connecticut, are owned by nonprofits too. The New London paper has a bigger staff, higher salaries and more space for news than other papers of comparable size, according to a report last year in the *American Journalism Review*. A nonprofit organization called C-SPAN, meanwhile, has been giving cable television viewers unmediated access to Congressional debates and other government proceedings (as well as author talks, miscellaneous public affairs events and similarly meaty fare) since 1979. C-SPAN is funded by the cable television industry and, like AP, seeks neither profits nor government funding.

Across the Atlantic, not-for-profit journalism has a long and honorable history. The BBC is perhaps the best known non-commercial brand in the business worldwide, but it’s less well known outside the United Kingdom that *The Guardian*, a respected national daily newspaper of decidedly liberal bent, is owned by the nonprofit Scott Trust, which was established in 1936 both to avoid death taxes and to sustain the old *Manchester Guardian* as an independent newspaper.

The *Guardian* model is interesting because it doesn’t rely on any philanthropy beyond the Scott family’s initial generous act. Instead, *The Guardian* and its Sunday sister, *The Observer*, are sustained by a variety of business ventures including regional newspapers, radio outlets and a set of special interest publications. The latter include a highly profitable automotive weekly and the United Kingdom’s leading automotive web site. Thus, while *The Guardian* and *The Observer* have lost money for the past two fiscal years, the Guardian Media Group (which owns the Scott Trust’s various media operations) has finished in the black.

While other newspapers in Britain have shifted to a tabloid format to appeal to readers, Guardian Media is spending more than £100 million (over \$180 million) to relaunch the two national papers in a mid-size format because the editors opposed the rigid tabloid format. “There are times when both the Guardian and The Observer think it right to shout at their readers,” writes Scott Trust chair Liz Forgan. “But the world

they seek to report on is a complex one full of loud and soft, long and short and good journalism needs flexibility to do its job properly. Only by re-pressing completely, in a new size which was compact but big enough to allow more than one tone of voice on the front page and throughout the paper, could those journalistic ambitions be realized.”

By the standards of American newspaper companies, the Guardian Media Group’s pretax profits are modest: just three percent in the fiscal year ended April 3, 2005, nearly all of it attributable to asset sales. Pretax profits were seven percent in each of the two preceding years and two percent in 2002. In fiscal 2001 profits were a healthier fifteen percent, but much of this, too, was due to asset sales. Guardian Media Group chairman Paul Myners, writing in the company’s 2004 annual report, makes no bones about what he’s up to: “Our core objective is the protection of our national titles, *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and Guardian Unlimited [the Guardian’s heavily used web site]. All other activities are in pursuit of that core objective and exist as a store of value to enable us to pursue our primary objective.”

It’s important to remember that, like the few American newspapers owned by nonprofit organizations, the Trust was founded as the result of an extraordinary act of generosity and public-spiritedness by a member of the owning family. Such acts, unfortunately, are likely to remain rare, and thus the ownership structure of the *Guardian*, like that of the *St. Petersburg Times* (which is owned by the nonprofit Poynter Institute), is unlikely to be widely emulated.

In this country, at least, the journalism of ideas is a nonprofit preserve of longstanding, even if such periodicals aren’t officially nonprofit charitable organizations under IRS rules. One that meets those requirements is *Harpers*, originally a business and now put out by the Harper’s Magazine Foundation. Other such publications limp along trying to finish in the black but subsidized by committed individual donors. Most of these magazines are small, but they have an outsized impact on public opinion because of their influential readers, who include many journalists and academics.

CommonWealth magazine, for example, is the quarterly publication of the nonpartisan Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) and examines Bay State issues in depth. In 2002 it reported on relatively youthful state employees who manage to get themselves “fired” soon after they become eligible for pensions. “A review of pension records by *CommonWealth* reveals that more than 1,000 state employees have seized on a variety of special early-retirement provisions since 1990, with hundreds of them obtaining pensions for which they may not have been qualified,” the article said, singling out some big name Massachusetts politicians in the process.

