transcend nations. Its coverage of small personal dramas of everyday life, triumphs or tragedies in science and education, and conflict or transcendence in religion and culture may create a community as much as its coverage of politics builds a public agenda. This is not to deny that the same means of global communication, which is an indispensable instrument for bringing people together, can also be used to sow hate and fear, chauvinism for one’s own group and contempt for others. There is no natural law declaring that good information will triumph over bad, but neither does the opposite hold, a Gresham’s law for information that bad information drives out good. There is unprecedented opportunity in the new global ecology of information to make the best we can of research and reporting in the service of humane self-government.

Chapter Twelve
THE FIRST NEWS REVOLUTION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

WHAT IS A JOURNALIST? Someone who gets a paycheck from a news organization for producing news stories? Or anyone with a cell phone camera or a Facebook account? What is a news story? Can a tweet, a blog post, a magazine piece, or a book based on reporting all be “news”?

What is a newsroom? Is it physically and philosophically separate from the business office, as it was long reputed to be, or is the wall between newsroom and business office only a set of movable screens? If the latter, is that a sign of the corruption of a once-proud profession, or is it a realistic adaptation of a once-arrogant guild to market realities and audience tastes?

All of the suggested answers to these questions are correct, and that is very confusing. Everything we thought we once knew about journalism needs to be rethought in the digital age. The ground journalism walks upon is shaking, and the experience for both those who work in the field and for those on the outside studying it is dizzying.

Blogging began in the mid-1990s but did not gain a general public presence until 2002 when several bloggers led the informational campaign that forced Senator Trent Lott to resign his post as majority leader of the U.S. Senate. Online job listing sites began with Monster.com in 1994. In 1995, eBay became the first of many online sites for people to auction objects they owned, which someone, somewhere, might want to buy. Craigslist was just a local San Francisco site for classified advertising until 2000 when it began to set up city-specific sites around the country and then around the world. Individuals can place ads on Craigslist for free and reach anyone in a city or region who might want to sublet their apartment or buy a used bicycle—or they pay to place an ad in the local newspaper with its declining circulation and its negligible readership among young people, whether in print or online. Newspapers, whose income from classified advertising as a portion of their total revenues had grown from 18 percent to 40 percent between 1950 and 2000, were deeply hurt as classified advertisers flocked to the Internet. The first social networking site (Friendster) began in 2002 and Facebook in 2004. YouTube launched in 2005. In 2003, when the first edition of this book appeared, the reinvention of journalism had scarcely begun because most publishers, journalists, and scholars did not then recognize just how quickly many (but not all) of the old conventions and practices were crumbling.

The convolutions of the U.S. news industry in the past decade have forced new understandings of what journalism is and what it has been. There is no canonical account of this, because the changes have been multidimensional, large in some areas and small in others, faster here and slower there, and they are still in process. Looked at in global perspective, the condition of journalism is even harder to grasp because printed newspapers are gaining readers and reaping profits as never before in some countries—India is the most prominent example—whereas in some mature industrial democracies with deep Internet penetration (Finland or Sweden, for instance), the economics of the newspaper business has been far less tumultuous than in the United States. But even where economic conditions are more favorable for "legacy" media organizations, the reshuffling of what news means has been dramatic in the past decade. The boundaries of journalism, which just a few years ago seemed relatively clear, stable, and permanent, have become less distinct, and this blurring, while potentially the foundation of progress even as it is the source of risk, has given rise to a new set of journalistic principles and practices. Journalism's wavering boundaries can be broadly construed in the following six ways.

