

numbered under a new publisher, Katharine Weymouth. He catches Weymouth and her new editor, Marcus Brauchli, in double-talk about the infamous "salons" that would have traded private access to *Post* journalists for cash, and he details Weymouth's chilling request for happy magazine stories to placate advertisers.

Yet such finger-pointing is less an exposé than an affirmation of the dominant narrative of journalists as found in books like Davis Merritt's *Knightfall* and Tom Fenton's *Bad News*: It's always the fault of the suits in the corner offices.

Weymouth earns her brickbats, but she's a symptom, not the cause, of the death spiral that inspired the book. *Morning Miracle*, however, offers no insight into the systemic economic issues affecting metropolitan newspapers such as the *Post*, issues that pre-date the Internet and involve a fundamental shift of advertising dollars away from mass-media to niche-media and me-media. Nor does the book acknowledge how the *Post* let its franchise in national political reporting slip away in 2007 to a pair of employees who jumped ship to create Politico. Instead, the book relies on familiar journalistic canards such as blaming Craigslist.

Economics is not Kindred's forte. When he wants to know whether the financial contribution of the Kaplan education consortium is critical to the Washington Post Co., he turns to an anonymous source, an unnecessary crutch and a weak spot in a book that is otherwise on the record: He could have found the answer in any quarterly income statement.

The trouble is that the book's stated purpose is to describe "a great newspaper doing its damndest to get out of this mess alive." Because the book is unable to describe the source of "this mess," it spends most of its pages celebrating the paper's greatness.

Some of that celebration is deserved. Kindred offers enlightening chapters describing how the *Post*'s Dana Priest and Anne Hull uncovered horrific conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the bravery of foreign correspondent Anthony Shadid, who jumped ship to the *New York Times*.

At the same time, the emphasis on "great" creates stock characters. Shadid writes "the most beautiful, harrowing stuff you're ever likely to see in a newspaper." In overlooking a small part of an illustration that may have been obscene, Mary Hadar "made the single greatest editing decision ever." Gene Weingarten's work is "magical." Henry Allen is "a craftsman whose stuff made the hair on your neck quiver in applause." More than one staffer is an "old-school" journalist who practices "shoe-leather" reportage.

In short, *Morning Miracle* is exactly what it claims to be: a valentine to a profession and its practitioners. It is an enjoyable book written by a good sportswriter who interviewed players from both teams and tried his best to describe the game to a hometown audience. Just don't expect the book to discern how the rules changed or critically evaluate whether the players were adjusting to a new ballgame.

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■ ***Newsonomics: Twelve Trends That Will Shape the News You Get.*** Ken Doctor. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010. 219 pp. \$25.95 pbk. \$12.99 Kindle (<http://newsonomics.com/>).

Ken Doctor is a "Leading Media Industry Analyst." It says so right under his name on the cover of his new book, *Newsonomics*. A former managing editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Doctor spent twenty-one years with Knight Ridder. Now, as an analyst for a company called

Outsell, he has joined the cottage industry that proclaims the future of media for all who will pay to listen.

How does he foretell the future? Mostly, it seems, by reading blogs. Apparently that is where all the wisdom required to understand the future of the mass media can be found. What method do bloggers use? "We build on each other's ideas," explains Doctor, "engage in intellectual battles."

Doctor directed new media for Knight-Ridder, based in San Jose, until 2005. Now he's a consultant whose work "centers around the monetizing power and democratizing work of digital content."

One source you won't find in Doctor's prescription for the new economics of news are media economists or scholars examining digital media. In fact, *Newsonomics* offers no citations or references of any kind. Doctor doesn't need the input of academics to formulate his dozen maxims for what he terms the coming Digital Decade. In addition to all of his online experts, he's got lots of colleagues and former colleagues to call on for wisdom, of which there seems to be no shortage when it comes to the future of media.

According to Doctor, because news now surrounds us, "it's hard *not* to know what's going on." At least, not if you're as plugged into the blogosphere as Doctor is. Because of this oversupply of news, only the fittest will make the cut, ushering in a new age of "Darwinian content." The winners, of course, will use technology better, engaging the social nature of Web reading and focusing news to audiences. Newspapers will survive for a while, according to Doctor, but not in all cities. They will be more expensive, printed only as a niche product for boomers and older.

Newsonomics is not based entirely on conjecture, however. Doctor does some calculations to bolster his arguments: At about 150 stories per year for every position lost, for example, he figures that

828,000 stories are now not being reported every year due to the newspaper layoffs of 2007-08.