CommonWealth is sent to roughly 1,000 MassINC dues-paying members as well as 9,000 journalists, academics, public officials, business executives and other opinion

leaders, many of whom it also brings together in public forums with politicians and other powerful Massachusetts figures. It's thus able to affect public opinion despite a small circulation and a budget of just \$750,000 a year—and a business model based on seriousness rather than celebrity appeal. The trick is support from roughly 90 disparate sponsoring organizations, including banks, labor unions and law firms. For their money, says editor Robert Keough, they get to advertise in a respected medium targeted at some of the state's most important people. But because there are so many such sponsors in such a broad range of fields distributed so widely across the political spectrum, the magazine hasn't had to worry if one or two get mad about an article it publishes. Says Keough: "Being a nonprofit with a commitment to the improvement of civic life frees us from the lowest-common-denominator mentality that dominates commercial journalism today."

Nonprofit status has proved especially suitable for the journalism of advocacy. It's noteworthy that Princeton's Paul Starr, who knows as well as anyone the role profits have historically played in building strong news organizations, is a founder and co-editor of *The American Prospect*, a nonprofit liberal journal of ideas. Since its founding as a quarterly in 1990, it has grown into a monthly with a paid circulation of 55,000 as well as what it calls "a daily web magazine [www.prospect.org] with more than 300,000 monthly visitors." *The American Prospect* was founded partly to counteract the intellectual dominance of conservative think tanks in Washington—which are themselves underwriting nonprofit journalism in the form of reports and newspaper op-ed articles by resident scholars and others. In fact, American newspapers took on their current nonpartisan, objective garb only when mass circulation became a profitable business goal, making it more lucrative to leave behind party affiliations and trade partisanship for appeal to a broad base of readers. To this day, despite critics on the left and the right, most for-profit news organizations insist that their journalism embodies fairness and objectivity.

The poster child for the role not-for-profits can play in doing serious journalism is National Public Radio, a nonprofit since its founding in 1970 that has become the preeminent cultural and journalistic force in the lives of a large number of mostly well-educated Americans. NPR's remarkable growth is a testament both to the journalistic potential of nonprofits as well as the failings of the marketplace. NPR distributes more than 120 hours of original programming each week to more than 780 independent public radio stations blanketing the country, not to mention the Internet, and NPR's *Morning Edition* is probably the nation's leading morning radio show—proving that lots of people want real journalism, especially if it's free.

While for-profit radio stations still deliver headlines, traffic and weather reports, NPR offers more breadth and greater depth—something it did not always have the

resources to accomplish. Back in 1979, it had a single foreign correspondent, Robert Siegel. It now has 36 bureaus worldwide, and its coverage of both the September 11th terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan won an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, which recognizes excellence in journalism. (Since 9/11, NPR has established a system for breaking into the local broadcast time at many of its member stations, which wasn't possible before.) Three years ago, NPR opened a major production center in Culver City, California, near Los Angeles, and has also launched a training program for radio journalists to cultivate new talent.

The lack of investigative reporting is a longstanding criticism of NPR, and partly to address this, the organization hired former investigative journalist and *Baltimore Sun* editor William K. Marimow as one of its top editors. NPR president Kevin Klose insists NPR is doing investigative journalism and cited a report on the very day of our interview by national reporter Snigdha Prakash, who has dug into Merck's handling of its Vioxx painkilling medication, which has been linked to cardiovascular problems.

The size and demographics of NPR's audience suggest a major market malfunction. For example, 75 percent of its news listeners have household income of \$50,000 or more, and NPR listeners in general are fifty-eight percent college educated. NPR listeners also are more likely to own a computer and to have voted in an election than Americans in general. These are presumably the kind of listeners prized by advertisers. So why hasn't the marketplace offered similar fare? It's as if the automakers never thought to manufacture Volvos.

Klose insists that the key to NPR's success is precisely that it is not commercial, and instead pursues a mission "to be of assistance to listeners in the act of citizenship." He adds: "The purpose of what we do is not creating an encounter in which we can sell them anything." McChesney argues that NPR's success stems in large part from commercial radio's abandonment of its public interest obligation, which fell by the wayside in the 1980s, as well as from the ownership consolidation and general homogenization of commercial radio that commenced in earnest in the late 1990s. These changes left the door wide open to local public radio stations, he says, as well as the NPR programming they carry. (A lot of additional public radio programming, including some from the BBC, is provided by yet another thriving nonprofit, Public Radio International, which is supported by a number of foundations. And there is growing competition in this field from Public Radio International and American Public Media, among others.)