1. The line between reader and writer has blurred. Readers and writers have never been rigidly separated in journalism. News organizations have long invited comments from their audiences. From their beginnings, American newspapers have run letters from readers, often letters that take issue with a newspaper editorial or, later, with the way the newspaper has covered a particular topic. Beginning in the 1960s, some American papers adopted a Scandinavian system of appointing an "ombudsman" to receive comments and complaints from the public and to write an occasional column that addresses these criticisms. The ombudsman has the freedom to defend the newspaper, or to side with the readers against it, sometimes eliciting an acknowledgment of a mistake, poor judgment, or insensitivity from newspaper editors and reporters.
But not since the early nineteenth century when newspapers began to hire full-time reporters and to produce more of their content themselves have the roles of amateurs advanced so quickly as in the past decade. Most professional journalists did not welcome these changes at first. They were particularly skeptical about blogging. Bloggers were disparaged as self-absorbed, angry, extreme venters of opinion. While this may have been an accurate characterization of some blogs, many others, however, are produced by people with expert knowledge and a desire to share it or people with personal experience and a flair for writing about it. Often these bloggers develop substantial followings. In many fields or subfields of knowledge, informed members of a microcommunity find leading bloggers who write about their particular area of interest to be indispensable. This is true in a small domain we could call the “futureofjournalism” world, and it is also the case in those microcommunities focused on, for example, the economic crisis, legal issues, local sports, food and health, and so on. The Milwaukee Journal has spun off a subscription-only online sports blog for fans of the Green Bay Packers, the favorite American football team for the region the newspaper serves. Bloggers have a significant place in various communities of political activists. Today the quest for reliable information is addressed not only by journalists reinventing themselves but by volunteer experts. Our informational environment operates more and more according to Joy’s law, an aphorism attributed to Bill Joy of Sun Microsystems: “No matter who you are, most of the smartest people work for someone else.” Or they work for themselves. No matter how skilled the journalists in a large newsroom or how well informed and well placed their sources, the smartest person is likely to be someone else somewhere else, and thanks to the Internet, he or she may have already started a blog or posted a comment on yours. It is Joy’s law plus the intellectual curiosity—or obsessiveness—of thousands of unpaid individuals who write and correct and update entries that have made Wikipedia an invaluable online reference work and also a handy news source because it gets updated so quickly.

A milestone was passed at the end of 2008 when the New York Times published an obituary about Doris Dungey, an influential voice on the collapse of the mortgage market in a blog she wrote under the pseudonym “Tanta.” Dungey was an Ohioan who worked in the mortgage business, knew a lot about the business, had some literary talent, and was encouraged to write for a financial website, where her posts developed a following. She analyzed what went wrong with mortgage financing, and her blog posts began to be watched closely by insiders; they were cited with approval by analysts at the Federal Reserve and by the New York Times columnist and Nobel Prize economist Paul Krugman. The blogosphere, in some measure, rewards the loudest, but it also gives attention to the best informed and most acute. By 2008, this second face of blogging was well established and Doris Dungey’s obituary showed that the conventional news media recognized it.

Readers have not only entered into producing or coproducing news content, but they have also become voluntary and selective news distribution managers, circulating news from friend to friend. As a result, news dissemination for the general public has grown more lateral and less hierarchical. That is to say, people get more of their news about the world in something like the way they have long learned news about their friends.
and neighbors: they pass on information or gossip to people they know. This is especially so with the growing popularity of "social media" sites like Twitter and Facebook, in which friends exchange news about the wider world as well as about one another.

2. The distinction among tweet, blog post, newspaper story, magazine article, and book has blurred. Scholars who study journalism invariably focus on the story and usually the front-page story. But there is a whole "curriculum" of journalism, and the front-page story, as media scholar James Carey wrote, is only the introductory course. "Journalism is a curriculum. Its first course is the breaking stories of the daily press. There one gets a bare description: the identification of the actors and the events, the scene against which the events are played out and the tools available to the protagonists. Intermediate and advanced work—the fine-grained descriptions and interpretations—await the columns of analysis and interpretation, the weekly summaries and commentaries, and the book-length exposition."3

In journalism studies as in journalism itself, attention centers on the front page, but reporters do not stop writing when they have left the scene of their reporting. How many journalists have written books based on their reporting on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars over the past decade? There are books by Washington Post reporters Rajiv Chandrasekaran (Imperial Life in the Emerald City), Steve Coll (Ghost Wars), Thomas Ricks (The Gamble and Fiasco), Anthony Shadid (Night Draws Near), David Finkel (The Good Soldiers), as well as several books by Post editor Bob Woodward; NBC correspondent Richard Engel (War Journal); Wall Street Journal correspondents Farnaz Fassihi (Waiting

for an Ordinary Day) and Ron Suskind (The One Percent Doctrine); NPR reporter Anne Garrels (Naked in Baghdad); New York Times military reporter Michael R. Gordon (Cobra II); Newsweek reporter Michael Isikoff (Hubris); New Yorker reporter George Packer (The Assassín’s Gate); and U.S. News military correspondent Linda Robinson (Tell Me How This Ends), to name just a few. This is journalism, too.

That the act of reporting extends from tweet to book (or, in video format, from cell phone camera shot to YouTube to TV news story to feature-length documentary) does not suggest that the story in the daily newspaper in its familiar printed form has remained just what it used to be. It is not the contained, finished product that journalists and readers once took for granted. Now when a news story is posted online or even in print, the newsroom norm and public expectation is that it will be updated regularly. As a result, there is a new pressure on reporters to stay alert to even small developments related to an already posted and printed story. The result for the writer is permanent occupational vertigo: the story is never finished, never in final form. Journalism has become a 24/7 job. News is becoming, as media scholar Mark Deuze has observed, "liquid."

