

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VOL. 59 NO. 3 FALL 2005

Five Dollars



Covering Indian Country

Journalist's Trade

Changing Newspapers,
Changing News

Comparing National and Local
Campaign Coverage

Words & Reflections

War Photography to Opinion
Journalism

“... to promote and elevate the standards of journalism”

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation.

Vol. 59 No. 3 NIEMAN REPORTS
Fall 2005 THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Publisher Bob Giles
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Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published
in March, June, September and December
by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University,
One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098.

Subscriptions/Business
Telephone: 617-496-2968
E-Mail Address:
nreports@harvard.edu

Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years; add \$10
per year for foreign airmail. Single copies \$5.
Back copies are available from the Nieman office.

Please address all subscription correspondence to
One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098
and change of address information to
P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108.
ISSN Number 0028-9817

Editorial
Telephone: 617-496-6308
E-Mail Address:
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Internet Address:
www.nieman.harvard.edu

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Second-class postage paid at Boston,
Massachusetts and additional entries.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to
Nieman Reports,
P.O. Box 4951,
Manchester, NH 03108.

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Mainstream Media and the Survival of Journalism

In March, Nieman Foundation Curator Bob Giles welcomed to Lippmann House the participants in a symposium cohosted by The Media Center at The American Press Institute. Called "Whose News? Media, Technology and the Common Good," this two-day event brought together people whose professional lives intersect with the changing environment in which news is being gathered and disseminated. Edited excerpts from his remarks follow.

One question we will address in this symposium is whether the traditions of journalism will survive. This is a question of critical interest to the Nieman Foundation because our educational purpose is directly linked to elevating the standards of journalism. It is hard not to be aware of the controversies and conflicts swirling around mainstream journalism. Just how timely this gathering is can be seen in recent stories that reflect on the state of journalism. Or what Bill Berkowitz of AlterNet refers to as "the sorry state of journalism these days."

This month the Columbia Journalism Review devoted an editorial to the idea that "it's time to reconnect the press and the public If journalism is seen as just another hungry special interest, the public will toss the good out with the bad. That may already be happening," the editorial warned, as it cited a "plaintive letter" posted on Romenesko last month by David Cay Johnston of The New York Times: "Just what has gone wrong in American journalism? Fewer people pay attention. More of those who do ... reject all or part of the news. There is hostility and suspicion that reporters and editors and producers detect What does it mean for our democracy that so many people ignore or disbelieve the people whose job it is to watchdog our government? What does it mean that trust seems to be under broad assault?"

A commentary on Barron's Online focused on the crisis of confidence confronting the mainstream media, combined with a technological revolution and structural economic change. Has this created "what can only be described as a perfect storm, especially for newspapers and broadcast outlets?" the Barron's article asked. "Print's business model is imploding as younger readers turn toward free tabloids and electronic media to get news. It has become fashionable these days for many in the media to indulge in self-flagellation, hail the emergence of 'citizen journalists,' and applaud the death of dinosaurs who 'don't get it.'" The Barron's commentary concluded on a supportive note for the mainstream media: "In a polarized

country facing difficult challenges, the public needs our skills, experience and most of all our professionalism to give them the vital information they need to make good decisions about their lives and our nation's future."

A study released recently by the Knight Foundation reflected on what's happening with the readers and viewers of tomorrow. It uncovered what has been described as "a shocking level of student ignorance about the First Amendment, particularly its free speech and free press guarantees." More than one-third thinks the First Amendment gives too much free press protection, and most students don't understand what free speech is.

A report from The McKinsey Quarterly questioned whether the answer to dwindling newspaper readership might be a move to the tabloid format. It noted that several important

European broadsheets have been converted into tabs, and the format has proved popular, with rising circulation in the next year. But changing formats carries the big risk of influencing more churn because U.S. papers are heavily dependent on home-delivered circulation, and these readers are more resistant to change.

Lou Ureneck, a teacher of business and economics journalism at Boston University, writing a Nieman Reports review of "The Vanishing Newspaper," a new book by Phil Meyer at the University of North Carolina, summed up the current business culture of many

newspaper companies: "In a period of declining circulation and public trust, it is a commentary on our times that budgets have become the key point of contact between editors and publishers (or corporate CEO's) The concept of increasing the investment in editorial quality, or even moderating the impulse to cut newsroom budgets, has become a battlefield. On one side: editors with a blind faith in the power of potent journalism to win readers and improve society. On the other side: business-oriented managers with an unbending commitment to controlling costs and hitting the numbers that reward investors."

In her new book about broadcast news called "News Flash," Bonnie Anderson, a former executive at CNN, wrote that "It's all about money, a desperate attempt to hang on to the huge profits news had earned over the years. And that is far more important to the corporations than the people's right to know, even more important than a healthy democracy." In a review of Anderson's book for Nieman Reports, Rebecca MacKinnon, a former CNN bureau chief, writes that "Anderson

'If journalism is seen as just another hungry special interest, the public will toss the good out with the bad. That may already be happening.'

— *Columbia Journalism Review Editorial*

does not paint a pretty picture of American TV news. It is a world in which the obsessive focus on viewer ratings, the parent corporation's quarterly earnings and stock prices, have caused news executives to lose sight—even lose interest—in the American public interest.” Or what the planners of this symposium are referring to as the “common good.”

On AlterNet, Berkowitz identifies John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton of the Center for Media and Democracy as taking on an ambitious task of “reinventing journalism”—a mission driven by their exposures of “how corporate shells and government spokespersons have manipulated the media and undermined democracy for more than a decade.”

In a dean's note to the students and alumni at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Nick Lemann observes that “These are tough times in journalism, not just ethically, but also economically, professionally and politically. There is an ever-increasing amount of material that flies the flag of journalism, but doesn't qualify by our standards. All of us are concerned about the depth of our audiences' loyalty to what we'd consider the best in journalism.”

An item by Eric Boehlert that was posted on Salon notes that “for the last four years the persistent storyline about the White House's relationship with the press has focused on the administration's discipline, denial of access, and ability to stay on message. But in the wake of revelations about the aggressive and unprecedented tactics employed by the White House, that relatively benign interpretation is being reexamined. Recent headlines about paid-off pundits, video press releases disguised as news telecasts, and the remarkable press access granted to a right-wing pseudojournalist working under a phony name, have led many observers to conclude that the White House is not simply aggressively managing the news, but is out to sabotage journalism from within, to undermine the integrity and reputation of the press corps.”

At a Harvard conference on blogging in January organized by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at the Law School and the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, several take-away points were identified:

- There is room for both professional news organizations and citizens' media, such as blogs.
- Blogging and journalism are different, though sometimes they intersect.
- Ethics and credibility are key, but there are no clear answers on how credibility is won, lost or retained.
- Many mainstream news organizations now see using some form of participatory citizens' media as a way to build loyalty, trust and preserve credibility.

- Opening online news archives for free public access might make business sense and build audience loyalty.

Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz recently observed that “millions of people with access to a wide audience are looking over the shoulders of journalists, or are practicing journalism themselves Many bloggers are careful and thought provoking, others partisan or mean-spirited. But they are here to stay, and by and large they provide a healthy check on those who once monopolized the news agenda.”

In an editorial last Sunday [February 26], the St. Petersburg Times found this to be a “healthy development ... which bloggers, for all their excesses, have shown they have a role to play in holding mainstream journalists accountable Mainstream journalists have nothing to fear from bloggers if they remain true to fundamental standards of accuracy and fairness. They must remain cautious before passing along information from blogs or

reacting to their charges, while continuing to learn from a form of mass media that is evolving before our eyes.”

Finally, Mike Getler, who is winding up his tour as The Washington Post's ombudsman, writes that his perch has been “an interesting spot from which to watch all the angst unfold. The attacks on the mainstream media, and the attempts to undermine them, are indeed escalating. More and more e-mails have a nasty, threatening, ideological tone. The number of people who claim they are canceling their subscriptions because they don't like the coverage of this or that is increasing.”

Getler continues: “The blogosphere is a wonderful thing, but it doesn't seem so new to me because it does what readers have always done: read, write, analyze, complain, correct. It has always been true that if you make a mistake on even the most arcane matter in a newspaper, someone out there will catch it and let you know.”

The Web and the explosion of blogs have greatly expanded the public reservoir of knowledge and understanding in important ways by challenging the accuracy of reporting and adding analysis. Getler argues that newspapers are “central to an informed citizenry ... their special role cannot be filled by competing media Nothing out there is going to supply you with the extraordinary daily content of the Post, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, and other fine newspapers.”

As these many strains swirl around the mainstream media, it is our hope that as we consider this important landscape, we can hold a tight focus on the standards of our craft and our obligation to serve the common good. ■

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‘These are tough times in journalism, not just ethically, but also economically, professionally and politically. There is an ever-increasing amount of material that flies the flag of journalism, but doesn't qualify by our standards. ...’ — Nicholas Lemann

Covering Indian Country

Jodi Rave, who reports on Native issues for Lee Enterprises, describes some difficulties Native and non-Native journalists confront in reporting about what happens in Indian Country. Because the financial survival of the majority of tribal newspapers depends on tribal support, “newspaper editors tend to stay away from news that calls tribal leaders into question.” This absence of watchdog oversight has consequences for the tribe’s citizens whose lives are affected by policies and decisions made by tribal leaders. In non-Native media, “native voices . . . rarely seem to permeate the daily news pages.” The consequence is that “stories tend to be written with a confined perimeter, written without context, and written based on generalities.” Photographs by **Ken Blackbird** accompany her words and appear with other articles.

For nearly 30 years **Bonnie Red Elk** reported for and served as editor of the Wotanin Wowapi, the tribal newspaper on Fort Peck Reservation in northeastern Montana. Early on she attended tribal government meetings, and the paper published what she witnessed during the council’s deliberations. In time, complaints about such watchdog reporting were voiced by council members, yet as editor she continued this coverage. Red Elk writes about her tumultuous journey at the Wotanin as she worked to maintain the newspaper’s independent voice. **Tim Giago** created the Lakota Times, which “became the only independently owned Indian weekly publication in America,” and he speaks to the financial and community barriers to a free press in Indian Country. As he explains, “Some newspapers have crossed editorial swords with tribal leaders and vanished.”

Writing from the perspective of a non-Native who has reported extensively about Indian Country, **Steve Magagnini**, a reporter at The Sacramento Bee, offers tips he has learned through trial and error. One lesson: “The key seems to be to present Indian perspectives—and to write about solutions as well as problems, renaissance as well as dissonance.” When non-Native **Larry Oakes** returned to the Leech Lake Ojibwe Reservation, where he’d lived as a child, he was there to report a story for the Star Tribune in Minneapolis, Minnesota about an upsurge in youth violence and in their abuse of alcohol and drugs. After “The Lost Youth of Leech Lake” was published, the tribal council convened a two-day public forum to “change the perception” the articles had created. Oakes tells what happened as the articles’ words and photographs taken by **Jerry Holt** forced discomfiting issues to the surface. **Michael Moore**, a reporter at the Missoulian in Missoula, Montana, went to the Flathead Indian Reservation because of the alcohol-related deaths of two 11-year old boys and ended up devoting four months of time to reporting on the complex circumstances of children’s lives on this reservation for a series entitled “Lost Boys of the Flathead.” As Moore writes, “To report this story well, we needed to slow down.”

Mary Ann Weston, author of “Native Americans in the News” and an associate professor emerita at the Medill School of Journalism, explains why journalists—past

and present—“have largely failed to tell Native Americans’ stories fully, accurately and, sometimes, at all.” When a school shooting took place on Red Lake Indian Reservation in March, editors and reporters at the Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald relied on the reporting expertise of columnist **Dorreen Yellow Bird** and the trust she’d built with members of this tribe from coverage of the reservation’s less dramatic stories. Yellow Bird shares her observations—and disillusionment—about the news media’s coverage of tribal events. **Dan Gunderson**, a reporter with Minnesota Public Radio, also reported on the Red Lake shootings, and he describes the cultural clash he saw as reporters tried to report the story without their customary access due to tribal sovereignty. American Indians, he writes, “place high value on respect and trust and inherently distrust people when they show up asking questions and demanding answers.”

Mark Trahan, editorial page editor at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and author of “Pictures of Our Nobler Selves: A History of Native American Contributions to News Media,” explores the consequences of Natives not being among those journalists who report for TV or radio stations and says improvement won’t happen “until TV news recognizes the depth of the problem.” **Victor Merina**, an editor for rezneta, which provides online coverage of Native issues through a college network of Native reporters and photographers, writes about the valuable role the Internet is playing as it becomes “a conduit for Native Americans to tell their individual and collective stories—and for journalists to print and broadcast them.”

Based at the University of Montana School of Journalism, **Denny McAuliffe** is rezneta’s project director. He describes the varied paths that Native youngsters take in becoming journalists, including two targeted initiatives—a summer training institute and the online network (rezneta)—that provide much-needed opportunities. With its wide reach, rezneta is allowing Native college students to become tribal youth’s “missing role models.” At this school, journalism professor **Carol Van Valkenburg** also directs the Native News Honors Project in which Native and non-Native students learn how to find and tell stories in Indian Country, go to reservations to do their reporting, and publish their work with a focus on such complex topics as tribal sovereignty and race. In describing the students’ award-winning work, Van Valkenburg says, “They are hard hitting, insightful and in-depth stories about people whom the students spent time talking with and observing.”

Anne E. Pettinger was among Van Valkenburg’s students who set out last spring to report on an aspect of race affecting tribal members at Rocky Boy’s Reservation near Havre, Montana. After researching the topic and hearing about tensions between Natives and business people in Havre, she and student photographer **Katie Hartley** set out to learn more about these interactions. The tensions and incidents that Pettinger’s story “Bordering on Racism” featured brought swift reaction from community leaders and pledges of change. “The assignment illustrated the wealth of stories waiting to be reported from these communities,” Pettinger concludes. ■

Challenges Native and Non-Native Journalists Confront

Those who tell Indian people's stories are 'expected to be truthful, responsible, accurate and excellent communicators.'

By Jodi Rave

Most indigenous people rise from a tradition of storytelling, a practice continued today throughout Indian Country. Some of the best examples of the oral tradition take place during Crow Fair, Tipi Capitol of the World, where majestic cottonwoods flank 1,500 tipis near banks of the Little Big Horn River in southeast Montana.

These stories are told in family camps, the powwow arena, and on the parade route. Most are spoken in Crow or the Apsalooke language as part of the annual celebration. The storytellers have undoubtedly etched indelible memories among all who have heard these stories. It's also hard to shake the visual image of hundreds of Apsalooke women wearing elk tooth dresses or Crow men parading in white buckskin vests and pants. In the procession, horses and riders are adorned with some of the finest beadwork in Indian Country.

As participants parade through the camp, families take the opportunity to honor the riders. A family usually designates someone to speak on behalf of the honoree who is led in front of the people while his accomplishments are reported or announced to those along the route. Not just anyone is given this news duty. The storyteller must be given the right to speak in public. And like many practitioners of the oral tradition, people holding these positions are expected to be truthful, responsible, accurate and excellent communicators.

While the oral tradition continues to thrive among tribes like the Crow, the printed word appearing in many mainstream and tribal community publications often begs for greater truth and accuracy. For mainstream papers

this problem is connected to a dearth of Native voices within the newsroom or the final news product. For tribal newspapers, a credibility gap exists because tribal leaders often see tribal news publications as public relations tools, thereby preventing tribal news editors from closely examining the role of the tribal government.

Both mainstream-tribal press scenarios represent the best and worst of news reporting. Mainstream newspapers—like history books—have often written stories about Native people from a white perspective. But this is changing. Several news outlets and journalism training programs are making great strides in improving news coverage of indigenous communities. Progress is occurring from universities and foundations to tribal newspapers and individual reporters.

Tribal Newspapers

The challenge in telling accurate news stories, however, cuts deeper for tribal newspapers. The majority of the estimated 300 tribal newspapers and newsletters remain financially dependent on tribal coffers. This means tribal newspaper editors tend to stay away from news that calls tribal leaders into question. In a recent sample by the Harvard University Native American Program, fewer than one-quarter of tribal newspaper editors viewed their role as being a watchdog of tribal government. One-third regarded their newspapers as public relations tools. Thankfully, three-quarters of editors surveyed felt their main duty was to report the news, but this didn't include holding tribal government leaders accountable.

The situation constitutes a travesty



Sundance leader Leonard Crow Dog of Rosebud, South Dakota has his helpers raise the center pole for a ceremony. Lincoln, Nebraska, July 2004. *Photo by Ken Blackbird.*

for tribal citizens since tribal governments are typically the largest employer on reservation lands, making them a critical component of the tribal economy. So not only are tribal leaders making executive decisions for the tribe, but they also wield considerable control over hiring and firing employees. Tribal council power is also maximized when it comes to a reservation system of checks and balances. The council typically has a hand in the tribal court systems, tribal administrative decisions, and legal influence, which can all fall under tribal council purview.

This type of power and control makes it difficult for tribal editors to question daily tribal operations. It's even tougher when one considers that 80 percent of tribal news sources surveyed said their publications received money from tribal government coffers—nearly half received more than three-quarters of their operating budget from the tribe.

While the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) has discussed free press issues at several annual conventions, little evidence exists to show tribal newspapers moving toward financial independence or becoming free from tribal council influence. A positive step, however, was taken in 2003 when the National Congress of American Indians, the country's largest and oldest Native advocacy organization, passed a resolution calling for tribes to support a free and independent Native press.

Improving Native Coverage

As news operations move forward in the 21st century, mainstream and tribal press operations must work at improving the stories told about Native people and communities. That means creating opportunities for more journalists to explain what's happening in Indian Country. With tribal casino annual revenue most recently at \$21 billion, Native people are taking more high-profile political and economic roles throughout the country. But it's also important for news outlets to realize this new money is limited to a few pockets while a plethora of social and economic ills still plague much of Indian Country.

But if readers were to rely on mainstream news stories, it would appear otherwise. One news observer described Indian gaming reporting as the welfare mother stories of the 1980's—a group blamed for everything wrong in America. This reporting trend has roots with the December 2002 Time magazine series on tribal casinos. The story, which won a 2002 Sigma Delta Chi Award for magazine investigative reporting, set a subpar standard for Indian casino reporting, paving the way for an anything-goes style of newsgathering to follow. These stories tend to be written with a confined perimeter, written without context, and written based on generalities.

Any tribe represents a unique set of circumstances. For example, even though tribal casinos are guided by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, tribes share and spend their revenue differently. It's a small example of how it can be risky to paint tribes with one brush stroke. Indian Country comprises an incredibly diverse group of people, including 560 Native sovereign nations.

While mainstream press reporters deserve criticism, that does not mean Indian Country is without naysayers. Some Native press publications offer critical views. The difference is they are based on fact and insider knowledge. Native columnist Tim Giago is a frequent critic of tribal casinos. Nor are some in the mainstream press unable to produce a fair and balanced casino story. Among Native people that simply means they had a chance to express their point of view. In June, Fox Butterfield of The New York Times, for example, offered a tribal perspective with a casino story he wrote about the plight of the Tigua Tribe of Texas, a rags-to-riches story about the downfall of the tribe's Speaking Rock Casino and the ongoing investigations related to the casino's closure involving lobbyist Jack Abramoff and the House Majority Leader Tom DeLay. [A collection of mainstream and tribal press reporting—the good, bad and ugly—can be found at www.pechanga.net, a Web site specializing in the latest tribal casino news.]

Today it largely falls on mainstream news outlets to explain what's happening on tribal lands and in urban Indian settings. That means it is often non-Natives who are telling Native stories, since only 295 self-identified Native journalists work at daily newspapers, which is one half of one percent of all U.S. newsroom employees. Native voices in these news outlets rarely seem to permeate the daily news pages. And they are even more nonexistent in broadcast news divisions. [See Mark Trahant's article on page 30.]

This scarcity of voices makes it imperative that reporters like Steve Magagnini of The Sacramento Bee continue to cover Indian Country. He stands as an example of how it's possible for non-Natives to enter unfamiliar communities, gain trust, offer critical views, and become a respected reporter on Native issues. [See Magagnini's story on page 15.]

The Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism has also taken a step to help mainstream outlets improve Native news coverage. In March, the center offered a seminar titled "Covering Native Americans in the 21st Century." Participants learned better ways to report on areas such as health care, tribal sovereignty, and gambling, giving particular attention to states with some of the largest Native populations in the country. The center has also tried to increase the dialogue among those reporting on Native issues. Its Covering Indian Country blog was designed to promote best practice approaches to reporting Native news. [See Victor Merina's article on page 32.]

While the Western Knight seminar worked with midcareer journalists, attention should also be paid to training journalism students. The University of Montana's Native News Honors Project took a lead in this area more than 13 years ago when it began teaching mostly non-Native journalism students to dig below the surface when covering indigenous communities. Student teams have since dedicated an entire semester to writing in-depth stories with photographs related to the seven large land-based reservations in Montana.



Tribal members from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation gather for Memorial Day services at the Pony Hill Cemetery, where they continue the custom of cleaning the graves of family and friends. North central Montana, 2005. *Photo by Ken Blackbird.*

The students' tribal sovereignty issue, a 36-page tabloid, won the 2005 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for the best of college reporting. [See articles by Carol Van Valkenburg and Anne Pettinger on pages 36 and 38.]

While mainstream outlets should continue to strive for better news coverage of indigenous issues, an equal effort must be made to recruit more Natives into the news profession. The University of South Dakota and the Freedom Forum teamed up five years ago to create the American Indian Journalism Institute, a summer journalism boot camp in Vermillion, South Dakota, for Native college students. [See Denny McAuliffe's article on page 34.] The program has continually increased the number of Native reporters moving into first-time reporting jobs at daily newspapers since its founding.

While non-Native news outlets boast several programs that better cultivate the Native perspective, far fewer examples exist to show how tribal newspapers are improving coverage within their own communities. A center or training institute needs to be developed

to help tribal newspapers strategize on how to become financially independent. The training center, perhaps housed within the NAJA, could also empower tribal editors to effectively challenge tribal government officials. Finally, NAJA should consider an educational campaign to help inform tribal leaders and tribal citizens about the role a free press should play in their communities.

It's heartening to know that tribal editors exist who fully understand the importance of a free press in a tribal democracy. The Wotanin Wowapi newspaper of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes has stood its ground time and again to inform readers about tribal council meetings and decisions. [See article by Bonnie Red Elk on page 10.] Tim Giago founded the first independent Indian weekly newspaper, the Lakota Times, providing a road map for a free press operation on an Indian reservation. [See Giago's article on page 13.] And Tom Arviso, Jr., chief executive officer of the Navajo Times Publishing Company, has waged successful effort to lead the Navajo Times newspaper to financial independence. The newspaper

no longer depends on money from the Navajo tribal budget to get news out to tribal citizens.

In a news hungry age, tribal newspapers should do more than promote community events or be public relations tools. It's imperative these papers and mainstream news outlets reflect the lives of Native people living within a system designed to defeat them. Areas such as health care, education, law enforcement, land management, economic development, and tribal court systems all call for more in-depth questioning because they profoundly affect the quality of Native life. Solid news reporting can provide answers and solutions. In this way, news publications can all honor the age-old tradition of storytelling, which expects nothing less than truth and accuracy. ■

Jodi Rave, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, reports on Native issues for Lee Enterprises, a chain of 58 daily newspapers in 23 states. She is based at the Missoulian in Montana.

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WATCHDOG

The Difficult Path of a Tribal Watchdog Reporter

‘I asked the council politely, “What is the role of this board? Will you be looking over and deciding what news goes to print?”

By Bonnie Red Elk

No education in tribal government compares to the one I’ve had during the 29 years and 11 months I worked as reporter and editor for the *Wotanin Wowapi*, my tribal newspaper. As I look back, I see that the path I walked was one that has been taken by no other nonelected person among our 10,000-member tribe. The path led me into the hallowed chambers of our tribal government and, once there, I watched and learned what was going on among our elected leadership. Most importantly, I became the first person to report what I saw and heard to our people.

My reporting journey started in March 1976 when I dropped out of Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas—the only all-Indian junior college in the nation—three months short of graduating with an associate’s degree in general studies. When I returned to the Fort Peck Reservation, home to several bands of the Assiniboine and Sioux nations in northeastern Montana, I got a job as a reporter for our tribes’ biweekly newspaper only because, by chance, I’d signed up for a journalism class that I never completed.

The *Wotanin* newspaper had been started in the winter of 1970 by a group of young people sent to our reservation by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a program started in the 1960’s to send young service volunteers to disadvantaged urban and rural areas of America. In the beginning, it was a four-to-six page biweekly newsletter copied onto legal-sized paper out of an office in the tribal offices in Poplar.

On its pages was printed the log of actions passed by the tribal council. Never before had there been such a tribal publication available to the Indian people to read about actions taken by



There was tension in the tribal council chambers when John Morales was removed as Fort Peck tribal chairman. June 2004. *Photo by Louis Montclair.*

their government. But what they learned was only what happened, not how it had happened or what it meant to them. Nor did the items go into detail about who had initiated it or who had supported it. Slowly the *Wotanin* evolved into a tabloid-sized newsletter that contained a few of the community happenings on the reservation, some sports activities, and some major national news of interest to Indian people. Still, coverage of our tribal government was scant.

By the time I went to work as a reporter, the *Wotanin*’s editor was taking tiny steps into tribal government coverage by publishing stories about major issues affecting the Fort Peck Tribes. To augment this, he placed me in the council chambers with instructions to write down all that took place

during the council’s deliberations. This was one of the first major steps taken by the *Wotanin* to become a watchdog of tribal government on the Fort Peck Reservation.

Watchdog Reporting

I was serious, and I took my editor’s instructions seriously. Never mind that I was being paid by a federal trainee program that could end abruptly once the money allocated for my position was depleted. I took the plunge and learned to swim. From that point on, I sat in on every biweekly council meeting of our tribes’ government, and I also started sitting in on the committee meetings, since all of the council’s actions started at committee level before being taken

to the full council for ratification. The more I listened, the more I learned. And the more I learned, the more I wrote down, and the more I was able to comprehend what was happening. It was an invaluable lesson in how this tribal government worked, a lesson not many people have ever had.

I covered in great detail the committee meetings, where policies and actions that affect our tribes are initiated. Using my own-fashioned speedwriting, I jotted down everything that was said and done, including who wanted what and why. Most importantly, I wrote down the positions that our elected officials took on all the issues that were going to be presented to the full council for action. In the Fort Peck Tribes' form of government, each of the 12 council members sit on one committee each day, and this is where they discuss the actions they plan to take. Soon I began to draft stories before the full council would meet in which I wrote about issues that were going to be addressed at those meetings. And once an issue got to the full council, I wrote a story on the decision-making and the final outcome.

Tribal Leaders Respond

After one year of being a reporter, I was appointed to the job of acting editor while the paper's editor went on leave to farm. Only then did I become aware of the anxiety my reporting of tribal government was causing the tribal council. I can recall the first time I was called before one of the committees. At that time, the council's members were what can be described as "old school." Some believed that the official actions they took were based on the number of votes these actions would get them in an upcoming election and not based on what was good for the people as a whole. Reporting how they voted—who was for or against an issue and what they said in their discussions—and putting this all into print for community members to read was a totally new experience for them and for our readers.

The newspaper staff accompanied me to the council chamber that day. I didn't know what to expect since this

event was another first in our tribes' history. The members of the council told me that tribal members living off the reservation (who received the *Wotanin* by mail) were calling some of them to ask what was going on at home and expressing concern about news they were reading, not all of which was positive.

"OK," I said in response.

In different ways, they kept asking me why I was doing these stories. Very calmly, and as respectfully as I could because I was speaking to our elected officials, I told them, "I'm not creating this news. I'm only reporting what you're doing. I'm only doing my job." As they wrung their hands in frustration, and after a few more comments they made among themselves about how bad the *Wotanin* was making some of them look, we were excused and told to return to work.

The council's next move was to create a board of directors for the *Wotanin*. They picked an all-male group of tribal employees and one elected official to serve on this board. I was called to their first organizational meeting and informed of their existence. I didn't like it, but I was cordial. I asked the council politely, "What is the role of this board? Will you be looking over and deciding what news goes to print?"

"Yes," the chairman of the *Wotanin*'s new board of directors responded.

I took a photograph of the board members and published the picture on the next issue's front page. Along with the photo, I published a short article explaining that the tribal council had named a board, the purpose of which was to begin censoring the news.

The reaction from our readership was swift. They did not favor any censorship of the news, and they let their elected officials know. Other news outlets that subscribed to or exchanged news with us—such as a television station in Williston, North Dakota, some 70 miles to the east of the Fort Peck Reservation and one of the first national Indian newspapers, the *Wassaja*—also reacted to this article with more coverage of what was happening.

Public pressure stopped the censorship, but not the council's attempt to

stop our tribal newspaper's coverage of our elected government. The next thing they did was advertise the position of editor. I'd been named "acting" editor in the summer of 1976 and was still working in that capacity in 1977. One day I was stopped on the street and asked whether I was resigning, since the position was being advertised in the *Poplar Shopper*, a non-Indian weekly newspaper that only covered the happenings in that community. For some reason, the board of directors did not advertise it in the reservationwide *Wotanin Wowapi*. I applied for the position and was eventually selected and voted in by a majority of the council.

The Paper's Commitment

From that time forward, I became accepted by the council, the tribal employees and those who staffed their programs, and the community in general. I continued to attend most of the committee meetings and all of the tribal council meetings. In the newspaper I created a format in which to report all statements and actions made by our elected officials, our programs and employees, including federal employees who worked for agencies that were there to serve our people, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

I did not back away from controversy. Soon employees—who had insight into situations that were not right and needed to be brought to light in the newspaper—brought issues to my attention. These were situations not readily visible to people who didn't keep the books or were not aware of what happened in some of the meetings, such as those held by various boards of directors. One tribal chairman had himself appointed to a board of directors of a tribal industry without following policy. He eventually took himself off that board and let the process move ahead in the proper way, but this only happened after I disclosed the irregularities in a front page story placed above the fold.

I approached my job strictly from the perspective of a journalist, without animus toward those on whom I reported. To my surprise, so did the

council chairman who never seemed to hold a personal grudge against me and was always forthright in any interviews I did with him during the more than two decades he served on the council after serving one term as a chairman.

During the 1970's and 80's, there was strong support in the community for freedom of the press as I faithfully and happily covered our tribal government and its programs. Often I stayed up late into the night, typing with great detail each bit of news about the actions of our tribal council. Sometimes my minutes of the meetings took up two to four full newspaper pages, which is what people wanted and expected.

The process seemed to be smooth and, as time went by, people began to share with me all kinds of information that was being provided to our elected officials. At each full meeting of our government, the chairman's office would provide each of the 12 council members a packet of correspondence received by his office, including memos and opinions from our tribes' attorneys, travel requests, committee minutes, and any correspondence related to committee business, even copies of who was approved for enrollment in our Fort Peck Tribes. At each council meeting a packet was set aside for me, with my name on it, and I wrote stories about most of what I learned from reading its contents. If the matter was of interest to our tribal membership, I would use the letters or documents provided to me and make calls to add information to these stories.

One longtime tribal official, who served 50 years on the council and died while in office, understood and was supportive of freedom of the press. He served on the council and was also tribal chairman and was a strong leader who was well known on the local, state and national levels of government. He was the person who told the council that it should be OK for me to sit in on closed-door discussions between them and the tribes' attorneys on a variety of important issues such as water rights, gaming, taxation and even personal issues such as the holding of incapacitated persons for treatment. He explained that in doing so I'd gain a good background

when it came time to report on these issues. And it became quite a learning experience, one in which I gained a lot of knowledge about an issue's historical perspective. Soon I was invited to travel with the council on some of their more important delegations so that I could see first hand what they were doing and report on it, which I did.

One October a young, rambunctious, popular man was elected to serve on the council. Eventually he came to frown on the Wotanin's reports of some of the council's actions, particularly when the stories involved him. Council members who also wanted to return to how things used to be quickly joined his side in what was becoming an uncomfortable confrontation. I was not willing to stop my reporting, so this councilman began writing his side of the story, while also trying to cut down the Wotanin. We published his words in the opinion section and let him have his say. He was eventually able to get some of the tribes' funding of the newspaper cut, and he became someone who stood in opposition to freedom of the press on the reservation.

Several years later, when he was no longer on the council, he attended a Native American Journalists Association conference and saw and heard the efforts of the Wotanin lauded by other tribal press. Later, when he came back to the Fort Peck Reservation and ran again for tribal office, he came to the newspaper and apologized for his earlier actions. By then, however, inroads he'd made against the paper were being rejoined. In 2000, the tribal chairman was convinced by others to stop providing copies of committee minutes to the newspaper until the day of the full council meeting. (The only way we could find out what the committees were doing was to sit in on the meetings, but we were not able to sit in on every one of them. If we did, there would not be any other type of news in the paper.) Because of this change, we lost our edge in getting word out to the people what the council would be considering at their next meeting. Information, in general, provided to the press dwindled after that. By 2001, the press packet included only copies of

committee minutes and the travel log.

The councils that were elected in 2001, 2003 and 2005 have used in many instances the "executive session" rule in Robert's Rules of Order in conducting their meetings. In an effort to keep some issues out of the public eye, the majority of the elected officials have voted for closed sessions, thus keeping the press out. This means that the people do not learn what has gone into the decisions their tribal leaders are making.

In February 2005, what I saw as the final blow to the press occurred when the tribes' "random" drug-testing policy was leveled on the four-member staff of the paper, all at the same time. I refused to abide by it because this testing was anything but random. As a result, I was fired from my job as editor. I didn't take this matter to the people, as I had in the past. Nor did I file a grievance, which I had a right to do. I walked away in an act of defiance.

My termination did not mean the end of the paper. At the Wotanin, I had four freelance reporters who had their own beats to cover. One of them stepped forward and is acting editor. But my departure ended a lot of tribal council coverage, since that was my beat.

The Wotanin was my baby. I raised it, along with my four children. I took it from a tabloid-sized biweekly newspaper to a weekly full-sized paper that was bursting with news of our people. Each year our dependence on tribal monies to operate grew less and less, while the advertising and revenue from newspaper sales grew. Today, wherever I go, I come across people who tell me they miss me at the paper. I miss it, too. ■

Bonnie Red Elk, a Lakota-Dakota, served the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes as reporter/editor for nearly 30 years. The Native American Press Association presented her with two awards for Best Coverage of Tribal Government. She now freelances for the local non-Indian weekly newspaper on the Fort Peck Reservation.

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WATCHDOG

Freedom of the Press in Indian Country

At its creation, the Lakota Times ‘became the only independently owned Indian weekly publication in America.’

By Tim Giago

What sets the Indian people apart from every other minority in America? Native Americans are the only ethnic group that lives on lands with clearly defined borders and boundaries. We have our own judiciary, law enforcement, and government. State governments have no jurisdiction on our sovereign nations. In the 1960’s, it became a bit more complicated when Public Law 280 allowed some states to assume jurisdiction on some Indian reservations. But in states like South Dakota the tribes convinced the voters of the horrendous cost and responsibilities they’d assume should that act become law, and it wasn’t passed.

The word “jurisdiction” is what creates the divide between the off-reservation media and many Indian nations. Because of logistics, language barriers, and a deep misunderstanding and mistrust of tribal governments, many newspapers have simply ignored the people of the Indian reservations. However every Indian reservation has state counties within their borders, and small newspapers spring up to take advantage of a county’s available advertising revenue. These papers usually carry little news about the tribal government or the people, but offer obituaries and tiny gossip columns.

On some reservations newspapers have been published sporadically, geared to specific causes or politics. The Crazy Horse News, published by Aaron DeSersa before and during the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, is an example of this type of effort. The American Indian Movement (AIM) sponsored this newspaper, which was used as an attack instrument against the elected government of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Half-truths and innuendo

that smeared tribal president Dick Wilson’s administration were often printed. The paper was clearly biased in its approach and was regarded as a political tool of the far left. The paper ceased publication upon the death of DeSersa in 1981.

Tribal Newspapers

Other publications, with their operating costs supplemented by tribal governments, have continued to flourish through the years. Some newspapers have crossed editorial swords with tribal leaders and vanished. One such newspaper, the South Piegan Drum of the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, published an article critical of the tribal chairman and soon discovered his wrath. He shut the paper down by cutting off its funding. Another paper, published by the Spirit Lake Tribe in North Dakota, asked the tribal council to publish the minutes of its meetings. The council refused. The editor, a non-Indian named Randy Howell, rushed his last publication to the printer and beat it out of town one step ahead of the tar and feather brigade. The center of his last edition held two blank pages containing only the words, “The Minutes of the Spirit Lake Tribal Council.”

In Navajo Country, the publisher of the Navajo Times, Loren Tapahe, decided to make that weekly newspaper the first daily Indian newspaper in America. It was a grand experiment. Considering the Navajo Nation covers 25,000 square miles and is located in four states, the effort turned out to be a financial disaster. Getting the paper to all of the far reaches of the Navajo Nation was hard enough once each week, but to try to do this five days a week proved to be cost prohibitive.

Tribal chairman Peter McDonald took a look at the dripping red ink on the budget, shut the paper down for a couple of weeks, fired the editor, Mark Trahan, and had the paper revert to a weekly publication. Trahan then decided to start a weekly newspaper he called The Navajo Nation Today to compete against the tribally owned Navajo Times, sincerely believing that an independent newspaper—unfettered by politics—could succeed. It lasted eight months. Advertisers refused to place their ads in it, and when he printed an article unfavorable to one of the largest mini-store chains on the vast reservation, the paper was thrown out of all of its outlets. Trahan lost half of his circulation in one day.

The Lakota Times

While working as a reporter for The Rapid City Journal, I was bothered by the fact that although I had been born and raised on the nearby Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, I was seldom given the opportunity to do news stories about the people of that reservation. One editor told me he believed that since I was Native American, I would not be able to be objective in my reporting. I replied, “All of your other reporters are white. Are they objective when covering the white community?”

By the spring of 1981 I had reached the point at which I knew I had to start a newspaper on the Pine Ridge Reservation. That reservation is 100 miles long and 50 miles wide with a population of nearly 20,000 people. It had no weekly newspaper to serve the people. I cornered my then-managing editor, Jim Carrier, and my editor, Jim Kuehn, and picked their minds for advice. They encouraged me to give it a try.

I moved back to the reservation and, using an abandoned beauty shop for an office and a \$4,000 loan from a local bank, I published the Lakota Times. I chose the name Lakota for the people and Times because I admired the efforts of the Navajo Times. It seems strange now, but when our newspaper hit the stands on July 1, 1981, we became the only independently owned Indian weekly publication in America.

A former classmate from the Holy Rosary Indian Mission, "Dickie" Brewer, believed so strongly in the concept of a free press that he let me use his customized 1946 Plymouth for collateral to secure the \$4,000 loan from Stockmen's Bank in Rushville, Nebraska. The loan officer was a collector of vintage cars and knew in his heart that the bank would soon own that Plymouth. Instead, the \$4,000 got the paper started, and the bank was repaid every penny it was owed.

When I started the Lakota Times, one strong belief guided me. Though idealistic and determined, I knew that if one is to ride into battle on a big white charger, it still takes a lot of money to buy the hay to feed that horse. With that in mind, we did something never done before in Indian country. We solicited advertising from Indian high schools, colleges, tribal government, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and local reservation programs such as Head Start. We were also lucky. During our first year the Pine Ridge High School Thorpes won the state's A level basketball championship for the first time since 1936. We went to every business bordering our reservation, to our tribal government, and to all of the other eight tribal governments in the state and got them to put in two-by-five inch advertisements to congratulate the Thorpes on the historic victory.

I also created a special tabloid issue that carried advertising for all of the powwows held in America. It was called "Hitting the Pow Wow Circuit," and our second such tab was 68 pages (75 percent of which was advertising). This publication brought in more than \$60,000. In 1998, the year I sold the

newspaper, it grossed \$1.9 million in advertising dollars. Not bad for a weekly Indian-owned newspaper. But it wasn't easy.

Although our newspaper was located in Pine Ridge Village in the heart of the reservation, our hard-earned economic independence gave us the freedom we needed to report news as we saw fit and to write editorials critical of the tribal government, if the need arose. We also took a strong position against the violence perpetuated by AIM. Several murders and brutal beatings had taken place on the reservation since the occupation of Wounded Knee, and AIM members, many of them from tribes outside of our reservation, were causing problems the tribal government was trying to stem.

After I wrote a strong editorial in the fall of 1981, the windows of our newspaper office were blasted out with gunfire. We came right back with another editorial challenging the "cowards who strike in the middle of the night." Two days before Christmas of that year firebombs were smashed against our building,

... our hard-earned economic independence gave us the freedom we needed to report news as we saw fit and to write editorials critical of the tribal government, if the need arose.

which was saved when an alert Oglala Sioux Tribe police officer spotted the blaze and quickly kicked the burning bottles filled with gasoline away from the building.

It was pretty clear by now that bringing freedom of the press to Indian Country was not going to be easy. But we continued to publish every week, and we continued to strike out at violence and injustice. Our determination prompted tribal chairman Joe American Horse to call a special session of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council at which he proclaimed that "from this day forward any attack upon the Lakota Times will be considered an attack upon the gov-

ernment of the Oglala Sioux Tribe." It was a gutsy move for the president of the tribe to make, and American Horse can be credited for the eventual success of the first independent Indian weekly newspaper in the United States. To the credit of American Horse, the attacks upon the newspaper stopped.

The Lakota Times went on to win more than 50 awards from the South Dakota Newspaper Association, and investigative stories we published have caused banks to be fined and prospective rip-offs of the tribal government to be halted. It is now the largest Indian newspaper in America, reaching into 50 states and 17 foreign countries. In the process the Lakota Times proved that freedom of the press could not only succeed in Indian Country, but also that it can make a major difference in the way news is covered on the Indian reservations of America.

Sharing Lessons Learned

The major ingredient we brought to the Lakota Times is that we always viewed it as a community newspaper. Even though we eventually had news coverage from all nine Indian reservations in South Dakota, we always considered them to be one community. All of us grew up in the same fashion, which meant we lived in poverty and shared many of the same difficulties. In other words, we were Indian, and we

thought as Indians, and our newspaper reflected that concept. I changed the name of the Lakota Times to Indian Country Today in 1992 to reflect its national circulation. After I sold the paper to the Oneida Nation of New York in 1998 many of my readers told me that the paper had lost its "Lakota soul."

Now I am president of the Native American Journalists Foundation, Inc. Having been an active member of the mass media for several decades, I remain appalled by the lack of American Indian journalists in print and electronic media. This foundation provides journalism scholarships and summer intern programs for Native American students.

By helping them get summer jobs at local newspapers and radio and television stations, we hope to spark that desire to pursue a career in journalism.

The foundation's other objective is to hold at least three journalism seminars each year at different locations in America. At these gatherings we will bring Indian journalists and editors together to learn how to improve their radio stations and newspapers, how to sell advertising to give themselves more

independence, and discuss ethics in journalism. Bill Kovach, former curator of the Nieman Foundation, Ray Walker, an editor with Knight Ridder Tribune News Service, and Richard Lee, former head of journalism at South Dakota State University, serve on our board of advisors.

After more than 30 years in journalism, it is time for me to pass on what I've learned to the next generation of Indian journalists. ■

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Covering Indian Country: How an Outsider Gets In

Relying on decades of experience, a journalist provides valuable reporting tips.

By Steve Magagnini

He and his wife lived in a cluttered trailer up a dirt and gravel road near Weitchpec, a village deep in the Hoopa Reservation in Northern California. His name was Calvin Rube, and he and his wife Georgina Matilton were Yurok Indian healers. I had come to them for help with an intestinal ailment. They put me in the wood frame house Rube was building, where I slept on the floor next to a wood-burning stove. The house had no walls, just a roof. It was November, and I could hear and feel the rain.

Then they put me to work, clearing and flattening the road to their trailer, hauling wood, and helping Calvin build his new house. At night, they performed ceremonies and came up with a diagnosis—some evil being, perhaps a black spider, had a grip on my guts. The spider represented an old girlfriend I hadn't gotten out of my system and, once I did, I'd heal. Call it superstition or power of suggestion, but I let go of that girlfriend emotionally, indeed got better, and wrote the story for the San Francisco Chronicle.

That was 23 years ago. That experience taught me something about California Indian ways and opened the door to many other stories. Here—learned through trial and error—are some tips for covering Indian Country.

1. If it's important for the story, always ask how someone prefers to be identified. For a while, the term "Native American" was considered politically correct. Then I met an anthropologist from a Southern California Indian nation who said she was neither Native nor American. Now I politely ask people what nation—or nations—they're from. It's more respectful than asking someone their tribe, since the term nation honors Indian sovereignty. I like "First Nations" people, the term used for indigenous people in Canada, because it seems most accurate. "American Indian" now seems preferable to "Native American," but again, I suggest asking what each person is most comfortable with.
2. It's often much easier to talk to Indian people face-to-face than on the phone. Given America's shameful, tragic history in its dealings with Indians, it's not surprising that some Indian people still distrust non-Indians—what I call the "guilty until proven innocent" syndrome. Many people—not just Indians—prefer face-to-face interviews because it's easier to gauge a person's honesty and motives. Once you've shown respect for a person's culture and a genuine interest in learning some-

- thing new, the guilty until proven innocent syndrome disappears.
3. Don't come to an Indian story with preconceived or overly romantic notions. There are more than 550 federally recognized Indian nations within the United States—most with their own languages. Dozens more aren't federally recognized but nevertheless preserve their nationhood through distinct customs, language and oral histories. Californian Indians didn't have powwows, they had Big Times, but the relocation of thousands of Indians from other states in the 1950's and '60's brought powwows here.
4. There are often factions or divides about which reporters need to be aware. It's often a mistake to let one person speak for the "Indian community" (or the African-American community or any other ethnic group whose members naturally reflect many viewpoints). As one California Indian elder recently told me, "If somebody tells you there's someone you shouldn't talk to, maybe that's the person you should talk to."
5. Be patient and respectful, and try not to take any setbacks personally. Some Indian people tell stories in a circular way—rich in context and metaphor—before they arrive at a response to a specific question. Don't

interrupt, just hang in there. Generally there will be plenty of time for the question to be answered. Two years ago, when I was researching tribal justice in Navajo and Hopi Country—and how traditional ways of conflict resolution might help resolve bitter disputes in California Indian Country—most people were extremely generous with their time and insights. But a few folks blew me off, failing to show up for scheduled interviews after I had driven hours to get there. When I mentioned this to a Navajo friend at Stanford University, she replied, “It’s not about you.” Which I guess means it’s about long memories of exploitation and abuse by outsiders. No one likes the idea that somehow their culture and knowledge will be exploited for profit, even in a newspaper story intended to enlighten readers and resolve problems.

6. Most of the time, if an Indian person tells you about an event, you’re invited. And if you write balanced, nuanced stories, Indian readers will notice. After I had done a series on Hmong and Iu Mien shamans—traditional spirit healers from the mountains of Laos—a California Indian leader, Cindy La Marr, called me in for a meeting. She said she liked the approach to the Hmong and Iu Mien stories and said it was time I wrote the California Indian story. La Marr—now president of the National Indian Education Association—opened many doors for me by calling Indian leaders and elders throughout California and telling them I was okay. The result was a four-part series called “Lost Tribes,” published in 1997 in *The Sacramento Bee*, and focused on the tragic modern history of California Indians.

Reporting ‘Lost Tribes’

As an outsider, sometimes a reporter has to pass a test. While working on “Lost Tribes,” I flew to San Diego to meet with California Indian leaders there. The gatekeeper I relied on to open doors for me there was Ron Morton, who ran an urban Indian health clinic. “In the

Indian world you earn the right to speak after listening and observing,” Morton said. “The Indian way of learning is by experiencing.” He took me to a sweat on the Viejas Reservation in East San Diego County.

I remember that cool February night like it was yesterday. As a full moon arched over the San Diego hills, each of us gave some tobacco to sweat leader Ron Christman, a Kummeyaay Indian. The sweat leader’s assistant, an Oneida Indian named Larry, was shoveling rocks into a fire outside the sweat lodge, a circular, canvas-covered structure about four feet high. Larry asked me if I’d ever been to a sweat before. I hadn’t—and I had no clue. “Know why you’re going in,” he counseled. “The sweat is Mother Earth’s womb. Thank her for her womb. If you pray hard, it gives strength to the others in the sweat. If you feel you can’t take it anymore, pray harder. You’re going to experience a little suffering. There are people suffering a whole lot more than you every day—people with cancer, alcoholics, people who have nothing. So remember your suffering is only temporary. [But] if you just can’t take it, get out.”

Finally, when the rocks in the fire glowed red-hot, Larry shoveled them into a pit in the center of the lodge. Twenty of us—including older men and women and children as young as eight—smudged ourselves with sacred smoke, then crawled inside the mouth of the sweat lodge, forming a human coil, and rubbed ourselves with sage. Larry shoveled some more hot rocks into the fire pit, doused them with water—creating a blast of steam—and then shut the flap to the sweat lodge.

I couldn’t move, see or breathe, and all I could feel was the relentless heat. The only way to survive is to focus on anything but yourself. And in the next hour, I sang and prayed harder than I ever have in my life—for women and children, for sick people, for those incarcerated, for my friends, family and even people who had done me wrong. After each round of song and prayer, the flap would open, Larry would shovel more hot rocks into the fire, douse them with water, and the flap would close again. I didn’t want to be the white wimp who

runs out of the sweat, but after the flap opened a fourth time, I was finished. “Ron,” I said, “I don’t think I can go another round.”

