



OCCASIONAL PAPER 8

NEW MEDIA, NEW POLITICS: THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY FORUM OF THE ST. LOUIS JOURNALISM REVIEW, OCTOBER 2001

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**The St. Louis
Journalism Review
gave their readers
insightful and
outspoken news
editorials that the
local and national
mainstream press
overlooked or was
afraid to tell.**



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In the First Amendment, the Founding Fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors. The Government's power to censor the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to censure the Government. The press was protected so that it could bare the secrets of government and inform the people.

- Justice Hugo Black

INTRODUCTION

The *St. Louis Journalism Review* celebrated the 30th anniversary of its founding in October, 2000. The celebration was a forum at the Sheldon Concert Hall, titled: New Media, New Politics. This was a roundtable discussion with prominent journalists from major national news organizations about how new media have changed politics and campaign coverage. The forum took place the day before the final presidential debate at Washington University in St. Louis between Governor George Bush and Vice-President Al Gore.

Over the years, the SJR gave their readers insightful and outspoken news/editorials that the local and national mainstream press overlooked or was afraid to tell. SJR often broke a story or gave vital background information to a news item that the corporate media did not reveal.

As major news companies merge and media conglomerates gobble each other up, the SJR continues its role as watchdog of rich and powerful entities. By all accounts, the SJR has never been a profitable business. Nevertheless its leadership, staff, and contributors publish a monthly newspaper that is widely read among the media in St. Louis, in the region, as well as nationally. The integrity of its founders, Rose and Charles L. Klotzer, and its current editor, Ed Bishop, allows the SJR to exercise influence in the media far beyond its modest outward appearance. SJR may not be a household name among the public, but in media circles SJR is respected and at times even feared. Media professionals know that the SJR engages in investigative reporting, even when it means turning a critical spotlight on the profession of journalism itself.

BACKGROUND

The *St. Louis Journalism Review* is a product of the Sixties, although it first hit the newsstands in 1970. In the 1960's, around the world and in the United States there was turmoil. Both the struggle to stop the war in Vietnam and the struggle to gain civil rights for African Americans had brought out the worst in America. Political assassination was becoming a routine event. American leaders were being gunned down in the street, in their driveways, and in their homes. Inner city ghettos were burning, students were closing down universities, and thousands of protesters were marching in the streets. Just a few months before SJR's first issue was printed, several students peacefully demonstrating at Kent State were shot and killed by the National Guard.

The Sixties also created a crisis in journalism. Almost overnight newspapers sprung up around the country. Young, radical writers who produced these papers were convinced that mainstream media were collaborating with the establishment to mislead the public. Some in the mainstream press were coming to the same conclusion.

The turning point for American journalism was the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. Mainstream reporters knew that critical information had been withheld by top editors and that stories had been interpreted in ways that put a false light on what actually happened. Specifically, it had been the police who rioted, not the demonstrators. Within months of the convention, local TV and newspaper reporters got together and founded the *Chicago Journalism Review*. During the next two years, dozens of other local journalism reviews were founded in the United States.

Here in St. Louis, in the summer of 1970, a number of reporters and political activists met in the home of Charles and Rose Klotzer. They included: Al Delugach, who had just won a Pulitzer Prize the year before; Ted Guest, who is now the National News Editor of *U.S. News and World Reports*; and from the local press Robert E. Adams, Margaret M. Carlan, Peter A. Donhowe, Richard Krantz, Gerald Lindhorst, Gus Lumpe, Roy Malone, John Shelton, Ellen Sweets, Fred Sweets and others. They decided St. Louis needed a straightforward, tell-it-how-it-is critique of the local media, a publication that couldn't be intimidated. The *St. Louis Journalism Review* became the editor and publisher.

As the SJR group anticipated, attempts at intimidation came almost immediately. Threats were made and the SJR stopped running bylines for a time. Editors and news directors continued to complain, sometimes rightfully so. But for the most part, for over 30 years, media management in St. Louis understood and accepted SJR's mission.

