

# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

## Stop the Presses?



Photo: James Hardy/Getty Images

**THE PRINTING PRESS OF A MAJOR NEWSPAPER.** Will it be a museum piece sooner than we think? Can you imagine a world where the word newspaper is a misnomer because the news will no longer be printed on paper and instead delivered only via computer? How would journalism and our lives in general be different if that were the case? Imagine what your daily list of news sources might look like in the year 2057. What will be your primary sources of news? What role, if any, will newspapers play?

### THE RACE, PP. 24-32:

List the reasons why Kuttner believes newspapers are in danger and what he thinks they must do to survive. Suggest some additional reasons that aren't mentioned in the story. Kuttner asks, "Why does the survival of newspapers matter?" What is your response? He also wants to know what distinguishes newspapers when anyone can use the Web to originate news. What do you think? Are blogs journalism? Explain. What *does* constitute journalism? What makes a journalist a more reliable source for news? Does the Web help people to become better informed, or does it hinder them from becoming so? Can accessing the Web duplicate the experience of reading a newspaper? Why or why not? How important is that experience of holding a newspaper, turning the pages, and having that easy portability, etc.? Are newspapers saving themselves by adapting to the Web, or are they sealing their doom? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Compile a list of your daily news sources. Compare your lists to your classmates'. Discuss your choices and your reasons for them. What do they tell you about the future of newspapers? Set up a Web site that lists some of the better news sites, including a selection of "clogs" that you think would be useful to a journalist. Imagine you are the publisher of a mid-sized urban newspaper. Make a list of actions you think your newspaper needs to take in order to survive.

### BEFORE JON STEWART, PP. 33-37:

What does the prevalence of fake news say about our society? Why do the purveyors of fake news feel that deception is preferable to a straightforward approach? Why have news stations been willing partners in such

## Talking Points

IN THIS ISSUE, Robert Kuttner writes about the future of newspapers in a world where more and more people have come to rely on the Web for their information. Kuttner says newspapers can adapt, and indeed many have already. But what does it mean for journalists? For future print reporters, the latest trends aren't encouraging. Newsrooms are downsizing, and those reporters lucky enough to retain their jobs are finding their workloads are heavier while their benefits are being trimmed.

How can a journalist maintain a strong sense of commitment in the face of cutbacks, and in an era when anyone with a keyboard and an Internet connection can have access to an audience? What kind of journalism do you see yourself practicing? Why? Why do you want to become a journalist? How can you best prepare for the challenges of a journalism career?

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deceptions? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Watch “The Daily Show” or “The Colbert Report.” How do they mix real and fake news to make a point? List different ways the Bush administration has manipulated the press. Is it the same as producing fake news? Why is the press susceptible to such efforts? What can be done to prevent it? Find three great journalistic hoaxes that are not mentioned in the story. Discuss who and what was behind them and their impact.

### EPIDEMIC, PP. 38-43:

Connect the issues raised in this article to those discussed in “Before Jon Stewart.” List the different reasons why local news operations are willing to make cooperative deals with hospitals. Do viewers benefit from these deals? Why or why not? Who benefits the most: the hospital, the news operation or the viewers? Why don’t the hospitals simply pay for commercials? Comment on Fox’s defense of its use of the Cleveland Clinic material. Should TV stations be permitted to “charge money for news?” Why or why not? What impact do such arrangements have on a news operation’s credibility? Are they worth it in the long run? If you were an anchor, would you host a news program that was packaged by a medical provider? What if you were told you would lose your job if you didn’t?

#### Between the Lines

- 1) Imagine you are a layout editor for a newspaper or magazine. As the editor, give a written critique of CJR’s new layout and design. Then, as that publication’s managing editor, critique CJR’s new features.
- 2) What conclusions can you draw from the figures in this month’s “Hard Numbers” feature?
- 3) If you were in James Rainey’s (p. 12) position, how far would you go in covering the workings of your own newspaper? What would you do if your reporting was censored?
- 4) Do you agree or disagree with the comments of Flemming Rose (p. 18) on the cartoon controversy? What would you have done had you been in his place? Would you have published the cartoons? Why or why not? Should *The New York Times* have published them after the controversy boiled over? Why or why not?

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Imagine you are the editor of a local news operation.

Your budget is limited. You receive an offer from a hospital to bankroll your medical coverage in exchange for “considerations.” Write a note to management explaining what you think would be the best response. In your letter, explain how you think medical news should be covered within your budget. View and critique the medical coverage on your local TV news station. Was the reporting balanced? Were a variety of sources used? Could you tell whether the segment was done in partnership with a medical provider?

### CAPTURING CUBA, PP. 44-48:

What enterprise has Bardach employed to get her stories? What lessons from her work can you apply to your own daily reporting? Comment on Bardach’s reasons for fighting the lawsuit. Why does coverage of Castro engender so much controversy? What are the special challenges of reporting on Castro and Cuban affairs for a newspaper or television station in south Florida? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Go to the *Miami Herald* Web site. Read a selection of recent articles on Cuban issues and critique its coverage. Is it fair and balanced? Why or why not? Find some examples of Bardach’s reporting on Cuba and critique them. Compare her work to the reporting in the *Herald*.

### THE OPT-OUT MYTH, PP. 51-54:

Why have so many journalists written stories about women choosing to “opt out” of the job market if the story is essentially a false one? What is the best way to report on this story or on any story about what has been labeled a trend? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Do your own investigation into this issue. Interview housewives, their husbands, women who work and anyone else you think could shed light on the story. Write an article based on your reporting. Graff mentions several articles about women who have “opted out.” As part of your article, try to locate one of the women mentioned in those stories and do a follow-up interview with her.

#### Quick Takes

- 1) After reading “Blinded by Dubai,” interview your senator or representative (or one of their staff members) to find out where he or she stands on the issues discussed in the story. Write an article based on the interview and your own reporting into the matter.
- 2) After reading the laurel to the *Santa Fe Reporter* (p. 13), see if you can localize the story by examining the issue of privatization in your town or city. Find a government service that has been privatized and investigate the reasons for the change and its impact.
- 3) Reread Michael Massing’s essay on reporting on the Midwest. Then, find what you think is an excellent example, from the past or from current sources, of in-depth reporting on the Midwest. Discuss the reasons for your choice in the context of Massing’s concerns.
- 4) What are the benefits and drawbacks of a newspaper having a single owner such as the *New York Post* had under Dolly Schiff (p. 61)? Are newspapers better off with corporate ownership? Explain.