NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLVIX No. 2 Summer 1995

FIVE DOLLARS

Running Scared Into the On-Line Era

Public-Interest Journalism Faces New Technology

"...to promote and elevate the standards of journalism"

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

NIEMAN REPORTS

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Conference photographs by Stan Grossfeld, drawings by Cyn Maurice. Cover art based on icons from New York Online.

Curator's Corner

Protecting Values in the New Era

Six decades ago Walter Lippmann said that citizens in a democracy did not act on reality but on the pictures of reality in their heads, formed slowly like stalagmites from the steady accretion of daily droplets of information. Many of the guiding principles of our journalism today were shaped by that concept. The world has slipped beyond the reach of Walter Lippmann's vision. Today we live in a "virtual" world in which the images in our heads are real images planted in real time. When the images are real and in real time the demands on journalists are radically altered.

Many of those who exercise most power over the new media are outside journalism and often antagonistic to the gatekeeper function of journalists. They are the people on line who are driving the explosive development of worldwide networks of information.

Inside journalism the most creative people work across traditional disciplines of newspaper, television, radio, magazine, and newsletter. Through innovative mixtures of sound and picture and words they are finding exciting ways to tell complex stories in greater context and greater depth.

To protect the democratic values of journalism it is important to continue to struggle for context and objective balance but we must now also:

- Consider how exposition and narrative are changed in hypertext.
- Consider when the journalist is gatekeeper and when mediator.
- Demonstrate relevance in a world flooded with information and images.

To help in this search, the Nieman Foundation called its second technology conference. It considered the interplay of journalism and technology in two areas of critical importance.The first area was the impact of the new technology on a journalism in the public interest.

When we talk of public-interest journalism at the Nieman Foundation we are talking of something that may be compatible with—but differs from—what is called public journalism or civic journalism. These concern themselves with a journalism more closely integrated with community aspirations, with a heightened concern for the impact of the news reported.

The sense of public-interest journalism considered here is the commitment of resources to produce a reliable stream of broad and deep reporting of the behavior of interests that wield power over the lives of the citizens. This, and a commitment to work first in the interest of an enlightened citizenry—producing an account of public events, characters and issues in a context that helps citizens become involved in their own governance.

Examples of this kind of journalism are discussed in the conference. They are The Philadelphia Inquirer's "America: What Went Wrong" series and the tenacious efforts of the Africa News Service to enrich the public with a stream of important journalism on issues on a continent dimly perceived.

The second purpose of the conference was to discuss the economic implications of the new communication technology and begin a search for the best economic models that will support a journalism in the public interest.

Over the years, radio and television companies, newspapers and news magazines, all effectively limited by state, regional, or national boundaries, had grown comfortable, if not complacent, in their competitive struggles.

As if from nowhere, the great convergence of technology has blown that world apart. Today it seems anyone and everyone, from the phone company to a computer hacker in Oslo, is in the business of making news available.

Following digital revolution where it seems logically to lead, the economic organization of corporate journalism is now moving to vertical integration of communications in all its forms. Time Warner is one model.

This reconfiguration of media corporations brings new strategic partnerships by the day. Partnerships that take corporations, once entirely journalistic, further away from the values of the newsroom—if for no other reason than that the newsroom is not a determining factor in the decisions of a company facing competition from a world with 500 paying channels of information. In a world in which mass advertising oozes like an amoeba in 1,000 different directions. Commercial and non-commercial organizations alike are chasing bits of this elusive form. Working across once-impermeable barriers, they experiment with new intermedia products and creative new strategies of marketing and sales.

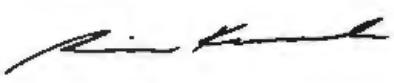
What will be the shape of an economic structure to support the costly work of a highly organized, experienced working group devoted to producing news to serve the broad public purpose of a self-governing society?

Inside corporate structures where the best minds are focused on the economic competition—on economic survival—these questions are secondary.

It is for this reason that custodians of newsroom values must become more deeply involved in understanding the possibilities and the challenges of the new technology to their work.

Most Nieman Fellows have 25 years or more of creative work ahead of them when they leave Harvard. That means an important part of the work of the Foundation is always to look forward to the demands of an ever-changing journalism.

The results of our second conference on the new technology reported in this issue may help us prepare for that challenge.■



What They're Saying

William Finnegan

Pace He Could Handle

I've never worked on a newspaper. Before I got interested in political journalism, I bummed around the world—I spent most of my twenties overseas—working all kinds of jobs and leading a rather ethereal literary life. So when I finally started working as a reporter I felt like a bit of a fraud, and thought I should really try to get on a paper, where I could get properly trained. But the closest I got was my first New Yorker assignment, in 1986, which took me to South Africa, where I spent a couple of months with some local black newspaper reporters, watching them work. I really admired them, and ended up writing a book about them, but I also thought, no, I don't really want to do this daily stuff, constantly grinding out copy on deadline. And, luckily, by then, I had found a nice middle ground at The New Yorker, where they let me report and write the stories I wanted at a pace that I could handle.

—William Finnegan, writer for The New Yorker, at a Nieman Fellows seminar, March 24, 1995

James Fallows

Sign of Failure

If you look at the largest public issues that the U.S. has had to deal with in, say, the last twenty years, it's very very difficult to argue that the press has done a good job in helping us understand what the consequences are, that things are not just a competition between Bob Dole and Phil Gramm and Bill Clinton but that deeper issues are involved. And yet every one of us can point to the good article we wrote about the budget deficit, the good article we published about Bosnia, the good things we saw here and there.

But I think it would be very hard to argue that our government, especially in domestic policy, has responded to what will be seen historically as the deepest problems of the time. And I think that we in our business need to take that seriously as a sign of some serious failure. I'm not saying that the press's performance by itself would have made fiscal policy more realistic in the 1980's or changed the distribution of income...or made it possible to make a more informed choice about health care. I am saying, however, that in twenty years we've had a hard time in doing the job we should do, of making issues understandable to the public and to the political actors.

—James Fallows, Washington Editor of The Atlantic Monthly, at a luncheon at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, April 18, 1995.

Robert H. Estabrook

Without Wounding

Journalists, I believe, should be skeptical without being cynical. In small towns, especially, you are less likely to encounter deliberate crooks in government than simple lack of knowledge or at worst incompetence. It is a lot easier to berate some far-away federal or state official or denounce those anonymous klunks in government than to run the risk of encountering the object of your editorial spleen face to face when you meet him or her at the post office. A watchdog must bark, but you learn to criticize without wounding unless you intend to make an enemy.

—Robert H. Estabrook, Editor and Publisher Emeritus, The Lakeville (Connecticut) Journal, at the National Writers' Workshop at Hartford, April 2, 1995.

Kristin McGrath

Faster, Faster

Everyone wants newspapers to change faster than they are changing.

—Kristin McGrath of MORI Research. at the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April, 1995.

Public-Interest Journalism Winner Or Loser In The On-Line Era?

Editor's Note

Our report on the second Nieman Foundation conference on new technology, held May 4-5, 1995 in Cambridge, Mass., begins on the next page with three analyses, followed by edited excerpts from the sessions. Interspersed through the pages are independent articles and commentaries. The conference was organized around two case studies, one on a Philadelphia Inquirer Pultizer Prize-winning series, the other on the Africa News Service. Additional sessions were held on new competitors of traditional media, the role of mainstream journalism and the economic pressures on the industry.

Three Views of the Conference

Katherine Fulton
Duke University,
Organizer of Conference
(Analysis Written After Conference)

What does it all mean? Admittedly puzzled, I'm tempted to say: read the excerpts from the conference proceedings and the analytical articles on the following pages (or the full text on the Internet) and see if you can figure it out. I sure don't know, having just read all 514 pages of the transcript, and, I doubt anyone at this stage of the technology can tell us what it all means. But, as I began to analyze and synthesize, I found myself circling around two different but related themes.

The first is panelist Omar Wasow's rewriting of Marshall McLuhan, "The mix is the message." At this conference, the diverse mix of people present was most definitely the message. Listen carefully to the mix, and you can begin to understand the nature of the crisis journalism faces.

The second theme is the notion of a paradigm shift, which has unfortunately become a cliché since Thomas Kuhn advanced it in 1962 as a way of understanding scientific revolutions. "That's what's happening to mass media," Nancy Hicks Maynard told us. "It's old. We're getting old. And we're on the road to a new kind of communicating, but we don't yet know what that is. And in that space is...creative destruction." Perhaps we should call the challenge we face destructive creation. Whatever we call it, the conference itself was a dramatic experience of the paradigm shift now underway. I would maintain

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Maxwell King
Editor and Executive Vice President
The Philadelphia Inquirer
(Analysis Written After Conference)

In the offices of the large communications companies of America, there is fear. There is a sense of opportunity, too. And, sometimes, there is even a sense of excitement.

But, mostly, there is fear.

There is fear in the newsrooms, too. The journalists see the opportunities, of course. But, mostly, they see them as commercial opportunities that could threaten their journalistic values.

The source of the fear is the Internet and the incipient electronic revolution in the communications business. Whether it's called the "new information super-highway" or "electronic new media" or some other catchphrase, it promises profound, wrenching change in the field of journalism in the coming years.

And though it may lead to new, stronger forms and to better journalism eventually, right now it just scares the hell out of us.

So, at the Nieman Foundation Conference (titled, somewhat apprehensively, "Public-Interest Journalism: Winner or Loser in the On-line Era?"), the fear was an acrid, almost palpable presence over all.

The Nieman planners thought to bring together about 200 of what they hoped were the best thinkers in the business. For two days, a fractious gaggle of editors, publishers, reporters and academics quarreled to no particular conclusion.

The academics were dismissive; the journalists were defensive. The entre-

continued on page 69

Jack Fuller
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Chicago Tribune
(Speech Ending Conference)

Let's start with the question that Katherine [raised] at the beginning, which was: are we into a period of renaissance or reformation—renaissance or reaction, I guess? The words filled me with some humility, especially as I reflected on some of Neil Postman's comments about Gutenberg and how he might have thought about his creation. If he had known that it would bring down the authority of the Catholic Church, he might have been very troubled. Actually, from what I understand from the history of that period, it was worse than that. Gutenberg, in fact, had a business plan for the press, and his plan was to sell indulgences, print them, mass produce indulgences for the church and make a lot of money.

I think many of our plans may suffer similar fates as we go along and learn what the reality of a medium is that we're only beginning to explore.

I've been put in the position of, or characterized as, an optimist, which I guess I am, but when I thought back to the Renaissance and the period of great humanism, I suddenly shuddered and thought, well, maybe I'm Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss in this meeting. I'm the one who's meant to say, "Everything's for the best in this best of all possible worlds."

I don't have that kind of optimism—but I do believe that we're talking about the only possible world, something which is, which is reality, and which will occur. And therefore, I look at it the

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First Case Study

'America: What Went Wrong?'


The Philadelphia Inquirer

America: What went wrong?

Across the country, people sense that the rules of the game have changed, in some undefined way that rewards a few and hurts the many. They are right, in a nine-part series, The Inquirer examines the dismantling of America.

Doubts on talks' chances

Assailed by some Israelis, Arabs

2,184%

How the game was rigged against the middle class

697%

What went wrong

44%

A rage toward women consumed Texas killer

Youthful rebellion in the '90s

Faces change, but attitudes stay the same

How the Prize-Winning Series Was Conceived, Reported and Written
And a Suggested Way It Could Have Been Handled On Line

The Newspaper Version: How It Was Done

Maxwell King

Editor and Executive Vice President
The Philadelphia Inquirer

The nine-part series, "America: What Went Wrong?" published in October of 1991, is the best example I can offer you of how The Philadelphia Inquirer tries to do effective public-service journalism.

It touched a nerve with readers across the country because of, not in spite of, its massive scope. We worried a lot that it would be too comprehensive, too long, and too complicated, as we reported, shaped and edited the series. Later, our readers thanked us profusely for making it so comprehensive, for providing such a holistic explanation of how government and business and economics interact.

One of our readers, Kathleen Byrnes of Miami, wrote: "This is what newspapers are all about: information, helping to explain what is going on in our lives and as part of a larger picture."

The series began on Sunday, October 20th, and was completed on Monday, October 28th. The stories, charts and photographs covered 25 full pages of the newspaper.

The stories described in detail how rules made in Washington and deals done on Wall Street in the 1970's and the 1980's had impacted much of America's middle class.

They analyzed the effects of corporate bankruptcies, the growth of foreign business in the United States, the deficit, health insurance, corporate takeovers, deregulation, pensions and politics.

Then they described the impact of these decisions on ordinary people.

The result was a compelling portrayal of life in a changed America. For the first time, a generation entering adulthood would find it virtually impossible to achieve a better lifestyle than its parents. The rich were getting richer. Life for the working class was deteriorating, and those at the bottom felt trapped.

To get the story, Don Barlett and Jim Steele criss-crossed the country for two full years. They visited 50 towns and cities in 16 states and Mexico.

They talked with men and women who work for a living—in glass plants, department stores, shoe factories and packing houses, trucking terminals and brokerage houses. They also interviewed government officials and corporate managers. They traced the operations of scores of companies, and then told, in the voices of the workers themselves, what had happened when those companies were taken over or closed during the buyouts of the 1980's.

The series drew on a massive amount of tax and statistical data for its underpinnings. But assembling that material, more than 100,000 pages of documents and economic data covering a half century, was only the first step. The reporters then built their own databases, which enabled them to produce original charts and tables that showed the changing patterns they were covering.

The series generated the largest response from readers in the newspaper's history.

The paper received more than 20,000 letters, calls and requests for reprints. By the end, 495,000 reprints were given away or mailed around the country.

We made two key decisions early. One, that we would try to make reprints available as soon as the series was finished in the paper. Second, we were not interested in making a profit from the reprints. We simply wanted to cover a portion of our costs.

The series ran on the Knight-Ridder Tribune News Service, and all or portions of the series appeared in 43 other newspapers in 25 states. In March 1992, we followed up with a paperback book. The book remained on The New York Times bestseller list for eight months.

So, what did it cost? Although a ballpark estimate of all costs could range over half a million dollars, I want to emphasize that they were all costs that would have been incurred anyway, whether we produced the series or not. They were all part of our budget for that year, or those years, before we started the project. We simply chose to direct our resources, staff and news hole into this one massive project, rather than into a score of smaller ones.

Besides Barlett and Steele, 14 other staffers contributed to this project. When you add them all up, it comes to about five and a half years of staff time that went into it.

James Steele

Reporter, The Philadelphia Inquirer

I want to discuss briefly how we got started because the misconceptions that people have, both in journalism and with readers, about how these things come about are tremendous.

I think the general perception is that Barlett and I get an idea, or Max gets an idea, and we say, "Gee, the American middle class is getting hammered. Let's go out there and do a series on it."

Well, the fact of the matter is, in the 25 years that Don and I have worked together, almost every project that we have begun on has ended up considerably different than our original conception of it. And the same is true with "America: What Went Wrong?"

If you think of the 1980's, everybody talked about corporate restructuring. Everybody talked about downsizing. Everybody said this was absolutely essential to put America in a position to deal with the 21st Century.

We were curious about that: what is driving this process? What is the result? But mainly, what happens to the people in these companies, these institutions, who go through this particular process? What happens to them?

We always start by reading. In this case, news articles, magazine articles, corporate annual reports, bond prospectuses, investment brokers' reports, Congressional hearings. You name it. No scrap of paper is off limits to our office.

Then we start our interviewing process. Many names of many companies across a whole wide range of fields showed up as part of this. We began going out around the country.

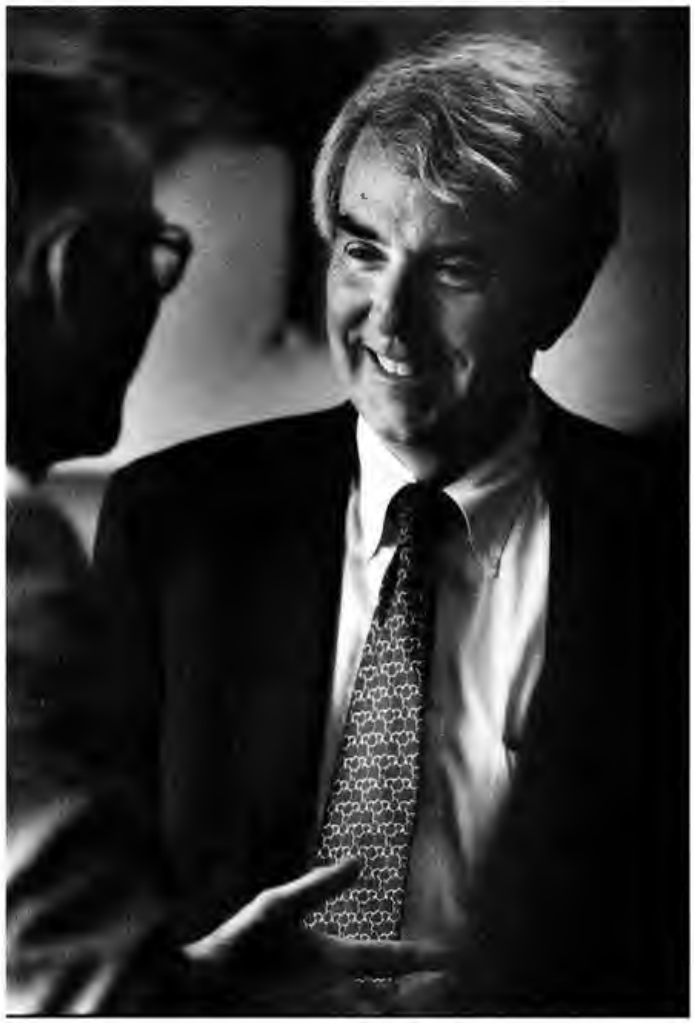
One of us would go to a company, let's say, manufacturing electronic components in Northern New Jersey; another would go to a forest products operation in California; one would go to a food processor somewhere in the Midwest; another would go to a plant manufacturing glassware. We talked to people who had worked there, sometimes production workers, sometimes mid-level managers, sometimes higher up.

We'd come back and transcribe the tapes, because invariably, most of the time, you can tape an interview. People are so used to that. Tape that interview, transcribe the tapes, exchange the transcripts with each other.

And something happened on this project that had never happened to us in all our years of working together: you would read these transcripts, and it sounded like we had interviewed all the same people. Even though one person was out in California, the interview from the person in New England sounded like that same person.

And it went something like this: "I gave my life to this company. Then at this last minute, I'm thrown out through no fault of my own. I've lost my health care; I've lost part of my pension," or some variety of that. "I wasn't able to find a job equal to the one I had," or maybe "I didn't find a job at all."

The bottom line with all of these people was the same: their standard of living had gone down.



James Steele

And as these interviews began to accumulate, as we began to run across this around the country, we began thinking of this project as something larger than simply a plant-closing series or a corporate restructuring series, which was kind of the way it started out.

We kept seeing a whole class of people for whom their life, their way of life was changing radically, and it got us thinking in that direction. It didn't happen in a day; it didn't happen in a week; it didn't even really happen in a month, but slowly, over time, the realization that this was a much larger story than we had thought began to occur to us.

The same time we were doing this interviewing, we also began to collect a lot of economic data, tax and economic data. This is information on jobs, information on taxes, information on corporate and personal write-offs.

Now, this is the glamorous part of investigative reporting: go through 50 or 70 years of IRS reports, extract that information from those reports, then input that information. This is very, very exciting.

We collect all our own data; always have, from the very first time we started working together. We extract it from various reports, make our tables, make our own charts, make our own statistical component. We don't go to think-tanks; we don't go to foundations.

One of the reasons for that [is that] it gives you the flexibility of then seeing a whole range of things that you would otherwise be limited by.

But to us, the greatest advantage of doing your own data is that you know where those numbers have come from. That's one of the great advantages and it is reflected in your writing and it makes you more confident about what your conclusions may be.

Unfortunately for us, none of this information was in any one place. It was a matter of pulling it out of many of these reports, and we literally did Xerox sections of roughly 70 years of IRS statistics of income, and we plugged that information into a spreadsheet, and then made those particular analyses.

We were as surprised as many of our readers were about some of those conclusions, particularly about total salaries for people at the top versus people in the middle. We were very surprised to see what had happened to many corporate tax deductions that had been around for years and years, but had swerved very wildly out of control during the 1980's.

These two features, the people, the profiles of the people, and the data were indispensable to what the series became. Reader after reader told us about that, that that is precisely what they liked about the series. It wasn't just anecdote, and it wasn't just hard fact. It was that interweaving: the human stories backed up by the hard information.

And the other thing we found out about it, and Max made reference to this, as well, is contrary to the notion that people do not want this information—we hear this all the time. The fact of the matter is [that] they do want this information, if we go that extra mile to present it in a way that they understand.

Over and over again, we heard from people that they liked it for just that reason, the fact [that]there were numbers in the story that had some meaning to them.

Like this woman from Rhode Island, she said, "We, the people, do want to read. Tell the editors we need the media to report on what government is doing. I want to tell you that 'America: What Went Wrong?' has restored my faith in American journalism."

An extraordinary team effort went into this at the paper, to make sure that these very complex ideas were conveyed very clearly to the readers so that they could understand what those were.

It means, quite simply, that there was a lot of rewriting. We always think about that; we always imagined it, but the amount of rewriting that went into this series by all of us was extraordinary.

Don and I rewrote each other; others rewrote us; everyone was committed to the notion of trying to make it as clear as possible so people could understand exactly what happened.

"America: What Went Wrong?" is a perfect example of a project that has benefited tremendously from many of the new things that are available.

Obviously, the spreadsheet helped us collect the data and analyze the data in a way that would not have been possible, at least on that scale, many years ago.

Word processing programs helped us keep track of a vast amount of textual material. Commercial databases were instrumental in tracking companies' programs in ways that would have been impossible in the past, or if possible, would have taken this project 10 years instead of the two it turned out to be.

So all of these things enhanced and enriched the story tremendously.

But here's the point I want to make: in the final analysis, all of these things are really tools, wonderful tools, to be sure. Don't misunderstand me about that, but basically tools. The most crucial element that ultimately was most important for this project becoming what it was is really a very old-fashioned commodity, and it's called time.

Time was more important than all of these things put together, so when we talk about the future, whether a story appears on newsprint, whether it's on a computer screen, whether it's a CD-ROM, whether it's a VHS cassette, time will still loom over that process to the very end to be the most significant factor: time to report; time to think; time to grasp the implications of what it is these facts mean; and time to make sure we communicate the power of what that information says to the reader or the viewer, because unless we do that, unfortunately, we've ultimately failed.■

Richard Lanham

16.7 Million Colors

We have been preoccupied, ever since Marshall McLuhan made "media" a household word, with the much sexier world of broadcast television. It was TV that was creating the global village full of couch potatoes with minds to match. It was TV that dramatized politics. It was TV that created a special channel to reenact rhapsodic sexual foreplay on a round-the-clock basis. Thus bemused, we failed to notice that the personal computer had presented itself as an alternative to the printed book, and the electronic screen as an alternative to the printed page. Furthermore, in the last three or four years, that alternative page has been enhanced so that it can preseot and manipulate images and sounds almost as easily as words. And it can do all this in 16.7 million colors. The loog reign of black and white textual truth has ended. The nature and status of textual discourse have been altered. This movement from book to screen promises a metamorphosis comparable in magnitude, if not in hype, to broadcast TV.
—Richard A. Lanham, "The Electronic Word," The University of Chicago Press.

The On-Line Version: How It Might Be Done

David DeJean
AT&T Interchange Online Network

This is not a short course in computer-assisted reporting. I'm not dealing with the computer tools used to dig out the data or to analyze the data, or to crunch the numbers, or anything else. This is strictly about the presentation side of it, and I think that's one thing we all need to keep in mind: that these new technologies, there's a definite split really between data management systems and data presentation systems. And data presentation systems do not good data management tools make, necessarily. Now, that'll probably change a little bit over time, but for the present, there is that dichotomy.

I want to talk about this in three categories: the medium, authoring and design.

The medium. The first thing about the medium is, the "High C's," I call them: Community, Content and Commerce.

Commerce is a phrase that, unfortunately, has offensive links to advertising, and I realize for this group, we shouldn't talk about things that are offensively commercial. We are all, after all, journalists. We're high; we're pure; we don't think about that kind of thing. So I struggled to find another "C" phrase, and so we're going to talk about "calls to action." What can we get out of this that calls us to action? How can we use this medium in a way to generate calls for action? In the sense of advertising, the call to action is clear. In the sense of editorial material, however, we're just getting to the point where we actually can issue a call to action as part of the editorial content.

The community issue is key. We are operating in an era when the community is almost the message, or the medium is the community is the message. I can't quite figure out how to amend Marshall McLuhan to say that, but it is nonetheless true, I think, that community is the most important part of the new media. They give you a chance to participate in a community, even though it's a virtual community.

And finally, of course, content. Content in an on-line medium is very different from content in a print medium, is very different from content in a multimedia medium.

What I'm going to show you is an on-line medium that is definitely not multimedia, but is, in some ways, sort of unimedia. It's text and graphics, and it's very much closer to your father's print Oldsmobile than you might like to think.

The other point about the medium is that the story's not done until the mail is sent. What that means is that this is an interactive medium where the writer and the reader are basically in conversation with each other. It is an interactive medium in the sense that the writer writes, and the reader reads, and then the reader writes and the writer reads. And then it loops back.

David DeJean

That's an important thing to remember, and if you fail tn take advantage of that, you're failing to use the medium to its fullest.

Authoring. Authoring is the new buzzword. We used to call that writing, but we don't call it that anymore. The nature of digital media is basically verbal, not literary. You are not writing for publication when you post a note in a discussion in an on-line forom. You are conducting a time-shifted phone call. It's like speaking into the microphone, and then hanging

up, and then having somebody leave their response on your answering machine. It is almost aggressively non-literary.

This is a big change from what we, as writers, are used to. In fact, I find myself very inhibited when I'm called upon to participate in on-line forums because I'm so damned wordy. I can't clear my throat in less than 2,500 words.

Database, not narrative: what we are dealing with here is data, information. It's definitely not writing. It's something that is designed to be lumped together and sorted through.

Much the way that Jim [Steele] talked about the way they massaged their data to develop the series, the series becomes data to be lumped together and sorted through by the user who interacts with it. It's the cornerstone of the interactivity of the thing.

We are writing to be read at random, not linearly. We're aggressively non-narrative here. Databases are not narrative. They're something you go into and then come back out of with the answer.

Design. Design for the hand, as well as for the eye. It's an interactive medium. It's a very tactile thing that you're doing when you hold the mouse of a computer in your hand and run it around the screen. It is something that your hand has to be comfortable with. You tend to click on things and do things in a very physical, tactile way, and that has to be designed into the product.

And finally, it's the medium's limitations, stupid.

We are still incredibly technology-bound by what we can do. We have the same problems that anybody who's been a photographer knows.

I basically took the first installment and started to put the series into an electronic form.

Q. & A.

JIM DOYLE, Army Times—If I understand what you're saying, could you explain the journalistic value in taking a series that we have been told is very closely edited over a long period of time, and turn it into, I think you said, into a kind of a random-access user-access piece of work?

DeJEAN—Well, the journalistic value of it is the same journalistic value that was created by taking the newspaper series and turning it into a book. What we've got here is another distribution medium. It's no more complicated than that. This is an on-line representation of that work.

ELISE O'SHAUGHNESSY, Executive Editor, Vanity Fair—I guess I want to follow up on that and say fine, but it's not the same as turning it into a book because basically, you're taking it and you're breaking it down into the components that were so carefully put together, in a sense. The book reproduced the article and it gave you some additional material, I am sure, and expanded on it. But I don't think you can compare—You can't just say this is just another medium when what you've done is break it apart again.

PETER McGRAW—The authors, as they made it clear,

Chris Bowman and Kathryn Kross, 1995 Nieman Fellows

wanted to drive the reader—I think we can still call him or her a reader—in the direction of a conclusion, which was the middle class is getting screwed. If you turn the reporting into a database, what's to prevent the user accessing at random to conclude that it's the poor who are getting screwed, or even the rich who are getting screwed? What happens to the author's intention? What happens to the coherence of an argument when you abolish its narrative quality?

DeJEAN—Good question, and I don't know the answer. I think we'll find out but it'll take us about five years.

MAXWELL KING—Let me just say one thing about that. I think we've got the confidence in the research and the material on which the series is based, that if it's broken down into different databases, and a committed reader accesses a lot of it, they'll reach the same conclusion. And, in fact, if they don't, then I think there's a question about the cooclusions that we raised.

CHARLES SHEPARD, Online Manager, The Washington Post—I work with this same technology every day. Is it not true that if I click on these links, if it were, in fact, a live product, I would be able to get the full text of every article that Jim and Don wrote in their—It hasn't been taken apart; it's the full text, written as it was published in The Philadelphia Inquirer?

DeJEAN—Yes, that is true.

SHEPARD—A second question. I think I remember Max saying that The Inquirer spent about $100,000, or close to it, mailing out the reprints. I don't know what the publishing costs were. Is it not true that if you had this information in digital form, that you could make it available to your users at essentially no cost to you within 24 hours or less, probably within five hours, actually?

DeJEAN—Yes.

SHEPARD—So the reprints could have been instantaneous and available to anyone who could access this system anywhere in the country, or the world, for that matter?

DeJEAN—Yes.

SHEPARD—Great. Thank you.

(DeJean continues presentation)

❶

The title page. The row of starred items down the center is the nine parts of the series. On the left-hand side, you'll notice a copyright statement. Copyright problems loom larger than ever in this new medium. And then there's a little box that says "About this Series." There's a lot of stuff here to be followed up on in an interactive random fashion. A couple of items I would call your attention to in the lower right: one of those says, "What Went Wrong?" and it looks like a little dialog balloon. That's a discussion. There is a discussion on the title page of this piece of work. I think this is important. Click there, and you're off already into posting messages and interacting with the material at the level of, "I've got an idea, and I want to tell you what it is." It's a non-deferred letter to the editor, in effect. The other thing down there is "Resources." That's the link to all the research, all the depth behind this series.

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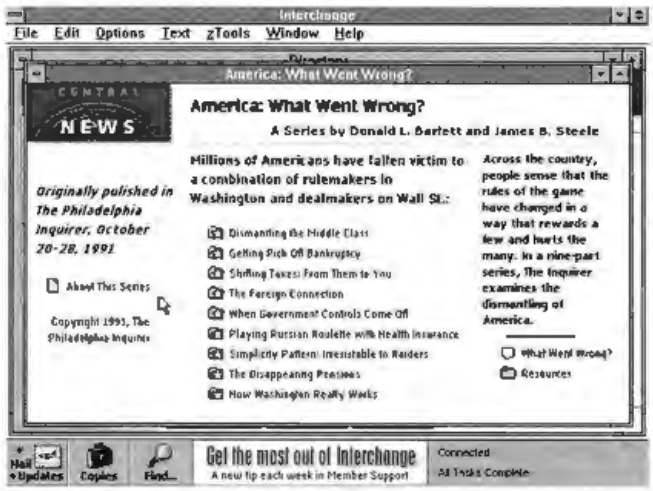

❷

Here's the "About" box with the pictures of Barlett and Steele, and their bio.

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❸

And this is the resources listing I've put together. I expanded the folder for part 1 of the series. I created folders for government documents, footnotes, related articles, photographs and graphics. Jim mentioned that they built their own databases so they could extract their own charts. I would love to be able to link in directly into those databases and make those data files available to anybody. You want to use this data? Fine, here it is. Load it up and draw your own conclusions.

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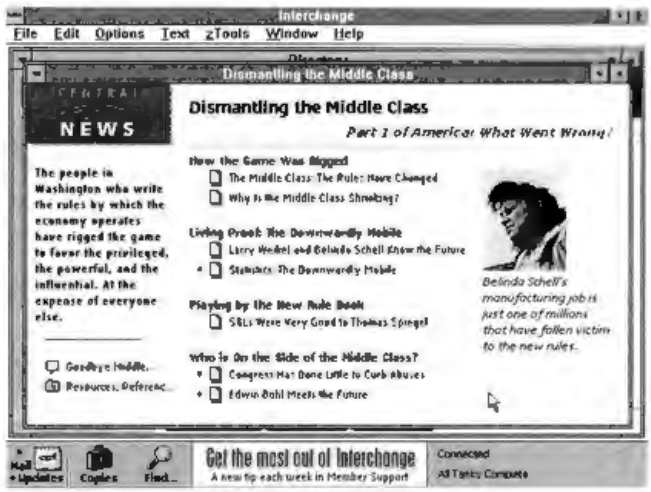
The next button that you click is probably the one that says "Dismantling the Middle Class," the first piece of the series. This is page 1 of the first installment in the series. And this is what I mean by breaking it down. It's interactive. We've got the subsections of this individual story here. We haven't lost the point of the series. There's a statement again here. We also have a photograph here and sidebars, more links to discussions, that's very important. And in the lower left is a discussion aimed specifically about the first installment, and the references and resources folder for this particular article.

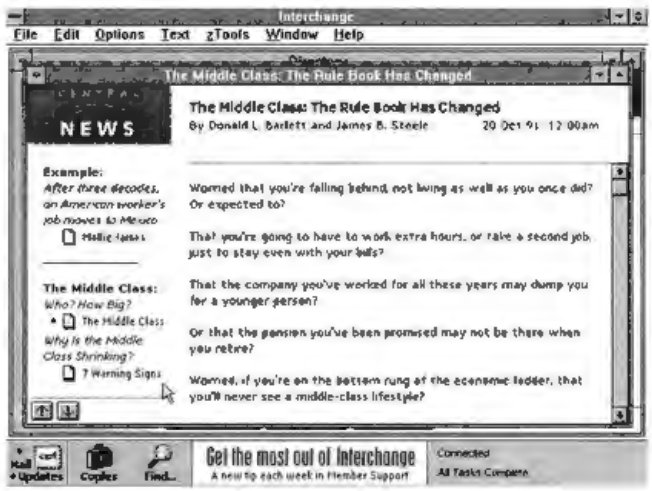
❹



❺

Now, we click on the button in the middle up there that says, "The Middle Class, The Rule Book Has Changed," which is where the article starts. And if we hit the scroll bar on the right-hand side, we scroll for a long, long way, because even in the first section of this piece, there's a lot of text to read on the screen. This medium is not designed for reading on the screen, which is another reason why it's broken up. And on the left-hand side, we've got more links to other stuff. Mollie James, for instance. If you follow that link....

❺



❻

....it brings you to this page, which was a sidebar in the original series. And, you'll notice that in a bow to the problems with the technology, there's a link there that says "Photo."

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If we click on that link, we come to the full photo of Mollie James that ran with the series, and the cut-line. This file is probably about 45-50K of data. If you're connected by a telephone link to the on-line service, that means the photo is going to take 45 seconds to come down the line to you. You don't want to look at that happen. You don't want to sit there and wait for it. So probably you click on that and let it download in the background and work around it.

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Going deeper and deeper into the data, because you liked this photograph and wanted to take a look at it, maybe you want to take a look at all the graphics. So here's the complete folder of all the graphics and photos for the series so that you can root around in them.

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The next section down is "Why is the Middle Class Shrinking?" This was a set of items that were subheaded in the text. And so I cut them all out and pasted them all into this format, and then you click on any one of them.

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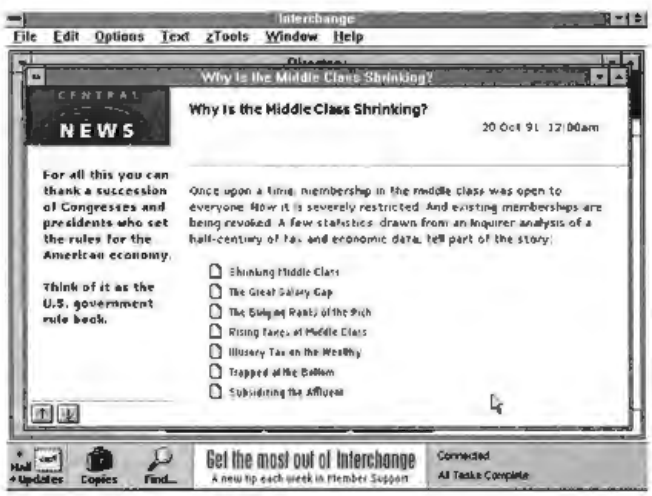

⑩

The Illusory Tax on the Wealthy. This was one of the reasons why the middle class was shrinking—the illusory tax on the wealthy. You'll notice in the left-hand column again, "Related Items."It says over there, "Income Statistics." I wanted to demonstrate a link to deeper data so what I did was manufacture a little item in the name of Don Barlett that says, "Here's something I as the author want to tell you about the sources of this information." Again, think of the telephone metaphor: "I'm speaking to you. Here's what I found. Here's how you go get it. You write to the—"

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Here's the reference for the Internal Revenue Service "Statistics on Income" bulletin for spring 1991. Here's the author's comment about it, things that he thinks are important about it. And then you can scroll through [to read] commentary from the author about the resource material on which the series was built.

⑪

What I have just showed you was very much a top-down presentation. I took a finished piece of work and turned it into something else in a different medium.

I didn't show you something that had grown up in an online medium, that had started out as discussion notes posted on bulletin boards, and had started out as individual articles written for The Philadelphia Inquirer, and that then had been gathered on line and been linked to by the authors of the series.

So I've done something that in a way is very artificial because the ideal way to do it is the other way around. Obviously, some computer-assisted reporting, as well as computer-assisted presentation, would have yielded a much more organic product. It's the difference between something manufactured and something that actually grew.

The other thing about this is that it is still too much lecture. There weren't enough voices speaking in the stuff that I showed you. We weren't looking at any messages from bulletin boards in response. We weren't hearing any opposing opinions. There were no instant letters of disagreement from government officials and Wall Street people, the kind of diversity of opinion that you would expect to have and would be very easy to represent by simply pasting links in that said, "For another opinion," over here in the sidebar, "For another opinion, click here."

I think this series is going to live for a long time. Remember I said that the story isn't finished until the mail is all answered? There's going to be mail follow-up, E-mail discussions on line for a long time. And participation in those discussions, and what develops out of that, is going to be, in some ways, just as important to the community that is interested in this series as the original series was. It's going to be a great facilitator, and it's going to drive discussion, and hopefully, drive some calls to action.

I didn't show you an index of the names, addresses and phone numbers of the House and Senate members, for

instance. We could have linked into that so that when a Congressman's name was mentioned in the story, there's a link right there that takes you directly to his address information or to his phone number, so that you can follow this call to action.

Now, let me say, too, that I spent probably a total of about, oh, eight hours, ten hours, putting this example together using the editorial tools of Interchange.

What I did was cut up the story into individual pieces, and then make copy and links from those pieces and paste them in here. The photo was scanned in, cropped, sized and pasted in here. I typed in the cut-lines; I typed in the decks; I typed in the headlines; and then I hit the Save button, and the page was made.

So it didn't take 14 people to do this, but I was obviously riding on the backs of the editorial work of 14 people. Those 14 people are no less important to this series in this form than they were to the series in print form, and I don't think we want to say, "Gee, we can cut our budgets by 95 percent." That's not the point of this exercise.

Q. & A.

PAUL TASH, Executive Editor, The St. Petersburg Times—If I understand correctly, you basically took the stories and are presumably plugging them into this presentation. Earlier you said, in the discussion of authoring, that writing here is aggressively non- literary. How would the writing actually have been different had this work been presented in this form, rather than in the printed page that it was?

DeJEAN—I think it would have been more fragmented and broken up into more pieces. We're hitting the Find button and getting back a list of documents. That's the primary interface to the data here: we're treating the series content as a database.

TASH: Would the pieces have been shorter, substantially shorter in a different tone?

DeJEAN—The individual pieces would have been substantially shorter, yes.

TASH—And is it possible that this kind of work does not lend itself to the presentation that you're pushing it into today?

DeJEAN—Yes, it's possible, but I wouldn't dwell on that too much. I think that the underlying content is just as important and needs to be presented, and we would find a way to present it properly

MAX KING—I want to say one thing about that, because there's something about the methodology we followed in putting together the series for the newspaper that, I think, may suggest a way that you could follow putting it together for this medium. We were aware of the weight of all the information we were presenting, and the likelihood that people would just sink under that weight. And so, the series was done in layers of people: narrative about real people in real situations, and then explication, with a lot of data in the explication for what it meant, and then back to narrative about people, and then back to explication; back to people, back to explication. That suggests, I think, a methodology that you could follow in this medium and break it apart in chunks of the relevant people, the relevant explication—

DeJEAN—I think that would work, and even more to the point, some of those layers would have been contributed, rather than authored. Remember that this is a nine-part series that was spread out over days. It grew over time in the newspaper. It would grow over time on line, as well. And readers should be able to respond and contribute their own stories to it, instead of having them filtered through Barlett and Steele.■

Sean Callahan

Beware of Shovelware

If there is anything that I've learned in the nearly 10 years that I've been out there trying to reinvent myself as an electronic editor it's that there is a very good reason why they call it new media. It is very new. It is frighteningly new. And the most important aspect of it is that very newness.

Whenever we get into discussions about what we want to put up on Pathfinder I often find myself paraphrasing James Carville: "It's the new, stupid!" You don't just grab some text out of your publication, put it on line and say that you've created new media. You've created shovelware. There is nothing very innovative or dynamic about asci text on a screen. The delivery is new but the media isn't. You haven't really unleashed the power of this technology and created a new dynamic in on-line publishing until you've learned how to navigate a database, harness a search engine and forge innovative links between documents.

Some web sites from professional publishers are very bad and that is because they have literally put the cart before the horse. The first question they asked was how we make money and they thought they answered it by trying to sell something —usually a product or service but not editorial content...Editorial defines and draws the consumer on line as it does on newsstands and on air. Marketers must respond to the interactive, information-driven impulse that new media editors are supplying and come up with marketing efforts that feed that same impulse in an innovative but not imitative manner. To do otherwise is to repeat the mistakes of countless publishers who failed when they launched an idea from a marketing concept.

—Sean Callahan, an editor at Time Inc. New Media, developers of Time Warner's Internet web site, Pathfinder, speaking at a Nieman Fellows seminar April 14, 1995.

Newspaper vs. On-Line Versions

A Discussion of the Old and the New Media

Bob Ingle

Vice President, New Media
Knight Ridder, Moderator

Based on what you saw here, what advantages do you see in the [on-line] presentation, compared to the printed paper? Are there benefits in this 1995 technology that David was showing?

ELLEN HUME, The Annenberg Washington Program—There are many advantages. One of them is that shelf life of news goes on and on. This series, if it's kept up, can be accessed when the consumer or the citizen is interested in the subject, rather than having to catch it on the fly when it's published. Another advantage is that the news hole is endless. If you have the energy and time to put the material up, you can provide all the outakes, all the extra stuff that didn't make it into the old tiny news hole. Another things is that geography is no longer an issue. You can get the local stories from Philadelphia Inquirer reporters all over the world instantaneously.

INGLE—An endless news hole could also make it possible to offer two or three or five different presentations of the same material, something you could almost never do in print. Maybe if you have a large Vietnamese population, you might occasionally print something in Vietnamese. Basically, this has not been possible in a physical medium. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, [it] will be possible right around the corner. You have people with various education levels, various comprehension levels, and varying amounts of time. Do we want to say that if you don't have the time for 70,000 words, or 95,000 words, in the case of the book, that this is not important material to you? Clearly, it is. The geography point also is important. It would be completely possible to ask the reader, "What state do you live in?" And to give examples, from that point on, tied to the state where the reader lives. So you could tailor that presentation to the individual as you went.

DOUGLAS CLIFTON, Executive Editor, The Miami Herald—Sorry to leap to the disadvantages, but I'm dying to. Were this published solely in computer form this way, my contention is that it would have had a fractional impact, as compared to the way it was published. By putting it on the computer concurrent with publication in the newspaper, then you take advantage of the kinds of things you're talking about. But if this were the exclusive means of dissemination, you would have lost the impact that one gets from seeing it in a newsrack, watching your neighbor look at it.

DeJEAN—Would that same loss have occurred if this had been delivered in nine consecutive nights on the eleven o'clock news?

CLIFTON—Had it been delivered on nine consecutive nights at the eleven o'clock news, it probably wouldn't have been followed, my bet is. And I'm not arguing that it should exclusively have been distributed and presented as it was in the newspaper, but if it were a combination of things—

INGLE—I don't think, that on-computer is, at this moment, or even five or six years from now, the preferred way to do things exclusively. We're in a period of transition where everything's coexisting together, and I certainly don't know where that's going. I don't know if it'll get to a point where it's all electronic. I think it's a far ways out.

