

policy IN public



THE BLOGOSPHERE

The Fall and Rise of Empires

- > REAL-TIME JOURNALISM
- > MEDIUMS AND MEDITATIONS
- > **BOOK REVIEW:
THROUGH A
LENS DARKLY**
- + A SURVEY OF OTHER THINK TANKS



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{ RE:THINK RE:SEARCH RE:BUILD }

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Cardus is a registered charitable foundation and supports its activities through financial support from thoughtful individuals, business and labour organizations, and foundations.

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FROM THE EDITOR:

PAPYRUS TO TWEETING: THE ONCE AND FUTURE CARTOGRAPHY OF THE NEWS ROOM

Ray Pennings

The landscape of news media has changed so rapidly over the course of the last hundred years it is only with acknowledged generalization we can talk about the traditional newsroom. But even in the midst of this change we can recognize important contemporary shifts: institutions are being replaced by aggregators, footloose entrepreneurs are operating in real-time across the globe and print-scale information—for millennia the mainstay of humankind—is being outpaced by the digital revolution. From papyrus to printing blocks to tweeting, we are witnessing a revolution in our news institutions.

This issue of *Cardus Policy in Public (CPIP)* puts some of Canada's foremost news media editors and journalists onto this topic. In his book review, former newspaper executive and *Reader's Digest* editor Peter Stockland points out how dated the question of institutional vitality seems in the context of "anachronistic information

gatekeepers in the nation's emptying newsrooms." However, as Mr. Stockland would seemingly agree, the demise of an institution once considered essential to democracy ought not to be celebrated without at least a reflective tear.

In our main feature, Cardus Senior Fellow and former newspaper executive Peter Menzies outlines how alternative media forms are as transforming to our public discourse as was the invention of the printing press only centuries ago. To Menzies, this rings some alarm bells: the erosion of journalism standards is lessening public trust, and encouraging an emergent form of tribalism in which individuals consume only media forms that reinforce narrow identities—all of which lessen the caliber of our public conversation.

We publish two responses to Menzies' musings. Stephen Kimber, a Halifax author and journalism professor,

disputes Menzies' main conclusion. While admitting that the example of alternate media cited, live-blogging, may showcase the "sausage-making aspects of journalism," Kimber suggests that the transparency inherent in this new form of journalism creates a new common ground or social meeting place. In a similar vein, Cardus Director of Operations Milton Friesen highlights how new media provides an opportunity for broad-based participation and interaction which is creating a new form of institution. This new kind of institution needs to be understood, and like the old institutions, it provides opportunity for building or destroying, oppression or empathy.

All of our contributors agree that there is a radical change underway in the manner we gather, distribute, and process news in the early twenty-first century. The process of news has always been a messy one, with biases, agendas and subjectivity impacting what it is that we learn (or don't learn) from our preferred sources. It is now a messier one, in that the emerging media is much more *individual* than *institutional* and does not have the inherent checks and balances once associated with journalism. However, as Stockland's review of *Through a Lens Darkly* points out, such checks and balances were hardly foolproof and in fact, could be argued to have at

times contributed to rather than resolved social confusion.

This edition of CPIP is closed out by our regular Think Tank Index. We include this to draw attention to the thoughtful and varied voices that constitute public discourse in Canada today. It may seem oddly self-serving to observe that the rise of the think-tank as an institution of influence in Canada may correlate somehow to the decline of media institutions and that the journal you are now reading (many on-line) is a consequence of the trend described in its pages, but there is likely a connection. New forums for conversation are emerging and we believe that being inclusive in engaging various perspectives is a healthy way for that conversation to continue.

The aim of *Cardus Policy in Public* is to engage in this conversation within the context of our mission of renewing Canada's social architecture. We are convinced that our social institutions and the relationships between them are radically changing. The institutions which collectively compose the media sector form an important part of that architecture, and we trust that these pages will provoke you to rethink those changes which are taking place before our eyes.

Ray Pennings is a Senior Fellow and Director of Research at Cardus. Email him at rpennings@cardus.ca.





THE FALL AND RISE OF EMPIRES

Peter Menzies
Cardus Senior Fellow

Peter Menzies is a national commissioner with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the owner of a consulting company, and past publisher and editor-in-chief of one of Canada's major daily newspapers. Still the author of occasional commentary in Calgary and at the national level, Menzies' newspaper career spanned 27 years.

Find more by Peter Menzies at www.cardus.ca/contributors/

I began the first draft of this essay by examining the emergence of the blogosphere as an alternative to traditional journalism institutions and the emergent practice of live blogging. As with all such investigations, the piece evolved as it searched for the appropriate context within which to place the analysis. By necessity, it has grown into a broader work that examines the rapid decline of traditional journalism through a technological revolution that is likely to have as profound an impact on media as that inspired by the invention of the Gutenberg printing press. It also probes the suggestion that the threat to traditional institutions is not entirely technological and can be linked to the maintenance of an intellectual architecture capable of supporting social capital assets.

Through this essay, which is both narrative and journalistic by turns, I hope that you will have value and understanding added to your perception of the world in which we live.

LIVE BLOGGING—THE JOURNALISM TEST

Many years ago, a colleague wrote a fine newspaper column regarding the true meaning of art and how it can be distinguished from more mundane events.

The rather frank and confessional analogy he used was a description of how, as a young man, he found himself among friends in an establishment of the sort one's mother always hopes one would never frequent. Beer was available, and every hour or so there was a free performance that involved music, dance, a faux fur carpet of some variety and, unique to its genre, a sort of firefighters' pole.

"It was an arresting spectacle," my colleague wrote. "But it was not art."

Over the past two to three years, working journalists have identified live blogging as a form of event coverage that has emerged at the leading edge of their craft. Reporters don't just

write their reports as the event happens (a longstanding practice in sports coverage known as “running copy”); they actually file them directly via their Blackberry to the public via their media’s web portal. People can follow the news online as it happens.

One example is the live blog from the website of Canada’s leading news magazine, *Maclean’s*, and the reports filed by Macleans.ca reporter, Kady O’Malley, who captured Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s visit to Governor General Michelle Jean at her Rideau Hall offices on December 4, 2008, to request a prorogation of Parliament following the formation of a coalition of opposition parties. The stakes couldn’t have been much higher: if the Governor General had chosen not to take the Prime Minister’s advice, the government most certainly would have fallen and some form of constitutional and/or electoral crisis would have ensued. Fragile stock markets were poised to react. Accurate and timely information was critical.

My critique relates to the genre, the medium and its pressures and not to Ms. O’Malley, who filed and updated her blog every three to five minutes. Dead time on a live blog is a dilemma that forces people to say something even when there is actually nothing meaningful to say. It’s a tough job. This need for constant data exists because online media need to deliver news quickly and hold the attention of viewers or readers in order to stimulate advertising revenue. Here are excerpts from O’Malley’s reports on Macleans.ca on Thursday, December 4, 2008. They have been edited for length.

9:13:15 AM

... Apparently, the PM will have a “sit down” with the GG, after which he will possibly have

a statement for us. Or he’ll just stomp out in a dark rage.

9:16:48 AM

Kory Teneycke is dealing with a minor—but growing—media insurrection for his decision to block the cameras from filming the PM’s actual entrance. “Do you own this land?” One reporter asks.

9:18:51 AM

Poor Kory. He’s been surrounded. “I’m not going to have this discussion on camera,” he says.