"What you see with journalists these days is a pace of work fueled not just by passion—although that is where it begins—but powered by caffeine and aggravated by the felt need to be constantly available and connected. There is no downtime. It makes one think of Charlie Chaplin on the assembly line or, as Dean Starkman envisioned it in Columbia Journalism Review, a hamster on a wheel."

3. The line between professional and amateur has blurred, and a variety of "pro-am" relationships have emerged. This is not quite the
same as the murky distinction between readers and writers. There are now ways in which amateurs participate in the journalistic process without being writers or photographers. Here the professional journalist enlists amateurs as co-workers or research assistants. The Public Insight Network at Minnesota Public Radio, which its originators have shared with other public radio stations, enables each station to maintain a database of far-flung audience members they can turn to for opinions and information. ProPublica, a New York–based online-only professional news organization dedicated to investigative reporting, enlisted volunteers across the country to send in information on the disbursement and actual use of funds in the Obama administration’s economic recovery program. Here members of the general public became research assistants in an activity that has been dubbed “crowdsourcing.” This is not a case of readers becoming writers. Participants are not necessarily expressing themselves but rather contributing something of importance to a larger cause or project.8

4. The boundaries delineating for-profit, public, and nonprofit media have blurred, and cooperation across these models of financing has developed. American journalism has been unusual among industrial democracies in its domination by commercial media. American journalists have traditionally been hostile to any government participation in news gathering. This remains true, but more U.S. journalists are coming to acknowledge the awkward fact that the U.S. government has subsidized commercial news operations far more than First Amendment purists recognize. Beginning with the Postal Act of 1792, the government gave newspapers preferential rates for the use of the U.S. postal service. At a time when the population was dispersed rather than highly concentrated in central cities and when newspapers themselves had no mechanism for delivering papers to customers, the availability of postal delivery at subsidized rates greatly enhanced news distribution. At a time when so many newspapers filled their pages with stories reprinted from other papers, the Postal Act’s provision that newspapers could be mailed to other newspapers without paying any postage at all was a great subsidy for news content. The U.S. government has, in effect, continually subsidized an important part of local television and print news reporting since the late nineteenth century with its establishment of the National Weather Bureau; the bureau remains today the authoritative source of national weather reporting.9 Many commercial news organizations—particularly television news—have their own weather reporting services, but in Alaska, with its small and scattered population and vast territory, the federal government provides the only weather reporting.10 For forty years the Public Broadcasting System and National Public Radio have been producing news reports, which only public financing made possible. The First Amendment states that Congress shall not “abridge freedom of speech or of the press.” It does not say that the government shall not find ways to enhance freedom of speech or of the press.11

Acknowledging that government has long played a part in directly underwriting commercial news gathering begins to obscure the stark conceptual divide between government-supported and independent news gathering. The image of the self-contained, independent commercial news enterprise is compromised even further by several other developments. In the emerging news environment, news gathering is becoming both
more cooperative and more competitive. Today, commercial news businesses cooperate with (1) other commercial news businesses; (2) government supported news operations like PBS and NPR; (3) nonprofit news organizations, particularly the dozens that have emerged online; and (4) nonprofit news production capabilities in journalism schools and other areas of higher education.

The old tradition of news organizations competing against one another in order to survive is giving way to a new, more collaborative tradition. Now survival depends on cooperation. The incomparable independence of the individual news organizations, once their hallmark, has weakened and is being replaced with a growing sense of a common public obligation. Commercial enterprises are making agreements with other commercial enterprises to cover aspects of the news jointly or to trade stories with one another without exchanging dollars. (The eight largest Ohio newspapers launched an arrangement in 2008 whereby they freely reprint stories from one another concerning each paper's home city; the Washington Post and Baltimore Sun started a similar arrangement in 2009 in sports coverage and with respect to some other Maryland state reporting as well.}

New nonprofit news organizations are working with commercial news organizations and public broadcasters to get the word out: the editors of Voice of San Diego, an online news operation in San Diego, California, appear on commercial television and on public radio to discuss their online news reports; ProPublica gives its stories away to any other news organizations, commercial or nonprofit or public, that might want them; and the university-based nonprofit Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting has freely provided its stories to some fifty newspapers in the region.