ELISE O'SHAUGHNESSY, Executive Editor, Vanity Fair—When The Philadelphia Inquirer says, "We are starting this nine-part series and it's starting on Monday," and everybody picks up their paper on Monday, and everybody's experiencing it at the same time, that's something that is very difficult to achieve with the current state of technology.

MURREY MARDER, retired diplomatic correspondent, The Washington Post—Let me give an example of what I think the difference would be. If The New York Times and The Washington Post were to carry on their front pages the same story, or carry editorially the same story, the same day, it would have a remarkable effect in setting the agenda in Washington for Congress, for the White House, for the rest of the government. The same item, at this stage of computer development, carried on any computer network, would not have anywhere near the same kind of impact because of the difference between how many people were watching it. Now, by the same token, the fact that we have a multiplicity of television channels is also fragmenting the more familiar type of information dissemination. But in international affairs, it could be possible, because of the diversity that you've

mentioned, to carry a short version of a story, and to carry a long complete version, because that's one of the complexities we've had in international affairs for years.

RICH MEISLIN, Senior Editor, Information & Technology, The New York Times—There's also a more basic problem of how much you can expect readers to tolerate reading on line. I would no sooner read a piece of the length that we're talking about than I would have somebody read it to me on a TV screen. Until something is done to give you the same flexibility on line as you have to draw a newspaper reader or some printed reader into a story by eye-relief, by breaking up stories, by multiple images on the page, you're not going to be able to get readers to stick with it the way you can get them to stick with it on a printed page.

INGLE—But can you envision things a little ways down the road that would make it as good a presentation medium, with video, with sound, with all the other multimedia things that we think will be happening?

MEISLIN—I can see a point down the line where the advantages come up to balance off the disadvantages.

W. HODDING CARTER III, President, MainStreet—Let me just piggyback on that. Outside of researchers, academics, affluent dilettantes, kids, who the hell actually is going to have the time, in the foreseeable future, to do the kind of insertion into process that both the last two speakers have spoken so eloquently on? I understand those who have time to play the game, and when you say that we're going to go from narrative to database, you are saying something which automatically throws away an awful lot of people's potential, because, in fact, the point of the narrative is to make sense of the database. And you are further segmenting this society.

TODD OPPENHEIMER, Associate Editor, Newsweek Interactive—I have sort of a "squishier" concern about the loss of narrative, which is what it does to our imaginations. And I'm not sure the answer on this is negative, but I think we need to think about it. There is something not only wonderful and magical, but something effective, about taking in information in a narrative form. It builds a story in your head; it pulls people along; gives them an emotional connection; it instills it in the memory; it inspires you. If it becomes a database process, I'm not sure how much, if any of that, remains. And I worry about what effect that has.

INGLE—I'm not sure that it's a correct assumption that narrative need be lost in these new media. It's granted that it's different, but in the very best television news shows that you see, or magazine shows, is narrative lost, do you think?

OPPENHEIMER—Narrative's not lost there, but that is meant to be a narrative medium. It need not be lost here either, but at the moment, it sure as hell is absent.

INGLE—Well, let's make some assumptions and assume that, in addition to all of the interactive, timeless, bottomless—the power of the computer coming against a lot of data—that in addition to that, you have, interspersed with it, video segments, much like television that you can stop, go back in, go off sideways to explore, let's say, the background of one of the speakers that you're seeing in the video. The narrative thread is a lot more exciting than simply converting text to a computer screen. How do you think that might change it?

FRANCIS PISANI, Nieman Fellow 1993—I'm working on hypertext, not only as a way to link from an index to a story, which is a very poor way of understanding hypertext, but as a new narrative form. I think, in a way, our friend hit on the key question, which is: what is the rhetoric for the new narrative form which is required? I've seen a lot of interesting and flashy presentations of classical stories. We have to investigate the new rhetoric of these mediums. What is frightening for us, maybe, is that we are losing our authority. We are not only authors anymore. That does not mean there is not a narrative, but that has to be reinvented in the way in which the printed book gave way to El Quixote, like 100 years later. There was the need to create a new narrative from a new medium. We are at this stage, and this should not be forgotten.

BENJAMIN M. COMPAINE, Bell Atlantic Professor of Communications, Temple University—I think you guys are off on the wrong track, talking about "narrative this, narrative that." The fact is newspapers are being read by fewer and fewer people. Yes, the print paper may be the better form, folks, but only 18 people might be reading it in 15 years, if the trends continue. What I think folks in the room have to do is trip over anything they can do to reverse that trend of people wanting to go to television because they're lazy, or because it's more effective, or whatever, and if this on-line stuff and the technology is going to make that happen, let's do it, even if there's some disadvantages. Because otherwise, there ain't going to be an audience left.

INGLE—When we started Mercury Center, in [San Jose], our attitude was: nobody wants an on-line electronic newspaper. Viewtron proved that they didn't want it, so let's not even think about it. We got into focus groups and it became very clear from the feedback that, if The Mercury News was doing it, they wanted the newspaper there. So we figured out a way to automate it so it didn't cost a lot, and we put it there. We found some interesting things. There are a group of people out there—I don't know how big, but I think it's growing—who are interested in the news. They're interested in the information, and the physical product simply does not fit their lives anymore for a variety of reasons: the paper doesn't come when they leave to work; they travel a lot and they don't want the papers building up; they work in front of a workstation all day, and they're connected to the Internet at T1 speeds. Whatever the reasons, there is a body of

people who prefer to get the same information that [way]—it's harder to read, there's no question about it—because it fits their lives better. I'm pretty stunned by this, to tell you the truth.

JOCK GILL—The gentleman from The New York Times, I believe, who said that this has had no effect on Washington and that what happens on the front page of The Washington Post and The New York Times drives D.C., currently, today, I'd say it was correct. I'd give a counter-example of the clipper chip, which was not understood well by the press, and not terribly well-reported by the press. And yet, the online community basically stopped it. We're at the end of 100 years of the consumer being the victim of top-down communications, and the people don't want to be told what is news. They do need institutional memory, fact-checking and point of view, and they'll pay for it. But they want to participate in the process.

BERTIE HOWARD, Africa News Service—I want to raise a few issues that I heard in a symposium last week at Howard University, where people were concerned about whether or not electronic news leaves out a whole segment of our nation, and whether we, again, are widening the gap between the haves and the have nots. Newspapers, I know the readership is falling down, but newspapers get passed around and read to large numbers of people, particularly in minority communities. Where is the access to this information going to be with falling revenues? Lots of libraries used to have access to electronic data, but that's falling now. People talk about the non-interest in the printed paper, but look at the proliferation of small papers for minority communities, the continuing growth of newspapers—which don't make it in most instances, but it seems to me that says something about the interest among everyone in getting the information, and how do we make certain that people have that?

INGLE—A lot of what we've been talking about here today is more and more and more and more and more data. And if there's anybody in this room that thinks they don't have enough information most of the time, raise your hand. There are a few things coming down the pike, and existing right now, that actually save time: software agents, clipping services, those kinds of things which, unlike on line, which is extremely time consuming—you can sit in front of a terminal for hours, kind of rummaging around and finding new, and mostly insignificant things. The things that have real value, that save you time, are few and far between. But I suspect that increasing computing power and interconnected databases, and so on, are going to change that over the next few years.

HUME—For journalists, time loses its control over shaping your story, because if you have constant deadlines, then you can take more time against the problem. Or you can do what most people are doing today, which is panic, and throw everything on without checking it. Secondly, your question about time for the consumer: it's very clear that what consumer citizens, readers, experiencers of the news want is to save time. That's one of the reasons why consumers for television and print news are both down. So obviously, the marketplace for the journalist is better than ever. If the journalist is the editor who goes out there, selects and confirms what the facts are, you'd think the market would be better than ever. The problem is, I think, the content. Journalists have lost the trust of the public. I hope that a lot of this conference will be about the fact that the emperor has no clothes, the emperor is very sick.

RICHARD TOFEL, Assistant Managing Editor, The Wall Street Journal—It seems to me that there's a tension, ultimately, between these time and democratization notions. Just out of curiosity, how many letters did you get in response to this series?

STEELE—About 25,000.

TOFEL—And, presumably, another few thousand phone calls. And you printed, of those, ballpark, how many?

STEELE—Several hundred.

TOFEL—Okay. And you showed us, I think, five in your on-line world. David, you've cited this continually as a great advantage: just type in your reaction here. I suspect you would have had 40,000 reactions—

DeJEAN—Easily.

TOFEL—And to find the 25, I would have had to read all 40,000. There is, I think, ultimately a virtue in somebody saying, "I'm sorry, folks. I know everyone has a view, but these are the 25 most interesting views." And, I think, at the end of the day, that there are a lot of people in the world who will say, "Yes, ideally, I'd like everyone to have the same shot at expressing their views, but I can't read 40,000, and so I'll let you pick 25." And I think Ellen's right, that we have to do something about who gets entitled to do that, and how people trust them to be the person who does that. But I don't think you're going to be able to avoid having somebody do the choosing.

JEFFREY E. CHESTER, Executive Director, Center for Media Education—The access inequity issue is one of the key issues that has really been overlooked, particularly in the press coverage. One year ago, we and the NAACP and National Council, for example, released a study which showed that the Bells were bypassing both low-income communities and communities of color as they build interactive networks. FCC is still sitting on our petition. We all know this information business is dramatically transformed. There's no turning back. I think we need to reinvent the newspaper for the interactive digital world, but the key here, the challenge here is to include the values that Kovach is talking about.

VIVIAN VAHLBERG, Director of Journalism Programs, McCormick Tribune Foundation—As I sit here looking at

the demonstrations that David put up, I find myself really jarred by the prospect of having this particular work in that particular format. What disturbs me about it is that the highest value of that series is that you've had two very intelligent people taking all of the pieces, putting them together and making sense, and creating an incredibly powerful whole. And when I see that very powerful whole being broken up into pieces, with people looking at individual pieces, it makes me worry.

INGLE—Five years is about the outer limit of almost anybody's vision these days, in terms of technology, but some trends, I think, are very, very clear. The actual medium, the computers, are doubling in power every 18 months; the screens are getting finer, and so the actual devices are going to get better and better and better, and cheaper and cheaper and cheaper, as we go. Secondly, databases, especially on the Internet, are going to be increasingly interconnected, so that you could do a cross-database sweep to get information on a certain subject across 50 databases, let's say, simultaneously, and get the results back. Software agents will get more sophisticated, and you'll be able to actually keep watch on certain kinds of things without spending a lot of time at it. You can even adjust the threshold so it gives you more relevant articles, meaning fewer—or less relevant articles, meaning more. None of this—certainly within five years, and probably not in ten years—makes newspapers obsolete, or television either, for that matter, because these services, I think, will not evolve that quickly into the kind of thing that can give us the broad background and the understanding that's the kind of thing, the content, that we're talking about here. It's my belief that all of these things will remain supplemental, very useful in certain individualized applications. But the mass media, newspapers and television, I think, will still be there to provide the kind of background and understanding and common ground that society demands.■

When Multimedia Really Arrives

After the conference, three people who have been experimenting with serious news content in the new medium sent, at my request, additional ideas about how "America: What Went Wrong?" could be done on line today, or in the not-so-distant future. Here's what I compiled from conference presenter David DeJean; Bruce Siceloff, the Online Editor of The News & Observer; and Lew Friedland of the University of Wisconsin:

One important question is how the reporting would have been different—and whether the story might have been done years earlier if reporters had had on-line access to readers who might define news a bit differently than journalists sometimes do. "I suspect their reporting would have started as the natural outgrowth of their participation in discussions on various on-line services," DeJean said. "They would have broadened their search for examples by posting messages in forums laying out their ideas and asking for responses. And I suspect that in addition to transcribing hundreds of hours of taped interviews, they would also have printed out hundreds of E-mail messages."

The reporting process today also could include audio clips. We could hear the voices of some of the people featured in Barlett and Steele's story, not just see their pictures and read their quotes. (In five years, predicts DeJean, we'll be incorporating full-motion video as well.)

Much of the conference discussion centered on what happens to the narrative on line. Siceloff agreed with DeJean that the series would now be presented on line in sections, and he saw several possible advantages over the print version. He would "index it in hypertext so you can search quickly for every reference to William Simon or corporate bankruptcy, and so you can refer to Barlett and Steele's definition of middle class whenever you need reminding."

Siceloff also would work to make the databases that Barlett and Steele constructed available directly to the reader, "to find out how a particular trend applies to his or her state, county, metro area, or to a particular industry or employer." And he points out that much government information is now on line, which would have made it much easier for the reporters (and the readers, with the proper links) to access key databases at the Census Bureau and Federal Reserve, for instance.

All three believed that one of the most profound differences today and in years to come will be how reader response can be woven into the fabric of a major story on line. Much of the conference discussion missed the ways that conversation would develop around the piece, and change it. "If 'America: What Went Wrong?' had been presented on line, it would not have been the individual personal stories like those of Mollie James and Edwin Bohl that would stand out, but the preponderance of responses, the accumulation of 'me-too' messages," DeJean said. "And if the series had been presented on line, all those messages should be linked in, there alongside the statistical data for any reader who wanted to dig down far enough to find them."

Friedland also suggested someone besides the reporters could have been an on-line host for a discussion of the problems outlined in the series, and the possible solutions to them. In addition to the on-line version, regular reports could be made to the printed newspaper about what people were saying on line.

As we look ahead, DeJean said, "the reader will have the beginnings of some computer-assisted tools for understanding, software that gets smart about what its user wants to know, and how its user likes to learn—software that responds on the fly to its users' preferences for summarization, visual vs. textual presentation, and so on."

"Reading engages the reader," Siceloff summarized, "and an interactive on-line presentation can engage the reader even more."■— Katherine Fulton

New Competitors and Hybrid Forms

What Experiments Are Taking Place Outside Mainstream Journalism—How Good Are They?

A discussion by Mark Benerofe, Executive Vice-President of consumer services, Delphi Internet, formerly of Microsoft, Prodigy and CNN; Lew Friedland, Civic Practices Network and Wisconsin Online, and Omar Wasow, founder and President, New York Online.

Denise Caruso

President, Technology & Media Group, Moderator

I'm just going to start with a question: How do you see that professional journalism is being changed by electronic media, and all the features that we see in on-line journalism? Is it possible, do you think, in this era, as we move forward, to stay true to journalistic values?

MARK BENEROFE—I think it's a really complicated question, one that's kind of haunted this group. It's very frustrating for me because one of the things is the question gets muddled. First of all, newspapers have always been about more than just journalism. First, they're news, and then they're paper. But there's always been at least a dozen things in a newspaper, some of which are really not journalism, that have been very key to the bundling or marketing efforts, whether that's been classifieds, or just local announcements or weddings and births and deaths.

One of the big issues is that journalism for a long time has been a club we've all aspired to, a heritage: can I work long enough to wind up at The New York Times, at ABC, at CNN, at The Economist, or any of the wonderful companies that you all work for and have aspired to? And I don't think that's ever gotten out in the marketplace. I see the promotion happen afterwards.

I see The New York Times promote their award-winning writers after they win the Pulitzer. They're using it to sell the brand and the masthead, but they're actually disfranchising the very values, the ones we hold most dear. And I think that it was Ms. Hume who was saying earlier that it's not just that we've lost the trust. I really don't think there's the understanding.

One of the potential missions or action items out of a group like this [could be] what journalism should go up as a web site? The 52 best stories of journalism and how they were done and why they're important, and how it was covered and how it was brought to the public, and what those values are. That's a little bit self-promotion, which is a bit something that, as a group and as a profession we've always aspired against. But the problem is, I think, we have a public and a community that not only, due to occasional mistakes or just poor journalism, whether it be NBC blowing up cars, gets to the point where people lose faith and no longer believe that everyone's out there protecting their interest.

I went to Prodigy to work for Jim Bellows [former editor of The New York Herald Tribune]. That was the attraction, and a lot of ex-CBS people were there [too]. This was a company that IBM and Sears very much wanted to be a shopping service. I don't want to be very negative because they've hung in for a long time, and I actually think IBM deserves a tremendous amount of credit especially, through a lot of rough spots, especially in bulletin board policies and all the kinds of things we see today. They were very frustrated [because] they had 700 people working on the commercial side of the service and 40 under Mr. Bellows working on the editorial side. And the editorial side of the service was driving 68 percent of the usage, and the commercial side of the service was driving only 20.

And the thing that has happened, despite all the corporations you see up on the web or the net, is if you go through Yahoo, and you look at the sites that are driving the most usage, they are very much information, news, entertainment, entertainment news-based. They're not about transactions, at least not today. There's a giant opportunity for what we deliver. That's what people really want. And the people best-equipped to do that, I think, sometimes are opting out, out of bringing

their expertise to this medium for whatever reason.

CARUSO—Tell us a little bit about what you think electronic media, especially on-line services, can do better than print journalism, and where you might see the opportunities to do the kind of promotion of journalism as journalism that seems to be lacking in print.

BENEROFE—I think one of the places it does much better is in context, because of the data. I know everyone shied away from the database metaphor here, but I think the place where it shows value, and you can actually see it, is on the commercial and the editorial side. I was, when I came from CNN to Prodigy, someone who thought "Who the hell is going to want to read news on an on-line service that's this slow in 16 rotten colors in NAPLPS with one font?" And the fact is, no matter how much it's been dismantled at that service, it's still the largest reach application on the service, short of the weather map. Not a particular surprise to anyone who's been in the newspaper business.

We spent a solid year at Prodigy doing the equivalent of [Congressional Quarterly], building a giant political profile database. And we did it from the consumer's perspective. We said: "What are the 10 things you need to know if you want to be an informed citizen? What does it take?" What district do I live in? I might have to then go get zip codes and map them against Congressional districts and make a database. Who is my representative? How did he or she vote? How are they rated by a group of nonpartisan and partisan interest groups? Where do they get their money?

Try getting that kind of information and the FCC information on a regular basis where you can make it intelligible to a consumer, and then contextualize it, graph it for people. And I don't even think, to be honest, that having someone download it into an Excel spreadsheet is too damned hard. Make the graph for them, put it up there in a bar chart, show how that maps against all the other people.

That kind of information, that kind of reporting, that kind of journalism, and then being the one who goes out, and then for that community member, just as you would do it if you [worked] in a small town paper, then goes and represents that person and asks the tough questions. That's a place, I think, where there's tremendous opportunity to succeed, but I don't think we tend to do it from—we've kind of lost touch with what it is the consumer wants to know, or the reader or the member. And it's also hard work. It's expensive. I mean, it took us a year to put together that database at Prodigy. It did get the League of Women Voters to stand up with us and endorse it, which is something very unusual for them.

I was at the Republican Convention talking to Judy Woodruff at one of the Freedom Forum-sponsored events, and she was saying, "We try to give them information that's important, but they don't want it." I don't think that's true. I just think sometimes it's not in the form that lets them make sense of it.

And I think we get lazy, and also, we don't allocate the resources to do it right. It's really hard work because the world's gotten more complicated, and that means you have to take the risk and spend the money. I've always been surprised by what the results have been, even when I thought people wouldn't want to read the news or go through hard-core political stuff like that. But I think the fact is: if you give them the information they want so they can be an active citizen, in whatever field of interest or information they have, that you always are surprised.

CARUSO—I'd like to turn now to Omar. A lot of what's very important about on-line services is the communities that are created. So in what you're doing, where does hosting and facilitating conversations fit into your picture of journalism, and as a member of the computer/video generation, what do you really see as happening here? What's the transformative effect on journalism?

OMAR WASOW—If we step back and think about, well, what is the public interest? What is journalism doing here? If part of the public interest is good government and strong local communities and communities that are sort of moving in the right direction, then, it seems to me, journalism should play a role in that.

One of the questions asked before is: what is the new McLuhan phrase that applies to this new medium? For us, one of our slogans has been "the mix is the message," totally riffing on McLuhan. But what's very powerful about on-line community is that people who are never in the same room at the same time can talk to each other. In a city like New York where the Bronx and the Lower East Side are worlds apart, creating spaces for those people to establish links and to share information and to do the kind of group forming that builds better communities and builds better government, that's very powerful.

If we think about the "America: What Went Wrong?" story, and if there were 25,000 responses, it seems to me it's not too far to imagine that if we're reconceptualizing what is journalism and what is the role of a newspaper, that part of its role can be to not just put the information out there, but create places for those 25,000 people to talk to each other.

For me, this idea of the new medium, the hybrid journalism—I think the very format we have here is a good one. There were experts; there was public conversation, which didn't in any way undermine the expert discussion; and then there was very informal private discussion that happened afterwards. And that's what you see in an on-line service that I think really works. It's presenting valuable expert information; it's creating places for people to talk to each other, to build links in a way that can strengthen community in ways that break down boundaries of geography and class and color and caste, and all kinds of things, because in this medium, you can rub shoulders in a way that, at least in New York, only happens sort of on the subway, and in most cities doesn't happen at all.

CARUSO—Lately, we've been talk-

ing a bit, amongst ourselves, about how English is the language of the Internet and of on-line services. And I'm curious about how you're looking at the future? For an on-line service, you have an incredibly wide mix of minorities. Is there a way that you see any easy way of being able to reach out to communities that are not primarily English-speaking? Can you start doing translations? Do you think that this is going to be feasible?

WASOW—Well, again, to take this idea of not just broad-based public interest, but sort of narrow casting, which is something people talk a lot about on on-line forums, there will be Spanish-only on-line services. Language may prove that there may be some cleavages that happen there that reflect real life. As concerned as I am about access and about people across both America and the world getting linked and getting wired, I'm very optimistic. There was a statistic I read yesterday that said something like the Nintendo machine that people buy for 250 bucks, 20 years ago would have cost something like $14 million. The numbers may or may not be right, but roughly that's the case. The technology is becoming more and more democratic and accessible in a way that allows people who aren't necessarily wealthy, who aren't necessarily big institutions, to become producers of information, not just consumers. I think our service is a reflection of the fact that I'm not a rich person and I've been able to put together a service that, on some level, competes with America Online. It's a graphical user interface, and that's a reflection of the fact that this technology is getting so cheap and so accessible that it puts an enormous amount of power in a wide array of peoples' hands.

CARUSO—The last thing that I'd like you to talk about a little bit is how your relationships work on line with the magazines who have a presence on New York Online.

WASOW—The key idea has been that magazines have a readership. The broad concept of New York Online is that people who have common passions, common interests, but aren't in the same room at the same time, who are geographically disparate, can make connections in an on-line forum in a way that they can't do in real life. So people who are your readership are a branded community, if you're a publication. When we've talked to Vibe, we said, "Look, there are all these people who are really passionate about your publication, but they don't get to talk to each other. Part of the service you provide is that you create a space for your readers to talk to each other." For me, the vision of where this can go is that it's not just special-interest groups that are stamp collectors, but it's the people who read Essence. What surprised them is they listed an E-mail address. They were flooded with E-mail and they had no idea they were going to get this kind of response. And all those people wanted to talk to each other. That's a very powerful part of building a relationship with the reader, allowing them to talk to you, and allowing them to talk to each other.

CARUSO—I also just want to point out something that Mark and I were noticing during the last session, which is that someone said if it were possible to send E-mail about the series, "America—What Went Wrong?" it would be possible that you would get 40,000 responses, and people were sort of horrified by that. Well, there's two points to make. One is that if you are a newspaper who runs an on-line service, and you have 40,000 people posting in your forum, you are going to make some money from that. The second thing is that if 40,000 people write in, you don't have to read everything they write. The point of this is what Omar's talking about, which is giving people the opportunity to express themselves, whether anybody ever reads it or not. People want to be creative and express themselves, and sometimes they make friends from doing that; sometimes they learn something. If you want to edit that down for publication, that's fine, but the point is to allow people to express themselves.

WASOW—And they're not mutually exclusive. Those are complementary things. You can have your highly edited, narrative content, and you can have your discussion areas, and there doesn't have to be some sort of hodge-podge mish-mash.

RON JAVERS, Newhouse School, Syracuse University—What you just said was very interesting. You said that these people could write 40,000 of them. Let them all write, but no one's going to read what they write.

CARUSO—Oh, well, no, I did not say that.

JAVERS—That's not communication. That's what you said.

CARUSO—No, I didn't.

JAVERS—But that's when I almost had a coronary.

CARUSO—Well, you have the choice to read whatever you want to read. People who spend time in on-line forums, if you join a news group, for example, on the Internet that's been in existence for 10 years, I highly doubt that you're going to start 10 years back and read every message that's been posted.

BENEROFE—One of the things that I think that people miss about the web is that everyone thought the written word was dead. And one of the things on the web is the written word is not dead. Everyone says, "Literacy. Why Johnny can't read." But nobody says it secondarily, that he can't write. It's nice that everyone gets to read your stuff, and it's great if you can manage it appropriately so you can actually make people feel that that's been satisfied. But frankly, there's nothing wrong with playing a piano or writing a diary if no one's hearing it and you're not in Carnegie Hall. The very fact that more and more kids or people are learning how to express themselves in this medium and are self-published, has value unto itself.

CARUSO—Lew, can you tell us a little bit about what you're doing?

FRIEDLAND—Online Wisconsin and the Civic Practices Network are two far ends of the same spectrum. Online Wisconsin is an on-line multimedia news journal, still more print-based than we would like, but it has audiotext and a little bit of video, even though it's ungodly difficult to work with. Online Wisconsin's model is a model of journalists as citizens. It's a public journalism or a civic journalism model. In other words, we asked ourselves—what can we, as professional journalists—and journalists-in-training, our students—do to create more of the kind of edited, if you will, community, the constructive narrative that allows our readers to engage in citizenship activity? I watched the Barlett and Steele presentation with great interest. We, in fact, tried to use that as a model for preparing a public journalism discussion on welfare. What we tried to bring to that discussion is a multiplicity of points of view, including the original documents, studies that the government has that, for example, were paid for by the State of Wisconsin, but then promptly lost, or that weren't covered in the mainstream media, the statements of Governor Tommy Thompson and his main welfare reform architects, all in one place, to allow readers to take advantage of those multiple contexts, to take advantage of them over time. Every day, that's there. It's up there and it's added to, and a conversation grows over time around that kind of on-line public journalism.

The second model is somewhat different, and I think, in some ways, it's more challenging, closer to the one that both Omar and Mark are talking about. That's citizen journalists—not professional journalists as citizens, but citizen journalists who essentially take an area of their expertise and skip the editors, or become editors themselves, to put it more succinctly, in which, for example, on the Civic Practices Network, we've assembled an environmental team, a community and economic development team, a health team, and so on, leading experts from around the country who facilitate a citizen conversation and learning processing, using their expertise to guide that conversation in ways that editors, in many cases, maybe can't and certainly haven't, but allowing citizens to formulate their own points of view in the process of reading and using this network.

CARUSO—When you look at how the service is being used, do you get the same kind of response as what the last panel talked about, in terms of what went wrong, where people were saying, "We want more of this. We want more information. We're glad to get our hands on this"?

FRIEDLAND—We have gotten pretty good reader or user response, if you will, to the public journalism projects. You just touched on the difference between information and context. I want to point out that information doesn't always help to explain the larger picture. Actually, it sometimes jams up the ability to perceive the larger picture. So what we do is context-building. Sometimes, that involves access to information resources; sometimes it doesn't. On the Civic Practices Network, the point is to build narrative, to build context —not to give people more information. They can get information in lots of different places, but it's to build a kind of context that allows them to then engage in a dialogue with their fellow citizens and act around a variety of issues nationally. It's that kind of context-building activity that I think is probably the single most important contribution that this new medium can make.

GEORGE LEWIS, NBC News—I'd like to ask Omar a question. It seems to me that the signal to noise ratio in cyberspace is kind of awful sometimes, that at the fringes of cyberspace, there's sexism and racism, and there are flame wars going on. How do you create an environment that's friendly to a diverse group of people? And, number two, the economic issues. A family living below the poverty line in, say, the South Bronx, how do they get on line? How do they afford to avail themselves of your kind of service?

WASOW—Well, to address the first one, I'm not so optimistic about the medium that I would say that it's somehow a utopia. It reflects society. It's a medium just like print, and you see all of the ugliness and all of the goodness in society in this medium. People tend to think that this is somehow going to be idyllic. It's not. It's another medium, and it should be treated as such, and there shouldn't be higher expectations. But to come to the bigger question, if we're going to try and cultivate something, how do we do it in a way that's actually rewarding to people? This is what we've been working on tooth and nail for the last year. And I think there are a couple of key things that come out. One is that you want to have people who are sort of hosts or moderators. And while Donahue is not a journalist, there is a kind of role there where you're sort of moderating competing conversations. And when two people start screaming at each other, you step in and say, "Okay, easy." And as important as the World Wide Web is and the global Internet is, for us, the idea of local is really important and if you have a boundary where there's a defined community, there's some accountability. On a service like America Online, people have four account names, and they can change them at will. So what happens? You get a lot of people who—they're bored—change their name and they go and they act like on-line vandals. The value of local is that people might bump into each other in real life, and, in fact, we encourage that. When that happens, you're a lot less likely to call somebody a jerk on a moment's nntice. You set a standard, and people try to live up to it. Clearly, it's going to degenerate, but, you can posh people in the right direction.

In regard to the other question, poverty is and will continue to be an issue. There's an enormous combination of government bureaucracy, historical bias and injustice. And those things aren't changing, and they're reflected in people who have more access to technology, and some people have less. At

Omar Wasow

the same time, I learned to program in a public school with a $100 computer that plugged into a TV. I was inspired to want to program because I was playing video games. That path to computers and sort of a love of computers is not a particularly privileged one. Both of my parents are well-educated, so there's no question that there was some help there. But I'd like to believe that the kind of tools that are necessary to become deeply connected to computers and to the technology, and to be smart about it, is not exclusive.

W. HODDING CARTER III, President, MainStreet—I'm interested in a factual question. If there are a million requests for information on item X, what are those million requests for? I'm taken by the fact that the largest single demand on various forms of video [is] pornographic, just statistically. And I was wondering what this demand wave that you're talking about is asking for. And parenthetically, as one who used to answer those questions with computers for the government, if that's a conversation, I'm a turkey. That kind of mail response is a god-awful fake, no matter how it's done, because it is not a human being responding. It is a preset game which spews out a set of things triggered by the question. It's sort of like a Washington talk show. If you think you're learning anything real about the world from it, forget it.

CARUSO—For example, Time Warner's Pathfinder site on the Internet, they can tell when you come into their area. They can't tell a whole lot more about you than that, and they don't even know exactly who you are, but there's a way that people can count, can tick how many people come into an area. So the Penthouse and Playboy web sites on the Internet, forget it. You can try for days and never be able to get to it because all the nodes are taken up with whoever feels compelled to do those kinds of things. Mazel tov. But, you can tell that there are people. It's not just sort of an amorphous blob of 30,000 people flying around on the net. You can tell where they are and what they're doing.

BENEROFE—If you look at the Yahoo list, the largest group tends to fall into the pop culture arena—probably no surprise—arts, entertainment, music, movies.

BENJAMIN M. COMPAINE, Professor of Communications, Temple University—It seems to me that we've gotten to the point where it's become almost so democratic that anyone could become a publisher, whereas in the print world, anyone who has ever tried to do even a newsletter knows that getting distribution can often be difficult, and that what you have here is a ready-made distribution network. Anyone can become a publisher; some can fail; some can be very successful; some will reach small audiences, and some might reach big audiences. But is that what you guys are talking to, what I would like to call publishing dialtone?

FRIEDLAND—I think that's absolutely right, Ben, and I think that that's why we see this potential massive inversion of the whole set of relationships, economic relationships that have characterized the print world. We started putting Online Wisconsin together, granted, with some student labor and a lot of volunteer energy, but the capital investment was $5,000. Essentially, we can reach worldwide for $5,000. If anybody can essentially buy a worldwide interactive printing press for roughly

five grand—and really it's cheaper than that. You could do it for $2,500 or less, if you wanted to. That starts to create a really different world and opens up publishing to entirely new voices. Right now, video is still very slow, very cumbersome. But, for example, Oracle's new proposed video dialtone network will allow a similar kind of video publishing, which will open up the way for the kind of miniaturization—miniature television publishers, miniature television news services—that might end up being very, very analogous to the kind of publications that we're hearing about here.

WAYNE MacPHAIL, Director, Southam Infolab—When we were talking earlier about this medium being anti-narrative, it might be just that we're looking for narrative in the wrong place. I liked Lew's point about narrative exploding out in the community creating narrative.

WASOW—Everybody surfs. Nobody watches one cable channel, no matter how many there are. "America—What Went Wrong?" came out in nine separate issues. Some people missed an issue; some people read some of the sidebars; some people just read the charts. Just because it's being printed in one standard format, doesn't mean everybody consumes it the same way. There's this sort of myth that we've put it out there and it's absorbed. And the reality is I open The New York Times in the morning, and I go to the business section, and I look at the index. And I read about what's happening with America Online, and I skip all the other stuff. I already do a newspaper for me, and I think that's always happened.

FRIEDLAND—About five years ago, we wanted to start an environmental news weekly nationally, and we had some of the best environmental journalists who wanted to contribute. We wanted to do it on television. Well, we had to ante up, very conservatively, a million and a quarter, a million and a half, just to be able to do a bare-bones type of thing using video cameras. Even using Hi-8 cameras, anticipating some of the breakthroughs that we're starting to see now, but we didn't have a million and a half dollars to get started. Today, that environmental news weekly could be done. You go out and you do it with Hi-8, and you report it and edit it professionally, and you put it together on the net, and you distribute it that way. That's journalism.

BENEROFE—Newspapers really are, in some ways, a better user interface, an interactive metaphor, and they long have been. It's much harder on this limited screen or with netscape browsers where you can't sometimes see the whole page to actually navigate. One of the great things about newspapers is you can navigate all over the place.

WASOW—It doesn't always have to be read on the monitor. I think one of the things that we're going to see increasingly is that on line will be just a distribution method, and then somebody will print it out in their home, because print and paper still do have a value, but you can cut out all of these old distribution technologies.

CARUSO—I think there's going to be a lot more printers, because people will find their information on line, and then they will print it out and take it with them.

STEVE ISAACS, Co-Chair, The Center for New Media, Columbia University—Many of us who have been ink-stained wretches for most of our lives see you and people like you as sort of the invading hordes coming over the mountains on your elephants. Does a person like yourself [believe] CNN, Prodigy, Bill Gates, now Rupert Murdoch, are going to destroy the values that Bill Kovach and a lot of others of us in this room hold dear? Are we dead meat?

BENEROFE—I think you're only dead meat if you choose to opt out. That's when you become dead meat. I think that it behooves everyone to get in the game. It's very hard for small newspapers—they're so strapped—to put the kind of resources into what they need. But when you look at the costs, which are coming down, it's not that hard to bit by bit go digital and be able to get in the game. You're not dead meat and if you're dead meat I think we should all go home. I feel really strongly that what works already and what we've seen work on line best espouses the virtues of all those things that are about news. They may not necessarily be about paper.

TODD OPPENHEIMER, Newsweek Interactive—I have a question for Lew [Friedland]. You mentioned this notion of having citizen journalists participate. I'm curious about how you go about fact checking their material, if you do, and how you put it up, what kind of disclaimers you include, if you use that, and also, this whole notion of building up context, or whatever, if it just provokes, in a sense, new story ideas?

FRIEDLAND—When I said citizen journalists, that was a turn of phrase. They're citizen editors. We have editorial teams, people of the highest repute in their respective areas, people like Bruce Jennings of the Hastings Institute. Those of you who have covered the health-care issue know that he's a leading health-care policy expert. Mike Garland, Chair of Oregon Health Decisions. These are people who have been involved with these debates and know them probably better than any beat reporter or medical editor out there. So they're people who know their stuff. The editorial teams are really editors. They didn't go to J-school, or they didn't necessarily serve time on a city desk, but they know their domains, and they know them down cold. So in that sense, they're gatekeepers of a different sort. They're gatekeepers who gain their spurs by having been involved in these issues for a number of years and know these areas very, very well. They don't post anything. It's not a bulletin board. Now, as far as the issue of disclaimers go, we do allow a wide latitude because we're a medium for dialogue. We're not simply a journalistic medium. We're trying to encourage a policy debate, broadly defined, among citizens, so we

want room for a wide range of use and a wide range of assertions of fact. But we do try to check for accuracy, but part of the check is in the dialogue itself, and that's the other thing I want to stress, and that's kind of a radical concept, sometimes, assuming that you're not being inflammatory or overtly publishing wrong-headed information, then sometimes, you have put ideas out there or interpretations of fact and allow other people to say, "Sorry, I see that differently, and here's my supporting evidence." That's really what fact checking is in the scientific community. It's only in the journalistic community that it's defined as whatever an editor says it is, or whatever a good reporter following certain rules comes out, and that's the end of it.

VICTOR NAVASKY, The Nation—Every day, there is a new story of a merger or takeover or a coming together of a new mega-communications conglomerate. Is that all irrelevant to what you're talking about here? Is that going to have no impact on content because every citizen can eventually get a piece of hardware, at least in the West, but not in the developing world? Or is that a real concern? And if so, at what point is the market going to take over this free Internet and affect it, and in your judgments, how?

WASOW—I know that a lot of our current subscribers are people who have fled systems like AOL [American Online] and Prodigy because of oppressive free speech policies they have. While I'm not enthusiastic about all the mergers, to some degree that can work as a strengthening force for outsider voices.

BENEROFE—I think it does, to the degree that all the mergers sometimes are so big that the companies trip over themselves, and it creates a lot of opportunity for entrepreneurs, because they can get to market so much faster. But I do think that there's no way that the merger of all the conglomerates doesn't give cause to concern to what's been the independent editorial voices. But that's been going on for a long time and is not particular to this meeting.

NAVASKY—The point is, in traditional media, at least it's my view that what you get as a result of these mergers—leaving out the politics and the ideology—is homogenization. And if you get that magnified exponentially through this worldwide trans-mega conglomerate, it seems to me it's a qualitative difference, the same way the new technology may be a qualitative difference.

CARUSO—But there's also a quantitative difference, which is that anybody in this room, no matter what organization you're attached to, can have a piece of hardware hooked up to the World Wide Web, and you are a publisher. It is the nature of the Internet to be decentralized and open.

NAVASKY—I think that's a moot point. I think that's an illusion, though.

FRIEDLAND—It's not a delusion. It's actually a fact, Victor. If you go back to the 1500's and the days of the printing press, there were two models. There were pamphleteers, small presses, the kind of world that Elizabeth Eisenstein describes, for example, in which there were many, many small points of view. Then there were state monopolies. Then the king tried to essentially suppress what he didn't want published. It's not perfect analogy, but we're entering a very, very similar world, where just because there is control at the top does not mean that points of view can be suppressed. The truth of the matter is that it's much easier now for any citizen to publish electronically than it ever was in the 1500's to set up a print shop. That was still a form of guild, restricted guild craft. Now, essentially any 14-year-old kid can do it. Does that make it journalism? No, it does not, and I want to be clear about that. But it is a kind of freeing of the press.

WASOW—I just want to add one last point, and that is that it's possible that in five years, the Microsoft network is the platform and the web has died. This is a brief moment. There was some debate a few years ago about [whether this is] going to be a point-to-point model where any person can communicate with any other person, which is what you have on the web, which is what people who have been on the set for awhile advocate fiercely? Or is it going to be the kind of corporate model where there's like a central broadcaster and you just receive? And while I'm enthusiastic about point-to-point—anybody publishes to anybody else—I don't think it's guaranteed that that's the model that continues. That's something we all need to fight vigorously for.

BENEROFE—The Internet has shaken the on-line industry and the large publishers to [their] very roots because of the fact that it enables publishing from niches and smaller voices. One of the bigger issues does concern me. In terms of the original source information, there's less original reporting being done. There's more of each of the companies just packaging the same stuff, the same wire feeds. There's fewer news gatherers out there. And that does concern me. The problem then is how [to] publicize and promote and educate about both the editorial standards and the heritage, and the importance. How do you bring to the consumer the differentiation between this is what has been done on that editorial model, this is the area where we're all communicating and sharing experiences and is not done on that editorial model, and this is commercial advertising or just opinion voices?

FRIEDLAND—If the network is privatized and closed, then we are dead meat.■

What Makes Journalism Different?

What Is the Problem for Which Journalism Is the Answer?
What Are the Problems Technology May Solve?
What Are the Problems Technology May Create?

A conversation among Neil Postman, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences, New York University; Richard Harwood, founder of The Harwood Group, a research firm, and conference attendees.

NEIL POSTMAN—I've been a little disappointed so far in the conference. The theme of the conference, "Public-Interest Juurnalism: Winner or Loser in the On-Line Era," suggested to me that we'd hear something about the purpose of journalism. We didn't hear too much about that. There were some questions. During the last session, someone from the back said, "What is journalism?" But I had the impression this question wasn't taken very seriously.

I had the feeling so far that I often have at education conferences. When educators get together to talk about education in the on-line era, they almost never talk about the purpose of schools. They begin to talk right away about Internet, and computer technology generally. One gets the impression that whatever the technology will allow them to do, that's what education will become.

This is always depressing to me, because I think of such educators as hard-line determinists. In fact, I even heard Katherine say right at the beginning this morning, "technology, or technological change, cannot be resisted," which was a chilling remark, I thought. But no one reacted to it. I thought they would pull her down from the stage, but everyone just sat there.

I also heard Jim Steele, say, "technology is just a tool," and it reminded me of the old saying, that "to a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail." And I was thinking that I suppose you could say to a person with a television camera, everything looks like an image, and to a person with Internet, everything looks like data.

What I'm driving at is that technology may be a tool, but it is a tool that has an agenda, a political agenda, an epistemological agenda, a social agenda, and I notice that really didn't come up.

I just want to say one other thing, which is that most of the people who spoke about technology this afternoon spoke as advocates. That surprised me, because I always thought of journalists as, if not entirely cynical, at least people with some distance on what was happening in the culture. So what I heard were advocates telling us what technology can do for journalism. There weren't more than four sentences, maybe three, on what technology will undo for journalism.

Anyone who's studied the history of technology, knows that it's always a Faustian bargain: it will giveth, and it will taketh away. And the question of what a technology will undo seems to me at least as important as the question of what it will do.

RICHARD HARWOOD—The conversation that I heard this morning and this afternoon was also very similar to other conferences I've been to with public officials who are now thinking about applying technology to reconnect citizens in the political process, to educational conferences that I've also attended and to many civic groups who are now exploring the use of technology. What struck me, as you were saying, Neil, is that we became enamored with the technology and left the content behind.

Bill [Kovach] and Katherine [Fulton] started, I think, very well, saying, "Look, this is about the relationship between public-interest journalism and technology, and will public-interest journalism be a winner or a loser in the new media age?"

I felt that we set up some false choices for ourselves. For instance, I remember in the first conversation, we talked about dinosaurs versus "techies," if you remember that. We talked a lot about new media versus print. What's striking about this issue, particularly as you go out and talk to the public, is that they don't make any distinctions at all.

For instance, in this "Timeless Values" report that we did for ASNE [American Society of Newspaper Editors], [people we surveyed] would have said that this conversation to them sounded very foreign. What was so striking about what they had to say was, "We don't want to talk about new media. What we want to talk about is journalistic values. What's the value that journalists bring to technology?" So to turn one of your last statements around, about what can technology do for journalists, I think the question we ought to be asking ourselves is: what can journalists do for technology?

As we look out into new media, and particularly, as you look out into new media in the context of public-interest journalism, I think we face a real choice. One is that we can continue to pursue the kinds of journalism that a lot of people now see, which is largely based on dissonance, polarization, making superficial analyses of things.

And new media, because of the lack of time involved, because of its quickness, because as someone said, "You can read something and respond right away," which is not deliberative in any way. That's sort of a knee-jerk response. It's not deliberate; it's not thoughtful; it's not reflective. [It] will accentuate and accelerate many of the problems that people now believe mar journalism in print, let alone in new media.

So, one of the things I would urge us to think about is: what is the role of a journalist in a society that is changing? What is the role of journalism? What is the relationship between journalism and society? And what are our journalistic values? As we answer those questions, the medium becomes much less important, because then we have a set of guiding principles that we can take with us and apply to different mediums, albeit differently, but at least we can say: are we moving in the right direction?

POSTMAN—The word "narrative" came up a lot in the discussion, although it wasn't always clear that everyone meant the same thing. I was wondering what would happen if The Philadelphia Inquirer had done a series called "America: What Went Right?" I really would be interested to know where they would look, what sort of ideas they would uncover.

Now, what I mean by this is: do journalists have a narrative of the story of democracy? Is there a story journalists want to tell to Americans? I don't mean to imply that it's inappropriate to say "America: What Went Wrong?" In fact, that's part of the narrative, that in a democracy you do that. But it would be very interesting to find out from journalists: what is the story about de-

mocracy they really want to tell, and what contribution can journalism make to the development of the democratic ideal?

