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New Media and an Old Problem
Promoting Democracy

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When anyone can be a publisher, it can be hard to tell who counts as a journalist. This confusion, peculiar to the beginning of the twenty-first century, ironically allows for communitarian journalism to emerge in a way that was not possible in the largely one-way mass communication of the twentieth century. The ease by which one can produce and consume messages challenges citizens to participate in self-governance in entirely new ways.

This essay argues that recent technological advances allow for participatory democracy at an unprecedented level by analyzing the mechanisms for doing so and the implications of those mechanisms. The challenge for the major social institutions of government, education, and journalism is how to help citizens realize their responsibility to actively and civically participate in self governance and to provide improved mechanisms for them to do so.

Communications scholar Clifford Christians writes, "As our philosophies of life and beliefs are lobbied within the public sphere, we have a responsibility to make public the course we favor and to demonstrate in what manner it advances our common citizenship. The issue is whether our values help to build a civic philosophy and thereby demonstrate a transformative intent. This is worldview pluralism, which allows us to hold our beliefs in good faith and debate them openly rather than be constrained by a superficial consensus. The standard of judgment is not economic or political success but whether our worldviews and community formations contribute in the long run to truth-telling, human dignity, and nonmaleficence. Ethical principles grounded in being do not obstruct cultures and inhibit their development. On the contrary, they liberate us for strategic action and provide a direction for social change" (Christians and Traber, 1997, p. 18).

The Role of Journalists and Citizens in Democracy

The liberation of American journalism from the elite silos of the twentieth century provides the opportunity to create public communication values that advance what Christians calls "common citizenship" and others would call democracy. However, simple expression of opinion is not enough to move the practice of journalism, essential for educating citizens, forward. According to journalist Leonard Downie Jr. and journalism historian Michael Schudson, "The expression of publicly disseminated opinion is perhaps Americans' most exercised First Amendment right, as anyone can see and hear every day on the Internet, cable television, or talk radio. What is under threat is independent reporting that provides information, investigation, analysis, and community knowledge, particularly in the coverage of local affairs. Reporting the news means telling citizens what they would not otherwise know" (Downie and Schudson, 2009).

Journalism and citizens are separate and essential elements for sustaining democracy. Historically, the role of journalism has shifted from providing a platform for views to providing reasoned, authoritative accounting of important issues and events. According to Downie and Schudson, "Most of what American newspapers did from the time that the First Amendment was ratified, in 1791, until well into the nineteenth century was to provide an outlet for opinion, often stridently partisan… By the late nineteenth century, urban newspapers grew more prosperous, ambitious and powerful, and some began to proclaim their political independence" (Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009). What developed through that independence was a change from "a preoccupation with government, usually in response to specific events, to a much broader understanding of public life that included not just events, but also patterns and trends, and not just in politics, but also in science, medicine, business, sports, education, religion, culture, and entertainment" (Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009).

The social role of journalism in democracy is continually evolving, as much dependent on technology and marketing values as ethics, but partisan or not, profit-driven or nonprofit, journalism exists to notice and report the important events and issues that citizens need to know so that they can effectively govern themselves (Kovach and Rosensteil, 2001) (Elliott, 1986). "Tim McGuire, a former editor of the Minneapolis Star Tribune," [said] "We've got to tell people stuff they don't know" (Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009).

A worldwide web of information at one's fingertips gives the illusion that citizens can find out anything that they want to know with no journalistic intervention. Yet, information is only as good as its source and is only as complete as the process used to develop it. "Independent reporting not only reveals what government or private interests appear to be doing but also what lies behind their actions.… Reporting the news also undergirds democracy by explaining complicated events, issues, and processes in clear language… Something is gained when reporting, analysis, and investigation are pursued collaboratively by stable organizations that can facilitate regular reporting by experienced journalists, support them with

money, logistics, and legal services, and present their work to a large public. Institutional authority or weight often guarantees that the work of newsrooms won't easily be ignored" (Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009).

