

ABSTRACT

Chicken Noodle News: CNN and the Quest for Respect

Katy McDowall

Director: Sara Stone, Ph.D.

This thesis, focusing on Cable News Network, studies how cable news has changed in the past 30 years. In its infancy, CNN was a pioneer. The network proved there was a place for 24-hour news and live story coverage. More than that, CNN showed that 24-hour-news could be done cheaper than most of the era's major networks. But time has changed cable news. As a rule, it is shallower, more expensive and more political, and must adapt to changing technologies. This thesis discusses ways CNN can regain its place in the ratings against competitors like Fox News and MSNBC, while ultimately improving cable news by sticking to its original core value: the news comes first. To accomplish this, this thesis looks at CNN's past and present, and, based upon real examples, makes projections about the network's (and journalism's) future.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS:

Dr. Sara Stone, Department of Journalism, Public Relations and
New Media

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM:

Dr. Andrew Wisely, Director

DATE: _____

CHICKEN NOODLE NEWS:
CNN AND THE QUEST FOR RESPECT

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Baylor University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Honors Program

By
Katy McDowall

Waco, Texas

May 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
----------------------	---

The Pre-CNN Television News World and the Big Three

Ted Turner and His Plan

The CNN Team

A Television Newspaper: The Philosophies CNN Was Founded On

From Now on and Forever: CNN Goes on the Air

“Chicken Noodle News”

Not So Chicken Noodle: CNN Stands its Ground

The Big Three (Try To) Strike Back

CNN at its Prime

2. CNN TODAY.....	29
-------------------	----

Later History: How CNN Changed the News Landscape of the 1990s

Challenges for CNN in the 1990s

The Rise of Competition: Fox News and MSNBC

How “The Most Trusted Name in News” Operates Today

Fox News and MSNBC: How They Compete Today

The Ratings Battle of 2011

Programming Changes: Larry King Signs Off

Today's Programming Lineup	
3. TODAY'S NEWS LANDSCAPE.....	51
Gimmicks, Shallow Reporting and Over-Coverage of the Unimportant	
The Stars of the News	
The Business of Cable News	
Today's News Audience	
The Impact of the Internet, Social Networking and Other New Technologies	
The New Media Audience	
Keeping Up With the Times	
Is Twitter Journalism?	
4. WHAT SHOULD CNN DO?.....	75
Authoritative Reporting	
Distinctive International Edge	
Remain Objective	
Speed, Technology and Relevance	
Interactivity and Citizen Journalism	
Back to TV: Strong Personalities, New Programs	
Public Service v. Business	
The Future: Can CNN Fix Cable News?	
APPENDIX.....	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	109

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would not have been possible to write this honors thesis without the myriad of support I received. I would first like to thank my advisor Dr. Sara Stone, professor of journalism, public relations and new media at Baylor University, for her patience and guidance. Her kind words and brilliant ideas were fundamental to the completion and success of this project. I also am grateful to my other thesis committee members, Dr. Doug Ferdon, professor of journalism, public relations and new media, and Dr. James SoRelle, professor of history, who both inspired my research and devoted their time.

I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Allin Means, associate professor of journalism at Missouri Baptist University. During his time at Baylor, Dr. Means was vital to the formation of this project and the beginnings of my research. A special thanks also must be given to the faculty and staff of the Baylor University Honors Program, who provided invaluable resources, knowledge and encouragement throughout this project and my entire undergraduate career at Baylor.

Lastly, I offer gratitude to my family—Linda, Stephen and Robert—and my fellow Honors Program students and friends, who supported me throughout this endeavor.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Please, Ted! Don't do this to us!

*If you commit to a venture of this size
you'll sink the whole company.*

The anonymously written sign glared up at Ted Turner from his desk. The year was 1978 and word had spread around the offices of Turner's independent television station WTCG, Channel 17, of Atlanta, Ga., that he wanted to start a 24-hour news channel. A news operation of such magnitude could destroy all of the company's resources before becoming self-sufficient. It would need an electronic newsroom, hundreds of staff, domestic bureaus around the country, international bureaus and news feeds, satellite access and more. It would cost \$15 million to \$20 million to launch and even more to keep it operating before subscriptions and advertising fees would begin to pick up just some of the slack.

His employees were worried.

Turner was not.

He left the sign right where it was. He was not going to lose his nerve.¹

Two years later, Cable News Network (CNN), the first 24-hour news channel, would be on the air. Built upon the principle that the news came first, Turner, who had no background in news, created a news channel that had to overcome great odds: the belief that 24-hour news coverage was unnecessary, the monopoly the major networks had over television and news, and much more. Today, a world without 24-hour news seems like a

distant memory, as does a world with hard-hitting television news that is not overrun with political agenda and discussion of the news, rather than substantial reporting. The cable news world is a lot different today than it used to be. The years before CNN and before television news lost its edge, however, are not that long ago.

The Pre-CNN Television News World and the Big Three

In the pre-CNN world, 24-hour television news coverage was unheard of. There were three major networks: American Broadcasting Company (ABC), National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). These networks, the Big Three, dominated television with their programming—their long-running sitcoms and cop shows—living off of money from advertisers. They were the main sources of television news, yet they only allotted half-an-hour, or 22 minutes with commercials, of news each evening. The networks believed that was “the limit of the public’s appetite for news.”² Yet, in the 1970s, after television news had proven its effectiveness in its earlier years, it is hard to believe that there was a cap on people’s appetite.

Television transformed the news world after its introduction in the beginning of the 1950s. With its advent, the American public could watch as events unfolded around them from their living rooms. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, viewers could witness vivid video of sit-ins, marches and confrontations with segregationists as the Civil Rights Movement escalated.³ Television news played a crucial role in advancing race relations as the movement became “the first great television news story.”

According to CBS commentator Eric Savareid, television reporting on civil rights acted as “a critical prod to America’s conscience and the spur to congressional action.”⁴ For CBS producer William Peters, “The Negro revolution of the 1960 could not have occurred without television coverage.”⁵ Television news reporters covered events such as Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech and the Freedom Summer movement of 1964, which called for African-American voter registration. News anchors made sure Americans were “aware of the Deep South’s failure to create even elementary justice.”⁶ The coverage of these stories made the early 1960s a time of growth for television news, as viewers tuned in more and more for the big news stories of the day.

For example, more than 100 million people watched President John F. Kennedy’s funeral after his assassination on Nov. 22, 1963. For four days, life in the United States stopped. Businesses and schools closed. People cried in the streets.⁷ Even CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite took off his glasses and wiped his own eyes after he interrupted a soap opera to bring the news to the nation that Kennedy had been shot and killed.⁸ The networks brought “the most traumatic national experience of the age” into the homes of the American people.⁹

Hour after hour, they went live with developments. People watched as Kennedy’s young son saluted his father’s casket and as Jacqueline Kennedy, overcome with grief, attempted to remain strong throughout the funeral. Bewitched by the continued coverage, millions of Americans witnessed Kennedy’s murderer Lee Harvey Oswald as he was shot and killed by Jack Ruby live on television.¹⁰ The events displayed the power of television as a news medium throughout the coverage, as people watched the events as they

happened, minute-by-minute, their eyes glued to the screen. For the first time, the American public watched, united in tragedy.

Television news' significance was even more apparent during the Vietnam War. In the later 1960s and early 1970s, the medium played a role in turning the American public against the war. According to NBC news commentator Edwin Newman, "Television brought the Vietnam War into our living rooms on a nightly basis. [News networks] produced close-up sensational images of war. American viewers saw the real experience of war transformed into theatrics on the 21-inch screen. And they recoiled."¹¹ The major recoil, during President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration, came in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive in early 1968.

Following America's "first TV superbattle," NBC's Walter Cronkite went to Vietnam and returned to report on the war.¹² Upon his return, he reported, "It seems now more than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate."¹³ According to polls, Cronkite was "the most trusted man in America." The impact of his statements and other coverage on the war was dramatic. Every night, ABC, CBS and NBC attracted an average combined audience of 30 million viewers, including Johnson.

Obsessed with television news, the president had three television sets in the Oval Office, one for each network.¹⁴ After Cronkite's report on the war, Johnson is believed to have remarked, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the war."¹⁵ Approval of Johnson's Vietnam policy dropped from 39 percent before the Jan. 31 offensive to 26 percent by March of 1968. Less than one-third of the country believed the war was still being won.¹⁶ David Halberstam of *The New York Times* wrote, "Cronkite's reporting changed the balance; it was the first time a war had been declared over by an anchorman."¹⁷

The influence of the anchormen continued into President Richard Nixon's administration, so much so that Nixon and Vice President Spiro Agnew demonized the media for altering the public's opinion on the war.¹⁸ Nixon accused journalists of focusing on the problems rather than the United States' achievements in the war. He believed his worst enemy was the press and began to wage war against the television media's integrity. Yet, he maintained that television was more important than any other medium and continued to try and spread what little good news was left about the war. According to Cronkite, it was "a grand conspiracy to destroy the credibility of the press."¹⁹ The truth, however, was already apparent. The Vietnam War was not going to be won.

These are just three examples of powerful news coverage during television news' early years. Yet, the Big Three did not take news seriously. Owners of the networks saw news divisions as a way of "paying the debt television owed to society for the opportunity to profit by using the airwaves." They did not think of news as a profit center for the networks,²⁰ but they threw money into "extravagant habits," such as paying television newsmen two to three times more than newspaper reporters and allowing them and their cameramen to travel first class.²¹ At the same time, news had to be produced at a loss. Advertisers threw billions into commercials, while news, at the bottom of the ratings, never saw much of the money.²²

Even allowing news to run for half-an-hour was a struggle. Network news programs expanded from fifteen minutes to half an hour in 1963.²³ This was only accomplished after many corporate struggles, which extended into the 1970s, when

opposition from affiliates made the move to forty-five minutes or an hour of news impossible.²⁴ Still, the Big Three worked to maintain a monopoly over television news.

According to Reese Schonfeld, who would become the first president of CNN, there was an “unspoken conspiracy” between ABC, CBS, NBC and AT&T to keep other news organizations from using the telephone company’s lines. The Big Three had 600 broadcast station affiliates, who were the main suppliers of television programming to seventy-five million homes. The three networks paid for the lines at a 24-hour rate, which somehow granted them a discount of almost 90 percent, while other companies paid on a per-mile, per-hour basis. This meant three hours could cost another channel more than the Big Three paid for twenty-four hours.²⁵ ABC, CBS and NBC “mushroomed into giant corporations,” leaving little room for competition.²⁶

The networks remained unthreatened by other forces in the 1960s and ‘70s, but this is not to say they were without great news coverage. Programs like CBS’ *60 Minutes*, which started in 1968, changed news. The program not only made some money, but it made its correspondents stars. In 1975 and 1976, news rose from a 15 percent loss in 1972 to contribute to one percent of the networks’ profits.²⁷ Although news still did not make that much money, the Big Three wanted to maintain their control of the television news system. In fact, they “had become so smug and self-satisfied that by [the late 1970s] they seemed unaware that their power over TV news could be threatened.”²⁸

By 1978, however, Ted Turner was certain that 24-hour news was the next step in television and that a national news network delivered to the cable network by satellite was inevitable.²⁹

Ted Turner and His Plan

In a 1984 interview with *The Saturday Evening Post*, Turner was asked who in history he would most like to be.

“That’s easy. Ted Turner,” Turner said.

“You mean there’s no one in all of history you’d rather be?” the interviewer asked.

“No, I’m in history, and I like myself. I wouldn’t want to be anyone else.”³⁰

Robert Edward (Ted) Turner III was born on Nov. 19, 1938, in Cincinnati, Ohio. His father, Ed Turner, was a Mississippi salesman, who started his own billboard company. Turner’s father was demanding and his biggest influence throughout his early life. Ed urged his son to never give up on anything. As a young adult, Turner wanted to attend the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, but, due to his father’s wishes, he applied to Harvard University. He was rejected and attended Brown University instead. In his sophomore year, after spending a drunken night at a nearby women’s college, Turner was suspended. Six months later he returned to Brown, but was soon expelled for breaking the rule against entertaining female guests in the dormitories. Instead of returning to school, Turner began working for his father full-time.³¹

In 1960, Turner became the general manager of the Turner Advertising Company in Macon, Ga. A few months later, everything changed. On March 6, 1960, Ed Turner killed himself. “When he was 53 years old, he had a nervous breakdown and blew his brains out,” according to Turner. “I loved that man desperately; he was my father and we were very close; but I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what it was he did wrong. He put too much emphasis on material success. I can tell you it’s fool’s gold....”³²

After his father's death, Turner rebuilt the family billboard business, turning it into a multi-million-dollar conglomerate. By 1970, he acquired Channel 17 in Atlanta and Channel 26 in Charlotte, N.C. Turner may have learned from his father's mistake of putting emphasis on material success, but he was very good at acquiring such success. He reversed the fortunes of both stations, even turning the profits for Channel 17 within the first eighteen months. Between 1976 and 1977 he became a celebrity. He made Channel 17 a success, started his satellite channel SuperStation, and bought the Atlanta Braves major league baseball team. In 1978, his thoughts turned towards his next project: a 24-hours news channel. "By then, several other services had gotten started, but they were still weakly funded," Turner said. "The cable industry was growing mainly with HBO and the SuperStation and Showtime, which was now in existence. But still no one had tackled news...."³³

Without any experience in journalism, Turner was ready to take on the challenge. With his plan in mind, he called the vice president of advertising for Channel 17 into his office. "I am going to do a 24-hour news network," Turner said. "Write this down."

With those words, he laid out his plan for CNN: a half-hour of news, like *Time Magazine*, a half-hour of sports, like *Sports Illustrated*, a half-hour of features, like *People Magazine*, and then a half-hour of business, like *Fortune*, all repeated twenty-four hours a day.³⁴ Turner knew that the battle for future television dominance would be waged with news and he had his plan. And, just like every other project he undertook, he was not going to give up.

"I've got a bunch of flags on my boat, but there ain't no white flags," Turner said in a 1978 interview with *Playboy Magazine*. "I don't surrender. That's the story of my

life.”³⁵ Turner knew what he wanted to do. He just needed to find the people to help him do it.

The CNN Team

One of the first calls Turner made was to Reese Schonfeld. In 1978, Schonfeld was 47-years-old and working at the New York Daily News Building in the offices of Independent Television News Association, the nonprofit syndication group he founded. Like Turner’s employees, he had heard the rumors that Turner wanted to start a 24-hour news channel. Schonfeld laughed it off. To him, Turner did not seem to have any love for news and it did not make sense that Turner would want to start a channel devoted to it. But, when Turner called him, Schonfeld knew the rumors were true.³⁶

Unlike Turner, who had no history in journalism, Schonfeld’s foray into the world of 24-hour news seemed natural. For more than two decades, he had worked as a newsman outside of the Big Three. He felt that the networks had “stolen the birthright” of journalism by becoming entertainment outlets rather than the equivalents of electronic newspapers. A 24-hour news channel seemed logical to him, as it did to the other early CNN employees.³⁷

Other early faces of CNN included the network’s first vice president, Burt Reinhardt, who had worked with Schonfeld at UPI Television News, battling the Big Three for control of AT&T’s landlines; producer Ted Kavanau, who had been an investigative reporter and news director of *The 10 O’Clock News* for WTTG in Washington, D.C.; and news executive Ed Turner, who had started *The 10 O’Clock News* for WTTG. Like Schonfeld, all three had worked in television news outside of the Big

Three, meaning “they were loners and mavericks, even misfits, which made them perfectly suited for the founding of an upstart cable news network being financed by a guy comparing himself with Christopher Columbus and Robin Hood.”³⁸

One of the first news anchors to join the team was Dan Schorr, a veteran reporter, known as one of the toughest on television. Schorr had resigned from CBS News during a confrontation with the United States Congress over the freedom of the press, after he had disclosed a secret report on CIA and FBI activities and refused to reveal his source.³⁹

Other early anchors included Bernie Shaw, ABC News’ former Capitol Hill correspondent,⁴⁰ and Mary Alice Williams, who had been fired from WNBC-TV *Morning News* in New York and told that she would “never be a star.”⁴¹ Williams and the other early faces of CNN, however, were willing to risk it all, the chances of success and stardom, to be a part of the birth of 24-hour news.

