Report Proposes New Models for Journalism

By Record Staff

A new report from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism on the future of the news business has accomplished one thing that Nicholas Lemann, the school’s dean, had sought when he commissioned it. It has fueled a wide-ranging conversation among media professionals, pundits, and bloggers about how to respond to the wrenching economic decline of major U.S. newspapers and their ability to provide the “accountability journalism” so vital to informed citizenship and self-government.

“The Reconstruction of American Journalism” was written by Leonard Downie Jr., former executive editor of The Washington Post, and Michael Schudson, a sociologist and professor at the School of Journalism. Lemann had asked them to assess the enormous changes taking place in American journalism and to make recommendations for the future.


Their report was underwritten in large part by the Charles H. Revson Foundation. It has fueled a wide-ranging conversation among media professionals, including public affairs, political culture and cultural memory, including Discovering the News, The Good Citizen and Why Democracy Needs an Unlovable Press.

The report does not envision newspapers disappearing, but it also does not regard newspaper staffs as their former size as possible, said Lemann. “It looks forward to a new, mostly digital, era of news production, in which news and non-profit sources of news and public affairs.

“It may not be essential to save or promote any particular news medium, including printed newspapers,” says the report, published late last month. “What is paramount is preserving independent, original, credible reporting, whether or not it is popular or profitable, and regardless of the medium in which it appears.”

The impetus for this vast change in journalism is, of course, the Internet, which has ended local newspapers’ domination of the news business. The report does not envision newspapers disappearing, but it also does not regard restoring newspaper staffs to their former size as possible, said Lemann. “It looks forward to a new, mostly digital, era of news production, in which news and non-profit sources of news and public affairs.

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President Lee C. Bollinger cuts the ceremonial ribbon for the official opening of the Columbia Alumni Center on 113th Street, which occurred in time for Homecoming weekend. On the balcony of the center, from left to right: Donna MacPherson, vice president for Alumni Relations and the president of Columbia Alumni Association; James Harden, a university trustee and chair of the Columbia Alumni Association; William V. Campbell, chair of the University Board of Trustees; Michele Moody-Adams, dean of Columbia College and Vice President for Undergraduate Education; Richard L. Witten, vice chair of the Board of Trustees; Mark E. Knight, trustee; Bollinger; Kenneth Frank, trustee; Geoffrey Cohler, president of the Columbia College Alumni Association; and Susan K. Freling, executive vice president for University Development and Alumni Relations.

Leifey Neiman, a donor to Columbia’s School of the Arts and its Leifey Neiman Center for Print Studies, attends a tea in his honor, held at the President’s House on Oct. 13. Neiman’s artwork focused on sociological subjects, including bars, gambling and casino action, and many sports events. Throughout his career, he has drawn and painted many prominent figures in politics, entertainment and sports, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jimmy Carter and the Beatles. In 1954, Hugh Hefner enlisted Neiman for the launch of Playboy magazine, and he became the magazine’s official artist. Neiman and his wife, Janet, established the Neiman Center for Print Studies at the School of the Arts in 1996 to promote printing through education, production and exhibition of prints.

*WAY TO LOOK AT THINGS*  A scrape of an article on journalism in *The Columbia Spectator*.

**WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?**

*Hint*: To whom do these cascading folds of knowledge belong? Send answers to current@ columbia.edu. The first person to e-mail the right answer wins a Record mug.

**ANSWER TO LAST CHALLENGE**: Demosthenes, symbolizing law, is located in the Low Library. WINNER: Peter Kalmin, J School student.

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