At a late and convenient hour, we can discuss how technology can help that story to be told, but to first talk about what technology can do without addressing that question, seems to me like those educators who want to talk about whether or not we should have personal computers brought into the classroom, and if not, address the question: what is school for?

HARWOOD—From the public's perspective, I think they can define the role that they see newspapers and journalists and other media playing in this democratic experience. I think they look, for instance, to newspapers to be truth-tellers, to get to the essence of what's really happening. They look to newspapers to be guides. At one point in the conversation, people were saying that people want editors and journalists to get out of the way.

I think that's a far cry, really, from where the public is. They value the editorial judgment that journalists and others bring to the newspaper and to media. They don't believe you exercise the editorial judgment, and that's the problem.

POSTMAN—Does the public that you studied make a distinction among data, information, knowledge, wisdom? Does that matter, or...

HARWOOD—Oh, very much. They make a distinction between, for instance, journalism and information and data. To many people, journalism, again, gets to providing a sense of trying to get at the truth, although there may not be a single truth. They often think that we try to find one.

What they want is more of a sense of what are the competing points of view on something. They look at journalism as providing perspective, as providing context. They look at journalism as very much being connected to the community. That's the franchise for people. That's where, for a lot of people, newspapers and journalists, and other journalists, get their credibility, is that people believe that there is a special tie between journalists and the community that they cover. They often believe that tie has been separated or severed, but they believe historically there has been that tie.

Information, on the other hand, doesn't have necessarily those characteristics. It might be data. It might not be connected to anything. It might not have a sense of context. There might not be a sense of different perspectives.

POSTMAN—Beginning in the 1840's, with telegraphy and photography, we actually solved the problem of information scarcity. In solving the problem we've created another problem, which newspapers could answer, I think. That is information glut.

It's perfectly obvious that information has become a form of garbage, and ourselves, garbage collectors. The question is not, for crying out loud, how to get more information faster, in diverse forms, to people, although, if you listen to some of the guys talking up here today, you wouldn't know it. The problem is how to decide what is significant, relevant information, how to get rid of unwanted information.

I usually try to compare the information environment to the biological environment. We have an immune system which helps us to get rid of unwanted cells. If our immune system is not working, if it cannot get rid of unwanted cells, we get some form of cancer, AIDS, if you will.

The information environment, by analogy, has to have built into it institutions which will help us get rid of unwanted information. In the 19th Century, this was not a problem because we suffered from information scarcity. In 1995, we are overwhelmed by information. It comes indiscriminately, whether asked for or not, in huge volumes, at great speed, in diverse forms.

What are the institutions that could function as our intellectual immune system?

HARWOOD—There are very few institutions, I think hardly any, in most communities that are left that have the capability not only to sort through information, but to get it out in a way that people see themselves as being more than just isolated, atomized individuals, but can place themselves in the context of a larger community, of a larger arena.

I am very optimistic about the future of newspapers, because there is a yearning within the country for a sense of coherence; there is a yearning in the country for a sense of civility; there is a yearning in the country for a sense of seeing different sides of issues. Those are all things that have been typically associated with newspapers.

Now, people don't believe newspapers and journalists are delivering on those now, but that's the historical brand that people associate, and so newspapers will do very well, and journalists are very well-positioned to fill the void of both sorting and also providing that larger context.

POSTMAN—I would call a newspaper an information management system. I mean, there are many kinds of institutions that manage information for us. A university is one. If you look at NYU's catalog, you will find in it a statement of what NYU's professors think is worthwhile knowledge. What is not in the catalog is what the professors think is not worthwhile knowledge.

Now, there's plenty of knowledge about astrology, plenty of stuff around, but you won't find a course in astrology in the NYU catalog. You might find it in the Harvard catalog; I don't know. But in the NYU catalog, you will not because the professors do not think this kind of knowledge contributes to making an educated person, which is to say that behind the catalog is a theory, which professors, by the way, can articulate, as to what constitutes an educated person.

A newspaper is a theory of what constitutes an informed person, so one depends on it. I get The New York Times every day. If it were up to me, Rich, you know what I'd read? I'd do the crossword puzzle; I'd read to see, well, these days, how the Knicks made out. I'm not interested in the Mets. And then I'd look at the letters to the editor, because I always like those. And then I'd throw the damn thing out. I don't throw the thing out because what is on the front page, determined by editors,

is a statement of what they think an educated person in 1995 should know about, and I take them seriously.

They're a filter for me. Now, I don't have to agree in every detail with their conception of what an informed person should know about, which is why I read "The Nation" when it comes out, because Victor [Navasky] always prints what the editors of The New York Times don't think is relevant information. But that's because Victor has a different theory of what an educated or informed citizen should be.

So what I'm driving at is that any institution that is concerned with information first acts as a filter, or ought to. The idea of—well, this phrase was used a number of times today—there's a democratic new technology. I know "democratic" is a good word, so everyone is supposed to immediately have a warm feeling about it, but that could be a dangerous notion.

Some guy told me just yesterday at the dentist, "Don't drink any Coca Cola today because it'll affect your brain." So I said, "Where did you get this?" He said, "It was on Internet."

So this is one effect you see of a democratic information system.

A newspaper can make an essential contribution to the polity by functioning as a filter and saying, "This is the information we think you should attend to, and the stuff that is not here, we think you could live without."

HARWOOD—There are two important points about, if you want to call it, the information management system of newspapers.

One is, if, in fact, the role of newspapers is to make a contribution to the health of the polity, then I think one of the things we need to think about is: are we creating enough room within our society for polity to act as informed citizens? Are we creating enough room? We've talked a lot today about means, about instruments, technology, but not as much about content.

When you go into most newspapers and journalistic institutions, there's always a saying above the door about "We're here to help create informed citizens and make democracy work better." If, in fact, we take that seriously—and I do, and I believe most people who go into journalism have those aspirations—then I think we need to look seriously at ourselves about: are we doing that?

My sense, from engaging the public over a number of years on this issue, is that, in fact, we're doing exactly the opposite. We cover the news in ways that polarize. We do polls that ask people questions before they've ever had a chance to think about an issue. We fragment issues in ways that we think are making them manageable, but strip away the meaning, all right.

And it seems to me that if, in fact, we're interested in making this contribution, one of the things we ought to be considering is: are we creating the room for people to think? Are we creating enough room for what I would call ambivalence? Not that people are indifferent, but that they haven't made up their minds. They need to know more. They want to explore. They don't want the debate shut down.

Are we engaging people in thinking, as opposed to just telling them? So I think that's one point I think we need to think about if we're interested in making a contribution.

The second one is, which I think is connected to that, and you can't do the first without the second one, I don't think, successfully. We need to think about what is the very nature of the relationship between a newspaper and its community. What's the relationship? For instance, do we truly understand what the community is concerned about? Not have we taken polls, but do we understand the essence of what people are concerned about?

When Jim Barlett was talking about "What Went Wrong with America?" he started out with corporate restructuring. That's almost like an icon. The public click that on and then a whole slew of related issues come out that are connected that are very much important.

Do we understand all those other issues: the web of concerns that people bring to public life? Do we understand the ambivalence that people are really wrestling with, so that we can help to create an informed citizenry? Do we understand the emotional or the factual obstacles that people bring to a debate? And secondly, do we bring those insights back into the newsroom and let them permeate everything we do, in terms of the questions we ask, the stories we frame, how we go about doing our work?

It seems to me if we don't do that, it makes it very difficult to make a real contribution over time. We can do good projects and good stories, but over time, the institution hasn't changed, and it hasn't forged a stronger relationship with the community.

POSTMAN—I think we can do no better than to make our citizens aware of how new technologies alter the meanings of important words, without our quite knowing that they're doing it. For instance, you just used the word debate, and I was thinking that in America, the model of a political debate, of course, is the Lincoln-Douglas debates. And as you know, the standard format was that as they went through Illinois, the different towns, Lincoln would speak for three hours and Douglas would speak for three hours, and then Lincoln would have an hour for rebuttal, and then they'd go on to the next town and switch it. And now, what happens is that Barbara Walters says to the President, "This question is for you, President Bush. What do you think is the cause of the difficulty in the Middle East and how can we solve it? You have two minutes to answer this question, after which Governor Clinton will have a minute for rebuttal."

And then people actually say the next day, "Did you see the debate?"

HARWOOD—Well, yes, but they also say, "Who cares?"

POSTMAN—Well, that's true. But I notice that television has changed for all time the meaning of the word debate.

And I notice in listening to the sessions this morning here, there was a "chat session." And I don't think the meaning of chat session in the Internet world is the same meaning that we would normally have given. So we would have to look at what's happening to the phrase "town hall meeting." What's happening, what's the new

meaning of a "chat session," the new meaning of "community," the new meaning of a "conversation?"

I was asked not long ago to have a conversation with Seymour Papert, who's an MIT professor who writes on the role of computers in the schools, and this was last summer. And I said, "Fine. When will he be in New York?" And the guy said, "Well, he's not coming to New York. He's on vacation in Cape Cod, and we thought you would do this on E-mail." So I said, "That's okay, but E-mail is two guys typing to each other. And I'll do it if you stop calling this a 'conversation,' because a conversation to me means people are co-present; they can see each other, touch each other, smell each other, see each other's posture, et cetera, et cetera. This is a conversation. If you want to have two guys typing to each nther, that's okay. I'm not against that. But let's say, 'Why don't you and Papert type some things to each other?'"

So I think we have to alert our citizens to the fact that new technologies change the meanings of very important words, and we have to know that this is happening.

Q. & A.

MATTHEW STORIN, Editor, The Boston Globe—I get kind of disheartened in some of these conversations and panel discussions about technology. And when I hear information discussed like it's a commodity that's coming along on a conveyor belt, and it's sliced and diced and filtered by editors, or it's accessed by people on line, there's hardly ever, in my experience, discussions of where this information comes from, the gathering of information. And I wonder if there's any value seen to what reporters do. Barlett and Steele had to dig out and analyze and synthesize that information. And every day, reporters on newspapers are trying to get information, often that people don't want them to have. Frankly, most of this is done by newspapers, and what you see on television, what you hear on radio, what you see on Internet is really a regurgitation of information that began with these newspapers. Not all. I'm not trying to make a speech for newspapers. What I'm trying to get you to address is whether, in the future, there's going to be any value placed on the role of old-fashioned reporting?

HARWOOD—Do you mean in terms of going out and doing the kind of legwork that they do? My sense [is] if we don't do that—there was a question that someone asked: "Are we dead meat?" right, a couple of hours ago. I think if we don't do what you're suggesting, you will become increasingly irrelevant.

Right now, what's happening, I think, largely is that the media—not all, but overall—when you step back, people's perception is that the media is acting as a megaphone for dissonance. We're not striking at the essence of issues. We're not illuminating how things affect people and what they mean for people.

What people keep saying is, what one of the major problems where newspapers and journalists lose credibility, as other institutions do with the public, is that people do not believe fundamentally, based on what they see in the newspaper, based on the questions people ask at debates, is that journalists understand peoples lives, that they understand their concerns, that they understand their aspirations, that they understand their fears, that they understand what they struggle with on a day-to-day basis.

That they fundamentally do not understand those things, that therefore, that's reflected in the newspaper when, for instance, on the welfare debate, we keep seeing stories about: are you for welfare reform or are you against it? Are you for kicking people off welfare after two years or aren't you? Right? That's the story we usually see.

The more you push people away from public life, the less of a need there is for cross-cutting media, because then all people will need is information that they can download from Dow Jones or someplace else. There's no need for a larger context and larger issues.

And I would say that the only way in which you can move away from dissonance and make yourselves increasingly relevant is by having a deeper understanding of the communities in which you operate. And the only way you're going to do that is if you get out of the newsroom and start talking to people more, and talking in different ways.

ELISE O'SHAUGHNESSY, Executive Editor, Vanity Fair—You think there's an information glut because you feel that you have to read The New York Times from front to back. Now, I share that feeling that I have to read The New York Times front to back, but actually, I do enjoy a lot more of it than you do. You say you want to read about 20 percent of it and then throw it out.

A lot of America reads even less of The New York Times, and maybe doesn't have such a feeling that they have to go on a forced march through the more established media, shall I call it, and maybe they don't feel that a new way to get information is such a terrible thing after all.

POSTMAN—I don't know how most of the people feel, but I would say this: that these institutions, and you could call them elite institutions, if you wish, journalists, professors, theologians, are the people who communicate what we call culture. Culture is a set of principles and ideas and knowledge that function to hold the people together. So these institutions are indispensable.

The fact is that the institutions we're talking about are the disseminatars uf what you might call cultural values. And if we have a new technology that renders irrelevant those institutions whose task it was to put forward the presuppositions and principles and knowledge that form the culture, then we have something completely different, unprecedented in human history.

TERRY SCHWADRON, Deputy Managing Editor, The Los Angeles Times—I'd like to take you up on your question about whether we should be looking at language. One of the words we're dealing with here is "journalism," and it's exactly that point, that technology may well be changing what we mean by journalism, or at least the perception of

what's meant by journalism. The issue that I would prefer that we focus on, is the one that says: when people outside of newspapers say that they are journalists and are presenting information which is, by and large, indistinguishable from that which is produced by the editors who are in this room, is that journalism? Does that have a meaning for what we're talking about? While we're at it, isn't it something that the people in this room should do, that should be looking at in a way that is not tinged by fear or by anger, or by resistance, but one which says: what do we have to do to do a better job in order to educate a public about the kind of work that we do so that we can, in fact, provide those kind of guides that make sense in the sense that you're talking about? Because without that, people do look at a filter presented by Newt Gingrich or by Pat Robertson, or by the flavor of choice. And in these new areas, in these new means of distribution, they will look the same. So are we, in fact, changing the perception of what the word "journalism" means?

HARWOOD—I think people do make, Terry, a distinction between a filter, for instance, from Newt Gingrich and what a newspaper does. My sense is they make a very sharp distinction.

And there might be a sharp distinction because of their beliefs. You know, many things that I'm saying are rather soft, but I think that many of the things that we sidestep in our society are the basic questions and the basic things that make society tick.

The basic relationship, from the public's perspective, from what I can gather, between itself and a newspaper, is that the newspaper is of the community. It is part of the community—not that it's an advocate or a booster, or anything of that sort, but it is an institution of the community. It has a history. It understands the community. It has a desire to illuminate issues. It has a desire to challenge peoples' assumptions. It has a desire to put out different points of view or different perspectives on issues. It creates, hopefully, the room for civility within a community.

People don't associate, at least when I've done work with other institutions, people do not associate those characteristics with other institutions, at least for now.

Now, I think the second part of your question is that if we continue down the path that we are, they might start to look toward other institutions to fulfill those characteristics. I remember being in a community not long ago and ask[ing] people, "What would happen if the newspaper didn't fall on your doorstep tomorrow morning?" And a person came back very quickly and said, "I wouldn't care. Other institutions in this community could fulfill what that newspaper is doing right now."

So I think, and it goes back to the question about old fashioned journalism, in a sense, in terms of journalistic values. We will become irrelevant, increasingly irrelevant, if we don't maintain those ties, so...

JEFFREY A. CHESTER, Executive Director, Center for Media Education—I think that the print field has only a few years to really inform their communities about what the value system should be for this new media environment, and that if we don't have the kind of tradition from the print journalism community, then the new media environment will be more along the lines of the broadcasting model.

I think that the role that advertising is about to play in the creation and distribution of information in this country in the on-line interactive world raises serious public policy questions about who's going to set the agenda for information and news.

You have the Bells, for example, now spending $800 billion in programming and information content to build these new networks. I dare say that very few community newspapers have asked their public, what kind of community information environment should we have? What should be the role of journalistic institutions, and what should be the quality of the information environment? Because the quality we're about to get from the Bells and their partners, I don't think, is the kind of serious information environment this country deserves.

MAX FRANKEL, Columnist, New York Times Magazine—Harwood, you stimulate me to one comment, and that is, precisely endorsing everything you have found about what you call "disconnect," the public wanting us to be better than we are. I don't see how that necessarily leads to your own conclusion that all we need to do is get out there and find out in more efficient ways what is it that people want to know or read about.

It seems to me that among truly professional journalists who care, that's the easy part of our job. It's not hard to find out that the fear of war has eroded and that the fear of cancer or something else has taken over. Most reporters who bother—television doesn't bother much, except for sports and weather; they have no beat system—can get a pretty good sense of what's troubling the community.

It seems to me the real problem is that we favor the quick poll or the dissidence, or the false dichotomies because we lack the knowledge and the expertise to take an issue apart, and we do not have, from our managements, the kind of investments in reporting and talent, both among reporters and editors, that would allow us to understand what is going on and to help people to understand how things work and how to think about an issue.

And so we go for the cheap shot, and television goes for an even cheaper shot. And the result is that we're all tired with the consequences.

HARWOOD—We do a lot of work with newspapers on this very subject. The toughest part of that work is not the external part. It's the internal part, taking what you've learned and applying it in a different way. And the tough part about that comes in a lot of different places. Were the incentives set up in the newsroom for people to write different kinds of stories? I've been in a lot of newsrooms where people say, "If I came back with the story we're talking about, it would never get in, never get in. My editors would never let it in."

One of the questions we ask ourselves, in order to rethink what the story really is about is: what kinds of places have we created within the news-

room structurally that enable people to come together and talk about what they're struggling with in a way that doesn't say, "We've got to get this story out. The easy way out is to create dissonance or polarization."

YOSSI MELMAN, Nieman Fellow—I would like your comments on the positive side of the new technology. For example, it helps to circumvent censorship in certain countries. It eliminates the ability of government to control the freedom and the flow of information.

POSTMAN—You don't need me to tell you the wonderful things that the computers do. You had a stream of people who were almost near hysterical, I thought, telling us of the wonders of the Internet, how it was going to bring democracy and it was going to make individuals be more loving, and—There was one thing that did interest me. I noticed that on Internet, when you have what these people call a conversation, you actually have no responsibility to the other person. I mean, if you don't like what they're saying, that's it, which is quite different from being face-to-face with a person, and I wonder sometimes if that isn't its appeal to so many people, that you can have all these friends all over the world and have no goddamned responsibility for anything? But you're quite right. There are tremendous advantages for our culture inherent in computer technology, and there will be awesome disadvantages. Imagine that it's 1905 [and we knew then what] we now know about the automobile, and we said, "Let's make a list on a chalkboard of all the advantages that the automobile will bring and all the disadvantages." It would be a pretty long list on both sides. I'd put: our air would be poisoned; our cities would be choked; oh, I'd put here it will create the suburbs, but some of you might want to put that over there. And then we said, "Okay, let's vote. Let's have a plebiscite." We know what this is going to bring. Well, knowing, or thinking I know, my fellow countrymen and women, I think we'd say, "Ah, let's do it." But someone is bound to say, "Is there anything we could do to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages?" Well, in 1905, there was plenty we could have done: through social policy, political action, education, and so on. People say, "Here's the wonderful things that are going to happen with computers," and not one person standing up and saying, "Wait, this could be very dangerous. It can change peoples' psychic habits, their social relations, the meaning of community." I didn't hear it today, but I've heard people say, "With computer technology, we can bank at home, vote at home, shop at home, read books at home," and they go on. Now, what's the unspoken sentence? "...and never ever have to see another person in our community." Well, this would be a catastrophe, don't you agree? Does this mean the end of community life? I mean, when do you see other people in your neighborhood? I see them when we go shopping, when we go voting, when we go banking, when I go to the library. That's when I see other people like me, interested in the same things. The fact is that most of our modern media have been privatizing experiences. You listen to your radio alone, or could. You watch television alone, or you could; listen to music alone. Everything is moving us away from a sense of co-present community life. Then when you come to a conference like this and hear people say, "You can create a community through Internet," I worry about this, because this is more than a change in word. This is a change in the concept of civil life.

NANCY MALITZ, Manager, Interactive Electronic News, The Detroit News—I was sitting here thinking: are there any examples out there of newspapers that I really admire that are using technology, interactive technology in an interesting new way? I was thinking about some of the things that Bloomberg Business News is doing, for example. Here are reporters who are still covering the financial scene, attempting to be truth-tellers, attempting to be agenda-setters in some sense. But there are some things that are different about this news service. For one thing, you're sitting in front of a computer when you're reading it. Time is different. You've almost watched these stories being written. They're covered literally around the clock. And not only is the news more instant, but there's an archive that's also there at the push of a button, so that's one thing.

HARWOOD—I think the key point that I would just leave you with in terms of your example is this: I share many of the fears that Neil does about the use of technology, but I think it's here, sort of like the automobile, in some cases. I think most Americans believe it is here. As I've talked to Americans about technology on a whole slew of issues, they keep coming back and saying the same thing, whether it's with public officials, whether it's with corporations, whether it's with the media, whether it's with civic groups, and that is: don't focus on the technology. Focus on what it's going to do for us. What meaning is it going to bring into our lives? How is it going to help us move ahead? And in terms of that example, I would just leave you with this thought: to the extent that we move away from our journalistic values, and embrace, ostensibly, a different business as journalists, I think you run a risk. To the extent that we re-examine our journalistic values and rethink them, in terms of are we really fulfilling what we say our aspirations are, and then move and act where we're not, and then take what we learn from that conversation and bring it to bear on how we think about doing journalism in the world of technology, then I think that's a winner. The choice, basically, is up to journalists to decide. And I think the public is waiting to know.■

Can Media Economics Match Its Aspirations?

Where Is Page One in Cyberspace?

Nancy Hicks Maynard
Maynard Partners, Inc.

I believe that in the era of digitalization, tabloidization, shifting audience loyalties, the ability for public-interest journalism to have policy impact is at risk, and I summarize all the concerns in a question that I just keep asking myself: "Where is Page One in Cyberspace?"

If we think about the ability of "America: What Went Wrong?" to be published digitally first and foremost, how would it have had the impact? We know that in reprint, we could have gotten it out very efficiently, but how could we have garnered the interest in the first place if that were the medium of publishing? I don't know.

There are many implications for what this means. What we're doing now is apparently segmenting ourselves into two classes. Those who have influence in the media today are either gorillas or guerrillas. They are the powerful information forces that have the resources to really get the job done, or they are the nimble small-niche players who figure out where an audience is and go after them. It's a real David and Goliath, because the big guys are very much at risk as are the little guys.

I can tell you that playing on that plane is very risky because it doesn't take much to lose the game there. You don't have to lose great amounts of money. You can lose share; you can lose market position, and that's the end of it. What you have is the number of media outlets going up, and the share of network viewers going down. We're competing with more and more outlets for the attention of our readers and viewers. They're reading; they're viewing. They just may not be doing it with a frequency that we are used to.

Nancy Hicks Maynard

Now, this is being coupled [with] massive changes in the way business is done—how much corporate America is spending on information technologies. And the reason this becomes important to us as journalists is that those technology dollars are buying a way around the mass media to reach customers.

The impact of all this on the media business is great. We can continue to be the sleepy little publishers, if we choose to be. So if we're doing voice services, we do voice. We create it; we store it; we process it; we distribute it, and that's what we do. We don't do video; we do voice.

The way the landscape seems to be changing is if we're in the creation business, we'd better be able to do it in voice, videotext, still images, any way that information can be processed and distributed. That's the difference in the way that we'll be forced to compete, and that is what you're seeing in the kind of investment that the media companies are making now in new technologies. Now, if we think about what a newspaper is, there are essentially four business lines. We tend to think about ourselves as the information providers. That's what we do: journalism is information.

But the real power of the newspaper business has come from its marketing and distribution networks. The manufacturing is going to go away, but when we talk about the future of journalism, we're not talking about the future of the ability to do good journalism. Everything that we've been hearing says that technology will allow us to do the best journalism we have time for. What we are losing is the ability to control the distribution of journalism in a way that

makes it have impact.

To show you, just ballpark, how the dollars can break down, in The Oakland Tribune in 1991, we had an operating budget of about $45 million. And out of that, the manufacturing and distribution piece, the part that we don't really care about, was $21 million. Now, that's high for a daily newspaper, but we were old, and those are the ways the costs build up. If you can't change those costs, what happened to us, happens [The Tribune closed].

The newsroom budget was not that big—$6 million. But there was no way to get that $6 million to do that journalism without packaging it with all the other stuff.

When the Newspaper Association of America talks about a newspaper, they see a triangle—I call it "The Mountain"—in which information goes from the newspaper to the reader, the reader goes and buys advertising, and the dollars flow to the newspaper, and the circle goes around again. Today, it's really more of a media molehill. We still have that one direction, but what's happening is that the manufacturers and the consumers can interact with each other, and that's taken heft and power out of our distribution. We've gotten into alternate delivery systems to try to recapture some of this, but they tend not to be very efficient, and they're very duplicative.

Advertisers always want to find the eyeballs. The eyeballs are now on video games. So now, you're seeing brand images going into video games. That's taking money away from the ability to do journalism.

Some of it's going into database marketing. Newspapers that have been able to do databasing have the names and addresses of all of their customers or all the households. They really know who lives where and know how to address each of their customers. There's one Nebraska newspaper that has its total town in a database, a 15,000 circulation newspaper, and everyone in the building has access to it. Reporters use it for stories; the advertisers use it for creating advertising and direct marketing campaigns.

Value is a function of depth and completeness of the report. And if you have any doubt about that, think about what's happening in sports and business reporting. In both of those cases, we're very encyclopedic about numbers and people and players, and those are the subject matter that are going over now to pay media. You can not be guaranteed to watch the World Series on television all the time—well, maybe that you can, but championships of various sports have migrated to pay cable, and they can do that because the quality of what they're doing and the completeness is a known quantity to the consumer who's willing to pay the money.

All that is just to say that we have to think about our whole business and how we put things together if we're going to keep value to do public-interest reporting.

So the way that we've been trying to think about the strategies of getting good product out depends upon our size and how we choose to interact with all of this. I've look[ed] at the ways in which the companies have taken the trends and decided to get into business.

And I got them into really four categories. The Prudent Pioneer, which means anybody can try anything, but the goal of it is to try to do something that makes money. And that tends to be the people coming in who have great capital. Again, being a gorilla is being very important, but also being a guerrilla, being small and lithe and having a niche is equally important.

You can be a Timely Entrant, or a Canny Entrant. These are the companies that many of you work for that are waiting. They know that they can't compete on price, but they've got enough capital to get in the game. They wait for the big guys to get in, spend the money, and then come right in after with a product that's at least as good, and maybe cheaper.

The Reluctant Entrants [are] pulling themselves into this technology, and we hate it. And if you're not there, you're late to the game, and you're out of the game.

The goal in this game is to have sustainable market advantage, and that requires a good big information infrastructure, and then nimble application.

The Tribune Company, for example, is in all of these new ventures with the goal of getting 25 percent of its revenue from new ventures in five years. I think that's a way to, again, decide, "I'm going to invest these resources; keep this over here; hold the old business the way it is, but figure out where growth is coming from."

It's this kind of hedging and thinking about resources that's going to determine who gets to do the big stories in the future.

So my equation comes out to: success in this realm is a function of the capacity—that's the gorilla piece—and vitality or usefulness. So you've got to have great capacity and real life and real usefulness in order to play the game. And many of the mass media publications and broadcasts don't have that.

"America: What Went Wrong?" is a perfect example of this equation. There was great capacity; there was great vitality, and it was very useful to the readers because it allowed them to understand what the devil was happening with their lives.

The new world of information is what they call enabling. It's empowering: "I'm going to help you learn how to do this. I'm going to give you the tools. I'm going to give you the raw materials that will allow you to be more effective in the way you manage information." If we're going to be information suppliers we're going to need to get out of the convenience-relieving mode and into an empowering mode.

I looked at what it took to do some of the great stories.

The Pentagon Papers is an estimate of the direct cost [to The New York Times]: close to $4 million [in 1971 dollars] to report that story. The Washington Post got the Pentagon Papers late, so it didn't cost them quite as much. They didn't rent out a floor in the Hilton, which The New York Times did, and move a whole reporting staff in. They flew Ben Bagdikian to Boston to pick up a copy, and so he needed an extra seat for the papers coming back, so that's why there were three shuttle tickets instead of one roundtrip. They

spent the night at Ben's house going through the papers and published the next morning, so that explains the differential in cost. Essentially, their costs were legal fees that were about a little more than half a million dollars in today's economy.

Don Graham [Washington Post publisher] said that it was this story that made them aware that they had to do Watergate, that once they had gone through this, that they knew there was no doubt, they couldn't back away from the Watergate story as it was emerging, and this gave them the courage to do it.

So big dollars get spent, but with big effect.

Now, "America: What Went Wrong?" This is a little more precise accounting. Max [King] said yesterday it was more than $500,000. These are my estimates, not his, but it was about $388,000 in salaries; direct costs of newsprint, travel, promotion and reprints, about $240,000.

But there was a good revenue stream for this story, so there were $200,000 in book royalties; another $30,000 in newspaper sales, with the net effect that they basically recovered what they spent.

And the reason that becomes important is when we're talking about capacity, you can make money doing these big stories, but it comes down the line. You have to have the wherewithal to do them in order to recover from them. Good journalism can be profitable.

Everybody pays attention to NandO, but what has fascinated me about what [The News & Observer in] Raleigh is doing is their computerized newsroom, and they've totally reorganized their news reporting process around databases that have allowed them to create their own searches, allowed them to create their own databases, allowed them to do new electronic products that make money.

They've also figured out a way to capture the inefficiency of reporting, where reporters go out, write their stories and put their notes away somewhere, into a newsroom system that runs on hypertext and has a search capability. This is a different model of capacity and how you get to do the good stories.

So where are we? We're moving to an era where what we're looking for, rather than content is context, and that's going to be the job of the journalist, and that's going to be the thing that's going to cost us: putting context around.

And lest we forget it, the thing that we need to do is to keep reinventing ourselves. The big new phrase in management now is "self-cannibalization," eat yourself before your competitor does. You're your own best competitor.

All that means is that the news business is a lively business. It's a changing business. If we get stuck in the mud about the way we've done things and don't allow the technologies to help us do our job better, don't understand what they're doing, we're going to be in trouble.

I started by asking: "Where's Page One in Cyberspace?" I can tell you that I don't know the answer to that problem, but the pursuit of that question is going to be one helluva ride, and I look forward to finding it one day, maybe.■

How Technology Changed the Bible

The story of how the Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament diverged includes, improbably enough, a chapter from the history of technology....

What we now call a scroll is a text storage device that the first centuries of the common era called a book. What we call a book—cut pages sewn together on one side—was then called a codex. The codex, invented sometime in the first century of the common era, was clearly distinguished at the time from a "real" book—that is, from a scroll. The pagan literary elite of the Roman Empire, the conservatives of their day, looked on the codex rather as some in our day look on an electronic publication. They were attached to the older format and adopted the newer one reluctantly. The Jews, who had been using the scroll for centuries, were only somewhat quicker to change, and for ceremonial purposes they have retained the scroll down to the present. The Christians of the Roman Empire, a poorly educated, lower-class group with no secular literary traditions to preserve and, as a new religion, with few sacred traditions to preserve either—adopted the new device immediately and universally. The codex may in fact be their invention. Whoever invented it, Christianity's enthusiastic adoption of it gave the new religion a technological advantage that undoubtedly fostered its spread.

The new medium had a message of its own, however. As smaller codices gradually yielded to larger ones, the possibility emerged for the first time of including all the Jewish scriptures in one textual "container." Because the standard thirty-foot scroll could hold no work longer than the Book of Isaiah, the various works that would become the Hebrew Bible had always been stored separately: many scrolls in many storage jars. By keeping the constituent parts physically movable, the older text-storage system tended to keep them mentally movable as well and to forestall any tendency to edit them into a single, large, closed anthology.

The Christian scriptures, though also an anthology, had a different history, for they were born just as the codex was being born.....

The decisive moment came when the mode of storage the Christians preferred began to be extended to the inherited Jewish scriptures. The Christians, having taken these scriptures as their own, took this step first; the Jews did so somewhat later. As editors from either group realized that the order of the contents would now be fixed and visible, both would naturally have thought in a new way about the potential aesthetic or polemic significance of the order. In the end, the Jews made one decision about the order, the Christians made another, and so it came about that the last step in the editing of an edited manuscript took place twice. The Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament are not quite two different works but, to speak more precisely, two very different editions of the same collection.

—Jack Miles in "God: A Biography." Alfred A. Knopf.

The New Economics of Journalism

A conversation between Esther Dyson, new media analyst and entrepreneur, EDventure Holdings, Inc., and Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., Publisher of The New York Times, joined later by Walter Isaacson, Editor of New Media, Time Inc., and Frank Daniels III, Executive Editor, The News & Observer, Raleigh, N.C.

ESTHER DYSON—So page one in cyberspace is what everything points to. It's what brand names point to; it is what somebody considers to be important. And advertising is what people point to, as well. And so, real estate in cyberspace is defined by what is pointed to. It is what draws the eye. It's not physically constrained, but it's constrained by peoples' attention, and it's constrained by pointers. And so if the pointer is paid, it's advertising; if the pointer is defined by a journalist performing a public duty, then it's editorial. So what happens when control of the pointers gets given back, at least in part, to the readers, if we want to be democratic and turn the newspaper into letters to the editor?

ARTHUR SULZBERGER—I think we shouldn't pretend that we don't already have a relationship with our readers, and that we don't hear from our readers every day. Yes, it's going to change. We all know that. But it's not going to go from no relationship to a relationship. If all of us produced only a page one that we wanted, with no caring whatsoever as to whether it was of interest to our readers, I suspect we would be out of business very, very quickly. We need, certainly, to define news to a certain degree. That's our responsibility as journalists. But we also need to be aware of what it is that readers are interested in. We get that feedback in circulation.

DYSON—Now, you've got some guy who can't really spell, who wants to waste your reporter's time sending him E-mail.

SULZBERGER—I don't think that's going to happen. And maybe I'm fooling myself, but I really don't think that an individual reader directly to reporter, that that's going to be a major factor in how this is going to design itself.

DYSON—But it's going to be a major factor in how they have their time wasted, or how they have their time enriched.

SULZBERGER—Are you making the assumption that we're going to put all of our reporters on line? Is that the

Esther Dyson

assumption built into the question, that every day, all of our reporters will have hundreds and hundreds of E-mails that they've got to respond to? You can pick up a pen today and misspell a letter to any one of our editors, reporters, business folks. Most—I will speak, I think, candidly for the newsroom—of those letters go unanswered. It drives me nuts, but it's true.

DYSON— Do they go unread?

SULZBERGER—I don't know. They probably are read. But I'm not sure how that's going to define what a newspaper of the future is, or how much different that's going to be. When I was a reporter, people would come up to me and talk to me about what I'd written. People would write. People would call. And I suspect people will E-mail when that becomes more and more common. I think that's only a small part of what's going to happen. And I don't think—this is the important point—it's going to drive our coverage.

DYSON—Yes, but there's a notion that when you go on line, you're not simply taking The New York Times content and putting it out on line and then having letters to the editor. There's a different medium. Do you want to be part of it or not? And how does that change the dynamics between the traditional Times and this on-line thing where you do have more participation?

SULZBERGER—Well, I guess this is the time to introduce my secret answer—I don't know. You're hearing a lot of this. I don't know how it's going to change it. But let's go back to your opening comment, which I think was right on target. The value we really provide is judgment and the value we give is not merely in collecting the data, but analyzing the data and trying to fit it into all of the other data that we have, your page one billboard saying, "In the judgment of the editors of this news organization, these were the key stories you must know if you want to be a fully-functioning human being in society."

DYSON—You're going to be competing with more and more do-it-yourselfers, with more and more self-styled journalists, with more and more on-line services. I mean, people have so much time in the day, and so the question is—Do you want to maintain share? Do you want to maintain quality and give away share? And then how do you keep your brand name? How do you keep your premium pricing when there's all this other stuff, when there's Oprah Winfrey on line, and—?

SULZBERGER—Oh, God.

DYSON—I'm asking you because I don't know the answer either.

SULZBERGER—The job that the news and business people at The New York Times and that I have over the next twenty years is to answer that question. Our job is to take the brand we have today and to translate it for this new medium. We know that. We know it's going to have to be different than what it is today. In many cases, it's going to have to be more than what we offer today. I suspect it will not have to be less than what we offer today. Some of the parts will be shockingly familiar to all of us. Twenty and twenty-five years from now, other parts none of us can even imagine. Do I really think we need to change what it is we are? On the contrary, I think the only thing we know for sure is that we can't afford to change what we are. We've got to keep our center. We've got to know what it is that we do, what are our core competencies, and other fancy terms being used these days in business, and build on those cores. That leaves lots and lots and lots of room for lots of other people to do very interesting and exciting things, and they're going to do them, and mazel tov. We have a lot of competition today—in newsletters, in pamphlets, in magazines and your newspapers and publications, in television, in radio. All of us are swamped with competitors. So now, we'll have some new competitors. Well, okay, we're used to that, most of us, I think. So, I guess that doesn't scare me. What scares me is that we're going to try to change to become something we're not. We're going to say, "Gee, to compete with whatever you want to call on line, to compete in this digital age, I have to give up what it is I'm good at." I think we saw too many newspapers do that in their attempt to compete with television. I think that failed.

DYSON—Failed financially or failed morally?

SULZBERGER—Certainly morally, certainly in market share, certainly in destroying brand equity. I guess we won't know for another 10 years

Arthur Sulzberger, Jr.

whether it failed financially, but there are a lot fewer newspapers in the world today than there were ten years ago and twenty years ago. And to some degree, that's not our fault as journalists, and to some degree, we are absolutely to blame for making our products less valuable in an attempt to compete with a medium we didn't have to compete with [on] their terms. So I hope we don't have to change our core competencies, the value we give to our readers in an attempt to become something we're not, because I don't think that will succeed.

DYSON—Well, let's go back and talk about what those core values are. You take The New York Times. "The New York Times" is on each section. The first section is uniquely The New York Times. It's international news, it's some stellar columnists, et cetera, et cetera. Then there is New York Metro. That's local news, that's special. Then there's Business News. Then you have the "C" section. What makes a New York Times recipe unique?

SULZBERGER—We generally leave out one of the ingredients. Nothing. The value is not in the generic news. With rare exception, recipes are generic, the rare exception being if you've just gotten the recipe from the sous chef at Lutece. Maybe that's not generic. Maybe that's value added.

DYSON—And maybe you need to pay the chef for it.

SULZBERGER—And we're going to definitely have to [pay] the chef for it, sooner or later, one of these days. The value is in what do we bring to the news? What are we bringing in information? Is it unique to us? Our telephone call-up service, I think, is the best possible example of what I'm talking about. When we went into audiotext a number of years ago we put up a variety of audiotext options—everything from sports scores to financial tables to breaking, sort of quasi-breaking news, to the answers to the clues in our crossword puzzle. The only one of those that made money, and made a lot of money, was the crossword puzzle answers. Why? Where else were you going to go? We had the answers and you didn't, and neither did NBC. And people called and called and called, and it's just a nice little chunk of change. That's real value added, nowhere else to go. If you accept that, where should newspaper publishers be putting their money? In their newsrooms. They've got to be funding their newsrooms to a greater and greater extent to try to capture information that is not available anywhere else.

DYSON—And does that mean you'll can the recipes?

SULZBERGER—No, you don't can the recipes. You don't have to can the recipes. Let's face it, we're going to be making our money for years to come from what it is we do on paper. This is exciting. This is, in my mind, undoubtedly our future, but I'm not prepared to give up a billion dollar revenue base today in exchange for this, and I don't have to. It's not that expensive to create and to fund this. But we can do both. I know there will be a role for recipes on this. I hope Campbell's Soup will fund the role for recipes. But this isn't about recipes.

DYSON—Okay. As you go on line, will you focus on the unique New York Times stuff?

SULZBERGER—Absolutely.

DYSON—Will you distribute it broadly, or will you try and have some exclusive relationships, such as with Nexis?

SULZBERGER—The answer to all those questions is yes. We are going to do it all, because we don't know what works yet. And we're going to watch all of you do it all because we don't know what works yet. We're going to put page one up on the Internet, and it will be free. We will do much narrower things on the Internet, as well, and we will charge for them. We will continue on AOL [America Online], and we'll put our news and information up on that, and we're in the midst of creating and will be introducing shortly a new generation of AOL offerings. This is all an experiment. We don't know where this is going. In the end, it's going to have to pay for itself. We do know that. And there's not a lot of ways to make money. As far as I know, there are only four—three, if you exclude blackmail. Either the reader is going to pay or the advertiser is going to pay, or we're going to get a piece of the transactional action. If the reader decides that she wants to get theater tickets from the Shubert organization for "Cats," we'll try to talk her out of it, but if she still goes out to see "Cats," then maybe we'll get, you know, one one-hundredth or one-tenth, or whatever the heck it is, of that transaction.

DYSON—Take a John Markoff. Instead of being The New York Times, he decides he is just going to have his own Internet site, and collect money directly from readers or directly from advertisers.

SULZBERGER—All right. My idea is that the people who created and have used the Internet more or less up until now are frontierspeople. They are the people who like to go out into the wilderness. They enjoy roaming. They don't want to settle. They want to continue to forge ahead. And behind those frontierspeople are the barbarians like me, the shopkeepers, the folks who really aren't going into the frontier because we enjoy crossing the next river and getting past the next ridge, but are out there because we think that there's a future for stable, steady growth. We're their worst nightmare, but we're coming, and we're going to change the nature of what exists. And we're going to push the frontierspeople somewhere else, because that's what happens to frontierspeople—they just keep moving. And I don't know where they're going to move next, and it's going to be very exciting to see that happen. But I know that where they are today is going to change.

DYSON—That was a really nice answer, but not to my question.

SULZBERGER—Then repeat your question.

DYSON—It's this whole issue of you're The New York Times. You have some very good people. Collectively, they create The New York Times.

SULZBERGER—What happens then, I think, is that people are going to follow and want stability and they're not going to want to explore all the corners. They're going to want to go to places that help them, and then they're going to stop. Now, maybe they will

find the discrete little bits of information that they uniquely want, and maybe John Markoff, because he is a brand, maybe he'll be able to attract enough of them to make a good living and to be influential, and to have a successful life and business. But I suspect there are very few of those that can succeed in the world that I think is coming. I look at how people read The New York Times today. We all read it differently. Some of us start at the "D" section and read to the front. All of us who read a paper, all read it differently. But we all read it differently, exactly the same way, day after day after day. It really doesn't change unless something unique has happened, like the Oklahoma bombing. But then once that's over, we go back to our pattern. So people, I think, are creatures of pattern. And what we have to do is establish ourselves as part of their pattern. Unless you believe that they are really prepared to be on line for a tremendous amount of time every day, and to pick out discrete little bits of information unique to their interests, then we just have to transform ourselves into the packagers of that information.

DYSON—It's an interesting change in balance of power, not just between you and your readers, but in your newsroom, between you and your star reporters/columnists. People become more entrepreneurial, they're more visible to the outside world. You can read Max Frankel without having to read everybody else, if you want. You can have some kind of a pointer or a filter. And it means that The Times, which doesn't own its employees, but only rents them—

SULZBERGER—I'd like to think—Well, never mind.

DYSON—Or they own it, whatever. But the balance changes a little bit.

SULZBERGER—But that's always been true. To pick on poor John Markoff for a little bit longer, John Markoff could walk away from The New York Times today and start a newsletter, and he doesn't need the Internet to do it. He could go on the Internet with his newsletter. Indeed, Max could do it today. All of our reporters who would want to do that have the ability to do it. They can try to create a brand on their own. Some of them in the past have done it. You know, in our world, this world, David Halberstam is a brand, right?

DYSON—Yes.

SULZBERGER—So for those people who get enjoyment from that and can succeed at that, that doesn't change. The technology isn't changing things; it's merely offering a slightly greater variety of opportunities, but it's not changing the fundamentals. It's not changing human nature.

DYSON—Two things are changing. One, obviously, it's not all or nothing, but I would wager that Markoff could probably have a better negotiating position. If you take my own little business—I have a newsletter that has 1,300 subscribers. They have to sign up for a year at $600. Most of them probably find one or two issues really interesting; the rest they could do without. And this would be the same situation Markoff would face.

SULZBERGER—Exactly.

DYSON—Now, I can go on the Internet. I can sell those one or two issues to 10 times the number of people who'd be willing to subscribe for an entire year. The distribution capability, the ability of people to find me and me to find them, does change. So Markoff no longer needs The Times, once he's established his brand name on your back as his distribution mechanism.

SULZBERGER—The change in distribution pattern is, indeed, the single most exciting thing about the Internet and about the web.

DYSON—If you're Markoff.

