JOURNALISM AT A JUNCTURE

An Interim Report to the National Press Club Membership on the Nationwide 2008 Centennial Forums Program.

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For its 2008/9 centennial year, the National Press Club asked me to organize a nationwide series of forums to engage leading journalists, news media authorities, students and citizens in a conversation on "The First Amendment, Freedom of the Press and the Future of Journalism."

At each stop, we gathered a panel of print, broadcast and online journalists as well as a journalism academic or First Amendment scholar – about 130 in all -- to talk about where the news business is going and how to protect its core values as its underlying economic model changes.

Crossing the Mississippi River a dozen times, I visited 24 states and the District of Columbia. The NPC president, former presidents and board members hosted events in another four states, and we held forums by live Webcast and two-way satellite communication from the Club to journalism school and public audiences in another six states.

In all, the project reached thousands of people in audiences at 38 locations in 34 States and DC, usually at journalism schools, regional Press Clubs and civic auditoriums. Add in C-SPAN's coverage of the New York City forum, broadcast on local community access television, university channels and public radio stations, as well as public radio interviews, and the project reached a nationwide audience of many thousands more.

I bring you greetings from press clubs that co-sponsored our forums in Atlanta, San Diego, Denver, Milwaukee, New Orleans and Naples, Fla. as well as from journalism schools across the country that did so much work in helping organize these forums. Everywhere, people had a high regard for the National Press Club, the World's Leading Professional Organization for Journalists. They were proud, amazed and pleased that we were bringing our professional outreach program to them. At every stop, co-sponsors volunteered their time to locate venues for the forums, help find panel members and work on publicity.

Publishers, managing editors, TV and radio news directors, station managers and anchors, talk show hosts, investigative reporters, online news innovators, journalism scholars and First Amendment legal experts were pleased to be asked to participate. They recognized that radical changes are

happening to journalism and saw a historic opportunity to be part of the National Press Club's centennial.

The NPC Centennial Forums came at a crucial time for journalism as technological and economic upheaval are threatening the century-old economic model that has sustained the robust news gathering and reporting essential to a free society.

Yes, the news out there is mostly bad. Constant reports of staff reductions, Washington bureau closures, long-time print publications going entirely to the Web and bankruptcy filings were in the news as I traveled. By the last forum, Editor and Publisher Magazine was predicting that some major newspapers may soon be folding entirely.

But total pessimism is not warranted.

"So much depends on whether the ownership goes back to some semblance of seeing news as the public trust and ensuring it has some commitment of making sure that news is practiced in the public interest," Dan Rather told a standing-room-only Forum at New York University. "It can make money, it has made money, it does make money. It can be a good commercial enterprise. All of these pronouncements of near death of the journalism profession are premature."

We found journalists determined to maintain quality work in the face of shrinking revenues, profit pressures and rapid technological change. We also found tremendous innovation and a sense of expanding possibilities. Many journalists were excited about having new ways of reaching people and of telling their stories. And we found that the demand for reliable information is growing.

"I've never been so frustrated," Dennis Ryerson, editor of the Indianapolis Star, told a forum in Indiana. "But I have never been as energized."

The title of this report, "Journalism at a Juncture" comes from remarks made by Jay Rosen, a media critic and professor at New York University: "We happen to live in a time of amazing transition for our profession." He compared journalists to a tribe finding that its comfortable terrain is dying, forcing it to migrate to unexplored territory. "It hasn't been colonized and

civilized yet. It is still wild in a lot of ways. That's what's fun about it, that's what's cool about it and that's what makes me happy."

It could be, as one of our panelists said, "A golden age of journalism – if we could only find a way to pay for it".

Club President Sylvia Smith and General Manager Bill McCarren provided the Board and executive leadership to initiate this ambitious project that extended the Club's public outreach for the first time in 100 years to a truly national audience. It was the first NPC "road show," and we distributed free copies of our centennial documentary, "The National Press Club: A Century of Headlines," to everyone who attended the forums and to journalism schools to be distributed to students.

Tom Godlasky, chief executive of Aviva - North America, provided the financial support to make the 2008 project possible.

Club member Tony Culley-Foster gave tireless voluntary support, resource assistance and professional guidance that added so much to the successful development and delivery of the nationwide program.

The World Affairs Councils of America provided organizational help and resource support in cities where its chapters embraced this project.

NPC board members and past presidents actively assisted the project. Sylvia Smith hosted the Forum in Indiana, Donna Leinwand in North Carolina, Alan Bjerga in Minneapolis, Rick Dunham in Houston, Jerry Zremski in Maryland, Tammy Lytle in Naples, Fla., and Dick Ryan gave a special presentation at the Gerald Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, before the panel discussion. Former presidents also helped with the organization in cities where they now live -- Vivian Vahlberg in Chicago and Lee Roderick in Salt Lake City.

The Club's staff was essential to this project. Ryan Howell created our Web page, Howard Rothman helped find video shooters, Laura Holland put together the video, Melinda Cooke coordinated the publicity and Karen Deem made sure that plentiful copies of the Club's centennial documentary and promotional material always showed up in time to be distributed at the forums.

Video clips and summaries of the forums can be found at the project's Web page: http://www.press.org/npc100/forumindex.cfm

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS FROM THE NATIONWIDE NPC CENTENNIAL FORUMS

1. THE CONDITION OF THE NEWS MEDIA

After years of robust profits, most news organizations now are in trouble. Newspapers in particular are bleeding money and making severe cutbacks. As Tom Curley, president of the Associated Press, said at our New York City forum on Oct. 16, "a dire situation has turned into a fight for survival." He said that just as the Tribune Company announced it was planning to end its contract with the AP.

Classified advertising, which provided a third of most newspapers' revenue, has disappeared to free Internet sites. Newspaper sales are dropping. Television news executives worried that once political advertising ended it would not be replaced. Key advertisers, such as automobiles, real estate, and retail stores, are cutting back in the recession and shifting their advertising dollars elsewhere. Lamented Marla Drutz, vice president and general manager of WDIV-TV in Detroit, if the recession lasts much longer than a year, "the face of the media is going to change pretty dramatically."

Jonathan Wolman, publisher and editor of the Detroit News, said advertisers are as confused about the transformation of the media as anyone else. They are excited about the potential of digital news, yet the going rate for online advertising is about one-eighth of what print advertising is. Advertising revenue has gone up for newspaper online products, he said, but it does not begin to make up for the double-digit decline in print advertising during the past year. "Online advertising revenue has gone up in a gratifying way," he said, "but the business model does not see a shift from one platform to the next. It's sees a decline in one platform and a small increase in the next."

"The press used to sit as the tollgate," said Reid Ashe, the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Media General, Inc., a newspaper, television and online news company, told the Richmond forum. "Now there is no gate any more. It is a free for all. I fear in the present, and perhaps in the future as well, there is going to be fewer resources to do good journalism."

Newspapers are in trouble not only because classified advertising has disappeared to the Internet, but also because large news organizations took on huge debt to expand during the last 20 years, Kent Middleton, head of the University of Georgia's journalism department told the Atlanta forum. They had counted on fat revenue growth to pay back that debt, and it's not there.

Mike Donahue, a reporter and anchor for KOIN-TV in Portland, said being a trusted source of news is difficult for television journalism in the face of cutbacks. Just in the nightly news, he said, he has to do a version of a story for the 5:00, 5:30 and 6:00 o'clock reports. "Where is the perspective or context gone with my story?" he said. "We have to produce these stories faster and faster and faster with fewer people. That is a huge challenge."

Renee Ferguson, a top investigative reporter for Chicago's NBC News 5, said the biggest recent change has been the collapse in the separation between promotion and news. "They were separated like Church and State," she said. "Now I have to understand promotion; what people want to watch. I worry that we are getting too market driven. I want us to be a profession that relies on our best journalistic judgment."