A Television Newspaper: The Philosophies CNN Was Founded On

With a staff coming together, Turner set the timeframe for CNN’s launch. He wanted to be on the air by mid-1980. With the end of 1979 approaching, CNN would not have the luxury of moving into a new building designed from scratch, so Turner chose a large red-brick mansion, the former home of a Jewish country club, near the Georgia Tech University campus. In October 1979, as contractors filed in and out of the mansion, the growing news group moved into an old, musty, haunted-looking white house next door to prepare to go on the air.⁴²

By the spring of 1980, the old white house was packed with people. All CNN newcomers were presented with a loose-leaf binder filled with a 51-page manual, “Inside

CNN,” which producers Alec Nagel and Peter Vasey collaborated on. Nagel’s introduction read:

We are creating an alternative to the three networks. They’ve owned the airwaves, and therefore television, for a long time. Now comes CNN, using satellites and cable systems, and we’ve just started a new ball game. We’ll be putting on news when other networks are offering entertainment. We’ll be the alternative for millions of viewers. If we attract them and inform them, if we do our job, we will be successful. And television will never be the same. Welcome to the Great Adventure!⁴³

Turner, Schonfeld and the other founding members of CNN shared a vision. They knew how they would embark upon “the Great Adventure” and how they would prove wrong those who believed a 24-hour news channel was born to fail. They wanted to put everything into CNN that newspapers had. They believed they should keep the news impartial and objective, fearing that opinion would detract from the channel’s credibility. The focus was going to be put on the news, and not on personalities or opinion.⁴⁴ CNN was going to expand the new world of cable, the world where all entertainment and informational needs would be satisfied in the home.⁴⁵

“Our thing is going to be our ability to be there first, to show it on the air before anyone else,” Schonfeld said. CNN would be able to go live with breaking news stories as often as possible, more often than the Big Three had ever been able to. ABC, CBS and NBC relied on their affiliates to go live, and they rarely used domestic satellites for news feeds. CNN would be the first network to provide direct, live coverage from both overseas and domestic bureaus.⁴⁶ The showcase of CNN programming would be a two-hour newscast from 8 to 10 p.m. every night, acting as “counterprogramming” against the major networks in an attempt to draw viewers from the most popular prime time shows.⁴⁷ More than that, CNN would involve people in the news process.

“We intend to reveal as much of the news process as possible,” Schonfeld said. “It’s conceivable that we could operate from a completely ‘open’ newsroom, so the public can see how we work. We want to remove the mystery.”⁴⁸ Instead of separating the anchors from the newsroom, the anchors would be a part of it. Although there were worries that it would be too noisy, Schonfeld believed the open news atmosphere would add to CNN’s credibility, as viewers would be able to see the bustling newsroom all day, every day, as CNN worked to bring the news into their homes. What CNN would have to battle, however, were the views that 24-hour news would not work, the largest argument being that there would not be enough news.⁴⁹

“We sat there trying to figure out how we were going to fill twenty-four hours of television news with credible and reliable information, every single day, without any role model, and with everybody on the planet having asserted for the last two decades that it couldn’t be done,” said Mary Alice Williams, who signed on as an anchor and bureau chief at CNN in February 1980.⁵⁰

Despite the naysayers, CNN was going to make 24-hour news happen on a fraction of the budgets of the Big Three. At its launch, CNN had a projected yearly budget of \$30 million. According to Roone Arledge of ABC, his network ran through that amount in just a few months. Bill Leonard, president of CBS, scoffed at CNN and its budget. “Why would anybody choose to watch a patched-together news operation that’s just starting against an organization like ours that’s been going for fifty years and spends \$100-150 million a year?” Leonard said.

Turner disagreed. He believed the Big Three were overspending “as a way of life.”⁵¹ At a fourth of the size of the networks in terms of budget, manpower and

equipment, CNN was going take on 24-hour news, reassessing the “pleasant suppertime half-hour news habit” viewers shared with the likes of news anchors Walter Cronkite, Frank Reynolds and John Chancellor.⁵²

In May 1980, there were 16 million homes in the United States wired for cable. Latest cable systems carried thirty-two channels, but existing systems only carried twelve. Bound by the Federal Communication Commission’s requirements to carry local stations, this meant on many systems CNN would be unavailable. There also was no cable system available in Washington, D.C., and CNN would need 7.5 million subscribers to provide just half of its operating budget.⁵³ Yet, with only three million viewers projected, CNN was going to take the challenge.⁵⁴

From Now On and Forever: CNN Goes on the Air

On Sunday, June 1, 1980, exactly thirty-two years and one month after commercial network television was introduced in the United States, CNN went on the air.⁵⁵ But there was a problem. Days before the network’s launch, the major news had died down. Mount St. Helens was dormant once again and rioting in Miami had ended. There were no hurricanes in sight and no politicians stirring in Washington, D.C. During their first hour, CNN planned to give a satellite report from Jerusalem, and even the Arabs and Israelis were peaceful.⁵⁶

Yet, despite the worries of not having enough news, at 6 p.m. CNN roared to life, presenting Ted Turner at the podium outside of the CNN building giving an opening address. He read words of dedication:

... To act upon one's own convictions while others wait, To create a positive force in a world where cynics abound, To provide information to the people when it wasn't available before, To offer those who want it a choice; For the American people, whose thirst for understanding and a better life has made this venture possible; For the cable industry, whose pioneering spirit caused this great step forward in communication; And for employees of Turner Broadcasting, whose total commitment to their company has brought us together today, I dedicate the News Channel for America—The Cable News Network.⁵⁷

Thus, the first CNN broadcast began. Anchors Dave Walker and Lois Hart directed coverage to President Jimmy Carter in Fort Wayne, Ind., visiting with civil rights leader Vernon Jordan, before cutting to the attempted shooting of New York Yankee Reggie Jackson. Although it began as “a news report without news,” CNN was soon receiving and transmitting a story live as it unfolded for the first time, before any other network had it in any form at all. They even interrupted their first commercial break for the story.⁵⁸

“That’ll show ‘em we’ll never bow down to the advertisers,” Turner said of the cut to commercial. “You can always run the ads later. Who cares about ads anyhow? It’s a news operation.”⁵⁹

The coverage of the shooting ended just in time for them to go to the CNN correspondent in Jerusalem at 6:30 p.m. Afterwards, Hart ended the first hour of broadcasting: “Stay with us. We’re going to have all kinds of news, sports, weather and special features, from now on and forever.”⁶⁰

“Chicken Noodle News”

That week, *The Boston Globe* called CNN “the most audacious challenge to TV network news in the history of American broadcasting.”⁶¹ CNN President Schonfeld later called CNN “as significant as anything in this quarter century as far as journalism

goes.”⁶² The network represented a huge leap for television news, but, in the beginning, it was not without its quirks.

When a producer ran out of news, CNN would go to a public service announcement or Camera Five, an unmanned camera focused on the news pit. Ted Kavanau prowled the news room, taunting those who suffered from exhaustion after working for hours on end. Reese Schonfeld, during the few hours he was not at the CNN headquarters every day, watched from home, calling in to offer tips. Producers sent crews out in the field, or “one-man bands,” which combined the functions of cameraman, soundman, editor and reporter. CNN’s methods of coverage inspired a producer at one of the Big Three to claim that CNN stood for “Chicken Noodle News.”⁶³ In CNN’s infancy, the nickname was not entirely a misnomer.

Minor glitches occurred on occasion, such as when anchor Bernie Shaw was on the air and a cleaning woman walked in front of his desk to empty his wastebasket, or when meteorologist Stu Siroka almost got swallowed by the revolving panels of the weather map on his first day. Directors once cut to a monkey at the Atlanta Zoo masturbating, announced “Mary Ass Williams” was standing by, and, in one report, claimed “genetically engineered orgasms” were being grown in a lab.

As a young news network, it also was not without its limitations. Senator Edward Kennedy cancelled his appearance at CNN, leaving reporters the option to interview him on the plane. Yet, he only granted half of the full hour he promised, a “contemptuous treatment” of CNN.⁶⁴

Despite the issues CNN was presented with, “the real star of CNN, from the beginning, was the news itself.”⁶⁵ The faces at the anchor desk could change, there could

be a few hiccups here and there, but the network's focus would not falter. Against the odds, CNN began to prove that there was a place for effective 24-hour news coverage.

"You know how bumblebees theoretically can't fly, but they don't know that and do it anyway?" said CNN producer Jim Shepherd of the network's early years. "Well, we were bumblebees who knew we couldn't fly and yet we were off the ground."⁶⁶

Not So Chicken Noodle: CNN Stands its Ground

In the summer of 1980, CNN began to demonstrate its true abilities. It could go live from anywhere in the country, carrying a satellite dish 18-feet in diameter around in an 18-wheel flatbed trailer.⁶⁷ It pushed into international coverage, presenting a live satellite feed of the Shah of Iran's funeral in July. Investigative reporter Jean Carper broke the story of a brain cancer epidemic at a Texas chemical plant. Bernie Shaw was the first to break the news confirming that a nuclear device exploded at an Air Force base in Damascus, Ark.⁶⁸ Yet, it was the 1980 presidential debate that allowed CNN to show that it could truly go above and beyond the other networks abilities in news coverage.

The League of Women Voters, which was hosting the debate, did not want to include the independent candidate, John Anderson, but CNN did. The network added him to its live debate coverage by renting Constitution Hall in Washington D.C., where Daniel Schorr asked Anderson the same questions that President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were asked in Cleveland. The two-man debate lasted an hour, while CNN's debate lasted 90 minutes.⁶⁹ At first, CNN's debate kept running farther and farther behind the official debate. It played tapes out of sequence, producers forgot to press the record button and there were awkward moments where audio failed or Carter

talked out of sync. But, halfway through, everything was under control and CNN created television history.⁷⁰

By the end of 1980, CNN reached 663 cable systems and 4.3 million homes. Turner was still losing an average of \$2 million a month, even as CNN added new bureaus in Detroit, Miami and Tokyo.⁷¹ Yet, against industry skepticism and money problems, the network had made an impact on television news that was unforeseen just a year before.⁷² But CNN still had a long way to go towards proving itself as a credible news organization against the Big Three, which still controlled most of the flow of news in the country, especially news emanating from the White House. Fortunately, CNN was presented with an opportunity to assert itself.

March 30, 1981, was a slow news day for CNN. But at 2:32 p.m., Bernie Shaw, leading the other networks by four minutes, broke the news that shots were fired at President Ronald Reagan and that press secretary James Brady was shot in the head. Brady survived, but, before that was verified, Shaw refused to go with unconfirmed reports that Brady was dead, even as everyone around him in the newsroom urged him to. Throughout the coverage, he “maintained his own standards of journalism despite their frantic pleas for haste.”⁷³ Shaw stayed at the anchor desk for more than seven hours and CNN continued following the story for twenty-nine hours, claiming a number of victories in coverage. It showed tape of the home of the shooter, John Hinckley, coverage of the Dallas pawnshop where the gun was purchased and video of Vice President Bush in Fort Worth as he left for the capital. The true significance in the event for CNN, though, was that it set in motion their biggest confrontation with the Big Three to date.

ABC, NBC and CBS controlled the “pool” coverage of the president with full sanction of the White House, meaning CNN’s access to government information was limited.⁷⁴ It was a battle Schonfeld had been fighting for fifteen years. According to him, “The networks maintained absolute control of television news in three ways: by control of communication, through AT&T lines, by their unions, whose high rates prevented new services from coming into the market, and by joining in pools to their own advantage, while keeping others out or charging absurdly high rates for material.”⁷⁵

Schonfeld and Turner believed the actions of the Big Three went against the Fair Trade Act, which made pooling illegal. CNN moved to take action against the networks and the White House. The message that CNN received was clear: “You’ll have to sue us,” said Jim Baker, White House Chief of Staff. On Monday, May 11, Turner and Schonfeld held a press conference in Washington, D.C., and filed suit against ABC, CBS and NBC, as well as Reagan, Baker and Larry Speakes, deputy press secretary, for violating CNN’s right to equal access.⁷⁶ “The three major networks should not be able to dictate the terms of our coverage, limit its scope or combine their resources to effectively prevent CNN from competing with them,” Turner said at the press conference.⁷⁷

The suit was later settled out of court, and CNN earned its place as “The Fourth Network” in the White House pool. CNN’s win in Washington, though, was not without its consequences.

The Big Three (Try To) Strike Back

As CNN gained recognition and strength with subscribers and advertisers, as well as the White House, the Big Three networks attempted to counteract CNN’s progress.

While CNN continued to break more ground, ABC, NBC and CBS guarded their news footage, “recognizing that exclusive coverage of the world’s biggest story each day was one of their key competitive advantages.”⁷⁸ On the other hand, CNN saw selling its footage to local news operations as a revenue generator. This made the networks “subordinate to the needs of their local affiliates rather than the other way around,”⁷⁹ prompting the Big Three to fly their anchors over the globe in the 1980s to compete with CNN’s international coverage.⁸⁰ On top of that, the major networks realized that to stall CNN’s progress they needed to compete in the 24-hour news circuit.

In August 1981, ABC combined forces with Westinghouse Electric Company to create Satellite News Channels (SNC), two 24-hour news channels of advertiser supported cable news.⁸¹ At the same time, CNN was moving ahead with its next project, a headline news network, which would “deliver brief, fast-paced stories that would be repeated or updated every 20 or 30 minutes.”⁸² Turner and Schonfeld had been discussing starting the new news service since November 1980. Although it would later be called Headline News, Turner named it CNN2 to “count on the good name of the first one.”⁸³ Turner saw SNC as a threat to CNN and CNN2, but, as always, he was not going to back down. “They’re fifty times bigger, but with the SuperStation and the Cable News Network, we’ve always been the little guys fighting the big guys and I really like the fight,” Turner said.⁸⁴ Thus, he fought.

At a meeting with cable operators in Boston, Turner spoke out against SNC. According to Turner, the broadcast stations had lost all credibility as journalistic sources because they often panicked people and put a “showman” in charge of the news to increase ratings. Even worse, Roone Arledge, head of ABC News, said ABC would give

its footage to SNC “only under certain conditions.” All of the big stories would be held for ABC Evening News. According to another ABC spokesman, “Our first priority remains our network news operation. Our facilities will just supply extra footage for the cable news service that won’t be in competition with broadcast news.”⁸⁵ For Turner, ABC’s decisions were inexcusable for a news source. At the meeting, Turner called ABC out:

In the history of journalism, no one has ever started a journalistic endeavor admitting that, through a conflict of interest, they were going to withhold from the American people, from the people of any nation, major stories until it suited their major profit center! They have destroyed their credibility in this industry and with the American people!⁸⁶

Whether or not Turner’s words made a difference, SNC was not successful. The new network had to pay cable operators to take the channels at a rate of 50 cents per subscriber.⁸⁷ In October 1983, SNC was shut down after CNN bought the failed operation for \$25 million. ABC’s attempt to assert itself into 24-hour news through SNC failed.⁸⁸ CNN’s new venture had different results. CNN2 went on the air at midnight December 31, 1981, to less than a million subscribers, but today, as Headline News (HLN), it is still a member of the CNN family.

