

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Five Dollars

Citizen Journalism

FELLOW CITIZENS

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

I PUT the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon Religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the right of every Man to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow citizen,
THOMAS PAINE.

*Luxembourg, (Paris,) 8th, Pulvoise,
Second year of the French Republic, one and indivisible,
January 27, O. S. 1794.*

Words & Reflections

Intelligent Design

Global Warming

Hurricane Katrina Coverage

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

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

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Nieman Fellowships in Global Health Reporting

Three fellows in the next three Nieman classes will focus their Harvard study—and four additional months of fieldwork—on health issues in the developing world.

By Bob Giles

The world is going through a cyclical period of high interest in global health. Avian flu is on everyone's mind now, with building anxiety about whether this deadly respiratory virus might spread across the planet and become a pandemic among humans. Two years ago the subject was SARS, and previously such illnesses as HIV/AIDS have been the subjects of intense public interest that lose their urgency before long.

The recent Time magazine Global Health Summit brought together an extraordinary gathering of practitioners, researchers, scholars, public officials, activists and journalists to discuss strategies for addressing global health issues. The magazine's special issue on global health and the six-part television series on PBS explained the critical nature of global health to wide audiences. News reports from Africa about the poor populations affected by malaria and HIV/AIDS, and stories about international pressure on the Bush administration to commit the United States to paying a fair share of health costs in Africa, are giving the American public other reasons to pay attention, for now. But it is difficult to maintain continuing public attention among Americans and Europeans on global health; and people in the developing world, where the most serious health problems exist, have little access to accurate information.

To help educate journalists to cover these important stories, the Nieman Foundation has begun a pilot program to provide three annual Nieman Fellowships in global health reporting for three years under a \$1.19 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The fellowships are a joint initiative with the Harvard School of Public Health. The Nieman Foundation worked closely with the school's Center for Health Communication in writing the grant proposal. Jay A. Winsten, an associate dean and director of that center, was a true partner in persuading his faculty to enable the global health fellows to have access to courses throughout the school and work with advisors in course selection and in planning fieldwork projects. Particularly important to the fellows' experience is the opportunity to connect with Harvard's Initiative for Global Health, which was established in 2003 as a universitywide effort to bridge the gap from basic to applied life sciences, including social, economic, political and ethical issues that influence global health.

The global health reporting fellows—one from the United States, one from Europe, and one from the developing world—will be chosen annually, starting with the 2006-2007 academic year. The fellowships will include four months of

fieldwork in a developing country at the end of the Nieman year at Harvard. Adding four months of fieldwork is an exciting innovation in the Nieman program. It emphasizes the value of sending fellows to places in the developing world where they can get closest to the problems of disease, prevention and potential treatments. At the end of the fieldwork, the fellows will be expected to produce stories that draw on their intense exposure to health conditions in a developing country.

The decision to select fellows from the United States, Europe and the developing world recognizes several important realities about global health. The United States and Europe are among the richest places in the world. Major resources for research and treatment exist there. It is critical for the public and policymakers in these countries to be better informed about the problems of global health. Including a journalist from a developing country recognizes the challenge of providing basic knowledge about health to populations at risk in Africa and other parts of the developing world, where local reporters typically are ill-equipped, and sometimes ill-informed, on these topics.

We expect the fellowships will attract an applicant pool both from journalists who have experience in reporting on public health and who represent news organizations with a commitment to continuing coverage of global health and from journalists with a strong interest in global health but little actual experience in reporting on it. Dedicating three of our 25 fellowships for each of the next three years to global health reporting reflects our belief that the resources of the Nieman Foundation and Harvard's commitment to global health can contribute to building broader public understanding about illnesses that burden the world's poorest people—and could potentially threaten the entire globe.

A recent editorial in *The Lancet*, a British scientific journal, said that “the eradication of disease and the alleviation of suffering depend more on developing the skills of talented people than on technology.”

In funding these Nieman Fellowships, the Gates Foundation is acknowledging the critical role journalism can play in informing worldwide audiences of the complex problems in global health and of the imperative for both effective public policies and for investment in research toward prevention and treatment. ■

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Citizen Journalism

With the arrival of the Internet, the ability of nonjournalists to “publish” their words and link them with those of other like-minded scribes has altered forever the balance of power between those who control the means to publish and those who have something they believe is important to say. This shift from journalists as gatekeepers to citizens as reporters has profound implications for news organizations that “might have completely underestimated the influence of this new medium.” Those are the words of **Shayne Bowman** and **Chris Willis**, authors of “We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information” and of the first article in our collection of stories exploring the emergence and practice of citizen journalism. “In the past two years, citizen media has grown from a promise to a legitimate presence in today’s media sphere,” they write, as they describe the new information ecosystems being developed.

Dan Gillmor, author of “We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People,” picks up on the notion of an evolving media ecosystem that he envisions becoming “a multidirectional conversation, enriching civic dialogue at the local, national and international levels.” He believes “the crucial leap” for journalists “will be helping our audience become involved in the process much more directly.” At the BBC, audience members now contribute to news reports with images and words. **Richard Sambrook**, the director of the BBC’s World Service and Global News division, describes his network’s transformation into the era of digital technology that enables greater interactivity between the BBC and its audience. As a first step “in what appears likely to be a long journey into new territory,” he observes that BBC staff must “help those who receive our news to contribute to our services as we witness fundamental realignment of the relationship between broadcaster and the public.” Sambrook describes some of the network’s projects related to supporting “the public in learning and using digital technology.”

Santiago Lyon and **Lou Ferrara**, director of photography and online editor at The Associated Press, respectively, explain how citizens caught in the midst of newsmaking moments are making their digital images part of international media coverage of these major events. Yet, they caution, “Most importantly, whatever we do decide to use must meet our editorial standards.” At OhmyNews, a citizen news service in Korea, stories are submitted by citizens, accepted (or rejected), then edited by frontline copyeditors before being posted online. As **Jean K. Min**, director of OhmyNews International, notes, “The readers, or news audience, are no longer passive consumers of news produced by a few privileged, arrogant reporters. They are active producers of the news they will consume”

At Minnesota Public Radio, **Michael Skoler**, its managing director of news, is working in the third year of an effort to gather information and develop story ideas with the use of an expanded and improved Rolodex of sources. It’s called Public Insight Journalism® and relies on computer technology and the Internet to create new avenues of interaction to tap “the knowledge and insights of the public,” Skoler writes, “to make our reporters and editors and coverage even smarter and stronger.” He offers examples of stories on which this new approach has worked well. **Steve Safran**, the director of digital media at NECN, doesn’t like the term “citizen journalist,” preferring to call what his cable TV station does “participatory journalism.” Viewers are invited to send in video news clips from their desktop computers, but not everything that is

sent is broadcast or used on its Web site. As Safran writes, “It’s the New England town hall meeting format, writ large. Town members give us ideas and suggestions, but at the end of the meeting, the moderator—that’s us—decides how to proceed.”

Jan Schaffer, executive director of J-Lab: The Institute for Interactive Journalism at the University of Maryland, describes the growth in start-up community news ventures that citizens are creating as “counterpoints to their local journalism, which they described as polarizing, shrill, focused on the near term, and certainly not focused on them or their concerns.” At the University of Missouri, journalism students, under the direction of associate professor **Clyde H. Bentley**, launched a citizen journalism Web publication called MyMissourian where editors “encourage and they actively seek out community members eager to speak their minds. What they say—not what we think—is what counts.” Bentley also describes how online content became a popular weekly printed newspaper and how the new focus will be on “defining the role of the trained journalist in this citizen variant and on training them in the skills that role will require.” From the West Coast, **Leslie Dreyfous McCarthy**, a former national writer for The Associated Press, explains what isn’t working well with the local newspaper in her small town south of San Francisco and why a citizen journalist Web publication, Coastsider, serves as “a locus for the kind of civic trust and independence on which the idea of journalism, indeed, democracy, is based.” When **Barry Parr** started Coastsider in May 2004 as “a community Web site,” he wasn’t a journalist, but soon he was employing skills that reporters and editors are trained to use. He writes about what he wished he’d known before the launch of his site. Among his wishes: knowing “how hard it is to do journalism well.”

Anticipating some of the difficulties that might arise in determining who in the evolving media landscape will merit special legal protections offered now to journalists employed by traditional news organizations, **William F. Woo**, who directs the graduate journalism program at Stanford University, sets forth what he thinks a functional definition for a journalist should be. At its core, his functional definition has as its premise the idea that “I *do* journalism, therefore I am a journalist.” Examples of what “doing journalism” means would include “there is a *story* ... [it] is aimed at an *audience* ... [and] there is a *public benefit* to the story or work product.”

Seth Hettena, a military writer and supervisory correspondent for The Associated Press in San Diego, California, explores the role that an American citizen’s personal Web page played in his reporting about the death of an Iraqi terror suspect at Abu Ghraib prison. His use of photographs of Navy Seals and their prisoners in Iraq that he found on this Web site led to a federal court case accusing the A.P. of “invasion of privacy, publication of private facts, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.” The case was dismissed after the judge concluded that “Plaintiffs voluntarily assumed a position of public notoriety when they photographed themselves engaged in actions that seemed to suggest possible mistreatment of captive Iraqis and then allowed Jane Doe to post the photos on the Internet.” ■

The Future Is Here, But Do News Media Companies See It?

‘Traditional news media are not yet willing to adopt the principals of the environment in which they find themselves.’

By Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis

The news industry is a resilient bunch. Newspapers, in particular, represent some of the United States’s oldest and most respected companies. So far they have weathered storms of significant social, economic and technological change by figuring out how to transform themselves and what they produce. The creation of the telegraph, for example, had doomsayers frothing, but instead newspapers turned a disruptive technology into a tool for better reporting.

During periods of massive change, the death of the newspaper has always been greatly exaggerated. So given the industry’s survival skills, why worry now? One reason might be that the burst of the dot-com bubble during the late ’90’s made many think they had overestimated the impact of the Internet. But in retrospect, the news media might have completely underestimated the influence of this new medium.

A Recipe for Radical Change

The Internet is a unique phenomenon that has delivered not just technological innovations but become a conduit for change, accelerating the rate, diversity and circulation of ideas. It affects nearly everything from culture to competition. It has also altered the economics of media in two important ways. First, it enables nearly limitless distribution of content for little or no cost. Second, it has potentially put everyone on the planet into the media business, including the sources, businesses, governments and communities newspapers cover.

Add other ingredients—easy-to-use, open-source publishing tools, a genera-

tion who finds it more natural to instant message someone than to call, a greater demand for niche information, and a rapidly growing shift of advertising dollars to online media—and you have a recipe for radical change in the news media landscape.

Likewise, the list of online competitors is seemingly ever expanding. Search giants, such as Yahoo!, MSN and Google, continue their expansion and encroachment into the news business, siphoning ad dollars and eyeballs from traditional media Web sites. Craigslist, Monster, eBay and countless others have taken a more direct bite out of newspaper’s bread-and-butter, classifieds.

But the greater threat to the longevity of established news media might not be a future that’s already arrived—it might be their inability to do anything about it. Bureaucratic inertia, hierarchical organizational structure, and a legacy mentality have paralyzed many news organizations from developing a meaningful strategy in this dynamic information age. And their real Achilles’ heel might be what made media companies a favorite of Wall Street until recent years—an ability to consistently garner operating profits double that of your average Fortune 500 company. As the Project for Excellence in Journalism’s State of the News Media 2005 observed, “If older media sectors focus on profit-taking and stock price, they may do so at the expense of building the new technologies that are vital to the future. There are signs that that may be occurring.”

Some have suggested that such behavior is a sign of an industry in a death spiral. Cost cutting with no investment for the future limits chances of an

encore. Only a few exceedingly rare exceptions of online news operations are profitable, such as The Wall Street Journal, but most are still unwilling to engage in a different relationship with their audience.

In October, Bill Kovach, former New York Times editor, Nieman Foundation curator, and journalist for 43 years, told the Society of Professional Journalists Convention and National Journalism Conference that “... too many journalists, especially journalists of my generation, remain in a state of confusion about the challenges of the new media environment and remain dangerously passive about the opportunities presented to traditional journalism by the new communications technology.”

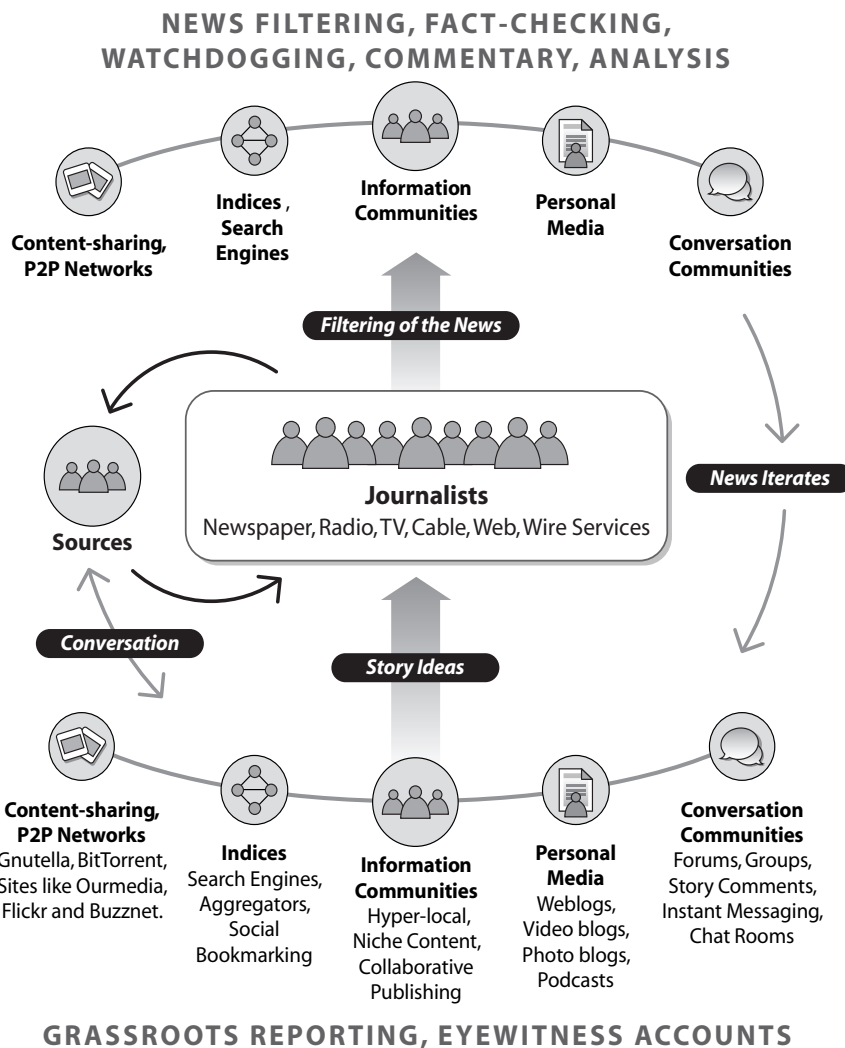
Perhaps it’s this simple: Traditional news media are not yet willing to adopt the principals of the environment in which they find themselves. Consultant and media critic Jeff Jarvis frames it this way: “The Number One lesson of the Internet, whether you’re Howard Dean or a media company or a marketer, is that you have to give up control to gain control.”

The Blogosphere and Shifting Authority

The venerable profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history when, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but by the audience it serves. Citizens everywhere are getting together via the Internet in unprecedented ways to set the agenda for news, to inform each other about hyper-local and global issues, and to create new services in

The Emerging Media Ecosystem

The relationship between citizen media and mainstream media is symbiotic. Information communities and Weblogs discuss and extend the stories created by mainstream media. These communities and the blogosphere also produce citizen journalism, grass-roots reporting, eyewitness accounts, annotative reporting, commentary, analysis, watchdogging and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources and story ideas.



Source: Based in part on “Blogosphere: The Emerging Media Ecosystem” by John Hiler, Microcontent News. Graphic by Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis.

a connected, always-on society. The audience is now an active, important participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information, with or without the help of mainstream news media.

In the past two years, citizen media has grown from a promise to a legitimate presence in today’s media sphere. Armed with easy-to-use Web publishing tools, always-on connections, and increasingly powerful digital and mobile devices, citizen journalists

are contributing many varieties of information and news: first-person, grass-roots reporting, not only in text but with photos, audio and video; commentary and analysis; fact-checking and watchdogging, and filtering and editing the ever-growing mass of information online.

Citizen media is a trend that mainstream news media clearly recognize. With great trepidation and reluctance, mainstream media are beginning to learn how to evolve their busi-

ness from an authoritarian “top-down” approach to integrate and report on user-generated news, as well as establish ways to collaborate meaningfully with their audience. However, they still have trouble letting go of control.

During Hurricane Katrina, many mainstream news sites like CNN, MSNBC, and The New York Times made an effort to solicit stories, photos and video from citizens. But despite the tremendous amount of content generated by citizens, only a small fraction found its way onto large online news sites, where it was clearly segregated from the main coverage.

Major news events such as Hurricane Katrina continue to bring more citizens into the journalistic fray. And with them, a tangible indication that authority is shifting from once trusted institutions to communities or individuals who have discovered how to earn credibility and influence online. Some of the top Weblogs and citizen media Web sites have traffic and online reach that outpace mainstream news media destinations. They include:

- The Daily Kos, a Weblog that offers political analysis on U.S. current events from a liberal perspective, averages more than 700,000 visits per day.
- Technorati, the real-time search engine that tracks the blogosphere, measures linking behavior as a proxy for attention and influence. According to their August 2005 State of the Blogosphere report, Glenn Reynolds’ political and current events Weblog, Instapundit, has more authority in the blogosphere (based on inbound

links) than the Los Angeles Times and National Public Radio [NPR].

- The Wikipedia phenomenon has taken off. Wikipedia is the international, free content, collaboratively written and edited encyclopedia launched in 2001. According to Alexa, Internet users are twice as likely to visit Wikipedia as The New York Times. Since 2003, it has grown from 200,000 articles to amass more than 800,000 articles in English as well as more than one million articles in 100 other languages. Overall, approximately 55,000 Wikipedians are writing more than 4,500 articles per month. Wikipedia now has 4.5 times the number of articles and nearly 2.5 times as many words as Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Weblogs are now an established, though rapidly expanding, force in news and marketing. They will continue to disrupt and challenge with a staggering pace of growth and influence. According to Technorati, the number of Weblogs is doubling every five months. The blogosphere is now over 30 times as big as it was three years ago, with approximately 70,000 new Weblogs created daily. As of October 2005, Technorati was tracking 20.1 million Weblogs. However, some reports estimate the number of Weblogs created worldwide as being between 50 and 100 million. According to Forrester Research, 10 percent of online consumers are reading blogs once a week or more.

What has emerged in this new media ecosystem is a stark contrast between the entrenched forces of big media doing what it knows and the rest of the Internet informing itself—reporting, discussing and vetting the news.

New Media Forms Emerge

In the ever-evolving citizen media world, new community Web sites designed to fill the gaps or augment the coverage of local and national media have begun to carve out a delicate but important niche in both rural and urban communities. These so-called “hyper-local” sites represent a fertile ground where citizens contribute to the unique and specific

information needs of the community. These sites look to engage citizens not only as readers but also as coproducers and see themselves as facilitators to the community.

Talking with publishers and readers of sites such as Baristanet, iBrattleboro, MyMissourian, and The Northwest Voice, it is becoming clear that these efforts are giving a new identity to the communities they serve.

Here’s what the most successful citizen media efforts have learned:

- Most citizens don’t want to be journalists but do want to contribute in small and meaningful ways. Citizens are interested in participating and contributing to subjects that traditional news outlets ignore or do not often cover. Clyde Bentley, an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, notes, “The main difference between traditional journalism and citizen journalism is that traditional journalists are sent out to cover things they don’t really care about; in other words, the next city council meeting isn’t going to make or break their lives. But a citizen journalist is not out to cover something, but to share it. For them, they want to tell everybody about their passion.” [See Bentley’s article on page 26.]
- It’s easy to underestimate what it takes to be successful in an online community. It’s more than Web sites and tools. Communities will not survive on the “Build it and they will come” ethos. They require constant attention, involved leadership and, most important, nurturing.
- Advertising revenues suggest that such ventures could become a small but viable business.
- All are seeking to add greater interactivity. More powerful tools and platforms (i.e. Google Maps) will provide engines for citizen media innovation such as “public service hacks” like those found on HousingMaps.com, ChicagoCrime.org, and the Katrina Information Map.

The democratization of media has leveled the competitive landscape and

forced dramatic change in the news business. Collaboration is the driving force behind the explosion of citizen media, with new forms being regularly blazed by passionate, motivated individuals.

The Wikipedia project has spawned more open-source, collaboratively written projects. Wikibooks is an attempt to create a comprehensive curriculum of free textbooks and manuals. It has more than 11,000 titles so far. Wikinews aims to “create a diverse environment where citizen journalists can independently report the news on a wide variety of current events.” In its first eight months, it accumulated more than 2,000 articles. RSS, the XML-based technology used to syndicate headlines and other information, was the province of Weblogs in 2003. Now it’s a fixture of mainstream media Web sites. As well, RSS gave birth to a new form of participatory media—podcasting.

Podcasting, the creation and distribution of audio recording online, went from the fringe to the mainstream in about 18 months. In its infancy, podcasts were produced by the same folks writing most Weblogs, the everyday citizen. Then Apple integrated podcasting into its popular iTunes software, with CEO Steve Jobs calling it “a TiVo for radio: you can download radio shows and listen to them on your computer or put them on your iPod anytime you want.” Now everyone from major radio and TV news outlets (CNN, NPR, ABC), to newspapers and magazines (The Denver Post, The Philadelphia Daily News, Forbes), to book publishers such as Simon & Schuster, is experimenting with podcasting.

Podcasts show that amateurs can gain mindshare in a new medium as, or more effectively than, pros. In less than a year, the popular comedy podcast, “The Dawn and Drew Show,” hosted by a husband and wife who describe themselves as “two ex-gutter punks who fell in love, bought a farm in Wisconsin, and share their dirty secrets,” has attracted an audience of more than 200,000 listeners. Their podcast is now simulcast on Sirius satellite radio.

Photo-sharing Web sites such as Flickr, acquired by Yahoo! in March 2005, are becoming hubs for citizen

photojournalists. In a June 2005 report by InternetNews.com, a Flickr spokesman said the service has 775,000 registered users and hosts 19.5 million photos, with growth of about 30 percent monthly in users and 50 percent monthly in photos. Since Hurricane Katrina, more than 11,500 images related to it were uploaded and shared. Even mainstream news sites such as the BBC have begun to use images from Flickr users to accompany their news stories.

The Future

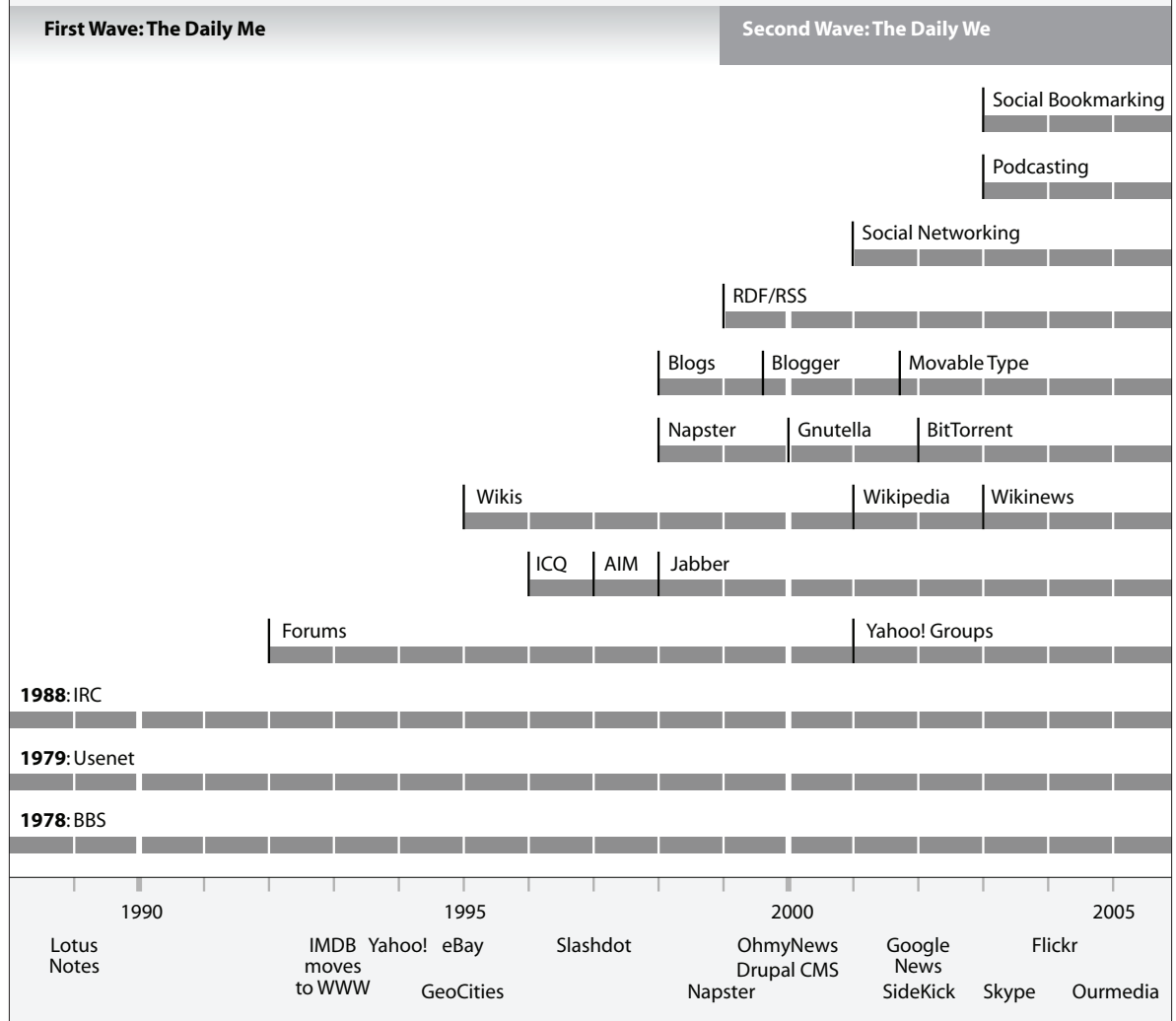
Citizen journalism continues to be an evolving and frustrating concept for mainstream media. It offers the tantalizing idea of an active and engaged democracy better informing itself. It also can represent an evolving and reckless endeavor that might result in just the opposite. Yet citizen media is a world that is starting to mature and develop in interesting ways, with or without the involvement of the mainstream media. Proponents of citizen media point to the successful open-source software movement, which is mature by comparison, saying it shows the promise of the kinds of innovation that communities can produce.

Like the early days of the Internet, there is a palpable optimism driving experimentation and the idea that any effort could become the next big thing. Here are some emerging changes we see in the media landscape:

- Successful news sites will discover

The Rise of Citizen Media

Participation has been a fundamental component of the Internet since its inception. Newsgroups, mailing lists and bulletin boards were the early cousins to the forums, Weblogs and collaborative communities flourishing today. Those early forms are still thriving, a testament to our need to stay connected to our social networks.



Graphic by Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis.

the right mix of community, content, commerce and tools. There is tremendous opportunity to leverage the power of the many, and mainstream media will more tightly integrate citizen content with the core news offerings. Some media will begin to pay for the best citizen contributions.

- The mobile Internet will proliferate (Nokia estimates two billion cell-phone subscribers worldwide by 2006) and bring about more dramatic change in how news is covered.
- Citizens will demand greater transparency in reporting. As a result, more professional journalists will be-

gin to blog, providing them a means to find a more authentic voice with their audience—a conversation.

- Authority will continue to shift from once trusted institutions to communities or individuals who have earned credibility through hard-won public discourse and will directly impact news media.
- Journalism education, like other institutions, has been slow to change. In the past year, change has begun and will continue to happen dramatically in the next five years. As well, expect media organizations to take a leadership role in educating its audience in becoming better news creators,

such as the BCC has done with their free broadcast and new media online training and the forthcoming BBC College of Journalism. [See box on page 15 for more about this BBC college.]

Citizen media represents not the end of journalism or news media companies but a shift in where value is being created. In the traditional broadcast model, value was created solely by the newspaper or TV station. In the future, more of the value will come from creating an infrastructure for citizen participation and nurturing trusted communities.

Google understands how powerful and profitable building infrastructure but not the end product can be. Google Maps, for example, offers an easy way to add sophisticated maps customized with whatever data and designed for whatever purpose on any Web site. Google AdSense is another variation that provides an easy means for people to make money from the traffic on their site without requiring too much control on how or where the ads must be placed. eBay earned \$1.1 billion in the third quarter of 2005, yet it builds no products or houses any inventory. Instead it has created value by enabling a trusted

community to transact in a safe marketplace. Both eBay and Google show that there is great value to be created if you are willing to embrace a different role in the value creation process.

Media companies and those starting citizen journalism endeavors need to understand that media are becoming more social entities. As in any social environment, there are participants who serve different roles in the creation, consumption, sharing and transformation. This is giving rise to information ecosystems, such as the blogosphere, which we are just starting to recognize and understand.

“Any media organization only exists on the quality and depth of its relationship with the public,” says Richard Sambrook, director of the BBC World Service and Global News division. “You’ve got to have a healthy and strong relationship for people to come to you. Technology is changing that relationship fundamentally.” Sambrook says the BBC’s role is shifting from broadcaster and mediator to facilitator, enabler and teacher. “We don’t own the news anymore. Our job is to make connections with and between different audiences,” he said. [See article by Sambrook on page 13.]

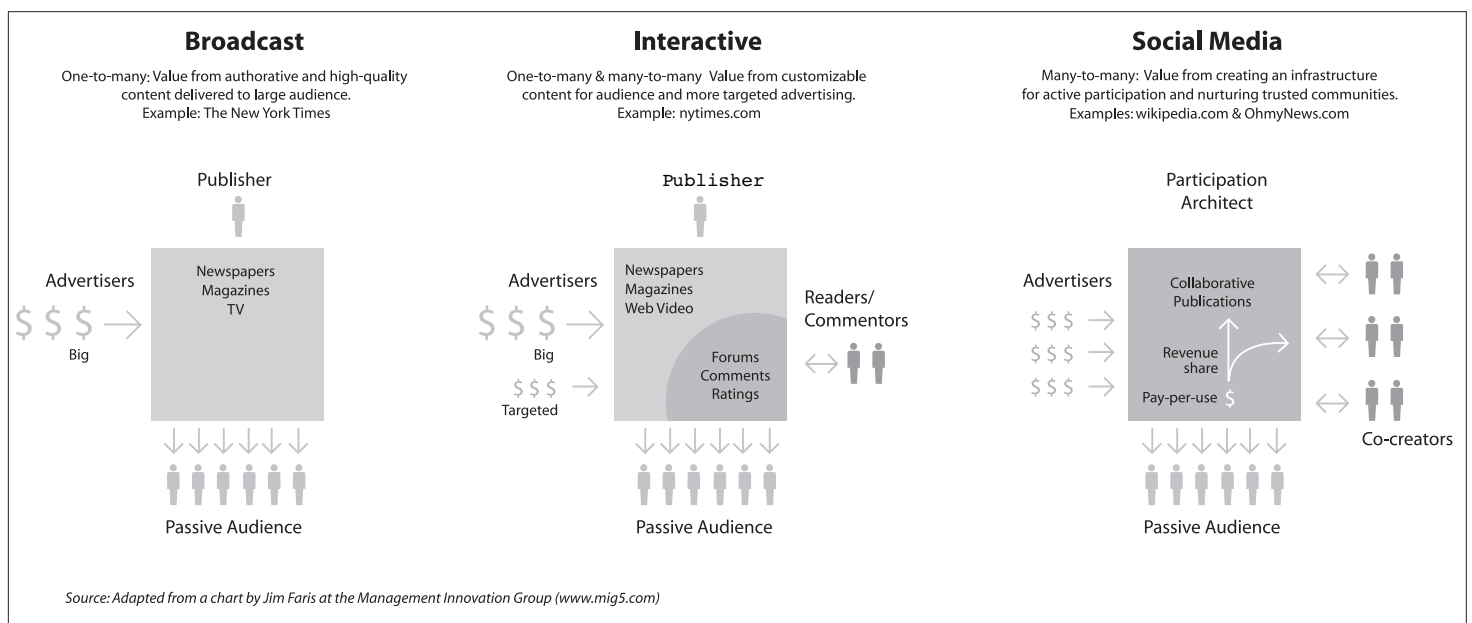
With media companies still generat-

ing respectable returns on investment, the smart money will be on those organizations like the BBC that can integrate successful citizen journalism experiments supported by better staff training, equipment and practices that encourage reporters and editors to collaborate with their audience. ■

Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis are the coauthors of “We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information,” a 2003 research report on the emergence of participatory journalism. An update to the report, commissioned by The Media Center and The American Press Institute, will be released online in January 2006. This article is adapted from the We Media 2.0 Executive Summary written for The Media Center. The report can be downloaded at www.hypergene.net/wemedia/.

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This display illustrates three ways in which media connect with people. *Graphic by Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis.*

Where Citizens and Journalists Intersect

‘The crucial leap will be helping our audience become involved in the process much more directly.’

On September 22nd, Dan Gillmor, the founder of Grassroots Media Inc., a project aimed at bringing more voices into journalism, delivered the 2005 Grabam Hovey Lecture at the University of Michigan. He titled his talk, “We the Media: Online Journalism and Democracy,” and what follows is an adapted version of the words he spoke that day.

Let’s take a hopeful look ahead, say to April 2007. The Pulitzer Prizes have just been awarded for work done in 2006. Fresh off its almost heroic efforts in the days and weeks after Hurricane Katrina, The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune wins its second consecutive Public Service medal. The 2007 award is for the paper’s powerful exposés of corruption, cronyism and other malfeasance, not to mention sheer ineptitude, in how billions of dollars in federal taxpayers’ money were stolen, wasted or went unaccounted for. The Pulitzer jury takes special note of the paper’s methods. The citation for the medal cites “an innovative collaboration with ‘citizen journalists’ in reporting and telling stories of wrongdoing.”

What has gone into that collaboration? Many things, including the standard tools of investigative journalism reported and edited by professionals. But the essential element was this: involvement of citizens as journalists.

As The Times-Picayune writes in its Pulitzer contest entry:

“Our citizen reporters were as essential to this coverage as our staff and more essential than the standard human sources we have always relied on to tell us what is happening and why.

The citizen journalists, responding to our invitations and consistent guidance throughout the process, did enormous amounts of original reporting. They examined local, state and federal records, and documented what they’d found. They conducted interviews. They told us, and the rest of the world via blogs and online forums, their personal stories. We shared preliminary findings with them, and they responded with a flood of corrections, clarifications, data

have done this work without them.”

Here’s one more wishful-thinking report from the future: The voters who read these stories got mad. When the 2008 elections came around, they got revenge. And in a region of the country where good and honest government has frequently been an oxymoron, things began to change.

The Shift Toward the Citizen

I don’t know if something like this will occur as soon as I’d like. But I do know that something like this scenario is coming. It’s coming because of the way media are evolving. If we’re both smart and lucky, future media will be an ecosystem that is vastly richer and more diverse than we have today. It will become a multidirectional conversation, enriching civic dialogue at the local, national and international levels.

Inspiring grass-roots activities are happening not just in journalism, but all across society. In business, for example, the Web and open-source concepts are transforming not just software development but the relation-

ship companies have with their customers and other constituencies. Walter Lippmann, in his 1914 book, “Drift and Mastery,” warned that civilization was becoming so complex that “the purchaser can’t pit himself against the producer, for he lacks knowledge and power to make the bargain a fair one.” Knowledge is shifting back towards the purchaser, and the power is following.

The distributed-media model goes far beyond the business world. In the arts, the democratization of once-unaffordable tools of production and distribution are unleashing creativity on a fantastic scale. In war zones, smart

When I went to Silicon Valley to write about technology, I learned quickly a fact of life that has been at the heart of my grass-roots journalism notions ever since. It was simple: My readers—many of whom were in the technology business—knew more than I did. They told me things I did not know. They made my work better. I believe this concept is true for all journalists.

and new topics to pursue.

“We were, of course, responsible for what we printed, so we applied journalistic principles and practices to this project. We explained to our citizen journalists that they were responsible for their words, that the laws of defamation applied to them as they do to us. We verified identities. We did extra fact-checking when potential legal questions might have arisen.

“With few exceptions, we found the citizen journalists’ work to be of exceptionally high quality. They cared, because this story was in the end about their own lives as citizens of this region and this nation. In the end, we could not

military people are pushing information and much of the decision-making out to the edges and away from central commands. They're learning, often the hard way, that agility can outfox brute force.

In the citizen-media sphere, remarkable new tools are under development, extending the early efforts such as Technorati, a search engine that indexes blogs. There's enormous potential for understanding current events in a far better way by aggregating the stand-alone media producers—bloggers, podcasters and the like—into a coherent overall news medium. We're some time away from this becoming a mainstream technology, but the progress is unmistakable.

I'm not in the camp that wishes for the demise of Big Media. The work they do is too important. But it's essential for professional journalists to adapt to what's happening, to use these techniques themselves, of course, but also to become allies of the grass-roots practitioners. Bringing more voices into the conversation is smart from a journalistic point of view. It's also part of a survival strategy. The long-range financial salvation of what some people sneeringly call the MSM, or mainstream media, may depend—at least in part—on a collaboration with what I like to call the “former audience.”

The pros can bring valuable principles and practices to this table. They also need to listen better and help their citizen-journalist allies understand what is at stake, namely the informed citizenry that is crucial to democracy's very survival.

The Value of Listening

The collision of journalism and technology enables the conversation we need to foster. If telephone epitomized one-to-one communications, and 20th century mass media epitomized one-to-many, we're moving into an era of many-to-many. We can thank—or curse, depending on our view of these shifts—the Internet's increasing reach and the availability of low-cost and easy-to-use communications tools. This evolution is not only about Web-

logs, even though blogs are getting most of the attention today, at least in the United States. Think of blogs as a proxy for an explosion of citizen-media tools, including audio podcasts, Wikis, interactive presentations such as user-annotated Web maps, and increasingly sophisticated amateur videos.

Remember, too, that this is more about people than gadgets. Citizen journalism is made possible by what's new. It will be made excellent because of what people do with it, and the most creative work lies ahead of us, not behind. Experiments in citizen journalism are a global phenomenon, moreover, not just an American one. Some have been done, or at least assisted, by major news organizations. Most have not.

Professional journalists have a lot to learn. If we accept the idea that we are moving toward a more conversational system, then we must remember that the first rule in having a conversation is to listen. We don't listen very well. When I went to Silicon Valley to write about technology, I learned quickly a fact of life that has been at the heart of my grass-roots journalism notions ever since. It was simple: My readers—many of whom were in the technology business—knew more than I did. They told me things I did not know. They made my work better. I believe this concept is true for all journalists. No matter what the topic you are writing about, your collected readers know more than you about the subject. This is true by definition.

The value in this should be clear to all of us. Our audience can help us understand our subjects better. The readers can give us facts we did not know. They can add nuance. They can ask follow-up questions. And, of course, they can tell us when we are wrong, or at least raise vital questions, as CBS News and its “60 Minutes II” team found out so dramatically in 2004.

The CBS case was an exception, because the major media do in the end work hard to get stories right, and they succeed for the most part. But bloggers have become media watchdogs. This is not the most pleasant notion for journalists whose every public move is now under observation. Too bad, get used to

it. We are fond of holding everyone else to account. More scrutiny of our own methods and motives is not a bad idea. News media have been opaque—black boxes producing products. Now they are becoming more transparent. I'm glad to see that CBS News now has a resident blogger whose job is, in part, to explain what's happening behind the scenes.

But the biggest jump for journalists is not just opening up, or creating blogs, or letting people comment on our sites. The crucial leap will be helping our audience become involved in the process much more directly. We can start with simple moves, such as linking to the best local blogs covering issues we don't have enough staff to cover. We can give readers their own blogs to cover things we don't cover ourselves. We don't have to vouch for everything on our sites, but we do have to distinguish between what we've done ourselves and what we haven't.

Creating a Virtual Town Square

The Web is an increasingly versatile platform. Several Canadian newspapers have set up interactive maps that readers will annotate with all kinds of useful local information. How about a map showing potholes, street by street, annotated with readers' photos? If news organizations don't do these things, no big deal. Yahoo!, Google and Microsoft will—as will lots of startups. They've already begun.

At the very least, with more reader action, people become engaged with the news, which is an improvement all by itself. When enough of them do it, with our assistance and recognition and with the benefit of the very real resources that a local media organization can bring to bear, they can be part of a virtual town square.

For local newspapers and TV stations, this is an opportunity of some size—and a market just begging to be served, not just for the journalism but the advertisers who can't afford print editions. Again, the stakes are not merely about news companies' markets. This is also about something much more important:

When you give power to what has been a passive audience, and they start using it, you start people on the road toward being even better citizens.

News organizations should involve the audience deeply in investigative journalism. The Katrina recovery spending story in my fantasy scenario is simply too big for the professional media. It demands citizen involvement.

But we should go further. The BBC has a Web project called Action Network, on which it offers tools that help citizens create campaigns—social, political, whatever. Anyone can use it to research a topic, including stories and video from the BBC archives, find other

people who want to be involved, and then create the campaign. BBC reporters and editors watch what the citizens do and cover the most active campaigns. (In the Department of Irony, one of the first citizen campaigns on the site was devoted to withdrawing taxpayer support for the BBC.) Action Network is still a fledgling operation, but it's a great experiment. [See the article below by Richard Sambrook, who directs the BBC's World Service and Global News division.]

Democracy is not a passive activity, not if you want an outcome that includes justice and honest government and liberty itself. Democracy—of the people, by

the people, and for the people—takes work. Instead of lecturing our audiences, let's ask for their help and offer ours. We can do great things together, and we should. ■

Dan Gillmor, a newspaper journalist from 1980-2004, including 10 years as business and technology columnist for the San Jose Mercury News, is the author of "We the Media: Grass-roots Journalism by the People, for the People." He is founder of several initiatives to advocate and promote grass-roots media.

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Citizen Journalism and the BBC

'... when major events occur, the public can offer us as much new information as we are able to broadcast to them. From now on, news coverage is a partnership.'

By Richard Sambrook

On July 7th, when terrorist bombs exploded on London subway trains and a bus, it was a day of intense pressure for our news teams to get things first, but more importantly to get things right. Our initial indication that we were facing more than the "power surge" the transport authorities were reporting came in an e-mail a viewer sent us. Before long, many more text and e-mail messages containing images and information arrived from the public, and these became an integral part of how the BBC reported the day's events. Within six hours we received more than 1,000 photographs, 20 pieces of amateur video, 4,000 text messages, and 20,000 e-mails. People were participating in our coverage in a way we had never seen before. By the next day, our main evening TV newscast began with a package edited entirely from video sent in by viewers.

Our audiences had become involved in telling this story as they never had before. By day's end, the BBC's news-

The screenshot shows the BBC News Player interface in a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays 'http://news.bbc.co.uk - BBC News Player - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by BBC NEWS'. The page features navigation tabs for 'NEWS PLAYER', 'SPORT PLAYER', 'WEATHER PLAYER', and 'RADIO PLAYER'. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area is titled 'Now Playing: Video montage of survivors' accounts' and shows a video player with a progress bar at 00:47.8/01:08.7. Below the video player are options for 'PLAYER SIZE' (NORMAL VIDEO & TEXT, NORMAL VIDEO ONLY, DOUBLE VIDEO ONLY, FULL SIZE VIDEO ONLY). To the right of the video player, there is a section for 'LONDON AMATEUR FOOTAGE' with text describing the video montage and instructions for submitting amateur footage. At the bottom, there is a 'SPECIAL COVERAGE' section with links for 'Amateur footage' and 'News Player'. The footer contains a navigation menu with links for 'Change how I view or hear this', 'Feedback', 'Help', 'Copyright', 'Privacy', and 'Terms and conditions'.

On the day of the London bombings, the BBC News's Web site used images sent to them by citizens who were affected by the attacks. On the site, people could learn how to submit their video, photographs and words for use by the BBC.



A citizen near the explosion of a bus in Tavistock Square sent this image, which was then used by the BBC and other news organizations. *Photo by Toby Mason.*

gathering had crossed a Rubicon. The quantity and quality of the public's contributions moved them beyond novelty, tokenism or the exceptional, and raises major implications that we are still working through. Not the least of these is how to handle this volume of material. Our small hub of four people was overwhelmed and is clearly going to be inadequate as we go forward. Of course, the BBC has used phone-ins, amateur video, and e-mail in its programs for years, but what was happening now was moving us way beyond where we'd been before.

Our reporting on this story was a genuine collaboration, enabled by consumer technology—the camera phone in particular—and supported by trust between broadcaster and audience. And the result was transformational in its impact: We know now that when major events occur, the public can offer us as much new information as we are able to broadcast to them. From now on, news coverage is a partnership.

After the earthquake in Pakistan and India in October, the most vivid descriptions of what happened and its effects came in e-mails and texts from the area. On page after page of the BBC's News's Web site we carried the most compelling eyewitness testimony. And as happened during previous disasters, our site was

used as a notice board for families trying to contact each other.

In September of this year, the BBC focused for a day on broadcasting from Afghanistan. As part of this coverage, one of our reporters took a laptop and satellite phone into the village of Asad Khyal, where about 300 families live and work on small grape farms or do odd jobs. Many live in huts after the Taliban destroyed their homes. We reported what an ordinary day was like for them—and allowed those who came to our Web site to question them directly. It became an extraordinary global conversation; questions were asked by people in Azerbaijan, Switzerland, the United States, Korea and Japan, among many other places. Questioners wanted to know about their lives, their families, their concerns, and their view of the world. These conversational links created a unique cultural connection.

The BBC's Citizen Journalism

These three examples from recent news coverage show how BBC's viewers and listeners contribute to our daily journalism and how they are fast becoming part of our core editorial endeavor. The BBC holds a license from the government that enables it to experiment with

citizen journalism and social networks. As a public broadcaster, funded by the license fee every homeowner with a TV has to pay, its focus is on providing value to its audience—even in small communities. This circumstance allows it to try things that commercial broadcasters, with an eye to the bottom line and share value, would not attempt. The BBC has long been expected, by virtue of its public funding, to innovate and lead industry developments. During the 1990's, the BBC was swift to move its news coverage onto the Internet and has since consolidated that early lead.

The BBC believes its role is to support the public in learning and using digital technology to engage with the world. What follows are some examples of how this has worked:

- Since 2001, Digital Storytelling has been a flagship project. It takes the tools of digital media production into communities across the United Kingdom, enabling people to tell their stories in their own way. Through local workshops, held in a portable studio, 10 people at a time learn new skills such as crafting scripts, recording voices, laying down music, and editing stills and video. Their stories are then produced as short programs and broadcast either as inserts to the news or with other BBC programs with related themes. To date, more than 500 people of all ages and backgrounds have made such programs. In 2006, the BBC will launch community TV—broadband services with ultralocal content provided by community-based reporters equipped with camera and laptop. With the emergence of community TV, many of these people will become regular contributors for the BBC.
- In 2003, Argyll and Bute Council, on the West Coast of Scotland, joined a Scottish Executive project called Digital Communities and issued every household in the North Argyll Islands a personal computer and narrowband Web connection. Working directly with islanders, BBC Scotland launched a participatory media project called Island Blogging. Using a blog interface built by the

team, bloggers aged 17 to 70 began to write about their lives and the issues that affected them—from being storm-bound in the spring to the delights of the local horticultural show, complete with pictures. Comment areas on the blogs lead to contributions and, sometimes, heated debates from those living on other islands in the United Kingdom and in countries throughout the world. Subjects like wind turbine energy prompted comments from around the globe while post-match debate over the Coll Bar's Pool ladder generated posts from Coll and the neighboring islands. Some stories—like the beaching of a whale on Coll—actually broke first on Island Blogging and were quickly picked up by the mainstream Scottish media.

- The BBC's Action Network (formerly called iCan) was launched as a Web site in November 2003 to help people become more involved in their community and take steps in addressing issues of concern to them. Users find others who share their concerns, exchange information and advice, and organize campaigns. There is also material provided by the BBC, such as authoritative guides on how to negotiate civic life, briefings on issues, and a database of organizations covering about a thousand different issues.

The site was created after turnout at the last general election fell below 60 percent and is aimed at people who feel the mainstream political process at Westminster and the town hall (as well as its coverage in the media) is too remote and irrelevant to their lives. The number of users has grown since its launch to about 170,000 per month, with 14,000 registered members.

Enlarging the Civic Space

While the BBC's Action Network operates on a tiny scale, it might hold the seeds of something more profound. Many people in the United Kingdom (and elsewhere) believe politics and the news media are engaged in a dysfunctional embrace, in which a lack of

The BBC's College of Journalism

The BBC is establishing a College of Journalism to raise and support editorial standards. All journalistic staff in the BBC will be given a minimum level of training each year, and in the future the completion of required training will be seen as integral to promotion. The college will have an annual budget of \$15 million and be based within the BBC's current offices in London. In addition to the core journalistic craft and production skills, which have been the mainstay of journalist training in recent years, the College of Journalism will also focus on ethics and values and building knowledge

on key themes and issues, such as Europe and the Middle East. The college will be fully operational in 2006, but the enhanced training is already underway. So far, 10,000 staffers have completed an online editorial policy course (the biggest BBC interactive training initiative yet), and 8,000 staff members have attended workshops on sources and attribution. The college will work in partnership with other journalism training institutions and news organizations. If the BBC wants to broadcast world-class journalism, it must offer its staff world-class training. ■ —R.S.

openness and trust distorts the public debate. Former Vice President Al Gore, who is now the chairman of Current TV, told participants at a new media conference in October that "some extremely important elements of American democracy have been pushed to the sidelines. And the most prominent casualty has been the marketplace of ideas that was so beloved and so carefully protected by our Founders. It effectively no longer exists."

It's possible that initiatives like Action Network (and there are likely to be many others like it throughout the world) hold some promise for how public participation might revive the marketplace of ideas and how citizen journalism might enlarge the civic space. Much of the strength of Action Network derives from the tenor of impartiality that the BBC brings to the project. The civic space it creates is a neutral area, a place where anyone can put any issue on the agenda, as long as they comply with basic house rules. Participants are likely to encounter opponents to their point of view, but the environment encourages them to engage in a dialogue rather than a diatribe.

At the other end of the scale, we're going to be launching The Global Conversation, which is an aggregation of what is provided to us by the public for use on our global TV, radio and Web services. This service will allow people

from different countries and cultures to connect with each other and with the BBC and through this site with commentators and decision makers—perhaps a global public space.

Changing Journalism

What makes these projects interesting—and of importance to journalists—is not simply the innovations they offer in interactive communication. They also point to some of the fundamental changes in the news business that are being brought about by digital technology.

While all of these online changes are taking place, the BBC is undergoing a restructuring that will result in the loss of some 3,000 jobs. This job reduction will allow the savings to be invested in transforming the entire news organization, including the news division, into one that is ready for the fully digital, on-demand age. The broadcast world is changing rapidly, and the traditional model of channels and schedules might not survive the decade.

Digital technology is also fundamentally changing our relationship with the audience—how they use these new digital tools and what they expect from us. For the BBC to retain—and enhance—its relevance, its news services must be able to provide content that can be seen, heard or read any time and any place.

We must also help those who receive our news to contribute to our services as we witness fundamental realignment of the relationship between broadcaster and the public. And these are only first steps in what appears likely to be a long journey into new territory.

Not everyone in the organization recognizes that this shift is happening or accepts it. Several of the kinds of initiatives I've described above have existed at the margins of our services and are only just beginning to move toward center stage. Such changes raise policy issues that disturb some colleagues. How can our journalistic reputation be protected when we are not fully in control of our content? As someone who supports this new direction, I don't suggest the BBC staff abdicate their responsibility for accuracy, fairness or objectivity. There will always be a central place for editorial judgment to be applied. That judgment is the essential brand value of major

news organizations. As we open up to contributions from the public, we must do so in a way that is consistent with our editorial values. However, I believe that truth, accuracy, impartiality and diversity of opinion are strengthened by being open to a wider range of opinion and perspective, brought to us through the knowledge and understanding of our audience.

The journalists' role is now to concentrate harder on how, when and where we can add value through our strengths of analysis, context, background and range. But as we do this we must be open to what members of the public bring to our attention. And as long as what they do bring is clearly labeled and attributed, I see no inherent problem with sharing it widely. When handled properly, it adds value and improves quality.

News organizations are accustomed to being the gatekeepers of information.

But with the Internet's emergence, information has broken free and become commoditized and democratized. Such change also puts the gatekeeper under the spotlight. We are watched and assessed more closely now by those whom we serve. Such observation can be very uncomfortable, but we'd better get used to it. Transparency about the news selection and editing process is now as important as the journalism itself in retaining public trust. If we act openly and honestly, even in the face of criticism, it will increase confidence in what we do. ■

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With Citizens' Visual News Coverage Standards Don't Change

'In an era in which digital alteration of images is increasingly easy, credibility is everything.'

By Santiago Lyon and Lou Ferrara

The explosions that rocked the London subway system on July 7th transformed the conversation about citizen journalism. Journalists waited at the entrances to a series of subway stations and were able to interview, photograph and video shaken survivors as they emerged from the tunnels. But how were we and other news organizations to get images and accounts of what was happening deep underground?

At The Associated Press headquarters in New York, we saw a dramatic grainy image on a BBC Web site of people being led out of a darkened tunnel deep un-

derground. [See this image on page 13.] The photograph had been taken by a commuter on his cell phone. Contacting the commuter, we obtained rights to the photograph, which we then distributed on our service and which was, despite the borderline image quality, widely used on the front pages of newspapers and Web sites around the globe.

This was citizen journalism in action.

With recent technical advances in cell-phone technology, many of them now produce acceptable quality still images (and video) and have the potential to become a new, relatively untapped

source of visual journalism. In the age of the Web and e-mail, these images can be rapidly e-mailed across the globe and published. While the news industry has used citizen-produced photographs and film in the past—the Kennedy assassination, for example—we have never experienced the volume of content that is now at our fingertips.

No longer is the conversation in journalism about whether we are going to use citizen-produced material, but how we are going to use it. Most importantly, whatever we do decide to use must meet our editorial standards.

There are issues, of course:

- **Quality:** Image quality and content quality are very important. In the case of the London bombing photograph, the news value outweighed the quality issue, but this will not always be the case. Professional photojournalists will often do a better job recording a news event than citizens because they are trained and better equipped. The citizen element will emerge most strongly when no journalists are present.
- **Veracity:** How do we know what we are seeing is true? Determining that the images show what the photographer says they show is crucial. In an era in which digital alteration of images is increasingly easy, credibility is everything. The same journalistic standards that are currently applied to mainstream media sources will need to be applied to all citizen-produced material. Verification is crucial.
- **Rights:** Who can use the images? Media organizations will have to issue the relevant legal language so that the amateur photographer understands what distribution rights they are agreeing to. This will need to be done, probably electronically, before citizen images are distributed.
- **Compensation:** What are the images worth? Generally a middle ground is reached between what the photographer demands and what the market will bear, and that will determine the price. These details need to be agreed upon before any of these images are distributed.

Once these issues have been addressed to everyone's satisfaction, there is no reason why citizens cannot offer their perspectives on global events. Of course, the challenge will be finding ways in our newsrooms to sift through the millions of images that people take on their cell-phone cameras every day and to determine what meets the standards of journalism. ■

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Journalism as a Conversation

‘Only as an afterthought did it dawn on us that the audience *is* the real content on the Web.’

By Jean K. Min

In a surrealistic bout of fate, passengers on JetBlue 292 en route to New York were watching their aircraft broadcast live on the screens of the in-flight DirecTV. The pilot was attempting an emergency landing on the tarmac of the Los Angeles International Airport with its front landing gear, clipped at a wrong angle, jutting out of the fuselage.

While millions of viewers in America watched this nail-biting drama, 140 passengers aboard the Airbus A320 found themselves the subject of live television news unfolding before their own eyes.

“It was absolutely terrifying, actually. Seeing the events broadcast made it completely surreal and detached me from the event,” said Zachary Mastoon in an interview with The Associated Press. “It became this television show I was inextricably linked to. It was no

longer my situation; it was broadcast for everyone to see. It only exacerbated the situation and my fear.”

A couple of NBC executives were also flying in the JetBlue plane and managed to set up a mobile phone call to report the situation back to NBC headquarters. What if the rest of the passengers were able to hook up to a high-speed wireless network and report the situation inside the aircraft back to a television station? Instead of watching their mile-high ordeal covered by someone else in a remote station, they would have been the ultimate producer of their own news, delivering the story to millions in real time, including on JetBlue's in-flight screens.

Featured on OhmyNews

Citizen reporters of OhmyNews, a unique news organization in Korea,

now number more than 40,000 and are no strangers to the sensation that comes from producing their own news. It is this transforming and empowering experience that attracts thousands of “citizen reporters” to OhmyNews every day. Kim Hye Won, a longtime citizen reporter of OhmyNews, described her excitement when she found her story published on OhmyNews for the first time: “As soon as I saw my article with my name, Kim Hye Won, attached to it, my heart fluttered. A housewife who for the last 18 years has been caught up in housework raising her children has now become a reporter. This was possible thanks to the OhmyNews spirit of ‘every citizen is a reporter.’”