SULZBERGER—No, if you're us. If you're a newspaper publisher. If you're a journalist, whether you're with a news organization or on your own, the most exciting thing about this is it dramatically changes the entire cost structure of our organizations. We have seen in the last few weeks newspapers go out of business, arguably because of paper prices. We know that paper prices are the single biggest cost newspapers have, at least The New York Times has, outside of the cost of people. When you remove that as a cost, the entire fiscal dynamic of the newspaper changes. People say they are worried about losing advertising to the Internet, and I am worried about that, too. But I also know that if the tradeoff is losing 10 percent of my advertising and not having to pay my newsprint and distribution costs, I am vastly, vastly aided from a financial point of view. So I find it, from a purely business perspective, which this is supposed to be, it's exciting. Does it offer opportunities for the Markoffs of the world to go out on their own? Yes. And to be successful? Yes. Could they be today, if they chose to go on their own? Yes, I think. Does it offer newspapers more of an opportunity to bundle and distribute, and will it change the relationship we have with some of the writing staffs that we have? Sure. Can we benefit from that? Yes. Does it mean that all of us have potentially tremendously greater reach? Absolutely. And now, when a newspaper publisher looks and says, "Where can I invest to make the most money?" Is he going to start looking at his distribution system, at building a circulation base? No. He's going to have to start saying, news. From my perspective, this is the best thing coming down the pike for a journalist that I've seen in a long, long time, because now we're playing our game—the news game. He or she who has the best news should win this one. That's pretty exciting.

DYSON—Have you defined "best"?

SULZBERGER—Most interesting to your readers, certainly. And I am differentiating from entertainment. I want to put entertainment aside, okay, because that's not what we're here for, I hope. Most interesting, most compelling, most comprehensive, whatever may be most local. We could get into that. That's on the agenda. But now, it changes the nature of what is local. All of a sudden, Oklahoma is real local for a lot of folks. So I would think all of the people in this room would be stunningly excited—I would hope that they would be—by the opportunity this gives us and by the power this places in the hands of journalists.

DYSON—This whole business of filters, agents. It's become almost trite now that it's really great. You can have the "Daily Me;" you can design your

profile, and you can get only the kind of news you like. Those of you who do read The New York Times carefully and read Denise Caruso's column, read her quotation of something by Frank Fukyama where he said, "Many people have pointed at the extent to which fringe and hate groups have made use of the Internet as an organizational and mobilizational tool, but the issue is not just that the communications technology facilitates the exchange of information. It also permits groups to filter out other types of information that might otherwise have served as a reality check.... When they reach out to the outside world, they find that there is a large network of like-minded people all over the country to support their particular paranoias. They never come across the evidence that might possibly convince them that they're crazy."

How do you deal with this, people getting more and more fragmented? It's not just marketing and advertising, but the public interest is not served when people get too local.

SULZBERGER—This is the guy who said that history had ended, right?

DYSON—Yes.

SULZBERGER—Yes, I remember.

DYSON—So he was wrong.

SULZBERGER—We've been through this. This is what Louis, the kings of France, were so terrified of with the coming of the printing press, that finally, average citizens would have access to the written word. Aren't we past that now? If you want to get very local very fast, you could do that today, and there's nobody in the world who forces you to pick up a copy of The Wall Street Journal or The New York Times, or Time magazine or The News & Observer. No one's holding a gun to their head, so people who don't want it, don't do it. And on this technology, people who don't want it won't do it. And in the end, I think, we're going to have to depend on humanity, simply humanity, that enough times, enough people will make the right personal decisions in their lives, knowing that too frequently, certain people won't. This technology, I don't think dramatically changes that. Does it make it easier for you to sit in your house and not go anywhere? Sure. Does it make it easier, perhaps, to reaffirm your own personal beliefs? Sure. But it's pretty damned easy to reaffirm your own personal beliefs today. Do you have an antidote to this?

DYSON—Yes.

SULZBERGER—What is it?

DYSON—Fundamentally, this notion of filters and "find me what I want" needs to be counterposed with the notion of maps and schemes. The front page, in a sense, is a map to what you should know, and the problem with filters is they take away your peripheral vision, just as somebody who's crazy has no peripheral vision for what he can't see. Somebody who's crazy keeps on seeing corroborating evidence, even when it isn't there. The role of a newspaper, to some extent, is to provide that peripheral vision, to say, "Even if you don't read this story, see this headline" that says "Good things are happening in the Middle East." "Mother takes care of baby seven days a week," that kind of thing. And so, technologically, a place people should focus is not simply filtering, but some way of summarizing, displaying a broader range of information so that you have the equivalent of a front page, not just of a single set of news stories gathered for one reader, according to what he's looking for.

SULZBERGER—Well, aren't you talking really about continuing to be an agenda setter?

DYSON—Yes.

SULZBERGER—Continuing to provide people with a common sort of set of understandings of what's transpiring in the world today. There's nothing that mandates that in today's environment.

DYSON—Except The New York Times.

SULZBERGER—We can't mandate it. All we can do is offer it, and all we can do is put it out there, and either people will buy it or they won't buy it. But people do buy it, and they buy The Chicago Tribune and The Washington Post, and collectively, we manage, somehow, to put a common agenda in front of Americans over time, not every day exactly the same, of course, but over time. Anything we try to do as we grapple with moving our brand into this new world must take into account how people live their lives, not how the frontierpeople who have made this world lived their lives, because I'm proposing—and I don't know this for a fact, Lord knows—that those people are different by the nature of what it is they do and the joy they get from doing it, by being those frontiersmen and women. But for the rest of the people, the people who are coming behind them, who are going to come into this new world and, hopefully, find us there ready to welcome them when they arrive, those people seek order out of chaos. And the Internet has been described as chaos, or almost organized chaos, but chaos. I don't know if you agree with that.

I propose that that's not what people want, the vast majority of people. They want some order in that chaos. They don't want total order. They don't want fascistic order, but they want an ability to get to information in a way that pleases them and in a way that makes their lives simpler and less time-consuming. And, yes, they're still going to make some sideroads because people in the Internet are interesting. But I think they're going to continue to want and need and seek a common agenda. That's our role.

DYSON—What do you do if they won't pay for it?

SULZBERGER—I'd go out of business, so they have to pay for it. I don't have a choice. I mean, we can debate this until the cows come home, but if they don't pay for it, I'm not there. So from my perspective, the answer is simple—Some way, I've got to get them to pay for it. I don't know what that is. Will it be advertising? Sure. Will it be circulation? Yes, some of it will be circulation.

DYSON—Personally, as the guy who has to make the decision, where do you make the tradeoff between making money and—

SULZBERGER—I don't need to make money this year, and I don't need to make money next year. And I'd like to lose a little less money the year after that. But at some point, and some point not very far down the line, we're going

to have to start seeing a financial return. And I don't think that's going to be as difficult as we think it is today, because I think the ethos and ethics of the web are changing. I guess I'm betting on that, aren't I? Am I wrong?

DYSON—We're all betting on it.

(Frank Daniels III and Walter Isaacson join conversation.)

ISAACSON—In terms of paying on the web, we talked to some people at AT&T and others, and they said. "Oh, you'll never ever pay for things on the web. We're going to have sponsored news. You know, we're going to sell the right to sponsor the parenting news to Procter & Gamble, and the right to sponsor financial news to Fidelity," and that sort of thing. Well, if you get to a web where people aren't willing to pay for value-added information, on the credibility of having non-sponsored information, it's going to be bad for journalism and all of us. I think, throughout all forms of journalism, people have been willing to pay, [so we] get our money from circulation, from advertising and transactions. You're going to have to do that on the web, but you're going to have to keep it distinct so that people know—this is not sponsored information. This is not Procter & Gamble telling you about disposable diapers. This is something that's from The New York Times, Time magazine, News & Observer.

DANIELS—My guess would be that readers would find information on diapers sometimes more valuable from the manufacturers of diapers than from newspapers.

ISAACSON—But they've got to know the difference of what they get and who's giving it to them.

DYSON—Well, do you think it's going to change the perception of the advertiser? Reebok, for example, has a web site on which the news doesn't all come from Reebok. That's the exciting part. It comes from people who have used Reeboks. It comes from people who say, "Mine fell apart after two weeks." It comes from people who are asking Reebok, "So how much do you pay the people in Malaysia who put your shoes together?" And it takes a tough-stomached sponsor to sponsor that kind of stuff.

Panel discussion on the new economics of journalism.

SULZBERGER—The good news is there are very few who have the stomach to do that kind of a thing.

DANIELS—Manufacturers run help desks. They answer consumers' questions all the time about how to use their products. When you look at diapers, the fact that we may not like the fact that buyers prefer the information from the product manufacturer sometimes, rather than some intermediary, is illogical. They're set up to answer questions about their product. How do we facilitate that conversation? Then how do we also, perhaps, facilitate that there are other places that you can get information about other products. [That] would be a role that we could play. But to say that the information has no value if it comes from Procter & Gamble, I think is missing the point. The information has value to the people that need it.

SULZBERGER—If they believe it. Now, we're getting into the credibility of organizations. Let's not forget that for all of the faults and flaws of our profession, we still carry a great deal of credibility. One of the joys of the net, of any of this on-line stuff, is that every piece of information carries inherently the same value as the next piece. There's almost no way, unless you know the brand, unless you have trust in where you're going, to know whether what you're reading is true or false. And I think that's not going to change. Maybe Reebok is one of those organizations where they're not going to dream of putting anything that's false up there, but I suspect there are not a lot of them. And I suspect that there's always going to be a role for Consumer Reports, and not just the magazine, but what we do, and that people, in the end, are not going to trust Sony to help them make a decision of what CD player to buy. They're going to want to go to a source that has done that work for them.

ISAACSON—You're right. Procter & Gamble has valuable information, but the user's got to know that this information is coming from The New York Times, and this information is coming from Proctor & Gamble—big difference. We've always done that, and now we're starting to blur it when we go into this new world, and you get a lot of new types of on-line services, or even big companies going into it that don't have journalism backgrounds that say, "Oh, we shouldn't make those distinctions. We should just say, 'Proctor & Gamble should pay to put up the parenting information and they should get the content. They should bring the content in, license it and put it in. And that way the web can be free because we believe in the ethos of cyberspace, that all information should be free.'"

DANIELS—But that exists now. You can go out and buy a magazine that's completely sponsored news. Those things exist now. We're not talking about what's happening. On line is not a discrete business. It's not even a discrete activity. It's very much part and parcel of how we live our lives today. The important thing is the credibility. You made the point about being invested in our newsrooms, and I would dare say that virtually no newspapers are doing the things to create credibility for their brand. Newspapers are distrusted by their readers, and they're distrusted because we don't do the research, because we make assumptions, because we call the same sources all the time. So the problem isn't that Procter & Gamble's information may or may not be credible; the problem is, is our information credible? Are we doing the investment and the training of our staffs and attracting the right people to the business to be credible? And I would say that no, we're not. As an industry, we're not doing that.

DYSON—What are you doing, Walter, as a semi-entertainment-oriented—?

ISAACSON—I'm resisting Time Warner's plan for world domination at every turn of the way. Time, Inc. is a journalistic organization. Whether we succeed or not, we believe that our information is branded. It should be credible, and everything on there should be things that people can believe. That means that we cover the entertainment industry, or any industry, as best we can. I believe that as we go out with on-line or interactive television, or other new ways of delivering digital information, we've got to do what you were talking about earlier, which is say, "Here's a front page. Here's some credibility. Here's something you can trust."

Frank Daniels III

DANIELS—How are you measuring credibility with your various products as you take them on line?

ISAACSON—Well, who are the people who pay for it? That's why I think you ought to charge on the web. If something's free you almost don't need the credibility. It's like the throw-away shopper newspaper that lands on your lawn.

DANIELS—Or maybe Time magazine's circulation's been going down. The revenues, you know, are struggling. Is Time magazine more or less credible than it used to be?

ISAACSON—We're probably less credible in some ways. Our circulation's not going down, but I do think we judge our credibility by the fact that people perceive value in coming to us for information, as opposed to the thousand other sources they could have now, or the 10 million other sources they'll have five years from now where they can just surf the net or call things up on their TV.

DYSON—Well, the web is very different. I mean, in a paper, it's discrete. There's editorial, and you know it's editorial. There's advertising, and you know it's advertising. And that's the paper. Then they might refer to stuff outside. Once you're on the web, you point to things; those things point to other things. Do you feel you're responsible for everything you point to, and if you're not, how do you indicate that?

ISAACSON—I feel we're really responsible for never pointing the reader or user in any direction without clearly labeling where they're going and what they're getting. It's pretty simple. That's what we do in a magazine; that's what we do in a newspaper. We do put information from advertisers, information from Fidelity mutual funds, from Merrill, Lynch, whatever it may be, but they've got to know when we send them there, you're going there, and that's a sponsored area.

DYSON—Talk about Oklahoma. The thing you wouldn't point to.

ISAACSON—Well, we have Pathfinder on the web, and we're talking about last week. One thing you do find that people really come for is new stuff, daily stuff. And I'm sure you see that in NandO.net. So we put up a hot page for Oklahoma. It's got all of our reporting from our bureau, some interviews, things from our magazines, things from all over. And they started pointing also to the other pages on the web, not just pages like government stuff, but the white supremacist pages that have been put up; the how-to-make-a-bomb pages that have been put up. And at one point last week, one of the editors at Pathfinder said, "Okay, I'll put the pointers under this little button that says 'Other Web Sites dealing with Oklahoma City,'" and clearly labeled to some white supremacist party telling you how to make the bomb, and that's when you start swallowing hard and saying, "Oh, maybe we do play censor here. I mean, do I want some kid to say, 'Oh, that's what you do? You go to Agway; you get this fertilizer; you do it.'" Finally, we broke that link. We just said, "People will be able to find that. It's on the web if they want to, but we ain't going to point to it."

SULZBERGER—Good. You know, it's the same thing I guess we do in journalism all the time. Every day.

DYSON—And you don't quote the National Enquirer.

SULZBERGER—We use judgment. And when we quote the National Inquirer, we're proud of it.

DYSON—Okay.

SULZBERGER—As we've been thinking about this, and perhaps, as you guys have been thinking about it, we think we're coming to conclude that the biggest change we're going to have to make in the news we offer our readers is that we're going to have to add a whole new way of looking at news that's much more silo-based. Newspapers generally offer a broad top-level view of the world to their readers, and very few get too deep into any one area. There are specialties, but I suspect that the Internet, this whole new electronic format, is going to force us to create much more of a newsletter mentality. Yes, we will still have to play that essential role of offering broad news at the top across a wide spectrum of human endeavor, but then we're going to have to get much more detailed, much more in depth in those categories that we think are important to the readers that we're trying to attract. And that's going to add substantial cost to the newsroom. It's also going to add substantial benefit to our readers, and I think that, if the technology is driving us any one way, it's driving us journalistically that way.

ISAACSON—That gets to the front page in cyberspace question, because you can create really deep niche markets now in the interactive and digital realm. You can say, "Okay, you want to go really deeply into Czechoslovakia investments." We'll put it there on the business page. Paul Sagan and I have been building both the Orlando Interactive TV stuff and the Pathfinder stuff on the Internet. They each have the Euro News button, the button that sort of says, "Build me my paper." So, if you program in your TV set in Orlando, or on the Pathfinder on the Internet, you can put in the filters or the intelligent agents can do it for you to say, "Here's what I'm interested in." And I'd put in, well, "I'm interested first of all in the weather; secondly, I want to know whether The Picayune has a story on gambling in New Orleans; I want to know something about whether the Knicks won, but I don't want to know anything about international news or whatever," and I've never checked it. So it just goes deeper and deeper into those little niche interests I have. And that's pretty dangerous, because you lose, as you were just saying earlier, the common bond of information that pulls us together as a society, and the peripheral vision that allows me to know, "Hey, maybe I should get some information about this, even though it's not in those targeted interests I put in my TV set in Orlando or my web browser that these are the news I want." And so, what we've tried to do, and we've experimented with it on the couple of products we're building, is say, "Okay, you can say 'here's my news,'" and here's a "my news" button you can hit, but when you turn on the News Exchange in Orlando, or when you call up Pathfinder on the World Wide Web, no matter what you've programmed in as "my news," in Orlando, there's an anchorwoman who starts off with a very quick summary, maybe four or five minutes, that gives you local, world, national, sports, everything else, so that even if you didn't put in that you cared about international news, you may care that they've starting breaking out fighting again in Croatia, or at least, you should know about it. If you want, you can override her. You can go right to the button that says, "Stop. I want my news." And so you don't get it.

DYSON—So I'd have to override it every day?

ISAACSON—At the moment, you've got to override it every time.

DYSON—A 14-year-old kid could do it for you.

ISAACSON—Yes. Yes. Anybody who desperately wants not to know today's news, we aren't going to be able to prevent that.

DANIELS—The guy that goes to pick up "Today's Personal News" has probably heard stuff on the radio; he's talked to somebody else; he's heard their interpretation of the news. You're assuming that there isn't curiosity out there, and we do not operate in a world that economists like to describe. We live in a dynamic world in which the information sources are multitudinous. I think that it gets back to your point of how do we make the investments to make the news that we present the most credible, and then how do we market it in a way that people will come and use it? It's a great challenge, and it has nothing to do with whether you create serendipity to draw them in, unless you're creating serendipity to really market the broad range of news that you offer.

DYSON—There's this notion that if you charge for information by the bit, people are not really willing to pay for it. They won't pay you for it in the morning because it's over. You have to create some kind of a continuing relationship, which is either a membership [or] a monthly fee. Then, most of the information they get in bulk. They might

subscribe to a particular service, but they're probably not going to pay three cents a page. They'd rather pay a dollar a month.

DANIELS—Unless it's going to be an investment decision. People will pay for discrete amounts of information if it's going to be helping them make an investment decision. All other information, you're right. They're not going to buy by the story would be my guess.

DYSON—What are you charging?

DANIELS—As we publish a newspaper, we have a relationship with a household. We get about $12 a month to deliver our newspaper to that household. The first thing we do is we offer Internet access on a monthly basis. We charge $20 a month for that. And then you can buy The News & Observer and Internet access together for $26 a month. And that works pretty well so far. Now, you can begin to buy premium services. You can buy access to our archives on a monthly basis. You can buy access to a product that we call the NandONews Network, which is categorized, but unfiltered news, and that is just the wire services coming in and dropped into buckets, and you get to choose what you want to look at or not look. We'll begin offering the personal news products because it's a demand. We'll begin offering the personal portfolios. The Wall Street Journal has a very nice product, a personal journal. Every newspaper should be doing those kinds of things because what we're trying to do is broaden and deepen the relationship we have with our community. The more we do that, the more likely we are to succeed. The more we do that, the more money we have to invest in our newsroom. And the more money we have to invest in our newsrooms, the better we're going to be. That's the first thing we did at the News & Observer, invest in our newsroom, to expand our news research department. We trebled it in size. The second thing we did was introduce a computer-assisted reporting network to our newsroom, to get our staff comfortable with what Phil Meyer calls "precision journalism," the analysis, the value-added in our local community. Now, we've got to go back out there and do a much better job of creating local databases that are accessible and usable within the community. That's our next step. All of that led to us offering an on-line service.

Walter Isaacson

DYSON—How many subscribers do you have?

DANIELS—Right now, we have 2,100 paid accounts, 16,000 users. We offer Internet access to schools for free, which has postponed our profitability, but also teaches us how the real market is going to use this stuff, because the market is eight to ten years away. The market is in school right now. We must learn how they access information. Seth Effron, who was a Nieman scholar, now runs one of our new media divisions called The Insider, which is a place where we're trying to expand and re-create our franchise in government information. We had an American Eagle crash in Raleigh last fall, you may recall. His daughter, eleven, was watching TV, got tired of the commentators on TV saying the same thing over and over again. She said to her mother, because Seth was covering the accident, "Let's log onto NandO and see what's there." And we were filing reports on NandO as they came in. Some things were edited; some things were put aside—we don't know if this is true. Here's the current rumors. They are rumors, and categorized them as such. You could track, over time, the information and how it changed. The same thing with Oklahoma City. We ended up getting about a half a million hits a day on our Oklahoma City coverage that was very comprehensive on our NandO Times product, for the same reason. We were able to help readers really get into what was going on, and we archived it. We kept them moving through the day, and they could get it updated. We had on NandO Times before CNN had that McVeigh was arrested. Those are the kinds of things that you can do as a newspaper that really puts you back in the game relative to the competing media.

ISAACSON—We feel that the reader we're going after on the web, and the digital age in general, is slightly different from our subscribers to our paper magazines. We're going after a different audience, to an extent. We've not yet announced how we're going to charge, but we are going to charge, and I think we feel comfortable with a monthly subscription charge that involves a certain loyalty to a product, probably to a package of products ini-

tially, as in Pathfinder, which gives you 20 magazines and ways to search for any type of subject you want amongst those magazines and other products. So there will be some monthly subscription charge, perhaps following the lead of NandO.net, bundling, with Internet access, with people who want a package of information, and a home page and a guide that takes you around the Internet. Once we figure out, the extent that we can bundle or sell on a monthly subscription basis, there will be certain things we put in that are premium prices. We will test the transaction. Do you want this specific thing, to play a rotisserie league baseball game with Sports Illustrated editors? Will you pay a premium price for that? Will you pay a premium price to find out an in-depth research report by Esther Dyson on this company that you've just looked up the stock price on? That might be a pay-per-view thing, where it would be $50 to get your report. That will be offered there, too. We'll try out a lot of those models of premium pricing, along with the basic thing.

TOM JOHNSON, Professor of Journalism, San Francisco State University—Given your individual goals for whatever your organization is, are the three of you individually desirous of any changes in legislation or policies or regulations, at any level, from national down to the state, vis-a-vis the Internet?

DYSON—Or do you want to stop S314?

DANIELS—Yes, we do want to stop S314, absolutely.

DYSON—This is basically an amendment to the Telecom bill. Originally, it was its own bill, S314, which would basically outlaw obscenity on the net and is completely against the First Amendment, as far as I'm concerned.

DANIELS—The freer and [more] open the net, the better off I think the regional newspapers are. It goes straight to what Nancy [Maynard] said about gorillas and guerrillas. We're a gorilla, not a guerrilla. We do have our local relationships, but also the NandO Times is a newspaper that reaches globally. I mean, it is an Internet newspaper that has advertisers, so we would like to see the net open and as free as it can possibly be, with local telecommunications competition and cable in there, and see a cable modem that actually works, and all of that kind of stuff. That's what we would like to see because we believe we have a brand that has credibility, that people will, in fact, pay for judgment. And the freer and[more] open it is, the more chaff that's out there, the more likely it is people will turn to people they know, to you. That's the opportunity. They will turn to you if you are in there and playing the game. They won't turn to you if you're not in there and playing the game.

DYSON—So the short answer is more deregulation?

DANIELS—Exactly.

BRAD GOLDSTEIN—I'm a Nieman Fellow this year. I'm a reader of The Times. One of the things I happen to like is Molly O'Neill's recipes. Can I expect to see contracts in the future with writers and reporters that once something is published in The Times or in Raleigh's paper, you, as publisher, own that and I give up in essence my intellectual property?

SULZBERGER—When Molly O'Neill writes a news story for The New York Times newspaper, and we publish that story, we also put it out on the New York Times News Service, and hopefully, all of you publish that story, as well. She is not paid for what goes out on our news service. She is paid for what she writes as a New York Times journalist, and she's paid very well for that. And I don't see any reason that that model is not absolutely applicable to this.

DANIELS—There are two kinds of things happening here for higher journalists. The people that work for us on staff, get benefits, get office space. You know, when you write for a newspaper in that capacity, the newspaper owns everything. As a freelance journalist, I think the opportunity for newspapers is that we publish it. Then we create a joint venture with all of our freelancers and create a server for freelancers, and as people want to access that, we'll share in the profits, us as the publisher, more like a book contract.

MURREY MARDER, retired diplomatic correspondent, The Washington Post—We've had no discussion so far about two subjects that intensely interest many people, especially those operating in national and international affairs, and that is—the impact of this new age on the manipulation of public opinion, and encountering the manipulation of public opinion. To me, there are immense values through the computer operation of effecting ongoing public policy. For example, one can think back, one can think with considerable provocation as to what would have happened in the McCarthy era if there had been this many avenues for recording public opinion. Or, for example, at the outset of the Vietnamese war. What could have been done journalistically by putting before the public not only the views of the government, but the views of the historians, the maps, the histories, the geopolitical aspects of it. And then there is a whole additional question of manipulating facts, manipulating pictures, what government may do in times of crisis in manipulating what you see, for example, or what you thought you were seeing in the Persian Gulf War. I would think that this panel, particularly, would have some considerable interest in venturing into this area.

ISAACSON—Well, Murrey covered Henry Kissinger, and I would think that Henry Kissinger, without this, was able to manipulate the perceptions of what we were doing in Cambodia, what we were doing in Vietnam. It's all been the stuff that you covered when you were covering him, right?

MARDER—Yes, but he certainly would not be able to manipulate it to the same degree if one had the same resources available now.

SULZBERGER—I think it's the opposite. And maybe my—

MARDER—Well, that is the question. You can argue it either way.

SULZBERGER—Isn't the experience of Tianamen Square proof that these technologies allow for a freer flow of information and a quicker ability for the common citizenry to pierce veils of secrecy and misinformation? If, in the

end, you don't believe that more information faster is better, then I wonder where we all are as journalists.

MARDER—No. That is exactly where I would be.

ISAACSON—I think that's what Murrey was saying. And I do think that government secrecy, misinformation, deception is harder in a world where there is a faster flow of information, more contact for more sources of information, for more people, and more feedback from the people to the opinion makers, and for that matter, to those who are packaging the news. I fully agree with you, and I think that's what Arthur was saying.

MARDER—Excuse me. I would just go back fleetingly to the McCarthy era. When the television hearings began, my dear friend and colleague, Phil Potter, said and said again when the censure hearings began, you know, "What the hell good will this do, Murrey?" I said, "Phil, the only premise I can operate on is the more facts you throw out there, eventually, something will happen." He said, "Well, what the hell will happen?" I said, "Nobody can be sure, but that's the only premise you can operate on journalistically."

ISAACSON—And now, it's global. When you covered the secret bombing of Cambodia, it was secret in this country. It was not secret in Cambodia. They knew they were being bombed. And the same thing when Arthur talks about Tianamen Square. If there were information that was global and quickly traveling, then the ability to conduct duplicitous or deceitful diplomacy, or for that matter, secret wars, would be minimized. Now, you can argue that one way or the other, but I know how I feel about that.

MARDER—You wouldn't be writing off the future Nixon administration so readily, would you, in terms of what they might conceive?

ISAACSON—I think there are dangers that come from cyber-democracy, and Time magazine did a story by Robert Wright on the dangers of cyber-democracy, which I didn't happen to agree with, but they did raise a lot of the dangers, which is that the ability to whip up fast popular opinion, and to have politicians be totally at the whim of the type of vocal people who may be involved in anything from talk radio to Internet chat groups, is probably not the prettiest sight for democracy. I do think, though, that it's hard to disagree with the author, that the more people who get more information and get more involved, the better off you are, unless you don't happen to believe in democracy.

JAY ROSEN, Director, Project on Public Life and the Press, New York University—I'd like to address a comment to something that we've heard repeatedly throughout the conference, and a lot in this panel, which is that what journalists sell us, or the value they add, is judgment. There are a lot of ways to judge the world, and if what The New York Times or any other news medium is doing is providing the information that a human being needs to function well in this society, there are a lot of views of human beings; there are a lot of ways to function well; there are a lot of views of what's going on in this society. And the question becomes: when I read The New York Times, I don't get just information, and I don't get just good judgment. I get a vision of what culture is about in the culture pages; I get a vision of what politics is about and for in the political news; I get a vision of the local community in local sections. In the years when The New York Times, for example, saw culture a certain way and didn't include rock and roll as part of it, I wasn't buying your judgment. I was waiting for your judgment to catch up to the way the world is. Do you see? So it seems to me that the challenge of the on-line world, which, incidentally, is also the challenge of public journalism, is—how can we create grounds for judgment that arise out of interactions with people and relationships with people?

DANIELS—I think he's absolutely right, that it's still judgment they're buying. What he's saying is—how do we make our judgments better? You know, how do we, through the relationships that we use, how do we use this technology to broaden and deepen relationships so that the judgments that we make, in fact, marry up with the community we're trying to reach? It's not an elitism question. What it is, is just how do we use technology to better inform ourselves, our journalists and our editors, to do a better job? That's what I heard you say. That's what we're trying to do at The News & Observer.

ISAACSON—People have got more choices. We put Vibe magazine to cover rock music within Pathfinder. It's got hip hop music. Within one click away, there's 500 other sources to get music stuff, so if Vibe screws up and doesn't have the right judgment, people have got a helluva lot more choices today than they did in the past. They can just click away and get somewhere else. So we'll know pretty quickly if they are not buying our judgment, and we get a lot of feedback.

STAN TINER, The Mobile Press-Register—Sulzberger must have people of both persuasions tugging at his coattails every day saying, "We ought to spend more money on the new technology," and somebody saying, "Wait a minute, we've got to take care of the franchise today and make sure that when we get to that brave new world, that we've still got money in the bank and are able to go forward." How do you decide between those two camps, and protect the franchise you've got now?

SULZBERGER—The answer, I think, is easy. If you don't have a brand, there's nothing to translate. And I am seeing some newspapers in this country pour more money and resources into the future and watch the present deteriorate. Now, they'll have a wonderful bright new shiny box to put all that brand in, but when they get there, they're not going to have much left. Quite frankly, I think all of you in this room could name two or three newspapers and newspaper companies that are doing that today. And they are starving their current news operations in a hope that they can build something for the future. I think they're out of their minds. On the other hand, I hope that by doing the opposite, that I will siphon away a lot of your readers.

DANIELS—Well, the way that at least we're trying to do it is we are very much integrating the two. ■

Scaring Ourselves to Death

By Tom Regan

It didn't sound very promising. Much of the audience reaction during the first day of the conference was strongly negative. On-line media will never tell a story as well as the print medium, we heard. The public won't be able to deal with the information glut. It's impossible to build community in cyberspace. An on-line entrepreneur standing near the back of the conference room shook his head.

"It's like listening to a group of monks talk about the printing press," he whispered. "A mass-produced book will never be as good as an illustrated manuscript. How will people deal with information glut? Etc., etc. What they were really worried about was that everybody would be able to have their own Bibles, and wouldn't need the clergy to tell them how things worked any more."

There was a hint of that ancient fear reflected in that first day of the conference. Hidden behind the statements of "How will this affect the public?" was the question, "How will this affect us?"

While people who work in the media tend not to be Luddites, many see new media "re-arranging" the order of things, and they are not too happy about it. One reason for this apprehension might be that those who oppose the notion of an on-line world have never been there. Some might have a personal computer, that they treat, as cultural critic Robert Hughes said in a recent Time magazine article, "...strictly as a typewriter and filing system with a big memory." A few might even have an E-mail address.

Well, as a long-time user of the Internet, and a firm believer that technology can be a valuable tool when used wisely, I want to tell you there is a "there" there in cyberspace. It's a place that will offer media a new and dynamic method of connecting to their readers (yes, the proper word is readers), and of connecting to their community.

Perhaps a few examples from personal experience will shed some light into the terror-filled darkness.

A common complaint about the on-line world is that it will isolate people and take them away from pastimes.

As a certified on-line junkie, I spend three to four hours a day surfing the Internet. I do not consider it wasted time. Nor has it cut into my time for books, museums and movies. In some ways, it's increased my chance to exercise those options. I've often learned of an event on line that I would never known about otherwise.

It has, however, affected the amount of time I spend watching TV. This view was also expressed recently in a speech by Ted Leonsis of America Online to the Harvard Business School. Leonsis told the audience that he considers TV his real competition. People will continue to read books. But it's those extra hours now spent watching TV that the on-line services must claim.

Another oft-stated viewpoint is that it's impossible to build community in cyberspace. Neil Postman postulated this view during his conversation with Richard Harwood, when he spoke of how it was impossible to have a "conversation" on the Internet, since you couldn't see, touch, or smell the person with whom you were having the conversation. Postman dismissed this as two people "typing" to each other.

Not always. A few years ago, I visited a school in rural Nova Scotia which had entered into an interesting project using the Internet. One student I met was a shy, awkward girl dressed in a black leather life jacket replete with studs. She told me how the Internet made her life more bearable in her rural setting.

Not one to make friends easily, she often felt isolated. When the Internet came to her school, she went on line and discovered a newsgroup devoted to Japanimation, one of her favorite topics. She discovered a community of people with whom she could swap stories, exchange ideas, and just have fun.

Her teacher took me aside later and told me that the Internet had literally kept this girl in school.

Perhaps another reason I see technology as a plus in terms of community is that I am a Canadian.

The Canadian experience with technology is an intriguing one. We live in the second biggest country in the world, yet most of us inhabit a sixty-mile corridor that runs along the border with the United States. Technology—like the telephone and radio—has not only allowed us to build "community" with each other, but has also allowed us to build a nation.

The reality of technology and cyberspace is that we're headed there one way or another. Like the frontier that Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. spoke of so eloquently, we will go there and settle it, and bring "order" to it.

But not the order we know or cling to today. It will be a postmodern "order," if I can use that expression, with little if any central authority, and lots of chances for people to talk back. That doesn't mean it will fly off into meaninglessness. Quite the contrary.

In the end, the values we bring to cyberspace as journalists are the same ones we bring to every other medium we use. Making technology and the on-line world work for us, rather than against us, lies in the way that we see it.

"Don't focus on the technology," Richard Harwood said during his discussion with Postman. "Focus on what it is going to do for us."

After all, the clergy didn't disappear when people got their own Bibles. Traditional media won't either, as long as we avoid that state of denial that Jack Fuller of The Chicago Tribune described to close the conference. ■

—Tom Regan is a 1992 Nieman Fellow.

News Photography in Cyberspace

By Fred Ritchin

In cyberspace, unlike on the printed page, there will probably not be a great deal of news photography of the "still" variety, the kind that presently fills our newspapers and magazines. However, there will be an extensive use of video and other moving imagery to report the news, as well as many new media hybrids.

Why? In part because the culture of the screen, as opposed to paper, is that of motion. The television and movie screens are displaying constant movement and the movement is, if anything, accelerating in recent years. A predominance of static imagery in a kinetic domain is unlikely. Moreover, the Internet's World Wide Web, which itself is also displayed on a screen, is essentially a multimedia environment that only for the moment looks like a collection of rather static pages. Currently there is the constant linking between one screen and another, and soon there will be the constant linking between one medium and another.

On a digital platform it is much more likely that the still photograph will actually be a video temporarily at rest, or the front end of another kind of metamorphosing imagery, than a single image with a caption.

The distinction here is between paper and screen, but there are other distinctions as well. People will be reading digital oews in fragments, constantly making decisions whether to continue with an article, a subject, a medium. They will expect choice. A still photograph that just sits there on the screen may seem like a leftover from a previous culture.

The reader will expect the still photograph to turn into something else—a video, a 360° panoramic image, a map, or even a painting or a speech. The image might be expected to morph into another, or change colors, or become its own contact sheet. Or it could be expected to evolve as more information becomes available (what the traffic looks like on a particular road), or to illustrate various concepts (what might the "typical" American family look like in the year 2000, for example).

On a digital platform where all information is written as a series of 1's and 0's, the various media share a common infrastructure and are distinct only in the forms that they are finally presented to the viewer (as sound, image, etc.). But since each is written in digital code, one could "play" a photograph and hear it as music, or vice-versa, expressing two kinds of tonality. It is probable that new hybrid media will emerge that can be seen/heard/read in a variety of ways, transforming one into the other like the popular children's televisinn show heroes, the Power Rangers, are themselves constantly metamorphosing.

A photograph of someone will also be able to be interviewed by viewers who will speak/write their questions, and expect answers that might either be pre-formatted or, depending upon advances in artificial intelligence, synthesized at the moment. One could easily imagine the photograph of a politician being interviewed in this way.

Then there is the tendency towards embracing virtual reality, or at least its three-dimensionality, so that photographs will be seen as antiquated flat worlds. The viewer may also expect to be able to "enter" the photograph in a virtual manner, and to travel around it. Whether this will also include an expectation of sounds and smells is unknown at this point, although not at all unlikely. If Newt Gingrich could recently describe, in his vision of the digital future, parents remaining in constant communication with their children on the battlefield of a foreign war, advising them in real time on how to outwit the enemy, then the two-dimensional photograph will seem simply outdated and lifeless.

The picture editor will become a multimedia producer, aware of the powerful synergies among media and of the emergence of new media strategies, rather than pledging allegiance to only one form of communications. To apply Marshall McLuhan's analysis of media, photographers and picture editors must understand that they are in the communications business, not the

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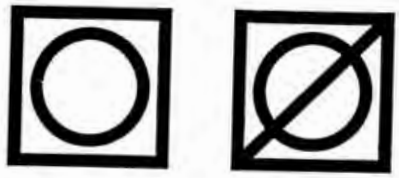
business of photography. Strict fidelity to a single formal strategy is of more relevance to labor union organizers than it is to the reader's comprehension of contemporary events.

This prescription does not, however, mean the death of photography as we now know it. There are many uses for a two-dimensional documentary form—to isolate aspects of a situation, to "stop" time, to record pertinent information, including other two-dimensional documentation, and so on. And, of course, the melding of the photograph with an array of interactive, digital possibilities (including the interaction among media, as well as between the viewer and the information) has astounding potentials for journalism.

In a more conventional sense, there will be a variety of narrated slide shows available in electronic form, perhaps with the photographer's voice, the subject's point of view, and other kinds of information, giving the photographer an amplified role. And there will always be an important role for the still photographic specialist covering major events, just as there will be for anyone particularly talented in a single medium. But much of the routine news photography of today, such as the coverage of a press conference, will be covered by a video cameraperson (or robot), and the still images, if needed, extracted in the newsroom.

Given the speed of technological progress, it makes sense to plan for these transitions immediately as newspapers and magazines go on line. How do journalists break the psychological barriers to understanding and implementing interesting new media possibilities? How do they start to experiment with more dynamic ways of covering the world? How do publishers deal with more diverse staffing requirements, including the re-education needs of their employees? How do editors meet the heightened expectations of the viewer for inclusion in the news process without pandering or running scared? And how is the documentary authority of the photograph preserved in a medium that is by its very nature malleable?



In response to the latter question, a committee that I headed at New York University has proposed the appending of a "not-a-lens" icon, a circle inside a square with a diagonal slash running through it, to any photograph that has been significantly manipulated yet still appears to be a conventional photograph. Misleading the reader is obviously perilous in conventional media but becomes even more difficult to protect against in a digital environment where the original context of the image (in a particular magazine, for example) is not evident. The Internet encourages "sampling" of information, and the original source for the information is not always immediately apparent to the viewer. This, of course, is not an issue confined to photography, but the extant "camera never lies" mythology makes it a particularly pressing one for this particular medium. The new digital age Conde Nast contract for its photographers and illustrators giving the publisher "the right to crop, retouch or otherwise modify the work" is one early sign that the photograph is being perceived as increasingly malleable.

Journalists are entering a time of great possibility when more effective models of reporting, explication and discussion of the news can be built, with greater involvement of readers and a variety of new ways to present information. It is also a moment of severe peril, for if the established news sources do not understand how to both safeguard the credibility of their reporting and incorporate new ways of sharing what they know, their role in this evolving information society will be severely eroded. Publishers and editors will have to admit that their paper-based presentation strategies are not the essence of what they do. The inability to intelligently seek out new possibilities will make it that much easier for the front page in cyberspace to be brought to us by Disney, or Tylenol, or Microsoft. The implications for a democracy are overwhelming.■

Transcript on Internet

The proceedings of the conference are available through the Internet. Complete transcripts of the entire program, as well as selected photographs, screen images from some programs described during the conference and links to the information services are presented in World Wide Web compatible format. There are also response areas which viewers can use to exchange comments and other information about the conference.

You can access this information indirectly through the regular Nieman Foundation home page using the following address: (URL) http://www.Nieman.harvard.edu/Nieman.html.

Alternately, the conference report can also be accessed directly using the following address: (URL) http://www.Nieman.harvard.edu/nconf95.html. Most of the information can be accessed using some of the older World Wide Web browsing programs such as early versions of Mosaic, but to take full advantage of the clickable buttons, sound and video files and interactive forms, we recommend the newer version of the browser programs such as Netscape.

For additional information you can send an E-mail message to nreports@fas.harvard.com.■

On-Line Editor —Multimedia Skills Needed

By Melanie Sill

If you want to know how new technology is going to change editing, steer clear of the panel discussions and pull up a chair in front of a computer with a World Wide Web browser. Connect to Editor & Publisher's home page for media (including lists and connections to newspaper on-line services) and you'll find out one thing quickly: the change has already happened.

The MediaInfo Web page (a note on its location follows) will take you to dozens of newspaper web sites that will show you how material is being presented in this new forum. It also features a job openings section with ads from publications small and large as well as from journalists hunting for jobs in new media.

One applicant's list of qualifications includes her experience in creating a web home page for a college sports conference. In another listing, The Sporting News says it is hiring a news staff of 13 for a new on-line product and advertises positions including "producer," a person who will be equal to the managing editor in the organizational chart.

USA Today Online is looking for content editors with good news writing and editing skills: "Knowledge of on-line services and Internet a plus." And Baseline, the arts and entertainment on-line service, wants a summer intern who can:

- Write and format headline for welcome screens
- Digest, synthesize, and rewrite copy from a variety of sources
- Do occasional reporting by attending news conferences, etc....
- Assist in the development of new products and services..."

Baseline's intern also should demonstrate "sound news judgment and superior writing skills, excellent to dazzling computer skills and the ability to quickly master a diverse range of editorial and technical tasks..." In other words, editors for on-line services have to do just about everything.

Chris Kouba already had done just about everything in the way of newspaper editing before he started a new job: Managing Editor for on-line services at Landmark Communications infi.net, the Virginia-based Internet access and information provider. Kouba also is M.E. for on-line services for The Virginian-Pilot/Ledger Star, Landmark's flagship newspaper in Norfolk.

Kouba is one of many converts who have moved from print or broadcast to new media operations. He came to the job with a dozen years of editing experience at The Virginian Pilot/Ledger Star of Norfolk; he had worked the night desk, edited the wires, done layout and served as business editor and then features editor.

Now Kouba is leading a staff that's learning how to do the essential task of editing—assembling material for presentation—using a medium that can offer sound, pictures and words and connections to an unlimited number of other sources.

When he talks about the job, Kouba echoes what many news people say about the web and other new electronic forms: they require a kind of editor who can do many things well. The '90's version of the Renaissance man is the multimedia editor.

"If I were in journalism school today I'd take electronic courses and print courses," Kouba says. "A single person putting together a web page needs good news judgment, writing skills, the ability to design screen-size pages with photos, sound and video, and the creative skills to put it all together in a way that offers style and substance. This kind of person is more of a producer/editor who sees how it all comes together."

"A computer screen is not as big as a newsprint page, and even though you can thumb through it instantly, you don't see the boundaries of what you're holding," Kouba says. "A paper you can flip through and know when you're done. It really places a premium on what editors or journalists do, which is try to figure out what is going to be the most interesting or most important material to present first."

That role—editor and producer—is more familiar to people who work in broadcast and work with words, sound and pictures in putting together their reports. The difference is that the World Wide Web is unlimited territory, and people who visit tend to be travelers rather than settlers.

The frontier for on-line editors isn't how to edit words for a medium where space is no object—there's plenty of room for long stories, and plenty of opportunity to showcase them with connections to every ancillary topic imaginable. The challenge is developing content that is particular to new media—and that's where editing gets interesting.

Bruce Siceloff, On-line Editor for The News & Observer/NandO.net in Raleigh, is another print editing veteran who made the move to new media—first to the newspaper's bulletin board service, then to NandO.net's web format. Siceloff, who was reporter, city editor, Perspective editor and government editor for The N&O newspaper, has taught himself most of what he knows about new-media editing. His advice for people who want to work in new media is simple: be prepared to learn, fast.

"You can't be a narrowly concerned specialist here; you have to be flexible, you have to know how your work fits into the broader picture, you have to be conversant in the new skills and technology of your coworkers," Siceloff says. "And just as a metro editor will be better off after learning how pagination and the pressroom work, so will new-media journalists fare better when they recognize that they can't do their jobs without getting their hands dirty in the new technology itself."■

Melanie Sill, a 1994 Nieman Fellow, is Projects Editor, The News & Observer, Raleigh. The URL for the E&P home page is: http:/marketplace.com/e-papers.list.www/e-papers.home.page.html

FCC in the Digital Age

An Address by Reed Hundt, Chairman, Federal Communications Commission

It is an honor to be asked to participate in your deliberations about the impact the digital age will have on your profession. I have no idea. That's my answer on that question, and actually, I don't intend to say much about it here today.

Journalists reacted to the invention of the telegraph as you might have predicted. With absolute certainty, they assured us that in the future, certain events would occur which, in fact, never occurred at all.