5. Within commercial news organizations, the line between the newsroom and the business office has blurred. This traditional separation has long been regarded as the sacred guarantor of the integrity of news and the symbol of the virtue of the journalist who cannot be swayed by the commercial needs of the news organization. But today, even at the most venerated news organizations, this boundary is breaking down. In academic year 2009–10, for the first time in the ninety-five-year history of the Columbia Journalism School, the required introductory course that used to teach a little media history, a little First Amendment law, and a little media ethics now also includes instruction in media economics and entrepreneurship.

The risk in this is obvious—that journalists increasingly will bow to financial priorities and the stories they produce will be trash. They will abandon boring, but valuable, municipal coverage for tales of politicians, entertainers, or sports heroes laid low by sex, drugs, or gambling. Moreover, if the roles of newsroom and business office begin to confluence, “bottom line” considerations will loom larger for the reporters, coercing them to think hard about how many eyeballs are glued to their program or pages rather than to a rival’s.

Can there be an upside to this? Yes. A corps of journalists unshackled to an actual audience poses its own sort of risk—irrelevance, elitism, a cliquish echo-chamber world where journalists wind up talking primarily to one another. Could it turn out that the best model for journalism is a mixed model rather than a model of pure journalistic independence? That journalism can be better if it is partly dependent on, and hence sensitive to, audience preferences than if it reflects only the insular and intramural preferences of professionals themselves.
Journalists are becoming more aware of what journalism professor Jay Rosen memorably called "the people formerly known as the audience." And they know with some precision what in the past could only be guessed at—what their audience liked in today's news. Market research assembled such information in the past, but it arrived slowly and in relatively abstract numbers. Today, however, there is ever-present evidence of which story on a given day was most popular, which was most frequently e-mailed to friends. Should a reporter care only about the "buzz" that her story generates? Of course not. But neither can a news organization that is struggling to survive in the marketplace ignore data on which stories are most e-mailed.

Sensitivity to audience preferences is not the same as subservience to them. In 2010, New York Times reporter Nina Bernstein said, in receiving an award for her work, that "the best stories" are "the stories nobody knows they want or need because they don't yet know that they exist." Those stories are either hidden away or lurking in the shadows where reporters rarely venture. How do journalists recognize those stories and drag them into the daylight? How do they develop knowledge, sources, and instincts about locating such stories? By professional training, skill, and experience and by independence of mind, persistence, and vision—not by reading the latest television ratings or "most e-mailed stories" list from the day before.

6. The line between old media and new media has blurred, practically beyond recognition. Not only do newspapers, radio, and television news operations run their own websites, but these sites are among the most widely read of all news websites. Not only have newspapers added an online product to their print editions, but their online journalists are increasingly well integrated into the news operation as a whole rather than set apart in a secondary newsroom of their own. In 2005, when media scholar Pablo Boczkowski studied the work habits of the journalists at Clarin.com, the web operation of Argentina's leading newspaper, Clarin.com (launched in 1996) was entirely separate from the print newsroom; today it is entirely integrated into a single newsroom.16

Journalistic authority has grown more individual- and less institutional-based. The work of journalism can be done—and done well—in low-overhead settings that require little more than a reporter and her laptop. New York Times' media reporter David Carr wrote in 2009, "Somewhere down in the Flatiron, out in Brooklyn, over in Queens or up in Harlem, cabals of bright young things are watching all the disruption with more than an academic interest. Their tiny netbooks and iPhones, which serve as portals to the cloud, contain more informational firepower than entire newsrooms possessed just two decades ago. And they are ginning content from their audiences in the form of social media or finding ways of making ambient information more useful. They are jaded in the way youth requires, but have the confidence that is a gift of their age as well."17

There is a lot in this emerging news ecology to worry about—the quickened pace of communication, the reduction of editing, the shift from stylistic sobriety to snarkiness in parts (not all) of journalism. But none of these concerns, singly or collectively, represents the end of the world. None presages the end of long-form and book-length reporting and analysis. There is a line between the recording and reporting of moments and the reflection about moments linked together into coherent
narratives. We have more of the former, to be sure. But we have more of the latter, too. There is just more of everything.

What follows from this: this is the best of times for journalists, as long as they can survive on relatively little income; show themselves agile in gathering data, connections, ideas, and relationships online; and develop the psychological makeup to handle experimentation, innovation, and risk.