Morton smiled and said, “That’s OK—it’s over. The Creator doesn’t give us more than we can endure.” The sweat was over. I’d survived this rite of passage, and the sweat leader and others spent hours talking to me about Indian traditions, their personal stories, and pros and cons of Indian gambling.

Once I have been able to sit with them face-to-face, Indian people have proven to be exceedingly candid, patient, honest and generous with their time and insights. And as long as they think I’m telling the truth, any subject is fair game, including the challenges generated by sovereign immunity on Indian lands and the epidemic of California Indian nations that have been kicking members out (and denying them a cut of casino profits).

The key seems to be to present Indian perspectives—and to write about solutions as well as problems, renaissance as well as dissonance.

In California, more than 200,000 people each day drive into Indian Country to gamble, dine, see shows, play golf, and visit discount outlets. Millions of outsiders nationwide cross the border daily into some part of Indian Country. We need to understand the nations in our midst and where the people who live there are coming from. The best way to do that is to treat people as individuals, with respect and an appreciation for a worldview shaped by history and circumstances that are often very different from those of most mainstream Americans. ■

Steve Magagnini has covered ethnic affairs and race relations for The Sacramento Bee since 1994. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism for his outstanding coverage of race and ethnicity in the United States. His series “Lost Tribes” is available online at www.sacbee.com/static/archive/news/projects/native/day1_main.html.

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The Healing Power of Well-Reported Words

A reporter returns home—to a troubled reservation—to write about what happened to its land and people.

By Larry Oakes

In 2002, a group of drunk and stoned teenagers randomly beat a 48-year-old blind man to death on the northern Minnesota Indian reservation where I grew up. I decided it was time to go home, this time as a reporter. The forested, sparsely populated Leech Lake Ojibwe Reservation had seen a surge of senseless deaths in recent years involving young people as either victims or perpetrators. Usually, alcohol and drugs were involved.

At the blind man's funeral in the little village of Cass Lake, old friends told me that the place had changed since we grew up there in the 1970's. There had always been poverty, and as kids we'd had access to alcohol and pot. But now, they said, the kids were snorting and shooting cocaine, OxyContin and methamphetamine. They were forming gangs and, unlike when we were kids, they brought knives and guns to their fights. Car theft, robbery and burglary, crimes we associated mostly with big cities back then, now touched nearly every household. Even the mayor's car had been stolen that year—twice—out of his driveway.

The green house on Maple Avenue where I had been brought up—a white kid on a reservation so fragmented and disenfranchised that half the people are non-Indian—now had sheets of plywood over some of its windows. "People are scared," an old friend said. "The kids are out of control."

Returning to the Reservation

Photographer Jerry Holt and I convinced editors to let us move to the reservation and spend six months trying to understand how and why things had gotten so much worse—why, as nearly every statistic showed, the reservation

had become one of the worst places in rural Minnesota to grow up.

We rented a house on the edge of town. I walked in the first night to find that someone had broken a window and rummaged around inside, apparently not finding anything worth stealing. "Welcome home," said a cop who responded to the call. I told him I would have preferred a fruit basket.

Jerry and I were an odd couple. He's a middle-aged black guy with dreadlocks, facial hair, and a bit of leftover drawl from his native Mississippi. I'm a middle-aged, clean-shaven white guy with a Fargoesque "you betcha" accent and closely trimmed hair. We sometimes joked to bemused locals that the hair was the best way to tell us apart.

Slowly at first, and then more and more as trust grew, people let us into their lives, homes and community. We spent hours and hours in schools, courthouses and at the local Boys and Girls Club, where kids sometimes used the donated computers to look up relatives on the Minnesota Department of Corrections offender locator Web site. We interviewed judges, social workers, doctors, educators, politicians and scores of kids and parents. We immersed ourselves in the mixed culture, going to meetings of city and tribal councils, pancake dinners and powwows, church services and sweat lodges. We met with dozens of tribal elders, always remembering to bring a pouch of tobacco—used in Ojibwe ceremonies and prayers—as a gift, to show our good faith. We searched cemeteries for the graves of kids who didn't make it, whose lives and family histories we were reconstructing, looking for what went wrong.

To visit other lost Leech Lake kids, we traveled to distant prisons. At the St.

Cloud penitentiary we befriended Darryl Headbird. He was serving 40 years for shotgunning his father to death as the man slept. Though only 14 when he did it, he was prosecuted and imprisoned as an adult. Darryl told us how his alcoholic mother had abandoned him and how he became a devil worshiper before deciding that his dad had to go. Darryl said he believed he might have fetal alcohol syndrome, though he'd never been tested.

At Cass Lake's alternative school, we got to know Tara Hare, 16, daughter of an alcoholic, single mother. Tara herself was in the throes of a battle with addiction, violence and other destructive behavior. She'd already been through treatment three times. Her principal said Tara was "hanging by a thread." We spent time in Tara's home, joined family gatherings, and even attended one of her Narcotics Anonymous meetings, with her permission and that of the other teens in the group.

Portraying What We Learned

The result of all our work was "The Lost Youth of Leech Lake," a three-day series that appeared in Minneapolis's Star Tribune in April 2004. In its opening scene, Darryl described how he prepared himself for murdering his father by beating their chained dog to death with a baseball bat.

Darryl's story represented those Leech Lake children whose lives were lost, either to prison or the grave. Tara represented the Leech Lake kids on the edge—those at extreme risk, who could go either way. The common elements running through the lives of the lost and struggling kids were highlighted and explained: poverty, a family history of chemical abuse, family disintegra-

tion. These losses were placed in the context of older, more universal losses of land, culture and religion endured by their families and tribe, creating psychic wounds still echoing through the generations. An accompanying timeline detailed how the Leech Lake Ojibwe were subjugated and herded onto their reservation in 1855 and how during the next century the dominant culture proceeded to take back 93 percent of the reservation's land.

The timeline further explored how large timber companies, railroads and white settlers flooded onto the reservation and took over, building dams that flooded wild rice beds and burial grounds, and leaving behind a polluted Superfund site on the south side of Cass Lake. Nearly all the reservation's beautiful miles of private lakeshore had fallen into the hands of well-heeled white people, who are lately building opulent homes and cabins, often just down the road from jack pine-ghetto housing projects for Indians. Indian anger over aggressive logging and loss of land had boiled over in what was called an uprising in 1898, on Leech Lake's Sugar Point. The exchange of gunfire with federal soldiers went down in history as the final battle between American Indians and the U.S. military.

Think about this for a moment: Here is where the United States finished its war against the American Indian. Here is a place, and a people, steeped in loss. Even the Indian name for the reservation's most beautiful lake—Red Cedar—was lost. The new white power structure changed it to honor General Lewis Cass, a territorial governor who had fought wars against Indians.

I'd never studied this history before going back home to examine the youth problem. I now understood the roots of a lot of the anger, despair and dysfunction I'd seen there as a kid. My family was part of the usurpation, as unintended as it may have been. We'd moved to Cass Lake because my dad got a job in the single white-owned bank there. He also served for a time as municipal judge in the white-controlled justice system. To say I sometimes felt the backlash would be an understatement. I had to learn how to fight, and

I still bear the scars.

Going back to see how the youth of Leech Lake got lost helped me come to better terms with my own difficult youth. For me the series became more than a project; it was also a reckoning.

Reaction to the Stories

Reaction to the series was swift and strong. In the first week I got hundreds of e-mails, and on the following Sunday, nearly all of the Star Tribune's op-ed section was devoted to readers' feedback. For weeks, Jerry and I were in demand as guests on talk shows and in classrooms.

The reaction was fairly evenly mixed. Many Indians and non-Indians alike felt it was powerful, unflinching journalism. But many others felt we focused too much on the negative, blamed the Ojibwe for their children's problems, and failed to point out all Ojibwe people are doing to try to make things better. Many wished we would have balanced stories about kids like Darryl and Tara with stories about Leech Lake kids who are doing fine.

I was disappointed to see some of the most strident criticism come from the Indian studies departments of universities, which blasted the series for all the sins listed above and added that it failed to put the problems in historic context, saved the positive stuff for last, and perpetuated the myth of the Indian as a helpless, tragic figure. The comments of some of the professors made me wonder if they'd read beyond the headlines.

I was unapologetic. I reminded angry readers that the entire third installment of the series covered the good work Indians and non-Indians alike were doing to try to save the reservation's kids. This is where we quoted elders who said reclaiming spirituality is the answer and others who said education is the key. The installment ended with a quote from a teenage girl who said the young simply have to choose a better path, as she had.

True, I said, two-thirds of the series defined and explored the crisis. But I argued that it would have been dangerous and irresponsible to seek some kind

of artificial level of balance for that sad news. If we had matched each story about a child who was suffering with another story about a child who was not, we would have blunted the message, letting readers think that maybe things aren't as bad as the statistics implied. We would have given readers an excuse to look away while more Leech Lake children died and went to prison.

On the reservation, where stores could not keep the series on the shelves even after the Star Tribune supplied them with hundreds of reprints, the response was about as mixed, but more intense. American Indian Movement founder Dennis Banks, a Leech Lake Ojibwe, led a four-day "We Are Not All on Drugs Walk," in which several dozen people participated. I interviewed Banks and covered the walk. Schools had special assemblies to help children deal with the discomfort and shame of being so publicly labeled "lost."

The reservation government scheduled a two-day public forum entitled "We Are Not Lost," at the Palace Casino. Fliers said that forum was designed to emphasize the good that was happening at Leech Lake and "change the perception" created by the articles. I was apprehensive about going, but I never even considered staying away. I'd had my say. The critics now had a right to give me a piece of their minds and to ask me questions.

At the forum, attended by 200 people, something happened that from my perspective was wonderful and amazing: Although some of the 35 speakers complained about the series, the majority credited the stories with jolting many on the reservation into more honestly facing the problems underlying the high per-capita rates of chemical abuse, child removals, and crime. "If you want to change something, you have to have a sense of urgency," said Randy Finn, an Ojibwe from Cass Lake. "It's like somebody has relit that flame, and all of you are here today because of it."

Mike Mosedale, who covered the event for City Pages, a Twin Cities alternative weekly, wrote:

"While the forum was launched with the idea that it would serve as a retort to the series' central thesis ... it

morphed into something very different: a ritual of catharsis and resolve in which speaker after speaker relayed their own personal stories, insights and recommendations.

“Some people wept as they spoke. Others were frankly confessional. One woman described how her daughter was involved in the robbery and murder of a tourist from the Twin Cities. ‘A lot of us mothers and grandmothers have lost children,’ she said plainly. ‘We’ve got to quit hiding. We’ve got to deal with it.’”

When tribal employee Patsy Gordon called me the day after the series ran, she was tearful. “Your stories hurt a lot of people,” she said. “How could you do that to us?” But after she attended the forum, Gordon wrote this in DeBahJi-Mon, the tribal newspaper:

“I heard and witnessed that many feelings have changed from anger to even thanking Larry Oakes, that he brought a wake-up call to Leech Lake. ... I myself came away from this forum with the thought of, ‘Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could recover from all of the drug addiction, alcoholism, poverty, etc., and go on to be a living example of how you can come back from the depths of despair?’”

Ojibwe activist Bob Shimek told Mosedale: “This is a real part of our history—the good, the bad, the ugly, and we have to own it. It was about frickin’ time someone wrote this story.”

Toward the end of the forum, tribal elder Wally Humphrey stood, facing the crowd, and spoke, at one point pointing a gnarled finger at my white face. “Let’s not forgot that the man who wrote these articles grew up here,” he said. “He is one of us.”

Waves of relief and gratitude swept over me as I wept in my motel room that night. Thomas Wolfe was wrong. You can go home again. ■

Larry Oakes is a reporter with the Star Tribune in Minneapolis, Minnesota. To read “The Lost Youth of Leech Lake,” go to www.startribune.com/leech.

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Tara Hare began driving when she was 11 years old, prompted by the frequent need to transport her mother when she got drunk. By the time she was 16, Tara was still driving without a license. Spring 2003.



LaDonna Hanson, left, Tara’s teacher at the Area Learning Center in Cass Lake, and Tara deliver Christmas gifts to families who live on Tract 33. Tara, who also lived there, and her classmates raised money to buy gifts for children on the reservation. Winter 2002.

Photos by Jerry Holt/Star Tribune.

Teenagers who live on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation often hang out on the main street of Cass Lake, its largest town. The reservation is statistically among the worst places in Minnesota to grow up, plagued with a multitude of problems including alcoholism, violence and poverty. Tribal elders and civic leaders are working to strengthen families, bring jobs to the reservation, and help more students graduate. But change isn't coming easily. Cass Lake, Minnesota, November 2002.



Sixteen-year-old Cierra Cloud, left, and a friend view the body of shooting victim Donald Kamrowski, 19, during his wake at a tribal building near Cass Lake. Cloud and Kamrowski had a son together, who was two years old when his father died. July 2003.



Photos by Jerry Holt/Star Tribune.

Taking Time to Understand the Story to Be Told

To report this story meant ‘immersing ourselves in a system of government and a way of life that, shamefully, we knew little about.’

By Michael Moore

On the first day of March 2004, two Indian boys were found dead in a snowy field outside Ronan, Montana, in the geographical heart of the Flathead Indian Reservation. The boys, Frankie Nicolai and Justin Benoist, were 11 years old. They’d been missing for three days, ever since they skipped out of their sixth-grade class after lunch on Friday afternoon. They’d drunk themselves to death.

The deaths were stunning, even on a reservation where death by alcohol is hardly a surprise. It was the boys’ age, of course, that slapped us in the face. At the Missoulian, which covers all of western Montana, we responded pretty predictably. Our reporter on the reservation, John Stromnes, wrote several straightforward news accounts of what had happened, and we waited for additional investigation.

There was obviously more to be done, but we weren’t sure what. I was assigned to figure out what should come next. At first, we thought we’d do a weekend piece, maybe an article to be published two weeks out. Photographer Tom Bauer and I headed up to the boys’ funerals three days after the deaths to start scoping things out.

Although our presence was tolerated, it was pretty clear we weren’t all that welcomed. We lucked into meeting Frankie’s dad, Frank, paid our respects and came home. That afternoon, I told my boss, Cal FitzSimmons, that we probably weren’t going to have a weekend story. The only story I could really see getting quickly was maybe an in-depth look at how the investigation into the boys’ disappearance was proceeding, with perhaps some poignant details from the funerals.

It would have been a decent story,

but pretty hollow, given the enormity of the tragedy.

Instead, we opted to back off. If we were going to tell this story, we needed to tell it in all of its complexity. This would mean a heck of a lot of reporting time and also immersing ourselves in a system of government and a way of life that, shamefully, we knew little about.

Nearly four months later, in late July, “Lost Boys of the Flathead,” written as a series of stories, appeared in each day’s Missoulian, stretching from one Sunday to another. “Lost Boys” was the result of a luxury we rarely get at small- and mid-size newspapers—time. While extremely frustrating, the fact that it took us two weeks of lobbying the tribal council for access to various officials, documents and studies also taught us something.

To report this story well, we needed to slow down. I don’t mean that we needed to work slowly; we just needed to understand that some of what we needed to tell this story was going to come when it came.

Seeking to Understand

That was never more true than with the families. Frankie Nicolai’s family was fractured, divorced and somewhat impoverished, but they are also solid, dependable people. I could make arrangements to spend time with Frank and know he’d be there. Justin Benoist’s family was a human train wreck. As we quickly learned, Justin wasn’t even the first son of Norma Lefthand Fox to die from alcohol. His 14-year-old brother, Tyler, had died just three months earlier, passed out drunk in a trailer that caught fire. The boy’s father had died years before, a drunken suicide.

Dealing with Norma was difficult at best. Learning about her life was like trekking into an undiscovered place, foreign and nearly unknowable. The first day Tom and I spent with Norma was a revelation, as she recounted a history marred from birth by alcohol, death and abandonment. She told her story in the flat, monotonous tone of a prisoner with no more appeals; in many ways, she had always been a prisoner of a past shaped by alcohol, violence and tragic misjudgments.

What happened over the next few months is that I just spent time with Norma whenever I could. Often I’d arrange interviews with tribal officials, police officers, alcohol counselors, and others, and then just drop in on Norma. We had numerous scheduled interviews, but often I’d just stop by unannounced, hang out for a while, and then leave. I hardly ever took notes, though I’d jot down a few things after I left. Mostly I just watched Norma live.

Outside the interviews with family, we had to learn about the history of reservations, of alcohol and Indians, and of boarding schools and government intervention in the lives of Indians. I spent time with cultural leaders and elders. I went to meetings that didn’t really have anything to do with the boys, just to watch tribal government in action. I spent many hours with health and human service officials, trying to comprehend the difficulty of the struggle they faced in trying to undo the tragic past. I read thousands of pages of reports on Indian drinking and substance abuse, and I sought guidance from some of the nation’s most prominent sociologists.

Tom and I went to rallies and to forums designed to address the problems

of juvenile drinking. Sometimes after a rally, I'd stop at a bar where Indians drink and just watch. I needed to understand what the stereotyped image might look like, so that I could avoid it. Tom was making his own trips, finding what we needed photographically; we traveled together quite a bit, but often he needed one thing and I needed another, so we'd work apart.

Telling the Stories

For whatever reason, our bosses felt like we were using our time wisely.

At about the time I had everything I needed to write—after about eight weeks of reporting—another boy died. Joey DuMontier was 15, and he drank himself to death at his girlfriend's house on May 1st. And so we started over again. Another family, another round with police and tribal officials. More rallies. More agonizing on the reservation.

Worst of all, another funeral.

By the first of June, I was ready to write again. Tom was still gathering pictures, but I knew he'd have what we needed because he always does. For a solid week, I sat in this weird little closet in the newsroom and read my notes and interviews. (Our administrative assistants had graciously transcribed miles of interview tapes.)

I've written lots of project stories, but I'd never had this much stuff. I often found myself thinking about a private coaching session I had with Poynter Institute's Don Fry many years ago, where he stressed organization. Don likes note cards that summarize the grand themes of a project, but he also likes highlighters. I took that route, using five or so highlighters to sort things into big topics. I also typed a list of every quote that seemed useful.

Along the way, I saw the holes that needed to be filled and did the necessary follow-up. Finally, I wrote. I tried to write about 30 inches a day, but several days I wrote almost nothing. On other

days, the story just rolled out. I wrote as if the whole thing would be published at once. I needed to pace the story so that my words could bring the reader with me as we traveled what would eventually be a very long way.

Often I found myself calling a few of my best sources to ask them if what I was saying sounded right from the Indian perspective. And I had as many as 10 people in the newsroom read the stories, in addition to the regular editing process. I also sent the stories out to a half-dozen people on the reservation, including some sources. Finally, I gave the stories to both Norma and Frank and invited them to be our harshest critics. I needed to know if my words sounded like their lives.

Some might find this objectionable,

Often I found myself calling a few of my best sources to ask them if what I was saying sounded right from the Indian perspective. ... I also sent the stories out to a half-dozen people on the reservation, including some sources. ... I needed to know if my words sounded like their lives.

but it seemed like a no-brainer to me. These people had invited me into their lives at the worst possible moment; I needed to know whether I was telling their stories as they knew them. On the other hand, I told them I wouldn't change things simply because they didn't like what I wrote. But if I was wrong, or if I explained a thing in a way that wrongly portrayed Indian life, I needed to know.

In the end, we changed very little, often just a word here or there. In every case, someone else's reading of the work was helpful.

Hearing the Response

The response these stories received was overwhelming. I received hundreds of e-mails and phone calls. Because of the

Internet—the stories ran on several Native news sites—reactions to them arrived from all over the country. People sent money to give to the families. They offered to come to Montana and help counsel families. They offered to come and just be here. The most heartening personal responses came from Indian people who thanked me for simply listening to their stories.

I was humbled by the whole experience.

Most importantly, the tribes restructured the way they deal with children. They turned their child-welfare system upside down, placing children at the top of a priority list previously focused more on parents and overall family structure. Every tribal department was heavily scrutinized, and both personnel and structural changes

occurred. A system of checks and balances was erected inside tribal government, so that when one agency comes into contact with a child, other agencies that might eventually deal with the child or family are notified.

County government also took a very aggressive stance toward the adults who'd played a role in the boys' deaths by providing alcohol.

Not long ago, a man was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his role in the death of Joey DuMontier. ■

Michael Moore is a reporter at the Missoulian. This article is adapted from a piece Moore wrote for Lee Enterprises' Writing Matters. "Lost Boys of the Flathead" won the Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism in June 2005. The series also won his company's highest award for news and several first-place prizes in regional journalism contests. The series is available at www.missoulian.com/specials/lostboys/.

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Attitudes and Mindsets Hinder Journalists in Their Coverage

‘... consciously or unconsciously, stories have been shaped to fit well known themes of bad, good or degraded, ancient and exotic Indians.’

By Mary Ann Weston

At the Unity: Journalists of Color convention in the summer of 2004, I watched as Mark Trahan, a Native American journalist from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, asked President George W. Bush a simple question: “What do you think tribal sovereignty means in the 21st century and how do we resolve conflicts between tribes and the federal and state governments?”

Bush had one of those deer-in-the-headlights moments that often end up on Jon Stewart’s “The Daily Show.” Bush stammered: “Tribal sovereignty means that; it’s sovereign. You’re a—you’ve been given sovereignty and you’re viewed as a sovereign entity ...” The audience tittered. Some laughed out loud. The quote was widely reported. And, yes, it made “The Daily Show.” But only a few articles about this incident went on to explain what tribal sovereignty means to Native Americans or why it’s important.

The omission points up a recurring problem with news coverage of Native Americans: Journalists fail to explain the history and context that’s critical to understanding their issues. A second problem is related: Unconsciously journalists often replicate the distorted images and stereotypes of Native peoples that have been part of our culture since the first European contacts with peoples of the Americas.

These problems have been around as long as the Euro-American press has covered Native peoples. And that’s as long as there has been journalism in this country. *Publick Occurrences* Both Forreign and Domestick, the short-lived paper widely considered the first newspaper in the English North American

colonies—it published a single issue, in 1690—devoted significant space to its writing about Native Americans. As historian John Coward has written, editor Benjamin Harris praised Christianized Indians for setting aside a day of thanksgiving but accused other Indians of kidnapping local children. Still other Indians were termed “miserable savages” for failing to support the British militarily.

Images Affect Coverage

From colonial times to the present the news media have largely failed to tell Native Americans’ stories fully, accurately and, sometimes, at all. And flaws in coverage have generally stemmed from the dual problems of stereotypical images and lack of context.

Most Americans and a great many Europeans, too, grow up with popular culture images of Indians. These images influence unconscious attitudes and mindsets that inform the ways people think—and journalists approach stories. The images actually go back to the time of Columbus, when Europeans were trying to make sense of the peoples they found in the “new” world. Somehow they had to fit these exotic folks into worldviews and mindsets that made no provision for them.

The result, according to historian Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. and others, was imagery that projected Europeans’ fears of the “savagery” they imagined in the absence of civilization and the nobility of an, also imagined, pristine state of nature. These images, the stuff of myth and fiction, have been repeated so often and in so many settings that they have

taken on an aura of fact.

There is the “bad Indian,” an image that takes many forms. Historically, “bad Indians” were “savages.” They were assigned qualities that embodied everything colonists and later settlers feared becoming or succumbing to in the vast, alien wilderness: paganism, lechery, brutality, cruelty, indolence, treachery and so on. Later, after Native Americans ceased to be a military threat, a related image, the “degraded” Indian, appeared. This image depicted someone who was an object of derision or pity, someone who couldn’t cope with the complexities of white civilization. He was depicted as poor, unemployed, drunk, or all three.

The flip side was the “good Indian.” This image often takes the form of the “noble savage”—someone who has an innate closeness to and communion with nature, who is at home in the natural world, who can understand it in ways whites cannot. Paradoxically, “good Indians” were also those who adopted farming and Christianity; i.e., they abandoned their cultures and became like whites.

Overlaying these images was the notion that, good or bad, Indians were exotic and ancient, people of the past, out of place in today’s world. You can see the “good” and “bad” images co-existing in *Publick Occurrences*: the good Christianized Indians and the bad “miserable savages.” And you can see them, albeit less blatantly, in current coverage.

All of these images, of course, defined Indians negatively in relation to whites. (For example, Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* wrote in 1860 that

“Indians are children. Their arts, wars, treaties, alliances, habitations, crafts, properties, commerce, comforts, all belong to the very lowest and rudest ages of human existence.”) Clearly such depictions told us more about the ethnocentric attitudes of Euro-Americans than about Native peoples. And the fact that the images are still around after more than 500 years might also tell us something about whites. Because constructing such views of the “other” is an exercise in power. Defining the other in negative terms gives the dominant party greater control over the discourse.

Such images are staples of literature and popular culture, from the stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne to the Jeep Cherokee. When these stereotypes are replicated in the news, they can influence public policy as well as the attitudes of ordinary people. They’ve been the basis for public policies that deprived Native peoples of their land and forced them to abandon their religions, languages and cultures.

The Challenge for Journalism

Journalism, ideally, gives its audience facts and reality—the news without fear or favor. It doesn’t deal with fantasy or fiction. But also journalism tries to make sense of the world. That is, it seeks to take the randomness of events and transform them into stories, narratives that allow us to understand what is happening. To do this, journalists, consciously or unconsciously, invoke familiar images, what Walter Lippmann called “the pictures in our heads.”

In the coverage of Native Americans, consciously or unconsciously, stories have been shaped to fit well known themes of bad, good or degraded, ancient and exotic Indians. Examples can be found from stories that examine the ways some tribes manage their casino income to those about reservation poverty. Among the most obvious lingering stereotypes are those in sports team

names and mascots: The University of Illinois’s Chief Illiniwek, the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Redskins, and others. Mostly, news organizations covering those teams repeat the images without examining their origins

Unconsciously journalists often replicate the distorted images and stereotypes of Native peoples that have been part of our culture since the first European contacts with peoples of the Americas.

and power.

Still, today’s journalists are more sensitive to the power of stereotypes than their predecessors. Nevertheless, Native Americans are often victims of the unconscious mindsets and assumptions of journalists who grew up with Indian “pictures” in their heads.

Another problem with coverage—the lack of context and historical background—can blight stories of their meaning, giving audiences facts without context. Admittedly Native American issues are complex. That tribal sovereignty issue that caused George Bush to stumble has tangled legal, historical and cultural strands that are daunting to unravel. Yet that issue underlies many of today’s stories about casinos, law enforcement, health, education and more.

The failure of journalists to inject the background and context such stories demand stems, I believe, from the institutional imperatives of today’s newsgathering:

- The need for timeliness and speed, spurred by the Internet and real-time television reporting, provides journalists with little time to reflect, to seek background information, or to find more sources.
- The need for brevity to accommodate the audience’s perceived short attention span makes it hard to construct nuanced portrayals of little-known groups.

- The traditional news values that favor conflict and violence over cooperation spotlight negative behavior—and negative images.
- The emphasis on the bizarre and the visually arresting highlights those with loud voices, extreme views, and strange appearances rather than the thoughtful moderates.
 - The practice of valuing events over trends or situations tends to downplay complex issues.

These practices themselves are culture-neutral. But they can work against

giving audiences an accurate picture of Native peoples. And when you consider that, for many, their only acquaintance with Native Americans is through popular culture or the news, the importance of accurate journalism is clear. ■

Mary Ann Weston is an associate professor emerita at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, where she taught courses in history and issues of journalism, reporting on race, and reporting and writing. She was a member of the Detroit Free Press staff that won a Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the 1967 riots there. Her book on portrayals of Native Americans in the 20th century press, “Native Americans in the News,” was published in 1996 by Greenwood Press. She was coeditor and cowriter of “U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities 1934-1996: A Sourcebook,” published in 1997 by Greenwood Press.

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When Reporters Lack Access and Knowledge

‘... access would be easier to achieve if reporters had been there to cover some of the more routine stories that had taken place on the reservation.’

By Dorreen Yellow Bird

At mid afternoon on March 21, the mood in the Grand Forks Herald newsroom in Grand Forks, North Dakota, changed from another ho-hum day to open throttle, high intensity. The shift started when the police scanner picked up early bits and pieces of a story about a school shooting on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in north central Minnesota. The report said there could be as many as three dead at the nearby school. After a quick huddle in the newsroom and updated reports from the scanner, a reporter and photographer were assigned to the story.

At the Herald, I am a columnist and member of the editorial board. But I also do some reporting, especially involving stories about the four American Indian tribes in our coverage area. Because I am Sahnish (Arikara) and Dakota/Lakota from a reservation in western North Dakota, I wasn't surprised when I was also assigned to report on the Red Lake story. I also wasn't surprised because my experience and reporting resources about Native American issues are extensive. When the reporters cannot reach tribal officials, I am called to help out.

Minutes later we were on our way to the reservation in my car. I knew my way there because I'd written many stories about this band of Chippewa or Anishinaabe people. [See box on page 26 for information about the term "band."] I had established a relationship and trust with the people. I took a new road not yet on Minnesota maps. As we drove, I remembered my first trip to the reservation. One of the locals pointed me toward this road; at the time, it was a dirt road that eventually ran up to the edge of the gigantic Red Lake. The road now is blacktop.



Red Lake Tribal Chairman Floyd Jourdain, Jr. stands in the parking lot of the Red Lake Detention Center as he speaks at a press conference with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Photo by Monte Draper/Courtesy of Bemidji Pioneer.*

When we reached the “T,” where the highway meets an endless, azure plane of the lake, there was something in the air—traffic was moving faster, and there was more of it. On the faces of the locals was a seriousness I could see even car-to-car. As we neared the reservation, we lost radio stations, and our cell phones worked sporadically. Just before our cell phones became unreliable, we were told there were more than three dead, and this was going to be a big story. It wasn't “just another” school shooting. It was the biggest school shooting in Minnesota history, with the most deaths in a U.S. school shooting since Columbine. And it had happened on an Indian reservation.

The Red Lake Band of Chippewa are unique. They're a people apart, even

from the other seven bands of Chippewa and four bands of Sioux in Minnesota. About 5,600 people live on the reservation that's a bit smaller in size than the state of Rhode Island. The reservation includes Red Lake, which is one of the largest lakes in the region.

A ‘Closed’ Reservation

Red Lake is a “closed” reservation. Alone among Minnesota tribes and almost alone in America, the people who live here rejected Public Law 280, which gave the 50 states civil jurisdiction over reservation affairs. They've resisted all attempts at allotting the reservation land. This means the members did what many tribes today wish they had done: They ran off surveyors, social workers,

lawyers and missionaries. This effort kept their land from being purchased by non-Indians, as happened on many other reservations.

Today the Red Lake people are more assimilated into the surrounding non-Indian society: The tribe's Seven Clans Casino is one of the latest moves into the non-Native community. But a certain separation or the potential for it remains. As Bemidji Pioneer photographer Monte Draper told a Twin Cities newspaper, "One former tribal chairman, Roger Jourdain, used to have a rule where you needed to have a passport to go to the reservation. I still have mine, but it is in a frame on a wall at my home."

We reached the reservation only a few hours after the 3 p.m. shooting. I saw trucks with satellite dishes, vans and cars from outside media. But by the time we arrived, members of the news media were restricted to the small parking lot of Red Lake's new police station, where I had covered the station's ribbon cutting a few years before.

As it turned out, there were 10 people dead—one teacher, two adults, six students, and the shooter. There was an air of uncertainty among the reporters, cameramen and photographers. They were finding that the powerful First Amendment didn't work as well on the Red Lake Reservation. They fidgeted anxiously as they waited to be able to report some news.

When the first news conference began in front of the police station, I stood away from the throng of reporters. Floyd "Buck" Jourdain, Jr., the tribal chairman—whose son, Louis, would later be accused of conspiracy to commit murder—updated the media. I learned from the locals that a tribal police officer, Sgt. Daryl "Dash" Lussier, was one of those killed. The sergeant was the grandfather of the 16-year-old shooter, Jeffrey Weise.

Most of the reporters were experienced and routinely covered breaking news. Some had covered the Columbine school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, but most didn't anticipate doors being closed in their face. On the Red Lake Reservation, they were restricted to a certain area and not allowed on the high-

way past the shooting area or into the tribal offices. Nor could they interview tribal officials. Armed officers blocked the roads and buildings.

I didn't realize that I was the exception. Law enforcement officers didn't stop me at first as I drove around the area. They thought I was a member of the band.

Reporting Different Angles

When the staff of our large Knight Ridder syndicate began to prepare for its coverage of this story, I was assigned a lead editor with whom I would work. I was one of the few journalists there who had reporting experience on the reservation and good tribal contacts, so it became my assignment to check copy for cultural and tribal correctness and identify contacts for other reporters. At the time I wondered why I wasn't assigned to report a story, but I didn't ask. I assumed the editors at the scene thought I would be too close to the story. I do know Indian people who have intermarried (my cousin-brother, for example, is married to a woman from Red Lake), and I have friends who live on the reservation. I also participate in ceremonies with people from Red Lake, since there is a crisscrossing that goes on throughout the entire region during ceremonies and powwows.

There were times during the first two days after the story broke when I was torn between loyalty to the band and my duty to the Grand Forks Herald. One reporter commented that he thought the rest of the Herald reporters should return to Grand Forks, leaving me to do the story with him. That didn't happen. And I understood the significance of this history-making story. I knew many of the reporters who'd come here wanted their bylines to appear on the stories we did.

There was a worldwide appetite for reporting about Red Lake. Foreign media wanted to be able to pass along information about where this shooting had taken place and what was happening on the reservation. But with reporters not able to get onto the reservation and not having contacts to get those who lived there to share information

What 'Band' Means

Dorreen Yellow Bird offers an example to explain the correct use of the term "band."

In Minnesota the Chippewa were once one tribe—like the Sioux. So when they divided up or the government divided them up, they were broken apart into groups they called bands. The Sioux became the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota but, if they are looked at linguistically, they are of one group. The Chippewa in Minnesota also go by different designations—i.e. Anishinaabeg, Chippewa or Ojibwe. Chippewa is the official or Bureau of Indian Affairs term, but most of the people there use Ojibwe. Band, however, is used as the group name rather than nation or even tribe. ■

with them, there was little that could be passed along. Again I wondered why some of these calls were not passed along to me. I suggested helpfully that they do, but nothing more was said. At the very least, I could have easily given these foreign reporters information about the reservation and its people, but again reporters seemed to want to hold their space and control of this breaking story.

After I had been there for more than two days, I made the three-hour midnight drive back to Grand Forks. The following day, when I was back at the Herald, the publisher asked me to interview Floyd "Buck" Jourdain. He said I was probably the only one who could get to him. Jourdain was unavailable to everyone since his son, Louis, had been arrested. With the help of someone I knew who knew Buck, he agreed to an interview. The story was part of our front page coverage on the following day.

During this difficult time, the Red Lake people pulled into themselves. As the network of spiritual leaders came quietly to the reservation, most of the sacred pipe and sweat lodge (inipi) ceremonies were held out of sight of the public eye. At first the people gave

few or no interviews, which I thought was a mistake since their voice—their story—would be missing from the news stories going out around the world. Instead they would become the people that reporters—some of whom had never been on an Indian reservation—created in their own minds.

There were times when I felt uncom-

media at Red Lake but from some in my own newsroom. During one news conference, federal officials chided reporters for inaccurate reporting, and the reporters, in turn, complained that they needed more access.

As these complaints rolled in, I realized that such access would be easier to achieve if reporters had been there to

dicey methods. They entered cordoned-off areas such as the area surrounding the home of the deceased police officer. They were stopped and shown off the reservation. One photographer's camera was confiscated when he tried to take pictures with his long lens. He got his camera back. Reporters were miffed at the restrictions.



As Red Lake tribal members carry blankets into the funeral services for two victims of the shootings, a sign notifies the press, including Native news organizations, that they are barred from attending any services. March 2005. *Photo by Ken Blackbird.*

fortable providing names of spiritual leaders to other reporters, because I wasn't sure that their stories would be culturally sensitive. At one point, the Herald did assign me to try to interview a medicine man. The idea was that this story would provide an understanding of the tribe's cultural ceremonies and convey the views of people who were not likely to speak with other reporters. It was difficult to get anyone to talk, but using contacts I'd made previously and relying on my cultural understanding, I was able to interview a Sundance leader. (Sundances are ceremonies for healing.) And when a photograph appeared of Louis Jourdain being led into jail in a black warm-up pulled over his head, reporters and editors wanted to know the significance of the Red Spider on his warm-up. This was an easy story for me to do since the Red Spider is more of a Lakota/Dakota symbol. The story served as a way to teach readers more about the culture.

Freedom of Press Issues

Complaints about the lack of freedom for the press came not only from the

cover some of the more routine stories that had taken place on the reservation. That would have helped to establish trust between the two groups. Instead, stereotypes about Indians seemed to slide into conversation among reporters and into their stories—old stereotypes about poverty, rampant alcoholism and drug abuse, alongside new stereotypes about tribal corruption and casino abuse.

The press leaned on stereotypes because they didn't have other resources. And reporters resorted to trying to get into places where the tribe prohibited the press from going. As the days of the 10 funerals arrived, hundreds of people came from across the nation to comfort the people of Red Lake. On the outside of the auditorium where the first funeral took place, the tribe painted a big, white, wooden sign that said, "No Press Admitted." I attended funerals because I knew some of the people, not to report on it. As I sat there, I began to realize press people were there. Uninvited, they had come to watch and write about the grief of these people.

Some reporters resorted to more

Giving Voice to Indian People

We have a project in our newsroom to give voice to "people like us"—that hometown view. That's a good idea, but when the newsroom is mainly white, the voices of people like me are rarely heard. There are exceptional people on the Red Lake Reservation who never do receive coverage in those "stories like me."

At Red Lake, the Chippewa people closed their doors. In their minds, there was little reason for trusting that coverage of this story would be less destructive than other stories they'd read about themselves and the reservation. They were not considered a part of the "people like us," and they knew it. They live in a village where most people are related or, if they're not, they almost certainly know each other. Most of the Red Lake residents were deeply affected by the shootings. They were fearful and in shock. If they had experienced finger-pointing in the past, then many of them believed these stories would buy a heyday of blame for them.

The Indian people have made progress in their lives as they recover from centuries of abuse and mistreatment. Tribes are more and more in control of their own destiny, and they are teaching their children who they are and about the culture. It was troubling for me to observe how "in your face" my fellow reporters were and how little they knew about the culture and people who live here. It troubled me, too, to see that information passed on in national and even international news stories fed into or created uninformed views and conveyed stereotypes of Indian people.

Since the shootings happened at Red Lake, there have been a few stories about youngsters attending ballgames

or a Minneapolis Police Activities camp off-reservation, but little has been written about the lives and work of those on the reservation. Months after the shootings at Red Lake, the press has left Red Lake, on the hunt for bigger stories, leaving behind people who live in their midst—"people like us"—who deserve better coverage. What happened at Red Lake represents an all-too-common failing of many journalists, and observing this experience has left me disillusioned about the role that journalism should be able to play. ■

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A horse-drawn wagon carries caskets during funeral services for two of the nine victims of a teenage gunman on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. March 2005. Photo by Ken Blackbird.

Cultures Clash in Coverage of a School Shooting

Some reporters didn't understand the implications of tribal sovereignty when they went to the Red Lake Indian Reservation to report this story.

By Dan Gunderson

When dozens of reporters descended on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota to cover a school shooting in March 2005, many were shocked by the tribal government's response. A short time after the incident, in which a 16-year-old boy killed nine people before shooting himself, tribal officials closed the reservation's borders. By early the next morning, reporters had been herded into a parking lot at the tribal jail, and if reporters ventured into the town of Red Lake, they were threatened with arrest.

As I grabbed a cup of coffee and a banana on the way out of the motel on the morning after the shootings, I eaves-

dropped on the conversation between two reporters who had never been to Red Lake before. One was incensed by the previous day's experience when reporters had tried to get onto the reservation. "Who do they think they are, telling us what to do?" she was saying, with some disdain. "Someone needs to educate these people," responded her colleague.

For a small number of journalists at Red Lake that day—including those of us who had come here before to report on the people who live on this geographically isolated reservation—this action taken by the tribal government was not unexpected. What many of our peers seemed to be having a hard time

understanding, in the midst of trying to cover this emerging news story, were the legal and practical implications of tribal sovereignty.

Red Lakers stand proudly on their sovereignty. They live on land where generations of their ancestors walked, land that was never ceded to the U.S. government. This means it is within their rights to close the reservation. In fact, not many years ago, outsiders were required to carry a tribally issued passport.

Such restrictions are often the reality in Indian Country. There is no guarantee of a free press on reservations, nor any protected right to free speech for the people who live there.

In Indian Country, access by outsiders is gained through trust—a commodity that is painstakingly earned and easily lost.

Establishing Trust

Four days after the school shooting, Red Lake Tribal Chairman Floyd “Buck” Jourdain, Jr. relaxed the media restrictions. But by then, many reporters had already left town. He offered little sympathy for those who complained about the lack of press freedom on the reservation. “A lot of times nobody wants anything to do with us. Media doesn’t want to come here. People have no reason to come here, and they could care less,” the tribal chairman told reporters. “But now that we have this tragedy, all of a sudden our sovereignty is a question and the way we conduct ourselves and our tribal customs.”

Their time in the media spotlight left a bitter taste with many Red Lake residents. In the weeks following the shooting, stories appeared about teenagers on the reservation who were offered cigarettes in exchange for an interview and money being offered for information.

This sudden and difficult cultural clash between the members of the news media and those who live in Red Lake didn’t do much for that precious commodity of trust. A few days after the shooting, I stopped by a Catholic church in Bemidji, a small town near the reservation where many Indians do business and go to school. The church was hosting a prayer service for the Red Lake shooting victims. The service was sparsely attended, mostly by elderly white parishioners. An American Indian man and his wife seemed a bit out of place. He told me he didn’t have any connection to the Red Lake shooting. He was there only because the priest asked him to perform a traditional Native ceremony as part of the prayer service.

As we waited for the service to begin, a reporter from a national news outlet walked into the church. After a cursory look around, he headed directly for the only American Indian in sight—the wife of the man doing the ceremony. He introduced himself and asked if he could talk to her about the Red Lake shooting. She politely demurred, saying she had no personal connection to the shooting and only knew what she’d seen on the

news. He was not easily discouraged. “But you are an Indian, aren’t you?” he asked with a touch of indignation.

Of course, as reporters, we pass in and out of peoples lives all the time and rarely do we really get to know them. That’s especially galling for many American Indians who place high value on respect and trust and inherently distrust people when they show up asking questions and demanding answers.

A few days after the media frenzy began, a tribal elder shook his head in dismay as he told about stopping at the Red Lake High School to offer tobacco and pray. As he prayed, cameras and microphones suddenly surrounded him. To him, the experience was as great an affront as a horde of reporters rushing the altar during mass might be to a Catholic.

He explained to me that during a crisis is not a good time to learn about a people and their culture. “When I get up and go outside my house and get ready to go to work, there are no cameras, no tape recorders, so I’m an invisible human being,” said Gichi-ma’ingan. “And when a tragedy happens all of a sudden here they are, saying ‘I have a lot of questions for you.’ My advice is come over to my house and visit when there is no tragedy. And then I can talk with you.”

I wonder how many visitors Gichi-ma’ingan will have. ■

Dan Gunderson is a reporter with Minnesota Public Radio. He has reported a number of stories about Red Lake, including an examination of press restrictions and relations during media coverage of the shootings.

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Red Lake High School sophomore Christopher Morrison, 16, is surrounded by news reporters as he enters the North County Regional Hospital in Bemidji to visit a friend. March 2005. Photo by Monte Draper/Courtesy of Bemidji Pioneer.

Broadcast News: The Absence of Native Storytellers

Without American Indian journalists, potential news stories are untold and the complexities of issues aren't addressed.

By Mark Trahant

Every few years a big news story breaks out from Indian Country. This year it was the tragedy at Red Lake, Minnesota. A few years ago it was the hantavirus epidemic in New Mexico on the Navajo Nation. Or the occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota. These are stories that capture the nation's attention because television news brings us the up-to-date events directly to our living room.

The 1973 siege at Wounded Knee now seems from another era. The TV reporting about the incident was essentially war reporting. There was not even the perception (by TV or print) that an American Indian reporter would or could add perspective. It was an event that just as easily could have been a satellite image from the Middle East or Africa. Anchors, including CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite, described the political activism as "Indians on the warpath."

But pushed by the civil rights movement, the world was changing—even in TV news. In February of 1989 Hattie Kauffman, then working for ABC's "Good Morning America," became the first American Indian to report a story for the evening news. The story involved a United Airlines accident. Kauffman happened to be in Hawaii when the story broke and was given the assignment for ABC News.

A few years later, when a mystery illness seemed to be killing young American Indians, the story was reported by more than a dozen Native Americans working for newspapers, local TV and radio stations, and two TV networks. Kauffman was again on the scene, this time representing CBS News. And NBC hired Albuquerque anchor Conroy Chino as a special correspondent.

Patty Talahongva, then a producer for a Phoenix TV station, said she was determined from the start to tell a different version of events. "I made sure from the beginning that it was not a Navajo disease; we never referred to it that way. And we made sure every victim was not a Navajo." Not all the media were so thoughtful. USA Today coined the phrase "Navajo flu"—a phrase that was easily and often-repeated on TV.

Since that story, however, the number of Native Americans working at the network level has been frozen. When the Red Lake tragedy story unfolded in April, CBS News sent Hattie Kauffman. Unlike many reporters, she had access to tribal officials and was able to fully report the story. But she was the only one telling the story to a national TV audience from a Native American perspective.

Think of that: A generation of one. Hattie Kauffman was the one and only TV network news reporter in 1989. And the same is true in 2005.

There has been a little progress, some hiring of reporters and even anchors in markets from Oklahoma City to Phoenix. But no dramatic change has occurred at either local stations or at the network level. Recent data from Ball State University and the Radio-Television News Directors Association shows Native Americans comprise only three-tenths of one percent of those working in broadcast media.

CNN demonstrated the invisibility of Natives in TV news in June when it announced \$1 million in minority journalism scholarships. The money was awarded to the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Asian American Journalists Association.

The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) was not included.

"We appreciate CNN's support for our upcoming convention and their pledge of continued support, and we know our Unity partners will do great things with the money they've received. But it's hard not to be disappointed when the rest of our Unity partners are recognized in this way and we are not," NAJA's then-President Dan Lewerenz (Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska) said. "Native people are the most under-represented of all minorities in national network news. I don't know of a single Native person currently working in news production for CNN. And many of our students attend colleges that don't have formal journalism programs or television training opportunities. CNN could have taken tremendous strides toward correcting these imbalances but chose not to. That's what makes this particularly painful."

The Value of New Voices

What will it take to do better? It's unlikely there will be any improvement until TV news recognizes the depth of the problem. Three-tenths of a percent ought to be painful to news executives, too. "If the broadcast news industry takes seriously its commitment to diversity, then we need to see these numbers turn around," Lewerenz said. "That's going to require outreach to both high school and college students. It's going to require looking beyond the established journalism schools and finding innovative ways to train journalists outside the curriculum. It's going to require paid internships, so that students aren't forced to choose between earning work experience and paying for college."



Tribal members walk to the cemetery on the Red Lake Indian Reservation for the burial of the first two victims of the school shootings. March 2005. *Photo by Ken Blackbird/The Associated Press.*

It's tempting to dismiss diversity in the broadcast news media as impossible to achieve, to give up on reaching the goal—or perhaps focus on other media. But here's another story, a hopeful one. A few years ago, Eugene Tapahe was offered an internship at the sports cable network ESPN. Tapahe, then 33, worked at his tribal newspaper, the Navajo Times, but he was eager to try something new and accepted the internship. Once he started, Tapahe was surprised to learn that ESPN had never aired a story about American Indian symbols and names being used as franchise mascots.

So Tapahe pitched the story, researched the topic, and waited. A day went by, then a week. He asked a producer what was up, only to be told that his material had not yet been read. But Tapahe wouldn't quit. He knew he had

good stuff and wanted the producers to go forward, or to just tell him to forget the idea. Finally he marched into a senior producer's office and made his pitch in person.

His courage and determination paid off. The story was assigned, and the project was a go. Perhaps it's significant that Tapahe did not play a major role in developing the story that eventually aired. He was, after all, an intern. But he helped create an environment of journalistic respect in which reporters and producers went about telling a story in a different way. Tapahe says he's proud of the story that eventually aired.

Indian Country is full of such stories, ones that ought to be told with respect. There are complicated histories that defy traditional grab-and-go journalism—stories with roots deep in history. They are stories about nations whose

governments predated those of the United States, stories about cultures, languages and people. Native Americans deserve to be among those who decide and report those news stories—and others—to a TV audience. The talent is there; it's just not visible. How invisible? Well, 99.7 percent makes what little presence there might be very close to being completely invisible. ■

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The Internet: Continuing the Legacy of Storytelling

‘I often reflect on my work as a journalist and wonder if I’ve some inherent genetic code that comes from this time-honored practice.’

By Victor Merina

There is a lasting image I have of Brian Bull. He is standing with earphones in his ears, a digital recorder at his side, and his microphone trained on the person he is interviewing—a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.; the president of the Navajo Nation at an Arizona reservation; a member of the Acoma Pueblo Tribe atop a sunswathed New Mexico mesa.