If journalism is essential to provide watchdogs over important social institutions and to provide credible collections of important material, so that citizens can make educated decisions, citizens themselves remain the missing link in US democratic process. "When moral controversies such as those over abortion, gay rights, affirmative action, and assisted suicide are routinely decided by the courts, critics charge that it is no wonder that the office of citizenship comes to seem of marginal importance," according to political theorist, Stephen Macedo. "Citizens deprived of the opportunity and the responsibility to grapple with the most significant moral questions lose a vital part of the training in responsibility and self-control that citizenship should bring (Macedo, 1999, p. 3).

Yet, citizens are more apathetic than ever before. "Where people once might have deluged their elected representatives with complaints, joined unions, resisted mass firings, confronted their employers with serious demands, marched for social justice and created brand new civic organizations to fight for the things they believed in," writes columnist Bob Herbert, "the tendency now is to assume that there is little or nothing ordinary individuals can do about the conditions that plague them" (Herbert, 2009).

It is not that citizens do not maintain the interest or desire to be an active part of participatory democracy, instead they are finding other means in which to practice their democratic rights and responsibilities. "Technology can amplify and aggregate voices that used to be faint and muffled. Voters used to write letters to newspaper editors and hope they would be published. Now they can blog" (*The Economist*, 2008). The Internet provides a whole new array of options for citizens seeking to address grievances and this shift in ways of expression opens new doors to great opportunities for participatory democracy.

The Internet opens the doors to many new, accessible, and affordable means of mass communication. These open doors allow for the embracing of the public as the new citizen-journalists, who seek to promote good by seeking out information and dispersing it. Communication and interaction between citizens, media, and government are key components to a successful democracy (Dahlgren, 2005, p. 149). The Internet acts as a means to connect those dots by granting the ability to connect groups and people who are geographically dispersed.

The World Wide Web has introduced the public to a new forum for political discussion and new kind of accessibility to the mechanisms that allow them to do so. What has traditionally been referred to as the public sphere, "a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates… and also the formation of political will… in which the mass media and now, more recently, the newer interactive media figure prominently, also serve to facilitate communicative links between citizens and the power holders of society" (Dahlgren, 2005, p.148), has advanced and become more prominent since the introduction of the Internet. While public discussion may only encompass a small

percentage of all the Internet's offerings, those discussions and the countless sites that host them serve as a direct route to the future of participatory democracy. As political communications scholar, Peter Dalhgren, puts it, "today's democracy needs to be able to refer to a past without being locked in it" (Dahlgren, 2005, p.159). Interaction and discussion among citizens in the new virtual public sphere is a way to ensure that progression.

The "worldview pluralism" as described by Christians expands the notion of the marketplace of ideas credited to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in his dissenting opinion in Abrams versus United States. Holmes says "when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out" (Abrams versus United States 250 U.S. 616). His concept of a free market of ideas corresponds with the ideas of nineteenth century philosopher Jon Stuart Mill (1991a), to be discussed later in this essay. The Internet is working to further develop the public sphere into an expansive free marketplace of ideas where the public can gather with others in the comfort of their own home to discuss, debate, and participate in current events.

According to scholar David Thompson, the Internet has a great capacity to connect people with similar values (Thompson, 2008). The rise of these kinds of Internet communities has become a staple in promoting participatory democracy; serving to enhance our "social ties by reinforcing existing behavior patterns" (DiMaggio *et al.*, 2001). These online communities, as defined by DiMaggio and coauthors (2001) "come in very different shapes and sizes, ranging from virtual communities that connect geographically distant people with no prior acquaintance who share similar interests, to settings that facilitate interactions among friendship networks or family members, to community networks that focus on issues relevant to a geographically defined neighborhood. Scholars have found that political participation of individuals can be greatly dependent on those individual's participation in social networks (Jang, 2009). This holds true even for the kinds of virtual social networks DiMaggio discusses, ones that are facilitated by the advancing technology available online.

