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Quality Journalism in the Digital Age: Strategies to Adapt and Remain Profitable

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QUALITY JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE: STRATEGIES TO ADAPT AND REMAIN PROFITABLE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the news media is commonly referred to as the "fourth estate" because we rely on it to fulfill a variety of functions essential to a healthy democracy. We trust the media to, among other things, tell us what is going on in the world, contextualize and provide historical background on current events, filter politicians' spin, fact-check, be a "watchdog," promote robust civil discourse, and enable understanding of complex issues.

Up until the last decade or so, the media could meet this "standard" without sacrificing its financial well-being. The internet and the smartphone, however, changed everything. The web has transformed how America – and the world – gets its news. Caught up in their old ways and slow to respond to a rapidly changing world, media outlets saw their revenues plummet. Many news organizations laid off staff and others went out of business. Today the media is still struggling to adapt. These problems were caused by, among many factors, a proliferation in the number of news choices, a decrease in subscriptions, and major losses in advertisement revenue. The digital age has ushered in a depressing paradox for news organizations: Americans are consuming more news than ever before, but news companies are struggling to stay in business.

While some news organizations have folded, others have tried to evolve with the rapidly changing landscape. Still, no newspaper has discovered the perfect formula for turning a profit in the digital age. On January 1, 2018, when Arthur Gregg Sulzberger replaced his father, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, as publisher of the *New York Times,* he penned a letter to his readers in which he said, "The business model that long supported the hard and expensive work of original reporting is eroding, forcing news organizations of all shapes and sizes to cut their reporting staffs and scale back their ambitions."[1]

[1] Sulzberger, A. G. "A Note From Our New Publisher." *New York Times*, 1 Jan. 2018. Accessed 2 Jan. 2018.

A healthy democracy needs a robust press. This thesis seeks to explain the ways in which newspapers can remain financially viable while fulfilling the obligations of the fourth estate. **In the digital age, how can major U.S. newspaper companies such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* continue to produce quality journalism that will adequately inform the American public?**

This paper, using the *Times* and *Post* as models, will provide a roadmap for other newspapers to become or remain profitable. In so doing, it will seek to solve the two-pronged media crisis that exists in our country today: 1) Newspaper companies are going out of business all over the country, leaving people without the essential knowledge they need to make informed decisions about the society in which they live; 2) Newspaper companies, in an effort to become profitable and remain in business, are turning to techniques that degrade the quality of their journalism. This paper will show that newspapers *can* turn a profit without sacrificing the thoughtful and dedicated news coverage they have traditionally provided. This thorough coverage is essential to informing our citizens and keeping our democracy healthy.

This paper will first provide an explanation for how the media should function in a democracy, based on the thinking of the U.S. Constitution's Framers and the well-respected mid-twentieth century journalist and thinker, Walter Lippmann. Next comes a clarification of what "quality journalism" – a phrase mentioned in the research question – is, and why this paper focuses on the *Times* and the *Post.* Then it will provide background on the media's "problem" – including both financial issues and the new ways that Americans get their news. Finally, it will get to the crux of my argument – how quality journalism can survive in the digital age. It will lay out the tactics media organizations can and have used, compare failed news organizations to

those that have survived, and offer solutions for how the media can function best in these turbulent times.

II. HOW THE MEDIA IS SUPPOSED TO FUNCTION IN A DEMOCRACY

Historically, the idea of giving regular citizens the power to make decisions about their government was considered radical. Even in the United States, where democracy eventually flourished, the Framers who drafted the Constitution were skeptical about whether this new system of government would work. "...[D]emocracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention … And have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths," wrote James Madison, the architect of the Constitution, in Federalist 10.[2] Among Madison's many fears was how the general public – a largely illiterate bunch – could make adequate voting decisions. How could an uneducated farmer in Massachusetts possibly understand the wants and needs of a vast, nascent country struggling to adapt on its own?

Walter Lippmann, a journalist, news critic and co-founder of the magazine *The New Republic,* believed that a well-functioning press could remedy this problem. Lippmann called the newspaper the "bible of democracy" and "the only serious book most people read...the only book they read every day."[3] He argued that the job of editors was crucial to supporting a government run by the people. "...[T]he task of selecting and ordering the news is one of the truly sacred and priestly offices in a democracy. For the newspaper is in all literalness the bible of democracy, the book out of which a people determines its conduct."[4] Newspapers enabled citizens to think "nationally," a mindset which, according to Lippmann, was the foundation of a democracy. "To

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[2] Madison, James. "The Federalist Papers : No. 10." *The Avalon Project*, Yale University. Accessed 8 Apr. 2018.

[3] Lippmann, Walter. Liberty and the News. 1920. Leopold Classic Library, 2017. (47)

[4] Lippmann, Walter. Liberty and the News. 1920. Leopold Classic Library, 2017. (47)

think nationally means, at least, to take into account the major interests and needs and desires of this continental population," wrote Lippmann in *Liberty and the News.*

Lippmann realized that citizens were able to think "nationally" because of technological advancements. The telegraph allowed journalists in the early 1900s to instantly relay news across the country and even the world, and, as a result, newspapers improved the breadth and depth of their coverage. However, the speed with which information could be distributed also allowed dangerous messages to be disseminated. Lippmann theorized that the rise in authoritarianism he observed globally was fueled by the spread of government propaganda, which left citizens misinformed. Although the problem of authoritarianism had not spread to the United States and democracy seemed to be functioning, Lippmann nonetheless feared that citizens did not have the time and ability to sort through misinformation and grasp the facts they needed to make coherent decisions about ideology and government.

Lippmann asserted that, in an increasingly complex and fast-paced world, citizens were struggling to find the necessary time in their busy lives to process the day's news. As Lippmann writes in *Liberty and the News*:

> [I]n that helter-skelter which we flatter by the name of civilization, the citizen performs the perilous business of government under the worst possible conditions… I know of no man, even those who devote all of their time to watching public affairs, who can even pretend to keep track, at the same time, of his city government, Congress, the departments, the industrial situation, and the rest of the world. … What men who make the study of politics a vocation cannot do, the man who has an hour a day for newspaper and talk cannot possibly hope to do. He must seize catwords and headlines or nothing.[5]

[5] Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. 1922. Renaissance Classics, 2012. (56-57)

Those headlines, of course, would be curated by the press, fulfilling its role as the gatekeeper of democracy. Lippmann recognized that not everyone would be able to thoroughly comprehend the facts necessary to make adequate decisions in a democracy. Some people did not have the time nor stamina to process current events. He believed the press needed to work harder to counter the growing complexity of the world. Simply relaying the facts of the day was not enough. He called on fellow journalists to elevate the profession's mission and help consumers *understand* the news.

Lippmann would likely argue that the need for the press to fulfill this role is more important than ever. It's safe to say that the world – and America, especially – has become infinitely more complex since Lippmann sat down to write *Public Opinion* and *Liberty and the News.* In 1922, when *Public Opinion* was released*,* the radio, phone, car and plane were brand new inventions, and television, cell phones and the internet were decades away from making their way into American life. These new technologies – although they benefit society immeasurably – drastically increased the velocity of life. One wonders what Lippmann, so concerned about the unfavorable conditions for democracy created by the "helter-skelter" life of the 1920s, would make of a day when the "perilous business of government" is commonly performed while staring at a cell phone during the 20-minute commute to work, or during a fleeting glance at a chyron displayed across the bottom of a television screen at the gym.[6] Almost a century ago, Lippmann feared, "The life of the city dweller lacks solitude, silence, ease. Under modern industrialism thought goes on in a bath of noise. … Every man whose business it is to think knows that he must for part of the day create about himself a pool of silence."[7]

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[6] Lippmann, Walter. Liberty and the News. 1920. Leopold Classic Library, 2017. (47)

[7] Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. 1922. Renaissance Classics, 2012. (56)

As that pool of silence becomes increasingly elusive, does Lippmann's theory still hold true? Modern scholars and journalists generally agree with Lippmann about the importance of the press in a democracy. Scholars support the argument that an informed public is essential to a democracy and that the media is partially, if not completely, responsible for providing the opportunity for information gathering (Bennett 2016; Kovach and Rosenstiel 2010; Fallows 1996; Jones 2009; Zaller 2003; Wolfsfeld 2011.)[8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] However, some disagree with Lippmann about how the press should function in a democracy. While Lippmann believed that journalists needed to be gatekeepers, determining what the public needs to know, he was also the proponent of a hierarchical society where the press's function was to inform the intellectual class, the elites, who would in turn make decisions for the public good. Today, some media theorists find this argument outdated and undemocratic.

Some scholars argue that the media can no longer fulfill the role of gatekeeper. Lance Bennett, a political science and media studies professor at the University of Washington, argues this in his book, *News: The Politics of Illusion*:

> The media system has fragmented into broadcast and cable channels, online platforms, and social media. … [M]ost of what we still recognize as news is produced by legacy news organizations. But those news organizations have been bought and sold, merged and divested, and squeezed for profits at the expense of quality journalism. More

[8] Wolfsfeld, Gadi. Making Sense of Media and Politics: Five Principles in Political Communication. E-book, New York, Routledge, 2011.
[9] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010.
[10] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996.
[11] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009.
[12] Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.
[13] Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018.

> importantly, the emerging business models and audience engagement logic of digital media have transformed how content is produced, sold and distributed.[14]

Bennett blames the erosion of the "gate" mostly on the internet. He says that, for one, the internet has hurt legacy media organizations financially, forcing companies to downsize or disappear completely which has, in turn, led to a decrease in the quality of journalism. Bennett goes on to add that the "participatory culture" of the internet means the media no longer has the monopoly on information it once had.[15] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel make a similar argument in *Blur*, calling the notion of the press as gatekeeper "problematic" or even "obsolete."[16] Before the internet, politicians relied completely on the press to reach the public, and the public relied almost completely on the press for information. Now, they argue, "[t]here are many conduits between newsmakers and the public. The press is merely one of them."[17]

These counter arguments to Lippmann's theory have their origins in the work of a philosopher named John Dewey, who died in 1952. Modern theorists commonly refer to the "Dewey-Lippmann debate" when talking about the role of the media in a democracy, even though Dewey and Lippmann were not directly responding to one another's arguments in their writing. Dewey shared Lippmann's concerns about the public's susceptibility to misinformation, but he argued that the media's *primary* responsibility was to engage the public in important decisions. He called on journalists to change the "presentation" of the news so that everyone – not just the "high-brow[ed]" intellectual – could learn about the world around them.[18] Only then, after the public was significantly informed and engaged, would democracy become the "great

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[14] Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018.

[15] Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018. (Location 156)

[16] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (171)

[17] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (171)

[18] Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. 1927. E-book, Ohio University Press, 2016.

society" that people had hoped for. "The highest and most difficult kind of inquiry and a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and breathe life into it," Dewey writes in *The Public and its Problems.* "[Democracy] will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication."[19] A significant portion of the responsibility for fostering this "free social inquiry" fell on journalists, Dewey argued.

James Fallows, a longtime writer for *The Atlantic,* supports Dewey's theory in his book, *Breaking the News,* published in 1996. Fallows says that, since Lippmann wrote *Public Opinion* and *Liberty and the News,* journalists have tried much harder to follow Lippmann's advice than Dewey's, to little avail.[20] Although the media "system" does not exactly meet Lippmann's specifications, "the public anger at journalism does not arise from the gap between today's journalism and Lippmann's ideal," Fallows writes. "Instead, the anger comes from the problem that John Dewey identified: the public's sense that it is not *engaged* in politics, public life, or the discussion that goes on in the press."[21] According to Fallows, the issue is not that the public is unable to grasp an influx of information, as Lippmann would argue. Rather, the more significant problem is that, as Dewey warned, people feel "estranged from public life."[22] Fallows blames the media for exacerbating this problem. "The media establishment seems to talk *at* people rather than with or even to them," he adds.[23] Fallows lays out a very pessimistic view of the press, as demonstrated by his book's full title: *Breaking the News:* ***How the Media Undermine American Democracy.***

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[19] Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. 1927. E-book, Ohio University Press, 2016.
[20] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (240)
[21] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (240)
[22] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (240)
[23] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (240)

Likewise, James Carey, a former media theorist and professor at Columbia University who passed away in 2006, harshly criticized Lippmann. In a number of journal articles, Carey argued that Lippmann's ideas were anti-democratic and sided with Dewey. Carey believed that Lippmann's solution for the uninformed citizenry rendered the public a "phantom" in the democratic process. "The central weakness," writes Carey, "of the tradition of independent journalism, the kind of journalism espoused by Lippmann and practiced in the craft, is this: while it legitimized a democratic politics of publicity and experts, it also confirmed the psychological incompetence of people to participate in it."[24]

However, Michael Schudson, a media theorist and professor at Columbia University's Journalism School, argues that Carey misinterpreted Lippmann's writing. Lippmann, Schudson writes, was not the "elitist" that Carey makes him out to be. "[Carey] makes a mistake in assessing Lippmann's argument to be that voters are 'inherently incompetent to direct public affairs,'" writes Schudson. "I do not think Lippmann used the word 'incompetent,' and I do not think he would have. Rather, what he insists on in *Public Opinion* is that we must reject a view of democracy that is premised on the 'omnicompetence' of citizens."[25] Schudson does say that Lippmann placed too much trust in experts.[26] However, he ultimately argues that the "elites" that Lippmann describes would actually *enhance* democracy rather than hinder it. The elites would help – in the words of Lippmann that Schudson quotes from *Public Opinion* – "represent the unseen."[27] To Lippmann, the expert represents "people who are not voters," "functions of voters

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[24] Carey, James. "The Press, Public Opinion and Public Discourse." *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent*, by Theodore Lewis Glasser and Charles T. Salmon, e-book, Guilford Press, 1995.