9:24:58 AM

Colleague Wherry is here, and has joined us on the barricades! “We will have an arrival shot,” one producer says into his cell phone. Oh, it’s on.

9:26:31 AM

And apparently, the GG is meeting with the opposition leaders this afternoon.

... 9:30:11 AM

The PM waved at us as he drove by. That’s nice, at least. Now Kory is telling the crowd that they’re waiting until they get an answer from the GG before heading to Woodstock for the auto plant announcement.

9:32:04 AM

Okay, so if they get an answer right away, it’s off to Woodstock, where he will have a media availability. If not, he’ll give a statement somewhere, at some point.

9:50:18 AM

A sudden flurry of media movement to the front entrance. Apparently he’s coming out. Or not. Nobody knows everything, which is somehow comforting, since someone suddenly knowing anything would be a radical shift.

9:51:36 AM

... New theory: if he doesn't get his answer, he'll go out the back door. Or the side door. Or sit there in her vestibule in a black rage until she makes up her mind.

... 10:00:20 AM

The camera throng—of which I am now a part—is becoming alarmed by my incessant teethchattering and trembling. Gloves are being offered. So gallant.

10:02:49 AM

Hmm. Kory never came back, did he?

10:05:32 AM

Maybe they're trying to freeze us out. Still no word from inside—and no sign of anyone at all from PMO. 41 minutes and counting, y'all. Not that we're counting.

... 10:17:04 AM

And he's coming out! Or—people are coming out, anyway. Not sure if the PM is among them. Also, a tip to those organizing nonpartisan grassroots demonstrations: most of us who work on the Hill can recognize Conservative staffers—even when they're all decked out like ordinary Canadians.

10:20:39 AM

We're starting to wonder if the opening of the doors a few minutes ago was just an attempt to distract us from the fact that the PM is going to leave by the side door. We're not that hard to distract, apparently.

... 10:29:31 AM

We just saw the flash of a camera inside the foyer, but nobody knows if that means anything. I thought I'd pass it on anyway, though.

... 10:44:17 AM

Apparently, CTV is reporting that the Woodstock trip has been cancelled. Oooh. That doesn't sound good.

10:47:06 AM

The atmosphere out here is getting downright festive, mostly out of a desperate desire to distract ourselves from the cold.

... 11:02:32 AM

I am now huddled by the barricade, listening to Bob Fife do his standup in hopes of learning something—anything!—about what's going on inside. Yes, it's come to this. He seems to think that they "chatted" for a while, and then she went off to talk to her advisors.

11:06:40 AM

Update: According to someone who just heard Jean Lapierre, the GG's advisors told her to tell the PM that she'll see him on Tuesday. No idea if that's true, or just Jean Lapierre being mischievous.

11:13:16 AM

Running! Camera crews running! They're like gazelles, these guys—they can sense danger. Which of course means a good shot.

11:19:13 AM

The doors are open again! Still no sign of Kory or Dimitri, however.

... 11:23:56 AM

Could they be calling in the Queen to settle this? If she says no, does he have any route to appeal?

11:26:11 AM

The podium is here!

11:27:12 AM

You know, I don't think any of us have the

slightest idea what he's about to tell us. This is just—neat. Right now, the podium attendants are hooking up the mics.

11:31:11 AM

Again—for some reason that last bulletin didn't go through—CTV is reporting that she *will* prorogue. No idea what that is based on, but it could well be true.

11:36:01 AM

PMO now saying the prorogue was granted, as per CBC. Nobody is telling us anything, of course.

... 11:50:06 AM

Yay, snow on the berryscreen. Best stakeout ever! At least it's about to end. Okay, here he comes—sixty second warning.

Parliament was prorogued, the opposition Liberals changed leadership, the coalition collapsed and the government passed its budget in late January 2009.

The live blog is certainly entertaining. O'Malley has a quick wit and manages over the course of her time on the scene to give a running commentary of three basic areas: the news events involving the Governor General's consideration of the Prime Minister's request; the rumours, banter, jokes and grumbling within the scrum of journalists outside awaiting the news; and the state of O'Malley's physical discomfort due to the cold and whatever thoughts happen to be running through her head at the time.

During entire time O'Malley is live blogging on site (8:52:01 a.m. through 12:08:11 p.m.), there are only two things that actually happened that can be considered news. At 9:30:11 a.m. the

Prime Minister arrives and waves as he drives by the reporters on his way in to Rideau Hall. At 11:52:00 a.m., a full three hours after the liveblog begins, the PM addresses the reporters until O'Malley signs off at 12:08:11 p.m. "News," in terms of the PM's conversation with the Governor General and her decision, constitutes only about 16 or 17 minutes of the liveblog. The other three hours of O'Malley's work, bless her, is spent entertaining us—quite engagingly—while we wait for the news.

No journalistic skill or training is required for this. While it may be one of the exciting features of the Internet, this live blog contains the transmission of some items that are not only unsubstantiated rumour but completely false. Both were once considered fatal to the integrity of a journalist and the reputation of his or her medium.

For instance, at 11:06:40 AM, we learn that "according to someone who just heard Jean Lapierre, the GG's advisors told her to tell the PM that she'll see him on Tuesday. No idea if that's true, or just Jean Lapierre being mischievous."

This simple sentence violates several fundamentals of the "old" journalism. The source for the information is not named, nor is a reason given for protecting their anonymity. It is merely "according to someone" and the information "someone" is passing along is their understanding of something said by (former member of parliament and French language broadcaster) Jean Lapierre. Whatever Lapierre said (probably in French) had to do with what he heard the GG's advisors had told her to tell the PM.

The information transmitted in this live blog is not first hand, nor is it from a verified, identified and reliable source as befits traditional standards of good journalism. Quite the contrary: it is fifth or sixth hand, probably subject to translation, and has an anonymous, or at least unnamed, source.

O'Malley does insert that she has "no idea" if the information she's passing along is true "or just Jean Lapierre being mischievous." We never hear again on efforts to establish whether or not they have some foundation in fact. Was it true? Was it not? The allegation is left hanging for 45 minutes until the Prime Minister appears and clarifies the situation. Nor did the Governor General ever meet with the opposition leaders. O'Malley's genre demands that she file constantly, which means she has no time to verify her facts.

Compare this with the rigour emphasized in earlier traditions. The phrase attributed to the Chicago City News bureau (which, poignantly, filed its last report after more than 100 years of operation on December 31, 2005) and drubbed into young journalists for years was: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

Live blogging is an arresting spectacle. But it is not journalism.

SO WHAT?

Or, in the words of blogger Warren Kinsella, formerly of the Prime Minister's Office in the Jean Chretien era, on warrenkinsella.com:

At the hospital last night, someone introduced themselves to me. We chatted. She: "Are blogs going to replace the news media?" Me: "No. We're entertainment, not news. There's a difference."

In that sense, the live blogger is more equivalent to the hockey play-by-play announcer such as Bob Cole than the Bob Woodwards and Carl Bernsteins (*Washington Post* Watergate reporters) of the world. It is helpful, informative and entertaining, but is a genre unto itself that has yet to be fully recognized as such, by either the consuming public or—frequently more grievously—the "news" organizations that use them. At its worst, it is inane banter used to fill dead air with the gossipy, rumour-filled and sometimes catty chatter of a scrum of journalists.

But none of this means that bloggers can not be journalists. Nor does it mean that journalists can't effectively use the blogosphere.

Jay Rosen, writing in 2005 on *Pressthink*, put it this way: "The question now isn't whether blogs can be journalism. They can be, sometimes. It isn't whether bloggers 'are' journalists. They apparently are, sometimes."