Despite the availability of opportunities to speak and organize through (virtual) grassroots efforts, more than just opportunity is needed to create deliberative democracy – individual citizen choices and group initiatives that are the product of gain knowledge and weighing alternative actions. According to political scientist James Fishkin, "American politics exhibits a near-fatal attraction to a too simple notion of democracy. Anything more direct and more majoritarian is thought to be more democratic"(Fishkin, 1994, p. 101). Fishkin observed that the use of technology to collect instantaneous reactions to a President's state of the union address created the appearance, but not the reality, of citizen engagement. He said, "Despite the unrepresentative character of the self-selected sample, and despite the

unreflective and volatile character of the instantaneous reactions, the results were presented as the voice of the people" (Fishkin, 1994, p. 101)

To echo Christians, deliberation has a goal of improving the community. According to theorist Jane Mansbridge, "If a deliberative system works well, it filters out and discards the worst ideas available on public matters while it picks up, adopts, and applies the best ideas. If the deliberative system works badly, it distorts facts, portrays ideas in forms that their originators would disown, and encourages citizens to adopt ways of thinking and acting that are good neither for them nor for the larger polity. A deliberative system, at its best, like all systems of democratic participation, helps its participants understand themselves and their environment better" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 211).
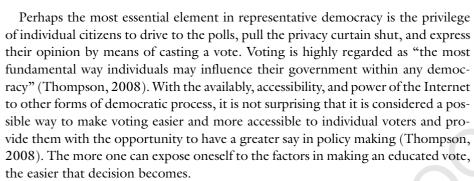
Fishkin would agree. "Polls, primaries and referendums bring power to the people, but they bring it under conditions where people have difficulty thinking about the power they exercise. Efforts at democratic reform appear enmeshed in a dilemma. It appears that we must choose between politically equal but relatively incompetent masses and politically unequal but relatively more competent elites" (Fishkin, 1994, pp. 106–107).

Citizens do not act without recognizing their power to bring about change. Recognition of power leads to the development of moral responsibility to use that power and to use that power to advance what individuals perceive to be in their interest. This suggests that citizens need education that involves recognizing the new opportunities embedded in new technology, but also their responsibility to do something with that. Political strategist Joe Trippi says that rather than call the change from traditional one-way media to new interactive media the coming of "the information age," it should be called "the empowerment age." The Internet is the most democratizing innovation we have ever seen – more so than even the printing press.… If Madison was right, and the people can only govern when they can "arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives," then the Internet is the first technology that truly gives people full access to that knowledge – and empowers them with the ability to do something with it" (Trippi, 2008, pp. 235–236).

One of the key features that can attribute to online discussion participation is the anonymity that is associated with the free space of the Internet. According to behavioral scholars Deanna A Rohlinger and Jordan Brown (2009), the anonymity associated with contribution to online political discussions, "can buffer the risks associated with activism" because the Internet is not in the direct control of any one political group (Rohlinger and Brown, 2009, p. 134). By hiding behind the virtual wall of one's own computer in the comfort of home, an online contributor may feel more willing to voice her personal opinion or speak out against those of others. This "buffer" described by Rohlinger and Brown (2009) grants the privilege for contributors to "express their dissent anonymously and without retribution," (p.135) which then increases the willingness and discussion contributions of individuals unlikely to participate. They also argue that the anonymous online contributions are likely to evolve into real world activism once contributors get comfortable with the expression of their views in political environments.

Perhaps the most essential element in representative democracy is the privilege of individual citizens to drive to the polls, pull the privacy curtain shut, and express their opinion by means of casting a vote. Voting is highly regarded as "the most fundamental way individuals may influence their government within any democracy" (Thompson, 2008). With the availably, accessibility, and power of the Internet to other forms of democratic process, it is not surprising that it is considered a possible way to make voting easier and more accessible to individual voters and provide them with the opportunity to have a greater say in policy making (Thompson, 2008). The more one can expose oneself to the factors in making an educated vote, the easier that decision becomes.

