

Throughout the book are drips and drabs of what Hersh finds most critical to a sustained career in investigative reporting. In preparation for stories such as the Gulf & Western and My Lai massacre investigations, Hersh relied on extensive research so that he could be confident and knowledgeable going into an interview. During those interviews, he asked questions that showed he had done so. In a passage on his attempts to locate Calley, Hersh also describes how he carefully crafted questions for sources as to not divulge the truest intent. He writes “never begin an interview by asking core questions” (p. 108).

Without allies to serve as his editors, Hersh’s directness likely would not have survived navigating the politics of *The New York Times* newsroom. His efforts to develop and maintain (or destroy) relationships with editors were inextricably tied to his ability to publish some of his most important work. However, Hersh readily admits that this memoir is a story of a time in journalism now long gone where reporters with a hot lead and determination had the time and resources to chase it down. In reflecting on a lifetime of spending countless hours bringing the most immoral, corrupt, illegal and downright deadly acts into the light, he details international flights and spending weeks or months in hotel rooms just to locate a single source. The special confluence of Hersh’s skills as a reporter and the robust backing of well-financed legacy newsrooms allowed the stories Hersh uncovered to be reported.

With heavy description of the how and why he took the actions he did in gathering information for his stories, this memoir could serve in some ways as instruction for an aspiring investigative reporter seeking inspiration for what will likely be a lifetime of obfuscation and obstruction by powerful people. Yet, today’s reporters rarely find a news organization with enough patience and finances to let their staff spend months or years on a single story or series. As such, this memoir can more likely be only a reflection upon a time that has passed and not sage advice for the future.

*Metro Dailies in the Age of Multimedia Journalism*. Mary Lou Nemanic. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2020. 208 pp. \$74.50 hbk, \$27.95 pbk.

*Reviewed by:* Marc Edge, University of Malta, Malta  
DOI: 10.1177/0739532920970797

Scholarship on the existential crisis newspapers have faced for the past dozen years or more has suffered from a decided lack of rigor. Some have tried to understand it, and even had books published on the subject, by relying almost entirely on mainstream media coverage, industry trade journals and websites. They rarely pay attention to the growing body of academic research on the subject and almost never wander into a newsroom to talk with actual journalists. As a result, their conclusions usually end up only codifying the conventional wisdom, which is informed mostly by industry misconceptions, economic illiteracy and historical myopia. Not so with Mary Lou Nemanic. In *Metro Dailies in the Age of Multimedia Journalism*, she thoroughly surveys the academic research done on the wrenching changes at newspapers and ventures out onto the front lines to interview editors and reporters in depth about them. The result is a valuable contribution to what has so far been an ill-informed debate.

Nemanic's study focuses on metropolitan dailies, which is the strata most at risk from the ongoing flight of advertising online. She comes away convinced that there is a future for newspapers in a multimedia world. "Metro dailies, in particular, can continue to survive if companies are willing to integrate their print and online operations, are committed to visual journalism, and retain staff sizes substantial enough to allow for quality content." Her observations about visual journalism are especially interesting, given that some newspaper managements have cut costs by eliminating their photography departments, with often disastrous results. This strategy is counter-productive, Nemanic argues, given "the powerful attraction of images in print and digital layouts."

For her field research, Nemanic identified 25 to 30 metro dailies often listed as endangered and then approached 10 of them. Five agreed to participate in her study: the *Buffalo News*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. She found from more than three dozen interviews that their journalists have suffered an identity crisis in the transition from print to multimedia content. "This identity crisis is evident in a clash between traditional print journalism's formality and emphasis on detail and digital journalism's informality and brevity." An emeritus faculty member at Penn State, Nemanic also found that journalists at metro dailies nowadays face not only financial challenges but also the so-called "hamster wheel" demands of multimedia publishing with fewer resources.

Her conclusions reject extreme approaches such as "digital first," which envisions an all-digital future, and the print-centric approach that privileges hard copy. She argues instead for an integrated strategy that considers print and online platforms as complementary and emphasizes visual journalism in what has been called "digital right." She recommends a hybrid approach to content delivery similar to that of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, which established a Quick Strike Team dedicated to breaking news that updates the newspaper's website frequently with brief stories in an iterative style that adds information as it is obtained. The success story the Strib has written under local ownership contrasts to the horror story ongoing across the river at Nemanic's hometown paper, the "scrappy, once-mighty" *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, which she describes as now "stripped to the bone in pursuit of profit." Under management by the giant chain Digital First Media, which is owned by the hedge fund Alden Global Capital, staff numbers at the *Pioneer Press* have been reduced to fewer than 50 from about 260 in the late 1990s. Even during the course of Nemanic's study, its newsroom was cut by more than half, from about 95 in 2015 to 46 in 2018. That was bad enough, but revelations that the *Pioneer Press* made US\$10 million in profits in 2017—providing Digital First with a 13% profit margin—were "particularly shocking" to remaining staff members, according to Nemanic.

How long will newspapers continue to publish in print? Nemanic seems to think they will do so indefinitely. "One reason is that more readers still prefer print, despite the fact that a growing number of people are consuming news online." Then there is the fact that print editions still generate solid, if declining, profits, which is something only the hedge funds seem to realize. Meanwhile, no one has yet come up with a profitable business model for digital news. What was thus assumed by many to be displacement of old media by new has turned out to be a lot more complicated. Anyone interested in the reasons why should read Nemanic's comprehensive study.