

"All the News That's
Fit to Discuss?"

Tomorrow's News

National Edition

Political climate: Cloudy with
high emotions and lows of
divisiveness and fear.

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\$ Priceless



News for Democracy: Of, By, and For the People

What if, under this headline, in the state of New Demotopia, an increasingly well-informed citizenry has become much actively engaged in public affairs, and not just as consumers? Citizens in this state are also much more engaged in the creation and the content of their news. In New Demotopia, the goal of news is to support democracy by informing

citizens and engaging them in public affairs. Citizens there are involved in selecting, producing, editing, and publicizing their news. Public affairs and other general-interest news matters to more citizens because they are better able to see the direct connection between their lives and the events they help report on.

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Infotainment and Niche News Prevail

We should face the truth. Reading long stretches of undifferentiated text on paper or listening to someone read that text to us on TV or radio (and only at certain times of day) are no longer popular or commercially viable leisure-time activities.

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Sponsored Content



Hair loss can look unnatural



Don't work, and watch the money pour in



The Brain Pill

One pill a day and you will know it all!



Celebrity look-a likes from the past

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Inside Tomorrow's News

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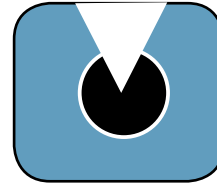
THE "FRONT STORY"

—Some Issues and Ideas to Help Start a Discussion



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Infotainment and Niche News Prevail

Increasingly, the new stories that consumers want—and that advertisers will pay premium rates for—are soft, special-interest, and/or local news. Infotainment and niche news now predominates all mass media formats. *page B4*



Hard News Makes a Comeback

A consortium of legacy and new media organizations are beginning to succeed in a high-cost, high-risk effort to reform the news and restore its credibility, accuracy, and accountability. In both new and old ways, they are providing high-quality journalism with more investigation, fact checking, context, and analysis and less commentary, false equivalencies, and infotainment. *page B2*



News for Democracy: Of, By, and For the People

In the state of New Demotopia, an increasingly well-informed citizenry has now become much more actively engaged in public affairs, and not just as news consumers. Citizens there are also much more engaged in the creation and the content of their news. *page B6*

Inside Tomorrow's News

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POSSIBLE HEADLINES FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR NEWS

—Different News Economics



Nonprofit News in the Public Interest

Voters in New Harmony have recently approved laws to provide new and significant public funding and other public supports for journalism and news media in that state. The laws there now treat the news as a necessary public good, and one that is no longer adequately provided by private commerce. *page B8*



All E-News or Bust

All major news producers, in a last-ditch effort to survive financially and respond to changing consumer demand, are shifting their news to solely digital and mobile formats. This move is certainly cutting their costs, and it may in time restore the industry to profitability. It is also pulling the plug altogether on all newspapers and broadcast news. *page B10*

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THE “FRONT STORY”



Why Talk About the News?

An Invitation to this Discussion

From neighborhood gossip to world events, we humans share our “news” regardless of the time, place, or society. We speak, whisper, chant, paint, sing, write, blog, post, text, and tweet—a lot. What we do far less, however, is talk about the news process itself. What is and is not “news”? How is it created, edited, interpreted, and consumed? What is, or should be, its purpose? In what formats should it be delivered and by whom? How should we pay for it? What do we mean by journalism? Is it a vocation, a business, a form of mass media, a profession? What are its ethics and ideals?

Seen through a conventional lens, journalism is an attempt to systematically gather, verify, analyze, and interpret information, and then share truthful accounts of it in a timely manner. For the purposes of this discussion, however, this definition is intended

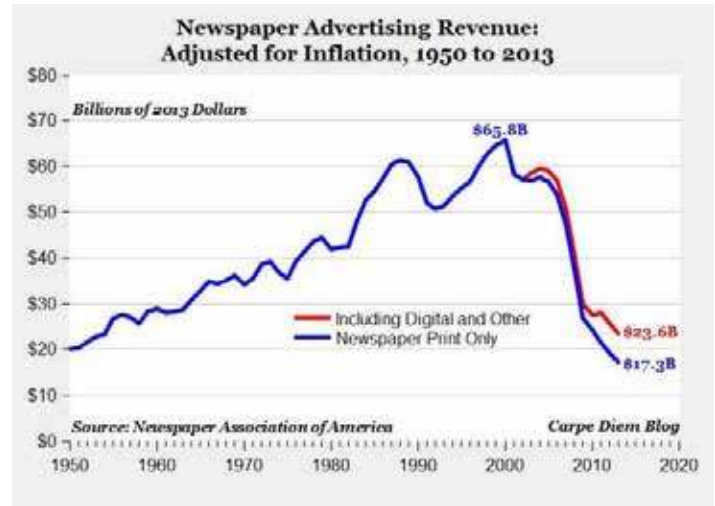
only to act as a starting point for exploring your own definitions of the news, the news media, and journalism. We hope to simply spur a discussion about why we share the news, how well we do it, how we should do it, how it’s changing, and what it all means for ourselves and our democracy. This discussion guide is an invitation to discuss those and other questions with your friends, neighbors, classmates, and fellow citizens. It offers a mix of both complementary and contrasting approaches or “possibilities” for the longer-term future of our news.

A key reason to talk about the news now is that the industry and the business of news is evolving in unprecedented ways, thanks to rapidly changing technology. From the printing press to the Smartphone, technology continues to shift how our news is created, delivered, and consumed.