Doctor also offers a theoretical basis for his prediction that a handful of giant media conglomerates will dominate the new media world. He calls them his "Digital Dozen," although they actually add up to about sixteen to eighteen, and their domination will be enabled by what Doctor describes as a "multiplier" effect in which the big only get bigger. A writer for the *New York Times*, for example, might generate two million page views per month, which at an advertising rate of \$12 per thousand readers (CPM) for each of three ads on that page would add up to \$72,000 in revenue. A writer for a Web site with less traffic—say that of the *Washington Post*—might only get 200,000 page views, which at a CPM of \$8 would amount to only \$4,800 in monthly revenue.

Thus, it pays to hire the best writers, so deep-pocketed conglomerates will dominate New Media just as they dominate Old Media. At least that much won't change. While the "Digital Dozen" were forced to trim their sails during the recession, local media were "blown away," bringing a redefinition of local news, or what Doctor calls "remap and reload." Remapping for some newspapers means going "hyperlocal," right down to the neighborhood level despite diminished resources. Reloading is aimed at finding new ways of reporting, as bloggers and citizen journalists pick up the slack.

The new media revolution, Doctor says, is actually two revolutions in one. A reader revolution has seen audiences migrate online as Old Media have failed to see the value of things like aggregation, search, and online video. An advertising revolution has been far quieter, but has seen a similar flight to the Web, where techniques like behavioral targeting and data mining allow such things as direct e-mail marketing. According to Doctor, it is

nothing less than "the perfection of selling in our time."

Newsonomics loses steam in its second half, as chapters grow shorter and rely increasingly on clichés. Blog syndication is the "Great Gathering," which capitalizes on "Other People's Content." Citizen journalism enables a "Pro-Am World" of media content. Business news and the Web are "a match made in heaven." Doctor's "10 Percent Rule" sees technology do the heavy lifting while humans add only 10% in skill and judgment. Where journalism once was a hardscrabble job for itinerant reporters, it's "Back to the Future" in the new "gig" economy of freelancing.

Doctor ends by urging us to "Mind the Gaps," like the "Chump Gap" created by those who get their news online for free, and the "Fun Gap" that Old Media have difficulty bridging in an age of Jon Stewart hilarity. Suffice it to say that this is a different Doctor than is found in the academic world, one whose expertise comes not from the systematic study of media but instead from a kind of digital osmosis. *Newsonomics* is what one of my colleagues derides as an "opinion piece." Amid the spate of punditry and prediction, it serves mostly to test the limits of new media fatigue.

MARC EDGE

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■ ***The Nightly News Nightmare: Media Coverage of U.S. Presidential Elections, 1988-2008.*** (3d ed.) Stephen J. Farnsworth and Robert Lichter. Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010. 246 pp. \$80 hbk. \$24.95 pbk. \$24.05 e-book.

The conclusion I draw from this updated edition of the classic work by Stephen Farnsworth and Robert Lichter, both of George Mason University, is that

the free-to-air U.S. television networks long ago reneged on the deal implied but ill-articulated by the 1936 Communications Act that, in return for free access to publicly owned spectrum, these advertising-driven operations would deliver a news product that served citizenship and democracy.

There is no evidence that network television has gained from its dedication to mediocrity: The networks converted a 26-percentage-point advantage over cable in 1992 to a 20% deficit in 2008, and they remain inept in attracting younger viewers. Yet the three evening newscasts continue to draw an overall audience of 25 million, so their miserable performance is a matter of great concern.

The authors' content analysis shows that media coverage of presidential elections is wretchedly inadequate and generally getting worse. The principal shortcomings are well known to readers of earlier editions: "horse-race" framing prevails over substance. There are significant problems of negativity, accuracy, and fairness. There is declining attention to candidates and excessive attention to the journalists who cover them—we hear much more from the reporters who, by 1992, were setting the tone of a story about 80% of the time, and failing to integrate the concerns and views of ordinary citizens. In 2008, two-thirds of all speaking time was allocated to journalists, with the remainder split between presidential and vice presidential candidates and other on-air sources. Apart from reporters, barely any independent or nonpartisan individuals are heard.

The networks compare unfavorably to many other media, notably PBS. The authors say that the "single most troubling finding" is the "massive chasm between what the campaigns say ... and what citizens learn about those campaigns from the networks." The vested interests themselves—the candidates and campaigns—manage to do a better job than

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