Thus, James Gordon Bennett of The New York Herald predicted that with the arrival of the telegraph, "Mere newspapers, the circulators of intelligence merely, must submit to destiny and go out of existence, while the intellectual, philosophical and original journalist will have a greater, a more excited and more thoughtful audience than ever." Now, I don't know about the end of newspapers. We know that part about a "more thoughtful audience" never happened for you all. But The New York Herald never printed a retraction.

Bennett's starry-eyed speculations in the 1840's about the impact of the telegraph are nothing compared to the cyber-hype surrounding the digital age. You all, I know, realize, because you've written it over and over, that the phenomenon of digitization means that voice and video and data brought to us by print, radio and TV journalists will converge, making you, as Katherine Fulton has said, digital multimedia joornalists.

Now, if you're like me, you think a digital journalist is someone who knows touch typing, and multimedia means they show writer's block on TV.

But like it or not, the truth is that you all are taking steps into the digital world. In 1989, only 42 newspapers were participating in any respect in electronic ventures. The number now is 2,700. TV, broadcast, cable, satellite, wire telephones, wireless —they're all converging. They're all different ways for you all to talk about reaching an audience, and to find ways to reach an audience.

What I particularly want to talk to you about today is the world of broadcasters. Broadcasters are going digital.

If you have a broadcast channel, you have six megahertz of spectrum, and you deliver one signal. And if the FCC, as Congress, in a House bill yesterday, asked us to, gives each one of those broadcasters another six megahertz, they can use that for digital transmission. And with the exact same amount of spectrum, they can transmit five or six or seven TV signals, instead of one. That's not all they can do. With the same spectrum, they can transmit, for example, a hundred-page newspaper to all the homes in the coverage area in 1.6 seconds. The same spectrum can be used for a couple of TV signals—maybe not six, but a couple—plus 75 CD-quality stereo radio shows.

So if you have 10 stations, as you do in Washington, D.C., you could have 60 signals. You could easily be transmitting several dozen newspapers to every laptop computer in the area. It kind of overtakes the paperboy concept, doesn't it?

No one knows how broadcasters will want to exploit this new spectrum, but there is no question that starting in the very, very near future, just a couple of years, broadcast TV is going to change totally. This is going to be a combination, like all change, of opportunity and anxiety.

The anxiety is going to be real and sincere and well-grounded for print and electronic journalists. You can con-

sole yourselves, I suppose, with the words of the great Civil War journalist, Horace Greeley: "Journalism will kill you, but it will keep you alive while you're at it."

Now, at the FCC, what is our role? Well, our first task is this: it is our task to bring fair competition to every communications market in the country, and that will require, in the digital age, a wholly different analysis than in the past.

So take the question: should newspapers and cable companies and telephone companies and TV stations in the same market all be able to buy each other?

For many years, we've been concerned that if you answered yes to that question, you would be likely to promote media concentration, a reduction in the diversity of voice, a kind of concentration that would drive up the price of advertising, that would limit access to the market. But in the digital age, all of the labels of these industries will be meaningless, and we will have to reason through a maze of industry analysis, of market analysis.

We need to start, however, by killing the metaphors that confuse medium and message, so if I say to you, "Well, in the digital age, a newspaper will be distributed to laptop computers by a broadcast signal," of what relevance in that phrase is the word "paper"? What role does that have in that? Absolutely nothing, and it doesn't do anything but confuse thinking to have the word in there.

Similarly, if I say to you that the telephone company will show you the nightly broadcast news, the word "broadcast" has no particular significance in that proposition.

All of our labels are going to be barriers to creative thought in the digital age, and it's going to be necessary to get rid of all of these metaphors that confuse conduit and content, and it's going to be necessary to recognize that we're just talking here in the news business and the entertainment business about product and aboot distribution.

And our goal needs to be that we want many ways to have product distributed. We don't want to have any bottlenecks in the distribution chain. We want easy access to the distribution chain for those people who make the product. And those people who make the product may be individual journalists; they may be teams of journalists; they may be journalists with editors; they may be any kind of product creator that has yet to be imagined or exists today.

But all of them will need to make sure that they have multiple avenues to the audience. And multiple avenues, just to give you a rough and ready answer to what in the real world you would have to pay millions of dollars to get experts to give you, you need four or five or six avenues to make sure you're going to have vigorous competition, four or five or six open avenues, at least.

That will get you very cheap distribution, and that's good for you, and that's good for the country.

So, if the anti-trust paradigm is imposed on the distribution of voice, video and data, then we can safely answer questions about whether a newspaper could own a TV station, or a telephone company could buy a cable company in the same market. The answer is going to be: it depends on the individual market, and whether you have the multiple lanes to the audience, or whether you don't. It will be a concentration analysis. It will not be based on labels; it will not be based on the outmoded stereotypes of the analog age.

The next thing that we really need to make sure we focus on, particularly for broadcasters, as the conversion to digital takes place, is that we have to rethink and restate and throw out moch of current broadcast regulation.

Right now, the prop of that regulation is the principle that the FCC regulates TV and radio so as to make sure that they serve the public interest, convenience and necessity. The legal principle was that there was a kind of public/private partnership or stewardship over the public property of the airwaves, and that is what is behind the 1934 Act's principle.

Now, what does that lead to? It leads to, today, a host of erroneous beliefs. It leads to the single question that I am asked in every single interview: why am I trying to get rid of Howard Stern? This question, somewhat amusing to some, in fact is a string, which if you pull at it, leads you into a whole mare's nest of conception and difficulty about the relationship between government and broadcast spectrum. It is generally believed, I have come to realize, that in some material way, through the FCC, the government actually sanctions and/or reviews and blesses broadcasters.

This view is embodied from time to time in doctrines like the Fairness Doctrine, or in programming guidelines. Today, you find this view behind the notion that broadcasters must provide programming that "responds to issues of concern to their communities" in order to get their licenses renewed. And we have rules about personal attack on the broadcast airwaves, and we have political editorial rules. We have a rule against the prohibition of news staging.

Rather than spend our time looking backward to how these rules have worked in the analog age, let's just, as Ronald Reagan used to say, "obsolete this problem" by looking forward and saying: do we want any of these kinds of rules in the digital age?

With 50, 60 broadcast signals possible, do we want the government to have any of these kinds of rules in a broadcast age? Do they have any meaning, if you did have them? Is there any chance that the FCC would, in any real sense, enforce any of them?

Let's ask this question: what meaning should there be to the public interest standard, at any level? In reality now, do broadcasters do anything much more than show programs that interest the public in order to meet the public interest standard? And if we didn't have a public interest standard, is there anyone here who thinks they would stop showing programs that interest the public?

Now, if we talk about whether there is reality to the public interest test, we may, in fact, discover that we have a fork in the road. On the one hand, we could abolish the test; on the other hand, we could substitute for it such

concrete, enforceable, and from the public perspective, valuable obligations as we as a society may wish to impose.

But if we got to that fork in the road and went one way or the other, it would be an advance over the fog that we are now in.

Now, broadcasters are just now commencing the process of converting to the digital age, and TV is going to become fantastically diverse and complex, and is going to merge with the computer and communications industry. Why don't we take this occasion to have honest, non-vague regulation of broadcasting? Why don't we end the charade?

If we're going to be honest, the public can get used to not caring about whether [former FCC Chairman] Jim Quello or I are spending our time listening to Howard Stern. The government will have to tell people, and people will have to learn that the government isn't censoring, filtering or protecting people from violence in content.

Now, here's what we propose in the new rules: Number 1, broadcasters should use the definition that they, in fact, have developed—they have developed a definition called FCC-friendly. I love this term. This means that the purpose is to please the uncertain foggy Commission, and has little or nothing to do with children's educational TV. But the definition developed by broadcasters clearly, in practice, has included Bill Nye, the science guy, and excluded the Jetsons. The definition is fine with me. They invented it; they can have it.

Number 2, they should—here's an idea—tell people in advance what shows they think meet the definition. Then the print people could print that. You already print the plot line for NYPD Blue; you print closed-captioned; you show what is new or what is a repeat. You could print that the broadcasters volunteer this particular show as educational TV. It would give parents and adults a chance to find it.

Number 3, we could tell broadcasters, "If you show three or four hours,"—we haven't decided how many hours—"three or four hours of educational TV per week, per licensee, per market, you will be guaranteed renewal on this issue." You will not have to file hundreds of pieces of paper, years after the event, at license renewal time. You will be guaranteed it will be a safe harbor.

We will also say, according to our proposed rules, that if nobody in your town complained about what you did, then all those nobodies who complained won't be able to be heard at license-renewal time. They won't have any standing to protest, because we want to get out of this business and have the relationship be between the viewers and the broadcasters.

Now, why do we want to do any of this? Because, to get right down to it, this could be the terms and conditions of the lease of the public property. We ought to have terms and conditions. Right now the situation is that the lease is like Goldwyn's definition of a verbal contract: it ain't worth the paper it's printed on.

Well, the current social contract between broadcasters and the government is like that, and I think it's better if it were clear and simple and minimally burdensome and real. Let's write down the terms of the deal in indelible ink for the digital age. It would further First Amendment values to say very clearly that broadcasters, in effect, are paying for the digital spectrum by either some cash for subscription services, which is what the House bill proposes, or what I am, in effect, talking about, in kind contributions, or a little bit of both.

This would be much better for the country because no one would be able to complain that there is this chilling of the First Amendment going on when people like me offer our layman's views about the content of TV.

Ultimately, this would be a good thing, because in law, clarity and fairness are good ends in themselves. And this would be a good thing because if we were clear about what broadcasters would be expected to deliver, we could also be clear about what they cannot be expected to deliver, and we would be able to focus more clearly on just exactly why we need non-commercial TV in addition to commercial TV.

All of this is about trying to follow up on what Thoreau also said in Walden: "Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end."

Well, we have lots of unimproved ends in this country, but the information highway can get us to those ends, and we ought to get about that business.

Q. & A.

VALERIE HYMAN, Director, Program for Broadcast Journalism, The Poynter Institute—You know, the subject of this conference has to do with public-interest journalism, and many people here bemoan the lack of what they call public-interest journalism on TV right now. Given the scenario that you're pursuing, and which I warmly embrace, what kind of assurance, if any, can you give anyone that this scenario, if it plays out, will, indeed, encourage more public interest journalism, encourage more serious television, and that people will be able to access it easily, especially given the wide spectrum from which they'll have to choose.

HUNDT—It's a big question, and I certainly, by no means, pretend to even have a glimmering as to most of what would constitute an answer. But if you had 50, 60 broadcast signals in Washington, D.C., I am absolutely sure that the very first thing that would happen would be this: the hue and cry would go up—what are we going to put over the air? And the answer is: the cheaper the cost of delivering any particular minutes, the easier it is for people in the public interest sector to muster the wherewithal to be part of those minutes. That's our job. That's what competition is all about. You know, Bill Gates said in Fortune Magazine that the principal basis of his vision of the future of Microsoft was the proposition that the actual cost of communication would go to zero. He said that he started Microsoft on the assumption that the cost of computing would move towards zero, and the new iteration of his company is that the cost of communication will go to zero. If that's true, that's good not just for Bill Gates. That's good for anybody who has content to deliver. ■

The Real Competition: Old-Fashioned Newspapers

By Frank McCulloch

One summer night in 1958, when the Cold War was hot, five Air Force colonels, one brigadier, two major generals, one four-star general and five civilian scientists of commensurate rank and prestige sprawled comfortably in chairs around a table, drank some booze, let their imaginations soar, and war-gamed the world almost out of existence.

This was the team with the awesome responsibility of closing the dangerous gap between U.S. and Soviet ballistic missile capabilities, and they were taking a short break from their usual 80-hour work weeks. They were gathered for the evening at the luxurious California desert home of an illustrious aviation pioneer. There, out of sight and in complete security, they relaxed, or at least intended to. In truth, they talked and thought about nothing they didn't talk and think about the rest of the week. But here they were a good deal more uninhibited as they argued about thrust, throw weight, megatonnage, mutual assured destruction and the human race's prospects for survival, if any, as the nuclear and space ages converged.

The unmistakable leader of the group was the four-star, a taciturn man who listened carefully to the war games but talked little. This was General Ben Schriever, Commander of the Air Force Ballistic Missiles Division, and one nf those rare men it has been the good fortune of the United States to produce when history demanded it.

On this particular evening, as the missiles soared off into space and their nuclear warheads vaporized strategic targets, Schriever's colleagues seemed almost to have forgotten him. But at one point strategies and counter-strategies ground to a deadlock, and then one of the brigadiers turned to Schriever.

"General," he asked, "how's it look to you? After all, you're Mr. Missile Man himself."

Schriever shrugged.

"I'm not a missile man," he said. "I'm a bomber man."

There was a brief silence, followed by guffaws. It was as though Henry Ford had urged a return to the horse and buggy.

The brigadier, emboldened by the laughter and good bourbon, said, "Okay, Ben, I'll play your straight man. Why are you a bomber man?"

And Schriever, dead serious and very much in command, answered quietly:

"Because you can turn them around."

There was a silence, and the room turned very sober, and the war-gaming drifted to an early end.

In the years since, the wisdom implicit in Schriever's remark has stuck with me: be very careful about subtracting human intelligence from, or subordinating it to, any technology, however powerful.

Which I hope will not be construed as an argument that all the new technologies now bursting into and around journalism will automatically subordinate human intelligence. It is, however, to argue that because they are enormously complex, because they can perform so many tasks for us, because learning to apply them soaks up resources better invested elsewhere, because once they're mastered they can be just plain fun, and because there is no way to foresee their ultimate consequences, human intelligence might very well finish second in its race with technology.

Putting that all another way, the danger is that the technology will become an end, not a means; a product, not a tool; and what we say and how we say it will become less important than how swiftly, cheaply or gaudily we can get the job done.

The memory of that long-ago night of war-gaming and apocalyptic visions often returns when I hear today's insistent proclamations of doom for newspapers, a startling number of which, weirdly enough, come from the news-

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paper business itself. (My focus here, by the way, is going to be on newspapers; other media can make their own cases.) Anyway, in real life the missiles were never launched in anger and no one was ever incinerated. Which brings me to my own view of today's reality: that no good newspaper need have any more fear for its future than it did, say, ten years ago.

The critical word in that last sentence is, of course, "good." This is what I mean by it:

A good newspaper is fair. It is accurate. It is responsive to its readers and its society. It is cleanly, clearly and simply written. It has a strong sense of context and history.

Its editors, its entire staff, know that the society is changing, always has, always will, and they change with it. They do not, however, relinquish their right to make their own news decisions.

A good newspaper's coverage of its own community is thorough, sensitive and respectful—but clear-eyed. That paper does its best to help its readers understand that while what happens in their own town probably interests them most, what happens in the rest of the world may affect them most.

And above all, the people who put out a good newspaper understand and believe in its role in and for an open society, a free people and a free economy.

So let me repeat it: that kind of newspaper—and there are more of them than critics, particularly the techies, acknowledge—is going to be around for at least as long as most of us concerned with the subject care.

What a newsroom produces for such a newspaper is, in this highly prejudiced view, the key to the future. But it is far from a good paper's only strength.

For example, it seems to me that so long as someone can lay a well-reported, well-written and intelligently edited newspaper down at my front door by 7 a.m. each day, and do all that for something like 50 cents, the competition, any competition, has a tough row to hoe.

Then, cliché though it has become, there's the simple mobility factor. It's a lot easier to carry a newspaper onto a bus or train, or into the next room, than it is a computer, even a pocket-sized one. When that's done, you take the front page, I'll take sports, and later we'll divide up the business, style, classified, editorial and local sections.

These are some other things I can do with a paper: I can hold it, feel it, carry it, read it at my convenience and be outraged, or delighted, by its critics, columnists and editorials. And if I am anything like a conscientious reader, I can be broadly informed by it about the world around me.

For 50 cents, that's one helluva bargain.

None of this, however, belies the fact that there are millions out there who want exactly what they want exactly when they want it and are happy to surf the Internet in search of, say, a stock price, a recipe or the latest in high-tech pornography. On the other hand, there are also millions who are interested not only in specifics but a full menu of politics, public policy, social events, the arts, science, sports, what's happening at city hall, Little League scores, and Doonesbury.

Assemble all that in a daily package, and we have a newspaper. Whether it's today's or tomorrow's and whether it took ten or a thousand people to produce, it is something far beyond what the loner at the computer can ever hope to put together for himself. Ah, you say, but someday we'll eliminate the newsprint and the presses and the trucks and the delivery boys and put the whole kit and caboodle on that screen. I doubt it, but even if that does happen, all we'll have to argue about then is the delivery system.

I know the users of the Internet and The Well and other databases have access to astonishing sources of information. I also know they talk with each other (although, with diminishing frequency, face to face) and make new techie friends around the world, and find all of that a lot more stimulating and responsive than a newspaper.

Let me emphasize this: I think that's truly wonderful. Despite the fact that a lot of what they're looking at is, in the words of one critic, "a wasteland of unfiltered data," what they're doing might prove to be a whole new way to communicate and thereby have its own significant impact on the practice of democracy.

Laudable as that is, however, that's one function, and journalism is quite another. As time goes on, the two will crisscross, and each will have a large effect on the other. But for as far as I can see down the road, they will and should remain separate and distinct endeavors.

Having opened this screed with an anecdotal illustration of what I'm trying to get at, I hope I will be forgiven for closing it with another.

This one is the old story about Thoreau and a young reporter. The president of the United States had just sent a message to the mayor of Baltimore over that stunning new piece of technology called the telegraph. It sped the distance between Washington and Baltimore in seconds, and the world was agog, including the editor of the paper nearest to Walden Pond.

So the editor directed the reporter to go out to Walden and ask that kook, Thoreau, how he felt about sitting out in the wilderness, doing nothing useful for anyone, now that whole sentences were being transmitted from city to city almost instantaneously.

The reporter dutifully made his way to the pond and asked Thoreau how he felt about life now that the president had flashed a message to the mayor over a distance of 30 miles. Thoreau thought for a moment and then asked:

"What did he say?"

And that's the essence. For journalism, that's what counted, maybe all that counted, yesterday, counts today and will count tomorrow. What we say, not the wonders of the tools that enable us to say it.

A final point:

This was written on a Royal standard typewriter, circa 1950, and was sent to Nieman Reports by U.S. mail. The script was full of xxxx's, transpositions and carbon paper smears.■

[Ed. Note: And scanned into a Power Macintosh 7100/66 in Microsoft Word, then placed into Aldus PageMaker pages in Garamond type.]

Second Case Study

Africa News Service

A Brainstorming Session on Ideas for Helping This Multimedia Organization Become Economically Viable

Finding a Paying Market

The discussion began with a briefing on Africa News Service by Geoffrey Green, a Duke University senior, and continued with a panel consisting of Andrew Blau, Director, Communications Policy Project, Benton Foundation; Steven Brill, Chairman and CEO, American Lawyer Media (The American Lawyer magazine, Court TV and the on-line service Lexis Counsel Connect); Esther Dyson, Founding Investor, Poland Online and member, National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council; Tamela Hultman, Executive Editor, Africa News Service; Mitchell Kapor, founder, Electronic Frontier Foundation and Lotus Development Corp., and Steve Rattner, general partner, Lazard Freres & Co., investment bankers, and former reporter for The New York Times. The discussion was moderated by William Boyd II, Faculty Associate, Poynter Institute, 1994-95 Lombard Visiting Lecturer, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University.

The Problem

Geoffrey Green

Africa News has lived on the financial edge ever since it was founded in 1973. Tami Hultman, her husband, Reed Kramer, two other Americans and two Africans had spent two years researching corporate practices of American companies doing business in South Africa. Back in the United States, they found they couldn't keep up with the news about Africa. They created and distributed radio scripts based on information they received from shortwave radio broadcasts from sources throughout the continent. In 1976 the news service began printing a weekly newsletter called Africa News.

From the beginning, Africa News has made a heavy investment in radio, producing news stories and multi-part series, like Dateline Africa, that have run on commercial radio and National Public Radio. Its reports also appear in newspapers and magazines. Its investigative reporting has frequently affected American foreign policy. In a mid-1970's series for The Washington Post, Africa News did the first U.S. reporting on the war in Western Sahara; that series prompted Congress to limit the sale of weapons to Morocco, a key U.S. ally in the region.

Its reputation skyrocketed as the years passed, but its financial situation remained unsteady. If it weren't for the efforts of employees, who work 70 or even 100-hour weeks on low salaries, Africa News probably would have folded long ago.

Africa News Service, with a budget that fluctuates between $200,000 and $750,000 annually, receives relatively little revenue from publications. For example, Africa News spent thousands of dollars covering the successful African democracy movements in the early part of this decade, but revenue from the newspapers covered only a small fraction of the cost of the reporting. On average, Africa News earns only about one-third of the money it spends each year. Most of the rest of its revenue comes from foundations, church agencies and individuals.

One fund-raising project involved selling African crafts through a mail order catalog. It started out successfully, but the news agency couldn't cover its losses until it became profitable. Its biweekly full-color newspaper could have been a big revenue producer. In 1990, Africa News projected it could increase the circulation of its print publication to bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars, but the agency didn't have the resources to attract enough subscribers to make a profit. Two years ago, the print edition was shut down.

A cookbook, printed by Viking-Penguin, has sold more than 40,000 copies, bringing in about $100,000. It is a primary source of steady funds.

During the past several years, it has published an electronic edition called Africa News Online, which is available on on-line services such as Lexis/Nexis and Newsnet. These outlets may spread the Africa News name, but Africa News does not make much money from them—no more than $10,000 per year from Lexis/Nexis. Nor do these outlets let Africa News control how its news is visually presented. In the fall, Africa News Service plans to officially debut its World Wide Web site on NandO.net. It will include news from Africa News reporters throughout the world, selections from leading African periodicals, video and audio resources, statistical information and documents on African nations and a list of other sources of information. Obviously, these services will help the news agency distribute its product.

Africa News has explored the possibility of selling advertising and soliciting funds on the Internet. What new business models could Africa News follow? Will reaching more people help create what has so far been elusive: a

paying market for Africa News information? And will the on-line world create a new genre of news agency, one that can create a community of people worldwide who care about Africa and who communicate with each other through Africa News? What business is Africa News in, or is it in business?

Suggested Solutions

WILLIAM BOYD II—One of the things that Africa News is trying to respond to is the absence of wide-spread coverage by the traditional media. So what we're trying to do is look at what Africa News has been trying to do on the very core subject of this conference: high quality public-interest journalism, and whether there is a market for that. You in this room are one potential market, so your role in the discussion as to whether or not there is a market among traditional news organizations for the product of this news service will be a vital part of this discussion. Very clearly, this is not a situation where if you don't buy, they have to fail. They can sell directly to the public, using technology. They also can give away public-interest journalism about Africa if they can obtain enough nonprofit philanthropic support. So there are several models that probably will emerge in the discussion.

TAMELA HULTMAN—Like most of you here, probably, the majority of editors and producers that we work with see Africa, essentially, as a bad news story in which their audiences are not interested. We, as a small independent news agency, have been, I think, remarkably successful at penetrating the major mass media with our coverage, for a couple of reasons.

One is that we report the complexity of a continent, not just its crises, and two, that over the years we became very adept at drawing the connections for our audiences, in terms of U.S. interest: Nigeria as a major source of U.S. oil, for example, or Liberia as an outpost of Americana in Africa. So finding outlets for our work over the years became not the problem. A couple of years ago when we had funding for a project on covering Africa in the post-Cold War world, we supplied an astonishing percentage of non-crisis reporting on Africa in major media in this country. We did one exhilarating calculation that in a 26-hour period, our work had reached over 30 million people. We had a report on All Things Considered on National Public Radio one evening; the next morning, an article in The Washington Post, and then that evening, a piece on one of NBC's news magazines. That's a real success in terms of audience outreach for us.

The problem is that reporting that collectively cost us tens of thousands of dollars, and brought in only a few thousand in revenues, and if you take the television out of that mix, only a few hundred dollars in revenue were generated. We're a nonprofit news agency, and we spend something like 70 percent of our time fund-raising. Those dollars are becoming scarcer every year, and it's not a sustainable situation. We have survived more than two decades now only because we have leaped to embrace new technologies as they came along, whether it was a fax machine or desktop publishing.

So the economic efficiencies that technology made possible have been very important to our history, and we now believe that unless we can make electronic journalism financially feasible to us, in a way that print and broadcast have not been, we won't survive our third decade.

The implications are that, for us, we have been economically forced to do sooner what I think all of us in this business are going to be forced to do later, if not sooner. Lest you think that the case study of Africa News is just a side issue that will be a nice intellectual exercise that doesn't have any application to what all of us face, let me suggest that we all need to think carefully about the implications of those economic realities for journalism as we know it, because maybe the model that all of us will be competing with in the very near future is something like Bloomberg, where reporting is, in fact, a sideline to the business of selling a company's product.

That's the environment we feel that we're operating in and trying to make inroads into. We'll be grateful for any sorts of ideas you all have to share with us.

MITCHELL KAPOR—To honor the request to be helpful, specifically, to Africa News Service requires a much fuller investigation into the facts than we have time here.

It's really a question, in a pure business context, of whether it's a problem with the company or a problem with the market. Is it an execution and management problem, or is it the fact that the opportunity just isn't there? And depending on the outcome of that investigation, you would go down two different action paths. Obviously, I can't comment on that because we don't have the facts.

Now, what the heck does new technology have to do with this, if anything?

I'll just point to one area that I think deserves some investigation, which is the question of whether there is, in fact, a community of people that is sufficiently large, who would be willing to pay a modest amount, not only for direct access to the information that is gathered here, but also to be participants in some sort of community of interest around these subjects. Because what the Internet is good at, being a two-way communication that allows people to respond to what they see, as well as to receive it, is to enable groups of people to come together, sometimes in very powerful kinds of ways, around subjects of common interest.

And, in fact, there's quite a lot of evidence to suggest that people are, in fact, willing to pay money to do this, not necessarily large amounts of money, but on the order of a few dollars or ten dollars a month if it's something that they're really interested in and they really get something out of it.

And then you need to do a business plan that says, "Look, the costs for pulling this together, it's a few hundred thousand dollars. How many people do you need at ten dollars a month who are members of—" and you have to give it a new name—"this virtual community is it going to take to break even, and do we have the skills to do that?"

To sum up this point that I'm trying to make, in between the notion of charg-

The Africa News panel

ing for content—plain, pure and simple—and giving content away in service of, you know, some other business, I think there are likely to be intermediate positions where the information is itself seen as valuable to the end users, but yet something else is also offered. And the something else could well be bringing together a community of people with common concerns who want to be participants, and I'd suggest that's at least an interesting area to look at. You'd be a pioneer if you did that. It might be better to let a few other people try and fail, and learn from their mistakes, if time permitted you.

STEVEN BRILL—I think that running any journalism organization as a charity is a disaster that should be tried to be avoided at all costs. I think a nonprofit journalism organization saps the strength and the vitality of the organization, and makes for bad journalism, because it doesn't give it an edge; it doesn't have people trying to sell the product, in the best sense of the term, "sell the product," which brings me to my real point.

The way I look at the journalism business, the way I look at every business we're involved in is: first I try to think of something that I want us to do journalistically, and then, I try to think of a way to make money at it. As opposed to what a lot of people do, I guess, which is they say, "Well, let's go into the cable television programming business. Now, let's do some focus groups and let's figure out that people want to watch a lot of science fiction movies, so let's start the Science Fiction Channel."

We have this thing that we want to do that we think is going to be good; it's going to be fun; it's important. Now, how do we make money doing it? When you start to think that way, there are a lot of things that come to mind. Just listening to the case here, it struck me that there are various people who would want to buy the journalism and would be willing to pay very different prices for it. For example, if you started an online information service, the notion that The Washington Post reporter would pay the same as a citizen, or just a member of the public who's interested in Africa is just plain crazy.

Just to give you one analogy, we charge, I think it's $600 a year for a monthly subscription to The American Lawyer, if it's delivered to a law office or a law library, and if a young associate lawyer or a lawyer working in a nonprofit organization buys a subscription, I think it's $35 a year, or something like that. So differences in pricing of the information can be very important.

By the way, I was struck, in listening to the story of the cookbook and everything else, that the first place to look would be in the deal you struck. It strikes me that you got an incredibly bad deal from Penguin if you only ended up with that much money for selling that many books.

What I would look at is how to take advantage of technology so that you can calibrate the level and the kind of journalism you're going to sell to different kinds of people. And technology allows you to deliver information very broadly, and then allows you to refine it and target it, and deliver it to very targeted groups of people.

For example, there might be five people who are desperately interested in anything going on in Nigeria because they are huge corporations with huge investments there. And they might want to subscribe to a daily newsletter, delivered just to them by your people, for $10,000 a month at the same time that some of that information, with other information, would go to a more broadly

distributed electronic newsletter for $10 a month. There are differences in the level of information. They also might, for that $10,000 a month, want to be able to E-mail you or your colleagues and ask all kinds of follow-up questions.

There are ways to do that. There are all kinds of spinoffs possible: newsletters, either electronic or not. It seems to me that if you're going to provide the kinds of high-quality video reporting that you do, you're just getting ripped off providing it the way it sounds like you provided it to NPR or to PBS. But again, as Mitch says, you'd have to look at each of those stories.

But the fundamental message I want to get across is that the way to think about this is to say: we have very important information. To some people, it's important for the traditional reasons that journalism's important. They have a connection and an interest to that part of the world, and we want to provide it to them in an inexpensive way. To other people, there's a different slice of that information or a different level we can add to that information that technology now allows us to do very inexpensively, especially in terms of delivery, that allows us to get a different level of funding from those people.

But start with the notion that you have a quality product. And if you have a quality editorial product, there is always a way to sell it.

STEVE RATTNER—Quality is absolutely the key. I would describe quality as necessary, but not necessarily sufficient. In other words, in this world of enormous competition for shelf space, for getting to people, for getting people's time, there are going to be many, many projects and news services and publications that have very high levels of quality that are nonetheless going to fail. And that's, unfortunately, just the reality of it.

Having said that, there are also going to be others that succeed, and in that regard, I agree with what Mitch said, that it is going to come down, to a considerable extent, to the specifics of how Africa News, or anybody else, approaches it. And we're not really, I don't think, equipped here to judge that.

I think it is fair and necessary to point out that some things are of more interest to people than other things, and it certainly has to be easier to succeed going into what one could describe as the growth area of the market, or where people's interests really lie.

It was also interesting earlier today to hear about The New York Times success with its crossword puzzle results line. It isn't clear to me that a telephone call-in service to get news of the Netherlands, or some other place, is necessarily going to be quite as successful. So you have to recognize that whatever market you choose to pursue, you could make it either more or less difficult for yourself. It doesn't mean you can't succeed in the more difficult markets; it just means it's going to be a lot harder.

International news is not a business that is impossible to succeed in. I think it is true, and somebody here, I'm sure, will correct me if I have this wrong, that The Economist now sells more copies in the United States that it does in Europe. So it is possible to sell a very serious publication in a market where it may not be what you immediately think people want. But you have to do it really well.

I don't mean just the editorial product, because the second side of it is marketing and how you get it to people, and how you segment the market, as Steve said, and how you try to produce different products that people will pay different amounts of money for. It's possible to succeed, but you really have to get back to the specifics.

First, being primarily print-based, as was my impression, you are also taking on a somewhat bigger challenge, because you have to be honest in recognizing that the competition that exists out there today is coming at people very heavily from the electronic side, from the on-line side. And the number of minutes that people are willing to devote to print-based media is low, and getting lower. I think it's true that the average person spends something like four and a half hours a day, or maybe four hours a day watching television, and about 27 or 28 minutes reading newspapers, and something less than that reading magazines.

The last point I'd make is in this whole on-line question. I'm a believer in on-line services. Let me state that at the outset. But let me also say that it can't be right that the future of Africa News Service has to depend on the success of an on-line news venture or on-line service in the short run, because in the short run, it's just not going to be there. If we're going to find a way for Africa News Service to make it, we're going to have to find a shorter-term solution, besides on line.

ANDREW BLAU—It seems to me, from looking at this case study, that the economics of production are going to remain pretty stable. Those are embedded in the cost of collecting and creating some sort of news product.

The thing that's really changed, and not in your favor, is the economics of audience creation. The multiplication of channels, which looks on the surface like manna from heaven, in fact, certainly lowers the economic barriers to entry. But it raises barriers to material success, and it means that access to capital and access to marketing become the key functions that tend to get left out.

So by focussing only on how much cheaper it will be to distribute this product and not looking at the relevant frame, which is how do you create the audience, it's doomed.

In fact, what's not clear to me, based on the case study, is: what is the product? It's not clear to me what's the relevant market for the product. Is it a consumer product or should it be? Is it a product that goes out to other news organizations, and that's different—or maybe it's both, but until we have some clarity about that, we don't know what the next steps are.

A lot of folks have been talking or thinking about, in this environment, how do you give things away to create relationships that you can then make money from? But even that's not clear to me. Could you have a cascading chain? The lowest price point would be zero. You'd give something away; you'd establish a relationship; you'd then

know who you could target for follow-up marketing in one way or another.

A question that I all too infrequently hear raised, much less answered, is: what must be done this way, and what is simply just kind of a sucking up the aura and the hype of new media? I spend a lot of time on line; I see a lot of stuff, and most of it right now is just pouring old media into new bottles, and I think that is a failing strategy, too.

So, until we know: what is it about Africa News Service that must be done in this way and can take advantage of these new technologies, we're going to throw a lot of money down a hole and not really have a chance to get it back.

ESTHER DYSON—My perspective on this comes from having spent five or six years in Eastern Europe. Most people who know about what I do in Eastern Europe think it's cute, nice, really public-spirited. And to me, of course, that's incredibly frustrating. The economics of what I did, until about three years ago, were entirely charity. My U.S. business made a lot of money, so I went and wasted it all in Eastern Europe.

One very good business model: find a single or a small sponsor that really likes what you're doing, that is reliable and will fund you to do it. And there may be such a person or a foundation around. Another one is to be commercial. But the first thing is to figure out which it is that you are and go for it completely.

My sense is that there ought to be a market for Africa News Service. I don't know whether you're looking at the African market, as well as the U.S. market. There's got to be a huge thirst for good local news locally.

My sense is there may be a lot of ambivalence within the organization about what they want to do, how they want to do it. There's clearly—I think everybody here is mystified that you seem to have gotten the short end of so many deals. You have something of value. Get someone there who knows how to value it, price it, market it. Find the market. My own perspective would be probably you need to cover business news, as well as political news. Maybe you already do.

BRILL—I just want to second one thing that I heard Steve Rattner say, which is in the near term the electronic delivery of that information is not at all necessarily the answer, and probably isn't the answer. It might be over the long term, but thinking about electronic delivery of information, I think, helps you go through the analysis that Esther just referred to, figuring out who has money and who will pay how much for all of this. When you think about on-line information, the only thing I would say is that it is not simply taking whatever you've done in print and putting it on line. It needs to be a decidedly different editorial product, and it needs, most of all, and in this case, it's clearly going to happen, although it hasn't happened in a lot of newspapers and magazines, at least until very recently. It needs to be run by editors, not by some passed-over business person in the organization or some technology person. It's an editorial product that needs to be thought about by the people who are at the editorial core of what you're doing.

RATTNER—I agree with you, Andrew, that there's absolutely a role for nonprofit activities, and there are things the market simply won't pay for but perform a very important service and should exist. That's the role presumably you play through your foundation and many other foundations play. Where, Esther, you and I might disagree, is that I'm not sure it has to be purely for profit, purely not for profit. I think there are some other models that actually represent a hybrid, and, in fact, I think the world may even be going that way. There are a lot of nonprofit institutions in the current environment of curtailed government funding that are looking at these kinds of models. I happen to be Vice Chairman of Channel 13, the public television station in New York, and we're doing something just like this in the sense that we are not for profit, we are going to stay not for profit, but we're undertaking a number of ventures, particularly in the multimedia area that we hope will generate revenues and allow us to go on and do other things that don't generate revenues.

DYSON—One way or another, you have to keep those things separate. If the nonprofit owns the for profit, that's fine, but the problem is when, within a single organization, people are confused about what they're trying to do. They're sort of half trying to do good and so they don't want to charge people too much, and they want to be nice. So the important thing is clarity. It's not necessarily homogeneity. So we agree.

HULTMAN—Just to clarify a couple of things so that we don't become diversionary. I think people in the book industry are amazed at the revenues that we made out of the cookbook. I think we probably did have a good contract; that may not have come across. But I think some of the serious, useful comments that have been made are ones we are following up, and I think they're important. We're, for example, looking at topical electronic newsletters, at fax on demand, at providing real-time financial information on African stock markets for the growing number of African investment funds. We have had, in the last six months to a year, lobbyists and financial investors and other kinds of companies knocking on our door for arrangements for certain kinds of information, and I think we are looking at creating some kind of hybrid of nonprofit and profit, or going completely for profit. We're open to all these kinds of things. Our goal as journalists has been: if we have a point of view, it has been that Africa has not received the attention it merits in major media coverage, and that our goal is to help fill that gap. The problem, the dilemma that that presents us as journalists is how much will these kinds of involvements, which may be lucrative and revenue-producing, compromise our reputation or our integrity as serious journalists? This presumption of a point of view is one that we've battled from and which arose here again today: well, I presume they have a political point of view. Fortunately, within our industry, we've become well enough known that we have won that battle. We are not regarded as having a point of view among people who know our work in major media. So I think the question [is]: is economic viability possible while

still having an image and a production as serious journalists addressing an unmet need within the major media marketplace? Are those two compatible? I don't know the answer.

BRILL—I think they are.You have to get past that. Dow Jones and The New York Times Company sell services to organizations that they cover every day of the week, and I don't think too many people look at them and say, "My God, there are all these ads for General Motors in The New Yurk Times.They must be slanting toward General Motors, or they must have a pro-business point of view or anti-point of view." If I'm a business person and I just want to know what is going on today in South Africa or Nigeria I'll pay anything for that. You're just going to provide the same straight information you've been providing. That's a no-brainer.

KAPOR—There is a kind of a genuine spiritual dilemma here that we can pass over too quickly. First off, I think everybody has a point of view. I think it's possible to have integrity, but it's not possible not to have some point of view. But the fact is that once you decide to make money at what you're doing, if you don't think that creates a set of pressures, internal and external, and forces decisions about which goal you're going to optimize for, because certain things will make more money, but they aren't as central to the other interests and purposes, I don't know what kind of world you live in.

BRILL—The point is: if you decide what you're going to do is do the work they're doing, and then you say, "all right, how do we make this economically viable?" It's not waking up in the morning and saying, "I'm going to make the most money I can. Now, what should I cover?" The presumption is you're doing the work you're doing, and the challenge is: how do you turn that into something that is economically viable? It is a model that works.

BOYD—Should they be selling advertising?

DYSON—Sure, if they can.Why not? That would be great.

Q. & A.

COLE CAMPBELL, Editor, Virginian-Pilot of Norfolk—I'm doubly astounded by this panel. First, I'm astounded by listening to a case study of a group of journalists who, for 19 years, have, by shear force of imagination, will and willingness to innovate and experiment with everything, including cookbooks, kept alive a very important and influential news service. I'm astounded by that and in awe of that. But I am doubly astounded by the tone and reaction of this panel, which I think is a terrible problem in our industry. And what I heard, and maybe I'm alone in this, I heard a level of smugness and dismissiveness, and what have these "rubes" from Durham not figured out about how to sign a book contract that I find offensive. I think if we're going to explore a new frontier, we have to do it the way the pioneers did and help each other erect these barns, and this panel would have been a whole lot more valuable if we had heard how The American Lawyer would go about publishing this, without a whole lot of smugness, or how the founder of Lotus would have gone about doing this, or the foundation model, or the venture capital model.

BRILL—We were asked to solve a problem.

KAPOR—And when some of us objected, we were told that this was the way the format was, and if we didn't like it, we could step down from it, so you need to understand the context before you write the headline.

CAMPBELL—You might also work on improving your listening skills. My point is not that your problem-solving methodology may have been incorrect, but rather, your attitude and assumption is the kind that drives us apart in the news media, when we need to come together to solve these problems, and that smugness is not a useful form of problem-solving.

RATTNER—Well, just to make this constructive, does The Virginian-Pilot for profit subscribe to the Africa News Service?

CAMPBELL—No. I'm embarrassed that I've never heard of it. You know, we're probably going to sign up.

DEE REID, Sanford Institute, Duke University—What I haven't heard discussed is whether you have figured out who your competition is and who you think your audience is.

HULTMAN—The audience for our newspaper for nearly 20 years was an eclectic mix, according to reader surveys, of business people, church agencies, non-governmental organizations, former Peace Corps volunteers—that small group of Americans who had interests in Africa. It was a dream that there would be enough of those kind of people to keep a small publication going, but it would have taken capitalization, which we were unable ever to raise, to reach the potential audience, one of the reasons that a lot of people, many people, a gratifying number of people in this room had. But the reason a lot of people who would have subscribed, we think, didn't know about it is because you need three or four years of funding in order to make a small publication reach a plateau of viability from subscribers, despite having high renewal rates, which we did. So we had a targeted audience.We sold our mailing lists. Our mailing lists were small, so that wasn't a lot of revenue, but it was steady. We tried all those things. I think we were really, in some senses, up against the very reason that we were founded, which is a lack of interest in Africa among people who have the resources to do something about it.

VICTOR NAVASKY, The Nation—One thing that occurs to me on your behalf is that you have, in this country anyway, a constituency in the music business that would put itself to work, I think, on behalf of making, whether it's a CD/ROM or a record or giving concerts, people who range from Paul Simon to Harry Belafonte and others, who have publicly expressed a great desire to do something on behalf of getting the story of the African continent out into the world. And they would not divert you from your path of collecting news, and at the same time, could put resources at your disposal.■

In Face of Changes the Craft Survives

By Peter Eng

There was a time when I would have been satisfied if the new technology just meant wheels on which to drag my typewriter.

When I first went to Vietnam in 1985, I lugged around an Olympia portable manual so heavy I returned from assignments with my right arm two inches longer than my left. It took a good 10 minutes to pry open the misaligned jaws of the hard case. And if that didn't finish off my fingers, the keys were so resistant it was painful to write more than two stories a day.

Thankfully, the clunker contained the seeds of its own destruction. We finally ditched it because we could no longer clean off the greasy grime that tangled the keys, and Olympia no longer made the spools for the ribbons. I pounded out a few more stories until the ink forever faded, then bought a smaller portable in Hong Kong. We still have the newer machine, but I hardly carry it around anymore.

Some evenings, as grateful fingers glide over a Toshiba laptop computer and from my Hanoi hotel room I watch farmers pedaling vegetables to market on bicycles, I think about the old Olympia. I miss it, and not just because I once owned it. I miss the labor, the care, the deliberation that working it required. I'm not sure today we're doing our jobs better, even with all the fancy gadgets now at our disposal. The new technology and the culture it has spawned often has meant reporting driven by immediacy, capsule summary and visual impact. Even in Thailand, you can now order adaptors making it possible to use a cellular telephone to transmit copy from a laptop. Instant filing, from anywhere. Thank God my office cannot afford the cost of the adaptor.

I never thought I would say that. Based in the Associated Press Bureau in Bangkok much of the past decade, I've experienced the evolution of the new technology from Genesis 1:1 on. Typically, new communications gadgets would be available there a few years behind the industrialized countries. Much further behind were the other countries on my beat: Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, which war and socialist rulers had driven to the world's economic cellar.

In Hanoi, the Vietnamese capital, filing a story often took longer than reporting and writing it. In the 1980s, the government herded all correspondents visiting Hanoi into the $20-a-day Thong Nhat Hotel, a sorry, peeling remnant of French colonialism. The hotel's army of overgrown rats brazenly ruled the tables in the cafeteria and withdrew only after we threw soda cans at them.

For years, the old telex machine in the hotel lobby was the only way to file. Manning it was a surly Vietnamese woman who firmly rejected the notion that any telex could be urgent. On lucky days, I would hand over my copy and sit in the lobby with a thick book waiting for her to punch and send it. Usually, the wait seemed forever. First of all, the woman often was not even there, but on siesta. Or she had to repunch the telex repeatedly to correct typos. Or the single telex line routed to the outside world via the Soviet satellite system wouldn't connect for hours. Sometimes, there was no line at all, so a whole day's work went into the wastebasket.

Phone and telex lines improved dramatically after the Vietnamese parted ways with their Soviet patrons and turned to the Australians and others for communications links. The Thong Nhat underwent an $11-million renovation and reopened as the luxury Hotel Pullman Metropole, with $300-a-night room rates. The rat army was vanquished. The telex lady was nowhere to be found, and would probably be promptly kicked out if she did appear.