[25] Schudson, Michael. "The 'Lippmann-Dewey Debate' and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996." *International Journal of Communication*, 2008. Accessed 9 Apr. 2018. (3)

[26] Schudson, Michael. "The 'Lippmann-Dewey Debate' and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996." *International Journal of Communication*, 2008. Accessed 9 Apr. 2018. (4)

[27] Schudson, Michael. "The 'Lippmann-Dewey Debate' and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996." *International Journal of Communication*, 2008. Accessed 9 Apr. 2018. (4)

that are not evident," and "events that are out of sight."[28] Schudson argues that Lippmann's idea of an expert is someone who would "represent" the citizenry better than "voters."[29]

This paper accepts Lippmann's theory for defining the role of the press in American democracy. The media's paramount responsibility is keeping the public informed. Our press must be a gatekeeper and show citizens a world outside of their own. This concept is *not* outdated. In fact, especially in the "helter-skelter" of our own digital age, it is perhaps more important now than ever before. In recent years, there has been an explosion of fake news on the internet. A *Pew* study[30] conducted in 2016 found that 64 percent of American adults believed fake news was causing a "great deal of confusion" and nearly a quarter of adults (23 percent) *admitted they had shared fake news*. Nearly a third (32 percent) of Americans said that they "often" saw fake political news online. Disinformation on the internet is rampant. If the public relies on the mainstream press as gatekeeper – to provide quality journalism and the news they need – than they will not be as susceptible or likely to click on fake news. Also, mainstream media companies may not hold the type of monopoly on information that they used to, but these outlets still have unmatched brain power, name recognition, access to sources that can provide scoops, and, though many newspaper companies are struggling financially, more financial resources than most of their competition. The gate may be rusted and weakened, but it still stands. Although the internet has begun to erode the mainstream media's monopoly, the subscription model, which will be discussed later, will help fortify the so-called "gate."

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[28] Schudson, Michael. "The 'Lippmann-Dewey Debate' and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996." *International Journal of Communication*, 2008. Accessed 9 Apr. 2018. (4)

[29] Schudson, Michael. "The 'Lippmann-Dewey Debate' and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996." *International Journal of Communication*, 2008. Accessed 9 Apr. 2018. (4)

[30] Barthel, Michael, et al. "Many Americans Believe Fake News Is Sowing Confusion." *Pew Research Center*, 15 Dec. 2016. Accessed 18 Apr. 2018.

Thinking "nationally," as Lippmann called it, is also more important than ever. However, this thesis recommends a slight tweak to the theorist's phrase. Lippmann's assertion of the importance of thinking "nationally" must be re-thought in terms of the reach of modern day media to the rest of the world and the emergence of problems that are global, not local. So, this thesis recommends thinking of Lippmann's concept today as prodding us to think "internationally" as well as "nationally." The internet, ironically, has both widened and narrowed the scope of our knowledge of the world around us. We have unlimited access to information about current events everywhere in the world with a click of a button. At the same time, most Americans now get their news from social media websites; in 2017, two-thirds of Americans got news from social media.[31] This means that many citizens now have their news curated for them, based on their political leanings and interests. We need good, honest, objective reporting to break the echo chamber of the internet and help consumers think "nationally" or, in some cases, "internationally."

Lippmann's advice for how the media should *function* is also in line with this paper's thesis. As discussed earlier, Lippmann argues the media should cater to the elites in a democracy because the public cannot adequately make decisions. But what is the definition of an "elite"? As Schudson argues, Lippmann, when writing about the informed elite, is not as undemocratic as he sounds. Instead, he is merely saying that not everyone will be adequately informed in a democracy. Newspapers do not need to *cater* to those who do not want to be a responsible voter or good democratic citizen. Still, this paper may define "elite" more loosely than Schudson and Lippmann. To me, an "elite" is anyone who is willing and able to consume quality journalism.

[31] "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2017." *Pew Research Center*, 7 Sept. 2017. Accessed 26 Nov. 2017.

Furthermore, the Dewey-Lippmann debate about journalism and its role in engaging citizens is an essential one for the digital age. As Alex Jones, a prominent media theorist, writes in his book *Losing the News*, "Lippmann would have viewed professional journalism as key to effective self-government by elites, whereas Dewey would have wanted quality news to educate the masses. Lippmann would have viewed the web's wide-open democratic interaction with skepticism, whereas Dewey would have hailed it."[32] This paper discusses at length the problems of the internet. This "wide-open" web has decreased the quality of news and put media organizations out of business. On the internet, the Dewey model lends itself to the ad-based, no fee or subscription model that has led to an explosion of clickbait journalism. (In the following section, I will argue that clickbait journalism is not quality journalism nor is it helpful in a democracy.) The news organizations we trust to provide quality journalism must continue to produce, show, tell and explain the news while remaining objective. They must be messengers of the truth and steer us towards a clearer vision of the world. This model is imperative given the fact that democracy relies on an informed citizenry. In contrast, a simply profit-driven press would leave citizens without the knowledge needed to participate in a democracy.

III. WHAT IS QUALITY JOURNALISM AND WILL CONSUMERS PAY FOR IT?

In the research question, the phrase "quality journalism" is used to describe what news outlets should strive to produce in the digital age. In the previous section, this paper laid out the various theories on what the media *should* do in a democracy, but not what good journalism *looks like.* So, what exactly is "quality journalism"? In *Blur,* Kovach and Rosenstiel identify

[32] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (54)

three main kinds of journalism. The first kind of journalism they mention is the "journalism of verification," which is the objective journalism most Americans think of when they describe optimal, traditional news coverage. Verification of facts is integral to quality journalism, which "places the highest value on getting things right – on facts over opinion," write Kovach and Rosenstiel.[33] The journalism of verification is objective, thorough, informative and accurate, and helps the public comprehend what is going on in the world around them. "The journalism of verification, in short, is that which provides the most complete answers to questions we ask in the skeptical way of knowing," add Kovach and Rosenstiel.[34]

Alex Jones opens *Losing the News* by describing something similar to the "journalism of verification," though he refers to it as the "iron core of information":

> Imagine a sphere of pitted iron, grey and imperfect like a large cannonball. Think of this dense, heavy ball as the total mass of each day's serious reported news, the iron core of information that is at the center of a functioning democracy. This iron core is big and unwieldy, reflecting each day's combined output of all the professional journalism done by news organizations.[35]

In line with Kovach and Rosenstiel, Jones even writes that a synonym for the iron core is the "news of verification."[36] He calls it "fact-based accountability news" that is the "essential food supply of democracy" and the "starting place for a raucous national conversation about who we are as a people and a country." The iron core is a "daily aggregation" of "accountability news," "investigative reports," and general "fact-based news."[37]

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[33] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (36)

[34] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (38)

[35] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (1)

[36] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (3)

[37] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (2)

While Kovach, Rosenstiel and Jones seem to agree, John Zaller, a political science professor at UCLA that specializes in media and public opinion, provides a different definition of quality journalism. At first, in Zaller's piece, *A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen,* the theorist discusses a definition of quality journalism similar to that described by Kovach, Rosenstiel and Jones, though he calls it the "full news standard."[38] "Full News does not mean all news, which is obviously impossible," writes Zaller in *A New Standard of News Quality*. "The name is intended to capture an aspiration to sober, detailed, and comprehensive coverage of public affairs, as required by the new ideal of the informed citizen."[39] The Full News standard should, like "verification" or "iron core" journalism, "provide citizens with the basic information necessary to form and update opinion on all of the major issues of the day." However, Zaller pivots to offer a definition that differs both from Jones, Kovach and Rosenstiel and from the full news standard, which he suggests is unrealistic. Zaller argues for a unique standard of journalism that he believes is more practical for citizens to stay informed. He calls it the "burglar alarm" news standard and describes it as follows: "The key idea is that news should provide information in the manner of attention-catching 'burglar alarms' about acute problems, rather than 'police patrols' over vast areas that pose no immediate problems," he writes.[40] Under this standard, news outlets would only produce journalism about topics that truly deserved the public's attention.

Zaller is, in a way, not only arguing for a different standard of quality journalism, but also a different *definition* of quality journalism. Jones, Kovach, and Rosenstiel define quality

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[38] Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (114)

[39] Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (114)

[40] Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (110)

journalism as objective, straightforward, fact-based reporting on all the events that happen in a given day. Zaller, in contrast, believes that the public would be adequately informed if news organizations refrained from pumping out as many articles about every little thing that happens in politics or in our society and instead limited their coverage to only events that truly deserve the public's attention. "News would penetrate every corner of public space so few would miss it," he writes. "Alarms would go off at irregular intervals rather than continuously–and not too often."[41] For instance, under Zaller's standard, news organizations would not cover political races in which the "opposition party mounts no serious challenge" to the incumbent, and focus their coverage on tight swing races.[42] Zaller's theory is, in a way, a response to Lippmann's and Dewey's quandaries. As discussed in the previous question, both men sought to lay out a solution for how citizens would stay informed in the "helter-skelter" chaos of society.[43] The "burglar alarm" standard seeks to limit the noise and accepts only journalism that is essential for the public to know.

Before discussing how this paper defines quality journalism, we must understand what quality journalism *is not.* The next type of journalism defined in *Blur* is the "journalism of assertion."[44] This type of journalism places an emphasis on "breaking" news as fast as possible. It is called "assertion journalism" because it involves reporting news first, then letting the verification process happen through "audience reaction *afterward*."[45] Assertion journalism arose during the 24/7 cable news cycle. Kovach and Rosenstiel credit CNN with launching not just the shift to 24/7 news, but also "shift[ing] the values and paradigms" to a frantic, fast-paced news

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41 Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (122)

42 Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (125)

43 Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. 1922. Renaissance Classics, 2012. (56-57)

44 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (38)

45 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (42)

environment.[46] Other cable news networks followed CNN's lead, they argue. "The inevitable bias of this 24/7 news culture is that it places a premium on getting things out there, passing them along as quickly as possible," write Kovach and Rosenstiel.[47] "This type of news coverage tends to be less impartial, thorough, or informative because the primary objective is to churn out news immediately and, only secondarily, to get it right."

Because it focuses so much attention on the immediate and the sensational, "assertion journalism" diverts attention from topics and stories that don't "break"; that is, stories that move at a more deliberate pace. "Assertion journalism" follows scandal stories that are exciting and easy for the consumer to understand, but neglects the slowly shifting winds of developments that may well be more important. James Fallows, the *Atlantic* writer mentioned earlier in this thesis, wrote at length about assertion journalism, though he did not call it by that name, in *Breaking the News.* Fallows published his book in 1996, during the meteoric rise of CNN, and recognized that 24/7 journalism was shifting toward a focus on incomplete stories and scandals:

> A convenient way to think about this side of journalistic culture is to imagine a seventh-grade science class in which kids are trapped and realize that they are finally going to *have* to learn the difference between metamorphic and sedimentary rocks. Then someone looks out the window and sees a fight on the playground or two dogs tangled up. The room comes alive, and by the time the teacher can get control the bell has rung.[48]

Fallows conceded that, yes, the media *does* need to cover political scandals and report on news as it happens. However, most of the time this has not been what the public needs and is not quality journalism. Because it is produced at such a commanding speed, this type of journalism

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[46] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (39)
[47] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (38)
[48] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (133)

is prone to error, and because it is can be forgotten almost as soon as it is delivered, it results in a substantial amount of fluff. Stories that deserve to be covered are more complete, more factual and thus, more valuable.