The problem is not on which technological platform news will be delivered, but who is going to subsidize the high cost of producing it, said Mark Jurkowitz, associate director of the Project for Journalism Excellence. "The kind of journalism we need costs money to produce -- investigative units, people in foreign bureaus, people in national bureaus, people in statehouse bureaus, people who are assigned specific beats whether its science or health, who can dig in and do stories that are very important. That's the kind of journalism that's expensive. I think everyone understands that that kind of traditional journalism has been heavily subsidized, traditionally, by the newspaper industry, which was at one point a license to print money, and to some extent by the broadcast networks, which had very expansive news organizations and operations. We hoped that there would be a nice, smooth baton pass in the relay race from legacy media to the online product. I think there are a lot of opportunities going forward, but what we really have is an old business model that has taken us this far and a new business model that has not yet developed." One editor, he said, compared it to "changing your oil while driving down the highway at 60 miles per hour."

Some news executives thought there might be another way of financing journalism other than advertising. Said Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, “A large part of what is now commercial journalism will have to be supported by foundations or organized more along the lines of public broadcasting,” she said. “I don’t see any reason why newspapers can’t adopt a corporate sponsorship model much like public broadcasting.”

Susanna Capelouto, news director for Georgia Public Broadcasting, said her organization is expanding to different parts of the state even as the Atlanta Journal-Constitution is contracting into its home turf. “I think why public radio does so well is that it is non-commercial media. I really think that information or news per se as a product that you can sell, that you can build commercials around, is changing.” Most of the ‘who, what, when and where’ on a story anyone can find on the Internet, she said. “Public radio specializes in the ‘why.’” With membership support, the commercial pressure is off, she said. “I can see how news and information in the future will become a non-commercial endeavor.”

But many newspaper executives said they could not see raising the kind of revenue needed to provide a comprehensive news operation with anything but an advertising model. Newspaper publishers said they are looking to find new advertisers by devising niche publications that cater to individual interests. In fact, they said, the newspaper itself could become more of a niche publication aimed at those people who are real interested in government, politics and international affairs. At a forum at Drake University in Iowa, Des Moines Register publisher Laura Hollingsworth said advertisers want to reach people where they are active, through information that connects to their lifestyle. “The vision for the Register as a regional information center is knowing the household, knowing the players in it, and layering products and services that are both digital and print.”

Ed Kelley, the editor of the Oklahoman, the newspaper in Oklahoma City, said, “We are in a race against time to develop other products, whether they be niche products in print or they be print products that are both print and digital that can help supplement the kind of journalism we all want to do. I ask constantly who will pay for the journalism? I have a newsroom budget of $14 million or $15 million. Where do I get the $14 million or $15 million dollars to keep doing the kind of journalism that we want to do? While we are experiencing record growth on our Web site, we had record growth last

month in video and our Election Day last week was perhaps our biggest day ever, we still don't derive near enough revenue on our digital side to pay for this journalistic army we employ."

Television stations have to reinvent themselves, said Jim Hefner, former vice president and general manager at WRAL-TV in Raleigh who now teaches at the University of North Carolina. "The notion of channel should be quaint to us. Television stations are not something with just a broadcast tower. They are a production facility that happens to own a television station. They also have an Internet site. They also have a position in mobile. Hopefully if they are smart they have a position in radio or more than one. Hopefully they are smart and have an alliance to provide their product to someone else. The smart players are going to be in it all."

The AP's Tom Curley said news organizations have to get control over people stealing their news content. "Our legal department has won millions in settlements this year. We are joking that it will become a profit center soon." He said AP is in contract negotiations with Google to license the Internet giant to use some AP copy. "We believe we should be compensated for that content, especially when it is picked up in large part. That is part of the discussion in raising revenue. We do want the sharing. But somehow there has got to be a way for us to be compensated, especially when you are looking at your photographers and some of your reporters who are risking their lives to bring back the stories."

The two mistakes that have been made so far with the Internet are the idea that news is free and that the price of advertising should be based on the television model – how many eyeballs see an ad, said Penny Muse Abernathy, a University of North Carolina professor of digital economics. That will change. "You will have business models that emerge that take advantage of information that just can't be free," she said. "As you see the Internet mature, the big game changer in advertising is that it is not just a passive push but an interactive thing." Advertisers will understand that Internet advertising doesn't just tell people about products, she said, but that it can be used to close deals. That is worth more money.

Steve Buttry, the editor of the Gazette of Cedar Rapids (Iowa) and GazetteOnline, agreed that news organizations have to look at Web advertising differently. "Think of how much of the content of a traditional newspaper is related to someone's decision to buy something," he said. A

person reading a bridal announcement will want to buy a gift or two. If it's online, a person could click on the bridal announcement and be connected to the bridal registry and can buy the gifts right there. The same is true in sports, he said. Read about a game and click on it and buy the tickets. "You can see that if we start becoming the community marketplace where you actually conduct the transaction, that is so much more valuable to the advertiser than just the advertising model of selling eyeballs," he said. "That's where we need to go."

Jim Brady, executive editor of Washingtonpost.com, predicted a shift in advertising dollars to online media that will support good journalism. "The journalism profession may be in for a period where for the next five to seven years it will be grappling with these issues," he said. "But at the end, we'll come out okay. Once we get through this, journalism is in for another great period."

2. DEMAND FOR NEWS

The demand for accurate, dependable news is still great and growing. More people are reading newspaper stories and than ever – if you combine those who get newspapers delivered to them with those who are reading the content online. The one thing mainstream media has to sell is credibility, and journalists across the country said they knew they could not sacrifice that because it is what separates them from the cacophony of competing voices on the Internet.

"The number one good thing that is happening in our business is that we have never had a larger audience for the content that gets produced," Jay Fogarty, the Boston Globe's vice president for strategic planning, said at a Boston University forum. "It's enormous the number of page views we get on Boston.com. The Boston Globe still has a healthy circulation. It's going down, but it is still healthy. The influence the Globe has in agenda setting is still quite high."

Tom Scarritt, editor of the Birmingham News said, "Our print and online audience is bigger than it ever has been, and we are adding audience and adding viewers looking at Birmingham News content." While that has not yet translated into growing revenue, "certainly that is the hope for the future. We are trying to grow the audience while we figure out how to make the money."

Even though the Raleigh News and Observer has cut its staff from a high of 1,200 in 2000 to 750, it still has nearly double the number of employees it had in 1975, when it put out a good newspaper, said Orage Quarles, the paper's publisher. "We are not going to give readers any less information," he said. "And because of the Internet, even though our circulation is down slightly, our readership is up."

Jill Abramson, managing editor of the New York Times said, "The appetite for fair, deep authoritative journalism is huge and healthy." As the financial crisis developed, the demand for print and online "news that you can trust, news that informs, news that investigates, news that will tell you the story behind the story is robust."

Aki Soga, editorial page editor of the Burlington Free Press, said at a forum at Norwich University in Vermont, "the job of journalism is changing but the mission remains the same. We have to be a credible source where people can turn to for information they can believe. Anyone can feed information onto the Internet. But the question is how good is this information, can we believe what's in there. The brand of a news organization tells you there is some kind of quality control there, some kind of accountability behind the information that is being presented."

Con Psarras, news director at KSL-TV, in Salt Lake City, said on election night, "for the for the first time in the history of the craft, there were so many voices that it was very difficult to separate the voice of what we would call traditional media and the voice of all the others. That confuses people." As the traditional news media goes through what he called "a painful transition," it must maintain its role as providers of credible, non-biased information. And that may mean dropping anything that appears to be opinion, whether its columns or editorials or opinion blogs. "What we heard was this chorus of voices that boiled down to disrespect for old media," he said. "We heard it daily and we heard it loudly and it was disturbing. 'You're not covering this because you're biased' or 'this is a story that you have not sent reporters to investigate,' and 'I heard this on the Internet and why aren't you reporting it.' Many, many times we have no answers to those questions that are satisfactory." It boils down to this, he said: Credibility is "a commodity we convey. If we lose that, we're out of business."

Edward Pease, a journalism professor at Utah State University, said the "noise" generated by all of the new media is making it more difficult for traditional media to maintain its authority. "It is the job of the journalist to make sense of all that noise," he said. "I don't envy the challenges of either the old technology or the new technology to figure out a way to have a voice that is authoritative. Given all the voices, having one or two or a handful of identifiable places where you can make sense of the world is a valuable thing."

