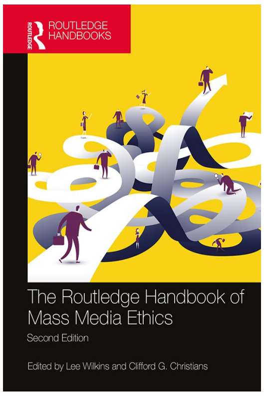

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Essential Shared Values and 21st Century Journalism

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Essential Shared Values and 21st Century Journalism

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If anyone can be a publisher, some might argue that there is no need for journalists. Individuals and groups have unprecedented ability to capture and broadcast images, events, and interpretations without the filter of traditional news organizations. The Web allows unlimited access to the opinions of others and to information from credible (and incredible) sources. Users with Internet access are adrift in a flood of visual and textual messages. It is clear that any role journalists might play in this Information Age has changed from being the primary provider of information that citizens needed to effectively function in their community, country, and world.

The technological changes that propelled interpersonal and mass communication from the analog to the digital era has caused a paradigm shift for journalism. One hallmark of paradigm shift, as described by scientist Thomas Kuhn (1962), who first coined the term, is that a significant number of relevant parties realize that old assumptions about how the social institution under examination should function no longer hold. According to Kuhn, a paradigm shift is not a neat and tidy transition. It is a revolution, a transformation in which “one conceptual worldview is replaced by another” (Take the Leap, n.d.).

The instantaneous aspect of communication in the digital era, for example, has changed many of the conventions and expectations for how it is appropriate to interact with one another. The formal salutations and closures of physical letter writing have generally been abandoned in sending texts or email. Receipt and response to physical mail might take as long as a month; receipt and response to electronic communication may be a matter of seconds. The success of a telephone call was dependent on catching someone at home or in their office near a landline and not knowing who might answer the phone. Now mobile devices provide immediate contact via voice, text, or images and it is rare for individuals to share their device with others. Vehicles for news included printed and distributed newspapers and commercially-produced shows broadcast on radio and television, most of which were competing with one another to deliver the same message to the same mass audience at the same times each day. Sender-controlled scheduled news media has been replaced by user-initiated access to real-time targeted information.

In this chapter, *Essential Shared Values and 21st Century Journalism*, I argue that while the paradigm shift has changed conventions and expectations for how journalism serves citizens, credible journalists and news organizations with commitment to the truly essential values of journalistic practice, are more necessary than ever for the development and sustenance of democratic process. The late 20th century paradigm shift from analog to digital communication, as with other paradigm shifts in the history of mass communication, includes fundamental changes in how, when, and from where people receive information; it does not change citizens' need for balanced, accurate, relevant, and credible information.

Paradigm shifts create confusion while old expectations disappear and new understandings arise. New technology paradigms do not arrive with conventions of practice attached and accepted. The period of time in which the old conventions and processes don't really apply and that new understandings and conventions are in development is notable for its lack of consensus. During this time, "competing schools of thought possess differing procedures, theories, even metaphysical presuppositions" (Stanford University, 2007).

Yet, essential aspects of social institutions endure, even during paradigm shifts. The social responsibility of journalists, at least in democracies, is to notice and report the important events and issues that citizens need to know so that they can effectively govern themselves (Elliott, 1986; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). That remains true despite paradigm shifts. Civic engagement requires information and opinions that create an individual's web of beliefs. Regardless of how distorted a particular person's beliefs may be, the unique social responsibility of those who call themselves journalists is to provide balanced, accurate, relevant, and complete information to audience members to the best of their ability. Essential shared values are those values that directly support journalists fulfilling their unique social responsibility (Elliott, 1988, pp. 29–30).

FORCES OPPOSING TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

In the current paradigm shift, four changes are most evident in 21st century journalism from that of the traditional journalistic practices that developed in the early 20th century:

1. Affordable satellite technology allows for instant transmission of messages by anyone;
2. The Internet allows for instant access to information, as well as providing an instant podium and microphone for response in the virtual, global town-square;
3. The Internet has created a 24-hour expectation for information flow, and destroyed the space- and time-limited news hole of traditional journalism; and
4. A lack of hard borders between types of mass communication—news, entertainment, advertising, and opinion—and the social media platforms that receive and deliver communication has resulted in a mixed bag of messages that defy easy classification and may lead to user misinterpretation (Elliott and Spence, 2018).

