

**The Old and the New: Media in a Changing World**  
by Beth Milton

Until recently, if you read an article in the newspaper that you wanted to comment on, you would grab a pen, sit down at your typewriter, or turn on your personal computer. You would draft a letter to the editor, put it in an envelope, and drop it off at the post office. A week or two later, your letter would appear in print, ready for you to proudly pass around to your family or colleagues.

Today, if you read a newspaper article online that intrigues you and begs a response, you just click on the “Comment here” button, quickly type your response, and hit “Save.” Within seconds, your text appears on the website below the article. Within minutes, a reader has chimed in to say she agrees with you, another has nominated your comment for “Best response of the day,” and some nasty fellow has flagged it for “Racist/offensive language.”

Welcome to the new media/traditional media divide.

“New media” is a tricky term to define. One online dictionary for information technology terms, *Webopedia.com*, calls new media a “generic term for the many different forms of electronic communication that are made possible through the use of computer technology. The term is in relation to “old” media forms, such as print newspapers and magazines, which are static representations of text and graphics.”

New media can include e-mail, personal web sites, commercial web sites, social networking, online video, and online chats. The key thing about new media is that it is electronic and digital. It doesn’t exist as an object you can hold in your hand but as information easily shared. The fact that this information is digital means that it is easy to generate, disseminate, manipulate, and interact with.

For example, consider an article on changes to the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) printed in the paper edition of *The Times of India*. What can you do with this traditional media article? You can read it, you can mail a letter to the editor, or you can pass it around to friends. If you want more than one friend to see it at a time, you will have to make photocopies first.

Now think of the same article posted online, at [www.timesofindia.com](http://www.timesofindia.com). You can read the article of course,

but you can also instantly comment online or e-mail it to as many friends as you want. You can use *The Times of India* web site to search for more articles on JEE, or you can go to *The Hindu’s* web page and see its take on the same subject.

If you’re still interested in the subject, you can go to various blogs, where normal people write about their daily lives or subjects that are important to them. By using search engines such as Technorati ([www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com)), you can find blog posts by students, teachers, politicians, and parents, that explain how the exam changes will affect them.

New media, however, doesn’t only have to reflect stories that originally appear in traditional media sources, such as *The Times*. Instead, “citizen journalists” can break news stories and disseminate the information themselves. In the U.S., for instance, there is a whole group of bloggers – people who write for and run

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San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, center, shakes hands with a Facebook worker as he tours Facebook headquarters with his wife, Jennifer Siebel Newsom, right, before he formally announced his candidacy for California governor at Facebook headquarters in Palo Alto, April 21, 2009. Entering a race that could see him competing against men 15 and 30 years his senior, the 41-year-old Democrat pointedly used YouTube and the social networking sites Twitter and Facebook to disclose that he would seek his party’s nomination to succeed Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma)

**The American Center**

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Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

**H O L I D A Y S**

December 25: Christmas Day

## A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear Readers,

It is holiday time and for many of us it is a season of giving. As in the past, the U.S. Consulate will be spreading holiday cheer to those who are less fortunate. We work with many NGOs over the course of the year, and come December, we identify a few to be recipients of toy drives, fundraisers, and Christmas caroling. This is truly an American tradition and it is a joyful way to bring tidings of good cheer to all.

We wish you Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, Happy New Year, and to all a good night. We'll look forward to seeing you in 2010.

Best Wishes,



Lynne Gadkowski  
Acting Director

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their own individual web sites – that try to “scoop” the traditional news media. A few months ago, William Calley – a member of the U.S. military convicted of committing a number of war crimes in 1968 during the U.S.-Vietnam War – gave a speech to members of a private social club in Georgia. In his speech, he gave his first public statement on the crimes in almost 40 years, apologizing for his actions and breaking down in tears. There were no reporters or camera crews present, and this story would have gone completely unnoticed were there not a blogger – Dick McMichael – sitting in the audience. He wrote up the story on his personal blog ([dicksworld.wordpress.com](http://dicksworld.wordpress.com)). Eventually a professional reporter found his account, and soon every major newspaper in the U.S. was reporting on the matter.