3. NEWSPAPER NEWSROOMS ESSENTIAL

The newspaper newsroom is essential to all news operations. Television, radio and online news rely on newspapers to have the big staffs of reporters. Newspapers are the ones watching the city councils and county commissions, keeping tabs on the police departments and courts, doing the investigative work. If newspapers fail, all of local journalism collapses with it. As Cyrus Freidheim, publisher of the Chicago Sun Times said, "the real critical mass of journalists is in newspapers. So we have to figure out how to make the transition that keeps newspapers alive."

Vincent Duffy, news director of Michigan Public Radio, made the best case for newspapers: "As good a job as we can do in telling narrative stories on public radio, as fantastic a job as television can do in covering spectacle and giving you fantastic visuals and presenting live situations, we don't have the staffs to cover the Detroit City Council meeting, the Ann Arbor city council meeting, Wayne County commission meeting like a newspaper can. We have all these bells and whistles that look great on the Web, but who's going to be the person with the professional background covering those events?"

Newspapers certainly must embrace new technology, and the Internet puts newspapers back in the breaking news business, said Terry Orme, managing editor of the Salt Lake Tribune. But newspapers cannot barrel ahead with the Internet and ignore the print product because it is still making the money that supports everything else. Providing a credible news organization requires a lot of people and costs a lot, he said. No one has yet to come up with an alternative way to provide that revenue.

The Associated Press gets its news from newspapers, said David Stringer, publisher of the Norman (Okla.) Transcript. If newspapers no longer have the revenue to produce news, then the AP no longer will have access to the

news to report to the rest of the country. Yet small newspapers like his now are competing against nearby larger papers that have the resources to post news online faster than his paper does. “We’re trying to figure this out at warp speed,” he said. “If we don’t figure this out, if there is in fact a significant impact on print media, it’s going to have a real negative impact on the industry as a whole and on journalism as a whole. The quality of reporting that you are going to see, no matter what platform we are going to put it on, there’s not going to be anything there.”

4. EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGY

News organizations are embracing new technology rapidly – some say desperately. Newspapers are producing video on their Web sites while TV and radio news operations are producing online prose. CNN.com is trying to challenge the Associated Press for printed news, while the AP is delving into video.

As Ken Mellgren of AP broadcast told our Webcast forum, everyone is staking out the “beachfront property” on the theory that someday it is going to be valuable. “We’re doing a tremendous amount with hosted custom news, for instance. It allows customers of any media company to customize their web site, using our content, which is continually updating itself with video, audio, graphics, and text. It has the look of their local web site. It is a wonderful technology. We are sharing in the ad revenue from that. The whole thing is shifting.”

AP President Tom Curley said that since the AP launched its mobile news network in May, page views have jumped from 2.6 million a month to 26 million in September. And it is just offered on Apple. “You can see how fast this can grow if you hit the right channel and you can reach people who are addicted to i-Phones.”

Con Psarras, news director at KSL-TV in Salt Lake City, said he doubted if all of the traditional news organizations in Salt Lake City – four television stations and two newspapers -- would survive the transition. So he pushes his station onto the Web. “We incrementally added to the Web staff to the point where it started to scare some of the people in television,” he said. “They fear that one day the old media would die and the new media would be born. We would turn the lights off on the TV studio and turn the lights on in the Web news room and there would be all these people already there.”

Tom Beres, senior political reporter for Cleveland's WKYC-TV 3, said covering this presidential campaign was a revelation to him in the ways technology is changing the business. The station's Web site was much more of a factor than four years ago, he said. At campaign rallies in town, someone from the Web site joined him to do a blow-by-blow, second-by-second Twitter diary. "I'm not sure how much traffic it generated, " he said, "but it t made me rethink how I present a story so it doesn't seem like yesterday's stale bread a couple of hours after the event." Mark Naymik, a political columnist for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, said the positive thing that technology brought to this political campaign was the instant ability to fact check campaign ads. Other technological innovations were not as successful. He carried around a 30-pound backpack with a high-definition video camera that was shaped like a gun. "It would shake. You could hear my pen writing because I would have it on my knee with the camera during press conferences. When I got back to the Plain Dealer, they remarked at how bad it sucked. But we're evolving. All those things are constantly changing."

Bill Adee, associate managing editor for innovation at the Chicago Tribune, said now it is possible for editors to know exactly how many people read a particular story on the Internet. True, he said, animal stories are the most popular. While that should not tell all reporters that they should do animal stories, editors should be aware of what attracts readers. "If you are doing a story, and you would not read that story yourself, you should stop," he said. "Reporters should still pursue stories they think are important, but they should know what is popular."

But Ross Douthat, senior editor at the Atlantic Monthly and a blogger for TheAtlantic.com, said story popularity now is driving the news, even at top publications. "I thought it was appalling that there were three New York Times front-page stories related to Bristol Palin's pregnancy. But if you had gone to the New York Times' Web site the next day and seen what were the most e-mailed stories, they were the pregnancy stories. Nobody at the Times is under illusions about the commercial environment they are in. That either consciously or subconsciously plays into things. To some degree the Internet is driving journalism toward a more give-the-audience-what-they-want model."

Speaking at a live Webcast forum from the Club to students at six universities in five states, Donna Leinwand, a USA Today reporter, described how she was able to provide a real-time running commentary and video to people logged into the USA Today Web site as she drove through the wreckage of Hurricane Ike in Texas. “We had 6,000 people or so following along on the Web as I drove down the highway,” she said. “I am using all kinds of different tools as I tell my story beyond words, beyond pieces of paper. I’m using photographs. I’m using sound. I’ve done my own audio and my own video. I think it’s fun.”

That hurricane also demonstrated to the Houston Chronicle the power that new technology is bringing to its news delivery, even turning once obscure reporters into minor celebrities. Scott Clark, executive editor of Chron.com, said during the storm, the weather reporter had 14,000 people following his live chat, and they posed 5,000 questions. “That is a completely different dynamic for a reporter.” Readers sent in reports from all over the metropolitan area during the storm, he said. If he had 100 more reporters, he couldn’t have collected more information.

News consumers now are beginning to expect that their news not only will be provided instantaneously, but will be delivered where they are located. Waiting for the next day’s newspaper is no longer an option. Even waiting for the evening news is becoming outmoded. As Omari Gardner, news editor for digital media at the Detroit Free Press said, “There’s an expectation from our readership that we give them news as we learn it. It’s instantaneous and it’s constant. We have never had better access to our community than we have now. And they have never had better access to us.”

In the near future, people will expect their news to be delivered to their cell phones, and woe to the news organization that doesn’t do that. Ken Booth, editor in chief of Al.com, the online service for the Birmingham News, said he watched a good deal of the Olympics on his i-Phone. “Once things are electronic and digital,” he said, “we can deliver them wherever people are, whenever they want to get them.” James Finch, vice president for news at Fox 6 WBRC-TV in Birmingham said the 47 hours of news programming his station does each week and providing streaming video on its Internet site is not enough. “People are going to want to watch local news on a mobile device. That is meeting them where they are wherever they are. We certainly don’t want them driving and doing that. But if they’re going to a ballgame

and they want to watch local news, that gives them an opportunity to do that. It's really about meeting people where they are."

Ana Marie Cox, who created the Wonkette blog and now is editor of Time.com, said Twitter represents where journalism is going more than Facebook. Twitter allows a reporter to send out instant messages of up to 140 characters that appear on subscribers' cell phones. It makes every reporter a broadcaster. "I think in the end, people want to be broadcast to," she said.

Charles Kuffner, who runs the Houston political blog, Offthe Kuff, said the tools for blogging have become so easy to use that anyone can do it. But the number of people running successful blogs is still small. "The key is to serve an audience that may be narrow in scope but has a much deeper interest in the topic at hand," he said. "I can spend my time like I am now going through precinct data from the recent election and finding all kinds of interesting patterns that will be of interest to the political junkies but might bore a wider audience."

News organizations say they must have the flexibility to try new ideas, "fail fast," if necessary, and go on to the next idea, as St. Paul Pioneer Press editor Thom Fladung said at the University of Minnesota forum. Marty Kaiser, the editor of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel says he is able to succeed because local ownership gives him the ability to make changes quickly and to concentrate on what he thinks will work. "It gives us great freedom in our newsroom to do the kinds of things that we want to do and also to experiment." Said David Busiek, news director at KCCI-TV in Des Moines, "All I know is that if we are not out on the leading edge of trying some of these new ideas and figuring out what works and what doesn't, we're not going to be around very long."