As Fallows, Kovach and Rosenstiel note, there is, of course, an advantage of assertion journalism for consumers. They can see events as they happen. That can sometimes be extremely important (e.g. during disaster events such as 9/11.) However, this type of journalism is rampant. *The Project for Excellence in Journalism* "consistently" finds that 60 percent (maybe even higher today) of cable news coverage is assertion journalism – unedited and extemporaneous.[49] This type of journalism can hardly be defined as "quality." In effect, the typical, messy journalistic process become the final product. "In the journalism of assertion," write Kovach and Rosenstiel, "what were once the raw ingredients of journalism–the rumor, innuendo, allegation, accusation, charge, supposition, and hypothesis–get passed on to the audience directly." [50]

Just like cable news, the internet demands immediacy and thus, it, too, tends to value assertion journalism. Still, if CNN placed its foot on the accelerator and sped up the news cycle, the internet slammed the pedal to the floor. Consumers loved CNN and the other cable news networks because they could flip on the channel at any time and find out what was happening. But, now, with the advent of the internet and the invention of mobile devices, we find out what is happening with a "ping" to our phone, watch, tablet or laptop while we are at the gym or eating at the dinner table. These technologies, ironically, leveled the playing field, allowing older, traditional media companies such as newspaper companies to act like cable news operations, breaking news as it happens. But it also meant that more companies have fallen into the assertion journalism rabbit hole.

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[49] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (40)

[50] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (40)

The third and final major kind of journalism that the *Blur* authors identify is the "journalism of affirmation." This type of journalism is blatantly partisan. It includes reporting done by the likes of talk shows hosts like Sean Hannity and Rachel Maddow and it values opinion over fact. Affirmation journalists drive a partisan narrative to feed their viewer base the news they want to hear. Kovach and Rosenstiel write, "It is a neo-partisan form of news–the news of the talk show star posing as an anchor, of one–sided or lopsided broadcast segments, of cherry-picked facts… for its appeal is in affirming the preconceptions of the audience, assuring them, gaining their loyalty, and then converting that loyalty into advertising revenue."[51]

Jones refers to affirmation journalism similarly through his "iron core" metaphor. Outside the iron core, there is space for the mush – or the "squabble" as Jones calls it – which includes the "editorials," or the "opinions of columnists or op-ed writers or political bloggers." Kovach and Rosenstiel add that affirmation journalism has become more popular in the 21st century because it allows people to fool themselves into thinking they understand the chaotic news cycle:

> The appeal of the journalism of affirmation is, in part, a response to the confusion of the 24/7 news culture. If information is coming quickly and over-abundantly, knowledge, paradoxically, is harder to come by. When information is in greater supply, knowledge is harder, not easier to create, because we have to sift through more facts, more assertions, more stuff to arrive at it.[52]

The appeal of affirmation journalism is its simplicity. People rely on talk show hosts like Hannity and Maddow because understanding this complex world is easier when someone is telling you what to think.

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[51] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (45)

[52] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (47)

Another type of journalism that Kovach and Rosenstiel do not mention in their book is "infotainment journalism." In this type of journalism, the primary purpose is to entertain and do so with stories that have little to no news value. Gadi Wolfsfeld, a professor of political science and communication at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, puts forth his definition of infotainment in his book *Making Sense of Media and Politics: Five Principles in Political Communication*:

> People like to hear stories and if they are 'based on a true story' it makes them even more appealing. There is a useful name for this that has become popular in recent years: infotainment. It is a derogatory term meant to suggest that the news isn't a serious means for informing the public; it is simply another entertainment channel.[53]

Bennett provides a narrower definition of infotainment journalism in his book, *News: The Politics of Illusion.* Bennett defines infotainment as, simply, "news that resembles entertainment."[54] Reality television, political comedy shows, and news about staged political appearances are all examples of infotainment as discussed by Bennett. Bennett writes warily of infotainment, and says that in the news industry, the line has been blurred between infotainment and real, quality news.[55]

This paper defines quality journalism similarly to how Kovach, Rosenstiel, Fallows and Jones define it. Quality journalism is complete, objective and informative news. The reader – having consumed a steady diet of articles from a particular paper, whether it be local or national – should walk away with a bigger and better tool box of knowledge from which to "perform the perilous business of government." The reader should have a better understanding of a current

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[53] Wolfsfeld, Gadi. Making Sense of Media and Politics: Five Principles in Political Communication. E-book, New York, Routledge, 2011.

[54] Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018. (12)

[55] Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018. (18)

event and should be able to place that event in context. “News coverage should ideally do what was not done in coverage of the Chechen upheavals or of Bill Clinton’s early struggles: help us place events in time, pointing out what is different from past episodes, what is the same, what is changeable and unchangeable at this point in history,” writes Fallows. “It would show us the background of events, which otherwise seem to come from nowhere, and it would indicate the likely consequences tomorrow of choices that we make today.”[56] Quality journalism should adequately assist the voter at the ballot box. After consuming quality journalism about his or her election choices, the reader should be able to recite the candidate’s background, answer several questions about his or her policies, and know about several problems in society that could be tackled by that politician.

This paper’s definition of quality journalism *does not* follow Zaller’s burglar alarm theory. Zaller’s theory is impractical for several reasons. For one, how can journalists possibly know when the “alarm” should “go off”? Reporting on complex news events is hard enough. Knowing when these events are worthy of alerting the American public is an unrealistic expectation of journalists. Furthermore, burglar alarm journalism is impractical from an economic standpoint. As this paper will discuss later on, newspapers must base their revenue on subscriptions. But this requires newspapers to produce a significant amount of content to “justify” charging consumers for a subscription. Zaller’s burglar alarm theory runs counter to this. It stresses producing less content to only “alert” the consumer when they really need to know something. Zaller also argues that the public can never live up to what he defines as the “Full News Standard.”[57] This paper refutes that. As this paper will lay out, the internet offers journalists tools to help consumers not only know the news, but *understand* it. It is fully possible for consumers to know

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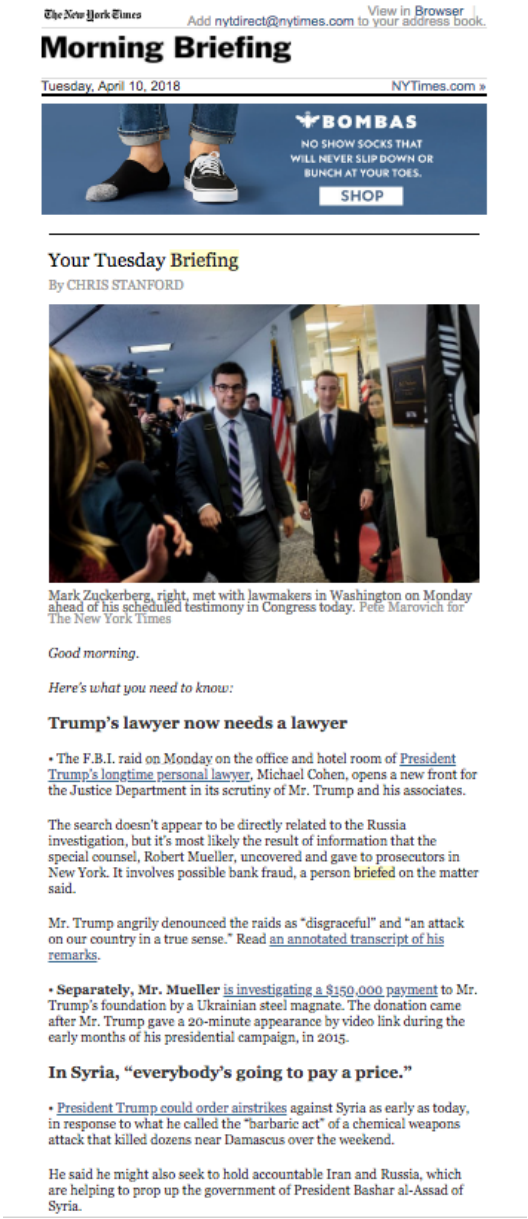
[56] Fallows, James. *Breaking the News*. Random House, 1996. (135)

[57] Zaller, John. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Stanford University*, 2003. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (110)

and comprehend the headlines and stories of the day. *The New York Times*, for instance, offers readers a daily "news briefing" that can be delivered to their inbox. It contains links to a dozen or so important stories of the day. Many more strategies to help consumers understand the news will be laid out later on in this thesis.



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Your Tuesday Briefing

By CHRIS STANFORD

Mark Zuckerberg, right, met with lawmakers in Washington on Monday ahead of his scheduled testimony in Congress today. Pete Marovich for The New York Times

Good morning.

Here's what you need to know:

Trump's lawyer now needs a lawyer

• The F.B.I. raid on Monday on the office and hotel room of President Trump's longtime personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, opens a new front for the Justice Department in its scrutiny of Mr. Trump and his associates.

The search doesn't appear to be directly related to the Russia investigation, but it's most likely the result of information that the special counsel, Robert Mueller, uncovered and gave to prosecutors in New York. It involves possible bank fraud, a person briefed on the matter said.

Mr. Trump angrily denounced the raids as "disgraceful" and "an attack on our country in a true sense." Read an annotated transcript of his remarks.

• **Separately, Mr. Mueller** is investigating a $150,000 payment to Mr. Trump's foundation by a Ukrainian steel magnate. The donation came after Mr. Trump gave a 20-minute appearance by video link during the early months of his presidential campaign, in 2015.

In Syria, "everybody's going to pay a price."

• President Trump could order airstrikes against Syria as early as today, in response to what he called the "barbaric act" of a chemical weapons attack that killed dozens near Damascus over the weekend.

He said he might also seek to hold accountable Iran and Russia, which are helping to prop up the government of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria.

This paper's definition of quality journalism *does not* include assertion or affirmation journalism because, most importantly, both types of journalism do not provide the complete story. Assertion journalism is a return to the journalism of the early days of our country, when newspapers simply relayed the facts from news wires in the paper the next day. And even then, newspapers often took more time to filter the facts as they came in. As Kovach and Rosenstiel write, media networks that use assertion journalism are "less of a filter and more of a conduit."[58] Affirmation journalism is opinion journalism. In our hyper-partisan world, this type of journalism routinely fails to provide the complete story. Quality journalism should offer the consumer a complete understanding of current events. In many ways, knowing fragments of information or only half the story is worse than knowing nothing at all. It will lead citizens to poor decisions at the ballot box and exacerbate polarization.

[58] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (42)

Audiences that exclusively watch cable media networks or read as-it-happens-internet stories may *know* the news, but they don't necessarily *understand* it.

Finally, this paper's definition of quality journalism does not include "infotainment." Infotainment has exploded on the internet, as will be discussed later on in this paper. It does not help the consumer, as Lippmann wrote, think "nationally." Journalism that is purely for entertainment does not add to the consumer's "tool box" of knowledge and it certainly does not help the consumer make better decisions at the ballot box. Still, this paper refutes Wolfsfeld's theory on infotainment because it is too broad. Quality journalism should entertain, particularly if we define entertaining journalism as that which is written or produced crispy, that understands narrative pacing and strong character development, that keeps the reader's, viewer's, or user's attention, and that leaves him or her with a deeper understanding of something. In other words, quality journalism can be a good story, so long as its primary purpose is to *inform* not only *entertain.*

Still, this begs the question: will consumers pay for quality journalism as this paper defines it? Sure, affirmation and assertion journalism may not be the best kind of journalism for informing the republic or fulfilling the responsibilities of the fourth estate. But, at the end of the day, most news companies are for-profit entities. Assertion and affirmation journalism are both techniques that, in the eyes of editors and news company higher-ups, seem to make it easier to turn a profit. Both methods require less time, effort and manpower. So, if that's true, why should mainstream outlets *not* dabble in affirmation and assertion journalism, particularly if it helps pay for the quality journalism they may also produce, if it keeps them in business? Thomas Patterson, a political scientist at Harvard University, conducted a study in 2000 of Americans' news habits, and found that producing a profit and producing quality journalism were, in fact, "mutually

reinforcing."[59] In the study entitled *Doing Well and Doing Good*, Patterson found that quality journalism, or "hard news" as he calls it, was the reason why most people consume the news. He argued that what was "good for democracy" was also "good for the press." The "best way" for news organizations to attract more consumers was through "balanced public-affairs reporting.[60] Patterson defines "soft news" similarly to how the authors in this section refer to news that is not quality, not part of the "iron core," and not "verification journalism."