Bull is a reporter with Wisconsin Public Radio, and he asks questions that will help shape a series of pieces about Native Americans that have been gathered during a weeklong seminar on “Covering Indian Country,” sponsored by the Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism.

Beyond Bull’s broadcast stories, the words that resonate with me are ones he writes in his hotel room and posts in the dead of night for a Weblog that chronicles this seminar and its participants on their cross-country journey.

“According to the elders of my tribe, the Nez Perce Indians handed down their values and history through oral tradition for centuries. Particularly during the long winters, when people gathered in longhouses, stories were passed on to younger generations who, in turn, would repeat those passages for their children.

“To keep the culture preserved, such speakers had to be observant, accurate, objective and bear excellent communication skills.

“Sound like a familiar job today?

“I often reflect on my work as a journalist and wonder if I’ve some inherent genetic code that comes from this time-honored practice. And while print, television and the Internet have given us more venues to learn of events and

culture, I’m still drawn to the spoken word.”

Using the Internet as a Reporting Tool

As journalists, Native and non-Native alike, we are all drawn to the spoken word—even those of us who have spent our careers largely putting those words on a printed page or searching our vocabulary to capture the timbre and nuance and inflections of a speaker we are profiling or quoting.

But for Native Americans, especially, when storytelling is so ingrained in their culture and when much about their traditions and history have not been absorbed by so many journalists, the ability to hear the authentic voices and to share those voices with an audience is vital when it comes to covering Indian Country. And increasingly, the medium that raises the volume and—in most cases—improves the understanding of Native Americans is the Internet, with its proliferation of stories and resources on Web sites, its array of streaming images and audio, and its future in Weblogs and podcasts.

There was a time when the specter of a digital divide underscored the lack of access to the Internet that residents of more rural and less wired communities endured, including those on Indian reservations. Six years ago, the federal National Telecommunications and Information Administration reported that rural Native American households ranked well below the national average for telephone penetration and access to computers. It also said that, overall, Natives had less access to the Internet than other Americans. Last summer, on the syndicated radio show Native America

Calling, a Federal Communications Commission official was still speaking about the issues that face Indian Country and the need to address the limitations that still beset some reservations.

But despite those difficulties, there are indications that more and more Native Americans—just like everyone else—are logging onto the Internet. Tribal colleges are wired for computers, and while some outlying regions of Indian Country remain beyond the grasp of cyberspace, most Native Americans live outside the reservation in cities where there is increased computer access and opportunities to get online, if not at home then in schools and public libraries.

More and more, the Internet has become a conduit for Native Americans to tell their individual and collective stories—and for journalists to print and broadcast them.

So what can Native Americans and non-Natives find on the Internet? Plenty. Among online publications are newspapers that specialize in Native issues or individual nations such as the Native American Times, Indian Country Today, News from Indian Country, or the Navajo Times. [See box on page 33 for information about these Web sites and others.]

There is also reznets.org, which covers Native issues through a network of Native American reporters and photographers in colleges around the country. [See article by Denny McAuliffe on page 34.] Various Web sites promote the preservation of a specific language or culture and the cause of indigenous people. One site, the Sequoyah Research Center at the University of Arkansas Little Rock also acts as a clearinghouse for information

on American Indian and Alaska Native newspapers and periodicals. There are also sites that might have started with a specific tribe but have evolved into a resource for general news and information affecting all of Indian Country. One of those, [Indianz.com](http://indianz.com), is based on the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska and provides an array of links to stories in other media and information on specific issues. And in California, Victor Rocha of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians saw his pechanga.net Web site blossom into a vital source for many journalists. "I don't know of a more comprehensive or balanced ethnic site anywhere," says Stephen Magagnini of The Sacramento Bee, who has long covered Native issues. [See Magagnini's article on page 15.]

While the Bureau of Indian Affairs Web site has been temporarily shut down because of an ongoing court case, there are other federal Web sites to tap. There is the site for the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. And for a nongovernmental viewpoint, there is the Web site run by the National Congress of American Indians that includes a directory of tribal governments.

Browsing the Internet, one can listen to a live feed of the talk show "Native America Calling," hosted by Patty Tala-hongva, a Hopi living in Albuquerque. Her show is heard on more than 30 stations in the United States and Canada. And on the show's Web site it is possible to listen to archived shows dating back a decade or patch through to American Indian Radio on Satellite and be able to listen to Native shows from as far away as Anchorage, Alaska.

Sharing Stories on the Internet

Indeed, the Internet has become home for disparate people seeking and conveying news about Native Americans. They include veteran journalists like Magagnini and Bull. And they also include less experienced ones like Louis Montclair, a 22-year-old member of the Assiniboine Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana. Montclair, who spent the summer working

on his tribal newspaper, relies heavily on the Internet to do his work and to showcase his stories. Internet users also include Lee Marmon, a 79-year-old of New Mexico's Laguna Pueblo, whose photographs of Indian Country date back decades and are among the most striking images of Native people in ceremony and in everyday life. [His photograph is on this magazine's cover.]

Marmon, Bull and Magagnini were among the speakers on the Western Knight Center's cross-country tour last spring on which 20 journalists traveled 2,600 miles in eight days to learn more about Indian Country. In this too-short journey, the Native and non-Native participants discovered that Indian Country is more than a legal entity and a state of mind. It is a place journalists must find by going there—walking the ground, encountering the people, asking questions, and listening to their answers.

When Western Knight Director Vikki

Porter heard the journalists praising this program, she began to contemplate the possibility of repeating the seminar in other parts of Indian Country, with other Native issues. As one of the seminar organizers I, too, marveled at the popularity of the Covering Indian Country Weblog that gave the seminar participants a way to share their experiences and thoughts about what they heard and observed, whether in a Senate hearing room on Capitol Hill or at the home of a Navajo mother in Window Rock, Arizona. For some, this was their first exposure to writing on a blog, and some did so only reluctantly at first. For others, the blog offered a chance to contribute to a medium that is becoming a more familiar aspect of journalism. In time, for everyone, the blog served as a way to construct and share the story of our journey, whether through reflective or observational writing.

Wisely used, the Internet can enhance

Valuable Web Sites About Indian Country

Listed below are addresses of Web sites that Victor Merina selected for their value as resources for journalists.

Native American Times

<http://nativetimes.com>

Navajo Times

www.thenavajotimes.com

Indian Country Today

www.indiancountry.com

News From Indian Country

www.indiancountrynews.com

Sequoyah Research Center, University of Arkansas Little Rock

<http://anpa.ualr.edu>

Indianz.com

<http://indianz.com>

Pechanga.net

www.pechanga.net

Native America Calling

www.nativeamericacalling.com

Reznet

www.reznetnews.org

Lee Marmon, photographer

www.leemarmongallery.com/main.html

National Congress of American Indians

<http://198.104.130.237/ncai/index.jsp>

Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.ihs.gov

The Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism

www.wkonline.org/index.php/seminar_showcase/nativeamerican2005

our understanding of Indian Country. By parsing the wealth of information that is let loose in cyberspace, we can deepen our knowledge and stir our creative ideas. This technology can help provide greater insight about a people and a culture that so many people still know so little about. As Brian Bull would remind us, by navigating Indian

Country we can find the spoken word, the written word, and the word in images, all of which can convey the words of storytellers. And we can share these stories through our journalism and on the Internet. ■

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Finding a Different Path Into the Newsroom

For Native students, a summer journalism institute, an online newspaper, and internships can lead to full-time jobs.

By Denny McAuliffe

Quick quiz: What college or university this year produced the largest number of Native American graduates looking for jobs in newspaper journalism? Let me knock about a million years off of your guessing time. The answer is East Central University (ECU) in Ada, Oklahoma.

Notice this is not a big journalism school. Neither is it one of the 33 small tribal colleges where most Native Americans (about 30,000) go to school. In the mini-world of Native American journalism, there is a number that is significantly smaller than the American Society of Newspaper Editors' annual headcount of about 300 Native journalists working at daily newspapers. That's the number of Native Americans studying journalism in college or at least preparing for a journalism career by doing internships each summer. The magic number that put East Central University over the top was two. Two of its graduates, Erny Zah, a Navajo and Mark Francis, a Muscogee (Creek), are on track to become staff reporters after completing internships this summer.

ECU technically is tied for this honor with Creighton University of Omaha, Nebraska, but ECU won the tiebreaker because it has a student in the wings. Jennifer McMahan-Curliss, a Timbisha Shoshone, will graduate next year with

several internships under her belt, and one of Creighton's graduates has decided already to quit her first full-time newspaper job and do volunteer work on a reservation in South Dakota. (The other Creighton graduate, photographer Tetona Dunlap, an Eastern Shoshone from Wyoming's Wind River Reservation, became The Washington Post's first and only Native American intern.)

I don't think ECU actually tried to achieve this distinction or is even aware of it. It just happened. Then again, ECU or any school that Native Americans attend doesn't have to teach journalism to its future Native reporters, editors and photographers as they earn degrees in something else. The reason: Native students can get their journalism lessons and experiences from other sources—and that is important news.

Young Native Americans and Journalism

Two programs—a summer institute and an online newspaper—train Native Americans in the basics of journalism, place them in paid internships at daily newspapers, and help them to find jobs. The Freedom Forum's American Indian Journalism Institute [AIJI] teaches about 25 Native American college students

how to write newspaper stories and take photographs in a three-week boot camp at the University of South Dakota each June. The rezneta online newspaper then puts them to work during the school year as paid reporters and photographers. They use their rezneta clips when they apply for internships, which many of them do through the Freedom Forum's Chips Quinn Scholars Program.

Rezneta, which I created, is starting its fourth year as a joint project of the University of Montana School of Journalism and the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education. The online newspaper operates as a sort of daily newspaper. Each school day, we put up on the site a new story. As editors (and teachers), we edit heavily and often. All of our exchanges with the students are done by e-mail and phone calls, and the Web site is created by a staff whose connection to one another is via computers. My student assistant, Craig Henry, attends the University of Oklahoma. He posts the edited stories and photos on the Web site, which is housed in Oakland, California. Three journalists pitch in as editors, again via e-mail—Steve Chin, with the Maynard Institute in Oakland, Victor Merina, of the University of Southern California's Annenberg Institute for Justice and Jour-

nalism in Los Angeles, and Bill Elsen, a recently retired Washington Post editor and recruiter who lives in the Washington, D.C. suburbs. The three editors and I teach at the American Indian Journalism Institute during the summer. [See Merina's article on page 32.]

With only one or two exceptions, all rezneters are graduates of AIJI. In fact, rezneter is the school newspaper that Native students either don't have at their schools or wouldn't be caught dead working for. There are as many theories about Native Americans and journalism as there are Native Americans in journalism. Mine is pretty simple: Native students just don't think about it, especially when they finally go to college. I say finally because the profile of the typical tribal college student is a 30-year-old single mother with a couple of kids.

When Native students do go to college, they've already made up their minds what they want to do, usually something for their tribes—and it isn't journalism. One reason is that journalism is largely absent from their lives. Given the sparse number of Native journalists, Native young people don't see themselves when they turn on the TV news or open a newspaper. Or the newspaper they read—the daily or weekly in the town or city nearest the reservation—is openly hostile to tribes or seems to go out of its way to make dumb mistakes about all things Indian (since most don't have Natives in their newsrooms, either).

Most tribal newspapers tend to be little more than public relations mouthpieces for the tribal leaders, tightly controlled by the tribal governments that own them. Good tribal newspaper reporters and editors—those who attempt to report real news on their government bosses—spend a lot of time out of work, which is not exactly a ringing endorsement for a young person deciding on a career.

It gets even drearier: Tribal colleges don't have journalism classes. If an occasional one is offered, it often is canceled because of lack of students. Or students don't do real journalism in the classroom. One tribal college offered a journalism class taught by an out-of-

work tribal newspaper editor who was a poet; the students' first assignment was to find a sacred place, real or imagined, and write weepy words about it.

Creating Rezneter

The reason I invented rezneter was to use the Internet to reach out and teach journalism to—sometimes literally—the one Native kid in Wisconsin or Minnesota or Oklahoma or New Mexico or even New York who was interested in trying it. Rezneter is also doing an important job of recruiting Native Americans into our journalism pipeline: Many of the AIJI and rezneter students have said their initial interest in journalism came from reading rezneter and seeing the work of other Native college students who have, in fact, become the missing role models. Erny Zah and Mark Francis are good examples. When he was accepted into AIJI, Mark talked his friend Erny into applying.

Last year we squeezed 35 students onto the rezneter payroll. (We pay \$50 for a story and give each student reporter a digital camera.) They came from 21 different colleges in 12 states, and they represent 25 tribes in 15 states. This spring, AIJI graduated its fifth class, adding another 23 Native students to the rezneter talent pool.

The hallmark of AIJI is its strong and reliable internship program: Top graduates go immediately into six-week newspaper internships. After this June's AIJI class, 17 graduates started paid internships at eight newspapers and an Associated Press (A.P.) bureau in seven states. The numbers we've compiled are impressive, though small. (Working with Native Americans is not for big-dreamer personality types.) This year, six graduates of AIJI got their first full-time jobs at daily newspapers (excluding the one who retreated to the reservation), and I expect at least another five more will find staff jobs next year, including Erny, Mark and Tetona.

Counting the new AIJI class, 58 Native college students have had internships since the program's inception, and many have had multiple internships. Twenty-three AIJI grads from 15 colleges have received Chips Quinn internships.

Three rezneters have had A.P. internships, and five have taken part in the A.P.'s Diverse Voices/Diverse Visions workshops. Three have been selected for the staff of the ASNE Reporter newspaper that reports on the annual conference of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. All nine Native students on the staff of The Unity News newspaper covering the 2004 Unity: Journalists of Color convention were rezneters.

The July 11, 2005 edition of the Argus Leader reflects the growing impact of these programs. AIJI grads who were interning at the Sioux Falls, South Dakota newspaper wrote the Page One lead story (a story by Virginia Perez about community opposition to moving a diner downtown) and the centerpiece articles in both the Life feature and Sioux Empire metro sections (another by Perez about multicultural marriages and a story about a bison petting zoo in nearby Minnesota by photographer Russel Daniels). And the AIJI graduate, Eric Bohlen, who was working as an intern at the Sioux Falls A.P. bureau, had a bylined story appear inside the metro section about an old gas station that pumped nostalgia, not gas.

I know there will be a day when the lead story in The Washington Post or The New York Times will be by a former rezneter and carry a byline with a name such as the ones that readers see every day on rezneter: Bearchild, High Bear, Sings In The Timber, Walking Bull. That's my small dream. With these essential building blocks in place, the reality is that now it's an attainable one. ■

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Native News Honors Project

In a journalism class at the University of Montana, students report from the state's Indian Country, and their words and images are published.

By Carol Van Valkenburg

Not long after graduating from journalism school, I was assigned to cover federal district court in western Montana. In reporting a trial about a man charged with an Easter Sunday murder of a family member, I described him as a 24-year-old Indian. The next day the publisher relayed to me a question he'd received from a reader: "Why had I identified the defendant by his race?" I was flustered, but stammered an answer: It explained to readers why the case was in federal, not state, court, since the federal courts had jurisdiction over crimes committed by Indians on the state's seven reservations.

While the factual context was true, few readers would understand the distinction, or care. The real reason I described him in the way I did was because I'd grown up in Montana with Indians identified by race in the newspapers. Though Caucasians were not similarly identified, the disparity was lost on me. Thirty years distant, it's hard to fathom, but at the time I hadn't thought about why this different treatment constituted racism. Nor had I been exposed to its inherent unfairness when I studied journalism in college.

More than a decade later, a few years after I'd joined the faculty at the University of Montana School of Journalism, Dean Charles Hood proposed a class in which students would report on issues of concern to Montana's Native Americans. He thought, and I agreed, that news stories about Indians in the region generally fell into two categories: coverage of crime or culture. Indeed, plenty of stories told of Indians in trouble with the law, and lots of others explored the culture of the powwow, in which Native Americans dress in the clothing of their ancestors and celebrate important traditions. Such stories served

only to reinforce the perceptions most Montanans held of Native Americans, regarding them as either criminals or icons of a bygone era. Most stories were reactive, rather than being proactive, and few examined in depth many of the contemporary issues the state's 60,000 Indian residents confront.

Today Native Americans make up about seven percent of Montana's one million people. Caucasians comprise almost all of the state's remaining population. Not surprisingly, few students at the University of Montana see students who look different than they do or have different ethnic backgrounds. Even in the journalism school, where half of the students come from out of state, most have almost no experience dealing with unfamiliar cultures.

Training the Students

As we thought about training these prospective journalists, we wanted to give them the opportunity to report on Native cultures they knew little about. To do this, we would need to teach them to learn how to look beyond the obvious. Learning cultural sensitivity in doing this particular assignment would translate into understanding other perspectives as they go on in their journalism careers to cover a broad range of issues involving race and ethnicity. One advantage we brought to this endeavor was being at a school where students are taught by professors who have worked for many years as journalists, and a lot of them return to newspaper work during the summer months. They are able to provide students with the guidance they need to cover real news stories and to offer extensive critiques of their work.

When we began this Native News

Honors Project in 1991, we invited students who'd performed the best in other journalism courses to take this class. Photojournalism professor Patty Reksten and I limited the class to seven reporters and seven photographers and paired them in teams. We emphasized that the reporters and the photographers were equal partners in doing the research and the reporting. Reporters were not allowed to talk about "my photographer," as if the photojournalist was the reporter's chattel. Each team was assigned to one of the state's seven reservations. After we selected a topic, each team began to research it at their particular reservation.

Much of our time was spent meeting individually with the student teams to discuss their progress. The most relevant advice we gave them was to find stories that could be told through the personal experiences of those affected by what their research had revealed. We did not want them to write policy stories that no reader would plow through.

Reksten showed the students, both photographers and reporters, the work of distinguished documentary photographers, and I discussed great narrative writing. The student reporters brought in writing they particularly admired and read it aloud and talked about why it was effective. After a few years of teaching the class, we added student copyeditors, photo editors, and designers to the class. Through the years, we've also had a number of Native American students who provide especially beneficial insights. We also invite guest speakers to discuss with students the history of American Indians in Montana and ask Native guests to guide us in interacting with Indian sources. (Reksten has left Montana to become director of photography at The

Oregonian, but her successor, photojournalism professor Teresa Tamura, continues to get stunning photojournalism from the students.)

In this class, we permit students to do things we would not encourage, or even allow, in public affairs reporting classes, such as occasionally letting students stay in the homes of sources on the reservation. When a source invites them to dinner at their homes, we tell them that they can accept. In keeping with Native cultural tradition, we encourage students to bring small gifts when they go to the reservations and to give them to those who are helpful to them. We also caution them to be open to new perspectives and not make judgments about people and events based solely on their own experiences.

Opportunities and Obstacles

Sources on the reservation are largely open and candid, and they seem pleased that someone in the media is showing an interest in their concerns. But research and reporting has not always been easy. Many sources don't have a telephone, yet our students need to do their initial research from our Missoula campus, firming up their story ideas from afar. Once a team is given approval to pursue a story, they travel to their assigned reservation, which can be more than 500 miles from Missoula, to report and photograph their stories. If the original story idea falls through, students must scramble to find another. Not one student has ever come back empty-handed.

The work the students in our first class produced was extraordinary, and their successors equal that high standard. The stories are not flattering, sympathetic puff pieces. They are hard-hitting, insightful and in-depth stories about people whom the students spend time talking with and observing. Mindful of the many criticisms that Indians have voiced of anthropologists who "used" them for their studies, yet failed

to share with them their findings, we require students to get the names and addresses of every source and make sure a copy of the publication is mailed to them.

In May, last year's class of students



The cover of the 2004 Native News Honors Project.

won a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for their coverage of sovereignty, which was published in 2004. It was our school's first submission to this contest, but through the years many of the Native News Honors Project students' stories and photos have received awards from the William Randolph Hearst Journalism Awards Program and from the Society of Professional Journalists.

In looking at how sovereignty issues affect those who live on tribal reservations, one student, for example, examined how a tribal court judgment of \$250 million against the Burlington Railroad seemed like a victory for the families of three women killed at a railroad crossing, but resulted in a loss of sovereignty for the tribal court. Another student wrote about how close relationships on the reservations can lead to preferential treatment of defendants by judges with

little legal training. And another student explored how problems, such as mold at tribal houses, which was allegedly making residents sick, led to confusion and inaction as the tribe and federal government could not agree on who was responsible for making necessary repairs.

In the course of publishing these stories, we've had to overcome some obstacles. The project is expensive, since the journalism school pays for students' costs to travel to the reservations, where they stay four or five days. But the most significant expense is printing cost for the publication. For several years, we published the 36-page report as an insert in the *Missoulian*, the local newspaper. It was financed through support from the journalism school, as well as the University of Montana and other donors, such as former NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw, who has a second home in Montana. Grants from the Knight Foundation have been our mainstay and recently allowed us to insert the report into the *Missoulian*, the

Great Falls Tribune, and the Billings Gazette, the three leading papers in the state. In doing so, this assured that most Montanans have access to it.

In doing this project, the students learn a lot, as do their professors. An important lesson I learned early in the project was to let students have a hand in the stories up to publication. In the beginning, I rewrote the stories of those few students whose writing fell short of my expectations. After a student stormed into my office and shouted, "You destroyed my story!" I learned to use a lighter hand. I also learned to mentor rather than to dictate. With tight deadlines it is sometimes difficult to let the students do another rewrite, but it's critical to the learning process. When I finally work on the last edit, I sit with each reporter and go over every line to make sure both of us are happy

with what will be published.

Our stories don't always make our sources happy. Our spring semester class took on the topic of race. One eye-opening story reported by a student, Anne Pettinger, who went to a northern Montana town that borders a reservation, caused such a stir that the town's local paper wrote several stories about the residents' reactions to it, and many efforts were undertaken to change the tense climate of race relations. [See Pettinger's story below for more detail on her reporting and responses her story received.]

These sorts of results are ones that might not be expected from a major newspaper, let alone university stu-

dents' work. This experience offered invaluable lessons for our students in understanding the power of accurate and moving reporting and photography.

Another initiative of our journalism school involves the creation of *reznet* by Denny McAuliffe, an Osage tribal member. McAuliffe acts as editor and coach for tribal college reporters across the country whom he recruits to cover their campuses for this online news forum. [See McAuliffe's story on page 34.]

The Native News course is taught each year, and each class of students continues to surpass our initial goals. Most satisfying is that the majority of journalists covering American Indian

issues for Montana newspapers today are veterans of the class, putting the lessons learned to use in their daily reporting. The result is stories that reflect with sensitivity and accuracy the lived experiences of Native American people. ■

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A Student's Most Memorable Story

In tackling a tough topic—racial relations in a Montana community—a young reporter learned how much good journalism matters.

By Anne E. Pettinger

Years down the road, when I recall my first experiences as a journalist, one interview will stand out against all the others for its vividness. It was a rainy Friday night in a bar in a northern Montana town, and the person I was interviewing—a railroad conductor—asked me the first question: "Are you from France? You seem foreign."

He was partially right. I was foreign to the place where I was that night, but not because I was from Europe. Rather, last spring I was working on a story about Native Americans for a special, in-depth publication produced by students at the University of Montana in Missoula. Although I had been in Havre, Montana, for a few days, and Missoula was just five hours away, this person accurately sensed that I was out of my element.

The assignment represented a time of many firsts for me—traveling to a new

town to report a story and working as part of a reporter-photographer team covering Indian issues and interviewing someone in a bar. And as our conversation progressed, I quickly found out how difficult it was to prepare in the classroom for all that I was learning.

The conductor offered his perspective on the relationship between people who live in Havre and Native people who live about 25 miles away at the Rocky Boy's Reservation. At one point he said, "Native Americans here are like the blacks in the south." What spurred this comment was a tense moment in the bar, when four Indians walked through the bar and then abruptly left after a patron ridiculed them to his friends' delight.

What I saw flustered me, but I finished my interview. As I did so, I tried to ask questions that would help me better understand this man's life and

perspective, but I was distracted by what I'd witnessed and my source's reaction to it. When the photographer, Katie Hartley, with whom I was working, and I finally left the bar, we sat in her car for a few minutes in silence. Neither of us knew how to process what we had just experienced. We drove back to our hotel late that night, and I wrote for hours, trying to record what we'd seen and heard.

Professors warned us that our reporting assignment—with its focus on race—might seem overwhelming. And even though it was proving to be tough, I felt my teachers did a good job preparing us to cover people and issues with which we were generally unfamiliar. In our semester-long Native News class, seven photographers, seven reporters, and two designers learned as much as possible before being sent out to various locations to report. We became familiar

with stories done by former classes, and guest speakers from newspapers in and out of the state came to give us reporting tips. Indian students from a local community college also met with us to offer their perspectives.

The photographers among us focused their attention on images, while reporters in the class brought in writing samples we found particularly compelling and practiced writing descriptive, authoritative narratives. We read our pieces aloud. Early in the semester, professors created reporter-photographer teams and assigned us to reservations, so it was as a team that we researched our areas, identified potential sources, and brainstormed story ideas.

During much of our class time we discussed specific story ideas. Since most of us would have just one shot at reporting our story—we'd spend about four days at the reservation doing our reporting—the professors urged us to leave Missoula with a firm story idea in mind. We spent a great deal of time on the phone and the Internet looking for ideas that fit our theme.

Reporting As a Team

Katie and I chose a topic late, just several days before we left on assignment. We had talked to a University of Montana student who grew up on the Rocky Boy's Reservation, where we were assigned to go. What this student said intrigued us: There were some places in Havre, a town where many Rocky Boy's residents went to shop, where some Native Americans felt they were treated unfairly because of the color of their skin. Those tensions were most evident at retail stores, bars and restaurants, the student told us.

Before we left, our professors stressed that it would be best if we reported on something we witnessed firsthand rather than relying on second-hand accounts. This guidance made us think more about the many potential problems we might have with reporting this story, but since our other ideas seemed less promising, Katie and I decided to investigate it. Our teachers also reminded me that it is difficult to know what motivates people's actions,

so it would be especially important to describe scenes without offering my interpretation of them. "Show, don't tell," became my mantra.

For four days we worked on the story, covering a great deal of ground. We interviewed employees at clothing stores, hardware stores, restaurants and bars. We talked to tribal college educators and police officers. We met with people in their homes. We went to visit the jail and on a ride-along with a police officer. The constant challenge was to figure out what questions to ask and how to ask them.

Race is a sensitive subject, so often I would simply ask about the relationship between people who live in Havre and people who live at Rocky Boy's. Since part of what I was investigating was how people were treated in stores, I also asked my sources, both customers and clerks, about shopping and store policies. People were generally candid and eager to talk.

Immersing myself in a new place and working on an in-depth story was invigorating. I was devoted to this project, and the reporting time passed quickly. Sometimes Katie and I separated to save time, but often we worked together. I found it was generally valuable to work as a team. When we met with sources, having two of us there seemed to put them more at ease. Katie was skilled at carrying on the conversation when I furiously scribbled notes, and my questions helped keep our sources relaxed when she was shooting.

Being part of a team was also helpful because we were able to discuss our story as it unfolded. If we needed an additional interview, we brainstormed about how to find the right person. When Katie wondered what image might best illustrate an idea, we talked about that, too. After each interview we'd discuss it, sharing what stood out to each of us.

Despite my initial uncertainty that the story would pan out, I became amazed at how many different angles our investigation could have taken. From our initial unplanned interview we were directed to additional sources and, for each person we interviewed,

there were three more people that we simply didn't have time to talk to. The assignment illustrated the wealth of stories waiting to be reported from these communities.

Responses to the Reporting

Most fascinating has been observing how the communities reacted since "Bordering on Racism" was published. Several local papers did follow-up articles describing people's responses. One of my sources was angry and said I took her comments out of context. The mayor of Havre called it the most slanted story he had ever read. But another person called it hauntingly accurate, and leaders in towns around the state said they face similar sorts of racial friction in their communities.

People have been pledging changes, too. A national clothing store chain announced that it was increasing its employee diversity training after a clerk in their Havre store told me, "I don't mean to be racist, but there are a lot of Native Americans around here, and that's who we have to watch." A mediator from the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service visited Havre to help town and reservation residents improve communication, and Havre city officials announced that its once-defunct Native American Affairs Committee would be revived.

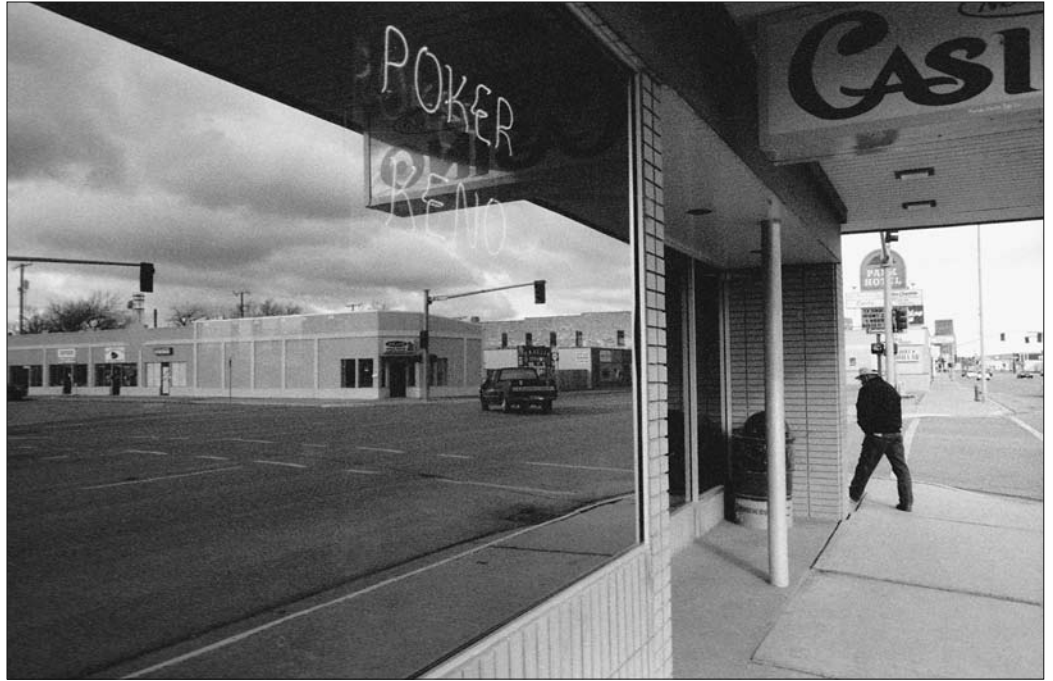
Visiting a new community and trying to make sense of it in four days was an enormously difficult task. But the response to the story is an illustration that journalism is important because it can directly affect people's lives. For me, it's also a powerful reminder that at its best journalism can help us better understand the places we've never been to and the people who live there—even those who might initially seem foreign. ■

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“Havre is a small isolated town located 25 miles from Rocky Boy’s Reservation. After visiting local businesses, it became apparent that these neighboring towns had conflicting opinions about the tensions between Natives and non-Natives.”

— Katie Hartley



“We expected that stories of racially motivated conflicts and tension would be few and far between on our first visit to Rocky Boy’s Reservation. What we found instead is that everyone we spoke with had a story to tell about local racism. Joe Big Knife recounted an incident at a Havre store that he felt humiliated his family.”

— Katie Hartley



Photos by Katie Hartley.

“The Rocky Boy’s Reservation lies between ranch lands and the beautiful rolling hills of the Bear Paw Mountains.”

— Katie Hartley



“In a Havre restaurant, Kenny Blatt, a Rocky Boy’s resident, tells us that he has built a rapport with many people in Havre. Blatt, however, expressed his concern that there were other Natives who were not receiving the same hospitality.”

— Katie Hartley



Photos by Katie Hartley.

Changing Newspapers, Changing News

In an effort to make decisions and activities transparent, **Steven A. Smith**, editor of The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, Washington, invites members of the public into morning news meetings, assigns five editors to be part of an online blog called "Ask the Editors" in which they explain news decisions, and welcomes the daily critique of five citizen bloggers as they share views about the newspaper's efforts in an online feature called "News Is a Conversation." As Smith writes, "In the transparent newsroom, citizens are partners in the news conversation, not just passive consumers of news and information."

Patrick Dougherty, executive editor of the Anchorage (Alaska) Daily News, describes how his newspaper is trying to use the Internet to "talk with readers." Notice, he writes, that "I use the word 'with' and not 'to' precisely because the choice of preposition lies at the heart of all that is changing for those of us at newspapers." The paper's first online attempt failed—and the Web site's feature was shut down—when comments "profane, bitter, shallow, racist and relentless" forced out those who were more thoughtful and well-informed commentators. Dougherty writes about this experience.

In a speech **Bill Kovach**, chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, delivered earlier this year to journalism students in Madrid, Spain, he focused on transitional issues that journalists are confronting in an era of rapid technological change. As he observed, "We begin by realizing that our old notion of journalist as gatekeeper is obsolete. The Internet has torn down the fences . . . Instead of gatekeepers, journalists must become authenticators." Transparency, he argued, will also be essential. "The premise is simple: Never deceive your audience. Tell them what you know and what you don't know."

Francis Pisani, a newspaper columnist and Weblogger for Le Monde, questions whether technology is poised to subsume some of the roles journalists have traditionally held. He speaks to the "emerging social phenomenon . . . [of] citizen journalism" and describes the ways in which computer programs, using algorithms, already determine the positioning of news stories on some popular Web sites. Journalists, he suggests, "should not overlook the fact that as technological tools are created, more and more parts of our usual tasks will be able to be taken over by software programs . . ." Comments Pisani made during the May 2005 Nieman Reunion panel, "Thinking About Journalism," address these issues, too, as do experiences shared by fellow panel member **John Robinson**, editor of the News & Record in Greensboro, North Carolina, whose newsroom exemplifies the use of blogs to promote greater citizen interaction with the newspaper's staff. "In journalism circles it seems the most controversial thing we do is not edit the blogs," Robinson said.

David D. Perlmutter, an associate professor at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communications, and **Misti McDaniel**, a master's degree candidate there, explore the ascendancy of blogging, evaluate blogs' impact on journalism, and assess how new media likely will affect the old. "At some level, blogs seem a threat to almost everything in the news business," they write. "But the point worth remembering is that the rise of new media should not make the old media panic or be dismissive or fearful." **Douglas Ahlers**, who studied the

intersection of online and offline news media as a spring 2005 fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy, and **John Hessen**, a communications consultant, share a range of data about news consumers' habits and advertisers' spending that touch on the prospects for print and broadcast media in the digital age. Traditional media organizations, they write, need to "understand and explore the complementary nature of online and offline media and take steps to attract the next generation of news consumers."

David Carlson, Cox Foundation/Palm Beach Post Professor of New Media Journalism at the University of Florida and creator of The Online Timeline that threads through our collection of stories, contends that few newspapers effectively use their Web sites. They are not, he writes, "taking advantage of the emerging capabilities of the medium." To do so, they must "stop thinking like newspapers." **Barbara A. Serrano**, a Web news editor at the Los Angeles Times, describes how her newspaper's Web site is being redesigned to highlight different content and draw in new readers. "There are plans to invest newsroom resources (i.e. staff) in the online operation," she writes. "The goal is to have a Web editor working for each department in the newsroom." In the wake of online experimentation on the Los Angeles Times editorial pages, **Michael Gartner**, who won the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing, reminds us that those editors "certainly won't be the last" to debate, dissect, or disparage the editorial page. It is something, he writes, that's happened "since Horace Greeley invented it [the editorial page] in the 1850's."

Susan E. Tift, the Eugene C. Patterson Professor of the Practice of Journalism & Public Policy at Duke University, describes what her students know about journalism (not much), how she teaches them about it, and what "dream newspaper" they then want to create. "Each one envisioned a strong Web presence in addition to the print edition," she writes.

Philip Meyer, Knight Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, finds in bloggers' treatment of their own errors an example of why, in the transition from old media to new, there is need for "a new kind of media organization to focus responsibility." **Russell Frank**, who teaches journalism at Pennsylvania State University, examines how newspapers might handle the anecdotal "optional" news leads now offered by The Associated Press. "The dilemma is clear," he writes. "Newspapers know they're going to lose readers when they only tell them news they already know."

Comparing National and Local Campaign Coverage

In writing about their comparative examination of national and local campaign coverage, **Shanto Iyengar**, the Chandler Professor of Communication at Stanford University, and colleagues **William F. Woo**, former editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch who teaches in the graduate journalism program, and doctoral student **Jennifer McGrady** examine both the content and quality of the news reporting they studied, interpret what they learned in their analysis, and explain the significance of their findings on future political coverage. "... there were significant differences between what the journalists thought (or said) they produced and what was actually published," they conclude. "Strikingly, reporters and editors significantly overestimated the substantive content of their stories." A close look at the coverage also revealed a "discrepancy between what journalists assert is important and what news actually reaches readers." ■

WATCHDOG

A Newsroom's Fortress Walls Collapse

At The Spokesman-Review, editors and reporters explain 'what we do and why' and involve 'citizens, at some level, in news planning and decision-making.'

By Steven A. Smith

First there was "fortress newsroom." That was the term I used in a series of speeches for the Pew Center for Civic Journalism in the early 1990's dealing with the perceived disconnect between citizens and their newspapers. Fortress newsroom, I argued, was the walled enclave where journalists practiced their craft in a "just the facts" environment, using selective notions of objectivity and balance to shield themselves from the consequences of their work.

In fortress newsroom, readers are something of a necessary inconvenience. We need their business, but not their interference. In fortress newsroom, objectivity means independence defined by separation. Journalists report on their communities but cannot be part of their communities. And listening to readers, trying to understand their interests and motivations, is the business of ad reps and circulation managers.

That the fortress newsroom model was failing newspaper journalism became apparent in the late 1980's and early 1990's as all of us began, finally, to wage war against the double-whammy of declining readership and plummeting credibility. I first challenged the model during early civic journalism experiments at The Wichita Eagle where I was managing editor. Those Eagle projects were built around the notion that newspaper journalists and citizens were active partners in the support of democratic institutions and that citizen voices were the bedrock of effective public service journalism.

But attacking fortress newsroom through the frame of civic journalism wasn't easy or effective. Civic journalism was too great a flashpoint, and its critics successfully derailed the conversation with red herring assertions that civic

or public journalism was equivalent to community boosterism.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) credibility project of 1997-1999 refocused the conversation. In two far-ranging ASNE credibility surveys, one of the key findings suggested that newspapers could slowly rebuild citizen trust by better explaining news values and decision-making and by engaging in conversations with readers about journalism.

"This research suggests that most of the public is fairly generous in giving us credit for trying to explain ourselves to them," Judy Pace Christie wrote in the overview to a report on the 1999 credibility survey. "The best outcome, of course, is that the education will be reciprocal."

Therein lies the foundation for the "transparent newsroom," the antithesis of the fortress model. In the transparent newsroom, citizens are partners in the news conversation, not just passive consumers of news and information. In fortress newsroom, where separation is a primary value, there are no mechanisms to foster conversations between journalists and citizens. In the transparent newsroom, the opposite should be true; connection becomes a primary value and journalists have multiple, programmatic ways to ensure that the education occurring through conversation is, as Christie suggested, fully reciprocal.

I've experimented with various transparency strategies through the years at four different newspapers. In Wichita, editors went to malls and recreation centers and set up tables inviting readers to discuss their newspaper concerns. In Colorado Springs, we invited various community groups into the newsroom to audit and critique the paper's jour-

nalism. In Salem, Oregon, open news meetings attracted community visitors almost daily.

The Transparent Newsroom

Our work at The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, Washington, incorporates many of those earlier experiments but is enhanced by aggressive exploitation of the Internet, an ideal medium for journalist-citizen interaction.

As suggested by the ASNE studies, our goal is to improve the newspaper's credibility in our communities by better explaining what we do and why, by soliciting and then listening to reader criticism, and by involving citizens, at some level, in news planning and decision-making. Among our newsroom initiatives:

- All of our daily news meetings are open to the public, and we promote that opportunity on Page One several times each week. Those participating in morning critiques often stay to talk with editors about issues that concern them. Invariably we learn something worth knowing or get a tip on a story worth pursuing.
- As many editors do, I periodically write about our journalism for the op-ed page. But the focus more often is on newsroom values, routines, reflexes and practices rather than particular stories or news decisions. One recent column articulated the core values that underlie newsroom policies and practices.
- Too small to support a full-time ombudsman, we hired a local journalism professor with no connections to the paper to independently critique our work and respond to citizen complaints once or twice a month.

Sometimes Whitworth College professor Gordon Jackson tackles subjects of his choosing; sometimes he responds to reader questions.

- Five editors participate in an online blog called “Ask the Editors,” portions of which are repurposed for publication on the op-ed page each Friday.
- Five citizen bloggers representing a cross-section of political and social views critique the paper daily in an online feature called “News Is a Conversation.” Staffers can respond to the citizen posts as can other readers, generating an ongoing discussion of coverage issues, news values, and decisions.
- One of our online journalists produces a daily summary of our morning and afternoon news meetings posted online as “Daily Briefing.” The report summarizes the daily staff critique and highlights the major stories being worked for the next day.
- Periodically, I host online chats about the newspaper. Recent chats dealing with our investigation of Spokane Mayor Jim West drew hundreds of participants. One lasted nearly three hours. [See box on page 46 for more about this investigation.]
- As part of our work on a pending redesign, we sent editors into the field to interview citizens—readers and nonreaders—about information needs and readership behavior. “Project Insight” was so successful, we’ll do it regularly.

Of course, The Spokesman-Review relies on traditional means of communicating with readers. We publish more than 5,000 letters to the editor each year, far more than most newspapers our size. Editors, reporters and support staff handle countless e-mail and telephone doorways into the newsroom for people to voice compliments, complaints and concerns, all promoted in print and online. And through the energetic innovation of Online Publisher Ken Sands, we have initiated numerous staff-written blogs that have become lively topic-focused conversations between journalists and news consumers.

Newsroom Responses

Newsroom reaction to the transparent newsroom has been predictably mixed. Generally, as each initiative proves its value—or fails to damage the journalistic enterprise—staffers accept it. And some relatively new experiments, such as “News Is a Conversation,” were suggested by staff.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to newsroom acceptance will come later this year when we begin Webcasting our morning and afternoon news meetings, inviting observers to participate in the conversations through real-time, chat-style interaction. Will anyone bother to watch? Will we have any interaction? How will observers respond to the occasionally off-color tone of a newsroom meeting? Will it enhance credibility or further confuse matters?

Well, it’s an experiment, so we can’t be certain of the outcome. If it helps, we’ll continue. If not, we’ll learn our lessons and move on to something else. But in the spirit of transparency, we’ll tell readers what we’ve done and why.

To date, I know of no statistically valid research showing that initiatives such as these actually move the needle on a newspaper’s credibility. Anecdotal evidence here and in a few other markets suggests we can show improvement. And some of the research conducted at the tail end of the ASNE credibility project and later by the Readership Institute suggests the same.

In Spokane, our Reader Behavior Scores (a Readership Institute measure of readership intensity) have gone up during the past three years. Our own readership studies show some marginal improvement in reader trust measures. But much more needs to be done before any of us can say that the transparent newsroom can repair the damage wrought by fortress newsroom. ■

Steven A. Smith is the editor of The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, Washington. His “Ask the Editors” blog can be found at www.spokesmanreview.com/blogs/editors/.

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Online Timeline

By David Carlson

An article by David Carlson, including a description of work on his timeline, begins on page 68. The Online Timeline from which this is adapted can be found at <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/carlson/timeline.shtml>.

1962

United States

U.S. Air Force contracts with Rand Corp. to study computer networking for defense purposes.

1963

United States

Ted Nelson, an author and futurist, coins the word “hypertext.”

1967

United States

Development of Arpanet, forerunner of the Internet, begins with U.S. Defense Department funding.

1969

United States

Arpanet begins operation, connecting three universities in California and one in Utah.

1969

United States

CompuServe Information Service launches in Columbus, Ohio, as a computer time-sharing service.

1970

United Kingdom

December 14: First mention of the concept behind teletext is made in a BBC internal memo.

1972

United States

The first e-mail program for Arpanet is created by Ray Tomlinson of BBN.

Sharing All That Reporters Knew With Readers

In the spring, following a two-year investigation, The Spokesman-Review reported that Spokane Mayor Jim West:

- Allegedly molested two or more young boys while serving as a deputy sheriff and Boy Scout leader nearly 30 years ago.
- Had, as a long-time legislative leader and powerful Republican, pursued an antigay agenda while living a secret life as a gay man.
- Admitted to trolling for young men on an Internet Web site, even going so far as to offer benefits and a city hall internship to an online correspondent who was actually a computer forensic specialist hired by the newspaper to confirm the mayor's online activities.

The stories were predictably explo-

sive. In the days prior to publication, Spokesman-Review editors decided readers would need considerably more information than traditional news reporting would allow.

We knew the mayor would come after the newspaper with every tool in his considerable political arsenal. Our defense, we decided, would be full disclosure, up front, of the information underlying our stories. We concluded total transparency would allow readers to review all of the material with which we were dealing so that they could decide for themselves if we had been fair to the mayor, if we were contextually accurate as well as factually accurate, if, in short, we were credible.

To accomplish this, we posted on our Web site (www.spokesmanreview.com) vast quantities of material—full transcripts of all conversations the mayor had with our computer consultant who

was presenting himself as a 17-year-old high school student, full transcripts of all interviews with the mayor and his chief accusers, full written and audio transcripts of the mayor's response to our stories, news conferences, etc., PDF copies of all official documents and reports used in our reporting, and so on. We even posted my raw notes from an early Sunday morning conversation I had with the mayor when he called me to tearfully explain his hellish life as a closeted, conflicted and now accused gay man.

This unprecedented opening of our raw reporting materials achieved its purpose. The lengthy transcript of the key interview between West and our investigative reporters attracted nearly 7,000 unique page views outside our subscriber firewall. The transcripts of his conversations with our consultant, using the screen name Moto-Brock, at-

Managing the Transparent Newsroom

To make a transparent newsroom function requires some changes in the tasks people take on in connecting more effectively with members of the community. What follows are some brief descriptions of ways we are learning to manage these new responsibilities.

Open News Meetings

What is it? The Spokesman-Review's daily news meetings—morning and afternoon—are open to all news staff and to the public. Typically, one or two outsiders will attend at a time. But sometimes entire scout groups or school classes are there. Participation in the critique and conversation are encouraged.

Who manages it? Visitors make appointments with the editor's execu-

tive assistant.

How do people find out about it? Invitations appear in a Page One rail every other day.

What does it cost? No cost.

What does it accomplish? Brings newsroom staff together with readers (and nonreaders) who have an interest in contributing to daily news decisions. Promotes mutual understanding. Provides story tips and background. Often brings young voices to the table.

Part-Time Ombudsman

What is it? Unable to support a full-time staff ombudsman, the paper contracts with a local college professor for op-ed columns once or twice a month.

Who manages it? Ombudsman reports to the editorial page editor.

How do people find out about it? Referenced periodically on the op-ed page.

What does it cost? Paid on a contract rate of \$125 per column.

What does it accomplish? The contract arrangement provides periodic, independent review of Spokesman-Review journalism and gives readers a place to take complaints for independent review and response. Much of his work never appears in print as he facilitates communication between disgruntled readers and staff.

Ask the Editors

What is it? Five editors participate in an online blog, portions of which are repurposed for publication on the op-ed page each Friday.

Who manages it? Online staff receive

tracted 34,000 views. PDF documents attracted 6,000 and audio transcripts and clips another 19,000. In all, the West materials drew 519,000 unique page views outside our subscriber firewall in the two months following initial publication on May 5, 2005. Statistics for subscriber views are still being tabulated as I write this.

Again and again readers told us how much they appreciated seeing the background material. Some readers still disagreed with our reporting, disputed our conclusions, or attacked our methodology. But they did so with full knowledge of what we had done. A great many more reviewed the background and told us they had a better appreciation for our reporters' work.

Did our strategy provide the desired defense against the mayor's attacks?

In a publicity blitz in late June, aimed at turning his political crisis into an

anti-Spokesman campaign, the mayor denied, among other things, ever offering Moto-Brock a city hall internship in return for a sexual relationship. The transcripts, he said flatly, showed the consultant had raised the issue first and had sought the internship.

Unfortunately for the mayor, our readers knew otherwise. In a subsequent fact-checking story, we were able to point them to all of the points in the conversations where the internship was discussed, showing, without a doubt, that the mayor was the voice behind the offer and the aggressor in pursuing the relationship.

This experiment in newsroom transparency does not mean we'll routinely post the raw material behind our stories. But it shows that in some cases and, when it matters most, such practices can enhance credibility. We can live with that. ■ — S.A.S.

reader questions and send them out to participating editors for a response.

How do people find out about it? Periodic promotion on Page One, daily promotion online, and weekly promotion on the op-ed page.

What does it cost? No operational cost. Editors find they spend a few minutes a day responding to questions, though occasionally a question requires considerable research.

What does it accomplish? Gives readers a quick explanation of news decisions, coverage priorities, and newsroom values. Provides quick feedback as questions usually are asked and answered the day a story appears.

News Is a Conversation

What is it? Five citizen bloggers representing a cross-section of political and

social views critique the paper daily in this online feature.

Who manages it? Bloggers post their own entries that are moderated by a member of the online staff. Editors, reporters and others respond as time permits.

How do people find out about it? Online. Periodically on Page One.

What does it cost? Citizen bloggers are volunteers. No staff or operational costs.