Thompson argues that the Internet serves as a means of exposing the general public to political conversation. He points out that these conversations can take place in any variety of online community such as a chatroom or an email network. The Internet is flooded with a wide variety of local and national, issue-advocacy, alternative journalism, and discussion forums (Dahlgren, 2005, p. 152). The availability of exposure to political conversation is all over the Internet. Citizens can access candidate websites, log on to political interest group blogs, or even subscribe to up-to-the-minute campaign updates, all of which can provide information unparalleled in accessibility.

Political scholar Seung-Jin Jang says that political disagreements, while they may be experienced differently by individuals and thus result in "different political consequences," (2009, p. 883) exposure to political disagreements in political networks can encourage participation for some individuals. He considers specifically the polarization of American politics that result in two strongly partisan opinions and much debate. Exposure to those partisan-fueled discussions can "spill over the participatory democracy by differently affecting each segment of citizens," resulting in "a critical balance between activism of strong partisans and recognition of the voice of reason," (Jang, 2009, p. 894). This balance is an ideal environment for the harboring of political debate, discussion, and participation, thus giving citizens the information they need to make an informed decision and vote.

The idea has even been considered by some to use the Internet as a way for voters to place their ballot in the comfort of their own home might encourage higher voter turnout (Thompson, 2008). This idea, among others opens the door to even further advancement of virtual possibilities to promote the intentions of direct democracy.

Another essential element of democracy that the Internet helps to ensure is transparency. Journalism scholar Micah Sifry writes about the 2008 financial bailout legislation and the explosive public response that subsequently resulted in the website crash of both the government-owned www.house.gov and the privately-owned GovTrack.us. According to Sifry, this response signals a new age of transparency, where "as the tools for analyzing data and connecting people become more powerful and easier to use, politics and governance alike are inexorably becoming more open" (Sifry, 2009). The September 2008 financial bailout legislation resulted in increased participation on public examination sites such as

PublicMarkup.org (Sifry, 2009). These sites enable public to detour around road-blocks set up by public officials who do not want certain information distributed, says Sifry. He specifically cites the website EveryBlock.com, which grants users access to crime reports, restaurant-inspections, and the like, putting information directly in the hands of the user that is otherwise accessible to the public but hard to acquire.

The Paradigm Shift in Journalism and Resulting Shifting Standards

Like the Guttenberg press, the telegraph, wire transmission of text, photos, sound, and video, technology is once again creating a paradigm shift in American journalism. A paradigm shift begins, according to Thomas Kuhn (1962), the scientist who invented the term, when a significant number of relevant parties realize that old assumptions for how the social institution works no longer hold. New ideas are forming, but no new standard has yet been accepted or recognized. Yet, the importance of the institution requires that it continue to operate within some recognizable frame. The beginnings of paradigm shift are marked with a lack of consensus, about how the organization should operate(Kuhn, 1962).

Journalism, in the early twenty-first Century, is a practice seeking definition. "[I]t appears that there are two contrasting theories of journalism… One consists of established standards and practices that emanate from print and broadcast journalism and the belief that journalism has a social responsibility to inform citizens and nurture democracy, while the other is informed by suspicion of centrally managed, traditional media conglomerates and a belief, inspired by the open architecture of the Internet and flexibility of Web publishing, that citizens can participate in democracy by creating their own journalism" (Berkman and Shumway, 2003, p. 67).

Trippi revolutionized political campaigns through his use of the Internet in Howard Dean's 2004 presidential bid. He sums up the paradigm shift as a shift in power from corporate news to the people. "In America, for two hundred years, we have relied on some version of the media to interpret the events of the world for us, and at the same time to explain our governments' role in them.… People are no longer waiting for the media or the government to give information. Now they are going online and getting it, and then disseminating it. And with that information, they are gaining power" (Trippi, p. 232).