> Hard news refers to coverage of breaking events involving top leaders, major issues, or significant disruptions in the routines of daily life, such as an earthquake or airline disaster. Information about these events is presumably important to citizens' ability to understand and respond to the world of public affairs. News that is not of this type is, by definition, "soft."[61]

Patterson concluded that hard news consumers were the "foundation of the news audience." He found that they consumed more news than soft news consumers and devoted a lot more time to reading it.[62] In a survey, Patterson found that 63 percent of respondents preferred "news about major events (hard news)" while 24 percent of respondents preferred "specific events like crime (soft news) and 13 percent of respondents preferred "both equally (hard and soft news)."[63] Additionally, Patterson found that soft news, namely affirmation journalism, assertion journalism

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[59] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

[60] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (15)

[61] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (3)

[62] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (7)

[63] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (7)

and general clickbait, may be contributing to a diminishing appetite for news. Patterson reached this conclusion by studying the behavior of hard news consumers. "Compared with the soft news audience, the hard news audience is more likely to say that the news is:

- fair, poor, or awful, rather than good or excellent
- getting worse rather than better
- biased rather than fair
- sensational rather than serious
- misleading rather than accurate
- superficial rather thorough
- uninformative rather than informative
- unenjoyable rather than enjoyable
- negative rather than positive
- depressing rather than uplifting
- boring rather than interesting

In any other business, this type of response by the core consumer group would be cause for alarm."[64]

The *American Press Institute* reached a similar conclusion in studies of Americans' news habits in 2017[65] and 2018[66]. The Institute found that *among paid subscribers*, people are most likely to cite accuracy (78 percent) and objectivity (68 percent) as "most important."[67] Newspaper consumers – more than any other type of consumer – value news primarily because it

64 Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (7-8)

65 Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

66 "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

67 "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

keeps them informed.[68] Finally, the *Institute* found that consumers do not want newsrooms to cut back on staff and coverage to maintain profit margins. Doing so, the majority say, will stop them from subscribing.[69]

Based on these findings, then, newspapers must trust that they can and should produce quality journalism. In fact, their very survival depends not so much on finding ways to cater to the superficial, but on reasserting their dedication to quality journalism. In the short term, some newspapers may not see a return on the higher quality of journalism investment. In other words, producing a higher standard of journalism may require some companies to add staff and the revenue from subscriptions may not be enough to immediately offset it. But a long term investment in quality journalism will ultimately be both a successful editorial and business strategy. As this paper will describe later on, the companies that have floundered in the digital age often do so because they have adopted strategies of desperation that assume audiences desire quick reads of insubstantial content. However, the data shows this to have been a failed strategy. Consumers want a higher standard of journalism and they are willing to pay for it.

IV. WHY PRINT? A DISCUSSION OF CASE SELECTION

This paper focuses on print journalism because it has traditionally been the primary source for hard news in the U.S. It is the place citizens routinely go for quality journalism. This claim has been substantiated by modern media theorists (Baum 2003, Patterson 2000, Prior 2003).[70] [71]

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[68] Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[69] "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[70] Baum, Matthew. "Soft News and Political Knowledge: Evidence of Absence or Absence of Evidence?" *Political Communication*, 2003. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018.

[71] Prior, Markus. "Any Good News in Soft News? The Impact of Soft News Preference on Political Knowledge." *Political Communication*, 2003. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018.

[72] Considering this paper's earlier discussion of the role of the media in a democracy and the definition of quality journalism, newspapers – at least in the U.S. – are the most important news medium in a democracy. If newspapers provide the most hard news, then newspapers most frequently fulfill the responsibilities of the press and keep the public informed. On this point, it should also be noted that while over the years, radio, television, cable, the internet, and social media emerged to challenge newspapers for audience share, newspapers remained the driving force behind news coverage. Stories in the major national papers – especially the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* – have continued to drive the popular conversation. Successful news technologies continue to follow print's lead.

Still, the newspaper industry has been hit hard in the digital age.[73] While the entire news industry is struggling collectively, newspapers have struggled the most in recent years. For instance, according to *Pew,* from 2014 to 2015, cable and network television saw *increases* in advertising revenue, while the newspaper industry saw an eight percent drop.[74] (This paper will discuss the newspaper industry's financial woes and why things have been particularly bad in recent years later on.) Because newspapers are crucial to journalism and journalism is crucial to democracy, it is absolutely necessary to think of strategies to help save the medium that has been impacted the most by our rapidly shifting communications technologies.

This thesis zeroes in on two print news superpowers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post,* for several reasons. For one, they have traditionally been the two pillars of the print journalism industry. Along with being among the top newspapers in the country in

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[72] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

[73] Mitchell, Amy, et al. *State of the News Media 2016*. PEW Research Center, 15 June 2016.

[74] Mitchell, Amy, et al. *State of the News Media 2016*. PEW Research Center, 15 June 2016.

circulation,[75] they routinely break the biggest news stories and hire the best reporters. In the last year, the *Times* uncovered the Harvey Weinstein and Louis C.K. scandals, broke countless stories on the Russia investigation, and discovered the Cambridge Analytica-Facebook data breach. The *Post,* on the other hand, broke the Roy Moore scandal – a story which likely led to his defeat in the Alabama special Senate election – and has gone toe-to-toe with the *Times* for scoops involving the Russia investigation. At the very center of the "iron core" that Alex Jones defines in his book are the *Times* and the *Post.* If journalism is to thrive in the digital age, these two papers must continue to produce quality journalism.

Furthermore, there is much to learn about the tactics these two great newspapers have used to navigate the digital age. Other newspapers may not have the money or prestige of the *Post* and the *Times*, but they learn from the strategies employed by these giants. Each of these papers has an interesting story to tell. They, too, have struggled to find their footing in the digital age. They have followed different paths from decline to recovery and continued success. And today, both papers have become models for how to remain profitable on the web.

Finally, because these newspapers are the pillars of the industry, there is a lot of research and writing about them. Many journalists and media theorists have written about and studied the decline and resurgence of the *Times* and the *Post.* Their coverage is scrutinized daily, so it is rather easy to research the tactics these papers use. For other news outlets, this may not be the case. Most news organizations do not share that kind of information. We have this kind of information on the *Post* and *Times* because journalists and researchers have done the digging to get it.

[75] Barthel, Michael. "Newspapers Fact Sheet." *PEW Research Center*, 2016. Accessed 10 Jan. 2018.

V. UNDERSTANDING THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY'S FINANCIAL WOES

The newspaper industry has survived threats posed by new technologies for nearly two centuries. When the telegraph was invented in the 1830s, information could suddenly travel across large distances in a fraction of the time. In the United States, newspapers, which up until this point were blatantly hyper-partisan, changed to focus more on reporting the facts that they received through wires.[76] A hundred years later, newspapers faced a new threat when the radio was invented. Americans could now get their news – including the *facts* – much more quickly in their home. The newspaper industry responded by becoming more "analytical."[77] Some newspapers, however, chose a different path and became more "sensational."[78] These newspapers capitalized on the arrival of faster speed film and portable cameras which allowed their photographers to shoot action pictures which were then published in an easier-to-fold format known as the tabloid. As the United States emerged from World War II, the television entered the average American home. How could newspapers compete with a medium that allowed Americans to see *and* hear the news? And how, just a few decades later, could newspapers rival the CNN-invented 24-hour news cycle? They responded by becoming even *more* analytical and fact driven. Still, television did represent the most significant threat to the newspaper industry in its history. After a period when it was seen as mostly an entertainment medium, television matured into a news medium that could not only, like radio, and not only pictures, like the tabloids, but sound and moving pictures that would eventually bring live events into the nation's living rooms. Unlike television, newspapers could not report on breaking news as it happened. By the 1980s, newspaper circulation in the U.S. began to rapidly fall.

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[76] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (16-17)

[77] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (18)

[78] Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (18)

But nothing – not the telegraph, the radio, the television nor CNN – was as significant a challenge to the newspaper industry as the World Wide Web. In *Blur,* Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel argue that the newspaper industry was not prepared for the rise of television but was able to stay afloat because elite advertisers still flocked to appeal to the "more affluent and educated demographic" that continued to read the morning and Sunday papers.[79] The digital age, however, saw this lifeboat sink. The newspaper industry was not prepared for internet, the iPhone, the iPad and the increased velocity of the newscycle. In 1980, the total estimated circulation for newspapers in the United States was 62,202,000. By 2016, it was 34,657,199.[80] But, even so, the biggest problem the internet poses for the newspaper industry is not concerning *readership,* per say. Ironically, most traditional news companies have increased their readership in the digital age.[81] Instead, newspaper's struggles have come from a drop in advertising revenue. As the internet became more popular, newspaper circulation dropped and print consumers became older. Many companies yanked their ads from print newspapers.[82] "The advertising dollars that once supported local news media are flowing to digital platforms such as Google that target consumers in more refined and personalized ways," writes Bennett in *News: The Politics of Illusion*.[83]

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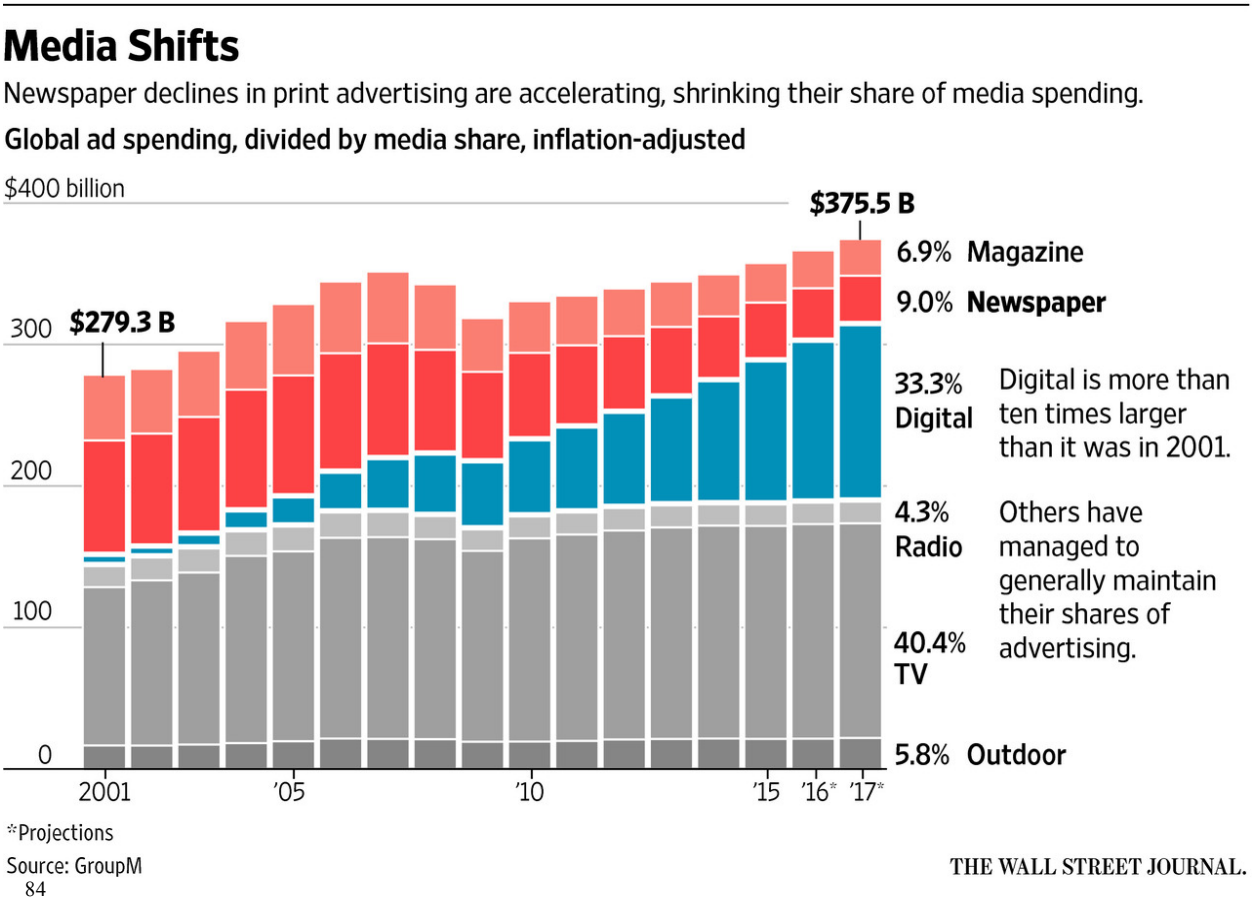
79 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (20)

80 Barthel, Michael. "Newspapers Fact Sheet." *PEW Research Center*, 2016. Accessed 10 Jan. 2018.

81 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (23)

82 Vranica, Suzanne, and Jack Marshall. "Plummeting Newspaper Ad Revenue Sparks New Wave of Changes." Wall Street Journal, 20 Oct. 2016. Accessed 13 Apr. 2018.

