
A WAKE-UP CALL: Can Trust and Quality Save Journalism?

The Wake-Up Call Conference • August 9, 2005 • San Antonio

This conference is the centerpiece of a one-year Restoring the Trust project developed in partnership with the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication at Kennesaw State University and the Reynolds School of Journalism at the University of Nevada-Reno in consultation with the PJNet and the AEJMC's Civic Journalism and Community Journalism interest groups. The Journalism and the Public: Restoring the Trust project is underwritten in part by the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation.



Final report

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An Introduction: Do We Trust Our Audiences?

Cole Campbell • Dean, Reynolds School of Journalism • University of Nevada, Reno

I don't know how many of you saw the piece by Jack Shafer on Slate that he posted at the end of the week on Friday. He basically said: "I'm beginning to doubt the trust and credibility of the mainstream reader." It's a fun piece to read, and I think he puts a finger on something, perhaps inadvertently, we ought to be thinking about today, and that is our ambiguous relationship to the people we serve. We don't know whether to blame them, serve them, ignore them, or how we ought to be treating the people who populate the communities we serve. We don't know whether to think of them as clients, as customers, or as citizens in the narrowly defined Black's Law /AP stylebook version or in the more expansive version. . . I think that's the probably the central question that underlies what we'll be talking about: who these people are, what do we think about them, what room are we going to make for them in our work lives, are we going to treat them as our peers, as our superiors, or as our inferiors. I think, thematically, we'll be exploring many dimensions of that.



Cole Campbell.
Photo by Wendi Poole

The Audience Can Save Quality Journalism, If Asked to Help

Leonard Witt • Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communications • Kennesaw State University

As I said earlier, we all know that trust in journalism is at an all-time low, although this year the State of the News Media 2005 said that the expectations from the media have stabilized. But then they add that it may be that expectations from the press have sunk enough that they will not sink any further. People are not dismayed by disappointments in the press; they expect them.

A few years ago when the Freedom Forum put out its Best Practices book for newspaper journalists, it addressed trust issues by posing a series of statements it had learned from talking to the public. The public said newspapers were unfair when they get the facts wrong and they refuse to admit errors. When they don't name names in anonymous

sources. When they have ignorant or incompetent reporters. When they prey on the weak and they concentrate on bad news. When they lack diversity. When they allow editorial bias in news stories and they can't admit that sometimes there's just no story.

Of course all these issues are important and they actually are fundamental to trust and quality, but for newsrooms, or for us to deal just solely with this (and that was my original intent when I was thinking of this conference) would be like trying to fine-tune the fiddle while Rome was burning. Newsrooms are besieged by corporate ownership woes, there's rampant criticism from the left and the right, and when it comes to coverage of the minority communities, Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte said, "The mass news media practice censorship by omission."

'The public said newspapers were unfair and they get facts wrong and they refuse to admit errors.'

Today ethnic communities, though, are getting their own place in the media world. They are now part of the competition for the mass media. On almost all fronts, news circulation and viewership are declining; few youth get their news from traditional news sources; entrepreneurs are giving away free newspapers; new cable channels spread audiences thin-

ner and thinner; and classified ads are being eroded by the likes of Craigslist, whose founder, Craig Newmark, is with us. . .

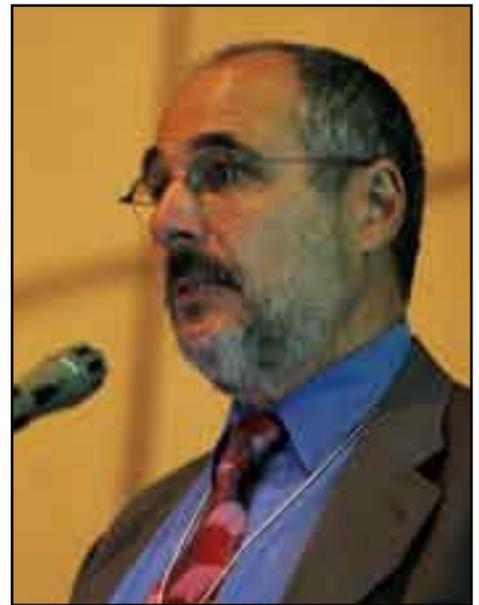
Phil Meyer, author of “The Vanishing Newspaper” and who gave me the idea for the Wake-Up Call, even talks of a death spiral. And more than a year ago, Jay Rosen, another of our speakers, told an audience at the World Economic Conference in Davos, Switzerland, that the age of the mass media is just that, an age, and that it doesn’t have to last forever. This year, in preparing notes for another speech, Rosen wrote, “Each nation will shortly have a chance to re-establish, or overhaul, its own press or to create a new one. And that’s a moment for careful thought.” And in the same vein, the State of the Media report for 2005, after listing its litany of news media woes, writes, “Somehow journalism needs to prove that it’s acting on behalf of the public, if it is to save itself.”

I would argue, though, that there really is help. And it’s everywhere, if journalists are willing to accept it. It’s in the form of audiences themselves. It’s presenting itself in the form of weblogs, videologs, podcasts, none of which are going away. In his excellent article in this month’s (August, 2005) *Wired*, Kevin Kelly, in a retrospective of the last ten years, writes, “In fewer than four thousand days, we have encoded a trillion versions of our collective story and put them in

‘Why don’t
journalists accept
what’s happening? I’d
say part of the reason
is attitude.’

front of one billion people, or one-sixth of the world’s population. That remarkable achievement wasn’t in anyone’s ten-year plan. Today, at any Net terminal, you can get an amazing variety of music and video, an evolving encyclopedia, weather forecasts, help-wanted ads, satellite images of anyplace on earth, up-to-the-minute news from around the globe, tax forms, tax guides, road maps, stock quotes, telephone numbers, etc, etc.”

And what about the trust in all of these things? About eBay, he writes, “We have an open global flea market that handles 1.4 billion auctions each year and operates from your bedroom. Users do most of the work; they photograph, catalog, post and manage their own auctions. And they police themselves. While eBay and other auction sites do call in the authorities to arrest serial abusers, the chief method of insuring fairness is a system of user-generated ratings. Three billion feedback comments can work wonders.”



Leonard Witt.
Photo by Wendi Poole

Then he adds, “What we failed to see was how much of this new world would be manufactured by users, not corporate interests. This bottom-up takeover was not in anyone’s ten-year plan.”

And of course he mentions weblogs. “No web phenomena,” he says, “is more confounding than blogging. Everything media experts knew about audiences—and they knew a lot—confirmed the focus group belief that audiences would never get off their butts and start making their own entertainment. Everyone knew writing and reading were dead. Music was too much trouble to make when you could sit back and listen. Video production was simply out of the reach of amateurs. Blogs and other participant media would never happen, or, if they would happen, it would not draw an audience.



Leonard Witt speaks Tuesday, Aug. 9 at A Wake-Up Call Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Photo by Wendi Poole

Or if they drew an audience, that audience would not matter. What a shock, then, to witness the instantaneous rise of 50 million blogs, with a new one appearing every two seconds.”

Why, I ask, would we as journalists, as journalism professors and members of the news media in general, turn our back on this public power? This bigger brain that Kelly persuasively argues will, by the year 2015—ten years from now—help us do so much of our thinking that, if we are cut off from it, will be almost like having a

lobotomy.

Why don't journalists accept what's happening? I'd say part of the reason is attitude. Newsrooms, a Readership Institute study tells us, operate largely in an aggressive, defensive mode. Not a great formula for welcoming change. They are grounded in tradition, and big institutions simply don't change easily. Years of public journalism, which many of the people in this room have been thinking about and talking about, have told us that most journalists don't relate very well to the public.

Fortunately some journalists and some citizens do get it. Some of them are in the room here today. You'll hear from them. What better way to establish trust and quality than to make the public a part of what we do? Or better yet, make ourselves, as part of the media, be part of what the public is doing and be part of that bigger brain. Why not become an indispensable link built on trust and quality? And then perhaps, by heeding the State of the News Media 2005's advice, journalism will, by acting on behalf of the public, save itself.

The Wake-Up Call: Are the Mass News Media in a Death Spiral?

Phil Meyer • Knight Chair in Journalism • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Author of “The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age”

Are Newspapers in a Death Spiral?

The answer is yes, and there’s probably nothing we can do about it. This is a picture of the death spiral—it’s not a spiral, it’s more of a straight line. I showed an earlier version of this chart in this same hotel about ten years ago, to a meeting of newspaper feature writers, and one of them looked at that and pointed to the chart and said, “No, that is not happening.” Denial is a pretty good way to deal with something like this. As Garrison Keillor once said, “Some problems are so bad, the only thing to do is to look at them and deny them.”

Well, the main argument of my

book is that credibility does make a difference, and this is about as close a relationship as I can get. In these 21 [newspaper] markets you can see that credibility increases the ability to hang on to their circulation in their home counties over a five-year period... That’s the good news.

The bad news is that not even the best newspapers in terms of credibility were able to hang on to all of their home county circulation and penetration in that time. So, credibility makes a difference but it’s not going to turn things around unless we somehow get beyond the quality ranges that are historic for the newspaper business. We’ve got to break out of the established ranges and do some-

thing even better. And since that costs money and since the industry is still in cost-cutting mode to maintain its historic profitability, that’s not likely to happen.

The End of Newspaper Monopolies

There has also begun a revisionist school of thought. A reporter for the Washington Post wrote a piece for American Journalism Review attacking my thesis. And when I read his article, I got that same sinking feeling I get when I read a book report by a student and realize that he or she hasn’t read the book. His main arguments were (1) newspapers were okay because they still make lots of money. Yes, that’s the problem—they make too much money.



Phil Meyer.
Photo by Wendi Poole

They're so busy making money that they're destroying their products.

And his other argument was that newspapers still have a monopoly. No, they don't have a monopoly. As sure as Craig Newmark is sitting in this room, they don't have a monopoly on classified advertising, and there's lots of other stuff they no longer have a monopoly on. They have a monopoly on being newspapers. But that's not the point. The point is that the services they provide are being provided cheaper and more efficiently...by somebody else. I first met Craig at this meeting and I shook his hand and I said, "Craig, you are what the Harvard Business School calls a bad competitor." A bad competitor is somebody who will

'I spent three years in a windowless room in Miami trying to do readership surveys for Knight Ridder that would lure readers back, until I realized that readership habits are set by the time a person is old enough to be interviewed in a readership survey.'

provide a better service at a lower profit margin. Since Craig isn't interested in any profit margin at all, he's about as bad a competitor as you can get. And this is going to continue.

Youth Audience Is Lost

A lot of people still have a picture in the book of people drifting away from newspapers. That's not it at all. It's just that newspaper readers are dying off, and each new generation that comes along has a lower reading habit than the one before. I spent three years in a windowless room in Miami trying to do readership surveys for Knight Ridder that would lure readers back, until I realized that readership habits are set by the time a person is old enough to be interviewed in a readership survey. And so the problem of luring people back is not the problem at all. ... We're going to need some

new institutions if we're going to save journalism. Forget about saving newspapers. They will survive in some truncated, less-frequent form. But we're going to need some new institutions to cope with the things that are replacing newspapers.

The Decline of the Mass Media

If I can just give you a bit of historical perspective on this: The demassification of the media did not start with the Internet. It didn't start with blogging. It started pretty much after World War II, and John Merrill and Ralph Lowenstein noticed this in a book they published in 1970. Everywhere you looked, the more specialized media were doing better than the more generalized media. And sociologist Richard Maisel did a nice piece about five or six years later documenting this in all kinds of media, even theater. The smaller

the audience, the better it was doing.