The William Calley story is a prime example of new and traditional media acting in supportive ways. With so much happening in the world, it is impossible to have professional reporters at every location where news might break. Instead, traditional media is increasingly coming to rely on members of the public to feed information back to them. The incentives for individuals to do this can vary. Some people do it for fun, some feel reporting news contributes to the public good, and some just want a bit of fame. CNN has taken the idea of “every reader a correspondent” far with their iReport ([www.ireport.com](http://www.ireport.com)) initiative. A significant segment of their reporting is now carefully curated photo, video, and written submissions from their viewers and readers.

In the William Calley story also, the traditional media took the new media blogger’s “scoop,” added much-needed context, and then disseminated it to a much wider audience than Dick McMichael ever could. For someone not familiar with William Calley, the story of his speech doesn’t have much relevance. Major news media outlets such as *The New York Times*, however, published articles that gave background on Calley, the Vietnam War, the crimes for which he was convicted, and popular sentiment towards him, then and now. The traditional media gave the context that generally only a professional journalist can give.

If only a few dozen people read McMichael’s original blog post, thousands subsequently read *The New York Times* article. While the circulation of a select few new media news outlets can rival that of traditional media companies, the fact is that most new media writers, bloggers, and performers reach only small niche audiences. It takes established media companies, such as The Washington Post Company, Time Warner, Reuters, or the Associated Press, to reach significant numbers of people.

Of course, nothing is as simple as the new media handing stories off to the traditional media for them to complete. New media writers borrow many of the techniques of traditional media journalists. And traditional media companies are actively seeking to implement new media platforms: to move articles online, allow comments, and further engage their digital readers. If one thing is for sure, it’s that this article will soon be dated, as the new and traditional media divide blurs further.

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*Beth Milton works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai*

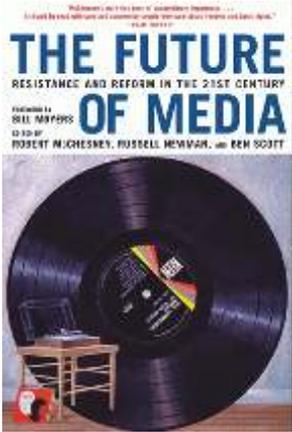
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Then-Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama, looks on as host Gideon Yago speaks to a studio audience February 2, 2008, at the MTV Studios in New York. Mike Huckabee (R) and Ron Paul (D) joined him in a youth-oriented forum sponsored by MTV, Associated Press and MySpace, each fielding questions separately by satellite. (AP Photo/Frank Franklin, II)

## NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

### Select Books and Periodicals Available on Mass Media and Communications



#### ***The Future of Media: Resistance and Reform in the 21st Century***

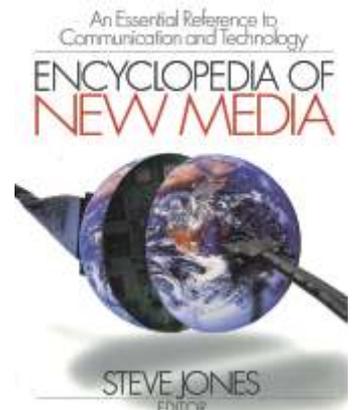
Edited by Robert W. McChesney et al  
Seven Stories Press, 2005

The purpose of this book is to prepare readers for tomorrow's media reform fights. It attempts to chart the front-line struggles over journalism, democracy, social justice, intellectual property, free speech, and their relationship to the big business battles over cable, Internet, copyright, and radio spectrum. The goal is to help shed light on the most important problems in the media system, emphasizing the ways in which public participation can help to change things for the better.