Traditional journalism required that journalists recognize newsworthy events and create images or textual, audio or visual narratives to share with a mass audience. Now, breaking news is as likely to come from the mobile device of a participant or an accidental observer as it is from a journalist employed by a news organization. This input has given rise to the term *citizen journalist* as a label for those who are gathering information for news stories without the sanction of a recognized news organization. Instead of details gathered and repackaged by journalists, information comes via *open sourcing* from a variety of information givers. Citizens at large have gained greater credibility as sources of information. But, according to long-time editor Robert Giles, "[M]astery of [new technology] is not a substitute for journalistic skills and values"

(2001, p. 5). The ability to witness and collect data does not make one a journalist. While traditional journalism was intended to prioritize the public interest in story development and delivery, internet-based sources often intentionally choose among source material to promote an ideology or particular point of view.

Traditional journalism took time. It took time to fact check a story. It took time for editors to review stories and determine the priority of placement in newspapers and broadcast news programs based on what should be most important to a mass audience of active citizens. It took many hours to produce the newspaper or the news show. But, every technological advance, from the Gutenberg press to telegraph to computer to satellite to Internet, has cut down the time that journalists thought that they needed to competently do their work.

For generations, there was more information that a news organization had print or broadcast space to use; what was used was said to fill the "news hole." In addition, journalists had facts that they believed to be true, but that they could not report (yet) due to a lack of hard evidence or verification. But, that too has changed. According to Bryon Calame, a *Times* Public Editor:

> For more than a century, *New York Times* reporters covering the newsworthy developments of the day typically focused on having the stories ready by the evening deadlines for the next morning's paper … More and more, *Times* staffers are expected to deliver breaking news stories to the Web version of the paper 24 hours a day—as soon as the articles are ready. That means more editors are constantly balancing speed against completeness to decide when an article is good enough to carry *The Times'* respected brand.
>
> (Calame, 2006a, November 19)

Calame notes that the result is a different mindset for journalists along with an explosion of "multimedia and video presentations, audio, blogs and interactive graphics" (2006a, November 19). The ability to transmit instantly has created the expectation of instant transmission. The concept of a news hole limited by space or time has dissolved for both producer and user.

Traditionally, journalism involved a group of like-minded practitioners, choosing among topics and details, gate keeping and fact checking their way to the creation of a news story. Huddled in separate newsrooms, reporters and photographers, designers and editors, producers and news directors adhered to common values, each seeking to develop similar news products first.

Now, instead of information givers all being journalists, who operate with similar conventions of practice, bloggers are claiming turf, as are participants and witnesses to important events. Print and broadcast tabloids, once dismissed for their sensationalism and incredible yarns, have broken true and important stories. These information givers do not respect the same rules as traditional journalists, but they influence traditional reporting.

Today "Internet journalism, according to those who produce manifestos on its behalf, represents a world historical development—not so much because of the expressive power of the new medium as because of its accessibility to producers and consumers" (Lemann, 2006, p. 44). Every user can be both a producer and consumer of news. K. Daniel Glover, editor of National Journal's *Technology Daily*, and graphic designer Mike Essl call bloggers, "the pamphleteers of the twenty-first century, revolutionary 'citizen journalists' motivated by personal idealism and an unwavering confidence that they can reform American politics" (Glover and Essl, 2006, p. 13). Bloggers, like journalists, seek to attract an audience and to provoke thought among those users. According to editor, E.J. Dionne, bloggers

> exist to engage citizens in the obligations and magic of politics. They draw people into the fight. They have made millions of people feel that their voices will be heard somewhere and, when aggregated together, can have a real influence on the outcome of policy debates and elections.
>
> (Dionne, 2006, p. 34)

The capability of audience members to control collection and dissemination of news, collectively and individually, can lead to the conclusion that consumer judgment can substitute for news judgment.