The Internet is bringing us the ultimate extreme in individual messages. And we're going to need new institutions to cope with that. And democracy can do that because some of our best institutions simply arose out of a need. Political parties, for example. The Founding Fathers did not make any provision for political parties in the Constitution—in fact, they didn't like the idea of political parties. They hoped they would go away. Of

course, they are needed to mediate between all of the different interests in the body politic and the government. The government is so big and complicated, and citizens' needs are so diverse, we can't keep track of them. But political parties bring interests together so that the voter, individually, at least knows whether he's going to support the ins or the outs in any given election.

And that's a very important and absolutely necessary service.

Bloggers, Competence and Values

Now, I love watching the bloggers. I am not a blogger myself, nor do I intend to become one. But I think what they're doing is very important. And that a natural organization is going to arise to harness all of this activity. Two things that need to be harnessed are some controlled management of moral values and subject matter competence. And I'm going to give you a silly little personal example of a moral value of blog-



Participants listen to a speaker at A Wake-Up Call Conference held Aug. 9 in San Antonio.

Photo by Wendi Poole



Phil Meyer at A Wake-Up Call Conference held Aug. 9 in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

ging that's been bugging me for some time. It's this: Every time a blogger makes a mistake, he or she preserves it in the record forever, as though it were something precious. It reminds me of those people who have fender-benders on the highway, and they won't move them from the road . . . why can't we get bloggers to move their mistakes, because they interrupt the flow of information.

I'm going to show you a mistake that drove me nuts. Here's a quote from John Robinson's very good blog at the Greenville Daily News—he's the editor and I greatly approve of what he's doing. But here's what he said about me in his blog: He called me Dr. Meyer twice. This is a terrible thing, because one of the worst things that can happen to an academic

is to be accused of inflating his credentials. I never set foot in a Ph.D. program. I am not any kind of a doctor. And anytime somebody calls me a doctor, I have to stop the conversation and correct them. . . . So I sent him a nice note and asked him to please fix it. This is what he did: I'm still there as Dr. Meyer. Twice. And at the end, he says "Updated correction: Meyer is not a doctor." It sounds like I was inflating my credentials and he caught me at it!

Here's another one. This one is from Tim Porter's blog. I love Tim Porter's blog because he reviewed my book, chapter by chapter, and got a lot of people interested in it. But in the very first review, he calls Hal Jurgensmeier, who's the guy who invented the Influence Model concept, and called

'There needs to be some kind of organizational activity to help identify people who have competence in a subject matter.'

him Hans Jurgensmeier. And so, given what happened with John Robinson's blog, I've thought very carefully how to direct Tim on this. I sent him a note, and I was afraid he was going to put in a correction that would sound like it was my fault that he called Hal Jurgensmeier Hans, so I was kind of direct. I said, "Good introduction to the concept, Tim, but out of respect of its originator, I'd like to correct your fumble on his name—it's Hal, not Hans." He put that at the very end, so you still have to read through his whole review of the first chapter—it's still Hans at the top—and at the very end it says, oh by the way, it wasn't Hans Jurgensmeier, it was Hal.

Why? Why do that? I don't know, but it seems to me that bloggers, if they really want to preserve their

mistakes, if they're that precious to them, they could at least have a footnote at the bottom saying that in an earlier version of this report, I called Phil Meyer a doctor; he's really not, and it was my fault, and I'm sorry. Wouldn't that do the same thing? But I would be just as happy if they would just fix it and then not tell anybody about it.

When I was a newspaper reporter, and I was helping Knight Ridder invent a very early pre-Internet electronic information system, I fantasized about all the times I made a mistake in the newspaper, and I'd think, wouldn't it be great if I had a rubber band attached to all those newspapers in the street and in all the homes in my community, and I could yank them back and fix them one by one, I felt so bad about the error. And the main advantage of electronic information systems, I thought, was that you could do that. But it's not being done.

Need for a competency accreditation society

Well, the other area is subject

matter competence. There needs to be some kind of organizational activity to help identify people who have competence in a subject matter. This is from Nelson Antrim Crawford's book on ethics. He had a cynical but very realistic view of that. He said: "Real knowledge of modern economics is less likely to gain promotion for a reporter on the average paper than the ability to write an interesting but largely untruthful story about a street fight over a custard pie." And I think that, as the old media monopoly disappear—and they have to disappear because the physical basis for their existing no longer exists—it's possible to create another kind of monopoly, which is the position in the user's head of being a trusted source of information. People with things to sell know to go to Craigslist, and it may be that reporters who are good and competent in specific subject matter areas can get reputations that will create, for a website, the kind of monopoly that used to be available only through the physi-

cal ownership of the means of production. I think Russell Neuman's idea is right on, and that might be the wave of the future.

So what would we call whatever organization that would do this? Well, my working title is The League of Extraordinary Journalists. . . and after I'd prepared these remarks, I was following the case of Jim DeFede at the Miami Herald and looking at the list of 500 journalists who said that the Herald ought to change its decision to fire him. Why couldn't there be an organization that would look into cases like that, and if they found that a journalist had been treated unfairly or unwisely, could do what the American Association of University Professors does, which is to censure the institution and say that we don't recommend that young journalists go to work for that body. Why couldn't we do something like that? And the same sort of thing could be done in establishing who has the technical competence to write about economics or other topics.

Expanding The Definition of News Media Trust

A Jay Rosen-Led Conversation with Charles Lewis,
Neil Chase and Dan Gillmore

Jay Rosen • New York University • Author of the blog PressThink

‘I imagine back in the prehistoric ages, a journalist was the only one willing to go into the dark cave and come back out and tell everyone what it looks like back in there.’

—Charles Lewis

‘Nobody trusts anything blindly. Do you trust your doctor anymore? Do you trust anybody anymore? People want more explanation, how it works. Heck, let’s give it to them.’

— Neil Chase

Jay Rosen: Most discussions of trust and the press proceed from the same story, and what I want to do is lay out this story, which is sort of a standard narrative, and then see if we can generate alternatives to it.

In the standard story that we hear, we find trust in the media declining and we look at poll numbers that show that, and we briefly ask, well, why would this be and we go down our list of factors and one of the factors is the recent spate of scandals like Jayson Blair

and Dan Rather and other high-profile screw-ups, which must have done something to trust. And then we cite the fragmenting of the marketplace and the way that that is breaking apart the media empires of old, and that’s fracturing trust. We talk about the loss of energy and initiative to bloggers, who are kind of nipping at the heels of the mass media. And we mention how criticism from the left and the right keeps rising, and that’s doing something to trust. And therefore, people in journalism are worried and they don’t really know what to do about

it, but they’re trying to reconnect with their communities, and that’s the story. I’ve heard it hundreds of times.

That captures a certain portion of the situation, and it’s not wrong, it’s not incorrect. It’s just limited. What I would like to do is put that to one side and open up this question: What do you know about trust in journalism that took you a while to learn and that maybe other people don’t know? What do you know about trust in journalism that took you some time to learn and is maybe a result of the privilege of your experience,



which other people haven't had?
Charles Lewis, Center for Public Integrity, (A nonprofit doing investigative reporting)

Going Around the Mainstream Media Gatekeepers To Get the Untold Story

Charles Lewis: I think that a lot of things that should be covered for ordinary citizens are not being covered, haven't been covered for decades, and the way to either build trust...is to present information about subjects that affect people's daily lives in an unvarnished, no-holds-barred way that names names and lays out information that is relevant to their daily lives to the best you can, and document it to the extent that you can, and that's what we've tried to do in 300 reports and 14 books at the Center.

The Center wasn't started as any kind of highfalutin' alternative. I couldn't get certain things on the air at 60 Minutes, and it was getting on my nerves. And I wanted to work somewhere where I could do it. The old A. J. Leibling comment that the only free press may be the one you own is a great quote, and with a non-profit, you don't own it but it's still fun, and so, Lincoln bedroom scandal with Clinton, posting that Enron was Bush's top contributor, posting the Patriot II Act when the administration said it didn't exist for six months, all the Iraq contracts, first disclosing Halliburton was the top contractor in Iraq for the world—

those were things that the mainstream media did not cover. You could go to the Center site and see the actual contracts.

And that's an important advantage of the web. You can actually link to documents. With computer-assisted reporting you can go through millions of records, you can do searchable databases of who owns the media within ten or twenty miles of your house by entering your zip code—there are just spectacular things you can do that you couldn't do five, seven, 10 years ago...

Getting back to the question. . . I imagine back in the prehistoric ages, a journalist was the only one willing to go into the dark cave and come back out and tell everyone what it looks like back in there. You've got the inside skinny that is maybe interesting to the rest of the village, however big you define that village. And to me, it's not a whole lot more complicated. I'm not trying to say it has all the answers, but that's been my M.O. and I'm going to keep doing it at the Center.

Jay Rosen: Okay. Let me underline two things. One is, you said you wanted your own printing press—that's why you started the Center. Fifteen years later, bloggers come along. It's a lot easier for them to have their own printing press, but it was the same motivation, right? And second, when you say trust follows from getting the inside story, it reminds



From top: Panelists Jay Rosen, Charles Lewis, Neil Chase, and Dan Gillmor at A Wake-Up Call conference.
Photos by Wendi Poole

me of a very important incident that erupted in Oregon when the Oregonian didn't uncover a sexual harassment by their own senator, because they hadn't been doing exactly what you're saying. They were shocked at how angry people were. Not because they screwed up a story. But because they never did it. In fact, they knew something about it. It wasn't such a secret. That's a very direct result of exactly what you're saying.

Neil Chase, Deputy editor, NYTimes.com

How the Mainstream Media Stopped Telling the Truth (or How Journalists Stopped Doing their Jobs)

Neil Chase: Charles, you said you started the Center because there were stories you couldn't cover at 60 Minutes that you wanted to cover. Why couldn't you cover them?

Charles Lewis: The suits would say they didn't need to be covered. Just go rent the Insider movie—that sums it up. Although I actually did do a story on tobacco, I was a producer for Mike Wallace. Larry Tisch, the owner of CBS, asked Mike Wallace over dinner not to broadcast it. To Mike's credit, he said, go to hell, Larry, we're doing it. Mike Wallace had the stature then to say that to the owner of one of the largest tobacco companies in the world, who also happened to own CBS. And we said on the air that Lawrence Tisch declined to comment. That occurred

'All of us know, from our time inside newsrooms that most of the screw-ups are not an intentional plot by a group of scheming editors who sit around the table and make up a plan to screw something up. They are often simple mistakes.'

— Neil Chase

in 1988.

By the mid-90s, when Lowell Bergman tried to do a tobacco story, they were threatened with annihilation, with a multi-billion dollar lawsuit, Black Rock, the corporate part of CBS, tells Don Hewitt and the show not to proceed, and this time, they don't stand up. And so—for that story, I could give you ten more. And they've never been published. But it's understood.

Sometimes Trust Is Lost Because Of Stupid Mistakes

Jay Rosen: So there's the first addition to our standard narrative—the press lost trust because it stopped telling the truth in a lot of ways. It just stopped.

Neil Chase: Or maybe in some cases we stopped doing our jobs. You mentioned the Oregonian thing. People just said, I want my newspaper to tell me this if it's go-

ing on.

What have I learned about trust from my years inside newsrooms and academia? All of us know, from our time inside newsrooms that most of the screw-ups are not an intentional plot by a group of scheming editors who sit around the table and make up a plan to screw something up. They are often just stupid mistakes. Somebody didn't raise a red flag. Somebody didn't say, hey, wait a minute, that doesn't make sense. Or, have we asked this question? Or you hear something at a dinner and you say, gee, that's a story, and I'm the local newspaper, I should do that. A lot of it just comes back to doing our jobs.

And this whole discussion of trust—when we ask readers, do you trust the local newspaper, what exactly do you mean? Would you trust me if I told you there was



The audience listens, laptops open, during A Wake-Up Call conference on Aug. 9 in San Antonio, Texas.

