

Chapter Eleven



Futures of the News: International Considerations and Further Reflections

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New Media, Old News offers a fascinating, in-depth look at the state of media as it moves online in the United Kingdom. What strikes me as most unique and important about this book is that it highlights structural features of media systems in the context of a richly detailed portrait of multiple types of communications practices. This approach is evident, for instance, in Phillips, Couldry and Freedman’s well-supported insistence (in Chapter 3) that journalistic ethics are only achievable on a mass scale if also supported by structural reforms (as opposed to, say, Roger Silverstone’s individually-oriented ethics in *Media and Morality* (2007)). It is also evident in several chapters where mainstream journalism is situated in relation to the variety of alternative media, writer-gatherers, and NGOs who are attempting to influence the newsmaking process. Finally, and this is no small achievement, the book consistently adheres to a careful analysis of what is and is not ‘new’ about new media.

In this essay, I’d like to try to pick up where the Goldsmiths contributors leave off. In the first half of this chapter, I address the empirical puzzle. To what extent does this portrait of the UK also hold for the US, the rest of Western Europe, and indeed, the rest of the world? In the second half of this chapter, I tackle the thorny questions of ideals and solutions. To paraphrase Jay Rosen (1999): What is journalism for? Of course, there are many different answers to this question. What the answers have in common is a concern with democracy; where they differ is how they conceive of democracy. The main thing is to put these cards on the table. This I intend to do with a brief overview of democratic-normative theories of journalism and an assessment of how current trends in new media are quite democratic in some ways and less so in

others. Solutions will differ depending on which aspect of journalism we value the most. I conclude by suggesting how various types of journalistic best practices may be institutionally secured.

As Great Britain Goes, So Goes the World?

New Media, Old News first of all documents the familiar litany of the internet's 'affordances' (Kress, 2003; Adams, 2007: 10–11), that is, the kinds of communication practices that online media uniquely afford: archiving capabilities that increase depth of coverage, multimedia formats that draw readers into complex topics, easy access to a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints outside the mainstream, and opportunities for ordinary citizens to ask questions of political and cultural elites via chat rooms and forums or even to create vast activist networks such as the one that played a key role in financing and helping get out the vote for Barack Obama's presidential bid. In their content analysis of a wide range of British elite, popular, and alternative media websites, Redden and Witschge (Chapter 10) show that at least some of the time, and in some media outlets, these potentials are realized.

But *New Media, Old News*' 'techno-optimism' is quickly tempered by a strong dose of 'techno-pessimism': the dramatic decline of newspaper circulation and advertising revenues, due at least in part to the flight of classified advertising to the internet; the sharp increase in online media audiences accompanied by the failure to find a way to make online media pay for itself, even as the parent traditional media companies often remain quite profitable; the fragmentation of news audiences across multiple media outlets, both offline and online; massive newsroom layoffs and cost-cutting, with especially deep cutbacks in foreign and investigative reporting, and greater job insecurity for those who remain; and finally, intensifying time pressures on journalists to produce news 'content' across multiple media platforms, contributing to the increasing homogenization of content (as shown by Redden and Witschge in Chapter 10) and the use of pre-packaged 'news' provided by public relations professionals.

To what extent do these trends extend beyond the UK? In what follows, I draw attention to some of the scattered evidence that is emerging about global trends, all of which of course may have been interrupted (or exacerbated) by the exceptional worldwide economic crisis that intensified during the winter of 2008–9.¹

Audiences: In the 'Anglo-American' world, at least, it is first of all important to stress (as does Freedman in Chapter 2) that the decline in

