

In doing so, the volume is also a crucial contribution to trace the recent history of journalism. The author rightfully positions the story told in the chapters as the continuation of the one explained by Pablo Boczkowski (2004) in *Digitizing the News*. In the influential book that pioneered a new wave of ethnographies focused on the appropriation of technology by the newsrooms, Boczkowski concentrated on the first years of online journalism in newspapers, with the core of his fieldwork in 1997–1999 and tracing back to the 1980s the early digital experiments. Braun's ethnographic observations concentrate on the period 2009–2011, while covering over a decade of evolution through document analyses and interviews. The choice to investigate the online presence of a television conglomerate condenses the key trends of the relationship of journalism with the Internet in that second decade of its history: the rise of video as the king of online content, the fragmentation of audiences, the development of blogs and social media, and the subsequent challenge of managing the participation of the public. By focusing on a specific case study, *This Program Is Brought to You by ...* unveils with precious detail and analytical insight how complex the process of dealing with all these innovations is. Only such an in-depth approach can help us make sense of the ways change takes place in journalism, the perfect antidote against the simplistic expectations full of technological determinism that often populate both scholarly and professional discourses.

The eclectic theoretical approach proves to be immensely fruitful to present the sheer diversity of aspirations, definitions, and strategies for online distribution to be found within a media company such as MSNBC.com, and beyond: the online newsroom, the executives, the television programs, and the 'transparent intermediaries' that provided technical solutions. The citizen journalism start-up Newsvine, acquired by MSNBC.com in 2007, and the popular *The Rachel Maddow Show* are two of the systems that Braun thoroughly dissects with skillful ability to take the *vantage point* of a given actor at a time in order to demonstrate how the interactions made sense to each of them. This multifaceted portrait of the scattered, messy nature of contemporary media work shows how, despite the constant tensions between actors, MSNBC.com managed to construct flexible enough distribution architectures accommodating the diverse *provincial* needs and continued to reach a mass audience by creating niche online products.

## Reference

Boczkowski PJ (2004) *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chris Peters and Marcel Broersma (eds)

*Rethinking journalism again: Societal role and public relevance in a digital age*

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*Rethinking Journalism Again* provides a compelling set of perspectives on the shifting dynamics of journalism in a digital era. Divided into two parts titled "Journalism and its societal role" and "Journalism and its public relevance," the first half of this collection

tackles the question of what journalism is, what it does, and its normative foundations. The second half shifts attention to the public that journalism claims to serve and reconsiders what it means to be a journalist in light of economic turmoil and the rise of participatory journalism. This collection is carefully reflective, both in the sense of reexamining journalism studies' long-held beliefs about journalism's democratic role in society and in the sense of reexamining its own assumptions about whether journalism is truly in crisis – and whether journalism is transforming.

In the introduction, editors Marcel Broersma (Professor of Journalistic Culture and Media at University of Groningen) and Chris Peters (Associate Professor of Media and Communication at Aalborg University Copenhagen) call for rethinking journalism's presumed role in society as an 'information source, watchdog, public representative, [and] mediator for political actors' (p. 5). Broersma and Peters contend that journalism's actual functions have grown distant from democracy, which is part of the impetus for this follow-up to *Rethinking Journalism: Trust and Participation in a Transformed News Landscape* (Peters & Broersma, 2013).

With a focus on journalism's functions (which the editors distinguish from functionalism), Broersma and Peters advocate that journalism scholars adopt "a bottom-up approach that carefully situates the functions of journalism in lived experiences" (p. 15). They persuasively argue that a top-down approach "from grand normative theories that by definition mould journalism into a predefined democratic framework" is limiting and that it behooves scholars to begin with audiences instead.

Three of the ensuing chapters take a "bottom-up" approach by considering how audiences find and select news. Rasmus Kleis Nielsen provides a useful taxonomy of gatekeeping in a digital era, including editorial, link-based, affinity-based, and audience-based gatekeeping. Pablo Boczkowski and Eugenia Mitchelstein examine the gap between journalists' priorities and news consumers' preferences, and conclude that journalists are far more interested in public affairs news than their audiences. Finally, Peters and Broersma consider the disparity between readers' professed interests in public interest news and their news-reading routines.

Separate from the audience, two chapters provide grounded insight by considering the ways that journalists' roles have evolved as they attempt to adapt to severe economic conditions. These chapters make the case that journalism's response to digital upheaval bodes poorly for its practitioners and, by extension, its public. Mark Deuze and Tamara Witschge explain the "hamster wheel" burdens placed on journalists who are in increasingly precarious employment situations. Their discussion foreshadows Jane Singer's chapter on entrepreneurial journalism, in which she explains that news startups struggle to survive in part because journalists who lead them lack business acumen.

Perhaps most compelling is the final afterword by Stuart Allan. By way of analyzing the iconic news photograph of Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi, Allan revives the previous key concept of stereotyping in journalism studies and advocates "elaborating a critical revisioning of journalism's social responsibilities, especially when pejorative imagery – indifferent to human dignity – risks being normalized as reasonable, even legitimate in authenticating the realities it claims to represent" (p. 228). The stakes of rethinking journalism's role and relevance come into focus in Allan's afterword, which recenters a normative connection between journalism and social justice.

Contributors to this collection regularly call for journalism to be reconceptualized as multiple rather than singular, but also tend to divide journalism into only two types: legacy (“mass media”) journalism and participatory (“digital”) journalism. This old-versus-new bifurcation could be enriched with a more textured consideration of variation within these two broad categories of journalism. Analyzing variation in terms of topic focus (such as public affairs, human interest, and entertainment) and the chief ideal (such as objectivity, advocacy, or deliberation) that guides different news organizations would help justify why the authors suggest moving away from a monolithic conception of journalism.

*Rethinking Journalism Again* succeeds in making a strong case that a “bottom-up approach” to journalism studies would help scholars grasp and explain journalism’s dynamics in the wake of digital and economic transformation while also questioning its own premise that journalism has transformed as substantially as hand-wringing “crisis discourse” claims. What the book leaves largely unaddressed, however, is what the contributors believe journalism’s normative role ought to be. Some contributors register concern about present realities but seldom develop visions of what journalism’s societal role should become.

Overall, this collection wrestles with key questions and understudied dynamics in digital journalism, accounts for and questions the extent of “digital disruption” that has taken place, and, in Allan’s afterword, begins to chart a conscientious path forward for responsible journalism.

## Reference

Peters, C. & Broersma, M.J. (Eds.). (2013). *Rethinking journalism: Trust and participation in a transformed news landscape*. London: Routledge.