> Disintermediated news is … not selected by editors. [It is news based on the assumption that] markets are capable of making better decisions about news than editors. We're getting this from two sides. First, there are the Web people, who have ingeniously figured out how to decide what's important by tabulating the collective wisdom of online readers. How galling for us—to be replaced by algorithm. Second, we're getting it from our own corporate leaders, who believe in market research. Why not just edit by referendum? They wonder. Why not just ask people what they want and give it to them?
>
> (Carroll, 2006, p. 5)

The short answer to Carroll's rhetorical question is that "what is in the public interest" and "what the public is interested in" are very different concepts. Essentially, journalists have the responsibility to report what is in the public interest and to try their best to help members of the public care about the topic upon which they report. Seeking to engage members of the public regardless of the importance of the topic is the foundation for click-bait and is more properly in the territory of entertainment media rather than journalism.

Journalism, in the first part of the 21st century, is a practice seeking newly defined boundaries:

> [I]t appears that there are two contrasting theories of journalism … One consists of established standards and practices that emanate from print and broadcast journalism and the belief that journalism has a social responsibility to inform citizens and nurture democracy, while the other is informed by suspicion of centrally managed, traditional media conglomerates and a belief, inspired by the open architecture of the Internet and flexibility of Web publishing, that citizens can participate in democracy by creating their own journalism.
>
> (Berkman and Shumway, 2003, p. 67)

Traditional news was once easy to distinguish from other forms of mass communication. The boundaries between news and opinion, news and entertainment, news and advertising have softened for a variety of reasons, but whether a particular informational product ought to count as news, reality, analysis, opinion, or parody is now sometimes difficult to judge.

Consider, for example, two fake news shows that have been shown to be "just as substantive as network television news". John Stewart, host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" (TDS), and Stephen Colbert of "The Colbert Report" (TCR), became 21st century cultural icons by deconstructing traditional news stories, often exhibiting greater truth than had been initially reported. Ethics scholars Sandra Borden and Chad Tew explain that real news and the "fake" news of the two comedy shows are deeply intertwined.

> [B]y relying on raw material that has been "vetted" by journalists, TDS and TCR implicitly buy into factuality—and its associated rules of evidence—as a key norm for good journalism … At the same time, "fake" news demonstrates how the same set of "facts" can be interpreted differently and contextualized more thoroughly.
>
> (Borden and Tew, 2007, pp. 10–11)

Rather than concluding that such shows make it difficult for audience members to differentiate news from other products, Borden and Tew argue that the comedy shows provides a critical perspective, by which true news can be judged. The use of "fake" news in the satirical show context is vastly different from the meaning of politicians who decry messages that they don't like as "fake" news. Satirized news is easily understood press criticism that lets citizens in on a humorous analysis of news coverage that is rooted in traditional news values. The "fake" news label, when used by disgruntled politicians unethically encourages citizens to question the truthful messages provided by legitimate news organizations.

MOVING FROM THE 20TH CENTURY TRADITIONAL PARADIGM TO THE NEW PARADIGM

Under the traditional paradigm of news reporting, journalists should:

1. Seek external discoverable truth or, if there is no clear single truth, present two opposing sides of the story;
2. Use sources with recognized expertise or authority;
3. Present that material objectively;
4. For consumption by a general mass audience;
5. Through one-way communication.

The new paradigm of journalism, in contrast, looks like this:

1. Notice issue and events;
2. Use own reporting as well as open sourcing;
3. Filter that through journalistic perspective;
4. For consumption by targeted audiences;
5. Who then provide feedback.

This section explores clashes between these two paradigms. However, it is important to remember that what is here called the "traditional" paradigm itself developed through a clash with an earlier paradigm that was based on the partisan press.

According to Dionne,

> From the beginning of our republic in the 1790s until the turn of the [20th] century, American newspapers were, for the most part, the organs of political parties. There was no ideal of objectivity … [But, then r]eformers who looked for professionalism, as against bossism, in politics eventually turned to seeking professionalism in journalism.
>
> Walter Lippmann … led the way to a redefinition of journalism's role and the journalist's responsibilities. The notion that newspapers should be objective rather than partisan was the product of Lippman's admiration for the scientific method, his skepticism of ideology, and, some of his critics would argue, his less than full-hearted faith in democracy.
>
> (2006, p. 34)

History shows us that new technology loosens old conventions and transforms the way that big stories are covered. In the 19th century, telegraph, the wire service, and the other technological developments created the ability to move a single story or picture to thousands of news outlets at a time. At the same time that these technologies were in development, the industrial revolution and an unending series of scientific discoveries were giving people a new sense of control over their environment. Causes and effects, and solutions to problems could all be discovered if only enough talent and resources were dedicated to the problem. Philosophers and scientists and the lay public agreed: the truth could be known.