Now there's no need to go to the hotel to file. The AP opened a bureau in Hanoi in November 1993, the first U.S. news organization to base in the capital since the Vietnam War. We now file news and photos by direct high-speed circuit to New York and Tokyo, in the same way as other bureaus in Asia. Frequent power outages present the only filing problem. The bureau recently relocated to a grander location that includes heat in the winter.

Modem filing is dicey outside Hanoi and the major commercial center, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), but it's possible. One big improvement was the recent establishment of a Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City high-quality transmission link that AP Television used to relay images up to Hanoi and on to London.

The situation was even more trying in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. Overseas phone lines there also were routed through Moscow. The country was even more severely ruined by war and international isolation than Vietnam.

The hallway of our favorite hotel, the Monorom, offered a splendid view of dozens of old toilet bowls strewn over the bottom of the stairwell—for easy storage, I guess. The single phone, in the lobby, hardly reached across the street, much less the outside world. The only way to file was the single line at the dilapidated central post office, where we competed with all of the city's humanity anxiously waiting to speak with relatives and friends in the countryside or abroad. There was no

telex, so we shouted dictation over the din, as dozens of Cambodians stared mouth agape. That was when the line worked.

Annus mirabulus was 1989. That September, the Vietnamese army gave up a no-win battle against a guerrilla resistance and pulled out of Cambodia. We knew it was the biggest competitive story in Cambodia since the Vietnamese invaded the country in 1978. The prospect of filing at the post office, with scores of other correspondents there vying for the line, was too horrible to face. Besides, Bangkok bureau chief Denis Gray told our New York headquarters, the other news agencies were planning to bring in portable satellites.

So we hauled in our own portable satellite. It was the first time the AP had used it successfully anywhere in the world.

The United States had trade embargos against both Vietnam and Cambodia at the time, so it took several days to get Department of Commerce permission to take the portable satellite there.

The unit was packed in two metal cases, total weight about 85 pounds. The technology originally was designed for shipboard communications. By 1989 the equipment had been reduced in size and otherwise improved so that units were developed for portable land use.

There were no direct flights into Phnom Penh at the time, so Neal Ulevich, then the Asia Communications Chief, took the portable satellite to Vietnam. From Ho Chi Minh City, Ulevich drove the eight hours along Highway No. 1 to Phnom Penh. To protect the portable satellite from the bumpy ride, he cushioned it with air mattresses and child's swimming tubes. So Western technology invaded Cambodia along the same road that the Vietnamese army had used to invade in 1978.

Ulevich hauled the portable satellite into a dilapidated room at the Monorom and spread out the dish. Using a simple map, he punched in his longitude and latitude and used a child's compass to align the dish to face the satellite hovering over the ocean. Setting it up and connecting with the satellite took 10 minutes.

The window was too small, so Ulevich and I tore out the frame. The incensed hotel manager nagged us daily, demanding compensation in the form of a bribe.

We filed through our Tokyo office. Moving copy at 1200 bits per second, few stories took more than two to four minutes, at a cost of 11 to 14 dollars a minute. Photo transmission also was of high quality. On its maiden voyage, the portable satellite performed flawlessly. I couldn't believe how easy Cambodia filing had become—and that I was filing through a big black box in a windowless hotel room.

Agence France Presse and Reuter also had portable satelllites. Journalists who didn't work for any of the agencies paid to file through the portable satellite. Ulevich thus became gatekeeper to the outside world. By day he worked the dish's marvels; by night he slept alongside it.

Later, in other countries, Ulevich and a growing number of AP journalists and photographers used other portable satellites all over the world. Ulevich used them in places including Mongolia, where a yurt functioned as a press center, and in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during the Gulf War. The unit we had used in Cambodia was the Inmarsat-A, an analog device. Now there are also among others the briefcase-size Inmarsat-M and the speedy, digital Inmarsat-B. The Cambodia unit was rented from Magnavox. Now the AP owns 13 units of various types.

In Bangkok, our office has seen changes as dramatic as the country's economic growth. Till the late 1980s, the AP office was a fire hazard a floor above a bra factory. We pounded away on heavy manual typewriters and filed by telex. All day the office rumbled with the clatter of ancient teletype printers. Now we're in one of Bangkok's best-known modern office buildings, the Charn Issara Tower. Now everything's too quiet, too quick.

One of the biggest innovations for us has been a technology old by American standards: the cellular phone. They are popular because Thailand's phone system is clumsy and demand for lines far surpasses supply. Units are quite expensive, but the expanding middle class can afford it.

In May 1992, middle class professionals in ties and loafers poured into the streets of Bangkok to join tens of thousands of people protesting military rule. Amid all the chaos, they used cellular phones to keep in touch with friends and family, and tell them what they saw on the streets. The military ordered a news blackout on the demonstrations, in which soldiers killed more than 50 people before the pro-democracy side won. But partly due to the cellular phone, citizens nationwide knew the truth. It also was the first time the AP Bangkok Bureau used the cellular phone to cover a major story.

If I carry one around, it's a lot easier to call the office when something comes up. So why don't I like to strap it around my waist and strut in the fashion of Thai professionals in the business district? Because I know that then my office, my New York headquarters—anyone—can call me anywhere, anytime. And then I have no excuses for not giving an immediate response. No time to think it over, check it out. This age, after all, belongs to real-time global television.

During the May uprising, virtually every major news organization buckled under the pressure and reported rumors, including a supposed battle raging by the airport, the supposed flight into exile of the military-backed prime minister. The AP bureau stayed away, but that was very difficult. You should see the stream of phone and wire messages from AP bureaus worldwide: CNN reporting, Reuter reporting...Kyodo reporting: Can we please match?

The new technology has made our jobs a lot easier, but you have to watch out lest it overwhelms you. During more cynical moments, I sit back and shut my eyes and think about the Hanoi hotel telex lady and her life philosophy: one thing at a time please. The woman irritated me in those days, and I feel guilty about that. I wonder what she's doing now, and I wish her a healthy, long life.■

Peter Eng, News Editor of the Thailand Bureau of The Associated Press, just completed his Nieman year.

Fulton

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that unless you understand the tensions present in such a shift—unless you fully internalize that this is not just a technical challenge—you can't fully understand the choices you face in dealing with it.

The mix is the message

The 1995 Nieman conference was an experiment in mixing cultures, which was perhaps both its greatest strength and also its great weakness. When I think back, I imagine the phrase that came to people's lips and minds most often must surely have been, "They just don't get it."

I heard more than one expert in the new technologies take the measure of the room and describe the dominant perception as "clueless." I didn't hear Omar Wasow, the dreadlocked, 24-year old president and founder of New York Online, actually say that. But his passionate, poised comments were certainly one of the lasting impressions of the conference. In a polite way, he made it clear that the people who criticized new technologies the most, often know the least about them. "You can't get up in the audience and critique the experts, and also not want to allow your readership to critique you and to participate, and to communicate with each other," he said, in a long defense of on-line conversations that replicate what happens when people meet in person.

Neil Postman, the great cultural critic, was proudly clueless about the nature of E-mail, and on-line chat and other conference topics. He told the new media enthusiasts that they were the ones who didn't get it. "Technology may be a tool," he said, "but it is a tool that has an agenda...And anyone who's studied the history of technology, knows that it's always a Faustian bargain: it will giveth, and it will taketh away. And the question of what a technology will undo seems to me at least as important as the question of what it will do."

Plenty of the newspaper journalists in the room agreed, especially as panelist David DeJean showed how he would put the first case study, a Philadelphia Inquirer investigation, on line. "The new media enthusiasts just don't get it," many reporters and editors sat there thinking, and sometimes saying. "When I hear information discussed like it's a commodity that's coming along a conveyor belt, and it's sliced and diced and filtered by editors, or it's accessed by people on line, there's hardly ever, in my experience, discussion of where this information comes from, the gathering of information," said Matt Storin, Editor of The Boston Globe.

If journalism is a religion, as Bill Kovach sometimes argues, Storin had expressed an unassailable part of the creed: technologists just don't get, that journalism cannot be created by software. Old-fashioned journalists will be needed more than ever to make sense of the information glut.

Well, sort of, another group sat there thinking. Old-fashioned journalism is quite sick and the traditionalists just don't get it. "There is a fundamental disconnect between journalism, and journalists and the public in this country right now," said consultant Richard Harwood, speaking for those who are advocates of journalists taking their responsibilities as citizens more seriously. "And unless we're willing to face up to that fact—some of it perceived, some of it real—but unless we're really willing to face up to that fact and deal with it, then I think that there's going to be big problems down the road for the credibility, therefore, the brand identity, and therefore the financial health of journalistic institutions in this country."

Glad you mentioned money, finally, the business folks present were thinking. As usual, passionate reporters and editors are pretty clueless about the underlying economic forces. "Quality is absolutely the key," said investment banker Steve Rattner. "But I would describe quality as necessary, but not necessarily sufficient." Quality won't mean much without an understanding of how the advertising economy is changing, or the way old-fashioned manufacturers of products in many industries are having to learn how to create services that add value for customers.

And on and on it went, as cultures clashed within the bigger journalistic tent: smaller, local papers versus large national institutions; broadcasters versus newspapers; advocates of consumer control and proponents of professional, filtered journalism.

These passionate differences in perspective gave the conference its vitality, but there wasn't time to really work through and understand the differences. And in fairness, it's not clear to me that any amount of time would be sufficient at this moment in time to bridge some of the differences, creating a truly diverse community of interest committed to public-interest journalism. For me, the mix itself remained the message, as I watched individuals who seemed primarily (and understandably) focused on the future of their own enterprises and ideas.

All the traditions, new ideas and forces present in the room—and plenty more which were not represented—will do battle, declare truces and combine in unexpected ways to shape the journalism of the 21st century. There were notes of dissonance, and some of harmony, but in the end I still felt more than a little overwhelmed as I tried to understand what I had learned. I suspect I was not alone, and that we will all feel this way for a long time to come. The media environment we work and live in is changing quickly. Technology changes quickly. People do not.

For some at the conference, the question was what technology could do for journalism. For others it was a matter of what journalism could do for technology. For still others, the most important question is what journalism should do for democracy.

These are all helpful lenses. But let me pair a couple of ideas that surfaced during the conference, to show that the nature of the change is more complex.

Early in the conference, Mark Benerofe of Delphi talked about how "journalism for a long time has been a club we've all aspired to, a heritage." The problem, he said, is that we don't explain ourselves, or promote ourselves, well to the public. He proposed creating an Internet site to promote the values of public-interest journalism, by

posting in any year "the 52 best stories of journalism and how they were done, and why they're important, and how it was covered and how it was brought to the public, and what those values are."

Interesting idea.

Then late in the conference, Mitch Kapor, who as founder of both Lotus and the Electronic Frontier Foundation is a major figure in all things digital, breezed into the conference for a couple of hours to help imagine how our second case study, The Africa News Service, might adapt to the changing economics of publishing. He preferred, he said, to make up something new:

"Let me give you an idea, actually, for a service that I think would be in the public interest that somebody could do today and make a lot of money at—or not a lot, but enough to be self-sustaining and get a lot of attention. I call it the 'Right of Reply Service.' This would be a service that is offered to anyone who is covered in the mass media, newspapers or television, and doesn't like what was said. Because the current deal, if you've been covered, is very asymmetrical, which is, 'Well, if you don't like it, write a letter to the editor, 200 words maximum. We reserve the right to edit it, and maybe we'll run it and maybe we won't.' The Right of Reply Service gives the space to anybody on the World Wide Web to respond at length, point by point, to anything, as long as it showed up first in the media. And I really think there would be an audience for that because people like a good fight; they like interactivity....You could sell advertising on it. You could do further editorial or op-eds about it. And that would work, and that could be started today."

But don't look to the Nieman Foundation, or probably anyone who attended the conference, to start it. Kapor's idea lies somewhere on the other side of the paradigm shift now underway. You probably can't think of truly new ideas like this if you wonder what technology could do for journalism, what journalism can do for technology, or what journalism should do for democracy. You'll only arrive at fresh ideas if you work to understand the nature of the new medium that's being created—and the profound, long-term shift of control from top-down mass media into the hands of consumers, who are going to have and exercise far more choices than most journalists can now comprehend.

When I start thinking along these lines, I'm in Thomas Kuhn's territory., "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," first published in 1962. Kuhn studied how world views change, and came up with a number of principles that are applicable outside the history of science.

New ways of seeing something—something like journalism, for instance—are nearly always invented by a very young person (like Omar Wasow), or someone new to the field (like Mitch Kapor), because they see that the old rules don't work anymore, Kuhn argued. What you see depends both on what you look at, and what your experience has taught you to see. So when the status quo is in question, it's very difficult for someone working inside that currently reigning world view to evaluate the new ideas.

Many journalists, therefore, have a tough time coming to terms with the shift in control that Wasow and Kapor understand intimately.

At such moments of crisis in systems, Kuhn wrote, communication "is inevitably partial." The tendency is to stake your claim on one side of the invisible divide. We saw that quite clearly at the Nieman event, in several ways. One side argued that the public needs journalists to sift and sort and be a guide to the info glut. Another said, "But the public just wants journalists to get out of the way, otherwise TV and radio talk shows wouldn't be so popular.

And then there was the argument that broke out around the future of narrative. The traditionalists said something like this: "Narrative and coherence are important; story-telling is a basic human activity. Hypertext and databases destroy stories and coherence, and therefore we'll stick with the old-fashioned methods, thank you."

Good point. Important to hear, the new media people said, and then launched into an argument like this: "But look at all the cool stuff you can do with databases that will make stories meaningful for people individually. And look how people can get involved, send their opinions, talk to each other about the stories."

Somehow in all this back and forth staking of claims, no one ever said, "Maybe the choice isn't either/or. Maybe both are possible."

When strong feelings dominate, open-minded exploration often disappears. People are inclined to take sides and then blind themselves to the full range of choices. That's why perhaps the most powerful part of the conference for many skeptical participants came when Arthur Sulzberger, publisher of The New York Times, calmly and confidently argued in a long conversation that the best stance for journalists is to carefully figure out how to mix new and old. The "best news" will win this battle, he said. "So I would think all of the people in this room would be stunningly excited—I would hope that they would be—by the opportunity this gives us and by the power this places in the hands of journalists." The Times, he admitted, will be different in the future, as it figures out how to translate the brand it possesses today for a new medium. But "the only thing we know for sure," he said, "is that we can't afford to change what we are. We've got to keep our center. We've got to know what it is that we do....What scares me is that we're going to try to change to become something we're not, all of us as journalists."

Yes, of course. But how do journalists figure out what's worth preserving, and what we ought to let go of, when the rules of the game are changing?

The only real answer, I'm afraid, is that we must take the time—and that's the one commodity always in short supply around newsrooms.

I don't believe we can or should fight the long-term shift of more choice and control into the hands of the consumer. I like having more choices on television. I'd like to be able to quickly find the article on new breast cancer treatments that ran three months ago when my friend calls in tears with the news she has breast cancer. If my local newspaper will offer me a personalized news

service for a small fee, tailored to some of my idiosyncratic interests, great. If I want a chance to post my personal tale of woe on line to go alongside the tale of woe the newspaper reports, so other readers can see it, I think my newspaper should welcome that.

Journalistic institutions that fight this trend toward giving the consumer more control won't last very long in the next century, in my opinion. The real question is whether those consumers will have meaningful choices to make.■

King

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preneurial techies—frontierspeople, New York Times Publisher Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. called them—were impatient with the stodginess of the editors. The editors, in turn, were suspicious of the techies' values.

In the coffee-break conversations, the reporters were predictably cynical in their presentations, knew they had something very valuable today, but seemed to be merely guessing at how they would translate their "brand," as they called it, into the future.

To examine the theme of the conference—how to do effective public-interest or public-service journalism in the new age—the organizers decided to dissect a major piece of investigative journalism and try to project its essence into electronic applications. They picked "America: What Went Wrong," published by The Philadelphia Inquirer. Two days of pushing and pulling, sawing and hammering and chiseling at the series by a slew of new-media experts and scores of other conferees led to more perplexity than anything else.

But it was, nonetheless, a rewarding two days. Almost without realizing it at the time, the group of 200 turned up about half a dozen key signposts for the future. They're not conclusive; they don't tell us where it's all going. Probably nobody expected that. However tentative they may be, though, they offer some guidance to the journalists who, really, have no choice but to proceed into the swift, churning current of the new electronic media. Here is my version of the guideposts:

1

Although much of the conference involved speculation about how communications would move from paper to cyberspace, the real news was that most expect the two—print and electronic—to coexist side by side for years, if not decades.

The real potential—both commercially and journalistically—is to understand how the forms can complement each other in communications strategies that exploit the combination.

As Nancy Hicks Maynard explained in a powerful presentation, the two work in such radically different ways that one is almost impelled to look for the construct that can provide symbiosis. Print, explains Maynard, follows the old, linear building-block approach that is familiar. But electronic new media offer an almost random-access collage of text, video and audio that allows each user to build understanding in a unique way.

For now, the skill that will be rewarded by the marketplace will be the ability to offer the two in concert.

2

On-line services today primarily outperform print communications in only two ways: for research and for instant communication. As pure research vehicles that permit the user to pursue level after level of information, on line is already superior to print. And for quick exchanges of information, E-mail and on-line "chat" services also excel.

What may eventually change this—propelling electronic media ahead of print in other ways—will be the evolution of hardware and software that permit on-line services to combine the collage-effect with the traditional linear approach of print.

The evolution of technology may make it possible to combine the "horizontal," serendipitous learning of new media with the "vertical" (to use Maynard's terms) approach of traditional print narrative, particularly the portability and ease of use of print. Such developments may include widespread use of so-called flat-panel electronic tablets.

3

One of the most important observations of the conference, voiced by Sulzberger and others, is that new media will almost surely favor depth, substance and comprehension. This is a cardinal point for anyone wishing to exploit new media.

Often, those studying the Internet see it as some extension of television—probably because both are electronic. It is not. It is the opposite of TV. Television offers ease and simplicity in a passive, often effortless and entertaining experience. Its practitioners favor glitz and gimmickry. On-line services and other new media, on the other hand, are active, often interactive, pursuits that require engagement and mental effort and offer, in return, multi-level depth and sophistication.

On line essentially offers what the best of print journalism offers: depth, substance, sophistication, comprehension. It will be, as are the best newspapers, a medium for the marketing of cogent organization and explanation.

So, two prominent journalists at the conference—The New York Times's Sulzberger and The Raleigh News and Observer's Frank Daniels III—both reached the same conclusion that many others in our business have been heading toward: the only prudent business approach in today's environment is to invest more heavily in content capacity. Both of these members of old publishing families are building their newsrooms in anticipation of the new age.

4

Sulzberger offered another important observation about the content now offered by the entrepreneurial "frontierspeople" who are pioneering services on the Internet: they are quite different than the average consumer of news services in the country, and what they are now offering is unlikely to generate broad appeal. The average person, says Sulzberger, "seeks order out of chaos...the Internet is chaos and I don't think that's what people want."

Sulzberger's point is pivotal: what most news consumers are paying for is organization, synthesis and understand-

ing. What the Internet now offers is infinite complexity and gross comprehension.

The average person—seeking to have his or her life simplified and made more manageable—won't be attracted to the magnificent chaos of the Internet; ergo, no mass market for electronic new media until the capacity for providing organization—"order," to use Sulzberger's word—is built into it.

5

Despite the fear and loathing most news organizations feel about electronic new media, they may eventually be a boon to newsroom and business-side alike. Why? Because they eventually promise to reduce most of the fixed costs not associated with content. The very thing that makes new media attractive to the entrepreneur (low capital investment and virtually no barrier to entry) may eventually advantage the big communications companies—if they have invested in content. If the cost of newsprint, press and pre-press production, and distribution are eventually reduced or eliminated, the biggest, imost powerful news organizations may be more profitable than ever.

The capacity to produce sophisticated, comprehensive content—particularly as production and distribution costs dwindle—could be almost impossibly difficult for the small provider to match and compete against in the future.

6

With virtually everything about this new game uncertain—and two days of wrangling by 200 "experts" did not make it less so—there may be only one immutable rule:

If you want to be sure you can play later, you must play now. No communications company can afford to sit out and hope to catch up. No one can know what technological or creative change will suddenly propel things forward at a much faster rate. So everyone has to be there, doing something just so they're not doing nothing.

And, no doubt, they'll all be back next year for the Nieman Foundation's third annual conference.■

Fuller

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way I look at other aspects of reality: as a challenge that we'll either meet or we won't.

I think there are some reasons to be encouraged that we'll be able to meet the challenge of the new medium in the new information age, however it might develop. But I think there are reasons for concern, as well.

There was a question from the floor yesterday which I thought was a very good one and for a variety of reasons. And the person asked: "What's going to be the rhetoric of this new medium that we're talking about?" And I thought that was a good way of asking the question, because if you think back to the notion of rhetoric, the classic notion of rhetoric, it has a couple of things to offer.

It suggests, first of all, or at least Plato suggested, that rhetoric was empty unless it began with an idea first. And I heard that repeated in a way by Steve Brill today, that you begin with something to communicate, I would hope something you believe in to communicate. That's where you start in the rhetorical process.

Rhetoric teaches us the next step is to look to the audience that you're hoping to move by this information, by this argument that you're going to make, and to understand how to make the argument effective with that audience.

Those are very important points for us to keep in mind as we try to not only reflect on the medium that we're already engaged in thoroughly, and that has to change as the audience changes, but also, and especially as we look at the new medium and try to determine what to make it.

I'm fairly confident about all of this because I think that the process of understanding your audience requires us to think not only about what surveys and focus groups tell us, although I think those can be quite useful, but also to go beyond them, because after all, when you ask people questions about something like this, they don't know any more than you do what it could be.

Or another way of putting it is: if you asked people some years ago would they like to have something they could put in their pocket and then wear earphones and walk around the street humming something that nobody else can hear, they'd say, "No," but it was a very successful product. It just hadn't existed before, and people wouldn't have known that they'd want it.

So there's a limited value to these tools of marketing research, but they have some value. I think it's important to keep in mind what I heard Arthur Sulzberger say, which is that you really begin here by trying to understand as best you can, based on a lot of evidence, historical evidence, you try to understand human nature and the basics of human nature, the underlying and largely unchangeable things about people, the way they're wired. And when I think about that, I am rather encouraged about our future.

And let me give you a couple of reasons. I think that despite some of the things we heard in the last couple of days, I believe that there is an overwhelmingly powerful and durable appetite in the human spirit for story, for story and for coherence. One is a kind of a narrative appetite and the other is a sort of argumentative appetite, I suppose. But both of them are very deep, and both of them are going to be satisfied by what I think of as what we do, which is to present information in a coherent and contextually rich way, whether we do it through narrative techniques or we do it through expository techniques.

It feels as if it's been all of my life—it's certainly since I started listening—I've been hearing people say, preach to me at symposiums and things like this in other places, that linear thinking is dead. It's gone; it's over with. Marshall McLuhan said it; the beat generation said it; the people who are into Zen said it before that; and now we hear it again, that linear thinking is dead, and that it's a vestige of the Industrial Age.

And I don't believe that for a second, because I think, once again, linear thinking is a product of the way we're wired, and everything that I've seen suggests that nothing about our basic wiring has changed.

So we have an appetite for meaning. Regardless of what the deconstructionists among us would say—which is another strain one hears in discussions of this new medium—there's an appetite, a deep appetite for meaning, and a belief that we can communicate it back and forth.

I think there's an appetite for reading. I believe that, once again, it's deep in the nature of human beings to want to communicate, not only orally, but in a written fashion, in a symbolic way. I don't think it's a matter of chance that the written language sprang up in many, many places at roughly the same time in the evolution of human history, places that were distant from one another and unconnected, so that it couldn't have been simply a movement of people that brought writing from one place to another.

I heard Time Warner's chairman the other day talk about this new medium down at the Newspaper Association of America, and it was interesting. He said, —I'm paraphrasing him—we think that people who think that the new medium will simply be television are wrong. It will have the soul of reading.

And that's because, unlike television, the person who is consuming this medium will have to be engaged. It is not a passive medium; it's an active one. It's a medium which is driven by human curiosity. That's what makes it go.

I think that's very encouraging, not only for us, in our commercial selves and our professional selves, but good for the society, because I think the act of reading, the act of engaging actively with material, with information in this world is vital for a free society to operate.

I think there's an enduring appetite for trusting relationships. There are lots of kinds of relationships, but one trusting relationship is between people and their newspaper, and the people or institutions on whom they rely for information.

And I doo't think anything will change in the new environment with respect to that. In fact, I think the need to find trusting relationships in a very cluttered environment will grow even greater, and not less.

There's a related appetite which I feel is strong in the human spirit, and which I think bodes well for what we do if we do the right things about changing, and that is an appetite for distinctive, recognizable human voice. We need to hear that voice. We hear it through our ears, but we also hear it through our eyes, as we read. It is what characterizes wonderful writing that captures audiences, certainly what characterizes writing that captures audiences over the generations.

I think it's what characterizes the fine newspapers of the country. They're the ones that have some distinctive individual characteristic and recognizable voice. The newspaper is not a single voice; it's more like a chorus, but it has a sound, and you can tell what it is, and it's not just because of the typeface.

I also believe in the power of habit, which Arthur Sulzberger also referred to. At the moment, everybody's wandering around quite literally in free space on this stuff, and that's fine, and that's what's going to happen at the outset. But pretty soon, habit is going to form around these practices, and habit is what we're also in the business of. We build a habit of readership through building people's trust. If we figure out how to translate ourselves into the new medium well, that instinct of developing habits through creating relationships that are rather intimate with our community and with individuals in it, will serve us well.

There are challenges in all of this, of course. One of the challenges is, and I think, you know, we're wrestling with it, to define what it is we're talking about. What is journalism? There have been great debates about who is a journalist and who isn't, and what is journalism, and so forth.

I would like to make a quick stab at it, just to start the conversation, which could go on forever. But I feel fairly strongly about these elements; there may be others; it may be refined.

But I think that journalism is not defined by anything other than its purpose and its values, and they're related. I think the purpose we have taken journalism to have, we believe that it has, relates to the nature of an open society. And we have come to believe that journalism serves the purpose of giving people the information that they need in order to make sovereign choices in a free society. And it's not just government choices; it's sovereign choices, all the choices that they might make.

And the values that we hold to all, or almost, all relate to our sense that the society works best if those who are committed to giving the information that society needs to make sovereign choices are all trying to tell the truth. When they describe reality, they're trying to describe, use the words that fit that reality, whatever it might be.

We recognize there are going to be many perspectives on that reality, but we hope that they all discipline themselves to tell the truth. We don't insist on it. Lord knows we don't make laws requiring it because we don't trust anyone to state with the force of law what the truth is. But we do hope that everyone who is doing this as journalists discipline themselves to tell the truth.

I worry a bit, as we lurch into a period of rapid change, that there is a decided lack of clarity about what we think those truth disciplines really are. And the words we use to describe them, perhaps, haven't been challenged enough lately. Lord knows, they're going to be challenged in the new environment, because if you've ever sat through other kinds of sessions where people are trying to figure out what's right and what's wrong for a newspaper to do in the new environment, you see everybody falling all over their shorts, tripped up on things that they had taken for granted, values that they had asserted easily in a setting in which it—we've been doing it for hundreds of years, and we know basically what we mean by a kind of a common law usage of the words. But you translate it into a new environment and then suddenly, all of it comes apart.

Let me just give you an example. We variously described what our principle truth discipline is as objectivity or, short of that, neutrality, or short of that, balance. Those are all interesting words. They're not all the same words, and

they lead you in a variety—We also use fairness, which is a very, very difficult word when you think about it deeply.

They lead in different directions often, and yet we use them interchangeably often, and without a lot of rigor. And I think it's time for us to think those through.

Let me give you an example, just taken from this session. We had a whole session on The Philadelphia Inquirer's very powerful and very popular series, "America: What Went Wrong?" And the first headline which I saw flashed up on the board from the first day's story was "How the game was rigged against the middle class."

In what sense would that have been objective? In what sense would that have been a neutral statement? In what sense would that have been balanced?

Those are questions that I think, to me at least, raise fewer questions about The Inquirer's piece, although I think you can talk interestingly about the piece, too. But they raised fewer questions about the piece than about the words that we use to describe what it is that we do. If we all like that piece and say it's great journalism, those words are very odd ones to use to describe it.

I also think, when we talk about these values, it's terribly important—You can derive the values in a number of ways. You can derive them from certain first principles; you can derive them from the needs of an open society, and so forth.

I think it's real important for us all to start attempting to understand and attempting to root, to get these values to have their roots in the expectations of the American people about us.

Why do I say that? Because if we root them there, they'll last through the changes.

Economics, another very big issue. The economic model which we were wrestling with for one kind of enterprise just a few minutes ago is very unclear for all enterprises. It's emerging. We don't know exactly what the right economic model in the new multimedia interactive environment is going to be.

But I think that it's terribly important that journalists immerse themselves in the issue and understand the economics, understand it in a sophisticated way.

And I think it's going to be important for us to understand that which we can do something about. You know the old prayer, God help me to know that which I can do something about, and that which I can't, and focus on the one. I've just destroyed the prayer, but we need to learn that prayer.

We need to learn that prayer and recite it with regularity because some of this is death and taxes: there's nothing you can do about it. It is reality, and you might as well shake your fist at God—which is sometimes satisfying, but it doesn't get you anywhere—as to shake your fist at some of the forces that are at work here. You're wasting your time and your energy, and if you focus on that part of the economic reality that you can affect, you'll have more of an effect.

The reasons for optimism, coming back to the beginning, because I'm optimistic because I believe that newspapers and journalism, journalism, the things we believe in, are the product of a human nature which is not quickly changeable by technology, if it's changeable at all.

That's because I believe in human curiosity and that there is curiosity—The "Daily Me" is fine. I think everybody's going to want it, but I think people are also going to want to know about that which they don't know they're interested in that moment. Everybody has that: human curiosity.

I'm optimistic because the playing field is being leveled out. I mean, that's discouraging in one sense, in a purely venal commercial sense because the competition is getting fierce. For those of us who were described as the gorillas, you know, suddenly, that's a very uncomfortable situation, because the barriers to entry are falling rapidly. The cost of communicating is dropping as fast as the cost of computing was dropping, and continues to drop.

That means it's a free-for-all. So it's threatening to us, but it's also a tremendous opportunity. And the reason for that is, that I see is that many of the things that have been competitive disadvantages for us in the newspaper business in competing with television over the years, and radio, suddenly even out.

They move as fast as electricity, and we move at the speed of trucks in traffic; they have vivid images that move, and we have static images that smudge; they have actuality, sound, to give the feel of a thing, and we can only describe.

In the new medium, as it emerges—not immediately, but as it emerges, all those things will come together. And that leads me to think that unless we, in our folly, invite the government in to organize all of this, the possibility for newspaper, for public-interest journalism, for what we think we do, to get off of the defensive for once, and to capture audiences that we've lost—lost—Well, maybe not lost because of the loss of interest. I don't think that's what it is. Lost for a variety of other reasons. Lost because of time competition; lost because of people's taste in the medium, rather than their taste in information and knowledge.

We can reach people that we wouldn't otherwise reach, and that's encouraging. But it will only happen if we can avoid being in a state of denial over all of this, and it will only happen if we look on this new reality that we are facing as a challenge that we should meet, moreover, one that we can meet.■

Judge Backs Tempo

Tempo, a popular independent Indonesian magazine, won a chance for a new life when the Jakarta Administrative Court issued an unprecedented decision overturning a government order that had closed the magazine in June 1994. Judge Benyamin Mangkudilaga said the government's order was arbitrary and illegal. He ordered the government to issue a new publication license to Tempo. Editor Gunawan Mohamad, Nieman Fellow 1990, commented: "It is a courageous decision, which is not only significant to me and the reporters, but for all judges in the country." The court's order is subject to appeal in a higher court.

The Ambassador's Terrace
A Brief Memoir of Itinerant Journalism

The 1995 Joe Alex Morris Jr. Lecture, fourteenth in the series, was delivered by James T. Wooten, the senior correspondent for ABC Television News. Wooten began his journalism career on a weekly newspaper in rural west Tennessee in the early 1960's. He worked for The New York Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer and Esquire magazine before joining ABC News in 1979. He has covered seven Presidential campaigns and the White House; in his current assignment he has originated stories from 25 countries and five continents.

Joe Alex Morris Jr. was a graduate of Harvard's Class of 1949. He served as a foreign correspondent for The Los Angeles Times, reporting from the Middle East for 25 years before he was killed while covering the Iranian revolution in 1979. His family and classmates, led by Richard Stone, his roommate, established the Joe Alex Morris Jr. lecture in honor of his memory. When Joe Alex died, an Iranian newspaper, The Teheran Journal, memorialized him with this observation: "Morris was respected for his fairness, his untiring quest for truth, his willingness to listen, to learn, to observe."

The reporter's credentials are not automatic proof of either wit or wisdom, nor are they a license to pronounce judgments on the craft or the culture, and they're no certificate of special status or stature, and every time I find myself behaving as though my press pass qualifies me for membership in some elite stratum of society, I have only to remember a sunny afternoon in the Middle East several years ago.

I was in Amman for a live interview with King Hussein, and as we chatted before the broadcast, for "This Week with David Brinkley," it occurred to me that I had come a long way from Alabama, from covering cops and robbers in Huntsville, or George Wallace and the State Legislature down in Montgomery, and I was pleased with myself to be sitting there knee to knee, in the palace, with the ruler of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, trading small talk about our families and our hobbies. "Would you care for something to drink," His Majesty asked. I said, "That's very kind of you. Some water would be fine." And he snapped his fingers and a young fellow materialized from someplace, carrying a silver tray on which were balanced an unopened bottle of Evian, a Waterford goblet for the King, and, for me, a Styrofoam cup. So much for how far I've come from Huntsville.

That was a useful moment, and so was this one. Several years ago, I was scrunched up in a corner of a plane waiting to take off from Istanbul, and while waiting for several other passengers to board, an American woman, a tourist no doubt, elderly woman, walked down the aisle, passed by my aisle, stopped, backed up and looked at me and said, "I recognize you. You're on television. What's your name?" And

James T. Wooten

I said, "It's Jim Wooten with ABC." She said, "No, no, no." And she went on down the aisle. And that was another useful moment.

And late one February morning in 1991, somewhere in southern Iraq, the armored battalion to which I had attached myself thundered over a rise into the middle of a large Bedouin encampment. After 40 hours of nearly constant combat chasing Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard, everybody in the battalion welcomed the meandering flocks and herds if for no other reason than as a logical assurance that for the next few kilometers at least there were no land mines. The cameraman and I crawled down from an APC [armored personnel carrier] and while he rolled on those predictable pictures, you know, the great and mighty American war machine moving carefully through these bucolic herds of camels and sheep and goats, I was soon joined by a little boy from one of the tents, and I smiled, and he smiled, and after a while he took my hand, and the cameraman noticed us strolling along in the desert and swung around to get the shot, and the kid noticed the camera and he pointed to it and he said, "CNN?" I said, "ABC." "No," he said, "CNN." Another useful moment.

Now, for reporters, the moral to this little trilogy is fairly simple. It doesn't matter who we are or where we came from or what our names are, it doesn't matter for whom we work. What really matters is the work, and the work is always and ever the story; finding it, getting it, writing it, filing it, airing it. That's what's important about reporters. Their stories.Years ago on my job interview at The New York Times, Mr. E. Clifton Daniel gazed studiously across the polished expanse of the managing editor's desk and somberly asked me exactly what sort of stories I'd like to cover for his newspaper. "Well, sir," I said, "I'd prefer all the big ones." Mr. E. Clifton Daniel did not crack a smile, but he did hire me, and although I didn't get all the big ones, I did manage to get enough of them to keep me happy and humble.

In 1974, for instance, when Gerry Ford nominated him to be vice president, Nelson Rockefeller was holed up in his little seaside hovel in Seal Harbor, Maine, and while I was there covering the man, I wrote a little story about the place, called it quiet and comfortable, an understated summer retreat for such prominent Americans as the late Walter Lippmann. As it turned out, Mr. Lippmann was not quite dead. This was a useful moment in my career.

And in January of 1977, writing the inauguration story from Washington, I told our readers at The Times how the shops and stores along Constitution Avenue were all closed and shuttered for the big day. If you want to be picky about it, there are no shops and stores on Constitution Avenue, proving once again that you don't have to be a genius to work the big ones for The Times. These are clearly examples of ignorance, my ignorance.

But not the sort of ignorance that Homer Bigart liked to recommend as the reporter's proper perspective on any story. What he meant of course is that we ought to strip ourselves of any notion that we understand the story before we report it. Last summer in Rwanda, I kept running into a reporter who also happened to be an M.D., who said repeatedly to me, and anybody else who'd listen, that there was no cholera in those teeming camps. "I've seen cholera plenty of times," he said, "I've seen cholera in Bangladesh, and I've seen cholera in Pakistan, and I've seen cholera all over Africa, and I'm telling you boys, there ain't no cholera here." It is not particularly funny, but it is ironic that the only reporter there who contracted cholera was the doctor. He was clearly not enrolled in Homer Bigart's school of portable ignorance.

I know it sounds like heresy or even hard work, Homer liked to say, but you have to ask questions, the answers to which you do not know. And what a business this is, this craft, or this vocation, or whatever the hell it is in which ordinary folks like Homer Bigart and Harrison Salisbury and a man named Charlie Moore—who taught my wife how to play poker and shamelessly took our money while she was learning—ordinary people like Bigart and Salisbury and Charlie Moore and Joe Morris could make such extraordinary contributions to their times simply by being good reporters. They were all flawed creatures, of course, unlike the rest of us, with numerous vices and weaknesses, but the flame of their lives was always and ever the story. And whatever their faults, I miss them. I miss their instinct, and I miss their edge, and I miss their attitude, but maybe most of all, I miss the voice of their work. And sometimes, I'd have to say, I come precariously close to believing that the passing of reporters like them has left an awkward and awful silence in our business.

That isn't true. I don't really believe that. There are plenty of good reporters around these days, and some are no doubt as good as they were and maybe even better, but what is true, or at least what I believe is true, is that the voices of good reporters are much more difficult to hear nowadays. Contemporary media, print and electronic, written and spoken, radio and television, movies, newspapers, magazines, entertainment news, network and local, it's all become a veritable Tower of Babel, the constant source of thousands of competing ideas and images offered not in the name of democratic diversity or free speech, but for pure profit. Most of it's bilge, eyewash, tabloid trash, but it is there, and it is always there now, inescapably noisy, mainlined into the mainstream ethos of our country and our culture with such forceful repetitiveness that the voices of good reporters, their ideas, their images, their stories, can hardly be heard.

The result of all [this] is either the absence of truth, or perhaps more pernicious, the widespread persuasion that there is no truth, or at least none that really matters, that it's all really a matter of opinion, point of view, perspective. This is a problem of dilution, the difference between a martini made at three to one, or eight to one, and it is most clearly seen in the claim and the widespread acceptance of people like Geraldo Rivera and Jerry Springer and Larry King and John McLaughlin, that

they are journalists operating within the purview and the protection of the First Amendment, which I think is the last refuge of the media scoundrel, this instant fallback on these vague perimeters of the Constitution, this instant response to any critique of what they do is, "I'm a journalist."

Now, there's really nothing to do about it except to act on our basic understanding and our instincts that they do not belong to our fraternity, and to say that as often as the opportunity arises because the problem is a confusion of identities. They are not reporters, they're not journalists, and the more often we say that, in print, on the air, in the public, the better off everybody is. It doesn't solve the problem entirely, it doesn't even begin to solve the problem, but it does provide a small inroad. And besides, it makes me feel good to say it.

After all, the very lodestone of what we do as journalists, as reporters and editors and correspondents and producers, the irreducible bedrock of our work is the assumption that truth does exist, if only in the context of a passing moment, and that in that moment it can be cornered, corralled, captured and explained, and that we're just the folks to do it. That is our theology. We are self-appointed, yes. And, yes, we're self-selected. But that's what matters about us, the one characteristic that separates us from all that noise out there, not merely that we have the confidence to take on this job, but the skill and the brains and the grit to do it. That's who we think we are, isn't it? And that's who we have to be, which is reason enough for pride and maybe from time to time a little arrogance.

Unfortunately, what's happened in our tribe, all over the country, is the proliferation of arrogance based on a myth. It is the myth of celebrity, I think, most often passed along and perpetuated by people in my business, but also even by newspaper people who get infected by the cholera of television exposure. It is the sense that one single and specific journalist, reporter, columnist, whatever, is special, simply by virtue of being noticed or by virtue of notoriety. It is this false notion, it is the false notion that what this is all about, what we do and why we do it is to be noticed, to be famous.

Not more than a month ago at Emory University in Atlanta, I addressed a gathering of student journalists from all over the Southeast, about 250 young people. And as many of them as I could I asked that same question that Mr. E. Clifton Daniel asked me so many years ago—what stories do you want to cover? Almost every single one of them said they wanted to be an anchor. Almost every single one said they wanted to sit in a chair, under the lights, and read the words that roll in front of them. Almost none of those young people saw the years ahead as an opportunity to find stories and tell them. Their careers for them were simply opportunities. I know I spent considerable time on Bigart and Salisbury and Charlie Moore, but the fact of the matter is, we're probably better now than they were, better educated, better trained, and certainly better equipped. My Lord, in that respect alone, what we can do, we are light years ahead of the old guys. Some of you are or will be editors with power, muscle, and control. Find the reporters with the best and the clearest voices, with the edge and the attitude and the instinct, and give them a platform, and turn up the volume. Give them a shot at being read or heard, and if you have the muscle, use some of it to identify who we are and what we do. Don't give your readers, your listeners, your viewers a chance to be confused about the difference between Ray Bonner and Geraldo Rivera. And if they're confused, beat them over the head with the difference. Reporters can't do that. Publishers won't. And editors can.

Make certain you tell your audience what you're doing, and why you're doing it, and who's doing it, and why they're the best people for the job, even if they did select themselves. Don't give people a chance to believe or assume otherwise. We must without embarrassment identify ourselves, who we are, what we do, why we do it, and why we're the best folks to do it. We are the folks who've appointed ourselves to find and tell as much of the truth as is possible in one given moment, in one given day, and we can damn well do the job. It seems to me that whatever it takes to separate us from "Hard Copy," and "Current Affair," and Oprah, and Phil, and Maury, and Sally, and Jerry, and whatever, all that drivel, is worth it, whatever it takes.

Last story. In the autumn of '73, during the Yom Kippur War, I returned to Tel Aviv from three or four days at the front in the Golan Heights. I was hungry, dirty, unshaven, unshowered, and still frightened half out of my wits. I had never been under such intense artillery before or since. And, in my hotel lobby, I happened to cross an internationally famous, well-connected Washington columnist, who was wearing a spiffy beige linen suit, and was nice enough to invite me to dinner that night at the residence of the American Ambassador to Israel, the former New York Senator, Kenneth Keating.

"I know he'd want to talk to you, Jim," the columnist said, "so get cleaned up and come on along." I declined, but the columnist was reluctant to take no for an answer and insisted. I continued to resist and he finally said in right angry exasperation, "How the hell can you expect to cover this war if you don't talk to the Ambassador? And besides, he has a lovely terrace. Over cocktails, it's the best place to be in Tel Aviv."

I suppose what he meant was that there's more to a war than the fighting, which is true of course. But when eventually I did sit down with the Ambassador a few days later in his office, not the terrace, he flat out lied to me. Either that or he passed along without knowing it one of Nixon's or Kissinger's many fabrications. But I attributed what Ken Keating told me that day to knowledgeable background sources and put it in The New York Times more or less as the gospel truth. I got over it and so did The Times, but the moment has become a part of my recitation of—there are no rules in journalism—a few suggestions for being a reporter, the first of which is obviously stolen.

One, on every story, start out ignorant, which is different from stupid. Don't be Forrest Gump; be Homer Bigart, or more contemporaneously be John Kifner, who's first question on any

assignment is, "What is this expletive deleted?" Ask questions the answers to which you don't know.

Two, a bit of arrogance is okay. You can strut; you're a reporter. After all, you've appointed yourself as an agent of the truth. It's not bad. It's a noble and an honorable pursuit.

Three, listen to your peers, but pay absolutely no attention to criticism from politicians. Even if they're sometimes right, they are always wrong. There are notable exceptions, of course, but by and large they don't much care about the truth and they're never really happy with what we do. They just pretend from time to time and it's not worth the trouble to listen.

Next, be comfortably ill at ease. Enjoy being an outsider. It's the best place to do your work.

Next, wander. Be a gypsy, an itinerant, even if you don't travel the world, and even if you don't move from city to city in this country. I mean by this, don't stay too long on the same assignment. Move around. Look for a fresh batch of ignorance.