But is this not also the worst of times? In the past few years major newspapers, including the Baltimore Sun, Philadelphia Inquirer, Cleveland Plain Dealer, San Francisco Chronicle, and Los Angeles Times, have cut their newsroom staffs in half, letting go as many as five hundred newsroom reporters, editors, and photographers. Overall, newsroom editorial staff, which had grown from thirty-nine thousand in 1971 to sixty-seven thousand in 1992, down to fifty-nine thousand in 2002, is back now to about forty thousand. The number of newspaper reporters covering state capitals full-time fell from 524 in 2003 to 355 in 2009. Meanwhile, between 1998 and 2010, twenty U.S. newspapers and newspaper groups that supported foreign bureaus have closed all of them, including such distinguished papers as the Baltimore Sun, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Miami Herald, and Philadelphia Inquirer.

In early 2011, the ombudsman for the Washington Post acknowledged that "staggering financial losses have required unrelenting expense reductions to restore profitability. The loss of newsroom talent, through forced buyouts and voluntary departures, has been breathtaking. Some of the most respected Post journalists have left, along with institutional knowledge and leadership so desperately needed during a period of radical change." While he proudly noted that "The Post on its worst days is better than most newspapers on their best days," he concluded that "the Post's journalistic quality has declined." So where is the good news?

Recall how much journalism grew from 1970 on. Journalism organizations do not have a long tradition of deeply investing in news gathering. That practice was brief, and it was fueled by monopoly profits coinciding with a change in the journalistic weather in the 1960s and '70s that made investigation a priority as it had rarely been before. Has something been lost? Yes. But the prosperous, professional, growing, aggressive, critical, active journalism, which operated in a political culture that was committed to the public availability of government information and other politically relevant information, existed for a relatively short time from about the late 1960s into the early 2000s, not longer, and the fact is that online resources make reporting more efficient than ever before.

Journalism is one of those fields—that people enter because they love it, not because they think it will be lucrative. There is no business model for poetry or string quartets or performance art, either, and all of those pursuits endure without it. They survive with the help of philanthropic support, significant subsidies from colleges and universities, and small amounts of direct government support, too.

The opportunity for passion to fuel a career has stimulated the rise of online journalism organizations, many of which have so far shown themselves resourceful. Online magazines of opinion and commentary began as early as Salon.com (1995) and Slate.com (1996) and in 2000 journalist Josh Marshall began his blog, Talking Points Memo, which would later evolve into a news organization that does reporting as well as analysis and
commentary. The first online news organization devoted to news reporting was probably the Voice of San Diego, launched in 2005. A score of online investigative reporting-centered news organizations came together in 2009 to form the Investigative News Network. By 2011, the group boasted fifty-one member organizations—nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations dedicated to investigative reporting. For the most part, they have only modest income from advertising or reader contributions and are funded primarily by foundations and private philanthropy.

There are reasons to believe they can last. They are low cost. They do not have to invest in a printing press, in paper, or in delivery trucks. Newspapers traditionally have devoted only 11–12 percent of their expenses to news gathering, news writing, and news editing. Newsprint and ink by themselves cost more than that, and the rest goes to other production, distribution, and administrative costs—and (per 2001 data) 21 percent gross profit. The Internet levels the playing field and nearly eliminates the competitive advantage of the newspaper. If you need a printing press to make your business work, then first you need substantial capital—and once you get in, your presence becomes a barrier to others entering after you. If you need only to put up a website, you can be up and running with the savings from your summer job. A newspaper, someone has said, is basically in the trucking business. Not so for a news website. While it is easier for someone to launch a news enterprise in the online world than in the printing press world, what makes it difficult to sustain is that everybody else has the same advantage—no barriers to entry.

Still, the productivity of an individual journalist is enormously increased by the Internet and the personal computer.

The increased efficiency in news reporting arises not only because the reporters have computers but because governments, nonprofits, and advocacy groups have jumped into the public information and government accountability business. They hire reporters, editors, and photographers. They prepare publicly available, downloadable, and usable databases. They make use of open-government legislation, which gained significance over the past half century beginning with the Freedom of Information Act (1966) and the campaign finance laws of 1971 and 1974, which mandated the disclosure of campaign contributions and expenses. Later legislation required environmental impact statements and toxic release disclosures and other mechanisms for making information publicly available and accessible. Databases are also compiled for public use by a wide variety of nonprofit organizations, some of which develop excellent reputations among journalists for the integrity and reliability of their information. Not the least of the virtues of digital communication for journalists is that they can sit at their desks and gather information from other news organizations’ websites—news outlets from around the world. Young reporters take this access for granted; their older colleagues, especially those who cover foreign affairs, cannot help but experience it as miraculous.