These beliefs about human ability to know and control the world reverberated in the 20th century journalistic paradigm. Information could come from a common source, such as the team of Associated Press reporters at the scene of a catastrophe. Text and visual journalistic accounts that resulted were distributed to the thousands of news outlets that subscribed to wire services. News, produced to provide the truth to a broad audience of Americans seemed to exist independent of the age, ethnicity, politics, or geography of its consumer.

An early U.S. journalistic code of ethics adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1923 reflected the technological, political, and scientific understandings of the new century. For example, journalists were told to exhibit "natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning."

But, technology threatened the status quo.

> Two hundred years ago, James Gorden Bennett of the *New York Herald* was one of many who thought the telegraph would put newspapers out of business. It was a logical conclusion, he said, because "it would eliminate the competitive advantage he had over his rivals. All that would be left to newspapers was commentary and analysis."
>
> (Giles, 2001, p. 3)

"In newsrooms of the early nineteenth century, timeliness was not a priority. Newspapers were almost exclusively local" (Giles, 2001, p. 2). The telegraph changed all of that. Newspapers survived and the journalistic value of timeliness was born. Marketing values had a hand in the development of the non-partisan paradigm as well. Dionne notes: "By being non-partisan and objective, newspapers did not offend half or more of their potential audience" (2006, p. 36).

But objective reporting was often that which didn't threaten the commonly held values of the audience. American journalism's coverage of World War II provides a good example. This was a non-controversial war from the point of view of most U.S. news consumers. Emerging technology, in the form of radio coverage, seemed to reinforce the notion that objective truth consisted of external reality that journalism helped citizens to experience.

From the time that Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, journalists rallied to give American audiences the American truth and show off new technology. The war was a radio news exclusive from the 2:22 p.m. Eastern Standard Time wire service report the day of the attack until the morning newspapers hit the stands at daybreak Monday.

CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow gave listeners minute-by-minute descriptions of life in the war zone and experimented with new reporting techniques. For the first time ever, listeners had what we now call "natural sound"—they could hear for themselves what was going on at the scene while it was being reported (Edwards, 2004, pp. 51–52).

Purported objectivity was easy to achieve when it was believed by the audience that there was only one right side. In reality, there were other stories that were barely told or not told at all. For example, information that the U.S. government consistently denied assistance to Jewish families seeking escape from German genocide did not make its way into mainstream coverage of the day (*Jewish Virtual Librar*y, January 13, 1944). Nationalistic coverage was mistakenly believed to be objective coverage.

Within a decade of the war's end, however, objectivity and the understanding of what counted as news came under serious attack. The United States returned to peacetime comfortable in its military strength, but not as sure of the country's ability to withstand the more subtle threat of anti-democratic politics.

According to contemporary journalist Bob Edwards (2004), U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy, who fanned the fear of Communists in our midst, was a careful student of objective reporting in the early 1950s. Day after day, the Senator waved his new set of allegations too close to the conventional late-afternoon deadline for journalists to find an equally believable source who could give the other side of the story. The news convention of the day dictated that journalists report only what they were told. The Senator, as named source, provided an illusion of expertise. Denials, if published at all, came too late to gain the attention given to the initial claims.

Thoughtful journalists at the time were troubled that their objective, verifiable, named source reporting of external events did not reflect *truth*. But, it took the maverick television reporting of Edward R. Murrow to provide context for McCarthy's allegations. The just-born television documentary had not yet developed norms of conduct. It was different enough from the printed news story that it didn't follow the same rules. The content was controlled by its producer, not its sources. Producers sought to give complete stories rather than simply echo the pronouncements of authoritative sources. The "See It Now" piece, so devastating to Senator McCarthy, was aired in early March, 1954.

Bound by the Federal Communication Commission's requirement of fairness, Senator McCarthy was given an opportunity to produce a response that was later broadcast in the same time slot. But, in the end, McCarthy fell victim to the process that he had himself exploited. The "See It Now" television documentary provoked public disgust over McCarthy's misuse of his power and of news media. McCarthy's denial and explanations, four weeks later, could not rally equal attention or belief (Edwards, 2004, pp. 105–123).