Everyone knew and understood that the SJR was being run on a shoestring. Year after year the SJR lost money. But the publication continued because the Klotzers continued to subsidize it. Publication also continued because a core group of local journalists, university professors and activists worked hard to write and produce it. To this day a group called the Board of Advisers meets each month to discuss media issues, plan upcoming articles and share the energy of a publication that has never lost its Sixties philosophy. Part of that philosophy was that media should not only be criticized for what they do but also for what they omit from print or broadcast. Indeed, the SJR decided to publish important articles on topics ignored by the mainstream media.

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On May 4, 1996, the Klotzers donated the SJR to Webster University. To insure its independence, it was set up as a separate corporation with its own nonprofit tax exemption. The SJR is housed on the university campus, and receives some subsidies from Webster University for a number of important functions. The university has never interfered in any way with the editorial content. Today, SJR is the only surviving *local* journalism review, out of about 30, founded in the late '60 and early '70s.

NEW MEDIA, NEW POLITICS

The following is excerpted from the round table discussion at the 30th Anniversary forum for the St. Louis Journalism Review. The author has also just completed a half hour documentary titled: *Who's Minding the Media: Charles L. Klotzer and the St. Louis Journalism Review*. This documentary is partially funded by the Public Policy Research Center, at UM - St. Louis.

Participants: Jodi Enda, Knight-Ridder White House Correspondent; Bill Plante, CBS News White House Correspondent; Adam Clayton Powell, III, Freedom Forum; Senator Paul Simon; Richard Stengel, Editor in Chief Time.com; Kenneth Walsh, *US News & World Report* White House Correspondent.

Moderator: Charles Jaco, KMOX Radio.

Jaco: The title of this evening is New Media and New Politics. It is a nice loose construct in which we can fit just about anything. The advent of new media -the Internet and 24-hour news services- has changed the way the news business does its business. One of the interesting things about it, I've found, is that the reason the new media has gotten such attention is because old media has been swimming to the bottom with such gusto and relish for the past 20 or 30 years. It's like the old story I used to tell. Someone asks, "What do you do for a living?" And I say, "Well, my mother thinks I'm a numbers runner over in East St. Louis. Don't tell her the truth, it'd break her heart."

Bill let me start the questions with you. What about the idea that one of the reasons that a lot of people are interested in new media whether its online services or anything else is that, frankly, they feel that the kind of coverage they are getting from the traditional media is basically all commercialism, all fluff. They might be able to get more if they go to Matt Drudge or something like that. They don't feel they're being told the truth.

Plante: If we put the same content on television and then also the very same material on a web site, the web site gets more hits and more recognition than the television program. It's the same story, but because you hear it in the new media it is granted more credibility, at least with a certain segment of society (younger of course). Is there a lot to be improved upon in the old media?

Jaco: Rick, what about you? First off, why Time.com? Time not dot-com seems to be doing pretty well. Why do it at all?

Stengel: Until recently, people who ended up at the dot-coms were often those who did not make it in the print versions. The dot-coms were seen as the "little brothers" of the print versions. Then there was that moment that ended about six months ago where the frog became the prince. And the dot-coms were seen as the future.

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There's this kid who works for me who likes to say, 'don't the people at *Time* magazine understand that in five years Time.com will be *Time* magazine?' I think there's a certain truth to that. Why people find something compelling about new media is, they have the impression that what you see in the new media is unfiltered. Because it's unfiltered it's unedited. It is closer to the "truth," whatever that may be. There is something very compelling about it for a lot of people. But that material may or may not be the truth. It may or may not be unfiltered, but the illusion is out there.

Jaco: What about the idea that not only their impression may or may not be true but that on a lot of websites, it may or may not be true, that there is no filter? For example, right now CNN has a web site. Cousin Bubba's militia group has a web site. We've got a lot of people out there who just believe that information is information, and it's all essentially the same.

Stengel: Well one of the appeals of the Web is that it is anti-elitist. Most of us come from elite media groups where there are certain standards, and there are editors and top editors. There are all kinds of filters and fact checkers. The Web is unmediated in many ways. I think a lot of people feel that because it's unmediated the material is truer. It has less fingerprints from the elite media on it. In many cases that is true.