For lots of angry young Korean “Netizens” who felt their voice was perennially ignored by the overwhelmingly conservative Korean mainstream media, OhmyNews was a godsend when

it was launched in February 2000. They were angry because the mainstream media constantly manipulated the nation's important agenda in politics, the economy, and society for their own taste and purpose.

Oh Yeon Ho, the founder of OhmyNews, left his job at a monthly magazine to test his ideas about this new form of journalism through the Internet. He deeply sympathized with these young Netizens in their anger against the mainstream media. In an interview with *The New York Times* in early 2003, Oh hinted that a part of his motivation in launching OhmyNews was to fix this skewed Korean news market: "We have a real imbalance in our media—80 percent conservative and 20 percent liberal—and it needs to be corrected. My goal is 50-50." More recently Oh has written of his original vision that he "wanted to start a tradition free of newspaper company elitism where news was evaluated based on quality, regardless of whether it came from a major newspaper, a local reporter, an educated journalist, or a neighborhood housewife So I decided to make the plunge into the sea of the Internet, even though I feared that which was different from what I was accustomed."

Many young Koreans who were already sharing their thoughts on the Internet found that it made infinitely more sense to write for a news media with a strong national brand and formidable presence in the news market than scribble their anger in a puny blog. Goh Tae Jin, a citizen reporter turned cyber columnist, shared his revelations about how he felt when his harshly critical piece appeared on OhmyNews in 2000. In it, he attacked one of the nation's top newspaper columnists for "factionalism and arrogance" that he'd exhibited in his column.

"Unexpectedly, my article was chosen as the top story and suddenly sparked numerous heated opinions. It was an astounding experience for me to have

for the first time in my life. On that day, OhmyNews transformed me from a reader into a reporter"

Typical citizen reporters write a story or two per week. After submitting a story, they can track their status. Stories remain as "Saengnamu" articles before being accepted by OhmyNews copyeditors. Once accepted, citizen reporters can follow the status of their words in real time, observing the number of readers' clicks into each of the stories, the number of comments, or the money collected in the "tip jar."

I 'wanted to start a tradition free of newspaper company elitism where news was evaluated based on quality, regardless of whether it came from a major newspaper, a local reporter, an educated journalist, or a neighborhood housewife So I decided to make the plunge into the sea of the Internet, even though I feared that which was different from what I was accustomed.' — *Oh Yeon Ho*

The Audience Is the Content

What happens on OhmyNews is an intensely interactive online conversation. Citizen reporters have to persuade OhmyNews's frontline copyeditors to have their stories accepted in the first place. As much as 30 percent of daily submissions are rejected for various reasons, such as poor sentence construction, factual errors, or its lack of news value. After stories are accepted and edited, then placed in a more prominent space, usually within minutes they draw scores of readers' feedback. When the story is controversial, as in the case of Goh's, the number of readers' comments can shoot up to hundreds and even thousands.

This feedback from readers, coupled

with editorial advice by OhmyNews's copyeditors, gives citizen reporters invaluable lessons in writing. A quick online search through the OhmyNews database yields 500 to 600 stories for some of our diligent citizen reporters, and the difference in quality between their first and more recent writing is remarkable. Nearly 70 OhmyNews citizen reporters now have contracts to write books. Believing, as I do, that an adequate level of writing skills is an important ability for citizens to have in a civil democracy, then OhmyNews's citizen reporters can proudly be named the most capable practitioners of "the Emersonian vision of an expressive society."

The *New York Times*—and many other prominent news organizations—appears to consider the Web as simply another format in which to sell their news content. They sold the news once in the paper medium, now they will sell it again to an online audience and increase the return on their investment. For OhmyNews, the Web is seen neither as a channel for information flow nor as a pipeline for news delivery. It is a playground for our readers, a cyberspace for Netizens.

In accepting this Internet vision, a whole new horizon opens for us. The readers, or news audience, are no longer passive consumers of news produced by a few privileged, arrogant reporters. They are active producers of the news they will consume at the end of the day. Participation in this great news sphere is realized for them either by joining OhmyNews as a citizen reporter or by participating in the online forum offered at the very bottom of every story we publish.

Only as an afterthought did it dawn on us that the audience *is* the real content on the Web. Like any nimble disk jockey in a cool nightclub in town would do, we gave them a place to hang out and mingle with the brightest minds in Korean cyberspace. One survey by a major Korean portal revealed nearly 40 percent of users' daily mouse clicks on

it were for user-generated content, such as readers' comments and blog posts. A similar result was also found for OhmyNews. OhmyNews readers generate on average somewhere between 30 to 50 percent of daily traffic on the Web site through their participation in various online forums (other than their reading of the news). This is surely a wealth of eyeballs that any shrewd advertiser would salivate for. The "audience as the content" model makes a lot of sense for our business as well.

Bloggers, Citizen Reporters, and Journalists

For many, citizen participation on a news site seems identical to blogging. But while Weblogs stimulate colorful outpourings of citizens' voices on the Web, most of the time a blog is a one-person operation, and many bloggers are pursuing their journalistic passion at their own peril. Without adequate advice from trained journalists, they risk being ensnared into potential legal disputes involving, for example, a defamation case.

The OhmyNews model is fundamentally different. We believe bloggers can work better with professional assistance from trained journalists. On the other hand, we also believe professional journalists can expand their view and scope greatly with fresh input from citizen reporters. News media as a whole can offer more diverse and rich content to readers by tapping into the wealth of Netizens' collective wisdom.

Unlike Wikinews, which restricts their oversight role to a "janitor," OhmyNews works as a convener by actively promoting conversation among editors, citizen reporters, and professional journalists. (We also, however, have a cyber janitor to clean up any mess that might be left in the aftermath of fierce online debate.) However, there seems to be a subtle division of roles between the OhmyNews staff reporters

and citizen reporters. Citizen reporters understand that instead of copying the styles of trained journalists, they will shine brighter when they remain true to themselves. Citizen reporters excel when they write something they understand well and have a strong inkling for.

No story is published before it goes through an extensive screening and copyediting process. Citizen reporters realize their edited text looks better with snazzy headlines and sometimes eye-catching thumbnail pictures. They also find their stories more polished after proofreading and editorial re-

We believe bloggers can work better with professional assistance from trained journalists. On the other hand, we also believe professional journalists can expand their view and scope greatly with fresh input from citizen reporters. News media as a whole can offer more diverse and rich content to readers by tapping into the wealth of Netizens' collective wisdom.

touching by professionals, even if they occasionally face frustrating rejections of their stories.

A recurring fear among journalists is that the coming age of citizen journalism would signal the end of "journalism as a serious profession." On the contrary, the OhmyNews experience shows that trained journalists will be in greater demand as an increasing number of citizen journalists start to produce explosive amounts of news themselves. Alas, if only journalists would understand how to reinvent themselves in this age of citizen journalism!

OhmyNews editors spend a lot of time educating aspiring citizen journalists. We regularly invite them to our newsroom and give them "Journalism 101" classes. We encourage them to keep keen eyes on things going on and give advice that, if properly applied,

would enhance the visibility of their writing as a means of effective communication.

Harnessing Collective Intelligence

Recently, OhmyNews opened a new service feature in which our readers can participate in the editorial process by voting for their favorite writers or stories. OhmyNews servers collect the data and sort out the stories according to the number of votes each received. If we can define the first generation OhmyNews as "a massively distributed

collaborative news operation on the Web," OhmyNews 2.0 can be described as "a massively distributed collaborative editorial participation on the Web." For example, when citizen reporters set up their personal blog site in OhmyNews, we encourage them to become an editor for their own edition of OhmyNews. They can drag and drop any of the few hundred stories available on OhmyNews each day to build their personal edition. Now every citizen can be an editor at OhmyNews.

In OhmyNews 1.0, we tried to bridge the gap between pros and amateurs by introducing "journalism as a conversation" as opposed to "journalism as a lecture." OhmyNews 2.0 will continue to evolve with the development of more Web tools that will help us to harness the collective intelligence of Netizens on a global scale. ■

Jean K. Min is director of OhmyNews International. He also contributed to the launching of seoprise.com, an influential political Webzine in Korea that together with OhmyNews played a vital role in electing the current South Korean President Rob Moo Hyun in 2002.

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Fear, Loathing and the Promise of Public Insight Journalism

A journalist wonders whether the mainstream news media will adapt fast enough to their changing relationship with the public to survive.

By Michael Skoler

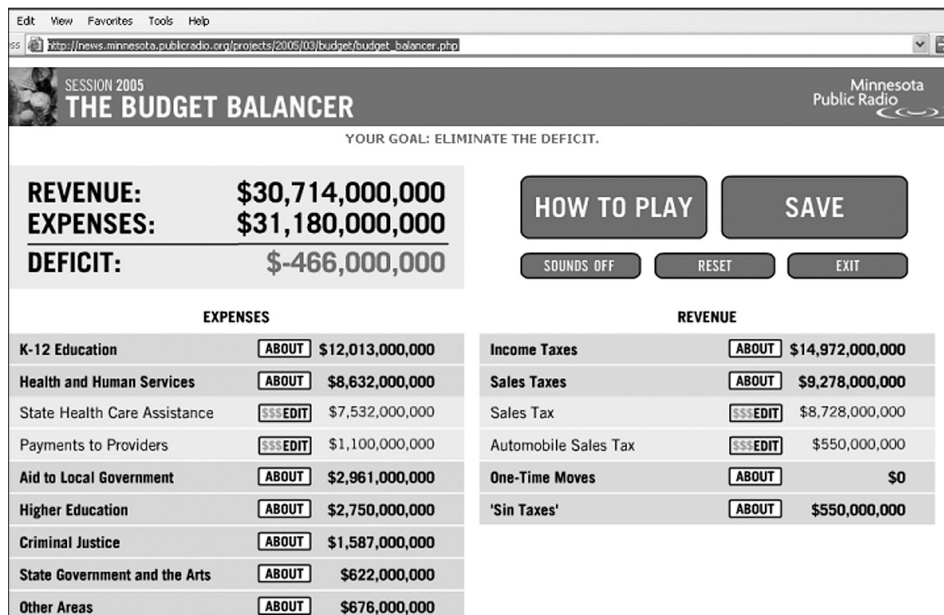
Bringing the public into the newsroom is dangerous. Longtime colleagues have been ready to stab me with the nearest implement over dinner when I mention changes at Minnesota Public Radio/American Public Media. I have been quietly advised to stop making statements like, “On any given story, someone in our audience is bound to know more than even our most experienced reporters and editors.” And I understand why.

That statement sounds downright disrespectful to the people who put their blood, sweat and passion into digging up the news and making sense of it for the public. Sure, involving the public in newsgathering sounds friendly and inclusive at conferences on the future of journalism. But in the newsroom, it can feel like a hook to the jaw.

For so long, journalists have considered themselves the arbiters of the news for “the great unwashed,” as one colleague half-jokingly puts it. For so long, journalists have seen their Rolodex of powerful sources as a measure of their worth. The idea of including the public, day in and day out, in newsgathering seems like pandering to public opinion at best and abandonment of our mission to inform and of our journalistic values at worst.

Bringing in the Audience

Yet my experiences at Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) convince me that we should fight past our gut reactions. Working with the audience can reinvigorate journalism, open the newsroom to more diversity than we could ever achieve through hiring alone, and break the media’s overreliance on officials



This Minnesota Public Radio Web page gave people the information necessary for them to try to balance the state’s budget and explain their choices. From those plans and comments story assignments were made by newsroom staff. *Graphic supplied by Michael Skoler.*

and expert spokespeople who try to manage the press.

The MPR newsroom has invested nearly three years in defining a new way of working we have dubbed “Public Insight Journalism®.” We’ve built software that keeps track of more than 12,000 public sources who share their expertise and experience. We’ve hired “analysts” to manage and mine those relationships. We’ve held meetings in people’s homes and at community centers. We’ve invited regular folks into studios and mobile recording booths. And we’ve run gaming software on our Web site. All this interaction is aimed at tapping the knowledge and insights of the public to make our reporters and editors and coverage even smarter and stronger.

Our rallying cry to the public has been “share what you know.” We don’t want opinion, we want knowledge. And we have amassed our public-source network over time by asking people to help us with specific stories and issues, using our airwaves and Web site to reach and engage them. With an audience of more than 500,000 listeners, MPR News continues to develop this network. We have avoided using our tools to do pseudoscientific online polls or collect person-on-the-street reactions. Instead, we actively look for public sources who have firsthand knowledge, whether it comes from their jobs, their hobbies, their relationships, or their life experiences, on stories that interest us or would interest us if we knew about them.

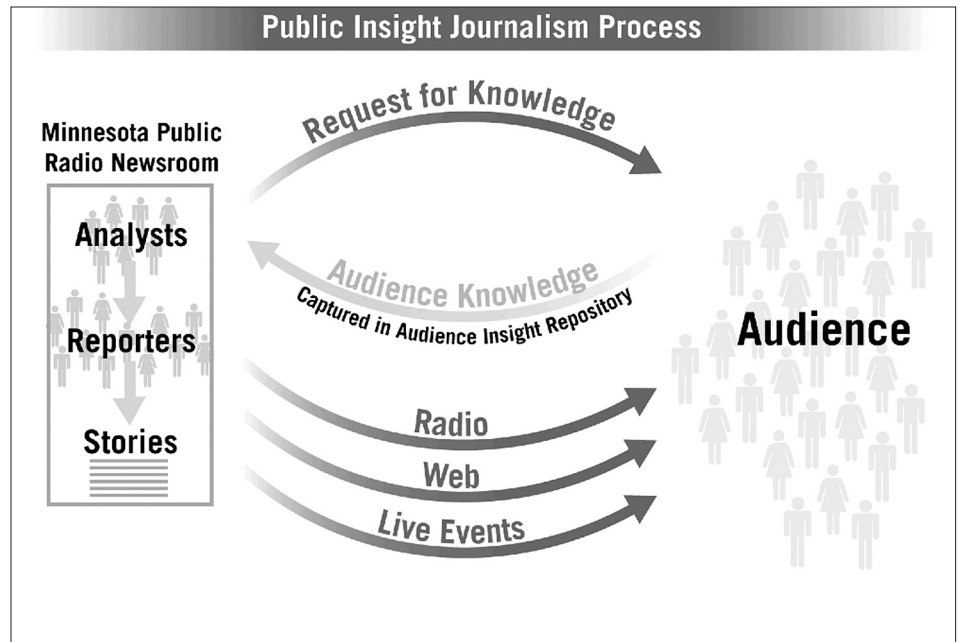
Expanding Our Sources

At the simplest level, the Public Insight Journalism (PIJ) process expands a journalist's Rolodex, finding sources that would be hard to find. When MPR reporter Tim Post heard a couple of hunters complaining how more and more landowners were cutting off access to hunting land, Post wondered if this shrinking access was a trend. A public insight analyst sent e-mail surveys to those in our source network who had listed hunting as a "passion" or lived near prime hunting areas. The informal hunters network then kicked in.

Within a day or two, Post had nine new sources from e-mails. He followed up, added other sources, confirmed the trend, and wrote a story on growing disputes between landowners and hunters and among hunters themselves, over access to hunting land. A few weeks later, a St. Paul man named Chai Vang killed six hunters in Wisconsin in what started as a dispute over a deer stand but also had racial overtones. That shooting became national news.

This fall, we used PIJ to deepen our coverage of the mechanics' strike and bankruptcy of Minnesota-based Northwest Airlines. On the air, MPR News hosts asked listeners to call a toll-free number or fill out an online survey to share their experiences as passengers, Northwest employees, former employees, or replacement workers. MPR analysts handed out cards at the airport explaining how to contact the newsroom and posted links to our survey on online bulletin boards and chat rooms popular with airline staff. They sent e-mails to those in our public source network. Nearly 200 responded.

For weeks, MPR analyst Melody Ng verified new sources, confirmed information, and passed vetted leads to reporters, editors and talk show producers. One source tipped us off to an FBI investigation into possible crew tampering—a story we confirmed and broke. An FAA inspector offered us access to an online database for tracking aircraft maintenance problems. Sources helped us track and report on passenger service problems and provided leads for many stories.



Graphic supplied by Michael Skoler.

With successes like these, MPR reporters and editors who were originally skeptical have welcomed PIJ for its expanded source network. "It vastly speeds up the process of collecting information and sources," says reporter Dan Olson. "And it gives more credibility to the reporting because it draws on many more voices." Our reporters have access to an extra Rolodex of thousands of public sources with known expertise and the viral web of connections these people have via the Internet.

Yet this expanded Rolodex is a fairly rudimentary use of PIJ, made possible by linking knowledge management software with today's fast online communications. To me, the real promise of PIJ lies in using public insight to help frame stories and set a distinct coverage agenda. The audience can guide us to important stories that are happening outside the controlled leaks and made-for-media events organized by vested interests. The audience can get us beyond our own social networks. And they can give us perspectives unfiltered by experts.

Reporting From the Bottom Up

In the fall of 2004, as macroeconomic numbers showed the nation had entered a recovery, MPR business re-

porter Jeff Horwich wanted to see if Minnesotans had felt the effects yet. Instead of surveying business leaders and economists, our newsroom sent e-mail surveys to 500 sources in our public insight network. We asked 1. if they had experienced the recession, 2. if they had experienced the recovery, and 3. what signs they saw of an economic recovery.

Seventy-six (15 percent) of the e-mail surveys were returned, coming from teachers, government employees, small business owners, high-tech workers, blue-collar workers, and entrepreneurs. The responses gave us a sort of topographic map of the economic landscape showing where the recovery was gaining traction, where it was stalled, and where the recession was still deepening.

The idea for one short piece on the recovery turned into a weeklong series on the uneven recovery, including an hourlong talk show. Public insight framed the series and revealed trends that economists couldn't see. Reporters used the information as a starting point, rounded out their reporting with other sources and experts, and more than 20 public sources ended up on the air. Our reporting was praised by the competition for exposing and explaining the wildly varying impact of the recovery. It was a story our audience revealed to us. They made the series stronger, and

they made us sound smarter.

Another experience with PIJ: In the last two budget cycles of the Minnesota legislature, MPR offered an online “Budget Balancer” where people could create their own balanced budgets from dozens of options and explain their choices. MPR’s Senior Analyst Andrew Haeg led the project. He analyzed the thousands of plans submitted and read every comment and then used that detailed look into how people thought through the budget debate to suggest story assignments.

For example, in the balancer many people used sin taxes to balance the budget, which had not been part of the budget debate. That led us to do a story on these taxes, like the tobacco tax, well before the governor and legislators shifted their focus and settled on that option. The newsroom also used a scientific poll to confirm a surprising trend we saw in the Budget Balancer—that Minnesotans, mostly opposed to tax hikes in principle, were willing to raise taxes to avoid specific spending cuts.

Then there’s the “Idea Generator”—an online collaborative tool we created to let the audience inform and strengthen our coverage of the educational performance gap between white

and minority students. We have since used it to gather hundreds of ideas and leads for coverage of low high school graduation rates and the risks to small town survival.

But in honesty, while MPR has made great headway, PIJ has had a tough road to acceptance in the newsroom. One reason is that PIJ grew out of a management vision, not a perceived need by reporters and editors to increase their sources or connection to the audience. Another is that we have defined it by doing it, which has left some of us confused at times.

Opening the Priesthood

The real challenge beckons. Public Insight Journalism, if successful, should change us journalists, and not superficially. I don’t believe mainstream news organizations will create a new and better journalism simply by turning over the microphone or pen to citizens. What we need to do is listen, collaborate and learn from the knowledge in our audience. Sometimes this means turning over the microphone or pen, or letting people talk back through the Web, or Webcasting editorial meetings. But it really means opening up.

The online media revolution that has

brought us blogs, citizen journalism and Wikis, is an assault on a traditional newsroom culture that Patrick Dougherty of the Anchorage Daily News described as a “priesthood, delivering truth to the masses” in the last issue of Nieman Reports. Used well, online tools can open the newsroom to more input, more diverse voices, and more questioning of our editorial instincts. But we have to change how we make coverage decisions if we are going to let insight from the public affect us. And that is hard, really hard, because it challenges our image of the profession and ourselves as authorities on the news.

The need to remake our culture is why many wonder if mainstream journalism can change fast enough to survive the online revolution. And why the board and senior management at Minnesota Public Radio/American Public Media have made Public Insight Journalism a strategic priority—one we hope to share widely with other media as we figure it out. ■

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How Participatory Journalism Works

A journalist describes why and how ‘a news organization works with its audience to have that “conversation” that is news.’

By Steve Safran

We’re all citizens, but not all of us are journalists. And the term “citizen journalism” is one I’ve never cared for. It’s inaccurate.

Journalism requires more than one person and it needs a support structure. It’s about editing, questioning and challenging assumptions. Much of what is put on blogs right now is “opinion.” There are good, thoughtful opinions out

there—but they’re often presented as fact. There is some journalism happening in the blogosphere, but not much. It’s mostly meta-journalism—reporting on reporting.

I don’t like the “citizen” part, either. The term is self-congratulatory and, frankly, a little smug. The notion that the bloggers and citizens will rise up and make the mainstream media obsolete is naive. At a recent seminar, the subject

was much debated, since an increasing number of news organization Web sites now invite user participation. That part is terrific. What seems less praiseworthy is the apparent lack of understanding of the basic rules of journalism.

A number of those who run these Web sites are thrilled about receiving user content—they’re just not interested in vetting any of it. What surfaced in this seminar was the notion that “if we don’t

edit it, they can't sue," an assumption based in part on a pair of rulings from the 1990's. In *Kenneth M. Zeran v. AOL*, the court held that AOL, as an Internet Service Provider (ISP) could not be held responsible for a defamatory posting on one of its bulletin boards. Zeran was an early test case of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that says ISP can't possibly monitor every bit of communication that passes through their space and therefore cannot be held liable. In *Blumenthal v. Matt Drudge and America Online*, the court refused to hold AOL responsible for content Drudge posted on his site that quoted a source as saying newly named White House Advisor Sidney Blumenthal had abused his wife.

In 1998, *Tech Law Journal* wrote about the Blumenthal suit: "Section 230 of the massive Telecom Act of 1996 protects interactive computer services from lawsuits based on defamation by information content providers. It provides in part that: 'No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.'"

Examine more closely the final sentence of that excerpt and ask yourself what constitutes an "information content provider." It is reasonable to assume not every single person is an information content provider. The Telecom Act's intent appears to be protecting ISP's from lawsuits stemming from defamation on Web pages and message boards they don't control.

News organization's Web sites are not ISP's. They are editorially driven, and their content is vetted by professionals. We might want viewers and users to contribute content, but it seems a weak argument to claim that a defamatory letter, for example, which would never be published in a newspaper, could be posted on the paper's Web site. Yet there was substantial debate over this topic at that citizen media seminar I

recently attended. Some participants even took offense to the idea I would look at content without putting it online. One editor of a weekly newspaper wondered aloud, "Who am I to decide what people are interested in?"

You're the editor, that's who.

Images, the Web, and Responsibility

At NECN (New England Cable News), we started an experiment in July 2005 inviting our viewers to send in video news. The program is called "Video New

There is an idea, and a good one at that, that 'news is a conversation.' But even this phrase often seems to be applied wrongly; a conversation is not 1,000 people shouting at once. Good conversation is two-way, among a few people.

England." We have made it very easy for people to send us video clips from their desktop computers. Anyone who has uploaded a picture to a file-sharing site like Flickr, or to a printing service like Snapfish, can easily send video to our news desk.

At first, the response was slow. We expected that. We also anticipated that we would see a spike in contributions during the first big storm after launch. Sure enough, that happened. We thought it would be a snowstorm that did it, but when New England got hit with major rainstorms and flooding through much of October, rivers overflowed and so did our viewer video contributions.

Most of the videos that reached us were excellent. And by that, I don't mean "broadcast quality" or even "VHS quality." Some of the video was quite grainy and even a little on the shaky side, but we didn't care a bit. For us, "Video New England" offered viewers a valuable source of information. We could show flooding scenes from around the region in ways we simply aren't staffed to do.

We empowered our audience to tell us the story. And they did.

That's why we call what we do "participatory journalism." There is an idea, and a good one at that, that "news is a conversation." But even this phrase often seems to be applied wrongly; a conversation is not 1,000 people shouting at once. Good conversation is two-way, among a few people. If viewers are allowed to post anything they want on the message board I host, it invites all sorts of dangers, not the least of which is a defamation lawsuit.

Another assumption being made by some of the newspaper and TV Web sites is that their organization's staff will not be held responsible if they simply take down "offensive material." That's an interesting choice of words, since "offensive" material is in the eye of the beholder. One site that invited local bands to post their flyers got complaints about a neo-Nazi band posting there. The editor proudly

announced to us at the seminar that he had taken down the offending flyer. I asked him if he would take down rap music with violent lyrics, or heavy metal Satan-rock. He wasn't sure he knew.

Consider this: If a TV station airs a slanderous news report and it is "taken down" the moment it ends (in the sense that it's done being aired), does that mean the TV station is not liable for its content? Let's look for a moment at a good theoretical example: Suppose someone can post any picture they want at *MyNewspaperName.com*. Suppose that picture is a Photoshopped composite, showing a local school teacher's head on the body of a naked model. The teacher complains, and *MyNewspaperName.com* takes down the picture. In the intervening time, every student in her class has seen the picture, and some have downloaded it and sent it to their friends. By the end of the day, it's even appeared on pornographic Web sites.

This teacher isn't going to try and find the anonymous poster. She will

sue MyNewspaperName.com, and it's my guess a jury will award her a few million dollars. "We took it down" is simply a lousy defense.

One question that keeps popping up in conversations about citizen journalism is, "We can't be expected to monitor every single post that comes in, can we?" The answer: "Yes." The contributions must be edited, just as any good news organization would do with their own staffers' contributions. I wouldn't put a report on air or online without vetting it, so why would anyone publish content from someone they'd never met

without so much as a glance?

Even if it turns out that news organizations cannot be sued for defamatory postings—and I believe the issue will one day be in the courts—I question why they would want to offer this new opportunity. If a news desk cannot monitor and edit material that appears under their banner, it seems their message ought to be, "We can't decide what news is anymore—why don't you do it?"

A better model is participatory journalism, in which a news organization works with its audience to have that "conversation" that is news. Our judg-

ment is used to make the final call, but we listen closely to what New Englanders tell us. It's the New England town hall meeting format, writ large. Town members give us ideas and suggestions, but at the end of the meeting, the moderator—that's us—decides how to proceed. Everyone is a citizen, everyone contributes, and everyone wins. ■

Steve Safran is the director of digital media at NECN and managing editor of LostRemote.com.

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Citizens Media: Has It Reached a Tipping Point?

New media initiatives emerge when citizens feel 'shortchanged, bereft or angered by their available media choices.'

By Jan Schaffer

First off, let's address one thing: Citizen journalists don't particularly aspire to be called "journalists." That's a label mainstream journalists often apply when writing about this mutating media ecosystem. Many citizen media folks are *reacting* to journalism, not embracing it—at least to the journalism they see in their communities. Meanwhile, some mainstream media folks are reacting to these upstart citizens with skepticism and even hostility.

The fretting usually goes like this: Citizen media participants are not part of the journalistic club. They don't do real journalism. What if they get something wrong? What if they only print news releases? How do we know if they are credible? Do they have any ethics? How will they make money? And, of course, what if they siphon off "our" money?

And the complaints look like this: Hey, they are not reporting "news;" they don't know the "rules" and, of course, they are not producing "quality journalism." Only we anointed big-J journalists can manage all that, right?

Now that doesn't mean that community media pioneers won't commit acts of journalism as they go about contributing or creating content or fulfilling their visions for community news and information. If anything, many citizen media ventures exhibit a lot of journalistic DNA.

So what does it mean that in 2005 citizens media initiatives are cropping up all around us? These initiatives are generating hyperlocal and special-interest news and information and breaking-news eyewitness accounts from far, far away—from the perimeters of major media markets to the outer reaches of rural areas. They are rolled out as franchise opportunities by legacy news organizations seeking new revenue centers; they are bankrolled by venture capitalists seeing future business models; they are supported by foundations hoping to bolster community building, and they are launched by retired or just plain tired, solo journalists as sideline enterprises. Most important, they are blossoming from the fertile imaginations of a new cast of visionaries—usually citizens feeling shortchanged, bereft

or angered by their available media choices.

Media Participation

No one size fits all in this evolving landscape. But an overarching narrative emerges: We are witnessing the creation of a robust infrastructure of media participation. And it is now far surpassing the efforts of individual bloggers. It's emerging to serve a new "culture of contribution," asserts "We Media" coauthor Chris Willis. [See the article by Willis and "We Media" coauthor Shayne Bowman on page 6.] In this ecosystem, "not everyone wants to be a journalist, soup to nuts," Willis told a Media Center gathering in October that was cohosted in New York City by The Associated Press. But they might want to contribute something—to upload photos, shoot video, post a comment or item, or write a full-blown story.

"We used to call them *citizen journalists*, but we stopped using that term," says Jonathan Weber, founder and editor of NewWest.net, the "voice of the Rocky Mountains." The term "intimidated"

people who were not journalists, he said. Now citizen contributions to the site are simply labeled “unfiltered.” At VoiceofSanDiego.com, more than half the content now comes from “contributed voices” and “guest columnists,” says founding editor Barbara Bry.

Readily available tech tools teamed with the growing tech savvy of ordinary citizens are making this all possible.

Community News Ventures

Just a little over a year ago, I proposed a project to the Knight Foundation to fund some start-up community news ventures. Little did I expect to be on the cusp of the next wave in journalism, but the clues came pretty fast. Two months after receiving the New Voices grant, we issued a national call for proposals. Ten weeks later, we had received an astonishing 243 vision statements.

The proposals were eye opening—innovative, ambitious and poignant. Again and again, the applicants said no news organizations were covering their concerns or their communities—whether they lived in cities or villages, military bases or university towns, ethnic enclaves or Indian reservations. So, they proposed, they would do so themselves—through Web sites, podcasts, low-power FM radio, and ink on paper.

“There was passion in what these community news ventures said they wanted to accomplish,” said Bruce Koon, a Knight Ridder executive and New Voices advisor who helped select the projects. Usually the applicants envisioned their projects as counterpoints to their local journalism, which they described as polarizing, shrill, focused on the near term, and certainly not focused on them or their concerns. At times, their ambitions could put journalists to shame.

Consider the Loudoun Forward project, starting up in one of the nation’s fastest growing counties in Northern Virginia. Even though Loudoun County has two weeklies and a weekly zoned edition

of The Washington Post, the project’s managing partners said: “Today, there are no local media organizations that explore Loudoun’s future—no presentation of ideas and solutions to long-term problems. Current media focuses on the short term and is, by nature, reacting to events.” Their announced aspiration: to make LoudounForward.org into a nonpartisan, forward-looking “public think tank,” using the Web, e-newsletters and public forums.

The Madison (Wis.) Commons Project has just finished training its first corps of “civic mappers” to cover two neighborhoods, and they’ve already turned up good stories. And The Forum in Deerfield, New Hampshire, which was launched as an alternative to

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coverage from the Concord and Manchester television stations, dailies and weeklies, urges contributors to “Be the news, not just *read* the news”—hardly a prescription for the typical journalist. It’s worth noting that, two months after launch, the all-volunteer project views its mission as filling a new void: Voters recently ended Deerfield’s participatory town-meeting tradition. The Web site (forumhome.org) is filled with content and is already moving on its plans to expand to three more communities.

I see some common denominators in these and other citizen media efforts: They seldom frame news coverage around “conflict.” They don’t invest in keeping score on who’s winning or losing in their communities. And they embrace different definitions of

“news”—from municipal agendas to announcements to photos to pats on the back to pleas for help.

Susan DeFife, CEO of Backfence.com, which has launched hyper-local community Web sites for McLean and Reston, Virginia, and Bethesda, Maryland, told the October “We Media” gathering: “We’re not there to be journalists or to ask the questions. The community is asking the questions. They are doing that quite well. It also means the sites may not deliver the answer unless someone in the community has the answer.” Backfence.com just announced it has \$3 million in venture funding to go national.

Civic Participation via Media

There are emerging signs that citizen participation in the media can fuel civic participation. That feeds into a current debate in academic circles: Is citizen journalism the same as civic journalism?

Civic journalism seeks to get citizens to participate in civic life; citizen journalism seeks to engage them in the media. They’re not synonymous, but they can be symbiotic. One can fuel the other: Soon after former Wall Street bond analyst Jarah Euston launched FresnoFamous.com to cover the city’s

local arts scene, the mayor invited the 26-year-old to join the city’s Creative Economy Council. “He probably didn’t want me to write about him,” she wryly told a recent Fetzer Institute gathering in Kalamazoo. She now writes weekly summations of the council’s meetings on her Sour Grapes blog on FresnoFamous, and the blog helps the public give the council input.

OneKCvoice in Kansas City tries to engage users in wrestling with big community questions, such as whether there should be a sales tax for big metro projects. Its “You Decide” feature provides pros, cons and places for users to weigh in.

Of course, much has been written about the role that citizen reporters at OhmyNews played in getting Roh

Moo Hyun nominated and then elected as South Korea's president in 2002. OhmyNews uses stories from journalists and citizen contributors. Citizen contributions helped the news site become enough of a force in those 2002 elections to challenge the conservative news organizations that had monopolized coverage of the nation's politics. [See story about OhmyNews on page 17.]

The Tipping Point

Beginning in December 2004, coverage of calamities has brought us to a tipping point for user-generated content, a new term for citizen involvement in the news. When the tsunami hit South Asia, tourists readily captured the tidal waves and their aftermath on cameras and videocams. More than 20,000 tsunami photos are posted on Flickr.com.

Then the July 7th bombings in London set a new standard. Video shot from camera phones led the BBC's coverage that night. "That had never happened

before at the BBC," Richard Sambrook, director of the BBC's World Services and Global News division, said at the "We Media" conference. [See Sambrook's article on page 13.] The BBC's Kate Goldberg has reported that eyewitnesses sent the BBC more than 20,000 e-mails, 1,000 photos, and 20 videos in just the first six hours after the bombing. "This is not just a toe in the water," Sambrook said. "Even calling it a *movement* sells it a bit short. It's a fundamental realignment of the relations between Big Media and the public."

Then in August, Hurricane Katrina opened the doors to even more citizen contributions—and news organizations themselves stepped forward to facilitate relief and rescue activity.

Citizen content does not create an either/or paradigm. It's an "and." Citizen-contributed content can do much to enrich traditional journalism: It will complement as well as compete with mainstream offerings. Citizens can serve as guide dogs as well as watchdogs.

Lex Alexander, cocreator of the

Greensboro, North Carolina News & Record's community blog project, has urged news organizations to start labeling content that is initiated by readers or viewers. Soon we'll see the next new thing, and I believe Alexander foreshadowed that at the New York City gathering: "Once we have this up and running," he said, "I'd like to work with citizen readers on some investigative journalism."

That evokes new images of citizens as parajournalists, akin to the paramilitary forces waging new-age wars. Can the era of "guerrilla journalism" be far behind? ■

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Reconnecting With the Audience

'What they say—not what we think—is what counts.'

By Clyde H. Bentley

Citizen journalism is the refreshing bouquet that traditional newspapers can give to readers who increasingly say the fire has gone from our romance with them. It's a way to say, "We're sorry," but also a promise to do better. For the last year and a half, with the launch of MyMissourian, we at the University of Missouri have tried to demonstrate how a newspaper gives this gift without abandoning its role in the community or the ethics of good journalism. Wooing our audience back with something they really want is no easy task, but our efforts to do so appear to be paying off with dividends.

Our foray into citizen journalism started with two news reports. In 2000,

Oh Yeon Ho launched a Korean journalistic and social revolution with the battle cry "Every citizen is a reporter." His Web publication, OhmyNews, used stories submitted by volunteer citizen reporters, edited by paid journalists, to successfully challenge the dominant conservative newspapers and contribute to the electoral defeat of that nation's conservative government. [See the article about OhmyNews on page 17.]

We followed Oh's progress with detached interest until The Bakersfield Californian announced it had Americanized Oh's concept. Mary Lou Fulton, a former Associated Press (A.P.), Los Angeles Times, washingtonpost.com and

AOL journalist, created The Northwest Voice as the Californian's combined Web site and suburban newspaper edition. The Northwest Voice used Oh's concept of citizen journalists but had a much less political tone than OhmyNews. A key difference in The Northwest Voice approach was a link to the free-circulation, market-shopper product of its parent newspaper, The Bakersfield Californian. Fulton used The Northwest Voice to gather content that could then be published in the free print shopper, thus tapping into a proven revenue stream and the resources of an established publication.

A flurry of reports in journalism journals and online bulletin boards in

spring of 2004 caught the attention of the faculty at the Missouri School of Journalism. Mizzou is a very practical school—our students staff a community daily newspaper, a network television station, and several Web sites. While we pondered how best to approach the new concept, I casually offered to revamp my online journalism course to create a trial citizen journalism Web publication. When word of this idea spread, more than a few of my journalism colleagues came to me with concerns. “Why in the world would a hardball journalist who dedicated his career to the scrappy community newspaper business be willing to turn over control of the ‘presses’ to amateurs?” they wanted to know.

Fortunately, Dean Mills, the school of journalism dean, was not among the doubters, and he wasted no time in taking me up on the offer. “Can we proceed with all deliberate speed? I’m in no hurry. Next week would be soon enough,” he e-mailed. Although he might have said it half in jest, his comment became the impetus for innovation. With Online Editor Curt Wohleber, we assembled a team of graduate students and worked through the summer on the procedures and technology needed to launch a site. By fall, undergraduate students in the online journalism class were contacting community sources for content. By October 1st, MyMissourian.com was online.

Research and Results

The key to the success of MyMissourian turned out to be the summer planning session. By taking a hard look at the task ahead, we answered many of our critics before we even heard from them. Traditional journalists are wracked with fear about untrained “civilians” dabbling in their domain. How could we have credibility without fact-checkers? Citizens won’t have a clue about the A.P. stylebook or standard spelling. This is a

college town, so count on a lot of swearing. What if they want to write about trivial events or “tabloid trash?”

I was equally nervous, but we approached the challenge with a balance of cold-blooded research and warm-hearted humanism. Earlier research on our daily newspaper, the Columbia Missourian, had shown that many people thought it and other newspapers were both arrogant and oblivious to the requests of the reading public. When we boiled that reader attitude down to its

Editors work closely with authors who ‘share’ information rather than ‘cover’ stories. We edit for readability and civility, not A.P. style and newspaper tradition. We know how to keep our reporters out of libel court, so this responsibility doesn’t change because our authors are not on the payroll. We let writers get trivial and let them talk about what interests them.

simplest factors, we ended up at “No.” In the public’s eye, newspapers are a world of “No.” Our space constraints, high “quality” standards, and often-inexplicable traditions create more reasons for not accepting material than John and Jane reader can imagine. Format and timeliness rules may be forgivable, but try explaining why we don’t publish Little League results. Or why we will publish a 25th wedding anniversary but not a 27th. We’re leery also of any story that might “promote” a business, and we don’t allow authors to show emotion about anything—even the death of a loved one.

As we resolved to eliminate most of the “No” in MyMissourian, we bumped into a few longer words like decency, literacy, commercialism and outright banality. Fortunately, we found that journalism had faced up to these issues. Fear of regulating indecent language is more of an issue within the die-hard Internet culture, and most newspapers already have checks on profanity that are seldom cited as reason to cancel subscriptions. Literacy was somewhat tougher since

we pride ourselves as guardians of the language and protectors of the correctly spelled word. But newspapers helped solve that problem by their advocacy of better writing education in the 1980’s and 1990’s and, thanks to Silicon Valley, people have spell checkers. We found, too, that Americans are much better writers than we’d been willing to credit them. Commercialism in print is nothing new to readers. Pick up almost any magazine, but also look back in the old issues of newspapers, and they reveal that we once had less defined lines between news and local business promotion. The issue for us was not commercialism but dealing with it without abandoning our journalistic ethics. That just left the banal to cope with, and we concluded that in light of some of our own actions, journalists are not great judges of what is dumb or boring.

We require original work from our citizen writers, but we managed to cut our litany of “No” to just four:

- No profanity
- No nudity
- No personal attacks
- No attacks on race, religion, national origin, gender or sexual orientation.

Each submission is edited by a trained journalist before it is published. Editors work closely with authors who “share” information rather than “cover” stories. We edit for readability and civility, not A.P. style and newspaper tradition. We know how to keep our reporters out of libel court, so this responsibility doesn’t change because our authors are not on the payroll. We let writers get trivial and let them talk about what interests them. No one is anonymous and, if we have questions, we get back to the authors by e-mail or phone before publication. Editors also do much more than edit; they encourage and they actively seek out community members eager to speak their minds. What they say—not what

we think—is what counts.

A Viable Economic Model

We could have stopped there, but we had another gift bouquet to deliver—this time to the newspaper industry. On the first anniversary of MyMissourian, we launched what we believe will be a viable economic model for online news products. Up to that time, none of our effort had gone into building online readership but had been focused on building “writership.”

Like almost all newspapers, the Columbia Missourian gets a big share of its revenue from a free Total Market Coverage (TMC) edition. Although we try to avoid the label “shopper,” historically the newspaper received the second-rate attention that name implies. It was filled with old stories, syndicated entertainment news, and games. Newsroom veterans told us the strategy was to use the TMC to give nonsubscribers a mere taste of the Columbia Missourian, but my staff thought that approach was

similar to a bakery handing out stale bread as samples.

Now 23,000 homes in Columbia receive a unique newspaper. Six days a week, journalists deliver “our” paper. Now, on our normally dark Saturday, we deliver “their” newspaper—a print edition containing what citizens produce online. Probably we should not have been surprised that interest in MyMissourian has exploded since the print edition hit the streets. In the first months of this effort, 200 new citizen writers registered, and page views increased similarly. Perhaps more important to my staff is that we now receive many stories submitted by citizens who we didn’t even know were out there. Advertisers also have good reason to be excited. Fewer copies of the TMC are left out in the rain, and merchants can play to the “just folks” theme of MyMissourian.

The print edition does not represent an end to our project, just a way station. In the next several years we will focus on defining the role of the trained journalist in this citizen variant and on training

them in the skills that role will require. Giving up the power to craft a story is probably the toughest assignment I hand to young journalists who have been well trained to observe closely and translate those observations into must-read prose. I am working to convince them that the basic reporting skills will not go away, but will be supplemented by the skills of becoming the journalistic “guide.” As we continue to publish a good newspaper, we’ll also give citizens their voice in MyMissourian.

The bouquet MyMissourian sends its readers is a sincere invitation into our world. By embracing citizen journalism, we have conceded that it doesn’t take a journalism degree to have something worthwhile to say. To help them say it, we’ve become colleagues, mentors and good partners. ■

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Creating a New Town Square

‘It’s a locus for the kind of civic trust and independence on which the idea of journalism, indeed democracy, is based.’

By Leslie Dreyfous McCarthy

Tucked between a verdant coastal mountain range and stark Pacific Ocean bluff tops, Half Moon Bay is one of those rare, spectacular natural places. It’s also a classic small town, time-warped only by the happy accident of relative geographic inaccessibility to the suburbanized San Francisco-Silicon Valley corridor just 20 minutes “over the hill.”

Not everyone here is involved in local politics, but pretty much everyone has an opinion. What it boils down to is development. What’s our civic vision? Do we continue to define ourselves fundamentally as a rural fishing

and agricultural community, open to sweeping vistas and closed to shopping mall sprawl? Or do we make Faustian bargains, trading bits of historic identity for real estate deals dressed up in the shroud of progress?

These questions lend themselves to endless political soap-opera gyrations among “pro-growthers,” “no-growthers,” “slow-growthers,” “managed growers” and . . . (fill-in-the-blank). Meanwhile, an alienated “silent majority” tunes in to the local cable access channel to watch, and perhaps ruefully to laugh at, the routine Kabuki of another public meeting.

It’s a familiar small-town story, for sure. At its heart is the flow of information driving—or distorting—so much of the civic ecosystem. The weekly newspaper amounts to a water cooler, a town square, the proverbial grapevine. Quite a sacred trust—and it comes with unbelievable, often unchecked, power to influence discourse among citizens.

Not unlike major market media, most small newspapers are driven by bottom-line profit. And that pressure is more obvious in some places than others. In the case of our chain-owned local weekly, ad space is dominated by—what else, in California?—real estate. The

pressure to develop subdivisions and golf courses on every last, highly valuable inch of available coastal property is intense. Environmental law is for some a nuisance to be gotten around. This tension is the subtext of everything, from elections to infrastructure to public school education to which watering-hole people choose to frequent. Take a side. Our local newspaper unquestionably has.

The local paper's version of truth is constantly rebutted for its misrepresentations and insinuations. Starting with city council members who have gone on record with their frustration and refusal even to read the paper, many consider it advocacy rather than journalism. Ask for a correction or clarification and, if one appears, it will likely have a snarky editor's note appended. In any case, once something falsely damaging is out

in circulation, it's too late.

That's why it was such a breath of fresh air when an online citizen journalist stepped up to offer a different point of view. More than that, Barry Parr has brought integrity, wit and professionalism to Coastsider.com. Though familiar with newsrooms as a result of his work designing early Web sites for Silicon Valley news outlets such as the San Jose Mercury News, Parr had no professional reporting experience. He's gotten his cub training as a middle-aged, computer-age Thomas Paine—a classic watchdog journalist, with a take-no-prisoners pay scale to match. [See Parr's story below.]

To the amusement and relief of devoted readers, Parr has at times posted line-edited-for-accuracy versions of pieces featured in the weekly. He has outed those who would intimidate or

suppress opposing points of view. He has created a civilized space for alternative voices—and unsponsored truth.

It might sound overblown, but Coastsider.com provides an unbelievably critical public service. It's a locus for the kind of civic trust and independence on which the idea of journalism, indeed democracy, is based. And he doesn't even own a printing press. ■

Leslie Dreyfous McCarthy, a 1995 Nieman Fellow and former national writer for The Associated Press, has come in for her share of local newspaper coverage as the author of a controversial local ballot initiative and an advocate for environmental responsibility and smart-growth on the California coast.

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Things I Wish I'd Known Before I Became a Citizen Journalist

In May 2004, Barry Parr, a former Web site architect for the San Jose Mercury News and CNET's News.com, introduced his own new Web site to an online audience. His initial goal was to apply what he'd learned about building news sites to the California coastal community where he lived. He described Coastsider—the name he gave his Web site—as “a community Web site for coastal San Mateo County.” Readers who came to this site, he said, would be able “to find out what's happening now in this amazing community, dig deeper into topics that interest you, and discuss these things with your fellow residents.” Until Parr started to gather local news and commentary on this Web site, he had not practiced journalism. In this article, Parr writes about what he would like to have understood better before he launched his site and found himself becoming a journalist.

By Barry Parr

For starters, I wish I'd known I was becoming a citizen journalist—before it actually happened. My original plan was to set up a little Web site where community members could share news and link to interesting Bay Area newspaper stories featuring a San Mateo County Coastsider angle.

Sometimes I feel like we live in one of those weird little towns that kept popping up in “Twilight Zone” episodes. The Coastsider, or coastal San Mateo County, is a 1950's town separated from

San Francisco and Silicon Valley by a wall of fog and a cliff-hugging highway ominously called the “Devil's Slide.” We still have Halloween costume parades on Main Street, run into our kids' teachers in restaurants, and pick up our mail at the post office.

And our only local newspaper is a weekly. Nominally we're in the coverage area of the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Jose Mercury News. But you wouldn't know it from reading them. Until I started my site, we Coastsiders

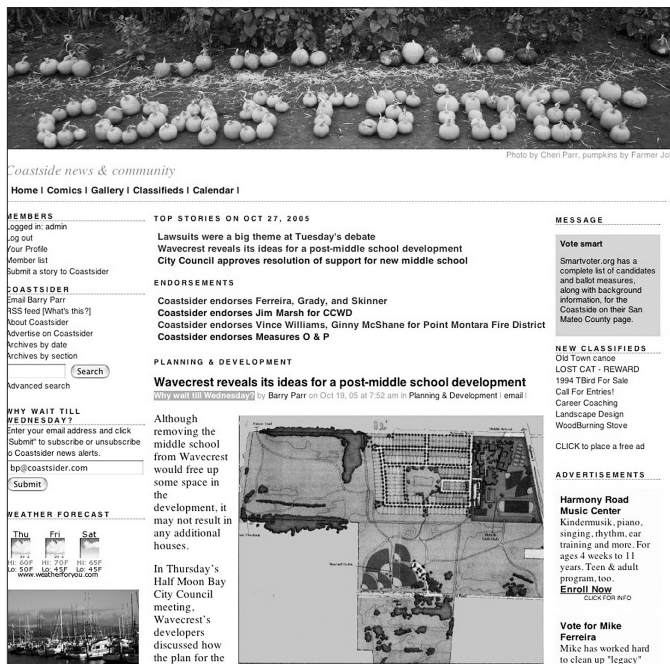
had to depend on the weekly for the news. If you've ever mourned the blandness of corporate journalism, you might have forgotten the pungent taste of old-fashioned, biased, winner-take-all journalism. Imagine a small-town Colonel Robert McCormick or Harry Chandler and you have an idea how many of us feel about our local paper.

There's one way the Coastsider is not stuck in the '50's. We have the Internet. My original plan was to build a Web site using the contributions of my friends

and neighbors, among whom many were already tearing up the infosphere with pithy posts on a local e-mail list. It would be a place where local experts could help me and others like me understand the issues that mattered in our community. I decided to call it Coastsider.

Despite all my planning, Coastsider became something I hadn't anticipated. The good news is that it turned out much better than I'd hoped, both for the community and me. I learned a few things along the way and realized what I wish I'd known before.

1. I wish I'd known how difficult it is to get smart people who write well to post on a Web site. Suddenly, faced with the prospect of writing for an online publication, all those clever writers clammed up. If I was going to have information on Coastsider, I was going to have to write it myself. So there I was, happily running links to meager Coastsider news in the regional dailies, when someone e-mailed me a tip on a real news story that hadn't been covered by the local paper. An endangered frog had been sighted in the middle of the most contentious development site on the coast. I called up the biologist who'd discovered the hapless frog and learned that he was happy to talk to me. Until that moment, my reportorial background consisted of a year of high school journalism class, which I'd managed to skate through without actually having to interview anyone. The biologist not only gave me a great story but also a picture of the endangered frog squatting in the field in question.
2. I wish I'd known how easy it is to get people to talk to you. Well, most of the time, anyway, I get calls back from public officials and private parties. And I've discovered some people choose not to return my calls when they don't like the way I cover the news. Perhaps most startling, I've also now seen firsthand that what appears in the newspaper is not necessarily



Homepage of Coastsider.

- what happened. On more than one occasion, after covering a story, I've been surprised to read an account in our local newspaper that is completely different from my own.
3. I wish I'd known how fun it is to beat the competition. I would have started in the news business a lot sooner. It's really addictive. There are weeks now when every story on the front page of the local paper has already been covered in Coastsider. And I love it. You might think I have an unfair advantage, competing with a weekly. But I'm just one guy working part time and they have a half-dozen full-time editors and reporters backed by a newspaper corporation that owns a lot of weekly newspapers. In thinking about the competition, my motto is "Coastsider is not about what's wrong with the local paper." Any news source needs to succeed on its own terms. It needs to beat the competition, but the competition can't be its reason for existing.
4. I wish I'd known how hard it is to do journalism well. I've now learned by doing it how time-consuming it is to report, write, edit and fact-check news stories with integrity. Every citizen journalist is also a citizen publisher. My roles as editor, publisher, reporter, citizen and neighbor are

constantly in conflict. I can't be objective, because I have a point of view. And Coastsider is fresher and more interesting when I don't try to hide it. To abandon objectivity, I must replace it with other strong, clearly established values. I've chosen openness, accuracy, fairness and thoroughness. To be honest, it would be easier to let everyone have a say, regardless of how valid their opinions. One reason I'm able to write from a very personal point of view and keep a large audience happy is that everyone is encouraged to add comments to stories. If I get my facts wrong, someone is always ready to point it out.

5. I wish I'd fully anticipated the depth of this conflict from the beginning, but I'm starting to understand it. The only thing you can do is to wear your point of view on your sleeve and try to be fair. One way I signal my readers that they're entering an objectivity-free zone is by writing my news stories in the first person. Readers welcome a point of view—as long as it's clear what you're doing.
6. I wish I'd known how influential I would become. I'm now reaching about 2,000 readers every week, a significant fraction of our local paper's circulation of 7,000. When you Google local bigwigs, the first result is almost always a Coastsider story. Coastsider is usually the top result when you search most local issues.
7. I wish I'd known how many friends I'd make doing this. In the past year, I've met dozens of people through Coastsider and gotten strong expressions of support from dozens of others. These days when I go downtown or to the post office, I bump into people I know. I've become integrated into this community in a way that I'd never been before.

I don't wear the label "citizen journalist" comfortably. It implies that the roles

of citizen and journalist are separate, and I'm some weird sort of hybrid. All journalists are citizens, aren't we?

I wish I could know now how this story would end. In its current state, Coastsider could generate enough ad revenue to be a good part-time job, and its audience is growing steadily, doubling in the past six months. I'm beginning to wonder whether it could be a career. I could make it deeper

and do more in-depth coverage of the Coastsider. Or I could make it broader and cover similar issues in neighboring coastal communities. What I've come to realize is that the Web is an ideal medium for delivering ultralocal news and bringing a community together. As much as I love the printed page, I've done things with Coastsider that would have been impossible without the Internet. ■

Since starting Coastsider (<http://coastsider.com>), Barry Parr has joined Jupiter Research as a media analyst. He was one of the architects of the San Jose Mercury News and CNET's News.com Web sites. He also writes the Weblog MediaSavvy (<http://mediasavvy.com/>).

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Defining a Journalist's Function

In one approach to finding a definition, it turns out that *being* a journalist is about *doing* journalism.

By William F. Woo

The emergence of citizen or grassroots journalism inevitably raises the question of whether bloggers, the operators of online news sites, or even freelancers should be considered journalists with the same legal rights as reporters who are employed by traditional news organizations. Some interpretations of the California shield law assert that they do, though so far this has been little help to the unnamed defendants sued by Apple Computer (Apple v. Does) in 2004 for leaking details about the company's new products to online sites.

That the defendants should be treated as journalists resided at the heart of their case. As journalists, they sought the protection of both the First Amendment and California's shield law. Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge James P. Kleinberg found such arguments unpersuasive and irrelevant. The case, he declared in deciding for Apple, was not about journalists and privilege; it was about trade secrets and "stolen property."

In addressing whether the defendants were journalists, the judge said the question was beside the point: "The California legislature has not carved out any exception to these statutes for

journalists, bloggers or anyone else," he wrote in his decision, which was handed down last March. Moreover, Kleinberg stated:

"Defining what is a 'journalist' has become more complicated as the variety of media has expanded. But even if the movants [defendants] are journalists, this is not the equivalent of a free pass."

And, in reaffirming Apple's right to protect trade secrets, Kleinberg went on to state:

"The Court sees no reason to abandon that right even if it were to assume, *arguendo*, movants are 'journalists' as they claim to be."

The case is now under appeal, but the argument that the defendants are journalists entitled to special protection is far from resolved. An amicus brief filed in a state appellate court for the defendants states that to serve the important purposes of the First Amendment, this "newsgatherers' privilege" should be interpreted to allow for a multitude of "vital sources of information."

The brief, submitted on April 11th by Lauren Gelman, associate director of the Stanford Center for Internet and Society, declares that:

"The applicability of the newsgath-

ers' privilege is determined not by the reporter's formal status as a 'professional journalist,' but rather by the reporter's functional conduct in gathering information with the purpose of disseminating widely to the public."

The brief, in short, proposed a functional test for determining who is a journalist.

Pondering the Definition

As it happened, the decision in the Apple case in March also had started me thinking about a functional definition for journalists. I had a telephone conversation or two about it with my old Nieman classmate, Philip Meyer, the Knight Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina, and on April 7, 2005, I sent him a memorandum setting forth some ideas, which I discuss here.

The traditional definition of a journalist is based on employment or association. The California shield law, whose language is typical of such measures and that appears in Article 1, Section 2 (b) of the state constitution, says that: "A publisher, editor, reporter, or other person connected with or employed upon a newspaper, magazine, or other periodi-

cal publication, or by a press association or wire service, or any person who has been so connected or employed, shall not be adjudged in contempt by a judicial, legislative, or administrative body ... for refusing to disclose the source of any information procured while so connected or employed for publication in a newspaper, magazine or other periodical publication, or for refusing to disclose any unpublished information obtained or prepared in gathering, receiving or processing of information for communication to the public.” The law also protects “a radio or television news reporter or other person connected with or employed by a radio or television station.”

It is noteworthy that in addition to the employment and association requirements the only words directed at actually *doing* journalism are concerned with refusing to disclose “unpublished information obtained in the reporting process” or “receiving or processing information to be communicated to the public.” The last—communication to the public—is relevant to a point I’ll make later about the functional requirement for an audience.

It had been thought or hoped by organizations such as California’s First Amendment Project that the law’s protection would apply to “stringers, freelancers and perhaps authors.” From there, it would only be a short step to include bloggers, operators of online sites, people who send their cell-phone photographs of newsworthy people or events to be published, broadcast or posted, and other distributors of information using new technology and software.

As I thought more about all of this, I came up with a list of elements of a functional approach to journalism and how they might work.