What does it accomplish? At its best, it generates a dynamic conversational thread about specific newspaper stories and decisions, but also about the future of newspapers, information technology, and the role of the press in society. Ranges in tone from thoughtfully intellectual to talk-show rant.

Continued on page 48

1972

United Kingdom

October 23: Ceefax is announced by the BBC, which outlines a series of tests to be conducted.

1972

United States

November: Atari is founded and ships Pong, the first commercial video game.

1973

Europe

First international connections to Arpanet are created in England and Norway.

1974

United Kingdom

The British Post Office's Research Laboratory demonstrates "Viewdata," the world's first videotex system, later called Prestel.

1974

United States

First use of term "Internet" appears in a conference paper by Vinton Cerf and Bob Kahn.

1975

France

An ambitious project to update the telephone system is begun. Leads to creation of electronic phone book, mass-fax and videotex systems.

1975

United States

Bill Gates, 19, and Paul Allen, 22, start a software company in Gates's dorm room at Harvard. It comes to be called Microsoft, and its first product is BASIC, a simple programming language.

1976

United Kingdom

First known e-mail from a head of state: Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom, sends a message via Prestel.

Daily Briefing

What is it? A short online summary and critique of the newsroom's morning and afternoon news meetings.

Who manages it? An online reporter takes notes at the meetings and posts them within minutes. Editor and managing editor review.

How do people find out about it? Online. Occasionally in print.

What does it cost? No cost. Staff time amounts to no more than 30 minutes per day outside the actual meetings.

What does it accomplish? Critique

summary provides insight into staffers' views of our daily performance. Provides heads-up on upcoming stories, helps promote next-day content and explain news priorities.

Project Insight

What is it? Newsroom editors are sent into the community in teams of three to four to interview citizens about information and news consuming interests and habits. Newspaper readership questions are secondary.

Who manages it? Editor and manag-

ing editor facilitate the program.

How do people find out about it? Intended for internal use, the project is not promoted to readers though the project will be cited when it produces specific content or design changes.

What does it cost? Minimum of two hours work time per editor quarterly.

What does it accomplish? Puts editors into contact with real people representing the widest cross-section of age, ethnicity, social status, education, etc. Information gleaned is used to reimagine a newspaper that better serves a fragmenting readership. ■ —S.A.S.

A Newspaper Talks With Readers in a Cyber Town Square

'Changes wrought by the Internet demand that newspapers innovate, and that means experimentation as we move beyond the boundaries of our known world.'

By Patrick Dougherty

About 10 years ago, a group of McClatchy executives asked the founding editor of Wired magazine where he thought the Internet would rank among human inventions. Was it like television or, perhaps even more profound, like moveable type?

"I think," Kevin Kelly told us, "that it's more like fire."

Our CEO later cautioned that humorist Dave Barry had conversely described the Internet as the greatest advance in communications since call waiting. Reality, he said, was probably somewhere in-between those extremes: fire and call waiting.

From where I sit, as executive editor of the Anchorage Daily News, I'm more in the moveable-type school of thinking. The Internet (and everything that catch-all name has come to mean) certainly represents the greatest technological innovation to hit the newsroom in my

lifetime. The introduction of cold type or the addition of computers for word processing and data crunching were insignificant when compared with the World Wide Web.

Even so, as Kelly's comment reminds us, the Internet hype can get pretty thick at times. One way to get beyond the hyperbole is to deal with one piece of the discussion at a time. Instead of talking broadly about "The Internet and the Future of Journalism," let's pose a narrower question: "What does this have to do with how we talk with readers?" And note that I use the word "with" and not "to" precisely because the choice of preposition lies at the heart of all that is changing for those of us at newspapers.

Our traditional communication with readers and viewers was one-way: we transmitted and readers received. We were a priesthood, delivering truth to

the masses. But that catechism is disintegrating before our eyes. Thanks to the Internet's interactivity, the masses are talking back. Editors no longer deal simply with an occasional reader calling to complain or a local gadfly writing a critical letter to the editor. Every reader becomes a potential writer, media critic, and publisher.

This potential offers a distinctly mixed blessing for those of us who work at newspapers and for our readers. Already I've experienced mixed results at the Daily News because of the availability and ease of these interactions; even so, we're about to wade in to encouraging more Web-based communication again.

The Conversation Ends

Our paper's initial experience with broad, Internet-based reader participa-

tion calls to mind a recent public radio story I heard about the decline of New England town meetings. After 200 years, going back to at least Alexis de Tocqueville, these annual expressions of direct democracy apparently are losing favor among their constituents.

One reason seems to involve the rancor and contentiousness of citizens trying to find common ground on which to build consensus with their neighbors. (Real participatory democracy isn't pretty, perhaps especially not during this time of bitter partisanship.)

I've never attended a New England town meeting, but that story struck a chord here because I did try—and failed—to create a place on my newspaper's Web site aimed at roughly the same purpose: a place where readers could write in to discuss the stories of the day and offer opinions on the newspaper's coverage.

Our attempt began well enough. Articulate and well-informed readers posted thoughtful, interesting comments about the news and the newspaper. Some offered astute criticism of our coverage. Of course there were a few lunkheads, but overall the online forums extended and enhanced what we were trying to do in the newspaper. We had readers who wrote to give first-hand information about stories we were covering. A member of the family of a crime victim we hadn't been able to track down wrote in and helped us flesh out the police account of a tragedy.

This is good, I thought. A hundred thousand fact checkers can add a lot to a newspaper's coverage of a story.

But it wasn't long before things started to go bad. A small group of people began to write constantly. They were neither the best-informed nor most thoughtful participants. Instead they were profane, bitter, shallow, racist and relentless. Little by little, their ignorant and mean-spirited comments began to predominate. They were prolific. They didn't appear to hold jobs or even sleep. Ultimately their words set a tone for the forum that discouraged reasonable, intelligent, considerate voices from participating.

I couldn't blame the good participants for dropping out—I would

have, too—but their departure further solidified the hold of the snarling pack, reinforcing a downward spiral that eventually convinced me that this particular experiment in involving readers in the paper had gone irredeemably wrong. In the end, I was happy to shut it down.

I wish I could say I understand the psychology behind what happened. But I don't. Why would an effort to let readers talk with their newspaper's editors and reporters and with each other attract people so eager to unleash their intolerance and mean-spiritedness? It called to mind a former colleague's description of talk radio as "a place where people go to pool their ignorance."

When we had started this online forum I hadn't viewed the editor's gatekeeping role as including the imposition of civility on public debate, but in retrospect that seems to be one of the things we need to do.

Renewing the Dialogue

Time has passed, and I'm ready to give this effort another try. I'm sure the bad actors or their cousins will show up again. But in an attempt to stop from happening what derailed our last attempt, this time forum participants will need to register on the site, and we'll be able to cut off registrants who don't behave themselves. We know that's more of a speed bump than a barrier, since banned users can create a new e-mail address, reregister and return. But we've also built in new mechanisms for screening and removing postings and better ways for the community of users to regulate itself.

Will this new venture into the free-for-all marketplace of ideas work better than it did the first time we tried it? Time will tell but, so far, the cyber town square seems to be one of those places where the hype about a glorious Internet—free from the strictures of old media gatekeepers—seems better in concept than in reality. But we're going to keep at it until we find something that works.

Figuring out how we get our readers to talk with us, talk with each other, and contribute to the journalistic mission of the newspaper, is a puzzle we need

1976

United States

April 1: Steve Jobs and Mike Wozniak incorporate Apple Computer and introduce the Apple I. Cost: \$666.66.

1980

United Kingdom

Prestel is now within a local phone call for 62 percent of the British population.

1980

United States

Miami: Viewtron, the videotex service created by Knight Ridder and AT&T, begins "concept trials" near Miami.

1980

France

Teletel, the videotex system now called Minitel, is publicly demonstrated.

1980

United Kingdom

The (Brighton) Argus, owned by Westminster Press, launches a Prestel service called Viewpress.

1980

Japan

The VCR is introduced by Matsushita. Within a year, 40,000 U.S. homes will have one.

1980

United States

July: The Columbus Dispatch in Ohio becomes the first newspaper to offer an electronic edition via CompuServe, which now has 3,600 total subscribers.

1980

United States

The Source is purchased for \$6 million by Reader's Digest. It has fewer than 5,000 subscribers.

to solve. Smart newspaper editors are engaged in doing this. Surely it is clear to every editor that we must learn how to extend our core mission into the online world if we want to survive and thrive. I'm convinced, for example, that the battle for the time and attention of young readers will be won or lost on our Web sites, not on the pages of our newspapers. Soon the Daily News will be asking readers to submit reviews of movies, concerts, plays, restaurants and nightclubs. We plan to post all of these reviews online and publish the best of them in the newspaper.

At the same time, we're redesigning our in-paper entertainment guide, which will be accompanied by the launch of a four-page, free distribution sheet focused on movies, dining and nightlife. Both will feed content to and promote an expanded Web site aimed at 18- to 30-year-olds. We might be wildly successful, or we might not. If this works well, we'll do more of it. If it doesn't, we won't just retreat. We'll try something else.

The Role of the Blog

I am also writing an editor's blog. Why? Mainly because I want to explore the potential of a newspaper blog before I commit other precious newsroom resources to this possible new venture. If it works the way I hope it will, the readers and I will have an ongoing, online

conversation about the newspaper and what appears (and does not appear) in it each day. Writing this blog will also test my skepticism about whether blogging can live up to its hype. Some blogs seem like little more than guest columns or expansive letters to the editor. Others offer personal commentary, ranging from what might appear in a newspaper column to a more intimate diary entry.

Is the blog a fundamentally new form of communication? I don't think so, but I do hear a lot of nervous talk about them among editors. Do newspapers need to jump on the blog bandwagon? Maybe. Blogging certainly seems a wonderful way to do something—but what that “something” is for newspapers still seems in need of exploration.

Some would say that the recent high-water mark of noninstitutional news blogging was the dissection and discrediting of the CBS News report on President Bush's National Guard Service. Smart people asking tough questions and ferreting out information for an Internet audience could not be ignored. This was a socially useful activity and one that was fundamentally journalistic, even if motivated by political partisanship.

A different type of blog is “Dooce,” the online personal journal of a Salt Lake City housewife. This is just a window—a clever, funny window—on the life of a regular person. It's interesting,

entertaining material. If I were the editor of a Salt Lake paper, I'd be trying to get material like that into the paper. In my judgment, this is also journalism, a personal form of it.

Newspapers are getting busy with blogs. Some are insider, backstory material or analysis, some are personal musings, some are editor columns. And I haven't seen much that was good in the blogosphere that wouldn't have been good on the pages of a newspaper, if newspapers could loosen up the standard newspaper template.

Changes wrought by the Internet demand that newspapers innovate, and that means experimentation as we move beyond the boundaries of our known world. This is the world of “ready, fire, aim,” as another colleague puts it. But this is certainly not how newspapers—these conservative, change-averse institutions that we love so much—usually operate.

Can we learn to adapt? I think so, but not without pain. Certainly we have sufficient motivation. To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, “Knowing you are to be hanged in a fortnight does wonderfully concentrate the mind.” ■

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A New Journalism for Democracy in a New Age

On February 1, 2005, former Nieman Foundation Curator Bill Kovach, who founded and directs the Committee of Concerned Journalists, gave a speech at the School of Journalism at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid/El Pais in Madrid, Spain. An edited version of his words follows.

Journalism does more than keep us informed. Journalism enables us, as citizens, to have our voices heard in the chambers of power and allows us to monitor and moderate the sources

of power that shape our lives. In the past few decades this responsibility of the journalist in a free society has been made more vital and more difficult by the revolution in communications technology and the economic organization of journalism it has spawned. Technology has filled the world with a flood of undifferentiated information that is changing the audience for news and information from passive receivers to proactive consumers, who decide what they want, when they want it, and how they want it.

I say “undifferentiated” because information is now accessible to a mass audience at each end of the process—the producer and the consumer. As a result the world of cyberspace is filled with many views of reality, designed to distract us or to control and dictate our public behavior rather than to inform our independent public judgment. This new competition requires a new journalism to assure that the view of the world in which the people live is one constructed with the integrity and reliability self-government requires.

There are two aspects of this new age about which journalists must think more deeply and more creatively. The first is the impact on the production end of the information stream; the second involves the impact on the consumer. Those of you who are just beginning your careers in journalism are assuming an obligation as public witnesses who clearly and without distortion describe the actions and behavior of those who shape and direct public life. To become a journalist is an act of character, since the public's ability to become a force in self-government depends upon the integrity of your work. To enter into the life of a journalist is to accept personal responsibility for the credibility of your work and serve the interests of its consumers. You can do that only if you fully understand how the system works.

Dual Challenges

Having an unlimited number of information producers presents two challenges for journalism in the public interest—an economic challenge and a content challenge.

The economic challenge affects even the largest and most powerful news organizations. As they compete in a worldwide market, the pressure to maximize profit and minimize costs leads to short-term decisions that threaten to undermine their ability to do quality work. At the same time, new producers—in the form of bloggers—are the pamphleteers of our time, and some have been tempted to use their perceived stature as independent journalists to allow the content of their writing to be influenced by payments from government sources, as we in the United States witnessed in the cases of Armstrong Williams and Maggie Gallagher.

Neither of these erosions—in quality or integrity—is readily recognizable to consumers of news, even though the public's interest has been ignored in favor of personal bias or corporate profit. In the United States, in addition to the Williams and Gallagher examples, there have been failures at CBS News (Dan Rather), The New York Times (Jayson Blair), and USA Today (Jack Kelley) that have challenged the cred-

ibility of the country's most respected news institutions. Left unaddressed, such challenges destroy the vital link between the people and its press on which democracy depends.

Each of those failures of journalism was the result of a thinning out of the professional staff in the newsrooms and a failure by the top leadership to develop a newsroom culture that encourages openness, rewards critical thinking, and holds journalists responsible for the credibility of their work.

Ways in which information is being controlled by people and institutions of power become more sophisticated by the day. Those who hold power realize that the success of their economic plan or political program depends on their ability to get the majority of people to see the world in their terms. To do this they progressively focus well-financed efforts to develop more subtle and effective ways to manipulate public behavior and understanding of the issues in which they hold a vested interest.

Meanwhile, in newsrooms little if anything has been done to sharpen understanding of how our work can be manipulated by these strategies. One reason many U.S. journalists now support the work of the Committee of Concerned Journalists is the frustration they feel as news organizations continue to invest less money in the ongoing training and education of their workers than almost any industry. As people and institutions we report on work diligently to apply new and better strategies to control or avoid our scrutiny, journalists appear content to plod along in the reporting and editing ruts formed in the 19th century. Too many newsrooms too often operate by rote, ceding to others decision-making about what is important to cover and how. Judgments produced by vested interests are given equal display to that of verified information produced by disinterested reporters or, at worst, their judgment is the only judgment presented.

To meet this challenge journalists must aggressively expose self-serving propaganda. When they don't, citizens who depend on our credibility become disillusioned. The public—all of us—are ignorant of many things, but we are

1980

United States

Qube, the first two-way cable TV system, is started by Warner Amex in Columbus, Ohio. It closes in 1984.

1981

United Kingdom

An estimated 10,000 Prestel terminals are in use. The service boasts 500 information providers.

1981

United States

February 17: Time, Inc. announces it will develop and test a multichannel teletext service to be distributed via satellite, the first of its kind.

1981

France

March 26: Le Parisien Libere, a French newspaper, produces its first online edition on Teletel.

1981

United States

August: IBM introduces the P.C.. Based on the Intel 8088, it sells 50,000 units in the first eight months. Cost: \$1,565 to \$6,000.

1982

United States

Eleven U.S. newspapers begin daily transmission of "electronic versions" via CompuServe, which now has 10,000 subscribers.

1982

France

Major public trial of Teletel begins using 270,000 Minitel terminals distributed free of charge.

1982

United States

Gateway, the videotex trial conducted by Times-Mirror, operates between March 15 and December 31.

not stupid. Sooner or later, citizens recognize when journalists fail to ask the right questions at the right time to hold a public official responsible or expose private corruption that threatens their welfare. In this era of unlimited producers, when we fail to do our job, why should the public stick with us? Why shouldn't people turn to a more exciting source, one that agrees with their prejudices, even if they can't necessarily trust the integrity of the work?

New Journalism

How do we begin the transition to the new journalism this new age requires?

We begin by realizing that our old notion of journalist as gatekeeper is obsolete. The Internet has torn down the fences. A journalist standing by the gate—opening it to allow this “fact” to pass through but closing it to other information that has not been verified—looks silly when, on either side of the gate, unfiltered, indiscriminate information is flooding through.

Instead of gatekeepers, journalists must become authenticators. With the flood of information and the lack of ways to discern what is true and what is propaganda, journalists need to construct a role similar to that of a referee—letting the public know whether information has been checked and verified, whether it has been found to be untrue, whether it is self-interested propaganda, or whether what is being reported is not yet able to be verified.

Responding in this way to help consumers construct their own news package will require us to be as focused as the challenges we confront. And this will necessitate that we take a more professional approach to our journalism, one that instills in each journalist a rigorous method of testing information so that personal, commercial and political biases do not undermine its accuracy.

As Machiavelli reminded us, to survive in times of change, institutions must return to their roots. That means reaching back to the goal of 18th century thinkers who believed that journalist's pursuit of truthful information must be

guided by a more scientific and transparent methodology of verification, checking every assertion against the record. It asks of every claim, “How do you know that?” and then demonstrates the source of every fact. Such painstaking verification is essential in this time of overflowing information.

Transparency will be essential, too, to retain the public's trust. The premise is simple: Never deceive your audience. Tell them what you know and what you don't know. Tell them who your sources are. If you can't name a source, then tell them how the source is in a position to know and what biases, if any, the source might have. In other words, provide information so people can see how the news item was developed and can make up their minds what to think.

Transparency also lets the public see that we approach each story with an open mind—open not only about what we hear as we report a story, but about our ability to understand. Some call this humility. We call it open-mindedness. Don't assume. Avoid an arrogance about what you think you know, and be sure you submit your assumptions to the process of verification.

When people decide what news to rely on, they make decisions about the judgment, the character, and the values of the journalists who brought it to them. Those values are revealed every day when we decide what stories to cover (and not to cover) and how to do so. Our unswerving commitment to maintaining the public trust and making sense of the flood of available information is the only way journalism can retain the economic base it needs to assure its survival.

We cannot meet these obligations unless we create a newsroom culture that rewards critical thinking and discourages and exposes dishonest behavior. Such a culture begins with a new focus by editors. In this competitive atmosphere, editors have been drawn more deeply into newsroom management at the expense of their more critical roles of editing and mentoring young journalists. They need to instill mechanisms of quality so that each journalist assumes responsibility for the credibility of what is produced, and this includes after-the-

fact quality control, such as analyzing complaints of errors or questions of assertions and analysis, as well as hiring ombudsmen or public editors to engage directly with the public.

Beyond these mechanisms, the newsroom culture must embrace forward-looking quality-assurance practices similar to those practiced by the best teaching hospitals. Each time a negative outcome of a doctor-patient interaction occurs, the doctor appears at a meeting with colleagues at which each step in the procedure is open for examination and criticism. The criticism is not so much aimed at finding fault but in learning from the mistake. Mistakes or omissions in our newsrooms should become learning tools and offer opportunities to remind journalists of their personal responsibility.

To some, these steps might seem too troublesome. But the cost of ignoring them—and risking corruption of the information and knowledge we provide the public—is too great. How journalism advances and how democracy progresses will depend upon how well we discharge this responsibility.

History tells us of the heavy price paid when independence, aggressive vigilance, accuracy and credibility of the press fail. Events in Iraq are a stark reminder to us in the United States that we haven't yet absorbed history's lessons. Who can say how the decision by the American government—with the support of a majority of the American public—to invade Iraq might turn out. But we already know that public support for the decision to go to war was built by the government's creation of an imminent threat that facts have not borne out. Brick-by-brick the construction of that deceptive rationale was aided by an American press that did not rigorously enforce an independent journalism of verification.

If history teaches us anything it is that freedom and democracy do not depend upon the best technology or the most efficient organization. They depend on individuals who refuse to give up their belief that the free flow of timely, truthful information is what has made freedom, self-government, and human dignity possible. ■

Transforming the Gathering, Editing and Distribution of News

Is technology poised to replace journalists and their judgment by consuming their tasks?

By Francis Pisani

While some journalists still seem to be wondering how best to limit the impact of information technology on their craft, the issues at stake are already dealing with other dimensions of the changes these tools have brought. The tension today lies somewhere between what we might call the “napsterization of news” (when everybody communicates with everybody and when everybody contributes with information and views) and what I call “algorithm journalism.” On one hand, people use new technologies to transform the ways in which news is gathered, edited and distributed. At the same time, however, and for a variety of reasons, computers are being used to execute some of the essential tasks that had been traditionally reserved for journalists.

The situation in journalism seems to be following an old pattern from an earlier conflict between those who wanted computers to substitute for what humans do and those who wanted them used to augment our capacities.

Technological Tools

Let’s consider what nonjournalists can do—and have started doing. They contribute to the news stream with text, photographs and now audio, due to a technology known as podcasting. Video images are not far behind.

On some Nokia cell phones (a few other companies offer similar products) video can be shot and edited with a program called Movie Director. The Nokia 6880, for example, has two cameras, a direct connection to a printer, memory to store songs, and a high-band connection to the Internet. Using it, a person

can shoot video, edit it along with music to accompany the images, and send it to a blog, a wiki, or to a news site, such as the BBC, which uses audience contributions in reporting on significant news events, as it did the London bomb attacks in July.

Technology enables other changes, including the following:

- At the Web site <http://del.icio.us/>, users can tag Web pages and share what they tag. Evidence of the growth in tagging can be found at sites such as Flickr.com (for photos), Technorati.com (for blogs), and Yahoo.com’s new “social engine” (for Web sites). This represents the basic level of what some technology analysts call “folksonomy.” By helping its users categorize news, they can do what editors usually do, while also commenting on the news.
- RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds can be viewed as a complement to this practice because they allow users to select and collect bits and pieces of information coming from different media. Instead of receiving the news via e-mail (a practice that is growing cumbersome), consumers either use a special program like FeedDemon (turning it on when they want to) or go to a Web page like Bloglines.com on which the chosen feeds are constantly updated.

These easy-to-access devices provide tools for an emerging social phenomenon often referred to as “citizen journalism,” in which people who have not received any journalism training contribute to news coverage by supplying stories and commentary either

1982

Europe

EUnet (European UNIX Network) is created by EUUG to provide e-mail and USENET services.

1982

Canada

Project Grassroots opens in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

1982

Italy

Videotel, a videotex service, begins testing in the first quarter with 2,000 terminals.

1982

Netherlands

100,000 teletext TV sets are sold in the year ending in April—and are twice the price of regular TV’s.

1982

United States

StarText, the only early newspaper videotex system intended for display on computers, opens in Fort Worth, Texas.

1982

United States

Commodore Computer announces the Commodore 64. It has 64K of RAM, sound and color graphics when hooked to a color TV. Cost: \$600.

1982

United States

Time magazine names no “Man of the Year.” Instead, the computer is dubbed “Machine of the Year.”

1983

United Kingdom

Prestel boasts over 200,000 users on 30,000 registered terminals. Its database contains 250,000 pages.

with words (read and heard) or images (static or moving.) [See accompanying box below for more about the impact of emerging technology.]

Technology Takes Over

Some informed observers point to a different phenomenon in which significant parts of what journalists do is executed instead by some form of technology. Such changes can be attributed, in part, to the volume and speed at which news reporting and information is now being collected and must be distributed. "There is too much information available on the Internet," says Jean-François Fogel, who helps run LeMonde.fr, the French newspaper's Web site. And news changes so fast that a paper's Web site is constantly reorganized by computer algorithms that determine the position of an image on the site's home page and the importance of a story as it unfolds. Though people at LeMonde.fr still make some decisions with the Web site's appearance, Fogel wonders if in the future

this kind of work "will be handled by people or by algorithms."

Google News already relies on computers to collect and distribute emerging news stories without human intervention. Given where such sites are today, it does not require much imagination to envision, for instance, a city with cameras installed in many places and a Web site with powerful algorithms that select which views are the most likely to interest its users. The users could even preselect the views they want to see, such as an avenue each day at rush hour or live images of accidents when they might happen. (In the case of the accident, the software that goes with the camera detects that "an accident" has happened and sends images to the computers of those who said they were interested.)

What I've begun to call "algorithm journalism" might seem far-fetched to many people, and it probably is. But journalists should not overlook the fact that as technological tools are created, more and more parts of our usual tasks

will be able to be taken over by software programs as they become smarter and more capable of doing these tasks at a speed we can't ignore.

The "napsterization" of news and information might be inevitable. On her Web site Napsterization.org, Mary Hodder defines this napsterization as "the disintermediation by new technologies and digital media of old economy, incumbent institutions, and analog frameworks." This is happening in many industries, and journalism is not an exception.

In the end, though, the actual impact of technology varies widely according to social factors. At a recent conference organized by the Fundación para un Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano, created by the Nobel Prize-winner and former journalist Gabriel García Márquez, the intersection of such forces was highlighted. Rosental Calmon Alves, who holds the Knight Chair in Journalism and UNESCO Chair in Communication at the University of Texas at Austin, reminded participants that the

Wondering About the Wonders of Technology

Francis Pisani is a journalist and teacher who has gained expertise in new media from his study of its global impact on journalism. He was a member of a panel at the May 2005 Nieman Reunion whose task was to speak to some of the changes taking place in journalism today due to emerging technology. The panel, "Thinking About Journalism," was moderated by Alex Jones, who is director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Edited excerpts from this discussion follow.

Francis Pisani: I would like to mention a few technologies that might get your attention even if they are not directly related to journalism. BitTorrent is a technology that breaks apart big files so that people will swarm to get to a

small chunk. Once they have that small chunk, they have to upload it in order to get more. This means everybody has to participate using the technology. The thing about BitTorrent is that in June 2004—and I apologize for not finding a more recent fact—35 percent of the traffic on the Internet was due to BitTorrent. To put this in some perspective, http, which is the language of the Web sites and blogs we are talking about, was only 10 percent [of the Internet's traffic]. So a user has enormous files that can be downloaded very quickly because they can be broken apart and then swarmed, so the technology allows people to download stuff very, very quickly.

Alex Jones: Would you give me an example of precisely what you're talking about, something that would be broken up and then downloaded that way?

Pisani: A movie or a TV reportage, something like that. You can send several movies quickly. Traditional distribution of moving images on the Internet is from a center to different places. It has to go in one big chunk. It would take half an hour, an hour, two hours or so. With this technology, it takes a matter of minutes, and how people use it shows that they like to exchange video shot by others or by themselves, just as they do with text and images.

When I wrote my first story about blogs in 2001, there was an estimated 500,000. Today a site like Technorati.com indexes about 10 million of them. This is a huge phenomenon, and that's why I talk about the "napsterization of news," and how we have to think of what it means to have everybody participating in this and having the tools to do so. This is a key phenomenon for the future of journalism.

crisis of traditional news media “started in the ’70’s, but it accelerated with the Web.” And Alves went on to say that “the Internet is but the top of the iceberg of the digital revolution. The threat it represents for journalism has no precedent in the history of media.”

A report entitled “Abandoning the News,” published in the spring of 2005 in the Carnegie Reporter and written by Merrill Brown, a media consultant and founder of MMB Media LLC, explains well the many reasons why young people no longer turn to the traditional sources of news. (Brown’s report is available at www.carnegie.org/reporter/10/news/index.html.)

Explanations for young people’s exodus abound, but none of us should overlook the “disbelief in metanarratives” that postmodernists called to our attention. Journalists who produce the initial narratives of our daily lives should be most alert, since young people essentially want to assume authorship of the narratives of their own lives. Because they have almost instant access to more

information than previous generations had, and they know more about places they live in and events that happen there than most journalists do, they insist their voices—their perspectives—will be heard.

Ultimately, perhaps, the napsterization of news will be understood as a democratization of journalism with the aid of technology, an idea that is difficult to argue against. The challenge for journalists resides in how to best adapt while preserving the essential values of our craft. ■

Francis Pisani, a 1993 Nieman Fellow, is a columnist for El Pais, a columnist for Reforma in Mexico, and Weblogger for Le Monde. As a visiting instructor at the University of California at Berkeley, he studies the social impact of information technologies on globalization and international relations.

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Jones: Who is going to pay for the news?

Pisani: One of the answers is that we might be slightly shifting from direct financing to indirect. Tomorrow a nonprofit organization might be the place to go in order to pay for serious journalism. I read yesterday that Craig Newmark, who created craigslist.org, a site of free classifieds that is now in 105 cities and 23 countries, is interested in backing, supporting and helping citizen journalism. He is working with Dan Gillmor, a former columnist for the San Jose Mercury who wrote the book, “We the Media,” about the power of citizen journalism. It’s a very interesting book that everybody should read. They are also working with Pierre Omidyar, the founder of eBay, whose success is based on communities, networks and relationships. So we are moving

towards a completely different world that journalists can only ignore at their expense.

Jones: You’ve posed the fundamental riddle because there’s got to be a way to pay for it. John Carroll [then editor of the Los Angeles Times] was telling me that his paper’s online service generates 50 million dollars and much of that is to the bottom line. But he’s got a news operation that costs many times that. And that’s the problem. There is no model yet for a business that seems to be in decline, such as newspapers, but that is also doing the lion’s share of the news-gathering and reporting. That’s where most of the action is, with exceptions, of course. But in most towns, that is the news utility and that’s where it’s

Continued on page 56

1983

France

The first smart card is introduced for commercial transactions via Minitel.

1983

Japan

Captain is introduced commercially late in the year. Trials have cost 20 billion yen.

1983

United States

Midyear: Keycom Electronic Publishing launches Keytran, a videotex service, in Chicago.

1983

France

Central Paris gets electronic phone book access. About 10,000 Minitel terminals are in use.

1983

United States

October 30: Viewtron launches commercially in Miami.

1983

Germany

Deutsch Telekom launches T-Online, its videotex system.

1983

United States

Internet Domain Name System is developed at the University of Wisconsin.

1983

United States

December: The largest U.S. online services are Dow Jones, with 90,000 users, CompuServe, 63,000, and The Source, 36,000 users.

1984

United States

CBS opens Extravision teletext system on various network affiliate stations.

got to be paid for, and if it isn't paid for, it's simply not going to happen.

Pisani: With citizen journalism, one of the very important dimensions is that people bring the news. People contribute with information. And Dan Gillmor's expression I think is very powerful: "My readers together know more than what I do." This is complicated, but I acknowledge that we have to address this question. The economy of this is tied to the fact that people do it because they want to do it, they want to contribute, they want to share.

Before I came here, I wrote on my blog that I was going to talk at the Nieman conference and asked people to provide answers to some of the questions I'd been sent to consider. And people wrote to me very interesting things. One of them told me that noth-

ing is better than sharing. Another told me that blogs in France are much more popular than in the Nordic countries, but the connectivity is much higher in the Nordic countries.

So my question became whether technology is more important than society. And the answer is no, it's a mix in which society and culture play a huge role. In France, a tradition of debate goes back to the 18th century. So people bring ideas forward, and they are not paid for that. They provide a huge amount of information and opinion, of course.

Jones: One of the things that Francis Pisani has been thinking about is this question of the glut of information and sort of the confusion that that breeds, or fatigue perhaps. What do you think, Francis?

Pisani: Participatory media is a big culprit in information overload, which is basically this issue. More stuff is produced than what we can ever see, and so the need for filters is very important. One of the beauties of blogs is that they are not only tools for expression, but they are also useful to filter information. The blogs one reads are chosen, and through this selection they become a great knowledge management tool. Blogs are picked according to what a person is interested in—the point of view of a person or the subject the blogger is dealing with. This can be seen as a first level of using blogs. At a second level, we have RSS that started with blogs and, let's see, I'd like to ask journalists in the audience which of them uses RSS in a daily fashion?

Very few hands are raised.

The Transparent Life of Newspaper Blogs

At the News & Record in Greensboro, North Carolina, many reporters write blogs—and newspaper stories, too.

John Robinson is editor of the News & Record in Greensboro, North Carolina. He was a member of a panel at the May 2005 Nieman Reunion whose task was to speak to some of the changes taking place at newspapers today, including his newsroom's increasing use of Weblogs. The panel, "Thinking About Journalism," was moderated by Alex Jones, who is director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Edited excerpts from this discussion follow.

Alex Jones: John has been getting a lot of attention and probably being called and queried more than most editors of most newspapers these days because he is genuinely on the forefront of the intersection of blogging and new media and the traditional local newspapers. He has

his own Weblog and responds daily to reader criticism. And we're going to be hearing from him about what he thinks is going on in Greensboro and how it might apply elsewhere.

John, you seem to be using your blog to try to create transparency without making it just a matter of apologizing for mistakes—explaining rather than correcting and doing mea culpas. What's really going as far as you're concerned, and what is the relationship as you've seen it evolve?

John Robinson: I can tell you it's a nasty world out there in cyberspace. Eight months ago, we started creating Weblogs so that our staff could talk with readers and interact with readers. Now we have either 14 or 15 Weblogs that are staff produced. I kind of lose track because they grow organically from our staff. We embarked on this for two reasons. One for transparency, on

mine in particular, where I post lots of thoughts about our newspaper, some things that are going on in journalism as it applies to Greensboro and our community. And these blog posts range from acknowledgement of errors, or directly publicizing our errors, to awards that we've gotten, from how we did this story to complaints that we've gotten and the reasons why we do things.

But that's not really all the blogs are about. For us, it really is about journalism. So our blogs range from a couple of editorial writers who essentially take the editorials that they write, or take the voice that they have on the editorial page, and move it online, and talk about a whole lot of different topics because we don't have space for them in the paper. It ranges from that to direct reporting blogs, where the city hall reporter, for instance, is able to tell readers about things that are going on in his own voice while still maintaining

Jones: The fact is that most of you probably don't know what RSS is.

Pisani: That's exactly my point! RSS means Really Simple Syndication. Basically it is a technology that allows a user to select information (or part of it) published on a Web site and bring it to one place of the user's choosing. There are now programs that do that and Web sites that allow that to be done. Someone can build a Web page on bloglines.com, for instance, by saying "I'm interested in the technology section of The Washington Post. I'm interested in the front page of The New York Times. I am interested in my friend's blog." I can choose 500, or I can select five. To read them, I only go to one place, and it does it for me. So blogging, with the technology of RSS, is a filter mechanism.

Jones: Even with the power of the blogs, it still seems to me that the power of defining what is really important still lies with the mainstream media and especially the major national media. I'm reminded of the Trent Lott moment when blogging sort of came of age in being able to keep a story alive and focus the story and focus the media ultimately on what happened with Lott. That would not have happened without the blogs, but nor would it have happened without the mainstream media getting involved. The role of the blogs was to force the mainstream media to take notice of something. I think that is still basically true. ■

the fundamental journalistic values of integrity and trust. He can also link readers to documents that are online, converse with readers about things that are happening at city hall, get information for them, and deliver it directly to them online.

The other thing that we're attempting to do is participate in more citizen journalism and solicit reader submissions of news stories so we can put those online. There is this sense that there's a lot going on in Greensboro that readers know about and we don't. In Greensboro, there are people who are bloggers who go to municipal meetings, county meetings, and write about them online. There are city council members and county commissioners and one state representative who have blogs and break news in their blogs. So we have to play in that field. And what it's done: It's given readers access to us, to talk about things, to tell us about things we're doing wrong. And it gives us the opportunity then to talk back to them and explain, in almost a real-time way, what it is that we do.

Jones: The people who have been blogging and reporting, are they sort of

two-voiced people? Are they one voice when their work appears in the newspaper and another voice on the blog? Should we take some lessons from the blogosphere, if that's what builds trust? Should that be the voice of our print products now?

Robinson: The reporters, in particular, have two voices, just as editorial folks and I do. One is institutional, and that one is in the newspaper, and the other, which is more collegial and accessible, is in the blogs. In journalism circles it seems the most controversial thing we do is not edit the blogs. That was done on purpose for a variety of reasons. If we sent their blog posts through editors, the editors would beat the life out of them, and we wanted to have a voice in this new medium that was more casual and that readers could respond to differently.

So the information the reporters bring to their blogs has the same value as the information in the newspaper. But there might be something that happened at a city council meeting that only 100 people are interested in. We would give it some space in the newspaper, but if there was some interesting

**1984
France**

Minitel has about 1 million terminals in use.

**1984
United States**

January: Apple introduces the Macintosh. Cost: \$2,495 with built-in B&W monitor. Within 75 days, 50,000 are sold.

**1984
United States**

March: CompuServe charges its users 13 cents per minute daytime and 10 cents at night. Dow Jones is \$1.20 daytime and 20 cents at night.

**1984
United States**

IBM introduces the PC-AT, based on the 80286 Intel chip. Fully loaded with graphics, color monitor and 20MB hard disk, it costs \$6,700.

**1984
United States**

November 1: Keytran, owned by Centel, Honeywell and Chicago Sun-Times, is renamed Keycom and launches commercial videotex service.

**1985
Worldwide**

Twenty-two nations are said to be involved in videotex and teletext. Eleven use Prestel, five use CEPT, two use NAPLPS, and four use French Antiope.

**1985
United States**

Videotex systems are planned in at least 20 major U.S. cities. Most are based on either Viewtron or Gateway technology, Editor & Publisher reports.

**1985
United States**

Whole Earth 'Electronic Link, The Well, is created by Stewart Brand in San Francisco.

interplay or drama then we could put it online and play with it a little bit more to make the point to readers that what is happening inside their city hall has value. What we haven't figured out, but which we are working on now, is how to move the more conversational, accessible writing style of the blogs into the newspaper.

Jones then turns to another panel member, Karen Stephenson, a Harvard professor who studies trust, and invites her into the conversation.

Jones: Karen, where is the trust question here? Is this a good idea to have two different voices? To have an official voice and then a sort of unofficial voice that is also one that seems to have even more weight and authority?

Karen Stephenson: I don't know if it's a good idea, but I think it's very realistic. Because any time anybody works inside organizations, and we all have organizations of one sort or another, there is the spoken word and then there's what's really going on. There's policy and then there's procedure. There are the rules of hierarchy and then there's the informal chitchat about how we really get work done. So I actually think that people being able to see what's codified and what's edited is fine because that's putting it out there. But they can also, if they want, have access to be able to go to these other sites. I remember this blogger with The Washington Post. He wrote articles that were edited in a certain way and then he had his own blog. And I just thought about how people could go to either source. They have direct contact with that person.

After the panel participants spoke, audience members asked them questions. Several questions were directed to John Robinson.

Questioner: At the News & Record you have vastly increased the amount of published material. Whether it's published in the newspaper or on the Web, it is still a huge increase in the amount of published material. Given

that you're responsible for the content of what the paper publishes, how do you find the time to supervise all of this content? Or are you essentially giving up on supervising it all? But if you are supervising it, what that you used to supervise are you not supervising today? Or are you just really cranked up to a higher rate so that the factory assembly line is effectively just moving by very quickly? That's what I want to know, how you manage your time, given this vast increase in publication.

Robinson: When you say supervise, what do you mean?

Questioner: Aren't you the editor?

Robinson: I am.

[Laughter]

Questioner: So aren't you responsible for what you publish?

Robinson: I am.

Questioner: And have you not increased exponentially the amount of material that's published?

Robinson: I have.

[Laughter]

Robinson: We've done a couple things. In all the newsrooms I've been in, if you ask a reporter what their biggest complaint is about being there—if you get past the I'm not paid enough and my parking space is too far from the building and I don't like my desk—what they'll say is there's never an editor around when you need them. Which was another reason that we pulled the editors out of this flow. Do I supervise them? To the extent that before anyone starts to blog, we have conversations about what are the standards of our newspaper, and our standards have not changed. We're still responsible for the content on the blog. For example, our expectation is that the people who seem to never have done very well in spelling in grammar school and still can't spell are expected to have grammatically cor-

rect and correctly spelled blog posts. So if they need help with that, they have someone read behind them.

When I say these blogs grew organically, what I mean is that I started one, then people saw that it was okay and saw what I was writing, and so we started a few others. And it was only people who raised their hand, who wanted to do it. We are not paying them more to do this, but what we've got are the people who are really intrigued with this idea of

We're still playing with ways to move blog commentary and blog story ideas into the newspaper.

another medium. It excites them. And they have a whole lot of information in their notebooks that they aren't getting into the newspaper, so they can put this information online. They get feedback from readers that they don't get in any other way, and that excites them.

I read all the blogs after they post the thing. Does it take up more of my time? Sure. But it's important. What I eliminate is that I'll find a meeting not to go to. And it's amazing, I didn't really have to be in that meeting anyway. So the result is that I've pushed responsibility and accountability down into our organization.

Jack Nelson, former Washington bureau chief, Los Angeles Times: I wanted to ask John Robinson, what sort of feedback do you get on the blog? Is it a lot? How does it change the way the paper now runs stories? Do you run shorter stories now because you can expand them on the blog? Has it changed the paper at all?

Robinson: I have my photograph on my blog, and my favorite feedback was from someone saying they appreciated the blog and the information, but really, I needed to update my photo because no one has a mustache like mine. *[Laughter]* The feedback really does span the

Wild West, from people calling each other idiots and their mothers idiots to very insightful commentary. That's just the way it is, as it is when any group gets together. And it changes our content in very subtle ways. We're still playing with ways to move blog commentary and blog story ideas into the newspaper. On one occasion a reader submitted a story that we thought was good enough to publish in the newspaper and met our standards of reporting and writing. Most reader submissions that we get, we leave online and don't transfer to the newspaper.

We do a lot of promotion from the newspaper to the blog so readers can get additional information. But it hadn't really flown back the other way. We try to tell stories in a different way, not as a result of us having online content but as a result of trying to understand what readers want from us and how to deliver the information better.

Jones: Do you put information online that would be considered unverified, whereas you would not put that same unverified information in the newspaper itself?

Robinson: Yes.

Marilyn Geewax, an economics reporter with Cox Newspapers in the Washington bureau: I already work in an incredibly dense day. I'm very busy every minute. If at the end of my day I also had to write a blog, there goes dinner. All right—I'll give up dinner. I can lose some weight anyway. But what about the readers who then want to respond to the blog and start e-mailing you? I find I waste so much time. I wrote a story last Sunday about wages. I probably had 12 e-mails the next day—lengthy things from retired economists who want to argue about wages. I sent back an e-mail saying, "Thank you for sharing your thoughts. I'm really too busy to engage in this," and then they're angry. Then they write back and say, "Well why don't you want to talk about this? This proves your liberal bias because you don't want to talk about this." I feel like I'm becoming a high-paid pen pal for retired people. [Laughter] Where

is the time? I don't want to spend my time being a global pen pal. I want to find news. And I don't even have time to do it now.

So my question on the blogging thing is, how do you in a sense create this expectation of interaction with the reporters and yet not give your reporters the time or the pay to do that?

Jones: One of the dirty little secrets of the blogosphere is that the most influential blogs, like Instapundit.com and places like that, don't take comments. They only send; they don't receive. What do you think?

Robinson: I think that you don't really have any choice. The time has come in which readers expect—citizens expect—to be able to challenge us and that we need to respond. So my advice would be twofold. It really needs to be a corporate priority, or at least a newsroom priority. If it's not a priority, then you do get a pass that you don't have to actually respond to the people who pay your salary. The other is that a blog allows you to do a couple things. If you get 12 e-mails that require 12 very substantive responses, and you get those every day, you can cut a lot of time by doing a blog post saying, "Here it is." The additional interesting thing is that someone will then comment about how half-baked you are and you don't even need to respond to that because six other people will come on and comment on how half-baked the person who commented is.

Heidi Evans, reporter at the (New York) Daily News: I do a fair amount of investigative reporting. I have two questions: What does your legal department have to say about sending unsupervised things out there? It's a frightening thought, like sending young children into traffic, that you could just send things out there. As an investigative reporter, although I think every journalist would like more paragraphs, extra space to tell certain things, I can't imagine wanting to give my adversary certain details about what really happened, especially since there are lawyers for your adversaries who are

1985

Asia

Asian countries using videotex or teletex include Australia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand.

1985

United States

Quantum Computer Services, which goes on to create AppleLink, Q-Link, PC-Link and, finally, America Online, is founded in Vienna, Virginia.

1985

United States

IBM, Sears and CBS announce a partnership to create Trintex, eventually renamed Prodigy.

1985

United States

Viewtron goes national with a service for personal computers. Kits for early P.C.'s cost \$9.95.

1985

United States

October 21: General Electric Co. announces the launch of GENie, a dial-up information and entertainment system for P.C. users. Price: \$35 an hour prime time; \$5 an hour nights and weekends.

1985

Canada

The Hamilton (Ontario) Spectator starts up Compuspec, a mainframe-based BBS system.

1985

France

22 million callers use videotex services in December.

1985

United States

Microsoft ships Windows 1.0. It is not well received and suffers dismal sales.

just waiting for one little detail to sue you. How do you handle this?

Robinson: We don't have a legal department. [Laughter] It does make our lawyers nervous, but our lawyers get paid to be nervous. There are two issues. The bloggers who we employ, they know what our standards are. They're very careful about what they post. So it's the citizen journalists that come to us and are on our forums, and

we publish their commentary. We do edit those for libel. The comments on the site essentially are unedited because our understanding of the law is that if you start editing comments, then you are responsible for the comments, as opposed to leaving them unedited, and you're not responsible for the comments. That, of course, is going to be challenged in court, we just hope it's not in our federal district We've been doing this for eight months now. My point is that

our bloggers know what we publish in the newspaper, and they're not going to publish anything on their blog post that they wouldn't normally put in the newspaper. If they're in doubt, they ask. We've published probably 5,000, maybe more than that, blog posts. I read them every day. There's only one that gave me pause, and it wasn't a legal issue. It was just a taste issue. And so it really is a "trust your staff to know what they're doing" issue with us. ■

The Ascent of Blogging

Old media report on the new media, but they haven't figured out how to adapt.

By David D. Perlmutter
and Misti McDaniel

New media are not new to those who've grown up with or use them every day. To 18-year-olds at our journalism school at Louisiana State University, iPods, satellite-reception, Wi-Fi, laptops, cell phones, PDA's, digital photography, and the Internet are technologies as familiar as the wheel and fire. But while ancient innovations took millennia to spread, today a new gadget or idea can catch on globally within a few years.

The ascent of the Web log, Weblog (or blog) is one example. Within five years, online journals of political and personal expression and debate rose from obscurity to become ubiquitous. In examining how the mainstream press has reacted to blogs, we discern lessons about the relationship between technology and journalism:

- Events don't drive new media technology. Rather, new media technology succeeds by finding ways to exploit events.
- News coverage tends to focus on the sexy or "hot" aspects of new media technology, which can obscure other trends that will be potentially more influential in the long run.

- Old media portrays new media technologies as darlings, only to cynically then dethrone them.
- Traditional media's vulnerabilities to such upstarts aren't just technological but are economic and psychological. Mainstream media believe new things might destroy, result in unemployment, or make them obsolete; they don't know how to adapt.
- The best response to blogs by television, radio and print is not to ape them but to determine what blogs do and why they do it well or poorly.

Certainly blogs seem to be everywhere—some estimates put the number

Speed Bump



Cartoon by © Dave Coverly/Creator's Syndicate. Reproduced by permission.

of blogs in the tens of millions. According to several Pew studies, of the estimated 120 million U.S. adults who

Weblogs: Knowing What Can Be Known About Them

Several times each year, David Sifry, the founder of Technorati, issues his State of the Blogosphere based on the activity of Weblogs that he and his staff track. At the beginning of August, his three-part report examining blog growth, posting volume, and the increasing use of tags, revealed the following information:

- In July 2005, Technorati was tracking over 14.2 million Weblogs and more than 1.3 billion links.
- The blogosphere continues to double about every 5.5 months.
- A new blog is created about every second; there are more than 80,000 created each day.
- About 55 percent of all blogs are active, and that has remained a consistent statistic for at least a year.
- About 13 percent of all blogs are updated at least weekly.
- Technorati is tracking about 900,000 blog posts created every day; that's about 10.4 blog posts per second, on average.
- Median time from posting to inclusion in the Technorati index is under five minutes.
- Significant increases in posting volume are due to increased mainstream use of easy hosted tools as well as simple posting interfaces like post-from-IM and moblogging tools.
- Weekends tend to be slower posting days by about 5-10 percent of the weekly averages.
- During the day, posting tends to peak between the hours of 7 a.m. and noon Pacific time (10 a.m.-3 p.m. Eastern time).
- Worldwide news events cause ripples through the blogosphere—not only in search volume, but also in posting volume.
- Growth has been tremendous in the past six months: Technorati has tracked over 25 million tagged posts from January to July of 2005.
- About 300,000 posts with tags were tracked each day at the end of July.
- About a third of all blog postings use tags or categories.
- People are tagging more than blog posts: Popular services include tagging photos and links (social bookmarks).
- About 12,000 unique tags are discovered each day.
- Tagging is growing in languages outside of English as well, including high adoption rates in Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese. ■

More data, charts and information on these topics can be found at www.sifry.com/alerts/.

use the Internet, some seven percent have created a blog while more than 30 million look at them regularly. Many blogs are basement setups—scribbled by one, read by few. In contrast, some popular blogs, like Instapundit, Power Line and Daily Kos, receive more daily traffic than many major newspapers or TV news programs.