Jaco: Does anybody else find that concept spooky?

Enda: Another thing that we have which a lot of websites don't have is libel lawyers. We're looking at what is true and what isn't true, where there may be libel. I've found that this could be a problem if nobody checks out what they put out on these websites before it gets out there.

Walsh: Mainstream news organizations take a point of pride in the idea that we try to have some standards for what we do. In the mechanics of setting up websites and trying to run them we had a special day to day site during the [presidential] conventions. Gearing up to do that became very complicated because we had a small staff. The idea is when you turn something in an editor has to look at it (i.e., a fact checker) and then a top editor has to look at it. Those are three steps that we go through professionally. So we all tried to work out how much to strain the existing staff, and how much staff to add. In the long term, frankly, it comes down to how much money you make out of it. That last part is still a challenge. Just how feasible is it to run a web site? Because it's not clear to most mainstream news organizations how you can make a profit from it.

Jaco: Adam, your organization the Freedom Forum runs lots of things: the Newseum, the Journalism Memorial in Virginia. For those of you who've never been there, it is kind of like the Vietnam Wall Memorial for people in my business who've died in the line of duty. I knew several people very well whose names are on that wall. How do you think the men and women whose names are inscribed on that wall would feel about the mainstream media in the year 2000 and what they've become? In many ways we're slaves to commercialism. Today, people with MBAs tend to run news operations rather than journalists. The sales and marketing departments have elbowed their way into the newsroom. There are many men and women who have given their lives to cover the news. Now when you take a look at your average TV show that passes for news and see what it has become, how do you think they'd feel? How do you feel about it?

Powell: Well, I think what we see now is, for better or worse, authorization of an unprecedented level of choice;

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at least unprecedented in our lifetimes. You mentioned Matt Drudge. We're seeing this happen not just on the Internet, but you could argue that Rush Limbaugh is the Matt Drudge of radio. Except his tiny sliver has become a rather big chunk of radio. I don't think there are a lot of editors checking what Limbaugh says second by second. I think Edward R. Murrow would be quite discouraged by much of what he'd see now. But I also think he'd be encouraged by some of it. There is still the best out there. It's just that there's so much more. So much more choice, so many more channels, so many more Internet sites that it may be harder to find what you are looking for. That places more of a burden on the audience.

Jaco: Senator Simon, a question for you. Would you still want to be in public life today, with people like Matt Drudge, and Limbaugh, who pretend to be journalists; who are accepted by common affirmation of the core audience to be journalists, but who really aren't? They dig into everything and throw barbs at you. Do you think this changes both the new and old media, and the people who are in the line of work you were formerly in?

Simon: Well it has resulted in changes, there's no question about it. I enjoyed my time in the Senate, the House, and public life. I would certainly recommend to a young person to go into that field. But there is a tendency to focus on trivia which is disconcerting. The other problem, you mentioned earlier, are the MBAs; it is the auditors who determine much of the news coverage. We're cutting back on personnel who cover the news. In the state of Illinois, a state of 12 million people, we have only one newspaper that has foreign correspondents. We used to have four newspapers with foreign correspondents.

Jaco: Someone mentioned democratization of the media. Isn't that kind of spooky when democratization means focus groups and catering to what a vast majority of people want? Recently there was a study on racism in the newsroom. The conclusion was that newsrooms are not necessarily populated with a bunch of sheet wearing racists. But that they are slaves, themselves, to advertising and marketing departments. Those departments do studies that say, "See. Look here. Our audience is primarily middle aged white people living in the suburbs. They don't want to hear about black people. So we're not going to do stories on them. We don't want to hear stories about inner city schools because our audience isn't interested in it." Now where do you draw the line between having democratizing media and democratizing it in terms of "well, if this is what the vast majority of our audience doesn't want to hear, then we're not going to give it to them because they might walk away?"