1. It rejects both the employment/association-based definition of a journalist as well as the Cartesian definition: I think (or say) I am a journalist, therefore I *am* a journalist. It holds: I *do* journalism, therefore I am a journalist. The lonely pamphleteer, the blogger, the metropolitan daily reporter, the soap box orator in the

park all enjoy the protection of the First Amendment, but only the first three are likely to be covered by a shield law that turns on function.

2. It relies on tradition, common sense, and an appeal to “the reasonable person,” sometimes called the average person (or the average man) or an audience of reasonable people. The concept is widely used in law and moral philosophy. A recent Supreme Court decision in an employment case involving a 53-year-old female elevator operator held that to demonstrate a hostile working environment, a showing would have to be made that “the working conditions were so intolerable that a *reasonable person* would have felt compelled to resign.” (The emphasis is mine.) What is a reasonable person? Legal dictionaries suggest that he or she is appropriately informed, capable, aware of the law, and fair-minded. However extraordinary the circumstances, such a person will act and think in a way that is reasonable. And there are examples from moral philosophy. In Sissela Bok’s book “Lying,” she asserts that publicity is crucial to all moral choice. “The test of publicity asks which lies, if any, would survive the appeal for justification to reasonable persons,” she writes.
3. It would clarify shield laws such as California’s, which extends protection “for refusing to disclose the source of any information procured while so connected or employed for publication in a newspaper, magazine or other periodical publication.” Under the functional principle, the protected activity would have to have occurred while the employee of such an organization was *doing journalism*. That requirement, I suspect, is implied in the shield law, though it is not stated. But merely being employed by a news organization would not protect someone from the consequences of nonjournalistic activities.
4. It would set forth some (though not all) definitions of what constitutes *doing journalism*. By the phrase “not all,” I have in mind activities

that would pass the test of reasonable people on a case-by-case basis.

Qualifying for Protection

To qualify for protection, not all of the definitions need apply. But some might be sufficiently compelling in the absence of others. Here, then, are some examples of what might be considered doing journalism.

- It means there is a *story* (or a series of stories/articles) that is being pursued. That is, the activity is aimed at producing a journalistic work product. Whether it’s a story would have to meet the test of the reasonable person. In most cases, I suspect, he or she would not have to think too hard about it. Whether the story is published or distributed is relevant but not controlling. Many journalists pursue stories that don’t pan out. Nonetheless they do legitimate journalism in the reporting.
- It means that the work product or story is aimed at an *audience*. It must be intended to be read or seen or heard. The poet, the lonely pamphleteer or blogger (or New York Times reporter) writing only for personal satisfaction would not qualify for shield protection.
- It means that there is a *public benefit* to the story or work product. The shield laws themselves exist because of the assumption that there is a public benefit to journalism and as a result society is justified in extending special protection to those who practice it.

I do not think, as a practical matter, that a public benefit would be hard to recognize or define were the question put to our reasonable people. In *Roth v. United States*, the Supreme Court held that one test for obscenity is that the material is “without redeeming social importance.” In other words, it is without public benefit.

The court also recognized in *Roth* that “ideas having even the slightest social importance—unorthodox ideas, controversial ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion”—have

the full protection of the First Amendment. Under my proposed functional definition of journalism, the phrase *slightest redeeming social importance* would extend to the work of citizen or grass-roots journalists, as long as they were *doing journalism*.

At its core, the functional definition of journalism is much like the functional definition of a duck. If it looks like journalism, acts like journalism, and produces the work of journalism, then it's journalism, and the people doing it are journalists. Whoever they are. ■

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When the Internet Reveals a Story

‘The challenge for me was to get the story off the Internet and into print.’

By Seth Hettena

Last year I was working a Sunday shift at my job in the San Diego bureau of The Associated Press (A.P.) when I typed three words into Google that led me to photos posted on the Internet of Navy Seals and their Iraqi prisoners. The resulting story would trigger a criminal investigation by the military as well as a lawsuit filed against me by a group of six Navy Seals. Recently a judge threw out the case, allowing me to tell the back story that began on that quiet afternoon.

I had been covering the mysterious death of Manadel al-Jamadi, an Iraqi terror suspect who met a gruesome end in CIA custody in 2003 in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Photos of al-Jamadi's bruised, ice-packed corpse emerged in the scandal at the notorious prison. Hours before he died, al-Jamadi was captured from his home by Navy Seals on a joint CIA-special operations mission. Last year, a group of Seals were prosecuted in military court in San Diego for abusing al-Jamadi. The secrecy surrounding the case was extreme; defendants weren't named in most court proceedings.

That Sunday, I was chatting with a source who had a copy of al-Jamadi's autopsy. Buried in the report was a reference to Camp Jenny Pozzi, a Seal base in Iraq. So I did what I imagine every journalist would do these days: I typed the name of the base into Google, the popular Internet search engine. Of the

few Web sites that popped up, one stood out—a commercial photo-sharing Web site called smugmug.com. Amazingly, what I saw on this site were photographs of Navy Seal Team Five in Iraq, hundreds of images of the super-secret Seals smiling for the camera, stretching in their bunks, playing volleyball, drinking beer, and eating cake on the Fourth of July.

More ominously, however, there were about 40 photographs involving prisoners. In an eerie echo of the Abu Ghraib images, grinning Navy Seals took turns sitting on top of hooded and handcuffed detainees in the back of a pickup truck. Other of these images appeared to be taken in the immediate aftermath of raids on civilian homes, and they offered an unusual glimpse into commando operations in Iraq. In one, an Iraqi was on his back with a boot on his chest. Another image showed a man with an automatic weapon pointed at his head and a gloved thumb jabbed into his throat. Blood dripped from some of the prisoners and someone had blacked out faces of many, but not all, of them.

Once I saw these photographs, I couldn't ignore them. There was a story here. Some of them were dated May 2003, which could make them among the earliest evidence of prisoner abuse in Iraq. The challenge for me was to get the story off the Internet and into print.

Publishing a Story About Prisoner Abuse

I let my editors know what I'd found and e-mailed links to the Web site so they could view the images themselves. Guidance I received from editors at A.P. headquarters in New York was to focus on whether the photos showed anything that might be illegal. With that in mind, Justin Pritchard, A.P.'s news editor in Los Angeles, and I mapped out a reporting plan, and I provided him with detailed updates throughout the process.

At the outset, we wanted to make sure the images weren't fakes. I tracked down the home address of where the wife of a Seal whose name appeared on the site lived. One day, I dropped by her San Diego apartment and, since no one was home, I left a note asking someone to call me. The Seal's wife called a short while later and told me that she had posted all the photos her husband had brought back from Iraq. She was also upset that I had looked at her personal family photos. When I pointed out that there were photos of prisoners, she said that those were "CIA photos" and went on to imply that her husband and other Seals were rounding up people wanted by the spy agency.

It was becoming clearer to me that there was a story that needed to be told. Our next step was to bring copies of photographs to Naval Special Warfare Command, the Seals' headquarters in

Coronado, outside San Diego. To show how easily the site could be accessed, I had ordered copies of photos mailed to me through smugmug.com for 29 cents each, and I shared these copies with the Seals' public affairs staff. Soon the Seals opened a criminal investigation, and we heard that the photos were being circulated at the Pentagon.

The A.P.'s attorneys reviewed the photos, and on December 3, 2004 we decided to move the story, along with 15 photos just as we found them on the Internet.

The story was explosive. Hundreds of media outlets around the country ran the story, including The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and CNN. Media organizations in the Middle East reacted with predictable outrage. Cuba put a billboard with the photos outside Guantanamo Bay—a point the Seals would later use against us. General Mark Kimmitt, a former military spokesman in Iraq, told the pan-Arab television network the next day that the photos showed the acts of an isolated few.

A few days after the story ran, Naval Special Warfare Command said some of the photos were taken for legitimate intelligence-gathering purposes and showed commandos using approved procedures. For instance, in a photo of a detainee with a weapon pointed at his head, the Seals said the weapon wasn't being used to terrorize him. Rather, a flashlight attached to the top of the weapon was being used to illuminate his face. But the Seals offered no explanation for other photos, including the grinning Seals photographed sitting on top of prisoners. At a minimum, Navy policy forbids such unofficial detainee photos.

Later our reporting revealed that Army soldiers in Iraq were worried about the way members of Seal Team Five were treating prisoners. According to Army documents in 2003, an interrogator said some of the prisoners brought in by the Seals "appeared to be very severely beaten." A former soldier who worked at a detainee holding facility in 2003 told me it was common knowledge Seals were beating prison-

ers, and it became something of a joke in his unit's morning briefings.

The Lawsuit Against Our Reporting

One day in December, someone knocked at the door of my home and handed my wife a letter. A lawyer representing the Seal wife who posted the photos claimed everything I'd written about our conversation was untrue. The next day, six Navy Seals and two of their wives sued the A.P. and me. (Two Seals and one wife later dropped out of the case.)

The lawsuit, filed in San Diego Superior Court and then moved to federal court, accused us, among other things, of invasion of privacy, publication of private facts, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The Seals claimed we deliberately endangered their lives and distorted the truth "in a quest to break the latest unsupported story against our troops in Iraq."

The attorney for the Seals (who never revealed their names) was James Huston. His name might be familiar to fans of military techno-thrillers. He's written several mass-market novels featuring Navy Seal Kent "Rat" Rathman, an undercover CIA operative who hunts terrorists. Huston, a former Navy aviator, still had his old pilot's swagger. In court papers, he insinuated that I hacked into the smugmug.com Web site. He said his clients feared for their lives. He also suggested that I committed a felony straight out of the Valerie Plame case by publishing identifiable photos of "covert operatives." This charge ignored the fact that, unlike CIA operatives, Seals' identities are not classified.

The lawsuit generated a second wave of coverage. I'd be lying if I said I didn't lose any sleep over it. I think my mother, too, preferred to see my name in bold at the top of a story, not in the middle of one in her beloved New York Times. The A.P. rushed to my defense and never wavered. "We stand together," A.P.'s Assistant General Counsel David Tomlin told me. Attorneys who the A.P. hired to represent me—David Schulz in New York and Robert Steiner in

San Diego—parried the Seals' claims with the strong protections afforded to journalists by California law. The state's "anti-SLAPP" law (SLAPP stands for Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) allows defendants to obtain quick dismissal of claims based on speech about matters of public importance unless the plaintiffs can show they are likely to win. Defendants can also demand reimbursement of their legal fees.

On July 12, 2005, U.S. District Judge Jeffrey T. Miller decided the Seals could not win and dismissed the case. "The Associated Press merely distributed a truthful story, with photos that depict a topic of great public interest," Miller wrote. The judge said he had reviewed the photos and found they showed possible abuse: "Plaintiffs voluntarily assumed a position of public notoriety when they photographed themselves engaged in actions that seemed to suggest possible mistreatment of captive Iraqis and then allowed Jane Doe to post the photos on the Internet." In August, the Seals agreed not to appeal the dismissal, and the A.P. and I agreed not to seek reimbursement of our legal expenses.

In the end, however, the larger issues raised by our initial story got lost and distorted. Questions about who the commandos were capturing, why they needed to use so much force, and whether they faced any consequences after the photos were revealed have never been fully answered and remain shrouded in government secrecy.

Earlier this year, the Seals told us the criminal investigation into how the photos were made and posted on the Internet was closed. A Freedom of Information Act request I filed in August asked for the results of such an investigation. As this story goes to press, my request is still being reviewed. ■

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Hurricane Katrina Coverage

“Let me begin with a confession. After watching television coverage of Katrina for nearly every wakeful moment over the first few dramatic days, I quit. Cold turkey,” writes **Curtis Wilkie**, who holds the Cook Chair in Journalism at the University of Mississippi, after a lengthy reporting career at The Boston Globe that included being a correspondent in New Orleans, where his home is located. “TV news had morphed into a mutant reality show: ‘Survivor’ gone berserk.” With those words, Wilkie opens our collection of reflective essays written in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by journalists who either went to the devastated region to report or grew up in a place the floodwaters destroyed.

Will Sutton, the Scripps Howard Visiting Professional at the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications at Hampton University, grew up in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans and recalls a vibrant neighborhood routinely ignored by local and national media. “As we look for what ‘sells,’ improving the human condition doesn’t sell as well as news where there is clear conflict . . . news where more affluent people are affected,” he writes, and explains why the press should pay attention now.

Carolyn Cole, a photojournalist with the Los Angeles Times, shares words and images about her experiences in New Orleans, and her photographs also accompany a poignant account by Los Angeles Times correspondent **Elizabeth Mehren** of the human misery and resilience her stories portrayed. Mehren writes, “It is impossible to exaggerate the devastation I encountered in 10 days on the Mississippi Gulf Coast immediately after Hurricane Katrina.”

Boston Globe reporter **Kevin Cullen** writes about the reporting of rumors and how race played out in the coverage of Katrina: “Class and race are inextricably bound up in New Orleans, and trying to make sense of it was as hard as trying to get accurate information.” From Southeast Asia, freelance journalist **Philip J. Cunningham** shares observations about reporters’ frequent use of the words “Third World” in their hurricane coverage. And **Nuri Vallbona**, photojournalist with The Miami Herald, describes photographing Katrina’s destruction from a plane, then later at ground level. “. . . each bank of the chopper revealed more devastation, more than I’d seen in my career as a photojournalist,” she writes.

The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune cartoonist, **Steve Kelley**, explains what it was like to create cartoons about Katrina’s aftermath when he was stuck thousands of miles away, unable to get back home. “People would ask how I could draw cartoons about a story from so far away. The answer is that political cartoonists . . . don’t report the news, we tailgate it,” he writes. And **Mary C. Curtis**, executive features editor and columnist at The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer, offers journalists some questions to think about in the aftermath of what Katrina revealed about poverty and race, as she wonders whether “this catastrophe will affect the topics that journalists decide to cover and how they practice their craft.” ■

Words Triumph Over Images

‘The human element was accentuated, and the best of the writing was impressionistic.’

By Curtis Wilkie

Let me begin with a confession. After watching television coverage of Katrina for nearly every wakeful moment over the first few dramatic days, I quit. Cold turkey. TV news had morphed into a mutant reality show: “Survivor” gone berserk. Even The Weather Channel seemed to be anchored by Chicken Little. So I turned it off. An odd reaction, I know, for someone who spent nearly 40 years as a reporter and visited his share of catastrophes. But I was suffering sensory overload and found my spirits in free fall, because my home is in New Orleans.

Long ago, I had given up on radio, the happy medium of my childhood, as a news source. With the exception of National Public Radio, the airwaves seem to have been taken over by talk shows promulgating nonsense, rumors and invective or music stations carrying the sameness of Clear Channel play lists. I’m not adept at the Internet, the latest means to obtain information—as well as all sorts of misinformation. I am—another admission—wedded to print journalism. So I began to rely entirely on newspapers as I followed events from Oxford, Mississippi, where I teach and have a second home. And as the disaster played out for weeks, I felt satisfied I was getting a clearer and more detailed picture from the written words than from the frantic scenes on TV.

Television had the advantage of immediacy and the ability to transmit visual images. But so much of what I saw and heard in those early days was unfiltered, not always factual, and too often failed to provide any context.

While Brian Williams of NBC News provided strong first-hand reporting from the Superdome within hours after the storm hit, others relied on hearsay and repeated it in apocalyptic voices.

I heard one correspondent reporting “from the heart of the French Quarter,” yet saw in the background that he was actually speaking from a part of the city we know as the CBD (Central Business District).

Not everyone was as careful as Jeanne Meserve of CNN. During a live telecast,

Operating under heavy stress in difficult conditions can be an alibi, but it’s not a good excuse for sloppy journalism.

she was asked by her anchor to describe conditions in one neighborhood. She simply said she did not know, that she had not yet been able to reach that part of the city. Others seemed reluctant to acknowledge that they did not know. Instead, they spoke, in authoritative terms, of that which they knew little.

When the city began to flood, we were told that the waters were drowning “the Lower Ninth Ward.” It begged the question: Where is the Ninth Ward? New Orleanians knew, but many of them were scrambling for their lives. Those in the rest of the country were deep into crisis coverage before finally learning its location—after someone thought to cut through the clutter of graphics and crawls to display an old-fashioned device: a map.

Another kvetch: Television played repeated loops of video shot from helicopter fly-bys, grim sights of shattered buildings or families stranded on rooftops or frightened people wading through foul waters, without any explanation of where the pictures had been

taken. Some of the scenes, it turns out, were coming from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Katrina’s devastation was terrible there, too. But that part of the story was given short shrift during the first days of coverage.

I have empathy for the reporters, on TV and in print, whose knowledge of New Orleans did not extend beyond Bourbon Street. Many times during my years as a national and foreign correspondent for The Boston Globe I arrived at the scene of a news story a complete stranger. I committed gaffes and gave credence to bogus information, too. But I also learned that these experiences cry for a reporter to learn quickly as much background as possible about the assignment, to be able to ask the right questions rather than to appear to know all the answers, to put the story in proper perspective, and to be skeptical of tales that might heighten the drama but prove to be false.

Reckless Reporting

Operating under heavy stress in difficult conditions can be an alibi, but it’s not a good excuse for sloppy journalism.

Katrina gave new meaning to the term “urban legends.” They grew up in the wake of the storm like mold and mildew in the flooded homes of New Orleans: stories we now know to be overwrought. So far as I know, the first news organization to investigate the credibility of lurid accounts of murder, rape and wanton terrorism was The Times-Picayune of New Orleans, which heroically continued to publish under the worst circumstances. Others followed their lead and discovered many exaggerations and lies and cases where officials, who should have been dependable sources, turned out to have been unreliable.

From my vantage point, I became suspicious after reading—high in a front page story in *The New York Times*—a fuzzy anecdote concerning a Corps of Engineers crew that came under fire from mysterious assailants. Police officers were said to have retaliated, shooting dead four or five of the gang members. It was attributed to police sources. This was one hell of an episode, I thought, and waited to learn more. The story simply disappeared.

New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin's assertion on the third day that "most likely, thousands" of bodies would be discovered amid the carnage titillated the tabloids and served as the sound bite of the day. His estimate helped to underscore the dire situation in his city, but it was highly inflated. Before the month was out, Nagin's police superintendent, Eddie Compass, paid with his job for his own fabrications of anarchy in the city.

In these cases, reporters were unwitting accomplices. They trusted official sources, when it would have been better to have sniffed the malodor. When I was in the Middle East, correspondents frequently encountered wild and flagrantly biased testimony from partisans in conflicts. These highly charged accounts were known, with some amusement in the trade, as "stories too good to check," because we knew we'd invariably lose rich and colorful copy if, indeed, we double-checked. But double-check we did, and the tales usually wound up on the newsroom's equivalent of the cutting-room floor.

Throughout September, when I basically confined my television watching to baseball and football, I kept up with post-Katrina through wire stories in local papers and reading *The New York Times* and *The Clarion-Ledger* of Jackson, which defied Gannett's customary penury over the news hole

by providing pages and pages on the plight in Mississippi.

The coverage was comprehensive, yet measured. The most powerful stories singled out individuals caught up in the greatest crisis of their lifetimes. The human element was accentuated, and the best of the writing was impressionistic. Of the hundreds of stories I saw, I especially remember Dan Barry's article in *The New York Times*, a macabre account of the horror, focused on an abandoned corpse in downtown New Orleans. Reading it, I thought: I would always prefer Conrad to cheesy television where desperate people were treated like "Desperate Housewives." ■

Curtis Wilkie holds the Cook Chair in Journalism at the University of Mississippi. His house in the French Quarter survived the storm.

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New Orleans' Lower Nine Fades, Fades, Fades Away

'Our neighborhood should've gotten more media attention well before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast.'

By Will Sutton

Until recently, not many people around the world, or around the nation, had heard of the New Orleans neighborhood where I grew up. As a matter of fact, not many in Louisiana or in the Crescent City could find their way to the Lower Ninth Ward if they were forced to do so.

The Lower Nine, as we often call it, has been a bit of a forgotten land. If you had a business, church, home, friends or a school there, you knew how to get in and get out before dark. Otherwise, you might have heard something about it, but you didn't want to know much, and you really didn't have much reason to want to know much about our part of the city. However, for those of us who lived there for whatever length

of time, it was home. It was where we kids played kickball, where neighbors lit paper Japanese lanterns at night, where we would watch the Holy Cross High School band or football team for entertainment, or catch crawfish in the canal or along the rocky shores of the Mississippi River.

Heck, when it got dark and the lights went on we, too, left—except we left the streets to go inside to the loving arms of our families, a delicious meal of red beans and rice, and the warmth of family fellowship.

The Ninth Ward might have seemed pretty bad to others, but we saw more good than bad. Like many other neighborhoods, we went with what we had.

Our Neighborhood

Most of us weren't there because we wanted to be there but because it was what our families could afford. Some of us were trying to move on up to a better quality apartment or home in the Ninth. We could've been in a shotgun house in another neighborhood or the brick house we had in the Ninth. Some in the Ninth wouldn't think of leaving. Some were trying to move on up to other New Orleans neighborhoods. When we were able, we moved to a tree-lined neighborhood called Gentilly just a few years later. Some we left behind were just struggling day-by-day, not thinking much about the future.

What's been missing in a lot of the

media coverage is a sense of who used to be in the neighborhood. I went to high school with a guy named Antonio Domino. He was named after his dad. His dad had another, more familiar name, however. Fats. Fats Domino. I remember going to their home after school and band practice sometimes and wondering why a man with a lot of money would have such a large house in our old neighborhood when he could live almost anywhere else. The real answer, of course, was because it was home. It was comfortable. They were with family and friends. Besides, another neighborhood might not have understood why Domino wanted a purple roof atop his home.

This section of one of the nation's most prominent tourist cities is seldom visited by residents of other city neighborhoods or tourists. Water surrounds it on three sides: the mighty Mississippi River to the south, the beautiful Bayou Bienvenue to the east, and the sometimes stench-filled Industrial Canal to the west. It's not that businessmen, government bureaucrats, journalists and politicians never found their way to our neighborhood. It's just that whenever they came, they so frequently left without any real hope or promise among those they left behind.



The author at age 13 as a Boy Scout.

Blacks and whites attended Semmes Elementary School, just a short walk down North Rampart Street from our home. People might forget that white folks used to live in the Ninth, too. They really did. Like us, they were working to provide homes for their families and working to make a better life. There were fine times at school. But this was the 1960's, so there was definite friction. One of my sisters was called a nigger and bullied by some of the white kids who didn't want her there. You see,

the Lower Nine wasn't always nearly all black.

My family wasn't rich, and we weren't poor. My dad was a newly minted PhD who landed a job as a professor at Dillard University, a small, historically black college where he and my mom went to school, met and fell in love. Though there were two parents and six kids, we always knew we'd eat dinner each day, wore nice clothes and shoes, and did a few family entertainment things. But money was tight, and the one-story house where we lived on Rampart Street was what we could afford. We kids felt good that we could live in a brick house. Cousin Lynne Aung lived right behind us with her husband. That made it even more special.

Sure, the impoverished neighborhood has had its share of crime, poor education, and worse. Still, some of us rose from the pressures to become reasonably successful. One of my brothers and one of my sisters are doctors. One brother is a mortgage broker and an independent businessman. A sister is a university professor of research library science. Another brother, like me, is a journalist. Oh, and Cousin Lynne is a successful psychologist in California, who once headed that state's psychology association.

That hard-working mother of ours raised six kids and still managed to earn a masters and teach elementary education at the college level. That hard-working father of ours sometimes worked two jobs to keep everything going through our times in the Ninth, in Gentilly, and even after I left home for college. That man became a college president in his home state of Mississippi.

The Lower Nine has produced some famous names who have stayed in the neighborhood, some who have wanted to leave but couldn't, and a bunch of black professionals like us who moved to the Gentilly, New Orleans East or West Bank neighborhoods. Post-Katrina, a lot of those professionals who have tried to make the old neighborhood more than it has been aren't likely to return. Those who moved to other neighborhoods with fond memories of the Ninth Ward aren't likely to return to the city. We're talking about Catholic and pub-



Three generations of the Sutton family gather in a sibling's New Orleans home in 1992. Will Sutton is second from right, standing.

lic school teachers, firefighters, police officers, longshoremen, doctors and attorneys. Many of them have left the city for other parts of Louisiana, Texas and states beyond.

We always knew the city was below sea level. We even knew that we were lower than other parts of the city and expected flooding with heavy rains. If there were only puddles, no standing water, it meant the good Lord had granted us a reprieve. When heavy rains, tropical storms, or tremendous hurricanes like Hurricane Betsy in 1965 or Camille in 1969 hit New Orleans, we frequently suffered more than any other section of the city.

Our family's parish church, St. David's, was about seven blocks north of the Mississippi and 10 to 12 blocks to the east of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal. I earned my Eagle Scout award at St. David's. So did my brother, Ave. We made *The Louisiana Weekly*. I don't remember making *The Times-Picayune*, the major daily. Far too often it's the little "big" things like that that are indicative of what the media think is most important about our neighborhood and others like it. A short public bus ride away is the world-famous French Quarter. The quarter isn't that far away, yet the neighborhoods are worlds apart.

Other city neighborhoods seemed to make the news for all kinds of reasons. Bad news. Good news. Breaking news. Feature news. When it came to our old neighborhood, however, it seemed that we only made television or made the paper when someone was shot and killed or when there was enough water to show cars slowly driving through the floodwaters.

The Vital Role Journalists Can Play

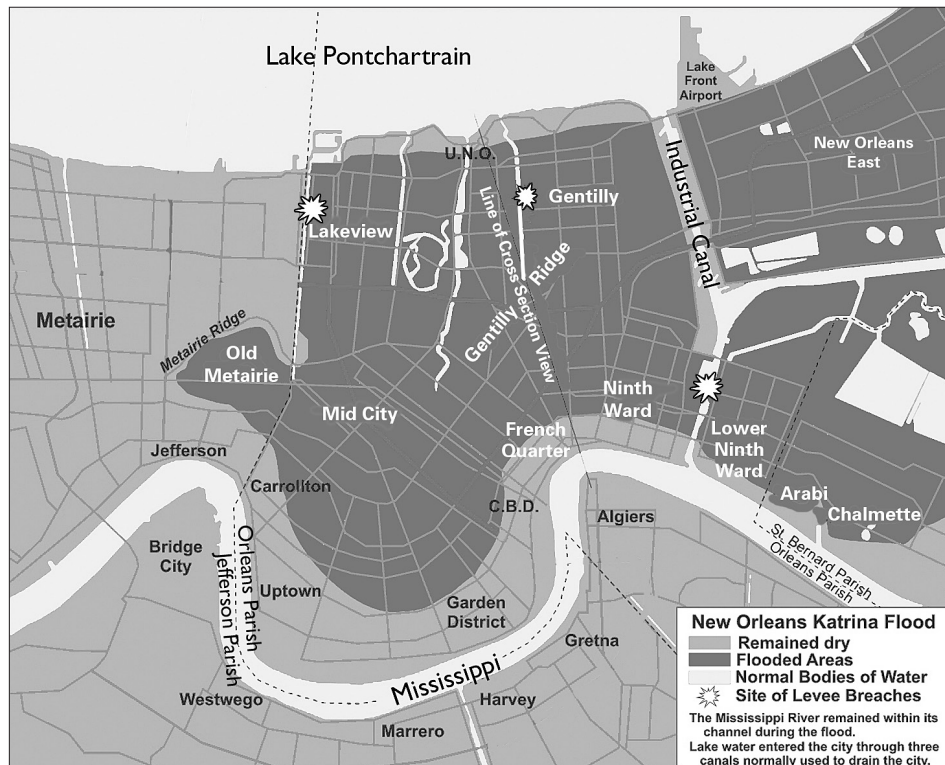
Our neighborhood didn't get a lot of local and national media attention, but we should've. Our neighborhood should've gotten more national media attention well before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. It certainly deserves

the human condition doesn't sell as well as news where there is clear conflict, news where there is immediacy, news where more affluent people are affected. Even so, *The Times-Picayune*, *The Advocate* in Baton Rouge, and other state newspapers and television stations should force the connected and the powerful to discuss these options with

the people whose lives would be affected most.

I fear that most New Orleanians won't have a say about the Crescent City's future. They won't have a say about how the city is rezoned, which parts of the city are razed, which parts are revitalized, and which parts get special jobs attention. It doesn't have to be that way if the news media step up and make these issues important local, state and national issues. This situation isn't a matter for local businessmen and politicians.

It's a matter of great national importance—and it should be covered that way. The media should work to show readers and viewers everywhere why they should care about what happens to New Orleans. Everyone will want to know about future Mardi Gras celebrations, the French Quarter, and whether the annual Jazz Fest will continue, but this is a much bigger story, one that deserves deeper, critical reporting. Without that type of coverage from within and outside of Louisiana, the Lower Ninth Ward and all of New Orleans will never be in the best interest of all. What I knew and what others have known will never be the same. That might be okay with me, depending on whether the media does its job and whether the people have a chance



This map was created by © J. Thomas McGlothlin.

more media attention now that Katrina and Hurricane Rita have devastated so much of the Lower Nine. With more media attention, more journalistic examination of the pros and cons of razing hundreds of businesses and homes in this special part of the city, the news media can be at the center of helping New Orleanians and Louisianians decide whether it is worth it to start from scratch or save what can be saved and make some progress.

There's much debate in the press about public journalism, civic journalism, and other forms of journalism geared toward getting citizens and readers involved in the decision-making. Journalists have some responsibility. Maybe even a lot of responsibility. As we look for what "sells," improving

to have a say. Thank goodness the local daily, the Times-Picayune, has been brave enough to start some serious digging already.

What's happened in the Lower Ninth Ward pre-Katrina is not that unusual. It isn't unlike so many other urban areas or sections of cities like Camden and East Orange, New Jersey; East St. Louis, Illinois, and so on. These other situations simply haven't gained the same amount of coverage, at least not nationally. Things happen there every day and every night that get little or no coverage unless and until a "visitor" to the neighborhood is hurt or killed or unless and until there is a major disaster that just cannot be ignored.

It's a shame that it takes something

horrible to get attention for people who really need help. Maybe the media can bring more attention to the nation's Lower Ninth wards and thereby shine a spotlight on the nation's economic and racial parity, diversity that goes beyond skin color and ethnicity, and go deep enough with investigations and research to show readers and viewers why they should care, how they are being affected, and how they will be affected if somebody, somewhere doesn't do something—and soon. ■

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Virginia. A Hampton graduate, he is the director of the school's Academy of Writing Excellence (AWE). A native of New Orleans and former resident of the city's Lower Ninth Ward, he is at least a fourth-generation New Orleanian who lives in Cary, North Carolina with his wife and son. He is a former president of the National Association of Black Journalists and a cofounder of what became UNITY: Journalists of Color, Inc..

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Witness to the Tragedy

A veteran photojournalist observes that '... even during war the deceased are treated with some respect'

By Carolyn Cole

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was unlike anything I had ever seen in America. I had covered the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11, the Columbine massacre, along with earthquakes and wildfires in California, but this was different. In most disasters I have witnessed, there is finality from the start. But when I arrived in New Orleans on the second day of flooding, masses of people were still trapped in their homes, the Superdome, and stranded on freeway overpasses. I saw people wading chest-deep down Canal Street, along with a pregnant cat swimming for her life. One man stood calmly holding onto a lamppost, only his head showing above water, while others begged to be rescued from the second floor of their homes. In Mississippi, a young boy from Biloxi sat exhausted in the rubble, after he and his parents survived the storm surge by swimming among the rooftops.



Graves remained flooded in the Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans. In this graveyard, some of the crypt doors came open. *Photo by Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times.*



Members of the 82nd Airborne of Fort Bragg, North Carolina went door-to-door in search of New Orleans residents who had not yet been evacuated.



Cesar Martin, 20, was fanned with a Bible by his mother, Linda Brown, as they waited at the New Orleans Convention Center to be evacuated. Martin was suffering from dehydration and lack of food.



Carolyn Cole is a photojournalist with the Los Angeles Times. In 2004 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for feature photography for her coverage of the Liberian civil war. Her work was cited for its "special attention to innocent citizens caught in the conflict."

Residents of New Orleans were exhausted from waiting to be evacuated from the city after days of uncertainty. Many were suffering from dehydration, such as the woman lying down, as they waited to board buses to the Houston Astrodome.

Photos by Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times.



The streets of Mid City, the second oldest neighborhood in New Orleans, were completely flooded.



A family waded towards the New Orleans Superdome, where thousands of people hoped to be evacuated from living conditions that had become almost unbearable.

Photos by Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times.

Rumors, Race and Class Collide

‘Class and race are inextricably bound up in New Orleans, and trying to make sense of it was as hard as trying to get accurate information.’

By Kevin Cullen

After a while, the daily news briefings at the Louisiana State Police complex in Baton Rouge, which served as a command center for relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina, took on a familiar, if increasingly surreal, routine. Governor Kathleen Blanco would talk in a folksy, upbeat way about the unique resilience of Louisianians. Then some big shot from the federal government, Michael Chertoff, the secretary of Homeland Security, or Michael Brown, then known around the White House as “Brownie” and not “the former, disgraced head of FEMA,” would insist that things were well in control when one cursory hip-boot stroll around flooded New Orleans would tell anyone they patently were not.

In the evening, after the governor and Brownie had finished briefing, the Reverend Jesse Jackson would stroll in, usually while print reporters were on deadline and, without a word of introduction, start talking. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, he assured us, was prepared to help if only the neo-cons at the White House would deign to accept aid from this leader whom they have demonized. Just who Jackson was representing, aside from himself, was never quite clear but, after all, he’d managed to get a fleet of buses to the Superdome, which was a lot more than Brownie could say in the days following Katrina. And he’s a preacher, so his words were often more stimulating than a lot of what the officials had to say. With editors howling for copy, his daily sermons managed to be distracting, oddly entertaining, and sometimes illuminating. One evening, Jackson took to the podium to explain that American citizens left homeless by Katrina’s wrath and governmental incompetence are not refugees, they are evacuees.

Jackson also kept telling the press

corps that the feds fumbled the immediate relief effort because most of Katrina’s victims were black and poor. If Jackson’s critics dismiss him as a self-appointed self-promoter, they sometimes fail to give him credit for getting the big picture right. And if his logic is applied to the news coverage, Jackson got that big picture right, too, while huge chunks of the news media got it wrong, as they flooded the airwaves and newspapers with unconfirmed tales of murder, mayhem and anarchy that were exaggerated or just flat out wrong.

So how did we get it so wrong? While many would be loathe to admit it, the idea of poor black folks simultaneously looting Wal-Mart of guns and wide-screen TVs in some apocalyptic “Get white!” frenzy seemed perfectly feasible to many reporters and editors, not to mention readers, listeners and viewers. Hundreds of cowardly cops walking off the job so they could join the looters, but not before gunning down innocents on the streets? Hey, if you saw “The Big Easy,” the 1987 movie with Dennis Quaid and Ellen Barkin, you know the New Orleans Police Department is corrupt.

Chasing Rumors

Katrina unveiled the news media’s bias against poor people, especially poor black people. Too many of us trying to report this story were too credulous when it came to passing on information that had very weak sourcing. As the floodwaters receded, something very disturbing was revealed: In a 24-hour news cycle, in the absence of solid information, weak speculation flourishes. With communication difficult, getting accurate information was especially hard, and confirming it was often impossible to do. Because an official didn’t

know about something didn’t mean it didn’t happen. Corroboration became hearing something more than once, but Katrina’s victims repeated what they heard on the street or on radio or TV, producing an echo chamber effect. Add to this the difficult task of judging the credibility of someone who has just lost everything and is suffering an unimaginable trauma.

Reporters had to spend a lot of time chasing down rumors. In part, this was to assuage editors who heard some of the more sensational things back in the newsroom. Something moved on the wires suggesting police had mistakenly gunned down engineers who had gone to fix the levees. Wasn’t true. A local TV reporter told a bunch of us that there were 40 people trapped in an elementary school just south of New Orleans. It wasn’t just a tip, she said, her colleagues were at the scene. I got our national desk at The Boston Globe to send a colleague of mine there. In an intrepid piece of getting around a tightly controlled area, he got there quickly and found the school empty. I rushed to what was supposed to be a hostage situation, with 20 people held at gunpoint in the French Quarter; when police stormed the apartment, they found it empty.

New Orleans’s mayor and police chief, who are black, did little to challenge and quite a bit to enhance the portrait of a city out of control. Mayor C. Ray Nagin, repeatedly asked for an estimated death toll, suggested that as many as 10,000 had perished in the city; the official count is much lower. What he based that estimate on was never quite explained. Police Chief Eddie Compass went on Oprah Winfrey’s TV show to say that babies had been raped in the Superdome. Not to be outdone, Nagin told Oprah that “hundreds of

armed gang members” were, as he put it, “running the show” inside the dome. The idea of a TV show controlled by the richest, most powerful African-American woman in the country perpetuating the stereotype of heavily armed black guys running amok is beyond ironic.

I couldn't confirm any of the wild stories, but in one story I quoted Compass saying that the city's SWAT team, headed by Captain Jeff Winn, had run toward muzzle flashes and, holding their fire lest they hit innocent bystanders, tackled and disarmed gunmen no fewer than 30 times. About a week later, I saw Winn and told him what Compass had said. He didn't deny it, but he gave me a look that left me uneasy in the Big Easy. A few weeks later, the chief's claim about 30 cases of tackling and disarming gunmen was discounted, along with some other things he'd said, and Compass resigned.

What Nagin and Compass said was on the record, but that didn't make it accurate. Still, it was hard to probe what they said or challenge them. Nagin did few interviews, and in the crush of reporters surrounding Compass, follow-up questions weren't possible. Captain Marlon Defillo, the police department's affable press liaison, looked uncomfortable when asked about some of the chief's more questionable comments, but he wasn't about to publicly contradict him, especially since he was having trouble getting accurate, current information himself. On several occasions, Defillo told me to go find the various captains or deputy chiefs in charge of specific areas and tasks. When I found Deputy Chief Lonnie Swain, who was in charge of the Superdome, he was genuinely surprised to hear that various news outlets had reported dozens of deaths and murder and mayhem there. He thought there were, at most, a dozen bodies recovered there, most of them people who were very ill when they arrived at the dome. (The official count, a month later, was six dead, none by violence.) As for babies being raped, Swain said he had heard of just one attempted rape of an adult.

The reality is that for the first couple of weeks it was hard to find anyone who really knew what was going on in the

city, and during that time the image of widespread murder and mayhem was firmly planted in many minds, including reporters'.

Interweaving Race and Class

If it's too simplistic to chalk up the hysteria to racism, there is no doubt that race played a huge role. Repetitious TV images showed almost exclusively black people caught in the squalor of the flooded city. Those who knew little or nothing about New Orleans could be forgiven for thinking that only black folks were caught in the madness. Those images convinced even some of the locals that the poor had risen up in righteous anger to engage in a class and race war. In his first-person account

The reality is that for the first couple of weeks it was hard to find anyone who really knew what was going on in the city

in *The New York Times Magazine* of returning to the city where he grew up, Michael Lewis observed, “If the images were to be reduced to a sentence in the minds of Uptown New Orleans, that sentence would be: Crazy black people with automatic weapons are out hunting white people, and there's no bag limit!”

It's just that Lewis was being decorous when he suggested that “black people” would be the chosen description. “Those people” was the most polite term I heard used; other times it was the N word.

On the deserted streets of Uptown, a week after the storm, I found a guy who had been rescued from his mother's house after spending a week surrounded by the floodwaters. After being rescued, he went to stay at his store, worried about looters. His elderly mother, he told me, had been rescued from the Superdome by Jesse Jackson, who put her on one of his buses. He also spoke approvingly of Nagin and Com-

pass. But, as we talked, he kept using the N word, saying the disaster could turn out to be a blessing in disguise because it had driven out many undesirables. The guy used the N word so many times in the course of our conversation that I felt compelled to ask him to stop. He couldn't understand why it bothered me so much. And when I asked him why he would use that word so casually, after he had spoken so highly of Jackson, Nagin and Compass, he seemed genuinely surprised. “Oh,” he replied, waving his hand, “they're not niggers.”

Class and race are inextricably bound up in New Orleans, and trying to make sense of it was as hard as trying to get accurate information. About a week after we had fanned out across southeastern Louisiana, I met up with two Globe colleagues, Tom Farragher and Brian MacQuarrie, for what amounted to a beer and bitch session in Houma, about 60 miles south of New Orleans.

“Have you noticed,” Farragher began, “how many people down here use the N word?”

As well-traveled and experienced as we thought we were, for a trio of white Irish Catholic guys from Boston, the open use of such an offensive, racist word was shocking. We wondered if there was anything that we did or said as reporters that somehow invited other white people to say this to us, as if it was acceptable. The stereotype of bigoted white southerners was as pernicious a stereotype as the one attributed to the black guys with the doo rags at the Superdome, and we told ourselves that there are just as many bigoted people up north, except that they were probably not as brazen as to use that word around reporters with open notebooks. But it left us deeply unsettled and thinking the real story lay somewhere at the confused and confusing intersection of race and class.

“It's different down here,” Farragher said.

He got that right. ■

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'It Looks Like the Third World'

Writing in Southeast Asia, an American journalist comments on reporters' use of this descriptive phrase in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

On September 10, 2005, about two weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit America's southern coast, Philip J. Cunningham, a 1998 Nieman Fellow and a journalist working in China and Southeast Asia, wrote an article about the use of the phrase "Third World" by journalists covering the hurricane's aftermath. His words were published in the Bangkok Post, and excerpts from his commentary, "We are the Third World," follow.

"It's like the Third World out here. It looks like the Third World." Dozens of news reports used the same curious term repeatedly, presumably implying that America wasn't quite itself anymore.

Safe to say, American reporters weren't doling out a compliment when they described conditions as Third World. It's at best a neutral term for the global South, but more often a term of contempt. Used and abused as it was in the aftermath of Katrina, Third World could be seen to mean, variously and in sum, black poor powerless and pathetic. It took on a life as a code word, shorthand for chaos, for garbage in the streets, for looting and rape, for a breakdown in law and order. It put the blame

on the victims themselves and darkly hinted at the need for martial law.

Third World? This tired, overweighted term has been bandied about quite unfairly. First a corrective: For every report of looting or antisocial behavior in New Orleans, there are dozens of reports of quiet courage and stoicism in the face of stunning government neglect. The orders to evacuate only made sense if you had a car and a credit card for a hotel down the road. No transportation or housing was provided at the outset.

Then the storm of the century hit. Six hundred police went missing; among those accounted for, some were caught scavenging stores for food themselves. For every borrowed boat or

requisitioned car, 100 tired and hungry people walked miles on foot without food or water only to be denied access to a bridge by gun-toting officials, or found themselves ensconced in the filth of a concentration center such as the Superdome.

The criminal lawlessness of put-upon poor people was generally matched, if not systematically created, generated and exacerbated, by the criminal recklessness with which the irresponsible power-holders lorded over them. If there is a hidden Third-Worldish element to New Orleans, it is not a question of skin color or even poverty, but a case of government greed, neglect and ineptitude. ■

Seeing Is Believing

'There was so much destruction that I couldn't put down my camera.'

By Nuri Vallbona

I was sent to Mississippi to cover Hurricane Katrina's aftermath after The Miami Herald's sister paper, The Sun Herald in Biloxi, found itself short-handed. Many of the paper's employees had just lost their homes, some were missing, and the area was in chaos. On my way there, editors diverted me to Pensacola, Florida, when they learned there might be room on a U.S. Customs and Border Protection chopper flight to New Orleans. Customs pilots were ferrying Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) officials, engineers, supplies and others to assess damage in the area. We could get on a flight if there was an empty seat, so I ended up waiting two days before finally taking off on a Saturday morning.

As we stopped to refuel in Mobile, Alabama, the pilots got word that a helicopter had been fired on that morning. Jan Makiewicz, an aviation enforcement officer, put on a bulletproof vest and placed what looked like a rifle case behind his seat. There were so many

helicopters taking off and landing that the pilots asked me to point out any that I saw to them. They seemed to pop out of nowhere, below us, beside us, in front of us. I'd never seen so much chopper traffic in such a small area. "This isn't as bad as it has been," one of them told me.

Flying from Florida's Panhandle region to New Orleans allowed me to see the extent of damage all along the Gulf Coast. I could see New Orleans under water—dilapidated wooden houses,



The rooftops of flooded homes in New Orleans. *Photo by Nuri Vallbona/The Miami Herald.*

elegant mansions, tall office buildings, and the Superdome immersed in a lake of brownish green goo. From above, it seemed nothing had escaped Katrina's destructive power. Part of the Superdome's roof had blown off, and rows and rows of people were visible, though almost swallowed by piles and piles of trash.

Big concrete highways sloped below

the water only to pop back up again yards away. About 100 school buses sat still in water that lapped up their sides. Only their tops poked out like giant yellow turtles sitting in the murky soup. I photographed them because they looked so pretty compared to the ugly sludge around them. Later I'd read about how the buses could have been used to evacuate many of the poor and

elderly who had no other way out of New Orleans. Now they sat empty and unusable.

We flew over towns in Mississippi with names like Waveland, Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis, and Long Beach. The coast's beaches were wiped clean as though a giant hand had swept across a game board scattering its pieces and leaving gray slabs of nothingness. A few blocks inland, homes and buildings were reduced to wooden piles resembling stacks of broken matchsticks. At times I felt like I was looking down on black and white photographs of Hiroshima after the bomb fell. But these images were real, in color, and in America.

There was so much destruction that I couldn't put down my camera. I kept shooting even though I knew that if I didn't look up now and then to scan the horizon I'd be airsick. However, each bank of the chopper revealed more devastation, more than I'd seen in my career as a photojournalist. I'd been to Mexico City for the earthquake of 1985, seen the town of Armero, Colombia buried by mud, and witnessed the destruction of hurricanes Charley and Frances and Jeanne. What I'd never seen was devastation as vast as this, stretching on and on for hundreds of miles through several states. I shot for so long that the pilots had to set down at a small airstrip so I could clear my head and pick up an airsick bag.

One apartment complex caught my eye because you could see the progression of damage in each of its buildings. Closest to the beach, only slabs remained. A few yards back, structures were partially destroyed. Undamaged apartments were at the furthest distance from the ocean. I showed my photographs to several people to see if they could tell me where the apartments were located. "Where is this?" I'd ask, "I want to go to that complex."

By coincidence a few days later, I teamed up with the City of Miami Urban Search and Rescue team as it worked in Long Beach, Mississippi. We ended up at an apartment complex that looked identical to what I'd photographed from the air. Rescuers worked throughout the day in over 95-degree heat stopping now and then to sniff the air. Once they pin-

pointed where a rotten stench came from, heavy machinery was called in to lift up the boards. Twice they found refrigerators full of rotting meat. Still the workers continued climbing and searching debris fields of two-by-fours that rose up 20 feet in some places. At one point, feeling overcome by the heat, I sat in my air-conditioned car for about an hour while I transmitted photos. The search and rescue team paused for only 30 minutes to eat.

I talked with hurricane survivors in Mississippi who described walls of water coming over their homes. Four adults had to pull eight children through windows and ferry them through the ocean that had swept through their house during the raging storm. A national guardswoman watched as water flowed onto the balcony of her apartment, the one I had visited with search and rescue workers. She was forced to swim to a nearby apartment where she spent five hours huddled on a porch as Katrina's winds raged. Her building was now a concrete slab. At a police station, many officers clung to trees as water drowned their building. They called out to each other through the storm to make sure their comrades were alive.

Stories That Were Not Told

But stories like these were mostly ignored by the national media. New Orleans suffered catastrophic damage, but what Mississippians experienced was horrible, too, and has left scars on people and communities. While working out of Biloxi for a week, I saw only one television crew and a few print reporters and photographers, but never did I see any in the damaged areas. Last



Angela Reed of New Orleans tried to calm her four-month-old daughter, Laila, while the family stayed in the Pensacola Civic Center after being displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

year Punta Gorda in Florida became a household name in the wake of Hurricane Charley, but very few people are aware of the devastation that is Bay St. Louis, Diamondhead, Long Beach, Waveland, Pass Christian. The video images that I saw played over and over again were of Biloxi's casino bars

whelmed by the chaos in New Orleans to look beyond that city? Was there so much to cover there that stations and newspapers didn't have the resources—the newsroom budget or reporting staff—to send crews to Mississippi or Alabama? Was it because the burial of a major metropolitan city is a more

washed ashore.

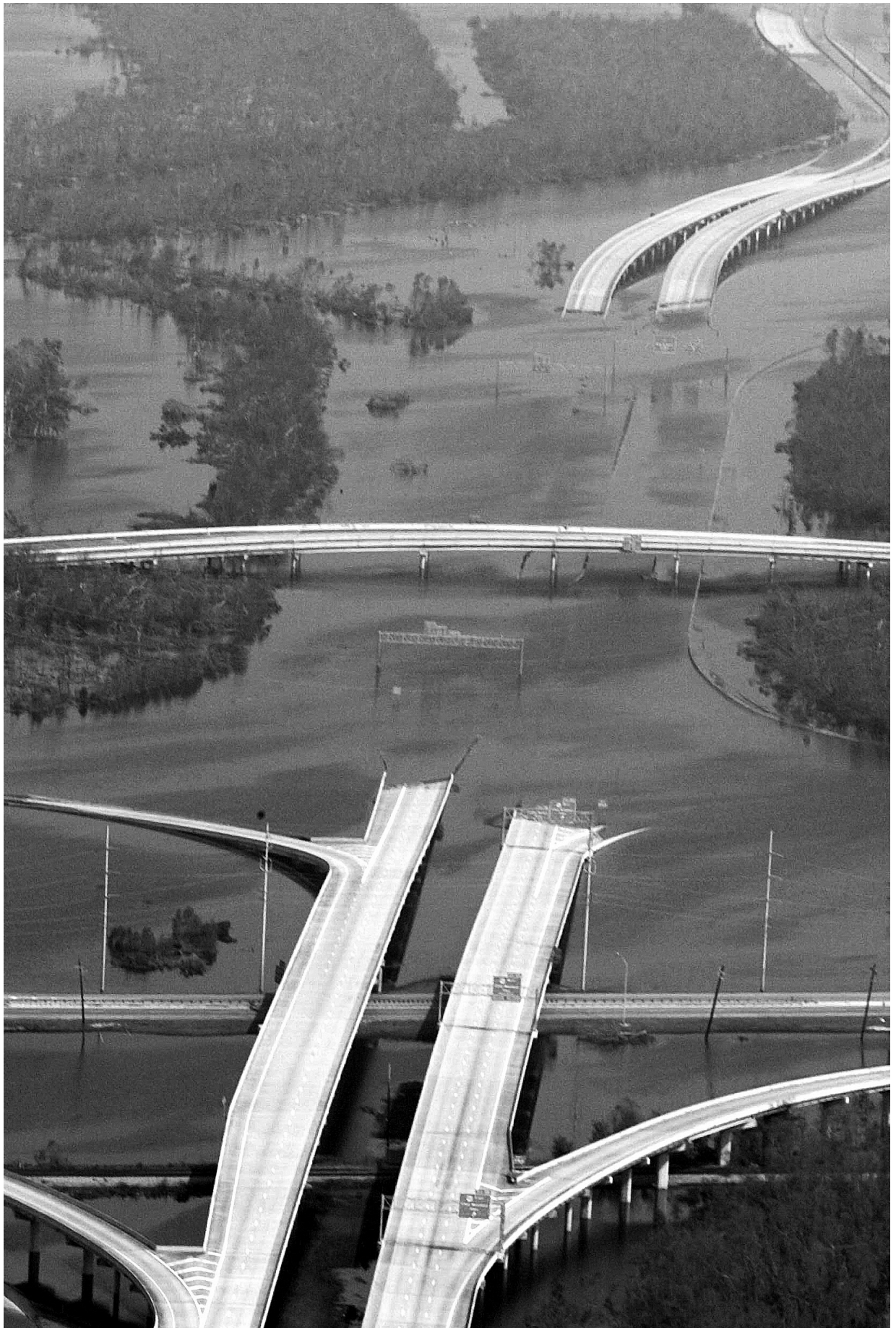
Given what I saw, I left Mississippi feeling disappointed by the inability of the press to tell a more complete story of Katrina's destructive consequences and to share it with a wider audience. New Orleans didn't deserve less coverage, but Mississippi deserved more, much more, and by our inattention there, we failed.

Were media outlets too over-



This aerial view of the Mississippi coastline shows how devastating the storm surge was from Hurricane Katrina. Some survivors described a tidal wave coming over their houses.

Photos by Nuri Vallbona/The Miami Herald.



Roads outside of New Orleans sit under water after Hurricane Katrina flooded the area.

Photo by Nuri Vallbona/The Miami Herald.

dramatic and “sexy” story than those that could be told in washed-away, small rural towns?

It became hard for me to understand how news organizations could ignore the tsunami-like destruction in these areas. With their houses demolished, people wondered whether to leave or rebuild, to stay or to go—the same questions many in New Orleans were asking except, in this case, few people heard them. At the same time, lasting images from the other coastal states were not of people—their loss and resolve—but of wrecked casino barges. Yet little reporting was done at ground level, where interviews with shell-shocked residents and footage of the barren coastline would have given viewers a more complete picture. While reporters rightly criticized the poor response by state and federal officials to the situation in New Orleans, they also irresponsibly transmitted stories from there about murder and mayhem, rumors that later would prove untrue. In doing so we, as journalists, showed our hypocrisy in criticizing others for their efforts while not being as willing to look closely at the sloppiness of our own practice.

As I moved through small towns along the Gulf Coast, again and again people thanked me for taking their picture, even though I photographed them often at their worst—as they sobbed or swept empty concrete slabs or waded through mud-soaked buildings. “Thank you for coming,” they’d say to me. “We need the attention.” Hearing their words made me feel badly, too, since I didn’t know if the photographs I was taking of them would be picked up on Knight Ridder’s wire service or even go out to local subscribers of *The Sun Herald* in Biloxi. In some ways, to them, it didn’t seem to matter. “We just want people to know what happened here,” one person said, as he reached out to shake my hand. ■

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Local high school students helped to clean up Haney's Pawn Shop before rushing off to football practice in D'Iberville, Mississippi. Pam Haney, the owner of the shop, said, “We will reopen.”



A neighborhood near Gulfport, Mississippi lies in ruins.

Photos by Nuri Vallbona/The Miami Herald.

Drawing the Mood of New Orleans

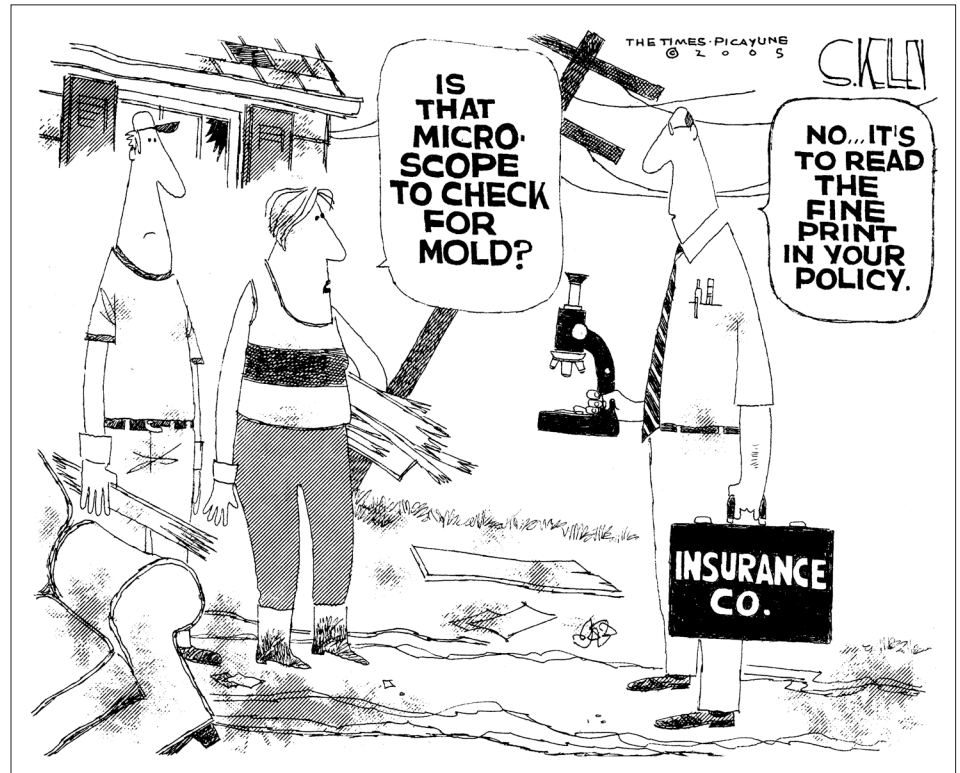
‘Cartoon ideas presented themselves, but none embraced the gravity of the situation.’

By Steve Kelley

My girlfriend called it “survivor’s guilt.” The stress—the anxiety tormenting my sleep at night and by day squeezing the throat of my creative process—was in fact a perverse remorse, a sense of regret that I hadn’t suffered Hurricane Katrina’s onslaught alongside my friends and colleagues at The Times-Picayune in New Orleans. Maybe she was onto something. As I read accounts of the newspaper staff’s persistent heroics in the face of all that Mother Nature and wholesale government incompetence conspired to produce, I wondered if I should be there, too, drawing cartoons about the disaster from ground zero instead of half a continent away. I could not shake the feeling that somehow, even if inadvertently, I had abandoned my post.