On the face of it, it seemed that 20th-century technology conformed to the traditional paradigm technique of journalists channeling objective information. During that century, technology first, provided still images in addition to text so that citizens could see how something really looked; then audio let people know how events sounded, then video showed them how the event happened, and finally satellite technology put audiences in events as the story was still developing. And, from the beginning of that century, journalists worked to transmit the accounts of sources and story subjects with dispassionate accuracy. But, rather than reinforce the belief of a single Enlightenment-style truth, slice-of-life journalistic reporting ultimately revealed that stories have multiple perspectives rather than a single infallible truth.

Reporting on later 20th century stories such as the U.S. civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and Watergate could not have happened through exclusive reliance on authoritative sources contributing in traditional ways.

Consider, for example, the reporting on Watergate. Then veteran *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward and novice reporter Carl Bernstein did not wait for official pronouncements or for on-the-record credible sources to tell the nation what was happening and why. Woodward and Bernstein obtained information however they could, tricking telephone company clerks and pressuring witnesses called before the grand jury into the disclosure of information. Rather than searching for, finding, and then reporting some indisputable truth, the Watergate reporting included a confluence of perspectives emerging from White House statements, leaked tapes, leaked grand jury testimony, Congressional testimony, stolen files, insiders seeking to expose corruption, those seeking to cover it up, and those changing sides. Woodward and Bernstein drew conclusions from a conglomerate of sources "close to the matter" and provided a narrative that best fit the pieces they were able to collect (Woodward and Bernstein, 1974).

However, the myth of objective reporting continued in the public mind and in journalism schools until the reporting on a new Presidential scandal 14 years later. The coverage of President Bill Clinton and his affair with a White House intern illustrates even more clearly the clash between paradigms.

From the beginning of this scandal, Web communication competed with traditional journalistic process. When Matt Drudge, publisher of the Web-based Drudge Report, told his e-mail recipients and Web-browser audience in January 1998 that *Newsweek* had decided to sit on a story about allegations of a Presidential sex scandal (McClintick, 1998, p. 113) the newsmagazine's editors responded by dumping the story onto online publication immediately rather than waiting additional days to first publish the story in the hard copy magazine.

Here was a story developed by traditional journalists that was force-fed to the public by a Web-based gossip columnist. According to McClintick (1998), that act of Matt Drudge foreshadowed

> the role of the Internet as a new and different journalism medium—and as a catalyst of broader trends in America toward democratization and devolution of the power of big institutions, especially in the media worlds of New York and Washington. In that sense, Drudge can be seen as a modern Tom Paine, a possible precursor to millions of town criers using the Internet to invade the turf of bigfoot journalists.
>
> (p. 114)

The reporting on Clinton-Lewinsky also provided an early example of how political leaders could bypass news media. Independent Prosecutor Kenneth Starr released his report simultaneously to journalists in hard copy and to citizens by posting it on the Web. In 2006, it is not surprising that candidates for the 2008 U.S. Presidential run would hold their own Web-based voter communications and, thus, bypass journalistic gatekeepers. But, in 1998, going around the journalistic gatekeepers was highly unusual.

Giles says,

> Posting the Starr Report gave the public an unfiltered version. It did not need a journalist to sort out the lead, to provide the context, to interpret the independent counsel's conclusions. To some it was a splendid example of democracy. For journalists, it was a revealing moment. The capacity to post documents and reports on the Web gave the public a vital point of comparison … As documents and transcripts on the Web became a potential check against truthful reporting, they raise the bar in newsrooms everywhere for accuracy, balance and fairness.
>
> (2006, p. 9)

A final example from the Clinton-Lewinsky coverage illustrates how journalists staying wedded to the traditional paradigm of dutifully reporting what sources say failed to meet the journalistic responsibility of telling citizens what they need to know for self-governance. The faulty adherence to the old paradigm was more noticeable because so many of the old paradigm conventions had been violated in the reporting of the story.

On March 5, 1998, *The Washington Post* published a detailed account of President Clinton's deposition in the Paula Jones case. At the time, the deposition was sealed by court order. The *Post*'s report was not attributed, but the ultimate sources for the leak were few. The sealed deposition could have been leaked by Clinton's defense team, by Jones's lawyers, or by Ken Starr's office (Baker, 1998). *Post* reporter Peter Baker, who received and published the information, knew the source of the report. If traditional paradigm holds, at least one *Post* editor also knew the source as well or knew enough about the source to agree that the information supplied was likely to be accurate.