An organization's "news hole" is no longer bound by constraints of time and space. The ability to transmit instantly across multiple platforms has created audience expectation for instant transmission. The time it took for traditional reporting to funnel through the series of gatekeepers allowed for editing and for review of information for accuracy and lack of bias by editors along the way. However, citizens are no longer dependent upon the local newspaper and three broadcast networks to tell them about their world. The increasing participation to the online public sphere further democratizes media in that it takes the power away from the

three major media giants and disperses that power to the active citizens. As the broadcast and print media become more narrowly-owned by corporate media giants, the world of online information of the public sphere continues to increase and expand diversity due to its many contributors.

Bias or lack of complete information from a single source does not lead to misperceptions if citizens develop their understandings from an aggregate of information sources. The partisan or objective nature of news does not matter as much as truth in labeling and each presentation being an honest attempt to present reality. Reality is ripe with interpretation from many sides and many perspectives. Media plurality can exist when journalists strive to include many sides in a story – when they include two sides, creating polarity, they often lose the story. Or, media plurality can exist simply through a multitude of sources.

The concern is that citizens have not been educated on the importance of seeking opinion different from their own or for the need of reviewing opinion that is in opposition to their own views. Instead, they gravitate toward the sources who reflect their own biases, with the potential result of misconceptions. For example, after declaration of the first Gulf War in 1991, research showed that the level of misunderstandings that citizens held regarding the need, goal, and even outcomes of that war correlated with their primary news sources. Polls taken soon after the beginning of the 2003 Gulf War revealed three major misconceptions held by American citizens: the United States had found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11/01 attacks on the US; and that the US had the support of other countries for its invasion of Iraq. A poll conducted by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) found that, "80 percent of those who said they relied of Fox News and 71 percent who said they relied on CBS believed at least one of the three misperceptions. The comparable figures were 47 percent for those who said they relied most on newspapers and magazines and 23 percent for those who said they relied on PBS or National Public Radio. Twenty-three percent of the public believed that WMD have already been found in Iraq, according to the PIPA survey. [The pollster] said he thought such a notion seemed to be ideologically driven in part, because significantly higher percentages of Republicans believed this, particularly 'Republicans following Iraq news closely.' Eighty percent of respondents said that they depended more on television and electronic media for their news, and a particularly high proportion of Republican respondents cited Fox TV, which has been especially jingoistic in its war coverage, as their main source" (Lobe, 2003).

The easy ability to access a variety of credible (and incredible) beliefs, opinions, and arguments also eliminates the need of journalists to depend on the usual suspects' style of sourcing, sometimes referred to as the Golden Rolodex. Now, sources are no further from the reach of traditional journalists than the ability to click to a provocative blogger. An important change from past eras when speakers might struggle to reach audiences who would reinforce and amplify their perspectives and agenda, crowds are no longer essential to signify the credibility or

importance of a speaker's idea. All that is necessary is that the speaker be 'clickable' and indexed by keywords for easy search engine access. Contemporary scholars suggest that traditional journalists embrace rather than eschew such involvement. "News organizations should… move quickly and creatively to involve their audiences and other citizens in the gathering and analysis of news and information" (Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009).

However, aggregation of information has resulted in a new style of majoritarian rule called Wikiality – the mistaken belief that open sourcing and editing results in truth. According to one writer, "The millions of bloggers who are constantly watching, fact-checking and exposing mistakes are a powerful example of 'the wisdom of crowds' being assisted by a technology that is as open and omnipresent as we are" (Naim, 2006, p. 31).