The latest wave of change has been crashing especially hard on newspapers. Many regional and national papers have already died, and many others are on life support. Although many niche publications and newspapers in smaller markets have remained profitable, it's primarily because they have little or no competition. Considering just newsprint and its high cost, perhaps we should let most of our newspapers go the way of the fax machine, the floppy disc, the VHS player, and the buggy whip. On the other hand, newspaper reporters have traditionally provided the bulk of original reporting across all news media. Who will do that original reporting in the future and how well? Meanwhile, broadcast and cable news producers are also losing viewers and, more recently, ad revenue. While they are still profitable (thanks mostly to highly profitable campaign advertising), they have also significantly scaled back their news operations—providing less original reporting and more commentary, soft news, and aggregated news content from other sources.

Yet change is constant, inevitable, and can be good. So do we even need to talk about our changing news or its meaning for society? Perhaps the most common—and many would argue the most important—rationale is that a vibrant and independent press is considered an essential component of any self-governing society. A free press is the “fourth estate” that sustains an enlightened and well-informed citizenry and checks abuses of power. It is part of our larger democratic creed: that government is to be determined by the will of the people, enlightened through public discourse, which is kept enlightened and well informed by an effective and free press. In this ideal, the news provides citizens with access to information, verifies its truthfulness (or lack thereof), and, critically, explains its larger meaning. Without this, according to the creed, our larger democratic experiment in self-government will fail.

If we believe at least some part of this democratic creed, we might want to be somewhat intentional about the future of our news so as not to leave it in the hands of a narrow and privileged elite. We also might want to discuss it so we can be more thoughtful news consumers and because talking about our news can be fun.

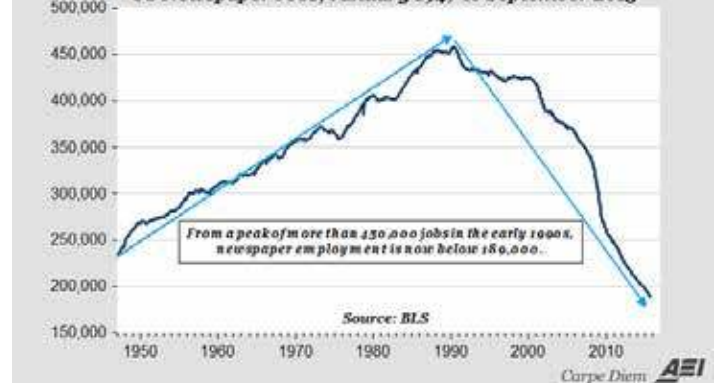


Evening News Audience Continues a 30-Year Decline

November-to-November Average Viewers per Night
in Millions



US Newspaper Jobs, January 1947 to September 2015





Key Terminology

A few definitions and distinctions to help get the discussion started

General-Interest News—news selected and produced for a broad audience and, as opposed to special-interest news, trade-group news, or public relations (organization-specific communications).

Hard News—general-interest, fact-based news related to current events, politics, government, the economy, elections, crime, legislation, public policy, etc. Sometimes also referred to as “accountability” news.

Infotainment—Nearly synonymous with soft news but more focused on entertainment news, such as celebrity culture, movies and TV, social media, etc. Also, programs and products that mimic news formats but don’t offer original reporting.

Investigative Reporting—The time-consuming, expensive, and challenging investigation, research, and digging required to determine the facts at the core of general-interest news.

Journalism—The profession and practice of reporting the news in a systematic way, including original investigatory reporting, writing, editing, production, and other news functions.

Legacy Media—News organizations, traditional newspapers, magazines, broadcast TV, and radio stations that existed before the advent of new media.

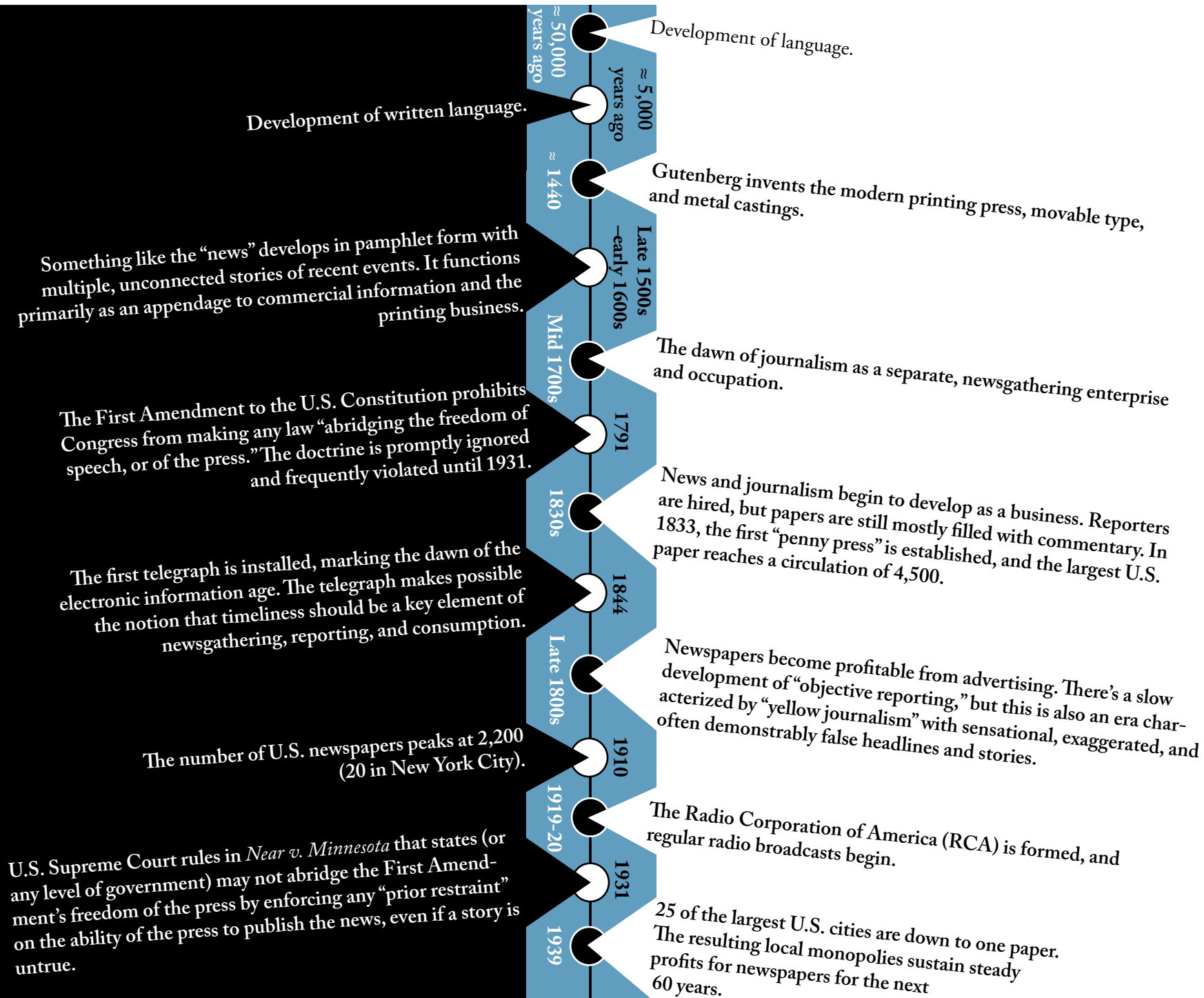
Long-Form Journalism—Traditionally the stories and reporting of national public affairs magazines, e.g., *Time*, *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, *The New Yorker* and their digital versions.