Know when to leave. I had two stories killed at The New York Times. [Executive Editor A. M.] Rosenthal said, "I want you to cover Washington like a foreign correspondent. I want you to pretend that you're writing for our readership in London." So one day I went up to the Senate Armed Services Committee and I took down phonetically everything that Strom Thurmond said and then translated it into English. That was my story and they killed the story, which is understandable. The second story that they killed was a story about drug use by reporters with White House people. They killed that story and I knew that story was true, and that's when I left. I think you have to know when to leave.

The papers and the networks and the magazines don't own your body and they don't own your soul. Demand that you get treated right and know when to walk.

Next, you need to get an edge and keep it. Make it count. You don't necessarily have to be an adversary or an enemy of anybody or anything, but you certainly can't be an advocate, and when you raise your voice, you ought to have something to say, and there ought to be an edge in it. Don't be timid and don't be dull. Get an edge.

Commit to the adventure. Journalism, especially recording, is precisely that. It is an ignorant, pitch-dark step into the unknown. If you're not willing to trust your instincts and your attitude and your edge, if you shrink back from that step, get a real job—be a lawyer.

And finally, don't talk to ambassadors, on their terraces or anywhere else. Generally speaking, it's a waste of time.■

25 Journalists Selected for 1995-96 Class

The following 13 American and 12 international journalists have been appointed to the 58th class of Nieman Fellows:

American Journalists

THOMAS E. ASHBROOK, 39, deputy managing editor, The Boston Globe.
DAVID BANK, 34, telecommunications reporter, The San Jose Mercury News.
YING CHAN, 48, reporter, The Daily News, New York.
ELLIOT DIRINGER, 37, staff writer, The San Francisco Chronicle.
JONATHAN FERZIGER, 34, Jerusalem bureau chief, United Press International.
TIM GOLDEN, 34, Mexico City bureau chief, The New York Times.
PATRICIA GUTHRIE, 36, city editor/team reporter, The Albuquerque Tribune.
DAVID L. MARCUS, 34, South America bureau chief, The Dallas Morning News.
SHERYL McCARTHY, 46, columnist, New York Newsday.
ALICE PIFER, 43, producer, ABC News, 20/20.
MARY SCHMICH, 41, columnist, The Chicago Tribune.
JOSEPH WILLIAMS, 32, senior general assignment reporter, The Miami Herald.
ANN WOOLNER, 45, associate editor, Fulton County Daily Report, Atlanta, Georgia.

International Journalists

KEVIN DAVIE, 40, editor of Business Times, Sunday Times, Johannesburg, South Africa. His fellowship is supported by the United States-South Africa Leadership Development Program.

LAURA EGGERTSON, 32, senior Washington correspondent, The Canadian Press, Toronto. She is the recipient of the 1995-96 Martin Wise Goodman Canadian Nieman Fellowship in memory of the late president of Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. and Nieman Fellow '62; funding is from the U.S. and Canada.

JAE-HONG KIM, 45, assistant editor, Political Desk II, The Dong-A Ilbo, Seoul, Korea. His fellowship is supported by The Asia Foundation and the Sungkok Foundation for Journalism.

GWENDOLYN LISTER, 42, editor, The Namibian, Windhoek.

JENNY LO, 43, executive producer, British Broadcasting Corporation's Marshall Plan of the Mind Project. Funding is provided by The Atsuko Chiba Foundation, Inc.

FRANCOIS MAROT, 37, senior editor, Ca M'intéresse, Paris, France. His fellowship is supported by Prisma Presse.

WOJCIECH MAZOWIECKI, 38, business desk editor and news/managing editor, Gazeta Wyborcza, Warsaw, Poland.

HISAYOSHI MIYATAKE, 38, assistant editor, World Services Section, Kyodo News Service, Tokyo. His fellowship is supported by Kyodo News Service.

JACQUES A. RIVARD, 47, environment reporter, National TV News, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Montreal. Funding is from the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation for the support of study and research in areas related to the environment.

DANIEL ULANOVSKY, 34, op-ed deputy editor, Clarín, Buenos Aires, Argentina. His fellowship is supported by the Fundacion del Hemisferio.

WANG JUNTAO, 36, Visiting Scholar, Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University; former vice chief editor, Economics Weekly, Beijing, China.

REGINA ZAPPA, 41, foreign editor, Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. As the 1995-96 Knight Latin American Fellow in the Nieman program, her fellowship is supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.■

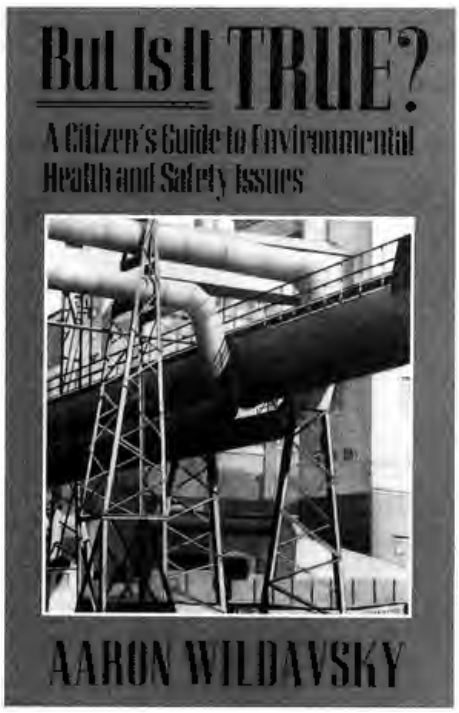
BOOKS

Overplaying the Environmental Risks

A Moment on the Earth
The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism
Gregg Easterbrook
Viking. 745 Pages. $27.95.

But Is It True?
A Citizen's Guide to Environmental Health and Safety Issues
Aaron Wildavsky
Harvard University Press. 704 Pages. $35.

In only 60 years or less, all life on earth will be dramatically touched from a planetary heat-rise such as the world has not undergone for 10,000 years, environmental scientists predicted Monday.—The Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, CA November 22, 1988.



BY CHRIS BOWMAN

Like other social movements, environmentalism has been fueled by assertions that things are getting worse. In the 1960's and '70's, who could argue otherwise? America's metropolitan skies grew murkier by the year. Swimming and fishing holes became industrial toilets. Toxins actually oozed and spewed.

Today, with much of the unsightly pollution cleaned up, the environmental movement is driven mostly by abstract threats—global climate change, ozone depletion, radon gas, pesticide residues. Are things still getting worse?

No one can say for sure. Environmentalists are still sounding alarms, but journalists need more than good luck to cull the genuine dangers from the clotter of exaggerated or nonexistent threats. The quandary begs for insight.

Two formidable thinkers—Gregg Easterbrook and the late Aaron Wildavsky—have attempted the challenge in separate books released on the 25th anniversary of Earth Day. Their reports, alas, reflect badly on journalists depending on the mainstream environmental movement for guidance.

In "Moment on the Earth," Easterbrook calls for a shift from alarmism to "ecorealism," an approach that recognizes not only the seriousness of human abuses of the environment, but also the enduring power of nature.

Yes, he argues, human affronts of deforestation, smog and ozone destruction significantly diminish environmental quality in our lifetimes. But these are "pinpricks" compared with environmental assaults of the magnitude nature is accustomed to resisting—volcanoes, asteroid strikes, post-glacial "superfloods."

The perspective should make journalists think twice about writing "irreversible damage" or "fragile environment" in their next environmental story.

Overall, Easterbrook's book is an opus of environmental optimism. Far from living in a time of impending ecological doom, Easterbrook argues that Western countries have passed the peak of their pollution age and that almost every environmental problem will be solved within the next 50 years.

These views will come as no surprise to those familiar with Easterbrook. As a commentator on environmental issues for Newsweek, The New Republic and The New York Times Magazine, Easterbrook takes every opportunity to buck "conventional wisdom." In his encyclopedic book, Easterbrook applies his eco-contrarian take on the whole gamut of environmental issues—from deforestation, smog, toxic waste and population growth to radiation, energy and biotechnology.

He builds a strong case for reversing the main current of environmental thinking. Technology is growing cleaner and resource efficient, not more brutish, Easterbrook argues. Recovery from pollution will happen faster than even optimists predict. He also turns anti-environmental beliefs on their heads, contending that most pollution controls are cost-effective and have made Western economies stronger, not weaker.

Easterbrook's unequivocal view of a steady march in environmental improvement, though, has the same drawbacks as the doomsday vision he wants to eviscerate. His eco-optimist narrative just doesn't always square with the facts. In some cases, it downright flops. Take his argument that the endangered sockeye and chinook salmon "may ultimately find themselves better off because men and women have tampered with Northwest rivers." To be sure, dam operators can manipulate river flows and reservoir levels to enhance salmon survival. But the notion that a dammed river could make a better home for salmon than a wild one is sheer fantasy.

Easterbrook is at his most powerful when he rips mainstream environmentalists for failing to focus on confirmed environmental emergencies. His chief example is the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The agenda was a treaty to reduce global "greenhouse" emissions—notably carbon dioxide—which may cause global warming.

The environmental problems that kill most people today, however, are local, not global: emissions from poorly ventilated cooking fires and polluted drinking water. Easterbrook comments, "There is something faintly indecent about the world's heads of state gathering, as they did at Rio, to bestow many tens of billions of dollars on the greenhouse effect, a speculative concern, while lifting not a finger to assist 7.8 million children dead each year from drinking infected water and breathing dense smoke."

Wildavsky, a political scientist at the University of California, Berkeley, who died in 1993, takes a much harsher view of environmentalism in "But Is It True?" An expert in public-policy analysis, Wildavsky rigorously examines the scientific literature, media coverage and government response in several controversial cases. He concludes from the "preponderance of evidence"—the book contains 100 pages of footnotes—that most environmental issues are largely or wholly based on false or unproved claims.

The total ban on the pesticide DDT, he argues, was not justified and may have even increased farm worker deaths by forcing a switch to more potent substitutes like parathion. Here's more: asbestos removal from schools imposed billions of dollars that helped no one. Dioxin cleanups have gone way overboard; these compounds have harmed humans only at improbably high doses. The federal Superfund program to clean up old hazardous waste sites provides no health benefits.

About the only environmental problem well-grounded in truth, Wildavsky contends, is the pollution-induced thinning of the ozone layer, the earth's shield against harmful ultraviolet radiation.

It is Wildavsky's method of inquiry—not his conclusions—that makes this book valuable. His chief goal is not to reform the movement or trash it. Rather, he wants "ordinary citizens" to decide for themselves which environmental risks are worth their worry and expense for protection. They can do this, he says, by reading the original scientific studies rather then relying on the word of scientists, advocates, journalists or government officials. The goal is to know enough to ask the right questions of authorities and to make sense of the answers.

Wildavsky makes the task less daunting. He dissects the building blocks of environmental regulations, all the way down to the protocols of rodent experiments and the mathematics of climate change predictions. He shows how to detect methodological flaws and hidden uncertainties in the scientific justification for regulation.

The book is a valuable guide for environmental journalists but is also a stinging and deserved indictment of their performance.

Wildavsky argues persuasively that journalists have largely failed to report the information people need to judge the merits of proposed chemical bans, restrictions and cleanups. News reports have often exaggerated the threats, relied mostly on anecdotes from alleged victims and juxtaposed competing opinions from authorities in the pretense of balance.

Wildavsky explores questions that journalists should have been asking all along: are the claims of environmental peril scientifically justified? How do these threats compare to everyday risks? What are the health benefits and costs of protection?

Wildavsky and Easterbrook provide a heavy counterweight to the environmental doomsday books that have been piling up since publication of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" more than 30 years ago. Their analyses help journalists clarify rather than amplify environmentalism's bottomless grab bag of crises.■

Chris Bowman, the first U.S. Environmental Nieman Fellow, has just finished his Nieman year. He is returning to The Sacramento Bee.

Reclaiming an Apocalyptic Columnist's Reputation

Joe Alsop's Cold War:
A Study of Journalistic Influence and Intrigue
Edwin M. Yoder, Jr.
The University of North Carolina Press. 220 Pages. $24.95.

By Richard Dudman

Younger newspeople these days may hardly recognize his name, but from the 1940's into the 1970's Joe Alsop (1910-1989) was about as well known as Connie Chung is today. Joe and his brother Stewart, in their widely syndicated newspaper column, broke many major stories and often led public opinion on such issues as development of the hydrogen bomb (they favored it), Senator Joseph McCarthy's crusade against alleged Communists in government (they opposed it) and the Vietnam War (they backed it to the bitter end).

They often went against the grain, as when they staunchly defended J. Robert Oppenheimer against national security charges. Beyond all that, Joe Alsop was the consummate insider, or "access," journalist. He exchanged letters and telephone calls with top-level officials of the State and Defense departments, tapping them for news and advising or sometimes lecturing them on how to do their jobs.

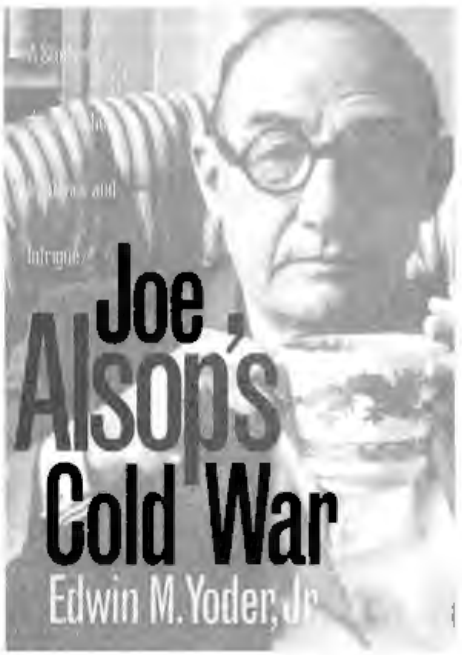
He entertained high government officials at his formal Georgetown dinner parties. President John F. Kennedy, after attending the 1961 inaugural balls, turned up in white tie and tails at Alsop's door and stayed several hours. Joe and Stewart were frequent guests at the Cleveland Park home of Richard Bissell, a high CIA official who planned the U-2 spy-plane project and the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Bissell's staff once gave him a "decision box" with three buttons to press: "Yes," "No," and "Ask Joe Alsop."

Joe was superbly educated and well read, diligent, persistent and courageous. He was also aristocratic and well connected: he was a grandnephew of Theodore Roosevelt, and his grandmother, Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, got him his first newspaper job, on The New York Herald Tribune, through her friend Mrs. Ogden Reid, the publisher. He was also arrogant, irascible, foppish and secretly gay. The author of this book provides a detailed and sensitive account of a traumatic incident involving Alsop's homosexuality that has been heretofore unknown except to a few Washington insiders.

Such a figure as Joe Alsop was bound to attract a cult, a community of journalists and public officials who still like to exchange Alsop anecdotes and go over his many journalistic and social feats and failures, generally with sympathy and often with defensiveness.

Edwin M. Yoder appears to be a member of the Alsop cult, if rather a newcomer. He became a professional and social acquaintance after arriving in Washington in 1975 as editor of the editorial page of the old evening Star. Yoder's closeness to Alsop's relatives and old friends permitted him marvelous access to anecdotes and documents illuminating Alsop's work and personality. This closeness also seems to have led Yoder to emphasize Alsop's achievements when he turned out to be right and soft-pedal his missteps.

The book is an engrossing tale of some principal Cold War episodes and the Alsops' intimate role in them. It also is an acknowledged effort to reclaim Joe Alsop's reputation from the damage brought on by his own apocalyptic writings, his often abusive behavior and his active promotion of some ideas that turned out to be false and policies that turned out to be disastrous.



The main thread that wound through Joe Alsop's various journalistic campaigns and political intrigues was a militaristic patriotism. Alsop launched his career as a reporter-activist in 1940, when most Americans were cool toward aiding Britain against Hitler's aggression. After a brief flirtation with isolationism, Alsop plunged into active support of interventionism including Franklin D. Roosevelt's controversial plan to transfer 50 "overage" destroyers to Britain. Alsop later claimed that he and Walter Lippmann wrote a crucial speech by General Pershing in support of the destroyer deal. After World War II, the Alsop brothers campaigned for a bigger military budget, total victory in Korea, continued support for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in China, development of the

hydrogen bomb and American intervention in Vietnam, first to try to avert the French defeat in 1954 and later to try to achieve a U.S. victory.

They consistently pressed an analogy with the British government's failure to rearm Britain against the rising menace of Hitler in the 1930's, with "international Communism" taking the place of the Nazi threat. They clung to this lesson long after others began to see regional conflicts as largely expressions of local nationalism rather than aggression orchestrated from Moscow. Joe Alsop claimed to have coined the phrase "domino effect" for a corollary to the appeasement lesson: If one small country fell to Communism, down would come many others, like a string of dominoes. Yoder goes to great lengths to refute David Halberstam and others who have blamed Joe Alsop for setting the tone for a conspiratorial view of the Chinese Communist revolution, an interpretation that Joseph McCarthy seized upon in his witch-hunt for supposed State Department traitors who "lost China." Yoder argues that Alsop's three-part Saturday Evening Post series titled "Who Lost China?" was widely misunderstood. In the first place, he says, the title was not Joe's but someone's at the magazine, and it aligned Alsop too closely with the China Lobby, which explained the Chinese revolution in terms of betrayal and treason. Actually, Alsop was close to the China Lobby, although he never fully bought the conspiracy line. He intended the series as a rebuttal of a white paper ordered by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, which argued that the Chinese civil war was "the product of internal Chinese forces" and that nothing that the United States did or could have done or left undone could have altered the outcome. Alsop, disagreeing, attributed the Communist victory not to U.S. betrayal but to an epic struggle during World War II between General Joseph Stilwell, Chiang Kai-shek's deputy, and Claire Chennault, commander of Chiang's Flying Tiger air force. Alsop, as a young naval officer, had been Chennault's public relations aide. Yoder recounts that background only briefly. Barbara Tuchman's "Stilwell and the American Experience in China" tells it in detail. Tuchman reports that Alsop peppered his family friend, Harry Hopkins, in the White House with private letters ridiculing Stilwell (Alsop's commanding officer) and urging his removal. She calls Alsop "fanatical," "excitable," and filled with "relentless animus." Yoder, in his bibliography, gets back at Tuchman by accusing her of employing too much "Cleopatra's nose" history—giving great causative weight to small, single factors. Yoder's anticlimactic conclusion of that episode is that Acheson was clearly right. Alsop thus was clearly wrong, and his error helped perpetuate the long U.S. quarantine of Communist China.

Alsop hinted, too, that Stilwell was soft on Chinese Communism. But when McCarthy began his witch-hunt, Alsop broke with his friends in the China lobby and fiercely defended the State Department China specialists, Stilwell's advisers, who had foreseen Chiang's inevitable downfall.

As for the homosexuality episode, it occurred in 1957 on Alsop's first and last trip to the Soviet Union. He had been pleasantly surprised by the lively cultural and social life in Moscow. But among the people who gathered at Alsop's hotel to drink and talk was ao agent of the Soviet secret police. As Yoder tells it, Alsop "and this companion were photographed in a sexual act in his hotel room, and he soon was confronted with the photographs and the threat of blackmail and was urged—unsuccessfully—to become an undercover agent." Alsop reported the incident to the State Department and the CIA. He flew home to Washington, reported the incident to The Washington Post, which then was syndicating the Alsops' column. He offered to resign, but The Post would not accept his resignation. J. Edgar Hoover learned of the matter through the CIA's routine referral to the FBI and retailed it to other officials. Yoder quotes a Hoover memo reporting that he showed Alsop's "confession" to Attorney General William P. Rogers. Hoover's memo said that Rogers first assured himself that Alsop's statement had been signed and then "commented that he was going to see that certain individuals were aware of Alsop's propensities." Rogers, who was later Secretary of State in the Nixon Administration and now practices law in Washington and New York, was queried by this reviewer but declined to comment. Yoder gives no indication that he asked Rogers for comment.

Alsop showed strength of character by carrying on with his column despite a whispering campaign against him, including sly public hints by McCarthy that he knew Alsop's secret. Yoder reports that the Soviet Union kept up its harassment and in the early 1970's mailed copies of the compromising photographs to some other Washington columnists. Alsop learned of this and for a time resolved to end the matter by publicly declaring his homosexuality. A friend with "high connections in the intelligence community" dissuaded him, partly on grounds of embarrassment to his family, but added that this would be unnecessary. Yoder says the Soviets received stern representations and a threat of retaliation and ended the campaign.

In his conclusion, Yoder claims the advantage of hindsight and says that no one could have known that the Alsops' gloomy views, based on lessons of the past, would not prove out. "Fortunately, their gloomier forebodings turned out to be not so much incorrect as inconsequential." True enough, if we disregard the Vietnam War and various disastrous Latin American adventures that grew out of a panicky atmosphere that the Alsops helped create.■

Richard Dudman, Nieman Fellow 1954, is a former chief Washington and foreign correspondent for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch. He lives in Ellsworth, Maine.

The 'Greatest Editor' And His Favorite Reporter

Harry & Teddy
Thomas Griffith
Random House. 315 Pages. $24.

BY DEAN BRELIS

Being poor and fatherless during the Great Depression did not hold back the young Teddy White. He earned money selling newspapers and working as a teacher in a Hebrew school. He graduated from the prestigious Boston public Latin High School with grades good enough to earn a scholarship to Harvard. And there he was lucky as well as smart. He was the only undergraduate to choose Chinese history and studies as his major.

Thus began his long relationship with John King Fairbank, the outstanding Orientalist scholar who oversaw his academic pursuits at Harvard and then guided Teddy into becoming a journalist. Having graduated summa cum laude, Teddy was given a traveling scholarship which enabled him to travel to China where he became a correspondent for Time magazine. The visit of Harry Luce to China was the beginning of their friendship.

A. J. Liebling, who was an inimitable critic and observer of what he called the wayward press, once likened Harry Luce to the owner of a shoe store filled with shoes of only one size—his own. That's what this terrific book is about—to what degree Luce allowed views other than his own to appear in his magazines and how he reacted to correspondents like Teddy White who placed truth above kissing the boss's ass.

Griffith's book shows the reader how these two men came to their mutual interest and love of China by totally different routes. "Teddy's curiosity about the country was an intellectual one; the spark was not ignited until he was in college," writes Griffith. "For Luce the fascination was basic, instinctive and emotional; he was born in China and there he spent his childhood."

Among the strengths of this book is the skill with which Griffith, himself a veteran editor of Time, gets inside the various influences that made Harry one of the most controversial personalities of his time, especially his view of Chiang Kai-shek as a heroic, wise leader and his publishing inaccurate and biased reports that unsuccessfully tried to get Republican presidential candidates elected against Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. When Dwight Eisenhower won election in a landslide, Harry Luce's support was not needed, although a Time writer, Emmett Hughes, became Ike's chief speechwriter.

The book also contains valuable insights into journalism by committee. It highlights the abuses of a foreign news editor, Whittaker Chambers, who would scrap reports from Teddy in China and John Hersey in Moscow, and print stories based entirely on what he believed to be the truth. In Hersey's case, the book suggests that when the correspondent visited Hiroshima after the atomic bombing and wrote his landmark piece, he gave it to The New Yorker because he didn't trust what would happen to it with Time's editors. Luce never forgave Hersey for not offering the Hiroshima story to Time.

For his part, Teddy was shocked at the handling of a file he wrote for a cover story on General Joseph W. Stilwell, Chief of Staff of Chiang Kai-shek's armies, who had been fired by the Generalissimo. The break had been brewing for a long time. Teddy had eyewitnessed the deep divisions blow by blow, giving both sides in his report to Time. But when Chambers got through editing, Stilwell came off as the villain. When Teddy read what finally was printed he cabled Harry that it was "an entirely dishonorable story" and threatened to quit. Instead, he returned to New York and got a leave of absence to write "Thunder Out of China," a book reporting how and why the Communists would defeat Chiang Kai-shek, as they did. Then he resigned from Time.

In Griffith's account, the reader gets to feel the years of Cold War that followed V-J Day and how Teddy and Harry experienced the mounting hysteria of McCarthyism witch-hunts. Teddy became a victim for a period because of his views on China and his journalistic career nearly came to a halt. Fortunately, he was able to write for the now-defunct Reporter magazine. Finally, he went back to Harry's Life magazine and, not surprisingly, showed he had the ability and the curiosity to write penetrating political stories concerning America.

The first genuinely unbiased Time political reporting, says Griffith, was the Kennedy-Nixon race, the same election campaign that gave Teddy his breakthrough Pulitzer Prize-winning book "The Making of the President 1960."

Griffith's book ends with Harry and Teddy reconciled, their attitudes toward each other amiable, relaxed, trusting, as was fitting. Even in the worst of times these two men genuinely liked one another. Teddy was Harry's favorite reporter. Once during the Second World War, when Madame Chiang Kai-shek was in the United States raising money for her husband, she read one of Teddy's reports in Time that gave a factual account of corruption in her husband's regime. She indignantly rushed to Luce and insisted he fire Teddy. Harry did not, something that Teddy never forgot. When Harry stepped down in 1964 as Editor-in-Chief of his magazines, Teddy wrote him, "As a reporter I feel orphaned by the retirement of the greatest of American editors."

A fine book by Tom Griffith.■

Dean Brelis, a 1958 Nieman Fellow, was a Time bureau chief in the Pacific Northwest, Rome, Athens, Cairo, Beirut, New Delhi and Bangkok. Retired, he lives in Milbridge, Maine.

The Mindset Behind U.S. Foreign Policy

Temptations Of a Superpower
Ronald Steel
Harvard University Press. 144 Pages. $18.95.

By Robert Manning

When the Cold War came to its startling end with the collapse of "the evil empire" we had good reason to hope that the victory would bring a degree of peace and tranquility to the world and lessen the immense defense burden of the United States. Or did we? The reality is proving to be perplexingly different, especially for the nation that casts itself as the world's only superpower but has not figured out how to play the part.

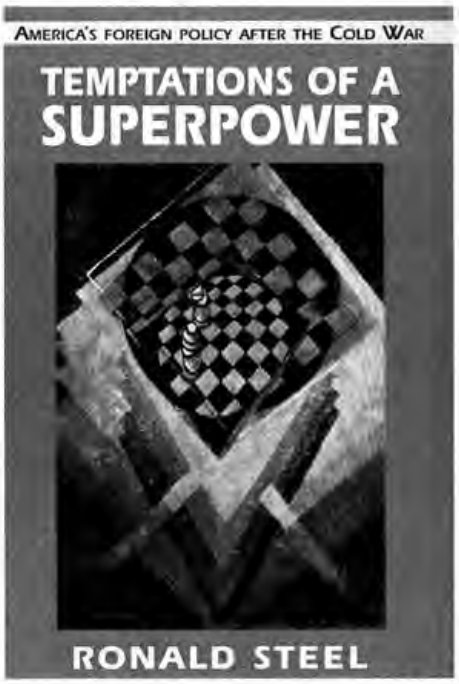
Before reading very far into this cogent analysis of post-victory American foreign policy—rather, the lack of one—a reader almost feels nostalgic for the Cold War. It "saved and...tranquillized Europe...it energized the United States...it kept a restraining hand on the simmering hatreds of unassimilated ethnic groups...[it] made the nuclear problem manageable." It was in its perverse way a force for stability and offered "a structure for understanding the world." The good old days.

Ronald Steel teaches international relations at the University of Southern California and is the author of "Walter Lippmann and the American Century," the essential biography of the late prince of pundits. Starting with his 1993 Joanna Jackson Goldman Lecture at the Library of Congress he has fashioned a slim but hard-packed handbook that deserves attention from any politician, government official or journalist concerned with international affairs. It would be helpful if a president and a few of the would-be presidents were to read it as well—though its depiction of how they and their associates are handling America's foreign policy won't improve their digestion.

Steel finds Washington still laboring under "Cold War conceits of military omnipotence and unlimited global responsibilities." Example: the Pentagon's "bottom up" review of U.S. defense plans in 1993 conceded that with the demise of the USSR and communism "the...threat is gone" but proposed only a seven percent cutback from the five-year force plan devised during the Cold War. Example: a defense budget of $253 billion is down a bit from the previous year but is as large as that of all the other nations of the world combined; about half the total is geared to the defense of Cold War allies in Europe and Asia against a now defunct Soviet Union. Yes, military planners blithely explain, but now we must be prepared to fight a couple of wars simultaneously.

The other major industrial and trading countries, among them of course those whom the U.S. is defending (from whom?) at the cost of billions, diligently "concentrate on productivity, market penetration, wealth and innovation: the kind of power that matters most in today's world. In this competition we are—with our chronic deficits, weak currency, massive borrowing, and immense debt—a very strange kind of superpower."

Consider as another example the NATO alliance, requiring the presence of more than 100,000 American troops in Europe. Its original purpose, to deter Soviet expansion into Western Europe, is gone so it is now proposed to expand NATO by bringing in the countries of Eastern Europe, and even to bring in the dead fox, Russia, to dress up the chicken coop. Such an alliance (against whom?) would do little to solve Europe's new security problem, which is aggression within borders, as in the former Yugoslavia. Steel is correct in



characterizing the proposed expansion of NATO as a silly idea designed only to keep a dispensable bureaucracy alive.

The first six chapters of "Temptations" make up the disquieting report of a building inspector. In his final chapter, What America Can Do, Steel is obliged to play architect. In this role he finds certitude more elusive. First, he says, it is necessary to close the "chasm between a foreign policy establishment mesmerized by notions of American leadership and 'global responsibilities,' and an American public concerned with drug trafficking and addiction, jobs, illegal immigration, crime, health costs, and the environment....The country is in no mood for costly adventures in redeeming the world....Domestic policy has now become paramount." It is "the foreign policy elite" that must change course.

Second, Americans need to make some hard-nosed choices when their compulsion to pursue morality in foreign policy collides with self-interest. This is not easily done in a country where genuflection to morality is so prevalent. Fortunately we were hard-nosed about Bosnia, refusing to intervene in any meaningful way when the European powers refused to deal with the killing in their own backyard. Morality, not self-interest, is what dictated our intervention in Somalia; that was acceptable until we attempted grandiose "nation building" there.

Should we have intervened in Rwanda to halt the holocaust there? Steel says it was "shameful" that we did not—but in the next breath he moves to his major theme:

"....We cannot as a great nation abjure the right to intervene. This does not mean we should, as in the Cold War, behave like a global fire brigade. Rather, our interventions, where necessary, should be almost entirely within our own geographic region, North America and the Caribbean." Is this realistic? Not quite. Steel himself then submits a lengthy list of other circumstances in which as the major world power the United States may be required to use force in any part of the world, many of them a long way from the Caribbean.

The critique in "Temptations" reaches all the way back to the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and its premise that direct or indirect aggression anywhere threatened the security of the United States. The assertion was "on its face absurd," Steel argues, as was President Truman's assertion later, in defense of the war in Korea, that "if history has taught us anything it is that aggression anywhere in the world is a threat to peace everywhere in the world."

"In truth," Steel writes, "what history has taught us is precisely the opposite. Peace is, and always has been, divisible....The danger with such a bloated universalist notion is that it obscures the way the world really works. It describes all disputes as those between good and evil, and turns them into crusades for the soul of mankind."

This construction does not really do justice to the context, the state of alarm, in which the Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment came into being so disillusioningly soon after World War II's end. If viewed as a continuation of that conflict, the coming of the policy of containment and the rhetoric surrounding it become eminently understandable.

Some readers may find other touches of glibness or hyperbole in other of the book's passages. And when he writes, "For the first time in half a century we face no serious security threat from abroad. We are as near to being invulnerable as a nation can get," he seems to underestimate the growing threat of nuclear attack or blackmail from some rogue government or assorted Dr. No-type mad bombers. The book devotes only a few words to this increasingly out-of-control threat to world stability.

But a few minor faults do not diminish the value of "Temptations of a Superpower." It is a challenging analysis of the mindset that has saddled us with an incoherent foreign policy, befuddled our allies and left Americans fumbling for the solution to long-neglected weaknesses and crises at home while asking us to play superintendent to the rest of the world.

As the American century ends, the United States has no serious enemies and requires no allies. So, says Steel, why not operate in the 21st Century as did Britain in the 19th, pursuing without passion the old-fashioned balance of power, coolly remembering that we have no permanent enemies and no permanent allies, only permanent interests? "This is not a heroic task," the author concludes, but it's the way for America to survive and perhaps even prosper into the future.■

Robert Manning, Nieman Fellow 1945-46, is former editor-in-chief of The Atlantic and author of "The Swamp Root Chronicle: Adventures in the Word Trade."

Complicated First Amendment Icon

Hugo Black: A Biography
Roger K. Newman
Pantheon. 741 Pages. $30.

BY BRANDT AYERS

Finally, there is a complete biographical picture of an icon of American journalism, the First Amendment absolutist, Associate Justice Hugo Lafayette Black of the United States Supreme Court. But iconography was not on my mind when my wife, Josephine, and I picked him up at the court for drinks and dinner during Christmas break of our Nieman year, 1967-68.

I said, "Judge, you've been on the court for about 30 years now. Surely, you have a different view of the institution than you did in the Senate when you supported Roosevelt's notorious court-packing scheme."

"Funny you should ask me that," he replied mildly. "I had some of those old Senate speeches out not long ago, looking them over. I didn't see anything in them I could disagree with—of course, I might have purified the language some." Ever the patient teacher with his clerks and young Alabamians with the faintest glimmer of liberality, he explained that the size of the court is not specified in the Constitution and had varied over the years.

The merry, unpretentious man who befriended Josephine and me is recognizable in Roger Newman's work, but that is only one of many aspects of his character and personality. Inevitably, it is a portrait of a complex and fascinating man.

The man who emerges from the 710 pages of text and notes seems to be a series of contradictions—a civil libertarian and a Ku Klux Klansman, a judicial pioneer and a strict constructionist, a populist who set strict limits on political protest—contradictions an-

chored to an overriding purpose: the articulation and defense of the First Amendment protections of freedom of speech, religion and assembly.

Roger Newman's work is a welcome addition to the shelf of books about Black: from Irving Dilliard's revealing collection of the judge's opinions, "One Man's Stand for Freedom," to James Simon's account in "The Antagonists" of how the Alabama country boy won the battle for dominance of the Court against the Harvard Solomon, Justice Felix Frankfurter; and finally the judge's widow, Elizabeth, who added her charming perspective in "Mr. Justice and Mrs. Black."Among the surprises unearthed by Newman, a research scholar at New York University School of Law, was the judge's strong presidential ambitions and his more active role in the Ku Klux Klan than any previous biographer has disclosed.

Black was an inveterate "joiner" and the Ku Klux Klan was one among his many clubs, although he hesitated for a year before accepting membership in Robert E. Lee Klavern No. 1, the largest and most politically powerful unit in Alabama. From 1923 to 1925, he marched in parades, wore the regalia and attended and spoke at meetings around the state. Once, when the Klavern debated whether to whip a man, Black objected and threatened to resign. When the motion passed, Black left in protest, but didn't actually resign until some time later.

Newman devotes an entire chapter to a celebrated murder case in which Black defended a Methodist minister who murdered a Catholic priest. The priest was killed during a fight triggered by the priest's presiding at the marriage of the minister's daughter to a dark-skinned Puerto Rican. By today's standards, the trial reeks of prejudice. The case, tried shortly before Black joined the Klan, might be seen as evidence that Black was tainted by the prejudices of his time, but the testimony of a whole life contradicts that judgment.

For instance, as a young Birmingham city court judge years before, he found a black man not guilty of beating a collection agent. The strong-arm bill collector had tried to repossess the black man's furniture—including the bed where his sick wife lay—even though the man had already paid $94 for $50 worth of furniture.

As late as 1948, he took soundings about how to run for president. That was the year the South began slipping away from the Democratic Party on the race issue. After Black joined in the court's unanimous Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation decision, all hopes of the presidency were snuffed out.

Though he failed in his ultimate ambition, this man from rural Alabama roots who skipped college and went straight to law school at the University of Alabama dominated the court in his time. Justice Frankfurter believed the law was handed down from the majesty of British jurisprudence and based many of his opinions on what would or would not "shock the conscience." The Alabamian, in Bridges v. California, made a judicial declaration of independence, asserting that the liberties of Americans, free speech chief among them, could not be curbed—not even by judges. He thought opinions based on "shocked conscience" were an excuse for judge-made law. For his own opinions he researched debates in Congress and the Constitutional Convention. He was also persuaded by the plain language of the Constitution, "Congress shall make no law."

Newman gives us a richly detailed account of an extraordinary life—an epic intellectual journey, a story of a man who loved the law and his home state of Alabama. It is a story of unrequited love, because he was misunderstood and reviled by the people of Alabama. It is a measure of the greatness of his spirit that he returned their hatred with understanding and affection.■

Brandt Ayers, Nieman Fellow 1968, is Editor/Publisher of The Anniston (Alabama) Star.

An Entertaining, but Confusing Look at China

China Pop:
How Soap Operas, Tabloids and Bestsellers Are Transforming a Culture
Jianying Zha
The New Press. 220 Pages. $21.95.

BY XIAOYONG WU

The culture market in China is a blurred image. Communist propaganda is mixed with pirated Western products; soap operas allowed on television screens for the convenience of certain government priorities are playing back-to-back with Taiwan and Hong Kong soap operas, often featuring greed, violence and sex; and tabloid newspapers are making huge profits with gossip columns on filmmakers who won international prizes for blockbusters not allowed in theaters in China.

Analyzing the cultural trend and the impact of the changes is a complicated task and "China Pop" is a courageous effort. Through her insightful observation and extensive contact with various sources in China, Jianying Zha offers the reader a colorful quantity of materials. Her portrayal of the making of soap operas, her conversation with film directors Zhang Yimou ("Raise the Red Lantern," "To Live") and Chen Kaige

("Farewell, My Concubine"), and her description of the joy and sorrow of Chinese artists is entertaining. Her book is enjoyable.

However, as the reader turns the last page, the image of China's culture market remains confusing. One obvious reason is that the author's analytical edge is hopelessly compromised by her cynicism, if not her own confusion. Ms. Zha is certainly right that the "complicated, constantly changing reality" of China must not be seen and interpreted "through a pair of old lenses." But her attempt at a "closer look at China from multiple angles" is not penetrating, to say the least, and has even added a few confusions.

At the very beginning of her book, she describes the image of the 1989 student movement at Tiananmen Square as a new cliché, implying that its right and wrong should be reassessed. According to her and through the mouth of her interviewees, the student democracy movement was only a detrimental attempt to foment violent revolution rather than a peaceful evolution, and the protest caused a slowdown in China's economic development and the folding of numerous liberal publications. She quotes a reporter friend as saying that the suppression of student protests was "like a hard punch in the face from your father. Very hard to get over. Only by and by do you realize he's your father after all." This is certainly a different way to look at the Tiananmen massacre, but it is not new. The Chinese government has always insisted that the student movement was not a peaceful demonstration but a political rebellion, therefore military suppression was justified.

The author seems to believe that the Chinese people and society are not ready for freedom, democracy and justice. After asserting the Chinese people's willingness to forget the past and "let bygones be bygones," just as the Communist Party requires them, she concludes:

"No matter how cynical it is, there is practical wisdom in the party's policy of keeping the lid on tight and keeping the national imagination fixed on the present. Just look at Bosnia, and look at the former Soviet Union—aren't they lessons enough for remembering too much of the past, fixating too keenly on settling old scores and turning history upside down? The result is a slaughterhouse, a mess. The Chinese know better. Let's stay together. Let's move right on."

Born to an intellectual's family in Beijing, Zha came to the United States in the mid-1980's to pursue her graduate study and has now settled in Chicago, specializing in transcultural studies. She frequently travels between China and the United States. In recent years she witnessed the whole process of the democracy movement and its bloody suppression in Beijing in 1989.

With her background and academic experience, Zha is well equipped with knowledge of both cultures to provide an insightful analysis of today's China. Yet the book concentrates mainly on gossip-like anecdotes with a sarcastic tone. All the characters in the book—writers, artists, teachers, television drama producers and film directors—are portrayed as totally disillusioned or caring only about money. Zha's description of the life and work of these characters has no doubt reflected the repressive and stifling system that exists in China.

But repression and the fear of political persecution is only one side of the impact that is effecting changes in China's cultural scene. The gathering momentum of the economic marketization, its increasing demand for more cultural and political freedom and the rapid bankruptcy of the government policy of controlling people's thinking have inspired the production of many thoughtful and high quality cultural products.

Unfortunately, "China Pop" has failed to introduce this aspect of cultural changes. Ms. Zha has been more successful in describing the impact of market economy on media organizations. While government censorship over media is firmly in place, particularly on political issues, newspapers are allowed to take full advantage of the free-wheeling economy. As a result, Chinese newspapers are riding an unprecedented spin of checkbook journalism. With the exception of perhaps the few government announcements and editorials, every word in "news stories" is paid for by commercial sponsors, either the companies in the "news," or special interest groups that are willing to pay to have the story printed.

In a country where autocratic rule always has the last word, and where "laws and regulations" can always be bent to suit the needs of the top authority, economic irregularity can be quite safe or even legal, so long as the offender remains "politically correct and acceptable." Newspapers in China, including party organs at the national and regional levels, are changing their attitude from accepting bribes to demanding bribes. But the editors do not seem to worry, since proper political conduct has always been emphasized over professional conduct.

Ms. Zha quotes some economists as describing this state of affairs as "inclusive corruption." But she immediately points out that the real problem is "pervasive cynicism" resulting from "pervasive corruption." She writes, "whatever advantages such arrangements have for cash-starved newspapers, the cost in public trust has been immeasurable."

For those intimately acquainted with contemporary Chinese politics and culture, "China Pop" does provide some interesting first-hand material to understand the younger generation of writers, artists and their works. But people who know little about China will not benefit much from this book, for the stories and discussions are far too "Chinese" and the author's explanations are too sketchy and vague.■

Xiaoyong Wu has just completed a year at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow. He is former News Director and Deputy Department Director of Radio Beijing English Service.

Stalin's Regime and Two American Reporters

The Secret World of American Communism
Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov
Yale University Press. 384 Pages. $25.

Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-36
Edited by Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, Oleg V. Khlevniuk; forward by Robert C. Tucker
Yale University Press. 308 Pages. $25.

The Ransom of Russian Art
John McPhee
Farrar Straus Giroux. 181 Pages. $22.

BY MURRAY SEEGER

When I arrived in Moscow in January 1972, two aging icons of American journalism were still in place after nearly four decades. Edmund Stevens and Henry Shapiro were rivals in Moscow longevity but both had long lost their ability to see or report on contemporary life in the Soviet Union.

This was the time when Armand Hammer, the elderly oil tycoon, took the lead in attempting to establish business détente between Washington and Moscow, signing trade deals and investing in a new hotel and office complex. It was the beginning of the Jewish emigration movement, Andrei Sakharov's emergence as the leading democratic liberal and the campign to expel Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who had won a Nobel Prize. Looking back, it hardly seems like "days of stagnation" except in the ideological terms expressed by Mikhail Gorbachev.

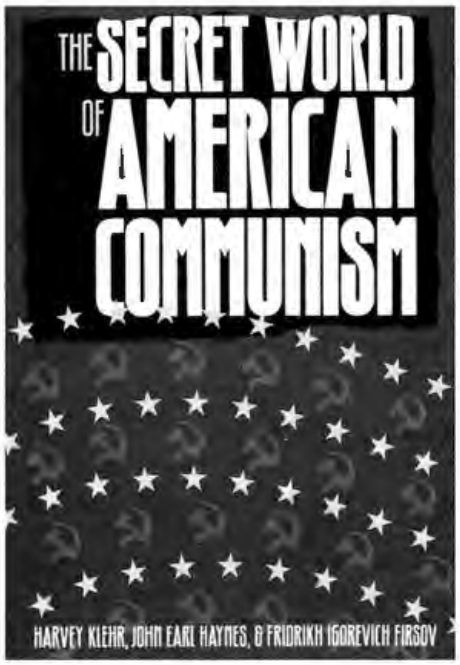
Now, publication of three new books opens doors of enlightenment to this era and earlier decades to confirm what many skeptics long believed was the nefarious linkage between the U. S. and Soviet Communist parties, the KGB and its predecessors and the Comintern (Communist International) that has faded into the foggy memory of yesteryear.