The door has never opened as wide to public television news in this country. For one thing, McChesney notes, radio news is relatively cheap to produce while television news is expensive, requiring more people and equipment. And then there is the matter of politics, which looms larger in the literally and figuratively more visible medium of TV.

Insulating public broadcasting from political influence was emphasized by the original Carnegie Commission when it did its work, and has been a tenet of the system since it was launched. But not long after, public television came under pressure from the Nixon administration for its coverage of Vietnam and Watergate. Politics became an issue more recently when Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, accused the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) of failing to achieve balance in its programming.

Public television is hamstrung, moreover, by a lack of secure, reliable government funding, which in turn has increased its reliance on corporate support—and therefore the programming preferences of corporate funders. The system's complicated structure hasn't helped either. What Congress actually funds is the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a nonprofit agency that exists to funnel federal money into public broadcasting—mostly to local stations. (The chairman of CPB is appointed by the White House.) PBS is a membership organization of 348 local TV stations, and doesn't itself produce programming. It distributes and promotes programming, though, and even provides some funding for programming, but actual programs are created by local stations such as WGBH in Boston, or by independent producers who must piece together backing from stations and corporate or philanthropic underwriters. This decentralized system may be characteristically American, but it's not designed to support a large newsgathering organization, even if it does result in such significant public affairs programming as *Frontline*, *POV* and *NOW*.

Yet public television's sole traditional news program—*The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*—is also its crown jewel. *NewsHour* reaches 98 percent of U.S. television households and is seen in Asia, Europe, Japan and Latin America. Despite the system's limitations, *NewsHour*, which has an annual budget of \$24 million, is watched by about 2.7 million people nightly and was ranked as the most credible, objective and influential TV news program in the country in the Erdos & Morgan Opinion Leader survey. Like everyone else, it has found its way onto the Internet, where its web site averages more than a million unique visitors each week.

The contrast between American public broadcasting and the British Broadcasting Corporation is stark. Federal funding for public broadcasting is \$387 million in the current fiscal year, or about \$3.50 per household—in a nation where the average annual cable bill in 2003 (the latest year available from the FCC) was \$543.84. Now consider the situation across the pond. Funded by an annual television license fee of £126 (about \$220) per household, the BBC is a massive multimedia operation that spent roughly £400 million (about \$719 million) just on news in the most recent fiscal year it. It employs some 3,500 people in its worldwide news operations, including roughly 2,000

journalists. They staff 40 bureaus in every part of the globe, and the BBC is heard perhaps just as widely. Its World Service, which broadcasts in 40 languages, has an audience of 150 million people, the BBC says.

The British electorate supports its public broadcasting system despite the levy on televisions. A BBC survey last year found that eighty-one percent of respondents think “the Beeb” is worth the money—and many would pay more. Asked what they’d be willing to pay to keep the BBC from shutting down, the average answer was roughly double what they are paying now. For evidence as to why this might be, consider the BBC’s coverage of the recent terrorist attacks on the London transit system. *Baltimore Sun* television critic David Zurawik noted that CNN’s coverage “featured a red logo emblazoned with the words: “LONDON TERROR,” and he quoted a CNN anchorwoman saying, “An eyewitness described utter pandemonium—bodies strewn around. ... People were screaming. ... They felt they were trapped like sardines essentially waiting to die.” By contrast, Zurawik wrote, the BBC “provided a sense of stability even as the death toll climbed,” offering an “oasis of relative calm” marked by “images of emergency workers restoring order.” It should be noted, however, that there may be some problems ahead for this venerable broadcasting service. In the spring of 2005, the BBC announced plans to cut about 4,000 jobs from a workforce of about 21,000 to save some £355 million (about \$670 million)—approximately 10 percent of its annual expenditure—over the next three years. Commenting on these proposed cost-saving measures, BBC director Mark Thompson said that the television license fee will only survive as the main method of funding the BBC “if the public is convinced that the corporation is spending money wisely.”