#### ***Encyclopedia of New Media: An Essential Reference to Communication and Technology***

Edited by Steve Jones  
Sage Publications, 2003

This single-volume encyclopedia presents more than 250 entries that explain the key terms, concepts, trends, and buzzwords that have become the everyday language of the Internet and global society. The encyclopedia explores the evolution and revolution in digital communications and human-computer interaction from an interdisciplinary, historical, social, and global perspective.



#### ***Columbia Journalism Review***

This bimonthly publication by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism covers critical reports and comments on developments and trends in the world of journalism in several media. The book review section contains a few short book reports and one or two extensive, in-depth reviews.

#### ***American Journalism Review***

This bimonthly publication by the University of Maryland Foundation examines print, broadcast and online journalism issues. It also analyzes ethical dilemmas in the field and monitors the impact of technology on how journalism is practiced as well as on the final product.



**Note: The Library subscribes to several online databases which provide access to hundreds of peer-reviewed periodicals. For more information, please contact the Information Desk on extn. 2204.**

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at [libref@state.gov](mailto:libref@state.gov) for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.

## Food and Beverage and Their Influence on American Holidays

Discussion led by Eric Jacobs

**Monday, December 14** **6:00 p.m.**  
**American Center Auditorium**

Over time, American cuisine has been significantly shaped by immigration and climate. American holidays are a combination of imported feasts and homegrown celebrations brought together to help define a nation. Food can easily describe each American holiday. Please join us for this discussion as part of our Mumbai Mondays series.

**Eric Jacobs** joined the Department of State in early 2008 as a Management Officer and arrived in Mumbai, over a year ago. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine. He worked primarily in economic development, focusing on project management, monitoring, and evaluation; and sustainable organizational development. Prior to joining the Peace Corps, Eric worked as a project manager for five years. He has a B.A. from Florida State University and an M.B.A. from the University of South Florida. He is passionate about the culinary arts.

**American Center Auditorium**  
**3:30 and 6:30 p.m.**

**Friday, December 11**

Writer/director James L. Brooks combines a savage look at TV journalism with a hectic love triangle. William Hurt is the not-too-bright but photogenic news anchor who interests driven producer Holly Hunter and angers veteran correspondent Albert Brooks. Also stars Joan Cusack, Robert Prosky, and Jack Nicholson as the network anchorman.

**Broadcast News**  
 (1987, 132 mins)



**Friday, December 18**

Director Alan J. Pakula rendered Woodward and Bernstein's account of the unraveling of the Watergate scandal and created one of the most suspenseful political thrillers of the 1970s. Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman are the resolute *Washington Post* reporters, with Jason Robards as gruff editor Ben Bradlee; Jane Alexander and Hal Holbrook costar.

**All the President's Men**  
 (1976, 138 mins)



## Media Melange – Celebrating Journalism

This film series underscores America's faith in a democratic mass media

December 4 and 5 in the American Center Auditorium



Announcement

### December 4

**Network** (1976, 121 mins) **11:00 a.m.**  
 Dwells on the use and abuse of ratings-hungry network television.

**Shattered Glass** (2003, 94 mins) **2:30 p.m.**  
 Portrays a fraudulent Washington, D.C. journalist, Stephen Glass, whose shortcut to fame does not go unnoticed.

**The Killing Fields** (1984, 142 mins) **6:00 p.m.**  
 This powerful docudrama about the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, is based on the experiences of three journalists: Dith Pran, a Cambodian, Sydney Schanberg, an American, and Jon Swain, a journalist from the United Kingdom.

### December 5

**Absence of Malice** (1981, 117 mins) **11:00 a.m.**  
 The story of Michael Gallagher (Paul Newman), the son of a dead Mafia boss who discovers that he has become the front-page story in a local Miami newspaper.

**The Paper** (2007, 68 mins) **2:30 p.m.**  
 Documents a crisis-filled year at Pennsylvania State University's campus newspaper, *The Daily Collegian*.

**Good Night, and Good Luck** (2005, 93 mins) **5:00 p.m.**  
 Portrays the conflict between veteran radio and television journalist Edward R. Murrow and U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

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