newspaper circulation did not start with the internet and has been going on for several decades. Between 1960 and 1995, before the rise of the internet, circulation per 1,000 adult habitants fell significantly in the United States (from 326 to 226, a 31 per cent decline), the United Kingdom (from 514 to 317, a 38 per cent drop), Australia (from 358 to 185, a 48 per cent decline), and Canada (from 222 to 191, a less dramatic fall of 14 per cent).² Not all countries, however, suffered from such declines: during the same 35-year period, circulation per 1,000 actually increased in countries such as Finland (52 per cent), Japan (45 per cent), and The Netherlands (10 per cent). Likewise, since 2000 when internet competition could conceivably have played a major factor in any decline, less advertising-dependent, politicized press systems – Hallin and Mancini's (2004) so-called 'polarized pluralist' systems of southern Europe – have tended to experience smaller circulation declines from already smaller bases. Thus, while US and UK per 1,000 circulation fell 9 and 18 per cent, respectively, from 2000 to 2006, in Italy, there was only a 4 per cent decline. Since 2000, newspaper circulation has remained steady in some high circulation, state-subsidized countries such as Sweden (there was a 0.4 per cent increase from 2000 to 2006), while in the 'developing' world, including the former USSR states and Eastern European satellites, circulation increases have been substantial. From 2002 to 2006, raw circulation increased 25 per cent in Poland, 8 per cent in Estonia, 53 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, 54 per cent in India, and 16 per cent in China (from 2002 to 2005). In aggregate, due to growth in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, it is simply not accurate to say that there has been a worldwide newspaper readership 'crisis'. Global circulation of paid-for dailies increased by 9.5 per cent between 2002 and 2006, and when free newspapers are included, there was an increase of almost 15 per cent; likewise, the global number of newspaper titles increased from 9,524 in 2002 to 11,207 in 2006, nearly an 18 per cent increase.

At the same time, even declines in newspaper print circulation are misleading to the extent that they do not necessarily indicate a decline in actual news consumption (Saba, 2005). For example, while the *New York Times's* daily print circulation has fallen to just over 1 million (representing approximately 4.7 million readers), its online version now claims a readership of nearly 13 million monthly users (*New York Times*, 2007; Westerdal, 2007). While these online readers tend not to spend as much time reading as their print counterparts, at least some of the *New York Times* content is reaching more people than ever before.

To what extent are news audiences becoming increasingly fragmented? It is obvious that the number of media voices available, in principle, to audiences is on the increase. Even if the internet increases choices exponentially, it is nevertheless important to emphasize that audience fragmentation is not something new (Meyer, 2004). Throughout the

nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, most US cities had two or more newspapers, and millions of immigrants relied on a diverse array of foreign-language newspapers. Magazines have targeted diverse constituencies long before the arrival of radio, cable, and the internet. Fragmentation is the norm, historically speaking. What is atypical are the media systems that emerged in the post-World War II period in Europe and the United States and indeed across the world in which a handful of national broadcast television channels were able to garner majority audiences. The current situation is thus a return to the normalcy of divided attention, with the important caveat that a select few of the now established 'brands' – leading national newspapers and television channels such as the *Guardian*, the BBC, the *New York Times*, CNN – have transferred and even augmented their agenda-setting power on to the net.

Advertising: Generally, newspaper print advertising revenues are down, while online advertising revenues have increased. In most cases, the print loss tends to be larger than the online gain. For example, despite significant gains in online advertising every year, overall advertising revenues in Germany declined by nearly 21 per cent between 2001 and 2005 (WAN, 2007: 336). Some countries' news media are managing the transition better than others. In Norway, total newspaper advertising revenues actually increased by 4 per cent in 2006, bolstered by a 42 per cent rise in online advertising (WAN, 2007: 545); likewise, a dramatic increase in online advertising offset print advertising losses in Canada, keeping overall newspaper revenues virtually steady in 2007 (CNA, 2007). Even in the US, a handful of the most-viewed online news sites, such as CNN, have been paying their own way for several years and expect eventually to be the dominant profit-generator for the company. CNN officials estimated that their website, whose audience already far exceeds that of its cable channel (and in fact is the world's number one news website, with an average of 1.7 billion monthly page views), would nevertheless not surpass the television channel in revenues for at least '10 to 20 years from now' (Stelter, 2009: B-1, 2). Outside the industrialized West where newspapers remain less reliant on online platforms, overall advertising revenues have in some cases increased quite dramatically: in India, for example, newspaper advertising revenues increased 90 per cent between 2001 and 2005 (WAN, 2007: 377).

Profitability: Even as offline audiences and advertising revenues have declined for newspapers in most industrialized countries, many large news media companies – at least until the economic crisis of 2008 – continued to be quite profitable. Certainly, this has been the case in the United States. Net profit rates (net income as a percentage of total revenues) have declined since the beginning of the 1990s when they often exceeded 25 per cent, but even in 2007, they ranged from 6.5 per cent at the New York Times Company and 6.9 per cent at the Washington