CNN at its Prime

In its first nineteen months CNN accomplished a lot. By the end of 1981, it had 450 staffers in a dozen domestic and international bureaus.⁸⁹ The network reached ten million households, with many subscribers using it as their primary source for news.⁹⁰ The Big Three, who used to only have monitors in their offices tuned to the other Big Three channels, began keeping their eyes on a fourth monitor tuned to CNN.⁹¹ The

Fourth Network “gained respect in proportion to its objectivity,” and CNN continued to cover breaking news, internationally and domestically, often ahead of the Big Three.⁹²

The network was the first to report on American officials in Central America carrying M-16s, violating U.S. policy. The story revealed the opposite of what the U.S. government had been telling the public, and none of it would have been possible if CNN had not been covering El Salvador in the first place. More than that, the coverage showed the value of 24-hour news. According to *The New York Times*, “The disparity in the time that the Cable News Network and the networks devote to Central America was graphically reflected when CNN devoted the first 17 minutes of its evening newscast solely to Central America. The major networks’ entire evening news programs run just 22 minutes after commercials.”⁹³ CNN’s international coverage added to its credibility at home, but it helped to make a name for the network around the globe.

By 1986, CNN had “made a pulpit for foreign politicians who lacked traditional domestic standing.”⁹⁴ In CNN’s early years when the channel was only available in the U.S., Fidel Castro, Cuba’s communist leader, watched the channel illegally. When Turner was invited to visit with Castro, he found that Castro had developed an attachment to the channel. “When there’s trouble in the world,” Castro said, “I turn to CNN.”⁹⁵ Other leaders around the world also saw the importance of CNN. In 1986, when Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos saw his reign coming to an end, his aide called the CNN Tokyo bureau asking if the network would broadcast a speech to the United States. A few months later, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi held a press conference open to the Western media. He told CNN exactly when it would be held and insisted that CNN ask a question. Then, in 1989, when U.S. troops invaded Panama, the Soviet foreign ministry

did not send a formal protest through diplomatic channels. Instead, they called CNN so that a Soviet official could broadcast a statement condemning the invasion.⁹⁶

At the same time, CNN continued live coverage of events at home, sometimes giving it the upper hand against the other networks in reporting events first. In 1986, CNN's coverage of shuttle launches was already a habit. Thus, on January 28, the network was broadcasting live as the space shuttle Challenger exploded. According to a United Press International story, "The Challenger blasted off at 11:38 a.m. and CNN cameras followed in closeup as the spacecraft slowly rolled, banked off and then burst into flames... None of the other networks—ABC, NBC and CBS—were live."⁹⁷

This international and live coverage, which no other network was doing to the same extent, led CNN to success. In 1989, a U.S. poll conducted by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press revealed that CNN was "the most believable" of the networks because of hard news and live coverage of events.⁹⁸ Throughout the 1980s, the network slowly gained attention from mainstream America and ratings improved modestly.⁹⁹ In 1985, the network sailed into the black, making a net profit of more than \$20 million a year, and profits continued to increase from there.¹⁰⁰ By the 1990s ratings increased dramatically due to CNN's role in covering the Gulf War. People noticed that CNN was the only 24-hour news channel on television, providing valuable information around the clock.¹⁰¹ It expanded to every continent and many world capitals, becoming the first transatlantic channel.

Most importantly, news was still the star. CNN continued to downplay the personalities of its anchors, even Larry King, who joined CNN in 1985.¹⁰² Turner sent an order banning all "commentary" by CNN on-air persons in 1989. By the end of the

decade, CNN and HLN had an estimated value of \$1.5 billion. CNN reached fifty-three million homes in the U.S., which was more than half the market, as well as eighty-four countries. With 800 staffers and nine domestic and eighteen overseas bureaus, CNN had made a name for itself.¹⁰³

Of course, change was on the way.

Endnotes

¹ Hank Whittemore, *CNN: The Inside Story: How a Band of Mavericks Changed the Face of Television News*, 1st ed. (Little Brown & Co (T), 1990), 31-32.

² Ibid., 4.

³ Leonard Downie Jr. and Robert G. Kaiser, *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril* (Vintage, 2003), 20.

⁴ Rodger Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History*, Second Edition. (Westview Press, 2007), 175.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s*, 1st ed. (Hill and Wang, 1994), 94.

⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁸ Bonnie Anderson, *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News* (Jossey-Bass, 2004).

⁹ Downie and Kaiser, 20.

¹⁰ Farber, 47.

¹¹ Streitmatter, 192-193.

¹² Ibid., 199.

¹³ Ibid., 204.

¹⁴ Ibid., 194.

¹⁵ Ibid., 204.

¹⁶ Farber. 214.

¹⁷ Streitmatter, 204.

¹⁸ Downie and Kaiser, 20.

¹⁹ Chester Pach. ““Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press’: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969–1973.” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (June 2010): 556-562.

²⁰ Downie and Kaiser, 128.

²¹ Ibid., 131.

²² Whittemore, 13.

²³ Streitmatter, 192.

²⁴ Whittemore, 13.

²⁵ Ibid., 12-13.

²⁶ Downie and Kaiser, 23.

²⁷ Anderson, 7.

²⁸ Whittemore, 5.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ Maynard Good Stoddard. "Cable TV's Ted Turner: Spirited Skipper of CNN." Saturday Evening Post Society, Inc., March 1984.

³¹ Whittemore, 9-10.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 34.

³⁵ Ibid., 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 6.

³⁷ Ibid., 28.

³⁸ Ibid., 64-66.

³⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 118

⁴¹ Ibid., 99.

⁴² Ibid. 72.

⁴³ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁴ Stuart H. Loory. "CNN Today: A Young Giant Stumbles." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (October 2005): 340-342.

⁴⁵ Tom Rosenstiel. "The Myth of CNN (Cover story)." *New Republic* 211, no. 8/9 (1994): 28.

⁴⁶ Whittemore, 140.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 50.

- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 57.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 103.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 105.
- ⁵² Joseph B. Cumming Jr. "Ted Turner: 'Captain Outrageous.'" *Saturday Evening Post* 252, no. 7 (October 1980): 67-68.
- ⁵³ Whittemore, 134.
- ⁵⁴ Cumming Jr., 68.
- ⁵⁵ Reuven Frank. "When News Was the Star." *New Leader* 85, no. 2 (March 2002): 35.
- ⁵⁶ Whittemore, 140-141.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 143.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 147.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 149.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 150.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Cumming, Jr., 67.
- ⁶³ Whittemore, 154-155.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 157-159.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 165.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 167.
- ⁶⁷ Loory, 341.
- ⁶⁸ Whittemore, 173-175.
- ⁶⁹ Loory, 341.
- ⁷⁰ Whittemore, 179.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 184.
- ⁷² Richard Zoglin "The Pioneer of Cable-TV News." *Saturday Evening Post* 253, no. 8 (November 1981): 34.

⁷³ Whittmore, 192.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 192-193.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 197.

⁷⁸ Rosentiel, 28.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Whittmore, 199.

⁸² Ibid., 180.

⁸³ Ibid., 205.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 206.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 209-210.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 224-226.

⁸⁸ Stoddard, 45.

⁸⁹ Whittmore, 222.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 231.

⁹¹ Ibid., 251.

⁹² Ibid., 246.

⁹³ Ibid., 232.

⁹⁴ Rosentiel, 28.

⁹⁵ Whittmore, 233.

⁹⁶ Rosentiel, 28.

⁹⁷ Whittmore, 272.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 299.

⁹⁹ Jonathan S. Morris. "The Fox News Factor." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10 (July 1, 2005): 59.

¹⁰⁰ Whittemore, 260.

¹⁰¹ Morris, 59.

¹⁰² Whittemore, 283.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 299-301.

CHAPTER II

CNN Today

Disney, Kodak, Mercedes-Benz, CNN.

According to a 1992 poll, CNN was once the fourth most respected brand name in the United States, ahead of Rolex, Levi's, IBM and AT&T.¹ But respect of the network has waned in the face of competition and other advancements in the news world. "Think of Cable News Network as a precocious child," said Stuart H. Loory, professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism, in a 2005 article, "one who spurned norms in infancy and childhood, matured too rapidly and then entered a sclerotic old age while new competitors successfully challenged."²

Today, CNN is sometimes labeled as the liberal network, the pro-Palestinian network or the anti-Iraq War network. It has fallen behind Fox News and MSNBC in ratings and also faces competition from international networks such as BBC World and Rupert Murdoch's Sky News.³ Personalities are used to promote the network, and, more than that, the emphasis on hard news is often lost. CNN has seen many changes since its inception, and it continues to rank in the top three domestic cable networks, but a question remains: Does it still stand for the ideals upon which it was built?

Later History: How CNN Changed the News Landscape of the 1990s

CNN was the prime news source during the Gulf War. In the midst of the brief conflict, President George Bush is believed to have said, "I learn more from CNN than I do from the CIA."⁴ And even the CIA relied on the network. Whenever the CIA received

information about the launches of Iraqi Scud missiles, CIA Director William Webster would say, “Turn on CNN to see where it lands.”⁵ For the Clinton administration, CNN became a way to communicate with the press without having to hold briefings. White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers would meet with Wolf Blitzer, CNN’s White House correspondent, who would air information to the public.⁶ The rise of CNN changed the news world. This can be seen in the effects the network had on the government, as well as how it affected the Big Three and newspapers.

In the 1980s, CNN demonstrated to the Big Three (ABC, NBC and CBS) and other networks that news could be delivered more cheaply. Its biggest expense throughout the 1980s and 1990s was broadcasting live from remote locations. Because of CNN’s international reporting and around-the-clock coverage, the Big Three struggled to compete. More than that, there were worries that they would give up trying to battle the young network. “What I fear is that in their straitened economic conditions, the networks will find CNN an excuse to shuck some of their own responsibilities,” said Walter Cronkite, former CBS news anchor, in a 1992 interview with *Time* magazine. “I can conceive that as the situation grows worse, the networks may say, ‘The public is being served by CNN. We don’t have to be there.’”⁷

As of the 1992 presidential nomination conventions, that may have already been the case. Only CNN committed to “gavel-to-gavel coverage.”⁸ And, as CNN continued to cover more and more major news, it seemed that the major networks could justify doing less, as if to ask, “Why burn precious commercial time when anyone truly interested could find the material elsewhere?”⁹ This attitude ultimately affected the Big Three’s viewership. In May 1993, 60 percent of American television news viewers were watching

network news. By 2004, that number was cut in half—to 34 percent—while 38 percent of viewers tuned into the cable news networks: CNN, MSNBC and Fox News.¹⁰

With the advent of 24-hour news, newspapers also struggled to stay relevant and not look as though they were “put together by simply watching CNN the night before.”¹¹ After CNN’s Gulf War scoop, newspaper editors tuned into the network in their news rooms. According to Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, editors began to assume their readers were also watching, so they gave less coverage to stories. This included the 1993 floods in the Midwest. Editors of the *Chicago Tribune* “barely covered” the disaster, believing their readers had heard enough about it. This was the “myth of CNN.”¹²

“CNN has put tremendous strain on the press,” said Thomas Winship, former editor of the *Boston Globe*, in a 1992 interview with *Time* magazine. “During the past five years, print has been clobbered by television and has generally failed to respond by emphasizing the analytic and investigative stories that TV cannot do so well.”¹³

The need for analytical stories created what the *Los Angeles Times*’ White House reporter John Broader called “soufflé journalism” in a 1994 interview with *New Republic*. According to him, more and more, newspaper stories began to call for a recipe of one part reporting, one part prediction and two parts attitude.¹⁴ Ultimately, newspapers had no choice but to compete, as the number of Americans reading the newspaper dropped 12 percent between 1990 and 2002, and newsmagazine readership decreased 28 percent.¹⁵

“The effect of CNN should be to persuade newspapers that the stenographic mode of reporting is obsolete, a real dinosaur,” said Jim Hoagland, *Washington Post* columnist in a 1992 interview with *Time* magazine. “The simple news account of an event that

much of our audience has already witnessed is no longer sufficient. We've got to shift to a more analytical mode or find the story that TV couldn't or didn't cover."¹⁶

More than these effects on other modes of news reporting, CNN and the 24-hour news model became proof of Marshall McLuhan's borderless world.¹⁷ According to Christiane Amanpour, former chief international correspondent at CNN:

At first we were ridiculed as Chicken Noodle News. We loved the fact that we were mocked as we kicked ass all over the world. We were thrilled and privileged to be part of a revolution, because—make no mistake about it—Ted Turner has changed the world with CNN. Not only did he create 24-hour news and everything that has meant, but he truly created the global village. As corny as that sounds, nothing has been the same since.¹⁸

Challenges for CNN in the 1990s

For CNN, there also were changes and challenges in the 1990s. Throughout the Gulf War, the Big Three and newspapers could not keep up with CNN. Once the war was over, however, things changed. Almost eleven million viewers switched back to watching the broadcasts of the major networks. Only with the O.J. Simpson murder case was there some relief.¹⁹ During Simpson's preliminary hearings, CNN reached more than two million households. But on the off days, viewership only reached 450,000.²⁰ By May 1994, there were more people watching ABC and CBS at 3 a.m. than there were people watching CNN during the day.²¹

In the early 1990s, CNN also changed hands, as Time Warner purchased Turner Broadcasting and was acquired by America Online, creating AOL Time Warner. Thus the network became "a very small part of an entertainment and communications behemoth whose bloodlines stemmed from magazine publishing."²² But CNN's new ownership and its fluctuating viewership were only small hurdles compared to criticisms of the growing

network. According to Rosenstiel in a 1994 *New Republic* article, “The network could have revolutionized TV journalism; instead it only diminished it.”²³ To Rosenstiel and others, CNN was not such a positive force of the decade.