New Media—Newer news organizations that employ digital and mobile media platforms to deliver news content, which is often re-packaged from other legacy news media. Some new media companies are beginning to produce their own original reporting as well.

Public-Interest Reporting—General-interest news that focuses, at least in part, on the interests of the broader public. For example, news stories about pensions and retirement accounts that affect all or many workers are public interest stories. Conversely, small and hourly price fluctuations in the stock of a single company are probably not.

Soft News—Typically commentary and opinion, sports, weather, and stories on entertainment, the arts, personal health and family life, personal finance, education, food, etc.

A Brief Timeline of the News



A Brief Timeline of the News



Some Key Concerns and Discussion Questions

For our news in general and to ask in discussing each of the headline stories.

- Our news is changing, again and dramatically. How and why? And will that future be good, bad, or just different? And for whom? As described in the brief history above, the business of our news is always changing: the technology, audience habits and demand, and reporting practices. How has your own news consumption changed over your lifetime or in recent years? Is it a cause for concern or celebration if the newspaper industry, local broadcast news, or general-interest reporting dies out? Will something better replace them? Has it already?
- The business of the news. The prior monopoly power and profits of newspapers, broadcast networks, and their schedules are gone, along with their readers, viewers, and ad revenue. Hard news is now “unbundled” from other forms of entertainment that previously subsidized it. Now, you can get the weather, sports, movie reviews, celebrity gossip, etc., without having to buy, skim past, or even wait for the broadcast of hard news to end. Is the shrinking audience for hard news enough to pay for it? In a far more competitive market (nearly free digital news), is there enough subscription and ad revenue to pay for professional journalism? If not, what comes next?
- Information silos and motivated reasoning. Does the news help or hurt our understanding of current events? Is information self-interpreting? Has digital news become a babel of self-selected news and information silos? What is the effect on an “informed citizenry” and the public good now that everyone can access and choose their own facts and preferred interpretation of them? And how do selection bias, confirmation bias, the “backfire effect”—in which providing more information hardens views in the opposite direction—and other forms of motivated reasoning affect our understanding of the news?



- Is there a public good to the news? A key justification for a “free press” is that it provides a vital public good—an “informed citizenry” without which popular government cannot long survive. Is this true? And if so, must the news be provided only by private commerce? Or should we support it as we do other public goods? If so, can the press remain truly free and independent with public financing? Conversely, can it survive at all solely or primarily with private commercial funding?
- The legacy of legacy media. Was there ever a “golden age” for news reporting or just for the profitability of certain legacy news media? Or is it a golden age now—at least for consumer access to more information and perspective?

POSSIBLE HEADLINES FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR NEWS

Tomorrow’s News Headlines in Brief

The Headlines or Different Approaches to the Future of our News	The “Back Story” Different concerns and thinking behind each headline	How & What? Different ways to implement each headline. What might it look like?
Different News Goals & Values		
<p>Hard News Makes a Comeback</p> <p>Primary values: truth, accountability, an informed citizenry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We rely on journalism to seek the truth, explain it, and hold institutions and public figures accountable. • Increasingly, our news fails these functions as it cuts quality and staff. • News producers should raise their standards to retain readers/viewers and charge premium prices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More hard news and investigatory reporting, fact checking, context, and deep analysis—what it all means. • Less “breaking news,” “horse-race” coverage, and cheap commentary. • Industry-regulated branding for “high-quality” news. • Strengthen open meetings and records laws, whistleblower protections, etc.
<p>Infotainment and Niche News Prevail</p> <p>Primary value: consumer demand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times have changed. There are too many entertaining options out there for traditional legacy news to survive. • Our news must evolve toward what consumers and advertisers will pay for: soft news, infotainment, local, special interest news, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on local and special interest news, which remain profitable. • More infotainment: game show news, video game news, graphic novel news; more “listicles.” • More comedy or fake news formats like <i>The Daily Show</i> or <i>The Onion</i>.
<p>News For Democracy: Of, By, and For the People</p> <p>Primary value: supporting democracy by engaging citizens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our democracy and its citizens require the information and analysis that effective news can provide. • An educated citizenry should be involved in both producing and consuming its news. • The news should be more directly and politically meaningful to citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More emphasis on reporting, “what this means to you” and “what can you do about it.” • Legal and other systemic changes to increase citizen engagement in and control over public affairs. • Citizen journalists, Wiki News, cash awards/bounties for news stories.
Different News Economics—how to pay for it		
<p>Nonprofit News in the Public Interest</p> <p>Primary value: public funding for a public good</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial markets are no longer able to provide quality news. • We should support good journalism as we do other public goods—with public funding and other supports for nonprofit news organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for nonprofits, low profits, and cooperatives news producers. • Government subsidies or even ownership, though not management, for public news.
<p>All E-News or Bust</p> <p>Primary values: evolve and cut costs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future of the news is online and mobile, not in print or in broadcast • The high costs of newsprint, its distribution, and bricks and mortar are not necessary or sustainable. • Broadcast and cable news, while still profitable, can’t deliver quality reporting or attract younger viewers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New media and digital and mobile platforms and producers: e.g., BuzzFeed, Politico, Vox, Vice, etc. • News written by computer program. • No more free digital content: pay walls and subscriptions for all. • Let legacy newspapers and broadcast/cable news die.