Simon: You and others at KMOX, or the people at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, may criticize the political leaders. You should criticize political leaders more for just following the polls. That isn't leadership. In a similar vein that is precisely what is happening in the media. You mentioned the suburbs and the inner cities, or an example we've all been through. The networks covered the OJ Simpson trial, many, many, times more than the fall of the Berlin Wall. And you ask media executives, "how come?" They say, "we're giving the public what it wants." That's the excuse the politicians give, "we're giving the public what it wants." But that is not leadership either in the media or in public life.

Enda: I've had that conversation. At two newspapers I worked at I wrote quite a lot about poverty and race issues. Sometimes they overlapped and sometimes they didn't. I had repeated arguments with my editors about why these stories were important and why we should put them in the paper even though many of our readers weren't familiar with homeless people. Of course, I argued that's why we should put them in the newspaper. People who live outside of Philadelphia may not have people sleeping on their doorstep. But I did, and so did a lot of people who live in the city.

The second point you made, it's not just the focus groups, though I agree that's a big problem. Part of the problem has to do with management. The editors that I have always regarded with (I hate to say it) disappointment, are often simply not familiar with the problem. They don't understand racial or class diversity.

They have no understanding of where most of the country is.

Walsh: I think increasingly in Washington we are getting a more and more highly educated elite making a lot of news decisions. This is part of why most Americans get a sense that Washington is not making decisions on their behalf. If you sit around most news conferences in Washington, there's very little understanding of a lot of issues that people understand intuitively around the country. The idea of different tax cuts or tax credits or something. You'll hear a lot of times, "well \$1000 tax credit doesn't make any difference to anybody; that's nothing." Well, to a lot of Americans \$1000 per year makes a great deal of difference. And I think there's another issue regarding diversity. That's class diversity. Class diversity is something that we are said to be lacking.

Jaco: Bill let me pose something to you. You are at a story meeting. Not necessarily at CBS, but let's say station XYZ. The XYZ radio station or television station says, "Plante, we have done surveys and this is who our audience is: our audience is a 35 to 54 yr old white male with an income of \$37,500 dollars or more. They drink this brand of beer. We know everything about them. They do not want to hear stories about the failing schools in the inner city. It doesn't bother them; their kids don't go there. They don't want to hear about inner city crime and poverty stories, that's why they moved to the suburbs." And if someone argues with them, the news director might say, "Well wait, what's wrong with that? A black TV station might give news that's skewed towards the African-American community; a rock station might give news skewed towards young rock'n'rollers. What's wrong with that? We're serving our audience. They don't want to hear about this other stuff, and, therefore we're not going to give it to them." What would you say to that?

Plante: Well, first of all, if the conversation ever got to that level I'd have to leave. The unfortunate thing is that it doesn't get down to that level. The assumptions are put in place without being explicit.

In the broadcast medium it's a little strange because we are trying to reach, particularly in television, everybody we can. They do surveys, and they know who their viewers are. For example, our audience is skewed predominantly towards the lower end of the economic scale, with a significantly larger number of minorities than there are as a percentage of the population. The higher education levels of the population tend not to watch a lot of television news. They get it from somewhere else; maybe they get it from PBS. So we know who the audience is. They don't tell us, they don't ask us, to program. But there is the underlying assumption, that I think is even more dangerous. If we know who the audience is, maybe we should be directing news towards them. That's not a decision, fortunately, that I have to make. People who are the executive producers of the broadcast get to make that decision. But the only saving grace is that there are now far more channels of all kinds, not just television channels. There are all kinds of news channels. I include the Internet and also cable television. The information is out there but it takes some work to find it.

Jaco: Jody, for someone dealing with your work, writing a story for a series of newspapers, here is a similar question for you. Cuban-Americans read the *Miami Herald* which is a Knight-Ridder paper. The Cuban-Americans here in Miami just want to hear the spin about Cuba. They don't want to hear about the rest of it. The *San Jose Mercury News*, because their "audience" is different, wants a significantly different set of stories. For people in the audience who are journalists, in fact for everyone in the audience how do you distinguish between writing something for the readership of the specific newspaper and: (a) slanting the news; (b) not covering the news; or (c) not covering something that is important simply because that audience isn't going to be interested.