Photo by Wendi Poole

going to be construction on your street next week that was going to disrupt your rush hour commute? Would you trust me if I told you that a member of the city council was doing something horrible with your money? Would you trust me if I told you I had some document and I couldn't tell you where I got it from? Would you take that on faith? Would you believe a Judy Miller and just say, well, it's the New York Times, sure, why not? Would people have felt differently about our court case ten, twenty years ago? Well, maybe.

“Welcome to the fish bowl that is the New York Times.”

I've only been at the Times three months, but one of the biggest changes that's happened at the Times in the past few years, not just because of the one, perhaps best-known change, or problem there, with stories being made up, but with all the things that have happened in all the media, is this intense effort to make things much more transparent. To say, wait a minute, what if we just show people what we're doing? Because there shouldn't be a lot of secrets.

I mean, when I got to the New York Times, the notice about my getting hired, the number two guy at the web site, starts going around to several different web sites, and I start getting messages from people. I mentioned this to my new boss, and he said, “Welcome to the fish bowl that is the

New York Times.” Everything we do here is public. Every memo from the editor about a change, including the fun ones we’re about to make with My Newsroom end up on the Poynter website and all sorts of other places because people watch what we’re doing.

And that’s great. There shouldn’t be a lot of secrets, I’ve learned in my years in journalism. We’ve got our whole ethics handbook now up on the Web—you can download the whole PDF and read it. It just seems like the huge effort to open the process up and say, wait, it’s always been a secretive thing, people trusted blindly.

Nobody trusts anything blindly. Do you trust your doctor anymore? Do you trust anybody anymore? People want more explanation, how it works. Heck, let’s give it to them.

Jay Rosen: Before transparency at the New York Times—which I think you’re absolutely right, it’s a very different world now—there was a trust system. But the thinking was, we put this product out every day, the daily edition of the

New York Times. You look at it, examine it, decide whether you trust it. But we’re not going to tell you much about how it’s made because, actually, that’s not relevant. What’s relevant is the product. We put it out there for you to judge. That was a way of achieving trust. It just isn’t the world anymore. It’s not the way the world works anymore.

And so now we have a new system, which is, here’s the product—the New York Times—and you can trust it or not, but look, we’ll tell you how we made it. And, increasingly, they have to do exactly that.

It’s Not Just Us—Lack of Trust is Endemic in Today’s Society

Neil Chase: And it’s just as important to keep in mind, this is not about just journalism. Literally, it’s about medicine. It’s about your car mechanic, it’s about everything you do in your daily life. People expect more information. They have access to more information, so they’re going to use it.

Trusting Your Audience Will Help Them Trust You

Jay Rosen: Dan, I want to know,

what do you know about trust that maybe other people don’t know?

Dan Gillmor, Author, “We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People” and the blog Bayosphere

Dan Gillmor: The transparency question ... is the change. It’s knowing that trust goes two ways, actually. If we trust the readers, the audience to help us, I think that we’ll find that they will. And that’s something that I think took me a long time to get.

How Working Outside the System Generates Coverage by the System

Jay Rosen: Okay. I want to ask now about some of your transitions in life because I think, when you change systems in journalism, you learn a lot about journalism. When you go out of a big operation and into a small one, you learn something about what a big operation is. If you go from national journalism to local, you learn something about the distortions of Washington.

So Charles, when you left professional journalism to found the

‘Nobody trusts anything blindly. Do you trust your doctor anymore? Do you trust anybody anymore? People want more explanation, how it works. Heck, let’s give it to them.’

— Neil Chase



Jay Rosen, far right, leads a conversation with Charles Lewis, left, Neil Chase, center, and Dan Gillmor in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

Center, you had been an investigative reporter for ABC and CBS, right? And so you worked inside two of the biggest operations, and also two of the most storied in the profession. And then you were suddenly on the outside of that system, doing what you say is the same work, but from a very different social situation, from having to raise money in offices that probably started very small. So, when you shifted from your position within CBS, a giant, rich corporation, and ABC long past, to this new operation, what did you learn about doing journalism? Or what did you learn about those organizations that wouldn't have been available to you if you hadn't gotten off the boat?

Charles Lewis: Well, I already knew that the mainstream me-

dia, not just the networks, had a little problem with arrogance, the smugness factor. You do notice it more when you're on the outside. My way of thinking, all the major stories of the late 80s, early 90s had been missed. The S&L story was mostly covered locally; the Iran Contra scandal, most journalists in Washington heard about it from the attorney general, Ed Meese, which is not a good sign.

Making the Transition Away from Mainstream Media

Charles Lewis: I broke a four-year contract. I walked out with a mortgage, a family, no savings, and I wouldn't recommend it necessarily but, I mean, I didn't know the next step. I just needed to get out of there.

I started the Center from my house. I took the name of the

Center because all the investigative reporting names were already taken. Then you're on the outside. And, being on the inside, I had had all these groups with interesting information, hundreds of them, thousands maybe, coming in, trying to get their stories on 60 Minutes. And I had a sense of what works and what doesn't in the mainstream media, and I knew that I had a different model than many of the other so-called independent or alternative—there's all kinds of adjectives for them—type of media. I had no interest in being on the margins. I wanted the world to know everything I did. Instantly, of course. And so the model I chose was—this was pre-Internet—to do reports that were anal-retentively researched based on documents, you know,

that would take a year and use ten or more researchers. And I would then announce the findings and that would be a news event.

The first news conference was in December of '90, and there were 35 reporters at the Press Club. ABC's 20/20 did a segment about it, C-Span, CNN and others, the wire services and the major dailies all covered it. And the model worked. This was something they had never covered, ever—the revolving door of White House trade officials where we found half of them, over a 25-year period, went to work for the people they were negotiating against, namely foreign governments and foreign corporations—but we actually had the numbers and the names. And we'd interviewed all of them, 75 people.

That showed that you could do investigative reporting, it could get out there, it could filter into the public consciousness, and it would be covered. And the Center would essentially be a wholesale provider, which it still is. But now with the Internet and with books—last year, “The Buying of the President 2004” was a best-seller for three months—so we also can go to bookstores now.

So we go through the media, but

we also go around the media. It's not a bad situation because you can get it out both ways. That continues to be the Center's model.

Jay Rosen: Dan, you quit, too, without really knowing what your future prospects were going to be. Not a dissimilar story from what Charles just told us. You went from being columnist and online blogger for the San Jose Mercury News with, I think it's fair to say, a position of some influence in Silicon Valley, to a start-up in citizens' media with no track record and no base of operations at all. And you've been at it, what, six months now? Since leaving that environment, what have you learned in that time about creating conditions of trust and, to go back to Charles' story, what was it that pushed you out the door?

Dan Gillmor: I wasn't pushed. I jumped, and there was no one's hand on my back except my own. I've likened it to jumping off a cliff expecting to assemble a hang-glider before I reached the bottom. And so I go through alternate moments of terror, exhilaration, which I'm told by my friends in Silicon Valley is completely normal. It certainly wasn't normal for me. But it just felt like we were on the verge in media of something

new, something that, in a decade or so, would begin to have a pretty good sense of what shape it was taking, maybe sooner. And that I had a chance to be one of the people who helped—I wouldn't say guide it, but help clear away some of the brush so that people could do this.

Citizen Journalism and Big Media Can Co-exist

Dan Gillmor: And the jury is way out on any number of things, including what business models will exist for citizens media, how we can encourage people to do things that are more signal than noise, and fundamentally, how I hope we can add this system and stop all this nonsense about replacing big media—when it does its job well, it does it brilliantly and we should want to keep it.

Jay Rosen: Charles' solution to that was not to replace the big media with his thing, but produce what they weren't producing and then pitch it back to them as a story. That's not replacing at all. And in that sense, one of the opportunities for citizen journalists is to do exactly that—to become, in effect, sources. That's a different relationship than a dependence relationship.

‘...one of the opportunities for citizen journalists is to do exactly that — to become, in effect, sources.’ — Jay Rosen

There is No Death Spiral, Just a Renewal

Clyde Bentley • Associate professor, School of Journalism • University of Missouri at Columbia

I guess I call myself a guerrilla journalist. I have been that way all my life. I love this idea of finding out where the holes are in the media system, jumping in there and competing with them. I've done a lot of work in community journalism, rural journalism, suburban journalism, done some urban journalism, competed with Time when I was an intern at Newsweek, that type of thing. I like the idea of competing. Maybe that flavors my view of this, because the idea of a death spiral, I can't buy it at all.

My whole experience says this isn't a death spiral. This is the dance of the phoenix. Things burn up, and they come back new. The bad part of that is, it's not a very pleasant thing to see, burning up. And it's gotta hurt like hell when it happens, right? But it comes back

as something new and beautiful, and it saves the day. . . . and that's one of the things I want to look at today.

We've got two issues here. The perceived failure or problems in the media system, and the actual problems in the media system.

The perceived problem is, hey, nobody's reading newspapers, newspapers are going out of business, we have so many fewer newspapers than there ever were, blah, blah, blah. . . .there's 8,650 newspapers. Of those, 1,456 are dailies, 7,164 are non-dailies. We get a new one every day or so. The non-daily newspaper business is booming so fast nobody can keep track of it.

You look out on other ways of the mass media, and you see blogs. Has anyone got a good count on blogs? No way. Citizen

journalism sites? No way. Bulletin boards? They're out there all over the place. Posters are all over the place in my town. . . .So is the mass media dying? No. Are things that look like USA Today and reporting poorly on the news dying? Yes.

Instead of looking at the phoenix rebuilding itself into something newer and prettier, we're looking at trying to save the death spiral or something that probably needs to burn up. . .



Clyde Bentley, an associate professor at the University of Missouri at Columbia, says there is no death spiral in journalism.
Photo by Wendi Poole

MarketWatch: Starting a News Alternative

A Conversation with Jay Rosen and Neil Chase

Jay Rosen • New York University • Author of the blog PressThink
Neil Chase • Deputy Editor • NYTimes.com

Jay Rosen: Neil, you started online MarketWatch, which was a company and a site invented for the Internet age.

And it was pitched, as far as I understand its logic, at a very old need and a very new need. The old need was people always need reliable business information who are involved in business and trade and investing, and there is always a demand for it because good information is always itself an economic good in that environment and a business write-off. Then there was this popular side as well, people in the stock market who wanted good information.

So MarketWatch succeeded spectacularly, with the CBS name attached to it. It really was a new

thing. And you were managing editor there, right? And now you've switched over to The New York Times, which is, in many ways, the opposite, as a core institution. It comes out of a totally different world. Its authority has been accumulating since the 19th century, and it had to be brought into the online world, as opposed to starting there like MarketWatch did.

... What have you learned, what is your mind suddenly preoccupied with today that maybe it wasn't then? What is different about your puzzle, as you go to work every day?

Showing How It's Done Instead of Saying, "Just trust us"

Neil Chase: You, Jay, and some of the others have written about the idea that bloggers, like any me-

dium, like any news organization, at some point there was a Day One when the news organization started. There are news organizations out there—take the Washington Post—which was once a very far-less-than-great news organization; it was the sixth most popular newspaper in a five-newspaper town. A family took it over and led it and made it into a quality journalism organization.

We started CBS MarketWatch—I wasn't there on the first day, so I can't take credit for this—out of nothing and with the idea that—here's this word again—the financial markets lacked transparency. Wall Street was this secretive club of old white men who did nothing but trade your money around. You could invest, you could give



Jay Rosen speaks during the conference on Tuesday, Aug. 9 in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

your money to a broker, and a broker would take that money and do something with it and charge you a fortune for it. You didn't know what was going on, you had no control. That's the way it was always run, and people blindly trusted that for decades. For decades they blindly trusted this old New York institution. Sound familiar?

Along comes a time when people want more information, a time when people want more control, a time when people have more control in other parts of their lives, and, at the same time, a technology that lets them have more control. And the first reporters at MarketWatch were sitting there saying we can get this information, we can get it out to people, we don't want to charge for it, we

want to make it free, we want to get it out there as fast as we can, and that coincided with the rise of online trading. It turned into a very successful business.