On one hand, conservatives disapproved of CNN’s tolerance of dictators and communist leaders. They were especially appalled by Ted Turner’s 1982 interview with Cuban leader Fidel Castro. On the other side of the political spectrum, liberal leaders criticized the network’s supposed detachment from reporting and occasional attempts to overextend itself internationally, sometimes reporting on unimportant international events. According to Hoagland, “It seems to me that they are probably more sensitive to host-government reaction than most journalistic organizations would be because of their approach of trying to be everywhere. And it seems to me that they lean over backward to carry what I think of often as nonnews from countries where they clearly want to be in that market.”²⁴

Scholars also took issue with CNN because of its “unscholarly haste and supposed shallowness.” Although the network’s coverage of sports, business, technology, entertainment and the government was adequate, it chose to emphasize events rather than analysis, especially with regard to international stories, according to former *Time* magazine arts critic William Henry III. According to his 1992 *Time* magazine article “History as it Happens”:

It can show great sensitivity in dealing with racial and multicultural conflict and is attuned to the concerns of women and gays. But its intellectual thinness is evident in the way it covers foreign affairs—with the same tired emphasis on revolutions, wars, famines and disasters found in the traditional half-hour nightly network news shows, despite having the airtime to give a more rounded picture.²⁵

For Rosenstiel CNN's programming was "strangely tired and unimaginative" and its coverage contributed to a "rush to sensationalism" and increased emphasis on interpreting the news.²⁶ Even CNN itself acknowledged that despite its round-the-clock schedule, its exploration of topics was often shallow.²⁷

At the same time, some scholars hailed CNN's news model. They applauded the network's reluctance to analyze the news and supported its choice to instead simply present the facts. "Ideological critics of the media, left and right, agree on one thing—that the press is too arrogant, too ready to tell people what to think," said G. Cleveland Wilhoit, professor emeritus at Indiana University in a 1992 interview with *Time* magazine. "By its very structure, CNN is populist. It provides the raw materials of the story and lets viewers form their own opinions."²⁸

Foreign officials also took no issue with the network's tactic of straightforward reporting of events. Sir Bernard Ingham, former press secretary to former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, believed audiences did not want analysis. "What we want is reporting of the facts," Ingham said to *Time* magazine. "People can form their own judgments. There are too many damn journalists analyzing the news."²⁹

Most criticism of the network from foreign powers arose from bitterness towards the United States' power and influence, believing CNN was just the latest example of American "cultural imperialism." For example, French television correspondent Christine Ockrent saw the network as a channel with a "global vocation" but that it saw the world through an "American prism."³⁰

The Rise of Competition: Fox News and MSNBC

Criticized or complimented, CNN's expanse into the global village also paved the way for competition. In 1996, Fox News, created by Rupert Murdoch and his growing media empire, joined the 24-hour news circuit, followed by NBC's all-news service, MSNBC, in partnership with Microsoft. Both new services catered to younger audiences to attract advertising, and hired younger, more attractive news anchors, building their programming around personalities rather than the news. Fox also spent an increasing amount of time on talk shows instead of reporting, a news model that became increasingly popular. CNN and MSNBC soon began to follow in its path.

In the early 2000s, Fox's principal commentator of one of these "nonnews programs" was Bill O'Reilly, the host of "The O'Reilly Factor." The interview host is known for interrupting and overriding his guests, a trend mirrored by MSNBC's "Hardball" with Chris Matthews. More and more people began to tune into O'Reilly than CNN's Larry King. In January 2002, O'Reilly even helped Fox News to achieve, for the first time, a higher average day-long audience than CNN.³¹

In addition to this new show format, Fox also was the first of the cable news networks to include more dynamic audio and visual presentations, as well as the scrolling ticker at the bottom of the screen for headline updates. CNN and MSNBC also quickly caught on to these additions.³² In response to its new competitors, CNN had no choice but to act. In July 2001, AOL Time Warner appointed Walter Isaacson, editorial director of Time Inc., as chairman and CEO of CNN. Soon after his appointment he said:

One of the things we've done... is take an organization that for 20 years was based on pure news-gathering and then just putting that news on the air as a lot of rolling newscasts, and instead we're trying to build CNN around specific programs.... [September 11] helped us create a show around Paula Zahn that made her one of the world's premier news anchors.³³

CNN followed in the footsteps of Fox News and MSNBC to produce "identifiable programs." In efforts to get the most skilled and most stylish news anchors, the three cable news networks fell into the evils of the Big Three, raiding each other's staffs for the best pickings. Following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Fox News stood behind experienced Washington correspondent Brit Hume, who had moved from ABC, and MSNBC utilized Brian Williams, Tom Brokaw's successor. CNN acquired ABC News' Aaron Brown, and soon lured Paula Zahn from Fox News, where she had moved from CBS. CNN also took Connie Chung from ABC, providing her with a salary in the "low seven figures." Soon after, Greta van Susteren left CNN to move to Fox after she "expressed her distress that general network promotions featured Ms. Zahn, Mr. Brown and Mr. King, but not her."³⁴ Between van Susteren's final appearance on CNN and her first on Fox, she underwent cosmetic surgery to remove the bags under her eyes. Due to the newspaper coverage, her first show on Fox attracted half a million more audience members than Paula Zahn had ever gotten during the same timeslot on Fox.

Of course, the three cable news channels still showed the news, in the midst of the petty thievery of anchors and quests to have the most alluring programming. "The bottom line, though," said Reuven Frank of *The New Leader* in a 2002 article, "is that all the celebritizing, the replacing of news with talk, and the clumsy obeisance to youth-cult can make one nostalgic for the Chicken Noodle Network."³⁵

How “The Most Trusted Name in News” Operates Today

In today’s news world, “the straight-shooting CNNs of this world seem to have less relevance.” With *The Drudge Report*, *The Huffington Post* and other agenda-driven news outlets, CNN has lost much of its authority.³⁶ According to Matt Baum, Marvin Kalb Professor of Global Communications and professor of public policy at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government:

CNN primarily—though like most news outlets, not exclusively—falls into the category of “hard,” rather than “soft” news. Yet more recent entrants to the “all news” cable market, like MSNBC and Fox, hoping to broaden their audiences have increasingly emulated soft news programming. And in order to avoid losing viewers to their competitors, CNN has substantially increased the percentage of its broadcasts to soft-news oriented topics and formats.³⁷

The other strategy that has helped MSNBC and Fox pull ahead is to align themselves to specific political views. “Anchoring programs to a single lens or view,” however, “would be catastrophic for CNN’s operations,” said Jim Walton, president of CNN Worldwide, in a 2008 interview with *Advertising Age*.³⁸ To counter the threat of political programming, CNN tried to rebrand itself. Anchor Campbell Brown was given the slogan “No bias. No bull.” The network also ran advertisements for Anderson Cooper where a conservative viewer and a liberal viewer praised him for fact-checking both sides of stories.³⁹ But, to some, CNN’s attempt to remain “non-partisan” as viewers move to more opinionated hosts on other channels is limiting the network. “If CNN continues on its course,” said Raymond Siller in a June 2011 *USA Today* column, “dinosaurs will be suing for copyright infringement. It’s like watching the ‘Sex and the City’ ladies rocking to ‘Bad Romance’ in orthopedic Jimmy Choos.”⁴⁰

Still, the way CNN operates is valuable, especially to the advertising community. The network is considered safe ground, “a trusted, if plain-vanilla news source.”⁴¹

“Clients still see the value in CNN,” said Elizabeth Herbst Brady, president of Interpublic Group’s Magna Global. And, according to Chris Geraci, managing director of national broadcast at Omnicom Group’s OMD, “It’s nice to have a strong showing [in prime time], but it’s not necessarily why you’re buying in the news genre.”⁴² What is important is that CNN offers “a neutral environment for advertisers,” according to Scott Pool, VP-associate director at Omnicom, as “certain people are leery of certain personalities on other cable networks.”⁴³

CNN contributed to about 12 percent of Time Warner’s consolidated operating income in 2010, with its advertising, which reaches audiences at home, overseas, online and more, as well as subscriber fees from cable satellite and other companies that distribute the network. Local news outlets also still pay CNN to use their content.⁴⁴ There is still a place for the network in today’s news world. The problem CNN faces is how competing networks are choosing to operate.

Fox News and MSNBC: How They Compete Today

On Easter Sunday in 2010, Baja California was hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake. As prime time struck at 8 p.m., CNN had live coverage of the quake, while MSNBC ran a special, “Why Planes Crash,” and Fox’s Mike Huckabee talked about God, Easter and the Sandra Bullock Film “The Blind Side.” Rated lowest in prime time, however, was CNN, the network that was actually covering the news. “Part of CNN’s problem,” said James Poniewozik in a May 2010 *Time* magazine article, “is that Fox News and MSNBC cater to the right and the left, respectively, cultivating faithful fans. There aren’t major earthquakes every day, but Sean Hannity (anchor of Fox’s “Hannity”) and

Keith Olbermann (former anchor of MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann") can produce temblors on demand."⁴⁵

Fox News, which most often tops the ratings, is conservative and confrontational, yet conversational.⁴⁶ The network uses an almost talk-radio format, which both CNN and MSNBC have adopted, a format which the likes of Bill O'Reilly are unashamed of.⁴⁷ This is because Fox caters directly to a specific audience: the right of center. They appeal to those who maintained for years that the American media appealed to the left. "Fox News has brought prominence to a new sort of TV journalism," said Jim Rutenburg of the *New York Times*, "that casts aside traditional notions of objectivity, holds contempt for dissent and eschews the skepticism of government as mainstream journalism's core."⁴⁸ Some critics even accuse right-wing Fox of being more of an outgrowth from the Bush administration than a news source.⁴⁹

But, for the past few years, Fox has consistently come out on top of the other cable news networks. It acquired \$511.5 million in advertising in 2009, ahead of CNN's \$420.2 million and MSNBC's mere \$131.7 million.⁵⁰ Also in 2009, for the first time, CNN's programs between 7 and 11 p.m. finished fourth and last among cable networks, including its own sister network, Headline News (HLN). Even Cooper at 10 p.m., CNN's signature host in prime time, finished last, trailing behind Fox's van Susteren, Olbermann on MSNBC and Nancy Grace on HLN. Fox's O'Reilly and Hannity were on top in prime time. Fox's 7 p.m. show with anchor Shephard Smith, a program considered "nonideological," even earned more viewers than every CNN prime time show. The only CNN show that did not finish last was Larry King, who came in third.⁵¹ CNN defended

its 2009 performance, as it still had higher ratings than MSNBC if every hour of the day was measured. According to CNN spokeswoman Barbara Levin:

We couldn't be more pleased that both our networks are now topping MSNBC in total day and that CNN.com leads all TV news competitors on the web. As we have said for years, we measure our audience across all CNN platforms and throughout the day, not just in prime time. CNN provides quality journalism and our ratings reflect the news environment more than opinion programming does.⁵²

Through September 2010, Fox News continued to beat CNN in overall daily prime time viewers by more than three-to-one. CNN also fell behind in ages 25-to-54, and only averaged 20 to 25 percent of Fox News' viewership during prime time. CNN lost ground to Fox during the Fort Hood shootings and the earthquake in Haiti, despite its usual advantage in covering hard news.⁵³

The Ratings Battle of 2011

2011, however, brought some ratings gains for CNN. During the extensive coverage of events in Japan and Libya in March, CNN surged ahead of MSNBC, moving into second place during weeknights from 8 to 11 p.m. During weekend prime time, CNN beat both MSNBC and Fox, averaging 678,000 viewers among ages 25-to-54 on Saturday night. Fox News averaged 353,000, while MSNBC drew 254,000.⁵⁴ The reason for CNN's gains can be seen in the network's decision to provide continued coverage of the international crises, while the other networks, most notably MSNBC, did not offer its viewers the option to stay up-to-date on the stories.

At 8 p.m. Saturday, March 22, as CNN correspondent Nic Robertson appeared live with reports of heavy gunfire and explosions in Tripoli, and as nuclear meltdown threatened Japan, MSNBC aired "Lockup," its weekly weekend documentary-style

program about prisons. Thus, CNN's breaking international coverage won out. "This is where CNN excels," said Phil Griffin, president of MSNBC. "This is their bull's eye, and they've done a great job. Even Fox News, which dominates them, gets beat by CNN at times like this." Griffin maintained that his audience expects to see their usual weekend programming.⁵⁵

"I think MSNBC really blew it," said Judy Muller, former network news correspondent and associate professor of journalism at the University of Southern California. "They lost a great opportunity to set themselves out as one of the few places people can get breaking news. When you are near a nuclear meltdown, I can't imagine a decision to go with your regular programming at that point."⁵⁶

The news of the killing of Osama bin Laden in May also pushed CNN to the top of the ratings. Almost eight million viewers tuned into President Barack Obama's speech on Sunday, May 1. For the 11 p.m. to midnight hour, CNN averaged 7.763 million viewers, CNN's most viewed hour since election night in 2008. Fox trailed with 4.778 million viewers and MSNBC with 2.275 million.⁵⁷ In June, CNN also reached the top spot with coverage of the New Hampshire debate between the Republican candidates for president. The network reached 3.162 million viewers during Monday prime time, up 400 times from its average for prime time for the four Mondays leading up to the debate.⁵⁸

By September, MSNBC was close to trailing once again, due in part to the departure of Olbermann. CNN averaged 257,000 viewers in prime time, with MSNBC barely ahead with an average of 269,000 a night for the month. Of course, Fox News was still far ahead with 526,000. Excluding the night of the Republican presidential debate, however, CNN beat MSNBC 219,000 to 207,000. The big change was in the 8 p.m. hour,

where MSNBC used to have Olbermann and where CNN moved Cooper. With Cooper at 8 p.m., CNN's performance improved 38 percent compared to 2010, growing from 156,000 to 215,000 viewers.⁵⁹ Olbermann left MSNBC in January 2010, but while he was still on the air, MSNBC beat CNN with 256,000 viewers to 173,000 in the 8 p.m. hour. "MSNBC may be rediscovering the downside of partisan news," said Chris Daily, professor of journalism at Boston University. "That is, the size of your audience is essentially cajoled by the size of the electorate that already agrees with you."⁶⁰

Crucial to CNN's improvement in ratings has been changes in their programming lineup. Ken Jautz, head of CNN in the U.S., said the network has been "making changes to several hours of our programming in order to grow CNN's audience during both breaking news and nonbreaking news periods. The fact that our prime time audience has increased this month (September 2011) by 49 percent is certainly gratifying."⁶¹

Programming Changes: Larry King Signs Off

One of the biggest recent changes made to CNN's programs was the departure of Larry King. His journey onto the network began with hosting a late-night radio talk show that got nationally syndicated in 1978 and soon developed into CNN's program "Larry King Live." His success was due to his interview style. He asked his guests short and simple questions and let them answer. "He's not full of himself wanting to sound off or make fun of others, a la Don Imus who left radio and TV in disgrace last week," said Al Neuharth of *USA Today* in an April 2007 article. "At age 73, Larry looks as though he may go on forever. Colorful suspenders, horn-rimmed glasses and all. Long live 'The King'!"⁶²

Unfortunately, King was not at CNN to stay. By May 2010, as he approached his 25th year on the network, King's ratings had fallen drastically, well behind his competitors, MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, in second, and Fox's Hannity in first. "Although still the linchpin of CNN's lineup, he has come to embody an enormous problem facing the cable news channel," said Brian Stelter of the *New York Times*. "How can he and CNN compete in prime time when viewers seem to crave partisan political programs and when prominent guests—the lifeblood of Mr. King's show—would rather burnish their images on other channels?"⁶³

At the same time, ratings for CNN's new "John King, USA" political program at 7 p.m. were disappointing, and Campbell Brown announced she was quitting her 8 p.m. newscast. But King's ratings remained 20 percent better than Brown's, and even though his contract was set to expire in June 2011, CNN focused on finding a replacement for Brown and had no plans for a change at 9 p.m., King's hour. "Larry King has a terrific place in cable news history," said Steven Farella, chief executive of the advertising agency TargetCast TCM, "but maybe not a firm place in cable news today."⁶⁴