Enda: I don't do any of that. I write the story the way I think it should be written from a journalistic point of view. I put the information in the story I think should be there because it's important information. Now, the editors in San Jose might treat it differently than the editors in Miami or Philadelphia. That is their

choice. But I put all of the same information in there. Because I write for all the papers I can't pick and choose which audience I'm going to write for. So I write the kind of story that I can be proud to put out under my name.

Jaco: Rick what about Time.com? Is there a significant difference in your audience? You said they are younger. How would the presidential debates (tomorrow night) be handled differently for the audience at Time.com as opposed to the magazine *Time*?

Stengel: I'll tell you exactly. But first, I just want to go back to something that was said earlier, at the risk of getting the opposite of Jody's applause. You were saying that in this age of journalism it has been terrible that someone with an MBA says, "this is what our audience is interested in. So, therefore, you can't do a story that you are interested in." The corollary of that, of course, is the attitude, "My audience is interested in this, but I'm going to tell them what they need to know. I'm going to make a decision about what's important, even though they're not interested in it." It's the sort of "eat your spinach" school of journalism. That will probably put all those papers that Paul (Simon) was talking about out of business.

In New York City, where I come from, there were 14 daily newspapers 40 years ago. Now there's only one. So, part of the quarrel with all of this (and I'm one too because I'm an elitist from way back) are the problems of capitalism and democracy. These are democratic and capitalistic instincts that all of these publications have, whether they're new media or old. So if your quarrel is with that then your quarrel is with something very, very basic.

Let's talk about Matt Drudge. The original Matt Drudge was Ben Franklin. Ben Franklin put out the *Penny Press* every day that was filled with gossip and lurid stuff, jokes and tawdry things. The republic is founded on this stuff. It has always existed. The idea that there was some elite group of intellectuals that consumed news in a way that they don't now is an illusion. It never was such.

To get back to talking about Time.com. What we do, for example in covering the presidential debate, is a quick response from *Time* correspondents from around the scene. And five, ten, twelve people will send in e-mails saying, "here's my quick response to the debate." We have a story up within a half an hour of the debate. In that we give a sort of "tick-tock" of it. Then we have within a half an hour to an hour the "truth squad" saying that's right, or that's wrong. If people get online an hour after the debate then they can have all the information. A print version would have to go out the next day or the next week. And it's unedited!

Powell: One thing about how people are using the Web. They will use different sites in different ways. AOL.com, MSNBC.com, and the *Washington Post*, all have huge websites as up to date as Time.com. Right after the Presidential debate they had lots of coverage. What they discovered at the *Washington Post* is that regardless of what they do, according to the editor, most of their people come in over the web site the following morning because they think of it as the *Washington Post*. So even if it was posted at 11 o'clock Wednesday night, people are going to come in at 8 o'clock Thursday morning or nine am or 10 am. It's truly something we learned a long time ago in radio: don't try to force people to do what you want them to do because of your 7 day 24hr news schedule. People are going to find their own pattern, their own way of using it. I've certainly found that I use Time.com in a different way. People are going to use sites in very different ways. They go to the main ones. Think of what is happening with the Internet as what is

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happening to New York City newspapers. Here you have a few major newspapers, like the *New York Times*. But New York City also has newspapers in Spanish and in Chinese. You go to a newspaper stand and there are all these pools of newspapers that most of us have never heard of. The Internet is like that, but even more so. There are all these websites that we don't know about. Maybe we've seen them once or twice, and yet they're attracting readers seeking specific types of news information.