In the published story, the *Post* allowed each potential source to deny the leak. Clinton attorneys called the leak illegal, reprehensible, and unethical. They promised to track down the leaker's identity. Jones' lawyers said that any suggestion that they were responsible for the leak was "erroneous, reprehensible and fallacious." Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr categorically denied that his office was the direct or indirect source of the story (Baker, 1998).

However, logically, someone in the Clinton, Jones, or Starr camps was indeed responsible for the leaked information, and the *Post* reporter and editor knew the identity of that person. The printed denials were probably accurate presentations of these named source's denials, but at least one of them was false. While it was certainly important for readers to know that the various players in the case denied having leaked the information, they also needed to know who was being truthful and why *The Washington Post* knowingly allowed one or more of these sources to lie in the news columns. The citizens were not told. "[P]ure nonpartisanship, in the sense of bending over too far to seem to be fair, can mislead reporters" (Dionne, 2006, p. 37).

As late as journalistic disclosures at the perjury and obstruction of justice trial of White House official Lewis "Scooter" Libby in March 2007, journalists were being exposed for aiding governmental manipulators at the expense of serving them rather than the public. According to media columnist Tim Rutten, most of the 10 journalists who testified at the Libby trial, "had made themselves willing tools of an administration bent on discrediting a guy whose offense was to inform people about how the White House had misled the country about its reasons for invading Iraq" (Rutten, 2007, p. E16).

PROBLEMS WITH THE OLD PARADIGM AND PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW

When journalists mindlessly adhere to the traditional paradigm of news reporting, they can fail to meet social responsibilities to citizens. An objective press, which is offered as nothing but a conduit for the messages of powerful sources is a powerless press that can be exploited by those sources. McCarthy's manipulation of journalistic process, which horrified journalists and citizens in the 1950s, had morphed into an accepted method of political survival by the 1990s called *spin*. News organizations should not knowingly report falsehoods or trial balloons without labelling them as such for their readers. Allowing those with power to "spin" a story in the name of objectivity may meet the needs of sources but fails to meet the needs of citizens.

Next, under the old paradigm, students are taught to get "both sides of a story." Most stories have one side or many sides. Disasters initially have one side. A bad thing happened and people were hurt. The story here is how people have been affected by the disaster. If the story becomes one of how well individuals and social institutions are coping with the disaster, the story becomes one of multiple perspectives. Journalists must choose among the many sides to provide focus for their stories, but when they choose only two, to give a polarized either/or perspective, they lose the nuances that citizens need to understand before they can make educated decisions for self-governance.

Last of all, the old paradigm was built on the idea that journalists were expected to find external news. But, discoverable news is a myth. News is what happens when journalists choose to pay attention to some event or issue and to frame it in a certain way. This is always at the expense of other choices. Visual journalists have always known that a photograph doesn't mirror what is out there, but shows pieces of reality, selected by the brain and its filters functioning in the photographer behind the camera. Images are given meaning by singling them out, choosing angle, composition, and frame.

Although these pillars of objectivity, two sides to the story, and external news were standards of 20th century American journalism, they more strongly reflect marketing strategies rather than ethical principles. They reflected the technological possibilities of the time and reflected news consortiums' development of an audience and advertising base larger than a community limited by geography or politics. Ultimately, they reflected news organizations' interest in cheap purchase of news products that fit the needs of every person.

But, the new paradigm has its problems as well. The pillars upon which it rests in this development phase are interactivity, multiple source perspectives, and targeted audiences.

Interactivity and multiple perspectives have resulted in what Stephen Colbert called Wikiality—the mistaken belief that open participation in providing and editing information results in truth. "The millions of bloggers who are constantly watching, fact-checking and exposing mistakes are a powerful example of 'the wisdom of crowds' being assisted by a technology that is as open and omnipresent as we are" (Naim, 2006, p. 31). Unfortunately, inter-subjective agreement does not equal truth. The crowd can be wrong.