With his viewership below 700,000, but a Guinness World record for longest-running TV show in the same time slot with the same host, on Tuesday, June 2010, King announced he was leaving his post on CNN.⁶⁵ "When the CNN host announced that Larry King Live would end this fall, after 25 years as the cable network's flagship, it wasn't a huge surprise," said Jaime Weinman of *Maclean's*. "His ratings have dropped by 40 percent in the last year and comedians constantly made fun of his lack of knowledge; Jerry Seinfeld mocked him to his face for not knowing Seinfeld was still popular when it went off the air."⁶⁶

Robert Thompson, professor of television and popular culture at Syracuse University, said he watched King “the way I used to watch American Idol for Paula Abdul” and that “even NPR doesn’t do interviews of the length that Larry King does.”⁶⁷ But what ended King may have been that he was a non-confrontational host. “Hosts like Hannity, O’Reilly and Maddow try to ‘nail’ unsympathetic guests,” Weinman said, “by getting them to say something embarrassing, as Maddow did when she got Rand Paul to say he disagreed with portions of the Civil Rights Act. Their shows try to be exciting every night, while King’s is mostly mellow—too mellow, it seems, to hold an audience.”⁶⁸

After about 50,000 interviews, King ended his run on CNN in mid-December 2010, making way for Piers Morgan, who took over in January 2011. King had no regrets but identified “the saddest part” of leaving the show was that the programs that hurt CNN and King in the ratings were those advocating political points of view. “If you look at media now,” King said, “all the hosts of these other shows are interviewing themselves. The guests are a prop for the hosts on these cable networks. The guest to me was always paramount.”⁶⁹

Today’s Programming Lineup

Piers Morgan kicked off his show, “Piers Morgan Tonight,” in King’s former timeslot on January 17, 2011, to a strong showing with guest Oprah Winfrey. His audience was more than three times as large as CNN’s average audience during the fourth quarter of 2010 for the 9 p.m. hour. He placed second with more than two million viewers, behind Fox’s Hannity, who interviewed Sarah Palin, averaging 2.36 million

viewers, and ahead of MSNBC's Maddow, who interviewed Michael Moore, averaging 1.11 million viewers.⁷⁰ By February 2011, however, Morgan's 242 percent improvement in viewership with his first show compared to King's final six months was old news. His interview with the Kardashians hit a series low with 498,000 viewers, while CNBC's grocery store investigation program on the same night hit 504,000.⁷¹ Even MSNBC's Maddow still beats Morgan, yet his show has improved CNN's ratings for the 9 p.m. hour by 18 percent, with an average of 193,000 viewers, compared to King's 164,000.⁷² In order to compete with MSNBC and Fox, as well as adding Morgan to the prime time lineup, CNN has tried a number of other strategies.

Other recent changes to CNN's prime time hours include the cancellation of Eliot Spitzer's 8 p.m. show "In the Arena."⁷³ Spitzer, former governor of New York, replaced Campbell Brown in 2010.⁷⁴ The cancellation of his show moved Cooper's 10 p.m. show into the 8 p.m. timeslot with a replay at its usual hour. Erin Burnett, a new hire from CNBC, moved into the 7 p.m. timeslot, with John King moving to 6 p.m. Wolf Blitzer's "The Situation Room" moved to 4 p.m. According to CNN, the new schedule will revitalize the network's performance.

"We think it creates a better flow from show to show, and we think that will improve the overall performance across the evening," said Jautz, who was put in charge of CNN's domestic operations last fall. He also said that the move of Cooper's show was critical because the 8 p.m. timeslot has become "emblematic of what a news network stands for" and Cooper's program "embodies CNN's strength and its uniqueness."⁷⁵

At the start of November 2011, CNN also announced that its morning lineup would see changes in 2012, most notably with Soledad O'Brien returning as host of a

“conversational ensemble” at 7 a.m. The network also welcomed Ashleigh Banfield, former ABC News correspondent, and Zoraida Sambolin, former local Chicago news anchor, to host a new show at 5 a.m. These changes ended CNN’s “American Morning,” which co-hosts John Roberts and Kiran Chetry departed in 2011. The show, which O’Brien worked on from 2003 to 2007, struggled extensively against Fox News’ “Fox and Friends” and MSNBC’s “Morning Joe.”⁷⁶

The news may no longer always come first, as it once did, but the changes that CNN has made may offer it some relief in competing with Fox and MSNBC. But for the network to regain its name as a hard-hitting news source and ultimately alter cable news’ current course, it needs to do a lot more.

Endnotes

¹ William A. Henry III et al., "History as it happens (Cover story)," *Time* 139, no. 1 (January 6, 1992): 24.

² Stuart H. Loory, "CNN Today: A Young Giant Stumbles," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (October 2005): 340.

³ Ibid., 340-341.

⁴ Henry III, 24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Tom Rosenstiel, "The Myth of CNN (Cover story)," *New Republic* 211, no. 8/9 (1994): 32.

⁷ Henry III, 24.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Reuven Frank, "When News Was the Star," *New Leader* 85, no. 2 (March 2002): 36.

¹⁰ Jonathan S. Morris, "The Fox News Factor," *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10 (July 1, 2005): 57.

¹¹ Henry III, 24.

¹² Rosenstiel, "The Myth of CNN," 32.

¹³ Henry III, 24.

¹⁴ Rosenstiel, "The Myth of CNN," 32.

¹⁵ Morris, 59.

¹⁶ Henry III, 24.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Christiane Amanpour. "Why Do I Do It?" *Brill's Content*. (December 2000): 50.

¹⁹ Tom Rosenstiel. "How CNN Hurt Journalism," *Wilson Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1994): 134-135.

²⁰ Rosenstiel, "The Myth of CNN," 32.

²¹ Rosenstiel, "How CNN Hurt Journalism," 134-135.

²² Frank, 36.

²³ Rosenstiel, "How CNN Hurt Journalism," 134-135.

²⁴ Henry III, 24.

- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Rosenstiel, "How CNN Hurt Journalism," 134-135.
- ²⁷ Henry, III, 24.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Frank, 36.
- ³² Morris, 60.
- ³³ Frank, 37.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Brian Steinberg, "Why in an Exploding Media World the Advertising Community Still Needs CNN," *Advertising Age* 81, no. 35 (October 4, 2010): 1.
- ³⁷ Morris, 61.
- ³⁸ Steinberg, 2.
- ³⁹ James Poniewozik, "Can the CNN-ter Hold?," *Time* 175, no. 17 (May 3, 2010): 60.
- ⁴⁰ Raymond Siller. "At CNN, Perhaps a Little, Um, Creativity Is in Order." *USA Today*, June 14, 2010. http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-06-14-column14_ST1_N.htm.
- ⁴¹ Steinberg, 1.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 2-3.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.
- ⁴⁵ Poniewozik, 60.
- ⁴⁶ Frank, 36.
- ⁴⁷ Jonathan Durbin, "Who's Winning The News Wars? (Cover story)," *Maclean's* 117, no. 40 (October 4, 2004): 28.
- ⁴⁸ Morris, 60-61.
- ⁴⁹ Durbin, 28.
- ⁵⁰ Steinberg, 2.

⁵¹ Bill Carter, "CNN Finishes Last in Ratings for Prime-Time Cable News," *The New York Times*, October 27, 2009, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/business/media/27rating.html>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Steinberg, 2.

⁵⁴ Bill Carter, "CNN Tops Cable Ratings Amid World News Bounty," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/23/business/media/23msnbc.html>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Bill Carter, "Bin Laden News Gives CNN a Ratings Victory," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/bin-laden-news-gives-cnn-a-ratings-win/>.

⁵⁸ Bill Carter, "Debate Coverage Brings CNN a Ratings Win," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/debate-coverage-brings-cnn-a-ratings-win/>.

⁵⁹ Bill Carter, "MSNBC Is Close to Falling to Third Place in Cable News Ratings," *The New York Times*, September 26, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/27/business/media/msnbc-is-close-to-falling-to-third-place-in-cable-news-ratings.html>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Al Neuharth, "Why Larry King Still Is 'The King' on Air," *USA Today*, April 19, 2007, sec. Opinion, http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/neuharth/2007-04-19-neuharth-king_N.htm.

⁶³ Brian Stelter, "Larry King Is Losing the Ratings War to Fox and MSNBC," *The New York Times*, May 26, 2010, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/business/media/27cnn.html>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Gloria Goodale, "With Show's End, What Larry King Leaves Behind," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 30, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2010/0630/With-show-s-end-what-Larry-King-leaves-behind>.

⁶⁶ Jaime Weinman, "What Killed Larry King?" *Maclean's*, July 19, 2010, <http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/07/19/what-killed-larry-king/>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Bill Carter and Brian Stelter, "As Larry King Leaves CNN, Everyone's Talking," *The New York Times*, December 13, 2010, sec. Arts / Television, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/14/arts/television/14king.html?scp=1&sq=larry%20king%20prepares%20to%20sign%20off%20everyone's%20talking&st=cse>.

⁷⁰ Lauren A.E. Schuker, "CNN's Piers Morgan Debuts With 2 Million Viewers," *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2011, sec. Media & Marketing, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703954004576090224055658868.html>.

⁷¹ Anthony Crupi, "Can Piers Punch Back?" *AdWeek*, February 21, 2011, sec. Television, <http://www.adweek.com/news/television/can-piers-punch-back-125797>.

⁷² Carter, "MSNBC Is Close."

⁷³ Brian Stelter, "CNN Cancels Spitzer Show As Part of Lineup Change," *The New York Times*, July 7, 2011, sec. Business Day, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E5D71030F934A35754C0A9679D8B63>.

⁷⁴ Schuker, "CNN's Piers Morgan Debuts."

⁷⁵ Stelter, "CNN Cancels Spitzer."

⁷⁶ David Bauder, "CNN remaking morning lineup with Soledad O'Brien," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2011, sec. NY AP Top News, <http://online.wsj.com/article/APb8a6660a97b94d84a4e3f0a9874915e5.html>.

CHAPTER III

Today's News Landscape

Reese Schonfeld, co-founder of CNN, once said that CNN “has become worldwide and skin-deep.... It coverage splashes over everything and saturates nothing.”¹ Today, that can be said of many of the practices of the 24-hour television news organizations, including CNN's competitor Fox News Channel. January 2012 marked a decade for the notoriously opinionated Republican news outlet at No. 1 in the cable news ratings. The network, which started in 1996, initially had to pay cable systems for distribution, but it only took five years for it to build more viewers than CNN.² Its rise in the news world has coincided with a decrease in the quality of cable news journalism, due to a variety of factors, as competition between the networks has run rampant.

In her 2004 book, “News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News,” Bonnie Anderson, former CNN anchor and executive, wrote, “Perhaps the only place the networks and news divisions haven't gone back to is their roots, back to doing television journalism the old-fashioned way: news that is truly fair and balanced with no political agenda; news that viewers want to know and need to know; news that is relevant to all sectors of the public, not just to a specific group.”³ Instead of reverting to the “old-fashioned way,” networks have created a news environment where gimmicks and shallow news reports are hailed for their entertainment value and anchors are treated as stars rather than professionals. All the while, network officials struggle with the business of broadcast, understanding their audiences and keeping up with new technologies.

Gimmicks, Shallow Reporting and Over-Coverage of the Unimportant

On February 2, 2004, CNN Headline News headlined its 11 p.m. newscast with the 26-hour old story about pop star Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction during the Super Bowl XXXVIII halftime show. The story was followed by an update on the breaking news that the toxin ricin had been found in the mailroom of the Senate majority leader, causing the evacuation of Senate office buildings and prompting increased surveillance at the Pentagon for potential terrorist activity.⁴ CNN may have been the culprit in this instance, choosing to headline Jackson's right breast over a national security issue, but such treatment of important, serious news topics can be seen across the networks.

All too often there is an increase in entertainment news at the expense of objectivity and official commentary. This can be a result of the desire to secure advertising revenue and maintain or improve ratings.⁵ Yet, this treatment of news undermines television news' purpose: to inform. According to Leonard Downie Jr., former executive editor of *The Washington Post*, and Robert G. Kaiser, associate editor and senior correspondent of *The Washington Post*, in their 2003 book, "The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril," "bad journalism—failing to report important news, or reporting news shallowly, inaccurately or unfairly—can leave people uninformed."⁶

How did this treatment of news arise among television news organizations? "We watch to see 'what's going on the world,'" said investigative reporter Steve Salerno in a 2008 article for *Skeptic* magazine. "But there's a problem right off the bat. In its classic

conception, newsworthiness is built on a foundation of anomaly: man-bites-dog, to use the hackneyed journalism school example.”⁷ More than that, looking only for the unusual or entertaining in news reporting often leads to something more sinister: looking only for the violence. In turn, this has led to a sense of monotony and limited focus in news reports. “How often do we see stories from the Middle East that aren’t about bombings, deaths, destruction, wars or the like?” Anderson said in her book. “What about from Africa? Yes, these horrendous stories should be covered, but these aren’t the only things going on in these regions. Not by a long shot.”⁸

To use another journalism school example, “If it bleeds, it leads,” is the commonly used phrase to decide how much prominence should be given to a story.⁹ According to Anderson, this leads to narrow reporting which lacks context and fails to provide accurate portrayals of the lives of people in many countries.¹⁰ But, as well as a focus on international violence, this type of reporting also gives greater clout to the lives and deaths of the rich and famous. The problem? Cable news audiences eat it up.

The plane crash and death of John F. Kennedy Jr. on July 16, 1999, garnered weeks and weeks of coverage. But apparently, the networks were giving viewers what they wanted. A poll conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 80 percent of Americans paid attention to the coverage and 54 percent followed it “very closely.” From “the big story or the trivial story that gets wall-to-wall coverage” to “the sensational story that doesn’t have a lot of relevance to people, but there’s a celebrity involved, what you have to hope is that even though there might be a lot of public interest in stories like that, that journalists are still doing the meat and potatoes, the investigative work, that they’re still being the watchdogs,” according to

Barbara Cochran, president emeritus of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, in Anderson's book.¹¹

The "meat and potatoes" reporting might be out there somewhere, but it is not the news that generates the most buzz. More viewers watched CNN's coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial of the mid-1990s than had watched CNN's daily coverage in the years before the news. The President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky scandal of 1999 also received never-ending coverage,¹² and, in 2003, "Larry King Live" devoted 47 shows to the Laci Petersen murder and eight shows to discuss NBA star Kobe Bryant's rape charges. The show even spent eight shows on pop star Michael Jackson's arrest during the same year, and that news did not break until November 18, 2003.¹³ Such stories are often what networks rely on to draw viewers, and, without them, networks resort to gimmicks to attract audiences. For example, on CNN's "Inside Politics" in 2003, anchor Judy Woodruff inaugurated a cooking segment, "Capitol Cooks." The program visited the homes of politicians and watched them prepare a meal, no longer leaving serious political discussion as the show's highlight.¹⁴

Ultimately, this type of coverage leads to a dumbing down of the public due to gimmicks, cheap journalism and infotainment. Better news coverage prepares the public to understand events, such as the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, according to Robert Wiener, a veteran news producer. "Instead of informing the public on international issues, the media let down the public," Wiener said. "The media did not serve the public well leading up to 9/11 which is why 9/11 came as such a shock to the American public. They really had no idea of the animosity that existed in much of the

Islamic world toward the United States and, consequently, Americans tend to view themselves as the good guys.”¹⁵

Without serving the public well leading up to September 11, 2001, the media created misconceptions about the Islamic world and America’s safety. “Did America become more vulnerable on 9/11?” Salerno said in his 2008 article for *Skeptic*. “Or had it been vulnerable all along? Indeed, it could be argued that America today is far less vulnerable, precisely because of the added vigilance inspired by 9/11. Is that how the media played it?”¹⁶

The bottom line of cable networks’ reliance on shallow reporting is that there is still good, solid reporting out there somewhere. The networks just do not see it as profitable. “I’m no longer sure that when I go out there and do my job it’ll even see the light of air, if the experience of my network colleagues is anything to go by,” said Christiane Amanpour, former CNN chief international correspondent, in Anderson’s book. “More times than I care to remember I have sympathized with too many of them assigned, like myself, to some of the world’s bad places. They would go through hell to do their pieces, only to find them killed back in New York because of some fascinating new twist on ‘killer Twinkies’ or Fergie getting fatter, or something.”¹⁷

The Stars of the News

Yet, not only can the trials and tribulations of the lives of the rich and famous be top news stories, news anchors themselves have turned into celebrities. “Once news was the star; now the stars are the stars,” according to Anderson. “And what’s worse the stars are often the news. And more and more on-air journalists are collecting multimillion

dollar paychecks and being treated like celebrities rather than as journalists. It is little wonder that our moral and ethical compasses have a tough time finding true north.”¹⁸

Dave Shiflett, critic for Bloomberg News and contributor to *The Wall Street Journal*, argues that a pretty face is more of a hiring credential than a graduate degree from Columbia Journalism School.¹⁹ Whether or not this is the case, one thing is clear: television news anchors are known for making millions of dollars each year. This includes Katie Couric’s five-year, \$65-million contract with CBS News, which expired in 2011. And she is not alone. According to *TV Guide*, Matt Lauer’s contract with NBC earns him \$17 million a year and Brian Williams, host of NBC’s “Nightly News” earns \$13 million. This is \$1 million more than ABC’s “World News” host Diane Sawyer. On the cable networks, for “AC 360” on CNN and his daytime talk show “Anderson,” Anderson Cooper earns \$11 million a year through his deal with Time Warner. Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly, the host of the top-rated show on cable news, receives \$10 million a year, as did former MSNBC anchor Keith Olbermann.