Plante: There was a time when broadcasting in this country consisted of two major networks: CBS and NBC. The people who founded the news departments, Murrow being one of them, believed with all their hearts that they had a mission to inform the public. But they too were by and large, elitists. They told the public what they believed it needed to hear. That persisted into the television age, into the three network world, but shattered in the last 15 to 20 years as there developed far more sources. The other thing you need to remember is that in broadcasting, economics is really the "bottom line." It's about making money. It's not really about informing people. The FCC principle "serving the public interest, convenience and necessity" is now something framed in yellowing print on the wall. It no longer exists. The "bottom line" governs the popular media. It certainly governs television. Bear that in mind as we continue this discussion.

Jaco: Given that the "bottom line" governs the media and always has, what does that do to the media's responsibility of informing people? If the survey shows that, well, people are not particularly interested in XYZ, what do you do? Does that mean that, all right, you've got the audience over here that may not want to hear about it? But I'm this snotty, elitist journalist who thinks that it's particularly important. Does it just go out the window? Or do you figure they will find out about it from someplace else, because now there are a million different media outlets.

Plante: We're journalists. We decide what's important. That decision gets ratified or cancelled by editors, open to a whole series of checks and balances for the so-called mainstream media, and even less for so-called "live" media. That's our job. If you disagree, take us on in public, in the letters to the editor column, and in journalism reviews, which perform enormously influential and important roles.

Jaco: Senator, what has changed about the media since the days when you started in public office, for better and for worse?

Simon: Greater attention to the trivial. I would get back to coverage of international events. Garic Utley had an article about three or four years ago in one of the foreign policy journals. The auditors and MBAs are trying to rule here too. At the last presidential debate, Jim Lehrer asked the two candidates how they thought the administration handled Rwanda. George Bush said he thought they had handled it very well. And Al Gore wasn't about to disagree with him. But in Rwanda 800,000 to a million people were killed and Bill Clinton, in his first trip to Africa, went to Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda, and apologized to the people of Rwanda for what happened. I didn't see any kind of a follow up story anywhere in the press on the Rwanda situation, one of the great tragedies of the last decade.

Jaco: Well, Senator, given what's been said tonight, why should there be that kind of coverage? If the vast majority of the audience could care less about Rwanda, where it is or what happens to people there, why do the story? Why should media corporations take the time and the energy and the trouble to do a story about Rwanda if nobody's going to read or watch or listen to it?

Simon: Well, you know, it's a strange thing. I understand Rick's point that this is the way things run. But journals and media that do the responsible thing, in the long run, I think, make money. In the short term it doesn't pay off. However, the *New York Times* makes more money than the *New York Post*. There is no immediate payoff for a lot of these stories. People in the media have to be asking the question, "how do I serve the public?" Just as people in public life have to be asking that. When that question isn't being asked,

in either sector, then the nation loses.

Jaco: Ken, question for you. When you write an article, how many editors check off on it? How many sets of eyes look at it and say, “Damn it Walsh, this is” either “the finest stuff I’ve ever read” or “It’s not writing, it’s typing and it’s not very good typing at that.” How many people do you have to go through before it’s in the magazine?

Walsh: It goes through a section editor, a fact checker, a news desk, and a top editor. It goes through four levels. It used to be that news magazines would be much more heavily edited than they are now because you used to have more of a template put on them. I think you have more of the voice of the writer now. So I think that’s part of why it’s more rewarding for a writer to work for a news magazine, because you can control your story more. But it does go through four filters if you will. And I think that’s good.

Jaco: Well, I take it from most of the people here that it’s not unusual that the copy you produce would go through two, three, or four filters. And that this has been the case for most standard media forever. As a journalism professor once told me, “check it out. If your mother says she loves you get it from at least two independent sources.” What is the average person reading today from websites that are informational? Websites where there is “zip” in the way of filters, there is nothing between you and the person who writes it except the cathode ray tube or the flat panel screen. There is no fact check. There is no system of filters you go through. I mean, Rick, isn’t that the ultimate democratization of the media? OK, I’m putting it out there, but you create it and put it together for yourself. How do you know what you’re reading?