But blogs aren't talked about just because of their numbers, rather for the news they make while critiquing journalism and tracking events, such as blogging about the rise and fall of presidential candidate Howard Dean, Dan Rather's "memogate," Trent Lott's

praise of Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat campaign, and the South Asian tsunami. In each case—and others—bloggers pushed and prodded old media to change the ways they work. In response, some journalists and news organizations have created blogs and use them for newsgathering, self-reflection, opinion-testing, and interaction with readers, listeners and viewers.

Though blog-like sites existed during the 1990's—most notably the Drudge Report—blogs were officially born in December 1997, when Jorn Barger, editor of Robot Wisdom.com, created the term "Weblog." In the spring of

1986

United Kingdom

Prestel reports 65,000 terminals in use and 1,200 information providers. Users view 8.7 million pages each week.

1986

United States

The first Freenet (Cleveland) comes online under the auspices of the Society for Public Access Computing.

1986

France

Some 1.4 million Minitel terminals are in use. French Telecom grosses \$70 million on the service.

1986

United States

CompuServe is purchased by H&R Block Co. for \$23 million.

1987

United States

The Middlesex (Mass.) News launches Fred the Computer, a single-line BBS system previewing the next day's edition.

1987

United States

Ted Turner starts the cable-TV revolution when he launches CNN, Cable News Network.

1988

United States

July: Prodigy begins test marketing in Hartford, Atlanta and California with a service for P.C.'s.

1988

United States

November 2: Internet worm burrows through the Net, affecting 6,000 of the 60,000 hosts on the Internet.

1999, Peter Merholz broke “Weblog” into the phrase “we blog” and put it on his homepage. As the term spread, in August 1999 software-maker Pyra Labs released the program Blogger, making blogs user-friendly and generally accessible.

Blogs were not an instant big story in the mainstream media. One of the first hits for “blog” in the press was in October 1999 when Great Britain's *New Statesman* described it as “a Web page, something like a public commonplace book, which is added to each day If there is any log they resemble, it is the captain's log on a voyage of discovery.” The first newspaper reference likely occurred in January 2000 when Canada's *Ottawa Citizen* quoted pop star Sarah McLachlan from her Web site. One of the first broadcast stories about blogs was in May 2000 when National Public Radio's “The Connection” interviewed several bloggers.

Overall, in tracking mainstream media's reporting on blogs between January 1998 and April 2005, we found 16,350 items mentioning the words “Web log,” “Weblog,” and “blog.” [See chart on page 63.] In gauging “blog-throughs”—events commonly ascribed to have propelled blogs to media attention—we found that journalists were barely acknowledging blogs in the wake of 9/11.

Blog obscurity changed decisively in 2002, when Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, while attending a reception for South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, made a racially insensitive comment. The item was first mentioned by ABC News and posted on its Web site, but bloggers drumbeat the story into widespread salience. Lott ended up resigning his leadership position under party pressure. Still, as blogs gained stature as agenda-setters, they remained relatively lightly cited by the press.

In 2003, as the presidential primary season kicked off, Howard Dean's team—led by technology-savvy Joe Trippi, Dean's campaign manager—pioneered the campaign blog for the public and the press. Users posted messages to other supporters, and this networking ability enabled them to meet for events. Supporters were encouraged

to “decentralize” by starting their Dean Web sites and to raise funds through their blogs. By September 2003 Dean's blog was getting 30,000 unique visitors a day. When General Wesley Clark entered the race, he cited a “Draft Wes” Web site's popularity and supportive blog comments as one reason to get in. The political parties and many candidates also began blogging. For example, the Democratic National Committee started up “Kicking Ass: Daily Dispatches from the DNC,” which promised “frank, one-on-one communication Blogs make that possible.”

Blogs were now being portrayed as voices of the people, political players, and as trip-wires for breaking stories.

Blogs Arrive

2004 was the year of the blog. That word became the most searched-for definition on several online dictionaries. Indeed in our tracking, October 2004 was the time at which 50 percent of blog coverage occurred before and after: In other words there has been as much blog news in the last half year as in the previous five. What follows are some of the more memorable news stories about blogs:

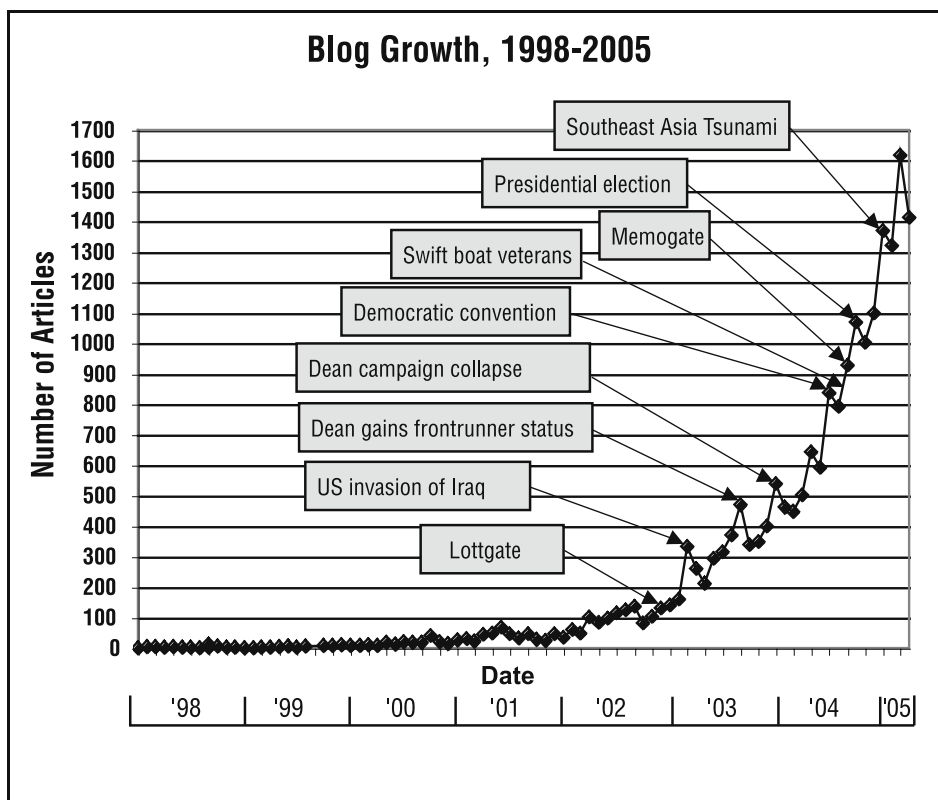
- As Howard Dean started his political slide out of the race, stories about blogs grew by 50 percent. Instead of seeking disgruntled supporters for face-to-face interviews, reporters cited Dean's bloggers as newspapers carried articles about Dean's blog and how its participants reacted to the campaign's changing fortunes.
- In July 2004 the Democratic National Convention credentialed 35 bloggers. While 15,000 journalists were issued press passes, attention focused on the “bloggeratti.”
- Blogging exploded into view on September 8, 2004, when on CBS News's “60 Minutes II” Dan Rather reported a story questioning President George W. Bush's 1970's National Guard service. Offered as evidence were papers, allegedly written by Bush's then supervisor Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Killian, stating that Bush did not fulfill his service requirements.

Pushing the Rather “memogate” story, bloggers simultaneously displayed their main virtue and vice—speedy deployment of unedited thought. One blogger on *freerepublic.com* posted his doubt about the memos' authenticity: “They are not in the style that we used when I came in to the USAF. They looked like the style and format we started using about 12 years ago (1992). Our signature blocks were left justified, now they are righth [sic] of center ... like the ones they just showed.” Bloggers such as Power Line's Scott Johnson launched an investigation of the purported memos. Innovatively, the blog *little green footballs* posted a file that contrasted a modern Microsoft Word recreation over CBS's version of the disputed papers. The text was almost an exact match.

Within days, the story leapt from new media to the mainstream news media. For two weeks CBS News stood by its reporting, but then admitted that its document examiners could not verify the memos' authenticity. The network launched an investigation to determine how the invalidated material ended up on the air. Eventually four people at CBS were blamed for the error. Rather, who anchored the evening news for 24 years, announced his retirement in November and left his position in March 2005. Many bloggers rejoiced at their power to topple venerable institutions. *Freerepublic.com* blogger “Rrrod” warned, “NOTE [sic] to old media scum We are just getting warmed up!”

More big blog news was ahead, including the following incidents:

- When some bloggers heard of Sinclair Broadcasting Group's plan to air an anti-[John] Kerry documentary, they organized letter-writing campaigns and boycotts and again pushed the item until it became a major story in the mainstream media.
- On Election Day, early exit polls indicated John Kerry held a lead over George Bush in a number of key states. Some bloggers pushed a “Kerry is winning big” headline. But the flexibility of the blogosphere was shown when bloggers Hugh Hewitt and Mark Blumenthal (*Mystery Poll-*



Graph created by David D. Perlmutter.

ster) pointed out that exit polls were only scientifically valid in a state until after voting had finished.

- The December tsunami in Southeast Asia contributed to a 39 percent growth in newspaper coverage of blogs. Stories of victims surfaced in blogs, and for the first time traditional media were bypassed as a source as relatives searched for information about loved ones online.

In the tsunami coverage, in particular, old media took another step toward co-opting the new. Uncensored and unedited video surfaced in video blogs (vlogs) and people relied on the Internet to watch scenes from the disaster. Free of Federal Communications Commission regulations, vlogs showed grisly and gripping footage, while TV newscasts often censored their reports to avoid upsetting the American public. WaveofDestruction.org, created by an Australian blogger, posted 25 amateur videos of the event and in five days logged nearly 700,000 visitors. Soon American TV networks vied for broadcast rights. Norwegian editor Oliver Orskaug sold his video for

\$20,000 to CNN and ABC News.

Even as blogs soared in attention and influence, a blowback from the mainstream media was underway.

- Blame fell on bloggers for leaking the raw exit poll results on Election Day and spreading conspiracy theories afterwards.
- Some bloggers were outed for faking data or retroactively changing posts without notation.
- Some bloggers accepted pay from political candidates or parties but did not reveal the arrangement to their readers.
- Questions arose about whether blogs were, indeed, the “voice of the people” since most domestic and foreign blog creators are white journalists, professors, lawyers or middle-class professionals.
- CNN was ridiculed for creating an “Inside the Blogs” segment that consisted of people reading blogs on air—an exercise in synergy that drew laughs even from bloggers.
- In March 2005, “The Daily Show” skewered one of the intellectual fathers of blogging, New York Uni-

1988

United States

October 10: New York Times photographers use a Macintosh and 9600 bps modem to send Dodgers-Mets photos from Los Angeles to New York.

1989

United States

Prodigy begins rolling out service in various metro areas. Pricing is unique—a flat rate of \$9.95 per month plus a \$49.95 start-up kit. It also sells modems for \$100.

1990

United States

Microsoft introduces version 3.0 of Windows. It really works and sales take off. Its sales hit \$1 billion, an industry first.

1990

United States

September 5: Prodigy goes national, offering local dial-ups in most major U.S. cities. IBM and Sears have invested \$600 million. Within a month it has 500,000 subscribers at \$12.95 per month.

1990

United States

September 29: AOL, still a service for Apple owners, announces a monthly feature called “Online Tonight,” an online talk show, and says P.C. software is in the works.

1990

United States

October: Access Atlanta becomes local dial-up system offering classifieds, the business section, and movie reviews. Cost: \$6.95 per month.

1990

United States

December 13: The Electronic Trib, first multiline, P.C.-based electronic newspaper system, is launched by The Albuquerque Tribune using BBS software and a 286-12 PC.

versity's Jay Rosen, as the program's correspondent satirized the entire idea of amateurs hosting a news and commentary Web site.

- Questions are raised about whether the number of blogs is inflated by ones that are inactive or are spam.

Blogs vs. Old Media

Given what's happened with blogs and journalism, can we say that their upward trend is now in decline? Or are blogs being relegated to places where journalists troll for funny stories or human interest filler? Neither seems a likely outcome.

Blogs are likely to thrive due to their adaptability and innovation. Bloggers' personal style, their technology, the use of open-end sourcing, and their ability to get information and speculation out quickly enable this new media to go around the clunky logistical trails and leadership—bypassing what economists call the “structural rigidity” of the old. Moments after the “60 Minutes II” story aired, for example, ABC News's Peter Jennings was not going to break onto the air and proclaim, “There's something screwy about a story on CBS.” And when a few bloggers had an idea about how to speed up and collate information about tsunami victims and survivors, they didn't have to wait for an OK from senior editors or management. Blog failures cost much less than do those of mainstream media, so bloggers can experiment on a whim and do so faster than giant operations.

“Old world panic” is also a problem. At some level, blogs seem a threat to almost everything in the news business. OhmyNews, for example, is a South Korean Web site where anybody can post news stories and editorials; if the content proves popular enough, the author gets paid for it. If such a model becomes dominant, it would mean the end of journalism, not to mention journalism schools. But forcing new technology into old holes doesn't work, either. Reading blogs on TV is artificial and unworkable, as is “hipping up” a

newspaper column by calling it a blog or trying to feign technical innovation by telling readers that one's musings were done on a Blackberry (though suspiciously without typos).

Regular media are challenged, too, about how to cover novelties in their business. Journalists noticed blogs late, but interest intensified as blog-

Though some news-related blogs have more ‘hits’ than others, blogging lacks both defined leadership and a constituency. Post an item on a blog and comments range from complete agreement to irate dissent. It's messy, but that's what blogs are

gers showcased their potential. Now a frenzy of attention by journalists is coupled with mocking. Is this an inevitable cycle—building up what is new to unwarranted levels of praise, then despairing at its flaws, which were evident at the start?

Blogs cannot be stuffed into ill-fitting stereotypes. Blogs represent the divergent voices of millions. Though some news-related blogs have more “hits” than others, blogging lacks both defined leadership and a constituency. Post an item on a blog and comments range from complete agreement to irate dissent. It's messy, but that's what blogs are, and we hope they stay that way.

Certainly traditional journalists have a right to feel as sports stars do when they have to endure catcalls and advice shouted at them by obnoxious fans. And compared with most journalists, a lot of the bloggers have not paid their dues in education, training or experience. But the problems that mainstream journalism is experiencing today have little to do with bloggers. After all, it wasn't bloggers who slashed newsroom budgets for basic beat and investigative reporting. Nor did bloggers create a star system of astronomically paid anchors and pundits. And bloggers were not the ones who reduced coverage of political campaigns and elections to

sound- and visual- bytes and horserace handicapping.

Finally, let's step back and take the longer view into this blogger/mainstream media debate. Once upon a time, as historian Gwenyth L. Jackaway documented, a new medium came along—loud, raucous, uncontrolled and full of unprofessional and discordant voices.

It was called radio. The print press of the 1920's and 1930's saw radio as a danger, not only to their livelihoods but also to the future of the republic itself. The New York Times fumed, “If the American people ... were to depend upon scraps of information picked up from air reporting, the problems of a workable democracy would be multiplied incalculably.” Editor & Publisher asserted that radio was “physically incapable of supplying more than headline material,” and thus it was “inconceivable that a medium which is incapable of functioning in the public interest will be allowed to interfere with the established system of news reporting in a democracy.”

Print news survived and thrives and radio did not destroy democracy. There will always be a mainstream media, though perhaps blogs will blur into it. But the point worth remembering is that the rise of new media should not make the old media panic or be dismissive or fearful. Rather what is new ought to remind us of the need to grasp ever more tightly ahold of the fundamentals of journalism as we journey forward. ■

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Traditional Media in the Digital Age

Data about news habits and advertiser spending lead to a reassessment of media's prospects and possibilities.

By Douglas Ahlers and
John Hessen

A Harvard graduate student recently went to a job interview at The New York Times and was asked why she would want to pursue a career in an industry that probably would not survive the decade. The message she walked away with was clear: The Internet is killing the print newspaper.

As the Internet has developed into a ubiquitous source of news and information, many observers and industry professionals have openly questioned the long-term viability of printed newspapers or network television news programs. Such fears are supported by statistics like a staggering 1.9 percent drop in newspaper circulation in the six months ending March 30, 2005 and a decline in total circulation of more than 15 percent since 1984. Television network evening news viewership has fallen 37.8 percent during this same period. The audience for local TV evening news has also slipped from 76 percent in 1993 to 59 percent today.

With dismal numbers like these, it is not a surprise that a February 2005 story appearing on the front page of The Washington Post's Sunday business section concluded, "The venerable newspaper is in trouble," and The Wilson Quarterly recently dedicated an issue to "The Collapse of Big Media." But to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of their death have been greatly exaggerated.

Unconventional Wisdom

In an extensive analysis of the impact online media is having on its traditional print and television counterparts, we found little evidence to support the claims that the latter are facing annihi-

lation. In fact, there is a great deal of information suggesting that most news consumers prefer to use new media as a complement to print and television rather than as a substitute. This is good news for well established media brands that can leverage their visibility to expand both audience and revenues online. When we went on to examine the degree to which not just consumers but advertisers have substituted new media for traditional news outlets, the results again suggest an encouraging economic outlook for print and television news.

The idea that the rise of the Internet spells the end of print and TV news stems from the popular sense of the Internet as a disruptive rather than a sustaining technology. As described by Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School, sustaining technologies are those that change an industry through incremental improvements, while disruptive technology creates a new playing field, knocking down traditional barriers to entry and transforming an industry or market completely. The Internet certainly has the appearance and characteristics of a disruptive technology, but its impact on the news industry has been far less profound than anticipated.

Traditional media's high overhead costs have always been outweighed by high profit margins. But with the U.S. Department of Commerce estimating, for example, that 30 to 40 percent of newspaper production costs go to printing and delivery, there are clearly powerful economic advantages favoring online media where these costs are near zero. Thus we'd expect to see online media, with its decisive cost advantages in du-

1990

Switzerland

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) is invented by Tim Berners-Lee, an Englishman, and colleagues at CERN, the European particle physics laboratory.

1990

Switzerland

October: Tim Berners-Lee coins the phrase "World Wide Web" to describe his hypertext project.

1990

United States

The World comes online (world.std.com), becoming the first commercial provider of Internet dial-up access.

1991

United States

February: Omaha World-Herald closes its videotex service, saying "The public just didn't buy it."

1991

Europe

Linux, a UNIX-like operating system, is created by Linus Torvalds and released free across the Internet.

1992

United States

March: AOL begins offering stock to the public on the Nasdaq market.

1992

France

May 6: Minitel serves more than 6 million terminals with 1,800 information sources.

1992

United States

The term "personal digital assistant" enters the lexicon with Apple's release of the Newton.

plication and distribution, gain market dominance at the expense of print and television. In theory, these cost differences between the traditional news media and the online media should be passed on to the consumer, causing news consumers to substitute the lower cost online media for traditional media. News producers, in turn, should seek out lower-cost means of duplication and delivery, pushing consumers to the online distribution channel much the way banks encourage customers to use ATM's. But the reality is that these competitive advantages are simply not as great as they appear, and they have not led to the predicted wholesale substitution of online media for offline alternatives. What follows are some reasons—economic and psychological—that help to explain why:

- The cost of news to consumers is typically heavily subsidized (an average of 85 percent in the case of newspapers) or completely subsidized (as in the case of television) by advertisers. So despite the economic advantages inherent to online media, there is little pass-through benefit to the consumer from these cost savings and therefore little financial motive for consumers to actually substitute one form of media for another.
- There is strong evidence that news consumption habits are hard to break absent a major price benefit of switching. The major decline in newspaper readership is actually due to a generational gap rather than to a switch in behavior from established newspaper readers. It is attributable to the fact that young adults, ages 18-35, are not adopting the newspaper readership habit in the first place. In 1972, 42 percent of people under 30 read a newspaper daily, but now, only 23 percent of adults under 30 read a newspaper yesterday. This is in contrast with the older age cohorts where 52 percent of people aged 50-64 and 60 percent of people who are 65 or older read a newspaper yesterday.

This news-consumer generation gap exists online as well. Survey data show that only an average of 5 percent of adults over the age of 45 use the Internet as a source for national news, whereas 22 percent of adults 18-24 and 14 percent of adults 25-34 use the Internet to get news. This data show that few existing newspaper readers are switching outright to online media, but the younger age group is gravitating to using online and offline news media in roughly equal proportions

As the use of multiple media channels has become the dominant strategy for news consumers, credibility and public profile, established via the offline media, can provide tremendous leverage for an online presence. And a strong online audience can translate into better sales at the newsstand as brand preferences are carried offline.

as they become news consumers (23 percent reading papers and 22 percent going online for news). This gives us reason to believe that the vast majority of newspaper readers will not change their news consumption habits in the near future. But it also raises long-term concerns (15-25 years out), when the younger age cohorts begin to replace today's older newspaper reading generations. This same trend holds true for TV network news for which the median viewer age is 60, with only 18 percent of adults under 30 watching.

Another factor in understanding the psychology of news consumers is the widespread perception that online and offline media are largely complementary rather than competitive. While industry-sponsored research tends to view the audience as monolithic consumers of one media at the expense of others, the reality of the dynamic "multichannel" media user is very much the norm.

A study by Frank Magid Associates for the Online Publishers Association found that 51 percent of users of online news Web sites identified themselves as

multichannel users who actively seek out news through a variety of media, for instance using the Internet to find more information about a story first seen on network news. For such individuals, the broad spectrum of online and offline media is used as a kind of information buffet from which they sample according to appetite and interest. Among those who are younger and those with more online experience can be found a large and growing number of "multitasking" users, comfortable

consuming news from several media sources simultaneously.

The Magid study also found strong evidence of overlap between users of online and offline news sources, with 70 percent seeing the two as complementary and only nine percent suggesting that online and offline media were in direct competition. Among users of online news sites, 64 percent reported that they also use the corresponding offline media property (i.e., NYTimes.com and The New York Times) either

frequently or occasionally.

Conclusions can be drawn from this that in a rich world of media choices, the majority of Americans choose "all of the above." This suggests that brand identity and reputation could play a decisive role in shaping consumer choices. As the use of multiple media channels has become the dominant strategy for news consumers, credibility and public profile, established via the offline media, can provide tremendous leverage for an online presence. And a strong online audience can translate into better sales at the newsstand as brand preferences are carried offline.

The Internet's Impact

So how big of an impact is the Internet having on the traditional news media? The Magid study showed that only 29 percent of news Web site visitors were "online-only" news consumers. This translates to only 12.2 percent of the adult U.S. population. Another 21.5 percent of this group are multichannel news media users, as described above,

so this leaves two-thirds of the population as offline-only news consumers or as “dabblers,” who are people who go online for news very infrequently in response to high profile events.

From this data we can see that roughly 12.2 percent of the U.S. population substitutes the online news media for offline news. For another 21.5 percent, the online news media acts as a complement rather than as a substitute. And 66.3 percent of Americans have shown no change in their news consumption habits. A 12.2 percent shift is significant, but it scarcely represents a disruptive migration to online media.

But what about the future? Does this shift represent the entire impact or is it just the beginning of a mass migration? Long-term trends can be inferred by looking at the media mix of experienced Internet users. Those with six or more years online report spending three hours per week reading print newspapers, which is 14.3 percent less time than new Internet users and 25 percent less than nonusers. The experienced users spend an average of 45 minutes per week reading news online. Notable in these numbers is that even for long-term Internet users, there is only a fractional reduction in newspaper readership.

The resounding implication is that generational news-consumption patterns are of far greater significance to the well-being of the industry than competition from the Internet.

To properly assess the future of the news media, it is necessary to acknowledge that the news business serves two interrelated markets—consumers and advertisers. Though declining circulation and ratings figures tell us that print and television have undoubtedly lost a share of their audience, they’ve not experienced a corresponding drop in advertising revenues. Despite increasing fragmentation of the market, advertisers have not found any suitable substitute for the exposure generated by traditional media.

Tracking Advertising Dollars

Between 1998 and 2004, news media advertising revenues have increased by

a total of 15 percent despite a major advertising recession in 2001-2002. In the case of newspapers, ad revenues have grown at an inflation-adjusted 6.24 percent during the past two years and will return to prerecessionary levels by the end of this year. Analysts have projected continuing growth for newspapers at a compound annual rate of 5.3 percent through 2008.

Network TV morning news shows were scarcely affected by the recession, with revenues growing at an annualized rate of 10.6 percent since 2001. Local news broadcasts accounted for 46 percent of station revenues in 2004, up from 39 percent in 1999. And ad revenue for the cable-TV news channels grew 39.4 percent from 2000 to 2004 despite the advertising recession. This leaves only the evening network news broadcasts having yet to return to prerecession revenues, but even they have rebounded substantially.

While virtually all segments of the offline media were hit with recessionary declines in revenues in 2001-2002, the online advertising market also saw a similar drop at this time (26 percent decline between 2000 and 2002). This suggests that the decline in traditional news media ad revenues during this period (10 percent) was due to a pullback in total advertiser spending rather than a shift to advertising online. As advertisers returned to the market in 2003-2004, offline news media has seen overall ad revenues increase by 7.15 percent annually. Advertisers are showing no real signs of abandoning newspapers or TV news in favor of the online media.

Just as online news media have siphoned away a small but not catastrophic share of the offline audience, so too have some ad dollars migrated online. But again the percentages are not the stuff of doomsday predictions. In 2004, all online advertising accounted for 3.61 percent of total U.S. advertising spending versus 17.5 percent for newspapers and 25.4 percent for television.

Findings by the Interactive Advertising Bureau and PricewaterhouseCoopers show that online advertising continues to be the fastest growing sector of the advertising market. In 2005, online advertising is expected to grow

1992

U.S. & Canada

NAA reports 11 newspapers have an online presence in the United States and Canada and more than 250 offer voice information services.

1992

United States

February: Gannett’s Florida Today launches on CompuServe. Content focuses on U.S. space program.

1992

United States

June 9: Congress removes restrictions prohibiting commercial use of the Internet.

1992

United States

November: Delphi becomes the first consumer online service to offer access to Internet mail, ftp, newsgroups, telnet and gopher.

1993

Switzerland

February: First alpha version of Marc Andreessen’s Mosaic browser for Windows is released by the NCSA at a conference at CERN in Geneva.

1993

United States

March 2: First known Internet e-mail message from a U.S. President is sent by Bill Clinton.

1993

Worldwide

Number of countries now reachable by e-mail: 117.

1993

Switzerland

April 30: CERN board declares that WWW technology will be freely usable by anyone.

at a rate of 22.4 percent while newspaper ad revenue growth is projected to be 5.13 percent. But behind these numbers is the simple fact that even at the slower growth rate, newspaper ad revenues will grow substantially more in actual dollars than online advertising. And even when we look forward, projections for 2008 show 94.3 percent of total advertising dollars still going to offline media; hardly the stuff that industry collapses are made of.

The one area that has seen direct online competition growing significantly is classified advertising, particularly for cars, real estate, and employment. With classified ads contributing 35.5 percent of total newspaper ad revenues, newspapers have been hardest hit as 9.1 percent of classified advertising has moved online (\$1.73 billion in online classified advertising versus \$17.3 billion in newspaper classified advertising). Jupiter Research projects that online classified advertising will more than double to \$3.7 billion by 2009. This increase of two billion dollars in less than five years is a staggering compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.4 percent. But it is still less than the \$2.5 billion growth that the newspaper classified business will produce

at a puny 2.67 percent CAGR.

In numerous cases, publishers have responded by going online themselves to recapture lost revenues and leverage their ability to reach consumers both on and offline. From 2002-2004, Knight Ridder's online classified revenues doubled to \$83.3 million, or 10.67 percent of their print classified revenues. Knight Ridder also owns Cars.com and in partnership with Gannett and Tribune Company owns CareerBuilder.com, an online employment service. Similarly, The Washington Post Company recently purchased Slate, and The New York Times Company acquired About.com.

Such ventures are among the ways for established media entities to leverage their brand and customer base online. Extending their brand presence online provides companies with the opportunity to capture new audience and new advertising markets. For example, Knight Ridder's 2004 results show that online earnings contributed just 3.78 percent of total revenue, but because of high online profit margins, these earnings contributed 5.7 percent to total operating income.

While initial reports of Mark Twain's death were greatly exaggerated, eventually they were proven to be merely

premature. The same prospect exists for the traditional media entities that fail to understand and explore the complementary nature of online and offline media and take steps to attract the next generation of news consumers. Doing so will allow them to capture an ever larger audience and increase ad revenues. If they fail to do so, early reports of their death might be issued with little exaggeration after all. ■

Douglas Ahlers, who was a founder of Modern Media and a pioneer of online advertising and electronic commerce, was a spring 2005 fellow at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy, where he examined the intersection of online and offline news media. He is now at Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. John Hessen is a communications consultant based in Silicon Valley. He specializes in the fields of media, technology and politics.

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The News Media's 30-Year Hibernation

Online newspapers 'are not creative. They are not interactive. They're too much like newspapers.'

By David Carlson

The problem with online newspapers is this: They are just like offline newspapers. That means they are not particularly interactive, they are barely customizable to individual preferences, they contain mostly outdated information, and they are hardly relevant to most readers' daily lives.

From the very conception of online services (1970 at the British Post Office Research Laboratory outside of London), the inventors envisioned

them to be more than just a new way of distributing the same old information. Led by Sam Fedida, the researchers came up with the idea that led to videotex, a graphical approach to the display of information online that can be said to be the forerunner of today's online services. The prototype, named Prestel, was first demonstrated in 1974. By later that year, these researchers had identified six classes of services that could be delivered via the new medium.

A bit more than 30-years later, online newspapers still struggle to deliver these services and, for the most part, haven't figured out how to deliver online news in new ways, either.

The great promise that online journalism brings is the potential to tell stories in ways they never have been told before. Using online technologies it is possible to capture the strengths of the existing news media, eliminate most of the weaknesses, and roll them

up into a new medium that can offer news and information in much more compelling ways.

The strengths of printed news are not difficult to enumerate—great breadth and considerable depth. Newspapers and magazines include a wide variety of news, and they are capable of exploring a topic in considerable detail. They can be browsed, offering readers the potential to discover information they didn't know they were interested in—serendipity, if you will. Print publications also are cheap to buy and extremely portable. A newspaper or magazine can be taken almost anywhere.

Print's weaknesses are considerable as well. Never is there enough space in a print publication for all the news that might interest its readers. Another is immediacy. By their very nature, print news publications are out of date before they can be read. That fancy color weather map in this morning's newspaper is at least six hours old and very likely older than that by the time you see it. Print is expensive to produce and distribute. Worldwide, some 80 cents of every dollar newspapers spend goes to some part of the production process—paper, ink, presses, trucks, personnel and the like. It's not cheap to put a pound or more of paper on tens of thousands of doorsteps every morning.

Print's other Achilles' heel is its feedback channels. They are clogged. It is extremely difficult for editors to gauge how well pleased customers are with the product. The measures are few: circula-

tion numbers, letters to the editor, and angry calls to the switchboard (any of us who've been there can tell you that the happy readers almost never call).

Broadcast media have a different set of strengths and weaknesses. By their nature, they are more compelling than print because they offer sound, in the case of radio, and both sound and pictures, in the case of television. Radio and television have immediacy that print never will be able to match, but their biggest and most compelling strength is the ability to take us to the action, to make us witnesses to events.

While these are very powerful strengths, broadcast media have major weaknesses as well. The first is time—not time in the sense of the broadcast day being too short, but in the sense of how long a viewer or listener must spend to see or hear a specific item on the news. It's about linearity. Wanting to find out how a particular event is reported requires being in place before the newscast begins and watching or listening to every second of it, commercials and all, to ensure that you don't miss the little piece of it that interests you. Another of broadcast's weaknesses is depth. It is much more difficult for broadcast media to present dense, deep information about a topic than it is for print. And talk about feedback problems. Broadcast station managers have an even more difficult time gauging their customers' happiness. They have only ratings growth or decline and those angry calls to the switchboard.

Creating The Online Timeline

The online world left no physical tracks. This meant that a permanent record was nearly impossible to keep because hard disks were small and CD and DVD writers were not yet invented. When technology advanced, everyone raced to implement it. A new version would appear online, and the old very likely would be lost forever.

It appeared to me that the history of a new medium—one that I believed could be nearly as important as the invention of the printing press—was being lost.

That was the impetus for The Online Timeline. Starting in 1990, I captured screen shots almost daily. I tracked events and accumulated hundreds of clips from print media. In 1998 I had the idea for the timeline and spent months in libraries and on LexisNexis searching print archives to piece together the early years.

If you have materials from these early years, especially promotional ones, contact me at dave@carlsonsite.com.

■ — D.C.

1993 United States

August: Mosaic, first graphical Web browser for Windows, is released by the University of Illinois. It causes WWW to grow at a 341,634 percent annual rate of service traffic.

1993 United States

September 2: Middlesex (Mass.) News launches first Internet gopher-based online newspaper.

1993 United States

October: First journalism site on the Web is launched at the University of Florida. By now there are about 200 Web servers in the world.

1993 United States

Apple says its new consumer online service, eWorld, will debut in April 1994.

1993 United States

December: Prodigy for Windows finally debuts, nearly a year after AOL's Windows version. There are 232,000 orders placed in the first 10 days.

1993 United States

December 8: First article about the Web appears in *The New York Times* under the byline of John Markoff.

1994 Worldwide

More than 3 million hosts exist on the Internet. Editor & Publisher reports about 20 newspaper online services exist worldwide, mostly BBS's.

The Promise of Online News

The promise of online journalism is the ability to encompass all these strengths and more. Online news has breadth and depth and can be unlimited in its coverage. An online news site has the potential to offer its customers access to every story ever published about a topic. Online news can be browsed and, making it even more useful, it can be searched, enabling visitors to quickly find information about a topic of interest. Online news can have the immediacy of broadcast and, using audio and video, it can have that same ability to make us witnesses to events. Online's feedback channels are wide open, too, enabling instant response from readers.

Online media also have new capabilities that so-called "old media" never did. They can be personalized—better yet, individualized. The top of your front page of news and the top of mine don't have to be the same. If you care more about the Chicago Cubs than anything else, the top of your front page could be the Cubs—not how they did yesterday but how they are doing now, today, in the bottom of the sixth inning. If it's money that matters to you, instead of delivering news about the markets an online publication could report how your personal wealth has changed in the past 24 hours, or the past 24 minutes, if you prefer. Advertising can be interactive, with a restaurant ad, for example, leading to a menu, and the menu leading to a way to make a reservation. Classifieds can feature photos. Distribution is cheap, with no need for presses, ink, trucks, or production and distribution personnel.

Nor does online journalism have to be limited to the traditional methods of storytelling. Databases and spreadsheets, for example, can be used and even can allow visitors to interact with the data to ask questions and often seek answers to their queries. Each part of a story can be told with the medium that tells it best. Words, pictures, audio, video and data—even reader contributions—can be mixed to tell stories in

compelling new ways.

I'm sorry to say that none of these ideas is particularly new. The foundation for these concepts was laid back to the 1970's. What's wrong with online newspapers is that they have not—and are not—taking advantage of the emerg-

Lots of these Web sites, big and small, are very deep and wide, but what makes up these deep, wide sites is repurposed content. At least 90 percent of the content of every news site I've seen is 'shovelware'—news prepared for one medium and shoveled into another.

ing capabilities of the medium. They are not creative. They are not interactive. They're too much like newspapers.

The Missing Pieces

The first step on the road to real change is to stop thinking about these new methods of distributing news as if they are newspapers. As a judge of two of the most prestigious international contests for online news sites, I can tell you that the evidence of original thought out there is pretty limited.

Lots of these Web sites, big and small, are very deep and wide, but what makes up these deep, wide sites is repurposed content. At least 90 percent of the content of every news site I've seen is "shovelware"—news prepared for one medium and shoveled into another. Broadcast news scripts, complete with bad spelling and capitalized letters, do not make interesting content, nor does a 30-minute newscast offered in one linear chunk. Thousands of wire stories do not make a compelling Web site, either, especially if they are the same wire stories that were published in the paper edition and don't offer a single hyperlink to additional information or related stories. And far too often the photos and graphics that were published with a story don't ever make it to the Web.

Then there are letters to the editor.

While most newspaper sites publish letters, they're usually the same letters that were put in print. Why not include the dozens of letters that don't make it into the newspaper?

Why not publish columnists online who aren't published in the print edition and other comics, too? Why don't online music and film sections offer more sound clips and video clips? Why aren't newcomers' guides and reviews of restaurants, movies and recordings kept easily available long after publication? This is material that has a long, useful life to customers. Why don't more media companies offer news on different platforms, such as mobile phones and pda's?

And do TV station gurus really believe it serves viewers to make them go to their Web sites to find a link to some government agency?

In many ways, advertising on media Web sites is even farther behind. Why aren't real estate ads easily searchable by any criterion, even workshops, garage stalls, lot size, and number of fireplaces? Why can't owners or realtors be e-mailed directly from the ad? I can count on one hand the number of newspaper sites I've seen that offer the opportunity to include a photo with a classified ad. Just in case newspapers haven't noticed, pictures sell merchandise. Does that help explain why eBay is winning this competition? Does that help us understand why Craigslist threatens newspapers? Consumers want instant gratification. Print and broadcast ads never have offered that, but if news Web sites are to succeed, they must find a way to connect their customers with advertisers, both retail and classified.

Newspapers could have been eBay and Amazon.com and Monster.com, too. They could have done what Priceline did and should have done what Craigslist did. Newspapers even could have done what FedEx and UPS do. After all, delivery cars and trucks roll up and down every street early each morning, seven days a week.

Why have media companies failed to capitalize on this medium that seems

such a natural extension of what they do? I can think of three primary reasons.

1. Media companies have not historically invested in research and development. It's not in their nature; it is an industry that adopts the inventions of others, not one that paves its own way.
2. Media companies are cursed by their high-profit margins. That sounds illogical, but the high margins that they've been able to generate have led Wall Street not only to expect such profit levels quarter after quarter but also to demand them. But this is a mature industry, one that is not growing. Newspaper penetration has been declining for 30 years, and broadcast has been losing significant market share to cable for a decade, so the only way to keep the profit margins up is to cut costs by shrinking products, cutting personnel, and raising prices. The result: Customers find it easier to do without the product. The entire industry is, in effect, cashing out, as Philip Meyer explains in his recent book, "The Vanishing Newspaper." Quietly, perhaps even unknowingly, the industry is committing suicide, and the corporations appear to be greedy moneygrubbers instead of public-spirited entities staunchly defending the public's right to know.
3. Most troubling is myopia. News organizations are nearsighted. They are suffering from short-term thinking, as Vin Crosbie, an online news industry consultant, put it in a recent posting to an online newsgroup. He wrote: "Newsrooms are concerned just with today's or this weekend's stories; ad sales departments with this month's quotas; marketing departments with the next Audit Bureau of Circulations or Nielsen deadline; general managers only with capital investments that can be recouped within 12 to 36 months, and news corporations only with the next financial quarter's results. Relentlessly short-term thinking is pandemic in the news industry." And it's killing it.

It's a sad but true predicament, and

this sort of thinking prevents these companies from seeing the trouble they are in. Trade organizations, the Newspaper Association of America, for example, continue to cheerlead by reporting that newspaper advertising revenues grow year after year, but they fail to adequately report that the piece of the overall advertising pie going to newspapers continues to shrink. As a result, many publishers and editors have their heads in the sand when it comes to seeing the true picture. And very few news media companies are making any serious investments in new media. Strategic thinking seems short-term, at a time when there is a pressing need for long-term thinking about new business models.

In order to move forward—I fear in order to survive—news organizations must remove the cataracts that blur their vision. They must convince investors that they are worth saving and find ways to invest in the future. They also must take another very big, very difficult step and stop thinking like newspapers, stop thinking like radio and television stations. They must recognize that they sell information, not newspapers or television or radio. They should work to become platform independent and worry about selling the data, not the format. Remember the once-mighty railroads. They thought they were in the railroad business when it was transportation they were selling. ■

David Carlson is the Cox Foundation/Palm Beach Post professor of new media journalism at the University of Florida, director of the university's Interactive Media Lab, and president-elect of the Society of Professional Journalists. He has been involved in online journalism since 1989. Information for The Online Timeline that weaves information along the side of the pages in this section of stories was provided by Carlson and adapted for this use. His complete Online Timeline can be found at: <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/carlson/timeline.shtml>.

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1994 United States

January 19: The first newspaper to regularly publish on the Web, the Palo Alto Weekly in California, begins twice-weekly postings of its full content. Price: Free.

1994 United States

January: The first online venture from The (Raleigh) News & Observer is Nandoland, a bulletin board system aimed at public-school children.

1994 United States

February: American Online hits the 600,000 subscriber mark.

1994 United States

March 13: Access Atlanta, the first newspaper site on Prodigy, is launched by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, a Cox newspaper.

1994 United States

Netscape is formed by Jim Clark and Marc Andreessen and a Web browser, Netscape Navigator 1.0, is released.

1994 United States

June: The New York Times launches @Times on AOL. The content, mostly arts coverage, is widely criticized.

1994 Worldwide

June: Over 1,500 Web servers are registered with CERN.

1994 United States

July: Raleigh News and Observer goes to the net, launching the NandoTimes and the SportsServer, both Web-based news services.

Reinventing A Newspaper's Web Site

The online Los Angeles Times is 'very different. It should *be* different. It should *look* different.'

By Barbara A. Serrano

The Los Angeles Times has had a prominent online presence for a decade with its Web site. But it wasn't until this spring that a genuine effort was made to tap into its full potential and integrate the print and online staffs. There has been experimentation with reporters' online notebooks and a shift in how the site's content is generated and arranged.

Perhaps the most significant turning point in this new venture came this summer, when editors who'd spent their careers on the print side were asked to venture into the digital world of journalism and think about how to attract more readers. The path we charted is part of an ongoing attempt at the Times to give latimes.com its own voice, while also bridging two mediums (print and online) in ways that encourage the newspaper's staff to think more comfortably—and instinctively—about working for both.

"I think that all papers, including ours, were too slow to really embrace the Web," said Dean Baquet who, as managing editor, succeeded John S. Carroll as editor of the newspaper on August 15th. "And I would include myself in that, as a reporter and as an editor. It felt to us for years—for too long—it felt like this odd thing that required us to do more work, and now I think of it as an essential part of the paper, and when I say 'the paper,' I also think of the Web site. It's very different. It should *be* different. It should *look* different."

Creating a Different Look

Even after an earlier, much-publicized redesign, latimes.com looked like the paper did. The Times's front-page sto-

ries, mostly foreign and national news, became lead stories on latimes.com's homepage. Web visitors could find little on the site that was not lifted directly from the paper's pages.

One day this summer three of us—the deputy business editor, Joel Sappell, tapped by Baquet to act as a "guest editor" with the online staff; Dan Gaines, a senior online producer, and I—stood at a computer screen in the online newsroom looking at the site's homepage. We could count as many as 14 headlines, and that was only on the top half of the screen. Few of these stories were drawing much Web traffic, perhaps because the site provided no way for readers to tell which were the more important.

Sappell envisioned a more streamlined look—one strong enterprise or feature story, packaged with lead art, and a few headlines running alongside it. He wanted snappier headlines and a story mix that was distinct from the paper. He looked over at the box in the screen's upper right-hand corner with local TV video clips, a feature we knew was drawing fewer than a hundred visits daily.

"What if we were to move this box down to another place on the page?" Sappell asked Gaines. A moment later, he asked about the possibility of placing a homepage photo gallery where the video clips were located. Then, pointing to a spot on the screen just below where Sappell's envisioned gallery might go, I wondered aloud, "What if we put the breaking-news stories here in a box?"

So began a week filled with experiments and risks. Promotional boxes were moved—or made bigger—to display eye-catching photos and give the

site a more vibrant feel. Stories about food and the outdoors rose to the top of the page, and television and movies received even better play than before.

Sappell and I attended the same news meetings as print editors. But working with the online staff, we dug deeper into story lists to find content that might resonate with Web users. One day we featured a story about Asian women who go to excruciating steps to avoid the sun and stay white. The provocative nature of the article—accompanied by a rather unsettling shot of a woman sitting behind a steering wheel wearing a Darth Vader-like helmet and other photos—proved exceptionally popular. It drew more than 36,000 page views that day, making it the most requested story.

As we watched which stories users were gravitating to, it became apparent that celebrity, conspiracy and sex are quite popular topics on the Web. Photos, too, attract viewers. "I'm hearing from the masthead editors downstairs that they like it—fewer stories, better display, that it's working very well," Sappell declared at an online staff meeting.

Making Changes

At the Times, change hasn't come easily, nor has it come without resistance. Those who work on the extended news desk, which handles breaking news for the online site, didn't like having their headlines set aside (and placed in the new smaller box) to make room for larger, splashier features. Other assignment editors weren't thrilled with the interruption in workflow when the guest-editor-of-the-week called or e-mailed them for early postings. Copyeditors were rattled. How could

they guarantee the same quality with copy if they were being pushed to move stories in a matter of minutes?

Once some of this initial anxiety wore off—and people began negotiating the rules—a palpable sense of energy settled in. Print editors, for example, began to realize that they now had another platform to think about. With that realization came a sense of owner-

explained. “So we’re trying to do a lot of culture change on both sides.”

Until a few months ago, hardly anyone in the newsroom or senior management even knew where the online operation was located or who was in charge of it. The focus has always been to aim for a Page One story or, better yet, column one, the coveted home for long-form features.

The Los Angeles Times online homepage prior to suggested changes by “guest editors.”

ship about a medium that previously had been more or less ignored. “Why can’t we run it with a bigger picture? Can we do video?” editors started to ask. Meanwhile, the frenzy meeting at latimes.com evolved into free-flowing conversations about story placement and design, rather than the usual mind-numbing discussions about technical issues.

Rob Barrett, the site’s general manager, was also reiterating his long-standing pitch: experiment, share ideas, and watch what competitors do. “We’re five years behind the planet earth. We’ve got to get with it,” he told the staff.

Soon after Barrett’s arrival in January, he and Baquet were holding meetings with department heads in the newsroom to preach the importance of the Web and talk about changes ahead. “There were some very basic connections that had never been made between the Web staff and key people on the editorial side and the business side of the paper,” Barrett

So some of us have found this new embrace of the Web exciting—and long overdue.

Integrating the print and online staffs requires a paradigm shift that Baquet began to pursue earlier this year. As a long-time newspaper editor, he says he knew intellectually that the Internet was important, but its full power—and potential—did not become tangible to him until he saw the impact bloggers were having during the 2004 presidential campaign. Declining circulation figures also entered into heightened interest in online readership. (In the six month period ending March 31, the Times reported its steepest decline in several years, as daily circulation fell 6.5 percent and Sunday’s paid readership plunged 7.9 percent.)

Top editors now regard Web users as part of the Times’s readership, and they view the vast online community of bloggers as a part of the paper’s future outreach. “There’s plenty of handwring-

1994 United States

August: AOL tops the 1 million subscriber mark.

1994 Spain

“El Mundo” starts an edition on the Internet, but only with “Su dinero” (your money) and “La revista” (the magazine), two weekly supplements from the newspaper. It launches October 22nd.

1994 United States

November 1: A guild strike shuts down San Francisco’s daily newspapers. Strikers and management create rival dailies on the Web, the Free Press, and The Gate.

1994 Worldwide

November 29: Deutsche Presse-Agentur reports some 200 newspapers around the world are offering editions online. It says 48 papers have “full-fledged electronic editions.”

1994 United Kingdom

December 7: The Daily Telegraph launches a Web-based version, The Electronic Telegraph.

1994 Luxembourg

Europe Online is founded by three European publishers.

1994 United States

Java, a programming language that allows animation on Web pages and much more, is introduced by Sun Microsystems.

1995 United States

Consumer online services experience 64 percent growth rate in 1995 and now reach 8.5 million members.

ing in the business these days about circulation losses," Carroll said. "If you consider the people who read us on the Web site, there's no problem. It's actually very, very good." There have been about a dozen reporters' online notebooks (akin to blogs) since the site's redesign, most tailored around specific events, such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Los Angeles Film Festival, and the Tour de France.

notebook's biting style and worried that the blog was blurring the line between opinion and news reporting.

The Web Site's Future

Latimes.com, which is fifth among U.S. newspaper sites in the number of visitors it draws, generates revenues that run into the tens of millions of dollars and draws 5.5 million unique viewers

ment industry insiders (as users and advertisers) by providing Web-specific content and a database of entertainment and travel listings. To this end, consultants and staffers are at work on two new products: a site focused on news and information about awards, such as the Oscars and Emmys, and a Hollywood page in which bloggers weigh in on the day's news and gossip.

Podcasting of Times's stories began in August, and there is talk of having the site be a conduit for the work of citizen journalists and bloggers. "No one in my opinion has really solved the problem of what a newspaper site ought to be, because it's a local and national information business, as well as something that reflects the paper," said Barrett. "Latimes.com is evolving The issue is how fast and how far can we go with something that's great because there are so many competitors. If we're not fast enough, they're going to figure out ideas before we do it."

If our recent experience is prologue, the Times will be rushing full speed into the digital universe in 2006—wrestling with how to maintain its commitment to high quality, resource-rich hard news reporting while enabling its Web site to attract more readers by spotlighting edgier and glitzier stories. There is also hope that the Web will offer a way for the newspaper to strengthen its relationship with Southern California communities, a goal that has long eluded the paper.

The Web, Baquet says, "should be part of who we are. We're a serious, hard-hitting newspaper, and we always will be. The Web offers a way to get a glimpse of what people want to read and what people care about." ■

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A redesigned homepage of latimes.com, with more emphasis on enterprise features and images.