Another resource not to be taken lightly is the seemingly endless supply of obsessive, gritty enthusiasm that journalists typically bring to their work. Journalists who demonstrate it today follow in the footsteps of their nonmainstream predecessors who, for example, set up alternative weeklies in the sixties, wrote for political magazines or vegetarian newsletters, or even carved out their living as freelance foreign correspondents, subsisting on a combination of passion and lowered expectations.
for comfort. With just about everyone I talked to at the online start-ups, whether twenty-somethings at one of their first jobs or fifty-somethings who had taken buyouts or been let go from conventional news organizations, you could hear their blood pulsing. One top editor from a major daily newspaper, now working at ProPublica, told me, "I feel I have died and gone to heaven!" She was doing more of the work that had led her to journalism in the first place than at any other time in her career.

As with culture and the arts, colleges and universities have assumed a growing role in producing journalism directly for general audiences. In 2007, Pulitzer Prize winner Walter Robinson, an investigative reporter at the Boston Globe for several decades, returned to his alma mater, Northeastern University, to teach an investigative reporting seminar to both graduate and undergraduate students. In the first two years, the students produced twelve front-page stories in the Boston Globe. Robinson proudly told me, "In all the stories so far we've not had a single correction or substantive complaint."³⁹

Evaluating where journalism stands today and where it is going will require not only taking account of the multiplying number of online news organizations and learning to assess the journalistic worth of digital communications but also reexamining our understanding of news in a global perspective. Despite the decline in the number of U.S. foreign correspondents working at major news organizations, and the retreat from maintaining foreign bureaus, it is not clear that our news from abroad is of lower quality than it was. Richard Sambrook, a veteran BBC journalist and former director of global news for the BBC, sees sunshine in the future for international news. He does not think expensive foreign bureaus will survive, but nor does he judge this a tragedy. He is not convinced that these bureaus were terribly useful and quoted Washington Post editor Marcus Brauchli's observation that many of them were established in the days of large newspaper profits "in order to be seen as 'players'" within the industry, but their readers would have been just as well served if the newspapers ran AP stories instead. Typical foreign correspondents in the twentieth century were middle-class males who worked away from the home office but remained dependent on local staff; they tended to operate with a small network of sources, boasted few nonprofessional friends in the countries reported from, and were unlikely to speak the local language. Sambrook envisions a future in which foreign correspondents will be competent in the local language, come to the job with specialized knowledge of the country, be more diverse in gender and ethnicity, work across media platforms, connect to hundreds of sources, likely work as stringers or freelancers for many news organizations rather than one, and work from home or apartment abroad rather than from a bureau. Where, in the past, they could safely assume they would be the sole source (or one of a few sources) of information on their country for readers back home, they will increasingly recognize that "they are not the only, or even main, source of information. Their role will be as much about verification, interpretation and explanation as revelation."³⁹ The other sources of information the foreign correspondent will be competing with—and verifying, interpreting, and explaining—will include local and regional news sources so that the reader back in the United States or Britain or Germany will be able to access directly, as never possible in the twentieth century, journalistic reports produced by citizens of the country in question for audiences in that country. This may
not be the best of all possible journalistic futures, but Sambrook makes a good case that it compares favorably with what used to be. In 2010 and 2011, many people in Europe and North America who followed news of the popular revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world found the coverage by Al Jazeera English to be exemplary. This is just the kind of possibility that Sambrook anticipated.

Coda

In 1920, in Liberty and the News, Walter Lippmann complained that American journalism was failing to serve the needs of modern democracy—and that it would continue to fail without help from forces beyond itself.

Why? Lippmann cited two reasons. First, journalism was in the hands of “untrained amateurs,” and though the amateur “may mean well...he knows not how to do well.” Lippmann expressed some hope for expanding “a professional training in journalism in which the ideal of objective testimony is cardinal.” By deepening the curricular riches of journalism schools—the few that then existed, making them intellectually more ambitious, each crop of new recruits to journalism could over time raise the standards of the news.

Second, the world had become far too complex to be adequately reported by the conventional tools of journalism. The news from which the reporter “must pick and choose has long since become too complicated even for the most highly trained reporter.” The problem, then, is not simply the inadequacies of individual reporters or newspapers but rather “the intricacy and unwieldiness of the subject-matter.” Journalism could report the complexity of the modern world only by making use of other agencies in which “a more or less expert political intelligence” provides the journalist reliable maps of the world. He referred to these agencies as “political observatories” to imply that they examine human affairs with scientific instruments, methods, and outlooks. He called for independent, nonpartisan scientific organizations committed to an agenda of research about the political and social world and able to produce it in a form accessible to the competent journalist. Only then could newspapers offer citizens a more thorough, complete, objective, and reliable portrait of relevant public life.