Mark Blaine, who is working to reconstruct the University of Oregon's journalism curriculum, said journalists just don't think like entrepreneurs. Computer scientists have seized the new technology to create profitable new forms of communication, but they don't have the values of the Fourth Estate, he said. If journalists could be involved in developing these new forms of communication then they could apply journalistic values to them in advance instead of trying "to retrofit good values and ethics to something like YouTube."

5. BURNING OUT JOURNALISTS

As news organizations cut staff and embrace new technology they run the risk of burning out their reporters who now are under constant deadlines on multiple news platforms. Many editors and broadcast news directors said their reporters were energized by the new technology. Many rank-and-file reporters begged to differ.

"The burn-out factor we talk about a lot," Neill Borowski, managing editor of the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, told the forum at Syracuse University's S.I Newhouse School of Journalism. "It's nothing for a reporter to grab a notebook, take a video camera to an interview. Set up the camera, do the interview on video and take notes the traditional way, come back, file a Web story, sometimes with several updates through the day." Then the reporter must have a fresh lead that pushes the story ahead for the next day's print version, he said. For older reporters, "this is a revolution," Borowski said. But he insisted for younger reporters, who grew up with the technology, it's not as difficult. "Five years from now, it will be no big deal," he said. "This is how it's done."

But many journalists from national and local news outlets said quality was suffering as they updated repeatedly for the Web, blogged, Twittered and provided Webcasts. Vincent Duffy, news director for Michigan Public Radio, lamented that "Every time there's a new technological ability to do something, our bosses say, 'great do that, too.' You have reporters who are running ragged with no more resources, no more time, and no more pay."

Bill Carey, a senior reporter and field anchor for News 10 Now, the Syracuse 24-hour cable news channel, said the technology revolution is transforming how television news reporters do their job – and not necessarily for the better. In the past a cameraman and a reporter would go out on a story, he said. Now a single person is shooting the interviews, and the b-roll, coming back to the station and editing his story to get it on the air immediately, and then going out and doing it one or two more times during the day. "They're getting the stories done and on the air," he said. But they are not doing a lot of the off-camera reporting that allows them to understand the issue or put it in any perspective. "We are crushing people with all of these requirements. We are just getting some video and words on television." But J.W. August, managing editor, KGTV Channel10 in San Diego insisted that this is the future. His station has cross-trained

photographers to write and reporters to shoot. “Now we send one reporter out with this camera,” he said, holding up a new lightweight video camera, “and a Mac laptop that they can edit on. And we feed the video back wireless to the station. Our station has a lot more bodies on the street than our competitors, even though we have a smaller staff.” He did concede, however, that “traditional broadcasters complain about the quality of the work.”

At a forum at the University of Missouri, Tony Messenger, the state capitol reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, said he has been blogging for years and now he is Twittering as well as trying to produce an intelligent analytical piece for the next day’s newspaper. “I have yet to have a discussion in my newsroom about why we’re blogging and to tie that somehow into the newspaper’s business model,” he said. “How are we going to save jobs in the newsroom if we do this?” Elaine Sciolino, the Paris correspondent for the New York Times, said she now is expected to post to the Web by noon, produce video for the Web, write for the Times-owned International Herald Tribune and still write a flawless story for the next day’s Times. “You don’t have a choice,” she said. “If you want to be a journalist today, you just have to work harder and more efficiently. You aim for perfection until the deadline, and then you aim at doneness. You just gut it out.” Charles Davis, director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition and a Missouri professor, said he gets calls even from recent graduates who say they are giving up on their journalism jobs. “It was do the daily, come back, blog, Twitter, whatever the technology of the day,” he said. “Work on the project for Sunday. Go back on the blog four more times before I leave. The job doing public relations for the school board looked a lot more attractive.” Jennifer Reeves, a Missouri Reynolds Institute Fellow, who is studying new media, said many news organizations are embracing new technology because it is cool, not because it really delivers a better product. “A lot of newsrooms need to take a breath and see if the markets need it and find a way to use it logically,” she said.

Rick Dunham, Houston Chronicle Washington bureau chief, described how covering politics became much more intense as reporters wrote on different communications platforms instead of just for the newspaper. At each presidential debate, he said, “I was live blogging using Twitter. It would be live on our Web site, and the last 20 postings would be right there on the screen. At the same time I was doing an analysis for the newspaper. So when the debate ended, I had a half hour to file the analysis story for the

newspaper. At the same time I was taking photographs to do a photo essay that I would file after I filed for the paper. Then I did additional online stories afterward," he said. "The newspaper gets the same story it would have gotten from me four years ago or 16 years ago, but I'm doing about five or six different things there. You exhaust the reporters. There is a real risk of errors. When you are that worn down, little things can slip through."

The challenge with the new technology is that while news organizations now CAN do anything, they have to decide what the SHOULD do, said Nancy Kent, news director at Richmond's NBC 12. The canon of news stories – those six or eight topics that everyone knew had to be covered – no longer applies, she said. Now, news organizations are looking for an editorial voice that will attract people they can sell to an advertiser. "We are finding ourselves very stressed as we look to find out where is my dollar going to come from so that I can keep people running around to develop this material," she said.

The key, said Eve Epstein, executive producer of Oregon Public Broadcasting's experimental "Think Out Loud" program, is sticking to your strengths. "We know radio really well. We know sound really well. We don't know print and graphics well," she said. "There is so much technology out there. You can do the throw-it-against-the-wall-and see-if-it-sticks method or you can think deeply about what you are trying to do and how the technology will enhance that."

6. INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Investigative reporting is suffering. Many TV reporters and news directors said investigative teams are the first to go when the economy turns down. Many newspaper editors say they just cannot allow a reporter to devote weeks if not months to a good story because staffs are so small and the technological demands so intense. Tom Baxter, who edits the online Southern Political Report after leaving the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, said the public will miss investigative reporting the most. "The major metros were the only people in town that had the resources, the number of reporters, the financial strength, the institutional memory, the commitment of journalists and publishers to do that work."

Barry Ahrendt, director for marketing and programming at WIS-TV in Columbia, S.C., said he has worked for two television newsrooms where the

I-Team is the first thing to go when budgets had to be cut. Jim Hummer, who worked as an investigative reporter for the Providence Journal and WLNE-ABC, called it the "tyranny of the urgent" as reporters get taken off investigative stories to fill gaps in the next day's newspaper or TV broadcast. "It is one of the great risks and dangers in our society that we have lost this significant resource," he said. "I don't see any solutions for it right now."

Mike Donoghue, executive director of the Vermont Press Association and a long-time Burlington Free Press reporter, said the cuts in news budgets are undermining the news media's role as a watchdog on government. "I'm concerned that journalists today, with the cuts, are practicing what I call desktop journalism," he said. "Unless they can find it on the Web or by phone, they don't pursue the stories. God forbid if they have to go out and actually talk to real people."

Some newspapers and TV stations say the investigative responsibility is too important to let drop. They are eliminating some of the routine reporting to concentrate on investigative pieces. But that means city halls, county commissions and courts are not as well covered. Sandra Rowe, editor of the Portland Oregonian, said her paper no longer does stories about incremental changes and instead concentrates on in-depth pieces, sometimes putting just one story on the front page. "It's a clear choice I am making with these resources," she said. "That's how journalism should change. The more cacophony there is in the marketplace, the more (readers) need to know what can (they) rely on."

"There are few things we do that gets a more favorable response from readers than investigative reporting," said Mark Lett, editor of the Columbia, S.C. newspaper, The State. In the past, he said, a reporter could disappear for a week or even a month and then come back with a great story because he had time to run down tips and make context out of the information. But giving a reporter that kind of time now is difficult, he said, when news organizations are cutting staff while creating content for both the Web and the newspaper. "Every day there is this tremendous push/pull, how to feed the beast, how to fill up the newspaper with local content."

Keith Conners, executive news director of KHOU-TV in Houston, said news organizations should treat most routine news as a commodity that can be reported by any one news organization and shared with the others. That will

free up limited resources to do the hard news, enterprise investigative reporting, which should be the core of the business. The news organizations that embrace it, he said. “are going to be the ones that not only survive but thrive.”