The most extensive online reporting effort involved coverage of the presentations by TV networks in New York in mid-May. For five days, network executives and celebrities put on flashy presentations and attend star-studded parties to promote new prime-time shows. With three reporters and a business editor filing dispatches from the scene, staff writer Shawn Hubler pulled the narrative together from her home in Laguna Beach, while I was working as the editor in Los Angeles.

Internal feedback was overwhelmingly positive. But at one point, around 6:30 in the morning, Hubler and I agreed that we truly understood what it's like to be bloggers. (They have no life.) As much as editors liked the result (particularly when bloggers like Defamer linked to it), reporters in the field were tired and frustrated. They had filed dispatches morning, afternoon and night, which left them virtually no time to develop sources or story ideas. Some were also uncomfortable with the

a month, up by 39 percent from a year ago. And page views grew by 7 percent, according to data from Sage, The Tribune Co.'s metrix reporting tool. The publishing side wants to increase and diversify the site's advertising and its audience, since about 70 percent of latimes.com users are from outside the five-county area in Southern California. Our audience isn't as loyal as advertisers would like: In June, only about 17 percent of new users returned to the site after their initial visit. Nor do our site's daily visitors—the majority of whom are men between 35-44 in age—resemble the younger digital audience the Times would like to attract.

There are plans to invest newsroom resources (i.e. staff) in the online operation. The goal is to have a Web editor working for each department in the newsroom. Barrett and Baquet are also collaborating on an ambitious plan to develop new content and rebuild the site.

Barrett intends to target entertain-

Gripping About Newspaper Editorials Doesn't Change

The problem editors face is figuring out how to get people to read editorials.

By Michael Gartner

Two quotations: “The prestige of the editorial is gone . . . There are journalists who think the time is at hand for the abolition of editorials and the concentration of the whole force of journalism upon presenting to the public the history and the picture of the day . . . Editorials neither make nor mar a daily paper.” And “Michael does like to ask questions, such as, ‘In today’s world, what is the continuing relevance of a newspaper editorial board?’”

Ah, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The first quote is from James Parton, a noted biographer of the 1800’s, and it appeared in the *North American Review* in April 1866. The second quote is from Andrés Martínez, the editorial page editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, and it appeared in *The New York Times* in June 2005.

The “Michael” that Martínez referred to is Michael Kinsley, who was then the editorial and opinion editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. Kinsley had been shaking things up at his newspaper, moving writers around, asking outsiders to contribute editorials, letting insiders offer dissents, and—in a brief experiment—encouraging readers to rewrite editorials on the Internet.

Kinsley was just the latest—but he certainly won’t be the last—among the legions of people who have been debating, dissecting, or disparaging the editorial page ever since Horace Greeley invented it in the 1850’s. (Until Greeley set apart a page for opinion in *The New York Tribune*, newspapers readily mixed reporting and editorializing—something critics say that newspapers continue to do today.) Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* abandoned editorials

in the 1880’s, and *USA Today* went to a controversy-averse format when it was launched 100 years later.

Making Editorials Matter

Parton and Kinsley are right, of course, in raising questions about the editorial page. But history shows that neither they nor *USA Today* has the right solution. It is folly—and dereliction of duty—for newspapers to abandon editorials, and it is equal folly to move to group-edit or groupthink. Editorials can—and should—always be strong parts of newspapers. Especially today, in this era of instant news and instant rumor, thought is a commodity in scarce supply.

The problem editors face today is no different from the problem editors have faced for 150 years: How do you get people to read editorials? The answer, too, remains the same. Report thoroughly, think clearly, write gracefully. Be passionate in your beliefs. Be persuasive in your writing. That’s the formula that worked for the four greatest editorial writers in history: Greeley of the *Tribune*, Henry Watterson of *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, William Allen White of the *Emporia (Kan.) Gazette*, and Vermont Connecticut Royster of *The Wall Street Journal*.

These men wrote in four different eras, but they had much in common. They held strong beliefs, and they were stirring. The editorials of a young White helped put William McKinley in the White House. The editorials of an old Watterson helped stir a nation to war. Greeley, in his day, was as influential as any politician. Royster, in his way, set the political agenda for business leaders and

1995 Spain

August 1: “*El Diario Vasco*,” a daily newspaper, starts a weekly edition on the Internet.

1995 United States

August 21: Gannett’s *USA Today* begins offering its content free via the World Wide Web.

1996 United States

In January, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin begin work on the search engine’s predecessor, BackRub.

1996 Luxembourg

Europe Online declares bankruptcy on August 2nd with \$40 million in debts and 25,000 subscribers.

1996 Worldwide

In April, NAA reports about 175 North American dailies are currently available on the World Wide Web. About 775 publications are available online worldwide.

1996 United States

In May, *The Wall Street Journal* launches its Interactive Edition, a pay Web site. Cost: \$49.94 a year.

1996 United States

In October, *The Associated Press* launches A.P. Online, a wire service to provide content for online newspapers.

1997 China

In April, Prodigy launches its service—with Internet access—in Shanghai on mainland China.

Greeley, Watterson, White and Royster, and their newspapers, had something lacking in most of today's editorial writers and newspapers—personality. And that personality—personal and institutional—made the men voices to be listened to and made the institutions forces to be reckoned with. They wrote anonymously, but they were far from anonymous.

There's something else, too. Greeley and White owned their newspapers. Watterson had an ownership interest in his. And Royster worked for a benevolent family, and a benevolent company president, who encouraged him to be as outspoken as an owner.

Watterson, who left the *Courier-Journal* in 1918 in a dispute with the new owners over their favorable views on the League of Nations, "was the last of the great editors, for the reason that he was the last of those editors who wrote with the power of ownership," Arthur Krock, a great journalist himself, wrote. "A hired journalism, however zealous,

however loyal, however entrusted, however brilliant, cannot be great because it speaks through the mist of subordination."

Restoring an Editorial Voice

Neither Michael Kinsley nor anyone else is going to undo chain ownership, of course, but Royster—and a handful of others—proved that corporate-owned newspapers can have vigorous editorial pages. "The proprietors have put up with my prejudices while by no means always sharing them," Royster wrote after he retired. Indeed, that tradition probably continues. The *Wall Street Journal* continues to put out perhaps the best editorial page in the nation—the editorials are well-reported, well-reasoned and well-written and often outrageous and outlandish and outspoken. It's hard to believe that the owners and executives agree with every word and every position.

The now-retired Richard Aregood,

one of the best in the modern era of editorial writing, wrote editorials for newspapers owned by Knight Ridder and Newhouse, and clearly they and their editors gave him great freedom. "It's about time for Leonard Edwards to take the Hot Squat," began a 123-word Aregood editorial in the *Philadelphia Daily News* of 1975. And after outlining the crimes of "this piece of human crud," he ended the editorial by saying: "Fry him."

"A lot of people don't have opinions," the opinionated Aregood told an interviewer from the Poynter Institute in 1993. "That's where the passion comes from. You've got to believe in something. There are a lot of things I believe in and strongly. And you've got to care about what you're writing or," he laughingly told the interviewer, "it reads like an editorial."

Kinsley need only to have looked in the files of the *Los Angeles Times* to find some of that passion. At the height of World War II, the *Times* ran

Graceful and Persuasive Words and Passionate Beliefs

These excerpts from editorials illustrate how, as Michael Gartner writes, "personality—personal and institutional—made the men voices to be listened to and made the institutions forces to be reckoned with."

"Unworthy of the Bench from which it was delivered, unworthy even of the previous reputation of the jurist who delivered it, unworthy of the American people, and of the nineteenth century, it will be a blot upon our National character abroad, and a long-remembered shame at home."—The *Albany Evening Journal*, March 10, 1857, commenting on the Dred Scott decision by the Supreme Court.

"Dear Sir: I do not intrude to tell you—for you must know already—that a great proportion of those who triumphed in your election, and of all who desire the unqualified suppression of the Rebellion now desolating our

country, are sorely disappointed and deeply pained by the policy you seem to be pursuing with regard to the slaves of Rebels. I write only to set succinctly and unmistakably before you what we require, what we think we have a right to expect, and of what we complain."—Editorial written by Horace Greeley in *The New York Tribune*, August 20, 1862, addressed to President Lincoln.

"There are old reasons enough against woman suffrage, and it would be futile to cite them now. Men's minds are made up. At this time of all times the poetizing and enfeebling of the practical instincts, experience and capability of the State by the admission of women as voters would be a perilous venture."—An editorial appearing in *The New York Times*, November 12, 1915, opposing women's suffrage.

"First of all on bended knee we should pray God to forgive us. Then erect as

men, Christian men, soldierly men, to the flag and the fray—wherever they lead us—over the ocean—through France to Flanders—across the Low Countries to Koln, Bonn and Koblenz—tumbling the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein into the Rhine as we pass and damming the mouth of the Mozelle with the debris of the ruin we make of it—then on, on to Berlin, the Black Horse Cavalry sweeping the Wilhelmstrasse like lava down the mountain side, the Junker and the saber rattler flying before us, the tunes being 'Dixie' and 'Yankee Doodle,' the cry being, 'Hail the French Republic—Hail the Republic of Russia—welcome the Commonwealth of the Vaterland—no peace with the Kaiser—no parley with Autocracy, Absolutism and the divine right of Kings—to Hell with the Hapsburg and the Hohenzollern!'"—An editorial written by Henry Watterson in the *Courier-Journal*, April 17, 1917, as the United States was preparing for war.

an editorial with the headline: "Apology to Rattlesnakes." It began:

"Once or twice since Pearl Harbor, The Times has likened the Japanese to rattlesnakes. This is to apologize to the rattlesnakes.

"Compared with self-styled human beings who strike from the dark and slay without provocation or warning, who torture their helpless victims and murder them in cold-blooded defiance of honor and decency, the rattlesnake is one of nature's noblemen."

Today, the chain-owned newspapers tend to use editorial pages as convenient rest stops for reporters and editors who have lost their edge—or their patrons—in the newsroom. And it shows. "Most journalists come to [editorial writing] because they have been good reporters," Royster noted, "and it is assumed that because they are knowledgeable about, let us say, government or foreign affairs, they will have opinions worth listening to. Sometimes it's true, often not. Many a good reporter has been

"You say that freedom of utterance is not for time of stress, and I reply with the sad truth that only in time of stress is freedom of utterance in danger Only when free utterance is suppressed is it needed, and when it is needed, it is most vital to justice." —An editorial written by William Allen White in the Emporia Gazette, July 27, 1922, during labor unrest in Kansas.

"Frank Munsey, the great publisher, is dead. Frank Munsey contributed to the journalism of his day the talent of a meat packer, the morals of a moneychanger, and the manners of an undertaker. He and his kind have about succeeded in transforming a once noble profession into an eight percent security. May he rest in trust." —An editorial written by William Allen White in the Emporia (Kan.) Gazette on December 23, 1925, on the death of Munsey, who was one of the early owners of a newspaper chain.

ruined by asking him to think."

History is the best teacher. So here's some advice to those who endeavor to make editorials readable and relevant: Find some people who can think. And who can write. Find some people who are passionate. And who can be outrageous.

Then leave them alone.

If that doesn't work, call up Richard Aregood. ■

Michael Gartner's book, "Outrage, Passion & Uncommon Sense: How Editorial Writers Have Taken on the Great American Issues of the Past 150 Years," will be published by the National Geographic Society in October. He won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing in 1997 and is principal owner of the Iowa Cubs and president of the Iowa Board of Regents.

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"A bully by nature, a mountebank by instinct, a Senator by choice.... Thus this preposterous blob excites our pity if not our respect, and we leave him to his conscience in order that he may be entirely alone and meditate over the life of a charlatan whose personal interest and personal vanity are always of paramount concern to him." —Editorial written by Grover Cleveland Hall in the Montgomery Advertiser, August 19, 1927, about Alabama Senator Tom Heflin.

"A newspaper exists only to provide information for its readers; it has no other reason for being. It provides that service only so long as it diligently seeks out what is happening and reports it as accurately and as clearly as it can." —Editorial written most likely by Vermont Connecticut Royster in The Wall Street Journal, June 16, 1954, after General Motors pulled advertising because of news stories. ■

1997 United States

On November 14th, the Pulitzer Prize board opens the public-service prize competition to articles published online—but they must be entered on "a single CD-ROM."

1998 United States

On September 7th, Google, Inc. is established in Menlo Park, California.

1999 United States

February: One-quarter of U.S. newspapers' Web sites are said to be profitable at Editor & Publisher's Interactive Newspapers conference.

1999 United States

On November 5th, after a yearlong antitrust suit, a federal court finds that Microsoft has a monopoly.

2000 United States

January 10: America Online announces it will acquire Time Warner in a deal worth \$162 billion, an agreement Wall Street Journal technology columnist Kara Swisher later calls the "messiest merger" in corporate history.

2000 South Korea

OhmyNews is founded by Oh Yeon Ho in Seoul, South Korea. During the country's election, the free online news service registers 20 million page views per day in a country of 40 million.

2000 United States

February 23: Stock prices for online companies have risen so high that Michael Bloomberg tells the Editor & Publisher Interactive conference in New Orleans that Yahoo! has a higher market capitalization than the six largest American newspaper companies combined.

Getting Acquainted With Newspapers and Journalism

Students who didn't read newspapers started doing so, and before long they knew a lot about journalism and were inventing news outlets of their own.

By Susan E. Tift

It seems like a contradiction. People in their late teens and early 20's have grown up in what amounts to a media marinade. From reality shows to video games, iPods to instant messaging, talk radio to MTV, they are practiced multitaskers. They surf the Web while listening to music downloads and cell phone their friends while thumbing e-mails on their BlackBerries. Yet when it comes to journalism—to the news media—they know very little and are not as savvy about technology as we might think. That's the conclusion I've come to based on seven years teaching an admittedly unscientific sample of undergraduates at the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University.

Duke doesn't have a journalism school. What we offer is a journalism certificate, which is the rough equivalent of a minor without the academic discomfort it would cause to actually call it that. I teach the core course for the program—a seminar in media ethics, which all certificate aspirants must take—as well as three electives: one focused on investigative reporting, one on media ownership, and one on journalism's effect on public policy. The students run the gamut. Some are liberal arts majors hell-bent on pursuing journalism careers. Others are premed, prelaw, or engineering students who are simply curious about the media.

What they have in common, with some exceptions, is a profound lack of knowledge about who journalists are,

the conventions under which we operate, and even what constitutes "news." This doesn't mean they are lazy or stupid. On the contrary. Most come from the nation's top public and private high

schools; they are whip-smart, hardworking and eager to learn. But they didn't grow up, as most of us did, in homes where reading newspapers and news magazines, or watching nightly newscasts, was routine. The whole notion of "gatekeeper," at least as mainstream journalists understand the term, is foreign to them. And why shouldn't it be? The world they've inhabited since the moment they became conscious has always had multiple cable channels, many featuring partisans screaming at each other, and an infinite array of Web sites. Separating fact from opinion and balance from bias in such a swirling stew is daunting even for those of us who are journalists, so I'm sympathetic with young people who have a tough time divining the truth.

That said, it's been edifying—and occasionally horrifying—to find out where my students get their news,

who they think meets the definition of "journalist," and what the mission of journalism is. Last semester, at the first class meeting, I gave students a questionnaire calculated to tell me what they know, so I could adjust my teaching accordingly. The survey asked them to list their four main sources of news and then gave them an array of names and job descriptions and asked them to check those they considered to be "journalists." I used the same method to find out what they considered "news" and how they defined the mission of journalism.

Here is some of what I learned from their responses:

What stumped students most was journalism's public function. They seemed comfortable thinking of the news media as corporate and private, yet surprisingly uncertain about its proper role in a democracy. Many said it wasn't journalism's mission to help citizens make informed choices in the voting booth or to spur them to political or social action. And many fewer than I would have liked said it wasn't the responsibility of journalism to serve as a watchdog or a check on those in power.

- Virtually all of the students' news sources were Web sites—cnn.com was the top pick by far, followed by msnbc.com, nytimes.com, and espn.com—with the occasional mention of a print outlet such as Newsweek or The Economist. The good news here is that almost without exception, the students chose a nutritious diet of mainstream sources; they just preferred to get them on the Web.
- The "Who's a journalist?" question produced more confounding results. A large percentage of the class said that Bill O'Reilly, Jon Stewart, and the President's press secretary are journalists, while a few said that Rush Limbaugh and columnists for The New York Times weren't worthy of

the title because “they’re just giving you their opinion.” Several insisted that a network anchor was not a journalist (“Anchors just read the news, they don’t report,” said one), while a startling majority scribbled question marks around the term “blogger.” (Some didn’t know what a blogger was; others knew but had never read one, so didn’t feel qualified to judge.) So much for the blogosphere as province of the young! (They had no idea what RSS or podcasting is, either.)

- As for what constitutes “news,” the students unanimously agreed that a story about a car bombing in Baghdad would make the cut, but they were less certain about movie reviews, stock tables, and politically liberal or conservative opinion columns. Oddly enough, almost everyone said that an obituary of a locally prominent citizen was not news—a misapprehension I was able to correct the following week when a former Duke president died and the student newspaper carried the obituary on the front page.
- As for the mission of journalism, the responses were all over the map and often contradictory. Many said our goal is to make money, to please the stockholders of the owning company, to promote that company’s products and services, and to beat the competition. At the same time, most agreed that news organizations should “report truthfully about community, national and world affairs,” “please readers and viewers” rather than advertisers, and challenge people’s views and assumptions rather than reflect them.

What stumped students most was journalism’s public function. They seemed comfortable thinking of the news media as corporate and private, yet surprisingly uncertain about its proper role in a democracy. Many said it wasn’t journalism’s mission to help citizens make informed choices in the voting booth or to spur them to political or social action. And many fewer than I would have liked said it wasn’t the responsibility of journalism to serve

as a watchdog or a check on those in power. As it turned out, these views were based not on any conviction about the news media, but almost entirely on ignorance of what the press is, how it works, and what it does.

Students also haven’t figured out how to square the high-minded stuff they learned in high school about the press and the First Amendment (to the extent they were taught it at all) with what they experience in the culture: 24/7 coverage of the latest murder trial or celebrity hookup; high profile cases of journalistic error (Dan Rather and “60 Minutes II”) or malfeasance (Jayson Blair), and an administration that, together with its fellow travelers, some of whom call themselves journalists, has mounted a largely successful effort to portray the mainstream press as politically biased, untrustworthy and—even worse—beside the point.

Discovering Newspapers

In all my courses, I require students to subscribe to and read *The New York Times*—the ink-on-paper version, although they’re welcome to browse the Web site for updates and breaking news. For many, it is the first time they have read a newspaper on a regular basis. Using the *Times* as our common text, students learn about journalistic conventions such as the wall between editorial and advertising, objectivity, the difference between editorials and news, and the use of anonymous sources. At the end of the semester, most students say they’ve become addicted to the news and are much more analytical (and skeptical) about what they read and see and hear. Recent grads report, to their shock, that they’ve become faithful newspaper subscribers.

If mere exposure to newspapers could make readers out of every 18- to 34-year old, the market for *Maalox* at major news organizations would completely dry up, which is not the case. The take-home point is that exposure can make a difference, provided young people also have their hands held as they are walked through it. By comparison, my students were indifferent to blogs. During the fall semester of 2004, in the

2000

United States

July: America Online announces it has hit the 25 million subscriber mark.

2000

United States

Studies show that fewer Web users are clicking on banner and button ads. Percentages, once 1 percent or higher, are now .1 percent.

2001

United States

March: With advertising revenue falling, major news organizations lay off staff in their online operations. *New York Times Digital*, for example, cuts 100 positions. Print operations suffer layoffs as well. Knight Ridder rids itself of 10 percent of its workforce.

2001

United Kingdom

Interactive TV takes off in Britain, where 23 percent of households are expected to use it this year, *The New York Times* reports. This compares with 9 percent in Europe and 7.5 percent in the United States.

2001

United States

May: AOL has 29 million subscribers and AOL-Time Warner says it has 133 million subscribers to AOL, cable and magazines. *The New York Times* reports 57 percent of U.S. households have some type of Internet access.

2001

Worldwide

May: Some 461 million people worldwide are connected to the Internet, according to a study from IDC. Forecasts say it will be 1 billion by 2005.

run-up to the presidential election, I made each student follow a political or journalism blog of his or her choice and post on the class Web site a weekly analysis of what was being said. Some students picked the blogs of the candidates or the candidates' supporters; others chose high-hit favorites such as the Daily Kos, Wonkette and andrewsullivan.com. They liked the exercise—one said adopting a blog was like adopting a pet rock—but they weren't impressed with what they found there, which they variously described as invective, bias, hype, spin, gossip and propaganda. ("I just don't trust them," said one.)

What kind of news product would young people create if they were given free rein? Last spring I divided my media ownership class into three teams and assigned each to come up with its own "dream newspaper." What they proposed might hold lessons for print news outlets struggling to retain readers. Each one envisioned a strong Web

presence in addition to the print edition. One suggested outfitting subscribers with a "news box," not unlike AOL's instant message box, that would stay on users' computer screens while they were connected to the Internet, providing updated headlines in real time and making the paper a sort of online buddy. Another invited junior high and high school students to contribute blogs to the paper's Web site as a way of building links to the community and nurturing news interest in the young. Yet another permitted readers to receive the paper in PDF format and to choose the order and composition of the online sections, turning readers into their own personal layout editors.

The students wanted slightly shorter stories, more sidebars, photos and graphics, and slightly more entertainment, but they also rejected the "news lite" model of youth-oriented papers such as the Chicago Tribune's Red Eye edition. Their message seemed to be:

We prefer our news online, interactive, downloadable and e-mailable to an array of hand-held devices. In short, every way that cutting edge technology allows.

But these same students were also surprisingly traditional when it came to the meat-and-potatoes of journalism. They insisted that their dream newspapers aim for objectivity, balance and fairness; avoid conflicts of interest; refuse to pander to advertisers, and support tough investigative reporting. And, of course, make money. (Hey, I said it was a dream, didn't I?)

Of course, they had to learn about journalism basics to embrace them but, once they were informed, they did—with gusto. Now, that's news. ■

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Organizing the New News

'... the greater velocity of information today multiplies the opportunities for confusing and misleading the public.'

By Philip Meyer

We're going to need some new institutions. Between the anarchy and spontaneity of the blogosphere and the rigid, hierarchical structure of the old media, there lies a huge gap. Soon it will be time for some new organizational form to take root in that fertile middle.

Democracy has always been good at making room for organizational creativity. The two-party system in the United States is a good example. The Constitution makes no provision for parties, and the founding fathers didn't like them much. In his farewell address, George Washington warned against "the baneful effects of the spirit of party." But he was already involved through his support

of John Adams, the Federalist Party's choice for his successor.

Parties are needed to mediate between the complex networks of individual interests and the purposely separated power centers in government. When things go right or wrong, it's hard to pin the credit or blame on specific officeholders. But if one party or the other is clearly in control of the government, you can hold that party responsible. The decision is reduced to its most basic form. Support goes to the ins or the outs.

It's going to be the same with media. When big media were natural monopolies, the best of them knew that trust had economic value, both for their

communities and their advertisers. Now that media power is becoming radically decentralized through the Internet, we need a new kind of media organization to focus responsibility.

For bloggers and their fans, this idea is counterintuitive. With everyone free to reach everyone else, they argue, a free market will force truth to the top. John Milton made the same observation in 1644 when printing was in its early state: "Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" But the greater velocity of information today multiplies the opportunities for confusing and misleading the public. Processing is far more important now than it was when information was scarce. It will

be necessary to invent a new institution to take the responsibility for evaluating, grading and processing information to make it fair and accurate.

It's no use asking me what this institution will look like. I don't know. I just have faith in the ingenuity of free markets to keep finding new things to try until something works. Some kind of order will arise.

Promise Meets Reality

For an example of the existing confusion, consider just one simple moral issue—the ways that bloggers deal with corrections. Back when I was part of the team helping Knight Ridder develop its pre-Internet experiment, Viewtron, it seemed obvious. When we found mistakes, we'd fix them right then. Many were the times as a newspaper reporter when I found an error in my own story and wished that all the papers out on the street could be yanked back into the office and fixed. One of the ways that electronic delivery would add value to information, I fantasized 25 years ago, was that such after-the-fact error fixing could be done.

But it's not happening. The Internet culture has developed an odd impulse to preserve every error as though it were part of some important historical record. Corrections do show up, but without disturbing the supposedly sacred significance of the original error.

It reminds me of those automobile drivers who, when involved in a fender-bender, insist on preserving the accident scene, right where it happened, regardless of the impediment to traffic. You've seen the highway signs: "Fender-bender? Remove vehicle from roadway." Why is such a sign necessary? What are those drivers thinking? That the wreckage will be a candidate for a national monument? That they want to get it bronzed like baby shoes?

Journalists who make errors in their blogs treat them with the same tender respect. Here's a personal example: John Robinson, the well-known Greensboro newspaper editor and blogger, mentioned my book, "The Vanishing Newspaper," in his blog, which was good, but he called me "Dr. Meyer,"

which is really bad. In academe there are few greater sins than claiming credentials you don't have, and anytime somebody calls me "Dr." I have to go to the trouble of correcting him or her at the peril of passively pretending to have a title I never had. I explained this to Robinson, and here's what his blog said after the "correction."

"I haven't read Dr. Meyer's book yet—and I emphasize yet—but I've been following Porter's deconstruction closely. Dr. Meyer, a journalism professor at UNC, apparently has done what so many other media watchers haven't: Substantiated his conclusions with research. (Updated correction: Meyer's not a Dr.)"

The problem is evident. Now it sounds like I did inflate my academic credentials, and he caught me at it! Why not just remove the offending error?

Blogger Tim Porter, who honored me by serially reviewing each chapter of my book, made an error in his first reference to Hal Jurgensmeyer, creator of the "influence model" on which I based the theory. When I sent Porter a correction, I was terrified that it would end up sounding like I, not Porter, was the one who made the error. So I made a point of assigning blame:

"Good introduction to the concept, Tim. Out of respect for its originator, I'd like to correct your fumble on his name. It's Hal Jurgensmeyer, not Hans."

My words were dutifully added to the commentary section way down at the bottom of Porter's review of chapter one. Six months later, near the top of his review, the influence model was still credited to "Hans" Jurgensmeyer. The correction wasn't even on the same screen. Only readers who made it all the way through Porter's piece and continued to the commentary section could learn Jurgensmeyer's real name. That's ethical?

Chapel Hill's Martin Kuhn, in a paper prepared for the August 2005 meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, explained this urge to preserve errors. It represents, he said, a desire for "accountability." It has become the

2001

United Kingdom

Some 35 percent of British households will connect to the Internet via computer this year, Jupiter MMXI in London predicts.

2001

United States

July: 63 percent of U.S. households have computers, and "nearly all of them" have Internet access, The Wall Street Journal reports.

2001

United States

November: America Online passes the 32 million subscriber mark, adding 1 million in 2 1/2 months. MSN has 7 million and Earthlink has 4.8 million. NetZero counts 6.1 million users, but only 1.25 million of them pay.

2001

United States

November: Apple introduces the first Apple iPod.

2002

United States

April: NAA study finds that online newspapers are the top source for local news on the Web.

2003

United States

July 15: The Mozilla Foundation, a non-profit California organization, is established. The foundation soon produces the award-winning Mozilla browser.

2003

Taiwan

Its Central News Agency reports 61 percent of the island's population (12.64 million people) use the Internet and 9 million use broadband equipment.

generally observed rule that “once a blogger makes a post, that post should be treated as if it were carved in stone, and bloggers have a duty never to erase their posts ... warts and all.”

Thus is preserved a lot of unnecessary messiness. Why not just fix the damned mistakes and acknowledge them at the end of the document? Robinson would offend no one if he removed the silly reference to me as “Dr.” from his column. He could preserve the history of his mistake, if he insisted, by adding a note at the bottom, e.g. “In an earlier version of this column, I erroneously referred to Professor Meyer as a doctor. He has advised me that he is not any kind of a doctor, and I regret the error.”

That would eliminate a distracting speed bump in the start of his otherwise very readable document. Tim Porter could do the same thing for Hal Jurgensmeyer. Just fix the man's name! That would leave a clean first reference, and then, in a footnote, he could, if he wished, preserve his precious error by admitting that he got the name wrong on his first attempt.

The Value of Knowledge

Ethical standards develop over time through a natural selection process. Rules that work tend to be kept, while those that cause confusion eventually get dropped or repaired. So it is not surprising that a medium as new as blogging would be in a period of moral confusion.

Nature likes to organize herself into hierarchies of dominance, and blogging will be no exception. A pecking order based on reputation is starting to emerge, and trusted bloggers are slowly rising to the top. We need some mediating agencies, perhaps the rough equivalent of political parties or trade associations, to help that process along.

When it comes to building trust, blogging's needs are no different from those of the old journalism. It helps if you know what you are talking about. And so one way for a journalist, blogger or mainstream, to earn and keep a reputation is by demonstrating subject-matter competence.

The old journalism has been figuring this out gradually, but it has never been willing to pay reporters enough or to subsidize their training sufficiently to bring standards to where they ought to be. We're still not very far from the situation described by Nelson Antrim Crawford, who headed my old jour-

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nalism school before I was born. (It was then the Department of Industrial Journalism at Kansas State Agricultural College.) Here's what he said in his 1924 volume, “The Ethics of Journalism”:

“Real knowledge of modern economics is less likely to gain promotion for a reporter on the average paper than the ability to write an interesting but largely untruthful story about a street fight over the ownership of a custard pie. The public, the editor says, is more interested in the humor of custard pies than in economics.”

In the past 80 years, that situation has not changed nearly as much as it is about to change in the next 20. In order to stand out in the noisy buzz of the information age, a talent for trivial humor will still be useful. But a reputation for competence and truth-telling will be worth a lot more, and raising the standards of training is the best way to get there.

Thomas Friedman's advanced degree in Middle Eastern studies isn't the only reason that his overseas reporting in *The New York Times* is followed closely. His clear writing and clever reasoning by analogy also help. But his ability to speak with such persuasive authority would be weaker without that training.

Subject-matter competence is still so rare in journalism, mainstream or blogging, that it can be the critical element that gets a voice heard above all the din. Russell Neuman, writing in “The Future of the Mass Audience” in 1991, called this the “upstream strategy.” Profits have been high in the media business because of the bottleneck created by the expensive means of production, i.e. printing presses and TV stations. As these are supplanted by the Internet, the bottleneck is moving upstream, to the creation of content.

The fact that higher quality content is a logical outcome of the new media technologies has been obscured by the reaction of mainstream media to the competitive threat. Instead of making their content better, they have been making it cheaper, a byproduct of their short-term preoccupation with maintaining their historic profitability. That situation will reverse itself after some apocalyptic adjustment.

When it does, the investment in better content is more likely to come from brash new risk-takers, not the careful, conservative old media. And they will need a new institution, perhaps some League of Extraordinary Journalists, to help us identify them and make our personal media choices on the basis of the ethical standards and the competence of their content creators. As individual consumers, we can't track all the complexities of those variables without help.

The League of Extraordinary Journalists. Doesn't that name have a nice ring to it? I can hardly wait for it to show up. Keep watching. ■

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When Major News Has a Very Short Shelf Life

With The Associated Press offering an ‘optional lead,’ questions arise about the handling of yesterday’s news.

By Russell Frank

A puff of white smoke rose from the Vatican just before noon, Eastern Standard Time, on April 19th, signaling the election of a new pope. I heard about it from a colleague, verified it online, and heard more about it on the radio when I got home from work. Nevertheless, when The New York Times landed on my doorstep the next morning, the lead story was addressed, as usual, not to me, but to those who had spent the preceding 18 hours in an isolation tank. Here is the lead:

“Roman Catholic cardinals reached to the church’s conservative wing on Tuesday and chose as the 265th pope Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, a seasoned and hard-line German theologian who served as John Paul II’s defender of the faith.”

Self-described caveman Jim Naughton defended such a conventional approach to news reporting in an online debate posted on the Poynter Institute Web site in September 2001. “I don’t care if you’ve already watched the news on television,” wrote Naughton, now retired from the Poynter presidency. “Print can tell it anew, and sometimes better, in a manner that provides context, breadth and depth and, importantly, durability.”

When big news breaks, says Gene Foreman, former managing editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer and now my colleague at Penn State, “the paper provides ‘affirmation’ of the event as well as an orderly, coherent account of everything that happened.”

Naughton and Foreman are right, in

one sense: We don’t just read the paper to find out what happened. Look at the sports section. Most who read a game story, I suspect, already know who won. A lot of them probably watched the game. They’re fans; they want to know everything, again, from start to finish. When big news breaks, all of us share the sports fan’s hunger for a reaffirmation of what happened.

Still, if we’re as busy as many of us claim we are, and there’s lots of competition for our fleeting attention, and only the most abject news junkies are going to spend more than a quarter-hour reading the paper, it seems silly to waste such precious moments telling us things we already know.

The Dilemma of the Optional Lead

So what are newspapers to do? Since March, The Associated Press (A.P.) has offered its subscribers an optional lead. While the “straight” lead tells readers what happened, the optional lead is designed to “draw in the reader through imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means.” The A.P.’s advisory about this expanded service came with an unfortunate example of what the news service had in mind. The straight lead was the usual spattering-blood-and-body-parts account of a suicide attack in Iraq. The optional lead warbled about a day of hope turning into a day of tears. The bloggers had a field day. The urge to parody turned irresistible.

There is nothing new in any of this. Max Frankel skewered the drift toward

2003

United Kingdom

October: Dutch fileshare program KaZaa is the most downloaded piece of software in history, with 230 million P.C.’s with it installed.

2004

United Kingdom

January: The UCLA World Internet Project reports that 63.6 percent of British men and 55.0 percent of British women use the Internet.

2004

United States

January 20: Apple’s 4-gigabyte iPod Mini is released and sells well.

2004

United Kingdom

March: The Manchester-based Guardian Unlimited newspaper has 7.5 million unique visitors on its Web site—less than 1/3 of whom live in the United Kingdom.

2004

Korea

March: The Korea Times reports more than 11 million Korean households have broadband connections.

2004

United States

An AOL survey finds that 70 percent of U.S. teens age 12-17 use the Internet for instant messaging, which is expected to overtake e-mail as the most popular form of Internet communication in 2005. ■

anecdotal leads on hard news stories in a column he wrote for *The New York Times Magazine* in 1998. The former executive editor recalled an even earlier push at the *Times* to replace traditional hard news leads with "throat-clearing trivia," a move that also invited parody. Frankel cites a mock-story that begins with a description of Elvira Brown's aging face and devotes five sentences to all Brown had seen from her Dallas front porch before getting around to telling us that the old lady had just seen a motorcade rush past at top speed. "Top speed because, it seems, the President of the United States was inside. And he was dead."

Perhaps the newspaper in a position to make the smoothest adjustment to the reality of the 24-hour news cycle is *The Wall Street Journal*, probably because it has never felt obliged to traffic in breaking news. Compare the *Times*'s traditional approach to the December 2003 capture of Saddam Hussein to the *Journal*'s "forward spin" approach.

"Saddam Hussein, once the all-powerful leader of Iraq, was arrested without a fight on Saturday night by American soldiers who found him crouching in an eight-foot hole at an isolated farm near Tikrit, haggard, dirty and disoriented after eluding capture for nearly nine months."—*The New York Times*

"The capture of Saddam Hussein by U.S. forces ends a brutal era of Iraqi history and gives a huge boost to the American occupation and Iraqis who support it."—*The Wall Street Journal*

The *Journal*'s lead doesn't tell us anything we didn't know (the "boost" given to the American occupation doesn't count because the reporters didn't know this either). But a major difference between the two leads is that the *Times*' is written in the traditional this-just-in style, while the *Journal*'s contains an implicit parenthetical phrase: "The capture of Saddam Hussein by U.S. forces (that you already know about)" The *Journal* story goes on to tell

us what might happen next rather than what has just happened.

The problem is that nobody knew what was going to happen next. "Mr. Hussein's capture could entice more Iraqis to cooperate in tamping down the insurgency," the *Journal* suggested. Maybe. On the other hand, "The arrest of Mr. Hussein could also encourage militant Iraqi Shiites, who didn't want

Surely there is a way to offer readers of a morning newspaper fresh perspectives and information on yesterday's news without just slapping on an anecdotal lead and demoting the news lead to the nut graf. ... Spin it forward, in other words—not with reporter speculation, but with the informed opinion of experts

their opposition to be misconstrued as support for the former dictator." Also a possibility.

In other words, the capture of Saddam Hussein could lead to less violence or it could lead to more violence.

The dilemma is clear. Newspapers know they're going to lose readers when they only tell them news they already know. But going with a second-day lead, says Gene Foreman, "causes you to have to guess just how much the reader already knows and often sends reporters down a dangerous path of speculation."

While Naughton's fellow cavemen on the copy desk complain that the A.P.'s optional leads take too long to tell us the news (apparently it doesn't bother them that straight leads take too long to tell us what we don't already know), some bloggers commented that they saw opinion sneaking in the door opened to admit "imagery, narrative devices, perspective or other creative means."

Surely there is a way to offer readers of

a morning newspaper fresh perspectives and information on yesterday's news without just slapping on an anecdotal lead and demoting the news lead to the nut graf. In an e-mail exchange, Naughton tells me he doesn't buy the notion that readers need to be "seduced into a story by a lead that subordinates the news." Nor does he grant that straight leads are invariably dull. "In the olden days," Naughton recalls, "we had a choice between an A.P. lead that as a rule paid homage to the inverted pyramid and a UPI lead that as a rule was more writerly. Both told the news, however." If A.P. can offer optional leads that do not subordinate the news and are as "sprightly" as UPI's used to be, Naughton says he has no objection.

But I would argue that the challenge of reporting early breaking news isn't a matter of not subordinating the news or choosing between straight vs. sprightly leads. After 18 hours, the name of the new pope simply isn't the news anymore. Nor do I need to read a you-are-there reconstruction of the papal election. What I want to know more about is what sort of pope this Ratzinger is going to be. Spin it forward, in other words—not with reporter speculation, but with the informed opinion of experts and acquaintances. ■

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Looking Behind the Scenes of Political Coverage

A study compares national presidential press coverage with local reporting on congressional races and emerges with some unexpected findings.

Do national reporters covering the presidential campaign and local reporters assigned to congressional races approach their work with the same journalistic values and assumptions? Are their reporting techniques similar? Which approach serves their readers better? Three members of the department of communication at Stanford University attempted to learn answers to these questions. Shanto Iyengar, the Chandler professor in communication, teaches courses on mass media and political campaigns. William F. Woo, former editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, teaches in the graduate journalism program. Jennifer McGrady is a doctoral student and research assistant in the department's political communication laboratory and at the Center for Deliberative Democracy. The following article, composed by the three of them, explains what they learned in surveying newspaper reporters and editors about their political coverage.

By the middle of January, the 2004 campaign horserace was in full swing. In just a few days, the Iowa caucuses would select the nation's first presidential delegates. In less than two weeks, New Hampshire would hold the first presidential primary. On February 3rd, seven more states would hold their primaries. Never had so many votes been cast so early, and never had they been so important in selecting a party's presidential candidate.

While poll results are the most obvious manifestations of horserace coverage, the term also can include stories about the candidates' strategies and fundraising, predictions of who will and will not turn out to vote, and other "nonsubstantive" topics that do not bring to citizens the information they need to make informed voting decisions. On the other hand, stories linking vital policy issues to candidates' positions, competence and experience, as well as articles taking readers beyond the daily polling or the insider's analysis of the campaign, provide the kind of substance voters need. [See pages 86-87 for comparative examples of coverage.]

Horserace journalism has long been criticized—by those who practice it and by academic observers and even news consumers—but there is no denying its appeal on a number of levels. Such reporting produces fresh stories

whenever a new poll is released, and it is cheap and easy to do. The "scientific method" of political polling also makes such coverage relatively immune to criticisms of bias. Moreover, by conducting polls, news companies offer powerful incentives for this horserace approach. During the 2004 political campaigns, CNN collaborated with Time to conduct polls; NBC News linked up with The Wall Street Journal; The New York Times with CBS News, and The Washington Post with ABC News. Journalists might grumble about the fixation on polls, but results from them are showcased by the nation's most prestigious news outlets.

As the caucus and primary voting began, the polls were in alignment. The Democratic frontrunner was former Vermont Governor Howard Dean. CNN-Time and CBS-The New York Times placed Senator John Kerry, who would emerge as the candidate, fourth.

Examining the Coverage

We decided to take a close look at the techniques of election reporting as they would play out during the rest of the campaign. We brought to this task our varied perspectives of a political scientist, newspaper editor, and campaign researcher. We believed that in comparing techniques, assumptions and approaches of presidential campaign

journalists with those of local reporters assigned to congressional races we might unearth some important differences. Among the questions we wanted to consider were the following:

- Was the horserace as compelling a news story in congressional campaign coverage as it seemed to be in a presidential race?
- Were the conventions of presidential reporting migrating down to the local level and affecting that coverage? And if so, how?
- Was the trend toward more analytical and interpretive political coverage taking hold in coverage of more local races?
- In short, was there a growing homogenization of U.S. election news? If so, what were some implications for voters?

In all, 101 reporters and editors representing 37 papers from every region of the country shared their thoughts and practices with us in an online survey. (To recruit these participants, we contacted managing or executive editors and asked for permission to approach the reporters and section editors responsible for election coverage. We invited 161 journalists to participate in our survey, of whom 101 agreed—a response rate of 63 percent.) Correspondents from major national newspapers

Senate Hopefuls Clash Over Minimum Wage

This excerpt is from a story written by Schuyler Kropf that appeared in The (Charleston) Post and Courier on October 20, 2004. Those conducting this study regard it as an example of substantive political coverage.

After being debated at the national level this election season, the politics of the minimum wage flared up Tuesday in South Carolina's U.S. Senate race.

Democrat Inez Tenenbaum wants the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour to increase "over time, once the economy recovers," her campaign said.

She doesn't have a target of how high she wants the hourly wage to go or when she wants an increase to take effect.

Republican Jim DeMint opposes increasing the minimum wage because he's against more regulation on

business.

"The way to create high-paying jobs is by reducing regulations, not increasing them," his spokeswoman, Kara Borie, said.

Tenenbaum accused DeMint of wanting to eliminate the minimum wage, based on ideas he's supported in Congress.

In 1999, DeMint, Greenville's 4th District representative, backed legislation that would have let states set their own minimum wage. The idea has faded out, his office said.

Under the plan, the national minimum of \$5.15 per hour would not be done away with, DeMint said. But if the federal government raised the rate, states would be free to adopt it, leave the wage unchanged, or pick a compromise. The decision would depend on the local economic climate, he said. ■

agreed to discuss their coverage of the presidential race; for congressional races we reached out to local and regional newspapers whose circulation areas included districts where races were considered competitive. (National reporters received a slightly different version of our questionnaire than did local reporters; editors from both national and local papers received an identical third version. See box on page 89 to learn more about the project's methodology.)

To compare what journalists said to what they did, we examined—through LexisNexis searches and by subscription—a selection of national and regional newspapers on a daily basis for the two weeks leading up to Election Day, November 2, 2004. The smallest of the papers had a circulation of 12,704, the largest more than two million. Because many of the editors and reporters were too busy to complete a lengthy questionnaire while the campaigns

were in progress, the survey went out on November 10th.

We have divided our findings into two categories.

1. Answers to questions we posed.
2. A wholly unexpected picture that emerged of the journalistic environment and processes that govern election coverage.

This second category of findings surfaced when we noticed that in many instances the coverage we read reflected neither the news values nor production processes that the journalists reported following. For example, on a scale of one (focused entirely on horserace coverage) to five (focused entirely on issues), journalists rated their coverage at 3.4 on average saying, in effect, that issue-oriented stories outnumbered horserace ones. In fact, we found that almost 50 percent of all stories were essentially horserace coverage or dwelled

in nonsubstantive information, while less than 20 percent dealt with substantive matters.

With issues, too, more than 80 percent of the journalists rated the economy as one of the three most important issues to cover. In fact, it was the leading one journalists cited. Yet stories about the economy amounted to less than 10 percent of all of the issue-focused campaign coverage we found. Terrorism, on the other hand, was named as one of the most important issues by only 48 percent of the journalists, but made up 17 percent of issue-focused stories. [See accompanying graphs on page 88 for more detailed findings.]

Comparing Local with National Coverage

We also discovered that local journalists and newspapers covered congressional races in significantly different ways than national journalists did the presidential race. Though we had less congressional coverage to compare—since during our two-week examination we found an average of 50.6 stories per newspaper about the presidential race and only 6.3 stories about a specific race for Congress—local political reporting tended to be more substantive. The papers we analyzed for the presidential race had a significantly higher proportion (about 50 percent) of horserace stories than did those we examined for congressional races (about 25 percent). Likewise, coverage of the congressional races included a higher proportion of substantive stories—about policy issues and candidate competence—than did the presidential coverage. Stories about congressional races tended to also include more quotes from candidates than did stories about the presidential race. Articles dealing with congressional races were more descriptive, emphasizing what happened during the course of the campaign day, than those from presidential reporters, which concentrated more on analysis or interpreting the meaning of events.

In their survey responses, those who covered congressional races reported different news values than those track-

ing the presidential race. Both rated candidate debates, interviews with candidates, and interviews with pundits as having the highest news values. However, presidential reporters rated campaign TV commercials as having substantially higher news value than did congressional reporters. And congressional reporters rated campaign press releases more highly on this scale than did presidential reporters.

We also asked the journalists which three issues they considered more important to cover. While both congressional and presidential reporters rated the economy as important in approximately equal proportion, on Iraq they differed substantially, with 92.3 percent of presidential reporters and 65.4 percent of congressional reporters rating it an important issue in the context of their reporting. With terrorism, 76.9 percent of presidential journalists rated it important, while just 26.9 percent of congressional journalists did.

These foreign policy differences are not surprising since terrorism and Iraq were primary issues in the presidential campaign. Education and—perhaps more surprisingly—tax policy and the environment, were named as important by a higher proportion of congressional than presidential reporters.

The Intersection of Coverage

We also tried to learn whether congressional journalists felt national political reporting affected their coverage. What most influenced them was the topical focus of the national coverage (the emphasis on horserace vs. issues), as well as decisions on what issues to cover or ignore and stylistic aspects of the coverage. National reporters and editors (especially the latter) also indicated that they were influenced by the coverage of other national media, a finding we attribute to the near-instant access journalists had via Web sites and Weblogs to stories appearing throughout the country.

One clear message we received was that national journalists consider themselves a cut above their local counterparts in two respects: They believe their

Winning By Just Losing Less Badly; Edwards Visits Lima to Nibble at GOP

This excerpt is from a story written by Stephen Koff that appeared in The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer on October 25, 2004. Those conducting this study regard it as an example of nonsubstantive political coverage.

Not a soul in Ohio or national politics believes that Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry and running mate [John] Edwards can actually win in Allen County, one of the most rock-solid Republican counties in the state.

But with some voters sore over job losses and others questioning the war in Iraq—this, in a city that takes pride in being home of the only combat tank-maker in the United States—Democrats say they have a chance to hold back the runaway victory that gave Bush a better than two-to-one margin over Al Gore in 2000.

That's why Edwards, in open-collar blue shirt and navy blazer, visited for about a half-hour, making what otherwise would seem an unusual stop in a daylong bus tour. Earlier Sunday he went to a predominantly black church in Cincinnati and then to an urban high school in Dayton, both places certain to give Democrats comfort.

After leaving Lima, the blue campaign bus took Edwards to Toledo, another Democratic stronghold, where he spent the night and plans to speak this morning before flying to Wisconsin and Iowa.

In Allen County, the Democrats' strategy is not to try to win but, rather, to hold down the Bush numbers. If Kerry and Edwards could make Allen County's Republican lead take a dip, it'll mean Bush has to outperform in other, less-secure parts of the state such as northeast Ohio. Given the dead-heat nature of the race, any votes Bush loses here have to be made up elsewhere for him to win.

"When you're in western Ohio, you just try to keep down the margins," said Dan Trevas, spokesman for the Ohio Democratic Party.

The Kerry-Edwards campaign would consider it a win "if we can get up to 40 percent in Allen County," said Jim Ruvolo, the campaign's Ohio campaign chairman.