The practice of exchanging information with colleagues, friends and the public at large certainly isn't new. What is revolutionary is the blogosphere's ease of access and the creation of online discussion boards where information can be posted and debated. This can be enthusiastically viewed as a revival in the old traditions of letter writing (which appeared to be on its deathbed for a period of time that

Live blogging is an
arresting spectacle. But
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coincided with the ascendancy of network TV) or journal-keeping. It certainly has and will continue to have an impact on traditional notions of journalism. Its most profound impact, however, is what it is doing to traditional power structures.

Rosen's essay quotes Orville Schell, dean of the University of California at Berkeley's journalism school, from an article in *Business Week* magazine. Schell said, "The Roman Empire that was mass media is breaking up, and we are entering an almost-feudal period where there will be many more centres of power and influence."

Herein lies the key to the transformation that is taking place. Traditional media built their power base on their ability to access and control the flow of information to the public. First newspapers, then radio, and then (in Canada) public and private network television were the sole suppliers of the information that was required to meet public demand.

The blogosphere certainly has and will continue to have an impact on traditional notions of journalism. Its most profound impact, however, is what it is doing to traditional power structures.

Certainly major events—elections, wars, assassinations, and so on—define themselves in terms of the news agenda. But on a normal day, the news agenda was, and still is, defined based on assessments made early in the cycle by assignment editors. They generally make their decisions based on what they believe you should

know, must know or will find compelling. These local assignments combine with news flowing in from regional, national and international bureaus and agencies (where assignments are similarly made) and get pared down guided by strategic content objectives into the serving you find in your newspaper and newscasts, or even their online versions.

A senior editor once told me when I was fussing about trying to find room in the paper for a story I thought was important, "Don't worry, kid. No one knows what doesn't get in the paper."

Commentary has similarly been dominated by these traditional media structures, so that endorsement of a candidacy, or an idea, on the editorial pages of a newspaper (the bigger, the better) has been fervently sought. These media had dominated the flow of information, had built trust and credibility within their communities, and even when they weren't respected, needed to be treated as if they were.

Individual commentators have also been figures of influence. Throughout most of history, they were staff members of the media organization that published or broadcast their work. Only towards the latter part of the 20th century (when media began to get a sense that the public was bristling under their dominance) were citizens given access to "op-ed" pages through guest

columns, rebuttal columns and the like. Prior to that, the public could only become part of the conversation by writing “letters to the editor.”

The Internet and the blogosphere have completely changed all that. Now everyone can find out (if they are willing to do the work) what doesn’t get in their hometown paper or on the newscast. Everyone can have their point of view published. Anyone can pretend through their blogging that they are Alan Fotheringham or Andy Rooney.

If, as Orville Schell pointed out, the mass media is really analogous to the Roman Empire, then its demise may indeed constitute freedom from oppression. On the other hand, it might mean that the barbarians—a lot of whom, this time, have MBAs—are at the gates.

THE SACK OF ROME

Traditional news media structures are under assault. Some will almost certainly die. Indeed, they must, for business too has a circle of life that insists on a process of birth and death, fall and redemption.

Thirty years ago the citizens of most major cities had access to no more than two dozen sources of information—a couple of newspapers, 12 or 13 cable channels and a number of radio stations. Research could only be done through the local paper’s archives or the public library. Obtaining information was a very deliberate and time-consuming exercise best left to someone else to conduct on the consumers’ behalf. Thus did media operators build “captive” audiences which they were able to monetize.

The “Big Bang” advent of high-speed Internet and broadband cable has blown that world

into billions of pieces. Audiences are no longer captive and have fragmented into areas of specific interest. Television is now much more like a traditional magazine newsstand from

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which one chooses those items in which one has the greatest interest—golf, cooking, running, gardening and so on. And, just as with print magazines, the best of these TV specialties are highly effective advertising tools due to their ability to match audiences with very specific interests to products specifically designed for them.

Newspapers have traditionally been divided into sections devoted to specific interests—news, local news, entertainment, sports, business and lifestyles. The traditional network TV content model, while overwhelmingly dedicated to dramatic and other entertainment programming, nevertheless had a similar model for its media component: national and international news, local news, sports, business, health/lifestyle and weather.

All of these component parts of old media have now been plundered. Today there are media that serve only news (CNN, Newsworld), sports (TSN, Sportsnet, The Score, ESPN), business

(BNN) and weather (The Weather Network). The list goes on. Sports, for instance, is further fragmented into magazine channels specializing in golf, cricket, rugby, soccer, auto sports, fishing, hunting, hockey and more.

One no longer has to check the morning paper, hourly radio newscast or supper time evening news for the latest sports or weather highlights. It is now there—through TV, computer, Blackberry or cell phone—any time you want it.

Audiences once “captive” are running freely in the streets. They are bombarded with information they used to have to seek out and around which they built their daily schedules. No longer: they have laptops and Blackberrys, and are prepared to use them.

Rome is burning at their fingertips.

THE ASSET OF TRUST

The old media model clearly lacked the freedom and flexibility of today’s world. But like lots of old things, it had its merits.

The greatest of these was that it represented a common ground from which people drew their information. And media companies knew that in order to win the loyalty of these mass and financially lucrative audiences, they had to build and maintain loyalty. Most of all, media knew that the key to attracting people to their supper time newscasts and their morning papers was a social capital asset called trust.

The great news anchors and newspaper commentators of their day were men and women who citizens felt were trustworthy people whose work displayed high levels of integrity and who

worked in trusted organizations. The most preeminent of these was Walter Cronkite of the CBS Evening News in the United States. Cronkite was “the most trusted man in America” (an allegation backed up by polls) and his ability and that of others like him to build massive evening audiences for what was a mere 23-minute newscast had enormous consequences. The evening newspaper, for instance, disappeared in North America.

Citizens also trusted these personalities and organizations because their information was reliable, founded in fact and presented in an ethical and unbiased way. It was very clear to news organizations that sound professional standards and an ethical environment were components necessary for the construction and sustenance of the levels of trust and credibility that were required to maintain mass audiences.

So successful were CBS and Cronkite in building this trust that when the latter editorialized following the Tet Offensive in 1968 that the Vietnam War was not winnable, it is believed that U.S. President Lyndon Johnson said words to the effect of “if I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost middle America.”

Trust, as we have seen recently, is also a commodity necessary to the maintenance of other, even more expansive structures, such as financial systems. *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wentz pointed to this in a recent column:

“Paul Volcker was in Toronto the other night to have dinner with a bunch of well-heeled people who hung on his every word. Everyone looks up to the former U.S. central banker, because he whipped inflation in the ‘80s and also because he’s over six and a half

feet tall. He genially admitted that the old system is finished. “Finance doesn’t work without some sense of trust and confidence,” he said.

“But all the trust and confidence are gone. The smartest people in the world thought that financial markets obeyed mathematical laws. They believed that people, in the aggregate, acted rationally. It turns out that they don’t. The markets are only human after all. And so are people.”

The fall of the old media and the liberalization of audiences mean, at the very least, the decline of institutions which people once trusted to deliver reliable information upon which they could base decisions about their lives. If the institutions disappear, people will inevitably seek out new institutions in which they can place their trust. The need for a renewed social architecture is evident.

RENAISSANCE OR DARK AGES

At this stage of its evolution, the North American news industry is generally following a pattern that is unlikely to maintain, let alone build, the trust and therefore loyalty it will require to create the audiences necessary to ensure its survival.