Post Company to 14.2 per cent at Gannett (owner of 85 US newspapers, including *USA Today*) and 12.0 per cent at Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (which now owns the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*, Fox News, as well as, of course, several major British and Australian media properties). These respectable profit margins have been maintained, in part, by aggressive cost-cutting. But the sense of crisis, among media owners, is driven less by current profit rates than by shareholder expectations that 'offline' media, especially newspapers, are a dying breed, which has led to a virtual freefall in share prices. Gannett shares which traded at \$85.71 in January 2004, near historic highs, had fallen to \$7.59 in early January 2009; likewise, New York Times Company shares peaking at \$51.50 in 2002 were trading at \$6.41 by January 2009. Even the Washington Post Company, insulated to a certain extent through its ownership of the highly profitable Kaplan educational testing service, has seen its share price fall from a peak of \$983.02 in December 2004 to \$408.24 in January 2009.³

The shift of news to the internet – the specific ways in which it is transforming journalistic practice – cannot be understood solely in relation to so-called technological 'imperatives'; rather, the internet has become an 'iron cage' for many journalists (see Davis, Chapter 7) because owners and advertisers have long favoured such economic rationalization and have sought to develop the internet in ways to maintain and extend the existing 'social formation' of power relations (Williams, 2003). In the United States, the conventional wisdom is that the publicly-traded corporation is to blame, since its legal charter requires profit maximization for shareholders, and virtually all leading news organizations are now part of publicly-traded corporations. While the UK also has its publicly-traded media organizations (the *Daily Mail*, the *Independent*, and Murdoch's News Corporation-owned the *Sun* and *The Times*), what strikes me about the British situation is the intensity of competition in a highly-centralized, multi-newspaper national journalistic field, and how this has been amplified by the 24-hour internet news cycle. The degree to which media outlets are economically directly competitive, or perceive themselves to be, also needs to be taken into account as a factor contributing to a decline in news quality.

Newswork: Similar to Great Britain, in both Canada and the United States the full-time journalistic workforce has been decimated in recent years (PEJ, 2008; Ray, 2009); at the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, successive layoffs between 2001 and January 2009 have halved the editorial staff from 1,200 to 600 (Agence France Press, 2008; Bensinger, 2009). In the aftermath of such cutbacks, US freelance journalists working under incredible pressure are increasingly being used to fill the news hole, similar to the process described by Phillips, Couldry, and Freedman (Chapter 3). This transformation of journalism into yet

another form of flexible labour has also occurred in Canada (McKercher, 2002), and across Asia and Latin America (IFJ, 2006). Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that increasing job 'precarity' for journalists had been observed in countries such as France (see, e.g., Accardo, 1998) even before the shift to the internet was well under way. Reduced overall staffing combined with the need to provide content for multiple platforms (online print, audio, and video, as well as the original 'offline' print, audio, or video versions) is creating a time-squeeze that stretches well beyond the Anglo-American (Klinenberg, 2005) world, affecting newsroom working conditions across Europe and the developed world (Deuze, 2008). This 'multiskilling ... leads to increasingly pressurized arrangements, to higher stress levels and burn-out rates, [and] an ongoing recasting of specialists into generalist reporters' (ibid.: 154). In this volume, Phillips (Chapter 5) describes how competitive pressures are leading British journalists to spend more time monitoring and even 'cannibalizing' without attribution news stories written by their colleagues at other media outlets. Cannibalization hasn't been adequately studied in the US, but if it is perhaps less prevalent, again, it may be due in part to the more fragmented character of the US journalistic field (with leading media outlets spread across the country) which could mitigate, even online, the kind of intense competitive pressures produced by the UK's London-based media.

Finally, given the PR industry's own self-conscious expansion across Europe (Burton and Drake, 2004) and indeed the world (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003), coupled with a global trend toward newsroom job cuts and the use of flexible labour, it is certainly likely that there is also a global increase in the predominance of PR-produced 'news'. Unfortunately, there has been little systematic research on this question in the US or other western democracies to match the impressive UK-based research in this book as well as previously published studies by Davis (2002) and Miller and Dinan (2007).

In sum, *New Media, Old News* paints a portrait of the press under siege in the age of the internet, but in some ways it seems to be a self-inflicted wound, bound up in its reliance on an advertising-driven model of mainstream journalism. As Barnhurst and Nerone (2001: 285) observed in their global survey of online news media, 'the most striking quality of online newspapers is the dominance of promotion [and] advertising, much of it self-promotional [which] completely overwhelms the other content'. The crisis of the journalism business, offline or online, should not be so quickly equated with the crisis of the journalistic vocation. There is no automatic correlation between a news media industry's economic success and its contributions to democratic life. On the other hand, economic failure can open up a process of reflection and self-questioning that could ultimately make the media more democratic.