Hard News Makes a Come Back

What if, under this headline, a consortium of legacy and new media organizations begin to succeed in a high-cost, high-risk initiative to reform the news and restore credibility, accuracy, accountability to their reporting, along with the expectations and demands of consumers for these values? Their goal is the truth: finding it, explaining it clearly, and holding public institutions and figures accountable to it. In both old and new ways, these news producers have significantly raised their standards and are providing high-quality journalism focused on original, general interest, and investigative reporting of hard news with more facts, fact checking, context, and analysis and less commentary, false equivalencies, and infotainment.

The Back Story: Concerns, Values, Goals

For most journalists, and certainly for their audiences, the traditional and primary product or “added value” of producing and consuming the news is not simply the text, video, or images of current affairs spewed out every day. The actual product is the reputation, the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the news media to produce reliable, truthful reporting. Their added value is in the myriad decisions required to decide what is newsworthy, check and double-check the facts, and provide sufficient context and thoughtful analysis. They must accurately summarize complex information, investigate claims, and report the truth. They must be fair and non-partisan and also unflinching in exposing deception, corruption, and wrongdoing. These are the ideals that citizens and consumers expect and that journalists strive for. They are also increasingly difficult to achieve with fewer staff in a declining industry. These ideals are also difficult because the audience, its attention span, and the ratings for such journalism are limited, fickle, and declining. “If it bleeds, it leads” is a cliché for a reason. In the short run—which is all that matters for news producers and their profits—the sensational captivates and sells no matter how unimportant it may be in the long run.

In that longer run, however, sensational headlines, misleading reporting, and cute cat videos are unlikely to reveal the truth or restore the reputation of the news media or the loyalty of news consumers. Short-term ratings and clickbait don’t equate to reader engagement,



subscribers, or profits. As legacy news media have chased ratings and profits with more soft news and staff cuts, they have abandoned not only their ideals but also that part of the news market that wants—and is most willing to pay for—hard news and high-quality reporting. It’s a mutually reinforcing death spiral, as consumers increasingly look elsewhere for their news. This approach would reform and renew the legacy and restore its audience by offering something they can’t get anywhere else: original, credible reporting, and the truth.

Possible Means: How?

Some reforms under this headline could include:

For news producers of all types:

- More original and investigative reporting. Less commentary, less emphasis on “breaking news” and “chasing-the-same story,” “inside-the-belt-way,” and electoral “horse-race” coverage and commentary.
- Eliminate false equivalencies and so-called “objective journalism” in the sense of “he-said, she-said” or “report-the-controversy” stories, which omit independent analysis or assume the truth is in the middle.
- More direct accountability for inaccurate claims and those who make them. Call out lies and liars.
- Get it right, do it right, and source it: better internal fact checking, enforce journalistic ethics, and include specific references or citations for all sources.
- Specialization and training for reporters—require them to be experts in their subfields.
- Standards and branding: news producers could collaborate in a new—and industry-regulating—certification and brand for high-quality journalism. The brand would certify that the reporting meets certain standards, say, that at least 60 percent of the total news text or time be focused on hard news.

For Government:

- Strengthen open public meetings and records laws (and streamline records requests) and whistleblower protections for the public and private sectors.
- Restore the Fairness Doctrine (require coverage of controversial public interest news and contrasting views) and apply it to all news formats.

For Consumers:

- Demand and pay for better news reporting.
- Stop consuming infotainment and clickbait.

The Op-Ed Page –

Some additional perspectives, concerns and possible consequences for discussion.

- How should journalists or their audiences determine what is “true”? What standards or which philosophy should guide them?
- How might we pay for this type of news? Do we think there is enough consumer demand for it? Are there other ways to pay for it?
- Would this renewed legacy and focus on hard news still provide a daily crossword puzzle, sports coverage, movie reviews, weather, stock prices, and fashion news?
- We’re all our own editors now. Individual consumers increasingly decide what’s news and how it should be written and delivered. Do you view these changes as positive or negative? In what ways and why?

Your Letters to the Editor:

A Look Inside this Newsroom:



Infotainment and Niche News Prevail

What if, under this headline, increasingly, the news stories that consumers want—and that advertisers will pay premium rates for—are only soft, special interest, and/or local news? As a consequence, such infotainment and niche news now predominates in all mass media formats. Consumer demand and commercial markets that respond to it are now the sole determinants of the form and content of our news. And that news is more entertaining and fun, more localized and individualized, more social, and focused on special interest and niche markets that continue to support and pay for original reporting and content.

The Back Story:

Concerns, Values, Goals

We should face the truth. Reading long stretches of undifferentiated text on paper or listening to someone read that text to us on TV or radio (and only at certain times of day) are no longer popular or commercially viable leisure-time activities. There are now just too many other, more entertaining options where consumers can get their news. For any form of public affairs reporting or news to survive, it has to be far more engaging and more entertaining. The news must surpass the lure of “on demand” movies, video games, reality TV shows, and Facebook, Twitter, and other social media feeds. Perhaps the only way for some part of the news industry to survive is for it to continue to evolve toward more engaging and more individualized content and formats.