Five days before the storm struck, I’d flown to San Diego to host a comedy benefit for the Thousand Smiles Foundation, an alliance of oral and cosmetic surgeons who volunteer their time and skills for children in Mexico and Costa Rica. I closely monitored Katrina’s determined path across the Gulf of Mexico, a curved trajectory that rolled toward our coastline like an enormous bowling ball. As landfall neared, computer models projected that New Orleans would be its headpin.

U.S. Airways left a phone message to say it was canceling my flight home because of the hurricane. I felt anxious because I hadn’t prepared my house for the storm, yet somewhat relieved, as evacuating New Orleans on Sunday would have meant confronting 150 mile per hour winds in my 1970 two-seater. Anticipating a stay in San Diego of several days, I began mentally to organize. I would dismiss further thought about my house, the fate of which I could not influence, and concentrate my hopes on the people of New Orleans and on providing the best work I could for my



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newspaper.

Constraints of Tragedy

Nothing—and I mean *nothing*—is more difficult to address in a political cartoon than the deadly duo of tragedy and despair. Calamitous events demand comment, yet defy the kind of treatment—sarcasm, cynicism, pies in the face—that cartoonists usually administer. There is simply a limit to how many times a cartoonist can draw Uncle Sam, hat in hand and his head bowed, and I had succumbed to that image most recently when Ronald Reagan died.

So it was with acute trepidation that on the day after Katrina made landfall, I called my editor to see what direction she wanted my cartoons to take. She confirmed my darkest fears. For the next

several weeks, I should confine myself to cartoons about the hurricane, and the tone must be “appropriate.”

Dear God, no—anything but *appropriate*.

Understand that for a quarter century of commenting on the news, one of my goals has been to amuse people. I’ve established an unspoken covenant with readers: They look at what I produce each day, and I provide something insightful and humorous or, at the very least, ironic about the world around them—in short, something worth their trouble. What I’ve labored assiduously to avoid is any sense of “appropriateness,” which to a political cartoonist is about as appealing as a game of chess might be to a Hell’s Angel.

Worse than the restrictions on tone, I knew that addressing a single, depress-

ing topic every day would lead to stagnation and paralysis. It was as though the editors had put me in a tiny room with only one building block and asked me to construct something new and compelling five times a week.

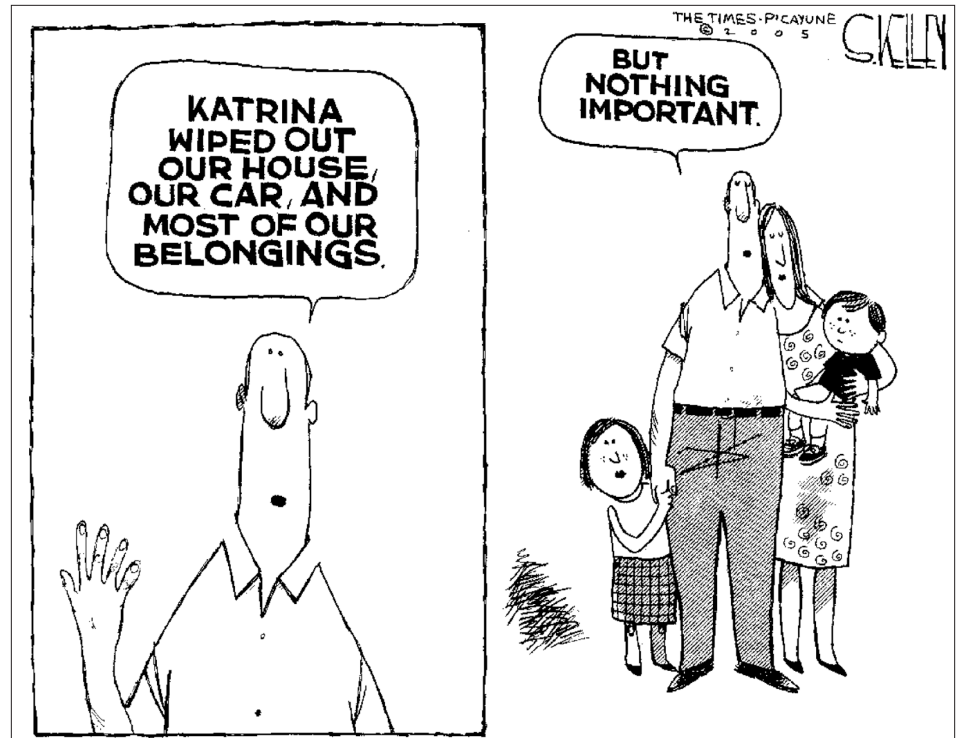
So although I covered Hurricane Katrina and her aftermath from a safe and pleasant location, I will forever look back on that time in San Diego the way a grizzled, despondent war veteran with a vacant stare might recall time in a dank, filthy trench under fire. Years from now at our cartoonists' convention, I'll tell and retell how for six weeks back in the fall of '05 I did nothing but hurricane cartoons, one right after the other. Everyone, especially the young guys, will gasp wide-eyed and plead to know, "Damn it, man, how did you *do it*?"

Like much of the world, and the rest of the country's cartoonists, I watched our nation's worst natural disaster unfold on CNN and Fox News. People would ask how I could draw cartoons about a story from so far away. The answer is that political cartoonists, like opinion columnists, don't report the news, we tailgate it—offering commentary on events only after readers have absorbed the basic reporting from a variety of sources. This degree of separation offers certain advantages, much as watching a sporting event on television does. Multiple camera angles, running commentary, and especially specific, repeated broadcast images imprint on a cartoonist's brain and oil the gears of his creativity.

Searching for Ideas

On the Monday that Katrina plowed into New Orleans I sat, heart racing, before a computer terminal at a San Diego Kinko's alternating among the Web sites of CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and NOLA, my newspaper's site. The early morning hours I spent watching CNN's Anderson Cooper vaporized without ink touching paper, and as the clock ticked and my fourth espresso-laced beverage grew cold, a clammy panic set in.

Journalists long for grand-scale events, but the enormity of the Katrina story seemed to work against me.



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Cartoon ideas presented themselves, but none embraced the gravity of the situation. It wouldn't be enough to say hurricanes are bad or to entreat the country to feel sorry for the victims. As the cartoonist of record in New Orleans, the city whose fate everyone was suddenly intent upon, what I produced that day might actually matter. Though I knew the paper's readers had greater concerns, I felt responsible somehow to speak for them in what was surely their most grievous period of need.

Still, there I sat, comprehending all of it, and nowhere close to a viable idea.

I began to wonder if this was it—the choking point I always dreaded. In the midst of the most compelling news story I'd ever had to address, taking place in my own city, was I going to come up empty? For all of my effort, I had nothing to show anyone but half a dozen wads of crumpled paper and a sharply elevated pulse.

It is axiomatic that deadlines compel results and, with only 90 minutes left to draw, the muse arrived. My first cartoon in the storm's wake would be of a man looking out and saying that Katrina had destroyed his home, his car, and most of his belongings. In the next frame, he hugs his wife and children and contin-

ues, "But nothing important."

I attached the cartoon to an e-mail addressed to our photo department, hit send, and felt a simultaneous, precipitous decline in my blood pressure, a moment of misty tranquility that would evaporate as I confronted the awful and the obvious: What would I do tomorrow? It was as though I had just crossed the finish line of a marathon only to see a guy with a stopwatch, pointing a pistol in the air and saying, "On your mark . . ."

In the days that followed, I came to realize that the hurricane was not a single event. Initial stories of the storm's ferocity gave way to reports of levee breaks, flooded homes, and epic incompetence by government at every level, all begging for comment. Even before credible assessments of Katrina's damage could be tolled, Hurricane Rita tore across the Gulf and thrashed southwest Louisiana and areas of Texas, reflooding parts of New Orleans and terrorizing tens of thousands of Katrina evacuees anew.

I drew a towering Mother Nature, rolling pin in hand, a few steps behind two nervous Katrina evacuees on a Houston street. One evacuee remarks, "I think we're being followed." Days later,

I depicted an enormous woman, "RITA," pulling a welcome mat from beneath a man labeled "Returning Evacuees." Another cartoon noted the irony of the New Orleans Saints' 2005 marketing slogan. A man standing amid the ruins of his home points to the words on his shirt, "You Gotta Have Faith," and says, "Guess it's not just the Saints slogan anymore."

Despite presidential admonitions against playing the blame game, incompetents needed outing, and I was all too eager to help. I drew a cartoon entitled "Forced Evacuations We'd Like to See," showing FEMA director Michael Brown and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff being loaded onto a departing bus. I happily put a knee in the groin of insurance adjusters who were busily informing policyholders that homeowners insurance, which protects against loss from hurricanes, does not cover damage from rising water, a distinction understandably lost on the thousands of newly homeless.

On October 10th I returned, along with most of the newspaper's staff, to our New Orleans offices. We remain fixated, like the rest of the city, on what the hurricanes did and where all of it will lead. Everyone is eager for a measure of normalcy to return and, to that end, I am trying to infuse my work with humor. Finally, funny feels appropriate again.

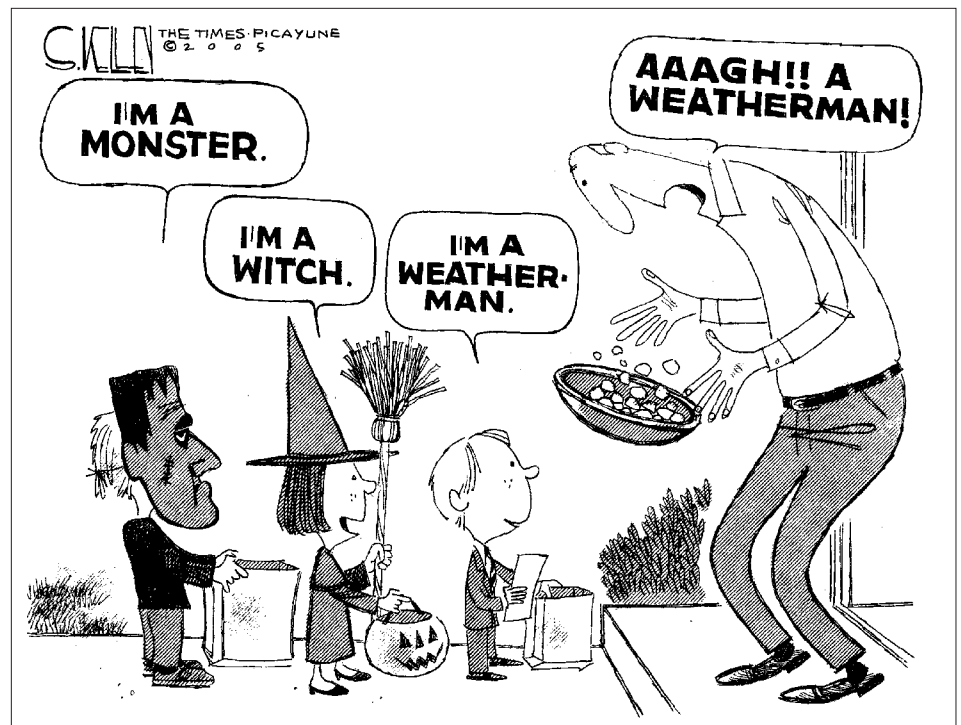
Driving across New Orleans since the storms, regardless of the route people take, they now encounter spectacular visual incongruities created by the storms that after several weeks have begun to seem routine. To a cartoonist, they're irresistible. All I had to do was contrive a situation to list them. So I drew a mother saying to her daughter, "Yes, sweetheart, things are different since Katrina." Across the living room, Dad is on the phone, giving directions: "Make a right at the second boat in the road, then a left at the overturned pick-up—our driveway is the fourth refrigerator on the right."

And as Halloween approached, I drew three children at a doorstep, explaining their costumes to the home's resident. "I'm a monster," shouts the

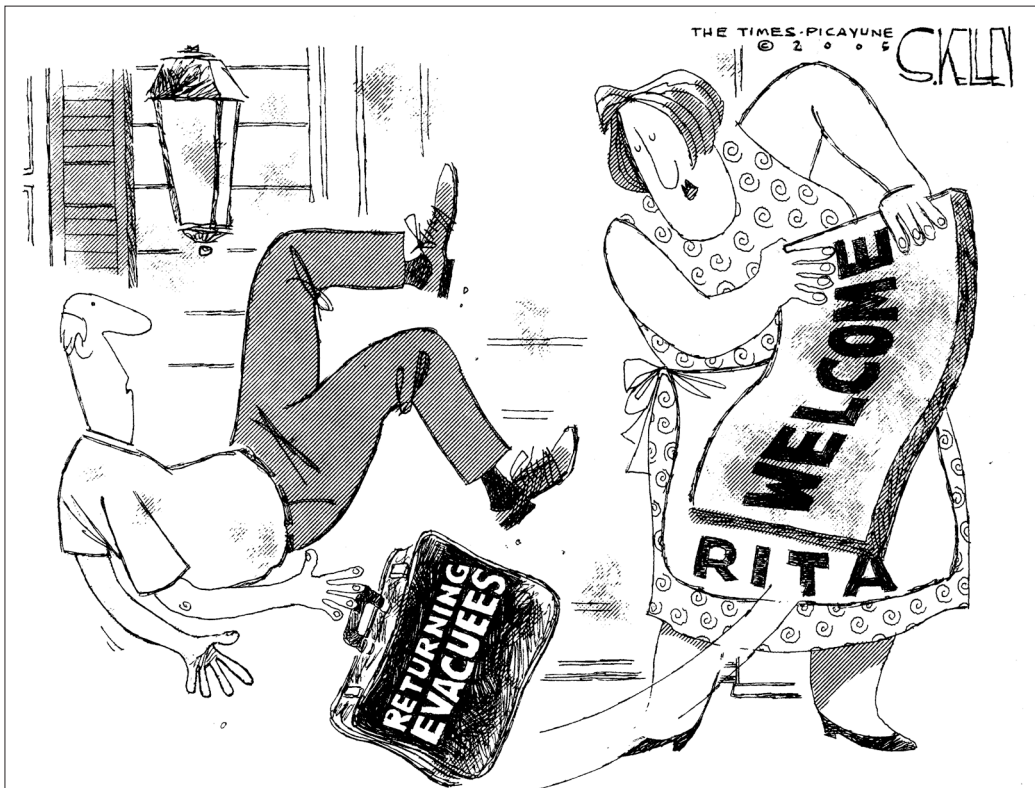
first, who is dressed as Frankenstein. "I'm a witch," declares a little girl in a black dress and pointed hat. The third, a boy wearing a sports jacket and tie, says, "I'm a weatherman." The home's mortified owner recoils in fear, "Aaagh!! A weatherman!" ■

Steve Kelley is editorial cartoonist with *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans. His work has won numerous awards, including the National Headliner Award in 2001.

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The Messengers of Mississippi in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina

In small, forgotten towns of the Gulf Coast, a reporter tells the stories she heard amid the hurricane's devastation.

By Elizabeth Mehren

Imagine if you woke up one day and your entire house was gone. It could be a large house in a lovely colonial town, such as the place where I live. It could be a New York high-rise apartment, a quaint townhouse in Georgetown, or an address in any American suburb. Just picture it disappearing, leaving only a concrete foundation slab. With it would vanish everything you owned: Every single thing. All your pictures, your family records, your clothes, your books, your music collections. Your appliances would be gone and also your car. If you were smart enough to keep valuables in a lock-box that, too, would be missing. Your most precious objects would have been no safer in a bank vault, for that, too, would cease to exist.

It is impossible to exaggerate the devastation I encountered in 10 days on the Mississippi Gulf Coast immediately after Hurricane Katrina. Whatever you think you have seen in television footage or in newspaper pictures is only a pale shadow. George Bass, the fire chief of a coast town called Long Beach, told me, "I just tell people they haven't really seen it until they come down here and wrap

their own eyeballs around it."

Along with at least six other small towns along the Gulf in Mississippi, Long Beach lost its fire and police departments, city hall, post office, library and schools—in short, the entire infrastructure. The roads crumpled. All



Seven-year-old Dillion Chancey is exhausted after four days during which he and his parents rode out the hurricane in Biloxi, Mississippi, where they lost everything they had.

Photo by Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times.

of these towns lost at least half of their homes. In most of these seaside communities, the figure was closer to 80 to 90 percent. "This is our new reality," Bass said, barely a week after Katrina sent a 34-foot storm surge across the coast highway and into these towns. "We are only just starting to adjust to this landscape ourselves."

I met family after family, digging through the dirt on what used to be their

home sites. They were looking for even the smallest material evidence of their former lives. One woman in Waveland crowed with joy when she uncovered an intact teacup. Another walked in a daze through the empty lot where she and her husband had renovated their dream

house in Biloxi, overlooking the sea. She kept wondering how a whole kitchen could fly away—and after it flew, where did it go? This woman freely admitted she was on heavy medication. The shock of losing it all was just too much.

Time and again, I heard every Katrina cliché. This was the end of the world, people said—and from their perspective, they were right. It was Armageddon. It was a nuclear holocaust, wrought not by man but by

nature. And yet, within this overwhelming destruction, there was an astonishing and unending spirit of resilience. I never once heard anyone say "poor me." Many people raged at FEMA—as well they should have—and some were less than kind on the subject of their insurance companies. But not one of the hundreds of people I talked with ranted at nature. For most of them, it was too soon to talk about whether



Standing on the roof of their demolished home, which had landed in a neighboring lot, Bobby Underwood consoled his wife, Darlene, after the discovery of their seven-year-old dog found dead in the rubble. They lived in Waveland, Mississippi for the past 25 years.

Photo by Carolyn Cole/ Los Angeles Times.

they would rebuild—but not too soon to ask about other communities. They were cut off: Cell-phone coverage was sporadic at best and most had no electricity. Rather than wallowing in how bad it was for them—and it was bad, trust me—they wanted to know how other towns were faring.

As they sifted through the remnants of their lives, many people came across photographs of people they had never met. Instead of tossing them, they carried these pictures to the side of the road and propped them against whatever large object they could find—a kitchen cabinet, perhaps. A woman in Bay St. Louis likened these small displays to roadside shrines and explained that the idea was that if people drove or walked by, they might spot the image of one of their loved ones.

It was beastly, beastly hot in Mississippi. I know that is a redundancy: Mississippi and heat. But I was born in California's Central Valley, and I spent much of my childhood in Washington, D.C.—another hot place. The Gulf Coast, post-Katrina, was so much hotter. And let's not even talk about the

smell from all the mountains of dead and rotting and mildewed detritus. In the rural community of Escatawpa,

In the face of Katrina's horror, I found people surprisingly eager to tell their stories. In their terrible situation, I might have been inclined to tell a nosy journalist to buzz off. But instead they opened their hearts.

about 15 miles inland, one woman compared the aroma to—well, it was a graphic medical analogy and let's just leave it at that.

I wore my trusty Los Angeles Times hat and slathered myself constantly with industrial strength sun block. But in that heat, the lotion rolled right off. I bring this up because on so many occasions, the people I was interviewing stopped their digging to express concern for my well-being. Here they were, camping out in tents on their former home sites and going through what has to have been

one of the most traumatic exercises anyone can endure. "You look like you could use some water," they would say. "Can I get you some?" My reaction was to race back to the cooler in my car and reply, "No, I'm getting *you* some."

Telling Their Stories

In the face of Katrina's horror, I found people surprisingly eager to tell their stories. In their terrible situation, I might have been inclined to tell a nosy journalist to buzz off. But instead they opened their hearts. I heard amazing stories about people who survived by swimming for 13 hours. One couple, with their seven-year-old, said they held hands and prayed before leaping into the roiling waters around their house in Biloxi. Along with their stamina and self-sufficiency, their survival saga surely would have earned them a ticket to the White House if only they had bothered to get married sometime during their 20 years together.

I lost track of how many notebooks I filled up—a dozen, at least. Late one afternoon in Pass Christian, I listened spellbound to yet another breathtaking Katrina odyssey. The 56-year-old woman I was interviewing kept right on digging, using heavy gloves and a small rake, while she led me on a little neighborhood tour of personal heroism—her own, and that of everyone around her. Finally I stopped her. Her quotes were almost too good to believe.

"How come everybody around here sounds like Faulkner?" I asked.

"Oh, Faulkner," she replied. "He never wrote anything. He just listened."

In the crush of attention on New Orleans, much of the national media have overlooked the damage Katrina inflicted on Mississippi. Much remains to be written—and much listening remains to be done. ■

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Questions for Journalists to Ponder in the Aftermath of Katrina

‘The first step is admitting that you don’t know what you don’t know.’

By Mary C. Curtis

Hurricane Katrina blew its destructive force ashore in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Now, in its aftermath, journalists who are rarely exposed to either the breadth and depth of poverty or the extent of devastation that these winds caused and revealed struggle to understand and find ways to convey what it is they witness. At a time like this, important questions should surface about whether this catastrophe will affect the topics that journalists decide to cover and how they practice their craft. A few of these include:

- When journalists report on an America that is different and poorer from their own, how does their privileged prism color the story? What can they do to ensure fair and accurate reporting?
- Big stories—the Iraq prison torture scandal is one example—often fade as a result of breaking news, as well as public and press fatigue. How do journalists report the complicated aftermath of Katrina—which involves everything from wetlands protection to the role and effectiveness of the government in disaster relief—and keep themselves and the public interested?
- As a result of what Katrina revealed, will news organizations commit to more projects on class, poverty and race in America?

I was riveted as television and newspapers recorded the escalating disaster of Hurricane Katrina. I was stunned as the storm’s aftermath grew more disastrous.

I am a journalist. I am an American.

I am an African American. The people on the rooftops of drowning New Orleans wards and parishes are me and yet they are not. Not many journalists live in such neighborhoods or in the projects or a trailer. Most I know own a car. Their bank accounts might not be

I am a journalist. I am an American. I am an African American. The people on the rooftops of drowning New Orleans wards and parishes are me and yet they are not. Not many journalists live in such neighborhoods or in the projects or a trailer. Most I know own a car.

fat, but they usually contain more than eight dollars. That might be why one television reporter seemed so shocked when an evacuee gave her bank balance as exactly that. How can someone live like that?

Few journalists truly understand such things.

My parents sold their first car for a down payment on their first and only home, a modest, Baltimore row house. It took them nearly 10 years of saving to afford their next car. I explained to my son that I—the youngest of five children—clearly remember when the family finally bought that Ford Fairlane. You can live a hard-working life without a car—walking and public transportation are two alternatives. But it puts you at a disadvantage when you have to get out of town fast.

For the most part, journalists did a

great job telling the story of Katrina, and The Times-Picayune did even better with its years of prescient warnings about what eventually came to pass. The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, and others have recently reported on class differences in America. Still, when Katrina hit, there was a hint of “Where did all these poor, mostly black people come from?” and this was not heard just from government officials.

Journalists have already debated, “Are they refugees, evacuees or survivors?” and “What’s the difference between scavenging and looting?” To that I would add: When is it “us,” and when is it “them”? Let’s talk about this—and these other questions—before we parachute into another story, another disaster.

Every day journalists report on subjects we know little about, from stem cell research to Greco-Roman wrestling. We research, ask questions, get up to speed. Then we can report nuance and discover shades of gray. It can’t be that hard to do the same when the story involves the life circumstances of people. The first step is admitting that you don’t know what you don’t know. Even if it took your dad years to buy a car. ■

Mary C. Curtis, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is executive features editor and features columnist at The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer. A version of this article appeared first on the Nieman Watchdog Web site at the address www.niemanwatchdog.org.

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In his opening essay, **Dan Fagin**, associate director of New York University's Science and Environmental Reporting Program, plows the common ground beneath the coverage of intelligent design and global warming. Science, he observes, is not "adept at feeding the media's craving for novelty, since the credibility of science depends on meticulous process in which each hypothesis builds incrementally on all the work that has come before. In science, nothing ever really comes out of left field. In journalism, it's our favorite position." Then we move on from his words to articles examining reporting about these two issues.

Intelligent Design

In Ohio, where the state board of education ruled that 10th graders must be taught about the "evolution debate," including ideas such as intelligent design, **Jeff Bruce**, editor of the Dayton Daily News, explains the approaches to coverage of this issue on the paper's news and opinion pages and raises a key question about efforts to balance news coverage: "At what point in our efforts to be neutral in our news coverage do we risk becoming misleading?" **Cynthia Tucker**, editorial page editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, speaks to the vital voice this page of the newspaper brings to the debate about this issue in Georgia. "We take credit for helping to turn the tide last year when Georgia's State Superintendent of Schools, Kathy Cox, proposed striking the word 'evolution' from the state's science curriculum because it is a 'controversial buzzword.'" **Diane Carroll**, a reporter for The Kansas City Star, started covering this topic in 1999, on the day when the Kansas Board of Education voted to downplay evolution in the state's public school science standards. Years of experience have taught her that "I.D. proponents tend to be very particular about how their views are presented in news reporting . . . the Discovery Institute even set up a Weblog to 'educate' reporters by critiquing their stories."

Diane Winston, the Knight Chair in Media and Religion at the University of Southern California, explores the consequences of reporters' tendency to use the conflict narrative in covering this issue. "If I were an editor," she writes, "I'd ask my reporters to step back and consider how they, as purveyors of this narrative frame, might be embedded in the 'conflict' and its outcome." **Paul R. Gross**, University Professor of Life Sciences, Emeritus, at the University of Virginia, laments journalists' lost opportunities in coverage of a recent Pennsylvania court case in which parents challenged the Dover school board's decision about changing the school's ninth grade biology curriculum. ". . . it is vital," Gross argues, "that journalists make certain that readers, listeners and viewers understand exactly what did and did not happen in the course of the trial, as opposed to relying on 'he said, she said' commentators who know precisely the words to use to skirt some of these key points." **Gailon Totheroh**, science and medical reporter for the Christian Broadcasting Network, suggests that "it might help if reporters started to think about the Dover case as Scopes turned upside down . . . [and] explore the ways in which institutional power can now be found in the evolution establishment opposing freedom of thought and speech in the academy." **Martin Redfern**, senior producer of the BBC Radio Science Unit in London, explains that British people regard intelligent design as a religious issue, not a scientific one. With British schools recently given "more freedom to innovate," if efforts are made to bring "religious dogma into the classroom through the back door," Redfern says reporters "will be waiting . . . to lift this largely untold story into headline news."

Global Warming

David Michaels, a research professor in environmental and occupational health at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services, describes how public-information campaigns, funded by the fossil fuel industry, insert skeptical views into journalists' reporting on global warming. "... the skeptic's assertions are often reported without identifying their corporate sponsors or letting readers know the person's credentials for raising such doubts," Michael writes. **Ross Gelbspan**, author of "Boiling Point," criticizes reporters for their misplaced use of "balance" in the telling of the global warming story and writes that "it seems profoundly irresponsible for them to pass along a story that is 'balanced' with opposing quotes without doing the necessary digging to reach an informed judgment about the gravity of the situation." In reporting on science and the environment for radio, print and the Web, **Daniel Grossman** travels with scientists to research sites as they study impacts of climate change. In a photo essay from his trips, many of which have taken him near the earth's poles "since the Arctic and Antarctic are heating up faster than anywhere else," Grossman shows and describes what he has observed.

Max Boykoff, a doctoral student in environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, reports findings from a study he coauthored about "balanced reporting" in newspaper coverage of global warming. The conclusion: "... the reporting was found to be strikingly out of alignment with the top climate science." University of Utah doctoral student **Jessica Durfee** and associate professor **Julia Corbett** examined how context and controversy in stories about global warming affect readers' perceptions of the issue. One finding: "It is heartening to know that the simple inclusion of scientific context might help mitigate the readers' level of uncertainty." **Sharon Dunwoody**, who teaches science and environmental journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wants journalists to use "weight-of-evidence" reporting in covering this issue. It is not up to journalists "to determine what's true but, instead, to find out where the bulk of evidence and expert thought lies on the truth continuum and then communicate that to audiences." University of California at Berkeley journalism professor **Sandy Tolan** and graduate student **Alexandra Berzon** provide an overview of coverage of this topic, and Tolan describes a class he designed, "Early Signs: How Global Warming Affects Commerce, Culture and Community," in which journalism students learn how to document "the social, cultural, political and economic impact of climate change around the world."

In excerpts from a speech television journalist **Bill Moyers** delivered to the Society of Environmental Journalists, he offers ways to connect storytelling about global warming to evangelical concerns about preserving the earth. **Markus Becker**, who heads the science department at Spiegel Online, contrasts U.S. and German approaches and notes that American news media "are so intent on hearing both sides in a debate that they often are virtually incapable of showing where the majority opinion lies." **Hans von Storch**, who directs the Institute for Coastal Research in Germany and **Werner Krauss**, who teaches at the University of Texas at Austin, explain how cultural orientations in the U.S. and Germany affect public perceptions about climate change and reporting about it. And former Canadian Broadcasting Corporation correspondent **Jacques A. Rivard** describes why his editors rarely requested that he include "opposing views about global warming." ■

Science and Journalism Fail to Connect

‘How can we expect Americans to know anything beyond what they happen to remember from science class? Journalists certainly don’t tell them.’

By Dan Fagin

Evolution is “only a theory.” Global warming is “unproven.” And science itself is “just another opinion.”

Critics of mainstream science seem to be everywhere these days, and we, as journalists, just can’t seem to get enough of them. It’s just about impossible to pick up a newspaper or watch CNN for an hour without being confronted by someone attacking ideas that most scientists think are so settled that they aren’t even worth discussing any more. Meanwhile, the topics that many scientists are working on—the almost daily advances in nanotechnology and genetics, to pick just two—are largely absent from mass-market media coverage. What’s going on?

Nearly 50 years ago, the British physicist and novelist C.P. Snow published his famous “two cultures” essay, which deplores the widening gulf between scientists and their intellectual counterparts in the arts. If Snow was alive today, I think he might have extended his argument to apply to the chasm that now exists between science and just about everyone else in society, including journalists.

No longer seen as the public figures that many were in the days of Albert Einstein and Edward Teller, scientists now are more reluctant than ever to venture out of their ivory towers. Shunning messy public controversies, they tend to communicate only to each other and through the rarified language of peer-reviewed journals. Meanwhile, far below, where the air is thicker, warring special-interest groups hurl slogans and accusations, their every fractious word amplified by media companies struggling to catch the attention of a jaded public, if only for a moment.

A few respected scientists do make it

a priority to speak out on the compelling issues of the day: E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, to name two, though neither has the public profile of his predecessors. And a few mass-market media outlets still cover scientific developments in a sophisticated way: The Economist and The New York Times, to name two, though neither is as comprehensive as it once was. The best coverage, as always, comes from many niche publications, but they reach relatively small audiences. Most consumers of news never hear about the work of contemporary science: the meticulous testing, honing and retesting of hypotheses—the process that ended the Dark Ages and continues to illuminate dark corners of our world.

So we shouldn’t be surprised that about 46 percent of American adults don’t know it takes a year for the earth to orbit the sun, according to a 2004 survey by the National Science Foundation, and that more than half of Americans think the earliest humans lived at the same time as dinosaurs, not 60 million years later. But those errors of fact aren’t nearly as damaging as the widespread ignorance of what “science” is and what it isn’t. Most of us know almost nothing about bedrock scientific ideas such as the importance of being able to replicate an experiment, the meaning of statistical significance, and the use of control groups. According to the same survey, for instance, most Americans wrongly think that it’s better to test a drug by giving it to 1,000 people than to give it to just 500 and compare their health to 500 others who weren’t given the drug. It turns out that most of us not only don’t know science, we don’t even understand why it matters.

How can we expect Americans to know anything beyond what they hap-

pen to remember from science class? Journalists certainly don’t tell them. When is the last time you heard a reporter explain in print or on the air that a scientific hypothesis is elevated to a “theory” only after it is supported by overwhelming observational and experimental evidence and is widely accepted by the scientific community? Sure, evolution is a theory—and so is Mendelian heredity and Newtonian gravitation.

When is the last time you heard a journalist explain that the scientific process is not about “proving” anything? Instead, it’s about constructing a hypothesis, disproving it, and then developing a better one that offers a slightly fuller explanation of the natural world as we experience it. The cycle never stops. Science will never prove, in an absolute sense, that emissions of carbon dioxide from man-made sources are contributing to global warming, but science can show—and has shown—that no other idea comes anywhere nearly as close to explaining what’s happening to our world.

And when is the last time you heard a journalist explain that science’s supposed “weaknesses” are actually its great strengths? Always self-critical, the best scientists freely acknowledge the uncertainties that remain in even the most sophisticated theories. That’s the way science corrects its mistakes, but it is a grave shortcoming in a sound-bite world that prefers brash sloganeering. Nor is science adept at feeding the media’s craving for novelty, since the credibility of science depends on a meticulous process in which each hypothesis builds incrementally on all the work that has come before. In science, nothing ever really comes out of left field. In journalism, it’s our favorite position.

Scientific Reasoning for Journalists

We shouldn't be naive about efforts to bridge the chasm between mass-market journalism and mainstream science. The market forces driving journalism away from serious science coverage are too strong to wish away with a five-point action plan. But surely there are some steps we can take to improve coverage.

For starters, teaching journalists scientific reasoning is vital. We should give that training not only to reporters who are new to science-related beats, but also to those who cover business, politics, culture or work in just about every other corner of the newsroom, and to editors, too. In one way or another, all of those journalists cover science, whether or not they realize it.

Just as importantly, graduate and undergraduate journalism programs must offer, and even require, more science-related courses. Again, the emphasis should be on scientific reasoning, not merely the acquisition of dry facts. At New York University (NYU), I help to run a program that has been training science journalists for 24 years, but I also teach science writing to students

in the general journalism department because we believe that journalists aren't fully prepared to thrive in the professional world unless they know something about statistical analysis and the scientific method.

With this training, our goal should be to give reporters enough confidence to make reasoned judgments about the scientific legitimacy of competing arguments whenever they're doing a story about a controversial issue, whether its global warming, stem cells, intelligent design, or something else. We need to show reporters how and why to resist the journalistic perversion of Newton's third law of motion: For every assertion in a news story, there must be an equal and opposite assertion. Phony "balance" is the bane of science journalism.

And finally, we have to be obsessive about the importance of storytelling, especially in science journalism geared to mass audiences. At NYU's Science and Environmental Reporting Program, even as we teach the subtleties of cutting-edge science, we never stop talking about compelling narrative, clear explanation, and coherent organization. Because if a reporter can't tell a story, it doesn't matter how much science she knows.

In short, we need to do all we can to show reporters how, even within the tight constraints of the sound-bite society, it is possible to cover science stories in ways that do credit to both science and journalism. Once we start doing that, you can bet your Bunsen burners that scientists will start climbing down from those ivory towers, and maybe our readers and viewers won't be quite so quick to assume that all opinions are created equal. ■

*Dan Fagin is an associate professor of journalism at New York University (NYU) and the associate director of NYU's Science and Environmental Reporting Program. Now a writer of books and magazine articles, he was the environmental writer at *Newsday* for 14 years. In 2003, his stories about cancer epidemiology won both of the best-known science journalism prizes in the United States. Last summer, he was a Templeton-Cambridge Fellow in Science and Religion at the University of Cambridge. Fagin is also a former president of the 1,500-member Society of Environmental Journalists.*

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Strengthening the Line Between News and Opinion

A newspaper editor asks, 'At what point in our efforts to be neutral in our news coverage do we risk becoming misleading?'

By Jeff Bruce

As I dropped my son off at school the other day, I spied one of those plastic fish affixed to the back of a sedan in front of me as we sat queued in the parking lot. This one had the word "Truth" inside a big fish devouring a smaller fish labeled "Darwin." It served as an ironic counterpoint to a similar fishy display on my own dashboard, another big fish eating a smaller one with the words "Reality Bites" inside.

Our dueling fish are emblematic of

the debate raging across the country over efforts to instill "intelligent design," or I.D., into public school science curricula. Intelligent design is the controversial challenge to the theory of evolution being pushed by some social conservatives who seek to offer an alternative to Darwinism that is more compatible with the biblical story of creation. Intelligent design advocates argue the universe is so complex it can only be the consequence of an intelligent,

guiding influence. Critics call I.D. mere creationism costumed to sneak past First Amendment prohibitions against church-state commingling.

As this article was being written, the state school board in Kansas was nearing adoption of a plan requiring that opposing views to the theory of evolution be taught. A federal court was hearing an intelligent design lawsuit in Pennsylvania, and in my home state of Ohio, where I am editor of the Dayton

Daily News, the state board of education has already mandated that 10th graders be taught about the “evolution debate,” including competing ideas such as I.D.

I have been especially interested in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania trial where 11 parents in the Dover Area School District filed suit in federal court to block the inclusion of intelligent design in the ninth-grade biology lesson plan. While a ruling in that court would have no direct bearing in Ohio, the judge’s decision could inform other courtroom battles as they erupt, which seems inevitable.

Reaction to the I.D. Coverage

I called Bill Toland, a reporter for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, who has covered the trial, as part of my research for this article. I was interested in the feedback he received from his readers. Toland said he has postulated a new theory governing the speed of news as a result of his experience. “I call it the First Rule of Journaldynamics,” he told me. “The speed at which a story moves over the Internet is directly proportional to the number of times you mention ‘gun rights,’ ‘evolution’ or ‘liberal’ in your story.”

Like many newspapers, including mine, the Post-Gazette publishes reporters’ e-mail addresses and phone numbers with their stories. During the first few weeks of the Harrisburg trial, Toland was getting calls and correspondence from around the world. “It’s just remarkable the geography of the feedback,” he said, confessing “there were some days” when it occurred to him it would not be a “bad idea to drop the tag lines.”

While one might expect the majority of feedback to have come from I.D. proponents, Toland said he heard from both ends of the debate. His stories were dissected for liberal bias by the Discovery Institute, the Seattle, Washington

August 02, 2005 | JBlog | Commentary on Miami Valley, Ohio and national issues and politics by Dayton Daily News

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Tuesday, August 2, 2005
Creating an argument
 By Jeff Bruce | Tuesday, August 2, 2005, 01:50 PM

Well, it's the dog days of summer and things have slowed down a bit on JBlog, so let's see if we can stir up some conversation.

I'm bored with [Bolton](#), [Judy Miller's](#) still in the slam, Karl Rove's not, Stunning news (not): another baseball player [banned](#) for steroids. What is there to talk about?

Oh, I know: [Intelligent design](#).

Our commander in chief has now weighed in on whether creationism, hiding behind the euphemism of intelligent design (a dressed-up version of creationism), should be taught in our schools.

He says he's in favor of it.

Well, he was more nuanced than that, to be fair. He was asked about it and this is what he said: "I think that part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought. You're asking me whether people ought to be exposed to different ideas, the answer is yes."

Presumably the president wouldn't be in favor of just any "different idea" taught to our children. We needn't belabor

ABOUT JBlog

Jeff Bruce is the Editor of the Dayton Daily News. Bio: from Miami, Florida - BLS, St. Edward's University (Austin, Texas); M.A. Antioch McGregor University (Yellow Springs, Ohio) - Previously worked at Tribune Newspapers, Phoenix, Arizona.

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CATEGORIES

A blog about intelligent design written by Jeff Bruce, editor of the Dayton Daily News.

think tank proselytizing I.D. as part of its “wedge” strategy that seeks to displace Darwin with “a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.” But he was also taken to task by liberals who objected that “paying attention to the I.D. crowd at all” falsely elevated the legitimacy of their arguments.

That matches our own experience in Dayton, where letters to the editor and e-mails have poured in from readers during the past several years as the state board of education debated whether science lessons plans should include challenges to Charles Darwin’s theories of the origin of life. The board finally settled on a compromise proposal to “teach the controversy.”

“Ohio is now ground zero for the explosion of creationism that is sure to follow,” warned Patricia Princehouse, a Case Western Reserve University evolutionary biologist, when the new lesson plans were adopted. Princehouse is an organizer of scientists opposed to teaching “intelligent design.” Given recent events, her warning seems prophetic.

Some background: It has been 80 years since the so-called monkey trial in that other Dayton—Dayton, Tennessee—where John Scopes was convicted

for teaching evolution. That ruling was later overturned by the Tennessee Supreme Court, and in 1968 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to ban the teaching of the theory of evolution. You might think that would have settled the matter. Think again. When I Googled the phrase “intelligent design” in late October, I found 61,900,000 entries. Impressive. Not even Jesus Christ has those numbers (26,600,000), or Genesis (32,200,000). God, of course, is well represented on the Internet with 170,000,000 listings, but even He is overshadowed by “evolution” at 227,000,000 Google hits.

The idea of science trumping God in any setting sets some people’s teeth on edge. It underscores the arguments

and courtroom battles playing out over whether “intelligent design” has a place in public school classrooms. Already bubbling, the issue heated up even more earlier this year when President George W. Bush was asked by a reporter if intelligent design should be taught. His answer, I thought, was nuanced. “I think that part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought,” he said. “You’re asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas, the answer is yes.” But his words ignited a firestorm of commentary online and in the letters columns of newspapers.

Coverage Stirs the Debate

I blogged about Bush’s comments on my newspaper’s Web site, figuring it would be a natural to stimulate comments from readers. Little did I know. The debate my observations sparked among my blog’s commenters raged for four weeks and sometimes got ugly. A sample:

Spirilis: “The entire debate is about your faith, Jen. We simply want it kept out of the science classroom. I personally don’t care if you believe that space

aliens originated life on earth but you have no right to teach your silly beliefs in a tax-supported institution. Worship whatever books you choose just quit trying to turn your fiction into my fact. I can accept that someone could want to remain ignorant but what is the benefit in keeping the future in darkness? Why do you hate the children so? ...”

Jen: “Awww, Spirilis! I expected more out of you than that! I gave you the debate you wanted and you ended it with a desperate attempt to attack my faith and my personal life; did you run out of things to say? What I gave you is science, accept it! Everything I said is true, you know it. If you think I am wrong, PROVE IT! You can’t. ... Spirilis, you pick only specifics about what you want to hear, only when it supports what you want to believe, but then you ignore all other evidences, facts and truths that discredit your precious evolution As for your personal attack on me, I refuse to even dignify that with a response; that was just pathetic on your part. Great debate, Spirilis.”

The I.D. debate also filled the letters columns of the Dayton Daily News. Some samples from just one day, September 2nd:

John Garner: “It is depressing to have the apparently atheist Dayton Daily News editors and cartoonist continue to deride the concept of intelligent design...”

Thomas Brunzman: “Recently, the Dayton Daily News reported that Harvard University is committing millions of dollars to fund a research project to determine the origin of life Given the growing discussion of intelligent design as a plausible explanation for the origin of life ... could it be that the evolutionists at Harvard feel that evolutionary theory is not as strong as they would have you believe?”

John Strukamp: “The idea of intelligent design would seem to negate the need for science to explore the as yet unexplainable. Why bother with scientific research when we accept that God just made things this way? ... Where did that notion come from, and why do some give it validity?”

Opinion vs. News Pages

The contention, raised by that last letter writer and echoed by reporter Toland’s liberal critics, that in an effort to be fair and balanced we risk distorting the picture by giving undue credence to I.D., is a slippery one. It presupposes a judgment of illegitimacy that most journalists would feel uncomfortable making for the news pages. The opinion pages, though, are another matter. We publish Leonard Pitts, Jr.’s syndicated column, which our readers rank among their favorites. Here’s his take on the question of whether students have a right to be exposed to all sides of the evolution issue, from his September 30th column:

“... for that argument to hold water, you must have more than one side. Where science and the theory of evolution are concerned, you do not. It is the overwhelming consensus of the mainstream scientific community that Darwin had it right. So pretending there is another ‘side’ to the question makes about as much sense as pretending there is another side to the Klan. It reeks of false equivalence, no-fault scholarship, judgment-free education, the bogus notion that all points of view are created equal and are equally deserving of respect.”

Irrespective of intelligent design’s legitimacy as a scientific theory, at some point numbers matter when it comes to news cov-

erage. And proponents of I.D. know how to draw a crowd. This movement is arriving at a time when those of us in the news media are acutely aware of the public’s perception of liberal bias. We’re familiar with the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press study showing two-thirds of Americans agree that “in dealing with political and social issues, news organization tend to favor one side.” Moreover, a 2004 Gallup Poll found that 45 percent of the American people think human beings were created by God “pretty much in

MIAMI VALLEY

VOICES

READERS' LETTERS, FAXES, PHONE CALLS AND E-MAILS

‘DDN’ derides intelligent design

IT IS DEPRESSING TO HAVE THE APPARENTLY atheist *Dayton Daily News* editors and cartoonist continue to deride the concept of intelligent design.

There should be no disagreement between true religion and true science. But is this discussion really pitting religion vs. science? Based on established scientific facts, not speculation, isn't it possible that some type of evolution has occurred with the involvement of an intelligent designer? A fundamental belief of the majority of the *DDN's* readers, who are members of the Christian, Jewish or Islamic faiths, is that there is an intelligent designer of the universe. A recently published *Newsweek/Beliefnet* poll stated that 80 percent of those Americans polled believe that God created the universe. Evolution, without an intelligent designer, still is a scientific theory rather than an established fact, according to several scientists and medical professionals.

JOHN J. GARNER
CENTERTVILLE

George Will needs to open his mind

Re “Nature not always warm, fuzzy”, Aug. 28: I love reading George Will’s commentary; he makes me examine the origins and foundations of my own beliefs. I loved his musings on penguins’ love lives, grizzly protectors, and the Alaskan varmint-hugger turned mosquito-murderer. Even a tree-hugger such as myself, viewing his thoughts with an open mind, can’t help but see the truth and irony in his perspectives. But why does he have to take a fine article and fashion it against faith in a higher power and spirituality? With an open mind, Will might see that belief in the laws of natural selection may actually coexist with intelligent design. As a naturalist, I use evolution to explain how I’m here, and God to explain why I’m here. Nature truly is grand, and so is the possibility that it was planned that way.

JOE ROTHSTEN
TIPP CITY

Does theory need shoring up?

Recently, the *Dayton Daily News* reported that Harvard University is committing millions of dollars to fund a research project to determine the origin of life. One of the main researchers, David Liu, admits he expects the research will come up with a series of simple natural processes that helped form the first life “with no divine intervention.” In other words, his philosophical bias toward naturalistic predeterminations has already excluded the possibility that life was created by a force outside the boundaries of nature. Given the growing discussion of intelligent design as a plausible explanation for the origin of life in educational and political circles, could it be that the evolutionists at Harvard feel that evolutionary theory is not as strong as they would have you believe? Perhaps this new area of funding is to shore up some of the weaknesses in the theory of evolution. After all, why would Harvard put millions of dollars into origin of life research if evolutionary theory already gave us a satisfactory explanation?

THOMAS BRUNSMAN
BEAVERCREEK

Gottlieb should do research

Re Martin Gottlieb’s column, “Anti-evolutionists looking meek,” Aug. 24. There are a few things in this piece that I don’t agree with. First, there are a lot of us who don’t buy evolution from the scientific point of view. I have read Michael J. Behe’s book, *Darwin’s Black Box*, and while well-written and thoughtful, a better book for the subject is the one I’m reading now, Michael Denton’s *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Gottlieb would do well to do some research on all the holes in the theory of evolution. It seems the people defending the theory are treating it just like a religion, and anyone disagreeing with them should be shouted down.

JIM ARMSTRONG
WILMINGTON

Science doesn’t preclude God

The idea of intelligent design would seem to negate the need for science to explore the as yet unexplainable. Why bother with scientific research when we accept that God just made things this way? Who then decides where scientific research is appropriate and where it is not? I do not believe that scientific theories and research in any way preclude the existence of God. Where did that notion come from and why do some give it validity?

JOHN STRUKAMP
DAYTON

ONLINE EXTRA



Hucksters who jump on the Katrina bandwagon are among the latest topics on *Dayton Daily News* editor Jeff Bruce’s blog at daytondailynews.com/jblog

their present form” sometime during the past 10,000 years, a timeline that closely parallels the Old Testament story of creation but is at wild variance with the scientific fossil evidence.

Our newspaper’s instinctive response is to be careful, to be especially mindful of the need to be balanced. But Pitts’s objections of “false equivalence” are compelling. At what point in our efforts to be neutral in our news coverage do we risk becoming misleading? This is especially challenging with the First Amendment on the line and the role newspapers have carved out for themselves as protectors of the Bill of Rights.

Even when we strive for balance in our news columns, the passionate views expressed on our opinion pages can carry over to color perceptions of the overall newspaper. Earlier this year, the Dayton Daily News hosted a roundtable meeting with members of the community to explore their concerns about liberal bias. We followed the format established by the Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), which has pioneered the program. Steve Sidlo, the newspaper’s managing editor and a member of the APME board, and Assistant Managing Editor

Jana Collier organized the conference. The feedback from participants, who were a self-selected group of critics, clearly showed that spillover from the opinion pages tinted their perception of the paper.

Interestingly, many of these critics admitted they “shopped” the paper for signs of bias, betraying their own foregone conclusions. Still they scored some hits—a headline here, a phrase in a story there—that those of us observing the discussion agreed added legitimacy to their criticisms. The presidential election, as well as hotly debated social issues (abortion, prayer in schools, gay marriage), was among the topics that fueled their perceptions of the paper’s prejudices. We left the roundtable discussion with a renewed determination to police ourselves more vigorously, understanding how easily we can undercut our authority with even the smallest lapses in diligence.

The good news is that our readers expect us to tee up controversial topics for discussion and that newspapers and their Web sites can and do provide useful and provocative forums for these conversations—with us and among our readers. In a world of multimedia competition, it is crucial that we position

our newspapers and online sites as the ideal place for such debates to rage. In so doing, though, we should be mindful that while clearly distinguishing news and opinion in our print products is standard operating procedure, the lines can blur in the blogosphere. We need to be cognizant of this and the implications for the newspaper’s overall credibility. And we need to be mindful, as Toland discovered, that our audience is now worldwide, meaning, among other things, that there are more eyes than ever before examining us and holding us accountable.

For myself, I’ve taken that fish off my dashboard. There was a time when these sorts of decals could be viewed as friendly jousting. I think those days are gone. ■

Jeff Bruce, as editor of the Dayton Daily News, is in charge of the newspaper’s newsgathering and opinion page staffs. His weekly column is published on the News’s Sunday editorial page, and his blog appears at daytondailynews.com/jblog.

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Editorial Pages and Intelligent Design

‘Once upon a time, I would have been mortified at the thought of exposing my religious views to my readers.’

By Cynthia Tucker

I grew up Baptist in Alabama—the buckle of the Bible belt—so I have more than a passing familiarity with conservative Christianity. Where I come from, there’s really no other kind. Yet battles over the teaching of evolution were not a feature of my childhood. (I first encountered the controversy when I was in my early 20’s, covering suburban governments, including school boards, for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.) Not that there was much teaching of Charles

Darwin’s theories, either. Alabama has never been known for the high quality of its public schools; I have no recollection of anything more than a passing reference to evolution in my high school biology classes.

I was a little surprised, then, when vigorous controversies over the teaching of evolution erupted around the country during the past decade. If the Scopes trial of 1925 had not quite settled the matter, I thought recent scientific

developments—mapping the human genome, genetic manipulation, cloning—had. The public might debate the wisdom of research on stem cells, but surely we all accepted evolution as a cornerstone of modern biology.

Apparently not. As a harsh and narrow Christian theology began to inject itself into public policy—first, not surprisingly, in the southern United States—the benighted forces who opposed the teaching of evolution rose

again, intimidating textbook publishers, taking over school boards, and pushing for curricula that include the teaching of “intelligent design.”

It was in Cobb County, which boasts some of Georgia’s best public schools, where anti-Darwinians staged a surprise attack on science in 2002. A group of parents successfully lobbied the school board to require stickers on new high school science texts with the following disclaimer: “This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.”

Cobb is an affluent Atlanta suburb where most voters support Republicans, attend church on Sundays, and equate low taxes with good morals. But Cobb County is also home to many well-educated professionals who support high academic achievement, take pride in local public schools, and don’t want classrooms hijacked by pseudoscience. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution weighed in on their side—without hesitation.

Around the editorial board’s conference table, not a single member—including our most conservative colleague, Associate Editorial Page Editor Jim Wooten (a Cobb resident)—believed that evolution was inappropriate in public school classrooms. Nor was there any hesitation about our writing an editorial protesting the sticker on textbooks; this was a matter of public policy, education policy. On August 21, 2002, editorial board member Maureen Downey, who includes education policy among her areas of expertise, wrote an editorial headlined, “No faith-based science in schools.” As the debate raged on, I followed with a column on October 2, 2002, “Why pit God against evolution?” I argued that evolution doesn’t argue for or against the existence of a divine being. “The [text]book should not be controversial to any but the most narrow-minded. It does not rattle religious views unless they adhere to the literal story of the Creation in seven days,” I wrote.

At the same time, on our op-ed pages we’ve gone to great lengths to reflect the views of conservative Christians who don’t want their children taught evolutionary theory. We’ve run op-eds by parents, preachers and a gaggle of pseudoscientists using fancy words and confusing data to try to justify their views. But their views are their views—and they have every right to be heard.

Maintaining the Newspaper’s Tradition

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has a long and storied history of support for civil rights, civil liberties, and separation

... we’ve written several editorials and columns denouncing efforts to either ban the teaching of evolution or to supplement it with something called ‘intelligent design’—religion dressed up as pseudoscience.

of church and state. And the page has a strong tradition of editorializing against any breach in that wall of separation. Our editorials in support of the teaching of evolution—a time-tested scientific theory—honor that tradition.

Moreover, as an editorial page editor who is intimately familiar with conservative Christianity, I am not intimidated by religionists who would paint me as a “secular humanist,” “anti-Christian liberal,” or “God-hating Satan-worshiper.” (Those are among the more colorful epithets flung at me by my fundamentalist critics.) Indeed, growing up Baptist in Alabama probably provided me the background to take on conservative Christians in ways that other (saner) editorialists could not or would not. I know their beliefs. I can speak their language. I can quote the Bible back at them, chapter and verse. And I do.

Once upon a time, I would have been mortified at the thought of exposing my religious views to my readers. Like many Americans, I believed my spirituality was best shared in church or Sunday School

or around the dinner table at Christmas. Editorial pages were not the appropriate places for airing my religious beliefs. But during the last decade, I’ve changed my mind. No longer Baptist—I’m now Episcopalian—I have concluded that left-leaning Christians like me have allowed rightwing Christians to take over the public square, leaving the uninitiated to conclude that they exclusively represent Christianity. So I am much more comfortable now about presenting my contrasting view of Christianity, where the topic lends itself.

Thus, my October 2nd column ended with these words: “For those on the Christian left—and I count myself a member of that steadfast, if small, group—it does not matter one whit whether God created the universe in seven days or several billion years. Nor does it matter whether she started all life in a primordial soup and set a system in motion wherein species evolved over time. Her glory is not diminished.” (I couldn’t resist having a little fun with the rightwingers by using the feminine pronoun.)

Since then, we’ve written several editorials and columns denouncing efforts to either ban the teaching of evolution or to supplement it with something called “intelligent design”—religion dressed up as pseudoscience. We take credit for helping to turn the tide last year when Georgia’s State Superintendent of Schools, Kathy Cox, proposed striking the word “evolution” from the state’s science curriculum because it is a “controversial buzzword.” Downey wrote several critical editorials, and Cox reversed herself, bringing evolution back.

No doubt we will have to continue to fight efforts of certain conservative Christians determined to launch a frontal assault on the teaching of science. The war is not yet over. ■

Cynthia Tucker, a 1989 Nieman Fellow, is editorial page editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

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In Kansas, the Debate About Science Evolves

One veteran reporter describes the complexities involved in telling this story as like entering ‘The Land of Muck.’

By Diane Carroll

Evolution entered my life as a reporter on August 11, 1999. Before that day, I’d never written a word about it. But our education reporter/evolution expert was far away with her family in a cabin rented months earlier, so for two days, as speakers made their final pleas, I observed the tension building in a packed Kansas Board of Education meeting in Topeka. Finally, the board members cast their long-awaited vote. It was close, six to four. Those who wanted the state’s public school science standards to downplay evolution had prevailed. Creationists had won a huge victory. And people noticed. After The Kansas City Star published my story about the vote, e-mails from across the world clogged my computer.

Big story, I thought. Indeed, it is, and a tough one to tell. Just how tough became clearer to me when I inherited our paper’s evolution beat in 2002.

The changes the state’s board of education made in 1999 were significant and daunting for anyone to try to describe and explain in a few paragraphs of a news story. Nowadays, this same challenge holds true for the intelligent design-inspired changes that the board approved this fall. The most recent proposal in Kansas calls for students to “learn about the best evidence for modern evolutionary theory, but also to learn about areas where scientists are raising scientific criticisms of the theory.” The proposal also calls for changing the definition of science from “Science is the human activity of seeking natural explanations for what we observe in the world around us,” to “science is a systemic method of continuing investiga-

tion that uses observations, hypothesis testing, measurement experimentation, logical argument, and theory building to lead to more adequate explanations of natural phenomena.”

Proponents of intelligent design

By the time a reporter explains the changes and describes why their supporters want them and why opponents object, readers might feel like they’ve been pulled into something akin to dirty quicksand, or what I refer to as ‘The Land of Muck.’

(I.D.) contend that the current definition limits scientific inquiry because it allows only “natural” explanations. Scientists who oppose the proposed change say the new definition opens the door to “supernatural” explanations, which have no place in science.