But what, precisely, do we mean by democracy? Before we can determine the best way forward, it is essential that we acknowledge the complexity of the term and its cross-cutting, potentially contradictory elements (Ferree et al., 2002; Baker, 2002; Schudson, 2008).

Journalism and Models of Democracy

In democratic theory, three broad schools of thought have emerged: elitist, deliberative, and pluralist.⁴ How we evaluate journalism in the era of the internet depends crucially on which of these democratic models are emphasized and valued.

The elitist democratic model is most often associated with Walter Lippmann (1997) and the ideal of a 'watchdog' press. The primary duties for the press are to examine the character and behaviour of elected officials, to monitor closely their activities for corruption or incompetence, to critically analyse policy proposals, and to provide reliable, in-depth information about social problems. It is largely against this standard that the contemporary press – both offline and online – has increasingly been judged inadequate. Of course, some elite print-based journalistic organizations continue to provide in-depth reporting and investigations of official wrongdoing. But as Davis, Phillips, and Fenton show in their contributions to this volume, commercially driven online news media tend to emphasize the latest breaking information and thus operate according to a rhythm fundamentally antithetical to slower-ripening, depth reporting;⁵ moreover, as also noted, the pressure to produce news content for multiple platforms shifts time from reporting to repackaging.

Whereas in the elitist model, the press largely acts on behalf of the public, in the deliberative model, the press works alongside the public to 'support reflection and value or policy choice' (Baker, 2002: 148–9). In the deliberative model, mainstream media like the BBC and the *Washington Post* are not valued so much for their well-funded capacity to investigate as for their status as 'inclusive, non-segmented media entities that support a search for general societal agreement on "common goods"' (ibid.: 149). The deliberative model, most closely identified with Habermas's ideal public sphere, provides a benchmark to evaluate both journalistically-produced and non-journalistically-produced discourse on the net, including such aspects as civility, direct engagement of opposing viewpoints, and reasoned argumentation.

Increasingly, the major news websites facilitate debate and dialogue. When readers engage with each other, the quality tends to be lower than when they engage with journalists or other expert contributors. Unmoderated reader forums on nytimes.com became

such 'sewers of profanity' that the newspaper was forced to close them down in 2006 (Robinson, 2007: 310). Another detailed content analysis of reader postings on the French *lemonde.fr* and *wanadoo.fr* open forums found that they tended to be dominated by a few, often aggressive readers, some of whom displayed 'the effects of some form of intoxication or mental illness perhaps' (Adams, 2007: 193). The same study, however, found that in conversations that were effectively structured by journalists, as with the reader comments to a *Libération* blog, the quality of discussion was significantly higher. *NYTimes.com* now has a regular feature called 'Room for Debate' in which 'knowledgeable outsiders' are invited 'to discuss major news events and other hot topics'. Reader comments are welcome, but are moderated. One January 2009 debate concerned 'bonuses for bad performance' on Wall Street and featured a novelist, a law professor, a professor of labour economics, and responses from 798 readers (often outraged, but all free of profanity!).

Finally, the pluralist model emphasizes ideological diversity, popular inclusion, citizen empowerment and mobilization, and full expression through a range of communicative styles. Measured against this pluralist standard, there are certainly signs that some online news media are enabling greater democracy. For instance, *nytimes.com* now has a 'TimesExtra' version that adds links at the bottom of news articles to a wide range of other news media (including British) and diverse types of blogs. On January 23, 2009, there were Extra links to various independent writer-gatherers (e.g., Brooklyn Vegan) as well as more established blogs (Huffington Post, Politico, etc.). On the 'Blogrunner' website linked to *nytimes.com* (and also owned by *The Times*), mainstream media articles tended to dominate, but there were also prominent links to blogs by a University of Oregon economist, the liberal filmmaker Michael Moore, and the obscure blog Sadly No! whose contributors include its founder Seb, a French-Canadian financial analyst living in Germany, and various scattered graduate students, writers, and designers.⁶ Likewise, *Le Monde's* website (*lemonde.fr*) has at various times featured links to a range of blogs produced by the kind of writer-gatherers described by Couldry – judges, financial experts, amateur art aficionados, ordinary citizens concerned with the quality of urban life – as well as more occasional 'chronicles' written by individual *Le Monde* subscribers and even videotapes of professors' lectures delivered at the prestigious *École normale supérieure*.