Companies faced with the threat of audience fragmentation generally trend toward expanding their holdings. This has led to intense consolidation of ownership in media, which involves considerable investment. One of the chief methods used to pay for that investment has been the reduction of staffing levels in newsrooms. Even as media operations have expanded their delivery from traditional forms into new media (the Internet), many have

been doing so with fewer resources. While this has short-term economic merits, it also tends to weaken the strength of the core product—trustworthy and contextual information—that the platforms are designed to deliver.

Journalists once had the relative (albeit highly demanding) luxury of gathering information throughout the day, verifying it, including additional and contrary viewpoints and establishing present and historical context for the news before filing their story. Being first with the news (the scoop) was always important. The primary component, however, was accuracy. There was always great tension, even when the world operated on a 48- or 24-hour news cycle, between the need to be first and the need to be accurate. New media have created a 15-minute (or in the case of live blogging, a 3-minute) news cycle.

The time that once was available to exercise professional due diligence on information has disappeared. Further challenging this is that journalists in today’s environment are commonly expected to file audio, video, blog and text versions of their stories for use across multiple media platforms. Though journalists may not have always fully utilized this time to conduct the checks required to ensure the delivery of accurate information, that argument is now moot. It is no longer a question of whether time set aside to ensure the trust and credibility vital to the genre was appropriately allocated. Today for an increasing number of journalists, the time doesn’t exist. And when no time is set aside to verify information and the tension and balance between speed and accuracy becomes distorted, the natural outcome is that while there is more information available faster to consumers in the new era, a much higher percentage of that information will prove to be false at worst and

At this stage of its evolution, the North American news industry is generally following a pattern that is unlikely to maintain, let alone build, the trust and therefore loyalty it will require to create the audiences necessary to ensure its survival.

incomplete at best. This creates a product that inevitably proves to be unsatisfactory, and erodes rather than builds trust.

Similarly, the blogosphere is rife with “citizen journalists” who represent the local militia leading the information revolution. Perhaps they do—but while their challenge to the status quo is certainly valuable, like any militia, they lack professional standards and generally have strong partisan leanings. This is not to say they shouldn’t have their place, but they are not always people who seek the truth or conform to a predictable set of professional standards; instead they believe they have found the truth and are on the lookout for information that reinforces it.

The outcome of this ever-blurred line between opinion and fact is that savvy consumers become even more wary and less trusting of the information they receive. Little bits of information can be dangerous for everyone. Trust, the moral component most vital to news

media’s ability to build, maintain and monetize audiences, is continuing to erode. And structures that fail to maintain their social architecture die.

On the other hand, the organizations most likely to survive will be those that adapt to new technology and fragmentation while maintaining their reputation as a trusted source of reliable and useful information. Those institutions that maintain and renew the elements vital to a healthy social architecture will survive. The rest of Rome will burn.

CONCLUSION

“What gunpowder did for war, the printing press has done for the mind.”

- American abolitionist Wendell Phillips
(1811-1884)

The blogosphere and other Internet developments may be every bit as revolutionary as the invention of the Gutenberg printing press. Although the printed word was initially denounced as vulgar by the upper classes, it proved popular with the middle and lower classes and inspired increased levels of literacy. It destroyed the clergy and upper classes’ dominance of ideas and the interpretation of Scripture. Its ability to distribute alternative and often revolutionary thoughts is widely credited with inspiring an end to the Dark and Middle Ages, the dawn of the Renaissance, the foundation of Protestant Christianity and the emergence of liberal democracy.

Martin Luther’s *95 Theses Against Indulgences* received much more widespread distribution than would otherwise have been possible, thanks to the printing press, and his publication of the

German Bible gave people, for the first time, personal access to the word of God in their own language. The consequences were considerable.

So it comes as no surprise that—just as those who benefited from the status quo of the 15th century denounced the emergence of the printing

press—those whose businesses and power bases are intertwined with the 20th century's media status quo are quick to denigrate what they fear is the mob rule of the blogosphere.

The free flow of information should not be a matter of concern in cultures that share traditions and have built institutions based on values founded in liberal democracy. Further, the interactivity of the blogosphere and its ability to provide

a forum for debate and discussion between individuals and groups is clearly a welcome development that has happily restored, inspired and multiplied the intellectual innovation created through the tradition of letter-writing both privately and publicly through “letters to the editor.” Although unproven at this stage, this has some potential for an expansion of “the commons.”

The threat, such as it is, comes from fragmentation and the even stronger potential for reduced common ground. Writing in the *Toronto Star* this past winter, associate professor Kelly Toughill of the University of King's College School of Journalism put it this way:

500 years ago, many clerical and monarchist institutions were able to survive the spread of ideas ignited by the printing press, but they did so either by having a secure social architecture or by renewing it in order to sustain the levels of public trust that were, and are, necessary to their survival.

“ Mass media builds community. Or at least it did. . . . It is the fragmentation of the marketplace that is hurting newspapers most, not new technology. Very few general-use products are created these days. Even toothpaste and toilet paper are marketed to niche groups, as are everything from house

paint to cereal and custom vacations. The problem for a newspaper is that all of its targeted sections (Life, Business, Sports) are delivered to everyone, which makes the paper very expensive to produce.

“ Network television is suffering from the same problem. Why advertise on a network when you can place your ad for less money on a specialty channel that caters to your specific market?

“ But they won't create the community-building function of mass media. When readers look for a sports story or a horoscope in a newspaper, they browse through all sorts of content they wouldn't necessarily choose to see on their own. The same thing happens with local and network news; viewers must wait for the stories that interest them, and learn about other things in the meantime. All of that wasted time is actually part of building community, a way to make us listen to each other.

“Sure, big newspapers and network television aren't the only place that happens. We share public schools, parks, playgrounds and

sidewalks. And some argue that the Internet is the biggest commons of the intellect we've ever had. But you don't have to browse through much foreign thought to find your own tribe on the Internet."

This trend towards "tribalism" is well worth considering. Interestingly, the online responses to the professor's argument laid the blame squarely on the doorstep of the traditional media. Here are some excerpts.

"... People are abandoning big media because they know they're being fed a pack of half-truths, if not outright lies, as part of political and social agenda. It wouldn't be so bad except the media continue to tout itself as objective. The media have, by and large, betrayed the trust of the public and the public have, in turn, gone searching for the truth themselves. And they don't have to pay for it. Want to regain your lost ground, Ms. Toughill? Return to objective, fact-based reporting and proactively seek out opposing viewpoints on contentious issues."

"As a journalism student, and blogger, I can vouch for the type of brainwashing that mass media tries to indoctrinate its people to deal in. The focus in journalism school isn't on free-thought, development of ideals, or expression of progressive ideas; but rather on toeing corporate lines, fitting into the box, and being churned out directly into a job with some cookie-cutter publication. Journalism lost its way for the same reason other professions do: greed. Once the corporate elites got their filthy claws into every major publication, any credibility once-fine papers had was lost forever. There is indeed much more free speech, creativity, and room for new ideas now on the Internet. This is a necessary change. People deserve to be exposed to a multitude of voices, not

just that of tired old institutions trying to maintain their control over societal values."

It is easy to imagine a similar conversation taking place 500 years ago, when Gutenberg's technological development began to threaten the common ground that had been established by clerical and monarchist institutions. Many of those institutions were able to survive the spread of ideas ignited by the printing press, but they did so either by having a secure social architecture or by renewing it in order to sustain the levels of public trust that were, and are, necessary to their survival. However, other institutions died or were diminished as new structures arose.