83 Bennett, W. Lance. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 10th ed., University of Chicago, 2016. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018. (Location 261)



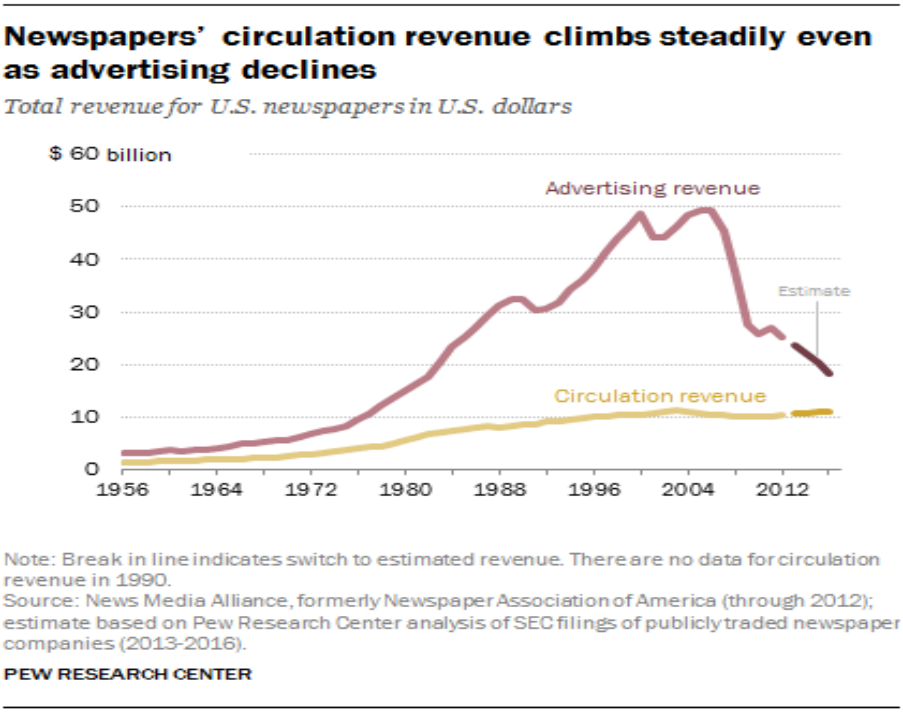
At the same time, even companies that continued to advertise with the same newspaper company but opted for only online advertising had a similar effect on the newspaper business because newspapers receive much less revenue from web ads than print. In 2006, the newspaper industry received a little less than $50 billion in advertising revenue. By 2016, that number had dropped to about $18 billion.[85] The internet – specifically companies such as eBay, Craigslist, and LinkedIn – has also totally stripped the newspaper industry of specific sources of advertising revenue, such as job postings and items for sale. “The problem these institutions face is that the

[84] Vranica, Suzanne, and Jack Marshall. "Plummeting Newspaper Ad Revenue Sparks New Wave of Changes." Wall Street Journal, 20 Oct. 2016. Accessed 13 Apr. 2018.

[85] Barthel, Michael. "Despite subscription surges for largest U.S. newspapers, circulation and revenue fall for industry overall." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017.

internet has decoupled advertising from news," write Kovach and Rosenstiel. "Advertisers, including individuals connecting with one another through websites like Craigslist, no longer need the news to reach consumers."[86]

Online subscriptions have not supplanted the declines in print circulation and advertising revenue either (see graph below.)[87] In 2016, even as digital subscriptions exploded for major news organizations and circulation revenue *grew*, revenue decreased for the industry overall.[88] In other words, the drop in advertising revenue was so great that the growth in subscriptions was not enough to offset the decline. All the while, most – if not all – traditional newspapers continue to rely on print for most of their revenue.[89] This is because many newspapers have either not



86 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (6-7)

87 Barthel, Michael. "Despite subscription surges for largest U.S. newspapers, circulation and revenue fall for industry overall." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017.

88 Barthel, Michael. "Despite subscription surges for largest U.S. newspapers, circulation and revenue fall for industry overall." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed 5 Dec. 2017.

89 Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

made the switch to the subscription model or have not done enough to convince readers to pay for a subscription.[90] The newspaper industry has relied on the advertising-print model for decades. Accepting the need to change has been difficult. This thesis will discuss the subscription model in more detail in the following section.

Declining profits and the punishing environment of the digital age have forced many old-line newspaper companies to sell or close their doors all together. Between 2004 and 2014, more than 100 newspapers went out of business.[91] [92] Three major news companies – E.W. Scripps, Journal Communications and Gannett – merged in 2016.[93] The *Oakland Tribune* and the *Cheraw Chronicle,* a major South Carolina newspaper that had been operating for over 128 years, both closed in 2016. The media conglomerate Tronc purchased the once mighty New York tabloid, the *Daily News,* from longtime owner Mortimer Zuckerman in September 2017 for $1. *Time* magazine, not a newspaper but nonetheless one of the most prestigious print news publications of the 20th century, was bought by the Meredith Corporation in 2017. Other newspapers have limped along, cutting staff amid hemorrhaging profits. They hold out hope that the excitement of the technological innovations of the last few decades will fade and people will realize they miss holding a physical copy of a newspaper in their hands. In 2018, this strategy seems like little more than wishful thinking. Newspaper companies must figure out how to survive in this news market. Print may not be dead, but it's dying as a revenue source – fast.

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[90] Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[91] Radcliffe, Damian, and Christopher Ali. "If small newspapers are going to survive, they'll have to be more than passive observers to the news." *Nieman Lab*, 2 Feb. 2017. Accessed 13 Apr. 2018.

[92] Mitchell, Amy, et al. State of the News Media 2016. PEW Research Center, 15 June 2016. (19)

[93] Mitchell, Amy, et al. State of the News Media 2016. PEW Research Center, 15 June 2016.

VI. HOW QUALITY JOURNALISM CAN SURVIVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

To reiterate, this paper's research question was: In the digital age, how can major U.S. newspaper companies such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* continue to produce quality journalism that will adequately inform the American public? Newspapers can continue to produce quality journalism and turn a profit if they 1) maintain their identity and 2) adapt that identity for the web. In recent years, the *Times* and Post have largely followed this strategy and are stronger financially because of it, while print companies that have not have generally declined or died off completely.

Maintaining Identity

As newspapers confronted the realities of a digital 21st century, many opted to change identity. They did so on the notion that old models of journalism simply could not survive in the digital age. These new identities tended to be ones that sacrificed quality for the sake of short-term profits. In most cases, this has been a terrible idea. One of the fundamental strengths of a newspaper is the reliability of its content. When a person picks up a copy of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post,* or any other newspaper, they are expecting content that is *familiar* to them. They know when they pick up *Time* magazine that they are getting a thorough summary of the week's news. They know when they pick up their local town paper they will read about local and regional events of importance. In economic terms, this is called "brand loyalty" – the concept that consumers will tend to buy the product that is familiar to them. News outlets run into trouble when they try to rapidly change their brand and identity. Very few newspapers are thriving or even producing a profit in 2018. The ones that have found a way forward and are producing quality journalism have not changed their character.

The New York *Daily News* is an example of a media company that has *not* maintained its identity and has suffered because of it. The *Daily News* is like many other newspapers in that it has not adequately adapted its content for a digital platform and has seen a decline in advertising revenue.[94] But the paper's change in identity is what really accelerated its downward spiral. The *Daily News* was traditionally thought of as a "voice for New York's working class."[95] It is known for its amazing photography of New York City and catchy front-page headlines (which internally is known as "the wood," see above.) People once picked up a copy of the *Daily News* for its talented staff of columnists that included writers such as Pete Hamill, Liz Smith, and Jimmy Breslin. But, over the last 20 years, the paper changed rapidly. For one, it became much more focused on national news and clickbait. Most of its content – both online and in the physical newspaper – became regurgitated national news. Outside of its front pages, which fit well for the internet, it quickly lost its character. Michael Wolff, author of the recent bestseller about the Trump administration, *Fire and Fury*, wrote a column for *USA Today* in 2015 arguing

94 Farhi, Paul. "How one newspaper deal explains the decline of the newspaper business." *Washington Post*, 5 Sept. 2017. Accessed 27 Feb. 2018.

95 Ember, Sydney, and Andrew Ross Sorkin. "The Daily News, a Distinctive Voice in New York, Is Sold." *New York Times*, 4 Sept. 2017. Accessed 26 Feb. 2018.

that the *News* owed its decline to its owner, Mortimer Zuckerman. Wolff wrote that Zuckerman did not have the "temperament" of a tabloid publisher and that under his leadership, the *News* was often "bland and voiceless."[96] Traditionally, consumers did not pick up a copy of the *Daily News* to read a reworded article from the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post.* They picked up the New York tabloid to "read the voice [of] New York's working class."

It is the view of Wolff and other journalists that the *News* lost its "soul" and that it did so mainly because of the decisions of its owner, Zuckerman. The lack of "brand loyalty" and a loss of identity is at play here. Once the *News* stopped producing the content it was known for – once it became "bland and voiceless" – its profits plummeted. In 1947, the *News* had a peak circulation of 2.4 million.[97] In 2000, the circulation was around 700,000.[98] Today, the newspaper's circulation is around 200,000. From 2014-2017, the paper lost more than $90 million.[99] As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Tronc purchased the *Daily News* from Zuckerman in September 2017 for $1.

Yes, the paper was hammered by the challenges of the digital age – including a loss in circulation and ad revenue. But, the *News* could have slowed the bleeding long enough to make the transition to the web. For instance, the *News'* competitor, the *New York Post,* maintained its identity and was able to surpass the *Daily News* in weekday circulation beginning in 2007.[100] "The problem is that The Daily News competes against a paper that wakes up every day knowing exactly what it is," wrote the late David Carr in 2006 about the *Post* for his *New York Times*

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96 Wolff, Michael. "Wolff: The long death of N.Y.'s Daily News." *USA Today*, 4 Oct. 2015. Accessed 27 Feb. 2018.

97 Farhi, Paul. "How one newspaper deal explains the decline of the newspaper business." *Washington Post*, 5 Sept. 2017. Accessed 27 Feb. 2018.

98 Daily News Circulation is On the Rise." *New York Daily News*, 31 Oct. 2000. Accessed 19 Apr. 2018.

99 Kelly, Keith J. "Daily News lost more than $90M over the last three years." *New York Post*, 20 Nov. 2017. Accessed 27 Feb. 2018.

100 Perez-Pena, Richard. "New York Post Will Publish Weekly Page Six Magazine." *New York Times*, 17 Sept. 2007. Accessed 14 Apr. 2018.

media industry column.[101] Today, the *Post* ranks 28th of all news sites in average daily visitors and daily pageviews over the past month, according to Amazon's Alexa marketing website.[102] The *News* does not even crack the top 50.[103]

A similar downfall occurred at the *Chicago Tribune*, once a powerhouse in the Midwest. It could be said that the *Tribune* was to the Midwest what the *Times* was to the Northeast. But the *Tribune's* decline over the past two decades has been significant and ugly. The paper filed for bankruptcy in 2008, and has changed ownership several times since. The *Tribune,* too, can point to a loss of identity as one of the reasons for its decline. Under poor leadership, the *Tribune* stopped producing the quality journalism that Chicagoans and midwesterners relied on. The paper followed a similar path to the *Daily News* by decreasing the quality of its content in favor of more advertising. Executives prioritized profit while navigating the tumult of the digital age and the Great Recession, and hurt their own credibility by attracting scandal.[104] In a column that revealed that one of the *Tribune's* executives had been embroiled in a sexual harassment scandal, David Carr wrote about the paper's loss of identity: "[W]hile many media companies tried cost-cutting and new tactics in the last few years, Tribune was particularly aggressive in planning publicity stunts and in mixing advertising with editorial material. Those efforts alienated longtime employees and audiences in the communities its newspapers served."[105] Carr also quotes Ken Doctor, then a newspaper analyst with Outsell Inc., who said of the *Tribune's*

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101 Carr, David. "Zuckerman, Bound to the News." *New York Times*, 6 Mar. 2006. Accessed 14 Apr. 2018.