Certainly, there is an upper-middle class, professional bias to the non-journalistic voices (paralleling the newspapers' readership) that tend to be permitted inside the journalistic tent. If writers from the developing world appear relatively rarely on *openDemocracy.net* (as Curran and Witschge show in Chapter 6) they are surely all but absent on

nytimes.com. We need more research to see whether the range of online 'linked' viewpoints significantly extends the amount of ideological diversity found on print newspapers' editorial and op/ed pages (in a careful study of the *New York Times* op/ed articles and letters to the editor, Benjamin Page (1996) found that these tended to closely straddle *The Times*' official position as represented in its editorials). Building on the more optimistic observations of Redden and Witschge (Chapter 10) and Coudry (Chapter 8), though, it seems clear that the best online newspapers are moving in the direction of more, rather than less, openness toward civil society. There is reason for techno-optimism here.⁷

In sum, democratic normative theory helps clarify the problems and potentials of new media, at least within the industrialized western democracies. How we define the problem crucially shapes the appropriate response. I now turn to the question of solutions.

Policy Solutions: Private and Public

For the most part, the 'crisis' discussion has tended to presume the elitist model, which should not be surprising since this is the standard most closely associated with journalists' own self-conception, at least in the United States and the United Kingdom. While this is surely a crucial role of the press, and worthy of serious attention, it is important to keep in mind that it is not the only democratic function it performs.

To illustrate this point: the dominant journalistic frame for understanding the current crisis is that the 'old model' of advertising supported media isn't transferring well to the online environment. As Freedman reports (Chapter 2), there is a strong journalistic nostalgia for this 'arrangement' that supposedly benefits the public, 'whereby advertisers have been happy to pour money into bulletins and titles that provide them with desirable audiences while these audiences are in turn provided with public affairs-oriented material ...'. While there is certainly some truth to this claim, it too quickly elides the many ways in which the public has also been short-changed by this particular arrangement. For one, critical reporting of the business world, whose power has increased exponentially over the past half-century, has been mostly non-existent. For another, advertising funding has led the press to conceive of their readers more as consumers than citizens, and this has been a major obstacle to a press that is more deliberative and pluralist.

It's not even clear that advertising support is the best guarantee of the kind of journalism most valued by the elitist model: investigative reporting of government, foreign reporting, and in-depth examinations of social problems. Good journalism has sometimes been good business,

of course, but there is no necessary connection between the two. The Gannett chain headed by *USA Today* has been spectacularly successful at making money and just as spectacularly unsuccessful at producing high-quality journalism. The best journalism – again, as defined by elitist democracy – has required not only resources but a civic and intellectual vision and the commitment to pursue it even when it is not profitable.

One key word that often comes to the fore in this discussion – it certainly has in this book in several chapters (see especially Phillips, Chapter 5) – is the notion of ‘autonomy’. Autonomy is usually understood in a negative sense, that is, autonomy ‘from’ something, usually the market. Yet, such autonomy can’t simply be asserted through the actions of journalists within the field, it has to be ‘secured’ by something else that is able to underwrite the accumulation of cultural capital (Benson, 2006).

At the *New York Times*, for more than a century, that ‘something else’ (or someone) has been the family that owns the newspaper, the Ochs and Sulzbergers, that have treated it as a public trust (Tift and Jones, 1999; McCollam, 2008). On a recent PBS ‘Frontline’ documentary, *New York Times* editor Bill Keller exclaimed: ‘I wake up every day grateful for the Sulzberger family’ (Talbot, 2007). This kind of family ownership model has become the primary guarantee of journalistic excellence in the United States. With the Bancroft family’s sale of the *Wall Street Journal* to Murdoch’s News Corporation in 2007, today only the Grahams at the *Washington Post* and the Sulzbergers at the *New York Times* retain majority control of their newspapers. But is it wise to place so much responsibility on the shoulders of a few supposedly indispensable individuals? At the time of writing, as the *New York Times*’ balance sheet continues in freefall, Mexican multi-billionaire Carlos Slim Helú moved to increase his stake in the company to 20 per cent of the common stock, making him the single largest shareholder other than the Sulzberger family. We should not assume that the Sulzbergers will – assuming that they even can – forever and always hold the newspaper in trust.