The Moral Citizen

American democracy is steeped in talk of citizen rights – the right to know what government is doing in our name and to know what we wish about our candidates for public office; the right to speak freely and to hear diverse views; the right to vote and to develop ballot initiatives to engage other citizens in perceived reform. Yet, there is relatively little attention paid to citizen responsibilities. Legal responsibilities of citizenship include obligations to obey the law, serve on juries, and pay taxes. "Democracies need more than an occasional vote from their citizens to remain healthy. They need the steady attention, time, and commitment of large numbers of their citizens who, in turn, look to the government to protect their rights and freedoms"(State, 2008).
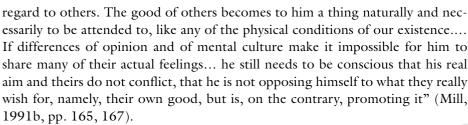
Nineteenth century British philosopher John Stuart Mill enumerated the duties of citizenship with an eye toward the aggregate good. In his essay, "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion," he tells us that the duty of every citizen is "To form the truest opinion they can" (Mill, 1991a, p. 23). The way that citizens form true opinions and continually test out the correctness of their opinions is through seeking divergent opinion and weighing their opinion against those of others.

Mill would agree with Christians and other political communication theorists in arguing that articulating one's opinion is but a piece of the vehicle on the road to democracy. Mill says that most people "have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and consider what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess" (Mill, 1991a, pp. 42–43).

However, the seeking and expressing of one's opinion has instrumental worth for the active citizen. The true goal, as Mill explains in "Utilitarianism," is advancement of the overall good of the community, in which the citizen realizes that her happiness is dependent upon the happiness of others. "He comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who of course pays

regard to others. The good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to, like any of the physical conditions of our existence…. If differences of opinion and of mental culture make it impossible for him to share many of their actual feelings… he still needs to be conscious that his real aim and theirs do not conflict, that he is not opposing himself to what they really wish for, namely, their own good, but is, on the contrary, promoting it" (Mill, 1991b, pp. 165, 167).

In his essay on the "Agentic Power of the Internet," Scott Waring (2006) discusses the concept of agency, or "having the power or authority to act." Waring emphasizes how maintaining personal agency is necessary to be an active part of any participatory democracy. He describes the youth of America as associating agency with historical figures that they learn about in school, and underestimate or do not even consider themselves capable of making change through their own actions. This disassociation with agency among children can be attributed to the way they are taught, brought up, and the experiences they encounter. It is essential that children understand their ability to contribute to political action and, as Warren states, the Internet can provide that missing link due to its "global and decentralized nature" (Waring, 2006 p. 63).

The Internet, because of its vastness, makes almost any information available to almost any user. "Small causes have large effects [online], thus enabling actors to have agency at a distance or from anywhere in the world," (Waring, 2006, p. 63) allowing for networks to organize and even quiet voices to be heard. Civic participation can be embraced and developed through the Internet, and helping young students acquire the skills to do both those things will help to advance the Internet's capabilities for democratic participation.

Warren also provides us with a list of online forums and agencies that help to promote civic participation. Among those is Congress.org (www.congress.org), a nonpartisan company designed to help users communicate with elected officials and learn more about this country's legislature. Another, e-advocates (http://e-advocates.com) assists individuals in advocacy and consults for advocacy strategy. Others, such as Action!Network (http://actionnetwork.org), an environmental activist group, and Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org), for human rights advocacy, provide opportunities for collective agency through the World Wide Web. Sites like these help the promotion of democracy by allowing for access and facilitation through taking steps toward agency and by offering networks and collective virtual meeting areas for initiatives (Waring, 2006, pp. 65–66).

By teaching our youth and partaking in the many democracy-promoting resources available on the Internet, citizens are working toward embracing their own agency while at the same time serving society. As Warren says, "through the power of the Internet, every individual has the ability to serve as an agentic force for change within a society. The Internet provides a way for individuals to fulfill promises of democracy and to become empowered agents for social change" (Waring, 2006, p. 70). Embracing the capacity of the Internet fulfills the role of a citizen to be an active member of society and democracy as a whole.