102 "The top 500 sites on the web." *Alexa*, 2018. Accessed 14 Apr. 2018.

103 "The top 500 sites on the web." *Alexa*, 2018. Accessed 14 Apr. 2018.

104 Carr, David. "At Flagging Tribune, Tales of a Bankrupt Culture." *New York Times*, 5 Oct. 2010. Accessed 2 Mar. 2018.

105 Carr, David. "At Flagging Tribune, Tales of a Bankrupt Culture." *New York Times*, 5 Oct. 2010. Accessed 2 Mar. 2018.

leadership: "They threw out what the Tribune had stood for, quality journalism and a real brand integrity, and in just a year, pushed it down into mud and bankruptcy."[106]

Though this paper uses the *Washington Post* as a model of digital success, it, too, lost its identity before it was purchased and saved by the Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos. The *Post's* core identity has always been its thorough political coverage. Largely because of its location, the *Post* has traditionally enjoyed unparalleled access to sources and scoops in politics. For instance, longtime *Post* editor Ben Bradlee developed a close bond with President John Kennedy during his time in the White House. Bradlee's relationship with J.F.K. allowed the *Post* to publish many exclusive stories on the president. (Their friendship was mentioned in the recent blockbuster movie, *The Post.)* The Watergate scandal was uncovered in part because of the *Post's* access and proximity to the White House. Such political coverage earned the *Post* national prestige. But over the last couple of decades, the *Post* stopped cultivating the monopoly it had on political stories. Donald E. Graham, son of the legendary *Post* owner Katharine (Kay) Graham, held onto ownership of the paper, unwilling to let it leave the Graham family's control, all the while making decisions that jeopardized the paper. Graham simultaneously raised prices and cut staff, diminishing the quality of the *Post's* content and hampering the ability of its journalists to get scoops and churn out the influential stories that had given the paper its prestige. "The *Post* has diluted the quality of the newspaper, shrunk it, and asked readers to pay three-quarters *more* for it—all while leaving the barn door wide open online," wrote Ryan Chittum in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 2012.[107]

The *Post,* however, has turned its fortunes around since Bezos purchased the newspaper in 2013 and helped steer the paper back to its roots. The *Post* obviously benefited greatly from

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106 Carr, David. "At Flagging Tribune, Tales of a Bankrupt Culture." *New York Times*, 5 Oct. 2010. Accessed 2 Mar. 2018.

107 Chittum, Ryan. "The Washington Post Co.'s Self-Destructive Course." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 11 May 2012. Accessed 28 Feb. 2018.

Bezos' wealth. However, money will only do so much and Bezos is not one to waste it. He did not purchase the *Post* for it to be run like a charity.[108] Bezos and other higher-ups at the *Post* have restored the paper to its place as the premier publication for political news. In its first year with Bezos at the helm, the *Post* hired over 100 new employees. In the same year, the *Post* tapped Marty Baron as its new executive editor. Baron, an experienced journalist and editor, helped rejuvenate the *Post's* lackluster political coverage. "Important institutions like the *Post* have an essence, they have a heart, they have a core—what Marty called a soul," said Bezos in 2016 at a ceremony opening the *Post's* new headquarters. "And if you wanted that to change, you'd be crazy. That's part of what this place is, it's part of what makes it so special."[109] This paper will discuss the success of the *Post* under Bezos more later on. For now, know that the paper is an example of the success that comes from sticking to your identity (even if you briefly stray from it.)

The *New Yorker* is another print publication that maintained its identity throughout the transition to the digital age, and fared much better as a result. The *New Yorker* has maintained its image as a culture magazine with a great mix of sober and comedic writing for the reading class. While the *New Yorker* has, like any print publication, struggled to maintain a profit, it has been able to stay afloat by raising subscription fees, while still remaining appealing to its audience.[110] People know what they are getting when they pick up a copy of the *New Yorker.* They know it now, and they have known it throughout the digital age. Jack Murtha of the *Columbia Journalism Review* argues this in an article about the magazine's transition into producing video

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[108] "The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (3)

[109] "The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (5)

[110] Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. "The New Yorker Tests Readers' Willingness to Pay Up." *Wall Street Journal*, 4 Apr. 2016. Accessed 15 Apr. 2018.

content for the web. Murtha writes that, in doing so, the *New Yorker* has maintained its "DNA": "The DNA of this content remains consistent with that of the print product, relying on deep reporting, captivating characters, and intelligent analysis to tell each story."[111] After instituting a metered paywall in 2014, the magazine *increased* its number of unique visitors by more than four million from the year before.[112]

News companies that have changed their identity often do so to play the internet money-making "game" as they see it. They try to model the success of online startups such as *Buzzfeed* that rely on clicks over content. The fear of consumers flocking to internet startups is not unfounded, but reveals itself to be irrational once you take a look at the facts. Legacy news companies – such as the *Tribune* and the *Washington Post* – still dominate the internet. As Kovach and Rosenstiel write in *Blur:*

> People have not abandoned traditional news values or news brands. Online, indeed, traditional news values dominate the traffic to a degree many did not predict. Of the top two hundred news websites in America as of 2010, roughly 80 percent of them were either 'legacy' news sources – with ties to print or television institutions–or aggregators of legacy news sources, and they attracted 83 percent of the traffic.[113]

This is true in 2018 as well. The *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Guardian, USA Today,* the *Wall Street Journal, Time* magazine, *The Hill,* the *Los Angeles Times,* the *Atlantic,* and *Newsweek* all rank in the top 50 news websites by average daily visitors and daily pageviews over the past month. Unfulfilled by simply scrolling sites like *Buzzfeed*, readers are willing to pay for subscriptions to legacy newspapers for the kind of quality journalism they are

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111 Murtha, Jack. "Using video, The New Yorker abandons its mystique in hopes of attracting a larger audience." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 9 Mar. 2016. Accessed 15 Apr. 2018.

112 Trachtenberg, Jeffrey A. "The New Yorker Tests Readers' Willingness to Pay Up." *Wall Street Journal*, 4 Apr. 2016. Accessed 15 Apr. 2018.

113 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (171)

accustomed to reading (Patterson 2000; American Press Institute 2017: American Press Institute 2018.)[114] [115] [116] Thus, the subscription model is the way for newspapers to make money on the internet. Through subscriptions, companies can maintain an identity while still making a profit and making the inevitable transition to the web.[117]

Adapting Identity for the Web

However, maintaining an identity is not enough. Even though "legacy" news companies are leading in web traffic, they have not done well financially. For news companies to succeed in the digital age, they must adapt their content – the content consumers have expected from that brand – for the web. In this section, this paper will lay out the strategies newspapers must follow to make the digital transition from print. The *Times* and the *Post* have both adopted strategies to do just this, and other newspapers should follow.

The first strategy for adapting an identity to the web is to switch to a **paywall, subscription-based revenue system.** A subscription model is much more viable in the digital age than a model based solely on print or digital advertising. As laid out earlier in this thesis, digital advertising revenue will not sustain the newspaper industry. The subscription model provides a more stable and lucrative base of income.[118] [119] Furthermore, subscriptions as a business model are booming as people become more and more comfortable buying online.[120]

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[114] Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[115] "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[116] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

[117] "The top 500 sites on the web." *Alexa*, 2018. Accessed 14 Apr. 2018.

[118] Stulberg, Ariel. "In paywall age, free content remains king for newspaper sites." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 22 Sept. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[119] Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[120] Stulberg, Ariel. "In paywall age, free content remains king for newspaper sites." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 22 Sept. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

Since 2014, the number of visitors to subscription company websites – such as Blue Apron, Dollar Shave Club, etc. – have increased by over 800 percent.[121]

Both the *Times* and the *Post* have committed to the subscription strategy in recent years. They see it as the only way they can maintain a profit and produce the quality journalism they're known for. "We are, in the simplest terms, a subscription-first business," wrote the "2020 group," a group of *Times* journalists commissioned to outline the strategy for the newspaper moving forward. "Our focus on subscribers sets us apart in crucial ways from many other media organizations. We are not trying to maximize clicks and sell low-margin advertising against them. We are not trying to win a pageviews arms race." Gabriel Snyder, a journalist for *Wired,* notes that the subscription model used by the *Times* and the *Post* is the same economic strategy utilized by successful tech companies such as Netflix, Spotify, and HBO. Writing specifically about the *Times'* foray into the digital age, Snyder asserts:

> …[T]he Times is embarking on an ambitious plan inspired by the strategies of Netflix, Spotify, and HBO: invest heavily in a core offering (which, for the Times, is journalism) while continuously adding new online services and features (from personalized fitness advice and interactive newsbots to virtual reality films) so that a subscription becomes indispensable to the lives of its existing subscribers and more attractive to future ones.[122]

Since adopting the subscription model, both the *Times* and the *Post* have improved their digital revenue.[123] Since the *Times* instituted its paywall in 2010, more than 1.5 million have paid a total

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[121] Kestenbaum, Richard. "Subscription Businesses Are Exploding With Growth." *Forbes*, 10 Aug. 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

[122] Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.

[123] Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.

of more than $200 million for a subscription.[124] The *Post* does not report any data on subscriptions, but journalists believe the company is starting to catch up to the *Times* in number of paying customers.[125]

Both newspapers have also developed techniques to better their paywall that other newspapers should replicate. *The Times* has instituted a new metric that measures an article's ability to attract a reader to subscribe.[126] Both papers have created a "customer engagement funnel," a strategy that involves drawing people further and further into the paper's content after they click on an article until they feel compelled to subscribe.[127] "The goal is to widen the top of the funnel as much as possible by maximizing total digital traffic and to convert some small percentage of that traffic into loyal, subscription-buying customers," writes Dan Kennedy in *The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons it Might Hold for the Beleaguered Business.*[128] This method is supported by research. People are increasingly getting their news from social media apps that aggregate news articles – like Facebook, Twitter, etcetera. In a 2017 study, *Pew Research Center* found that online news consumers were almost as likely to reach a news article by going through a social media website or app (35 percent) as going directly to a news website (36 percent.)[129] A paywall will stop consumers from reading articles for free when they are taken to an article from a social media site.

Still, will people pay for these subscriptions? Critics say that the internet has caused

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124 Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.

125 The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (19)

126 "Journalism that Stands Apart." *The New York Times*, Jan. 2017. Accessed 4 Nov. 2017.

127 The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (18)

128 The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (18)

129 Mitchell, Amy, et. al. "How Americans Encounter, Recall and Act Upon Digital News." *PEW Research Center*, 9 Feb. 2017. Accessed 11 Apr. 2018.

consumers to expect all news to be free. They maintain that readers will not pay for news in the future. Research does not support this. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, studies show that Americans will pay for quality journalism (Patterson 2000; American Press Institute 2017: American Press Institute 2018.)[130] [131] [132] Additionally the 2017 *American Press Institute* study[133] found that slightly more than half of U.S. adults subscribe to news (digital or print.) And four in ten adults under the age of 35 – a demographic critical to expanding a newspaper's subscription base – are currently paying for news. Nearly two in ten people that don't subscribe to news now say that they are "inclined to begin to pay in the future." The study found that "half of those who do not pay for news actively seek out news and resemble subscribers in various ways." And, finally, out of those who regularly use a free source of news, 26 percent said they were somewhat likely to begin paying for it and 10 percent said they are very likely.

A similar conclusion was reached in a study conducted by the *Reuters Institute* for Journalism at the University of Oxford. The study,[134] which sampled respondents in the U.S. as well as other countries, found that 16 percent of Americans are "somewhat likely" or "very likely" to pay for *online* news in the future. The study also found a significant increase from 2016 to 2017 in the percentage of Americans currently paying for online news (from 9 percent to 16 percent.) The *Institute* does note that this spike may be partially attributable to the election of President Donald Trump: "It is too early to know whether these increases constitute a groundswell, or simply a knee-jerk reaction to a political shock." Nonetheless, readers are

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130 Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

131 Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

132 "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

133 Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

134 Fletcher, Richard. "Paying for News." *Reuters Institute*, Oxford University, 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

willing to put their dollars toward quality reporting and appear to understand its importance. The researchers found that out of 36 countries studied, respondents in the United States were most likely to state that "funding journalism" was their reason for buying a subscription.