The good news is that alternatives to commercial ownership are being publicly discussed as never before. In the same PBS documentary that quoted Keller’s appreciation of the Sulzbergers, (then) *Los Angeles Times* editor Dean Bacquet expressed his enthusiasm for non-profit ownership models (such as the Poynter Institute’s ownership of the *St. Petersburg (Florida) Times*, which would be similar to the Scott Trust’s ownership of the *Guardian*). And in a recent op/ed essay published by the *New York Times*, two Yale investment officers made the case for tax policies that would allow endowments similar to those used by universities, to underwrite quality journalism (Swensen and Schmidt, 2009). In the letters to the editor responding to this article, one writer argued that this

proposal didn't go far enough, that what is really needed is the kind of 'public media' represented by the BBC.

What about the BBC? No doubt there has been some erosion in its quality over the past decade, as Lee-Wright suggests (Chapter 4). But truth be told, the BBC and its long, distinguished record of doing 'substantive justice to the main social and political issues of the day' (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001: 392), embodies an 'inconvenient truth' that many American journalists would prefer to ignore. In the United States, a BBC-style solution has long been precluded by an absolutist (or what might be better termed 'fundamentalist') interpretation of the First Amendment. For the absolutists, when the First Amendment says 'Congress shall make no law restricting freedom of speech, or of the press ...', it means literally 'no law'. Scepticism toward the state remains the dominant view among US journalists, even those otherwise critical of the current state of affairs (Nordenson, 2007), and thus it is difficult to imagine US journalists embracing either an expansion in public television or the kind of solution developed recently in France, in which the state will provide all 18-year-olds with a free subscription to the newspaper of their choice (Pfanner, 2009; Leparmentier and Ternisien, 2009). Still, in the light of the global financial crisis and the resulting changed zeitgeist, government-led reforms, even in the United States, are not inconceivable. Increasingly, the argument is being heard that the US government has played and continues to play a positive role in supporting the media (Cook, 1999; Starr, 2004). Legal scholar C. Edwin Baker (2002), for example, makes the persuasive case that states must intervene where advertising-dominated markets fail, such as in supporting reporting on controversial or complex social problems, or news about the poor and the working class – in short, all forms of journalism either offensive or not of interest to advertisers and the high disposable income audiences they seek to reach, yet nevertheless crucial to the functioning of a democratic society.

What's clear is that simply tinkering with the 'old' business model will not provide a complete solution. A few elite media organizations with extremely loyal audiences, such as the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*, may be able to successfully charge readers for access to content, thus overcoming the weaknesses of the advertising model on the internet.⁸ But this solution, if it is one, will only be available to a few. It's also clear, as shown by Curran and Witschge's case study of *openDemocracy* (Chapter 6), that relying on the benevolence of foundations and other wealthy benefactors is not a reliable, long-term guarantor of journalistic autonomy. No single solution will suffice. We thus need to think of autonomy in the plural rather than the singular. Contra Bourdieu, the state is not necessarily allied with the market at

the heteronomous pole of the field; it may be a crucial support for journalistic autonomy. Each form of autonomy has its limits directly related to the way in which it is secured. But in a system with multiple types of ownership and funding – private, government (with guarantees of independence from direct partisan control), non-profit, journalist-owned (as at *Le Monde*), etc. – there is a greater likelihood of ensuring that no powerful actors or public problems will be able to elude critical journalistic attention.

In all of this discussion, we need to keep in mind that ‘quality’ journalism as represented by the BBC or *Le Monde* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is only part of the full democratic equation. The question of journalistic autonomy seems most urgent in relation to the press’s ‘watchdog’ role as envisioned by democratic elitist theory. However, a little less autonomy might be just fine when it comes to making room for greater deliberation and pluralism. Scholars and intellectuals can and are increasingly playing a role in expanding reasoned deliberation on the web. Likewise, a range of social movement groups, blogs, and partisan media are expanding pluralism. To the extent that journalistic-produced news content is increasingly homogenized across media outlets (see also Boczkowski and Santos, 2007), links to such outside sources (even if they themselves, of course, are often commenting on mainstream news) can provide some limited means of escaping from the echo chamber.