Gutenberg's galaxy unleashed the power of human ingenuity and ideas. Both are powerful, potent things. As a result, structures and institutions emerged that could not possibly have been foreseen. Some, such as the equality of each of us before God, are rich with beauty and light. Others, such as racial supremacy, are dark and morbid. Releasing ideas is sometimes like releasing the hounds; one is never quite sure what scent they will choose to follow.

What is known is that the emergence and spread of ideas has prompted and will likely continue to inspire enormous battles—physical, theological, philosophical, economic and ideological—in the effort to establish the ascendancy of one over the other.

There is no reason to believe the same won't apply to the next set of ideas released by the technology of the 21st century. Prepare for the unexpected.



REAL-TIME JOURNALISM

A RESPONSE

Stephen Kimber

Stephen Kimber is the Rogers Communications Chair in Journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax. He is an award-winning writer, editor and broadcaster. He is the author of one novel, *Reparations* (Harper Collins, 2006), and six non-fiction books. His most recent book, *Loyalists and Layabouts: the rapid rise and faster fall of Shelburne N.S.*, was published by Doubleday in 2008.

Peter Menzies' essay "The Fall and Rise of Empires" focuses on two distinct but related issues: specifically, whether there is a legitimate journalistic role for live blogging; and, more generally, the causes and effects of the decline of public trust in mainstream media.

Let's start with live blogging. Menzies makes the argument that, whatever else it may be, live blogging of events is not real journalism.

By way of example, he cites Kady O'Malley's December 4, 2008 live blog for Macleans.ca from outside Rideau Hall. Prime Minister Stephen Harper was meeting that day with Governor General Michaëlle Jean. During what turned out to be a critical and unexpectedly lengthy closed-door meeting, Harper asked the Governor General to prorogue parliament rather than risk his government falling on a confidence vote.

While I didn't follow O'Malley's blog while it was happening, I did switch

back and forth between CTV Newsnet and CBC Newsworld during their live coverage of that same event. Reading O'Malley's account now, I am struck by just how similar it was to what I remember of the television news networks' special programming that day.

Because of the meeting's potential historic significance, its inherent drama and its unpredictable outcome, some of our most-respected television journalists—Peter Mansbridge, Keith Boag, Craig Oliver, Robert Fife, and so on—spent the same two hours and forty minutes on air as O'Malley did online. Waiting. Waiting to learn what had happened inside.

Like O'Malley,¹ those prominent TV journalists were reduced to reporting what their colleagues on the scene were

¹ It is probably worth noting that O'Malley, far from being simply an "entertaining" blogger, is an experienced parliament Hill journalist who has covered federal politics for *The Hill Times*, a publication whose only mandate is to cover the Ottawa scene.

hearing and then trying to read the tea leaves of it all for veracity and significance. It's worth noting that O'Malley and the TV journalists were both careful to let their audiences know that much of what they were reporting was unconfirmed and might not even be true, but it was the only information available at that moment to fill the news void.²

Is what O'Malley and the TV talking heads did "journalism"? I would argue that it is. It is different, certainly, from the journalism of the nightly TV newscasts, or from the next morning's newspapers. By then, reporters have had the luxury of time to verify, add to and subtract from all the conflicting information that they have ferreted out, or that has come their way in the course of

² My own reading of O'Malley's posts suggests that her "story" is not about the outcome—the conventional "news" of Harper's statement—but the equally interesting, newsworthy process of how a brief, *pro forma* meeting between the prime minister and governor general had morphed into a more than two-hour *tete-a-tete* and the unfolding mystery of what was actually happening inside. Simply focusing on what Menzies describes as the "only two things that actually happened that can be considered news"—Harper's arrival and his statement—misses the news value in the process. Of course, neither story gets to the heart of the *real* story: what Jean and Harper said to one another. For that "news," we may have to wait for their memoirs.

The bad thing—and the good thing—about the live blog is that it showcases the sausage-making aspects of journalism.

their reporting day. Equally, the journalism the dailies practice is different from what is done at the weekly newsmagazines, where

reporters and editors have even more time to sort fact from spin, develop context and fine-tune nuances. But all are journalistic endeavours.

The bad thing—and the good thing—about the live blog is that it showcases the sausage-making

aspects of journalism. It often isn't pretty. Rumours, facts, false leads, distortions, agendas—reporters must gather, sift and sort to try to get to the best truth they can in whatever limited time and resources are available to them. And, in a live blog, to do all of that with the world following along.

One would not want to have to subsist on a steady diet of only live blogs, of course. But the reality is that blogs are just one menu item on a journalistic smorgasbord that includes all-news-television, network TV newscasts, newspaper stories, online news reports, columns, magazine articles, and more.

After watching the live broadcasts of the meeting at Rideau Hall, for example, I tuned in to that night's *The National* to get CBC-TV's digested post-event account

and followed up the next morning with analysis in my print-on-paper *Globe and Mail* as well as in a variety of online newspapers and commentary blogs.

Let me go a step further and suggest that live blogging—like live TV news coverage—is, in fact, an important form of journalism.

Let me go a step further and suggest that live blogging—like live TV news coverage—is, in fact, an important form of journalism. In times of crises, such environments create a new “common ground” where citizens gather, follow, discuss and try to make sense of whatever is happening.

One can go back to the heyday of Walter Cronkite, “the most trusted man in America,” and his coverage of the 1963 Kennedy assassination—one of the first examples of live, 24-hour news—to get a sense of how reporting of major events as they unfold can help bring citizens together. Americans wanted to know what was known as it was known, and they understood that some of it would be incomplete or maybe even wrong. But they accepted—and expected—the errors would be corrected and clarified as information became available.

Although it doesn’t compare to the Kennedy assassination—or certainly 9/11—the Rideau Hall meeting had the potential to be historic. Those of us fascinated by Canadian politics wanted to know what was happening as it was happening. Live coverage gave us the opportunity to follow what was known—as well as unknown—in real time.

Such live coverage, with all its faults and potential for errors, has another advantage. By showing citizens how news is created, it gives them better information on which to make judgments about the quality of coverage. Seeing a Barack Obama press conference live, for example, allows viewers to compare their own news judgment with those of the professionals. (These days, editors cannot be as flippant as Menzies’ editor was when he told the young reporter: “Don’t worry, kid. No one knows what doesn’t get in the paper.” Now they do. And these days, too, the traditional media’s news coverage is subject to more internal as well as external monitoring; witness the *New York Times* apology for its coverage of the early stages of the Iraq war.)

Having said all of that, I certainly do agree with Menzies when it comes to his larger point that traditional journalism is going through profound change, the outcome of which is impossible to predict.³ And, I also agree with his argument

³ I am less concerned than Menzies and my colleague, Kelly Toughill, that the collapse of traditional media may lead us down the slippery slope of fragmentation, tribalism and the destruction of the common meeting ground. My own experience is that the Internet offers at least as much (and perhaps more) opportunity for connection and serendipitous discovery as traditional media.

that, for a variety of reasons, public trust in traditional media is in decline.

The evolving corporatization of media has placed profit above public service, which has inevitably led to fewer journalists trying to produce more “product” for more platforms to generate more profit for shareholders, who have no stake—and less interest—in the quality of the journalism those media publish or broadcast. The consequent erosion of professional standards has undermined public trust in journalism and made it more difficult for media owners to make a compelling case for their institutions at a time when those very institutions are under threat. By the time media owners wake up to the true nature and value of the journalistic franchise they hold—what

Menzies correctly describes as public trust—it may be too late for them. Perhaps it already is.