So, if there is a sizeable portion (nearly 20 percent and growing) of the American public not yet paying for news but potentially willing to do so, how do newspapers get them to subscribe*?* One strategy adopted by the *Post* and *Times* is offering consumers a "bundle." When readers subscribe, they do not pay for each article they read, or a specific section. Instead, the consumer is offered all of the company's news content on all platforms – their iPad, their smartwatch, their smartphone, etcetera. Jeff Bezos was an enthusiastic proponent of the bundle as soon as he bought the *Post.* He believed it was much easier to get consumers to subscribe to all content than pay for each individual story. "'People will buy a package,'" Bezos said. "'They will not pay for a story.'" [135] The *Times*, for instance, offers subscribers unlimited access to news stories on all platforms, but also the "Cooking" section and its recipe app, crossword puzzles and its game app, "Timemachine," a service that grants subscribers access to all electronic copies of every newspaper, "Smarter Living," a section for health tips and life advice, and other content. Another strategy might be to offer consumers a bundle of a different form. Newspapers could partner with other companies to offer a joint subscription service. For instance, in 2017 the *Times* paired with Spotify, the music streaming service, to offer a joint subscription. The deal offered consumers a steep discount on the two services. Similarly, Amazon began offering a discounted *Post* subscription to Amazon Prime members in 2015.

However, to reiterate, the best way to entice consumers to subscribe is to produce quality journalism. Research supports this (Patterson 2000; American Press Institute 2017: American

[135] The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (8)

Press Institute 2018) and so do the successes of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post.* In the section "Understanding the Newspaper Industry's Financial Woes," this paper discussed how newspapers raised their standard of reporting when new inventions changed how people obtain information. The internet forces newspapers to raise their standard of reporting to the highest level so as to cut through the noise. "The only future for newspapers is at the high end of quality journalism," says Craig Huber, a prominent newspaper analyst and founder of Huber Research partners. "That and only that are what people are willing to pay for."[136] A newspaper *must* produce quality journalism that fits its identity to justify charging consumers a subscription fee. Click-bait, assertion, affirmation or infotainment journalism will not convince consumers to pay for a subscription.

As an added note, the subscription model will help ease some of the problems with press coverage in the digital age described earlier in this thesis. For one, the internet has caused the media to lose its monopoly on information, eroding the so-called "gate." The subscription model would bolster the gate. If people subscribe to a newspaper, they would theoretically use that source for news instead of relying on many different news sites. Subscriptions also help legacy news organizations – not fringe news organizations – financially. A subscription-heavy newspaper industry would help raise the quality of journalism, another problem in the digital age. The subscription model, in a way, *forces* news organizations to produce higher quality journalism on the internet. It's common sense: people expect a higher quality if they are being charged for it.[137] [138] [139] By relying more on subscription revenue, these companies do not need to

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[136] Stewart, James B. "Washington Post, Breaking News, Is Also Breaking New Ground." New York Times, 19 May 2017. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

[137] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

[138] Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

compete with clickbait news companies for clicks. Their primary concern is keeping subscribers happy and enticing other consumers to subscribe. According to the *American Press Institute,* people who pay for news are "highly motivated" by being informed.[140] Finally, the subscription model might decrease the "helter skelter" in a citizen's day that Lippmann wrote about. Instead of reading tons of articles each day from different social media accounts, consumers can rely on just a few newspapers for their coverage. There are no studies that support this, but people commonly talk about information overload in the digital age. If a newspaper adheres to the subscription model, then it should provide enough coverage that a consumer does not need to worry about reading news articles from many different news sites.

Quality journalism must take a different form to justify charging consumers for a subscription. News companies must adapt to the web by **changing the way stories are told.** This *does not* mean changing a paper's identity, and this does not mean that the definition of quality journalism is changing. Instead, news companies must display the content that consumers are expecting – and have expected for hundreds of years – in a web-friendly way. While there is no formal study of consumers' appetite for visual *news* content online, there are stats that show Americans' shifting desire for visual content in general. In February 2018, the *Times* ran a feature story entitled "Welcome to the Post-Text Future."[141] The article stated that on average, young Americans spend two hours a day watching video online. Instagram users use the app for an average of 30 minutes each day. And video content on Netflix is in such high demand the company plans to spend $8 billion on original shows and movies this year.[142] The marketing

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139 "Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news." *American Press Institute*, 27 Feb. 2018. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

140 Williams, Alex T. "Paying for news: Why people subscribe and what it says about the future of journalism." *American Press Institute*, 2 May 2017. Accessed 16 Apr. 2018.

141 Mango, Farhad. "Welcome to the Post-Text Future." *New York Times*, 14 Feb. 2018. Accessed 6 Mar. 2018.

142 Mango, Farhad. "Welcome to the Post-Text Future." *New York Times*, 14 Feb. 2018. Accessed 6 Mar. 2018.

magazine *INC* also ran a story[143] about Americans' obsession with visual content in the digital age. Advertisements that include images generate 650 percent higher engagement than text-only posts and advertisements with videos produce three times more link clicks than text-only posts. Finally, 81 percent of internet users only skim the content they read online. A newspaper can no longer be just words and pictures. If newspapers are to compete with other content providers online, they must use computer graphics and video to tell a story.

This primarily involves, in the words of media icon and Executive Editor of the *Post* Marty Baron, thinking of the internet as a "distinct medium." [144] Journalists must work in tandem with data journalists to produce articles for the web *first.* This may seem simple, but many journalists are still stuck in a print-supremacy world and tend to look down upon colleagues that prioritize the digital realm. As an intern-journalist in *Time* magazine's Washington, D.C. bureau in 2017, I saw this firsthand. My colleagues talked of the "disconnect" between the web-first New York headquarters and the print-first Washington bureau. I even sensed the disdain that the older journalists in my bureau felt for the young New York writers who, in their eyes, were not living up to *Time*'s prestigious print standards. I witnessed a similar disconnect between journalists – old and young – as an intern at the New York *Daily News* in 2016. This problem – the disconnect between digital-native and print-native journalists– has likely shown itself at almost every newspaper across the country, including the *New York Times.* In 2014, A.G. Sulzberger, now publisher of the *Times* but then an editor on the metro desk*,* was commissioned to oversee the "Innovation Report." The report covered the status of the *Times'* digital progress. In it, he criticized the *Times* for a disconnect between the editor and the programmer. "The newsroom has historically reacted defensively by watering down or blocking changes, prompting

143 Kim, Larry. "16 Eye-Popping Statistics You Need to Know About Visual Content Marketing." *INC*, 2015. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

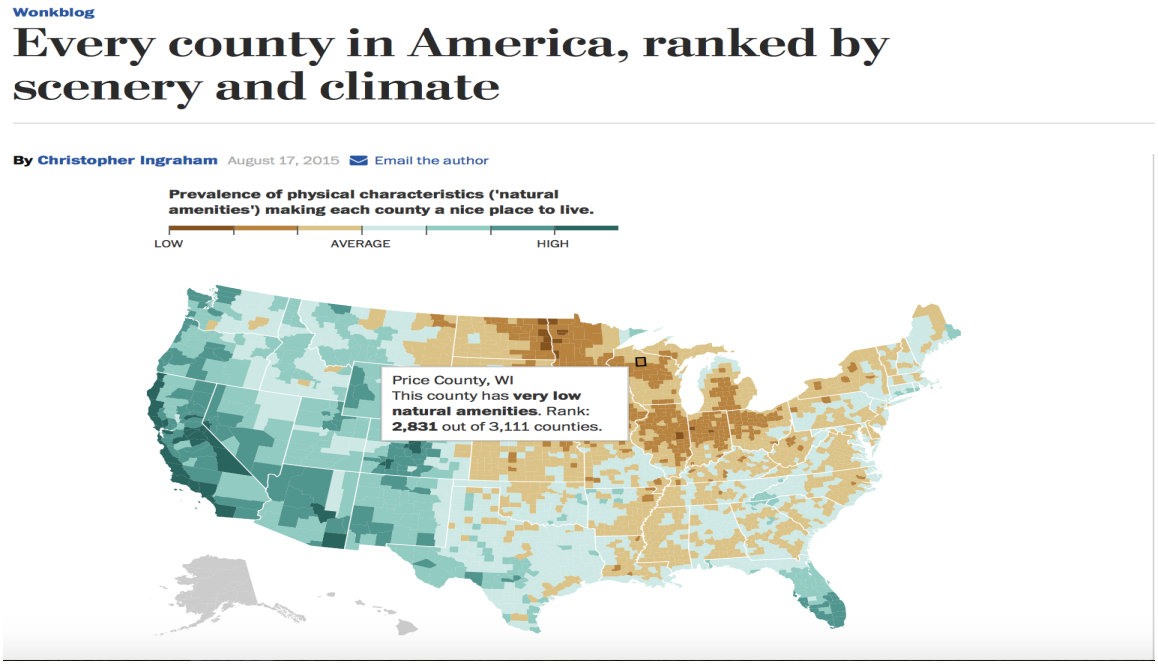
144 "The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (13)

a phrase that echoes almost daily around the business side: The newsroom would never allow that."[145] The *Times* was "privileging…print journalism over the web,"[146] he added. After the report was released, things at the *Times* began to change, according to Sulzberger.[147]

Still, it's one thing to say that journalists need to accept change and work with other data journalists, but what does treating the internet as a "distinct medium" look like? It entails pouring resources into spurring digital growth, which the *Times* and the *Post* have done successfully. For starters, both papers post articles that never appear in print. [148] Around 1,200 articles appear on the *Post*'s website each day.[149] And, more and more stories on the *Post* and *Times* website mix the written word with the visual. On the *Post*'s homepage, there is a section for "visual stories." These stories include colorful graphics explaining complex elements of the U.S. government that would not fit on print pages:[150]A March 17, 2017 story entitled "40 Years of Budgets Show Shifting National Priorities" includes a very informative graphic:

145 Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.
146 Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.
147 Snyder, Gabriel. "How The New York Times Is Clawing Its Way Into the Future." *Wired*, 12 Feb. 2017. Accessed 8 Mar. 2018.
148 The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (15)
149 The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (15)
150 Florit, Gabriel, et al. "40 years of budgets show shifting national priorities." *Washington Post*, 17 Mar. 2017. Accessed 17 Mar. 2018.

In addition to utilizing graphics, the *Times* and *Post* have created more stories that are interactive. The *Post* often includes these in the flashy sections they have created, such as "PowerPost" and "Wonkblog," that provide an interesting spin on recent news or showcase a graphic. "Technology is a significant part of the *Post's* viral success," writes Jack Murtha in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. "In-house tools like Chartable help reporters quickly build charts, maps, quizzes, games, polls, and even bingo boards. These types of content are key not just to telling a good story, but to pushing it off the ground."[151] Below is an example of a popular interactive Wonkblog piece:[152]



The *Times'* version of this is the "Upshot." Below is an example of a *Times* data piece in which the graphics move when the page opens.[153]

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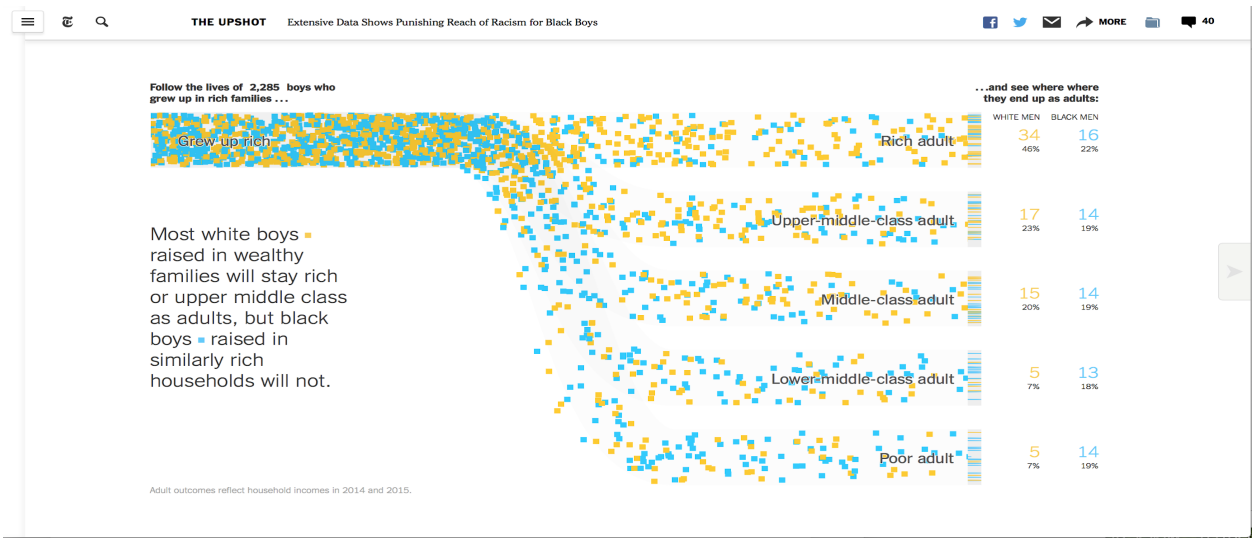
151 Murtha, Jack. "How the times have changed for The Washington Post." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 1 Dec. 2015. Accessed 6 Mar. 2018.