But it was all based on MarketWatch's having information people wanted. Doing reporting, doing journalism, they brought in top-notch professional journalists, for the most part, to run it. They built up a very credible news organization, one where the secret sauce there is that it looks like a newspaper front page.

It made this thing look like a newspaper to engender the trust you would have—they milked the 150, 200 years all of us have spent building up all these great newspaper reputations, MarketWatch walks in and makes it look like a newspaper and instantly adds

credibility. . . Big headline at the top designed and organizes things in a way that tells a story. You can look at this and figure out which story editors think is most important.

And they built this up over a period of years. And then one night, maybe two years ago, my boss takes me and the other managing editor out to the bar one night after work, which we'd been known to do once or twice, and says, well, I got a little bit of news for you. The chief columnist, the founder of this site, is going to be busted by the SEC tomorrow. And the way the SEC makes a bust is, it announces an investigation into this person's conduct in relationship to these newsletters he was writing, whether he owned the stocks or was hyping the stocks or was doing something other than fairly reporting the news. And this was the kind of scandal that, everybody cringes, everybody thinks, oh my God, it's all over.

But the site had developed a strong reputation of delivering quality news to people. A lot of business stories are based on press releases. They're not all deep investigative journalism, but they're things people want to know. And MarketWatch got through that, like the Washington Post got through its scandal twenty, thirty years ago now with "Jimmy's World" and the New York Times got through its, and every other news organization, many



Bill Isreal, left, University of Massachusetts talks with Neil Chase, right, a deputy editor at NYTimes.com, after a panel discussion during the conference Aug. 9 in San Antonio, Texas.

Photo by Wendi Poole

other news organizations have had to.

At MarketWatch it was, geez, this thing actually works. We built this thing up. People trust us. We worked hard to get that. I went to the New York Times and I thought, this is going to be a challenge—yeah, the Times has been on the web long before MarketWatch, they've been doing this for ten years.

But there are a number of people at the Times who have somewhat more years of experience than I do, as was pointed out to me when I first got there. A lot of people who love what they're

doing. I expected resistance, I expected people to look at me funny, I expected—I wasn't sure what I was walking into. But in every single interview I had for the job, every single meeting with a department head, all I get is, "Help us. Tell us, how do we do more." And then the editor announces, a couple of months after I get there, we're going to move the whole web newsroom back into the print newsroom, back where it belongs.

This is a bunch of people who think this is the right thing to do, and they want to do this. It was a wonderful thing to see. And it goes along with posting

original documents on the Web, like you were saying, and being able to tell people, here's where we got the thing, it's audio and video where appropriate, it's telling the story the best way we can on the web and, at the same time, explaining what we're doing.

So it's a tremendously open environment, a place where, whatever demons were there ten years ago, about how we can't ever change things, are gone. There's a strong consensus among this group with very diverse experiences to want to move forward. It's a very user experience thing. The people who call in first with a breaking news story, to get it to the web site, are the ones in Iraq, where they don't see the newspaper, and they sure as heck don't want the AP reporter sitting next to them to see an AP story on the front page of the New York Times when the Times reporter has it too.

Jay Rosen: Leonard Apcar, who is your boss, the editorial director of the Times site, told me once that the Times is conservative about journalism. It's slow to do certain things. It always has been. In a funny way, that makes it more radical when it does act. And I think that's very true about that particular newspaper. . .

Can Nonprofits Fill Mainstream Media's Investigative Reporting Gap?

An Open-Forum Conversation with Jay Rosen,
Charles Lewis and Dan Gillmor

Jay Rosen • New York University • Author of the blog PressThink

Charles Lewis • Founder • Center for Public Integrity

Dan Gillmor • Author • “We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People,
for the People” and the blog Bayosphere

Q **uestion from the audience:** What do you predict for the future if the financial rug is pulled out from under those in the mainstream media, such as the New York Times, CBS, who are still doing investigative reporting? Would non-profits be able to fill the gap?

Charles Lewis: Well, I don't predict futures. And I don't know the future. I just want to make sure everybody knows I don't have a theory about the future. . . I don't see a lot of wonderful investiga-

tive reporting. I think the great moments in American journalism ended in the 70s. If you study over the last 50 years great moments in American journalism, I hate to use the phrase but speaking truth to power occurred with challenging authority and exposing what needed to be exposed, the high-water mark was clearly the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate case. And when the Center for Public Integrity spends \$600,000 on an investigation and uses 30 or 40 journalists on six continents—I failed to mention that we have an

international consortium of journalists. . . I don't see those entities you just mentioned right now doing investigations on that level. I see Time Magazine turning over the notes of a reporter and not doing those investigations.

So, you'll have to excuse me if I'm slightly skeptical. I see Edward R. Murrow laying out McCarthy on the air in '54. I see Walter Cronkite doing a five-part series on Viet Nam and LBJ deciding not to seek re-election weeks later. And [then] I go to Iraq and I see hundreds of journalists embedded. The land-



Brenda Lee Huerta, Univision Radio, asks questions during A Wake Up Call conference on Tuesday, Aug. 9.
Photo by Wendi Poole

scape is really weak.

There are problems with the non-profit journalism model—it's not a panacea. You have to worry about payroll and keeping the lights on and finding money. My board, almost all of whom are working journalists . . . but I was told for 15 years that I did not have a sustainable business model, and we kept growing. . . The aim of the Center was never to replace the mainstream. . . I don't know where all this is going. . . there are non-profit investiga-

tive reporting groups all over the world. . . they are also, with their reporting, creating the resignation or impeachment of presidents on multiple continents. . . so, can great journalism occur? Can large sums of money be amassed? Can great journalists do good things outside the mainstream and filter back to the mainstream and force it to take note? The answer is a resounding "yes." Do I know what's going to happen in 2010 and 2020 and 2030? Absolutely not. And I'm not going to remotely attempt

to tell you that. I'm one of these brick-by-brick kind of guys. I just start things, and I'm working on some new ones.

How the "Open Source" Method Can Help Us

Dan Gillmor: There's also something that we might think about in the future with the citizen journalism sphere, and that is for investigations to be done in what might be called an "open source" method. While most big media investigations are done very opaquely—they're done in secret—then

there's this blow-out done at the end of the process. Many of them should be done that way, if not most, but I think there are a lot of these that could be done where someone says, early on in the process, here's what we're looking into. Can we get your help, please, to the world? And you would find that people would have data, facts, ideas, information that could feed into the process at the beginning. As opposed to waiting to have the thing appear in print, broadcast or on the web and then say, I know something else. And then you get the follow-ups, which is the standard method. I think we ought to be experimenting with that. It's something I'm planning on doing, to get people in on something of this sort early and invite the community, of whatever sort, to participate in an investigative piece. I suspect we're going to find good results in some cases, not in oth-

ers. But we need to try.

Harnessing the Power of Horizontal Reporting

Jay Rosen: . . . my prediction is that the power of horizontal information gathering [via a blogger or site, such as Talkingpoints, asking constituents to call their congressman to see how he voted in an illegally closed meeting, then to relay that data to Talkingpoints] as opposed to putting a lot of money in a vertical organization and asking a small dedicated group of people to find things out—my prediction is that the power of horizontal investigations to produce totally effective truth which would have been hard to do by other means, will in fact be proven over the next few years. We will see that emerge as essentially another branch of investigative journalism distributed over many people cooperating to produce really powerful work that individuals—even your

Center—would find hard to do. I think this will happen. It's already happening.

Q: How can this horizontal model apply at the local level for newspapers?

Dan Gillmor: . . . This can work better probably locally than nationally. . . Tell people in the community you're working on the following story. Start with something simple, like local transportation. People will come out of the woodwork to tell you what they know. . .

Charles Lewis: I have an example [of this horizontal model working investigatively]. We pulled all the records from the Indiana state legislature. We had 12 news organizations—conventional, mainstream news organizations, radio, TV, the Indianapolis Star-News, not famous for their muckraking prowess—there was massive coverage all over Indiana, inside

'Start with something simple, like local transportation. People will come out of the woodwork to tell you what they know...'
— Dan Gillmor



Jay Rosen, NYU, leads an open forum discussion in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

‘...they’ll take some of that and expand on it and do some better investigative reporting, but it’s gonna be a conglomeration of all these new sources that are going to give us better information.’

— Neil Chase

of one week. Twenty-five hundred readers contacted the paper, the largest response in the state’s history. This was called “Statehouse Sellout: How Special Interests Hijacked the Legislature.” The newspaper has since done five additional five-part series. The laws about access to information in Indiana changed within two weeks.

The Center now posts all the financial disclosures for every state legislator in America, all the 527 groups throughout America, all the political party committees throughout America, and then there’s a listserv of 3,000 local journalists in every community that can then—because their own papers, of course, don’t cover the legislature despite the 25,000 laws that are passed every year. And so now, this is a resource that they can use, sitting in their newsroom without going to the state capitol, perish the thought.

And so, that is another example of the web. And then local folks can play off of that data too and feed horizontally and in every other direction. It’s kind of excit-

ing, what’s possible.

Neil Chase: We’ve seen examples in the past, pre-Internet, of large metro dailies that became a monopoly, didn’t do that much, were challenged by a smaller, local upstart newspaper and ended up having to dramatically race to catch up and do a better job in the end of local coverage. What you’re going to see with what Dan’s doing and some of the other citizen journalism projects and with blogs and everything else, there’s lots more information coming to light, and the good newspapers can’t ignore that. They have to take that information, and in a perhaps perfect world, they’ll take some of that and expand on it and do some better investigative reporting, but it’s gonna be a conglomeration of all these new sources that are going to give us better information.

Jay Rosen: I think if local newspapers and sites don’t start to incorporate this kind of journalism and succeed with horizontal reporting, that they won’t be the

people who inherit the news franchise in those towns. I really think they have to do this. They have to find out how to use this new world because the age of mass media was different from our present world in one really important way, which is that all the readers and everybody really important in the audience, the people formerly known as “the audience” in the age of the media, were connected up, to the New York Times, to the hierarchy.

But not connected to each other; in fact, in a lot of ways, they were separated from each other by active reading of the newspaper. And now those same people might still be connected up, but they are also connected horizontally to each other. And that’s a new fact for people in journalism.

And they’re going to have to get used to doing journalism under those conditions. I think it’s a new challenge. But they still retain many advantages in that horizontal world.

Can You Have Trust if You Practice Censorship by Omission?

Why People of Color Don't Read the Mainstream Media

Dori Maynard • President • Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education

‘Given the track record historically of censorship by omission...and the ongoing distortion of news about minority populations, leaders and issues, the mono-perspective content, the press has long failed its mission to inform.’—Dr. Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte, interview, May 2005

I would argue that the new media, the old media, whatever the medium, it doesn't really matter, if we continue to ignore so many people in our communities. Actually, I think it's quite fitting that we're meeting today, the day after the death of John H. Johnson. As many of you may know, Mr. Johnson was the founder of Johnson Publications, which published Ebony and Jet. In 1942 he took out a \$500 loan to start his organization, which last year had sales close to \$500 million. It was actually 498; I hope you'll forgive me for rounding up a little bit.

I think in many ways John Johnson was the foundation of and the precursor to the huge explosion of ethnic media we see today. Readership in Hispanic media has gone from 440,000 in 1990 to 1.8 million today. You see the same explosion in the Asian press, and, of course, in the African American press, we have not only Jet, Ebony, but we have BET and Essence.

But before I go any further, I'd like to ask how many people here read Ebony or Jet.

So, for the vast majority who don't read it, can you tell me why you don't read it...Okay, everyone's

heard of it. But so very few people actually read it. And I would argue, although it's just my guess, that many of you don't read it because you think it has very little to do with your lives and it's not very relevant to you. And I think that that same issue that you see with relevance to Ebony and Jet is what's happening to many people of color with the mainstream media. It just doesn't seem that relevant anymore.