And, perhaps, as Menzies hints, that is not necessarily a bad thing. “Those institutions that maintain and renew the elements necessary to a healthy social architecture will survive,” he writes. “The rest of Rome will burn.”

We are in the middle of a journalistic revolution at least as profound as the one Gutenberg launched. We don’t know how it will turn out, but we would be wise to keep in mind Menzies’ argument that “trust [is] the moral component most vital to news media’s ability to build, maintain and monetize audiences.”

Amen to that.



MEDIUMS AND MEDITATIONS

EXTENDING THE MENZIES/KIMBER EXPLORATIONS

Milton Friesen

Milton is the Director of Operations for Cardus and spends his time connecting the world of organizational ideas to measurable growth. He has done graduate work in philosophy of language, served in local government, and has recently written a book on adaptive leadership. He is a new resident of Hamilton, ON, along with his wife Michelle and their four children.

When we discuss the relative merits of live blogging in contrast to traditional media, we must take into account Neil Postman’s argument that we shape the tools, and then the tools shape us. In a recursive cycle where technological development and social change lead to other technologies and more social change, the winners and losers of the exchanges are never neatly segmented.

Corporate mass media has owned everything—from the research to the writing, from the means of production to the distribution. Local papers couldn’t afford to have correspondents in various places around the world, so the bigger outlets controlled the flow of that information and profited from it. Now the

means of production has decreased to the point where the “barbarian masses” are able to stake out a piece of the wilderness to settle and occupy. The connections between these new media citizens are now giving rise to new organizations and arrangements facilitated by the fluid platforms of Facebook, Blogger, Ning, Twitter and “the next big thing.”

Trust is a central exploration of Menzies’ analysis—can we trust a live blogger who is speculating, thinking on her feet, fishing for some new info-bit to talk about? Can we trust Peter Mansbridge later in the day when he presents a more formal and, it is assumed, authoritative analysis of the events? Can we trust the durability of a fragmented, tribal landscape more or less

than a powerful media conglomerate that very liberally applies a “they don’t know what didn’t make the news” approach? The fragmentation of mass media is not simply a result of blogging over the last few years. Long before blogging was possible, the broadcast world was multiplying channel options in a frantic micro-niche race to try and gain dedicated eyeballs. Magazine publishing has followed similar paths. With the emergence of web 2.0 and beyond, we are seeing more movement in that direction, as the means of production and distribution have shifted from corporate outbound to public co-creation.

We still evaluate relationships and organizations based on trust. Our decision to listen to or ignore someone on an important matter will depend a great deal on how credible we believe the source to be. Studies and statistics and data have multiplied exponentially, making issues of trust more important than ever. I recently read a book on business innovation, published in 2000, which pointed out the great merits of Enron as a very progressive corporate citizen. Progressive indeed. The ascendancy of eBay has been facilitated by a low threshold for participation, together with a means to establish the credibility of participants through a ranking system. A hundred years ago, in a small town, you may have had only word of mouth; now, you get ranked by other eBay users in a global, digital village.

Credibility is as important as ever—perhaps more so. What has changed, however, is the way in which credibility is gained and lost. It used to be that the size of your office building, the luxury of the interior appointments, and the suits of your executive team all served to lend credibility to your operation. You had made it;

you had things under control; you were a safe bet for other people’s money; you could be trusted as a regulator; you could be relied on to deliver the news objectively, whatever the format. If you ran a tight ship, kept all the barriers between your organization and the wider public carefully maintained, and controlled all the messaging about yourself, you maintained your credibility. Those mechanisms of credibility are changing. There have been too many failures on the part of large, trusted corporations. As Menzies points out, this has led to decreased trust and has been manifested in decreasing credibility. Beyond blogging—micro or otherwise—these are a few of the emerging new parameters of corporate credibility.

TRANSPARENCY

If I can’t see what you are doing or find out more about you easily, I will assume you are trying to hide something. The more layers of bureaucracy there are between me and the decision-making process, the more I will feel like direct, open, clear responses are simply not going to happen. Since I can probably find out a lot about you online anyway, trying to keep the one-way mirror in place probably won’t work. At the very least, I will choose to do business with, or consume media from, a source that is more transparent than you, because then I will know what I’m getting and I will have been spared the trouble of ferreting out your delinquencies.

AUTHENTICITY

If you only give me spin, then I won’t believe you even when you are telling the truth. I want to know that I’m dealing with real people in a context that I understand or can learn more

Credibility is as important as ever—perhaps more so. What has changed, however, is the way in which credibility is gained and lost.

about if I choose. If you don't know what the future holds, it's better for you to be honest about it than it is to pretend you know something that you really don't. Print might go away in an archive that will take deep dedication to access in five years; but online, your content has a much longer and much more accessible life. You might give away 50 million dollars each year to protect the environment because you say it really matters to you, but when I look you up and discover that you earn ten times that much every week in an industry that is exploiting the environment, you won't feel like a trusted source. If the dynamics of reporting on an international conflict are complicated, you need to come clean about that rather than giving me something that is trite and tidy.

PARTICIPATION

If our exchange is only one-sided and you do all the talking, I will assume that you are trying to sell me on something or manipulate me. As someone once said, if you build it, I might use it—but if we build it, I will use it. Maybe in the past being a good citizen included reading the paper regularly, but today, good citizenship means contributing something of value to the conversation, not just reading someone

else's summary of events. If your editorial department only listens to people in power or individuals with cultural capital and denies me an opportunity to meaningfully interact with and co-create content around the issues or events involved, then you will fail to engage me over time. I will simply move on to places where I can read, watch, listen and freely interact with the generators of the content and, perhaps even more importantly, connect laterally with other people who share my interest in the matter at hand.

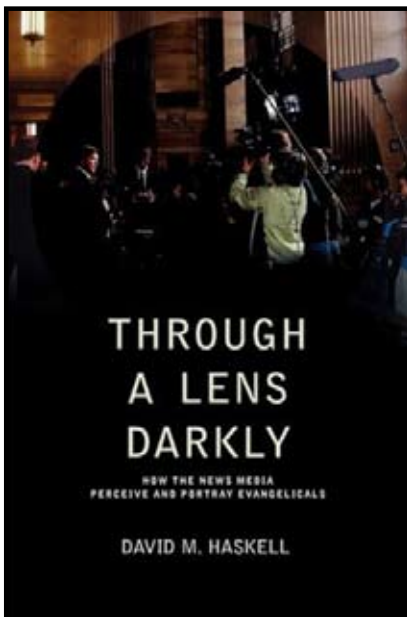
It seems to me, no matter what journalism has stood for in the most compelling moments of the craft, that telling the truth, particularly when it has been costly, is among the most important reasons for its existence. Whether it is pixels or ink on paper, this remains a very vital function. In a robust and resilient society, people who are dedicated to investigating and reporting what is going on around us remain indispensable. The movement from consolidation (as seen in mass media) to diversification (as seen in various social technologies) has not eradicated that need. The responsibility for understanding how a diversified media landscape can be misused—and guarding against it—is as critical today as has been the responsibility we have had to this point in time to understand how a consolidated media landscape can be turned to ignoble ends. New and different kinds of power consolidation are happening through Google, with its galactic appetite for data collection, sorting, sifting and sharing. Engaged citizens need to actively understand the risks and rewards that such mass accumulations of data and cloud-based computing represent.