Despite these inflated salaries, “network news divisions and talk-show producers are also trying to hold down costs.” According to the August 2011 *TV Guide* report, “Regis Philbin is leaving ‘Live! With Regis and Kelly’ instead of taking a cut in his \$15 million salary,” and Piers Morgan “is getting less than a third of what Larry King earned during his final year in CNN’s prime-line up.”²⁰ But no matter how much they are paid, more and more, anchors are being promoted as personalities, rather than serious journalists. This can be seen in the anchors’ promotional reels. In 2003, viewers could tune into CNN’s Aaron Brown for a “unique perspective on the news.” The following year, Anderson Cooper’s promotion reel touted, “Anderson Cooper does not shy away

from strong opinions... Regular features include Anderson's take on the world." But "if news is reported properly, fairly and in a balanced manner, can it truly be unique?"²¹

Lou Dobbs, former CNN anchor now at Fox, is one example of what can go wrong when "celebritizing" anchors. Dobbs' CNN program "Moneyline" was considered a profit center for CNN, thus he was treated like a "golden goose" by managers because he brought in so much advertising revenue. In 1992, against CNN rules and journalism ethics, Dobbs took money from several companies he reported on, including \$30,000 from Ford Motor Company, to appear in videos to be shown to brokers and clients of Wall Street institutions. Although it was a firing offense, Dobbs merely received a slap on the wrist from CNN executives. In response, in a July 29, 1992, memo to CNN chairman Tom Johnson, a long-time senior manager wrote that when he joined CNN "no one person was ever, ever thought to be bigger than the story":

The idea was that CNN was created to give a home to the news, and more news, and more news after that. When the network has been able to sign up good, reliable, professional journalists, it has made our mission that much easier. But times have changed. The news is no longer the star. The 'stars' are the stars. And even worse the 'stars' are the news. Despite what are obvious violations of the company's various codes of ethics policies, it appears one man can get away with flaunting and violating these policies.

In June 1999, Dobbs left CNN over another financial infraction. He helped create Space.com, which would compete with CNN's web interests. After an ugly breakup, two years later, CNN executives begged Dobbs to return, unable to find someone worthy to replace him. He returned to the network and continued to violate ethics. During coverage of Afghanistan and Iraq, he declared "war against Islamists" and began wearing an American pin in his lapel, like his counterparts at Fox.

“Under Ted Turner, Lou Dobbs would not have been on the air wearing an American flag lapel pin,” said Robert Wiener, CNN’s Baghdad executive producer during the Gulf War. “What does that say to the viewers in Iraq or Lebanon, where [CNN correspondent Brent] Sadler is risking his life? It used to be that CNN was created as an international news organization based in the United States. Now I’m told [by people around the world that] CNN is looked at as nothing more than a mouthpiece of the U.S. administration.”²²

The Business of Cable News

Why are the stars the news? Anderson, who worked at CNN from 1994 to 2002, believes “journalism has become a bottom line business.” With Fox and CNN profits in the hundreds of millions each year, it is not hard to believe. “By no means is it unpatriotic to make money in the news business,” Anderson said. “But the value of a free media should never be measured in terms of dollars earned or in ratings achieved, although both can coexist with public service.”²³

For some news organizations, this is already the formula that they follow. During the aftermath of 9/11, General Electric, the owner of NBC, knew it was going to lose money. But it also understood that it was the network’s responsibility to the public to continue to air coverage of the tragedy, whether or not it brought in revenue. According to Anderson, the executive meetings at CNN were a different story. “I was present at executive meetings during which there were discussions on how soon the network could resume running commercials without angering viewers who might then turn off CNN and

affect ratings, which would then lower earnings,” Anderson said. “The bottom line of those conversations was—the bottom line.”²⁴

Joe Angotti, former NBC senior vice president, believes virtually every aspect of television news is driven by ratings, and ratings by money. “I don’t think there are many instances anymore where at a television editorial meeting someone would stand up and say ‘this may lose us viewers, this may turn people off, but it’s an important story and we’ve got to do it.’ I don’t think that is happening anymore,” Angotti said. “The impact is that the public suffers. The impact is that we’re giving people what they want and not what they need. Television news is not as interesting as it once was in making a difference in people’s lives.”²⁵

The hunt for profits sometimes leads to stories promoting the parent companies of news organizations. In 2001, Bryant Gumbel, host of “CBS This Morning” began a segment with “Who gets kicked off today,” a story about the wild animals living where *Survivor II* was set. The story was one in a long line of fluff pieces promoting CBS’ *Survivor* programs. In October 2003, CNN promoted a special report by Paula Zahn about former President George H. W. Bush’s experiences in the United States Air Force during World War II, “A Flyboy Story.” At the same time, Barnes and Noble was featuring a new book, “Flyboy.” Both CNN, Barnes and Noble, and the book’s publisher, Little Brown, are subsidiaries of Time Warner.²⁶

News operations are expensive, but are shameless plugs of parent companies necessary? “Yes, media is big business, but surely there must be a level beyond which demanding profit from news is simply indecent,” according to Amanpour. “We all love ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire.’ I love ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire.’ Networks,

make your money off of that. Leave news alone, with only good, competitive journalism at the benchmark.”²⁷

Today's News Audience

The worst part about the moneymaking and audience luring strategies of cable news organizations is that they are oftentimes self-defeating. In a mid-2003 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll, more than half completely or mostly agreed that the “people who decide what to put on TV news or in the newspaper are out of touch with people like me.” Fifty-six percent believed that news organizations often reported inaccurately and 62 percent said that news organizations “try to cover up mistakes.”²⁸

According to Jeff Jarvis, founder of *Entertainment Weekly* and director of the graduate interactive journalism program at the City University of New York, in a 2006 interview with *Northwestern Magazine*, “They’re telling us: ‘You bore us. You tell us stuff, but not the stuff I need to know.’ We’re not doing the job we need to do for the public.”²⁹ The situation is similar for Amanpour, now the global affairs anchor for ABC News. “Think of how much more of a contribution we could make to this great society if we weren’t so dependent on what I call those hocus-pocus-focus groups who tell us what people are not interested in,” Amanpour said. “They tell us that Americans don’t care about serious news, Americans don’t care about foreign news, Americans don’t care about anything except contemplating their own navels. That’s what they tell us.”³⁰

Based on Pew survey results, it is clear the network’s attempts to understand and cater to their viewers do not work. Pew began tracking the public’s views of the news

media in 1985, and since then negative opinions about news organizations have increased, surpassing all-time highs. In a September 2011 survey, 66 percent of respondents said news stories are often inaccurate, 77 percent said news organizations tend to favor one side, and 80 percent said news organizations are influenced by powerful people and organizations.

Television news outlets, despite the growth of internet news, remain central to the public's impressions of the news media. Sixty-three percent of respondents volunteered the name of a cable news outlet when they were asked what comes to mind when they think of a news organization. CNN and Fox News were the most prevalent responses. Only 36 percent named a broadcast network, and 5 percent mentioned a national newspaper. More than that, for 66 percent of respondents, news organizations pay too much attention to bad news, and three-quarters of Republicans believe news organizations are politically biased, as do half of Democrats.³¹

According to Amanpour, "Here in the United States, my profession is much maligned—people simply don't trust or like journalists anymore, and that's sad. They accuse us, particularly television, of hyping everything for ratings."³² Yet, despite Amanpour's and the public's misgivings about the news, Americans trust the information they get from the news more than from other sources, including the government. Sixty-nine percent of Americans said that they trust information from local news organizations "a lot," and 59 percent said the same of national news organizations. Only 50 percent trust information from the Obama administration, while 48 percent have "not much" or "no" trust in the administration.

As well as being central to the public's impressions of the media, television also continues to dominate news consumption. The top sources are: Fox News, cited by 19 percent of the public, CNN (15 percent) and local news programming (16 percent). About a third of Republicans (34 percent) cite Fox as their main source of news, compared to 17 percent of independents and 9 percent of Democrats. Since 2009, the total audience for CNN has declined from 22 percent to 15 percent of the public. But in spite of Fox's popularity, more than 60 percent of Americans said that they prefer their news sources without a particular point of view.³³

The Impact of the Internet, Social Networking and Other New Technologies

More than keeping up with audience expectations, the cable news networks have had to adapt to changing technologies. The rise of the Internet—and with it social media, mobile phone applications, tablet PCs, etc.—has changed news. More than three-quarters of American adults use the Internet, and 70 to 75 percent of those people have used the Internet to get news in some way. The Internet has overtaken every source of news—magazines, radio and newspapers—except television in viewership.³⁴

In the September 2011 Pew survey, 23 percent of respondents cited the Internet as their main source of news. More than half of Internet users (51 percent) said that when they looked for news on a specific site that offers links to stories from many news organizations, they looked at sites such as Google (21 percent) and Yahoo (14 percent). For Internet users who searched a news organization's website for news, CNN topped the list (13 percent).³⁵

Social networking and user-generated contents sites also are in the mix. They have given people unlimited access to information and other people, and have given the media more opportunities to connect with the public.³⁶ Twenty-seven percent of adults say that they regularly or sometimes get news or news headlines through Facebook, Twitter or other social networking sites. That percentage includes 38 percent of people younger than 30 and 12 percent of people 65 and older.

Across its vast array of platforms, technology has helped identify what is newsworthy and through which mediums news is delivered. Facebook and Twitter “provide a snapshot of events happening around the world from the viewpoint of firsthand witnesses, and blogs and citizen news sources offer analytical perspectives from the ground faster than print or television can provide.” By October 2011, eighteen months after the introduction of the Apple iPad, 11 percent of adults in the United States owned a tablet computer of some kind, with 53 percent of tablet users getting news on their tablet every day.³⁷ The blog website Tumblr, as of February 2012, even hired two journalists—Chris Mohny, SVP of content for Blackbook Media, and Jessica Bennett, senior writer and editor for Newsweek—to write news about Tumblr for the site.³⁸

But despite their popularity, new technologies present some challenges to news organizations. News organizations must now engage their audiences in new ways, adapt their newsgathering practices to the speed provided by new technologies and, more than that, reassess what makes the news.

The New Media Audience

According to Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), in a 2010 interview with *Columbia Journalism Review*:

We now live in a user-controlled media world. People are their own editors, and the ability of the press to function as a gatekeeper over what the public sees, or to force-feed the public what it should know, is over. Our public discourse is now going to be collaboration between citizens and consumers of information, and the sources from which they get that information. The real gap in the twenty-first century is not between those who have access to the Internet and those who don't; it's between those who have skills to navigate the information, and those who are overwhelmed by it and escape that sense of overwhelming by just going to the sources that make them feel comfortable, or to points of view that are comforting and familiar.³⁹

The challenge for news organizations expanding onto the web is to present a wide array of information in clear, easy to follow ways, that, above all, keep audiences engaged and reading or watching. In a January 2011 talk on "The New News Consumer and the Future of News: Trends for 2011 and Beyond," Amy Mitchell, deputy director of PEJ, reported that the average American actually spends more time consuming news than they did a decade ago, contrary to popular opinion. They spend fifty-seven minutes per day getting news through traditional outlets (newspapers, TV, radio) and an additional thirteen minutes consuming news online. On the web, most people are "news grazers" who get their information from a variety of sources with only 13 percent of Internet users saying that they have a favorite news site. But the time spent on news sites has dropped. In 2009, the average visit to a news site was three minutes and six seconds. In 2010, it fell to just two-and-a-half minutes.

On social media, Mitchell reported that 62 percent of Internet users participate in some kind of social media, with 77 percent of social media users getting their news from social media sources like Facebook and Twitter.⁴⁰ Yet, although social media use is on

the rise—in its 2012 State of the Media Report, Pew reports 133 million Facebook users in the United States compared to 117 million in 2011, and 24 million Twitter users, a 32 percent increase—the medium is not a major source of traffic for news websites. It does, however, have the potential to become one.⁴¹

According to the report, only 9 percent of new organizations' website traffic was driven by social media in 2011, and only 9 percent of online consumers of news in the United States “very often” got their news from Facebook or Twitter. The numbers seem low, but they were up from 2010, and Pew expects them to continue to rise.⁴² With more and more Americans turning to the Internet for news, it seems a likely trend. Pew also suggests that the creation of frictionless news sharing apps on Facebook will contribute. Yahoo already boasts 25 million users of its social reader on the social media site, and *The Guardian*'s has been installed five million times. The drawback that news organizations utilizing such tools will suffer is a decrease in readers visiting the company's actual website and an increase in dependency on Facebook.⁴³

Despite these challenges in attracting and keeping audiences in the new media age, most large news organizations have been able to keep up. According to Rosenstiel, in an April 2011 *Washington Post* column, “Many predicted that the rise of the Internet and online publishing meant that mainstream news organizations would lose their readers and viewers, with technology breaking their oligarchic control over news. But that's not the overall picture.” Although consumers are migrating online, they are heading to “traditional sources.” Of the twenty-five most popular news websites in the United States, all but two are “legacy” media sources—like *The New York Times* or CNN—or

aggregators of traditional sources—like Yahoo or Google News. “The crisis facing traditional media,” Rosenstiel said, “is about revenue, not audience.”⁴⁴

Ultimately, the online news consumer has more resources available to them than previous generations would have thought imaginable. They can choose to rely on the big names—like *The New York Times*—or go for something newer—like *The Huffington Post*. They can access foreign news sources—like Al Jazeera—or stick to something that covers their interests or opinions—like *Politico* or *The Drudge Report*. What remains is that major news organizations, like CNN, or even smaller organizations, can now reach audiences through a number of outlets and can stay successful in the news business if they play their cards right.