Content audit after content audit shows that people of color are overrepresented in stories about crime, about entertainment, and



Dori Maynard, president of the Maynard Institute, speaks at A Wake-Up Call conference in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

sports, and are underrepresented in everyday stories—business, lifestyle, politics. If you want to see a great example of that, you don't need to go any further than today's paper.

Here, on the front page of USA Today, a very large second-day story on Peter Jennings, and a small refer to John Johnson. It tells you to go to the business section. You go to the business section of USA Today, and he's certainly not on the first page. There he is, on the bottom of page 4B. The man

who started a multi-million dollar empire, an icon in the African American community, couldn't even get a corner in the front of the business section.

So, when you look at that, you begin to see why mainstream media is becoming less and less relevant to people of color. Now, the reasons for that, I think, are fairly clear. We can go over them really quickly.

One is, if you look at who's working in our mainstream media, you know, 13 percent of newspaper

journalists are journalists of color. The numbers are only slightly better in broadcast—22 percent. But then if you look at the experience of most journalists, it becomes clear that not only are the numbers small, people don't come to our newsrooms equipped to do credible cross-cultural coverage. Despite the fact that our country is more diverse today than ever, we still lead largely segregated lives. An analysis of the 2000 census by the State University of New York at Albany found that your aver-

‘...it’s really time for us to admit those faultlines exist
and begin to think of ways we can cross those faultlines.’

age white urban/suburban resident lived in neighborhoods and communities that were 80 percent white. And people of color did not live in communities that were much more diverse. So when we walk into our newsrooms, we walk in ill-prepared to cover communities other than our own.

Examining Diversity Of Race, Class, Gender, Generation And Geography

Now, the good news in all this is that, at the Maynard Institute, we do think that we have something of a framework that can help newsrooms do better cross-cultural coverage. My father, the late Robert Maynard, former owner and publisher of the Oakland Tribune, spent a great deal of his life thinking and working on these issues. Shortly before he died, he came up with what he called the faultlines framework, which is how we look at diversity. We look at diversity through the prisms of race, class, gender, generation and geography. We say that those five things not only shape our perceptions of ourselves, each other, and events around us, but they are the five things that divide us as a nation. And it’s really time for us to admit that those faultlines exist

and begin to think of ways that we can cross those faultlines.

A few years ago, the fact that we do see things through those faultlines became very clear to me. I was at the Poynter Institute; we were doing a seminar on race and the media. During the course of the seminar we watched a clip of Ted Koppel interviewing some white residents in a Philadelphia neighborhood who did not want people of color moving into their neighborhood. They said when that happens, crime skyrockets and housing prices plummet.

I’m sitting there looking at that, and I had to say, when the clip was done, that there was no context. I kept expecting Ted Koppel to say, you know, in all due respect, that there are African American neighborhoods in this country that are more affluent and safer than some white neighborhoods. When I made that comment, it was a large group and no one really listened. About five minutes later, a white male participant raised his hand and he said, there’s no context. He said that without context, that clip made all white people look as if they were racist.

So there we were, we saw the exact same clip, we had the exact

same concern, that of context. But because of our faultline perceptions, what we meant by context was completely different.

So we argue that in our newsrooms we need to begin to have conversations that expect that there are going to be those differences of opinion, but that we need to have these conversations with the goal of understanding each other and not necessarily agreeing with each other. We think that these conversations, while I focused on race, really do need to include the other faultlines.

Journalists as Occupying Forces in Communities They Cover

One of the ones that’s largely overlooked is geography. And I think that’s extremely important because, as our career paths go from market to market until we hit that destination market, the people we talk to the most are the people in our newsrooms. And so we don’t always learn the morés and the nuances of what’s going on in the communities we cover. We’re almost like occupying forces. We come in for a little while, we tell people what’s going on, and then we move off. And then we wonder why people in our communities say, “You don’t get us.”



Dori Maynard told conference participants that journalists need to pay attention to five faultlines that affect coverage: race, class, gender, generation and geography. *Photo by Wendi Poole*

And we say, “Well, we gave you the facts.” But we didn’t put them in the context of your particular community.

Discovering Journalists’ Blind Spots

Lastly, we argue that with faultlines, we need to understand that we all have blind spots, areas where our five faultlines come together in such a way that we simply don’t see something.

This was made very clear to me when we went and we worked with a paper, we gave them some faultlines training and we told them to go out and to ask people in their community how they could cover them differently. And a group came back who had talked to some immigrants. And they said, you know, you can stop cov-

ering us from your middle-class point of view. You look at us and you see two families sharing one house, sharing one car, and you call us poor. And we say, we have a house. We have a car. We are not poor. And it was a blind spot on our part.

So what we hope that we will be able to do is use faultlines sort of as a checklist.

Not only will you have your conversations that understand that you really will see things differently, but that you will have conversations that will help you understand each other, not necessarily agree, but you also have a checklist, like you have who, what, when, where, how, why, you have race, class, gender, generation and geography.

And the last time I did some faultlines training was actually at the University of Nevada, Reno. I used, as a foundation for the training, a story that the New York Times had done on advances in lung cancer treatment. And I asked the group to use that as a foundation and then to figure out angles that they could include in that story that looked at issues pertaining to race, to class, to gender, to generation, to geography.

And when they were done, they had angles that looked at the disparity and treatment across class, the difference in effectiveness in drugs across race, the differences in community rates of cancer, both local communities and regions. They looked at disparities between women and men, and they looked at the difference in aggressiveness, depending on your age and generation.

And in the two days since Peter Jennings has died and we’ve seen a number of stories on lung cancer, we have yet to see a story that was so complete, that took a disease that affects us all and covered it in a way that we all saw ourselves.

So today, when we think about the death of John Johnson and how he showed us how profitable covering people of color could be, I hope we will also see how possible it can be.

Thirteen Percent of Americans Prefer Ethnic to Mainstream Media

Alice Tait • Central Michigan University • Co-editor of the series “Ethnic Media in America”

What do we mean, restore the public trust? What trust?

Who do we trust? Why do we trust them, and have we ever trusted them? Those are some of the questions our panelists are going to answer for you this afternoon.

The other question is, if we don't trust them, what have we done as a result of that? . . . the panelists will answer that question with respect to their involvement with their ethnic media.

First, I'd like to talk to you about a survey that was revealed in June by the New California Media entitled “The Ethnic Media in Amer-

ica: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight.” It's the first comprehensive survey of its type looking at the audiences of ethnic media and how they feel about their relationship to ethnic media, as well as their relationship to mainstream media. And here are a few of the major findings.

The study revealed the striking impact of ethnic media in the United States. Forty-five percent of all African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native Americans and Arab Americans adults prefer ethnic television, radio, or newspapers to their mainstream counterparts. These primary consumers also indicated that they access ethnic media frequently. This

means that a staggering 29 million adults—45 percent of the 64 million ethnic adults studied, or a full 13 percent of the entire adult population of the United States—prefer ethnic media. Eighty percent of the ethnic media population studied is, in fact, reached by ethnic media.

Where Ethnic Groups Get Their News

Even though the ethnic media population studied tended to rely on the ethnic media for information about their communities and countries of origin, African Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans and Native Americans prefer the mainstream media when it comes to information

about politics and the United States government. Hispanics were the only group studied who prefer ethnic media to mainstream media for their information about political affairs.

There's a little more information about their relationship with certain news organizations. Four of the five ethnic groups studied trust CNN more than Fox News to deliver accurate news and information. Arab Americans and Asian Americans prefer CNN to Fox News by a more than 4-to-1 ratio, Hispanics, 2-to-1, African-Americans by 4-to-3 also trust CNN, but by a smaller ratio. Native Americans are evenly divided in their opinion about the objectivity of the two major cable networks.

Let me give you a few facts about the consumption habits of each of the groups that came away from this survey.

Hispanics—Spanish language and television has universal reach. There's a growing penetration of Spanish-language newspapers. Hispanics tend to have very low access to the Internet.

For African-Americans, there's a strong penetration of African-American radio. There is substantial reach of African-American newspapers, and there's average access to the Internet.

Asian Americans—there's strong reach of Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese newspapers. There's significant reach of Fili-



Alice Tait speaks during A Wake-Up Call conference on Aug. 9.
Photo by Wendi Poole

pino weekly newspapers, there's significant reach of Asian Indian monthly publications, growing penetration of Korean and Chinese television, and they have high access to the Internet.

For Arab Americans, Arab

television was the most popular medium, and they have very high access to the Internet. For Native Americans, tribal newspapers are the most popular media, and they have average access to the Internet.

Immigrants Have a Different Definition of What's News

Alejandro Manrique • Managing Editor • Rumbo de San Antonio

‘It is very difficult to address how to restore trust in ethnic media when your readers have never had trust in media’—Alejandro Manrique

The question of how to restore the trust between or among ethnic media, as you call it, gives me a lot of trouble. A little bit of context. . . we’ve launched four newspapers in Texas last year, one in San Antonio, one in Houston, one in Austin and one in the Rio Grande Valley. These newspapers are entirely devoted to the immigrant community, first, second and third generation immigrants. They are entirely in Spanish.

...It is very difficult to address how to restore trust in ethnic media when your readers have never had trust in media. The immigrants who come from Mexico or

Central America or Latin America, they don’t even trust the media. They don’t trust the government there. So the question must be addressed in the following way: How do we gain the trust of readers who face many challenges here in this country?

... There is no independent media in Latin American countries. I lived there, I was an investigative journalist there, and I can tell you that. We have examples of independent journalism, of good journalism, but that is not the mainstream. The mainstream is that you have the government tied to the media.

So, before we can talk about how to regain trust between our His-

panic readers, we have to ask, how do we teach them to trust? [We have to teach them] the standards, the way independent journalism is done. That is the first issue.

The other point is that our Rumbo readers are not used to reading. Most of them are immigrants who, some of them, are illiterate, some who can read but they don’t trust, they have a lack of education. And they come here and face other types of struggles. They are here for survival.

....despite all those...difficulties, if they come to this country—and we have done a lot of studies, a lot of research—it is very likely that the immigrants will begin to trust, if the media that they read do the



Alejandro Manrique of Rumbo de San Antonio speaks at A Wake-Up Call conference about restoring trust to minority readers.

Photo by Wendi Poole

right thing.

But when I talk about “do the right thing,” that involves a lot of questions. A lot of issues. We have to redefine, for example, what is the concept of our news. . . news is a changing concept, depending on cultures and on the times. . . Everything is news for them. They are in a new country, they don’t understand most of the things that happen here, so the traditional concept of news, meaning an interruption in the normal events

of life, is not that simple when it comes to [this] readership.

. . . Not only what is news, but how we can present the news. Also, we face a lot of issues involving intimacy and truth-telling. Here, the boundaries between what is intimate and what is public information is pretty much defined. But when it comes to a community of readers like Hispanics, things are really different. Because Hispanic people . . . weigh intimacy a lot more because

of our Hispanic tradition. . . If what is news for them trespasses their right to privacy and intimacy [it becomes offensive]. . .

...news also means for us a way to educate our readers on how to survive in this country. . . and, as my bosses say, how to put brown faces in the newspaper, to give some recognition to our people, to put them in stories and on the front pages. . . that’s the way I can respond to the question, how to restore trust.

Is There A Need For Mainstream Media?

George White • Assistant director • UCLA Center for Communications and Community

We do communications workshops nationwide, and what we do is help journalists get better connected to communities, which is what public, civic journalism should be about. . . we also help non-profits and community groups nationwide understand journalists better, so they can do a better job of connecting with media and getting their stories told, or if they choose to create their own media . . .

One of the questions I was asked to address was to consider, is there a need, considering the declining readership in mainstream media,

is there a need for mainstream media?