Much as Lippmann imagined, now there are political observatories aplenty. They began in Lippmann’s day. The Brookings Institution in 1921 was among the first, and the General Accounting Office (today the Government Accountability Office), also 1921, was—inside government—the sort of agency of accounting and accountability that Lippmann had in mind. And since the 1970s, the proliferation of information-generating agencies has been spectacular. While this poses a challenge to journalists—how does the reporter know which of the many agencies can be relied upon, for example?—the political observatories have enriched and improved journalism.

The problem of (U.S.) print journalism today is not the Internet alone, to be sure. Before there was Craigslist, before there was Google, before dailies were undercutting themselves with impressive websites of their own available free of charge, newspapers were faltering. Young people were not adopting the newspaper habit to the same extent as their elders. Profitable newspapers were getting gobbled up by large national chains that often had little knowledge of and little concern for the peculiarities of local communities. Distinguished news
corporations like the Tribune Company and even the New York Times Company had eyes bigger than their wallets and took on debt in acquisitions and new buildings at the worst possible time, just as the Internet came into its own and just before the economic recession that began in 2008.

But the Internet is particularly important because it is not going away and will therefore continue to threaten the survival of the American newspaper. At the same time, it is also the central factor in constructing a new model of what journalism can be.

In the past century, the growth of advertising helped make possible a press independent of party and congenial to the rise of ethics- and values-infused professional reporting. Especially in the past forty years, American democracy has had the benefit of serious, critical, and credible accountability journalism. This is because, as media theorist Clay Shirky put it, Wal-Mart was willing to subsidize the Baghdad bureau.31 That has been a very happy accident for our capacity to hold government and other powerful institutions accountable to the law and to legitimate public expectations of integrity and fair play. The United States was able to subcontract an essential building block of democratic life to commercial newspapers and commercial broadcasting.

The point Shirky makes is central, but it does not stand alone—that is, advertising did not by itself make for excellence in journalism. There are still fourteen hundred daily newspapers in the United States and only a score of them have ever had a Baghdad bureau or even sent a reporter to Baghdad, and only a few dozen have ever opened a foreign bureau anywhere. For that matter, only a minority of these papers post a reporter to their own state capital. U.S. newspapers have been stunningly prosperous for a long time, but they underinvested in serious news coverage.

Moreover, the emergence of a skeptical, critical, and aggressive accountability journalism dedicated not to partisan triumph but to a sense of public service is a product of the 1960s and after. Prosperity was its necessary but never sufficient condition. Prosperity had to be supplemented by the cultural changes that came with the 1960s and '70s, including, as we have seen, an increasingly widespread and fiercely defended professionalism. Journalism, hardly faultless today, nonetheless became more independent of government and more committed to investigation and criticism from the Vietnam War on than ever before. Quality reporting also required something else that grew from these tumultuousness decades: the broadly shared presumption in U.S. political culture that public-ness or public visibility is a central democratic value. Whether it was televised presidential debates, which began in 1960, or the Freedom of Information Act of 1966, or the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 with its requirement that new federally funded construction projects produce environmental impact statements, or the rise in the 1970s and '80s of a wide variety of advocacy and nonpartisan nongovernmental organizations whose purpose was to monitor different aspects of government activity, a demand for government transparency has grown apace.

The presumption of public visibility has had global dimensions, too. Advocacy groups like Human Rights Watch hire trained journalists as human rights reporters and take the ethical responsibilities of factual reporting seriously. Human Rights Watch also hires photographers, videographers, and radio
producers to work with their researchers in the field. Amnesty International is hiring professional journalists to produce human rights-related news for the general media.\textsuperscript{32} Some critics argue that these organizations, despite themselves, compete with one another by the rules of a conventional "media logic"—for instance, by emphasizing personalities in order to get their work noticed in the wider media.\textsuperscript{33} Even so, they are questioning, and perhaps redefining, the boundaries of journalism in our time.

It was not profitability alone but the combination of profits, professionalism, and the growing ideal of public visibility that enabled the best journalism in American history from the 1970s on. And, of course, the presumption of public-ness has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade, thanks to the Internet. This clearly produces new dilemmas, especially concerning the protection of personal privacy. That an organization like WikiLeaks can threaten confidential communications long judged essential to diplomacy is also now apparent, and debate over this may be with us for some time.