Keeping Up With the Times

As news moves online and onto iPads and other mobile devices, news organizations must expand to the new platforms with their audiences and break news faster, but accurately. During a breaking news story, a reporter no longer has as much time to report, interview and fact check as they once did. Although technology has made it faster to get on the scene and report, it has also taken away many of the classic roles of a journalist.⁴⁵ Thus, journalists—for print, online and television alike—must adapt to the times. Speed is a necessity, but so is maintaining accuracy and objectivity. More than that, journalists must acclimate their work across many mediums and make new efforts to engage viewers.

“We’re all pretty convinced that news doesn’t break on TV anymore,” said Eric Bader, senior VP-managing director of digital communications at MediaVest, in a 2007

interview with *Advertising Age*. “Almost everybody across pretty much every economic and age demographic learns of breaking news online, increasingly on mobile.”⁴⁶ This means that news organizations “absolutely have to figure out how they can create and nurture a community for their users,” according to Mary Lou Song, former senior product manager for eBay, in a 2006 interview with *Northwestern Magazine*. “The expectations of average internet users and newspaper readers are that they all want to be an active part of a community, and whether that community is built around a product or news or an issue, it doesn’t matter,” said Song, who is on the board of advisers of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.⁴⁷

For Scott Smith, former executive of the Tribune Company, which owns ten newspapers and twenty-three television stations, traditional news media must respond to the rising technologies with innovation. “I would say that in the news business as in other businesses, customer-focus innovation is essential,” Smith said in a 2006 interview with *Northwestern Magazine* on the future of journalism. “In that context, you’ll see a greater range of choices offered by one news organization.”⁴⁸ This “greater range of choices” can include parallel reporting, where an organization shares the same story or content across its platforms, or it may go beyond sharing the same content in different places. It may include more convergence, where news organizations provide different content or expanded access to content across their platforms.

This expanse often gives reporters a chance to “flesh out stories compressed by time,” as well as share more original stories and unedited interviews on the web. According to David Louie, Emmy Award-winning reporter for ABC7 News in San Francisco, “Every reporter feels cheated. The internet gives us the opportunity to expand

on a story where we don't feel compromised.”⁴⁹ Internet and other technologies have allowed journalists to expand their work, but, on the other hand, they have also provided ways for journalists to shorten news stories, some down to 140 characters or less.

Is Twitter Journalism?

There are many new and growing services available to journalists and news organizations. YouTube and Current TV have added to the expanse of television online. Services like Storify, which allows users to compile social media content into news stories, have made news even more interactive. Facebook has allowed news organizations to create fan pages where they can share content, as well as create applications to better integrate news sharing on the social media site. Twitter, too, has become a great source for news organizations to share links to news stories on their organization websites and interact with their audiences on a more personal level. All of these new services offer challenges to news organizations in learning to use them effectively, especially Twitter.

According to Paul Farhi, senior contributing writer to the *American Journalism Review (AJR)*, “the real question is whether Twitter is more than just the latest info-playingthing.” In an April 2009 *AJR* article, Farhi wrote, “Does it ‘work’ in a meaningful way—as a news-dissemination channel, a reporting and source-building too, a promotional platform? Or is it merely, to buy the caricature, just a banal, narcissistic and often addictive time suck? The unsatisfying answer: It all depends.”⁵⁰ Farhi believes Twitter can be “a serious aid in reporting” and can be a “blunt instrument for crowdsourcing.” Yet, it can also be a pain to sift through a lot of pointless chatter, like “I’m washing my hair!” Ultimately, however, it is a great audience builder for news

organizations. According to ComScore analyst Andrew Lipsman, the average Twitter user is two to three times more likely to visit a leading news website than a non-Twitter user.⁵¹

The big challenge that remains for news organizations is knowing when or if to use Twitter to break news. There is no denying the service's ability to quickly spread a news story. Take, for example, 33-year-old Sohaib Attar's May 2, 2011, tweet, "Helicopter hovering above Abbottabad at 1AM (is a rare event)." Within minutes, his tweet was spread around the world, and within days, the IT consultant living in Abbottabad, Pakistan, became known as "the man who live-tweeted Osama Bin Laden's death."⁵² According to the Nieman Journalism Lab at Harvard University, the news of Bin Laden's death created a tweeting "frenzy" with an average of 3,000 tweets per second for about three hours.⁵³ The news of singer Whitney Houston's death was also broken on Twitter with Aja Dior M.'s (@AjaDiorNavy) tweet "omgg , my aunt tiffany who work for whitney houston just found whitney houston dead in the tub . such ashame & sad 😞" at 4:15 p.m. February 12, 2012, forty-two minutes before the Associated Press broke the news. According to Josh Welford, staff writer for WebProNews, during the hour after the AP reported the news, there were 2,481,652 tweets and retweets on the topic. The traffic peaked at 5:23 p.m. with 61,227 tweets at one time, and MSNBC had the most retweeted article about the death, with more than 13,000 shares.⁵⁴

Twitter can spread breaking news like wildfire, but it also presents an issue: sometimes the news reported on the social media site is not true, especially that of celebrity deaths. In a February 2012 *AJR* article, Barb Palser, new media columnist for *AJR*, wrote, "Social media death hoaxes have befallen countless very-much-alive public

figures, including President Obama, Lady Gaga, Eddie Murphy, Jon Bon Jovi and Chuck Norris (who, as fans noted, is invincible and cannot be killed). ‘Twitter Death’ has become a near-daily occurrence, prompting a great many users to respond with caution when they hear that Madonna, Jackie Chan or Snooki has gone to the great beyond.” Fake news may break on Twitter and news organizations may think they have a great scoop, but, in the end, it is their responsibility to fact- and source-check a Tweet, before posting anything official.

The Challenges Don’t Stop Here

Overall, technology’s impact on journalism has been vast. Emily Bell, director of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, believes the impact was foreshadowed by the coverage of the World Trade Center attacks on 9/11. “Linear TV just could not deliver,” Bell said in a 2011 interview with *The Guardian*. “People used the Web to connect to the experience by watching it in real time on TV and then posting on message boards and forums. They posted bits of information they knew themselves and aggregated it with links from elsewhere. For most, the delivery was crude, but the reporting, linking and sharing of news coverage emerged at that moment.”

Despite the current and emerging challenges for television news organizations regarding new technology, as well as the other factors facing them—ratings, audiences, news anchors, expenses—there is still a lot of good news gathering and reporting out there, as foreshadowed by the 9/11 tragedy. For some, however, this is not the case. According to Salerno’s 2008 *Skeptic* column:

To argue that a certain sloppiness has crept into journalism or that the media has been ‘hijacked by [insert least favorite political agenda]’ badly misses the real point; it suggests that all we need to do to fix things is filter out the gratuitous political spin or rig the ship to run a bit tighter. In truth, today’s system of news delivery is an enterprise whose procedures, protocols and underlying assumptions all but guarantee that it cannot succeed at its self-described mission.”⁵⁵

This is a depressing outlook, which in itself “badly misses the real point.”

Journalism’s future is not doomed. There are still a lot of good “procedures, protocols and underlying assumptions” by many media organizations and journalists. But a “certain sloppiness” remains on many fronts, especially in the cable news world. The biggest challenge for CNN and other news organizations is to face the hurdles head on.

Endnotes

¹ Bonnie Anderson, *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News*. Jossey-Bass, 2004: 5-6.

² Bill Carter, "Fox News Marks a Decade at No. 1 in Cable News." Media Decoder Blog, *The New York Times*, January 31, 2012. <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/>.

³ Anderson, 20.

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Michael Nitz, Tom Reichert, Adonica Schultz Aune, and André Vander Velde, "All the News That's Fit to See? The Sexualization of Television News Journalists as a Promotional Strategy." *Journal of Promotion Management* 13, no. 1/2 (January 2007): 13.

⁶ Leonard Downie Jr., and Robert G. Kaiser, *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril*. Vintage, 2003: 6.

⁷ Steve Salerno, "Journalist Bites Reality!" *Skeptic* 14, no. 1 (March 2008): 52-59.

⁸ Anderson, 43.

⁹ Downie and Kaiser, 7.

¹⁰ Anderson, 43.

¹¹ Ibid., 34-35.

¹² Ibid., 112-116.

¹³ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴ Ibid., 150.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Salerno, 54.

¹⁷ Anderson, 107.

¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹ Nitz, 16.

²⁰ Dylan Stableford. "Matt Lauer Makes \$17 Million, Topping Annual TV News Salaries." Yahoo! News, August 10, 2011. <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/cutline/matt-lauer-makes-17-million-topping-annual-tv-150858412.html>.

²¹ Anderson 154-155

²² Ibid., 162-164.

²³ Ibid., 6-9.

²⁴ Ibid., 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 28.

²⁶ Ibid., 132-133.

²⁷ Ibid., 52.

²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²⁹ Josh Kwan, "The Future of News." *Northwestern Magazine*, Fall 2006.
<http://www.northwestern.edu/magazine/fall2006/cover/cover.html>.

³⁰ Anderson, 29.

³¹ "Press Widely Criticized, But Trusted More Than Other Information Sources." *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, September 22, 2011. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/09/22/press-widely-criticized-but-trusted-more-than-other-institutions/>.

³² Christiane Amanpour, "Why Do I Do It?" *Brill's Content*. (December 2000): 54.

³³ "Press Widely Criticized." Pew Research Center.

³⁴ Ryan M. Thornburg, *Producing Online News: Digital Skills, Stronger Stories*. CQ Press College, 2010.

³⁵ "Press Widely Criticized." Pew Research Center.

³⁶ Kees Brants and Yael de Haan, "Taking the Public Seriously: Three Models of Responsiveness in Media and Journalism." *Media, Culture & Society* 32, no. 3 (May 2010): 411-428.

³⁷ "The Tablet Revolution." *Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism*, October 25, 2011. http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/tablet?src=prc-headline.

³⁸ Graeme McMillan, "Tumblr Hires Journalists to Write About Tumblr" *Time*, February 2, 2012.
<http://techland.time.com/2012/02/02/tumblr-hires-journalists-to-write-about-tumblr/>.

³⁹ Craig Silverman, "Q&A: Blur Author Tom Rosenstiel." *Columbia Journalism Review*, December 3, 2010. http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/qa_blur_author_tom_rosenstiel.php.

⁴⁰ Chad Garrison, "The Future of News? Media Trends Suggest Social Media, Partisan Reporting and Brevity." *Riverfront Times*, January 20, 2011.
http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2011/01/the_future_of_journalism_clarity_in_media_statistics.php.

⁴¹ Alex Fitzpatrick, "Pew: Social Media Not Yet Driving News Traffic." *Mashable*, March 19, 2012. <http://mashable.com/2012/03/19/pew-state-of-media-technology/>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Tom Rosenstiel, "Five Myths About the Future of Journalism." *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2011, sec. Opinions. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-the-future-of-journalism/2011/04/05/AF5UxiuC_story.html.

⁴⁵ Anderson, 31- 32.

⁴⁶ Andrew Hammp, "CNN the TV Channel Is No Match for CNN the Website." *Advertising Age*, June 11, 2007. <http://adage.com/article/mediaworks/cnn-tv-channel-match-cnn-website/117244/>.

⁴⁷ Kwan, "The Future of News."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Paul Farhi, "The Twitter Explosion." *American Journalism Review*. April/May 2009 (April 2009). <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=4756>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Doug Gross, "Tweeting Osama's Death: The Accidental Citizen Journalist." *CNN*, March 10, 2012, sec. Tech. http://articles.cnn.com/2012-03-10/tech/tech_social-media_twitter-osama-death_1_sohaib-athar-abbottabad-citizen-doctor?_s=PM:TECH.

⁵³ Mark Coddington, "This Week in Review: Talking Bin Laden on Twitter, Journos' Online Freedom, and Apple Gets a Taker." *Nieman Journalism Lab*, May 6, 2011. <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/05/this-week-in-review-talking-bin-laden-on-twitter-journos-online-freedom-and-apple-gets-a-taker/>.

⁵⁴ Josh Wolford, "Whitney Houston Death Broken By Citizen Twitter Journalists 42 Minutes Before AP." *WebProNews*, February 13, 2012. <http://www.webpronews.com/whitney-houston-death-citizen-journalists-2012-02>.

⁵⁵ Salerno, 52.

CHAPTER IV

What Should CNN Do?

“We won’t be signing off until the world ends.”

CNN founder Ted Turner spoke these words during the 1980 launch of the network. CNN was a pioneer. It helped create the appetite for 24-hour news, the appetite for instant information. Even though it was “almost stillborn,” the network proved its initial critics and naysayers wrong.¹ Turner devoted himself to CNN and its parent Turner Broadcasting, until he was phased out in 2000 after Time Warner merged with America Online (AOL). Now, at 73 years old, the business tycoon-turned-philanthropist watches his innovation from afar.² “I watch CNN out of habit,” he said in an October 2011 interview with a local Las Vegas news show. “I don’t like everything I see, but I think they’re doing a pretty good job.”³ CNN, despite the challenges it has faced, has done a lot right, but what should the network do now?

Authoritative Reporting

CNN should continue to practice authoritative reporting with live coverage, correspondents present at the scene and a thorough process of fact-checking the validity of stories. The network is no stranger to such coverage. Going back to the beginning, CNN’s commitment to substantial authoritative reporting can be seen in its coverage of the 1986 Challenger space shuttle disaster. CNN’s policy has always been to show every space shuttle launch and landing live. On January 28, 1986, this worked to the network’s advantage in both informing the public and proving that 24-hour news coverage had a

place on television. CNN was the only network that chose to show the Challenger's launch. Stunned viewers were able to watch as reporters at the Kennedy Space Center covered the explosion and the United States lost nine astronauts, including a teacher.⁴

Effective reporting can also be seen in CNN's coverage of the Elian Gonzalez story in January 12, 2000. Gonzalez, a young Cuban boy, was brought to the United States via boat by his mother and her boyfriend. His mother drowned on the journey, and Gonzalez subsequently was placed in the care of paternal relatives in Miami, Fla., who sought to keep him in the United States, despite his father's demands that he be returned to Cuba. Clashes between the Cuban and United States governments, as well as Gonzalez's family, ensued. The Miami media coverage "ignited a firestorm," culminating in one story which brought the controversy to new heights.

Gonzalez was recorded on video saying, "Avion! No quiero volver a Cuba!" ("Airplane, I don't want to return to Cuba.") The problem? The recording was unclear. It could also be heard as, "Avion! Yo quiero volver a Cuba!" ("Airplane, I want to return to Cuba.") Most news channels chose which answer to play. CNN, however, reported on the controversy itself. It played the tape and explained the two interpretations of young Gonzalez's words.⁵ The network let the viewers decide, rather than deciding what the news was.