I think there is. I think there is a need for a common square, a public square of opinion, of information. But it's clear that public square is going to be smaller in the future, because there's no way we're going to reverse the trends we've been seeing in the past 15 years. We heard some of the numbers. . . New California Media with regard to the loyalty that consumers of ethnic media have toward their newspapers and television and radio stations. They have not been served by the mainstream media. They are finding what they need elsewhere.

What we do see is mainstream

media trying to get into the game. With the New York Times trying to start what is, effectively, a black newspaper in Gainesville, Florida. We've seen it with the Chicago Tribune company with Hoy—there are lots and lots of examples. This is the trend when we look at the changing demographics of this country. We're going to see a continuation of this niche-news approach.

Can the Mainstream Media Appeal to Ethnic Groups?

There will be some difficulty for mainstream media trying to reach communities of color. We've seen it already, for example, with the Chicago Tribune and Hoy, where they had some circulation scan-

dals. We've seen it in sort of the lack of quality coverage in some of these satellites of mainstream media.

Basically, the problem is this, and it's the problem mainstream media has with its overall audience: It is too focused on the bottom line. These companies are public companies, they are concerned about shareholder price, and so therefore they will not, or have not, put the resources into these new alternative media, which are designed in many cases to reach people of color.

I was recently on a panel whose topic was similar to this. . . [public relations professionals] were looking specifically at ethnic media or minority media, and what was interesting was the composition of the panel, or at least three-fourths of it—at one end was a former L.A. Times reporter, a former colleague of mine, who had quit about five months earlier to start an English-language magazine for the Latino market in Los Angeles—there are already two monthly magazines in the city—but Latinos don't read them. And even English-speaking Latinos, for the most part, don't read them. So he felt there was a market for it, and he seems to be doing fairly well.

Right next to me was an L.A. Times reporter, much younger—I left the Times five years ago—so I did not know him. He was an Asian American journalist whose assignment was to cover the Asian American community. He said, more than once, the Asian American community does not, for the most part, read



George White during A Wake-Up Call conference in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

his articles because they don't read the L.A. Times. Not [just] those who don't speak English, but the English speakers. And so he felt somewhat out of sorts—who is he writing for? Maybe, he said, there are some whites who are concerned about the Asian community who are reading his reports, but that's pretty much it.

How Some Journalists Are Connecting With Communities of Color

...Let me go back with my history, very briefly. Right after the riots in Los Angeles in 1992, the Ford Foundation looked at the situation there and came to the conclusion that the mainstream media didn't have any idea what was going on in communities of color in Southern California. We journalists already knew that. But the Ford Foundation wanted to do something about it. They were willing to fund something.

A coalition made up of the L.A. chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, the California Chicano News Association—which is the largest journalism association of color, by the way—and the L.A. chapter of the Asian American Journalists Association came together. We called it the Unity Media Access Project, UMAP for short. ...in ...three years, we did 30 community engagement sessions in all parts of Southern California, where we had journalists come and talk about their jobs...

This is something we need to be about, no matter what we're involved in, mainstream media or ethnic media. . . we need to make sure that, whether it's minority media or ethnic media or mainstream media, that those news organizations are trying to connect with the communities they're supposed to be serving.

Small Papers Have a Big Place on the News Media Spectrum

Daily Encounters with Readers Reinforce Trust

Peggy Kuhr • Knight Chair in Journalism • University of Kansas

‘I think of local newspapers as the last refuge of unfiltered America, a running documentary of the warts and triumphs of real people, unfettered by the spin and bias and opaque polish of today’s homogenized journalism. It’s the difference between homemade bread and Pop-Tarts.’

—Jock Lauterer

I f Squirrel Species Can Coexist, Why Can’t Various News Media?

Let’s turn to the topic at hand, mass media meets community and niche media. I’d like to start by talking about squirrels. I spent the last couple of months in Missoula, Montana, hanging out with folks who are scientists and ecologists.

While I was there, I learned the story of the red squirrels and the gray squirrels in Missoula. You see, years ago red squirrels lived on only one side of the Clark Fork River, which bisects that town. And the gray squirrels lived on the other side. One day engineers come to town, and engineers build bridges. And the squirrels could more easily cross from one side to

the other.

Now, in an ecological sense, you would think. . . that one subspecies of squirrel would out-compete the other. Over the long term, one kind of squirrel would disappear, and the other would survive. And triumph.

But that has not happened. And that’s because of something called “the principle of competitive



Peggy Kuhr during A Wake-Up Call conference in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole

‘Can... news media organizations, staffed by homo sapiens, learn something from the principle of competitive exclusion? I want to know if journalists can learn anything from ecology.’
— Peggy Kuhr

exclusion.” That principle is part of what scientists call “the theory of niche.” What that tells us is that the strongest organisms, the strongest species, are those that avoid head-to-head competition. They are those who survive by developing their own unique specifications and specializations.

In the case of the squirrels, they didn’t compete for the same territory once they started living on the same side of the river. They nest in different parts of a tree, they eat different kinds of food.

So, I’m taking the squirrel story and bringing it back to the world of media. Can... news media organizations, staffed by homo sapiens, learn something from the principle of competitive exclusion? Is this what niche products

and community journalism are all about? I really want to know whether journalists can learn anything from ecology.

Jock Lauterer, Founder, Carolina Community Media Project, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Staying ‘relentlessly local’ is the key

The first thing that a community journalist knows is, it’s all about access. I believe there’s a direct correlation between access and trust. Here’s a story... people want to know what community journalism is... I’ve got a story told by the newly elected governor of the state of North Carolina, Mike Easley, who... decided to go home to his hometown of Southport... home of the state’s best

weekly newspaper, the Southport Pilot... [the governor said] “As I was reading this newspaper, I was recognizing all these names and faces of people I knew, all the weddings, the school news, the sports, even the obits, so by the time I got to the other side of the harbor... [he asked the captain of the ferry boat he was on if he could keep the paper] and this is what the captain told the newly elected governor of North Carolina: “No, I’m not done with it.”

This is a three-day-old weekly newspaper, y’all. Another little story... some of you may be familiar with Baxter Black, the cowboy poet who writes a wonderful column. He wrote a column headlined “Why I Love my Hometown Newspaper.” [the San Pedro, Ari-

zona Sun-News, a weekly.] Here's the quote: "Small town newspapers often thrive because CNN or the New York Times are not going to scoop them for coverage of headlines like 'VFW Fish Fry' or 'Bridge Construction Delay' or 'Boys and Girls Playing Basketball Receive Scholarship' or graduating or getting married. Or going off to war.

I think of local newspapers as the last refuge of unfiltered America, a running documentary of the warts and triumphs of real people, unfettered by the spin and

bias and opaque polish of today's homogenized journalism. It's the difference between homemade bread and Pop-Tarts.

What is it that these newspapers know that, perhaps, other newspapers may not know? Some of you may have read, or are reading, *The Tipping Point*? A darn good book in which the author talks about "stickiness" and products or institutions having "stickiness"—it simply means they are memorable and vital to you. I think community newspapers have that.

As long ago as 1984, CBS leg-

'What is it these newspapers know that, perhaps, other newspapers do not...it simply means they are memorable and vital to you. I think community newspapers have that.'

— Jock Lauterer



Jock Lauterer from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill talks about the power of community papers.
Photo by Wendi Poole

end Charles Kuralt was giving the commencement address at my university [UNC at Chapel Hill]. . . I heard him with my own ears say, “Salvation of the American media would be that the media become relentlessly local.” This is in 1984. Kuralt called for us. . . to become relentlessly local. . .

So yes, Peggy, there is an entire niche of community newspapers, 97 percent of all American newspapers have circulations of 50,000 or under. And ASNE calls those “small newspapers.” I call them community newspapers because their emphasis is local, local, local.

That’s what it’s all about, folks. And so as we look at our numbers and we look at our attitudes that we’re hearing being talked about today, I hope that we can all reflect on the importance of the local media. And remember that, of all those papers out there, a huge percentage of those 9,000 newspapers—7,000 plus—are weeklies. That is a factor we need to talk more about, it’s a huge growth area.

Who won the Pulitzer this year for investigative reporting? An urban alternative weekly. Right there in Portland, Oregon.

Accountability is Most Keen at the Local Level

How many of you have worked at a community newspaper? . . . If I write anything that doesn’t ring true with the community, I’m going to get ambushed over the broccoli in the Food Lion.

‘Who won the Pulitzer this year for investigative reporting? An urban alternative weekly. Right there in Portland, Ore.’

— Jock Lauterer

Don’t you know what I mean? I don’t think Jayson Blair would have lasted one week at a community newspaper. . . he would have been outed! So the credibility and the trust, the sort of relationship, really has everything to do with accountability and access, because people know they can walk right in, and they do. Those of you who have worked at small newspapers know this is an absolute factor and we must keep our doors open. It’s not just putting our email at the end of the story, which is a great idea, by the way. You’ve got to be out there, and get out of the newsroom. It’s a critical dynamic.

Leonard Witt: I’ve noticed, up in Carroll County, New Hampshire, now, there’s a listserv that’s almost doing what the paper used to do before. People get on it, they talk to each other, it’s really independent of the newspaper, it’s lively. . . I’m far away from there now, but I still own property there, and from a distance I can really keep up with what’s going on better than I can

with a paper. . . I think many of those papers are not very good. Some of them don’t cover the town very well, and they’re very vulnerable.

Jan Larsen, University of Wisconsin: We have a locally owned paper, and I’ve worked for both locally owned papers and chains, and I think that the problem in our area with some of those smaller papers is that they are so worried about advertising that they don’t want to tick anyone off. And I’ve seen some recent campaigns to print “happy news” and only “good news” in order to try to attract readers, but the feedback that I’ve been getting from the community has been disappointment that they are underestimating the intelligence of their audience.

So I think that even local papers have some work to do with their credibility in that regard.

Jock Lauterer: For every crummy newspaper that you mention—there are plenty of them—there are others that are heroic, that are led by—and this is critical—great leaders. Great newspapers are the result of great people.

How Do We Get Youth to First Read or Watch and Then Trust the News?

Kendra Hurley • Editor, Youth Media • Reporter, Ymreporter.com

‘Teens really want news that’s similar to citizen journalism. They don’t want it coming from a God-like source, they don’t want it sounding like the Gospel, they want it from a peer, they want it with opinion, they want it with analysis, and they want it to somehow be able to link it to who they are personally.’ —Kendra Hurley

Peggy Kuhr: I’d like to look at niche in another way now, and move to so-called “youth media.” Now, there are many who would say that young people are not a niche. Indeed, they are our future, and if you look at their numbers, particularly the numbers in . . . Generation Y, which is 9 or 10 years old up to 26 or 27. . . their numbers in a few short years

are going to be larger than those of us in the aging Baby Boomer category—we are not going to rule any longer.

But you can say that youth is in the minority when it comes to audience and content of mainstream news media. So we know about all of the reports. . . the declining newspaper readership, the declining network viewership, the Internet growing and growing, and the questions that are being asked

about whether young people are using it for news or for a lot of other activities. . .

So I’d like to have Kendra talk to us about young people and whether they really care about the news. What’s going on here?

Kendra Hurley: Yes, young people do care about the news. A Carnegie study found that young people aged 18 to 29 read blogs often, and 44 percent of young adults surveyed visited a web

news portal every day.

And so, though I can't speak for all young people...I worked for seven years at a publisher who publishes two magazines written by teenagers. The one I worked on was called "Represent," written by teenagers in foster care, and the other one is "Youth Connections," which has a circulation of 200,000 and goes to New York City high schools, written by teens in New York City.

The kids at those organizations were definitely interested in what was going on but didn't really see themselves represented in the media, so they weren't interested in adult reporters interpreting their life for them. And also—teens are very rarely quoted in the stories about them, and most stories about teens are negative. They're about crime or gangs or teens getting involved in drugs.