With shrinking news holes, newspapers have to rethink how they present major investigative stories, said Jacquee Petchel, assistant managing editor for projects at the Houston Chronicle. With technology, newspapers can gather so much more information but they have smaller space in print to present it. In the future, she said, newspapers may run just a small part of an investigation in the print edition to draw in readers with a great story and send them to online to see the details.

Investigative reporting does make a difference, said Charles Bierbauer, dean of the University of South Carolina’s College of Mass Communication and Information Studies. While the number of entries into the university’s award for investigation has dropped significantly, he said, the Charleston Courier and Post’s winning story last year “made a difference in changing the laws and regulations affecting fire departments across the state,”

Some journalists may make their mark by being entrepreneurs. Amar Bakshi spent a year traveling around the world and producing a Web series “How the World Sees America,” which ran on the Washington Post and Newsweek Web sites. He told a forum at the University of Maryland that individual journalists have the opportunity to move fast, and on their own, to establish their own credibility in a variety of media forms. He marketed the idea for his series as a business proposal and said other journalists should do the same. Editors are looking for innovative Web products such as his series.

7. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Defense of freedom of information and the First Amendment is suffering. News organizations said they no longer had unlimited budgets to challenge government secrecy and to defend reporters’ confidential sources. As Brian Maas, who leads the investigative team at Denver’s CBS 4 said, “The media seem less and less willing to fight back and to challenge government authority. And the government has gotten pretty canny in knowing that there’s less fight in the media to battle for information.”

First Amendment attorney Guylyn Cummins in San Diego said she had never seen such encroachments on the protections the news media used to have and less resources to fight them. “Government is definitely getting more secretive. In fact, there is a shift in the balance of power between the public and what they know and what the government is able to keep secret because there are less resources.” In addition, she said, news organizations are not even covering courts as they used to. “One of the judges said we used to have reporters who were in our court rooms who covered cases,” she said. “Where is everybody? We don’t see anyone anymore.”

Seattle Times Associate Publisher Ryan Blethen said his paper cannot abandon its role of challenging government secrecy, but it can no longer fight it with an open checkbook. “You can’t blow up at everything. You have to pick your battles and figure out where you’re going to apply some pressure and be smart about it.” That sends a chill through the rest of Seattle’s news media. Knute “Skip” Berger, a columnist for Crosscut.com and former editor of the Seattle Weekly, said smaller papers have always depended on large dailies to fight freedom-of-information battles. “I worry about the loss of the Seattle Times’ legal budget,” he said. “We can’t hire lawyers to fight all the battles. The open-government battles that the Times has fought have benefited everybody.” Lori Matsukawa, an anchor at Seattle’s KING-5 TV news, said television news cannot pick up the costs that newspapers have been incurring to fight legal battles. “We really appreciate the fact that the Seattle Times will take the lead on litigation,” she said, “and then we will send our attorney out there to file a friend-of-the-court brief.” Quipped Blethen, “If you ever want to cut us a check, we’re open.”

Panelists at the forum in Washington, D.C. said the First Amendment and freedom of the press are under attack, especially in the Bush administration, which refused to release information under the Freedom of Information Act while keeping careful control of information leaks out of the White House. "I think it's in trouble," Bill Plante, CBS News White House correspondent, said of the First Amendment. "There will always be those in government who try to apply pressure to those gathering news and to have that information suppressed."

Jill Abramson, managing editor of the New York Times, said “the past eight years has seen an extraordinary rise in secrecy in the federal government. Even more pernicious has been the spread of criminal leak investigations,

probes trying to ferret out who the sources of journalists have been. It puts a freeze on the interaction between journalists and sources inside the government who have an interest telling the truth and bringing to the fore abuses of power."

"When reporters are jailed in this country, it sends a chilling effect on the press," said Jim Taricani, a top investigative reporter for WJAR NBC, Channel 10, who was sentenced to six months of home confinement for refusing to reveal who leaked him a surveillance tape. Not only are reporters less willing to risk confinement to protect sources, he said, but their employers now are far more reluctant to incur the costs of defending these cases. His legal battle cost his station $700,000.

Steven Brown, executive director of the Rhode Island chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, told a forum at the University of Rhode Island the Bush administration has used the war on terrorism to hide information that is not a threat to national security and has stifled dissent. He held up a copy of an ACLU complaint the government had released to the public with large sections of it blacked out for "security reasons." He said most of what had been blacked out had nothing to do with national security. "The idea that someone has filed a lawsuit against the government challenging very important statutes, raising serious constitutional questions, and then having the public kept in the dark is absolutely appalling," Brown said. "Unless and until more people speak up as we deal with this never-ending war on terrorism, you will see more of these things."

Without a Shield Law in Texas, news organizations doing hard-hitting investigative stories are forced to pay what Houston First Amendment attorney Tom Forestier called "a lawyer tax." "I know if Channel 2 or Channel 11 does a good investigative report, you can probably count on the next two or three days that they will get a subpoena from the district attorney's office asking the reporter for their files and that's a real problem," he said. "Now we've got law enforcement and government piggy backing on media when they should be doing their own investigation." With revenues tight, news media have to consider the cost of defending against that kind of government intrusion, he said. "It has an impact on the kind of stories they want to investigate."

As news circulates globally, it is creating new challenges for libel law and First Amendment protections that American journalists enjoy, Matt Bunker,

a University of Alabama professor who specializes in the First Amendment, told a Birmingham forum. American journalists are being sued in foreign courts. "There have been a number of cases in the United Kingdom, which has plaintiff-friendly libel laws, and they don't have the First Amendment and they don't have New York Times v. Sullivan," he said, referring to a U.S. Supreme Court case that gave broad protection to American journalists.

8. CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

I found a debate over “citizen journalists,” untrained people who are reporting on events as though they were journalists and often supplying information to news organizations. Some journalists believe that they are dangerous because their information is sometimes used as though it had been gathered by trained reporters. Yet few citizen journalists are disinterested observers. As Robert Whitcomb, editorial page editor of the Providence Journal said, much of citizen journalism “stinks.” Gordon Robison, who had been Fox bureau chief in Beirut and had reported for CNN, told a forum at Vermont’s Norwich University, "CNN constantly pushes iReports, which is stuff randomly sent in by viewers. What gets it on the air is not whether it is timely, accurate or good, but whether it is good TV."
Aki Soga, editorial page editor of the Burlington Free Press, said citizen journalists are challenging the assumptions of journalism. “The great thing about a free press is that we never allowed anyone to define what journalism is and who a journalist is,” Soga said. “Now there’s a whole host of real issues.” The high bar that used to restrict who could be a journalist has disappeared, he said. “Anyone can disseminate information at the click of a mouse.” Bloggers “are claiming freedom of the press,” said Susan Youngwood, a longtime Vermont journalist who now advises the Norwich University newspaper, “but are they really being careful of what they are putting up? Is it opinion or is it fact? There has to be some responsibility.”

Others believe that citizen journalists are essential for covering those meetings that regular reporters can no longer reach. And what news organization is going to turn down video someone took of a collapsing building? Journalism is no longer a one-way street. It has become a dialogue between the news organizations and the news consumers. Jay Rosen, the media critic at New York University, said citizen journalists – a group he labels “the people formerly known as the audience” -- now are just a fact. People have blogs, they have cameras they have video, they can edit, they can create their own report and they can distribute it to the world.

Marty Kaiser, editor of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, said that what has changed is that the newspaper now is part of the conversation, not the font of all wisdom. “The more things that we can do to involve people and readers, it’s strengthens our reporting. On Election Day we’re going to be posting comments from people out at the polls with their own blogs with a chance for them to post photos and tell us what’s happening.” When there was a train accident, he said, the paper posted a notice on its Web site to find if anyone had a picture of it. “In a very brief time we had pictures of the train accident.”