In all likelihood, NPR is as close as we’ll come to a domestic version of the BBC—and government funding will be a relatively small part of the picture. In fact, NPR only gets about one percent of its budget directly from Uncle Sam, although local public radio stations, which get about thirteen percent of their funds from Washington, use some of this money to pay NPR for programming. But while public radio in this country gets by on relatively little government money, it benefits from having a diversified funding base. Local public radio stations get about a third of their money from listener contributions and another quarter from corporate and foundation grants.

NPR has even established a foundation to raise an endowment for itself (PBS has more recently done likewise), and over the years has garnered funds from the Ford, Ahmanson and MacArthur foundations, among other sources. In 2003, it announced what has amounted to a \$230 million gift from the estate of Joan B. Kroc, the San Diego philanthropist and widow of McDonald’s tycoon Ray Kroc. The Kroc gift has enabled NPR to hire more journalists and expand its news coverage, which now involves 350 full and part-time employees and an annual news budget of \$50 million. Local public

radio stations provide news and public affairs programming of their own as well. NPR's Klose notes the contrast to for-profit radio: "Radio is completely finished as a reporting medium on the commercial side."

Unfortunately, the news about commercial news coverage generally is not good. The Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), in its 2004 survey of the industry, "found that most sectors of the news media have seen clear cutbacks in newsgathering resources," according to Tom Rosenstiel and Amy Mitchell of the PEJ and Bill Kovach of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. The number of newspaper newsroom staffers shrunk by 2,000 between 2000 and 2004, a drop of 4 percent overall. Some major online news sites saw much deeper cuts, such as MSNBC, which cut around a quarter of its staff between 2001 and 2003. Radio newsroom staffing declined by 57 percent from 1994 to 2001. After an uptick in 1999, network staffing began to drop again in 2000. Since 1985 the number of network news correspondents has declined by 35 percent while the number of stories per reporter increased by 30 percent.

That same year, 2004, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, in conjunction with PEJ, conducted a survey of 547 national and local journalists. Some 66 percent of national journalists said profit pressures were hurting journalistic quality (and, to point out that this is not just the usual newsroom grousing, only 41 percent held this view in 1995). Among local journalists, the figure had risen to 57 percent from 33 percent in the same period. Dan Gillmor, a former columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News* and lately an advocate of citizens' or grassroots journalism, may have summed up the worries when he said in an interview: "It's not at all clear, given the erosion of the business model the mass media are now suffering, that they will be able to afford—or their shareholders will permit—the kind of things I consider crucial in a democratic society."

The trends in newspapers are particularly worrisome. Newspapers are the journalistic institutions providing the most extensive coverage, from small town papers right up through *USA Today*. They are the news organizations with the most boots on the ground. Their articles are longer, deeper and more extensively sourced than those of other media, and mostly self-generated. Paul Ginocchio, who analyzes media stocks at Deutsche Bank Securities, states flatly that: "Newspapers are the prime content providers for the modern news distribution machine."

The newspaper industry remains quite profitable, but critics like Philip Meyer say this comes at the expense of spending on news. And the future doesn't look bright. Daily circulation, at about 55 million, has been stagnant for half a century—and "penetration" has been falling since the mid-1950s, at least. Back then, the industry sold 1.2 newspapers per household. Daily newspaper penetration today is hugely diminished, at roughly .5 newspapers per household. Worse yet, circulation has been falling in abso-

lute terms since the mid-1980s. “I don’t see any reasonable expectation this is going to change anytime soon,” says John Morton, a veteran industry analyst. Newspaper advertising, meanwhile, the industry’s lifeblood, is under attack. Such Internet ventures as craigslist.org and monster.com are aggressively competing for the industry’s prized classified ad business. And Wal-Mart, the nation’s most successful retailer, has preferred to advertise by direct mail.