Audience demand for soft news and infotainment continues to grow. Also, news for smaller regional, local, and even neighborhood (“hyper-local”) markets continues to command monopoly pricing and profits. Finally, special interest and other niche news markets will also pay for reporting on their activities. So news that serves a few hundred neighbors or the many thousands of fans of, for example, Frisbee golf, low-riders or muscle cars, true crime, origami, tattoos, pit bulls, barbecue, vintage Air Jordans, or pop, rap, opera, swing, go-go, blues, or chamber music—will all be profitable markets for those news producers focused and nimble enough to serve them.



Possible Means: How?

Some reforms under this headline could include:

For news producers of all types:

- More “comedy” or commentary news formats that incorporate but don’t produce news reporting: cable shows like the *Daily Show With Trevor Noah*, HBO’s *Real Time With Bill Maher* or *Last Week Tonight*, or web shows and sites such as *The Flipside With Michael Loftus*, or *the Onion*.
- Develop “Game Show” news and reality TV programs that are based on reporting about and knowledge of public affairs. “Name the Senate majority leader and win a prize!” Develop graphic novel news as well.
- Video Game News—Develop video games centered on reporting and knowledge of current events.
- Make news more visually appealing: add more color, more pictures, more charts, and video links to make reading faster and clearer; add section headings, bullet points for lists, and space between sections.
- Shorter articles and stories and/or break them up into bite-size nuggets: more “listicles.”
- News media companies should focus on “hyper-local” markets—the small town, the neighborhood, etc.
- Also, more “interest group” and “trade group” news: for memorabilia collectors, hobbyists, sports and music fans; for particular teams and artists, commercial interests, etc.
- Continue to produce more special-interest stories and fewer general-interest stories.
- Reduce duplicative and less profitable international and national-level reporting and bureaus.
- More partisan or advocacy news that appeals to—or advocates for—just slices of the political spectrum.

For Government:

- Reduce and/or eliminate subsidies and other support for general-interest reporting and public interest news programming on public TV, radio, or in other media formats.

For Consumers:

- Read, watch, and follow only the news that most appeals to your individual interests.

The Op-Ed Page –

Some additional perspectives, concerns, and possible consequences for discussion.

- How might humor and the other entertaining elements of this approach affect—
 - Our overall interest in the news; in public affairs in general
 - Our retention of information versus our understanding or knowledge?
 - The challenges of self-selected information silos and our biases?
- How might this approach contribute to “social diabetes,” where we’re overfed media content but undernourished with respect to the quality of that content? What might be some ways to counter this trend?
- How might consumers react to this approach? Will they consume more, less, different news?
- If hard news shrinks further and ultimately disappears, how might that affect our public discourse, civil society, our government?

Your Letters to the Editor:

A Look Inside this Newsroom:



News For Democracy: Of, by, and for the People

What if, under this headline, in the state of New Demotopia, an increasingly well-informed citizenry has become much more actively engaged in public affairs, and not just as consumers? Citizens in this state are also much more engaged in the creation and the content of their news. In New Demotopia, the goal of news is to support democracy by informing citizens and engaging them in public affairs. Citizens there are involved in selecting, producing, editing, and publicizing their news. Public affairs and other general interest news matters to more citizens because they are better able to see the direct connection between their lives and the events they help report on.

The Back Story:

Concerns, Values, Goals

Democracy needs the news. This possibility views a thriving and free press and its functions of investigative reporting, bearing witness, ensuring public accountability, and providing for an informed citizenry as central and necessary (though insufficient) for any form of democracy.

Increasingly, however, there are concerns that our news media is failing to perform these functions. In fact, many see our news media as doing more harm than good. While Americans are often accused (with some justification) of being ignorant of, unengaged with, and seemingly uninterested in public affairs, many feel that our news media actually contributes to these problems rather than mitigates them. Our current news reporting on public affairs makes many Americans feel more alienated and disempowered. Often our news stories seem to be about and for political elites rather than regular people. Our news tells us what those in power have done to us rather than what we can do about those in power—or their abuses of it. Similarly, many news stories seem directed to the interests of other journalists or newsmakers, such as news that focuses on “inside-the-beltway” issues, or daily changes in lawmakers’ positions or “horse-race” election coverage. These news stories typically fail to explain how power and policy actually and directly affect the lives of everyday citizens, much less how citizens might, in turn, affect power and policy. Add to this our huge and growing disparities in income, wealth, and political power, and it easily understandable why the other 98 percent of us increasingly ask, “why bother” with the news. This possibility offers a very different vision for our news and our democracy.



the free news source you can write



Possible Means: How?

Some possible reforms under this headline could include:

For news producers and consumers:

- Engage volunteer “citizen journalists” to compile and contribute basic news information and research.
- Add Wiki News and other formats that encourage direct public input; offer prizes/bounties for news.
- Work with nonprofits and other non-governmental organizations that can contribute content and analysis—e.g., investigatory news networks, the Knight Foundation, League of Women Voters, etc.
- Re-envision the journalist role from a mere “watchman,” scrivener, or translator of events to an active moderator responsible for nurturing multiple dialogues between people and power.
- Increase and use moderated online comments, “live chats,” and other participatory forums.
- Employ public “ombudsmen” to review, criticize, engage, and moderate among journalists and citizens.
- Reform reporting and news-writing practices to emphasize the broader picture and longer term, also “how it affects you,” and “what you might do about it.” Decrease “inside-the-beltway” news of small daily shifts and “horse-race” election coverage of interest only to other reporters and power elites.