So all of that is quite off-putting and similar to what people were talking about with ethnic media. For teens, they're almost like a community in themselves, and a lot of the media that they read really isn't culturally relevant.

So, what studies have found, and what I saw as well, was that teens really want news that's similar to citizen journalism. They don't want it coming from a God-like source, they don't want it sounding like the Gospel, they want it from a peer, they want it with opinion, they want it with analysis, and they want it to



Kendra Hurley.
Photo by Wendi Poole

somehow be able to link to who they are personally.

That's what youth media is all about. There are numerous organizations across the country where journalists are working closely with young people in radio, online journalism, video, print publications like the ones I just held up, to create media where the teens bring their stories to the table and the journalists, who are the adult working professionals, help them tell those stories in a way that's compelling.

And so, when I was working at "Represent," it could take up to eight months to work on a story with a writer, but the stories we got were really amazing. We ran an issue where a bunch of our writers wrote about being labeled 'crack babies,' and that—it was for the 20-year anniversary for crack. These were kids, who had been

told basically by the media, that they weren't going to amount to anything, kind of talking back and saying, here's how that affected us, here's how we overcame the stigma.

And that got a huge amount of national attention, it was on NPR, the AP wrote a story about it, Columbia Journalism Review wrote about it. And so the impact youth media can have is huge, but I think radio's really embraced youth media, online journalism has embraced it as well, AlterNet has a youth media site, Wiretap, which is part of it. A lot of radio stations like NPR will play youth-produced spots.

But print, especially newspapers, are shy about working with youth media organizations.

Peggy Kuhr: I would mention that a couple of years ago, just as the war in Iraq was starting, MTV did a documentary and the whole point of their documentary was to talk to young people over in Iraq, both soldiers, nurses who were stationed over there, and young Iraqis. What you realize when you watch something like that or hear something like this is, it is a war fought by young people, and we do not hear from them, and we do not see them through that perspective in the mainstream media.

Kendra Hurley: You really need to have an operation that's set up to work closely with the kids, because all sorts of emotional stuff comes up. Teens are writing about

So How Is One Mainstream Media Paper Coping? The Answer is Niches.

Brett Thacker • Managing Editor • San Antonio Express-News

‘Brett [Thacker]... in April, your newspaper was Named Newspaper of the Year here in Texas at the APME annual meeting...How do you characterize the financial and editorial health of your newspaper?’

—Peggy Kuhr

Growing Vertically Versus Growing Horizontally

As editors, we’re a lot more familiar with the business side of things than we used to be, because business does drive our ability to do things, unfortunately. The Express-News is, by all measures, a very successful newspaper, both financially and journalistically. We are the poster child in our corpo-

ration for success on both levels. I think we’ve been able to achieve what we’ve been able to do, and also deliver to our corporate fathers, the returns that they need. Now, could we take more money out of that? Absolutely. We wish that we could.

... Weeklies readership is up 10 percent in the last 15 years. Dailies are down 13 percent in the last 15 years, Sunday, about 7 percent. These [stats] are from the NAA

[Newspaper Assoc. of America] So, in San Antonio, our circulation base is pretty solid. Our advertising base is pretty solid.

We have lost, like a lot of other newspapers, classified advertising through the years because of Monster.com and because of Craigslist. These are phenomena that are out there and that we’ve got to address if we’re going to remain viable. Also, department stores. The big auto dealers. Foley’s, which is one



Brett Thacker of the San Antonio Express-News speaks during A Wake-up Call conference.
Photo by Wendi Poole

of our largest advertisers, is going away in the next year, and Macy's will not advertise as much as they did. We lost Montgomery Ward's, we lost Kmart.

So, fortunately, we're in a growing market where new business activity is almost constant, so we're able to replace that business. But there's going to come a point—we underwent a strategic conversation last year on where's our business headed—and the mantra was, we're not going to

keep growing like this, which is the core product—it's gotta be horizontal, like that. That means niche products.

Launching Niche Products

Niche products take some investment in terms of manpower and the corporate fathers also have to bless this, too.

One thing that we had done a couple of years ago—honestly, it was a cost-saving measure to save newsprint on our full run—is a publication we do every Saturday

called "Business Express," and I have it here. It's—the main motivation, and several other markets have done this—is, stock pages are not used very much. Everyone goes online for the most part, but there is a die-hard core of readers, older readers, who still want their information out of the newspapers.

At the same time we knocked our stock pages out of our Saturday newspapers, we provided to them—at a cost, of course—a pub-

lication, it's 36 pages each week, half of it is stock listings, the mutuals, a full run of them, plus some pretty good journalism too, along the way. And we've achieved our goal in terms of the circulation on this. We wanted to get the circulation to a certain point to where the returns would not be diminished by—I hate to use this phrase, as an editor—the bottom line.

In the meantime, we've produced some good stories in this newspaper, in this 15,000 circulation, and it's gone over to the main sheet, too. So that's been a success journalistically as well as saving our resources.

Now, last year, about a year and a half ago, . . . we launched a bilingual weekly called Connexion.... We envisioned this originally as half Spanish, half English. If you know anything about San Antonio, about half the people here can speak Spanish. The reading and writing proficiency is about 10 percent or less. A lot of those people actually have no preference; they can go either way. . . . A lot of people who come up from the South will go to Dallas, they'll go to Houston, they'll go elsewhere, but this is a very acculturated

community. A lot of our Hispanics have been here for many generations.

As a result. . . over time, Connexion has gone from 50/50 to more like 80/20, English to Spanish. People ask, well, how do you figure that out? It's more by feel than it is by anything else. People tend to like shorter blocks of Spanish so they can at least test it. . . . That's been a big success in terms of advertising. Our circulation is ahead of budget, ahead of plan. We have 50,000 circulation weekly. . . .

Beyond that, there are other niches too that we need to look into. Of course, online plays a big role in that. In fact, we are blogging here today. Getting our arms around the youth market—that's the big issue. The median age of our readership continues to creep upward. I think our daily readership is, like, 50. Our Sunday readership is in the mid to upper 40s. That just creeps upward and upward. . . and the question is, how do you appeal to the younger readers? Do you do it online, do you do it with a print product? We tried dedicated pages in our feature section, with a dedicated editor—that didn't work that well.

Now we have an annual advisory board called the Teen Team, where we take a couple of dozen kids from around the area and our features editor. . . works with these kids to help them develop their writing skills, so we get their voices in the newspaper.

They have voiced their opinion on the election, they do movie reviews, they do all kinds of things, so we're getting them into print and hopefully planting the seeds in them . . . it's a start. We'd love to do a stand-alone publication, we're trying to get our arms around it. . . . And there are blogs too, getting back to the online factor.

Reporters as Bloggers, Citizens as Contributors

We've toyed with a lot of things. We can only do so much at once. A lot of our reporters are starting to do blogs now, in their areas of expertise—for instance, we have a beer blog, a gardening blog. We will blog big events, like, we blogged the hurricane recently—we had our reporters out there filing dispatches from various points around the map in Texas and Mexico, where they were.

I would like to see something

'A lot of our reporters are starting to do blogs now, in their areas of expertise — for instance, we have a beer blog, a gardening blog. We will blog big events, like we blogged the hurricane recently....'

‘We’ve been here for 140 years, I think we’re going to stay around, but we’ve got to adapt. I think niche is definitely where it’s at...’
— Brett Thacker

that Seattle has done, Houston is doing it, where your community is broken down within your large metro area and you build a site for them—essentially, here are some links to the community, here are stories out of the main product to populate the site, but then you have citizen journalists who can help to put more content there.

That’s a model that I think we’re all going to go to at some point if we’re going to stay relevant. We’ve been here for 140 years, I think we’re going to stay around, but we’ve got to adapt. I think niche is definitely where it’s at, but we cannot ignore the main product because, being all things to all people, that all major metro dailies are, you’re not going to please everyone. With the Internet, obviously, we’re hearing more and more each day from them, and we’ve answered them. We try to be as interactive as possible, but in the end—I think really, 10, 15, 20 years from now. . . we’re still going to be here, I think.

Have any of you seen the Epic 2015 video that’s online? It’s very scary at first. When I first saw it—this basically—go Google

Epic 2014, there’s a 2015 version now—it envisions a world ten years from now, taking the technology we have today and extrapolating it forward, so that basically Google and Amazon rule the world. Mainstream media is just for the infirm, the elderly or something. . . it’s kind of a doom and gloom scenario.

I think we have brand names in our community that we can parlay into something special, it’s just a matter of getting the motivation from our corporate fathers to say, this is the future, and I think at Hearst we’re starting to see this now. We have a very bright man named Lincoln Milstein who is on board with us now who is pushing us more to the blogosphere, more to other areas online to extend the franchise and insure our future.

Question from the audience: It seems to me the notion of niche media has a dilemma built into it: journalism is supposed to create common ground, common understanding. . . but if everyone is reading what is interesting to them and what is relevant to them, how do you reconcile that with this need to

create a broad understanding?

Brett Thacker: . . . I think we have to pick our niches, at least from the get-go, the ones that make the most sense. But in terms of being all things to all people. . . the Internet is a great democratizer of information, obviously. You can get it out there, you can say what you have to say, you can find whatever you want out there. . . By the same token, I also see a coarsening in the dialogue that we have, with our readers and just among each other in all of society, because I think the great broad center is either mute or people are gravitating to either end of the spectrum and as a result, we are polarized. That’s what we’re seeing every day, because people can seek out—if they disagree with something in the newspaper or on our website, they can go find something contradictory and say, “Why didn’t you print this?” Well, what they’re talking about is extremely partisan and, quite frankly, to use the word, it’s biased. But it appeals to their sensibility. They can seek it out. They feel warm. They’re conforming in their own way. Here we are, trying to occupy the moral and journalistic high ground, and we’re getting shelled from both sides because people want what they believe. And it’s out there and they can seek it and be reaffirmed daily, online.

What the News Media Future Will Look Like

A Jay Rosen-Led Conversation

Jay Rosen • New York University • Author of the blog PressThink
David Gyimah • Producer and journalist • University of Westminster, UK
Bill Grueskin • Managing editor • Wall Street Journal Online
Chris Nolan • Stand-alone journalist
Craig Newmark • Founder • Craigslist.com

‘I know the title of this conference is Restoring the Trust, but I wonder if it has more to do with restoring the identity and restoring the sense that you as a newspaper or a publication or a weblog, you build an identity with your readers and they thereby build their identity around what you are doing.’

—Bill Grueskin, Wall Street Journal Online

Direct Feeds From Citizens at the Scene [See David Gyimah’s view of the future at ViewMagazine.tv by visiting his website www.viewmagazine.tv]

Jay Rosen: Okay, so that’s a vision of the future that says it could look like magazine journalism plus broadcast journalism plus

web, all sort of working together.

Bill Grueskin, Managing editor, Wall Street Journal Online

Building an Identity With Readers

Bill Grueskin: My vision of the future came to me while on a subway in New York a couple weeks ago... on the subway nowadays, you really look people over, and I was watching one woman. . . she

had two things in her hand. One was this newspaper called A.M. New York—it’s a very popular free tabloid and the other thing was this stuff, which is called ‘vitamin water’—do any of you drink vitamin water? She was reading this newspaper like it was the last chapter of The DaVinci Code and she was drinking this stuff like it was the elixir of the gods, and it



From top: Panelists Bill Grueskin, Chris Nolan, Craig Newmark and David Gyimah.

Photos by Wendi Poole

kind of made me think two things: one was . . . it wasn't that long ago that people would pay for this [the free tabloid] and get this for free [the costly water] . . . but then what I really thought about was. . . why would anybody pay \$2.99 for a bottle of this stuff—okay, 1.99; the profit margin . . . must be—I went and bought one and brought it to my office and I asked people under 30 working for me and I said, what is it about this stuff, and one of the women said, it shows who you are, you drink this, it says something about you. . . what interested me, I thought about it some more, and it used to be that what you read said something about you, that what you read used to really define who you were in many ways. And I say that as editor of a website that is a subscription website.