Those are the proposal’s highlights—and certainly these points are what will most likely appear the most in headlines as this debate is covered, though there’s more to the proposal than this. By the time a reporter explains the changes and describes why their supporters want them and why opponents object, readers might feel like they’ve been pulled into something akin to dirty quicksand, or what I refer to as “The Land of Muck.”

It’s my belief that our newspaper’s readers and its editors want students in Kansas to receive a good science education. So when proposals are put forth that cause them to feel that education is being threatened, they care. But they don’t like The Land of Muck. And with

stories about evolution—and its teaching in the public schools—this land can be hard to avoid, especially when reporting on daily news developments. What’s helped me get through it is learning a few things about the terrain.

Who’s Who—Or Does It Even Matter?

There are creationists, young-earth creationists, and supporters of creation science. Then there are supporters of intelligent design. Usually the ideas of the I.D. supporters match up, but even among them there are differences. When Kansas adopted its new science standards in 1999 (which a newly elected board voted out in 2001), the outcome was influenced by young-earth creationists, who interpret the Bible’s Genesis account literally and believe God created the world in six days. In their minds, the earth is no more than 10,000 years old.

In 1999, as a result of the board’s vote, questions were deleted from our state’s science assessments about the age of the earth, the big bang theory, and macroevolution, which refers to one species changing into another as it adapts to its environment. What this meant is that teachers in Kansas were no longer responsible for teaching about these scientific topics. The state’s science standards also were changed to reflect rejection of the idea that evolution is a unifying principle in the sciences. Even the definition of science was altered to having it be a discipline that sought “logical” instead of “natural” explanations, which is a difference significant to those who challenge evolution.

Creationists hold the same basic

views as young-earth creationists, but believe the earth is much older. Those who support the teaching of creation science believe the manifestations of creation can be explored scientifically. One doesn't hear the term "creation science" much anymore; today, talk centers on intelligent design, the idea that the world is so complex that it must have been designed. But the creationists are still out there, and they've rallied around I.D.

From what I can tell, creationists' motives are likely different from I.D. proponents', but it is possible their motives are the same. But this is hard to determine because neither group seems willing to say much about their motives, and this makes it difficult for a reporter to really know how to accurately characterize the motives of I.D. proponents. In Kansas, I.D. proponents like to talk about intelligent design being "objective science," but this is a term that national I.D. leaders with the Discovery Institute shy away from.

According to intelligent design leaders here, the current definition of science in Kansas promotes a "nontheistic" point of view because it allows only "natural" explanations of the world. That view, they say, promotes naturalism or materialism and eliminates the possibility that some form of intelligence played a role. They want to change this definition to include a "theistic" point of view. Combining theistic and nontheistic views, they say, will result in "objective science." As one Kansas I.D. leader puts it, "When you can detect design in a living system, the implications of that are very significant. If you conclude the system is designed, it shows life has an inherent purpose."

All of this sounds a little like the ideas espoused in the Discovery Institute's "wedge" document, an internal memo first publicized in 1999 that talks about the "devastating consequences of the triumph of materialism." The Discovery Institute has tried to distance itself from this memo and claims that the news media have misinterpreted it.

Is it important, as a reporter, to

understand these differences among those who support these similar ideas to be able to convey this information to readers?

To readers, I don't think it matters all that much, since all of these forces are in some way involved in pushing intelligent design into the science curricula. But for reporters who are covering this story, knowing the background of these different groups and figuring

When all is said and done, the story is all about religion. Or the story has nothing to do with religion. Reporters hear both. So what is this story about? Surely it's about more than showing that evolution doesn't answer all the questions that scientists have about where we came from.

where their perspectives and strategies diverge can help to cut through the confusion that seems to envelop this story. This knowledge puts a reporter on more solid ground, and that can be important to prevent the slide into The Land of Muck.

When Ohio adopted its science standards in 2002, the Discovery Institute put out a press release lauding the vote. Interestingly enough, so did the National Center for Science Education. How could that happen? And what did this mean? After all, the two were on opposing sides during the debate. As it turned out, each side reached a different interpretation of some compromise language that read, "Describe how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolution." Attached to this clause there was a note that said this language did not mandate the teaching or testing of intelligent design.

The Discovery Institute latched onto the words "critically analyze" and claimed these words supported their push to "teach the controversy" about evolution. The National Center

for Science Education claimed that the language didn't change anything because scientists continually analyze evolution. It certainly is not unusual for opposing parties to end up in such a place, and by checking beyond the press releases—and interviewing leaders in Ohio on both sides of the issue—a clearer picture emerged. I ended up with a front-page story about the debate that went on in Ohio.

Also, bear in mind that I.D. proponents tend to be very particular about how their views are presented in news reporting. There's a lot of very specific language that some of them want to get into the public discourse, and the Discovery Institute even set up a Weblog to "educate" reporters by critiquing their stories. Even with these watchful eyes hovering over the stories we write, what reporters learn on this journey is that not even the most conscientious among us will ever get through *The Land of Muck* by parroting what people say, no matter what side of the debate they are on.

The Real Deal

When all is said and done, the story is all about religion. Or the story has nothing to do with religion. Reporters hear both. So what is this story about? Surely it's about more than showing that evolution doesn't answer all the questions scientists have about where we came from. I once pressed a Discovery Institute leader to explain the fervor behind the movement: he said the real issue was academic freedom. When I brought up the motives espoused in the "wedge" document, he responded to each of my questions with a question.

I have listened to intelligent design proponents explain their rationale for hours. I can report from those conversations that they believe in what they are saying and think they are working toward some greater good. But even if one accepts their assertion that the world was designed, where does that leave the issue? In a science classroom, if a designer is acknowledged, isn't it time then to turn back to science?

After my years of coverage, I've reached the conclusion that the most worthwhile stories to pursue are those that shed light on the emergence of these movements and the passion driving them forward. This means also investigating how these movements are funded, at their inception and also now. Reporters also have to try to help people to understand the motivation

of those who are behind them. For example, are today's I.D. proponents part of the conservative Christian faction trying to infuse their view of religion into the public school curriculum? If so, this information needs to be part of the coverage the issue receives.

Questions such as these need to be explored. And if reporters can dig out information to help in answering them,

then slugging through the muck might just be worthwhile. ■

Diane Carroll is a reporter for The Kansas City Star. She has been following the debate on the teaching of evolution in Kansas since 1999.

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When the Conflict Narrative Doesn't Fit

'Conflict does attract readers. But pursued as a virtue unto itself, it can distort news stories and skew public understanding.'

By Diane Winston

Pity the reporter assigned to cover the culture wars without the time, space or resources to do the job right. That, at least, looked like the backstory for an October 22, 2005 New York Times news story titled, "Intelligent Design Is Not for the Classroom, Cornell President Says." Armed with fewer than 500 words, reporter Michelle York recapped Hunter R. Rawlings III's nearly 4,500-word State of the University address, in which he decided to devote the entire speech he delivered to the Cornell community to an issue he defined as "the challenge to science posed by religiously based opposition to evolution." In the first paragraph of her story, York quotes Rawlings calling the campaign to add intelligent design to the science curriculum "very dangerous," noting he "denounced intelligent design 'as a religious belief masquerading as a secular idea.'" Further down, York cites recent statistics on the percentage of Americans who favor teaching creationism instead of evolution, then sums up the conflict between religion and science in a sentence or two.

The story ends with a quote from John G. West, a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, a preeminent hub for intelligent design theory. West says a "college president is in a unique position to create an atmosphere of

free speech," but Rawlings seemed to be "fanning the flames of intolerance" and "implying that faculty don't have the right to discuss ideas."

Rawlings' mistake? Stating that the "invasion of science by intelligent design embodies ... above all a *cultural* issue, not a scientific one." York's mistake? Dumbing down a complex issue with polarizing, oversimplified and lazy reporting. But this isn't one reporter's problem. The New York Times's story—like most articles about the "clash" between religion and science—repeated the miscues and misapprehensions that have characterized coverage of this topic for almost a century.

Newsroom realities—including a shrinking news hole, more deadline pressures, and lack of in-depth knowledge—are part of the problem. But these don't justify ill-suited frames, intellectual timidity, and rote reporting that typifies much of what is written in general and on this subject in particular. What happens with coverage of this topic reflects many of the pitfalls that plague mainstream media. Journalists rely on narrative structures that mask more than they reveal and short-circuit the kinds of contextualization, sourcing and analysis that can provide new insights on hot-button issues and move public discussion forward.

Journalism, Religion and Science

The long-standing antagonism between the domains of religion and journalism is described in a recent essay, "Promoting a Secular Standard: Secularization and Modern Journalism, 1870-1930," by sociologist Richard W. Flory contained in "The Secular Revolution," edited by Christian Smith. Beginning in the late 19th century, publishers, editors and journalism educators "actively sought to minimize and ultimately undermine traditional religion," Flory argues. In its place, they advanced science, which was seen as progressive and inclusive, to be the authoritative voice for modern society. Their reasons were twofold. The first was economic: Pressure to sell advertising and boost circulation ended the need for advocacy journalism, including sectarian religious coverage. In other words, newspapers now needed to reach the widest possible public. The second reason was that an increasingly professionalized and secularized society considered legal and scientific models more prestigious than those based in the supernatural.

By diminishing the importance of faith and promoting science, journalists demonstrated that their field was "best suited to succeed religion in the

modern world,” according to Flory. He also explains that newspapers adopted the conflict narrative to improve their commercial prospects, and editors encouraged reporters to write colorful, lively stories. Charles Merz, who later became an editor of *The New York Times*, advised reporters in 1925 to make conflict a key element in their stories. He observed presciently (given the column inches subsequently allotted to clergy sex scandals), that “If theology and religion envy sex and crime and sigh for front-page space, all that theology and religion need to do is produce a good personal encounter.”

Conflict does attract readers. But pursued as a virtue unto itself, it can distort news stories and skew public understanding. Not everything fits a “he said, she said” structure, and not all arguments are epistemologically equal. As Rawlings said in his talk, evolution is a scientific theory—a hypothesis, and that is demonstrated by observation or experiment. Intelligent design is a religious belief. It is a theory according to its definition of being “an idea or belief arrived at by conjecture or speculation.” But that is a different understanding of theory than that used in science. Proponents of intelligent design obfuscate an important distinction by blurring the two meanings of theory.

That’s why Rawlings and West talk past each other: What is happening is not a conflict; it’s a disconnect.

Imposing an Ill-Fitting Narrative

So why do reporters use the conflict narrative so frequently in covering this story? It’s familiar, reliable and a lot easier than research and original thinking. In this case, it plays out the trope of a culture war, propagated by the catchy notion of a “red-state/blue state divide.” Do we think that Merz ever imagined that conflict would become the primary frame for reporting most of the news? I doubt it. In his own writings, he emphasized a newspaper’s responsibility to the pursuit of truth.

Writing for *The New Republic* in 1920, he decried the *Times*’s coverage of the Russian Revolution as “a case of seeing, not what was there, but what men wanted to see.”

The debate about the teaching of evolution and intelligent design shouldn’t

The debate about the teaching of evolution and intelligent design shouldn’t be cast, in the words of my first managing editor, as a ‘pissing match.’ Rather it’s a philosophical discussion about how we know what we know.

be cast, in the words of my first managing editor, as a “pissing match.” Rather it’s a philosophical discussion about how we know what we know. Unfortunately, many of the sources who could offer thoughtful comments on how to constructively discuss this aspect are rarely quoted. The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, The Center for the Study of Science and Religion, the Counterbalance Foundation, as well as numerous smaller and more religiously located groups, have worked in this field for as long as half a century. But their speakers, resources and publications are rarely cited.

For a helpful case of art reflecting—and besting—reality, reporters might watch the thoughtful treatment of the evolution vs. intelligent design debate on a recent (October 16, 2005) episode of the TV drama, “*The West Wing*.” Presidential candidate Matt Santos is dogged by reporters who want to know his position on the issue. Although his Democratic Party handlers advise him not to comment, Santos, piqued by the media’s insistent questioning, says he believes in a God, whom he assumes is intelligent. The subsequent media frenzy forces Santos to clarify his position during a meeting with parents and teachers at a local school where the

issue is hotly debated.

Santos passionately describes his faith in God. But he is equally ardent about his acceptance of science and the theory of evolution. He explains that evolution, a scientific theory, should be taught in public schools, whereas religious instruction should come from the home or a religious institution. He suggests that those who are unhappy with that division of tasks should seek redress in the democratic process. The crowd—even those who disagreed—cheered wildly.

The Cornell University president’s speech, which made similar points, also elicited strong support. In an interview I did with him after his speech, Rawlings said he’d received “an overwhelmingly positive response,” but he would have preferred media coverage that more accurately reported the address. “I recognize the media has a tough job of summarizing arguments,” he said. “But journalists should be extremely wary of oversimplifying and emphasizing polarities instead of nuanced arguments.”

Were I still working as a reporter, I’d visit Ithaca, New York to see how issues of religion and science play out in Cornell’s classrooms, dormitories and houses of worship. I’d explore student, faculty and staff response to Rawlings’ contention that both faith and science are important to the university. Then I’d visit Ithaca itself to see whether and how these issues surface in public schools and community settings. And if I were an editor, I’d ask my reporters to step back and consider how they, as purveyors of this narrative frame, might be embedded in the “conflict” and its outcome. One step back could be the first step forward. ■

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Courtroom Testimony Offers an Excellent Road Map for Reporters

‘... the usual “he said, she said” quotes I read in press accounts have little or nothing to do with the actual issues raised by the Pennsylvania case.’

By Paul R. Gross

From late in September until early November, journalists reported on a battle being waged in a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania federal courtroom between “intelligent design” (I.D.) and the sciences of biology and geology, especially evolutionary biology. Their stories have unleashed another comber in a media-coverage tidal wave. There have been some big waves on this topic before, in Kansas, Texas, Georgia and Ohio, for example, each the result of the I.D. movement’s self-identified “wedge” initiative that has been in operation for a decade. But with the Harrisburg trial the stakes escalated, and the result has been a tsunami of attention in print and also in broadcast chatter.

Though the case concerns a small school district in Dover, Pennsylvania, this is not a mere local political challenge of the kind taking place in other states. At its core, the issue here is constitutional. The defendant in this case (the Dover school district) has mandated an official announcement be read to all ninth grade biology students that asserts—in effect—that what the state’s science standards for K-12 require on the history of life on earth (organic evolution) is incomplete and, well, just one theory and quite possibly wrong. More to the point, these words inform students that there is an alternative and, by implication, an equally sound scientific theory, even though evolution has for more than 100 years been employed in biology worldwide, including its applied sciences such as medicine, as the central organizing principle and has been recognized as such and for that long by the overwhelming majority of the world’s scientists—not just biologists.

Backing up its announcement, the school district in effect recommends and makes available a revised edition of a creationist textbook, which has just recently had all such words as “creation” and “creationism” deleted and replaced with words like “intelligent design.” That text presents the alternative “theory”—intelligent design. Life on earth, it argues, is too complex to have arisen by chance. It must have been designed (that is, created) by an intelligent agent or agents (like, say, God) working supernaturally. No serious scientist, by the way, understands the mechanism of evolution as “chance.”

Some press accounts, and I’ve read many of them, are conscientiously evenhanded. When editors give enough column inches, some reporters have provided pretty good summaries of the broad issues and make clear that I.D. is a game being played centrally by a very small group of activists based in and supported by a conservative Christian think tank, the Discovery Institute of Seattle, Washington. Some describe in some depth this small band of activists, some of whom have science backgrounds (but not one is a recognized, contributing evolutionary biologist) and how they’ve relied on the reflex support of a vast slice of the American populace—perhaps more than half of it. (Among this half must be many people who know nothing about evolution except that it can’t be right.) Most journalists point out the magnitude of the rejection by the world scientific community of the I.D. claims, but at the same time allow I.D. proponents their say.

The problem in the reporting on this case is a universal problem of journalism. In this case, this (manufactured)

conflict is dealt with as if it was just one more story of rival claimants to the public esteem using a traditional “he said, she said” approach. The problem is that the usual “he said, she said” quotes I read in press accounts have little or nothing to do with the actual issues raised by the Pennsylvania case. At its core, this case is about a public school initiative to pass judgment on the content of science in its curriculum—in effect, about an action to *correct* what its supporters regard as an error, weakness, or imbalance in the state’s and the scientific community’s consensus.

Ignoring the Testimony

Most disappointing about news coverage of this court case is that a remarkable opportunity has been lost in the role journalists could have played in educating Americans about some of the core issues, testimony and findings that surfaced during the weeks of trial. Here are a few of the conspicuous ones:

- The primary defendant claim is that I.D. is a fully qualified scientific theory, sufficiently well developed and with sufficient *positive* evidence to back it up, such that it constitutes a serious challenge to the prevailing science of life’s history on earth. That being so, the claimants continue, this challenge must be brought to the attention of all students.
- Another major claim is that there are serious gaps and flaws in what is being taught as the current standard account of life’s history on earth. (It is misnamed “Darwinism” even though Darwin, were he to come alive, would not recognize or understand it.) This

being so, the school district argues, the flaws must be pointed out. Good science and fairness demand it. “Teach the controversy” is their battle cry.

- Opponents of these claims (the plaintiffs) pointed out that the I.D. advocates want to introduce ideas not from anything in the scientific literature or recognized by any productive evolutionary scientists, but from a program dedicated, by its own announcements, to overturning modern science and replacing it with a “theistic science.” The hoped-for theistic science is one in which conservative Christianity is an ineluctable element of every undertaking and teaching. The movement, the plaintiffs argued, is inspired and supported by a radical, sectarian religious viewpoint that is hostile to evolution and to science generally. They argue that this nonscientific and antiscientific view has been promoted by a branch of government (the defendants) into the science curriculum, and the courts have held, repeatedly, that this is unconstitutional.

Those are real issues examined in this trial, which is therefore a very important event. The decision in this case will be no less important for science education generally and for the general culture, whatever its outcome, than was that 1925 Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee. Given this trial’s prominence, and the issue’s significance, it is vital that journalists make certain that readers, listeners and viewers understand exactly what did and did not happen in the course of the trial, as opposed to relying on “he said, she said” commentators who know precisely the words to use to skirt some of these key points.

- Readers, listeners and viewers need to know that in the course of the trial no evidence *in favor* of the claim of intelligent agency was of-

fered and that those who testified for the plaintiffs, speaking for all of the life sciences, argued (and documented their argument) that no such evidence has as yet been brought forward, by anyone.

- It is also important to point out that the principal scientific witness for the defense, biochemist Michael Behe, agreed, albeit reluctantly, that there has been no evidence *for* I.D.. As he was forced to admit in cross-examina-

[Barbara] Forrest used the proponents’ words that they addressed to one another and to their supporters to explode the claim of their secularist approach. Yet despite an abundance of such evidence, reporters too often take at face value the claim of I.D. proponents that their case is purely scientific and secular.

tion, his argument consists of incredulity—he just doesn’t believe that the standard Darwinian mechanisms can explain the complexity of living things. On the stand, he agreed that these mechanisms do work in many cases, including in some of his own, original examples of this supposed impossibility.

- It also emerged in the trial that nobody has found even one of the supposedly disabling flaws named by the I.D. proponents to be such. Quite the contrary: The strident I.D. claims of error and fraud have themselves been shown, in an avalanche of publications in scientific journals (unlike outlets used for I.D. claims) to be grossly in error. This has been reported in the primary scientific literature and in the popular literature for nearly a decade.

It is certainly true that some news coverage of this trial did illuminate the fact that scientists in evolutionary biology (tens of thousands of them) reject

the I.D. claim that there are deep and obvious flaws in Darwinism. Perhaps the most damaging testimony for the plaintiffs came, however, from expert witness Barbara Forrest, a philosophy professor at Southeastern Louisiana University, who has tracked closely the operations of the I.D. movement. In well-documented statements (written and on the stand), she demonstrated that the I.D. movement had fundamentally religious origins and purposes that were announced at the start in an elaborate plan to destroy Darwinism and materialism and that they continue to be pursued according to the “wedge” plan. In detailed testimony (and writings), Forrest used the proponents’ words that they addressed to one another and to their supporters to explode the claim of their secularist approach.

Yet despite an abundance of such evidence, reporters too often take at face value the claim of I.D. proponents that their case is purely scientific and secular.

Finally, there emerged in the course of the trial information that is as galls-funny as it is tragic. Not one school committee member among those most insistent on the importance of I.D. in the curriculum seemed to know much or anything about it or about evolution. Nor would any of them admit to having had any religious interest in this affair, despite damning evidence from the available records that there was nothing *but* religion in the arguments that preceded the school board’s decision to insert I.D.. According to their testimony, they simply took the word of the Discovery Institute’s operators that I.D. is good science and that Darwinism is false. The school district and its legal team have evinced no little pique at having been hung out to dry by the Discovery Institute.

Any journalist reading this essay will, of course, respond (correctly) by assuming that it is, or includes, spin. But the opportunity exists to go to the trial transcripts, which are available online,

to see if what I've written is accurate. (Start here: <http://www2.ncseweb.org/wp/>.) Or go to the literature on this issue, which includes the 2004 book that Barbara Forrest and I wrote entitled, "Creationism's Trojan horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design." Do this and I can all but ensure that reporters will come to this understanding of the way things

were and are. On the other hand, read most of the press coverage of this trial and about these issues and come away with no clear sense of what this supposed conflict of scientific "alternatives" is really about. ■

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versity of Virginia, is the author of a comprehensive review, sponsored by the Fordham Foundation, of K-12 science standards issued by 49 states and the District of Columbia. The review was published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in early December.

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Probing Beneath the Surface of the Intelligent Design Controversy

‘... to truly understand I.D., people need to look at things in ways that are different from our accustomed patterns.’

By Gailon Totheroh

On October 21st, Cornell University's Interim President Hunter R. Rawlings III gave the school's annual State of the University speech. Almost from the beginning of his talk, Dr. Rawlings attacked intelligent design (I.D.). The Cornell Daily Sun called the president's attack a "condemnation." Why would I.D. be an issue that would sidetrack Rawlings from focusing on the usual topics college presidents talk about? Rawlings explained that the threat to science and education from I.D. was too great to remain silent.

Other news reports tell of British philosopher Antony Flew's change of mind about the existence of some sort of super-intelligence being involved in creating the universe. Last December Flew, a lifelong atheist, said in a video he released entitled, "Has Science Discovered God?" that biologists' investigation of DNA demonstrates "by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce (life), that intelligence must have been involved." He says that he still rejects Christianity and monotheism in general, indicating that his was not so much a religious conversion as

an empirical one.

From my position as science and medical news reporter with The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN, an avowedly evangelical Christian organization), my sense is—as stories mentioned above indicate—that there are very deep issues involved in coverage of this topic. This sense comes from my personal observations and reading during the past 20 years, as well as from my reporting experiences for nearly that long with CBN News. For example, woven into this story are such critical issues as public education, freedom of speech and religious liberty, academic censorship, the nature of science, and the essence of religion.

I believe that being well informed and self-conscious about one's worldview can help reporters to convey the bigger picture as we cover the I.D. controversy in this country. At times I fear that reporters, and I include myself, are not asking the important questions we should be asking. In part, this situation might be blamed on the dearth of awareness of the underlying philosophies connected with evolution and intelligent design. I also fear that too often, because of

this lack of awareness, we use clichés and boilerplate accusations in our reporting instead of working harder to understand the issues. What this means is that journalists might be missing or misinterpreting many stories related to our origins, design and evolution.

Reporting on Intelligent Design

I began to report on intelligent design just as the issue was entering the public dialogue. In September 1992, I first interviewed Phillip E. Johnson, the University of California at Berkeley law professor, who had written "Darwin on Trial." Johnson, whose specialty is evidence, had been on sabbatical in Britain a few years earlier and had seen and read books by the noted evolutionist Richard Dawkins. He analyzed Dawkins as being weak in evidence and claimed that he relied too much on naturalistic philosophy to make up for that absence. From my own reading about weaknesses in evolutionary theory, I was aware of some of this, but Johnson impressed me with his command of the issues. I left my interview with him with a sense that

I'd now be better able to direct a critical eye toward science reporting when, for example, such events as fossil finds were in the news. In 1993, Johnson met with other scholars interested in intelligent design and they sparked what became the intelligent design movement.

This fall an important legal case involving the teaching of I.D. in the public schools, *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, was argued in Pennsylvania. Even when a decision is reached, appeals might go on for some time, and one day it is possible this case might lead to a Supreme Court decision about whether I.D. can be taught in public schools. Even now, the testimony in this case speaks to some of the deeper issues animating public interest in this issue.

A common thread in the news coverage of this trial is dueling accusations about whether intelligent design is about religion or about science. But this thread is only one of many aspects of this story that is worthy of journalists taking a closer look. For instance, many reporters refer to the Dover trial as a repeat of the 1925 Scopes "monkey" trial, but many Americans (including some reporters) draw their understanding of Scopes from the 1960 movie "Inherit the Wind." But like many movies, this one does not depict reality, as Edward J. Larson's 1998 Pulitzer Prize-winning history of Scopes, "Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion," documented. And after I learned about this disparity, I reported about the film's false image.

Similarly, reporters would do well to look into their overuse of other clichés that seem to be surfacing in coverage of this contemporary conflict between religion and science. Into this category I'd put the Roman Catholic Church vs. Galileo and the flat earth accusation. In his book, "Inventing the Flat Earth," University of California, Santa Barbara historian emeritus Jeffrey Burton Russell describes, for example, how Darwinists marketed this myth in the late 19th

century as a way of attacking critics of the theory. These historic controversies have a complexity that seems to be at variance with their common usage by journalists.

Perhaps it might help if reporters started to think about the Dover case as Scopes turned upside down. By this I mean they might want to explore the

A common thread in the news coverage of this trial is dueling accusations about whether intelligent design is about religion or about science. But this thread is only one of many aspects of this story that is worthy of journalists taking a closer look.

ways in which institutional power can now be found in the evolution establishment opposing freedom of thought and speech in the academy. If reporters were willing to take an even more historic—and I'd argue relevant—leap they could help people realize how today's issues compare with a similar debate that occurred in ancient Greece among philosophers, with the atomists (proto-evolutionists) facing off against the First Cause crowd (proto-design advocates). In doing this, reporters would help to clarify that this is a long-lived debate, one that is not likely to die out in the foreseeable future.

Complexity of Ideas

The issues at the heart of this debate are complex. In the Dover trial, the complexity is apparent. Scientist Ken Miller testifies one week about how evolution can explain the miniature machines in bacteria. Then, in the next week, biochemist Michael Behe, the author of "Darwin's Black Box," rebuts Miller's testimony, explaining how those "machines" are products of design. Certainly it is a challenge to explain this conflicting testimony to readers and viewers as part of daily news about the trial. But this difficulty should not deter reporters from trying to learn as

much as they can about the complexities of these arguments, then look for ways to convey this understanding as part of their news reporting.

My reporting on this controversy has been helped by a lot of background reading. Early on, I read about the differences between microevolution and macroevolution, enough to know that

no one disagrees with microevolution, which generally refers to small changes in existing species or gene pools, such as changes in the size of finch beaks or the development of antibiotic resistance. By contrast, macroevolution refers to the formation of fundamentally new features and structures, such as the origin of animal's basic body plans during the Cambrian explosion. When

a scientist says evolution is a fact, he is rightfully referring to microevolution. Yet macroevolution—what generally is called the theory of evolution—is a contested issue. Recognizing one as fact does not confer that status on the other.

There are unanswered questions, too, about the fossil record. Study of the fossil record, for example, led the late evolutionary author Stephen Jay Gould to develop the theory of punctuated equilibrium, which posits great leaps forward in evolution in a geologically short time span. Dawkins attacked Gould on this issue. If major camps of evolutionists can't agree on such a central issue—one that Darwin said could contradict his theory (a clear fossil record)—a reporter might well have questions, too.

When Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" was published in 1859, people took a type of intelligent design point of view for granted. To properly understand Darwin's new theory of evolution, people had to think in an entirely different way. Similarly, today, to truly understand I.D., people need to look at things in ways that are different from our accustomed patterns.

When I was a graduate journalism student in 1985, a coauthor of "The Mystery of Life's Origin," scientist

Charles Thaxton, spoke at Regent University. Thaxton was one of the early advocates of intelligent design. A story he told struck me with its theological and philosophical implications, and it has remained as a backdrop of my reporting. He told of a time when he'd spoken to a biology class at Johns Hopkins University. During the first half of the period, he gave a best-case scenario for evolution. In the last half, he critiqued evolution based on the science. Despite the fact that Thaxton had mentioned nothing but science,

one student went up to him afterward and said, "I now know why I believe in evolution. It's not because of the facts, it's because I hate God."

Truly, evolution and intelligent design are each connected with questions about God and both have implications for worldviews and elicit philosophical overtones. Taking those considerations seriously has been quite helpful to me in "getting under the story," as one of my journalism mentors describes it. Being aware of my own presuppositions makes me more aware of the philoso-

phies of my sources. And delving into those might produce a wealth of story ideas as we try to have the stories we do help readers, listeners and viewers think more expansively about intelligent design and evolution. ■

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Intelligent Design Has Not Surfaced in the British Press

At a journalism seminar, a BBC producer was 'struck by the concern about intelligent design amongst our transatlantic colleagues.'

By Martin Redfern

I've been asking a few friends who are neither journalists nor scientists—nor, for that matter, Americans—what they understand by the term "intelligent design." "Isn't that the slogan of that German car company?" one said, in a remark typical of what I often hear. In Europe, intelligent design is nowhere near the big issue that it is in North America. Serious newspapers have been giving brief coverage to the Dover, Pennsylvania court case on their inner pages, but in the popular press and on television there is not a mention made.

It's interesting to reflect on why that might be. After all, according to the U.S. Constitution, church and state are separate whereas over here, the queen is both head of state and head of the Church of England. And many schools

are church schools with religious education a small but significant part of their curriculum, and a brief act of worship is an almost daily event. But it is hard to find anyone here who thinks that intelligent design is serious science or that it should be taught as such in schools,

Whether people believe in intelligent design or not, to most Brits this is clearly a religious issue. Since there is religious education, if the topic is worthy of discussion then it seems logical that it should be discussed as part of religious education, not in biology lessons. The American curriculum does not offer that option.

or at least who is prepared to say so in public. The Church of England, for the most part, seems to be on the side of the biologists, and even the Catholic Church has gone on record as saying that evolution is more than just a theory.

It might be a relatively untold story,

but the evolution/creation debate regularly rears its ugly head into journalists' lives. Almost whenever we broadcast anything substantial about evolution, we get a small but significant response from lobbyists demanding that we give equal time to creationist or intelligent

design arguments. It is relatively easy to reply—almost with a stock letter—pointing out that ours is a science program, not one about religious belief. But these letters usually come through formal channels, and thus they demand time-consuming paperwork.

We presume creationists monitor our broadcasts with that in mind.

This past summer, I was fortunate to be a Templeton-Cambridge Journalism Fellow in Science and Religion, which enabled me to attend a series of seminars in Cambridge, England.

Both the journalists and the speakers were drawn from a mixture of faiths and included several atheists, but no one seemed to be pushing the intelligent design argument, and the Brits among us were struck by the concern about intelligent design amongst our transatlantic colleagues.

One of the speakers at a seminar was Professor Richard Dawkins, well known on both sides of the Atlantic for his almost fanatical belief in evolution and his rejection of religion in all its forms. He might appear to be a fundamentalist scientist, but he does have a way with metaphors. He likened the theory of evolution to a crane that can lift complex life, including human life, up from the primordial slime. Evolution is a theory, yes, but like a crane, he says, it is built on the firm ground of established scientific observation. By contrast, invoking God as an explanation, through whatever subtle mechanism such as intelligent design, is like a skyhook: It may offer an explanation for the progression of life, but it has itself no rational supporting structure in science or observation. As William of Ockham would have put it in the 14th century, introducing God multiplies entities unnecessarily.

That logical argument, one might think, would hold true everywhere. But belief, to many British minds, including my own, defies logic. I was stunned to read in an account of a U.S. poll that “only” 26 percent of a sample of Americans believe in a literal six-day creation. For me, the figure of 26 percent would have been shocking enough, but it was the “only” that raised the hairs on the back of my neck. I would be surprised if “even” 2.6 percent of Brits held that belief. But then we do not appear to be a very devout lot. Church attendance here is low and falling—only a few percent of the population attend church on a regular basis. And those who do go are often elderly and attending services that have changed little since the 19th century.

But I suspect that our societal level

of devotion is not the main reason why the issue of intelligent design has not yet become a major debate in education. Rather it could be because religious education here is already part of the school curriculum. Whether people believe in intelligent design or not, to most Brits this is clearly a religious issue. Since there is religious education, if the topic is worthy of discussion then it seems logical that it should be discussed as

Such issues [as the teaching of creationist beliefs] have been reported in the British press, especially in liberal or left-wing publications such as The Guardian, but they have not become headline news. That may still happen, however.

part of religious education, not in biology lessons. The American curriculum does not offer that option.

Even though there seems to be no large, well-organized lobby group for intelligent design in Britain, its teachings have appeared in some of our schools. A few years ago, the government started to encourage the creation of so-called technology colleges in deprived inner-city areas where existing schools had been failing. These have been set up as partnerships between the public sector and private benefactors. Though they charge no fees, they are technically independent schools, and their benefactors get to appoint the school governors who, in turn, appoint the teaching staff.

One such benefactor is Sir Peter Vardy. He made his fortune as a car dealer and has now contributed to several schools in the northeast of England, the first of them, called Emmanuel College, is in Gateshead near Newcastle. It is clear that Vardy has sympathy for intelligent design and even for full-blown creationism. Another of the school’s directors is the Conservative peer, Baroness Cox, who, in 1988, sponsored amendments to an education reform bill stating that religious education in state schools should be “in the main Christian.”

According to The Guardian news-

paper, the chief education advisor to the Vardy Foundation, John Burn, is a founder of the Newcastle-based Christian Institute that has 12 full-time staff promoting fundamentalist Christian beliefs. The head teacher at Emmanuel College suggested to a Guardian reporter that it is “fascist” to say that schools should not consider creationist theories, while the head of science at the school, Stephen Layfield, was quoted as having urged colleagues to “show the superiority” of creationist beliefs.

Such issues have been reported in the British press, especially in liberal or left-wing publications such as The Guardian, but they have not become headline news. That may still

happen, however. In October, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that he wants all schools to have the chance to become “independent” to give them more freedom to innovate, within certain guidelines. Part of his motivation is probably to take some of the control of schools away from the local county education boards but, if there are enough rich benefactors who believe in intelligent design, some believe he could be letting religious dogma into the classroom through the back door.

And if this shows signs of happening, many other British journalists and I will be waiting with our pens and microphones at the ready, to lift this largely untold story into headline news. ■

Martin Redfern is senior producer of the BBC Radio Science Unit in London. Any views expressed in this article are his own, and not necessarily those of the BBC. Messages for Redfern can be left on the BBC Radio Science message board at www.bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F2766778. Examples of this unit’s coverage of the Dover trial are at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4353524.stm>.

Knowing Uncertainty for What It Is

In reporting on the science of global warming, journalists contend with powerful, well-funded forces using strategies created by tobacco companies.

By David Michaels

For decades, the tobacco and asbestos industries have worked hard to manufacture more than just their products. While aggressively marketing what they make, they've also been successfully creating public-information campaigns designed to create uncertainty in the minds of people about claims made against the destructive and lethal characteristics of their products. Though discovery of these efforts has come too late for many of their victims, documents unearthed in lawsuits have revealed concerted efforts to avoid the imposition of government regulation by impugning public health science.

These days, the most well-known (and likely also the best funded) of these campaigns is the one in which the fossil fuel industry manufactures uncertainty about environmental and public health claims raised by scientists and others regarding climate change. When confronted by an overwhelming worldwide scientific consensus on the impact of human commerce in the global warming of the past century, the industry and its political allies follow the tobacco road. Evidence of this was illuminated when Frank Luntz, a leading Republican political consultant, sent a strategy memo to his clients revealed in 2003, and his words were widely circulated among scientists and policymakers. In it Luntz asserted that *"The scientific debate remains open.* Voters believe that there is *no* consensus about global warming in the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly." (Emphases in the original memo.)

Because journalists often report

on political and scientific debates that arise about this issue, they can find themselves transmitting information that conveys this frame of mind to readers, listeners and viewers. In part, this happens when reporters feel obligated to offer space and credibility to skeptical perspectives, even when those who espouse these views are funded and promoted by corporations whose activities disproportionately contribute to the problem, which in this case is global warming. Further, the skeptic's assertions are often reported without identifying their corporate sponsors or letting readers know the person's credentials for raising such doubts.

Recognizing the power of a sound bite and memorable phrase, industries responsible for creating what scientists contend are causing the climate to warm often cry "junk science" at the appearance of studies reporting what they regard as unfavorable findings, even when the quality of the research is high. Junk-science advocates allege that many of the scientific studies (and even scientific methods) used in the regulatory and legal arenas are fundamentally flawed, contradictory or incomplete, contending that it would be wrong or premature to regulate the exposure in question or compensate the worker or community resident who might have been made sick by the exposure.

Certainty vs. Inaction

Every first-year public health student is taught how John Snow in 1854 stopped a cholera epidemic in London. During a 10-day period in September during which more than 500 Londoners died from the disease, Snow used a city map to mark the location of each household

with a case of cholera. He quickly determined that those who drank from one particular water source were at the highest risk for the disease, and he recommended removal of the handle from the pump supplying drinking water from that source. By using the best evidence available at the time, hundreds of additional deaths were avoided. If government officials in London had demanded absolute certainty, the epidemics might have continued for another 30 years until the cholera bacterium was identified.

In our time, it seems, debate over science is replacing debate over policy, and this can threaten the ability of the government to protect the public's health and environment. As Snow's story demonstrates, the desire to establish absolute scientific certainty is both counterproductive and futile. This recognition is realized in the wise words Sir Austin Bradford Hill, a renowned biostatistician, delivered in an address to the Royal Society of Medicine in 1965:

"All scientific work is incomplete—whether it be observational or experimental. All scientific work is liable to be upset or modified by advancing knowledge. That does not confer upon us a freedom to ignore the knowledge we already have, or to postpone action that it appears to demand at a given time.

"Who knows, asked Robert Browning, but the world may end tonight? True, but on available evidence most of us make ready to commute on the 8:30 next day."

Yet in our time, the wisdom of Hill's words is being both twisted and ignored. For example, take the case of

Philip A. Cooney, chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, extending a political hand into the editing of a federal report on climate change to magnify the level of uncertainty. Before his appointment to a top environmental protection job by President Bush, Cooney worked as a lobbyist with the American Petroleum Institute (API), one of the nation's leading manufacturers of scientific uncertainty. Subsequently he left the White House for employment with ExxonMobil, where his job title might have changed but not his mission.

Another example of tearing down scientific findings in the name of certainty happened with a chemical called benzene, a byproduct of oil production and use, and exposure to it is known to cause leukemia. Recently, a team of U.S. and Chinese scientists confirmed that workers with exposure to benzene (a known human carcinogen) at levels that meet the current workplace standard in the United States have an increased risk of blood disorders. The medical message is clear: The current standard is not protective; it needs to be tighter.

Facing such a specter, the API raised more than \$20 million to conduct its own study whose results were expected to, according to internal documents, “establish that adherence to current occupational exposure limits do [sic] not create significant risk to workers exposed to benzene.” But how does API know what the results will be before the study even begins? It's a common trick of the trade, one that any of the key players in the “product defense” (which is their own term) industry can pull off easily. They are talented experts at subverting science at the behest of their corporate clients, and they hire product defense scientists who won't *deny* that a relationship exists between the exposure and the disease, but are quick to conclude that “the evidence is inconclusive.”

But much scientific “uncertainty” about the causes of disease is manufactured, designed to impede the inconve-

nience and economic consequences of public health protections. For 50 years, tobacco companies employed a stable of scientists to assert (sometimes under oath) that they did not believe there was conclusive evidence that cigarettes caused lung cancer. Scientists paid to manufacture such uncertainty would dissect every study, then highlight flaws and inconsistencies. Less well-known but following the same pattern are the campaigns mounted to question studies documenting the adverse health effects of exposure to lead, mercury,

It is important for people to understand—and for journalists to help them do this—that our nation's public health programs will not be effective if absolute proof is required before we act; instead, the best available evidence must be sufficient.

vinyl chloride, chromium, beryllium, benzene and a long list of pesticides and other toxic chemicals.

Manufacturing uncertainty is now so commonplace that it is unusual for the science behind an environmental regulation *not* to be challenged. Yet it is important for people to understand—and for journalists to help them do this—that our nation's public health programs will not be effective if absolute proof is required before we act; instead, the best available evidence must be sufficient.

Observing the Strategy

I observed the work of the product defense industry when I served as assistant secretary for environment, safety and health in the Department of Energy (DOE) from 1998 to 2001. In that role, I was the nuclear weapons complex's chief safety officer, responsible for protecting the health of workers, the communities and environment around some of the most dangerous and pol-

luted sites in the country. One of my chief concerns was beryllium, a light-weight metal vital to nuclear weapons production. Hundreds of weapons workers have developed chronic beryllium disease (CBD), a sometimes-fatal lung disease associated with breathing tiny amounts of the metal.

Beryllium's victims included not only machinists and others who worked directly with the metal, but also others who were in the vicinity of beryllium work, often for very short periods of time. One accountant had developed CBD after working for a few weeks each year in an office near where beryllium work was underway.

In 1998, when I was appointed by President Bill Clinton, both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and DOE (whose facilities were not covered by OSHA) were applying a 50-year-old standard for protecting workers from beryllium exposure, a standard that was widely recognized as inadequate. As both agencies began the time-consuming legal process of updating their rules, the beryllium industry mounted what has become a predictable response: They hired Exponent, Inc., one of the leading product defense firms, to assert that there is too much uncertainty in the science on the ability of beryllium to cause CBD to warrant a new standard.

Sharing authorship with product defense specialists, beryllium industry-associated scientists published a series of papers suggesting it was possible that beryllium particle size, or particle surface area, or particle number, are more important than previously thought in the development of beryllium disease. They also raised the hypothesis that skin exposure could play a larger role in CBD risk. The hired guns concluded that, even though the current standard was not protective, more research was needed. They even suggested that once these questions were answered, the new beryllium standard “could easily be among the most complex yet established.”

After reviewing the extensive evidence and taking testimony from industry and independent scientists, DOE concluded that, while more research is always desirable, we had more than enough information to protect workers immediately. Over the industry's objections, we issued a much stronger standard, reducing the acceptable workplace exposure level by a factor of 10. This new standard, though, applies only to nuclear weapons workers; beryllium-exposed workers in the private sector don't have the same protection. In 1998, OSHA declared its intention to issue a similar standard to protect workers in the private sector, but dropped beryllium from its regulatory agenda

once the Bush administration took over in 2001.

In the past, corporations and public relations firms hired individual scientists as part of their uncertainty campaigns; the product defense industry represents an evolution into specialization. After all, today scientists themselves control many of these firms, and because they understand the workings of science better than the usual public relations person, they are better able to design campaigns that successfully raise questions and promote doubt. As they do so, journalists need to be prepared to ask tougher questions about the evidence they are shown, to inquire about funding behind the "science," and inform

their readers, listeners and viewers about any links they find between those who supported the research and its findings. Until such connections are made visible by journalists and commentators, the uncertainty being manufactured will achieve its goal to the detriment of both science and health. ■

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Disinformation, Financial Pressures, and Misplaced Balance

A reporter describes the systemic forces that work against the story of climate change being accurately told.

By Ross Gelbspan

One central fact—as simple as it is overwhelming—informs the current understanding of global climate change: To allow our inflamed climate to stabilize requires worldwide cuts in our use of coal and oil of about 70 percent. This is the 10-year-old consensus finding of more than 2,000 scientists from 100 countries reporting to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the largest, most rigorously peer-reviewed scientific collaboration in history.

To act on climate stabilization in the way that science guides us threatens the survival of the coal and oil industries that constitute one of the biggest commercial enterprises in history. Conversely, the findings of most scientists who study this issue indicate that a failure

to address this issue rapidly and comprehensively threatens the continuity of a coherent civilization. (Already visible are some financial stresses that show up in the escalating losses by some of the world's property insurers.) Yet despite its scope and potential consequences, global climate change is probably the most underreported story.

Instead, stories about aspects of global climate change should be in newspapers at least three times a week and on radio and TV newscasts more frequently, too. In addition to reporting about its science, the climate issue involves the emergence of extreme weather events (debates about increasing strength of hurricanes is just one example), technology developments, oil industry movements, terrorism and national security, economic stability,

diplomatic tensions, and significant policy differences between many state governments and the administration in Washington.

Why Climate Change Isn't Covered Well

Looking at how the news business works, however, there are several reasons why this is happening.

At one level, environment reporters usually focus their energies on mastering intricacies of the science and the mechanisms of ecological interactions. Were they to compliment this reporting with some investigative training, their treatment of the climate crisis might broaden significantly. The reason is that most reporting about the environment involves tracking conflicts about

money, and these conflicts generally pit a specific environmental vulnerability against an industry, a business, or a developer. If reporters approached these stories through a wider investigative lens—and had the training necessary to know how to follow the money—they'd be bringing better tools with them to evaluate the responses they receive from corporate interests and likely be better equipped to sniff out the use of front groups, dubious economic claims, disguised or concealed lobbying strategies, and pressure tactics that are not readily apparent.

On the level of institutional culture, one barrier to comprehensive reporting about climate change can be seen in the career path to the top at news outlets. Normally the path follows the track of political reporting, as top editors tend to see nearly all issues through a political lens. While there have been predictable feature stories about climate change from Alaska and small, buried reports of scientific findings, global warming gains news prominence only when it plays a role in the country's politics. During the 1992 elections, for instance, the first President Bush slapped the label of "ozone man" on Al Gore because of his book, "Earth in the Balance." It is likely not coincidental that Gore ran away from the climate issue during the 2000 presidential campaign. The issue was prominently covered in 1997 when the Senate voted overwhelmingly not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. These stories spoke not to the substance of the scientific debate but to the political setback the Clinton administration experienced at the hands of a rebellious Senate. News coverage resurfaced when President George W. Bush withdrew the United States from the Kyoto process and again focused on resulting diplomatic tensions between the United States and the European Union and not on the climate change impacts.

Prior to his withdrawal from Kyoto, President Bush declared he would not accept the findings of the United

Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) because they represented "foreign science" (even though about half of the 2,000 scientists who contribute to the IPCC are from the United States). Instead, Bush called on the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to provide "American science." In reporting this story, few members of the Washington press corps bothered to check the position of the NAS. Had they done so—while publishing and broadcasting the President's words—they would have been able to inform

... if journalists want their coverage to be balanced, their stories should reflect the relative weight of opinion in the scientific community. If that happened, the views of mainstream climate scientists would be the focus of 95 percent of the story, while the dissenters' views would be mentioned less prominently and less often.

the public that as early as 1992, three years before the IPCC determined that humans are changing the climate, the NAS urged strong action to minimize the impacts of human-induced global warming.

When we look at reporting that comes from international correspondents, we find that foreign editors and reporters have not shared with the public information about the major divide on this issue that exists between the United States and much of the rest of the world. At the time when the Clinton and Bush administrations have refused to impose mandatory emissions reduction goals in the United States, Holland has begun the work of cutting emissions by 80 percent in 40 years. The United Kingdom has pledged to cut its use of carbon fuel by 60 percent in 50 years. Germany has committed itself to 50 percent cuts in 50 years. Several months ago, French President Jacques Chirac called on the entire industrial world to reduce emissions by 75 percent in the next 45 years.

Each of these policies adheres to

the dictates of the science. But other than fleeting coverage of large demonstrations in Europe that followed the U.S. withdrawal from the Kyoto process, these differences in policy and practice have been barely explored in the mainstream press. Unfortunately, the culture of journalism is generally a political culture that is often institutionally arrogant toward nonpolitical areas of coverage.

A second reason for the failure of the press to adequately cover the climate crisis lies in an extremely effective campaign of disinformation by the fossil fuel lobby. For the longest time, this industry's well-funded disinformation campaigns have duped reporters into practicing a profoundly distorted form of journalistic balance. In the early 1990's, the coal industry paid a tiny handful of dissenting scientists (with little or no standing in the mainstream scientific community) under the table to deny the reality of climate change. Just three of these "greenhouse skeptics" received about a million dollars from coal interests in the mid-1990's in undisclosed payments. More recently ExxonMobil has emerged as the major funder of the "climate-change skeptics" and their institutions.

The campaign's success can be measured by how effective it has been in keeping the issue of global warming off the public radar screen. Its effectiveness is underscored by two polls done by Newsweek. As early as 1991, 35 percent of respondents (in the United States) said they thought global warming was a very serious problem. Five years later, in 1996, even though the scientific evidence had become far more robust and the IPCC declared that it had found the human influence on the climate, the 35 percent had shrunk to 22 percent. This is striking testimony to the impact of the industry public relations campaign. (With recent visibility of this issue and the escalating pace of change, public awareness has almost certainly

increased during the last few years.)

A key ingredient of this success has been the insistence by the public relations specialists of the fossil fuel lobby that reporters adhere to a balanced presentation of views about an issue. And the press did this when they accorded the same weight to this tiny handful of skeptics that it did to the views and findings of peer-reviewed scientists. But this is a misapplication of the ethic of journalistic balance. When balance should come into play is when the content of a story revolves largely around opinion: Should society recognize gay marriage? Should abortion be legal? Should our schools provide bilingual education or English immersion? In such coverage, a journalist is ethically obligated to provide roughly equivalent space to the most articulate presentation of major competing views.

When the story focused on an issue in which various facts are known, it is the reporter's responsibility to find out what those facts are. During the past 15 years our understanding of climate changes and its likely causes have been informed by an unprecedented accumulation of peer-reviewed science from throughout the world. This is about as close to truth as we can get. As one co-chair of the IPCC said, "There is no debate among any credentialed scientists who are working on this issue about the larger trends of what is happening to the climate." Regrettably, that is something you would never know from the U.S. press coverage.

Of course, a few credentialed scientists who dismiss climate change as relatively inconsequential have published their findings in the refereed literature. Given this other perspective, if journalists want their coverage to be balanced, their stories should reflect the relative weight of opinion in the scientific community. If that happened, the views of mainstream climate scientists would be the focus of 95 percent

of the story, while the dissenters' views would be mentioned less prominently and less often. This is beginning to happen—though very belatedly.

Finally, journalists seem to have gone out of their way to ignore some of the more visible manifestations of a warming atmosphere. One of the first impacts of climatic instability is an increase in weather extremes—longer droughts, more heat waves, more severe storms, and the fact that more of our rain and snow falls in intense, severe

As one co-chair of the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] said, 'There is no debate among any credentialed scientists who are working on this issue about the larger trends of what is happening to the climate.' Regrettably, that is something you would never know from the U.S. press coverage.

downpours. Increases such as these have been documented by numerous sources, including the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organization.

Not surprisingly, extreme events also occupy a much larger portion of news budgets than 20 years ago. With the convergence of more coverage and information, one might assume that journalists working on these stories would include the line, "Scientists associate this pattern of violent weather with global warming." But they don't. A few years ago a news editor at a major broadcast outlet was asked why this connection wasn't made between the escalating incidence of natural disasters and climate change. "We did that," he said. "Once." The story involved a major flood in Mozambique in 2000. The editor explained that when the network suggested a possible link to global warming, several auto and gasoline industry representatives threatened to withdraw all their advertising if the outlet persisted in making that connection.

Apart from the fear of industry pres-

sure, the climate issue exposes a deeper betrayal of trust by journalists. By now most reporters and editors have heard enough to know that global warming could, at least, have potentially catastrophic consequences. Given this, it seems profoundly irresponsible for them to pass along a story that is "balanced" with opposing quotes without doing the necessary digging to reach an informed judgment about the gravity of the situation. To treat this story in this way seems a violation of the trust

that readers, viewers and listeners put in those on whom they count to provide an informed interpretation as conveyors of the news.

Ultimately, the urgency and magnitude of this issue should keep this story at the top of news budgets. It pits the future of our highly complex and vulnerable civilization against the profit and survival of an industry that gener-

ates more than one trillion dollars a year in commerce worldwide. This is an immense drama with an uncertain outcome, which means it is a terrific news story with many legs. From the point of view of pure professional gratification, it is hard to imagine a more consequential or compelling story for any journalist to report. The challenge will be to report it well. ■

Ross Gelbspan is a retired 30-year journalist with the Philadelphia Bulletin, The Washington Post, and The Boston Globe, where he shared a Pulitzer Prize for a series he conceived and edited. He is the author of "The Heat Is On: The High Stakes Battle Over Earth's Threatened Climate" (1997), and "Boiling Point: How Politicians, Big Oil and Coal, Journalists, and Activists Have Fueled the Climate Crisis—and What We Can Do to Avert Disaster" (2004). He maintains a Web site at www.heatisonline.org.

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Observing Those Who Observe

A journalist travels to the ends of the earth and reports from ‘distant, inaccessible places [that] have a grip on the popular imagination’

By Daniel Grossman

Researchers have known for more than a century that carbon dioxide released into the air when coal, oil and other fossil fuels are burned could trap extra heat in the atmosphere, causing the planet to heat up. But it is only in the past decade or two that scientists have accumulated convincing evidence that the planet actually is getting warmer and that humans are a (if not the) major cause. Today, no credible scientist questions that humans are warming the earth. Far less is known about what warmer temperatures will mean for earth’s inhabitants, human and otherwise. I have devoted the last several years to accompanying scientists to some of the research sites where they are studying the impacts of climate change. Much of this research takes place near earth’s poles, since the Arctic and Antarctic are heating up faster than anywhere else. Felicitously, such distant, inaccessible places have a grip on the popular imagination that I believe attracts greater attention to my writing than would reporting from less exotic sites.

When Flowers Bloom

In 1965, Mary Manning, a schoolteacher from Norwich, England, noticed that daffodils in her backyard were blooming well before Easter. Her mother, this teacher then realized, used to think it a rare blessing if these harbingers of spring blossomed in time to decorate the church for the Easter service. Ever since that year, Manning has been recording the first blossoming dates of acornites, crocuses, snowdrops and many other flowers in her garden, as well as the presence of migratory birds. She says

she hasn’t failed to observe her garden for a single day. “It’s not the jolliest thing to do,” she says about making observations on frosty December mornings, “but its got to be done.”

Climate researchers say such extended observations of the timing of plant and animal behavior (a kind of study known as phenology) help reveal how global warming is affecting ecosystems. Few scientists collect such long-term data, especially since the 19th century, when experimental research began

to overtake observational studies. So contributions from amateurs like Mary Manning are welcome. Tim Sparks, a researcher at Great Britain’s Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, has collected records from about 100 such “closet phenologists.” In one paper he published using Manning’s 40-year-long nature journal, he showed that five plants were flowering more than five days earlier per decade. Primrose, the record holder, flowered 10 weeks



Mary Manning in her garden. Photo by Daniel Grossman.

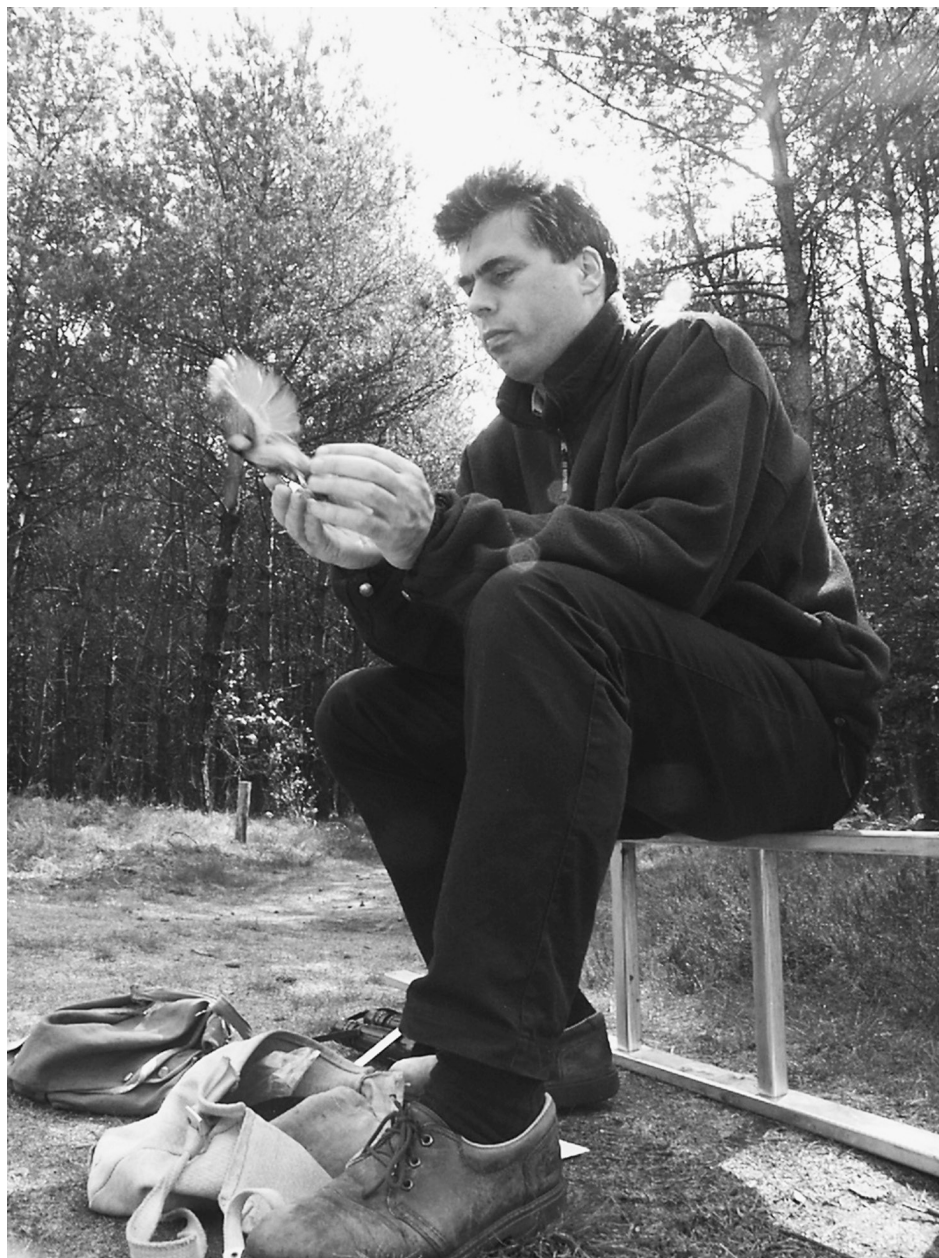
earlier during the 1990’s than it did between 1965 and 1980. Sparks is worried because if different members of plant and animal communities that interact with each other change at different rates, ecosystems could literally come undone. “The communities, the types of woodlands,” he says, describing the impact he expects to result from these changes in timing, “will not be similar to those that we have now.”