Indie media, citizen documentaries and other types of grassroots-driven mergers of low-cost technology and online distribution can strengthen our social fabric. An example of this work is the National Film Board of Canada's filmmaker-in-residence program that has, of late, featured the work of Katerina Cizek, who uses immersive strategies to get the voice of under-represented people into her documentaries. She talks about making media with people rather than simply about people, working through a long-established institution to explore new ways of helping others with indie-style approaches to digital filming.

New technologies represent opportunities for building or destroying, oppressing or freeing. The vicissitudes of the human heart ensure that the spectrum of possibilities between those poles will continue to be represented. Journalism, at its best, plays a vital role in pushing the balance toward the good, the true and the beautiful, regardless of the medium.



BOOK REVIEW



DAVID M. HASKELL, *THROUGH A LENS DARKLY: HOW THE MEDIA PERCEIVE AND PORTRAY EVANGELICALS*. TORONTO: CLEMENTS ACADEMIC, 2009. SOFTCOVER, 290 PAGES. LIST PRICE: \$24.95

THROUGH A LENS DARKLY: BOOK REVIEW

By Peter Stockland

After nearly 200 pages of meticulously verifying and detailing news media mistreatment of evangelical Christians, author David Haskell pops a courageous, if belated, question: so what?

As with so much of Haskell's *Through A Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals*, the "so what?" question reverberates on numerous levels. Certainly the journalists Haskell surveyed for their attitudes toward evangelicals seemed, by and large, barely able to muster who-cares shrugs about the fairness or unfairness of their approaches.

With the exception of a few documented spikes in public opinion about the need to treat evangelicals

more equitably in news reports, Canadians as a whole seem blissfully unperturbed about the raw deal given evangelicals by reporters and editors across the land.

Even among their mainstream Christian counterparts, Haskell shows, hard evidence that Canadian journalists have become almost hardwired for antipathy toward evangelicals provokes more extended yawns than a mumbled sermon on a hot August Sunday.

Given that, one answer to Haskell's "so what?" might be: so this is a book of interest only to evangelicals, and even then only to the subset of evangelicals who are publicly concerned enough to notice how they are portrayed in the media. Another answer might be: so this is a book with a potential audience so small it could be shelved in the Canadian poetry section of your local Chapters/Indigo outlet.

Neither answer would be justified. *Through A Lens Darkly* is a book that deserves to be read, studied and cited profusely. It is finely researched and fluidly

written account not just of another instance of media abuse of an identifiable group, but of the intellectual poisons pervasive in contemporary journalism. As such it should find the widest possible readership in journalism schools across this country and (like this is going to happen!) among professionals in the news business. Of course, Canadians of any faith would do well to encounter in its pages how caustically religion in general is regarded by the enlightened, progressive, diversity-proclaiming beacons of tolerance who populate the nation's newsrooms.

However extensive or limited the book's impact, though, Haskell's clear intent is for it to contribute to some measure of reform or correction in the industry that he once served as a television reporter and now helps to shape as an associate journalism professor at Wilfrid Laurier University. He writes as a practicing Christian in a spirit of charity and fraternal correction, not as a grievance-monger for whom statistics are rhetorical ordnance and cutting one-liners are the apogee of argument.

Through A Lens Darkly is a book that deserves to be read, studied and cited profusely.

"(T)he results of this (book) would be put to poor use if they served to only heighten the tension that already exists between evangelicals and the news media. (T)he findings would be better employed as a catalyst to positive action," he writes.

It is a statement of quite remarkable grace following, as it does, page after exhaustive page of statistically-valid study results showing the vast majority of the country's reporters and editors top-of-mind-response to evangelicals is to consider them intolerant, criminally-minded and un-Canadian. He complements this graciousness by adding counsel, in the last pages of the book, on practical steps both media organizations and evangelicals themselves could take to provide a truer, fairer, more complete

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journalistic representation of this aspect of Christianity.

It is within this advice-giving, however, that the ultimate “so what?” of *Through a Lens Darkly* emerges. So what if, over time, there is improvement, token or tangible, in the mainstream news industry's depiction of evangelical Christians? So what if, working hard and applying themselves diligently, evangelicals are at last able to communicate effectively with (and through) Canada's newspapers, radio and television stations? In fact, what will have been realized through the expenditure of effort on both sides is *a gain for a lost cause*. By that is meant the loss of the big media itself, not the cause of Christian evangelism.

In an era when more and more citizens care less and less almost daily about what mainstream media outlets are reporting, when many of those outlets are staggering on broken knees toward inevitable financial oblivion, when the means of infinite media production are a mere mouse-click away for everyone, so what if a group of anachronistic information gatekeepers in the nation's emptying newsrooms think a particular way about evangelicals or anything else?

Haskell argues, and has the numbers at his fingertips to make the case,

that the majority of Canadians still get the bulk of their news from traditional media sources. Using a concept called frame theory, he also shows convincingly how repetition of journalistic perceptions of evangelical Christians perpetuates negative images in the wider population. Finally, he shows the impact these two facts have had on specific public policy debates—namely abortion and same-sex marriage—to the detriment of the political positions taken by organized evangelicals. (Canadian journalists almost uniformly consider evangelicals “wrong” on abortion and same-sex marriage and so, in a feedback loop that only a journalist could love, convert that “wrongness” into the essence of evangelical Christianity. You are what I say you are because you and I disagree about what you should believe.)

Conceding the general correctness of Haskell's arguments does not diminish their belatedness, however. *Through A Lens Darkly* is a book that still considers mainstream journalism to be as important as it was when, oh, say, arguments over abortion and gay rights first began. It is an understandable position for a former journalist and current denizen of a university journalism to take, but it is yesterday's position at best.

If we are not quite there, we are rapidly approaching a time when conventional journalists will be what buggy whip makers were at the dawn of the age of the automobile. Their power to drive things will be, shall we say, niche-market if it exists at all.

In that sense, the real power of this book is as a case study in how the intellectual poisons

of contemporary journalism helped to kill an institution once considered essential to the proper functioning of democracy. Evangelicals, after all, are but a subset of those who have suffered from the arrogance, rigidity, dogmatism, ignorance and superstition that constitutes the daily fare of Canadian newspapers, radio and television news. It is why,

when the last of the mainstream newsroom lights go out, they will properly join the bulk of the population in shrugging and asking: "So what?"



CANADIAN THINK TANK INDEX

A compilation of pertinent research and publications from other think tanks.

ATLANTIC INSTITUTE FOR MARKET STUDIES

AIMS released their seventh annual report card on Atlantic Canadian high schools (RC7), with most schools seeing their grades improve rather than decline in the past five years. Nova Scotia led the way with more than twice the number of improving schools as those seeing their grade fall. For a complete copy of the Report Card, visit:

www.aims.ca/library/RC7.pdf

ATLANTIC INSTITUTE FOR MARKET STUDIES

BRIAN LEE CROWLEY

Crowley delivered a talk entitled “Surviving and Thriving in an Irrational World” at the end of April, arguing against continued single-tier municipal services. He writes, “There is no observable correlation between amalgamation and economic growth,” and argues that instead, “we need a framework for local government that spurs competition, and ends rigid monopolies in the supply of local government services.” His talk can be found at: www.aims.ca/library/MunicipalGovernment.pdf

CALEDON INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL POLICY

The Caledon Institute is hosting a roundtable on “Reducing Poverty in Ontario: A Place-Based Approach” on June 10-12. The conference will respond to the release of Ontario’s first comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, with representatives from government and prominent NGOs.