Stengel: It’s a good question and to piggyback on what Ken said, having also been a news magazine writer for a long time, I remember John Leo, a colleague of yours who was at *Time*. When I was first there, this was so long ago, you actually turned in your stories on paper in a little wooden box. I was turning in my story and John Leo, who was sort of a curmudgeon fellow, turned his story in and he said, ‘Yeah, I’m turning it in for joke removal.’ That’s what editors did, they took out anything that was funny or interesting, or personal. And when you’ve got four levels of that, nothing ever gets through. So the idea was to write in four times as many jokes so that one would make it through. And yes it’s true that the big magazines have become more personal, that the voices are coming through more.

For example, on my web site the content that goes in is from magazine writers. Or if it’s only for Time.com, and not the magazine, then it’s really only edited and copy edited. It doesn’t go through those three or four levels of editing. I’ve found that there is a side benefit to this. A lot of people feel that it’s actually more liberating to write for the Web than it is to write for print. One of the *Time* magazine television critics is a wonderful writer who just came from Salon.com. He writes maybe one piece a week for the magazine and then three or four for the web site. He says, “You know, I just much prefer writing for the web site than for the magazine. When you write, and you know you have three editors you get a little cramped and you sort of preemptively take out the fun stuff. You don’t want to see that red pencil all over your piece.” By the same token, there aren’t as many barriers. Stories are not fact checked the way they would be in newspapers and magazines.

One of the ironies I remember from *Time*, and it’s probably true of *US News and World Report*, is that when I was writing a story in the olden days there used to be fact checkers. Everything had to be checked. Such as proper nouns; except material taken from books which were known as a “red check,” meaning you didn’t have to check it. Having written several books myself, there is nothing that goes out there in a more unmediated, unfiltered way than books. They don’t even get read by their editors. They have copy editors. I believe that people who read things on the Web know that this probably doesn’t go through all the hoops that a printed story does. Now I have to be a little more skeptical about it. In effect, I become the editor myself. That’s the democracy of the Web. The reader becomes the editor, judging whether a story is valid

or not valid and true or not true.

Walsh: I think there's another aspect to this whole notion of the democratization of the media. That's the blurring of the line between straight journalism and entertainment, "infotainment" and punditry. I think most Americans can be forgiven for not understanding what journalism is anymore, because you have the whole revolving door syndrome. Paul Begala was in the Clinton White House. He was on the TV show with Ollie North. Now he's playing Bush in preparing Gore for the presidential debates. He comes back and does punditry. Then you have Rush Limbaugh who some people may actually think is a journalist. God help us if they do! You have the blurring of the line of where people get their information. One of the troubling things to me are the studies indicating that a lot of people get their news from the late night talk shows. They get an early sense of how they should evaluate things that are on the news. If you look for instance at CNN Tonight, on their politics segment, they showed Saturday Night Live's rehearsal and depiction of the debate of Gore and Bush. So everything is getting blurred now. I think that's one problem we have in the mainstream media. What is journalism anymore and what filter is appropriate? Given the way the readers and the viewers get their information, they don't really know what journalism is.

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Enda: If I can jump in here. I think one of the reasons for that, Ken, is cable TV, which we haven't talked about. Since we have 24 hour television and the Internet, the news cycle is speeding up. So there is always something out there and just about everyone can get on cable TV at some point or other, including all of us. I think it also serves to blur what news is and who are journalists, and what is journalism. I think that people go to the Internet in part because they are skeptical about the mainstream media. They don't see their views represented there. They don't think that we're fair and so they look for a web site that matches their own views. Maybe that's the Republican or Democratic Party web site. It's not necessarily a conventional journalism web site like Time.com.

Jaco: Adam, how does that strike you as someone looking at us journalists from the outside at someplace like the Freedom Forum. I mean, if several years ago someone asked me, "what is journalism?" I would probably have said something facile and probably inaccurate like "Well it's supposed to be the truth." And we have people, who for various reasons, maybe preconceived ideology, maybe dissatisfaction with the media, are going to all these various websites for different forms of "news media." They may be getting the instant, primary sources of information. But that stuff is straight from your mouth to God's ear. There's no filter in between.