When Ecosystems Decouple

Marcel Visser of The Netherlands Institute of Ecology oversees a 50-year-long study of a bird known as the great tit. Visser's research, in the De Hoge Veluwe National Park in the middle of the Netherlands, is one of the world's few studies to examine how a cascade of changes caused by global warming can ripple through an ecosystem.

In early spring, breeding tits feed voracious hatchlings highly nutritious caterpillars. The caterpillars, in turn, nourish themselves by feeding on tender, newly opened leaves of oak trees. Twenty years ago these three organisms—the oak trees, the caterpillars, and the tits—passed the phases of their life cycles in synchrony like the choreographic feats of ballet dancers who twist and leap together in time to a rhythmic beat. But today, like performers dancing to slightly different rhythms, the members of this short food chain are becoming, as Visser puts it, “decoupled.” It appears that each of the three organisms is responding differently to global warming. Spring temperatures in De Hoge Veluwe Park have increased by about two degrees Celsius in the past 20 years. The birds' behavior has remained virtually unchanged: They lay their eggs almost exactly when they did in 1985. The caterpillars, in contrast, seem to have responded to increased temperatures by hatching earlier. Today the peak availability of caterpillar flesh occurs about two weeks earlier than in 1985. As a result, by the time the tits hatch, their food is already on the wane. Now only the earliest chick gets the worm.

Oak trees are also waking up from the winter earlier in the spring. But, in contrast to the caterpillars, the leaves of oaks open only 10 days earlier than they did 20 years ago. So the caterpillars, which used to synchronize their lives with the arrival of the oak leaves, now have to wait for food for an aver-



Marcel Visser with the bird he studies. *Photo by Daniel Grossman.*

age of about five days extra. Apart from small declines in caterpillar numbers and changes in tit-chick health, Visser has yet to show that the ecosystem is actually suffering from the changes. However, in a system where “timing is

everything,” he says “it only a matter of time before we see the population come down.”

When Penguins Breed

Bill Fraser, an ecologist from Montana, says that Adelie penguins near America's Palmer Station research base on the Antarctic Peninsula are being wiped out by global warming. In the approximately 30 years since Fraser first visited Palmer Station, the number of Adelies there has dropped by about 70 percent. Winter temperatures in the Antarctic Peninsula have warmed a remarkable six degrees Celsius in the past 50 years. As a result, sea ice, which covers the ocean for hundreds of miles for much of the year with an impermeable cover, is less extensive than it used to be. That means more water vapor can evaporate into the atmosphere and return to earth as additional rain or snow. And so, counterintuitively, global warming has increased snowfall along the Antarctic Peninsula, which Fraser says is reducing breeding success of these penguins.

Fraser shows how the spatial pattern of Adelie declines provided him with essential clues. The scientist discovered that Adelie colonies at the base of south-facing slopes had been hit worst. In the photograph on page 83, he points to one such hillside, where the prevailing winds of winter storms deposit snowdrifts. In the southern hemisphere, southern slopes get less sunlight and thus are the last to become snow-free in the spring and summer. Increased snowfall has left these areas snow-covered much later than in the past (a small drift is seen just behind Fraser's outstretched hand in the middle of the Antarctic summer). Adelies cannot breed successfully until their gravel nest sites are snow-free. Sometimes impatient birds will try to nest on top of the snow of late-melting nesting sites. However, their nests flood and their eggs are destroyed when the sites finally clear. When Fraser began his surveys, the entire flat base of this island was covered with Adelies. Now all that remains of the once-teeming colony is the handful of birds seen in the background to the left of Fraser's head.

Fraser says he expects the colonies around Palmer Station to be completely gone within a decade. The researcher, who has spent his entire professional career studying the decline of these birds, mourns their disappearance.

Nonetheless he says he is gratified at the thought that their loss might, by alerting the world to the threat of global warming, be a gain for animals elsewhere. "The Adelies," he says, "are an honest barometer of global changes."



Adelie penguins in the Antarctic. *Photo by Daniel Grossman.*



Bill Fraser points to a snowy hillside.



Melting sea ice near the Antarctic Peninsula.

Photos by Daniel Grossman.

When Drift Ice Melts

On the fringes of North America, Asia and Europe, ringing the top of the world like the collar of a hand-knit sweater, is a fragile ecosystem known as the high Arctic. Conditions there are hostile, possibly at the limit of what complex organisms on earth can endure. For months at a time the sun never rises. Winter temperatures commonly drop to tens of degrees below zero Celsius. And so little precipitation falls each year that this polar region is considered a desert. Nonetheless the high Arctic is home to a diverse collection of birds and mammals, including the polar bear, arctic fox, muskox, lemming, snowy owl, plover and falcon.

Zackenbergl Station, located in the high Arctic of northeast Greenland, is the second most northerly research base in the world. It is the only place in Greenland, and one of the few on earth, where very long-term observations are made of a broad range of attributes of the environment, including plant and animal life and climate, river, soil and snow conditions. The station, operated by Denmark since 1995, was founded on the principle that in order to truly understand the impact of climate change on earth's plants and animals, data must be collected for 50 years or more.

Hans Meltofte, Zackenbergl's founder, says it is too early to draw any conclusions about the impact of climate change on the station's high-Arctic habitat. However, he says that in the decade since the base opened, researchers there have made discoveries that raise serious concerns. For instance, climatologists predict that drift ice, the rivers of densely packed Arctic icebergs that steam down Greenland's coasts, will become less extensive as temperatures rise. This ice is like a lid on the sea, reducing evaporation and keeping snowfall low. Less ice could thus mean more snow, and more snow, in turn, could mean birds that require bare ground after the winter's

snows have melted to nest will have to wait until later in the season to lay eggs. Their chicks would have less time to mature before migrating, threatening their survival. Alternatively, if breeding birds try to stay on schedule by nesting in less optimal areas, eggs could be more vulnerable to predators like foxes. Warmer temperatures could also cause ice crusts to form on snow, making it difficult for the muskox to forage. In other parts of the world, ecosystems might be able to respond to warming by moving north. But at the top of the world, the high Arctic has nowhere to go but the Arctic Ocean. Asked if the plants and animals here could be exterminated, Meltofte pauses then says, "It is a hard word to say for an ecologist. But it is not unlikely." ■

Daniel Grossman is a radio producer and print and Web journalist whose reporting focuses on science and the environment. His radio documentary, "The Penguin Barometer," won the 2004 Media Award for Broadcast Journalism from the American Institute of Biological Sciences and an award from the Society for Environmental Journalists for outstanding in-depth radio reporting. His Web site on Madagascar won the 2005 Science Journalism Award for online media from the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Grossman's work can be seen and heard at www.wbur.org by searching at that site, using his name.

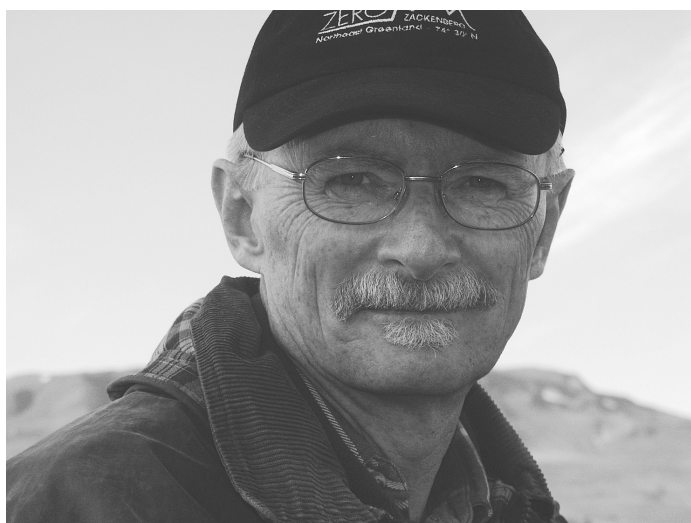
✉ grossmad@colorado.edu



Researchers believe that reduced sea ice caused by global warming could create problems for polar bears who normally live and hunt on pack ice. *Photo by Daniel Grossman.*



Danish scientists are trying to discover how warmer conditions, which are expected to cause more snow accumulation, will affect vegetation like the cotton grass and wildlife that depend on it.



Hans Meltofte works in the high Arctic of northeast Greenland.

Photos by Daniel Grossman.

The Disconnect of News Reporting From Scientific Evidence

Balanced coverage results in a ‘misleading scenario that there is a raging debate among climate-change scientists regarding humanity’s role in climate change.’

By Max Boykoff

The procession of hurricanes through the Caribbean Basin, lashing the southeastern United States, has served to spur an increase in news media coverage of various aspects of climate change. These devastating hurricane events provide a news hook through which many journalists have started to investigate the complex nexus of interacting natural forces and potential human influences. Debates regarding links between increased intensity of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma and global warming notwithstanding, these discussions illustrate the ongoing and contentious battles about what is taking place in our carbon-based industry and society.

These highly politicized debates can be contrasted with the overwhelming scientific consensus regarding the issue of human contributions to climate change (a.k.a. anthropogenic climate change). Since the late 1980’s, climate scientists have stated with increasing confidence that humans play a distinct role in changes in the climate. Acting on the science, the world community took initial steps to combat anthropogenic climate change in the form of the Kyoto Protocol; 128 countries have ratified it, but the United States is not among them.

The United States’s obstinate anti-Kyoto stance, combined with more recent events, has prompted many foreign leaders, environmental groups, concerned citizens, and local officials to blame the Bush administration for its inaction in this critical issue. For example, German Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin recently said, “The

Bush government rejects international climate protection goals by insisting that imposing them would negatively impact the American economy. The American President is closing his eyes to

change scientists.

My research empirically examined this disconnect. Through content analysis of U.S. newspapers, as well as interviews with key actors at the interface of climate science, policy, media and the public, I looked at how discourse on anthropogenic climate change is framed through the media, thereby affecting public understanding, discourse and action.

Since previous research found that the public generates much of its knowledge about science from the mass media, it is crucial to reflect on the role of the mass media in shaping public understanding of climate science and policy. Interactions between climate science, policy, media and the public are complex and dynamic. It is clear that science and policy shape media reporting and public understanding. However, it is also true that journalism and public concern shape ongoing climate science and policy decisions. Journalist Dale Willman, a veteran correspondent and field producer with CNN, CBS News, and National Public Radio, has commented, “in terms of agenda-setting ... the media don’t tell people what to think, but they tell them what to think about.”

In a peer-reviewed study published in 2004, coauthor Jules Boykoff and I examined this issue of balance in leading U.S. newspapers—The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and The Wall Street Journal. Each of these newspapers has a daily circulation of more than 750,000. The study found strong adherence to balanced reporting since 1990. This balanced

It is clear that science and policy shape media reporting and public understanding. However, it is also true that journalism and public concern shape ongoing climate science and policy decisions.

the economic and human costs his land and the world economy are suffering under natural catastrophes like Katrina and because of neglected environmental policies.” [See articles on pages 97 and 99 for information about German coverage of this issue.]

Measuring the Effects of Balanced Coverage

While much focus of ire and frustration has focused on the Bush administration, another significant, yet often underconsidered point of resistance to international cooperation on climate change also revolves around the media’s ongoing adherence to the journalistic norm of balanced reporting. By adhering to this norm, the news media presents both sides of a story, with attempts often made to do so in equal measure. But when balance has been applied to the critical environmental issue of anthropogenic climate change, it has served to distort the findings of the world’s top climate-

presentation of anthropogenic climate change that was seen from 1990 to the end of the study in 2002 differs significantly from the perspective put forth in the findings of climate science during this time. While it ought to be the job of journalists to make sure that scientific consensus is conveyed accurately, the reporting was found to be strikingly out of alignment with the top climate science. The principal finding was that U.S. news media effectively provided consistently deficient coverage of anthropogenic climate change.

By adhering to balance, these influential news sources greatly amplified the views of a small group of climate contrarians who contest the notion that humans are contributing to changes in the climate. Over time, these dissonant views on anthropogenic climate change have been frequently granted roughly equal space alongside the research and recommendations of the most reputable climate-change scientists from throughout the world. Therefore, through this type of reporting in the U.S. news media, the American public and policymakers have been presented with the misleading scenario that there is a raging debate among climate-change scientists regarding humanity's role in climate change.

Newsroom Pressures

There are a number of factors and pressures that affect newspaper content, and these are interrelated and therefore very difficult to disentangle. While many of them are codified and explicit, others are shaped by social convention as well as larger political, economic and cultural trends, making them more implicit and difficult to pinpoint. However, the interactions of a number of key processes in journalism have contributed to a distorted discourse about anthropogenic global climate change. Some examples follow:

- In many newsrooms decreased budgets have resulted in more journalists working as generalists, who cover many areas of news, rather than

specialists on a particular news beat. Some people have found this trend has had an influence on the quality of reporting. Malcolm Hughes, climate scientist at the University of Arizona, observes, "A lot of the time [when] you give an interview ... there is a huge gulf in the nature of the questions and concerns that come from people working very broadly [as generalists]."

- Inherent challenges exist in translating scientific findings into information for the public in news reports. Scientists have a tendency to speak in cautious language when describing their research and have a propen-

Journalists need to acknowledge that their long-cherished norm of balance has become a form of informational bias.

sity to discuss implications of their research in terms of probabilities. For journalists, this lexicon can be difficult to transform into crisp and clear reporting. Henry Pollack, professor of geophysics at the University of Michigan, refers to this as the challenge of "translating error bars into ordinary language."

These difficulties cause distortions in communications about anthropogenic climate change, such as inaccurate amplification of uncertainty by relying on climate contrarians' counterclaims.

To serve the American public responsibly, U.S. media coverage of the human impact on climate change must improve. Journalists need to acknowledge that their long-cherished norm of balance has become a form of informational bias. What is needed is a more accurate depiction of the existing scientific consensus. And if those who represent the U.S. policy position continue to distort science in pursuit of an agenda that benefits special interests, then journalists must provide the crucial scientific context for the public. In this realm of coverage, journalistic credibility is on

the line.

This critique is not meant as an attack on individual journalists. Rather, our focus as researchers has been on examining the institutional features of the news media in its coverage of this issue. But it is true that change will come most likely through the aggregate improvements of individual journalists, editors and publishers. Nor should the focus for improvement solely be on the news media. Political, economic and cultural factors from many sources contribute to this historical tapestry of intransigence: well-paid and skillful lobbyists pressuring national representatives on behalf of fossil fuel interests, the oil and coal industries' tanker-load of contributions to the campaign chests of federal policymakers, and the connections between members of the Bush administration and the oil industry. Responsibility also rests in the scientific and policy communities, as well as with the public.

By the information it receives, members of the public can either be galvanized into action or resigned to passivity. Our research aims to improve the coverage of these climate science issues. The question becomes whether awareness of these journalism practices will result in more accurate coverage of anthropogenic climate change. Perhaps it is too soon to tell, but what we do know is that with the recent hurricanes in the Atlantic Basin new opportunities exist to expand and improve how aspects of climate change are framed and discussed. It will be up to journalists to decide if they will grab them. ■

Max Boykoff, who is completing his doctorate in the environmental studies department at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has conducted research examining how U.S. news media coverage influences public understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change. The Web link to the 2004 newspaper study is <http://people.ucsc.edu/~Emboykoff/Boykoff.Boykoff.GEC.2004.pdf>.

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Context and Controversy: Global Warming Coverage

‘... it is heartening to know that the simple inclusion of scientific context might help mitigate the readers’ level of uncertainty.’

By Jessica Durfee and Julia Corbett

For most citizens, knowledge about science comes largely through the mass media, not through scientific publications or direct involvement in science. As sociologist Dorothy Nelkin has explained, the public understands science less through experience or education but through the filter of journalistic language and imagery. This is especially true for unobtrusive or invisible issues such as global warming with which a person lacks real-world experience that could help shape opinion and understanding. Even if someone lives through the hottest summer on record, severe drought, or forest fires, that person still relies on the news media to connect such events to scientific evidence.

In media coverage of global warming, scientists were the primary sources of information early on, but more recently politicians and interest groups have been cited more frequently in stories. As this happens, an issue ripe for examination is what messages media coverage communicate about global warming as sources of information change. Some researchers have found that as their sourcing changed, journalists tended to overemphasize the level of uncertainty about global warming. This conclusion has been reached by academic researchers and echoed by journalist Ross Gelbspan, who wrote “Boiling Point,” a book about global warming. [See Gelbspan’s article on page 77.]

Some media researchers suggest that journalistic practices—such as objectivity and striving for balance—contribute to conveying this message of uncertainty. When sources offer conflicting claims, for example, reporters tend to use one of two strategies: 1. try to be objective, or 2. try to balance the conflicting claims within the story, which

leads to sides in the debate being given equal weight, even when the majority of scientific evidence might fall to one side while the other side consists of industry-supported, fringe science.

Media coverage can send the message to readers that the science is uncertain without ever mentioning “uncertainty.” To deliver that perception requires the balancing of competing scientific views without a clear context to explain how the evidence lines up in the scientific community. But until we set out to test readers to determine whether story elements—such as conflict and context—contributed to or created a sense of uncertainty, no researcher had examined the impact of this journalistic practice. Our experiment would assess how newspaper readers respond to journalists’ writing on global warming, while exploring specifically how controversy and context influence readers’ perceptions about the certainty or uncertainty of global warming.

Testing Public Understanding of Global Warming

For our experiment, we created four versions of a news story based on a story of an actual scientific study that found a section of the Antarctic ice sheet was thickening. We used this subject matter because the finding suggested uncertainty about global warming, and therefore it would be a good test: We were curious to learn whether the addition of scientific context would be able to mitigate uncertainty or if the addition of conflict further heightened the uncertainty.

To find out, we wrote a few paragraphs about controversy. Another few paragraphs we wrote emphasized the context of this particular study.

Controversy was inserted into one version of the story, context into another. To another version, we added both paragraphs—about controversy and context. In another, we placed neither paragraph but supplemented the thickening Antarctic ice story with general, encyclopedia-facts that were related to its size and formation. We also added some of these “encyclopedia-facts” to the other versions to make all of the news stories approximately the same length. Then we formatted them so they resembled a photocopy from a real newspaper.

We also designed a survey to assess the readers’ level of certainty about global warming after reading the article. Combined with questions that specifically assessed the participants’ level of uncertainty, other questions were related to the participants’ prior knowledge about global warming and general attitudes toward environmental issues. Each participant read one version of the story; all of the readers then completed the same survey. (Specifically, 209 undergraduate students participated in the experiment; 54 read the controversy story, 51 read the context story, 51 read the controversy and context story, and 53 read the story with neither controversy nor context.)

To evaluate the responses, we compared the survey answers relative to the version of the news story read. As expected, the students who read the news story with context reported the highest level of certainty regarding global warming, whereas students who read the story with neither controversy nor context appeared to be least certain about global warming. [See accompanying graph that illustrates the levels of certainty relative to the news story the participant read.]

What We Learned

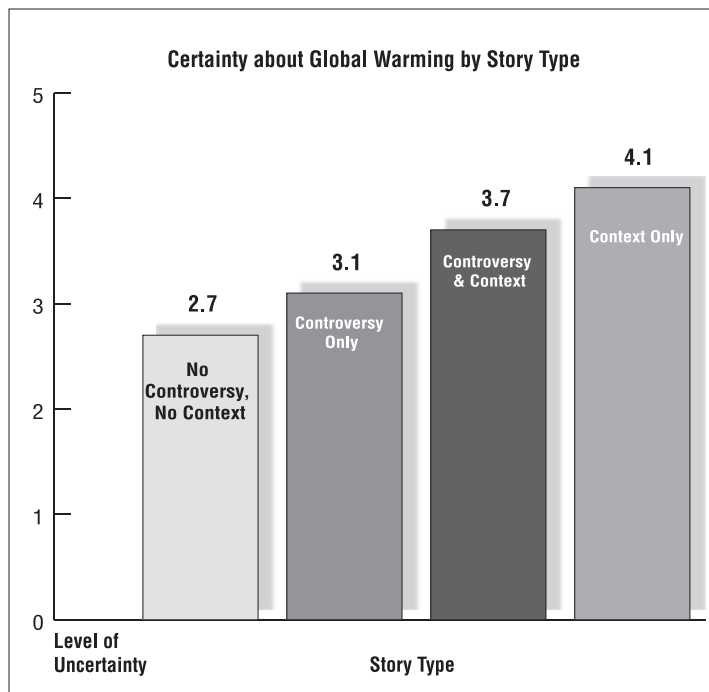
This experiment was an attempt to test whether common elements in news stories—controversy and context—influence readers' perceptions. The media's attraction to controversy is unlikely to wane, but it is heartening to know that the simple inclusion of scientific context might help mitigate the readers' level of uncertainty. The goal of our research was to bring these findings into a broader context for future research and counsel for science communicators and journalists.

Research like ours represents only a snapshot, replete with limitations and shortcomings—just as the picture of science presented by the news media is a snapshot. In comparison, the process of science can be viewed as a long movie, so it should not be surprising that members of the public struggle to put the movie together from their media exposure to scientific snapshots. As Henry Pollack, author of "Uncertain Science . . . Uncertain World" explained: Enough snapshots strung together can begin to look like a movie to the public. Eventually, through repetition and attention to context, the public will better understand global warming and other large-scale environmental concepts.

On a final note, we suggest that global warming needs a more salient metaphor that emphasizes its seriousness,

immediacy and scientific credibility. In the United States, when reporters ask people on the street what they think about global warming, a typical response is that a few degrees warmer might not be so bad. These responses make clear that U.S. media coverage has not communicated the graveness of the phenomenon nor the negative consequences for daily life. It ultimately might be up to scientists, science communicators, and journalists to find ways to communicate the seriousness of global warming to a general public that will be increasingly affected by it. As our experiment demonstrated, including scientific context in the construction of news stories is one strategy to improve public certainty about the science behind global warming. ■

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*an associate professor in this department. She is finishing a book, "Green Messages: Communication and the Natural World." A complete version of this study was published in *Science Communication* (volume 26, number 2) in December 2004.*

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Weight-of-Evidence Reporting: What Is It? Why Use It?

Journalists 'find out where the bulk of evidence and expert thought lies on the truth continuum and then communicate that to audiences.'

By Sharon Dunwoody

When it comes to the news media's coverage of contested science, global warming stories are the favorite whipping boys of everyone from academics to pundits. Commonly, complaints take aim at such journalistic practices as objectivity and balance and conclude, as did a 2004

news media research report by Max Boykoff and Jules Boykoff, published in *Global Environmental Change*, that "the continuous juggling act journalists engage in often mitigates against meaningful, accurate and urgent coverage of the issue of global warming." [See article by Max Boykoff on page 86.]

They are right. But they and others excoriate long-standing behaviors of journalists that arose to help reporters manage some pretty intractable problems. At this juncture, I urge a modicum of respect for those norms—objectivity and balance—but I am also willing to critique their employment in coverage

of controversial science issues. And in light of those criticisms, I would propose an alternative: weight-of-evidence reporting.

Normative behaviors do not survive haphazardly within occupations. Rather, those behaviors that confer value on their practitioners will be sanctioned and vigorously defended. Objectivity and balance are two such norms in the journalism world. Other scholars, such as University of California-San Diego Professor Michael Schudson, have explored the history of these norms. I simply want to argue that one important reason for their establishment is that, although journalism exists in principle to help individuals make reasoned decisions about the world around them, journalists are rarely in a position to determine what's true. Objectivity and balance have evolved over time to serve as surrogates for truth claims.

Why can't journalists be responsible for reporting what is true? For one thing, most journalists have neither the background nor the time to develop enough expertise about a particular topic or issue to make validity judgments possible. Science writers, for example, are defined as specialists among journalists, yet most cover a wide variety of topics, from nanotechnology to stem cells. There's solid evidence that years in the saddle is a good predictor of one's knowledge base as a journalist—science writers who have been covering the beat for a couple of decades know a great deal about many things—but even experienced journalists cannot grasp the factual intricacies of all they cover.

And even if a journalist were an expert at something, readers will react badly to an effort to declare one position on an issue “more true” than another. In our American culture, journalists are assigned a transmitter role, for better or worse, and going outside the role is often recognized by readers as a violation of expectations.

Objectivity and Balance

If a reporter cannot determine what's true, what is she to do? The “objectivity norm” responds that, if you cannot tell what's true, then at least capture truth

claims accurately. Objective journalism effectively reproduces the views of its sources.

The benefit of such a norm within a contested arena is that it absolves the reporter of having to ferret out truth and sets an accuracy standard in its place. Validity is replaced by a measure of the goodness of fit between the source's message and the reporter's story. If the reporter has faithfully captured the meaning and intent of the source, she has done good work.

The “balance norm,” on the other hand, declares that if you cannot tell what's true, then be sure to include all possible truth claims in the story. Again, the reporter need not determine who's telling the truth (and who is not). By including a variety of viewpoints, the reporter instead declares that “the truth is in here somewhere.” Lobbing a variety of viewpoints into the public domain sits well with a society that values the “marketplace of ideas,” so once again the reporter has done good work.

These norms deserve to be valued. Determining truth is a hazardous, messy business even for experts, and we should not expect journalists to accomplish that feat. Validity claims confront the occupation with an almost intractable dilemma, and journalism has done a reasonably savvy job of evolving coping strategies to manage the problem.

Why Change Practices?

While journalists have developed reasonable surrogates for validity claims, these normative practices may mislead audiences. Extensive research on audience reactions to media messages suggests that individuals believe what they read and hear. While surveys of public perceptions of the press indicate growing skepticism of journalistic performance these days, it is still the case that news media coverage of a topic legitimizes it in the public eye. Issues covered by the media are considered to be more important than those not so well covered.

This legitimizing effect is at work even for specialists who encounter media coverage of issues in their own fields.

One fascinating study some years ago examined the topic by dividing research papers published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* into those that got picked up and turned into stories by *The New York Times* and a set matched on all other variables but that did not garner coverage. A search of the science citation literature subsequently found that those research papers covered by the *Times* received almost 75 percent more citations in the peer-reviewed literature than did their matched counterparts. Media visibility made this research more important—and, presumably, true—even among other scientists.

What this means, then, is that a journalist can work to meet the high standards of accuracy set by the objectivity norm but might still mislead readers into thinking that a source's position on an issue is important and potentially true. Adding points of view to satisfy the balance norm can mislead in other ways. As most journalists know, balance typically gets put into operation as the presentation of two contrasting points of view, a strategy that can place a deceptively simple interpretation of an issue before the public.

Equally problematic is the meaning given by audiences to balanced stories. Remember that the journalist is trying to communicate to his readers/viewers that “the truth is in here somewhere.” Communication scholars who have fed balanced stories to readers and then captured their reactions find that audiences interpret such stories in a different and more ominous way—as telling them that “no one knows what's true.”

Presenting an Alternative

I suggest another strategy that would permit journalists to retain their emphasis on objectivity and balance but still share with their audiences a sense of where “truth” might lie, at least at that moment. I call this strategy “weight-of-evidence” reporting. It calls on journalists not to determine what's true but, instead, to find out where the bulk of evidence and expert thought lies on the truth continuum and then communicate that to audiences. Reporters are still responsible for capturing points

of view accurately (objectivity) and for sharing with audiences the existence of more than one contrasting point of view (balance). But added to that mix would be information about which point of view has captured the hearts and minds of the majority of experts, information about where they think the truth lies at that moment.

For example, before sitting down to write this essay I came across a story in the news section of the October 21, 2005 journal *Science* titled “Confronting the Bogeyman of the Climate System.” Its author, Richard Kerr, reports on climate experts’ evaluations of the possibility that warming temperatures could melt too much ice at the poles, which in turn could shut down the exchange of warm and cold waters in the Atlantic Ocean. Bringing the oceanic “conveyor belt” to a halt could drastically chill parts of the globe, the European continent among them; this phenomenon was the central climate actor in the recent movie, “The

Day After Tomorrow.”

The catastrophic potential of a failed oceanic conveyor belt has been the subject of many media stories and deservedly so. Experts who met at the Aspen Global Change Institute last summer to discuss “abrupt climate change,” however, have concluded that the best available data indicate that increasing greenhouse gases might lead to a slowdown but not to a collapse of the conveyor belt. That conclusion was the focal point of Kerr’s article.

Kerr’s piece is what I would call a weight-of-evidence story. It shares with readers views of scientists on both sides of the issue—some who think a failed Atlantic Ocean conveyor belt needs to remain a major scientific and public concern and those who think that it is less likely than other possibly catastrophic outcomes—but then makes it clear to readers that the bulk of experts who know the science fall into the latter category. What’s true might change

as time goes on, of course, but stories such as this can go a long way toward helping us, as recipients of news, make sense of the world.

This is a service that news audiences deserve and one that journalists can deliver without compromising the long-standing norms of their business. ■

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Global Warming: What’s Known vs. What’s Told

‘Americans could be forgiven for not knowing how uncontroversial this issue is among the vast majority of scientists.’

By Sandy Tolan and Alexandra Berzon

In science, hypotheses become accepted truths one experiment, one study at a time. Initial doubts become so small, and the doubters so few, that a new scientific “truth” emerges. Even though these “truths” are never fully proven—be it about evolution, relativity, or even gravity—the gradual whittling away of doubt eventually compels scientists to call in the jury and declare the matter settled. Such is the case for global warming and its link to human activity.

In 1988 James Hansen, a respected NASA scientist, testified before the Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources, saying he was “99 percent certain” that global warming was real and that it was linked to human activity.

Two years later the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nations’ body initially backed by 175 scientists in 25 countries, convened to address global warming and declared that human activity was contributing to a warming planet. In the 17 years since the IPCC was formed, the group has grown to include more than 2,000 scientists in 100 nations, and global temperatures have continued to rise, leading to the hottest years ever recorded.

Increased temperatures coincide with the rising levels of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels and from worldwide deforestation. In 2003 the American Geophysical Union, an international scientific research group with more than 41,000 members, declared

that “Human activities are increasingly altering the earth’s climate. These effects add to natural influences that have been present over earth’s history. Scientific evidence strongly indicates that natural influences cannot explain the rapid increase in global near-surface temperatures observed during the second half of the 20th century.” Similar declarations came from the American Meteorological Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Academy of Sciences.

The conclusions underscore the research of Naomi Oreskes, a science historian at the University of California at San Diego, who reviewed 928 abstracts of articles on global climate change published in scientific journals

‘Early Signs’: A Journalism Class Project at Berkeley

One Sunday in August 2004, as I set down *The New York Times Book Review*, it suddenly occurred to me that there was sufficient evidence to explore one of the biggest stories of our time in a new way. I’d just read Al Gore’s review of Ross Gelbspan’s “Boiling Point,” and that review, coupled with other readings I’d done on climate change, suggested that the signs of global warming were now sufficient to consider the story in human terms. Yet most of the reporting in the U.S. press remained focused on the debate over whether the planet is warming and, if it is, whether human activity could be partly to blame. With scientists largely in agreement on these questions (resoundingly in the affirmative), and early signs of warming coming in from the Arctic and elsewhere, it seemed possible that a team of reporters could begin documenting the social, cultural, political and economic impact of climate change around the world.

I approached colleagues at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California-Berkeley, where I teach international reporting and, after several encouraging conversations, including with Dean Orville Schell and

the environmental and science writer Michael Pollan, I began to investigate whether these early signs were sufficient for a full-scale investigation by a team of the school’s reporters.

On September 1, 2005, 12 journalists gathered for our first class, charged with finding stories in which global warming would be explored not only through the lens of science and environment but also in human terms. How is a warming planet starting to affect people and the lives they lead? I designed “Early Signs: How Global Warming Affects Commerce, Culture and Community,” as a two-semester seminar and reporting workshop. Our task was to combine intensive study of the science, politics, economics and social impacts with active story development in regions as far flung as the sub-Arctic, South America, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and the South Pacific.

A central premise of the class was based on the scientific consensus that human activity is contributing to global warming. We intended to avoid the pitfall of creating a false balance of “dueling experts” that gives equal weight to unequal sides. This did not

mean that we wouldn’t learn all sides of an argument but that in our pursuit of knowledge and story ideas (which would involve several hundred pages of reading each week in the first two months), we’d place such skepticism in scientific and political context.

Accepting that global warming exists and that humans are part of the engine driving it did not, of course, mean that we’d abandon the rigor or skepticism that reporters always apply. Indeed, as my reporters began to research stories in Australia, the Azores, Bangladesh, Canada, Cuba, Ecuador, India, Mali, Peru, Portugal, New Zealand, Tanzania, Tibet, Zambia and the Pacific Islands, they were required to vet the science through a formal review process overseen by my colleague John Harte, a global warming expert at the University of California’s Energy and Resources Group, who serves as my co-instructor and the science advisor to our team.

Through Harte’s review and reporters’ conversations with other experts in the field, we decided not to move ahead with stories on agriculture in Argentina, potential threats to the Azores, farming in Zambia, and drought in Australia. We

between 1993 and 2003 and could not find a single one that challenged the scientific consensus that human-caused global warming is real. “There have been arguments to the contrary,” she wrote in a 2004 editorial in *The Washington Post*, “but they are not to be found in scientific literature, which is where scientific debates are properly adjudicated.” The overwhelming agreement echoed the 1997 conclusions of D. James Baker, the former administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who declared, “There is better scientific consensus on this than on any other issue I know—except maybe Newton’s second law of dynamics.”

“The time to call the jury in for a clear verdict has long passed” proclaimed Sir David King, science adviser to Tony

Blair, in a 2002 speech.

Controversy Feeds Disbelief

Americans could be forgiven for not knowing how uncontroversial this issue is among the vast majority of scientists. Even as Arctic ice and permafrost begin to melt, resulting in slumping houses and new global shipping lanes, and the world’s leading scientists agree these phenomena are linked to human activity, American readers, viewers and listeners continue to get the impression that the jury will be deliberating well into the future.

“In the case of global warming, the media have more often than not overplayed the level of uncertainty about global climate change,” wrote Julia Cor-

bett and Jessica Durfee in a 2004 article in *Science Communication*. The reason, the authors write, is largely because of traditional journalistic balance. “The result of the routine media practice of quoting conflicting ‘sides,’” wrote Corbett and Durfee, is “giving equal weight to fringe and nonscientists as much as scientists ... even though the majority of evidence or opinion may fall clearly to one side.” [See article by Corbett and Durfee on page 88.]

Another factor, writes Dominique Brossard and colleagues in a 2004 study published in *Mass Communication and Society*, is the American media’s inclination to generate stories with drama and conflict. “American media actively constructed narratives about global warming to maintain public interest,”

also decided not to focus on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita for a number of reasons. These included the timing of our work, the heavy news coverage from other outlets and, as Harte pointed out, even though the science strongly suggests that warming oceans will generate more powerful hurricanes, it is difficult to point to any specific storm and connect it with global warming.

Harte explained to students that each successful story proposal would likely fall into one of three categories. One type would document the result of changes due to melting ice, rising sea levels, or elevated sea surface temperatures, which science has clearly linked to global warming. Another kind would focus on political or economic impacts, such as a South Pacific refugee program for displaced islanders or planning for sea level rise in vulnerable delta areas like Bangladesh. A third category was more challenging. In situations in which changes from a warming planet were more subtle or indirect, the story proposal would need

to show scientific evidence that the situation was “clearly not the result of a long sequence of fluctuations that are part of natural variability.” Thus, stories about powerful storms or droughts carried a higher burden of proof, and report-

... the reporters worked up extensive story memos to show us their ability to transform their ideas into compelling narratives, populated with real people and a sense of place.

ers had to cite peer-reviewed science explicitly linking such stories to global warming. Ultimately, each story had to be stamped with Harte’s approval.

As Harte and I signed off on the students’ proposals, the reporters worked up extensive story memos to show us their ability to transform their ideas into compelling narratives, populated with real people and a sense of place. Simultaneously, I contacted former colleagues at National Public Radio’s environmental newsmagazine show,

“Living on Earth,” and at U.S. daily newspapers, in an effort to place our large body of work. (We are still looking for a newspaper home for our series.)

In late October, with funds from the Graduate School of Journalism, our Arctic team of Jon Mooallem and Nick Miroff flew to the upper Hudson Bay to document how a small Canadian town is being transformed by melting ice and the changed terrain for polar bears. Many of the other reporters would do their travel during the university’s holiday break:

Jori Lewis and Kate Cheney Davidson will go to the snows and inland lakes of Tanzania; Aaron Selverston to the Pacific Island nation of Kiribati; Pauline Bartolone and Felicia Mello to South America’s glacial highlands and its Amazon; Durrell Dawson and Alexandra Berzon to New Zealand, and Sandhya Somashekhar and Emilie Raguso to Bangladesh.

During the spring semester, they will transform their reporting into stories.

■ —*Sandy Tolan*

they wrote. “In developing their narratives, they may choose to frame stories in a particular way ... ignoring others or simply reporting facts or perspectives more interesting or challenging than others The journalistic tendency to draw in discordant opinions in a story can lend strength to a viewpoint that may have very little credence in the scientific community at large.”

Remaining skeptics do include a few especially cautious scientists who point out, for example, that the earth might be in a natural warming trend so it is therefore impossible to determine how much of the problem is human-caused. Many of the skeptics, however, are supported by industry-backed groups such as the Greening Earth Society and the Global Climate Coalition. Ross Gelb-

span, a former Boston Globe editor and reporter who has written two books about climate change, argues that these groups are part of a “carbon lobby” whose central purpose is to raise doubts on the issue through public relations campaigns. Gelbspan quoted industry documents aiming to “reposition global warming as theory rather than fact.” [See Gelbspan’s article on page 77.]

“The handful of carbon, natural gas, and oil interests have been handed a megaphone that carry their voice farther and louder than it does in strictly scientific circles,” says Bud Ward, a longtime reporter on the environment who remembers similar debates over the ozone hole starting in 1976. “Public perceptions are being torqued toward a greater uncertainty than ac-

tually exists in a responsible scientific community.”

Equally influential, in some cases, are nonscientists, including the novelist Michael Crichton, whose “State of Fear” decries environmental extremism and who writes in an author’s note, “We know astonishingly little about every aspect of the environment, from its past history, to its present state, to how to conserve and protect it. In every debate, all sides overstate the extent of existing knowledge and its degree of certainty.” Crichton, who declares that “everyone has an agenda, except me,” has nevertheless seen fit to testify before the U.S. House and Senate at the invitation of conservative legislators who continue to sow doubt on the issue among the general public.

The Dangers of Balance

The weight many journalists give to such views, in insisting on balance but not on putting it within a broader scientific and political context, appears to be at the heart of the confusion among Americans, who may understandably determine from the “dueling experts” that nothing can be concluded and thus that action is not yet warranted. “The message of the traditional balanced account may be, ‘Well, who knows what’s really true?’,” wrote Corbett and Durfee.

Ward agrees that “the old journalism 101 thing about balance” is creating a problem in the coverage of climate change. “Balance in some cases can be the enemy of accuracy,” he says. “I’m all for balance in a gubernatorial campaign, a presidential campaign, policy stories. But science isn’t determined by a popularity contest. We went through this for how long with tobacco? Certainly this is not the first time we’ve seen the mistaken application of balance.”

But the U.S. media may be inching closer to its own verdict, one more aligned with scientists. Seth Borenstein, who covers science and the environment for Knight Ridder’s 32 daily papers, said he’s noticed that in the past few years environmental reporters have reached a consensus for how to cover global warming that still adheres to the American journalistic ethic of including disputing views, but puts those views into a clear context: “Most of the people you talk to are legitimate, mainstream scientists,” explained Borenstein. “You put a paragraph in saying ‘There are a minority of scientists skeptical, they say this, but the vast, overwhelming majority of scientists disregard them.’”

In April and May 2005, The New Yorker published Elizabeth Kolbert’s three-part series, “The Climate of Man,” which documents changes to the planet and concludes by asking, “As the effects of global warming become more and more apparent, will we react by finally

fashioning a global response? Or will we retreat into ever narrower and more destructive forms of self-interest? It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing.”

In the months following Kolbert’s series, The Washington Post and The New

The weight many journalists give to such views, in insisting on balance but not on putting it within a broader scientific and political context, appears to be at the heart of the confusion among Americans, who may understandably determine from the ‘dueling experts’ that nothing can be concluded and thus that action is not yet warranted.

York Times published major takeouts on global warming in the Arctic, with the Times’s Andrew Revkin writing in “The Big Melt” series on October 25th, “many . . . scientists have concluded that the momentum behind human-caused warming, combined with the region’s tendency to amplify change, has put the familiar Arctic past the point of no return.” An informal survey of articles published in 2004 and 2005 in American newspapers also suggests less uncertainty on the issue than in previous years. One representative headline from The Seattle Times declared, “Scientists overwhelmingly agree: The earth is getting warmer at an alarming pace, and humans are the cause no matter what the skeptics say.”

Reports continue, however, of a reluctance to tackle the issue in all its gravity, both in the press and in popular culture. The summer documentary hit “March of the Penguins,” which intimately documents the migration and mating habits of penguins in Antarctica, does not once mention that the creatures’ habitat may melt away. Luc Jacquet, the French biologist and director of the film, told National Geographic News, “It’s obvious that global warming has an impact on the reproduction of the

penguins. But much of public opinion appears insensitive to the dangers of global warming. We have to find other ways to communicate to people about it, not just lecture them.”

In cases of Americans’ reluctance to confront this situation, the issue goes deeper than efforts by the “carbon lobby,” or journalistic models of balance, to something far deeper. Valerie Brown,

a freelance journalist who has written about global warming, said she worries that as they find out more about the issue, “people will just get more anxious and cocoon even more while the world is going to hell in a handbasket.”

“There’s not a clear-cut view in society’s mind about what can be done about it,” says

Ward. “Is it bigger than both of us? Is this something that we human beings just can’t affect? It’s not like CFC’s [chlorofluorocarbons, released in aerosol sprays], where you can just take them off the market. It’s not clear that there’s a counterpart solution. There’s the difficulty of not finding a silver bullet.

“And that,” Ward says, “basically invites denial.” ■

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How Do We Cover Penguins and Politics of Denial?

Bill Moyers suggests a new approach to conveying reporting about global warming.

As part of the message television journalist Bill Moyers delivered in October to members of the Society of Environmental Journalists at their annual convention, he spoke about an opportunity the mainstream press has to reach a segment of the country's population—evangelical Christians—with coverage of issues revolving around climate change and sustainability. To connect their reporting with this audience, he argued, would require that journalists find ways to speak about such issues using more metaphorical language rather than “the language of environmental science.” In excerpts we are publishing from his remarks, Moyers elaborates on the methods and potential of this new approach. The entire text can be obtained online at the SEJ Web site, www.sej.org/confer/past_conferences.htm.

There is a market here for journalists who are hungry for new readers. The conservative Christian audience is some 50 million readers strong. But to reach them, we have to understand something of their belief systems.

Reverend Jim Ball of the Evangelical Environmental Network, for example, tells us that “creation-care is starting to resonate not just with evangelical progressives but with conservatives who are at the center of the evangelical spectrum.” Last year, in a document entitled “For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility,” the National Association of Evangelicals declared that our Bible “implies the principle of sustainability: our uses of the earth must be designed to conserve and renew the earth rather than to deplete or destroy it.” In what might have come from the Sierra Club itself, the declaration urged “government to encourage fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, encourage sustainable use of natural resources, and provide for the proper care of wildlife and their natural habitats.” Ball and a few evangelical leaders have also pushed for a climate change plank to their program, standing up to demagogues like James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson who are in the service of the corporate-funded radical wing of the Republican Party.

But we can't expect to engage this vast conservative Christian audience with our standard style of reporting. Environmental journalism has always

spoken in the language of environmental science. But fundamentalists and Pentecostals typically speak and think in a different language. Theirs is a poetic and metaphorical language: a speech that is anchored in the truth of the Bible as they read it. Their moral actions are guided not by the newest IPCC report but by the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Here's an important statistic to ponder: Forty-five percent of Americans hold a creationist view of the world, discounting Darwin's theory of evolution. I don't think it is a coincidence then that in a nation where nearly half our people believe in creationism, much of the populace also doubts the certainty of climate-change science. Contrast that to other industrial nations where climate-change science is overwhelmingly accepted as truth—in Britain, for example, where 81 percent of the populace wants the government to implement the Kyoto treaty. What's going on here? Simply that millions of American Christians accept the literal story of Genesis, and they either dismiss or distrust a lot of science—not only evolution, but paleontology, archeology, geology, genetics, even biology and botany. To those Christians who believe that our history began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and that it will end soon on the plains of Armageddon, environmental science, with its urgent warnings of planetary peril, must look at the best irrelevant. At worst the environmental woes we

report may be stoically viewed as the inevitable playing out of the end of time as presented in the book of Revelation. For Christian dominionists who believe the Lord will provide for all human needs and never leave us short of oil or other resources, no matter how we overpopulate the earth, our reporting may be viewed as a direct attack on biblical teachings that urge humans “to be fruitful and multiply.” It's even possible that among many Christian conservatives, our environmental reporting—if they see it at all—could seem arrogant in its assumptions, mechanistic, cold and godless in its worldview. That's a tough indictment, but one that must be faced if we want to understand how these people get their news.

So if I were a freelance journalist looking to offer a major piece on global warming to these people, how would I go about it? I wouldn't give up fact-based analysis, of course—the ethical obligation of journalists is to ground what we report in evidence. But I would tell some of my stories with an ear for spiritual language, the language of parable, for that is the language of faith.

Let's say I wanted to write a piece about the millions of species that might be put on the road to extinction by global warming. Reporting that story to a scientific audience, I would talk science: tell how a species decimated by climate change could reach a point of no return when its gene pool becomes too depleted to maintain its evolutionary adaptability. That genetic

impoverishment can eventually lead to extinction.

But how to reach fundamentalist Christians who doubt evolution? How would I get them to hear me? I might interview a scientist who is also a person of faith and ask how he or she might frame the subject in a way to catch the attention of other believers. I might interview a minister who would couch the work of today's climate and biodiversity scientists in a biblical metaphor: the story of Noah and the flood, for example. The parallels of this parable are wonderful to behold. Both scientists and Noah possess knowledge of a potentially impending global catastrophe. They try to spread the word, to warn the world, but are laughed at, ridiculed. You can almost hear some philistine telling old Noah he is nothing but a "gloom and doom environmentalist," spreading his tale of abrupt climate change, of a great flood that will drown the world, of the impending extinction of humanity and animals, if no one acts.

But no one does act, and Noah continues hearing the word of God: "You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you." Noah does as God commands. He agrees to save not only his own family but to take on the daunting task of rescuing all the biodiversity of the earth. He builds the ark and is ridiculed as mad. He gathers two of every species, the climate does change, the deluge comes as predicted. Everyone not safely aboard drowns. But Noah and the complete complement of earth's animals live on. You've seen depictions of them disembarking the ark beneath a rainbow, two by two, the giraffes and hippos, horses and zebras. Noah, then, can be seen as the first great preservationist, preventing the first great extinction. He did exactly what wildlife biologists and climatologists are trying to do today: to act on their moral convictions to conserve diversity, to protect God's creation in the face of a flood of consumerism and indifference by a materialistic world.

Some of you are probably uncomfortable with my parable. You may be ready to scoff or laugh. And now you know exactly how a fundamentalist Christian

who believes devoutly in creationism feels when we journalists write about the genetics born of Darwin. If we don't understand how they see the world, if we can't empathize with each person's need to grasp a human problem in language of his or her worldview, then we will likely fail to reach many Christian conservatives who have a sense of morality and justice as strong as our own. And we will have done little to head off the sixth great extinction.

That's not all we should be doing, of course. We are journalists first, and trying to reach one important audience doesn't mean we abandon other audiences or our challenge to get as close as possible to the verifiable truth. Let's go back for a moment to America's first Gilded Age just over 100 years ago. That was a time like now. Gross materialism and blatant political corruption engulfed the country. Big business bought the government right out from under the people. Outraged at the abuse of power, the publisher of McClure's magazine cried out to his fellow journalists: "Capitalists ... politicians ... all breaking the law, or letting it be broken? There is no one left [to uphold it]: none but all of us."

Then something remarkable happened. The Gilded Age became the golden age of muckraking journalism.

Lincoln Steffens plunged into the shame of the cities—into a putrid urban cauldron of bribery, intimidation and fraud, including voting roles padded with the names of dead dogs and dead people—and his reporting sparked an era of electoral reform.

Nellie Bly infiltrated a mental hospital, pretending to be insane, and wrote of the horrors she found there, arousing the public conscience.

John Spargo disappeared into the black bowels of coal mines and came back to crusade against child labor. For he had found there little children "alone in a dark mine passage hour after hour, with no human soul near; to see no living creature except ... a rat or two seeking to share one's meal; to stand in water or mud that covers the ankles, chilled to the marrow ... to work for 14 hours ... for 60 cents; to reach the surface when all is wrapped in the

mantle of night, and to fall to the earth exhausted and have to be carried away to the nearest 'shack' to be revived before it is possible to walk to the farther shack called 'home.'"

Upton Sinclair waded through hell and with "tears and anguish" wrote what he found on that arm of the Chicago River known as "Bubbly Creek" on the southern boundary of the [stock] yards [where]: "All the drainage of the square mile of packing houses empties into it, so that it is really a great open sewer ... and the filth stays there forever and a day. The grease and chemicals that are poured into it undergo all sorts of strange transformations ... bubbles of carbonic acid gas will rise to the surface and burst, and make rings two or three feet wide. Here and there the grease and filth have caked solid, and the creek looks like a bed of lava ... the packers used to leave the creek that way, till every now and then the surface would catch on fire and burn furiously, and the fire department would have to come and put it out."

The Gilded Age has returned with a vengeance. Washington again is a spectacle of corruption. The promise of America has been subverted to crony capitalism, sleazy lobbyists, and an arrogance of power matched only by an arrogance of the present that acts as if there is no tomorrow. But there is a tomorrow. I see the future every time I work at my desk. There, beside my computer, are photographs of Henry, Thomas, Nancy, Jassie and SaraJane—my grandchildren, ages 13 down. They have no vote, and they have no voice. They have no party. They have no lobbyists in Washington. They have only you and me—our pens and our keyboards and our microphones—to seek and to speak and to publish what we can of how power works, how the world wags and who wags it. The powers-that-be would have us merely cover the news; our challenge is to uncover the news that they would keep hidden.

A lot is riding on what you do. You may be the last group of journalists who make the effort to try to inform the rest of us about the most complex of issues involving the survival of life on earth. ■

Accepting Global Warming as Fact

‘It helps that the German media is less strict about the division between editorials and news than the news media in the United States.’

By Markus Becker

When Ross Gelbspan spoke about the aftermath of his recent op-ed in *The Boston Globe*, his comments provoked deep astonishment. As he put it, his article exploded onto the scene at the end of August, sending shock waves through the U.S. media. Angry letters to the editor poured in to the *Globe*, while Gelbspan himself went on the talk show circuit.

When Gelbspan told this story to a group of visiting German journalists, I among them, we were perplexed. What on earth had this man written to cause such an uproar? The answer was this: In his op-ed, entitled “Katrina’s Real Name,” Gelbspan, author of “Boiling Point,” had claimed that 1. global warming exists and 2. not only does it exist, it even has definite, tangible effects, such as more powerful hurricanes. [See article by Gelbspan on page 77.] When we heard this, confusion gave way to utter bewilderment. For the average German media consumer, this would have been about as shocking as declaring that the world is round.

Cultural differences might well be at play here. After all, Germans are known for obsessively sorting their household waste into plastics, metals, glass, paper and compost and placing it all in separate, different colored plastic bins. The glass—and most Americans think this is a joke—is further sorted by color and tossed into neighborhood containers—but no later than 7 p.m. please, to keep the noise down. Anyone who accidentally tosses regular garbage in with the recycling is asking for serious trouble with the neighbors. And when a hurricane drowns a city like New Orleans, the German environment minister blames the U.S. government for contributing to the catastrophe with its

misguided environmental policies.

Anecdotes like these are not the only examples of the depth of concern in Germany about global climate issues. For almost 50 years, conservatives, social democrats, and liberals had shared power in democratic, post-war Germany. The first party to establish itself as a fourth political power in Germany since 1949 was the Green Party, which formed a governing coalition with the social democrats from 1998 to 2005 and pursues an environmen-

The U.S. media pay far more attention to the domestic and foreign policy implications of climate change than its environmental consequences.

tal agenda mixed with left-wing and pacifist ideas.

The environmental threat posed by global warming rouses the German public’s emotions far more than the political aspects of climate change. Domestic environmental protection regulations and the Kyoto Protocol have generally bored German readers and will probably continue to do so—that is, unless President George W. Bush tries to use the climate agreement to boost his popularity in Europe.

By contrast, the U.S. media pay far more attention to the domestic and foreign policy implications of climate change than its environmental consequences. This could also have to do with public sentiment. When Roland Emmerich released his disaster blockbuster “The Day After Tomorrow,” conservative commentator Steven Milloy labeled

him an eco-extremist. “The movie’s unmistakable purpose is to scare us into submitting to the Greens’ agenda,” Milloy wrote on the Web site for Fox News. And this agenda has but one purpose, “domination of society through control of energy resources.”

Incidentally, Milloy’s primary employer is the neoconservative Cato Institute, which receives much of its funding through corporate contributions. That he is even allowed to write a column on climate policy for mass media distribution under the circumstances—even for Fox News—is interesting in and of itself, but Milloy is not the only vocal skeptic of climate issues that the lobby/institute has managed to slip into the mainstream media. More on that later.

The sheer number and nature of letters to the editor that are sent to mass media publications such as *Spiegel Online* demonstrates how passionate the discussion of environmental conservation and climate protection is in Germany. This makes it all the more important that we use the most reliable and credible sources for our articles and that we pay attention to the majority opinion in the scientific community.

This is perhaps the key difference between the media in the United States and Germany. This emphasis—not only at *Spiegel Online*, but in most of the German news media—has led both commentators and the public at large to the conclusion that human-caused climate change is a fact confirmed primarily, but not solely, by an overwhelming majority of scientists. Of course the proponents of the scientific minority have their say, too, but seldom does a German newspaper fail to mention the fact that these scientists do belong to a small minority.

It helps that the German media are less strict about the division between editorials and news than the news media in the United States. In Europe, the various media outlets traditionally hold a position at some specific point along the political spectrum, with conservative and left-wing newspapers publishing true to their political orientations and sharpening their images against the competition. Therefore, when the existence of global warming is largely accepted as fact, it is not just a matter of expressing the majority opinion of the scientific community. Conservative publications like *Die Welt* and *Die Zeit*, which are generally more business-friendly, tend to represent climate change as a topic of scientific debate, while liberal papers like the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the very left-leaning *Tageszeitung* take the side of researchers warning about the dangers of global warming.

In the United States, journalists want to be objective and take the political middle road—or so it seems from the European perspective. There are exceptions like Fox News. But it is interesting that, in this case, a TV broadcasting station that often violates political balance claims to do just the opposite, that is, to provide “fair and balanced” reporting. Another consequence of the “objectivity principle” is that news media in the United States are so intent on hearing both sides in a debate that they often are virtually incapable of showing where the majority opinion lies. In the climate debate, this means the same old skeptics can take up their position and receive equal time against an overwhelming majority of scientists.

This sometimes leads to interesting combinations. For example, on October 18th *The Washington Post* published an article by Juliet Eilperin on a study conducted at Purdue University that claims the number of extreme weather incidents will rise due to global warming. In this article, Patrick J. Michaels was quoted with an opposing view. Incidentally, Michaels also works for the Cato Institute. *The Washington Post* noted this and the fact that Michaels had received financial contributions from

representatives of the coal, gas and mining industries. Nevertheless, they gave him a soap box from which to claim that the Purdue team’s assumptions that carbon dioxide concentrations would double was wrong and “not borne out by reality.” It is hardly surprising that readers emerge from this “he said, she said” conflict not knowing any more about how or whether the Purdue researchers made any mistakes in their assumptions. All Michaels’ words do is cast doubt, and that is what is left in the readers’ minds.

For most German media, *Spiegel*

[U.S.] journalists want to be objective and take the political middle road—or so it seems from the European perspective.

