

Journalism without profit: Making news when the market fails. Magda Konieczna. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 264 pp. \$34.95 pbk.

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Newspapers were once among the most profitable of businesses, often keeping as income 20 or 30 cents of every dollar they took in as revenue. They still make money, despite what most people think. They would not likely keep publishing if they were losing money. They are not making nearly as much as before, however, because print advertising revenues have fallen by more than half in the past decade. Newspapers have had to cut back on their reporting staffs as a result. Most are shells of their former selves, and public service journalism has suffered as a result. Online journalism was supposed to take up the slack but has not because profitability has by and large escaped digital news media. Oversupply has slashed what most news websites can charge for ads. Philanthropists underwrite some online newsrooms. Others have made a subscriber model work, as have many newspapers by erecting paywalls around their online content. But this is definitely a digital dark age for news.

Some, such as French economist Julia Cagé in her 2016 book, *Saving the Media*, have proposed a new nonprofit model for journalism. Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. tax code allows tax-deductible donations to news media, creating something of a digital gold rush for news there. Other countries, such as Canada, badly need to update their charitable giving laws to enable this type of funding for news media. Magda Konieczna is less concerned with these financial and tax aspects in her book, *Journalism Without Profit*, and instead ventured out to the front lines to see how nonprofit newsrooms actually operate. In the best ethnographic tradition of Gaye Tuchman and Herbert Gans, she spent hours sitting in on newsroom meetings and interviewing journalists at three major U.S. journalism nonprofits in researching her 2014 dissertation in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Now an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism at Temple University, Konieczna chose as her subjects the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism in Madison, the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, and the MinnPost in Minneapolis. She found an ethos of sharing and what she calls “field repair.” Drawing from Field Theory to explain the phenomenon, and distinguishing it from paradigm repair, she finds that a major goal of nonprofit journalism is to help heal the profession from the inside by supplementing what a diminished mainstream media can now provide. “They’re designed in a way that enables the content they produce to ricochet around the news space in which they operate,” notes the former city hall reporter for

the closed *Guelph Mercury* in Canada. “They aren’t working to create an alternative news stream. Rather, the goal for many of them is to improve on the already existing field of journalism by injecting quality news reporting.”

The sharing ethos is in sharp contrast to traditional media, which jealously guard their own scoops and often studiously ignore those of others. Nonprofit online news organizations by contrast well realize their limited reach and are more than happy to allow other news media outlets to republish their stories. “Sharing is an acknowledgment of the fact that public service journalism cannot be explicitly produced by the marketplace,” claims Konieczna, “and must instead be tethered to nonmarket actors and forces.”

Although thoroughly exploring the history and operations of the three organizations she studied, Konieczna also provides a comprehensive survey and history of nonprofit news, even venturing overseas for comparison. What she provides, however, is less a how-to guide for practitioners and more an academic analysis. It is somewhat dated, as the bulk of her data were gathered between 2011 and 2013. It is presented in the classic six-chapter dissertation format, but is enlivened by feature-like introductions that provide illustrative examples. One annoyance is the bibliography, which is oddly organized by chapter, requiring each to be leafed through separately to find a publication.

In all, however, Konieczna provides a valuable addition to the literature on an under-researched topic that would be a useful foundation for further study on this topic. *Journalism Without Profit* would be of interest to anyone concerned with the direction journalism is heading, and could make a worthwhile addition to reading lists for courses in journalism, more likely at the graduate level.