For government:

- Enact structural/legal changes to renew some public trust and increase a sense of citizen control over our democracy: e.g., strengthen open meetings and records laws, enact campaign finance reform, restore the Voting Rights Act, reverse the Citizens United decision allowing unlimited political campaign donations by corporations, nonprofits, unions, and other organizations.
- Provide more and better education generally and “media literacy” specifically—at all levels and for all disciplines, especially civics, politics/political science, economics, science, philosophy, history, etc.

The Op-Ed Page –

Some additional perspectives, concerns, and possible consequences for discussion.

- How might we retrain journalists to be moderators and better engage the public?
- Who might volunteer to be “citizen journalists”? What kinds of skills, experience, and perspective might they bring to the news? And how might they impact its quality and content?
- How might certain legal or structural changes affect citizen engagement? What would it take to enact these changes? What might be the partisan impacts of this approach?
- How might we pay for this approach?

Your Letters to the Editor:

A Look Inside this Newsroom:



Nonprofit News in the Public Interest

What if, under this headline . . . voters in New Harmony have recently approved laws to provide new and significant public funding and other public supports for journalism and news media in that state? The laws there now treat the news as a necessary “public good” (like national defense, public parks, or clean air). And like those public goods, the news is now considered one that private commerce is no longer adequately providing. As a consequence, the citizens have determined that it is necessary to support the news just as they do other public goods, in multiple ways, including significant public funding and other public supports.

The Back Story:

Concerns, Values, Goals

Perhaps it's time to acknowledge that the old amalgam of commercial advertising and subscription revenue is not ever again going to support the kind of news reporting and news necessary for an informed citizenry. At a time when there are many competing entertainment options and free news content, audiences are no longer forced to consume their news in specific time slots, from a specific publication, or from a paper. So if we believe that good investigative reporting, bearing witness, public accountability, and an informed citizenry are necessary to sustain our democracy, then perhaps we should support these journalistic functions like other public goods—with public dollars and policy provisions.

Of course, with any proposal for public funding or other government support for journalism and news media, there is the concern that it would subvert the independence and objectivity of the reporting—a concern that has been a reality in many instances. On the other hand, such conflicts of interest are also present within existing funding for the press; for example, when a story involves a commercial owner or major advertiser. And in the news industry and in many government activities there are some relatively common procedural and institutional safeguards: e.g., separating finance from the editorial/reporting functions and providing employment safeguards. How well these safeguards work is always an important challenge, but one that is already faced by many public efforts, including some news media in the United States and abroad.



ALL E-News or Bust

What if, under this headline, all major news producers, in a last-ditch effort to survive financially, are shifting their news to solely digital and mobile formats? This move is certainly cutting their costs, and it may in time restore the industry to profitability. It is also pulling the plug altogether on all newspapers and broadcast news. High cost and environmentally wasteful newspapers and low-quality broadcast news (and possibly high-cost, lower-profit cable news) are being allowed—if not encouraged—to die quickly.

The Back Story:

Concerns, Values, Goals

The future of our news is digital and mobile. The news industry must face some hard facts and embrace the digital future that has already arrived. Consumers who still read newspapers in print or who regularly watch broadcast or cable news shows at a regular hour each night are a dying breed—both metaphorically and quite literally. Increasingly, consumers get their news elsewhere—from multiple and alternative digital and mobile sources. This is especially true for younger news consumers.

Notwithstanding their long-term dominance as legacy news organizations, newspapers and broadcast/cable news media no longer enjoy the monopoly they once had over news content and the habits of their customers. There are now many cheaper (often free) alternatives that are accessible whenever the consumer wants. The previously “captive audience” of newspaper subscribers and nightly TV news program viewers continues to shrink, isn’t coming back, and will likely never generate anywhere close to the advertising revenue that it once did.

Many legacy news organizations realize this reality but are struggling to make the transition. A number of newer, digital media organizations are already exploiting the opportunities provided by this creative destruction. This possibility envisions (a) supporting the continued rise of these newer, digital-only news organizations; (b) aiding legacy news organizations to transition if possible; and (c) letting those that can’t die out.



Possible Means: How?

Some of the possible reforms or proposals under this headline could include:

For the news industry:

- For new media, digital-only producers, continue to grow your market(s) and hire journalists and produce more original reporting, a la BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, Politico, Vox, Vice, the Intercept, the Daily Beast, and others—Netflix News?
- No more free online content! Implement pay walls for all content, and collude with competitors, work with government, whatever is needed to ensure a reliable revenue stream from online content.
- More stories written solely by computer algorithm and software; use a few organic, carbon-based journalists only to supervise, edit, and update.
- Create digital news portals that offer consumers an a la carte option of selecting their own “bundles” of content (don’t follow cable model). For print: Stop and sell the presses, take the losses, reduce your taxes, and/or declare bankruptcy.

For Government:

- Enact price supports for digital/mobile news. Set minimum prices per subscription or story—similar to what many states do for gas prices or what the Department of Agriculture does for many farm products.
- Provide regulatory approvals, tax incentives, and subsidized bandwidth to support both new and legacy media in transitioning from print and broadcast/cable to all digital/mobile.
- Pay for these incentives and subsidies partly with the savings from not having to collect, recycle, or dispose all that newsprint and—over time—all those TVs.
- For consumers: Cancel all newsprint or TV cable media subscriptions; recycle your TVs (unless used to view online news), and subscribe and pay for digital/mobile news.

The Op-Ed Page –

Some additional perspectives, concerns, and possible consequences for discussion.

- What might happen if this approach is still not enough to support our future news?
- How might we ensure access to the news for all citizens? What happens if the growing divisions of wealth and income maroon an entire unconnected class of citizens without access to the news?
- How might it work if news producers have to rely on other companies to distribute their content. What happens, for example, if Comcast raises its fees to consumers or if Facebook reduces its reimbursement rates?
- What happens to the journalism profession if there are no (or very few) full-time professional journalists?