We have just a little under 750,000 subscribers. One thing I've found about the Journal is that, for a lot of people, it is part of their identity. . . . I think that's been true for a long time about newspapers. . . . I know the title of this conference is Restoring the Trust, but I wonder if it has more to do with restoring the identity and restoring the sense that you as a newspaper or a publication or a weblog, you build an identity with your readers and they thereby build their identity around what you are doing.

So when you ask what's going to get bigger, I think. . . people

are going to build their identity around what other people are writing. And yet this is a challenge for the mainstream media guys like me to figure out how are we going to adapt our journalism, and especially our websites in order to enable people to be part of them.

Jay Rosen: We're going to move right to Chris Nolan, who is in the midst of trying to build her own operation online. When you look at what's going to happen with the craft that you love, with the world that you've been a part of as a journalist, what do you see?

Chris Nolan, Stand-alone online journalist

How People Consume News Has Changed

Chris Nolan: I see a lot of things. . . All right. The one thing I want to start out by saying is, there are a lot of people who read the Wall Street Journal . . . but as someone who wrote for the New York Post for a very long time, I'm here to tell you that there are lots of those people out there too—they just don't talk about how they used to read the New York Post. And that, my friends, is one of the conundrums of journalism in urban markets.

I see a bunch of things going on, but the main thing I see is probably your worst nightmare, which is that people don't identify and readers don't identify with one site, one publication, one place. That they start to surf and surf ag-

gressively, and they move through websites not as you, as newspaper editors or educators of journalists prefer to think of them as these entities, but they sort of clip along, clippety, clippety, because they're using a technology called RSS, which stands for 'really simple syndication'. And it allows them to read the headlines the way we in newsrooms have forever read the AP wire. "Oh, that happened? Oh, cool. Okay, we've gotta move somebody over there, okay."

That's how people outside, who consume and read what we in the newspaper business have been producing for the past twenty years now get their news. It's a big change. It's only going to get bigger.

I am building a website that is a collection of voices on the web that is designed to take advantage of this. How am I going to do that? I am hoping that I am going to get some help from big media, because what I'm going to say is, I

have voices. My voices are popular. Would you like my popular voices to appear in your not-so-popular newspaper? Perhaps you will become more popular.

It's a pretty basic strategy, but it's based on the idea that readers go to voices, and readers go to information that is presented in a new way, because information is ubiquitous. And I don't see that stopping. I mean, we're in the midst of it right now, and it is the most frightening thing to people



Conference participants talk during dinner on Aug. 9 at A Wake-Up Call conference in San Antonio.
Photo by Wendi Poole



Craig Newmark.
Photos by Wendi Poole

like Bill and the Wall Street Journal and even more so, to the New York Times.

But it's absolutely enervating to people like me who spent much of their career in places like the New York Post, where it's like, "Okay, let's go get 'em!" So, that's what I see.

Jay Rosen: Craig, I suspect you were invited here not because you were a journalist or are really doing any journalism yourself, but for what you might know about trust, which is the theme of this conference. So, when you look at where the world is going and where the world of trust online is going, and try to envision the future of your own organization, what are you seeing?

Craig Newmark, Founder, Craigslist.com

Newspapers Once Again as Centers of Community Service Instead of Profit

Craig Newmark: I'm very aware that I'm speaking, in a large respect, with some ignorance because I'm pretty much a dilettante in these matters. . . . one reporter asked if I was the anti-Christ of the

'...one reporter asked if I was the anti-Christ of the print media... given the work I do on Craigslist as a customer service rep...'

— Craig Newmark

print media. . . given the work I do on Craigslist as a customer service rep, fortunately I've become real optimistic about people. Combine that with my rich fantasy life and here's my take on things:

It used to be, from what I've read and from what a lot of people in the business have told me, newspapers used to be regarded as a community service.

That's how we perceive ourselves. We're not a nonprofit—we're almost all free, but we are, on paper, a for-profit—and the deal is that, when it comes to newspapers, they used to be perceived primarily as providing the public with a service, even way back in the mid-1700s when pamphlets were the big deal—I guess that's the earliest form I know of citizen journalism.

Nowadays, from what people who seem to know the news business a lot more than I do tell me, is that newspapers are increasingly perceived as profit centers. So in my optimism, I see this whole movement—that of citizen journalism, that of the destructive economics—as maybe changing

the focus back for mainstream news on being community service rather than a profit center. That may not make Rupert Murdoch happy—although I have been impressed by his appearances on *The Simpsons*.

Putting Some Attitude in the News

Other trends I think I see, especially when I talk to the youth—remember, the most trusted name in news among the young demographics. . . is *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. This may not be music to one's ears but you know, he takes chances, he tries to tell the truth. This makes a big difference. I do think news with an attitude will become more and more important.

A couple weeks ago I was in London and for the first time, reading the British press seriously, the *Guardian*, stuff like that. These guys have attitudes, they're biased, you know what their biases are, and they're often smartasses, with which I can identify, and the deal is that I think that's going to be a big trend in news.

I think in our country we've had

an experiment in what's called objectivity, but Dan [Gillmor] over there wrote this essay—I think it's called "The End of Objectivity"—and I think we're going to replace that with something which I guess is just plain fairness. I think that will change things.

Chris Nolan: One reason the UK press is the way it is, is because it's so competitive—I mean, how many papers were you reading?

Craig Newmark: Well, Chris has a good point and maybe the UK press is competitive because different papers have distinct attitudes. . . when any of us read stuff or listen to the news, we're often looking for attitude, for point of view, something which isn't just bland.

And sometimes you know, when someone is reporting the news. . . well, the best example is the White House Press Corps, where I've spoken to people and they say they know they're being lied to, but they can't say it. I don't know why, but maybe that's the illusion of objectivity. . .

Using Technology to Post the Most Trustworthy Version

There are new technologies that are going to promote these trends. People are starting to develop now, in the sense of getting funding, websites which will do things. . . people are trying to build the mechanisms, which will extract out of the news, what are the really big stories that are happening, and what are the most trustworthy versions of those stories. I'm hoping they also add follow-up to that. . . sometimes I see really big stories that are in the news one day, and then disappear the next. Those are happening, and frankly, me personally, I'm considering a microscopic investment in one of them. Just to make that perfectly clear, that's Craig talking, not Craigslist talking. . .

And finally, technology changes. My instincts tell me that in a few years we may have these little itty-bitty flexible displays come online, that you can actually roll up. If those start becoming integrated into cell phones, that's going to change the news business somehow, and that kind of thing may catch us all by surprise.

Questions from the audience:

Q: Craig, I've seen you quoted as saying your aim is not to destroy the conventional base of newspapers, but you can see how, to a degree, that's happening. . . you've said you'd consider including quality journalism or endowing a journalism institution. . . which, if any of those, is true?

Craig Newmark: Right now, we don't know what we're doing, frankly. . . something needs to be done, it's incumbent upon us, so we're exploring things. For example, I fantasize about—personally, not Craigslist—sending money to the Center for Public Integrity or the Center for Investigative Reporting. . . the deal is, maybe my role in this personally is just to make noise, accelerate the movement. . . and then maybe I just stop talking then, because I'm out of my depth. . . there is a possibility of seeing a personal announcement in the near future of supporting one activity out there. . .

How Craigslist Built a Sense of Community. . . And What Newspapers Can Learn

Q: Craig, what can you tell journalists, from your experience

‘...when any of us read stuff or listen to the news, we're often looking for attitude, for point of view, something which isn't just bland.’

— Craig Newmark

building Craigslist, about building a sense of community at their papers?

And Bill, what does the average reporter at your online WSJ think regarding building community/trust online? What does your newsroom think about citizen journalism?

Craig Newmark: Without trying to, we feel we've built a culture of trust and goodwill—a lot of it has to do with turning over control of our site, for the most part, to the people who use it. . . a lot of it has been through the obvious attitude that we have when it matters.

For example, a lot of people have noticed that when something bad happens—there are some bad guys out there—we get real passionate about the Bill of Rights kind of issues. And again, we just try to turn over more and more power and control over to people and to provide, oh, unthinkable levels of customer service. There's a lot more to it, but that's the gist.

Jay Rosen: What if, to produce more trust online, newspaper organizations were required to turn over more control to users?

Chris Nolan: Newspaper organizations could do what Craigslist does, which is to let people write their own classified ads online. And they would find that the cost of a classified ad would be substantially reduced.

There's no magic to what this guy has done. I know you guys are all scared of him, but he's a really

'Newspaper organizations could do what Craigslist does, which is to let people write their own classified ads online. And they would find that the cost of a classified ad would be substantially reduced.'— Chris Nolan

nice guy!

Bill Grueskin: . . . first of all, most reporters wouldn't even know what you're talking about, citizen journalism. . . . One of the things I've wondered about is whether the collective wisdom of citizens can be utilized to do journalism. . . part of it is, somehow, capturing the energy and wit and wisdom of the people in your town in a way that is a benefit to everybody. Newspapers could do it right now, and if they don't, then Craig will do it in a couple of years.

Jay Rosen: There are start-ups based on this premise. . . Back-Fence.com is the most well-known; there are others who are trying to get to that level of information. . .

Where Does Traditional Journalism Stand?

Q: Does the traditional practice of journalism as we have known it—disinterested research, verification, peer-reviewed—have any place in the future of the news media? All I've heard about tonight is talk about content, technology, the like. I'm feeling a little confused.

David Gyimah: . . . There are people who are finding new ways, new discourses, getting in touch with communities, and there's a rearguard battle from big institutions who can see them being shipped away and are either beginning to re-evaluate in the way they teach or are going back to basics. . . that's exactly what the BBC's up to. The BBC, after the Hutton inquiry and the weapons of mass destruction, has gone back to basics, big time. In other words, we will not print a story until we evaluate and get a third source and get a fifth source. . . to them, it's all good journalism. . . . As far as the BBC goes, there's a very defined way of doing things, and [they say] if you guys want to go off and build communities, that's great—we've got our way, and that's the standard way.

Jay Rosen: I believe there's definitely a future for verified, reliable information. It's always going to be important to a certain group of people, especially those who can pay for it. Journalism that existed in that way, before there was any mass press, will go on. There's always going to be people who need



Bill Grueskin gestures during a panel discussion at the conference.
Photos by Wendi Poole

reliable, verifiable information to trade with, to make important decisions with. Those people will get it.

It's whether there's going to be that kind of verifiable, reliable information available to the larger public—that is what is in doubt. And I don't think that that's in any sense guaranteed. We don't know.

Craig Newmark: The whole idea of having systems which allow both professional fact-checkers

but also just people in the public who know stuff—that kind of stuff is being evolved and built now, and that's a big deal. If you get hold of Fabrice over there [Fabrice Florin, NewsTrust] he can address a particular effort going on. There are others. I've even spoken to the guys at FactCheck.org about how they expand their mission. That's not to be confused with FactCheck.com. . . these mechanisms are evolving, they are a really big

deal, and I'd like to see a lot more of FactCheck.

Putting the Trends in Context

Chris Nolan: One of the problems with the conversation we're having now about the news business and what's going on online is that there's almost too much to talk about. And that people are getting their trends confused. There's a bad economic trend in the newspaper and big media business. There's an explosion of interest in what's going on online. Many of these things are coming together, and the side effects and the ripple effects are uncomfortable for people who have been used to doing things a certain way. That has a lot to do with the way the Internet is affecting all of us. So, when you start to think about what the future of journalism is, maybe it's worth looking back and thinking about how much has changed in terms of how we've used technology in the past ten years. . . if you think about that in relation to the news business, I find it helps me drop these arguments into place a bit more cogently.

‘It's whether there's going to be that kind of verifiable, reliable information available to the larger public – that is what is in doubt.’
— Jay Rosen