In his classic essay, ‘Rethinking Media and Democracy’, James Curran (2000) presents a public sphere ‘wheel’ composed of a public television sector in the centre, surrounded by four spokes – a private enterprise sector, a professional sector under the control of journalists, a civic sector that social organizations including political parties support, and a closely related sector of ideologically or culturally marginal media that operate in the market with partial subsidies from the state. In this working model of ‘complex democracy’ (Baker, 2002), each sector would help promote certain kinds of discourses and voices necessary for democratic self-deliberation. As part of this mix, I would just add, we also shouldn’t discount the positive democratic role that is often performed by so-called ‘entertainment media’ – television talk shows and dramas, music, and films – in placing various social problems on the public agenda (Delli Carpini and Williams, 2001). In this context, it is tempting even to think that we could do without journalism altogether, and distance ourselves from the ‘values’ guiding mainstream journalism, as that doctor blogger did so memorably in his interview with Nick Couldry (Chapter 8): “‘Values’ ... You have to be joking. Have you ever read the *Daily Mail*?”

But if *New Media, Old News* has shown us anything, it is that the practices of smaller scale media and NGOs often tend to parallel those of

the leading mainstream media – even on the internet! If indeed, as Fenton (Chapter 9) persuasively demonstrates, NGOs engage in ‘news cloning’, that is, ‘giv[e] journalists what they want – ready made copy that fits pre-established news agendas’, then it is crucially important ‘what’ precisely journalists want.

In sum, the challenge for the future is threefold: first, to maintain and even strengthen the autonomy of core mainstream media, whether public or private; second, to maintain and expand diversity at the margins (using the state to promote speech that is under-produced by the market, when necessary); and most of all, third, to figure out ways to connect the two. In many ways, the internet makes it easier to do this than before, but it won’t just happen ‘naturally’. As Freedman insists in Chapter 2, the problem of journalism is not one of audiences or advertising, it is one of underinvestment. Certainly, this is true. I would just add that when it comes to deliberative and pluralist democratic goals, an open mind may be just as important as money. Journalists will need to embrace these purposes as their own, and even loosen their monopoly on the public sphere in order to make more room for other professionals and citizen publics to contribute. There are encouraging signs that at least some of the most respected news media organizations are moving in this direction. In the age of the internet, the challenge will be to bring together both private and public economic and cultural capital so that journalism can fully assume its democratic responsibilities.

Endnotes

1. Matthew Powers, an NYU Ph.D student, provided research assistance for this chapter.
2. Newspaper readership figures are derived from WAN (World Association of Newspapers, 2007: i, 2, 27–29), Hallin and Mancini (2004: 23), and Kuhn (1995: 28).
3. Net profit margins were obtained from Hoover’s annual income statements for each of the aforementioned companies, which are publicly available at www.Hoovers.com. Historical company share prices were obtained from historical price charts available on finance.yahoo.com.
4. Elitist democracy, the term also used by Baker (2002) corresponds to Ferree et al.’s (2002) ‘representative liberal’ model. ‘Deliberative’ corresponds to Baker’s ‘republican’ and Ferree et al.’s ‘discursive’ model, both of which are closely aligned with Habermas. My ‘pluralist’ model brings together Baker’s ‘interest group pluralist’ with Ferree et al.’s ‘participatory liberal’ and ‘constructionist’ models, the latter based in the feminist critique of Habermas; while there are some differences among these models, all basically stress broad inclusion and acceptance of diverse discursive styles (not just rational argumentation).

200 NEW MEDIA, OLD NEWS

5. There are some exceptions to this tendency, such as the new non-profit online investigative reporting website Politico.com, headed by a former *Wall Street Journal* editor and generously funded by savings-and-loan billionaires Herb and Marion Sandler (Hirschman, 2008).
6. Sadly No! self-reports a focus on 'finding embarrassing slips or untrue statements by conservatives and linking to a refutation' and a 'daily traffic of between 7,000 and 15,000 visits'. Blogrunner uses an automated algorithm 'based on links from blogs or other websites', but 'editors can add items to the list if they find something interesting' and likewise they can 'take off items' (Hansell, 2007). *The Washington Post*, long considered an innovator in online journalism, has a 'Who's Blogging' link attached to individual articles, but the *Post's* website does not put blogs and other external media links front and centre in the way that Times Extra does.
7. I have cited here only a few examples of 'best practices'. Perhaps most media come nowhere near this level of democratic performance, but of course this has long been the case (at least in the US). Even if we can only say that the best are using the internet to get even better, this still represents some measure of progress.
8. In an online chat with readers (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/business/media/02askthetimes.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=all, accessed 3 February, 2009), executive editor Bill Keller said that a 'lively, deadly serious discussion continues within *The Times* about ways to get consumers to pay for what we make', including a subscription model, a micro-payment model (similar to Apple's iTunes), and new reading devices such as the Kindle.