Your Letters to the Editor:



About this Discussion Guide

What's it for? A way to start discussions, not settle arguments.

The Interactivity Foundation's discussion guides are intended to provide rough—and intentionally incomplete—maps to encourage and assist readers' own exploration, consideration, and discussion of the topic. As such they are intended to be “starting points” or sample trailheads for additional discussion, not clearly defined destinations. They are not meant to be answer books or expert policy papers that guide readers to a singular or specific policy solution. Rather, we hope that they will generate more questions, more exploration, and more discussion. As a consequence, most all of the questions, issues, and multiple contrasting “policy possibilities” in this discussion guide are intentionally broad, non-specific, incomplete, and sometimes vague and conflicting.

How should it be used? Some suggested discussion guidelines.

Of course, one answer is however you like. While we use and generally promote a few guidelines for any public discussion, we also encourage anyone interested in this or any other topic to experiment with both the discussion process and the topic. Some of the guidelines for group discussion that we've found helpful include:

- The overall goal is to foster engagement, encourage exploration, increase understanding, and have fun.
- There is no intent or effort to achieve group agreement, consensus, or any other group decision. Exploration of contrasting viewpoints and divergence are encouraged, and respectful disagreement is expected and allowed.
- We seek to avoid two-sided and confrontational debates in favor of a group discussion that encourages and respects multiple points of view and builds on the contributions of all participants.
- We're more interested in broader trends, bigger picture concepts, long-term choices, and trade-offs. And we try to avoid getting hung up on any specific facts or small-scale problems (whether those presented in this guide or from participants' outside reading, research or experience).
- We encourage everyone to participate and are not concerned with expertise or perfectly developed solutions. We hope that our discussions are safe spaces where all participants can try out and play with new and different ideas—especially those that may need more exploration or which may be politically unpopular.

- Finally, our discussions are—
 - Generally small-group discussions with at least four to five participants but not more than 10, with six to eight being ideal.
 - Facilitated to help move the discussion along and keep it exploring, not mired in one or more of the swamps of specificity or ambiguity, frustration or despair, or single-issue advocacy, etc.

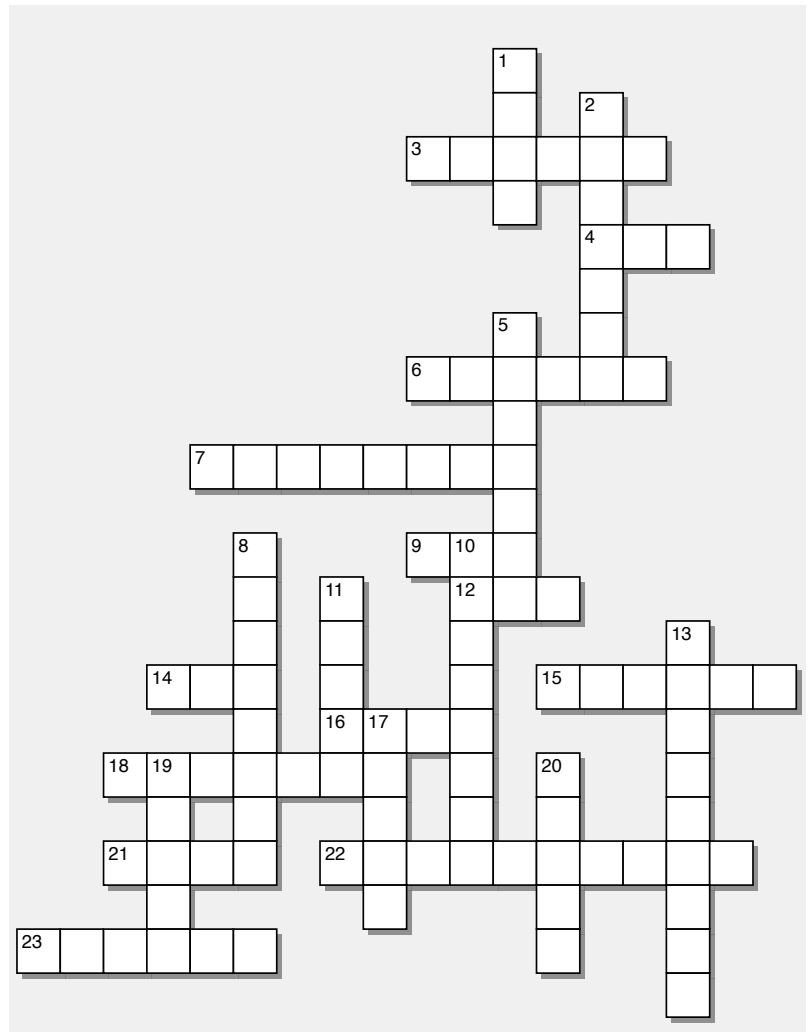
Who developed it and how? This discussion guide was developed and published by the Interactivity Foundation, which is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that works to enhance the quality and quantity of our public discourse—and ultimately the health of our democracy—through facilitated, small-group discussion projects on broad topics of public concern. The Foundation supports the discussion of public policy concerns and the exploration and development of multiple and contrasting approaches to them. [The Foundation does not, however, recommend or otherwise advocate for any of the specific ideas or policy “possibilities” in its discussion guides or other publications.](#) The Foundation's administrative offices are located in Parkersburg, West Virginia, but it employs fellows who facilitate and manage the long-term discussion projects that produce these guides, and other staff in other locations around the United States. You can find out more about the Interactivity Foundation at www.interactivityfoundation.org.