152 Ingraham, Christopher. "Every county in America, ranked by scenery and climate." *Washington Post*, 17 Aug. 2015. Accessed 9 Mar. 2018.

153 Badger, Emily, et al. "Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys." *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2018. Accessed 20 Mar. 2018.



In all of these examples, the writer worked with a team of data journalists to create a story for the web. While some – or many – print-native journalists may scoff at teaming up with a data journalist, in nearly all cases it actually benefits the traditional journalist. In other words, along with attracting consumers to content, data journalism assists the writer as well. The *American Press Institute* conducted a study of data journalism in 2016.[154] They found that data journalism, for one, "allows journalists to more authoritatively verify claims" and "enables journalists to better illuminate murky issues" because it focuses on facts rather than anecdotes. It takes the pressure off journalists to continually back up arguments. At a time when many people question the veracity of news, this is important. The *Institute* also argued that data journalism makes it much easier to tell a story. Journalism articles often include the "near" and the "far." For instance, journalists routinely use an interview with a person directly and personally affected by the incident or news event (the near), as well as an interview with an expert (the far.) Data journalism would eliminate the need for the "far" – the interview with the expert – which at times may be problematic because of possible bias. Data can make reporting "more transparent"

154 Sunne, Samantha. "How data journalism is different from what we've always done." *American Press Institute*, 9 Mar. 2016. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

as well. Reporters can show how they came to a conclusion or structured their argument. This is especially important for Op-ed reporting. Finally, data can make reporting more efficient. Once a data team at a news company creates a data set or graphic, it is a resource a journalist can go back to. "Reporters frequently collect information from the same sources over and over again: building permits, police reports, census surveys," it reads in the report. "Obtaining and organizing this information can be made infinitely more efficient, even totally automatic, by keying in to the data behind the reports."[155] Efficiency is also timely for the news industry because of the economic troubles it's in right now. Because of layoffs, reporting staff is very thin at newspapers across the country. Efficiency should be welcomed and data journalism, overall, is something traditional journalists must accept. It does more than just help newsrooms financially.

Additionally, newspapers should invest more in another digital-centered medium — podcasts. Americans are not only watching more, they're *listening* more. According to Edison Media Research, 70 million Americans regularly listen to podcasts and people who listen weekly usually spend around five hours a week on them. The *Post* boasts a number of podcasts such as the "Daily 202," a segment about the most important political news of the day, and "Can He Do That?," a show about the ways Donald Trump is reshaping the presidency. The *Times* has "The Daily," which is just like the *Post's* "Daily 202," among other podcasts. "The Daily" surpassed 100 million downloads at the end of last year just nine months after it launched.

The new ways of telling stories are not only financially beneficial and helpful to a reporter's job but also advantageous for assisting the media's role in democracy. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the media has a responsibility to help Americans know and understand the news. This paper argued that the media is the "gatekeeper," the "messengers of truth," and must

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[155] Sunne, Samantha. "How data journalism is different from what we've always done." *American Press Institute*, 9 Mar. 2016. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

"steer us towards a clear vision of the world." This paper talked about Walter Lippmann's concerns about the complexity of the news and the ability of people to perform the "perilous business of government" in this complex world.[156] The tools of the digital age, described here, assist journalists in carrying out their role as gatekeeper and explainer. Data journalism helps consumers understand complex topics because it puts information into an easy to interpret graphic. It therefore makes information more accessible and user-friendly.[157] The new techniques for telling stories also *interest* consumers – otherwise this paper would not argue that they are beneficial financially. When consumers are interested, they are more likely to understand a topic (Patterson 2000; Jones 2009).[158] [159]

Finally, while it may seem counter-intuitive to a thesis that stresses the importance of quality journalism and rejects the practice of clickbait journalism, news companies must learn *something* from companies like *Buzzfeed* that **entice consumers to click on articles and remain on the site or app.** The attention span of internet users is extremely short. According to the Brookings Institute, "The average visit to The New York Times' website and associated apps in January 2015 lasted only 4.6 minutes—and this was the highest of the top 25 digital newspapers."[160] The internet provides consumers with access to unlimited distractions; newspapers must compete for readers' time and, if they subscribe, money.

In order to draw in readers, journalists must adapt and craft headlines that are tailored specifically for the web. They should not simply copy the same headline they used for print and

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156 Lippmann, Walter. Liberty and the News. 1920. Leopold Classic Library, 2017. (47)

157 Sunne, Samantha. "How data journalism is different from what we've always done." *American Press Institute*, 9 Mar. 2016. Accessed 17 Apr. 2018.

158 Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018.

159 Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (26)

160 Kamarck, Elaine, and Ashley Gabriele. "The news today: 7 trends in old and new media." *Brookings*, Nov. 2015. Accessed 24 Feb. 2018.

use it for the internet. This strategy is employed by journalists at the *Post* and the *Times*. It involves packing headlines with terms that people type in Google or other search engines about a particular news topic. Called "search engine optimization" (SEO), this method seeks to obtain as many unique visitors as possible by matching commonly searched terms or phrases. At first glance, this approach might seem like it lends itself to "clickbait" – a phrase often used to describe "infotainment" articles designed to rack up clicks for advertising money but lacking in substance. But, these stories can still come with high journalistic standards. Both the *Times* and the *Post* use the SEO strategy for serious, hard news articles. If the content *behind* the headline is quality, what does it matter? "Being viral doesn't mean clickbait," says Marty Baron. "And writing a headline and using a photo that would cause somebody to share something on a serious subject doesn't make it clickbait. We do write headlines that we think will lead to sharing, and in many ways they get to the point a lot better. I mean, newspaper headlines are terrible, right?"[161] So long as the content behind the headline fulfills the criteria for "quality journalism" as defined earlier in this thesis, then the content cannot be known as clickbait. A headline provides little to the reader in terms of actual information they can use to understand the world around them.

In addition to crafting headlines that attract clicks, newspapers should not shy away from producing "softer" news stories for the web. If a paper like the *Times'* identity is hard news, it can still offer the content it is known for while offering more feature stories as well. Even Patterson, who concluded in his study that hard news was both important for democracy and an essential part of a news organization's business found that there was a "place" for soft news. "Even the most ardent hard news consumers like the diversion that an amusing or compelling

[161] The Bezos Effect: How Amazon's Founder Is Reinventing The Washington Post – and What Lessons It Might Hold for the Beleaguered Newspaper Business." *Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 8 June 2016. Accessed 6 Dec. 2017. (15)

soft news story can provide."[162] The only caveat, he added, was that soft news was a "weak foundation" for a news organization. This paper reaches the same conclusion.

Offering both hard and soft news will help keep consumers on that particular news website or app. "Soft news, if used with restraint, can expand an audience by attracting people who find news more enjoyable when it has a touch of personal drama," adds Patterson.[163] If a paper is using the subscription model (like all should), then it should be a place where people will consume more than one article at a time. Providing both hard and soft news is the way to achieve that. This concept is along the lines of the "bundle" economic strategy discussed earlier in this paper. The *Post* has adopted the hard and soft news combo strategy more than the *Times* has. "The *Post*'s present incarnation of content is a mashup–Woodward and Bernstein meets BuzzFeed," writes Jack Murtha in the *Columbia Journalism Review*. "Deep investigations and scoops sit alongside an expansive network of blogs geared for social media speed, like the Morning Mix, PostEverything, and WonkBlog, which are increasingly important traffic drivers.[164] By getting people to click on articles on Facebook, Twitter, Google, etc. with catchy headlines, the *Post* draws people to their website or apps and keeps them there, raising the likelihood that that person will become a paid subscriber.

VII. **CONCLUSION**

Newspapers should adopt the strategies recommended by this thesis so that they may produce quality journalism, navigate the digital age, stay in business and promote the health of our

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[162] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (9)

[163] Patterson, Thomas E. "DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy– And What News Outlets Can Do About It." *The Joan Shorenstein Center*, Harvard University, 2000. Accessed 27 Mar. 2018. (9)

[164] Murtha, Jack. "How the times have changed for The Washington Post." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 1 Dec. 2015. Accessed 6 Mar. 2018.

democracy. These recommendations will help solve the two-pronged problem mentioned at the beginning of this thesis: 1) Newspaper companies are going out of business all over the country, leaving people without the essential knowledge they need to make informed decisions about the society in which they live; 2) Newspaper companies, in an effort to become profitable and remain in business, are turning to techniques that degrade the quality of their journalism. This thesis is timely. Talk to any journalist and they will tell you the industry is still in limbo. Newspapers are folding at a torrid pace and knowledge about the news is at all-time lows.[165] The two-pronged problem this paper identifies is not going away.

The last section – the crux of this thesis – lays out the ways in which newspapers can turn a profit in the cutthroat economic environment of the digital age. To reiterate, to survive the digital age, remain profitable and produce quality journalism, newspapers must: 1) maintain their identity and 2) adapt that identity for the web. Newspapers can maintain their identity by simply sticking to what they do best and not shying away from investing in the journalism they are known for. To adapt, newspapers should switch to or maintain a paywall, subscription-based revenue model, change the way they tell stories, and entice consumers to click on articles. Along with helping to keep newspapers in business, this approach will help papers fulfill the responsibilities of the fourth estate. None of these techniques degrade the quality of journalism; they may even enhance it. This strategy will help newspapers financially and prepare them for future challenges they will face.

Lippmann was concerned about the ability of Americans to think "nationally" in a society so complex and fast-moving. By wielding the tools of the internet, journalists can help people better understand the complex topics of our lifetime. "It is as if journalists used to build houses with

[165] Jones, Alex S. *Losing the News: The Future of News That Feeds a Democracy*. E-book, Oxford University, 2009. (26)

only a hammer, saw, screwdriver, and level and now have access to all the power tools available at Home Depot," write Kovach and Rosenstiel in *Blur*.[166] An article with a graphic, for instance, can help the reader understand what he or she needs to know much better than plain text. (Research shows that humans learn better with visual cues.)[167] Similarly, an interactive story about a hard news topic may attract a reader to a story that they might not have read if it were just an ordinary news story online or in the newspaper.

Lippmann believed the media was the gatekeeper of a democracy, though he never actually used that word to describe his philosophy. In many ways, this is still true. The majority of Americans still turn to the major media organizations for the information they need to vote and understand what's going on in the world around them. However, today the press is not the only gatekeeper of information. Politicians can bypass news organizations and put out press releases directly to the public. Cell phones and apps such as Snapchat mean that anyone can lay claim to the tools of a "journalist." People can get news from friends on Facebook, people they follow on Twitter, or personal blogs and fringe internet news sites. This means that newspapers – the best source for hard news – must stand out from the pack. They do not have the monopoly on the public that they once enjoyed.

Some people see this – the decline of the gate – as a public good. They believe giving people more freedom over information they want to consume is necessary. Others, for totally other reasons, cheer the decline of the newspaper industry as a whole. We are living during a time that the journalist, the expert, and the elite are under attack. Support for the press has become a

166 Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *Blur*. Bloomsbury, 2010. (184)

167 Kouyoumdjian, Haig. "Learning Through Visuals." *Psychology Today*, 2012. Accessed 18 Apr. 2018.

partisan issue in this country.[168] People are scared, confused, and nervous about what lies ahead. Mass shootings, terrorism, the effects of globalization, etcetera are all problems that seem daunting. All the while, fake news has exploded on the internet and threatened the integrity of our elections. This paper argues the newspaper and the concept of the press as gatekeeper are fundamental parts of our democracy. In this age of disinformation and rebellion against the elite, our democracy needs a strong newspaper industry dedicated to producing quality journalism now more than ever. Lippmann wrote *Public Opinion* and *Liberty and the News* in the midst of an explosion of government propaganda and populism. Today, many would say we are experiencing a similar phenomenon.

I affirm that I have adhered to the honor code on this assignment.

Jack Brewster

[168] Barthel, Michael, and Amy Mitchell. "Americans' Attitudes About the News Media Deeply Divided Along Partisan Lines." *Pew Research Center*, 10 May 2017. Accessed 19 Apr. 2018.

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