Online included, something like this would be unthinkable. Michaels’ obvious conflict of interest would have disqualified him from the debate. To cite this conflict openly and then quote Michaels anyway would be viewed as a contradiction in terms or as kowtowing to industry. German reporters tend to call upon independent scientists as much as possible when seeking authorities to classify scientific studies and critically analyze the authors’ methods and findings. In the end, whether these scientists agree with the study findings or dispute them is not as important as the fact that a number of independent voices are heard. In other words, German media seek to hear numerous qualified opinions rather than doggedly searching for an opposing voice regardless of that voice’s qualifications.

One salient example of how the German journalists let climate experts be heard is an article published in the February 16, 2005, issue of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of Germany’s largest and most highly respected newspapers. Hartmut Grassl, a climate researcher who is recognized throughout the world, rebutted the common arguments of climate change skeptics. The newspaper did not invite a researcher to debate with Grassl. Instead they had an

anonymous party present 13 arguments commonly brought by climate-change skeptics. Those arguments comprised a total of 209 words of the article, while Grassl’s responses totaled 903 words. The title of the article was “Why climate-change skeptics are wrong.”

If a similar article had appeared in *The New York Times*, which holds a similar position in the daily newspaper market to that of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Germany, it likely would have elicited a fierce reaction. But in Germany this approach can easily be reconciled with journalistic ethics.

The newspaper presented the views of climate-change skeptics, but gave them a relatively small amount of space to account for the fact that theirs is a minority position. At the same time, the paper avoided offering a personal forum to an individual who might be compromised

by a conflict of interest. In the United States, this approach would probably have been considered a flagrant violation of the fairness principle.

However, there are clear indications that this and the resulting flood of “he said, she said” articles is coming to an end. At the beginning of October, *Time* magazine stressed that time is running out for political head games. *Time* writer Jeffrey Kluger wrote: “In Washington, successive administrations have ignored greenhouse warnings, piling up environmental debt the way we have been piling up fiscal debt. The problem is, when it comes to the atmosphere, there’s no such thing as creative accounting. If we don’t bring our climate ledgers back into balance, the climate will surely do it for us.” ■

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Culture Contributes to Perceptions of Climate Change

A comparison between the United States and Germany reveals insights about why journalists in each country report about this issue in different ways.

By Hans von Storch and Werner Krauss

When we talk about the weather, we also establish our social relations and construct the world we live in. Today such discussions are commonplace, especially when we have many extreme weather events and climate change to talk about. A cultural dimension is inherent in these conversations, and this is evidenced in how people perceive and connect these phenomena differently in the United States and in Germany.

With the Kyoto treaty, differing responses became evident. Now, as the role of climate change is being hotly debated in the aftermath of the recent catastrophic hurricanes in the United States, differences in perception are surfacing again. These moments teach those of us who study public responses to the issue of climate change that cultural history and media representations are often neglected factors and that a firm understanding of aspects of culture is indispensable in sorting through these differences in national perspectives and in adequately planning for management for a catastrophe.

Many Americans have come to view the last few hurricane seasons as particularly extreme. This year the devastation was especially severe when New Orleans was almost directly hit by Hurricane Katrina. In comparing the 2005 hurricane season to previous ones, the greatest surprise was not so much the severity and frequency of the storms that made landfall but the degree to which civil defense was obviously overwhelmed at a site historically known for its extreme

vulnerability.

The basic events of the Katrina disaster unfolded in much the same way as did disastrous European storm surges in 1953 in the Netherlands and 1962 in northern Germany. These storms came as surprises after a long lull; underestimating the danger, thousands of people in the Netherlands and hundreds in Hamburg drowned.

The difference among these situations is evident, however, in the societal

What happened in New Orleans? As in Hamburg in 1962, people underrated the known vulnerability of the place and its potential damage. But then in New Orleans, little aid on the ground and insufficient catastrophe management led to four days of agony with close TV coverage of the human devastation in the wake of the storm. It becomes clear that specific social conditions made this meteorological extreme event a social catastrophe: The link between

race, poverty and vulnerability was suddenly rendered transparent. Rumors of massive looting and crime spread before the armed forces arrived. President Bush took the initiative too late, only after widespread protests were heard in the news media and the emergence of social unrest could be witnessed on TV.

There is another crucial difference to be considered: During the last 50 years, the perception and interpretation of such extreme weather events have changed dramatically. “Global warming” and “Klimakatastrophe” (the English translation is climate catastrophe) are concepts that have captured public attention at the same time that extreme weather events are more likely—in some parts of the world—to be interpreted as man-made rather than natural. Moreover, even though there are significant differences in the public understanding of climate change in the United States and Germany, the media in both societies use a similar framework of vulnerability, even if it is constructed in culturally different ways.

Among mainstream climate scien-

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response. In Hamburg, then-unknown state minister Helmut Schmidt took the initiative. In spite of uncertain legality for the orders he issued, he called for the military, which turned out to be a key factor in managing the catastrophe. It was the mythical beginning of Schmidt’s political career, who later became chancellor of Germany. Shortly after the event, a new large-scale coastal defense program was instituted. When, 14 years later, a much more severe storm surge formed, Hamburg’s coastal defense proved sufficient, and no serious damage occurred. The Netherlands became famous for its coastal defense politics in the aftermath of the disastrous 1953 flooding, an event that has become part of the country’s national identity.

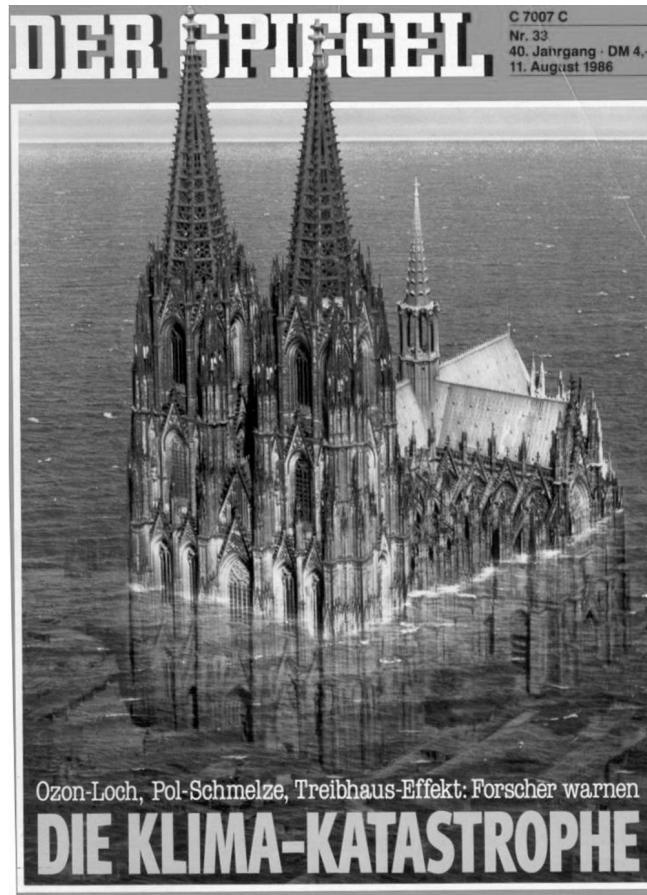
tists, there is little doubt that climate is changing significantly faster today than in the historical past. As a consequence of this “detection,” they conclude that there must be nonnatural factors at work. When different external factors are considered as possible causes, the most consistent explanation attributes two-thirds of 20th-century’s warming to the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, while the other third is ascribed to the sun’s changing output. While broad scientific consensus asserts that rising temperatures are a result of human emissions, a similar conclusion has not been drawn about anthropogenic changes in other weather phenomena such as windstorms in the tropics or at mid latitudes. Recently, a number of claims about worsening hurricane intensity have been made. However, the hurricane statistics vary on time scales of a few decades; the data describing the significant upward trend cover just the last 30 to 40 years, with a lull commencing in the 1970’s after an active period in the 1940’s and 50’s. Thus the conclusion of an anthropogenic signal is methodologically premature.

Climate change is not only a topic in the inner circles of climate researchers but also in the public domain. The interplay between climate research and the public sphere—the public demand for explanation and advice about how to cope with climate change—is one of the key constraints on current climate research. Given prevailing uncertainty about the scientific facts on the one side and the high stakes for the public on the other, climate science is now a contested field. And it emerges as exemplary of what some social scientists call postnormal science.

The German Perspective

While in the United States, the words global warming refer to a tendency towards warmer conditions, climate

change in Germany is framed more broadly, equated foremost with *Klimakatastrophe*. In Germany, all disastrous weather events are interpreted as consequences of climate change. The severe Elbe River flooding in August 2002 exemplifies this. While media



In 1986, *Der Spiegel*’s cover of the Cologne Cathedral half submerged in a flood became an iconic image for the German attitude towards climate change.

reports on flood mitigation and repair work dominated the first days after the events, the search for underlying explanations soon attracted even greater attention. Aside from such presumably minor sins such as manipulating river beds and flood plains, the main culprit was quickly identified—climate change, brought upon us by ourselves. This explanation, while not explicitly supported by scientists, was assumed by many commentators and could be read between the lines of many reports. The commentary in *Sächsische Zeitung*, a regional newspaper in the flooded area,

illustrates this: “Now the flood finally reached our backyard. This flood confronts us with the ‘why,’ with the sins we have committed, with the search for its origins. Even without scientific certainty we know that the flood is a consequence not only of cosmic changes, but of our own way of living.”

This is only one impressive example of an explanatory strategy that Germany’s legendary weekly, *Der Spiegel*, had already dubbed *Klimakatastrophe* in 1986. Its cover image became an icon for the German attitude towards climate change, with the Cologne Cathedral half submerged in a flood. The argument in the cover article was based on plausible scientific claims: Rising temperatures increase the volume of the ocean, melt ice sheets and fuel an accelerated atmospheric energy cycle, which together lead to higher water levels and more water vapor and thus to more intense rainfall.

A tendency in the 1980’s towards more violent North Atlantic and North Sea storms helped to support these claims empirically. Reference to such exceptionally vigorous and erratic weather events helped to implant the concept of *Klimakatastrophe* firmly in the public’s mind. Further, the theory was consistent with older, culturally constructed views that the weather is getting worse and less predictable—due to nature’s response to human misconduct.

Yet since the mid-1990’s, the wind storms in Northern Europe again returned to a less severe state, a trend scarcely noticed by the media or the public. Research further revealed that the number and violence of storms started increasing around 1960, after a long period of weakening storm activity—and many analyses began in just about 1960, when good meteorological data became available for the region.

Both in terms of the actual data available and public perception of it, this situation parallels contemporary discussions on the increasing intensity of hurricanes in the Atlantic. While there has been an increase in storm intensity in the past 30 or so years, the data are too limited and cover so short of a time span to afford any clear or final conclusion.

During the past two decades in Germany, the concept of Klimakatastrophe has become a valuable asset in the public shift towards a more environmentally “conscious” political attitude. And this attitude is often expressed with moral undertones: Humanity, in general, is blamed for destroying the fundamental balance between nature and humans. Following in the tradition of Romantic and Protestant ethics, many actions, symbols and stereotypes became associated with German Klima-Angst: the rise of the Green Party, the fall of nuclear industry, the societal task of household waste separation and recycling, and the moralizing call to bike instead of drive. Closely connected with this shift in the public’s perception was the rise of German climate research, as scientists became public figures and drew on these symbolic resources to communicate with the public via the media.

Interestingly, German climate scientists form a rather uniform phalanx of supporters of the concept of anthropogenic climate change. Only a few dissenters exist. They are not climate scientists and are hardly noticed by the public. Rather, a handful of publicly identifiable individuals have emerged to dominate media discourse on climate change. They do not explicitly claim causal relationships between increased greenhouse gas levels and extreme events, but rather allude to the cautionary principle and point out that the extreme events are “consistent” with future expectations. The public understands such weak causal claims as overly cautious assertions about what they see as an established “fact”: Specifically, recent violent climate events such

as the Elbe or the New Orleans flooding are not natural but human-made and thus, by implication, they are avoidable. Consistently, then, the federal minister for the environment from Germany’s Green Party alluded to the “fact” that the New Orleans disaster was self-inflicted by a stubborn U.S. administration.

The American Mindset

In the United States, the household term referring to anthropogenic climate change is not “climate catastrophe,” but “global warming.” This language leaves an impression that the future

Politicians, members of the public, and scientists engage in fierce debates about how to interpret scientific data and models. The media, following the U.S. norm of ‘balance,’ typically present the problem of anthropogenic climate change as a conflict between two opposing schools of thought—and give both schools similar space in advocating their views.

will be warmer but not more variable or extreme—a very different projection than in the German metaphor. Not surprisingly, therefore, cold spells in the United States are often associated with jokes that dispute global warming, while German scientists can use such events as further evidence for an evolving human-made disaster.

As in Germany, the interplay between science and the public has had a lot to do with the overall perception of weather events and climate change. Public opinion and the direction of research have been heavily influenced by long-standing disputes (rhetorical and real) between powerful social groups such as industry, scientists, environmentalists and religious groups (with the creationists in science serving as a symbol for the blurring of boundaries among these parties). The term “skeptical” in this context is a respectable label

for the opposition in the United States and not considered a dirty word, as it is in Germany.

Politicians, members of the public, and scientists engage in fierce debates about how to interpret scientific data and models. The media, following the U.S. norm of “balance,” typically present the problem of anthropogenic climate change as a conflict between two opposing schools of thought—and give both schools similar space in advocating their views. Within the scientific community, in contrast, one finds the skeptics isolated and accused of doing poor science; nonetheless, their argu-

ments are eagerly fostered by political and religiously motivated groups who can command significant media attention.

Despite such differences in U.S. and German media coverage of the science, a recent survey among European and North American climate scientists revealed that these two scientific communities actually hold very similar views on the assessment and projections of future climate change. But differences in coverage remain. In the past, for example, U.S. articles

about global warming—and this contrasts with German ones—rarely were pegged explicitly to extreme weather events. Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that in the early days of the Katrina disaster, a New Orleans Times-Picayune cartoonist showcased local attitudes towards the hurricane without making any broader connection.

However, the new media’s focus in its coverage of Katrina soon changed to the “national shame” that this storm had fostered. President Bush picked up on this public perception when he tried to repair American self-understanding and confidence in his almost biblical address to the nation: “In the life of this nation, we have often been reminded that nature is an awesome force and that all life is fragile. We’re the heirs of men and women who lived through those first terrible winters at Jamestown and Plymouth, who rebuilt Chicago after a

great fire, and San Francisco after a great earthquake, who reclaimed the prairie from the Dust Bowl of the 1930's. Every time, the people of this land have come back from fire, flood and storm to build anew—and to build better than what we had before. Americans have never left our destiny to the whims of nature—and we will not start now.”

Contrary to the German attitude sketched above, the American construction of identity in relation to nature is optimistic and far from self-critical. President Bush never mentioned climate change or the possibility of human action in causing it. He spoke about saving energy, but that reference was related to the potential damage to Texan oil refineries, not to a global ethical imperative. Whereas in Germany, climate change became a media issue from the first day of the Elbe River flood (and the German media immediately covered New Orleans's catastrophe in headlines), it was not until three weeks after Katrina that any widespread discussion of climate change appeared in the leading journals in the United States. It will be interesting to see how long interest in the issue persists, given that infrastructure and social welfare concerns predominate in the public discussion.

Yet climate change has not been absent from U.S. public discourse. In fact, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, some powerful voices used extreme weather events to argue for the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. After the 1988 heat wave and drought, for example, a famous claim was made during a U.S. Senate hearing that the heat conditions in that summer were due to global warming. That argument was also used regularly to appeal for support for environmental policy, with then-Vice President Al Gore as its most prominent public proponent. However, that campaign could not be sustained over the long term, and the link between extreme events and human actions lost

its persuasiveness among the U.S. media and public. It had been oversold, and the political climate had changed to what we've seen happen during the Katrina disaster.

What the Future Holds

Media symbols and representations of extreme weather events and their embedding in overarching cultural

If most Germans understand weather extremes as scripture written on the wall of impending, self-inflicted disaster, and if most Americans are willing to chance climate extremes as existential risks, these different attitudes have little to do with superior morality or rationality, but with deeply held—but very different—cultural values and orientations.

frameworks fluctuate over time. And the story of differing perceptions and resulting actions has not, and will not, come to an end.

The boundaries between science, politics and the public sphere are blurring, and climate research is one of the most prominent examples for this ongoing “postnormal science” process. By bringing social science into this debate, in particular with respect to different time horizons and media discourses, does not just add a further element to the end of an analysis, but it is indispensable for understanding public dynamics and for designing appropriate catastrophe management in a world, which was, is and will remain, vulnerable.

People react not really according to abstract concepts and scientific data, but to traditions, experience and shared values. Indeed, we have shown that the scientific construction of facts is cultural as well. If most Germans understand weather extremes as scripture written on the wall of impending, self-inflicted disaster, and if most Americans are willing to chance climate extremes as existential risks, these different attitudes have little to do with superior morality

or rationality, but with deeply held—but very different—cultural values and orientations.

The German approach might have the advantage that it helps to institute a meaningful policy of sustainability with respect to environment and resources. The advantage of the U.S. approach might be that it helps individuals adapt better to crises, doing so with less fear. The disadvantage of the U.S. approach

is that people are also shielded from thinking about sustainable energy and resource usage, while Germans are led to assume a missionary attitude, telling the world what is environmentally right and what is wrong. Some Germans seem to even believe that improved protection

against extreme events will not really be needed as soon as appropriate Klimaschutz (which translated means climate protection) measures are implemented.

In either case, it becomes critical to examine how the rhetoric of the public discourse and that of the scientific community intersect to create climate politics and guide the direction of research. This societal rhetoric is not ancillary to “real science” but serves as a critical determinant of scientific attitudes and explanations. ■

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Trying to Achieve Balance Against Great Odds

With the United States's opposition to Kyoto so strong, a Canadian journalist finds little pressure from editors to include that perspective in his stories.

By Jacques A. Rivard

For more than 20 years, I've covered the environment for Société Radio-Canada, the French arm of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's national TV news. As journalists do, I've tried to apply the "balanced coverage" rule to my reporting, just as I have taught my students in journalism at the Université de Montréal for two decades. But my attempts to do this don't always work.

Sometimes daily news coverage with limited time to tell a story has not allowed for multiple points of view to be presented, and follow-up stories I might propose, to provide such balance, were often hard to persuade my editors to do. But when it has come to reporting on topics such as global warming or climate change, I think being in Canada has made it easier for me to do this than for reporters in the United States, since there are fewer pressure groups in Canada working against ecological actions.

In 1992, I was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, when countries from throughout the world pledged to spend billions of dollars and facilitate transfers of clean technology to developing countries to help reduce global warming emissions. Those promises were not kept but, in Kyoto, Japan, when these countries met again to address this issue, the call out of that meeting was for nothing less than a new economic order, as industrial nations committed themselves to very substantial reductions of polluting gases emitted by the burning of fossil fuels.

In Canada, public opinion so strongly favored such actions that the government decided it had enough support to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Canada was one of few major economic powers outside of Europe to do so. As a reporter covering this issue, I did many stories

the consequence of this has been that pressure groups against Kyoto have become almost irrelevant; the only contrary views tend to come from the energy sector.

With the debate about global warming still open, how can a journalist provide the best available information and strive to produce balanced reporting? From my experience of 20 years covering the environment, the only way to do this is to become a specialist in reporting on these issues and work to do follow-up stories to bring in information that might be missing in the daily stories that tend to be done. ■

As a reporter covering this issue, I did many stories about climate changes being measured in the Arctic, as well as about pressure Canadian provincial and federal governments were putting on the United States to ratify Kyoto. As I did these stories, few of my editors ever suggested that I try to find opposing views about global warming.

about climate changes being measured in the Arctic, as well as about pressure Canadian provincial and federal governments were putting on the United States to ratify Kyoto. As I did these stories, few of my editors ever suggested that I try to find opposing views about global warming.

Why this lack of interest in balance from my editors with these stories? In some respects the situation can be easily explained. As it became quite clear that the U.S. government—our close and powerful neighbor to the south—was set against ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, this meant that ecologists in Canada were not facing a lot of pressure from within their own country about this issue. The perspective of my editors—and of many columnists in this country—is that the obligation to look to opposing pressure groups in Canada isn't as great when powerful opposition is found next door in the words and actions of the American President. In Canada,

Jacques A. Rivard, a 1996 Nieman Fellow, has covered the environment from the early 1980's for the French arm of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). As a national TV correspondent from 1998-2004, based in Vancouver, he did many stories about the impact of global warming in the Arctic. He retired from the CBC in 2004. As a Nieman, Rivard held the V. Kann Rasmussen Environmental Fellowship.

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“Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War,” a book written by Washington Post correspondent Anthony Shadid, who won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for his reporting from Iraq, “is filled with the kind of insights—and personal anecdotes—that only long conversations with Iraqis, and time in the country, can provide,” writes **Patrick J. McDonnell**, a former Baghdad bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times. In describing Shadid’s book as a “masterful account” of how the war and its aftermath affected Iraqi people, he observes that “its best moments are based on old-fashioned reporting, leavened with the kind of analysis that only a certain distance and time—and a touch of wisdom—can render.” **Maggy Zanger**, who in 2003 started a program to train Iraqi journalists in Baghdad, reflects on “an intimate journey into Iraqi lives” that is told by former National Public Radio correspondent Michael Goldfarb in “Ahmad’s War, Ahmad’s Peace: Surviving Under Saddam, Dying in the New Iraq.” In his book, Goldfarb writes about Ahmad Shawkat, an Iraqi Kurdish journalist, and his family, and about Shawkat’s death by assassination because of words he wrote and published.

In reading Karl Fleming’s book, “Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir,” **Lester Sloan**, a freelance photojournalist, came to understand how Fleming’s struggles as an abandoned child and adolescent—and his responses to them—prepared him well for the time when he’d report for Newsweek on the greatest story of his time: the civil rights movement. Jules Witcover’s book, “The Making of an Ink-Stained Wretch,” offers Des Moines Register political columnist **David Yepsen** “old ‘war’ stories about their trade” of covering campaigns, while reminding him that “the cacophony is noisier than in Witcover’s era, but it’s still better than the alternative of providing only a few sources of information for voters. The problem now is that there’s so much of it out there, people often don’t know where to turn for basic facts.”

Freelance reporter **Peggy Simpson**, who reported for many years from Poland, writes about Shana Penn’s book, “Solidarity’s Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland.” It was, Penn reveals, a group of women journalists, hiding from government officials, who kept the Solidarity movement alive by publishing and distributing underground newspapers about the resistance movement. As Simpson writes, Penn “explores why the vital work of these women remained a secret to much of Poland after the fall of Communism.” **Alvin Shuster**, a former foreign editor with the Los Angeles Times, says that in writing “Discovering Russia: 200 Years of American Journalism,” Murray Seeger has “written a fascinating book about the hurdles they [American correspondents who worked in Russia] jumped, bureaucrats they confronted, diseases they fought, famines they survived, and tea leaves they read to portray the Russia they found.”

In reflecting on the film “Good Night, and Good Luck,” **Don Aucoin**, reporter and former TV critic for The Boston Globe, says that it’s “hard to watch this film without pondering what has become of broadcast journalism . . . [and] the sort of enterprise reporting and investigative digging that Murrow prided himself on . . .” And Canadian freelance journalist **Madelaine Drohan** presents the predictable stages of scandal coverage, but wonders why “the media appear to lose interest once the central figure in a scandal has been punished” and walk away from the important watchdog stage of reporting when remedial action by authorities should be taken. ■

Bringing Iraqi Voices Into the Conversation About Their Country

A Washington Post correspondent's book 'is not a policy screed or a compilation of talking heads and experts.'

Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War

Anthony Shadid

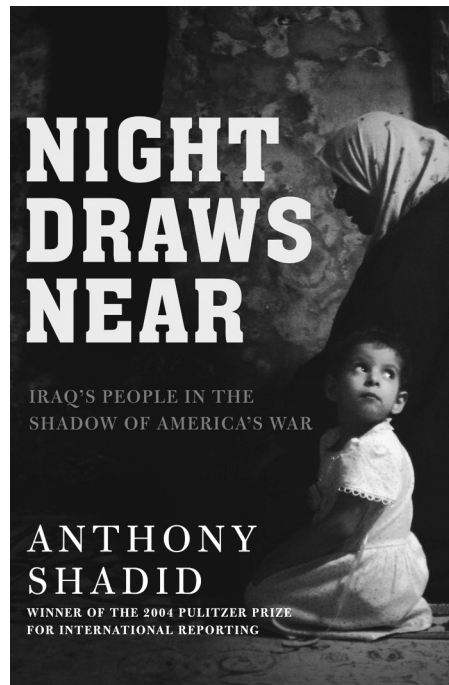
Henry Holt and Co. 448 Pages. \$26.

By Patrick J. McDonnell

Emotions were mixed for Anthony Shadid as he observed the historic spectacle of armored columns of U.S. troops rumbling through Baghdad in April 2003, signaling the end of Saddam Hussein's regime. The landmark tumbling of Hussein's statue in Firdos Square, a thoroughly unimaginable turn of events for Iraqis, was on television for an astonished world to witness. "I was in awe of the power of my country, America," Shadid writes in his masterful account, "Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War." "What other nation, driven by ideology, its existence not threatened, could conquer an entire country in a matter of weeks?" As an Arab American, however, the Oklahoma native acknowledges that this was not a moment of unalloyed elation, a sentiment shared by many Iraqis who loathed Hussein and his brutal rule. "Here was Baghdad, an ancient city whose name evoked a proud, enduring memory, fallen to a foreign enemy," Shadid writes.

Shadid, a Washington Post correspondent who won a Pulitzer Prize in 2004 for his stellar and courageous work in Iraq, has written a book that embraces such nuance. This is not a policy screed or a compilation of talking heads and experts. Its best moments are based on old-fashioned reporting, leavened with the kind of analysis that only a certain distance and time—and a touch of wisdom—can render. Viewed as a work of documentation, Shadid's book is an essential account of the chaos and violence of the U.S. invasion and of the subsequent looting and anarchy that set the stage for the ongoing crisis.

It is never an easy task for daily jour-



nalists to revisit their scrawled notes and process their experiences in the field with an eye towards crafting a broader narrative. Too often, as history skids by, we remain enveloped in the minute-to-minute tumult. But Shadid has managed to pull it all together and transcend the daily in dazzling fashion. His book is also testament to a time when reporters could roam more or less freely throughout Iraq, though we always did have to be careful. Iraq, long a closed society, was a place where stories seemed to be everywhere following the fall of Hussein. A reporter could drive to Basra or the Syrian border or Kurdistan, and most everywhere else, in relative confidence of coming back alive and with a good story. Alas, the bloody events of spring 2004 set into motion

a cycle of kidnappings and killings that has made much of Iraq off-limits to journalists, especially Westerners. To wander freely in places like Fallujah and Khalidiya, Sunni Arab insurgent strongholds that Shadid visited, is no longer possible.

The book, following Shadid's arc through the country on reporting trips before and after Hussein's fall, is filled with the kind of insights—and personal anecdotes—that only long conversations with Iraqis, and time in the country, can provide. He recounts the brutalized nature of Iraqi society, warped in so many ways after Hussein's mercurial rule and his catastrophic invasions of neighboring Iran and Kuwait, the latter followed by a decade of bruising international sanctions and isolation. Much of the world has come to recognize Iraq's ethnic and religious divisions—its distinct Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish populations, along with Christians and other minorities—but Shadid notes the folly of simply labeling groups, as U.S. administrators who arrived in Baghdad often seemed to do. Shadid reminds readers that Iraqis are often offended to be asked directly if they are Shiite or Sunni; the nation, in particular Baghdad, includes many mixed families and, in the countryside, tribal affiliation often trumps all other identities.

Iraq, a place seeped in history and never-forgotten slights, is also overflowing with complications, distinctions and subtleties, not to mention contradictions. Hussein's Baathist state simultaneously engaged in ghastly repression of Shiites and Kurds and heaped patronage on largely Sunni Arab zones, while of-

ficially backing a nationalist vision that discouraged ethnic and sectarian identity. To the outsider, the roiling, war-torn Iraq of today must seem a cauldron of ethnic and religious tensions—and so, lamentably, it has become. But it was not too long ago that Iraq was a well-off secular state, a place where people from throughout the Arab world came to study and women enjoyed considerable freedoms. The U.S. overseers who arrived after the war liked to talk about diversity, democracy, freedom and other hallowed concepts. But one often got the impression that these were abstractions for even educated Iraqis as they suffered through a lack of electricity,

miles-long gas lines, and the fearsome violence that pummeled their nation.

“What are the Americans all about?” an exasperated Wamidh Nadhme, an eminent academic and political commentator, asked Shadid at one point. “What do they want?”

Nadhme, a rumped, decent man who occasionally met with Western reporters on his peaceful veranda along the Tigris, serves as a reality check for Shadid during his years traveling back and forth to and from Iraq. He is among the most memorable of the Iraqi characters who inhabit these pages. Early on, as Hussein’s rule is crumbling, he sounds a prescient note of caution. “Even if the

Americans are capable of overthrowing the regime, they will face more and more resistance,” Nadhme predicted. “It will bring more destruction, more civil war, and a nationalist war against American intervention.” Later, with Hussein in shackles and the country in turmoil, Nadhme concludes, “The Americans have opened a Pandora’s box.” ■

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Iraq’s Emerging Press

Providing the public with ‘accurate, complete and fair information was, and remains for most, an unknown concept.’

Ahmad’s War, Ahmad’s Peace: Surviving Under Saddam, Dying in the New Iraq

Michael Goldfarb

Carroll & Graf Publishers. 354 Pages. \$25.95.

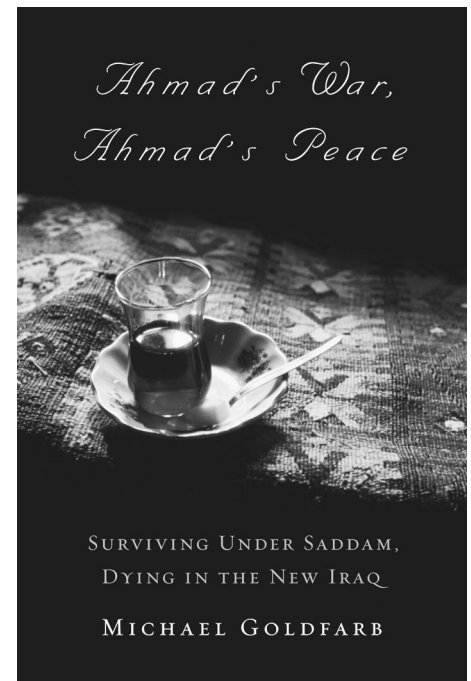
By Maggy Zanger

Since returning to the United States after spending nearly two years in Iraq working to develop journalism among its citizens, I have often lamented that the American people remain woefully ignorant of the complex reality of Iraqi lives, despite the millions of dollars U.S. news organizations have spent covering the 2003 Iraq invasion and its aftermath. And despite the plethora of “looking back” books published recently by navel-gazing political insiders or journalists, the people of Iraq still remain largely ignored, apparently regarded as an uninteresting sideshow to the main event that is supposedly being staged in their name.

One of a few notable exceptions is “Ahmad’s War, Ahmad’s Peace: Surviving Under Saddam, Dying in the New Iraq,” by former National Public Radio correspondent Michael Goldfarb, who offers the reader an intimate journey into Iraqi lives through the story of

an Iraqi Kurdish man, Ahmad, and his family. As seen through the eyes and experiences of this progressive intellectual and journalist Ahmad Shawkat, the reader is taken on an in-depth exploration of the political minefield of pre- and postinvasion Iraq.

A financially desperate Shawkat was hired as a translator by the equally desperate, newly arrived radio reporter, Goldfarb, in Kurdistan during the early days of the invasion. By the time Baghdad was surrounded by U.S. military hardware a few weeks later, Goldfarb had come to depend on Shawkat for an insider’s view of Iraqi society, and the two men had developed a friendship based on mutual respect and an oddly common intellectual history. Shawkat’s willingness to share with Goldfarb his life’s story left the reporter with “a solemn sense of obligation” to his translator to “tell his story to as many people as possible.” And that he does.



Through the detailed telling of Shawkat’s life journey—from impassioned young university professor to politically “safe” businessman, to desperate internal exile and then to postregime newspaper publisher—the reader journeys through the political trajectory of Iraq in the latter half of the 20th century. As Baathist street thugs rose to take the reins of state power, worldly, freethinking intellectuals like Shawkat were imprisoned, tortured, exiled and, finally, if they survived at all, left with little but poverty and despair. Readers also discover through Shawkat’s experi-

ences with the political reconstruction efforts after the invasion that ignorant American overlords in parts of Iraq allowed the oppressors of the old regime to come to power again, while former political prisoners were forced to the sidelines.

Shortly after starting a newspaper in Mosul, Shawkat was killed by unknown assassins while he was on his roof talking on a Thuraya satellite phone, a tool that became emblematic of both local and foreign journalism in war-ravaged Iraq.

The New Iraqi Press

Journalism in Baathist Iraq—if it can even be called that—took an abrupt turnabout with the fall of the regime. The tightly controlled state media juggernaut came to a grinding halt with the fall of the government on April 9, 2003. In one day, Iraq went from having one of the most rigidly controlled news media in the world to one of the most free. But the emerging issue would be what the content of these new entities would be.

By May, the Iraqi Ministry of Information's some 7,000 employees had been fired and the ministry abolished. An array of new media players rushed to fill the void. By late summer, there were probably more than 200 new Iraqi news outlets, in addition to those that had been operating relatively freely in Iraqi Kurdistan, which had been outside of government control since 1992.

The news media immediately became a focal point in the political jousting that, not surprisingly, characterizes postinvasion Iraq. Most Iraqi media outlets were started by political parties or by individuals with clear political ambitions. Parties and personalities long in exile or deep underground began newspapers and radio stations to enhance recruitment and to push their political line. A few profit-driven, highly sensationalist tabloid-style newspapers also quickly hit the streets, and some gained wide popularity.

But profit- or politically driven, nearly all papers trade in street rumor, conspiracy theories, and endless editorial comment, often based not on fact

but bias, misconceptions and wild innuendo. "Serving the public" with accurate, complete and fair information was, and remains for most, an unknown concept.

Training Iraqi Journalists

This was the media landscape I stepped into in August 2003 when I was hired to start a journalism training program in Baghdad by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, a London (and now also U.S.) based nongovernmental organization that specializes in training journalists in postconflict and post-authoritarian societies. As a university journalism lecturer in Cairo, Egypt I had been researching the post-1991 development of the Iraqi Kurdish media for several years. Like Goldfarb, during the U.S. invasion I was based in Kurdistan, though I came much earlier than he did and stayed much longer.

As happened with Goldfarb, I had quickly developed a deep sense of obligation to the people who, amid mind-numbing poverty and despair, had taken me in hand and shared with unexpected grace, humor and dignity their historical and social knowledge as well as their hopes and dreams. Like Goldfarb, I know that getting to know the Iraqi people is an enlightening and rewarding effort. If given the opportunity, the American people might discover that they have much more in common with the Iraqi people than they imagine.

From my first trip to Iraq in 2001, I had wanted to work with local journalists. I saw so much potential in a smart, dedicated people who had no role models for quality press. And perhaps my long disillusionment with U.S.-style news prompted me to want to play "journalism god" and help to shape an emerging, free news media. Perhaps I naively thought Iraq represented a "clean slate" from which there was a possibility to develop a form of journalism that could live up to all of those free-press ideals that some of us stubbornly cling to, ideals that we know are rarely achievable in the West's corporate media environment.

But Iraq is anything but a clean slate.

The Baathist legacy of deep corruption, violence and mindless obedience is tenacious and permeates all sectors of society in an endless assortment of debilitating ways. I called it "the Baathist hangover." Ahmad Shawkat called it the cancer of "dictatorism" and recognized it even in close friends he thought shared his determination to fight fascism in all its forms, even if it riled Muslim feathers.

Pervasive "dictatorism" led me to quickly realize that those reporters who had worked under the Baath would take a lot more "reform" than I could provide in three-week training seminars. At about the same time I turned to working with mostly young and totally inexperienced people and training them to report and write from the ground up, Shawkat was running afoul of Mosul's Islamists.

Shawkat's Journey

Shawkat had returned from exile in Kurdistan to mostly Arab Mosul and started a democracy institute and a newspaper with money he had wrangled from the Americans. The paper ran under the banner *Bilattijah* (Without Direction), which means that no one dictates the paper's point of view and conveys the sense that Iraqis were divided on what direction they wanted the country to take.

While Shawkat was not associated with any political party—he had long become disillusioned with all parties—he did have a political direction in mind. "We are the first to fight for the building of a new Iraq and a civil society and a transparent democracy in a time of freedom," Shawkat wrote in an early edition. "This is our direction in the midst of a period 'without direction.'"

His editorials called for all Iraqis to stand shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy who would thwart the democratic direction. Even in the summer of 2003, it was clear to him that a deadly union had formed between former Baathists and Islamic fascists, and he lost no time railing against them in his public forum. "O courageous Mujahideen . . ." he wrote. "May God forgive

you You know better than I do that Islam is a religion of peace”

What Shawkat failed to realize was that his overt, and reckless, criticism of the Islamists and their Baathist bedfellows presented his own manifestation of “dictatorism.”

For most Iraqis, the end of the regime meant “freedom.” But given the Baathist legacy, it was a freedom devoid of the confines of social contract. It meant, for some, freedom to drive at night with lights off on the wrong side of a divided highway. For others, to regularly steal U.N. food from the warehouse where they work. For others, it meant writing what is on one’s mind without regard for fact or, in Shawkat’s case, without regard for who will be offended.

He ignored the mounting death threats and warnings from friends that he needed to be more politic so people might listen instead of reacting in anger. “He weighed everything he was risking against a lifetime of enforced silence,” Goldfarb writes, “and decided he would not hold back.”

His enemies did not hold back, either. And their willingness to use extreme forms of violence was no match for Shawkat’s pen. And “dictatorism”

meant a thorough police investigation never happened and the killers never held accountable.

When Goldfarb returned to Iraq in March 2004 to investigate Shawkat’s assassination, the Iraq he found left him sputtering in anger. The Bush administration’s “arrogant political careerists” running the country “seemed hell-bent on making sure the Iraq Ahmad envisioned would never exist,” he writes. In his mind, he tells Shawkat of his anger. “My government betrayed you and the thousands like you.”

Many of us who lived daily with that betrayal share his rage. It may well turn out that the confluence of Baathist and Islamic fascists will prove less deadly to the Iraqi people than the confluence of the Baath and Bush legacies.

Goldfarb found a ray of hope in Shawkat’s young daughter, Roaa, who followed her father into journalism and was working as a stringer for Western news outlets. I also find hope in the young journalists I trained in Baghdad and Kurdistan. Some of them are working with local press and radio stations. Some, like Roaa, work with Western news outlets such as Reuters, the Chicago Tribune, the Financial Times,

and The (London) Independent. Many continue to write for IWPR’s Iraq Crisis Report, probably the best reporting on the daily lives of Iraqis in print today.

Several of these trainees said to me, “You are the only one who helped us.” One said, “You gave us a life. We were dead before.” Sad statements given the billions of dollars U.S. taxpayers have spent. All I did was give them a chance, an opportunity to reconstruct their lives. That was all Shawkat and his compatriots asked of “liberation.” ■

Maggy Zanger is associate professor of practice in journalism at the University of Arizona. She was Iraq director for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting [IWPR] from August 2003 to December 2004 and is the author of “Of Journalists and Dogs: Tales from the Northern Behind,” a chapter in “Global Media Go to War,” published by Marquette Books in 2004, that details activities of the international media based in Iraqi Kurdistan during the invasion. The IWPR’s Iraq Crisis Report can be read at www.iwpr.net.

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Childhood Experiences Shape a Reporter’s Journey

‘The great writers he’d discovered in the library at the orphanage became midwives to his talent.’

Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir

Karl Fleming

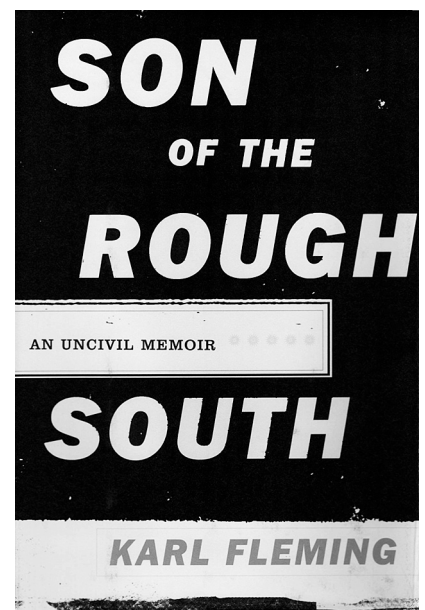
PublicAffairs. 432 Pages. \$26.95.

By Lester Sloan

In a way, Karl Fleming has two birthdays: The first is August 30, 1927, when one Nettie Fleming gave birth to a blond-haired, blue-eyed baby boy at a hospital in Newport News, Virginia. The second is December 27, 1935, when the same woman delivered him to the Methodist Episcopal Orphanage in Raleigh, North Carolina, where at the age of eight he began a new life. It would take him a lifetime to recover from the trauma

of both events, and his mother would go to her grave without receiving his forgiveness.

Her first husband and Karl’s father, David Henry Fleming, was a hard-drinking son of a tobacco farmer who eked out a living selling life insurance policies to farmers in the South where the Great Depression arrived early. He died six months after Karl was born. The insurance salesman didn’t have a



policy of his own. Nettie tried selling dishes and bibles door to door, with no success, and later reluctantly married her dead husband's best friend, McDuff Laughinghouse, another insurance salesman. Ethel, their daughter, was born on August 29, 1931 in Mauls Swamp, North Carolina, where they lived in a shotgun shack (you could fire a shot in the front door and it would exit the back without hitting anything), owned by the Laughinghouse family. Within a few years her second husband died. Twice widowed and unable to work, Nettie Fleming felt that she had no choice but to place her two young children in an institution where they would, at least, receive the essentials of life, but have to learn to fend for themselves. She would never live in the little house with the white picket fence that she hoped to share with her children.

Ethel Laughinghouse was admitted to an all-girl orphanage in September 1935. She was only four. Karl followed four months later. At the age of eight, with the nickname, "pretty boy," Karl entered what seemed at the time like a personal hell. In time it would prove to be his salvation. While the source of many lifelong pains, the orphanage provided Fleming with family-like ties among both the staff and the other students there. He developed a work ethic that formed the foundation of a personal ethos that would sustain him throughout his life. He learned to outsmart the bullies. And as an underdog, he developed compassion for other underdogs.

His Journey as a Reporter

"Son of the Rough South, an Uncivil Memoir" at times reads like fiction and shares many of the qualities of the great books written by Dickens, Twain and Dostoyevsky, where both character and place are shaped by social and historic events. "Human growth does not proceed in a straight line," Goethe teaches George Webber in Thomas Wolfe's American classic "You Can't Go

Home Again," and Fleming's book, leaving nothing to the imagination, traces a zigzag course over the tattered life of its author. As in a 12-step program, he bares all the hidden hurts, assaults against his character, and unrequited expectations.

Being sexually molested by a group of boys when he was young is an encounter he shares in jarring detail, as if he feels the need to cleanse himself

From one of his first editors, he's taught that both blacks and whites, the living and the dead, deserve the same respect. ... By the time he reached Atlanta, married with two children and where he worked briefly as a magazine writer for the Atlanta Constitution, he came to the attention of Newsweek magazine and began covering the unfolding of the greatest story of the 20th century: the civil rights movement.

of the experience. Fleming has learned along the way that "secrets make you sick." Again and again we are reminded—through the eyes of both the child and the man—of his mother's failings, both as a parent and a person.

But for the aspiring journalist, Fleming's book could be used as a primer on how to become a good reporter. From his early years at the orphanage we see him evolving into a person who desires to expand his world. The library becomes both a refuge and a repository of ideas and examples of life's vagaries. Beyond the orphanage, when he enters the military at the age of 17, and later as a young reporter for a paper in Wilson, North Carolina, he learns from both the skilled and the scum. Riding with a local cop who is both a bigot and a bully, he witnessed firsthand the suffering, degradation and murder of blacks in the South, his South.

From one of his first editors, he's taught that both blacks and whites, the living and the dead, deserve the same respect. He also notes that while his

mother failed to take responsibility for her problems, she treated all people as equals and never spoke ill of black people. He learned the newspaper business from the bottom to the top, at times because other reporters or editors didn't carry their share of the workload. His willingness to see the job through, without complaining—something he learned at the orphanage—proved to be a lifesaver. He moved up the ladder, trading up to better jobs in bigger cities. By the time he reached Atlanta, married with two children and where he worked briefly as a magazine writer for The Atlanta Constitution, he came to the attention of Newsweek magazine and began covering the unfolding of the greatest story of the 20th century: the civil rights movement.

At Newsweek he received the nurturing in both body and spirit that he found lacking in his earlier years. In this environment, he flourished. All that he had done and suffered up to that point prepared him for this moment. Under the tutelage of Bill Emerson, a senior editor at the magazine, he learned how to write a magazine story. The great writers he'd discovered in the library at the orphanage became midwives to his talent.

Over time, Fleming learned that the hate that poisoned his South lives within us all. Keeping that hate at bay is our struggle. The rest of his story is up to the reader to discover, but I will add this note: Fleming's coverage of the civil rights movement ranked among the best out there. Under his byline appeared many of the great names and moments of that historic struggle. And though his mother never got to live in the little house with the white picket fence that he now shares with his wife, Anne, and their dog, Dixon, she lived to see her "little man" live out her dream. ■

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Political Journalism: It's Not the Good Old Days

'But some of what ails American political journalism in our time is an overreaction to the failures of the boys back in Witcover's heyday.'

The Making of an Ink-Stained Wretch: Half a Century Pounding the Political Beat

Jules Witcover

The Johns Hopkins University Press. 343 Pages. \$30.

By David Yepsen

One of the things political reporters love to do is sit around telling old "war" stories about their trade, often while sipping adult beverages. Those who love such tales will find a rich trove of them in Jules Witcover's new memoir, "The Making of an Ink-Stained Wretch." Something else reporters love to do is sit around complaining about the business, about how it's changed, and about how it isn't just the same as it used to be. There's plenty of that in Witcover's book, too.

Unfortunately, there's not a lot in this book about what we should do to correct things. Witcover pens us a witty book about our trade, grumbles about how things have gone wrong, but then doesn't offer a plan for doing anything about it. But, then, Jules is an ink-stained wretch, not some cluck-clucker at one of those journalism school seminars. One retired colleague of mine once observed "no one does a job as well as you did it," and there's a dash of that in Witcover's book.

Still, after bemoaning some of the things gone wrong with the trade, he concludes charitably: "All in all, the business of writing about national politics is in as good, if perhaps more sober, hands as it was in my earlier days. Today's crew is probably better educated in various aspects of political science than my gang was, but maybe not quite so well versed in the art of having a helluva good time in the process of writing about it." Thank you, Jules. And amen.

What's Happening Now?

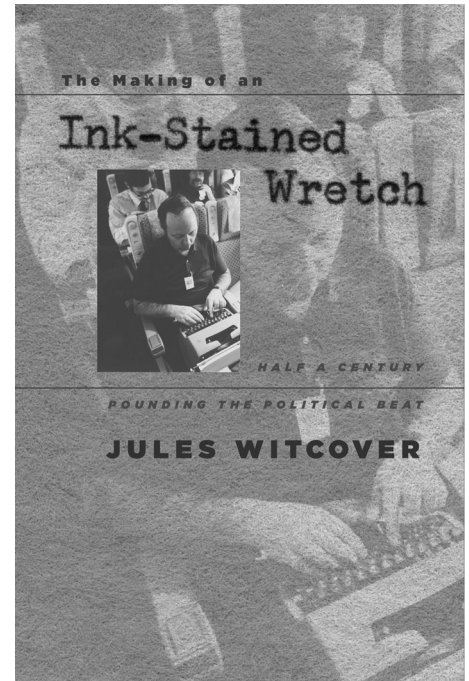
Political writers today are more "content providers" than reporters. When you've

got to be up before dawn for an early morning TV or radio talk show, then cover an event or two, file a brief story for the Web site, then a full story for the paper, make calls and send e-mails to collect string for Sunday pieces and columns, well, there just isn't the time for early morning tennis or high-fat, high-alcohol, late-night dinners. (Oh, I forgot to mention the blog you are expected to write from the road and how cell phones and BlackBerries mean discussing everything you do each day with the half-dozen editors back home, all of whom think they know more about politics than you do.)

Sadly, political reporters do all of this for years and, as Witcover and other colleagues have discovered, as a reward some get a letter saying their services are no longer needed because the Pooh-Bahs are cutting back on political coverage so they can spend money on other things or make the shareholders happy.

Maybe it's time to give up trying to reform the trade. Having been to all sorts of talks, seminars and think-tank discussions about how we can do it better—only to go out and sin again in covering the next campaign—I've pretty much given up hope of salvation. We're journalists, for crying out loud. As Witcover chronicles, we're in a raw, raucous and rough business. We get up every day, review yesterday's screw-ups, and try to get it right for tomorrow or for the next broadcast, podcast, cablecast or blog entry.

My problem with books like this one is they tend to convey a sense that things were great back in the good old days, and they weren't, a fact Witcover



notes. Those who pine for the "good old days" ought to sit down with old newspapers or fading film clips and see for themselves. There weren't a lot of female bylines. You didn't see many black or Latino faces, either.

Today's times aren't the good old days, thank goodness. In many ways, they're better. But some of what ails American political journalism in our time is an overreaction to the failures of the boys back in Witcover's heyday. After the presidencies of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon turned out so badly, news organizations came increasingly to the realization that voters would benefit by knowing more about the personal character of those seeking political office. Reporters responded by starting to dig into the private lives and personal backgrounds of politicians who, understandably, drew back, thereby creating the distance between them and us that Witcover bemoans.

In my generation of political reporters, all of us grew up reading Theodore

White's fly-on-the-wall stories of presidential campaigns. With his approach in mind, suddenly the tactics, strategies and personalities of the campaign people behind the scenes were a lot more interesting than the speech of the day. But, again, more barriers came up, and news coverage changed again; this time reporters started to put too much emphasis on the horseshoe. Now the "story" is often no longer out on the trail, but is found in the details of campaign finance disclosure statements. Or reporters flock to a candidate's hometown to discover what makes him or her tick. Or they vet position papers with experts to write more intelligently about what a politician is proposing.

The road story—the campaign—becomes nothing more than scripted political theater. And if those who cover it aren't as interested in getting drunk every night on the trail, it's because we've got heavy lifting to do. Frankly, too, it's a life that can be hard on the reporters' personal lives, as Witcover recounts happening to his own. Early

in my career I was lucky to hear that wisdom from guys in his generation. "Don't forget your family. Don't forget your marriage," they advised. If that means passing up some event or road duty, well, that's just too bad. Our jobs are stressful enough without wrecking marriages or not knowing our kids. Still, it's good to hear one of the veterans of our business give us tykes a little blessing of approval.

Today we inundate people with information, thanks to various communications technologies that didn't exist even a few years ago—cable, the Internet, blogs, podcasting. The cacophony is noisier than in Witcover's era, but it's still better than the alternative of providing only a few sources of information for voters. The problem now is that there's so much of it out there, people often don't know where to turn for basic facts. Add to this the unfortunate possibility that we might be returning to an even older set of "good old days"—to those times of yellow journalism and the partisan press. Citizens didn't turn to those

newspapers for unbiased information. They went there to have their biases reinforced and passions inflamed. Jules Witcover and David Yepsen might not like this trend, but Benjamin Franklin would recognize it instantly.

Don't look to Witcover's book for an in-depth probe of such questions. It's a comfortable read. Anyone interested in reliving some of the old days of this business will find that his stories bring a smile with them. (It's also best accompanied by a Scotch or two.) What he has to say is also useful for students interested in political journalism, since he offers a front-row look at our trade the way it used to be. It is a book written by one of the best in our business, as he shares his thoughts about the challenges political journalism faces and what aspiring reporters are in for if they join. Come on in. The ink is fine. ■

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The Role Women Journalists Played in Poland's Freedom

Only when Solidarity won did the journalists realize '... they had formed the only all-woman cabal in Poland to make a counterstrike against martial law.'

Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland

Shana Penn

The University of Michigan Press. 371 Pages. \$34.95.

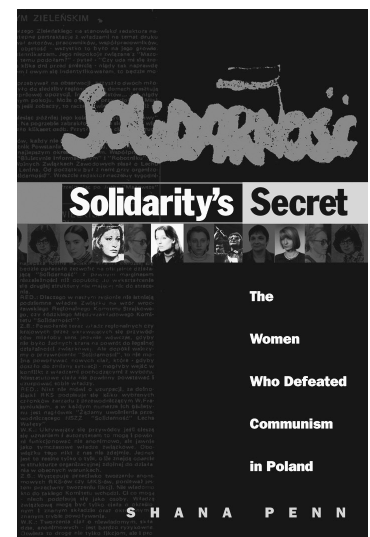
By Peggy Simpson

Poland's success in getting rid of Soviet-imposed Communism and in remaking itself as a Western democratic country remains a puzzle to many folks. Shana Penn's "Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland," offers clues by focusing attention on seven Polish women who shaped the underground Solidarity newspaper, *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. This paper kept the movement alive after Polish Communist leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski, decapitated the leadership with arrests of 10,000 men and 1,000 women and imposed martial law on December 13, 1981.

Communism never was a good fit in Poland. The Soviets who gained control of Poland and other Eastern European countries with the Yalta agreement near the end of World War II could not impose total control in this country of 38 million. Starting in the 1960's and expanding in the 1970's, links were forged between Polish elites and workers—a real threat to the myth of the "worker" oriented Communist state. These had culminated with the Gdansk shipyard strike, which erupted initially to protest the dismissal of veteran activist and shipyard crane operator Anna Walen-

tynowicz, with another fired worker, electrician Lech Walesa, joining the fray and leading it.

The Gdansk accord, signed by Walen-



Communist concession for the creation of a “free trade union.” In the next 16 months, half the adult Poles had signed up to be Solidarity members—forming units of the free trade union in their local schools, hospitals and bureaucracies. This became a vehicle to express anti-Communist sentiment, in essence, and it proved to be a huge threat not just to Jaruzelski but also to party bosses in Moscow. Thus the crackdown.

What happened right afterwards is hardly known in the West, and until recently was not known clearly even in Poland.

Penn’s book documents how the clandestine press played a massive role in keeping Solidarity alive. It provides the first comprehensive look at the strategic thinking, organizational brilliance, and the sheer daily grit of putting out an underground weekly newspaper during the next seven years.

The paper became a vital conduit of information to the masses of Poles who had backed Solidarity as a way of opposing the Communists. It squeezed 22 pages of newsprint into four legal-sized pages. The paper carried interviews with the jailed Solidarity leaders, as well as the few leaders who had avoided arrest and were in hiding. But it also featured stories about ordinary people who had been arrested or who were helping with the resistance—or coping with the chaos of minimal transportation and minimal amounts of food.

Each issue listed names of people arrested, including where they were imprisoned. It was a commitment to naming the victims, unlike the Communist Party policy of arresting tens of thousands of nameless people. This made the paper a valuable resource for international human rights monitors—and an organizing tool used by émigrés and their supporters in London, New York and Paris, who raised money to smuggle into Poland to help finance the underground press.

The underground media network didn’t just happen, of course. Penn’s book documents what took place in the hours after the mass arrests of Solidarity leaders and activists and how Helena Luczywo organized the clandestine network of writers, editors, printers,

distributors and couriers into a formidable countrywide force that continued to bedevil and resist the Communists. Luczywo had edited resistance publications, notably *Robotnik*, and in the brief period of Solidarity’s legal existence had run a news bureau about Solidarity activities that also fed news to the foreign media about the movement. She barely escaped when Jaruzelski’s troops began knocking down the doors of a Solidarity office at midnight December 13th.

Three days later, she and six other women began plotting strategy. The others were Joanna Szczesna, Ewa Kulik, Anna Dodziuk, Zofia Bydlinska, Malgorzata Pawlicka, and Anna Bikont. The government cut off telephone service, shut down public transportation, banned public gatherings, and put a nighttime curfew in place. “Each knew without a doubt that they would fight back. Solidarity was their dream come true, their life’s work and mission,” writes Penn. “It was only later that they realized they had formed the only all-woman cabal in Poland to make a counterstrike against martial law.”

A first priority was to find and safeguard the few high-profile male Solidarity leaders who had evaded arrest. They did that within days. Simultaneously, they began planning an underground newspaper. Within a month, the paper hit the streets and factory floors. Up to 300,000 Poles agreed to use their flats for storage, drop-off or pickup points for the newspapers. About the same number of people became part of the distribution chain, including within factories. The newspaper’s language was plainspoken, a break from the flowery and “romantic” language common in most publications at the time. By February, the newspaper featured interviews with Solidarity leaders in hiding, who said that what happened next would depend on the ability of millions of rank-and-file Poles to continue the resistance. Huge strikes probably would not work in the midst of martial law, they warned. That proved true.

From the outset, Luczywo positioned *Tygodnik Mazowsze* for the long haul. In doing that, she helped create the “civil society” institutions that involved many hundreds of thousands of Poles. In ef-

fect, she had helped shape a grass-roots network of civil society participants a decade before that was the buzzword of Western diplomats and aid-donor groups who came calling after 1990.