The Future of Democracy and Journalism's Role

A new understanding of journalism is essential to provide support for newly empowered citizens. Joe Trippi, a pioneer in the use of the Internet in political campaigns frames the future this way: "I am convinced that Internet politics and government will be defined by its opposite, broadcast politics, and by its potential to fix many of the problems broadcast politics creates: Civic disengagement,… the dumbing down of the American electorate,… the insidious corruption of our politics and our government due to the disproportionate influence of wealthy donors, special interests, and corporations. The Internet shines a light on these dark recesses and quickly organizes millions of Americans cheaply, without relying on billionaires who want something for their money" (Trippi, 2008, pp. 225–226).

Yet, the future of democracy is not the choice of citizen-journalist over traditional journalist or the choice of living in cyberspace over physical space. According to media scholar Alex Jones, "Online news consumers are going to want all of what the Web offers. And there is no reason to think that those who read print newspapers will not also go online for news and vice versa. Print newspapers and their brother publications online do different things and satisfy in different ways, and if that is recognized, they can both thrive"(Jones, 2009, p. 210).

The new era is one in which news media and active citizens recognize their mutual dependency. Trippi notes: "The little-known secret in newsrooms across the United States is that right now reporters are beginning every day by reading the blogs. They're looking for the pulse of the people, for political fallout, for stories they missed" (Trippi, p. 229).

According to Sifry, "we are heading toward a world in which one-click universal disclosure, real-time reporting by both professionals and amateurs, dazzling data visualizations that tell compelling new stories, and the people's ability to watch their government from below (what the French call sousveillance) are becoming commonplace" (Sifry, 2009). This world is one of increased exposure to the public sphere and acknowledgement of the agentic capabilities of everyday citizens.

Ultimately, whatever the source of information, citizens need to have some basis for trusting the accuracy of the information provided. Credibility is the ultimate value of mass communication whether the medium is a traditional newspaper (in print or online) or a blog. Just as advertising rates are determined in traditional media by the size of the audience, bloggers' income is determined by the number of clicks to their posts. "Honest debate requires at least some consensus on what the facts are, and honesty, not obfuscation, where there is genuine confusion over the nature of the facts… What we need, in other words, is to welcome the new partisan and participatory outlets while finding ways to nurture and improve independent journalism"(Dionne, 2006).

Freedom of expression, whether in speech or the press, is of instrumental, not intrinsic, worth. Journalistic freedom exists to support the dissemination of material necessary for active self-governance throughout the populace. As Jones points

out, "America has been a place where difference in knowledge – like difference in wealth – was not a yawning chasm and where a 'reality-based' press was, for all its shortcomings, premised on the belief that reality is something all Americans should know about" (Jones, 2009, p. 222). The reason for active self-governance is so that citizens recognize their duty and power to transform their local and global community into the best of all possible worlds, that is, in the words of Clifford Christians, that citizens express "ethical principles grounded in being" (Christians and Traber, 1997, p. 18).

However, an ignored responsibility for new media is in motivating citizens as well as informing them. Citizens need to understand that the information they gain from any source is not to fulfill their personal interest but to provide opportunity for them to work in the public interest. Enlightened citizens understand themselves to be actively involved in creating the good community. Ideal news organizations promote the growth and maintenance of community by giving citizens' information and priorities for their consideration and by, at least, reminding citizens of how to turn information into community action. In his essay, "On Liberty," Mill provides unwavering support for free expression of a diversity of views. In "Utilitarianism," he tells us, ethically speaking, what we are supposed to do with all of that freedom. The simple answer is that we should do what we each can to support the good of all.
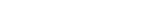
Just as aggregate good expresses a "sum greater than its parts" consideration of community good; the sum of individual expression produces democracy that is vibrant in tension and thought. How that plays out in the future is but anyone's guess. The trust is in the process, for Mill, as well as for Clifford Christians, instead of allegiance to some particular outcome. A century after the writings of John Stuart Mill, Clifford Christians has operationalized these thoughts in works that have inspired thinkers around the world. The technology of the twenty-first century has allowed true experimentation of the theories of political communication.

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