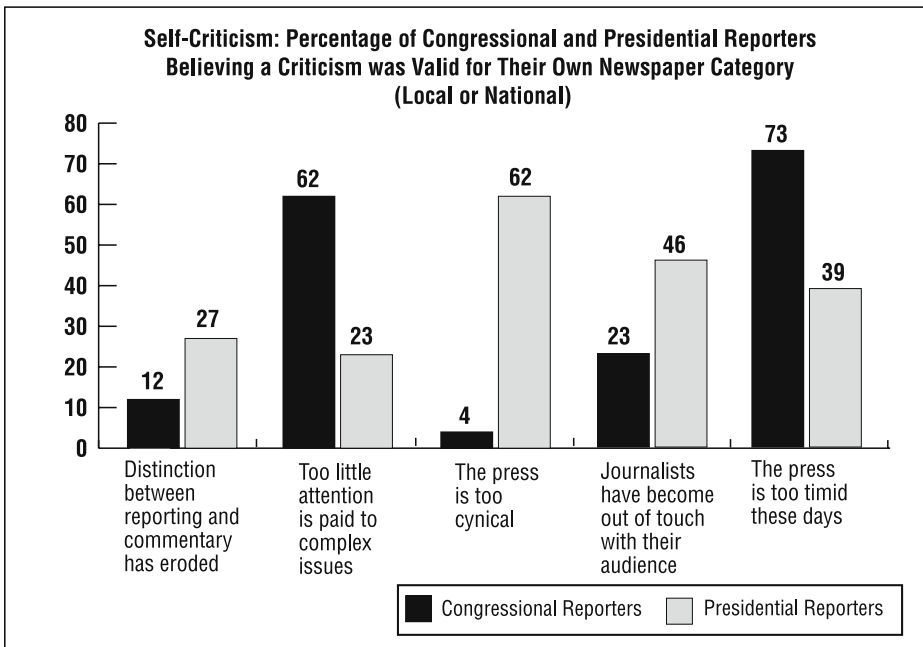
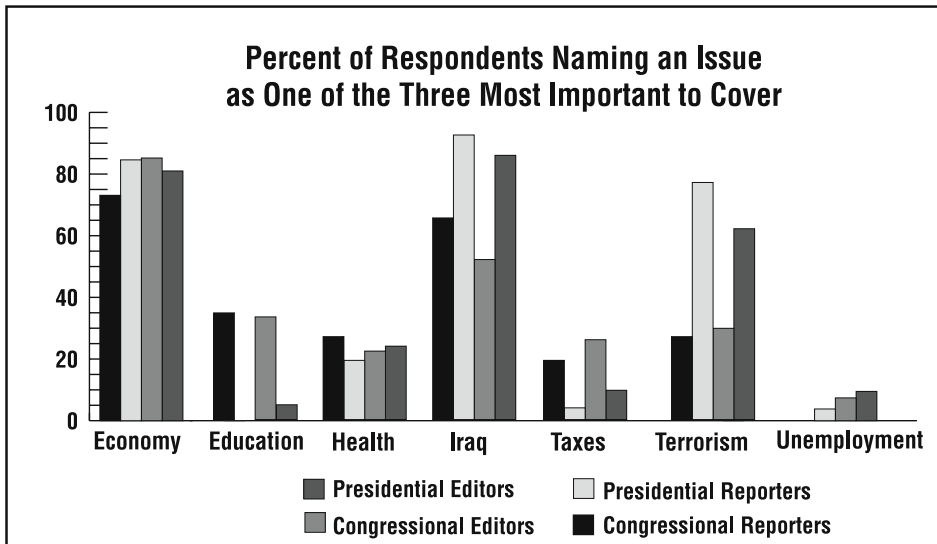
County Democratic chairman Gary Frueh sees his county's role this way: "If we get in the 40, 45 percentile, Kerry may win the state." ■

adherence to journalistic standards is higher, as is their expertise in coverage of national issues. This emerged as we asked all of the respondents in our survey whether national news organizations that "regularly cover presidential elections produce reports that are consistently superior to those of local or regional papers that provide occasional coverage of national politics." We went on to ask those who agreed with this statement about the basis of their perceived superiority.

- One hundred percent of the national reporters who responded to the

question agreed with the statement, and 67 percent of those who agreed said national news organizations had a "better grasp of professional standards."

- Nearly two-thirds of journalists who covered local congressional races also agreed with this statement, but only four percent of them said national reporters had a better grasp of standards. Instead, they ascribed the perceived superiority of the national news organizations to their access to better sources, more newsroom resources available, and a better understanding of the issues.



Interpreting the Findings

What can we learn from these results, as we look at these many responses that provide a tantalizing hint of the significantly opposing ways in which national and local journalists regard their work? One can assert that local papers provide a different kind of election coverage to their readers than do the national press. This is evidenced especially in the topics that are covered—with proportionally more substantive and fewer nonsubstantive stories found in

coverage of congressional races. Local readers received coverage that was often more solidly grounded in reporting, offering descriptions of what happened and letting readers hear directly from the candidates. Unlike their national counterparts, local political reporters seem not to function as a Greek chorus providing context and meaning to the action on stage. Hence readers had more opportunities to draw their own conclusions as to the significance of campaign developments.

What we did not expect to find when

we set out on this project was what we began to think of as a culture of confusion in the production of America's political coverage. As we described earlier, there were significant differences between what the journalists thought (or said) they produced and what was actually published. Strikingly, reporters and editors significantly overestimated the substantive content of their stories.

When we tried to determine who is in charge of making decisions about what stories to cover, we learned that on this point, too, there appears to be some confusion, which likely accounts, in part, for the discrepancy between what journalists assert is important and what news actually reaches readers. The editors we surveyed were evenly divided as to whether they or reporters had the most control over stories. But when asked about decision-making of what to cover and how, nearly 80 percent of both local and national reporters said they made the call.

Anyone who has worked in a news organization knows that plans and good intentions can easily go astray. Yet we are troubled by the wide gulf that exists between what journalists told us they covered (or should cover) and what they put in front of readers. Reporters in the field need to make coverage decisions, but the discrepancy between reporters' and editors' perceptions of their control points to the need for a more coherent decision-making process. This apparent absence of one cannot possibly benefit readers.

On assessments of the importance of various sources of news, reporters and editors were again often on different pages. For example, editors regarded a local appearance by a candidate as a more important source of news than did reporters.

Interestingly, professional values clashed sometimes with the ability to do good journalism. In response to an open-ended question about why actual coverage diverged from their stated news values, editors reported that efforts to serve readers by providing balance and strict fairness resulted in some campaigns getting too much publicity

while others got too little. Editors also affirmed the watchdog function of their news organizations, which often took the form of fact-checking commercials or scrutinizing candidates' statements. In some cases, these values got in the way of substantive coverage. One editor told us that important issue and policy stories were overshadowed by those examining political commercials. Another said the newsroom was so busy doing ad watches that it could not find time to deal with issue-related stories. [See graph on page 88 for more on journalists' appraisal of the shortcomings of their coverage.]

Why This Matters

Are national and local campaign coverage becoming homogenized? If not, what do the differences that surfaced in our project mean for voters?

Inevitably, overlaps in local and national political coverage exist, as they always have. It would be ludicrous to assert that there should be one set of rules or values for local political journalists and another for reporters who cover presidential campaigns. Such dual-track journalism would not help readers. But we think that the following differences between presidential and local coverage that we uncovered in our content analysis are important:

- Local election coverage seems more focused on descriptive reporting and on letting the candidates speak in their own voices.
- National coverage is based to a significant degree on analysis and on what journalists and other "experts" had to say.

These disparities were reflected in differing patterns of sourcing in presidential vs. congressional coverage.

- More than 10 percent of the national coverage used pundits as sources; less than four percent of the local stories relied on them.
- Independent experts—mainly academic specialists—were used in 39 percent of presidential stories vs.

How the Stanford Study Was Done

Our survey was responded to by 101 journalists (27 reported on congressional races, 26 covered the presidential race, and 48 were editors at small and large newspapers). Both sets of reporters received similar surveys, varying only in the wording of some questions. The editors were asked different questions because of the role they play in shaping political coverage.

For our content analysis of coverage, we coded 22 newspapers with campaign coverage of either the presidential race or a congressional race. (Two papers were included for their national and local political coverage. In all, 11 newspapers were coded for the presidential race and 13 for a congressional race.) Our analysis was focused on campaign stories appearing in the two weeks prior to Election Day, giving us a total of about 80 stories dealing with congressional races and with more than 500 about the presidential race. For each of these, we coded specific aspects of the coverage, such as the topic the story focused on, sources used, and whether its content was primarily descriptive or primarily analytical.

The average circulation of newspapers—determined by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) and, when necessary, other sources—used only for coverage of the presidential race was 632,143 (minimum 211,163; maximum 2,119,052). For newspapers coded for a congressional race only, the average circulation was 60,833 (minimum 12,704; maximum 175,834). (Circulation figures came from ABC in most cases; where the data were not available from ABC, sources varied.)

While we endeavored, as much as we could, to have the same newspapers represented in our survey and our content analysis, this overlap was not exact for two reasons. We could not know in advance which journalists would accept our invitation to participate in our survey, and not every newspaper whose reporters and editors we targeted for inclusion in our survey was available through LexisNexis or by mail subscription.

More information about this survey and analysis is available by e-mailing the authors. ■

only 15 percent of the congressional coverage.

- Almost twice the proportion of presidential stories as congressional stories used other reporters as sources.

The results of our study point to a paradox. National campaign coverage is abundant, but predominantly nonsubstantive. More than half of the stories by the national political press focused on the horserace. Local campaign coverage is scarce, but more substantive, with only 25 percent devoted to the horserace.

So the question is: How can national

papers be encouraged to apply their impressive resources to the delivery of more substantive coverage? And how can local newspapers stretch their staffs and budgets to do more of what they already are doing well? And for all political journalists, the challenge remains to bring clarity, coherence and consistency to a process—vital for democracy—that seems too often mired in confusion. ■

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In reflecting on the book, “A Matter of Opinion,” **Ray Jenkins** explains why its author, Victor S. Navasky, so strongly advocates “cutting-edge reporting, with an acknowledged point of view unrestrained by the demands of objectivity,” and shares experiences he had with opinion journalism as editorial page editor of *The Evening Sun* in Baltimore and his views on what he reads today: “What passes for editorial writing these days is all too often a mishmash of dullness, vacillation, predictability, obscurity and, ultimately, irrelevance.” **Gilbert Cranberg**, coauthor of “Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper Company,” reveals that in “Knightfall: Knight Ridder and How the Erosion of Newspaper Journalism Is Putting Democracy at Risk,” its author, Davis Merritt, former editor of the *Wichita Eagle*, presents “a story in microcosm of journalism generally during an era hit with the double whammy of consolidation and the shortsighted decision by media executives to ‘go public’ . . .” Cranberg uses his own findings to illuminate costs associated with these circumstances.

Working as a photojournalist in Iraq for *The Dallas Morning News*, **David Leeson** shared the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography with his colleague, Cheryl Diaz-Meyer. Now he writes about enduring issues confronted by war photographers as he contemplates the display of news photographs from the Vietnam War that photojournalist Catherine Leroy collected in “Under Fire: Great Photographers and Writers in Vietnam.” Leeson also shares his images from Iraq. **Steve Northup**, a photojournalist who was with UPI during the Vietnam War, finds in Leroy’s book a lot of pictures “taken by old friends,” and observes how “Vietnam was different, with its daily realities, some would later argue, all too apparent.” With Iraq, Northup observes, most Americans don’t have “any idea of the terrible suffering that goes on hourly, on every side,” given constraints that photojournalists now work under.

James McCartney, who reported from Washington, D.C. for more than 35 years, tells us about what Donald A. Ritchie unearths in his book, “Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps,” and about aspects of the job he overlooked. “. . . he fails to examine why the Washington press corps often fails and why it matters when they do,” McCartney writes. “The evidence suggests that the same factors that contributed to the failure in Vietnam were also present 40 years later in the run-up to the war in Iraq.” **John Geddes**, who is Ottawa bureau chief for *Maclean’s*, focuses on the early journalistic pursuits of Canadian-born John Kenneth Galbraith, as chronicled by Richard Parker in “John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics.” Galbraith’s five years at *Fortune* magazine were, he writes, “a key formative period when his early interest in journalism intersected with his growing confidence as an economist.”

Philadelphia *Inquirer* columnist and theater reviewer **Howard Shapiro** contemplates the manipulative forces of media as seen through Thomas de Zengotita’s writing in his book, “Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It.” One result is that we “surf everything in life, concentrating on little.” **Madeleine Blais**, a journalism professor at the University of Massachusetts and narrative book author, finds in Robert S. Boynton’s book, “The New New Journalism: Conversations with America’s Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft,” a “useful guidebook” to learn about immersion journalism and “the revolution in nonfiction writing,” launched by John Hersey’s “Hiroshima” in 1946. ■

Opinion's Place in Journalism

Victor S. Navasky explains why he loathes objectivity and values 'critical opinion.'

A Matter of Opinion

Victor S. Navasky
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
464 Pages. \$27.

By Ray Jenkins

In the first few pages of this extraordinary book, the reader will sense that Victor S. Navasky is taking us on a rollicking joy ride, not only through his own exhilarant life and times, but also through the life of *The Nation* as America's oldest surviving magazine of opinion. As he gathers speed, we discover that Navasky is also ruminating—confronting and examining—with relentless candor and honesty, the most vexing ethical and moral issues of journalism, which chiefly involve maintaining fidelity to principle. When the ride is over, we know that we have read one of the best books on the trade in a generation.

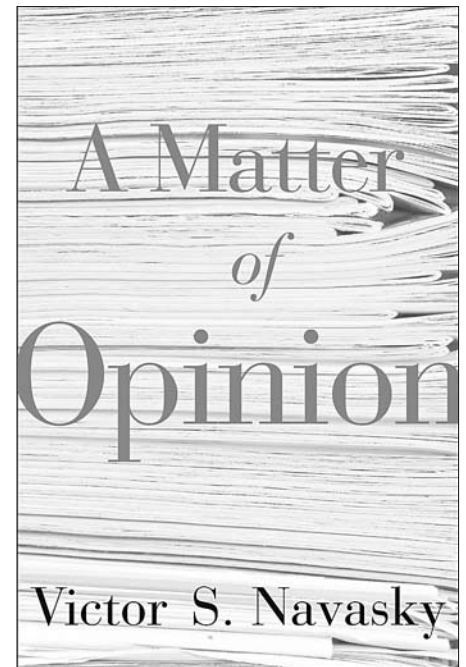
And no one is better equipped to take us on such a ride than Navasky, who in his half-century in the business has been reporter, editor, publisher and journalism professor. With zest and relish he covers his tours of duty as editor of the saucy 1960's satirical magazine, *Monocle*, then at *The New York Times Magazine* before settling in, 25 years ago, at his life's calling as the chief helmsman of *The Nation*.

That *The Nation* has survived at all is something of a miracle. The magazine first appeared the year the Civil War ended and seems to have turned a profit in only four of its 140 years of existence. Through all those years its survival depended not so much upon the kindness of strangers—fickle readers—but rather on the benefaction of wealthy patrons whose own interests seemed quite inimical to the magazine's legendary leftist editorial philosophy. To carry on under such arrangements

without gaining a reputation as a "kept woman" was a remarkable achievement indeed. (Consider, by contrast, the ignoble fate of a contemporary right-wing journal of opinion, *The American Spectator*. When its principal patron, Richard Mellon Scaife, withdrew his massive financial support in a fit of pique over the *Spectator's* refusal to give a good review to a shoddy book, the magazine, for all practical purposes, collapsed into irrelevance.)

One must stand in a certain awe of Navasky's courage to take over what appeared to be a moribund magazine of dwindling circulation and resources, in the aftermath of the cold war, and carry the tattered banner of socialism in the land of triumphant capitalism. And yet by cobbling together support from that fading band of conscience-driven liberal capitalists—most notably the actor Paul Newman—Navasky, now ensconced in the publisher's chair, not only rescued *The Nation* from threatened oblivion but also brought its circulation to a record-breaking 184,000. (It must be added that the circulation drive was greatly enhanced by its bete noire of the day, George W. Bush.)

Ever the indomitable optimist, Navasky confidently believes that in an age when print journalism seems to be rushing headlong to take its place in history beside the quill pen, *The Nation* not only will survive but will flourish—along with, he quickly adds, its much newer polar opposite, *William F. Buckley, Jr.'s National Review*. The reason, Navasky believes, is that these journals are not constrained by slav-



ish devotion to journalistic objectivity, which Navasky heartily loathes.

It might be noteworthy that only fleetingly does Navasky mention *The New Yorker*, which is undergoing a spectacular renaissance under the brilliant editorship of David Remnick. Long noted for the highest quality journalism that changed the whole political landscape—Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" and John Hersey's "Hiroshima" being foremost examples—in recent years *The New Yorker* has converted its once-gossipy "Talk of the Town" into a major voice of opinion journalism through the must-read work of Remnick, Hendrik Hertzberg, Adam Gopnik, and other talented writers. With a decidedly liberal tilt, and with the great advantage of solid bases in readership and advertising, *The New Yorker* might well turn out to be *The Nation's* chief competitor for readership and influence.

In Navasky's words, *The Nation's* highest purpose is "to explain the underlying meaning of the news." And this means more than mere pompous ranting. It means avoiding all the pitfalls enumerated in George Orwell's sacred text, "Politics and the English Language." Most of all it means the pursuit of cutting-edge reporting, with an acknowledged point of view unrestrained by the demands of ob-

jectivity. Whatever he might mean by “critical opinion”—a term he repeatedly uses—Navasky makes a compelling case that *The Nation’s* place in history lies in the work of such great reporters as Lincoln Steffens and his spiritual heirs such as Fred Cook, Robert Sherrill, Andrew Kopkind, Christopher Hitchens, and so many others whose work has graced the pages of the magazine over the past half-century.

The Editorial as Opinion

What are we lesser mortals to learn from the joy ride with this renowned editor and teacher? As I read Navasky’s tales of high adventure, I often found myself ruminating over the experience of my own half-century in journalism, much of which was spent writing opinion journalism—meaning, in daily journalism, editorials. And I confess it has not been a comforting experience.

When I was a young reporter, a favorite pastime of the new kids in the newsroom was to snicker at the palpable nonsense served up each day by the learned editors of the day. Eventually, of course, I reached that exalted position myself, but I must admit that I secretly looked over my shoulder to see if the new kids on the block were

still snickering.

In a time of midcareer boredom, I succumbed to the lust that lurks in the hearts of all editors: I got mixed up in politics. In 1979 I took a position as deputy press secretary to President Jimmy Carter. Almost the day I arrived at the White House, my new colleagues—and, for that matter, my former colleagues in the press as well—began to cautiously approach me with the loaded question, “what have you learned from being on ‘the other side?’”

It wasn’t long before I came up with an answer that is still valid today. “Well, I learned that it’s a lot easier to write an editorial than it is to write a public policy,” I’d tell them. “When you write an editorial, you can be reasonably certain that nothing specific will happen: no one will put a bomb under a train, or switch their party affiliation, or even kick their dog. But when you write a public policy, all sorts of things happen: businesses fail, people lose their jobs, nations go to war. So serving on ‘the other side’ is a humbling experience for someone who had an opinion on every subject on earth, whether he knew anything about it or not.”

Thoroughly chastened after my brief stint in politics, I returned to the safer realm of opinion journalism to serve

out my time until retirement a dozen years ago.

Thanks to the Internet, I now can follow opinion journalism more broadly than ever before, and I must say that while there are fine examples of thoughtful commentary to be found here and there in the hinterland press—modern equivalents of William Allen White’s *Emporia Gazette*, I suppose—what passes for editorial writing these days is all too often a mishmash of dullness, vacillation, predictability, obscurity and, ultimately, irrelevance.

But I don’t wish to be judgmental. As one wag put it in describing the predicament of opinion writers (this is the cleaned-up version), no cook can make the soufflé rise every time, but when you are an editorial writer, you have to put it on the table no matter what the condition.

Navasky’s sparkling book is here for one and all to read and to apply the tough lessons to themselves. ■

Ray Jenkins, a 1965 Nieman Fellow, was editorial page editor of The Evening Sun in Baltimore for 10 years before his retirement in 1993.

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The Silent Takeover of American Journalism

‘... realistic solutions to the problems newspaper editors face nowadays are elusive as best.’

Knightfall: Knight Ridder and How the Erosion of Newspaper Journalism Is Putting Democracy at Risk

Davis Merritt

Amacom. 256 Pages. \$24.95.

By Gilbert Cranberg

Knightfall is the cri de coeur of an idealistic journalist who witnessed, in the latter part of a 42-year career, his employer’s brand of public-service/public-trust journalism undermined by a focus on profit margins and stock price.

Davis “Buzz” Merritt, former editor of *The Wichita Eagle*, says his account

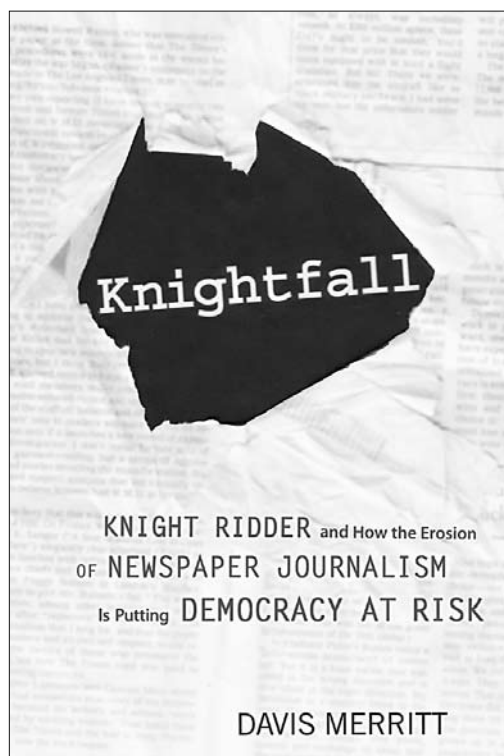
is not the history of Knight Ridder but rather a story about the company “told by an informed participant/observer.” Actually, it’s a story in microcosm of journalism generally during an era hit with the double whammy of consolidation and the shortsighted decision by media executives to “go public” and thus

be judged in the marketplace by the unforgiving standards of Wall Street.

By Merritt’s count, more than two-dozen Knight Ridder editors and publishers left the company in the latter 1990’s because they could not adapt to the new countinghouse culture. The same disaffection has been evident virtu-

ally industrywide, though likely more so in the publicly traded newspaper sector. I know that I encountered many Buzz Merritts during the research we did for “Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper Company,” a book I wrote with Randall Bezanson and John Soloski that was published in 2001. The dejection so evident in Knightfall was for me a replay of the widespread gloom I encountered among the 50 editors at publicly owned papers who were interviewed at random for the study. What follows is a composite of their complaints:

- “Before, journalistic quality was the only consideration, now it’s not.”
- “The point corporate misses is how not proposing things because of cost inhibits creative thinking and what it does to ‘soul’—the really big things, the story you decide not to do in-depth, the constant turnover due to ‘atrocious’ pay, the errors because of being short of people on the copy desk, the stories that go uncovered because of vacancies that can’t be filled.”
- “You write about car dealers very carefully; home builders also are big advertisers, so the publisher wants to see and soften those stories.”
- “The staff’s experience level reduced 50 percent in five years because of pay.”
- “It’s always been true that being a journalist is like being on an expedition—every day, you make do with what you have,” but there’s “more quarterly pressure now” and delayed investment.
- “I put in things [in the newsroom budget] they can cut out. I hope they buy more papers so they’re too busy to nitpick. They put me through agony. Why do you need this and need that?”
- “I became an editor because I wanted to do journalism, but now it’s about the bottom line.”



... anyone drawing a paycheck has a powerful disincentive to speak up publicly, although a few brave souls now and then chance it. It’s perverse that, in the land of the free, a person has to leave a newspaper company to speak candidly about journalism in a way that hits close to home.

To most of the editors who expressed their frustrations, I was a stranger, a disembodied voice on the telephone. They unburdened themselves in part because they trusted the pledge of anonymity I was obliged to offer in exchange for candor, but mostly, I suspect, because of deep-seated anxiety about the direction in which journalism was headed.

Given the discontent, why haven’t there been more “Knightfalls”? Perhaps because disheartened editors are by now a familiar story. Then, too, accounts of troubled newsrooms also virtually require prescriptions for reform, but realistic solutions to the problems newspaper editors face nowadays are

elusive at best. There might well be very few with a chance to be implemented. Merritt, for one, candidly acknowledges that “Knightfall” cannot “provide the answers to the difficult underlying questions of how the current state of affairs could have been avoided and what now needs to happen.”

The experience in 2002 of the low-profile Ad Hoc Committee on the Press is instructive. The committee, comprised of nine well-known journalists, was organized to present newspaper company CEO’s and directors with concrete measures they could take to put quality ahead of profits and so reshape the organizations to have them look and behave like institutions engaged distinctively in journalism instead of just profit-driven corporations. [See accompanying box on page 94.]

Those who signed on to the committee’s report were Hodding Carter, Bob Giles, Max King, Bill Kovach, Dave Lawrence, Jim Naughton, Geneva Overholser, Gene Patterson, and Gene Roberts. Individually and collectively, they’re of such stature in journalism that one would think they could not be ignored. For the most part, however, they were.

Responses were invited, but not a single director contacted in the 14 publicly traded companies responded. Only three CEO’s, and a representative of a fourth, answered. One of the respondents expressed general agreement, while two CEO’s took strong exception to the suggestion that directors have a hand in assuring the quality of a company’s journalism.

Stock analysts, who told me in interviews that they focus on the quality of newspaper company financial reports rather than their publications (they seldom read them), assuredly can’t be expected to pick up where the Ad Hoc Committee left off. Nor can investors or, for that matter, advertisers or readers. That leaves journalists, present and former, to advocate for quality journalism, but anyone drawing a paycheck

has a powerful disincentive to speak up publicly, although a few brave souls now and then chance it.

It's perverse that, in the land of the free, a person has to leave a newspaper company to speak candidly about journalism in a way that hits close to home. It's difficult, for example, to imagine John Curley saying, before he retired as Gannett CEO, what he was reported to have said afterwards, namely that "some of the chains would do well to tell Wall

Street that they've done all they can to improve the bottom line and focus instead on producing a quality news product for their subscribers."

Well, better late than not at all. So let there be more tales from the trenches like "Knightfall." Above all, let there be more people in newspaper boardrooms prepared to act on the conviction that journalism serves a far more crucial public purpose than piling up profits and upping stock prices. ■

Gilbert Cranberg, former editor of the Des Moines Register's editorial pages, is George H. Gallup professor emeritus at the University of Iowa and coauthor of "Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper Company."

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Recommendations From the Ad Hoc Committee on the Press

In 2002 the Ad Hoc Committee on the Press, made up of nine well-known journalists, presented newspaper company CEO's and directors with suggestions about how they could put quality ahead of profits and, in doing so, have them look and behave like institutions focused on journalism. What follows is the message that was sent by the members of this committee:

The undersigned individuals believe that newspaper companies have special obligations to the communities they serve and to society at large. We assume that you share this conviction. Yet we feel that, too often, media companies look and behave the same as any other commercial enterprise.

In an effort to encourage a reexamination by newspaper companies of the degree to which they are sustaining their commitment to journalism, we call your attention to the enclosed recommendations drawn from a number of sources. We urge you to consider adopting these, or your own variant, in keeping with the unique, constitutionally protected, public-trust mission of your companies.

We do not write in an adversarial spirit. We take this approach without fanfare or publicity and do not wish to put any company or individual on the

spot, although we may want to encourage public discussion of these issues somewhere down the road. We would appreciate hearing from you about any action you take or about thoughts you have on these issues.

Thank you for your attention and for your consideration of the suggestions attached.

Sincerely,

Hodding Carter
Jim Naughton
Bob Giles
Geneva Overholser
Max King
Gene Patterson
Bill Kovach
Gene Roberts
Dave Lawrence

1. Boards of directors of newspaper companies should have among their outside directors one or more members with experience on the editorial side of a news organization. Outside directors with editorial backgrounds should be represented on board compensation committees.
2. The board should designate a director to have special responsibility to monitor the quality of the company's editorial performance. The director

so designated preferably should be a member of the compensation committee. In the alternative, a committee on editorial quality should be established, said committee to work closely with the compensation committee.

3. Incentive compensation for corporate management should be tied in significant part to achieving journalistic quality goals. Boards should establish criteria for judging quality, and these may be both objective (e.g. circulation, news hole) and subjective criteria, the latter preferably after consultation with experienced nonemployees as well as in-house journalists. Judgments concerning the extent to which the criteria are met should take into account the views of journalism professionals and knowledgeable readers in the relevant communities.

These judgments should figure importantly in the compensation of local publishers, editors and key editorial employees. Newsroom bonuses should be rewarded exclusively for achieving journalism-related objectives. Stock options should not be part of the compensation package of editorial employees. Nor should stock options constitute all or part of directors' fees. ■

Going to War With a Camera as Artillery

With war photography, 'similar themes emerge; even the fields and faces can start to appear to be the same.'

Under Fire: Great Photographers and Writers in Vietnam

Catherine Leroy

Random House. 172 Pages. \$35.

By David Leeson

My grandmother's high school graduation gift—a little mechanical box—changed my life in ways I could never have imagined on the night when I opened this package. At times it's led me to places only reached when genies magically rub their lamps; at other times, it's taken me into a Pandora's box of hell.

I can barely remember the tears of my first wife on the day I told her I was leaving to photograph my first conflict in Nicaragua in 1983. But I recall vividly the words of the wife of the man who sent me—the director of photography of *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans—when she asked, "Are you sure about this? War changes men."

Perhaps I should have known better about entering this world of war. After all, I had watched my older sister's boyfriends leave to fight in Vietnam pimply faced and silent and then watched as they came home and demonstrated on me, using imaginary knives, how they slit enemy throats. Back then I remember thinking to myself that war does change men in cruel, silent ways. Now I wonder if they see the same horrible things in dreams as I do.

I went off to war, with my camera as my artillery. The two words "I went" define much of the rest of my life, just as they define the lives of any journalist who goes and who cares. I went. I saw. I brought back images. But what happened in between is a legacy buried in a thousand stories, a half-dozen close calls with death, and probably a dozen more I don't even know about. Going is easy. Coming home is hard. But duty called, so I went. I never look back on that decision because I can't.

There is another memory of Vietnam

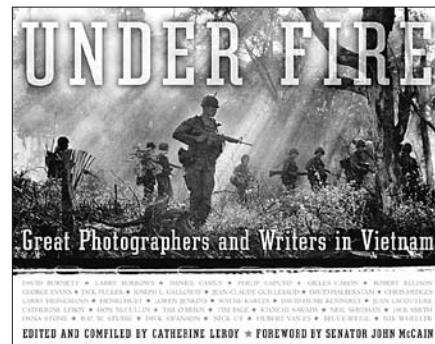
I carry with me from my teenage years. They are images taken by a single photographer, and they changed my life, too. Perhaps his photos were the ghost-like terror of a reality I unconsciously was trying to ignore. I was maybe 13 years old when I found Don McCullin's book, "Is Anyone Taking Any Notice?" at the Abilene Public Library in West Texas where I grew up. His images are some of the most chilling and evocative pictures from war that I believe have ever been taken.

There have been other great war photographers such as the Civil War's Matthew Brady, along with his assistants, and from the last century's wars, David Douglas Duncan, Joe Rosenthal, W. Eugene Smith, Robert Capa, Larry Burrows, and Catherine Leroy. The list is longer still. Capturing war's horror becomes a team effort. When a photo fails to touch our heart or grasp our mind, another steps in. And if we keep looking, the bombardment never ceases.

A few decades after reading his book—and taking my camera to a few battlefields, too—I had the chance to meet McCullin. Earlier this year the two of us joined Vietnam War photographer Catherine Leroy in a panel discussion about war photography at the University of California at Berkeley. As we spent time together, what McCullin couldn't fathom but did appreciate was the enormous influence his images had on my life.

Do Images of War Matter?

The Berkeley panel marked the official release of Leroy's book "Under Fire: Great Photographers and Writers in Vietnam," which she edited. As



someone who has been to war with a camera, what I found most striking about Leroy's book—with its many pages of photography taken from the frontlines and behind them—is how the incomprehensibly cruel landscape of war never changes.

In fact, if one tracks war photography, similar themes emerge; even the fields and faces can start to appear to be the same. All that changes is the uniform. Perhaps this is why to look back at this striking compilation of images from Vietnam is perhaps more poignant now than it was when these images were first released. Fitting, too, that at this time when our nation is embroiled again in another distant war, these photographs can help us to recognize some parallels, if only in the pain endured and sacrifice given in every war. As we survey these images from a past war, Iraq seems but a toss of the stone from the ripple that was Vietnam. Where one war finally ended, another has begun. When we no longer see the poignancy in these ripples, we must question humanity itself.

During our panel discussion an audience member asked if we thought images of war make a difference. McCullin replied that he doubts they do, as he observes from afar a war that rages even now. His words offered chilling

evidence of my silent fear that all of the images of suffering I've sent home for publication have been for naught. Yes, I worked hard, and I've won a few awards. But if that is all there is that comes out of my work, then the thought sickens me.

I know that as photojournalists raise their cameras amid shocking scenes of the death and destruction and devastation of war, they harbor the hope that this captured moment might bring an end to the madness of war. But they don't, for war continues unabated, wrecking lives without abandon. It explains why when I shared a Pulitzer Prize for photography from Iraq, my overriding feeling was one of failure.

The images of war don't change. They are as brutal and obscene as they were a thousand years earlier. Death and atrocity mingle like roommates in a despot neighborhood of loss. No one really wins in war. Innocence can never be regained. Were it that the din of voices raised could overshadow the thunder of artillery, shouting men in the name of diplomacy might rescue us, even if images of this diplomatic battle would not stir our emotions, as our scenes of war do.

When McCullin finished speaking, it was my turn, and I told the story of finding his images on a bookshelf in my small town in Texas and how my life was changed by them. I told about times when I raised my camera and saw his photos in the viewfinder. For me, a circle closed. I can only hope my images will do the same for some child today. On that evening at Berkeley, as stage lights glared in my eyes making it difficult to look out and connect with eyes across the stunned and silent audience, images I'd fled from decades ago found me. ■

David Leeson is a photojournalist for The Dallas Morning News. His news photography from Iraq, along with that of colleague Cheryl Diaz-Meyer, was awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography. He is also a two-time winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Award.

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Taking advantage of the calm, Captain Andy MacLean rests after a night of fierce fighting near Karbala two weeks into the war.

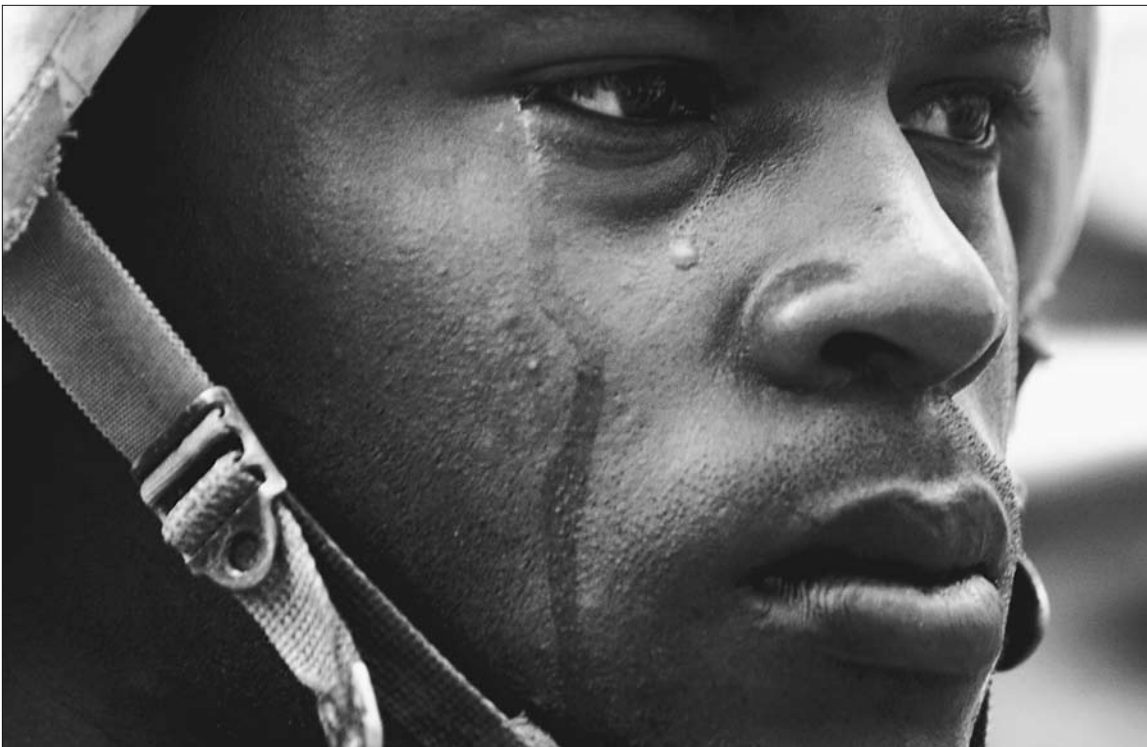


Soles on the worn-out, civilian shoes of dead Iraqi soldiers tell the story of an ill-equipped army.

Photos by David Leeson/The Dallas Morning News.



Arms outstretched in surrender after being stopped along a road, an armed suspect is surrounded by U.S. troops on their way to Baghdad.



Squad leader and Staff Sgt. Lonnie Roberts stands at attention as troops from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team pay last respects to a fallen 19-year-old comrade in Baghdad.

Photos by David Leeson/The Dallas Morning News.

When What War Is About Becomes Invisible

'If it wasn't for people like you, people over here would not know what was really going on.'

By Steve Northup

Writing about my time in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966 has never been pleasurable or easy. It was a difficult time. Reading Catherine Leroy's fine book, "Under Fire," opened up a whole box of Pandoras, to quote one of my state's former governors. Many of the pictures she uses in her book, many of them taken by old friends, bring back a different time, a different war, and the loss of too many good people.

Again our nation is at war, in one of our choosing. I don't think most Americans have any idea of the terrible suffering that goes on hourly, on every side. The grim human reality of the war in Iraq is damn near invisible: Most of what we see are images of plumes of smoke on the horizon, chewed and twisted metal midstreet, and our beleaguered soldiers, peering out from 70 pounds of Pentagon gear. We have no idea of the daily lives and terrors of sons and daughters who are serving there, or of the Iraqis, for whom they are trying to construct a nation.

Vietnam was different, with its daily realities, some would later argue, all too apparent. As a photojournalist, I spent a lot of time in the field as part of a two-man team, working with Martin Stuart-Fox for United Press International. In the time we were there, we were in almost every province in South Vietnam. Moving throughout the country was not difficult. And here's the good part—the troops really liked having us around. Young privates were happy to have a link to their hometown paper. (It was decades before I quit asking those I had

just photographed for the name of their hometown.) The sergeants, after giving us a thorough looking over and deciding we at least looked like we knew what we were doing, were our best guides and tutors. Officers, up through captain and major, were more cautious, but once trust and good friendships were formed, they gave us a lot of help. Contact with anything above that rank was rare. We

Again our nation is at war, in one of our choosing. I don't think most Americans have any idea of the terrible suffering that goes on hourly, on every side. The grim human reality of the war in Iraq is damn near invisible We have no idea of the daily lives and terrors of sons and daughters who are serving there, or of the Iraqis, for whom they are trying to construct a nation.

were the grunts of the press corps.

In March 1966 Martin and I went into the Ia Drang Valley with a reaction force to try to extricate a squad of trapped 1st Cavalry troops and fell into a deadly trap. We lost a good part of our company before the battle was finally over. At one point I heard a shout for help and looking behind me saw a pair of paratroopers, Ellis Higgs and Collin Johnson, Jr., both wounded. I crawled over and gave Johnson a chamois from my camera bag to try to use as a bandage. Then I lifted up my Leica and made a couple of quick frames, one of which became one of the more widely seen images from the war.

For 30 years I felt guilty about the two seconds or so it took to make that picture, time I could have spent trying

to get Higgs and Johnson to a safer spot and some help. Nothing worse happened during that time, but I still felt bad about using it. Years later Ellis and I met up, together with a bunch of his outfit, A Company, 1/12th, 1st Cavalry. After telling each other how happy we were the other one was alive (I always believed that Ellis hadn't made it), the first thing I did was apologize

for taking that time. "Don't be silly," Ellis told me. "You were there to take pictures, and you did what you were supposed to do."

Later he sent me a letter I will always cherish. Here's part of what he wrote: "I don't know what makes a guy go to a combat zone armed with only a camera, but I'm glad you were there, and I thank you for all you did for me and everyone else over there and back home. If it wasn't for people

like you, people over here would not know what was really going on."

Our government has done all that it can to make the war in Iraq invisible and thus, in the eyes and lives of many, a war without sacrifice. The reality is the sacrifices are many, yet they are terribly uneven. When a nation goes to war, it expends what is most precious: its name and honor, the gold of its treasury, and the blood of its children. We deserve a much better accounting. ■

Steve Northup, a 1974 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance photojournalist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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Probing the Successes and Failures of the Washington Press Corps

'Great reporting in Washington is about cutting through the bureaucratic maze.'

Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps

Donald A. Ritchie

Oxford University Press. 432 Pages. \$30.

By James McCartney

In analyzing the reasons for his defeat by a relatively inexperienced John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election, Richard Nixon concluded that it boiled down to a single definable problem—his television image. If he wanted to continue in national politics he would have to change that image.

Thus in 1967 and early 1968, with great deliberation, he set about doing so. He hired two experienced craftsmen, Harry Treleaven, from the advertising giant J. Walter Thompson, and Frank Shakespeare, from CBS television, with help from a youthful Roger Ailes, who now runs Fox TV. Between them, they repackaged Richard Nixon and sold him to America in the 1968 election campaign much like J. Walter Thompson would sell a bar of soap.

In his book, Donald A. Ritchie recalls this astonishing achievement—the manufacture, through modern advertising techniques, of a “new” Nixon when, in fact, as history subsequently demonstrated, there was no new Nixon. But with the Washington press corps, Nixon and his team got away with this massive deception and, in doing so, they changed American politics.

The Past Foretold the Present

This story illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of Ritchie's book. Ritchie clearly understands Nixon's considerable achievement. He attributes it to “a savvy team of media advisors.” But Ritchie seems unaware of the relevance

of his research in today's Washington world. For all practical purposes, Richard Nixon and his “savvy team” invented the modern presidency. The techniques that Treleaven and Shakespeare pioneered have become the model for George W. Bush's White House.

Bush and his team have stolen the Nixon playbook. They seek total control of information and try to avoid any

has done—and done well—and what he has not done.

Let's give Ritchie his due and deal with the good news first. In significant areas, he has carefully researched and skillfully reported some of the great changes in the history of the Washington press corps, and this results in some truly fine chapters. Here's a sample of his writing and research in a chapter about

problems black reporters had in gaining access to sources and recognition:

There is in Washington reporting an intrinsic bias to power and position. Stories by reporters who refuse to honor this hallowed tradition often get lesser play—or no play at all. But these contrarians are often closer to the truth.

“The Washington press corps remained exclusively white until President Roosevelt's press secretary, Stephen Early, kneed a black policeman in the groin during the 1940 campaign.

His rash act set in motion a chain of events that finally toppled racial barriers for African-American journalists at the White House and the Capitol.”

From there, Ritchie walks readers through the chain of events that followed. He also provides an effective narrative about the battle for equality waged by women. And there are intriguing and detailed accounts of how both radio and television fought, and gained, acceptance. In a thoughtful chapter, he writes about the rise and fall of Washington syndicated columnists, whose role, he points out, has been diminished by television talking heads or, perhaps more accurately, shouting heads.

In possibly the most devastating and, in a sense revealing, chapter, he examines how Senator Joseph McCarthy was able to use many willing members of

unscripted moment. They have even copied one of Nixon's major contributions to modern statecraft—staging phony so-called “town meetings” with carefully selected audiences, faking spontaneity.

The past is indeed prologue. Why else study history? Ritchie provides a great deal of the history of the Washington press corps, much of it fascinating and certainly well documented. But he fails to examine why the Washington press corps often fails and why it matters when they do. In a book that presumes to be a definitive history, one might expect an examination of the quality of Washington reporting—if not a critique, then at least an assessment. That apparently never occurred to Ritchie. Nevertheless, there is much to recommend in this book. But it should be clear what he

the Washington press corps in his climb to national prominence. He winds up his tale with a perceptive chapter on the growing influence of Weblogs and the Internet.

The Paths to Failure

By profession, Ritchie is an historian who has worked on the staff of the U.S. Senate since 1976. In that capacity he has come to know dozens of Washington reporters, and his book reflects considerable knowledge of the tribal customs of the Washington press. The stories he tells are often packed with background and detail. Where, then, does the book fall short?

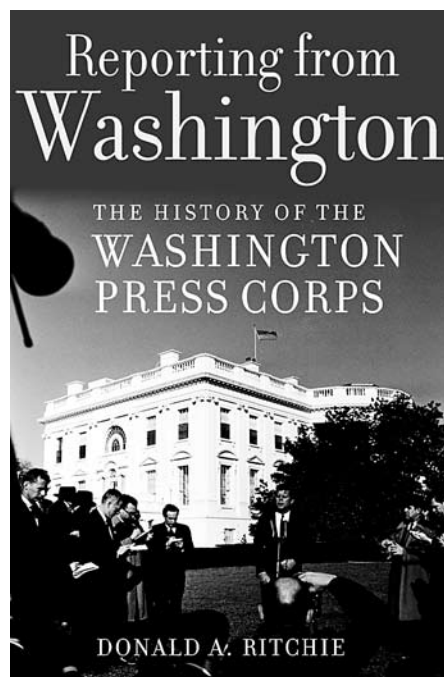
The book is not truly a history of the Washington press corps, as its subtitle suggests. It is a selective history. While he is very good at what he covers, matters of significance are missing. Ritchie appears to have no knowledge of the specialized worlds of some of Washington's important reporting beats—the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, the Justice Department, and other leading agencies—each a world unto itself. The book also offers no insight about the influence and impact the 24-hour news cycle has on Washington reporting.

This might be because Ritchie has viewed the reporting world from the limited pedestal of the U.S. Senate. He appears unaware of many dramatic changes in the press in recent years—for example, the enormous expansion of many regional bureaus, most notably the Los Angeles Times. Forty years ago the Times had two reporters in Washington, D.C.. Today the Times's Washington-based staff is more than 40. It is a major player in political coverage. So is The Wall Street Journal, which 40 years ago stuck strictly to reporting on business.

More important, the book doesn't engage what really great Washington reporting is all about. Former Washington Post Executive Editor Benjamin Bradlee once put it this way: "A reporter who could call Henry Kissinger by his first name wasn't worth a damn on the Watergate story." Great reporting in Washington is about cutting through

the bureaucratic maze. The real news frequently does not come from the top, from authorized statements at the White House or the State Department or other agencies. Normally those words are spin. Often important news comes from the deep bowels of the bureaucracy or from no-name staff members of congressional committees. It comes from those who know what is going on and who think it is important for the public to know.

But the Washington media too often appear trapped by an obsession with the official—the White House announcement, the Pentagon briefing,



'A reporter who could call Henry Kissinger by his first name wasn't worth a damn on the Watergate story.'

— Ben Bradlee

the congressional press conference, the staged event. There is in Washington reporting an intrinsic bias to power and position. Stories by reporters who refuse to honor this hallowed tradition

often get lesser play—or no play at all. But these contrarians are often closer to the truth. That is the problem, and Ritchie is clearly aware of it. In his preface, he observes that "the Washington press corps has always paid the greatest attention to those in authority." But in his book, he fails to recognize the implications of this obsession to the nation's consumers of news.

Thus even a well documented and well written selective history, as Ritchie has produced, doesn't help readers to understand how the game is played and why Washington reporters often fail. It is important to recall how the Washington press corps failed to perceive the disaster in Vietnam, for example, essentially providing support for President Johnson's misguided crusade until after the Tet offensive in 1968. That represented years of failure.

The evidence suggests that the same factors that contributed to the failure in Vietnam were also present 40 years later in the run-up to the war in Iraq. The Washington press corps enthusiastically bought Secretary of State Colin Powell's phony arguments to the United Nations seeking to justify a unilateral American attack. Both The New York Times and The Washington Post—trendsetters for Washington news—have acknowledged failure in their prewar reporting.

Ritchie's book is excellent in what it does and in the areas it seeks to explore. He deserves his scholarly reputation. But what he failed to perceive is that there is a larger and more meaningful story to tell. ■

James McCartney, a 1964 Nieman Fellow, was a Washington correspondent for more than 35 years, first for six years for the Chicago Daily News, then for Knight Ridder Newspapers, specializing in national security. For 10 of the Knight Ridder years he wrote a syndicated Washington column. In retirement in Florida, he continues to write a column for Florida newspapers.

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Blending Economic Ideas With the Persuasive Power of Journalism

Galbraith ‘performed that balancing trick as well as it has been done.’

John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics

Richard Parker

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 787 Pages. \$35.

By John Geddes

It is a well known bit of John Kenneth Galbraith lore that his path to becoming a towering public intellectual began at Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), which he once described as “not only the cheapest but probably the worst college in the English-speaking world.”

Richard Parker’s monumental new biography doesn’t dwell unduly on Galbraith’s five years at OAC, but moves ahead briskly to the University of California at Berkeley, Harvard University, and an astonishing lifetime of influencing and observing American economics and politics. Journalists, however, might pause for a moment on learning about Galbraith’s editorial policy at the OAC campus newspaper he helped found, *The OACIS*. Parker recounts how Galbraith has variously reminisced that his aim was to “give maximum offense to the faculty” and to keep “well on the side of safety.”

So which was it? Parker doesn’t attempt to resolve the contradiction. Read on, though, and the unresolved question of whether Galbraith set out to defy authority or soothe it takes on greater significance. He emerges as at once a consummate insider and an intellectual maverick. Nowhere is this apparent paradox more striking than in Galbraith’s five-year stint at Henry Luce’s *Fortune* magazine, a key formative period when his early interest in journalism intersected with his growing confidence as an economist.