And the average person, even someone in our business, unless he happens to know the material really well will have no idea if this stuff is true or not. If this is the ultimate democratization of media, does that mean anybody can do it whether it's true or not? I mean, how many people at the Freedom Forum...

Powell: Well everybody is doing it. The Freedom Forum, for example, has a web site and so does the Associated Press. We keep looking at the media as if whatever exists in the present is going to exist in the future. According to Nielson and Forester, what's coming is that by this time four years from now somewhere between 30-40% of American households are going to have broad band Internet in their homes. This means the Internet as cable television. We'll be looking at something that we may still call television, but it will be coming in over the Internet.

Now, instead of having a hundred channels in your home, you'll have tens of thousands of channels; millions of channels. Everyone will have his or her own C-SPAN. We already have Jennycam, a young woman who posts her entire life on the Internet in streaming video, 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. So instead of watching C-SPAN cover the House of Representatives and the Senate, you can watch Jenny in bed with her boyfriend. This is, for better or worse, what's coming. It's incredibly cheap, and getting cheaper all the time. Jenny spent only \$100 on her camera. You're going to have not just 30-40% of American households able to watch this, but you'll have 10% of Americans able to originate this. Not only Americans, but you'll have Britons, Japanese, Chinese, and Tunisians. It's going to become very confusing.

I'll just give you one little glimpse of what we're about to see. Amnesty International, a well known human rights group, has a web site. They have video and audio on their web site. They have some very uncomplimentary things to say about Tunisia. So Tunisia started a web site that looked just like Amnesty International's site but it contained a few different letters. Still it looked just like Amnesty International's Homepage. It had the Amnesty International logo. But you know, human rights really did change in Tunisia. And we're going to see a lot more of that: governments, industry associations, corporations, and labor unions starting their own news services, because it's so cheap. They'll be able to do something that looks and sounds exactly like Time.com or even CNN.

Jaco: Senator, let me ask you a question. We're getting to the point, where people aren't interested in the news anymore. They're not interested in international news or national news or even neighborhood news. But I want my news! I want my sports and my business news. I want to know what the weather is where I'm standing and no where else. I want to know how my stock portfolio is doing. To heck with the other guys. I want to know specifically the news I'm interested in. We are becoming increasingly fragmented. In fact, it's already possible for someone to design an information web site that only caters to their interests. As someone who has been in the public arena, what do you think of the idea of this country being based on a certain commonality of interest? Where people have things in common, and work towards some sort of common purpose. It seems as if we are all going off in 250 million atomized directions, getting our information from 250 million different sources with 250 million ways of looking at things. Does it make you worry that pretty soon there will not be any common purpose to speak of at all?

Simon: Well the strange thing is, when Adam talks about what's going to be happening in the future, I don't know how that effects that. But, a few of your listeners here, if they have a very good memory may remember I tried to get the Democratic nomination for President several years ago. One of the things that startled me, and really the only real surprise, was that I would get the same questions in Portland, Oregon, or Jackson, Mississippi. The same question in Portland, Maine. Somehow the new medium, the new media has united this country. And what is true for this country is also going to be true for the world. That's the positive side. The negative side is that despite all the talk about all the latest developments, things really don't change all that much.

One quick illustration from my political mentor, the great United States Senator Paul Douglas. When I was in the State Legislature he called me one day and said "Paul, will you introduce a resolution calling on me to introduce a resolution making the Corn Tassel the national flower?." Because I had so much respect for Paul Douglas I agreed to do it. But I got thinking about it all day and I really didn't want to introduce a resolution about the Corn Tassel. So I called him that night and I said, "Paul, are you sure you want me to introduce a resolution on the Corn Tassel?" He laughed and he became Professor Douglas. And he said "Just remember this Paul, the significant things you do in public life will receive very little attention. The trivial receives attention. You introduce the resolution, I'll endorse it, and it will be on every newspaper, radio and television station in the country. It won't pass but no one will be angry with us, and you will have done something to survive in politics." And that goes for the politics of journalism too.

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They are **CREATED** by the **PEOPLE** who **LIVE** in them.