Deborah Potter, executive director of NewsLab, a non-profit journalism resource in Washington, D.C., said that despite protests of many journalists about the dangers of having lay people report news through blogs and i-Reports, citizen journalism is here to stay. She cited an incident where Apple stock dropped precipitously after CNN.com posted a false citizen journalist blog that Apple CEO Steve Jobs had suffered a heart attack. “It’s a cautionary tale,” she said. “But I don’t think we are going to be ignoring the possible contributions of individuals to the news. There are many more people out there equipped with video cameras on their cell phones. But it does raise the bar for what news organizations have to do to verify information and do it in real time, which is the biggest challenge of all.”

Bob Sullivan, who writes for MSNBC.com told the Richmond forum news organizations are turning to unpaid bloggers to keep fresh information coming at a low cost. But he too noted the fake CNN.com post as an example of the risks. “Because it was under the CNN brand, it carried a lot more weight than any anonymous blogger would,” he said. A few more blunders like that, he said, may undermine citizen journalism and give more credibility to trained reporters who do not report news that they have not confirmed.

But Michael Tomasky, editor of GuardianAmerica.com, insisted that while bloggers may contribute to circulating rumors to a larger audience, the medium is self-correcting. Speaking at a forum held in the Club’s ballroom and connected by satellite to West Virginia University, Tomasky said blog readers are quick to correct false information, especially on blogs that have a lot of traffic. "There is some wisdom of crowds," he said. "Readers pick blogs that are good, and they rise to the top."

In New Orleans, journalists from mainstream media said they counted on at least one citizen journalist to provide them the depth of information they needed to do investigative stories in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Karen Gadbois posts information on her Web site, “Squandered Heritage” that documents demolition of homes in the city. Her investigation revealed that a federally funded city program to gut and repair storm damaged homes of the poor and elderly was a sham. Her work was picked up by television and newspaper reports. "I found great synergy between mainstream media and blogging in New Orleans," she said. "There is a focus that a blogger can give to a specific topic that a journalist may not have the time for."

Jeff South, a Virginia Commonwealth University professor of investigative reporting, agreed that the public may have to rely on bloggers who are willing to focus on certain investigations. “We are moving toward a pro-am model of journalists where you have professional and amateurs,” he said. Indiana University journalism professor Emily Metzgar said as the number of reporters shrinks, "you have citizens filling in the gaps. The citizens, the bloggers, whatever you want to call them … are indeed picking up a lot of the pieces. Are they professional reporters? No. But at the national level and at the state level you see time and again examples of how a story that was not picked up on by state media or national media is picked up by somebody who happened to be present, happens to have a certain area of expertise on a policy issue, happened to just catch video of somebody saying just the wrong thing." That may be true, shot back Dennis Ryerson, editor of the Indianapolis Star, but the information has to be vetted. "Our future depends on getting it right."

Former Rhode Island Supreme Court Judge Robert Flanders, who now practices First Amendment law, warned that news media that rely on citizen journalists can expose themselves to liable suits. “One of the flaws of that from a legal standpoint is the media would be held responsible for publishing defamatory material that has a citizen journalist source,” Flanders said. The news media are not held responsible for what people blog to their Web sites, he said, but as soon as they use those blogs as part of their regular news reports, they are as responsible for that information as if their own reporters had gathered it. “The more the media is involved in actually sponsoring this,” Flanders said, “the more that their feet will be held to the legal fire.”

9. BREAKTHROUGHS

There are some fascinating breakthroughs where journalists are creating entirely new journalism entities that are filling the gaps left by shrinking mainstream media.

In Boston, Phil Balboni has created Globalpost.com and is hiring 70 reporters who will be based in 50 countries to provide in-depth international news. He will pay for it with advertising, with subscriptions to a premium Internet site, and by selling the stories to other news organizations. "We will have the broadest geographic footprint of any U.S. news organization except the Associated Press," he said. "We are not spending huge sums of money. But this is the point about building a new model. If you are a journalist you have to think not only about how you create high quality content, but you have to think about how to build an enterprise that you can sustain realistically with the revenue that you generate."

In San Diego, Scott Lewis is the executive editor of the Voice of San Diego that is making a name for itself by breaking investigative stories. The Voice is funded by grants, memberships, and corporate sponsorships, much like public radio. "Our whole purpose in being formed was to treat journalism as a public service," Lewis said. "What we will do is raise enough money to provide that public service. But the days of lining the pockets of these owners and publishers, they're done, they're gone."

Tom Fiedler, the dean at Boston University's College of Communication, said he is getting grants to hire veteran reporters to work with students to produce investigative news stories that will be offered to New England newspapers. He said he is creating the New England Center for Investigative Reporting that will be allied with the existing Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco Bay. Funded by foundations, "We will have students who are studying investigative reporting work as the foot soldiers in projects that come to the center."

Dan Rather is global correspondent and managing editor of Dan Rather Reports, a weekly news program that appears on HDNet. It was started by Mark Cuban, who made his fortune in the dot com boom. "Cuban told me when he hired me that I would have complete total creative and editorial control. This is unique in my experience. He has been as good as his word." That gives Rather a free hand to do the in-depth investigative and international stories that he has always wanted to do.

Jeff Mayers, president and editor of WisPolitics.com, said he is able to carve out a niche business on the Internet that caters to people who care deeply about Wisconsin politics and government. To make it work financially, he said, he offers two levels of service. A free Web site attracts advertising while he offers more detailed information to people who are willing to pay for a subscription. "Content is king," he said. "People will pay for good content."

Paul Stieger, the former Wall Street Journal editor, could not make our New York City forum, but his "Pro Publica," a new national investigative reporting enterprise financed by billionaires Herbert and Marion Sandler, was raised repeatedly at forums as an example of an innovative way to finance serious journalism.

Tom Baxter took a buyout after a career with the Atlanta Journal-Constitution to become editor of the Internet-based Southern Political Report and senior vice president of its parent company, Insider Advantage. He said one part of his company makes money by doing consulting and polling. The journalism side makes a little money from advertising, and a small group of subscribers still pay for the newsletter. He admits it all barely pays for itself. "You can live on a buyout. A tremendous number of people are out there doing a lot of exciting things in journalism only because they got to a tenure point with their news organizations where they could retire with a health care policy."

10. JOURNALISM SCHOOLS

Contrary to what one would think, journalism schools are attracting more students, not fewer. I took part of the opening celebration for a new home for the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University. The dean there, Christopher Callahan, said young people are more engaged in civic life than at any point in his lifetime. And there is so much media now the students are media savvy growing up with the technology. While this new technology might frighten him, he said, it excites them. "You will see very few walls in this building," Callahan said. "Even in our big TV studios, it basically all one big room. We did that because we wanted to keep it highly flexible. The one constant is that the news business will change, and we want to be able to easily adapt the building to the changes."

The role of journalism schools, professors said across the country, is to train students in the ethics and the basics of good reporting. As Charlotte Grimes said at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, if a reporter does not know how to gather reliable facts and to tell a story in a compelling way, it doesn't matter what technology is used to transmit it.

Speaking to West Virginia University journalism students, Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, said they were the lucky ones. When people of his generation went through journalism school, all they were learning was how to mimic what their elders did. "This is a dramatically more exciting time to study journalism and imagine entering it. Although we are going through changes and a period of contraction, students today are going to invent the next journalism. They can be entrepreneurial, they can be creative, they are going to invent new forms, new tones, new ways of writing. This is a time when you can be much more creative than what was expected of us. It will be more robust, more personal and really more exciting."

Jamie Tobias Neeley, who teaches journalism at Eastern Washington University, told a forum at Spokane that her graduates "are taking jobs that sometimes didn't exist when they were freshmen, they didn't even exist last year. We had four students last year that went to work for a brand new sports weekly. They're just having a riot."

Aileen Gallagher, an online associate editor for New York Magazine and 1998 Syracuse graduate, told the forum at the Newhouse School the Internet revolution has opened doors to younger journalists who had felt stifled by Baby Boomers. "For a long time news rooms were white male dominated and no one left; it was like you were stuck," she said. With new Internet journalism jobs, "there's a sense of excitement that was missing for quite a while."

Attracting younger people just to read or watch the news has become a leading goal of many news organizations that are seeing the average age of readers and viewers escalate. But Vivian Vahlberg, managing director of the Media Management Center at Northwestern University, said young people still are looking for journalists to help them make sense out of the mass of information available on the Internet. A survey the center did of 90 people aged 17 to 22 found that "They want someone to separate the wheat from the

chaff, to tell them what's important. If they get on a site that they think is spinning them, they will get off."