Within a year, circulation was up to 80,000. Over the next seven years, 290 papers were published, with few interruptions even in the regional circulation. Luczywo and most of her writers stayed one step ahead of the police. Luczywo proved to be a formidable organizer. She developed a loosely knit team of printers, couriers, distributors and chemists who could make ink, Poles who donated flats or houses for the printing presses. Safe houses were changed regularly for what became known as their “floating offices.” The Communists, trapped in their own sexist stereotypes, kept looking for the men who were putting out this weekly. After the regime changed, they were astounded that it had been women.

As bleak as the picture looked inside Poland, the outside world was evincing support. In 1983, the Polish-born pope made his third visit to Poland and Lech Walesa won the Nobel Peace Prize. By mid decade, the government began two rounds of amnesties of prisoners. With the economy in a tailspin, by 1987 mass protests began again. A new Solidarity leadership structure was put in place and, in April 1989, Round Table talks between Solidarity leaders and the Polish Communist leaders concluded. The first partly free parliamentary elections were set for June 4th.

One Solidarity demand at the Round Table talks was creation of a private newspaper before the elections. Walesa drafted Solidarity philosopher Adam Michnik for the job; Michnik recruited Luczywo. And 250,000 copies of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Gazette) were on the streets several weeks before the elections, with profiles of all candidates. Solidarity won every contested seat, a total wipeout for the Communists, which forced them to turn over power later that summer.

Luczywo and Michnik went on to make *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the parent publishing company, *Agora*, the strongest in Eastern Europe and one of the strongest in Europe. In retrospect,

Tygodnik Mazowsze had helped keep Poles focused on a common purpose during a decade when it appeared the Polish Communists held all the cards. It also set the standard that would usher in a free press in Poland.

Breaking the Silence

In her book, Penn undertakes a feminist analysis of the role of women in Poland, past and present, and also explores why the vital work of these women remained a secret to much of Poland after the fall of Communism. Their role had not been written about—by them or by the many notable foreign correspondents who used them as sources during martial law, including Lawrence Weschler and Timothy Garten Ash. Political actors, including Walesa, didn't acknowledge them, either, and historians of the era have, for the most part, ignored them.

Penn's book fills in the gaps. In explaining the long silence about the crucial role these women played, she devotes considerable time to the centuries-old "Matka Polska" (Mother Poland) role attributed to women to preserve the language and the culture during the dozen or more invasions by Russia over several centuries. Women were the ones who kept the culture

intact even when Poland was divided into three parts and wiped off the map. Women and men also used this image as rationalization for why so few women went into politics when the first of many Solidarity parties took control. During their half century under Communism, women were educated in science and technology in numbers far higher than in the West, but when the battle to combat Communism took center stage, gender roles weren't on the table, and Communist rhetoric on equality had long since worn thin. Even though all women had been required to work full-time, the Communist government was quite happy letting women continue to bear the vast majority of at-home kitchen-and-child duties.

With few exceptions—most notably professor and legislator Barbara Labuda, who was a Solidarity activist from Wrocław—women who played vital roles in the movement never sought credit after 1990. Some downplayed their roles, while most were as manic as the men in scrambling to shape new lives.

Penn's interviews with the key women affiliated with the Solidarity movement began to reach public view by the mid-1990's in Poland. Fledgling feminists began to ask why they hadn't known about these women who had played such pivotal roles in the creation,

and sustenance, of Solidarity. Still, some of the women Penn had interviewed were reluctant even then to talk.

By the time the book was published in English this spring, words by Walesa endorsed it. The book, he writes, asks "a simple question I wish I had thought more about, myself: Once the leadership of Solidarity had been arrested during the 1981 military coup, who kept the movement alive over the following months and years?" Walesa praises the book about these "activists who rose to the call, set about saving an entire political movement, and in time turned themselves into some of the most powerful women in Poland today." ■

Peggy Simpson, a 1979 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance reporter in Washington, D.C. While based in Poland, she covered the Eastern European transition countries for such publications as Business Week, European Banker, Media & Marketing Europe, and the Warsaw Business Journal. She met Shana Penn there in the early 1990's when Penn was researching this book, which was published in 2003 in Poland and in 2005 by the University of Michigan Press.

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The Life and Times of Foreign Correspondents in Russia

A book explores the work of covering Russia through the experiences and words of those reporters who did it.

Discovering Russia: 200 Years of American Journalism

Murray Seeger

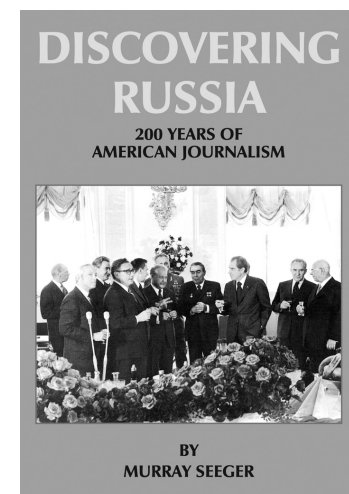
AuthorHouse. 471 Pages. \$25.

By Alvin Shuster

It would be a wonderful Nieman seminar: Sit down and talk with men and women who worked in Russia as foreign correspondents during the last two centuries. Failing that, we've got Murray Seeger to thank for bringing their accounts to life, for he has written a fascinating book about the hurdles

they jumped, bureaucrats they confronted, diseases they fought, famines they survived, and tea leaves they read to portray the Russia they found.

In Seeger's book, "Discovering Russia—200 Years of American Journalism," the work and lives of these correspondents take us from the days before,



during and after the 1917 Revolution, to the era of Lenin, Stalin and those who followed. We encounter them struggling with censors, harassed by secret police, detained in jail, buying donkeys, and sometimes even whining about how little they were paid. As witnesses to and interpreters of this history and politics, they could be controversial—their coverage or lack of it called into question. Those controversies matter little today, but what these reporters produced was amazing history, rich in detail, color, insight, reflecting boundless energy and, sometimes, misplaced passion. Few nations have attracted the attention of so much talent for so many years.

What is it about Russia? A partial answer comes from the legendary New York Times columnist Anne O'Hare McCormick: "Whoever goes to Russia discovers a different Russia." Another from Larry LeSueur of CBS: "Assignment to Moscow was the PhD for a foreign correspondent." Put me down as an undergraduate: I missed Moscow—or maybe avoided it—in my 10 years as a New York Times foreign correspondent.

Other journalists came and went, built reputations, won Pulitzers, and made their way into Seeger's book. One of the first, Harold Williams, covered the 100,000 demonstrators at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on "Red Sunday" in 1905 and later wrote about the "sitting editors" hired only to serve jail terms for real editors in trouble. There's an idea. On to the revolution, and John Reed and his companion, Louise Bryant, the three Associated Press reporters fighting censors, and all the others seeking to report the historic events.

And there was Bessie Beatty of The San Francisco Bulletin who, some 90 years ago, provided the world with a wonderful description of emergence of the infamous "anonymous source," so much in the news today. It was at a meeting reporters had with Elihu Root, who was sent to Russia by President Wilson on a goodwill mission. Bessie described what happened. The "great man," she wrote, said he would like to discuss quite openly everything that happened. But, she said, he wanted to be assured that all he said would be held

in strictest confidence. "You—perhaps because you are flattered by the great man's confidence, perhaps because of your curiosity—joyfully consent," Bessie wrote. "Sometimes you consent only because you know the folly of cutting off your ears merely because your lips are sealed." The lip-sealing, of course, lives on as "deep background."

Seeger, a 1962 Nieman Fellow who studied Russia with the Harvard greats—Merle Fainsod, Abram Bergson, Adam Ulam, and Marshall Shulman—was the Moscow bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times from 1972-74. I know Murray, but we did not work together at the Times, since he left the paper in 1981, two years before I became the paper's foreign editor.

For his well-researched history, Seeger relied mostly on books instead of original newspaper or magazine articles, thus removing, as he put it, "the factor of censorship and notorious inaccuracies that warped on-the-scene reporters well past the Khrushchev era." Seeger does work in some of his own experiences, adding a helpful dimension.

As we travel through the pages of the book, we go along with these reporters, sharing their troubles, their efforts at times to survive on thin meat soup and black bread, their attempts to avoid unwanted insects by putting the legs of their beds in cans of kerosene, their struggles with the military and police, and more. This underscored their goal, to get the story no matter what. There are enough war stories here to keep many a bar open around the clock.

We also find out when things worked well. Marguerite E. Harrison of The (Baltimore) Sun maneuvered her way into a Kremlin meeting and got her first look at Lenin: "Lenin is a short, thick set, unimposing looking little man, with colorless hair and complexion, a small pointed beard, piercing gray-blue eyes, and a quiet unemotional, almost monotonous manner of delivery. He wore a suit of rough English tweeds and looked like nothing so much as a fairly prosperous, middle-class businessman."

As for Stalin, it was Eugene Lyons of United Press who got one of the rare interviews in November 1930. A former

writer for Tass, the Soviet news agency, Lyons had connections. "Stalin met me at the door and shook hands, smiling," Lyons wrote. "There was a certain shyness in his smile, and the handshake was not perfunctory. He was remarkably unlike the scowling, self-important dictator of popular imagination." Now that's news.

After the hourlong interview, Lyons offered to show Stalin the story before sending it to New York, and he was given a typewriter, tea and sandwiches in a nearby small office. The story was then translated into Russian, Stalin made some minor corrections, and then signed it: "More or less correct, J. Stalin." For some reason, the censors quickly cleared that story, but it had to wait. United Press held it for better play until the next Monday morning.

These are only a few of the correspondents who drifted in and out of Russia over the years. Others appear in Seeger's book, some as main characters, others with cameo appearances—Januarius Aloysius MacGahan, Harold Frederic, George Kennan, Thomas Stevens, James Gordon Bennett, Melvin Stone, John Steinbeck, Anna Louise Strong, Dorothy Thompson, George Seldes, Floyd Gibbons, Henry Shapiro, Eddy Gilmore, Wallace Carroll, Max Frankel, Harrison Salisbury, Dusko Doder, Nicholas Daniloff, Bob Toth, Hedrick Smith, Bob Kaiser, Michael Parks, David Remnick, and many more.

Then there was Walter Duranty of The New York Times, perhaps one of the most controversial of them all, a man described by the outspoken British writer Malcolm Muggeridge as a "sharp-witted energetic man" but the "greatest liar of any journalist I have met in 50 years of journalism." Seeger writes that Duranty failed to report the "monstrous crimes" of the Stalinist era, the terrible human cost, stories that would have diminished the reporter's "claimed omnipotence." Still, Duranty won the 1932 Pulitzer for his reporting, although it remains in dispute.

Ukrainian groups over the years pressed the Pulitzer board to revoke the prize because Duranty, who covered the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1941, failed to report the state-sponsored

starvation of millions of Ukrainians in 1932-1933. Two years ago, the Pulitzer board declined to revoke the prize, noting that the award was given for 13 articles written before the famine. The board did declare that his 1931 reporting “measured by today’s standards for foreign reporting, falls seriously short.” The Times agrees and, beside Duranty’s picture in The New York Times gallery of Pulitzer winners, is a note: “Other writers in the Times and elsewhere have discredited this coverage.”

We get a large dose of Duranty from Seeger—his meetings with Stalin, his note in defense of his coverage to Adolph Ochs, the Times publisher, his high living in Moscow, “a Buick instead of a Ford,” and then the fading of his career and his request to the Times for a pension of \$155 a month. He got one check for \$2,500.

Just one saga in this book of so many. And, by the end of it all, the reporters who worked in Moscow will be reminded of why they did. Those who

never worked there might well wonder why they did not. ■

Alvin Shuster, a 1967 Nieman Fellow, was foreign editor of the Los Angeles Times from 1983 to 1995. He is now its senior consulting editor. He was also a foreign correspondent for The New York Times for a decade, serving as the bureau chief in London, Saigon and Rome.

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Remembering One of Journalism’s Finest Moments

‘Good Night, and Good Luck’ brings to life how and why Edward R. Murrow pushed CBS News to confront Senator Joseph R. McCarthy’s un-American tactics.

By Don Aucoin

When Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, and Peter Jennings yielded their anchor desks during this past year under divergent circumstances, their departures were widely seen as ringing down the curtain on the “voice of God era” in network news. While that trio will be missed, there are some salutary aspects to the end of this era. Partisan excesses of the blogosphere notwithstanding, there’s something to be said for the decentralization of media power. There was always more than a little presumption in Walter Cronkite’s evening signoff, “And that’s the way it is.” A viewer’s reflexive impulse was to reply, “Sez who?” In fact, one of my favorite New Yorker cartoons showed an irate burgher jabbing his finger at the TV set and shouting, “No, Walter, that’s not the way it is!”

CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow’s weekly signoff as host of “See It Now,” television’s first documentary series (1951-1958), was far more modest: “Good night, and good luck,” he’d say. There was a formality to it—Murrow was a formal man, and these were the buttoned-down 1950’s—but his parting words also conveyed a certain solidarity with the viewer, a sense that we’re all in this together. Murrow’s weekly benediction implicitly suggested that democracy

and life itself were precarious enough that we’re going to need good luck. Murrow’s sense of history and duty prompted him to use the airwaves on March 9, 1954 to confront redbaiting demagogue Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. In doing so, the newsman—to borrow Murrow’s description of Winston Churchill—“mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.”

That Murrow-McCarthy showdown is the subject of director and actor George Clooney’s “Good Night, and Good Luck,” a taut, well-made film that reminds us that, for good or ill, the whole voice-of-God business began with Murrow. Unlike many broadcast journalists today, who seem constantly to be auditioning for the role of America’s Chum, Murrow was a serious man for serious times. He stood for something and thought the news business should, too.

Indeed, the Murrow mystique has haunted CBS for decades. Paddy Chayefsky invokes Murrow in his prescient script for the 1976 movie “Network,” in which a CBS-like network abandons its news judgment and eventually its senses in a fevered quest for higher ratings. (Fittingly, Clooney is at work on a live TV remake of “Network,” slated to

air on CBS next fall.) In late October, art bracketed life once more. As “Good Night” was finishing its third week in movie theaters, reminding viewers of a time when CBS took aim at a powerful elected leader in Washington and helped bring him down, the network’s news president, Andrew Heyward, stepped aside, having been weakened, as Dan Rather was, by the 2004 “60 Minutes II” report on President Bush’s National Guard service that blew up in the network’s face.

Clooney made two smart casting choices. First, he used archival footage of McCarthy himself rather than an actor, so we see “Tailgunner Joe” in all his sweaty venality, making us wonder anew how such a loon ever got as far as he did. Secondly, he tapped the chronically underrated David Strathairn to play Murrow. That choice is rewarded with numerous onscreen moments of quiet power. My favorite is when Murrow and producer Fred Friendly (played by Clooney) are meeting with “See It Now” correspondents and producers to ask that they disclose any past political activities that McCarthy might use against them and the show. One staffer offers to leave the show, nervously acknowledging that his ex-wife might at one time

have attended a left-wing meeting of some kind. After a long silence, during which Murrow's face tightens still further, we hear him say, "We're going to go with the story, because the terror is right here in this room."

As several critics have noted, Murrow was far from the first journalist to challenge McCarthy. And it is also true that Clooney valorizes Murrow out of all proportion. But when has Hollywood ever been able to resist the temptation toward hagiography? Though this is history simplified and reduced to broad strokes, the big picture seems essentially sound: As with Cronkite's tide-turning 1968 description of the Vietnam War as a "stalemate," Murrow's decision to take on McCarthy constituted a kind of tipping point.

"Murrow and 'See It Now' did not topple McCarthy," Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson wrote in "The Murrow Boys," their fine 1996 book on the careers of Murrow and colleagues such as Eric Sevareid. "The senator was already losing his grip on the country by the time they went after him. Murrow's program did, however, give him an extra and significant shove. By the end of the year, McCarthy would be in disgrace, censured by the U.S. Senate. Murrow, in contrast, became the object of a national outpouring of praise and gratitude. He may not have caused McCarthy's downfall, but the broadcast was so good, its dissection of McCarthy so masterful, that it almost seemed as if he had."

Holding a Mirror to Our Times

Today, with network news divisions in decline, their one-time clout ceded to the fluffier morning shows and with press credibility generally in tatters, one has to wonder if there is a newscaster alive who enjoys this kind of moral authority.

Politically, Clooney's larger purpose in reconstructing McCarthy's smear campaigns and his efforts to criminalize dissent is to invite us to consider parallels to the present day. In this film, Murrow intones on-air that "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We

cannot defend freedom abroad while deserting it at home." As we hear him say this, it's hard not to think of former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer's infamous admonition in 2001 that Americans "need to watch what they say, watch what they do." More recently, there is the Valerie Plame case, in which she was outed as a CIA agent after former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, her husband, wrote an op-ed piece for *The New York Times*—based on evidence he'd gathered while on a fact-finding trip to Niger—accusing the Bush administration of twisting prewar intelligence on Iraq's nuclear weapons program to bolster the case for war.

It is also hard to watch this film without pondering what has become of broadcast journalism and, in particular, of the TV medium in which Murrow spent the latter part of his career and for which he harbored both high hopes and grave doubts. At the end of the film there is a depiction of Murrow's 1958 speech to the Radio-Television News Directors Association, in which he warned that if television "is good for nothing but to entertain, amuse and insulate, then the tube is flickering now, and we will soon see that the whole struggle is lost. This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise, it is merely wires and lights in a box."

There are some honorable exceptions but, in general, the sort of enterprise reporting and investigative digging that Murrow prided himself on is generally in scant evidence on TV today. Far too many network newscasts consist essentially of images packaged to illustrate whatever was in that morning's *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. How often do the networks actually break news these days? Meanwhile, the documentary form of which "See It Now" was the pioneer is all but dead on the broadcast networks, and TV newsmagazines, which might have been expected to fill the public-affairs gap, are instead largely given over to lurid true-crime stories and missing-person melodramas.

For all that "Good Night" evokes the

atmosphere of the 1950's, with its black-and-white cinematography, its plumes of cigarette smoke and its paranoid chill, it also hums just below the surface with issues that bedevil journalists today. "I've searched my conscience," Murrow tells CBS Chairman William S. Paley in the film, "and I cannot accept that there are, on every story, two equal and logical sides." In the aftermath of the Swift Boat episode during the 2004 presidential campaign—and a host of other stories—those words surely resonate with reporters who worry that their attempts at "on the one hand, on the other hand" objectivity end up doing a disservice to the truth and thus to the reader or viewer.

Another echo of contemporary journalistic debates occurs during an exchange between Murrow and Paley (played by Frank Langella, who rose to fame in his role as Dracula). "People want to enjoy themselves," Paley tells his prideful newsmen. "They don't want a constant civics lesson." Paley was giving voice to a credo that seems to guide today's network executives as we witness how they have reduced coverage of national political conventions to a blink-and-you-miss-it minimum. Sustained coverage of important civic events—and serious-minded reporting about issues of national importance appearing in evening time slots occasionally—would not seem to be too much to ask of the holders of lucrative broadcast licenses. But, hey, people want to enjoy themselves.

Whatever his flaws and whatever the flaws of this film that memorializes his words and deeds, Edward R. Murrow knew that the pursuit of happiness rested on firmer principles than the quest for entertainment and for eyeballs. What a pity that the networks have been in flight from Murrow's principles ever since. ■

Don Aucoin, a 2001 Nieman Fellow, is a reporter and former TV critic for The Boston Globe.

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Knowing When to Stop Reporting About a Scandal

A journalist describes the stages of a scandal, explains the news media's role, and wonders why they don't keep digging once the person has been punished.

By Madelaine Drohan

There is nothing like a good scandal to get our journalistic juices flowing. Headlines practically write themselves. Titillating details fill pages to overflowing. In the past five years, with business bigwigs added to the usual scandal fodder of politicians, celebrities and sports stars, the media have had a good run of stories to fill newspapers, broadcasts and Internet sites. Yet as we rush to cover a good scandal, how many of us pause to think about our role in creating and sustaining scandal? How many among us ask whether we could handle this reporting in ways that might better serve the public interest?

In three decades of being a journalist, I've covered my share of scandals. (One of my favorites was the collapse of Barings Bank in Britain because of its colorful cast of characters and the drama of seeing old English aristocrats brought low by a brash young trader in Singapore.) What I'd like to say is that I reflected often on what I was doing and why I was doing it, but that would be a lie. I never gave any of this much thought until the fall of 2004 when I received a fellowship from the Chumir Foundation in Calgary, Alberta.

Ostensibly, I set out to research what happened in the wake of major business scandals, such as Enron and WorldCom. Once the bright media spotlight moved on, were lasting changes made to prevent a reoccurrence? Or, as I suspected, were cosmetic remedies applied and some speeches made to give the appearance of change while business as usual continued? But as I delved deeper into coverage of scandals (historic and current), I saw more clearly how the media, far from being passive chroniclers of wrongdoing, were active participants in the process. The press, after all, often determines which behavior deserves to be called

a scandal and, as importantly, which does not. We drum up public outrage, put pressure on authorities to act, and lead the chorus for punishment. And a scandal is deemed over only when it is dropped from news coverage.

A lot of power rests in our hands, but are we using it wisely?

As I looked more closely at the media's role, a pattern began to emerge in how a scandal plays out. Like the cycle of grief with its stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, the cycle of scandal inevitably goes through various stages: Anxiety is the hallmark of the first one and action by authorities signifies the last. Recognizing these stages helps journalists situate where they are in coverage of a scandal. Here is a description of these stages, with the caveat that of course there will be exceptions to these general rules.

Stage One: Anxiety. No scandal emerges out of the blue. There is always some existing anxiety about a situation or an individual that serves as the bedrock on which the scandal is built. Enron and WorldCom exploded against a backdrop of public unease about growing corporate power and the exorbitant pay of corporate leaders. Bre-X Minerals, a Canadian gold scam, occurred at a time when mining firms were going to far-flung places and investors were worried about the quality of information they were receiving long-distance. At the level of the individual, think of President Bill Clinton. Rumors of his extramarital affairs were widespread long before Monica Lewinsky came on the scene. Yet press coverage tends to present scandals as surprise events. When looked at in retrospect, we realize they are firmly linked to their time as a reflection of contemporary anxieties. That does not mean we can predict them, only that in hindsight we

can see better the context out of which they arose.

Stage Two: Focus. Anxiety needs a focus. There has to be an event that captures the attention of the media. It could be the filing of a lawsuit, a police raid, release of a report, a sudden drop in share price, or publication of a paparazzi photo showing two people who should not be together at that time in the early morning. The editor of a Canadian newspaper used the term "crystallizing event," which sums it up neatly. Such events provide a convenient focus for our existing anxieties, and it is at this point when the media's role begins. But whether the observed behavior gets transformed by the media into a "scandal" depends on various factors. More important news happens, and the scandal's launch is buried or spiked. Or the publisher or editor is persuaded by someone wanting to short-circuit media coverage that running the story is not in their best interest. Television often has to pass on a juicy item when they don't have pictures or people to interview on camera. The media apply a complicated set of criteria to a story to determine whether it is scandal material, and these criteria involve gut feelings, legal realities and physical practicalities, and they aren't always easy to explain to outsiders. But once a story meets these criteria, it is on the road to becoming a full-blown scandal.

Stage Three: Denial and Evasion. Would Martha Stewart have been sent to prison if she had taken responsibility at the very beginning for what she'd done? Denial and evasion turn out to be a necessary stage in scandal, sparking conflict, attracting and magnifying media coverage, and stoking public indignation. One tenet of corporate crisis management is that the best response to crisis is to admit responsibility and

announce immediate remedial action. Though this advice is well known, when caught in their own personal crisis, few political or corporate leaders follow it. In the recent wave of business scandals, many defended themselves by saying they had no knowledge of the wrongdoing going on during their watch. Denials like these make good copy when linked with reporting about the massive salaries these executives earned for their stewardship of these companies.

Stage Four: Validation. While public anxiety, a crystallizing event and initial evasion or denial are necessary to give a scandal momentum, it will disappear unless the next two stages are reached—validation and definition. Official validation occurs when the authorities step in, confirm to the media, and through them to the broader public, the foundation for their suspicion of wrongdoing, and indicate that further investigation is required. Validation takes various forms: a commission, a judicial inquiry, a securities investigation, a committee hearing, or a court case. In the recent case of Conrad Black and his Hollinger media empire, a special committee of the board of directors validated the criticisms made against Black. Official bodies are able to uncover information not available to the media and force key players to testify. Their hearings and reports keep the scandal in the public eye.

Stage Five: Definition. In this crucial stage, the scandalous activity is defined, along with who is involved, to determine who might be punished and what measures authorities might take. Following the collapse of Enron and WorldCom, President George Bush defined the accused as “a few bad apples.” By placing the emphasis on individual actions, rather than on regulatory or systemic failure, the President tried to steer public attention away from shortcomings in laws and regulations. (He didn’t succeed, and Congress went on to pass the Sarbanes-Oxley Act to curtail these corporate practices.) Scandals can be defined in many ways. I covered a scandal in Britain that involved the selling of arms to Sierra Leone, which contravened a U.N. embargo and the

use of mercenaries in a foreign war. But the focus soon switched to what government officials knew and when they knew it, and other aspects of this story quickly faded from view. In this key stage, people who might have been involved with the scandalous activity struggle to remain outside the investigators’ net. This period is fraught with politics and power, and much of the action goes on behind closed doors.

Stage Six: Punishment. This is the climax of the scandal cycle—the stage when indignation that has been stoked by publicity can be appeased by a fitting penalty. Prison sentences and other forms of public disgrace offer the media a spectacle to cover. But punishment can take many forms, not all of them forced by legal actions. The heads of Enron and WorldCom were initially “punished” when they lost their jobs. Conrad Black was deposed as chairman of the media empire he founded. Once this stage passes, much of the media lose interest. When journalists buy the “bad apple” argument, they are satisfied that the matter has been dealt with. And when this happens, pressure on authorities to move to the next stage is lightened or removed.

Stage Seven: Aftermath. This important last stage is not always reached. When it is, authorities work to address the underlying causes of the scandal as a way of trying to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future. A question worth asking is why the media appear to lose interest once the central figure in a scandal has been punished and rarely cover what ought to be the final—remedial—stage of scandal coverage.

The News Business

As I reflected on this, I concluded that while part of the reason is psychological, the mechanics of news coverage and recent developments in the media sector also play a part. They include the following:

- Assignment editors send reporters to cover events, such as a trial or an inquiry, but rarely ask them to cover a process, such as drawing up new

regulations or laws, which often takes place behind closed doors, where participants are reluctant to speak and there are few events to cover.

- Reporting on a scandal’s aftermath requires time, initiative, and knowledge. With fewer reporters assigned to beats these days, journalists often lack the specialized knowledge they need to follow a complicated regulatory process, for example.
- Convergence—in which journalists file stories to print, Internet, radio or television for the same news organization—also works against in-depth coverage of complicated issues. Reporters don’t have the time to do this kind of reporting across these various media.

But this is where the question of responsibility comes in. Some scandals have no public policy implications and can be safely dropped once the individuals involved are punished. Sex scandals often fall into this category, as do some political scandals. And celebrity scandals are generally bits of insubstantial puffery. But when a scandal points to holes in the law or in regulations, an absence of media attention after the punishment stage betrays the public interest. We can hardly trumpet our role as important watchdogs of the public interest unless we are willing to follow the story through and determine if the public’s interest is being adequately safeguarded. If we fail at this, we are nothing but scandalmongers. ■

Madelaine Drohan writes on economics and business from Ottawa, Canada. Her work appears in The Economist, The Globe and Mail, and other publications. She is the author of “Making a Killing: How and Why Corporations Use Armed Force to Do Business,” published in the United States by Lyons Press in 2004. Her research was funded by the Sheldon M. Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership.

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Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

Photojournalism Students Cover Hurricane Katrina in Their First Leap Into a Real-World Crisis

‘Mark told me he’d learned more in the two days he photographed the hurricane’s aftermath than in his previous two years in college.’

By Eli Reed

Covering Hurricane Katrina was definitely not a class project—not then and certainly not now. It was a test of sorts for me and for my patience and skill as a photojournalism professor.

One day, at the beginning of fall semester, I was walking up the steps of the Jesse Jones Communication School building when I started to wonder where one of my students, Ben Sklar, was hiding himself. He is the president and founding member of the University of Texas at Austin National Press Photographers Association student faction, and I am its faculty advisor. Then I saw a middle-aged woman blocking my path. Her eyes conveyed the sense of someone searching for answers. She was Susan Sklar, Ben’s mother, and she introduced herself to me and succinctly related her story: Ben had just completed an internship at a Jacksonville, Florida newspaper and was supposed to return to Austin for classes and an internship at the Austin American-Statesman newspaper. Now his mother couldn’t locate him.

It was worse than that. In spite of his mother’s admonition to avoid the hurricane, Ben, a photojournalism student, had gone directly into its path. His mother was not only worried that he would fail to complete his internship or graduate next May, but she was terrified now for her son’s safety.

I understood her fear. At that moment, I felt as if I were a parent, too, as I watched my children—my students—bursting with the desire to run out and

join the real world. Mark Mulligan, Sloan Breeden, Meg Loucks, Rob Strong, and Anne Drabicky all soon followed Ben to the hurricane’s aftermath. They were moving in new and unknown territory, on their own, flexing their wings.

I started to receive cell phone calls from them as they began discussing procedures and what to look out for at the site of the hurricane. They asked good and specific questions, and I provided them with balanced, but nonetheless worst-case scenarios; it would have been senseless not to warn them of the dangers. But I also gave them broad instructions, since it was impossible to imagine all they were going to see and encounter:

- I spoke to them of desperate, hungry, burnt-by-the-sun, dehydrated and pissed-off people waiting in vain for help from federal officials and who might not be in the mood for the arrival of a bunch of white college kids with their expensive digital cameras. It was likely not going to mean much to these people that these young visitors were innocent and well-meaning.
- I suggested making eye contact, letting their possible subjects know that they were dealing with a genuine person. I let them know how people can connect with each other through a look that passes one to the other. The look could say “Go away,” or it could say “Look at me. I want someone to know what is happening here.”

- I told them that they might be entering dark places, in both a physical and spiritual sense—a place of people in a world of hurt. I warned them that there would be predators afoot and to look out for each other.
- I assured them that no photograph was worth dying for, and that I didn’t want to fill out a lot of papers and have to explain to their parents why they were no longer on this earth. Besides, someone else would then have to edit their photographs, and I knew they wouldn’t be happy about that, which was my way of keeping it light and yet scaring them into paying attention. If they were going to go, with or without permission, then they needed to go with their eyes wide open.

I couldn’t sleep, probably because I knew that closing my eyes was not an option until all of my students were safely back home in Austin. The days turned into a swirling cloud of class work, lectures and dealing with the confusing images that came from the hurricane sites. These photographs portrayed actions that made me feel uncomfortable about what human beings are capable of doing to one another, but other images left me with feelings that made me glad to be a part of the human race.

In time, my students all returned to Austin. Their spirit was indomitable, and as we talked about their experiences I could tell that they’d approached the

victims of the flooding in a manner sensitive to their plight. They'd also drawn many lessons from their experiences. Mark told me he'd learned more in the two days he photographed the hurricane's aftermath than in his previous two years in college.

It was my good fortune to have worked with these students as they made coverage of this hurricane their first leap into the void. But I found this experience difficult because I, too, wanted to cover Katrina, yet I had to honor my teaching commitment at the university. However, these students honored the teaching of their professors by making some extraordinary photographs under very difficult conditions. Because of the strength of their coverage, I was able to connect some of them with a weekly national magazine. In a rare and special circumstance, Ben had some of his work selected by Magnum Photos to appear on their Web site. Magnum President Thomas Hoepker commented that he found a number of Ben's images to be gripping.

The students are continuing their work knowing that this experience marks only the beginning of their journey as photojournalists. They are passionate and committed to making a difference in this world. They have varied approaches to their work, but they are speaking with their hearts and their brains, and I applaud them. ■

A selection of photographs taken by Reed's students appears in the End Note on page 125.

Eli Reed, a 1983 Nieman Fellow, is a photojournalist and professor at the University of Texas at Austin. An article based on the Hurricane Katrina experiences Reed describes on this page appeared on the digitaljournalist.org Web site. Also on that site are essays from Reed's University of Texas students about their experiences covering the hurricane and some of their photographs in the form of a multimedia presentation.

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—1961—

Chanchal Sarkar died on October 10th, after a long illness, at a hospital in New Delhi, India. Sarkar prepared to become a lawyer in Great Britain, but instead of practicing law he returned to Calcutta to become an assistant editor at The Statesman. He later moved to Delhi, where he was a commentator on "All India Radio." He founded the Press Institute of India in 1963 and was its director from then until 1981. He also wrote in various newspapers and was active in a variety of committees on the media. In an obituary in The Telegraph, Calcutta, a colleague wrote, "I had the good fortune to serve under him in a committee that selected journalists for an award. It was here that Sarkar's no-nonsense and utterly transparent attitude to work and his profession became apparent. One could argue and differ with him, and he tried, in his always quiet way, to persuade with logic and reason. One could see that there was always a mind at work, not petty vested interests." And another colleague said, "He never generalized in the tone of media pundits; he focused on specifics and drew the larger picture; the words never deceived or deluded the reader but drew her to understanding the importance of the issue."

He is survived by his wife, **Lotika Sarkar**.

—1966—

Jack Bass and coauthor Marilyn W. Thompson's book, "Strom: The Complicated Personal and Political Life of Strom Thurmond," was published in May by PublicAffairs. Bass is the author of several additional books on the American South, including "Unlikely Heroes," "Porgy Comes Home: South Carolina

In the Notes section of the Fall issue of Nieman Reports, the incorrect year was given for the Louis M. Lyons Award winner. Shahla Sherkat received the Lyons award for the year 2005, not 2004. We regret the error.

After 300 Years," and "Taming the Storm: The Life and Times of Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., and the South's Fight Over Civil Rights," which won him the 1994 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award grand prize. Bass and Thompson previously published "Ol' Strom: An Unauthorized Biography of Strom Thurmond" (Longstreet Press, 1998).

Bass has served as a bureau chief for The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer and the Los Angeles Times, written for The New York Times and The Washington Post, and currently teaches at the College of Charleston in South Carolina.

—1967—

Hiranmay Karlekar, consultant editor of The Pioneer and a member of the Press Council of India, has written a book, "Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?" released in New Delhi in November by Sage Publications. In a review, the book has been described as "lucid, hard-hitting, and well-documented," analyzing the historical, social, cultural and political circumstances accounting for the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in Bangladesh. Karlekar has been editor of The Hindustan Times, deputy editor of The Indian Express, and associate editor of The Statesman and the Hindustan Standard. He has also published two Bengali novels based on Bangladesh's liberation struggle, "Bhabisyater Ateet" (1994) and "Mehrunnisa" (1995), and a socio-political book in English, "In the Mirror of Mandal: Social Justice, Caste, Class and the Individual" (1992), which was sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations to mark 50 years of India's independence.

—1969—

Paul J. Hemphill has a new book out, "Lovesick Blues: The Life of Hank Williams," published by Viking this fall. Hemphill began his writing career covering sports, then was a columnist for the Atlanta Journal. He began writing his first book, "The Nashville Sound," during his Nieman year, and since then he has written 14 more books—15 in all—four of them novels. His books are especially acknowledged for their

depictions of the Southern working class, and comments and reviews about “Lovesick Blues” connect the author with his subject—“one good old boy writing about another.” In a review by Richard Hyatt in the *Ledger-Enquirer* in Columbus, Georgia, Hyatt compares the audiences of the writer and the singer: “Paul Hemphill writes about Southerners with grease under their nails, whiskey on their breath, and a chip on their shoulder—the same blue collar folks who thought Hank Williams was singing about them.” And Garrison Keillor, author and host of radio’s “A Prairie Home Companion,” said that Hemphill told Williams’s story “with economy and grace.”

Hemphill lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

—1972—

John S. Carroll, former Los Angeles Times editor, will be a fellow at Harvard’s Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy starting in January 2006. Carroll was editor of *The Sun* in Baltimore from 1991-1998 and has worked at the *Lexington (Ky.) Herald* and the *Lexington Herald-Leader* at roles including editor, vice president, and executive vice president.

Carroll recently 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.

—1973—

Wayne Greenhaw’s 18th book, “The Thunder Of Angels: The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the People who Broke the Back of Jim Crow,” written with Donnie Williams, was published this fall by Lawrence Hill Books, an imprint of Chicago Review Press. The book received a starred prepublication review from *Library Journal*, and author Studs Terkel said: “This revelatory book tells the bone-deep truth of the Montgomery Bus Boycott Especially revealing is the role of E.D. Nixon, ex-Pullman car porter and head of the Montgomery NAACP. It was a victory from the bot-

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund, established in November 1996, has provided the Nieman Foundation with support for four Watchdog Journalism Conferences and the Nieman watchdog Project, which was launched in the spring of 2004. The support has also allowed the publishing of conference excerpts and articles on Watchdog journalism both in Nieman Reports and on the Nieman Web site. The following is an accounting of expenditures from the fund as of October 31, 2005:

Balance at 10/31/04:	\$232,577.69
Income:	\$103,113.52
Interest on balance at end of FY 2004-05 (at 6/30/05)	3,290.29
Distribution from endowment for FY 2005-06 (7/1/05-6/30/06)	99,823.23
Expenses:	\$149,892.27
Editors’ and Interns’ fees	138,545.33
Travel/Lodging/Meals	7,468.59
Web server and domain registration fees	2,788.11
Miscellaneous	1,090.24
Balance at 10/31/05:	\$185,798.94

tom up. An essential book for more fully understanding how the walls came tumblin’ down.”

—1975—

Michael Ruby has collaborated with Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico on a book about Richardson’s life and political career entitled “Between Worlds: The Making of an American Life.” It was published by Putnam Adult, part of Penguin Group (USA), and available in bookstores in November. The book focuses on Richardson’s multicultural heritage—his father was an American, his mother Mexican—and on his remarkable rise in Democratic politics as a congressman, international hostage negotiator, United Nations ambassador, energy secretary, and state governor. Ruby has edited and ghostwritten several other books, including “Tell Me a Story: Fifty Years and 60 Minutes in Television,” Don Hewitt’s account of his long career at CBS and his founding of the newsmagazine program, “60 Minutes.” Ruby has worked for *BusinessWeek*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

—1978—

Danny Schechter writes: “I am on fire, enraged by the role much of TV news still plays in sanitizing the coverage of the war in Iraq. When my first book on the subject, ‘Embedded’—the first dissection of media coverage of the war, based on my Mediachannel.org blogs—was largely ignored after its online release in July 2003, I turned to filmmaking, directing ‘WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception,’ which has played in theaters, festivals and on TV worldwide. Now the DVD of that film will be part of a new book, ‘When News Lies: Media Complicity and the Iraq War,’ which brings the story to date. It will be out in January from SelectBooks and argues that a media crime was committed as serious as any war crime. To add more fuel to my fire, I have also published a media manifesto called ‘The Death of Media: And the Fight to Save Democracy’ (Melville House Publishers). Read more at www.newsdissector.org/store.htm.”

—1980—

Acel Moore has retired from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* after 43 years.

However, he will remain on the masthead with the title associate editor, emeritus, will continue writing his column from time to time, and will act as adviser to Executive Editor Amanda Bennett for the next two years.

Moore started at the *Inquirer* in 1962 as a copy boy. In 1977, he won a Pulitzer Prize, the Heywood Brown, National Headliner, and the Robert F. Kennedy awards for a series on the abuse of inmates at the Farview State Hospital in Farview, Pennsylvania. He is a former director of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, a past president and founding member of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists, and a founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ).

In all, Moore has won more than 100 journalism excellence and community service awards and, this year, he received the Robert C. Maynard Legend Award, given by The National Association of Minority Media Executives, and The Legacy Award by the NABJ for his work on diversity in the newspaper industry.

At the *Inquirer*, Moore created two training programs. One, the Art Peters Memorial Fellowship Program, is an internship program for copyediting and has resulted in at least 50 minorities beginning their careers at daily newspapers since 1979. And in a second program at the Journalism Career Development Workshop, dozens of Philadelphia-area high school students have been trained since 1984.

Bennett writes, "As a member of our community, he has been both a voice for the powerless and a sounding board for the powerful. As a journalist, he has been a role model. An icon in our industry, he has won just about every journalistic honor; a trusted colleague, he has been a valued adviser to every editor for four decades. This paper was a richer place for his presence."

—1986—

Mary Lou Finlay, host of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) program "As It Happens," retired November 30th from CBC. Finlay first

arrived at CBC Ottawa in 1970.

"It's just the right time for me, even though it will be hard to leave. I've never loved a job more," she said in a news release. "At this stage of my life, I need to make more room for other projects I'm interested in."

Finlay first arrived at CBC to work on a television magazine in 1970. Five years later she became cohost of CBC Television's "Take 30," after which she hosted her own program, "Finlay and Company," from 1976-1977. After a short move to CTV to cohost and produce the lifestyle program "Live It Up" (1978), Finlay returned to CBC as cohost of "The Journal," a nightly current-affairs program.

Finlay also hosted CBC Radio's "Sunday Morning" and the weekly media watchdog program "Now The Details." Her last position with the CBC was as cohost of "As It Happens," where she stayed for eight years.

Finlay plans to contribute to CBC Radio on a freelance basis.

—1992—

Deborah Amos was interviewed for the book "Feet to the Fire: The Media After 9/11," a collection of conversations edited by Kristina Borjesson and presented as a "serious, first-hand account of contemporary mainstream journalism." The book is separated into 21 interviews with security and intelligence reporters, news executives, Middle East experts, White House correspondents, and others who provide insights into the interactions between political power and the media in the post-9/11 world.

Amos, a foreign correspondent for National Public Radio, was interviewed in March 2005. She spoke in part about multiple cultural misunderstandings and missed opportunities in Iraq. Her interview is titled "Marhaba Keefik! 'Two American Soldiers Died Today.'"

Chris Hedges, '99, also appears in the book.

Manoel (Kiko) Brito writes: "My brave little Web site, dedicated to the coverage of the environment in Brazil, has just published a story on the water

issue (Spring 2005) of *Nieman Reports* that I received recently.

"The name of the Web site is O Eco (www.oeco.com.br). It began because a famous Brazilian journalist, Marcos Sá Corrêa, one of the country's most prominent political scientists, Sérgio Abranches, and I were tired of paying attention to Brazilian politics and fed up with the quality of journalism being practiced right now in Brazil. We decided to turn our attention to issues that were not well covered and that could produce good stories. The environment seemed to be a perfect choice. It is a fundamental issue for the last country remaining on earth that can preserve nature on a continental scale, and it is full of untold stories. We all started to cover it on a freelance basis, giving ourselves time to deepen our reporting and allowing us to write longer pieces.

"At one point, we decided we should try to turn it into a business and so O Eco was born, more precisely on the last week of August 2004. It is still not a business, but it has become the most influential publication on the environment in Brazil, which, so far, is perfectly fine with us.

"We are trying to get a grant that would allow us to edit the site in English. We should be receiving an answer on that towards the end of November."

—1995—

Kathryn Kross has a new job, as mentioned in ABC's *The Note*: "In yet another scary-smart move, Bloomberg News has hired Kathryn Kross to run its Washington broadcast operations." It's part of "Bloomberg's significant expansion of its television operations in D.C."

Kross was previously the deputy director of the Center for Public Integrity. She spent nearly 20 years at ABC News, more than half of that time as a producer for "Nightline," where she won five Emmys for her work. From there, she spent almost three years at CNN in Washington, first as deputy bureau chief and then as bureau chief, where she managed a staff of nearly 300 people.

—1998—

Philip J. Cunningham brings us up to date on his work: “I’m in Beijing, busy and fully engaged in various journalistic pursuits. I’m writing a long piece for CJR [Columbia Journalism Review] on media in China. I see net progress in information flow despite various crack-downs in part because the Internet is too big to tame and too useful to do away with, in part because China is getting more comfortable with market journalism, but most of all I see tremendous resourcefulness, tenacity and courage on the part of Chinese journalists.”

“I write weekly for the Bangkok Post on Asian political developments, and I do regular political commentary on ‘Dialogue,’ a cutting-edge discussion program modeled partly after BBC’s ‘HardTalk,’ which ventures where few others dare to tread in China’s circumspect political commentary world and, interestingly, it’s usually broadcast live, on CCTV International, with an estimated domestic and foreign audience of 10 million viewers.”

Xiaoping Chen writes: “After eight years at Harvard, I moved to the University of Wisconsin Law School in September of this year. I entered the SJD program [Doctor of Juridical Science], which is the highest law degree at a U.S. law school. I will spend four-five years at Madison, where the law school is located.”

—1999—

Chris Hedges appears in the book “Feet to the Fire: The Media After 9/11,” a collection of interviews edited by Kristina Borjesson. Presented as a “serious, first-hand account of contemporary mainstream journalism,” the book is separated into 21 interviews with security and intelligence reporters, news executives, Middle East experts, White House correspondents, and others who provide insights into the interactions between political power and the media in the post-9/11 world.

The interview with Hedges, a foreign/war correspondent, took place in May 2004 on the day The New York

Times issued an apology for its prewar coverage. His interview, titled, “We’re Not Mother Teresas in Flack Jackets,” begins with his thoughts on the Times’s apology.

Deborah Amos, ’92, also appears in the book.

—2000—

Patrick J. McDonnell is now the bureau chief in Buenos Aires for the Los Angeles Times. He had been the Baghdad bureau chief for the Times.

—2003—

Alejandra Leglise has been appointed chief of the department of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) teleapplications development and research at the Mexican Commission for the Indigenous Peoples Development based in Mexico City. She writes, “This department’s focus is to generate the necessary infrastructure to facilitate ICT access and online resources to the indigenous peoples communities according to their own needs and aspirations.”

“Another of my responsibilities is to support and advise the indigenous people on how to organize themselves to work in a position for the World Summit on the Information Society. The objective is to develop and foster a clear statement and take concrete steps to establish the foundations for an Information Society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake, bridging the digital divide and the information rights.”

Leglise still freelances for a local newspaper and recently joined the Mexican Climbing and Mountaineering Association.

—2004—

Christian Rioux has a new book out, “Carnets d’Amérique,” published in French by Boréal in Montreal, Canada. According to Nieman Fellow ’96 **Jacques Rivard**, Rioux’s book helps French-Canadians to better understand the United States and its policies at a time when anti-Americanism has become “a la mode,” following 9/11 and the war in

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Iraq. “Rioux concludes that the destinies of our two nations are too connected to ignore each other,” writes Rivard.

—2006—

Mary C. Curtis, executive features editor/columnist at The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer, is a first-place winner of the 2005 Carmage Walls Prize for Commentary given out by the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (SNPA). Curtis, who won in the above 50,000-circulation category, received a plaque and a prize of \$1,000 at the SNPA Annual Convention in November held this year in Palm Beach, Florida.

Curtis won the award for a collection of five local commentaries, including “My Rebel Journey,” her personal exploration of Civil War heritage groups that “contributed enormously to community understanding, historical perceptions, and racial sensitivity,” according to the judges.

The column begins: “It’s the monthly

meeting of a Confederate heritage group in a banquet room in Captain’s Galley restaurant in Matthews. The mostly male crowd—along with the few women and children—sing:

‘In Dixie Land I’ll take my stand /To live and die in Dixie’

“The song ends with a Rebel yell that hangs in the air. And for a moment, I

forget to breathe.”

“My Rebel Journey” also received the 2004 Thomas Wolfe Award from the North Carolina Associated Press. In 2004, Curtis took first place in commentary (over-150,000 circulation) in the National Association of Black Journalists’ Salute to Excellence contest. ■

Journalists’ Losses in the Pakistan Earthquake

Soon after the devastating earthquake hit Pakistan on October 8th, the Pakistan Press Foundation [PPF] sent several of its members on a mission to the affected areas to determine the extent of damage journalists experienced, both personal and professional. One of the members of this mission was Owais Aslam Ali, secretary general of PPF and a 2002 Nieman Fellow, who sent us the foundation’s preliminary assessment of the losses and needs of journalists and media organizations in these areas of Pakistan. What follows are brief excerpts from sections of this PPF report describing the damage caused by the earthquake. This preliminary report also addresses suggested changes in government policies as well as the necessity for long-term training of journalists in this area, the need for greater support for women journalists, and the development of community radio. The full report is available on the foundation’s Web site, www.pakistanpressfoundation.org.

Journalists and other personnel working for media organizations suffered terrible losses due to the earthquake. Two hundred and forty-two persons working for media suffered personal or property losses in areas covered in the first phase of the PPF mission. Eleven were killed and 17 injured. Sixty-nine family members of media personnel were killed and 15 injured. One hundred and seventeen houses of media personnel were destroyed and another 54 suffered damage. Out of 20 press clubs and union of journalists in the area, premises of 12 were either destroyed or damaged. In most cases, furniture and equipment in damaged premises of media organizations were destroyed.

The majority of losses to media personnel and organizations occurred in Muzaffarabad, the biggest media center in the earthquake-affected area. Ten media personnel were killed in the city and 11 were injured. Fifty family members of media personnel were killed and another 10 were injured.

One hundred and nine houses of media personnel were destroyed and another 12 suffered damage to their houses ... buildings housing radio and television stations and the press club have been destroyed. The broadcast tower of Pakistan Television has also been destroyed but, fortunately, the broadcast tower of Radio Pakistan is still standing. The building renting office space to daily newspapers, Siasat and Mahasib, has become structurally unstable

Journalists of the affected areas have suggested that in view of the crucial role of the media in keeping the country and the world informed of developments in monitoring effectiveness of development activities, the rehabilitation of media should be given top priority in reconstruction activities Media assistance and development organizations should give priority to providing equipment that will enable local journalists to restart sending news reports to national and regional publications and television channels. Press clubs need computers and fax machines, and individual jour-

nalists need mobile telephones and digital cameras to become functional again. Although these requirements are modest, journalists in these areas have lost everything and are not in any position to acquire the equipment without external assistance. In the longer term, media personnel and organizations will need interest-free or low-interest loans to enable them to acquire professional equipment. Media development organizations could also develop creative microfinancing programs to help journalists acquire laptop computers, digital cameras, etc.

Like the rest of the community, many journalists in the area have been traumatized by the earthquake, and some among them would need psychiatric counseling on a mid- to long-term basis. Their trauma is worsened by the fact that being homeless, most of the journalists are living in tents with recurring panic due to frequent aftershocks jolting the area several times a day. ■

End Note

Photojournalism Students Cover Hurricane Katrina

These photographs were taken by Eli Reed's photojournalism students at the University of Texas at Austin. Reed's essay on teaching and guiding these students as they prepared to cover the hurricane's aftermath begins on page 119.

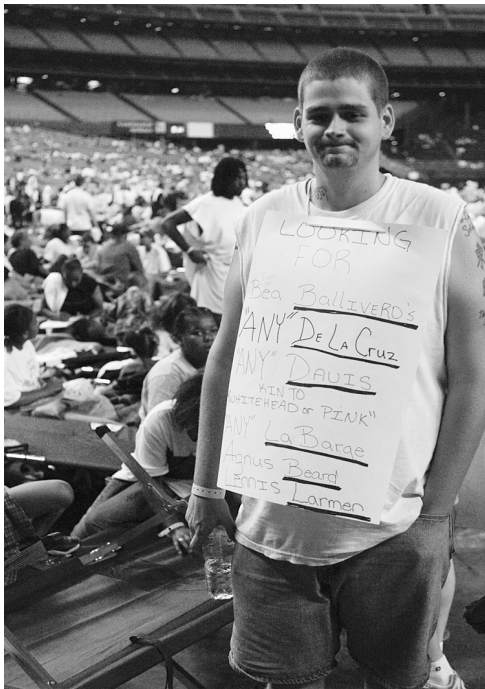
“Han Nguyen stands atop the remains of a Vietnamese grocery store where he took shelter on August 29th when Hurricane Katrina struck Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. After waves had obliterated the building, Nguyen survived by holding onto a tree for 11 hours.” *Photo by Sloan Breeden.*



“High above the flooded neighborhoods of New Orleans on September 5th, a member of the National Guard surveys the damage left by Hurricane Katrina when levees broke a week earlier.” *Photo by Sloan Breeden.*



“A young girl stares at the scene at the Astrodome in Houston. I have several shots of this girl with the same far-away look on her face, where she seemed sort of frozen for a few moments.” *Photo by Anne Drabicky.*



“A man looks for relatives and helps other people look for theirs as well at the Houston Astrodome as he walks slowly between the many rows of cots.” *Photo by Anne Drabicky.*

“Sharon Beasley helps her friend Katrina Blackwood wrap the remaining valuables left in her home in Gulfport, Mississippi. Bleach and other sanitizers were passed out by local volunteers to help residents clean their homes.” *Photo by Meg Loucks.*





“Members of the National Guard patrol New Orleans’ French Quarter on Labor Day, one week after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast.” *Photo by Mark Mulligan.*

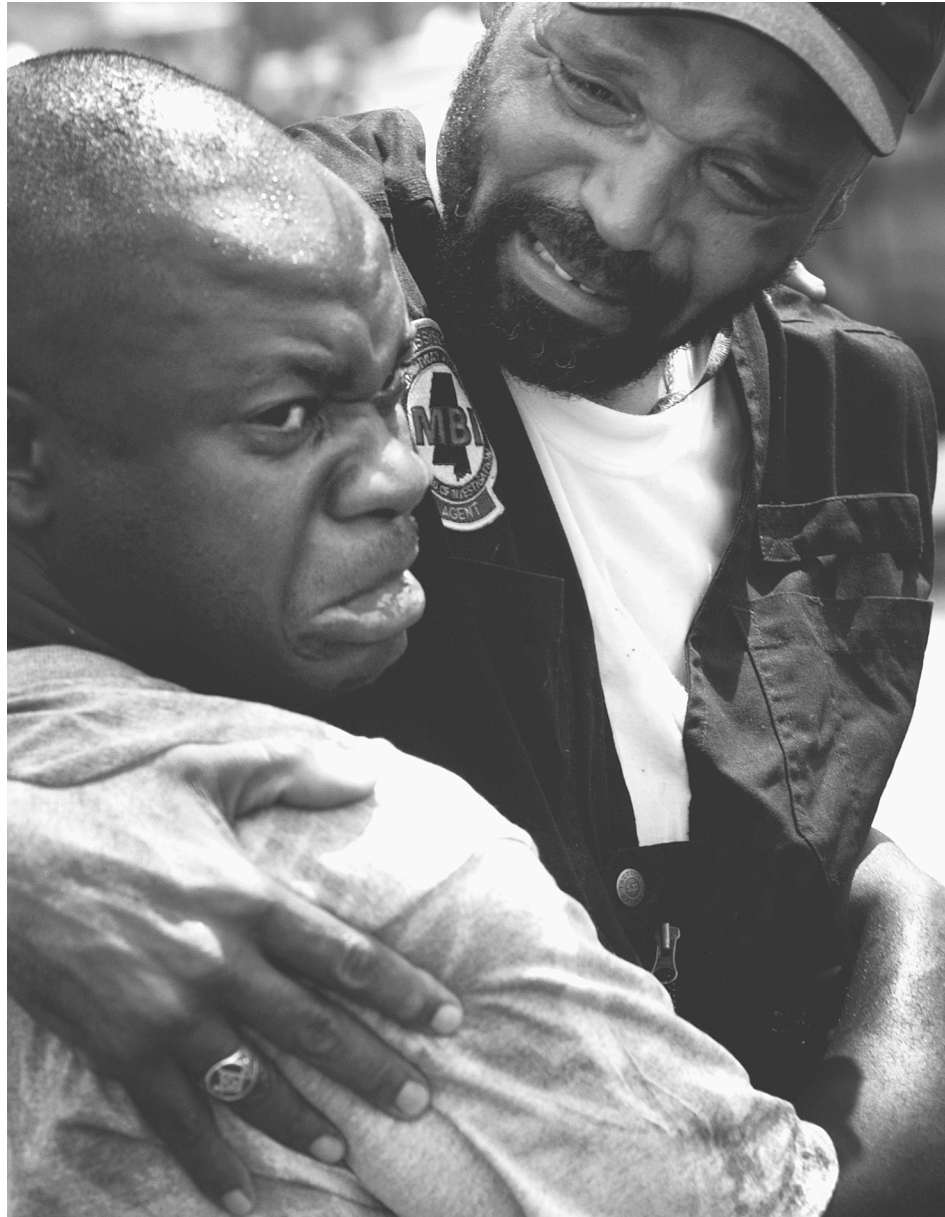
“A woman passes through a local church in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina whipped through their town. The church had been recently renovated and, although the interior was damaged, the stained glass windows survived the storm.” *Photo by Meg Loucks.*



“A statue in the Bay Catholic Elementary School in Bay St. Louis suffered three feet of flooding in Hurricane Katrina. September 10th.” *Photo by Rob Strong.*

“In a brief moment of joy, Troy Lee, left, embraces his friend Joel Wallace when they discovered each other at the Bay High School shelter two days after Hurricane Katrina, in Waveland, Mississippi.”

Photo by Benjamin Sklar.



“As Hurricane Katrina rages, emergency volunteer crews attempt to rescue the Taylor family from the roof of their car. Floodwaters overpowered and trapped the car on U.S. Highway 90 during the storm on August 29, 2005, in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. All six members of the family were safely rescued.” *Photo by Benjamin Sklar.*

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