CALEDON INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL POLICY

SHERRI TORJMAN, ANNE MAKHOUL *et al.*

The Institute released “Collaboration on Policy: A Manual Developed by the Community-Government Collaboration on Policy” in April. Developed by a group of ten partners, the manual provides practical lessons for government-community collaborations on policy. The many examples, tools and references provided in the manual are helpful both to those new to policy work and to groups already engaged in collaborations on policy. It can be found at: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/772ENG.pdf

CANADA WEST FOUNDATION

ROSLYN KUNIN

“Economic Development Issues for Rural Communities in the Four Western Provinces” was prepared as a forward-looking study to discern which issues are likely to affect economic development in Canada’s rural West up to 2015. Read the paper here: www.cwf.ca/V2/files/Rural_ALL.pdf

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

HUGH MACKENZIE AND RICHARD SHILLINGTON

“Canada’s Quiet Bargain: The benefits of public spending,” released in April, argues that the majority of Canadian households enjoy higher quality of life because the public services their taxes fund are a bargain, compared to more privatized systems. Read the report: www.policyalternatives.ca/~ASSETS/DOCUMENT/National_Office_Pubs/2009/Benefits_From_Public_Spending.pdf

CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber released an April report called “Pillar #1: A North American Vision” as part of its Transportation Strategy Series. It calls on Canadian and American governments to invest more heavily in the infrastructure of the border and establish cabinet-level Canada-U.S. border cooperation. The report can be found at: www.chamber.ca/cmslib/general/Pillar1.pdf

CANADIAN DEFENCE & FOREIGN AFFAIRS INSTITUTE

COLIN ROBERTSON

“After Obama’s First Hundred Days: The Pursuit of the Ottawa Agenda and the Need for a Permanent Campaign” examines Obama’s progress after 100 days, concluding that his agenda leaves little time for Canadian concerns about border protectionism. However, Robertson outlines ways in which Canada can revamp its relationship with the U.S. and boost its international status. The paper can be found at: www.cdfai.org/PDF/After%20Obamas%20First%20Hundred%20Days.pdf

CANADIAN POLICY RESEARCH NETWORKS

MARGARET MACADAM

In the report “Moving Toward Health Service Integration: Provincial Progress in System Change for Seniors,” Dr. Margaret MacAdam reviews the conceptual understandings underlying integrated care for seniors, examines models of cost-effective care, identifies their features and then ascertains to what extent Canadian provinces are implementing these features. Read the report here:

www.cprn.com/documents/51302_EN.pdf

C.D. HOWE INSTITUTE

KARIM MOUSSALY-SERGIEH AND FRANÇOIS VAILLANCOURT

In this May brief, “Extra Earning Power: The Financial Returns to University Education in Canada,” the authors argue that both male and female students see annual

returns on undergraduate education well above other forms of investment. Strong social and individual returns from university education must increasingly be taken into consideration for policymakers and students. Find the brief here:

www.cdhowe.org/pdf/ebrief_79.pdf

C.D. HOWE INSTITUTE

CLAIRE DE OLIVEIRA

The policy brief entitled “Good Health to All: Reducing Health Inequalities among Children in High-and Low-Income Canadian Families” argues that for child-targeted programs to have a substantial impact on health outcomes, income-related policies such as cash transfers should receive less emphasis, while in-kind transfers of goods and services directed to children should receive more. Read the entire commentary:

www.cdhowe.org/pdf/commentary_288.pdf

C.D. HOWE INSTITUTE

COLIN BUSBY AND WILLIAM B.P. ROBSON

In “Near Hits and Big Misses: Canada’s 2009 Fiscal Accountability Rankings” analyst Colin Busby and President and CEO William Robson argue that Canadian governments would be projecting less red ink, and Canadians would face lower tax burdens, if governments had previously spent only what they promised at budget time. Better reporting—and above all, more determination by legislators and voters to insist that governments deliver on the commitments voted at budget time—are critical to better fiscal performance in the future. Read the report here:

www.cdhowe.org/pdf/backgrounder_117.pdf

CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA

MARC L. BUSCH

In this briefing, author Marc L. Busch looks at the trade

implications for Canada of the 2008 U.S. elections, which saw Barack Obama's election and the Democrats' sizable gains in the 111th Congress. While observers were quick to argue that the election would result in significant changes in U.S. policy at home and abroad, few—if any—suggested that it would be good for international trade. The financial crisis and recession in the U.S. have only compounded the problem. This briefing warns that Ottawa needs to take a different tack when it comes to marketing Canada-U.S. trade in Washington. "The Perfect (Anti-Trade) Storm?: Recession, the November U.S. Elections, and What It All Means for Canada" can be found at:

www.conferenceboard.ca/documents_ea.aspx?did=3037

FRASER INSTITUTE

In March the Fraser Institute published its "Hospital Report Card Ontario 2009" ranking Ontario hospitals. The report data is available on an interactive website: [http://](http://www.hospitalreportcards.ca/)

www.hospitalreportcards.ca/. A second report card in April was issued on Ontario's Secondary Schools (2009), using relevant public data to rate and rank 718 of Ontario's public and independent secondary schools. The report can be found at:

www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce/web/product_files/70ONESCO9COMP.pdf

FRASER INSTITUTE

NEILS VELDHUIS AND
MILAGROS PALACIOS

"Taxes versus the Necessities of Life: The Canadian Consumer Index, 2009" concludes that the average Canadian family's tax bill has increased by 1,783 percent since 1961. The report argues that the average Canadian family now spends more of its income on taxes than on the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing. The report can be found at:

www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce/web/product_files/CanadianConsumerTaxIndex2009.pdf

MONTREAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTE

DAVID DESCÔTEAUX

In "Viewpoint on the debt of the Quebec government," Descôteaux wonders if the Quebec government's finances can hold up without sizeable tax increases. The report estimates that as of March 31, 2009 government debt stood at \$151.4 billion, or 49.9% of the province's annual GDP. Read the complete publication here:

www.iedm.org/uploaded/pdf/poin0509_en.pdf

THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION

JEREMY DE BEER (EDITOR)

In tandem with the International Development Research Centre, the CIGI has published an edited volume on the newly adopted World Intellectual Property Organization Development Agenda. The challenge of

intellectual property law and policy, the book argues, is one of implementation, and as such the volume covers a range of issues appealing to the non-expert as well as government specialists. The book was published in April by Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

THE PEMBINA INSTITUTE

CLARE DEMERSE

“Our Fair Share: Canada’s Role in Supporting Global Climate Solutions” argues that Canada has a narrow window of opportunity to play a constructive role in this year’s UN climate negotiations, and committing to provide our “fair share” of the financing the poorer countries need would be a step in the right direction.

This report outlines the financing needed and assesses Canada’s share of the total. It can be found at:

pubs.pembina.org/reports/our-fair-share-report.pdf

THE RIDEAU INSTITUTE

In “Looking Up: A Report on the State of Canada’s Space Sector,” David McDonald summarizes the general optimism of space sector analysts in Canada, particularly as it relates to the forthcoming Canadian Space Agency (CSA) strategic plan. The paper was a discussion starter at the Institute’s 2009 Roundtable on Space on March 12, 2009 and can be found here:

www.rideauinstitute.ca/file-library/Looking-Up-space-report-2009.pdf

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