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE 2008 – NPC – CENTENNIAL FORUMS

So where is this all going? The Club asked me to go around the country and be the catalyst for a national dialog on "The First Amendment, Freedom of the Press and the Future of Journalism." In the process I was particularly tasked with identifying viable solutions for the ailing news business. At every stop, I would tell the panelists that was my mission. And every time they would say, but we thought you were coming to tell us the solutions.

What I found was that in some ways, the First Amendment is quite healthy. With the Internet, more people than ever have an opportunity to express their opinions and publish their reports to a larger audience than had ever been imagined in the 20th century.

But it is widely perceived among journalists, that government from the federal level on down is trying to restrain free access to information and to hamper investigative reporters from prying under rocks and nosing around the hidey holes. Deteriorating finances of the news media are accelerating government secrecy. Only a robust news business with the courage and drive to take on secrecy and pursue investigative stories can counterbalance this assault on the basic tenants of the First Amendment and freedom of the press.

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM?

Some veterans of the business say people should not panic about events. Michael Gartner, who had been president of NBC News as well as a Pulitizer Prize-winning print editor, publisher and columnist, told the forum in Des Moines the newspaper industry should take a lesson from what happened to television news when cable television challenged the three major networks. "I lived through all of this 25 years ago at NBC," he said. "It was the same dire threat that these folks are facing now. You lost exclusivity, you lost your immediacy, and you lost a big chunk of your audience and a big chunk of your revenue." Television networks fought back by embracing cable television, he said. ABC has ESPN, and NBC has MSNBC and CNBC and Bravo and Oxygen and Lifetime. Television networks found ways to cooperate with each other on routine news to free up

more money for competitive journalism. "I understand the short-term panic," he said, "but I don't understand the long-term dismay and distress."

Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute said at our final forum in Naples, Fla., “there is no magic bullet.” News organizations, which have a culture of cutthroat competition, are going to have to learn to work cooperatively, sharing routine news and referring readers to each other’s Web sites. That will free up resources to compete on the big stories. “Finding the solution will take a lot of trial error,” he said. “It will challenge our standards and our ethics and our role in a democratic society. It will be a very difficult, challenging and interesting time.”

Many journalism executives and analysts estimated a five to 10 year shake-out period. But the demand for reliable information, good story telling and a disciplined watchdog on government and business will only get stronger. The National Press Club should take a lead in helping the news business sort through all of the options to find what works both financially and journalistically.

But with the Tribune Company declaring bankruptcy just before the final forum and a few major daily newspapers teetering on the edge, prospects do seem challenging.

About a week before the Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News announced that they would soon begin publishing a printed copy of their newspaper only three days a week, News publisher Jonathan Wolman said, “I know lots of people who are working lots of hours to get this business model tucked away. I have a certain amount of optimism that will happen. But the days do tick off.”

RECOMMENDATIONS.

I hope that a new 2009 corporate sponsor will soon emerge to provide the money required to conclude the remaining 15 state Centennial Forums in the US and three in Canada; air the NPC centennial documentary on nationwide public television and produce an NPC Centennial Forum White Paper on “The First Amendment, Freedom of the Press and the Future of Journalism” for presentation at a potential “Journalism At A Juncture” conference at the NPC in late 2009.

Each of the 2008 NPC Forums was videotaped. We have a lot of information from leaders in print, broadcast and new media journalism, leading journalism schools, regional press clubs and media sources regarding a new business model for our profession.

Despite the changing economic environment, business model and multi-tasking skill challenges for journalists, I believe that a new, improved and enduring new media-based professional journalism industry will evolve and the National Press Club will be central to defining its performance standards worldwide.

APPENDIX

LIST OF FORUMS WITH NAMES OF PANELISTS

ANN ARBOR, MICH.
Gerald Ford Library
Dec. 3

Jonathan Wolman, editor and publisher of the Detroit News;
Omari Gardner, news editor/digital media at the Detroit Free Press;
Marla Drutz, vice president and general manager WDIV-TV in Detroit;
Vincent Duffy, news director, Michigan Public Radio.

ATLANTA
Georgia Public Broadcasting Headquarters
OCT. 14

Cynthia Tucker, Atlanta Journal-Constitution editorial page editor and syndicated columnist;
Susanna Capelouto, news director for Georgia Public Broadcasting
Tom Baxter, editor of the Internet-based Southern Political Report and senior vice president of its parent company, Insider Advantage;
Kent Middleton, chairman of Journalism, Grady School of Mass Communication at the University of Georgia.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce
OCT. 3

Tom Scarritt, editor of the Birmingham News;
James Finch, vice president for news, Fox 6;
Ken Booth, editor in chief of Al.com;
Matt Bunker, University of Alabama First Amendment specialist

BOSTON
Boston University
SEPT. 23

Jay Fogarty, Boston Globe vice president for strategic planning;
Phil Balboni, founder of New England Cable News and founder of Global News Enterprises;
Ron Sanders, chief correspondent for WBZ-TV Worcester bureau;
Tom Fiedler, dean of Boston University's College of Communication and former editor of the Miami Herald.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.
University of North Carolina
Oct. 7

Orage Quarles, publisher of the Raleigh News and Observer;
Penny Muse Abernathy, UNC's Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics who is a veteran reporter, editor and media executive with organizations including The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal;
Deborah Potter, executive director of NewsLab, a non-profit journalism resource in Washington, D.C. and a columnist for the American Journalism Review;
Jim Hefner, former vice president and general manager at CBS affiliate WRAL-TV in Raleigh who joined the UNC faculty this year.

CHICAGO
Columbia College
June 4

Cyrus Freidheim, publisher, Chicago Sun Times;
Renee Ferguson, investigative reporter, NBC 5 News;

Bill Adee, associate managing editor for innovation, Chicago Tribune;
Vivian Vahlberg, managing director, Northwestern University's Media Management Center

CLEVELAND
City Club
Nov. 12

Mark Naymik, political columnist for the Cleveland Plain Dealer;
Tom Beres, senior political reporter for WKYC-TV3;
Dr. Rick Perloff, director of the School of Communication at Cleveland State University;
Ben Keeler, Akron area political blogger;

COLLEGE PARK, MD.
University of Maryland
Oct. 6

Kevin Blackistone, Povich Chair, Merrill College of Journalism;
Leslie Walker, Knight Visiting Prof. in Digital Innovation, Merrill College of Journalism;
Mark Miller, News Director, WBAL Radio

COLUMBIA, MO.
University of Missouri
Oct. 27

Charles Davis, director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition and an associate professor of journalism studies;
Jennifer Reeves, an assistant professor of radio-television journalism and a 2008-2009 Reynolds Journalism Institute Fellow;
Tony Messenger, state capital bureau reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch;
Elizabeth Merrill, a Kansas City-based columnist for ESPN.com;
Elaine Sciolino, Paris correspondent for the New York Times.

COLUMBIA, S.C.
University of South Carolina
Oct. 8

Mark Lett, editor of the Columbia State;
Barry Ahrendt, vice president for marketing and programming, WIS-TV;
Augie Grant, a University of South Carolina professor of media and technology;
Charles Bierbauer, dean of South Carolina's College of Mass Communications and Information Studies and former CNN senior Washington correspondent.

DENVER
Denver Press Club
Sept. 9

Mark Cardwell, managing editor and digital editor of the Denver Post, who has been editorial director of ABCNews.com and executive producer for the digital group at The Associated Press;
Brian Maass, the leading investigative reporter at CBS News 4 for more than 20 years;
Patricia Calhoun, co-founder, editor-in-chief and columnist at Westword, Denver's alternative weekly newspaper;
Deb Hurley, a leader in the Denver SPJ chapter who recently retired after more than 20 years as a journalism professor at Metropolitan State College of Denver.

DES MOINES
Drake University
Oct. 29

Michael Gartner, Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial writer, former president of NBC News, former editor of the Ames Tribune and the Des Moines Register;
Laura Hollingsworth, president and publisher of the Des Moines Register and group president of the West Group for Gannett's U.S. Community Publishing;
David Busiek, news director of KCCI-TV in Des Moines and former chairman of the Radio-Television News Directors Association;
Steve Buttry, editor of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Gazette, who is also director of Tailored Programs for the American Press Institute, where he's had extensive experience with digital journalism.