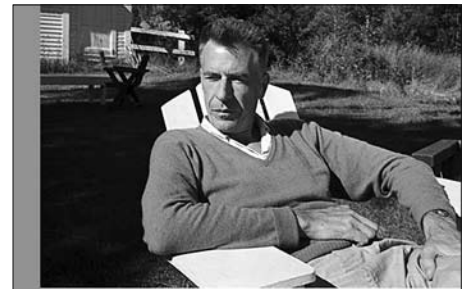
In a series of important articles he wrote or oversaw at *Fortune* from 1943-48, Galbraith interpreted John Maynard Keynes for the magazine’s affluent readership. Touting Keynesian-style government intervention to skeptical

businessmen, not least of which was Luce himself, proved to be a delicate task. The ideas themselves seemed bound to give offense; the trick was to present them in a way that stayed on the side of safety.

As Parker shows, those *Fortune* articles—in sharp contrast to the anti-Keynesian slant adopted at the time by *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, and *Forbes*—prepared the ground for Washington’s post-Second World War economic policy. So while we think of Galbraith as having influenced popular understanding of economics mainly through his 1958 book, “*The Affluent Society*,” and his other bestsellers, there can be no doubt that his earlier experience in Luce’s shop hammered home lasting lessons about how writing persuasively for a big audience could amplify a thinker’s impact.

Galbraith had come from a family and a rural culture in which what the newspaper said mattered a great deal. He was born into the farming community around little Iona Corners in Ontario, Canada. The *Toronto Globe* was known there as “the Bible” to the local Scots-Canadians, the Galbraith family prominent among them, who shared its support for the Liberal Party and generally progressive bent. (When I interviewed him early this year, Galbraith also made a point of mentioning that the first magazine he remembers seeing as a boy was *Maclean’s*, my Toronto-based home publication.)

His first foray out into the world was to nearby OAC, where he majored in animal husbandry, helped launch that school paper, and did freelance writing for two small southwestern Ontario



JOHN
KENNETH
GALBRAITH
HIS LIFE,
HIS POLITICS,
HIS ECONOMICS
RICHARD PARKER

papers. In 1931, he won a research scholarship in agricultural economics at the University of California at Berkeley and left Canada behind for good. He then went to Harvard and from there to a job in farm policy in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration. He was an early convert to Keynes’s theories about government economic management.

By the time Roosevelt was assembling the bureaucracy he would need to run a wartime economy, Galbraith was a natural recruit; he landed in the Office of Price Administration (OPA). With characteristic wit, Galbraith later described the creation of the OPA as even more controversial than instituting the draft, since “the draft involved only the life and liberty of the subject. Price control involved money and property and thus had to be taken more seriously.”

Seriously, indeed. In 1943, the system of price controls and rationing that Galbraith had helped create came under sustained attack by conservative congressmen and editorialists. Parker contends the OPA worked remarkably well. Still, Galbraith was finally fired, a big enough story to make Page One of *The Washington Post*. In one of the biography’s more dramatic episodes, Galbraith, just 34, collapses on his living room floor from the stress—a glimpse at

the fragile side of a man whose public persona would come to be defined by a sardonic self-assurance.

Galbraith and Journalism

His salvation came at the unlikely hands of Henry Robinson Luce, founder of Time, Inc., and sworn enemy of the New Deal and Roosevelt. What did Luce see in Galbraith? The same thing he saw in the many liberal journalists he employed despite his conservative bent—brains and talent. Just as important was what Galbraith evidently saw in Luce's publishing empire—scope and opportunity.

While Galbraith has suggested that his move to journalism was almost a matter of chance, Parker has mined the Time, Inc. archives to uncover a more elaborate, two-way courtship. Ed Lockett, of Time's Washington bureau, talked to Galbraith "innumerable times" about joining Fortune. Galbraith turned down three overtures while working at the OPA. When he suddenly found himself unemployed, he hit up Fortune's

editor, Ralph "Del" Paine, to see if the offer still stood.

Paine wouldn't regret his decision to take on the promising out-of-work economist. Luce had a grand vision for American world leadership after the war, and he had become convinced that Keynesianism would need to be part of the policy mix. Galbraith would bring that message to the readers who mattered. His first big piece on the transition to peace was published in January 1944. It was a triumph. Parker is at his perceptive best describing the article's inner workings. "Carefully avoiding any mention of Keynes by name," he writes, "Galbraith established why big business itself should want a Keynesian-style activist government." By May 1944, Fortune's readers were ready for what Parker calls a "stunningly flattering" article on Keynes, written by John Davenport, a conservative editor, but overseen by Galbraith.

This pivotal phase of Galbraith's life is also a key chapter in the history of American journalism in the last century. The biography goes on to engrossingly

survey Galbraith's life as a Harvard professor, presidential adviser, and household-name author, but his link to the news media commands our attention in its own right. His superbly accessible writing has always threatened to overshadow his economic insights. These two elements of Galbraith's gift, though, are finally inseparable.

For anyone who values journalistic independence, but also strives to produce the sort of journalism that can influence the powerful, Parker shows how Galbraith performed that balancing trick as well as it has been done. No wonder he became such a fast friend of the Nieman Foundation. But as a student reporter, way back when, was he out to shock his teachers in animal husbandry or placate them? By the evidence of what came after, one can only guess that he managed to do both. ■

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When Media Create the Message

The author of 'Mediated' makes us 'feel as if our very beings are enslaved by the messages as well as the messengers.'

Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It

Thomas de Zengotita

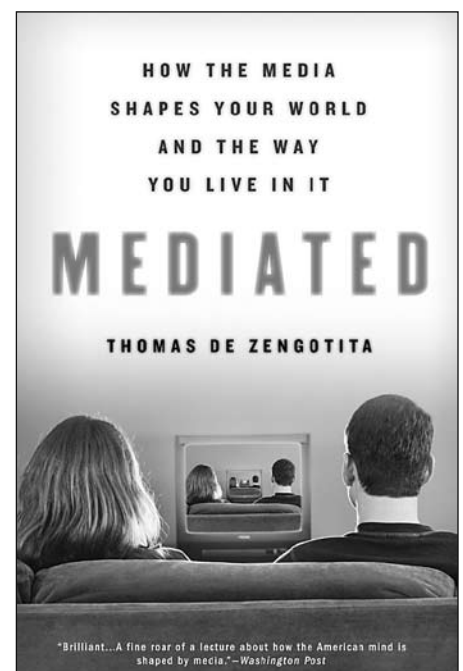
Bloomsbury. 291 Pages. \$22.95.

By Howard Shapiro

When one of my kids began obsessing about getting herself a navel ring, it was about the same time I'd begun to read "Mediated." I found the first hour of the book highly frustrating. Its premise, that we are what the media have taught us to be, was making me angry.

Thomas de Zengotita, a contributing editor at Harper's magazine, a PhD in anthropology and a teacher at New York University, immediately lays out his doctrine and turns it into a polemic

by employing Princess Di. He tells us that her mourners were not exactly involved in an outpouring of spontaneous, real emotion. They were, he says, a "mediated" lot. They were acting the way they'd been queued to act from years of watching people respond to the deaths of major figures or even minor ones on TV, in the movies, on the pages of glossy magazines, anywhere where someone with a message has the means to reach large segments of society or



even specific niches.

These Princess Di mourners were representing—*representing* is a word de Zengotita uses a lot to show that things are not always simply real—what they believed grief was, or thought that it should be. They were part of an international wave of sadness that had a certain dynamic because everyone had been—mediated.

De Zengotita ends up having Princess Di's mourners be representative *and* real—a nice finesse that, later in the book, fits under his definition of The Blob in American society: our constant need to see so many sides of things, we end up manipulating their real purpose or meaning. After laying out his mediation thesis, de Zengotita Blobs himself by telling us that the mourners “were truly grieving *and* they were performing. [*Italics his.*] Immersed in a world continuously represented from every angle, they understood Di's death as an opportunity to play a significant role in it, to represent themselves at levels of prominence usually reserved for the celebrated.”

I began to take exception to this idea instantly. Was I not honestly grieving for John F. Kennedy as a shocked 10th-grader, or later for Martin Luther King, Jr. or Robert Kennedy? When the terrible time came, for my own parents? Had I filled my psyche with what I thought grieving should be and acted simply on that belief? I think not.

Well, whatever I was thinking, I didn't think for long, because my 14-year-old interrupted me with another argument for her most passionate desire. This was her umpteenth plea for a piercing. The entreaties had begun weeks earlier, when she hit me and my wife, head-on, with tongue-piercing (and headsplitting) arguments. These were complete with Internet documentation, all representing one side. We were steadfast. No tongue pierces. She turned her attention to navel rings. We figured that we could hold her at bay until she worked her way fully south, and demanded an ankle bracelet. Then we'd give in.

I thought a lot about de Zengotita. Where did this piercing stuff come from? It certainly wasn't reflected in

some value I was preaching: “Sweetie, you're going into high school now, so it's time to start seriously thinking about the grades you earn and the upcoming SAT's, about a solid and fulfilling career, about a college that will nurture and energize you, and about piercing your tongue.”

No, it wasn't from me. The preaching was being done all around me. It was on MTV, in teen and celebrity magazines; it was on the silver screen and her computer screen. It was all around the house, too, with several of her older sister's

**We are 'systematically
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friends, who teathed their piercings as they sat in front of our large-screen television (hah!), fully unaware of their constant little oral dance. Perhaps de Zengotita had something.

Living Through Media

There is nothing really new in all this. Through the ages the media in any form would in some way inspire people, or try to move them to action; the Bible, the Koran, the I Ching are three examples. And we could fill the next dozen issues of this journal with more names of books and article headlines and broadcast titles and ad campaigns, down through time, which would be a cheap way to stop Nieman Reports itself from inspiring you, or trying to. What is new, though, is the thought process, refreshing tone and cadence that de Zengotita uses to make us all feel as if our very beings are enslaved by the messages as well as the messengers.

De Zengotita's book is smart, often hilarious, frequently infuriating, and full of little ideas that zoom around you, seemingly coming from nowhere—light bulbs flashing from a page. It is com-

elling social commentary; you might agree with it one minute, then shake your head against it the next, as you turn the page. I began laughing out loud somewhere in the second chapter, when I realized that de Zengotita was putting me on at the same time he was making serious points.

He is an uninhibited writer, tossing out thoughts in the same wild beat as perennial Broadway borscht-belter Jackie Mason. If you've ever seen Mason, a living bobblehead on stage, you know what I mean: there's a WIZ-a-wiz-a, WIZ-a-wiz-a rhythm to the delivery of his ideas, and it catches you, making it hard to release yourself from its thrall. De Zengotita achieves the equivalent, in print. In one spin of the cycle, his thoughts are crystalline, in another, his prose is so banal you can't help but howl. In another, a thought from left field strikes you as being worth an entire chapter. In another, his mastery of academic nonsense language leaves you breathless.

He tells us we surf everything in life, concentrating on little. The Blob, a powerful defense mechanism that ameliorates everything, sublimates our courage by making us indifferent. We are nostalgic for things we never experienced, because we live virtually. We can't have real heroes because they eat into our fattened notion of ourselves. We are so deeply into self-help we've forgotten the self and possibly why we help it. Our genetic engineering is nothing more than “self-help on a Divine scale.”

He uses, as examples to bolster his points about the influences upon us, everything from the power of popular music to Mister Rogers, from “Goodnight Moon” to stress, from Bill Clinton's lies and George Bush's performances and self-flattery and being possessed to a beautiful little riff on keys and the singularity of objects. (See the end of Chapter 5, as de Zengotita would write throughout the book. He overuses all manner of cross-references to mock academic, or mediated, or representational writing.)

De Zengotita comments, through it all, on the roles that journalism plays in our current behavior. We are “systemati-

cally conditioned by the media” to avoid anything we cannot understand in a minute. We buy into hype: “Who cares how much the woman on ‘Fear Factor’ is exaggerating her trepidation—she is eating a mouthful of live worms.” Crisis and scandal allow politics to compete with sports and entertainment because “only then are politicians genuine postmodern performers, being in the moment, packaged and real.”

He ends his book by looking at the influences on the way we perceive—and he, in particular, has reacted to—terror. I will treat this as a theater critic treats a denouement and tell you nothing about it, so as not to ruin the experience. This is only right, because there is a theatricality to “Mediated” that is obvious. Every worthwhile piece of theater has a right to play out its story without someone like me mediating. ■

Howard Shapiro, a 1981 Nieman Fellow, is a travel writer and columnist, and a theater reviewer, on the staff of The Philadelphia Inquirer. His younger daughter now wears a shiny navel ring.

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Time and Techniques Define A ‘New New Journalism’

Conversations with writers reveal how and why their stories are being told in different ways.

The New New Journalism: Conversations with America’s Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft

Robert S. Boynton

Vintage. 456 Pages. \$13.95 pb.

By Madeleine Blais

The world of letters struggles to this day to figure out how precisely to describe the revolution in nonfiction writing that appears to have begun in 1946 when John Hersey’s “Hiroshima” was published in its entirety in one issue of The New Yorker. How is it best to refer to this genre of writing—the nonfiction novel, creative nonfiction, the literature of fact, narrative journalism, new journalism, new old journalism? Now, courtesy of Robert S. Boynton, comes another label, the “new new journalism.”

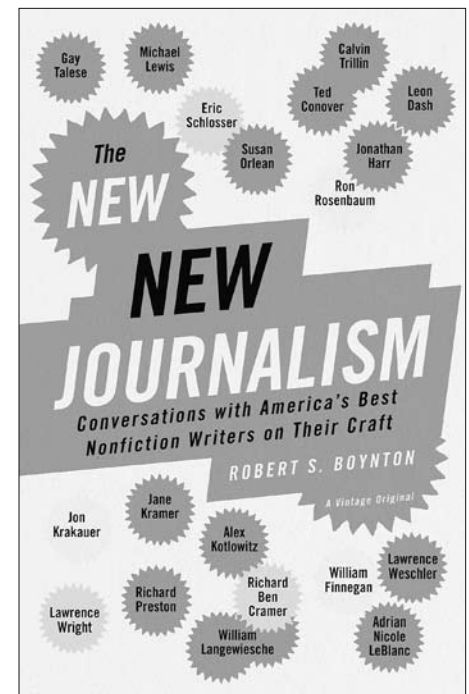
In his useful guidebook, which should have a long life in classrooms as well as on the desks of reporters aspiring to do this kind of work, Boynton focuses on the writing of 16 men and three women. They differ from Tom Wolfe’s new journalists, who inhabited the first wave of innovators, whom Boynton describes as expanding “journalism’s literary scope by placing the author at the center of the story, channeling a character’s thoughts, using nonstandard punctuation, and exploding traditional narrative forms.”

As Boynton sees it, Wolfe’s heirs, whose major work appeared well after the 1960’s ended, built on those innova-

tions, then raised the stakes—“changing the way one gets the story” by practicing immersion journalism on a grand scale. Boynton cites Ted Conover, who worked as a prison guard for “Newjack” and lived as a hobo for “Rolling Nowhere.” For many of these writers, deadlines exist as theoretical concepts: They put huge swathes of time on their side. Boynton cites several examples of writers who immersed themselves for quite some time in the lives of their subjects:

- Leon Dash spent five years following various characters who surrounded Rosa Lee, a drug-addicted grandmother he met who had been arrested for selling drugs to feed two of her grandchildren.
- Adrian Nicole LeBlanc devoted nearly 10 years to living among the young people and their children whose connected lives comprise her book, “Random Family.”
- Jonathan Harr spent about eight years working on “A Civil Action.”

These long commitments to one’s subject are the opposite of the slapdash hit-and-run aspect of parachute



journalism. The new new journalism is the literature of subcultures and the literature of the every day, as well as being the literature of the long haul.

Glimpses of Technique

The format Boynton selects to share his ideas is simple and straightforward. He frames each author’s work with an introduction that includes biographical material and a kind of critical bibliography. Then the thoughts of each subject are captured in a series of question

and answers. The inspiration for the volume came from the classes in magazine journalism that Boynton teaches at New York University; the insights offered by these writers to his students provided the spine for his subsequent interviews.

Because the book's structure has the casual back-and-forth quality of real conversations, repetitions do creep into the text, but there are plenty of payoffs when the writers take over the podium, including some small telling moments of vanity, as well as some inspiring words about how they do what they do (or sometimes don't do).

- Ted Conover on bad ideas: "Well, in the early 1990's, when everyone was getting online, I thought of doing a travel book about the Internet. My cyber-travel would itself structure the narrative. At the time it sounded good, but eventually I concluded it was more interesting as a sentence than as a book."
- Leon Dash shares his response to Rosa Lee after she'd asked him about whether she should stop teaching her daughter to shoplift. His answer is not a simple one, veering into the murky ethics of the relationship between author and subject.
- Jonathan Harr describes his disappointment when he was preparing to do a book on a dig at the Turkish-Syrian border, but backed off when the lead archeologist demanded a percentage of whatever he earned from the book.
- Alex Kotlowitz explains why he eschews tape recorders, other than for interviews with public figures who he thinks could become argumentative, while Adrian Nicole LeBlanc likes to use them. As a way to avoid the awkwardness the recorders sometimes inspire, from time to time she hands hers over to her subjects so that they can control the "on" button.
- Jon Krakauer shares his secret for outlining complicated subjects, which he compares to rock climbing: "When you embark on a really big climb, like, say, the Salathé wall of El Capitan, which rises three thousand vertical feet from the floor of the

Yosemite Valley, the enormity of the undertaking can be paralyzing. So a climber breaks down the ascent into rope-lengths, or pitches. If you can think of the climb as a series of 20 or 30 pitches, and focus on each of these pitches to the exclusion of the scary pitches that lie above, climbing El Cap suddenly doesn't seem to be such an intimidating project."

- Jane Kramer speaks to her special method for interviewing peripheral characters in which she asks each of them the same questions. "It's a kind of Rashomon tactic. I am interested in what emerges about each person in terms of what he or she adds or subtracts from that basic narrative."
- Susan Orlean, in response to the question "How do you know when the interviewing phase is done?," provides the brilliantly succinct answer, "When my attention span becomes shorter. In the beginning of a story my learning curve is so steep that everything the person says is new and fascinating. Then it slows down naturally as I become more and more familiar with the person and his story. Finally, I feel an intuitive shift from listening to the process of writing the story in my head."
- Calvin Trillin's measure for what makes a good story is whether it sounds interesting, which he realizes has more to do with some internalized click than any other more objective system. He believes murders make good stories because they have a built-in plot line and, better yet, there is likely to be a court hearing with a transcript: "I used to say that I'd go anywhere there was a transcript—which isn't quite true, but almost. My absolute favorite thing is when there is always a transcript from a defendant's previous trial. That way I have both a transcript to read and a trial to attend."

Through Boynton's lens, we learn a lot of details about the work habits of these writers, perhaps more than is really helpful: What does another writer learn from knowing that Conover does not need a room with a view and wrote one book in the upstairs room of a

neighbor's garage facing a blank wall? Are we enriched by finding out that Harr gets upset if he has to go out to a dinner party in the middle of the week, while Gay Talese finishes his work day at eight in the evening and then goes out? ("I like to go out. Every night. I love restaurants. Not necessarily good restaurants, but any kind of restaurant," Talese says.) Does it matter that Jane Kramer wakes up at 7:30 each morning and needs a lot of juice and coffee and does a crossword puzzle before she can settle in? At any rate, Ron Rosenbaum beats her in the early-bird game: "I wake up at four a.m., make some strong coffee—Ethiopian lately."

The book is marred by a few flaws—which could have been fixed by some basic fact-checking. When Harr laces into Joe McGinniss for betraying his main character, Jeffrey McDonald, in "Blind Faith," he is clearly alluding to another McGinniss' book, "Fatal Vision." Boynton uses the name "Michael" when referencing Mikhail Gilmore. And it seems curious for him to tell us that Calvin Trillin's wife, Alice, died in late 2001, when her death had the coincidental poignancy of occurring in New York City on September 11th.

In his introduction Boynton posits that there is something deeply American about this narrative art form: We are a practical people who like facts, yet we are a polyglot nation with an instinctive understanding that there is more than just one narrative line to our shared history. That said, most of Boynton's featured writers are male and are Caucasian. While no one would deny them the breadth of their commitment nor the worthiness of their contributions, one is left to wonder how long it will take a more variegated chorus to enter the "canon" and be routinely included in volumes of this sort. ■

Madeleine Blais, a 1986 Nieman Fellow, is professor of journalism at the University of Massachusetts and the author of "In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle."

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Shahla Sherkat Receives the 2005 Louis M. Lyons Award

The Iranian journalist is honored for her ‘dangerous and challenging job’ as publisher of *Zanan*, a magazine about women.

The Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism is an honor given each year by the sitting class of Nieman Fellows. The award is named in memory of Lyons, a member of the first Nieman class, in 1939, and Curator of the Nieman Foundation for 25 years. This year, the class of 2005 chose to honor Shahla Sherkat, the founder and publisher of Zanan (Woman), a monthly magazine that focuses on the concerns of Iranian women. In Sherkat's absence, Roza Eftekbari, an Iranian journalist who is a member of the 2005 class, accepted the award at a dinner at the Nieman Foundation in June. An edited version of Eftekbari's remarks follows.

When I was told that Shahla had been nominated for the Nieman prize, I became happy and worried at the same time. I became happy, feeling that for my journalist fellows the cliché of Iranian women as backward and passive has changed. They are now seen as champions who challenge the traditional image of women in a nondemocratic environment. I became happy to see that the effort Iranian women are making to change their situation is being acknowledged by other journalists even though they may have different attitudes towards the “veil.”

But I became worried, too, and this feeling is the result of working in a nondemocratic context that we—female journalists—have internalized. ... In the environment in which we work,

accepting an honorable prize like this has a political price, and that price could sometimes be so high that we would prefer to avoid receiving it. So in spite of the financial problems that *Zanan* has had, many times Shahla preferred to refuse to accept the prizes different countries have wanted to give to the magazine.

I wish Shahla was here tonight to talk to you herself. The way I know her, I am

Journalism, especially if focused on women, is a dangerous and challenging job in Iran given the sensitivity we have about women's issues.

sure she is thankful for this support.

Zanan has been published for 13 years, and its life has been endangered many times due to political struggles. Journalism, especially if focused on women, is a dangerous and challenging job in Iran given the sensitivity we have about women's issues. Today if those Islamic laws on inequality between men and women are being challenged—if there are talks on adapting laws for women based on human rights, if more Muslim women could call themselves “feminist” and not feel scared of losing

their religious beliefs and identity—it's all because of the courage women like Shahla have had in facing traditional attitudes.

But apart from facing the danger and struggle of the difficult political situations, courage could be also interpreted the way Kant has referred to it—meaning that facing the truth needs courage. Twenty-seven years ago, during the revolution, Shahla was a young woman of 22 who started in journalism with traditional views on women. Today she is a 48-year-old Muslim woman who initiated the first feminist magazine in Iran after the revolution with modern and human rights lenses to look at women. Such transition for a woman who wants to keep her traditional beliefs, and at the same time cannot be indifferent about injustice, means criticizing her own core beliefs; and it is an internal process that could be painful. Such transition has influenced and challenged her personally before influencing and challenging the socio-political context of the country.

What makes Shahla's personality unique is that she was courageous to learn and was honest to face the truth.

Finally, on behalf of all Iranian women, I would like to thank the Nieman Foundation and all of the 2005 fellows for their special attention that is a support not only to Shahla but also to all Iranian women. I am happy I had the honor to be the messenger of this note that gives voice to the woman journalists of my country. ■

—1953—

Melvin Mencher's book, "News Reporting and Writing," will be published in its 10th edition by McGraw Hill Higher Education in 2006. The textbook, which at its ninth edition had been adopted by more than 300 colleges and universities, will come with an Instructor's Resource CD-ROM. Mencher, who worked for the United Press and newspapers in New Mexico and California, is professor emeritus at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

—1963—

William J. Eaton died in a hospice in Potomac, Maryland, on August 23rd, after a long series of illnesses. He was 74. Eaton was the Los Angeles bureau chief in Moscow from 1984-1988, during the years that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. He won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting in 1970 for articles he wrote while at the Chicago Daily News on the Senate confirmation fight over President Richard Nixon's unsuccessful nomination of U.S. Circuit Court Judge Clement J. Haynsworth, Jr. to the Supreme Court. For Eaton's aggressive, in-depth reporting, he was also on Nixon's enemies list. Eaton retired in 1994 and became the curator of the Humphrey Fellowship program at the University of Maryland.

Eaton is survived by his wife, **Carole Kennon**, a daughter, and two grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, Eaton's family asked that contributions be made to the Reporters Committee in Washington. A memorial service will be held at the National Press Club on October 1st.

—1964—

James McCartney turned 80 on July 22, and a group of about 100 people—including at least eight Nieman Fellows—met at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., that night to help him celebrate. **Morton Mintz** writes: "The evening featured a short skit, which was inspired by a recent New Yorker magazine cartoon in which St. Peter tells an applicant for heaven: 'We're taking

Nieman Foundation Announces 2006 International Fellows

Twelve international journalists have been named Nieman Fellows for the 2005-06 academic year. They will join 11 U.S. journalists whose names were announced in May to make up the 68th class of Nieman Fellows at Harvard University. The names of the international fellows are:

Claudia Antunes (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), Deputy Rio de Janeiro bureau chief, Folha de S. Paulo. Antunes is a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Latin American Nieman Fellow.

Zippi N. Brand (Tel-Aviv, Israel), freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker.

Kim Cloete (Cape Town, South Africa), specialist journalist, South African Broadcasting Corporation. Funding for Cloete's fellowship is provided by The Nieman Society of Southern Africa.

Taghreed El-Khodary (Gaza City, Palestine), freelance television and print reporter. El-Khodary is the Ruth Cowan Nash Fellow, with funding provided by the Nash Fund.

Yaping Jiang (Beijing, China), executive vice president, People's Daily Online.

Mary Ann Jolley (Sydney, Australia), producer/reporter, Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Guillermo E. Franco Morales

(Bogotá, Colombia), content manager of new media and editor, eltiempo.com. He is a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Latin American Nieman Fellow.

Takashi Oshima (Tokyo, Japan), reporter, The Asahi Shimbun.

Altin Raxhimi (Tiranë, Albania), producer/editor for Top Channel TV and correspondent for Transitions Online. Raxhimi is the Carroll Binder Fellow, with funding provided by the Carroll Binder Fund.

Beena Sarwar (Karachi, Pakistan), editor op-ed and features, The News International, Jang Group. Sarwar is the Chiba-Nieman Fellow. Her fellowship is supported by the Atsuko Chiba Foundation, established in memory of **Atsuko Chiba**, a 1968 Nieman Fellow.

Bill Schiller (Toronto, Canada), foreign editor, Toronto Star. Schiller is the Martin Wise Goodman Canadian Nieman Fellow, with funding provided by the Goodman Trust in Canada and the Goodman Fund in the United States.

Alice Tatah (Yaoundé, Cameroon), producer/presenter, Cameroon Radio and Television. Tatah is the Robert Waldo Ruhl Fellow, with funding provided by the Robert Waldo Ruhl Fellowship Fund. ■

a little harder look at journalists lately.' In the skit, McCartney tries repeatedly to get past St. Peter and into heaven but is rejected several times before finally winning redemption. Playing the role of McCartney was his son, Robert McCartney, who was recently named metro editor at The Washington Post. McCartney's daughter, Sharon Alexsaht, introduced the skit.

"**Wayne Kelley, Jr.**, NF '64, gave the opening toast, describing McCartney's weakness for 'cheap red wine' and his lifelong effort to improve his golf game

with only limited success. Hostess for the evening, which included a buffet dinner and live music, was **Molly Sinclair McCartney**, NF '78. Molly and Jim met in Washington, D.C. in the early 1980's and were married in 1984.

"Other Niemans on hand for what was billed as Jim's 'Birthday Bash' were **Murray Seeger** and **Jack Nelson**, NF '62; **Jack Kole**, NF '63; **Morton Mintz**, NF '64, and **Ken Freed** and **Bill Henson**, NF '78. **Bill Eaton**, NF '63, helped to develop the skit for the party but was unable to attend because of illness.

[Eaton died on August 23rd.] In his remarks, McCartney said he felt guilty that he is in such good health when many friends are experiencing serious health problems. The crowd of well-wishers gave him a standing ovation and sang a rousing 'Happy Birthday.' [See McCartney's article on page 99.]

—1968—

Gene Miller, who worked at The Miami Herald for 48 years as a reporter and editor, died on June 17th of cancer at the age of 76. By all accounts a flamboyant, soulful journalist, he was described in The Washington Post as "a loud, lusty, likable guy who had two Pulitzer Prizes and two olives in every martini. Always wore a bow tie, rarely knotted it. Knew everyone worth knowing in Miami, from jewel thief Jack 'Murph the Surf' Murphy to future Attorney General Janet Reno to the man who founded Burger King. Preferred Wendy's—single with cheese." In the Herald, he was called "the soul and the conscience of our newsroom He coached novice reporters. He turned butterfingers into prizewinners. He challenged senior editors when he thought they were wrong...."

One of the last things that Miller wrote was most of his own obituary. Here is some of it:

"Gene Edward Miller, 76, newspaperman, died Friday morning at his home near South Miami. Cause: cancer, the family said. Noted Gene: 'Excellent health'—except for a fatal disease.'

"Self-portrait: Born in Evansville, Indiana, September 16, 1928, grandson of a Utah railroader and a grandma who could outshoot the sheriff. Prekindergarten firebug. Hid under bed as firemen from Engine 15 extinguished grass fire. As a \$12-a-week copyboy, misfiled clips in the morgue of The Evansville Press. Look for 'assassination' under 'assination.'

"Overpaid at \$50 a week at first newspaper job, The Journal-Gazette, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1950. Secret agent in Army Counter Intelligence Corps, 1951-53. On surveillance, forgot where parked car.

"Fired from The Wall Street Journal in

1954. Lacked respect for price of crude cottonseed oil. Reporter on The News Leader, Richmond, Virginia, 1954-57. Departed after motorist failed to pay five cent toll and guard shot at him. Managing editor didn't think it was news because publisher and his neighbors owned the bridge. Reporter and editor at The Miami Herald from 1957 to 2001 until tax-deferred buyout from Knight Ridder (\$287,365.28), then contracted as a newsroom 'vendor.'"

Miller won two Pulitzer Prizes, one in 1967 and one in 1976, for what he calls "malfunctions of justice;" he reported for more than eight and a half years stories that led to the exoneration and release of two men tried and convicted for murder and sentenced to death in Florida.

Miller leaves his wife, **Caroline Heck Miller**, four children, a stepson, and eight grandchildren. His first wife, **Electra Yphantis**, died in 1993.

Miller ended his obituary this way: "Swam a thousand yards daily with the grace and beauty of a floating log. Pace-maker installed for slow heartbeat and a fib. Treated in 2000 for malignant tumor with predicted five percent chance of future problems. Ha! In lieu of flowers, have a martini. Try Boodles gin. Parting words: Great run! Much joy! For sexual escapades, see addenda."

Thomas Sloan died of throat cancer on June 3rd. He was 76.

Sloan was born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and obtained both his undergraduate degree in philosophy and his masters degree from the University of Toronto. He then went on to postgraduate work at the Sorbonne in Paris and the London Graduate School of Economics. In 1958 he joined The (Toronto) Globe and Mail, serving first as real estate editor and later as Quebec correspondent. Sloan was the first director of the Université Laval School of Journalism. He worked as executive assistant to Robert Stanfield, a Progressive Conservative leader in the early 1970's, and was briefly The (Quebec) Gazette's editorial page editor in the late 1970's. Sloan also wrote the book, "Quebec: The Not So Quiet Revolution."

He is survived by his second wife,

Margaret Milne, and a daughter.

—1972—

John S. Carroll retired as editor of the Los Angeles Times in July. The paper's managing editor, Dean P. Baquet, will succeed him. Carroll had been with the Times since 2000 and was praised as an editor with a broad and deep vision for the newspaper and for his support for aggressive, in-depth reporting. During his tenure as editor, the Times won 13 Pulitzer Prizes, the most successful stretch of the paper's 123-year history. And a series on the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center, which provided care so poor that it put the health of some patients in danger, won the Gold Medal for Public Service this year from the Pulitzer board.

In a quote from the Los Angeles Times, Carroll said that his years as editor there were a "privilege." He went on to say, "I'm grateful for the staff's fine work and generous spirit. The journalistic achievements speak for themselves. Regarding my successor, I hired Dean five years ago, hoping he'd be right for this job. I doubt there's a better qualified editor anywhere."

Carroll was editor of The Sun, in Baltimore, from 1991-98. He received the American Society of Newspaper Editors Leadership Award and the Committee to Protect Journalists Burton Benjamin Memorial Award for lifetime achievement in defense of press freedom in 2004.

—1983—

Callie Crossley is a media critic on the WGBH-TV program, "Beat the Press," and that program received its third Arthur Rowse Award for media criticism from the National Press Club. The program received the award in 2001 and 2004 as well. Crossley is also program manager at the Nieman Foundation and principal of her company, CrossChannels. Crossley received the duPont-Columbia's Gold Baton for her production work on "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965" and was appointed to the duPont-Columbia jury last year.

—1984—

Paul Knox writes: “After 27 years at The Globe and Mail, I’ve moved on from the world of daily deadlines. I started work in July as chair and associate professor in the School of Journalism at Ryerson University in Toronto. Ryerson is Canada’s second oldest journalism school and expects to enroll more than 500 students this fall. Toronto is an amazing laboratory for journalism—one of the world’s most culturally diverse cities, with vibrant and competitive media. I’m joining great colleagues on the faculty who have a well-earned reputation for giving students the skills they need to hit the ground running in the news business. We’re working hard to strengthen our capacity for scholarly, research and creative activity, and we hope to generate ideas that will be useful to journalism’s ongoing transformation in Canada and elsewhere.

“I left a lot of great friends and a little piece of my heart at The Globe and Mail, where I was fortunate enough to have an unbroken string of challenging and rewarding assignments in Canada and abroad. As foreign editor—my last position—I didn’t have much opportunity for writing, and I’m looking forward to getting back into it, drawing on my experience in Latin America and tackling some of the tough issues facing journalists and media proprietors. It was a thrill to reconnect with Nieman at the May reunion. I hope to stay in touch with all via paulknox@ryerson.ca.”

—1988—

Eileen McNamara is working on a book, “The Parting Glass: A Toast to the Traditional Pubs of Ireland.” McNamara’s narratives will combine with the work of photographer Eric Roth to portray 43 traditional Irish pubs and their patrons. McNamara, a columnist with The Boston Globe, won the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for her columns on Massachusetts people and issues.

—1990—

Guoguang Wu joined the University of Victoria, British Columbia in fall

2004 as chair in China and Asia-Pacific Relations, where he also teaches political science and history. Because the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 interrupted his journalistic career in China, after his Nieman year he went to Princeton University to pursue a PhD degree in political science, which he obtained in 1995. He taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for nine years before this recent move to Canada. Wu welcomes Nieman alumni/alumnae to visit the Northwest Pacific, and to visit the UVic campus, where he says he will be more than happy to organize the audience for a lecture by a Nieman visitor. His contact information is: 1-250-721-7497 (office telephone); wug@uvic.ca (e-mail).

—1993—

Rick Bragg, formerly with The New York Times, will teach magazine writing this fall at the University of Alabama. He will be teaching advanced reporting and writing for print, and special topics advanced magazine writing. Bragg won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing and was the recipient of the University of Alabama’s 2004 Clarence Cason Award for nonfiction writing. His books include “Somebody Told Me,” “I’m a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story,” and “All Over But the Shoutin’.”

—1998—

Marcelo Leite passed his PhD exam at the University of Campinas in São Paulo, Brazil with honors and distinction. He writes: “It was a 4 and a 1/2 hour grilling session, but in spite of the initial tension a pleasant one, if you understand what I mean. There were three sociologists, a molecular biologist, and a philosopher of science on the panel ..., and the official degree I hold now is ‘doctor in social sciences.’”

“It is a long way since my Nieman year is over, but the thesis is a direct result of my becoming reinfected with the academic bug while at Harvard, especially the two courses I took with the late Stephen Jay Gould. The title of my thesis is ‘Total Biology: Hegemony and Information in the Human

Genome.’ Now begins the struggle to find a publisher, both in Portuguese and English.”

—1999—

Christopher Hedges’s new book, “Losing Moses on the Freeway: The 10 Commandments in America,” was published by the Free Press in May. Hedges’s book is adapted from a series of articles he wrote as a correspondent for The New York Times and consists of profiles of individuals “struggl[ing] on a deep and visceral level with one of the commandments.” Cited examples include a chapter on consumerism as taking the Lord’s name in vain and the greed of a woman who dreams of becoming a multimillionaire. Hedges’s “Losing Moses on the Freeway” was inspired by Krzysztof Kieslowski’s “The Decalogue,” a series of 10 films about the commandments. He has also written “War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning,” and “What Every Person Should Know About War.”

—2001—

J.R. Moehringer, a national correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, has a new book out, “The Tender Bar: A Memoir,” which was released by Hyperion September 1st. The book documents Moehringer’s relationship with a New York-style saloon and its inhabitants beginning in his youth and spanning several years into his adulthood. Moehringer received the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing for his Los Angeles Times portrait of an Alabama river community.

Linda Robinson, a senior writer at U.S. News & World Report, won the 18th annual Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on National Defense. Robinson received the prize for her work in the mountains of Afghanistan, where she traveled with soldiers searching for Osama bin Laden. In Baghdad, the award announcement said, “she explained how minutes count in processing intelligence information in the hunt for the terrorist Zarqawi and other insurgents.” And in a report on

U.S. Special Forces, she described the impact of Pentagon “turf wars” on the ability of the United States to respond to terrorism. Robinson’s entry was noted “for its balanced reporting and analysis, written in a lucid, easy-to-understand and elegant style that made it a pleasure to read.” The \$5,000 award recognizes journalists whose reporting helps readers better understand national defense issues. The award, sponsored by The Gerald R. Ford Foundation, was presented at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in June.

—2003—

Bryan Monroe, assistant vice president of news at Knight Ridder in San Jose and incumbent vice president of print of The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), has been elected the NABJ’s 16th president. The election took place in early August at the Anniversary Convention and Career Fair in Atlanta, Georgia. Replacing Herbert Lowe, Monroe is the first NABJ president to serve from the West Coast.

Monroe is former managing editor of the San Jose Mercury News, a former chapter president in the San Francisco Bay area, founder of the NABJ Visual Task Force, and on the board of directors of the Children’s Discovery Museum in San Jose.

Nirupama Subramanian writes: “My book, ‘Sri Lanka: Voices From a War Zone,’ came out in May 2005, published by Penguin/Viking. It is an account of the events in that country from 1995 to 2002, the years I was there as a foreign correspondent, first for the Indian Express and, later, The Hindu. The book has been received well in India and, for one short week, it was on the New Delhi nonfiction bestseller list. I see the book primarily is the product of my Nieman year because I began writing it then, imposing at least one chapter on my fellow Niemaners in Rose Moss’s class. Their feedback, plus the time the fellowship gave me and the distance it enforced from Sri Lanka, was crucial to the writing of the book.

“In June 2005, I was promoted and redesignated a senior assistant editor

at The Hindu. I continue on the editorial board of the newspaper, writing on national and South Asian issues.”

—2004—

Pekka Mykkanen writes, “Reunions and more reunions! We are happy to say that we had **Geoff [Nyarota]** as our guest here in Helsinki yesterday [June 19th]. Miro—now over 5 months old—had a great time with him. Unfortunately Geoff had only a couple of days in Helsinki; we had so much to talk about....

“**Yin Zi’s** book on ‘Young Nordic Design’ was published in China a couple of weeks ago. It is such a beautiful book and her publisher believes that it may do very well.... There is no way to describe how much both Yin Zi and I benefited from our Nieman year.”

—2005—

Richard Chacón has been named ombudsman for The Boston Globe, replacing **Christine Chinlund**, NF ’98, who is a Globe editor. Chacón will handle readers’ complaints and suggestions, advise Globe reporters and editors, and write a column every other week. In a further outreach between the Globe and its readers, he will create an online ombudsman’s page and arrange for community leaders to meet regularly with Globe staff members.

In the Globe announcement in July, Chacón said, “I am sure that there will be moments when we’re going to have disagreements, whether it’s with me and a reporter, me with an editor, me with some of the top editors, or me with some of the people in our front offices. ... I don’t think the job has to be one of constant conflict.” Chacón has been at the Globe for 10 years, covering Latin America, higher education, and Boston politics.

Joshua Hammer writes: “The family (**Nadja**, Max, Nicholas, our two German shepherds, and I) arrived in Cape Town on August 6th.... We settled immediately into a temporary home in Bantry Bay, one of the beach communities strung out beneath Table Mountain

“The city, which I visited many times during the tumultuous early 1990’s, is stunningly beautiful—a blend of Provence, San Francisco, and Rio de Janeiro at the southern tip of Africa. ... Cape Town in many ways is a South African microcosm: Affluent, American-style suburbs exist side-by-side with sprawling shantytowns. And though apartheid is 11-years gone, a quasiapartheid still exists here: Each morning when I bring Max to school I pass an army of minibuses carrying African domestics to work from the townships in the low-rent Cape Town Flats to the still largely white communities along the beach. It remains in many ways a divided society. Cape Town’s crime rate has soared in recent years. Everyone living in the affluent areas has invested heavily in private security, including laser alarms and roving, armed ‘rapid response’ teams that descend upon your house at the touch of a panic button....

“Workwise I’m keeping a low profile, trying to get us settled before heading out on the road. My title is Africa bureau chief and correspondent at large for Newsweek, which means that I’m expected to do a few big Africa pieces a year but can roam regularly farther afield. ... I feel a little rusty after a year at Harvard, but I’m greatly looking forward to getting back into the field.”

Chris Waddle is director of the Knight Community Journalism Fellows Program at the University of Alabama. Fellows in the program will receive the university’s journalism Master of Arts for study over 12 months at The Anniston Star, which will serve as a teaching newspaper for the program. The first class of fellows will begin in the fall of 2006. A journalism education project with the newspaper was first proposed in 2001 by **H. Brandt Ayers**, NF ’68 and publisher of The Anniston Star, and is supported by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and investments by the university and the Star’s parent company, Consolidated Publishing. Waddle, president of the Ayers Family Institute for Community Journalism, has served as a long-time editor at The Anniston Star. ■

End Note

A Long Journey Home

A photojournalist on assignment uncovers dormant feelings about his past and the South.

By Lester Sloan

I was returning to a place that I had never really known, the South. It was both my end station and my beginning. A little over a year ago, when I signed on to work on a project called “Voices of Civil Rights,” I had no idea that it would put me in touch with a part of me that had been snuffed out for more than 50 years. The journey started in Washington, D.C., and it would end nine weeks later in Topeka, Kansas.

Sponsored by AARP and The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, a team of some half dozen reporters worked in three-week shifts, collecting stories and pictures of those unknown foot soldiers of the civil rights movement. I was the project photographer and was lucky enough to go for the entire time. The tour was a symbolic gesture, with the stories and pictures donated to the Library of Congress as the beginning of an archive.

Contrasting Journeys

The earliest memories of my childhood were about the trips to the farm of my maternal grandparents—“going down home,” we called it. We were one of those northern or Midwestern families, in our case Detroit, who every summer would pile in a car and make the trek back to the places of our roots: Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida. We had family in every stop along the way. But back in the 1950’s, getting there could be pretty hazardous.

Those trips began with my mother standing at the kitchen sink plucking a freshly killed chicken and singing, “Jesus keep me near thy cross,” the sound of

running water her only accompaniment. My father had already bought several loaves of day-old Wonder Bread and Fago red pop for the journey. There were blankets, paper towels, and toilet paper for the pit stops beyond Indiana where we were not allowed to stay at motels or use bathroom facilities. It was a picnic. We laughed at the roadside Burma Shave signs and played car tag with friends we met along the way. Years later I learned that these were not chance meetings, but part of a strategy worked out by my father and his friends so that we didn’t have to travel on long stretches of dangerous road alone.

On the Voices tour, we traveled like rock stars in an air-conditioned bus, stocked with food and drink, replete with fax machines, satellite dish, and two wide-screen television sets, front and back, with a drawer full of recent films. And at every stop along the way, there was someone waiting with hotel keys to our rooms.

But the real joys were not the amenities on the bus, but the people I met on the way. They came out in their Sunday best, singing some of the songs my mother sang. They told their stories, shedding them with tears of joy for being able, at last, “to put their burden down.”

In Birmingham an old man sat in a barber chair like a great warrior king, his ebony face and head freshly shone, while off in a corner his grand nephew told the story of his uncle’s life. These were the men, young and old, who had run the gauntlet of police dogs and cattle prods, who had fought America’s second revolution in order to realize

the promises of the first.

In New Orleans a young woman sat with her 100-year-old grandmother while she told her story. She seemed amused that so many people were making such a fuss over her. She had grown old in a white world where people called her by her first name, or “auntie,” and now she was finally being honored.

In Baton Rouge, I met the four men who called themselves the “Deacons for Defense.” They looked like the aging frontline of a professional football team. Actually, one was known for rushing a quarterback, but collectively for standing up against the onslaught of a system that set out to destroy them.

At every stop along the way, I met strangers who were my kin. “Boy, where did you say you were from? Who’s you say your people were? Sloan? I don’t know no Sloans, but you show remind me of some Baileys and Borroughs.”

At the beginning of this tour I felt estranged from my southern roots, maybe also a little ashamed. In much the same way that some Europeans wanted to make their children Americans by not speaking the language of the old country, I realized that at some point in my life I turned my back on the birthplace of my parents and, by extension, a part of myself. When I went “down home” again, the South embraced me with open arms, and it was good to be back. ■

Lester Sloan, a 1976 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance photojournalist based in Los Angeles, California.

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“The Deacons For Defense and Justice was formed by African men in Jonesboro and Bogalusa, Louisiana, and Natchez, Mississippi. They were factory workers, farmers, common laborers, fathers, husbands, and church-goers who organized to protect themselves and their communities from the terrorism and oppression of the Ku Klux Klan organizations, White Citizens Councils, and police agencies.”
— Lester Sloan



“This photo was taken at the Talk of the Town barber shop in the historic 4th Avenue district of Birmingham, Alabama. He was my ‘warrior king.’” — Lester Sloan

“This photo of a 100-year-old woman with her granddaughter was taken in New Orleans.”
— Lester Sloan



Photos by Lester Sloan.

“The photo of this man and
his grandson was taken in
Summerton, South Carolina.”
— Lester Sloan

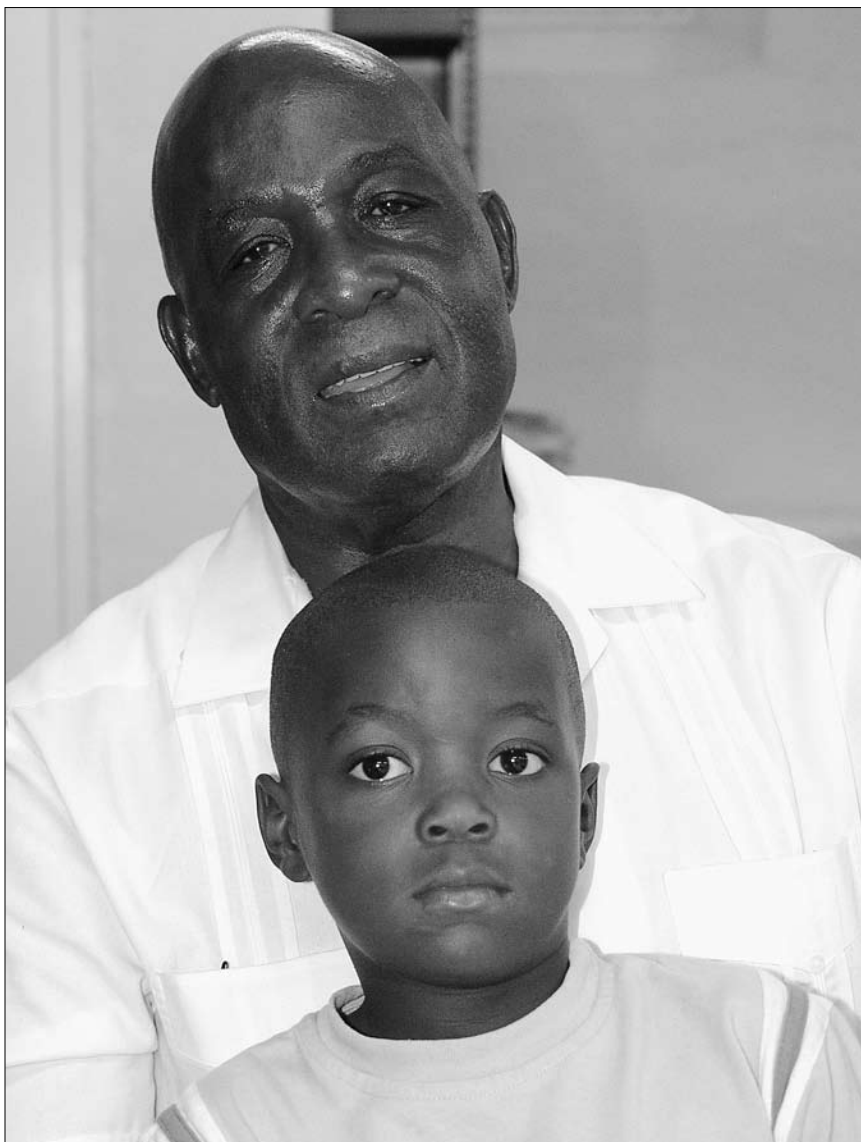


Photo by Lester Sloan.