As newspapers lose readers, celebrity-oriented periodicals are experiencing surging subscriptions and newsstand sales as well as big increases in advertising pages. They are also attracting a wider variety of ads, suggesting more mainstream acceptance. Meanwhile, says Steven Lagerfeld, editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*, which is published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, ideas-oriented publications such as his are battling for attention from the same relatively small group of potential readers. “There’s no demand for quality,” laments John R. MacArthur, president and publisher of Harper’s.

But the appetite for escapism and schlock doesn’t prove people don’t want—or can’t use—good journalism. “There is no shortage of historical studies showing a correlation between quality journalism and business success,” writes Meyer, whose own work suggests that newspaper credibility is correlated with higher ad rates, and that higher staffing levels are linked to a slower decline in penetration. Paul Ginocchio, meanwhile, looked at 150 large newspaper markets and found, in the words of the Project for Excellence in Journalism 2005 report, *The State of the News Media*, “that papers recognized for superior news performance, like *The Washington Post*, the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* had superior ‘brand power’—defined as circulation numbers and ad rates above expectations for their markets.” In other words, for newspapers, quality pays.

One area where news is clearly growing is the Internet, which has opened the door to a slew of other nonprofit media ventures that didn’t exist before. New York’s Gotham Gazette (gothamgazette.com) was started in 1999 with a grant from the Charles Revson Foundation and receives funding from the Rockefeller and New York Times foundations, among others. Besides offering a handy daily digest of New York City news stories appearing in other outlets, Gotham Gazette generates coverage of its own and publishes a policy magazine. It even posts translated articles from some of the city’s foreign-language ethnic periodicals, and offers readers a database of articles relating to local political campaigns. Gotham Gazette is operated by the Citizens Union Foundation of the City of New York, a nonprofit research and education organization that sees itself as a watchdog of the public good. Gotham Gazette’s annual budget is just \$550,000 a year.

How does such an operation keep itself going financially? Gotham Gazette editor Jonathan Mandell says that the organization, which initially focused on establishing it-

self and building up its coverage, is now focusing more on sustainability as well, and that means finding new sources of revenue. Twice last year, for example, it ran appeals asking readers for money, garnering a total of \$30,000, and Mandell says appeals this year will probably raise more. Gotham Gazette has also started offering classified and display ads, and is considering selling sponsorships for its popular e-mail newsletters, which offer potential advertisers the advantage of a highly targeted readership with a manifest interest in the topic at hand. “The Internet part of us in some ways is far more important than the nonprofit part of us,” Mandell observes, noting that many news sites on the web aren’t making a profit even if they wish they were.

Organizations such as Carnegie Corporation, the Reuters Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, meanwhile, have been funding a variety of media undertakings, from providing information that journalists can use to underwriting actual coverage. The Reuters Foundation, for example, has supported Voices of Iraq (<http://www.aswataliraq.info/>), a grassroots Iraqi news site that, with the help of \$800,000 from the United Nations, plans to become an independent commercial news service. In this country, Carnegie Corporation is among the funders of the Center for Public Integrity, which conducts investigative reporting through a global network of journalists. Last year the Center’s inquiry into U.S. government contracts in Iraq and Afghanistan won the online version of the George Polk Award, an important journalistic honor. The Center posts the fruits of its labor at <http://www.publicintegrity.org>.

Or consider the list of recipients awarded \$12,000 each by the University of Maryland’s J-Lab: the Institute for Interactive Journalism, which is using a \$1 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to pay for its New Voices project. One was the Friends of the Deerfield (New Hampshire) Library to start a web site with local news, opinion and photography. Another was the Mid-Columbia Centro Cultural in Hood River, Oregon to launch a weekly half-hour, bilingual news program on a low-power FM radio station, with training for community members to write scripts and edit audio. Yet another is a community news weblog in a poor, largely African American neighborhood of Chicago. One of the goals, says J-Lab executive director Jan Schaffer, is for the New Voices grant recipients “to develop various models of sustainability—from corporate sponsorships, to foundations, to advertising, to subscriptions, etc.”

“I doubt,” she adds, in a comment that might apply across the nonprofit media landscape, “that there will be one size that fits all.” ■

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