Most of the content for this discussion guide was developed from the long-term discussions of two panels, each with seven or eight members. One panel was composed of participants with professional and/or educational expertise in one or more areas of the news media. The second panel was principally (but not exclusively) composed of interested “generalists.” Their discussions were facilitated by an IF Fellow, the project manager and editor of this discussion guide. Although many of the policy possibilities and other ideas in this discussion guide were developed from the panelists' discussions (in various and edited forms), the Interactivity Foundation, not the panelists, is solely responsible for all content. And the inclusion of any policy possibility for discussion is not in any way intended as a recommendation or endorsement of that or any other possibility by the Foundation or any panelist.

Tomorrow's Puzzle

Across

3. Remembered for his WWII radio broadcasts from London.
4. _____ media, uses digital and mobile platforms only.
6. Inspiration for *Citizen Kane*.
7. Sawmill sound or online media site known for social, entertainment, and breaking news.
9. Nonprofit media org.
12. _____ *Today*, a national newspaper.
14. First cable ch. with 24-hour news coverage.
15. _____ media - traditional newspapers, magazines and broadcast news.
16. _____ news: stories and commentary on entertainment, arts, culture, food, weather, sports, etc.
18. _____ journalism, reporting by members of the general public.
21. Weekly news magazine.
22. The enterprise and profession of reporting the news.
23. Journalism that features sensational headlines and little or no legitimate, well-researched reporting.



Down

1. _____ news, fact-based reporting on public affairs, especially politics, government, the economy, legislation, public policy, and crime.
2. Its slogan is "fair and balanced" (two words).
5. First woman to anchor an evening network news broadcast.
8. Signed off each broadcast with "And that's the way it is . . ."
10. Journalism award and early proponent of yellow journalism.
11. _____ equivalence, a logical fallacy common to many news articles.
13. Trevor Noah hosts this cable news satire (two words).
17. Garden vegetable or influential comedic spoof of the news.
19. Current co-anchor of the *PBS NewsHour*.
20. *The Daily* _____, an opinion and reporting website focused on politics and pop culture.

Other Publications of the Interactivity Foundation

Other Discussion Guides previously termed "Discussion Reports"

Freshwater for the Future (2016)
 The Future of Employment (2015)
 Global Responsibility for Children (2015)
 The Future of Mobility (2014)
 Invention, Innovation and Intellectual Property (2014)
 U.S. National Security & Defense Policy (2014)
 What Might Childhood Look Like in the Future (2014)
 The Human Impact on Climate Change (2013)
 Helping America Talk (rev. 2012)*
 The Future of Higher Education (2012)
 Future Possibilities for Civil Rights Policy (2011)*
 Democratic Nation Building (2011)
 The United States' Democratic Promise (2011)*
 The Future of K-12 Education (2011)*

The Future of Energy (2011)
 Food: What Might Be For Dinner (2011)*
 Helping Out: Humanitarian Policy for Global Security (2011)*
 Health Care: the Case of Depression (3rd ed. 2010)
 How Will We All Retire (2010)
 Privacy & Privacy Rights (2nd ed. 2010)
 Anticipating Human Genetic Technology (2009)
 Property (2009)
 The Future of Regulation (2009)
 Rewarding Work (2009)
 Science (2009)

* Also available in Spanish

Other IF Publications

Let's Talk Politics: Restoring Civility Through Exploratory Discussion (2013)
 Julius "Jay" Stern: A Biography (2010)
 Contrasting Possibilities and the Interactivity Foundation Discussion Process (2nd ed. 2009)
 Facilitation Guidebook for Small Group Citizen Discussions (2nd ed. 2009)
 Support Materials for the IF Discussion Process (2009)
 Teaching Tips (2009)
 Guidebook for Student-Centered Classroom Discussions (2008)
 Public Discussion as the Exploration and Development of Contrasting Conceptual Possibilities (2008)
 Facilitation Guidebook (2005)

Tomorrow's Puzzle Answers

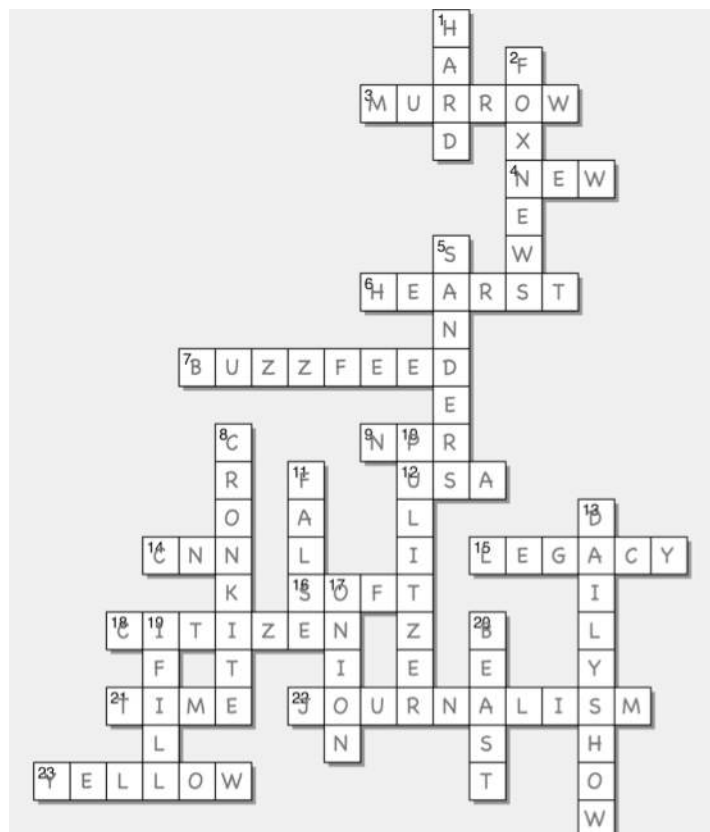


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TIMES

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WANT ADS
GET RESULTS