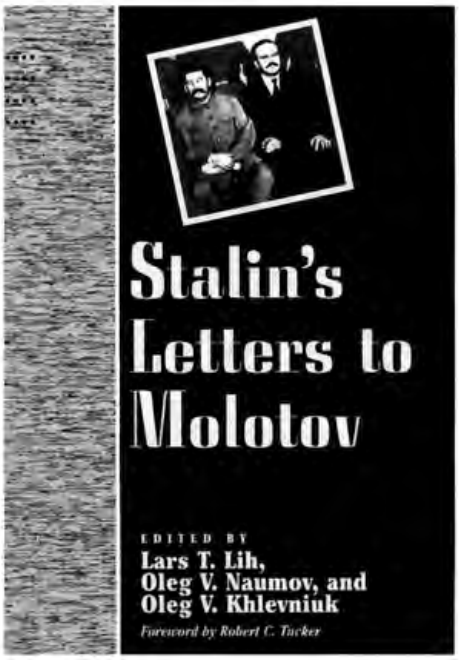
Stevens and Shapiro both arrived in Moscow in 1934 when there still was a spirit of optimism about the potential future of the Marxist-Leninist state. Both married Russian women and settled firmly into daily Russian life. Both spoke the language colloquially and each collected a mental storehouse of Soviet lore. By the 1970's, neither was writing a word worth saving. The recurring questions were: why have they stayed so long? Why are they writing nothing critical?

"The Secret World of American Communism," taken from archives of the Comintern and published with thorough backgrounding by Yale University Press, and another recent book by John McPhee suggest how Stevens's special position differed from Shapiro's. The Yale book also gives the new details on the special relationship the Communists had with Hammer that gave him a leg up when former President Nixon opened the doors for more business with Moscow.

A native of Romania and graduate of the Harvard Law School, Shapiro was a short stout man with a bushy mustache that rivaled Stalin's in size. He went to Moscow to study Soviet law, became a stringer for Reuters and married his translator, as several other correspondents did. He became a full-time correspondent for United Press with no other journalism experience. In 1972, he was still living in the apartment he occupied for decades, across the hall from his office. The gloomy atmosphere was distinctly the 1940's. This was a small, old central Moscow building otherwise occupied by Russians with no police at the door as there were at the compounds designated for foreigners' residences and offices. By the time Shapiro retired in 1973, the bureau had been moved to the big foreigners' area on Kutuzovsky Prospekt where KGB watchdogs dressed in city militia uniforms kept track of building traffic.

Shapiro was among the handful of U.S. reporters who covered World War II from Moscow. He was a taciturn, hard-working wire-service correspondent—a star of the U.P. staff—who had no apparent political motivations. He was highly competitive and tough enough to challenge the Stalinist censorship on March 5, 1953, by shouting "yes" to an editor in London who asked if Stalin were dead just as the single international telephone line was cut. In the immediate postwar years, when Stalin started his ultimate anti-Semitic campaign, Shapiro, the only Jew in the American press corps, was under intense official pressure. There were two police cars outside his door 24 hours a day. He left the country under the advice of the U.S. Embassy while Ludmilla was forced to get a Soviet divorce to save herself and their daughter, Irisha, from being "tainted." Shapiro returned to Moscow in time to cover Stalin's





death. He remarried Ludmilla and they came to Cambridge as part of the Nieman Fellows Class of 1955. She was given U.S. citizenship by an act of Congress. They returned to Moscow until he retired.

Correspondents Eddy Gilmore and Thomas Whitney of The Associated Press and Andrew Steiger of Reuters also had Russian wives and were subjected to intimidation that such marriages were "illegal." They could not take new assignments for years, until their wives were given exit visas in 1953 after the death of Stalin. Walter Duranty, the legendary New York Times correspondent who won a Pulitzer for his Moscow coverage in the early 1930's, solved the problem differently; he abandoned his wife and son in Moscow.

By the 1970's, Shapiro was still functioning with the caution he had learned from the darkest Stalinist days. He was accustomed to writing brief, cautious memos that were rewritten in London or New York after getting past the official censors. Censorship had ended in 1961 but, as Richard Longworth of The Chicago Tribune recalled from his days in the U.P. bureau: "Henry couldn't write worth a damn." Shapiro insisted another correspondent always had to be in the bureau to answer telephones, a major handicap given the agency's short staffing and long working hours. He discouraged his young, talented associates from pursuing the major stories of the day, political dissidence and Jewish emigration.

Correspondents in the earlier, most difficult, years competed on the basis of two cooperative circles, with the A.P., Reuters and The New York Times in one group and the U.P. and A.F.P. in the other. The competition was often bitter; Shapiro particularly feuded with Harrison Salisbury, who had worked briefly for U.P. in Moscow and knew Shapiro's copy as chief of the U.P. foreign desk. Salisbury mysteriously appeared in Moscow for The Times in 1949, receiving a Soviet visa after the newspaper had been unable to staff its bureau for two years. Shapiro accused Salisbury of stealing his material from the U.P. wire and writing it under his own name, starting his climb to a Pulitzer in 1955.

I met Shapiro at a Nieman dinner in Cambridge in 1961. He never talked to our class but did talk with the experts at the Russian Research Center. He was a bitter man. Duranty, considered a notorious compromiser; Salisbury, a colleague turned competitor; Gilmore, a competitor who produced frothy features that were approved by the Moscow censors, and Stevens, who had suspicious official connections, all won Pulitzers. Henry, who worked as hard as any of them without compromising, did not.

When I visited Shapiro in 1972, he still suggested I join his "circle": "You help me and I will help you." Soviet officials and journalists tossed occasional news nuggets to Shapiro, but he was now out of touch. The newer breed of Moscow correspondents cooperated with each other and around the A.P. and Reuters bureaus. U.P.I. suffered from Shapiro's timidity because the best stories were now in the streets and not within the suffocating Soviet bureaucracy that Shapiro knew. He was no longer a star getting his byline on page one regularly; he had worked in Moscow too long and was unable to work anyplace else. He spent the last two decades of his life with Ludmilla in Madison, at the University of Wisconsin, working on memoirs that were never published.

Shapiro and Stevens were not friends, and their wives were bitter enemies. Ludmilla Shapiro came from Moscow, saw herself as an aristocrat and member of the intelligentsia. She had been a strong right hand in her husband's work. Nina Stevens, who married Ed in 1935, was from a Cossack family and had worked as a teacher on a collective

farm. She worked with different news organizations but only occasionally with her husband. In an interview with Whitman Bassow, a former U.P. and Newsweek correspondent who wrote a history of Moscow reporters, Shapiro referred to Stevens simply as "that son of a bitch."

Stevens landed in Moscow fresh out of Columbia University as a translator and editor for a Soviet publisher. After he was laid off he wrote a newsletter for the American-Soviet Chamber of Commerce and did stringing for The Manchester Guardian and London Daily Herald and also acted as agent for the Cunard Lines.

In 1939, Stevens accomplished two feats that put him under suspicion for the rest of his life. He got an exit visa for Nina to travel with him to the U.S. and he bought a house overlooking the Moscow River in the center of the city. Nina's family lived in the house while Stevens covered the war from Finland, Moscow and North Africa for The Christian Science Monitor. Stevens credited the U.S. Embassy for getting Nina's visa, but there had to be high-level Kremlin approval; no other correspondent had a private home although some rented weekend dachas in the country.

Stevens also was able to secure U.S. citizenship for Nina before Shapiro won Ludmilla's passport and Stevens gained admission to the Bolshoi ballet school for his daughter, Anastasia, the first foreigner to be admitted to that privileged domain. In 1945, he published "Russia is No Riddle," largely a reminiscence of his war-time journalism. The book also propagated soft Soviet propaganda. Thus, the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 came about because the British "fumbled the world's last chance for peace" by refusing to permit Moscow to occupy part of Poland in the event of a German attack. When Hitler agreed to meet "Russia's security requirements" the pact with Germany was signed. Stalin not only gave Poland the infamous "stab in the back" but also retook the Baltic States and other western territory after Germany attacked Poland, moves that Stevens referred to as building a security buffer against the Nazis. Around the world, the Hitler-Stalin agreement disillusioned thousands of Communists and their sympathizers; most left-wing U.S. intellectuals abandoned the party.

In praising Stalin, Stevens wrote that the Soviet Union was governed by "a form of democracy, elementary if you will, but more genuine and pure within its limited scope than any American institution except the town meeting, to which in many ways it closely corresponds." The Communist Party had "a large degree of inner-party democracy."

What we know now, through the work of Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Firsov, is that the Ed Stevens of that era was a Communist. He joined the Young Communist League-USA in 1931 and the Communist Party of the United States in 1938. In addition, according to the Comintern archives that the Yale team has examined, Stevens had visited Moscow in 1932 and married Edith Emery, a Hungarian who was later married to Roy B. Hudson, described as a member of the politburo of the Communist Party of the United States.

Stevens returned to Moscow for The Monitor from 1946 to 1949, but reporting conditions became so difficult that The Monitor closed its bureau. In the U.S., Stevens gave lectures and wrote a long series on the Soviet Union that was awarded a Pulitzer in 1950 and was published as a book, "This is Russia—Uncensored," a sharp turn toward criticism of the Soviet system. In a prologue familiar to any correspondent from the bad old days, he wrote, "we had sensed imponderable walls closing in upon us." "Our son and daughter were taunted by their neighborhood playmates...we suddenly discovered that we were constantly being spied upon."

Still, there were signs of the old lefty: "...the lower efficiency standards of Soviet performance are to some extent neutralized by the fact that, under Soviet coordinated economic planning, some of the waste and duplication of competitive economy (sic) are eliminated....The Soviet system eliminates many of the economic contradictions of capitalism, such as unemployment and crises of over-production. The clue to this is total centralized control."

Stevens, who had been assigned to Rome, resigned from The Monitor in 1955 and returned to post-Stalin Moscow the next year. Over the next several years he combined journalism for many organizations including Time, Life, Look, NBC Radio, and The Times of London with private business. By the time I met him in 1972, he was accredited to Newsday and The Sunday Times of London, but these were not the chief sources of his income.

Although Stevens rarely filed any copy in the 1970's, he attended the weekly briefings of the U.S. ambassador. He sat in the rear, and often slept, while Shapiro, the dean of the correspondents, sat in the front row. When Stevens became dean, he took Shapiro's front row chair and fell asleep there. An affable, tall, heavy, red-faced man who suffered from a degenerative spinal disease that forced him to bend ever more forward over the years, Ed was a regular on the diplomatic party circuit.

Stevens for years also represented a U.S. movie distributor, getting a few movies for general viewing in Russia but more for the private entertainment of privileged audiences in the official film club. He and Nina had also assembled a large collection of work done by the many underground painters who worked without official approval. Some pieces were sold to foreigners and Nina took trips to the U.S. to sell others, transactions that could be performed only with KGB acquiescence. In his recent book, John McPhee relates that Norton Dodge, an eccentric professor of economics at the University of Maryland who assembled the world's largest collection of this underground art, paid Nina $50,000 in the 1970's for paintings at the average price of $1,000 each.

The Stevens were then living in a larger, grander private house that the government had given them when their original house was demolished as part of a city renewal effort. Dodge recalled visiting the Stevens's salon and watching host and guest artists drink large quantities of straight vodka and eating large dollops of caviar. Nina asked one artist, dressed in peasant boots and shirt, to dance. "She was showing him—

using him as dancing bear," Dodge told McPhee.

My wife and I attended another kind of evening salon operated by Stevens for foreigners newly arrived in Moscow. Bureau chiefs, diplomats and businessmen were invited to eat Russian food prepared by Nina and her mother along with copious portions of vodka and wine. There was some modest musical entertainment, but the stars of the evening were young men and women who spoke excellent English and were there just to make friends with lonely foreigners.

The businesses Stevens operated reminded some of us of the ways that Victor Louis, the nefarious KGB disinformation agent, was allowed to earn hard currency by importing western goods for sale and to publish, with his English wife, Moscow's only telephone book for the international community.

By the 1970's, most of his colleagues liked Stevens as an individual, but no one trusted him as a journalist. He asked one colleague for help doing a story about the political dissidents that a client requested, but the colleague refused. On the other hand, I asked him once about a twisted Pravda translation of a Nixon speech, and Stevens answered sharply: "They did it and they did it deliberately."

When he was asked why he remained in Moscow so long, Stevens usually answered first about his house. He paid $20,000 for the first, a so-called long cabin, and had been offered $35,000 more than 30 years later for his second, bigger house in the central city. He would not leave until he got a fair market price, although there was no private market to provide guidance. He also noted that he could not live nearly so well anyplace else in the world. Of course, the Soviet government could have forced him out at any time by canceling his residential visa. Stevens, who reportedly was also working on memoirs, died in Moscow in 1992 in the house where Nina still lives. His daughter, who returned to Moscow in the early 1970's after the breakup of her marriage, died there a few years earlier.

Interviewed in Moscow when the Yale book was published, Nina Stevens told The Monitor that she never knew Ed had been a Communist and that he lost interest in the party after the Stalinist purges of the 1930's. But she seemed to waver: "I don't think he would care if someone put him on a list of Communists. He didn't care much what people thought. As his war dispatches showed, there was very little communism left in him. He had dropped it completely. He was very critical of the regime here."

Edmund Stevens, Jr., an architect who lives outside Boston, wrote The New York Times: "My father was dean of the foreign press corps and recipient of numerous awards for journalism, including the Pulitzer Prize. Anyone familiar with the body of work my father produced would find...the accusation that he was a Communist ludicrous."

"The Secret World of American Communism" does not provide the final answer for questions that dog the reputation of several former Moscow hands. It is notable that only Stevens from American mainstream correspondents is mentioned in these records. Naturally, the correspondents for the old The Daily Worker are mentioned. There is no mention, for instance, of Duranty, who was accused of working with blinders that prevented his seeing the mass starvation caused by Stalin's collectivization campaign.

Most important, this book establishes beyond the doubt of anyone except the most recalcitrant revisionist historians that the Communist Party of the United States was an important link in the secret world of the Communist International and Soviet spy network. While it was known that John Reed, author of the classic "10 Days That Shook The World," transported millions of dollars from Moscow to finance the C.P.U.S.A., the Comintern archives also establish that Armand Hammer and his father, Julius, both medical doctors, performed the same function late in the 1920's.

Hammer carried messages between the Kremlin and Washington years before the Nixon Administration encouraged trade with the Soviet Union. In the 1970's, Hammer made major trade deals and built a new hotel and office complex in Moscow. He explained his special relationship on the basis that as a young man he had met Lenin while doing business with the new Soviet state. Hammer gave Brezhnev a Lenin autograph for the Kremlin archives. Correspondents covering Hammer press conferences in Moscow, when he announced such ventures as a golf course for foreign businessmen, noted that his interpreter was Mikhail Birke, the backup to the better-known Viktor Sukhadrev, Brezhnev's English voice.

Stalin broke up the Comintern in 1943 as a gesture to his wartime allies. Any later information about individuals whose cooperation with the Kremlin was especially valuable would more likely be in KGB archives that are still not open for research. Looking at these records, along with the scholarly appraisal the three authors have made of the material, whets the appetite.

The McPhee book in the author's unique reportorial style combines elements of pathos about the lives of the illegal artists with the adventurous spirit of the Maryland professor who secretly helped to finance their miserable existence. The short book carries several plates of the notorious art. The book does not explain how he got away with his activities under KGB surveillance.

"Stalin's Letters to Molotov" reproduces a small sample from what must be an immense documentary archive that sheds more light on the twisted mind and devious operations of Stalin. Molotov, "Mr. Stone Bottom," turned over to party files examples of correspondence from 1925 to 1936 done in a distinctive style of short, numbered paragraphs on a wide list of issues with chilling references to executions as the ultimate means of disciplining the bureaucracy. The tone darkened over the years as Stalin became confident of his absolute power. As Robert C. Tucker, the great Stalin scholar, points out in a forward: "Indeed, this man's anger became genocidal in scope and sweep."■

Murray Seeger, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, is Special Advisor to the Curator of the Nieman Foundation.

Nieman Notes

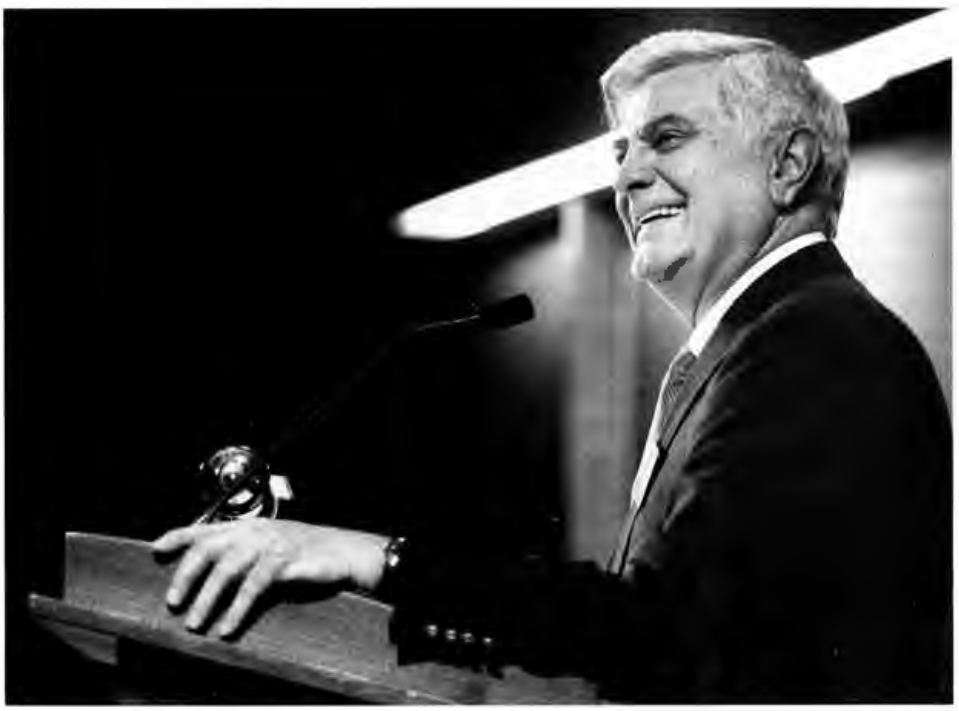
Compiled by Lois Fiore

Curator's Report to the 1995 Reunion

William Worthy of the Class of '57 wrote recalling an incident that happened during his Nieman year. He was working for The Baltimore Afro-American and had applied for a visa to visit Beijing. While he was here the Chinese government approved his visit. Bill said that out of courtesy, he decided to notify Louis Lyons because the Nieman Foundation was a tax-exempt institution and U.S. policy makers at the time were violently opposed to any travel to China. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was going around the country widely proclaiming that the First Amendment protected only the right to publish the news, not the right to gather the news, that journalists should not travel to China, and that their presence in the People's Republic would lend credibility to an outlaw regime.

Bill said that without hesitation Louis bestowed his blessing on the trip and that during his six weeks in China, when Harvard began to feel the heat from the administration in Washington, Louis never wavered in his defense of the right to travel and the public's right to know.

"Washington was especially disconcerted," Bill said, "because some reports I was doing for CBS contradicted the official nonsense about the imminent collapse of Mao's government. Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy personally called CBS President William Paley and Assistant Secretary Walter Robertson tried to pressure



Bill Kovach speaking to reunion fellows.

The Baltimore Afro-American into summoning me home.

"On my arrival back in the U.S. early on a wintry Sunday morning, Louis Lyons and two of my Nieman classmates, Anthony Lewis and Hale Champion, met my plane in a much-appreciated, in fact, indispensable gesture of solidarity. Officials in the State and Justice Departments, who had begun threatening prosecution under the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act, got the message of our solidarity.

"Several weeks later, at a private luncheon at the Nieman Foundation, Louis Lyons assembled Tony Lewis and Harvard law professors Paul Freund and Roger Fisher to coach me for testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, where I was able to disclose all the improper government arm-twisting and effort at interference behind the scene."

This brief remembrance from Bill Worthy I think captures the essence of the Nieman experience. The unwavering commitment to bedrock values of a journalism in the public interest which Louis Lyons, by his example, etched into the job description for Nieman

curators, the powerful bond that is forged between fellows during the year of fellowship, and the generous personal commitment made by the Harvard faculty and administration to the goals of the Nieman program. I am happy to report to you that these qualities have only grown stronger with the passage of time.

Because this is my first report since that extraordinary reunion six years ago that turned into a celebration of Howie Simons's life and his stewardship of the program, I'd like to report to you a little bit on the state of the foundation and some of the things that we've been doing.

The first thing I have to report is that the Nieman experience continues to be a rare gift for talented journalists from around the world, a chance to, as Jim Thomson and Howie Simons said, scratch where they don't itch.

Next, I can report that the core program is economically sound. There is a need to strengthen the endowment to assure its future in a time of change, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later, but Howie's 50th anniversary fund-raising drive has the fellowship program, the basic program, in a sound condition.

There are a few other things about recent trends in the program that I think you'd like to know. The diversity of Nieman Fellows continues to reflect changes in society and in the industry. The current class is almost equally divided between men and women, and next year's U.S. fellows are almost equally divided between male and female. We're attracting strong candidates representing major racial and ethnic minorities, but never enough, and we continue to promote our program at the various journalism conferences.

To meet the increasing need from abroad as newly emerging democracies have joined the developing countries in the creation of free and independent journalism, we've expanded the international component of the program. Today there are equal numbers of U.S. and international fellows, greatly enriching one of the most important parts of the Nieman experience, learning from one another.

This year's class included the first environmental fellow as part of a grant to Harvard by the Rasmussen Foundation in Denmark to encourage a university-wide interdisciplinary study of the environment. We have an environmental fellow, one each from the U.S. and abroad for the next three years, under that grant.

We continue to sponsor journalism conferences when otherwise unmet needs come to our attention. Among these since you last met in reunion were: the first meeting of journalists from East and West after the Soviet empire collapsed—the meeting was in Prague in 1990; the first conference of journalists from throughout sub-Sahara Africa, in Zimbabwe in 1993; the first conference of drama and arts critics of American newspapers that we put on in conjunction with the American Repertory Theater at Harvard; and, as you all know, we just concluded our second conference on the new technology, the only conference of its kind intended to help reporters and editors and publishers find ways to use the new technology to further the development of journalism in the public interest.

Each of these events, and many others, you've been kept abreast of in what I know you recognize as the steady improvement of the Nieman Reports. I'm sure you agree with me that Bob Phelps has done an extraordinary job making it the foremost serious, critical review of journalism that Louis Lyons dreamed it would be when it began.

The publication has been recognized every year since Bob has been here by one or more awards, and last year, as I think most of you know, it was awarded the Mellett Award for Media Criticism by Penn State University, which I think is probably the most carefully determined award on journalism criticism in the country. Because I was publisher, they invited me to Washington to deliver the annual lecture, and I think it's only going to get to be a better magazine.

With the encouragement and support of the Harvard administration and faculty, we were able to give editors and publishers around the country a sample of what a Nieman experience is all about. In conjunction with the American Society of Newspaper Editors convention, held in Boston in 1991, we invited all the editors here for a day-long series of seminars by the Harvard faculty, and two years later, when the publishers met in Boston, we repeated the performance. Attendees at both conferences pronounced the day the best convention day they had ever experienced.

We've experimented with ways to magnify the impact of the Louis Lyons Award. For the past two years, we have conducted seminar discussions on a contemporary issue in journalism built around the award recipient's background and career. Twn years ago, it was the plight of Haiti's struggling radio journalists, and last year it was the recognition of the deadly conditions faced by Algerian journalists.

This next year we're going to alter the process a little bit if we can to try to choose the award recipient earlier in the year so that the class that gives the award can be here when it's received. Unfortunately, what we've been doing over the years has broken that chain. We make the awards, as we did last night, in the spring, and then present it the next fall, and the class that gave it is separated from the event. So, next year I hope to have the class moving quickly enough so they can make their decision by January. Then the concluding event of the Nieman year will be a seminar built around the Louis Lyons Award presentation, which I think will be an ideal close for a Nieman year.

I'll conclude this part of my report by telling all of you how lucky I feel that this job has given me personally the opportunity to invest time and energy in the number of programs in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and Latin America and Southern Africa in the summer months, doing what the Nieman curator has been charged with doing, trying to elevate the standards and practices of journalism.

Now, let me close by offering a few observations about the challenges of the future. As you know, most of the Nieman Fellows have about 25 or more years of creative work ahead of them when they leave this program, and that means that it's crucial to my job to look

forward to the demands of an ever-changing journalism, and just in the short time I've been here, these demands have meant an internationalization of the outlook of the program and a greater emphasis on international fellows where the need is great; a greater emphasis on journalists involved in visual communication, incorporating computer literacy into the basic Nieman program, and a greater receptivity to freelance journalists as the marketplace puts more reliance on their work by even the most powerful news institutions.

All of these, and many other changes, will require the best thinking and efforts that we can bring for meeting the needs. We always can use and count on your counsel and advice on this and many other challenges that you see that the program needs to face up to.

Our dreams are to take a program that is basically sound and make sure that it remains that way in the very hazy 21st Century. Murray Seeger, who did most of the work of organizing the reunion, is also doing most of the work trying to get us organized to begin our part of the Harvard University's university-wide fund-raising drive, which concludes at the end of the century. For our part of that drive, we set a goal of $4 million to do several things. I'll list them in what I think are the order of priority.

The first is to endow the editor's position for Nieman Reports so that the publication will have a guaranteed future. If we can endow that position so that there will always be a first-class editor who's thinking creatively about it 365 days a year, then I can raise the incremental money from publishers and other organizations around the country to distribute the publication to the people that need to get it, whether they can afford it or not, and I think that's crucial. The other goal is to try to endow at least three international fellowships. As you know, the original bequest to Harvard is restricted to use for U.S. fellows. Our international fellows required a considerable amount of effort on our part with some great help from some special people, and one of them I want to recognize today.

Janis Goodman, as most of you know, created the Martin Wise Goodman Fund in Canada, and has funded and sent to the Nieman program an extraordinary series of Canadian journalists. It's a guaranteed fellowship for us. We have a relationship with a South African program where the South African Society of Nieman Fellows is taking over providing the funds for a South African Fellow. I think we're secure for the future for South and Southern Africa.

The family of Atsuko Chiba created a fund in her name in Japan to fund a Nieman Fellow from any Asian country outside of Japan. Their feeling was the Japanese press was sufficiently profitable that they could fund a fellowship themselves, and they wanted the money used in her name to help journalists from less wealthy countries.

So we're beginning to build a nest. This past year a group of journalists and business organizations in Argentina agreed to fund a Nieman fellowship for a few years to see how the program works, how it works for them, and I went down and conducted the interviews, met some impressive journalists, and it looks like we're beginning to have some impact in Latin America.

Roberto Eisenmann ('86), whom you all know, is actively engaged in creating a center for journalism in Panama. One of our Nieman Fellows from the Class of '90, Maria Jimena Duzan, has started a center for journalism ethics at the University of Bogota in Colombia. All of these seeds planted by the international Nieman Fellows comprise an area where we need to invest some interest.

The final money that we raise we hope to use for strengthening the Nieman network. You all have copies of the directory that we put together so that you'll know where your Nieman friends are anywhere in the world. This year's class of Nieman Fellows, with direction and help by Lew Clapp, put us on the Internet. There is a Nieman Foundation home page, and those of you who don't know what that is, you'd better learn because that's the way you're going to communicate in the future.

We've already begun to receive subscriptions to Nieman Reports through the system. Mike Riley, Paul Stoop and Brad Goldstein, the three fellows who this year have done most of the work on that project, are now developing a world map with locators where Nieman Fellows are. If you're getting ready to go to Thailand, you hit the button on Thailand and Songpol's [Kaopatumtip] name will pop up and all the Nieman Fellows in Thailand, with their addresses and phone numbers so you can look them up or call and see if they've got a place for you to stay.

So, I'm really excited about the possibilities of the Internet. I'll just quickly say one of the things I want to do beginning next year. What we're building into the program now is a Friday afternoon shop talk, where we talk about a journalism issue or problem confronting journalists right now. I want to use the Internet to send out to the Nieman Fellows around the world who have E-mail addresses the subject that we're going to be discussing in the following week's shop talk, and hope that I can get back from you some of your experiences, what you're confronting, what you're seeing where you are, so I can take that information into the conversation. I'll designate one of the fellows in the seminar to report back to you the results of our conversation so that you can be involved and help us and we can help you through this new system. I think that's what this technology is for, if we're smart enough to use it that way.

We're counting on your help, we're counting on your energy, we're counting on your advice, we're counting on your suggestions, both for ways to make this program better, and ways to help us make this a successful fund-raising drive. We've got five years to go. I think we can do it. I'm sure we can do it. But we need your help. Thanks for being here. ■

Reunion

A full report of the May reunion of Nieman Fellows will appear in the fall edition of Nieman Reports.

1939

Irving Dilliard of the first Nieman Class has donated a copy of a French-language newspaper, La Tribune de Geneve, to Harvard. He brought it home from World War II because of its salute to Harvard's President, James Conant. The newspaper, dated Mardi 26 Juin 1945, was placed in Harvard's archival collection.

1950

Max Hall, a writer and editor in Cambridge, was in Atlanta on May 8 to receive an honorary degree from his alma mater, Emory University.

Here is an excerpt from the citation:

"A meticulous wordsmith, you improved the language of Harvard University Press before writing the press's definitive history. Your books include a masterpiece of literary sleuthing that would distinguish the vita of any scholar....In scores of chapters and articles, you draw readers along with wide-ranging curiosity and unadorned, fluent style. In recognition of your excellent service to the written word, we proudly bestow on you the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa."

Before the ceremony, Hall wrote about another Emory honoree who was of special interest to him:

"...Henry Aaron, the home-run champion. I don't think I've ever in my long life asked anybody for an autograph, not even the foul ball I grabbed in the grandstand during Dave Morehead's no-hit game on September 16, 1965 (the Red Sox haven't had a no-hitter since). But...when we are up there on that platform in our caps and gowns (me and Hank) and the crowd is roaring, I may just ask for his signature to furnish evidence that I was really there."

When the time came, however, Hall decided against asking for Aaron's autograph.

Hall has a new book coming out in Oct. by Fulcrum Publishing called "An Embarassment of Misprints: Comical and Disastrous Typos of the Centuries."

1954

Bob Bergenheim is out of retirement—again.

From his beginning at The Christian Science Monitor, to the McClatchy papers in California, to the Hearst daily in Boston, to his own Boston Business Journal and Boston Business magazine, to his own Providence Business News, and now to another start-up, the weekly Newport (RI) Observer.

"It's a living," says Bergenheim, "and the only one I know that is worth it."

1962

K.R. Malkani writes to say that he is now a Member of the Indian Parliament, Vice-President of B.J.P., the main Opposition Party in India, and the author of a new book, "The Politics of Ayodhya and Hindu Muslim Relations."

1964

Robert Steyn writes:

"Since my Nieman experience in 1963 my life has taken many turns. I formed and headed up the University of Cape Town's News and Information Bureau, became Conciliator and Registrar to the South African Media Council and then spent two years with the Independent Development Trust which spear-headed many of the developments leading up to the transition to the 'New South Africa.' At the time of the Nieman experience I was already combining my journalistic activities with lay ministry.... Subsequently I went to Oxford for further training resulting in a professional qualification for the ministry. At the beginning of 1992 I quit the Independent Development Trust to devote myself full-time to my ministry....Ours is a small community but we serve people of all religious persuasions and of none....

1966

Hodding Carter III, will fill the new Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of Maryland. He will teach, write and oversee periodic reports on the coverage of government, politics and community affairs. He also will be a contributing editor to American Journalism Review.

Among other things, Carter will continue to write a weekly public affairs newspaper column syndicated by Newspaper Enterprise Association and will continue as chairman of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism in Washington. He is president and partner of MainStreet, a television production company he formed in 1985.

He lives in Virginia with his wife, Patricia Derian.

1970

Bill Montalbano is moving to London as Los Angeles Times bureau chief after eight years in Rome for The Times covering Italy, the Vatican and the Mediterranean.

1971

Richard Pothier died on April 10 in a retirement home in Vermont. He was 55.

For 18 years, Pothier was a reporter and columnist for The Philadelphia Inquirer. In 1990, Pothier had a heart transplant, which he wrote about for The Inquirer. The heart he received was from a 27-year-old murder victim. Pothier retired shortly after the operation. Before The Inquirer, Pothier worked at The Miami Herald covering American's space program. For a few years after his 1971 Nieman year, he was a journalism professor at Northeastern University. Pothier leaves a daughter, a son, a sister, and two brothers.

1979

Michael McDowell and his wife, Susan Flanigan, announce the March 11, 1995 birth of Hugh Conor McDowell. Hugh Conor carries Michael's journalist-father's bylined initials "H.C." and is named Conor after Conor Cruise O'Brien, friend and mentor of Michael.

1982

Anita Harris writes to say that her new book, "Broken Patterns: Profes-

sional Women and the Quest for a New Feminine Identity" should be in bookstores now.

"Amazingly, even though I've been working on 'Broken Patterns' on and off since my Nieman year, the book is hitting at just the right time, given the current concerns about diversity and affirmative action.

"'Broken Patterns' reveals how a powerful mother-daughter dynamic has shaped the experience of professional women in America. The women I interviewed, who entered male-dominated professions in the 1970's, did so primarily because they did not want lives like their mothers'—the homemakers of the 1950's. However, many of my interviewees had grandmothers who had been working women early in the 20th Century. 'Broken Patterns' places all three generations in historical context and suggests that in every generation American women have asked how they could retain the special qualities of their mothers and grandmothers and also be equal with men."

Review copies are available from Wayne State University Press in Detroit.

1984

M.R. Montgomery's new book, "Many Rivers to Cross: On Good Running Water, Native Trout, and the Remains of Wilderness," published by Simon & Schuster, "really isn't a fishing book," he says, "but a book about the West, about the ecological systems in the Western mountains." Trout just happens to be the way he approaches the subject, but "I could have used wildflowers or birds; I just happen to like fish." Montgomery said he looked for systems that still held remnant populations of aboriginal fish. By doing that, "you get to places not only biologically unspoiled, but also naturally beautiful as well. Gets you into nice country." Montgomery, a reporter for The Boston Globe, and his wife, Florence Yoshiko Montgomery, an artist, live in Lincoln, Mass.

1986

Madeleine Blais's new book, "In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle," is a look at a high school girl's championship basketball team. The book was widely reviewed, Reader's Digest published a condensed version in its most recent "Today's Best Nonfiction" volume and Warner's is planning a paperback edition for January of 1996. Blais reports that she's not sure what she's planning for her next book because she's so busy working on her three point shot.

1988

Dale Maharidge brings us up-to-date on his activities:

"I'm spinning like a top finishing a book and I'm teaching—it was supposed to be easier teaching and writing books. It's just a different kind of hard.

"Anyway, I'm teaching at Stanford and the project I am finishing is for Times Books, part of Random House. The working title is "The Fourth World," and it's about the changing demographics of California, which will become the first mainland state that falls below half white, sometime in the next few years.

"In other news, I just bought 34 acres on California's Lost Coast. The land is literally at the end of the road in Humboldt County, and 25 miles south is roadless protected wilderness beach. The property looks down on the crashing surf and it has ten acres of old growth Douglas fir. There's nothing there, but I am having a barn/studio built this summer and will be moving there permanently asap.

"Future plans? I dunno. I'll be at Stanford part of next year, and after that, I have the next two books planned, but things are open. For anyone who wants to contact me, I can be reached at 415-725-3032 through March 1996."

1989

Irene Virag's book, "We're All In This Together—Families Facing Breast Cancer," was published in May by Andrews and McMeal. The book, with black-and-white photographs by Erica Berger, is based on a series of articles that appeared in Newsday over the last two years. In 1994, Newsday's coverage of breast cancer on Long Island, including the stories by Virag and Berger, was a Pulitzer finalist for explanatory journalism.

"We're All In This Together" offers 16 intimate portraits of women with breast cancer, women who openly discuss their fear and pain and anger and who, in the process, reveal their courage and hope and humor.

"We're all in it for good and for bad and for always," Virag writes in the book. "That's one of the basic precepts Erica Berger and I learned from an assignment that bordered on a lifestyle. From the beginning, we knew that some of the women whose lives we were about to enter might die. That made the assignment even more difficult. These were the lives of real women who were not just breast cancer patients but who also were mothers and daughters and wives and sisters."

Irene Virag is a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for Newsday, where she has worked for the past 13 years. She was recently named garden columnist. She studied at the University of London and holds a bachelor's degree from Boston University and a master's from the Medill School of Journalism. She lives on Long Island with her husband, Harvey Aronson, a novelist and Newsday editor.

1990

Mary Jordan, her husband Kevin Sullivan and her new daughter Kate Sullivan moved to Tokyo in August. Kate was born in March. Mary and Kevin are the co-bureau chiefs for The Washington Post Far East Asian Bureau, and will primarily cover Korea and Japan. They plan to be there for three or four years.

1991

Katherine M. Skiba has been named national correspondent for The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the new morning paper that debuted April 2. Skiba will be traveling around the United States for news, feature and enterprise

stories and projects in her new role.

The Journal Sentinel resulted from the merger of the afternoon Milwaukee Journal and its corporate sister, the morning Milwaukee Sentinel.

Lucius W. Nieman, for whom the Nieman Foundation is named, became editor, co-owner, reporter and occasional typesetter of The Milwaukee Journal in 1882 when it was 22 days old.

Nieman Montanans Cited

Dale Burk, Nieman Fellow 1976, and **A.B. Guthrie Jr.**, 1945 Nieman, were among 25 Montanans cited by Montana Magazine in its 25th Anniversary issue for that period.

Guthrie was described as a writer who's books "gave Montanans a voice—he made the descendants of these mountain men and the later settlers aware that they had a story to tell, that their story was important, that they were just as much a part of America as those other white Americans who chose to remain in the seats of power and commerce in the East."

Guthrie, who died in 1991, wrote "The Big Sky," "The Way West," "These Thousand Hills" and other books.

In writing to us about the award, Burk said that "as a journalist/book author who keeps his hand in the issues both locally and nationally I was pleased that they centered, in regard to my selection, on what I was most proud of as a journalist [for The Missoulian]—'He got his facts straight. He dug deep, he built his case and was sure of his facts. That was in-depth reporting....'"

Burk, now running Stoneydale Press, a book publishing business, has expanded Stoneydale to include outdoor recreation books and outdoor and hunting gear under the subsidiary name of Snowcrest Outdoor Products. He and his wife, Patricia, have moved to Stevensville, the Northwest's oldest community, and are relocating the business to a new building there.

Burk also lectures regularly on the press/media and natural resource issues at the college level, is a featured seminar speaker at sportsman shows, and was recently named chairman of the seminar program for the International Bow Expo to be held in St. Louis next March..■

1992

Stan Grossfeld, Associate Editor and photographer for The Boston Globe, was cited by the Overseas Press Club in April for his 16-page section "Lost Futures," about children in crisis around the world.

1993

Dori J. Maynard has edited "Letters to My Children," a book compiling columns written by her father, **Robert C. Maynard**, a 1966 Nieman Fellow. Shortly before his death in 1993 of prostate cancer, he asked Dori to complete some of his unfinished projects, including his idea for "Letters to My Children." Column topics range from famly values to journalism, from racism to baseball. The book includes an introduction and essays by Dori and photos of the Maynard family throughout the years. The book should be in bookstores in July, 1995.

1995

Kemal Kurspahic, former editor in chief of the Bosnian daily Oslobodjenje in Sarajevo, is moving to Washington, D.C. to continue to work as his paper's editor/correspondent in the U.S.

Oslobodjenje, which received the 1993 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism, still appears in Sarajevo every day in the fourth year of the siege.

"There is lack of everything except enthusiasm to continue our mission," Kurspahic says. "The worsening of the siege of Sarajevo has reduced our reserve of the newsprint to the lowest point, and we had to reduce the circulation to the lowest ever, just 2,700 copies a day, but since there is no electricity to watch the television or to listen to the radio, each copy is shared by ten or more families. The lack of electricity also means that the paper has to struggle on a daily basis to find some precious diesel fuel to run the presses but editorial staff of Oslobodjenje—which still reflects the ethnic picture of prewar Bosnia with journalists Muslims, Serbs, Croats and others working together—is determined to keep going."

As editor/correspondent in the U.S. Kurspahic is not only reporting on American reactions to the war but also trying to raise some funds and technical support for the survival of his paper. The Nieman class of '94 has raised more than $12,000 to help Oslobodjenje.■

Nieman Replaces Nieman

Gerald B. Jordan, Nieman Fellow 1992, has been named an Associate Professor in the Walter J. Lemke Department of Journalism at the University of Arkansas, replacing **Roy Reed,** Nieman Fellow 1964, who is retiring. Jordan will teach two reporting sections, one copy editing section and oversee production of the department newspaper.

Jordan formerly was Editor of the Suburban North edition of The Philadelphia Inquirer. He joined the Inquirer staff in 1983 and worked on the features staff and National Desk before becoming an assignment editor in 1989. Prior to his working for The Inquirer, Jordan worked for The Kansas City Star and briefly at The Boston Globe.

A 1970 graduate of Arkansas, Jordan will return to the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, where he earned a B.A. degree in Journalism. He completed an MSJ at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, in 1971.

Roy Reed taught at the University for 16 years and was a reporter for 25 years, mostly at The Arkansas Gazette and The New York Times. Most of his New York Times years were spent covering the South.

Reed is working on a biography of former Governor Orval Faubus.■

End Note

By Lorie Hearn

I was fascinated by the O.J. Simpson case a year ago. As the legal affairs reporter for a Southern California newspaper, I saw a remarkable opportunity for front-page bylines over hundreds of column inches of educational material about the judicial system.

America's attention was riveted to this story of violence, sex, wealth, race and suspense. I hoped that we journalists could use this latest trial of the century to illuminate a legal maze known to the public largely in sweeping terms or through political slogans like "Three Strikes and You're Out."

We've made some headway in stirring discussion of domestic violence. But the courtroom shenanigans involving everyone from the judge to the jurors, and the shameless exploitation of every factoid by a media in perpetual motion, causes me now to hang my head. In too many ways, I dread the end of my Nieman fellowship, the return to a virtual world of analyzing the action in a murder trial that is played and pegged like a soap opera.

The O.J. Simpson saga ultimately may be valuable because we have hit bottom. Like an alcoholic who examines a wretched life through a last fifth of vodka, journalists and criminal justice participants may have stumbled as low as they can go. It's all so black and white, this O.J. case. It doesn't take a veteran reporter to see we've lost the grays of respectability when even Judge Lance Ito can't resist the siren's call of celebrity and we can't resist capitalizing on it.

We say we're giving the public what it wants, what it has a right to know. But is that really what we're doing? Are we giving people what they want or are we training them to want what we're giving them?

From the day O.J. Simpson failed to surrender, left what appeared to be a suicide note and led the police in a slow-speed chase down Los Angeles freeways, this has been a big story. No doubt. We have responded, filling newspaper pages and television hours with facts often drowned in commentary and decoration. The sideshows, like paid interviews with witnesses on tabloid TV shows, are inevitable in this era, but they are legitimized at times by the way we in the "mainstream" media repeat and dissect them. No wonder the public is confused about news and entertainment. Finding the news in this case is sometimes as difficult as finding the elusive chocolate egg in the Easter basket full of green plastic grass.

To be sure, there has been good journalism in the O.J. Simpson coverage, the kind of work that does more than titillate people who have become so benumbed to sensationalism that they demand something ever more sexy and bizarre. But it's easy to get tired covering daily events in even the most high-profile cases and succumb to the ready-made lead. It takes persistence to put things constantly in context lest we forget that the O.J. Simpson case is a distortion of the work-a-day criminal justice system. Most defendants don't have teams of big name lawyers and seemingly unlimited funds to challenge scientific evidence. Most trial jurors don't quit mid-stream to write books. Most prosecutors don't have their custody battles featured in living color. Most judges don't give interviews before a verdict is reached.

Sometimes we compound the distortion by more than omission. I remember cringing as I listened to a television anchor describe a day of preliminary legal proceedings as boring. This isn't a movie. The fact of the matter is the great share of courtroom action is laborious.

It's been a luxury this year to follow the O.J. Simpson case from the Ivory Tower of academia, that place so many of us in the trenches rush to for expert sound bites even as we are contemptuous of it for being out of touch with the "real world." There is something to be said for standing back, taking stock and looking inward.

After spending 20 years in newspapering, more than half of it in and out of courtrooms, I've had a chance to reflect on these issues over the last nine months of studying and debating youth violence, crime control policy and drug abuse here at Harvard. I've filled scores of hours talking about new technology, "real time" information delivery and competition with programming masquerading as news.

Perhaps it's too late to resurrect good journalism in the O.J. case. Maybe we've gone too far and are in too deep. It's taken on a life of its own. It has to be in the headlines every day even if the only news is that the prosecutor has a new hairdo. It has to be in the daily headlines because, well, because we've put it there.

But after burning up lots of words this year talking about how we might win the industry's struggle to be relevant, ethical and feisty, the strongest sense I have is that it is never too late to practice aggressive journalism and to have fun doing it. But neither is there anything wrong with old-fashioned notions like restraint, news judgment and dignity. More than ever it's a balance worth reconsidering now that we've scraped bottom. We know we can do better.■

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