Suspicion of corporate control of traditional news media has led some to bestow greater credibility on the independent blogger. According to journalist Hope Cristol (2002), "Readers may find blogs more credible than traditional media because blogs have no corporate interest to serve" (p. 8). But, bloggers often promote their own worldview. More troubling is that advertisers have infiltrated blogs, paying bloggers to build buzz for their clients' products (Friedman, 2007, p. C1). Despite FCC rules to the contrary, in real time, no user can be sure if what they are reading is the "true" blogger opinion regarding a movie, book, or restaurant, or whether it is a blog-ad, inserted into the script for a fee.

Careful targeting of audiences and the shaping of news product to fit the individual consumer can lead to citizens who seek information being less rather than more informed. Individuals passively take in information because it fits their comfort zone or because what they see at the top of the screen or news feed was determined by their previous purchasing or online searching. 19th century British philosopher John Stuart Mill contended that very few people really know what they think because of what we would call today "selective exposure." He says that most people

> … have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and consider what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess.
>
> (1859/1991, pp. 42–43)

Citizens have the responsibility to seek opinions different from their own.

ESSENTIAL SHARED VALUES

Journalism, like other important social institutions draws on essential shared values for its identification. It would be easy to draw the erroneous conclusion that journalists are relativists—adherents to a philosophical theory that holds that there is no objective standard for judging right and wrong. However, journalists do hold moral standards by which they judge professional behaviour, even in the digital era. Indeed, without such standards, journalism would not be recognizable as a discrete industry (Elliott, 1988, p. 28).

Three shared values are sustained across culture and time and paradigm shifts as well:

1. Journalists should strive to publish news accounts that are balanced, accurate, relevant and complete;
2. Journalists should strive to publish those news accounts without causing preventable harm;
3. Journalists should strive to give citizens information needed for self-governance.

This final principle is the defining principle for the practice of journalism and is the only principle that justifies causing harm in the production of news stories. Because journalists must prioritize providing information that is in the public interest, if citizens truly need to have that information so that they can participate in democracy, it is justified to publish it, even if the information does cause harm to some individual or group. However, without that justification, it is wrong to harm people or vulnerable groups through publication. Publication is a tool; it should not be used as a weapon.

HOW THE NEW PARADIGM CAN REINFORCE ESSENTIAL SHARED VALUES OF THE PRESS

Technology allows for the development of a more active and engaged citizenry, so the new paradigm holds the promise of better journalism than ever. For example, the input of citizen journalists and satellite technology has expanded the coverage of newsworthy events. Noticing the importance of events is the first step toward creating news.

The presence of multiple sources and the ability of citizens to seek a variety of information provide justification for journalistic perspective. Journalists need to maintain voices that are separate from the powerful individuals and groups that would manipulate them and the pull of public opinion as well. Only journalists have the special responsibility of providing information to citizens for self-governance. Journalists are those who are motivated to sift through the mountains of information to provide citizens what they need.

The Internet offers many powerful tools for good journalism. Twitter has become an important method for sourcing ongoing news events. Video captures sent across any number of social media platforms provides data points simply not obtainable prior to the digital era. Newsassignments.net, administered by New York University professor and journalism critic, Jay Rosen (2007) is an impressive hybrid of new and old paradigm journalism. The site "tries to spark innovation in journalism by showing that open collaboration over the Internet among reporters, editors, and large groups of users can produce high-quality work that serves the public interest, holds up under scrutiny, and builds trust."

> The site uses open source methods to develop good assignments and help bring them to completion. It pays professional journalists to carry the project home and set high standards; they work closely with users who have something to contribute … It does stories that the regular news media doesn't do, can't do, wouldn't do, or already screwed up.
>
> (Rosen, 2006)

But the Web is improving journalism in less ambitious ways as well:

> In their Internet versions, most traditional news organizations make their reporters available to answer readers' questions and, often, permit readers to post their own material. Being able to see this as the advent of true democracy in what had been a media oligarchy makes it much easier to argue that Internet journalism has already achieved great things.
>
> (Lemann, 2006, p. 48)

A sign that the new paradigm has moved past its infancy is that practitioners of online journalism are articulating standards. Professional groups, such as the *Media Bloggers Association* and *Online News Association*, are establishing ethical standards, correction policies, and professional identity.

Good journalistic practice, whatever the paradigm of the moment, is that which upholds the essential shared values of the profession.

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