HOUSTON
South Texas College of Law
Nov. 13

Jacquee Petchel, assistant managing editor for projects, Houston Chronicle;
Scott Clark, executive editor, Chron.com
Keith Conners, executive news director, KHOU-TV;
Charles Kuffner, political blogger, OfftheKuff;
Tom Forestier, first amendment attorney with Winstead.

INDIANAPOLIS
IUPUI University Library
DEC. 2

Dennis Ryerson, editor and vice president of the Indianapolis Star;
Bob Zaltsberg, editor of the Bloomington Herald-Times;
Cheryl Jackson, visiting professor of broadcast journalism at Indiana University and former WRTV-6 news reporter in Indianapolis;
Emily Metzgar, assistant professor of journalism at Indiana University specializing in the impact of social media on the political process.

KINGSTON, R.I.
University of Rhode Island
Sept. 22

Jim Taricani, a top investigative reporter for WJAR NBC Channel 10, who served six months of home confinement for refusing to reveal who leaked him a surveillance tape;
Steven Brown, executive director of the Rhode Island chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union;
Robert Flanders, former Rhode Island Supreme Court Associate Justice and law professor, and partner at Hinckley, Allen & Snyder;
Linda Lotridge Levin, chairwoman of the University of Rhode Island Department of Journalism.

MILWAUKEE
Marquette University
Oct. 30

Marty Kaiser, editor in chief of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel;

Lori Waldon, news director of WISN-TV;
Jeff Mayers, president and editor of WisPolitics.com;
Bonnie Brennen, Nieman Chair, Marquette University

MINNEAPOLIS
University of Minnesota
Nov. 17

Joel Kramer, publisher, MinnPost, an online news site;
Nora Paul, University of Minnesota Institute for New Media Studies;
Nancy Barnes, editor and senior vice president, Minneapolis Star Tribune;
Thom Fladung, editor and vice president, St. Paul Pioneer Press.

MORGANTOWN, W.VA.
West Virginia University
(Two-way broadcast from the NPC)
Sept. 15

Michael Tomasky, editor of GuardianAmerica.com, the U.S.-based Web site of The Guardian newspaper of London. It covers American politics and culture;
Ana Marie Cox, who founded the influential political blog, Wonkette, and is the Washington editor of Time.com where she coordinates political coverage and hosts the Web site's political blog, Swampland;
Ross Douthat, senior editor at the Atlantic Monthly, blogger for TheAtlantic.com, and co-author, with Reihan Salam, of "Grand New Party: How the Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream;
Tom Rosenstiel, former media critic for the Los Angeles Times who is now director, Project for Excellence in Journalism, which tracks trends in the news media.

NEW ORLEANS
Loyola University
Oct. 1

Adam Nossiter, a New Orleans-based national correspondent for the New York Times;
Monica Pierre, co-host of WWL-AM First News
Greg Shepperd, assistant news director at WDSU-TV and president of the Press Club of New Orleans
Karen Gadbois, a blogger and community activist.

NORMAN, OK.
University of Oklahoma
Nov. 13

Ed Kelley, editor of the Oklahoman;
Kevin Perry, vice president and COO of Perry Broadcasting;
David Stringer, publisher, Norman Transcript;
Julie Jones, associate professor, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

NAPLES, FL.
Sugden Theater
Dec. 8

Chris Doyle, publisher of the Naples Daily News;
Darrel Adams, news director, Waterman Broadcasting;
Matt Bernaldo, managing editor online, Waterman Broadcasting;
Phil Jones, former CBS correspondent;
Roy Peter Clark, vice president and senior scholar at the Poynter Institute.

NEW YORK CITY
New York University
Oct. 16

Tom Curley, president, Associated Press;
Dan Rather, former CBS News anchor, now global correspondent and managing editor, Dan Rather Reports on HDNet.
Jill Abramson, managing editor, New York Times;
Jay Rosen, media critic and NYU faculty member.

NORTHFIELD, VT.
Norwich University

Sept. 25

AKI SOGA, editorial page editor of the Burlington Free Press;
Mike Donoghue, executive director of the Vermont Press Association, a Burlington Free Press reporter, and an adjunct journalism faculty at St. Michael's College;
Gordon Robison, former Fox News bureau chief in Baghdad;
Susan Youngwood, Norwich University and former editor of Vermont Parent and Child.

PHOENIX
Arizona State University
Nov. 17

No panel. Presentation of NPC documentary to kick off celebration of opening of the new Walter Cronkite School of Journalism building. Interview with Dean **Christopher Callahan**.

PORTLAND, ORE.
University of Oregon Turnbull Portland Center
Oct. 21

Sandra Rowe, editor, The Oregonian;
Mike Donahue, reporter/anchor KOIN-TV;
Eve Epstein, executive producer of Oregon Public Broadcasting's 'Think Out Loud' program;
Mark Blaine, instructor, School of Journalism and Communications, University of Oregon.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.
Johnson & Wales University
Sept. 22

Tim White, a top investigative reporter for WPRI CBS, Channel 12;
Bob Whitcomb, editorial page editor of the Providence Journal-Bulletin;
Robert Flanders, former Rhode Island Supreme Court Associate Justice and law professor, and partner at Hinckley, Allen & Snyder;
Jim Hummel, who has reported for WLNE ABC, Channel 6 and the Providence Journal-Bulletin and has been a radio talk show host.

RICHMOND
Virginia Commonwealth University
Oct. 6

Reid Ashe, supervises Media General, Inc.'s three operating divisions: Publishing, including 25 daily newspapers, Broadcasting, with 26 network-affiliated TV stations, and Interactive Media;
Nancy Kent, News director for NBC-12;
Bob Sullivan, covers Internet scams and consumer fraud for msnbc.com;
Jeff South, VCU communications department associate professor who specializes in multimedia journalism.

SAN DIEGO
San Diego State University
Nov. 18

Diane Borden, director of the School of Journalism and Media Studies, San Diego State University;
J.W. August, Managing Editor, KGTV/Ch10 News/ABC affiliate;
Tom York, editor of the San Diego Business Journal;
Scott Lewis, co-Executive Editor, Voice of San Diego.com;
Guylyn Cummins, partner, Entertainment and Media Practice Group, Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton LLP

SEATTLE
University of Washington
Oct. 22

Ryan Blethen, associate publisher, Seattle Times;
Lori Matsukawa, anchor, KING-5 TV news
Knute Berger, columnist for Crosscut.com and former publisher of the Seattle Weekly;
Randal Beam, University of Washington Associate professor of journalism.

SPOKANE, WASH.
Eastern Washington University
Oct. 23

Gary Graham, editor of the Spokane Spokesman-Review;
Ted S. McGregor, Jr., editor and publisher, The Pacific Northwest Inlander;
Jamie Tobias Neely, assistant professor of journalism at Eastern Washington University and op-ed columnist for the Spokesman-Review;
John Caputo, the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media.

SYRACUSE
Syracuse University
Sept. 18

Neill Borowski, managing editor of the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle;
Aileen Gallagher, associate editor/online , New York Magazine and a 1999 Newhouse School alumna;
Bill Carey, senior reporter, field anchor, News10 Now, the Syracuse 24-hour cable news channel;
Charlotte Grimes, the S.I. Newhouse School of Journalism's Knight Chair in Political Reporting.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
World Affairs Councils of America
May 23

Bill Plante, CBS News White House correspondent;
Susan Page, Washington Bureau Chief for USA Today;
Jim Brady, executive editor of Washingtonpost.com;
Mark Jurkowitz, associate director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

WEBCAST FORUM
Nov. 10
From the National Press Club to journalism classes at:
The University of Alaska, Anchorage
The University of Alaska, Fairbanks
The University of Idaho
The University of Nebraska
The University of South Dakota

Donna Leinwand, national correspondent for USA Today and Club vice president;

Ken Mellgren, manager of affiliate relations, AP Broadcast;
Richard Dunham, Houston Chronicle Washington Bureau Chief;
Mark Jurkowski, associate director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism.