



# We the Media

---


Dan Gillmor






---


→ This book is about journalism's transformation from a 20th century mass-media structure to something profoundly more grassroots and democratic.



---


➔ Big Media, in any event, treated the news as a lecture. We told you what the news was. You bought it, or you didn't. You might write us a letter; we might print it. (If we were television and you complained, we ignored you entirely unless the complaint arrived on a libel lawyer's letterhead.) Or you cancelled your subscription or stopped watching our shows. It was a world that bred complacency and arrogance on our part.






---


→ Tomorrow's news reporting and production will be more of a conversation, or a seminar. The lines will blur between producers and consumers, changing the role of both in ways we're only beginning to grasp now. The communication network itself will be a medium for everyone's voice, not just the few who can afford to buy multimillion-dollar printing presses, launch satellites, or win the government's permission to squat on the public's airwaves.






---

➔ This evolution-from journalism as lecture to journalism as a conversation or seminar-will force the various communities of interest to adapt. Everyone, from journalists to the people we cover to our sources and the former audience, must change their ways. The alternative is just more of the same.



- 
- 
- ➔ There are three major constituencies in a world where anyone can make the news. Once largely distinct, they're now blurring into each other.

# Journalists

---

- We will learn we are part of something new, that our readers/listeners/viewers are becoming part of the process. I take it for granted, for example, that my readers know more than I do-and this is a liberating, not threatening, fact of journalistic life. Every reporter on every beat should embrace this. We will use the tools of grassroots journalism or be consigned to history. Our core values, including accuracy and fairness, will remain important, and we'll still be gatekeepers in some ways, but our ability to shape larger conversations-and to provide context-will be at least as important as our ability to gather facts and report them.

# Newsmakers


---

- Howard Dean's presidential campaign failed, but his methods will be studied and emulated because of the way his campaign used new tools to engage his supporters in a conversation. The people at the edges of the communications and social networks can be a news-maker's harshest, most effective critics. But they can also be the most fervent and valuable allies, offering ideas to each other and to the newsmaker as well.

# The former audience


---


- Once mere consumers of news, the audience is learning how to get a better, timelier report. It's also learning how to join the process of journalism, helping to create a massive conversation and, in some cases, doing a better job than the professionals. For example, Glenn Reynolds, a.k.a. "Instapundit," is not just one of the most popular webbloggers; he has amassed considerable influence in the process. Some grassroots journalists will become professionals. In the end, we'll have more voices and more options.



---


→ Media companies are merging to create ever larger information and entertainment conglomerates. In too many cases, serious journalism-and the public trust-continue to be victims. All of this leaves a journalistic opening, and new journalists-especially citizen journalists-are filling the gap.






---


➔ Instead of a news anarchy or lockdown, I seek a balance that simultaneously preserves the best of today's system and encourages tomorrow's emergent, self-assembling journalism. In the following pages, I hope to make the case that it's not just necessary, and perhaps inevitable, but also eminently workable for all of us.






---

➔ The rise of the citizen journalist will help us listen. The ability of anyone to make the news will give new voice to people who've felt voiceless-and whose words we need to hear. They are showing all of us-citizen, journalist, newsmaker-new ways of talking, of learning.

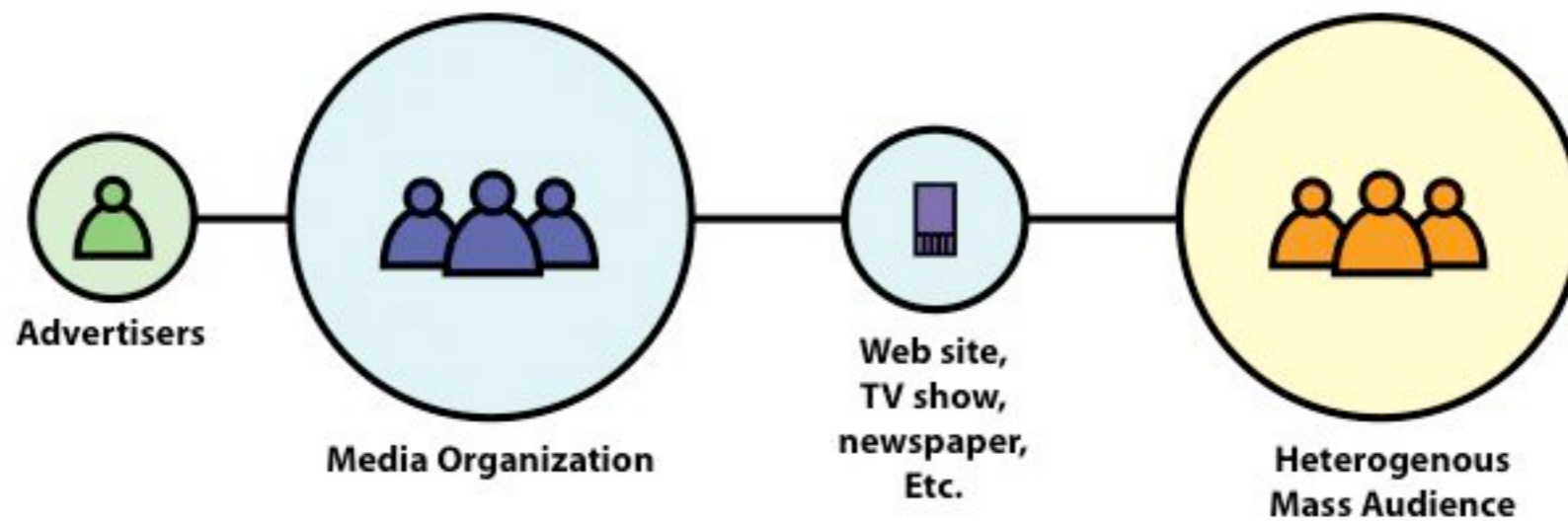


- 
- 
- ➔ In the end, they may help spark a renaissance of the notion, now threatened, of a truly informed citizenry. Self-government demands no less, and we'll all benefit if we do it right.

# We Media

## Broadcast: Top-down news

Model also called transmit, push. Characterized by media organization control. All news is filtered through organization before getting to audience.



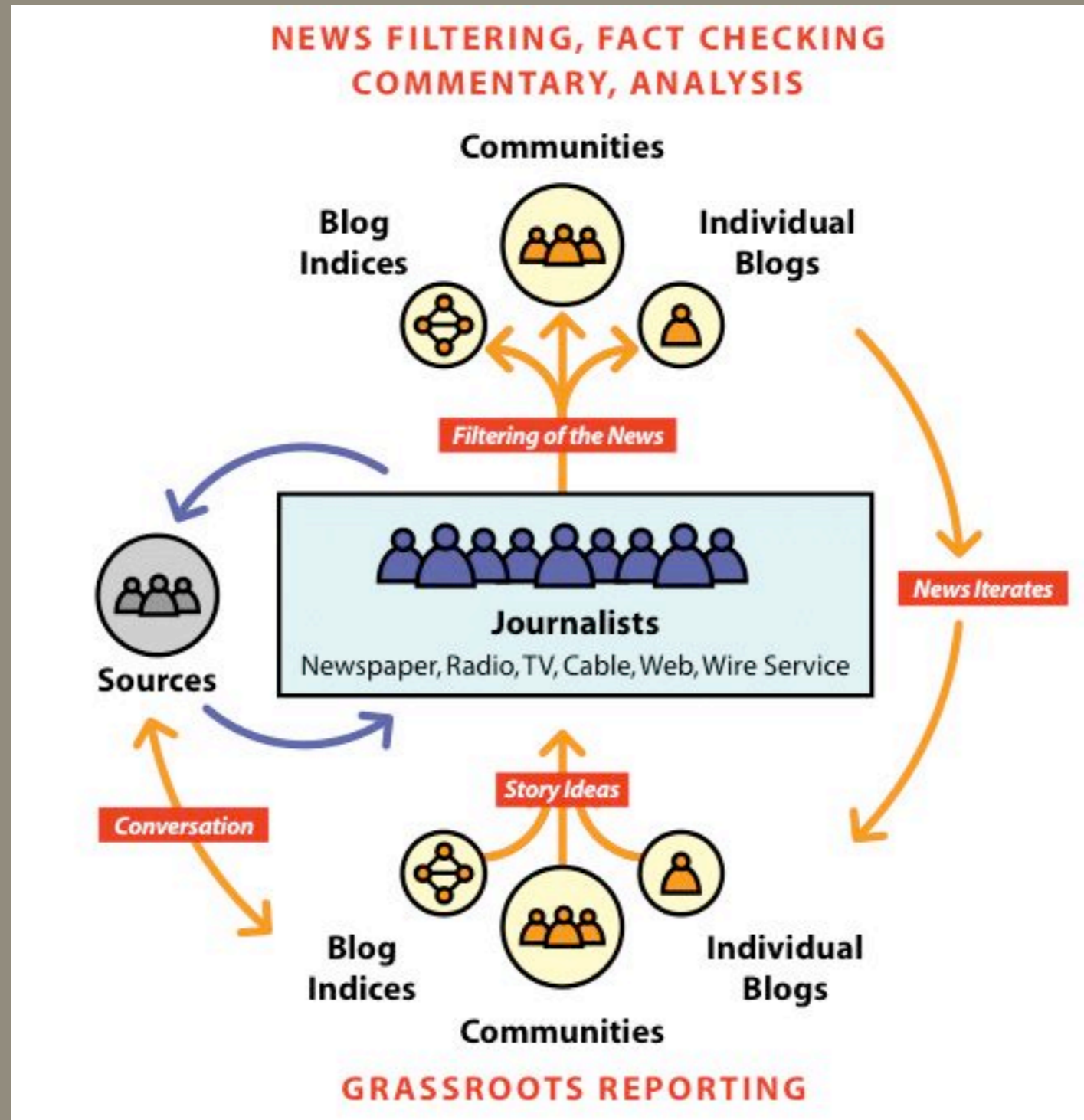
# We Media


## Intercast: Bottom-up news

Also called peer-to-peer, social network. Participants are peers and have ability to change roles. News is often unfiltered by a mediator before getting to its audience.




# We Media






---


→ Talk radio predated, and in many ways anticipated, the weblog phenomenon.



---


➔ But modern talk radio had another crucial feature: the participation of the audience. People-regular people-were invited to have their say on the radio. Before that, regular people had no immediate or certain outlet for their own stories and views short of letters to the editor in newspapers. Now they could be part of the program, adding the weight of their own beliefs to the host's.






---


➔ Justin Hall was a sophomore at Swarthmore College in 1993 when he heard about the Web. He coded some pages by hand in HTML. His “Justin's Links from the Underground”<sup>15</sup> may well have been the first serious weblog, long before specialized weblog software tools became available. The first visitor to Hall's site from outside the university came in 1994.





---


➔ The scene was now set for the rise of a new kind of news. But some final pieces had yet to be put in place. One was technological: giving everyday people the tools they needed to join this emerging conversation. Another was cultural: the realization that putting the tools of creation into millions of hands could lead to an unprecedented community.



# Open Sourcing the News


---


- Open source software projects are a digital version of a small-town tradition: the barn raising. But open source projects can involve people from around the world.
- If my readers know more than I do (which I know they do), I can include them in the process of making my journalism better. While there are elements of open source here, I'm not describing an entirely transparent process. But new forms of journalistic tools, such as the Wiki (which I'll discuss in the next chapter), are entirely transparent from the outset. More are coming.
- An open source philosophy may produce better journalism at the outset, but that's just the start of a wider phenomenon. In the conversational mode of journalism



---


→ The former audience has the most important role in this new era: they must be active users of news, and not mere consumers. The Net should be the ally of thought and nuance, not a booster shot for knee-jerk reaction. An informed citizenry cannot sit still for more of the same. It must demand more, and be part of the larger conversation. We will lose a great deal if this does not occur.






---


→ The Internet is the most important medium since the printing press. It subsumes all that has come before and is, in the most fundamental way, transformative. When anyone can be a writer, in the largest sense and for a global audience, many of us will be. The Net is overturning so many of the things we've assumed about media and business models that we can scarcely keep up with the changes; it's difficult to maintain perspective amid the shift from a top-down hierarchy to something vastly more democratic and, yes, messy. But we have to try, and nowhere is that more essential than in that oldest form of information: the news.






---


➔ Blogs and other modern media are feedback systems. They work in something close to real time and capture—in the best sense of the word—the multitude of ideas and realities each of us can offer. On the Internet, we are defined by what we know and share. Now, for the first time in history, the feedback system can be global and nearly instantaneous.






---


→ I'm still not convinced that Big Media is doing the most important thing: listening. We are still in a top-down mode and don't realize that the conversation is more important than our pronouncements. I see progress, but not enough.






---

➔ I'm most gratified at how the “former audience,” as I call it, has taken these tools and turned its endless ideas into such unexpected, and in some cases superb, forms of journalism.



---

➔ Open systems are central to any future of a free (as in freedom) flow of information. Yet the forces of central control— governments and big businesses, especially the copyright cartel— are pushing harder and harder to clamp down on our networks. To preserve their business models, which are increasingly outmoded in a digital age, they would restrict innovation and, ultimately, the kinds of creativity on which they founded their own businesses.





Your voice matters. Now, if you have something worth saying, you can be heard.