We have not reached the end of newspapers, but as Paul Starr has suggested, we may well be at "the end of the age of newspapers" when the urban daily newspapers were "central to both the production of news and the life of their metro regions."\textsuperscript{34} If the age of newspapers is one in which most people get information about public affairs from reading a newspaper, the age of newspapers ended in the United States in the 1960s when television became the primary source of news for most Americans and when public service broadcasting, particularly in northern Europe, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, became the indispensable news source. If the age of newspapers, however, is one in which the lion's share of original reporting on public affairs is provided by the wire services and daily newspapers, which in 2011 continue to make most of their money from their print editions, then we remain in an age of newspapers. (No one really knows what share of news is originally reported by newspapers and the wire services, but I have not seen any estimate less than 80 percent.)\textsuperscript{35} Most of the rest of public affairs chatter continues to live off of the investment that daily newspapers make in original reporting. Some notable online-only news organizations exist that do original reporting of their own. Some radio and television news operations also do original work; National Public Radio now maintains seventeen foreign bureaus compared to six ten years ago. American newspapers, even in the digital era, are still the engines of the U.S. news network. Relatively little original on-the-ground reporting emerges from television, radio, and online organizations (leaving aside the websites of newspapers); most news outlets embroider upon a factual base established by the news stories produced by newspaper journalists. And yet U.S. newspapers remain in serious economic straits.

Is there a way out?\textsuperscript{36} Government may be able to devise new means to offer more financial help to newspapers, but today there is little political will for this and most U.S. journalists themselves do not want to consider federal subsidy. (The fact that this has worked without diminishing free speech or free press in Britain or Sweden seems to have no traction as an argument in favor of it in the United States.) So is there a crisis in journalism or, more precisely, a crisis in public affairs news reporting? In the United States, yes, there is. In parts of Europe, the answer is yes, too, although it is less pronounced so far. In some other parts of the world, rapid economic growth in the past few decades has
fueled a considerable growth in newspapers. In India, growth has been most rapid in the country’s various indigenous languages. The globalization of human experience is far from total, and variations in local economic, political, and cultural conditions have an enormous impact on the state of journalism. While new technologies of news production are in most respects the same around the world, the political, economic, and social structures that organize their adoption, their use, or their repression, differ greatly. Scholars are just beginning to find frameworks for comparing the degree to which journalism in different countries faces an emergency.1

This is not a moment to make predictions or to suggest that we can take the measure of public affairs reporting in the world. It is in flux. To come to a more definitive conclusion would be premature. Better simply to borrow a metaphor from the early days of radio: stay tuned.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

5. Ibid., 82-83.
7. Edward Jay Epstein’s News from Nowhere (New York: Random House, 1973), 31, found that journalists had at least twenty-four hours’ notice for more than 90 percent of stories on the NBC evening news; wholly unpredictable events made up less than 2 percent of stories.

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18. Ibid., 26.


22. Ibid., 54-55.


25. Ibid., 134.


CHAPTER 12  THE FIRST NEWS REVOLUTION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1. See Philip Meyer, The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 37, on the importance of classified ads to newspapers. Eli Noam has offered different estimates, but they point in the same direction: Traditionally, he wrote, classified ads accounted for 25 percent of newspaper advertising but their share increased to 37 percent by 2006. See Eli M. Noam, Media Ownership and Concentration in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 138.

2. See Elliot King, Free for All: The Internet's Transformation of Journalism (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), for a comprehensive account of the technological changes that have influenced journalism.


10. Ibid., 56.

11. Geoffrey Cowan and David Westphal, "Public Policy and Funding the News" (Research Series: January 2010, University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, Los Angeles, 2010). Available at http://fundingthenews.usc.edu/report/ (accessed May 9, 2011). See also Geoffrey


22. See http://investigativenewsnetwork.org/about/about-inn (accessed January 10, 2011)


27. Ibid., 48.

28. Ibid., 53.

29. Ibid., 55.

30. Ibid., 56.


33. Simon Cottee and David Nolan, “Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field: ‘Everyone was dying for footage,’” Journalism Studies 8 (December 2007) 862–78.


35. Alex Jones, Laying the News (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4, estimated that “85 percent of professionally reported accountability news comes from newspapers” but wrote that he has heard other estimates up to 95 percent.


37. See David A. L. Levy and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, eds., The Changing Business of Journalism and Its Implications for Democracy (Oxford, Eng.: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2010), with chapters on Brazil, Finland, France, Germany, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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