More recently, CNN went above and beyond to report on Hurricane Katrina. After the hurricane made landfall on August 29, 2005, CNN spread the news across an array of platforms. It expanded its coverage to CNNRadio, CNN Newsource and CNN.com. Online the network serviced more than 33.2 million videos and more than 572 million page views.⁶ On television, the network's continued coverage lifted CNN's ratings

among 25 to 54-year olds in late August 2005. Fox still had a larger audience overall, but CNN won in prime time.⁷ The coverage also garnered CNN its tenth George Foster Peabody Award from the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication. The award committee commended CNN for being the "go-to" channel for "essential, up-to-the-minute information for viewers, listeners and online users" about the disaster, according to a Time Warner press release.⁸

More than that, CNN successfully filed suit against the United States government when emergency operations chief Terry J. Ebbert and Lt. Gen. Russell Honore ruled that the press would have "zero access" to body-recovery operations, stating that it "would not be good to have pictures of the people, the deceased, shown on any media." CNN filed suit claiming that "the government's ban on coverage of the victim recovery process is an unconstitutional prior restraint on publication in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution." Other than coverage on CNN, the network's legal victory was largely unreported by any other networks or media outlets, but it was a victory all the same.⁹

These are the types of stories that CNN should continue to tackle. There is still a place for serious, hard-hitting news, and it makes complete sense that CNN should be the one to continue to deliver it. Turner's vision for CNN was for it to be the *New York Times* of television, a notion he reiterated in a 2005 interview celebrating the 25th anniversary of the network with Christiane Amanpour, then CNN's chief international correspondent. "Somebody's got to be the most respected name in television news, and I wanted that position for CNN," Turner said. "I wanted to be the *New York Times* of the airway -- not

the *New York Post*, but the *New York Times*—and that's what we set out to do, and we did it."¹⁰

Now CNN must keep up with its reputation. "In 20 short years, by all the surveys, we became the world's most respected news source," Turner said. "The *New York Times* had been there for 100 years. We did it in 20. And you can coast on that reputation for a long time, but if you're going to hold that position, which I think would be the most profitable position, too, you have to earn it."¹¹ To maintain this position, as a hard-hitting, reputable news source, CNN must find a balance between infotainment and real news. There is no denying infotainment's draw for some audiences, but overuse of an entertainment news model undermines a cable network's purpose: delivering the news.

Distinctive International Edge

CNN also must maintain an international presence and continue to expand its international coverage. This is a strategy that has long made CNN stand out in the crowd, but, more than that, it has long made CNN the most trusted source during crisis. Although the network trails behind Fox and MSNBC on most days, when there is breaking international news, CNN is usually the successor. As discussed in Chapter II, this can be seen in the network's rating gains in the aftermath of the Japanese earthquake and Libyan uprising crises in March 2011. Such continued international coverage is something CNN takes seriously.

"At a time when other news organizations have cut back on international coverage, have closed down foreign bureaus, do less and less foreign reporting, CNN has actually expanded overseas," said Mark Whitaker, executive vice president and managing

editor of CNN Worldwide, in a November 2011 lecture. According to Whitaker, who presented “Covering the World 24/7: CNN's Role in a Changing Media Industry” at West Virginia University, CNN’s commitment to international news stems from Ted Turner’s original mission. Turner believed that Americans needed to know what was going on in the rest of the world and that substantial international reporting was a necessary part of a 24-hour news channel.¹² This is the belief that has and should continue to spur CNN’s international efforts.

Such efforts have included the network’s continued coverage of the Syrian uprising, which began March 15, 2011. A part of the Arab Spring revolutions, the uprising has been violent and dangerous for both Syrian citizens and international journalists. The fighting, bombings and media restrictions have made the conflict very difficult to cover. All the same, four CNN correspondents (some who have made multiple trips) have reported directly from Syria and many programs have been dedicated to the coverage. From March 2011 to March 2012, “Anderson Cooper 360” spent parts of more than half of its shows on Syrian coverage.¹³ CNN also aired “72 Hours Under Fire,” a one-hour documentary about the challenges faced by a CNN team on assignment in Homs, Syria, throughout March 2012 on CNN and CNN International.

“We are taking the unusual step of covering our journalists’ experience in Homs because it is another piece of the untold story in Syria,” said Whitaker in a March 2012 CNN Press Room blog post. “The fact that the Syrian government doesn’t want the world to know what is happening in places like Homs, and the enormous effort and courage it has taken for Western journalists to cover the brutal crackdown there, is part of the story.

We thought it was important to take our viewers behind the scenes to see and feel that part of this conflict, too.”

The film followed Beirut-based correspondent Arwa Damon, photojournalist Neil Hallworth and security risk advisor Tim Crocket on their trip to the Baba Amr district of Homs in February 2012. In a *Huffington Post* column in March 2012, Damon wrote:

We snuck in to Baba Amr to report close to the zones of intense fighting. It took nearly a week to get in. And everything we witnessed seemed significantly more dire than during our last visit to Syria. The front lines were constantly changing. Young people we filmed died hours later without pain killers or antibiotics. Doctors and medical volunteers were targeted by government snipers just for trying to help rescue the wounded caught in the crossfire -- and women and children desperate enough to venture out for food had to also dodge bullets. We had to be careful about describing our locations on air. And, as always, whenever we were helped by local fixers we avoided doing anything that may help the government identify them later.¹⁴

The three CNN correspondents risked their lives and the lives of others to tell just part of the story of the Syrian conflict, but it was not without purpose. “None of us believes we are invincible and no journalist wants to die telling a story,” Damon wrote. “But you also cannot do justice to the telling of a story like this unless you live and breathe as the people caught in that story are.”¹⁵ No story is worth dying for, but Damon is right. Without CNN continuing to take the risks to cover stories like this, light would often not be shed on some of the darkest places in the world.

The same can be said of another recent CNN story. For eight days in December 2011, two CNN correspondents risked their safety and the safety of others to report on slavery in Mauritania, as a part of the CNN Freedom Project, the network’s effort to end modern-day slavery. In 1981, the West African country was the last nation in the world to abolish slavery, but an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the population still lives in slavery today. CNN’s John D. Sutter and Edythe McNamee traveled to Mauritania to witness the

atrocities first-hand.¹⁶ Reporters are not allowed to report on slavery in the country, thus the pair worked undercover. They met with escaped slaves and abolitionists in secret, oftentimes in the middle of the night.¹⁷ What resulted is an expansive story, which launched March 18, 2012, on CNN.com, and includes photos, graphics and a 22-minute documentary, which also aired on television on both CNN U.S. and CNN International.¹⁸

Devoting more time and resources to these types of stories will be no problem for CNN. Compared to its competitors, the network already spends more time on international news. According to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, throughout 2011, CNN devoted more air time—34 percent—to international events than Fox—20 percent—and MSNBC—14 percent. The biggest story on CNN was unrest in the Middle East, which was the third most covered topic on Fox and MSNBC.¹⁹ But should CNN do more international coverage? Also in his 2005 interview with CNN, Turner said of the network, "The only thing I can suggest, and I love it the way it is, but I would like to see us return to a little more international coverage on the domestic feed and a little more environmental coverage."²⁰ For Turner, the answer is yes, and based on audience size and ratings during times of international crises the answer is yes. More than that, without international coverage, so many stories would remain untold. Looking to the future, CNN should continue its efforts to report internationally on serious news topics that expose its viewers to stories they otherwise would have never known.

Remain Objective

According to Whitaker, "The proliferation of sources of news, the velocity of news and the interactivity of news has taken the partisan element of the media and put it

on steroids.” On top of that, partisan news has created “the bubble effect,” where people can choose to watch or read the news that they agree with, living in their own bubble of beliefs, rather than being exposed to all sides of a story.²¹ But in the face of rampant partisanship, CNN should remain objective. Even if it means falling ratings as opinion news gains more and more popularity, there will always be a place for objective reporting, and, fortunately, this is a commitment CNN currently takes seriously.

“We at CNN think that there is still an audience that’s not looking for just one side, that wants programming where they get exposed to arguments on various sides of an issue, where hosts and reports challenge conventional wisdom coming from all quarters, where what is reported is genuinely reported and not just argued,” Whitaker said. “And that is still our commitment, to that kind of nonpartisan journalism.”²² According to a March 2012 interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, for Ken Jautz, executive vice president of CNN, “Quality journalism is good business.” More than that, CNN must continue to be regarded as “a multi-media monument to objective coverage, which any liberal or conservative viewer could appreciate.”²³

Outwardly, CNN executives appear committed to the standard journalistic practice of providing objective, unbiased coverage. But, despite the network’s decision not to head down the partisan path, there is no denying more opinion-driven news outlets’ current popularity, especially that of Fox News. On top of its anchors’ unashamed use of opinion, the executives at Fox have openly admitted that the network took “a hard right turn” after President Barack Obama’s election.²⁴ For some media figures, CNN’s refusal to have an open political stance is a mistake. In an April 2010 *Huffington Post* column, Mark Greenbaum, attorney and writer, wrote, “Clear opinion is now a must, particularly

in primetime programming, but more importantly, the delivery of news on Fox is now ceaselessly and viscerally sharp-edged with an underlying tone of right-leaning snarkiness. This model, once renegade, is now standard and has played a crucial role in remaking the national media landscape.”²⁵ Greenbaum went on to say, “CNN executives are reportedly still steadfast in their commitment to having primetime hosts deliver material without a partisan point of view. This is a mistake.”²⁶

There is little reason to say that CNN’s commitment is a mistake. Today, there certainly is a place, and a substantial following, for Fox’s news model, but its news gathering and presentation strategies need not be adopted by every news source. Without choices in news delivery style, the news world would be a bleak place. But according to *The Wall Street Journal*’s Jon Friedman, “Jautz may find that point-of-view journalism is what America really wants, that viewers truly do want their television network of choice to give them red-meat journalism. But Jautz won’t give in.”²⁷ Yes, opinion journalism is popular right now, but that does not mean objective reporting no longer has a place. Jautz should not give in. What the network needs to do is reassess its strategies.

For Whitaker, this means that CNN’s nonpartisanship should not mean neutrality. “We have to have a point of view,” Whitaker said. This is a point of view that demands that hard questions be asked of all sides, and that it is acceptable to take a position as long as it is rooted in real reporting.²⁸ An example of this type of reporting can be seen in CNN’s commitment to the Freedom Project, and its efforts to report on slavery in Mauritania and around the world. They also have covered stories on slavery in India, Mozambique, Vietnam, Taiwan and even the United States.²⁹

CNN knows when to take a stance on an issue, such as with the Freedom Project coverage. Where the network still struggles is in taking a stance between opposing political views. On his blog, Pressthink, in July 2011, Jay Rosen, professor of journalism at New York University, wrote:

The problem is this: CNN thinks of itself as the “straight down the middle” network, the non-partisan alternative, the one that isn’t Left and isn’t Right. But defining itself as “not MSNBC” and “not Fox” begs the question of what CNN actually *is*. To the people who run it, the answer is obvious: real journalism! That’s what CNN is. Or as they used to say, “the news is the star.”

Right. But too often, on-air hosts for the network will let someone from one side of a dispute describe the world their way, then let the other side describe the world *their* way, and when the two worlds, so described, turn out to be incommensurate or even polar opposites, what happens?... *CNN leaves it there*. Viewers are left stranded and helpless. The network appears to inform them that there is no truth, only partisan bull. Is that real journalism? No.

For Rosen, CNN’s efforts to remain objective thus far have been self-defeating.

He continues:

Leave the partisan fights to the guests: sounds great. Until you think about it for a minute. And really, that’s all it takes: about a minute. In a hyper-polarized environment like the one we increasingly have in the U.S. these fights have long since broken the borders of opinion. They now routinely break out over matters of fact. (Example: does cutting Federal tax rates increase revenues to the government?) Leaving partisan fights—over matters of fact—to the guests is a disaster, journalistically. But intervening in those fights takes skill, knowledge... and balls. Because one side could be a lot righter than the other, factually speaking.³⁰

This is an issue Whitaker has already addressed. “I think perhaps there have been times in the past when CNN would have people who represented extreme views — let them go at it in a food fight, and then sit neutrally in the middle — and then toss to commercial,” Whitaker said in a July 2011 interview with National Public Radio. “Well, we’re not going to do that anymore.”³¹

This still means CNN remains politically neutral, no matter how its critics label it or how hard it is to remain so. According to Lisa Weaver, former CNN International correspondent, “I don’t understand why people perceive journalists’ and news organizations’ efforts to be objective as a cover for agenda. I think most Americans have little appreciation for what the First Amendment really affords us a society, and they have no idea how hard doing good journalism is.”³² What CNN needs to do is good journalism which involves asking the hard questions, and, more than that, giving concrete answers to the public.

In the end, is it feasible for CNN to remain an objective news source? Turner puts it this way: In an October 2011 interview, he was asked if he thought there was still a place for CNN in the middle, compared to Fox and MSNBC, “I say that if you do a good enough job, certainly there is.”³³

Speed, Technology and Relevance

“I worry about CNN more than I do about CNN.com,” said Richard Parsons, CEO of Time Warner, in 2007. Although CNN’s television ratings have been on a steady decline since 2003, CNN has since expanded into the online realm with much success. More than that, the network has taken on projects with new media sources to continue to build and provide for CNN’s audiences. According to Whitaker, this means that CNN is now “more than a television network.” It has its own wire service, publishing breaking news all day, and it has embraced social media. Rather than viewing Facebook and Twitter as threats, the network has realized how much people now rely on them to get information. On top of that, CNN has become more aware of the relationship between

speed and credibility. “We can’t be too fast,” Whitaker said. “Ultimately, we rise and fall on our credibility.” Thus, the network will not confirm stories breaking on social media without solid proof.³⁴

The network’s website has seen a lot of growth in the past few years. The number of new visitors was up by 25 percent to 26 million in April of 2006, coupled with 90 million subscribers to CNN Mobile.³⁵ In 2011, the network reported that it drew more than 73 million unique visitors across all platforms, beating MSNBC by 38 percent, Fox by 187 percent, ABC News by 217 percent and CBS by 260 percent. CNN also claimed to draw the most mobile news visitors with 19.5 million per month,³⁶ and the website boasts 101.3 million video starts per month. Fox News received less than 30 million unique users across its channels and MSNBC averaged just more than 50 million. Other Time Warner sites, including Time.com and People.com, are included in the CNN Networks metric—perhaps overstating CNN’s advantage. But CNN clearly does have a strong online audience. As on television, the network excels online during periods of breaking news, such as in March 2011. During the earthquake and tsunami crisis in Japan, CNN.com had 135.9 million page views.³⁷

Other technological advancements have included:

- TV Everywhere, which was demoed at SXSW in March 2011. The service allows cable subscribers to get CNN on their computers, iPhones, iPads and other devices in high definition. It enables viewers to watch the network wherever they are, and even pause and rewind to watch coverage they may have missed.³⁸ CNN was the first network to adopt the service, which is available to about 50 million households.³⁹

- In fall 2011, CNN took over Zite, a company that created an iPad application that determines what its users want to read and view. It cost the network between \$20 million and \$25 million.⁴⁰

As well as these two new projects, during SXSW in March 2012, CNN was rumored to be in talks to acquire the social news website Mashable. Such an acquisition, according to Steve Rubel, executive vice president of Edelman, would mean CNN is “increasing their social DNA as more news finds us via social networks.”⁴¹ At this time, no deal has been made between CNN and Mashable. If a deal were to be struck, however, it would cost CNN, and parent company AOL Time Warner, around \$200 million, according to AOL CEO Tim Armstrong. The deal would mean that AOL’s “content business would be one of the most valuable businesses on the Internet,” said Armstrong at the Barclay’s Internet Connect Conference in March 2012.⁴²

Cost and value aside, what would make such an acquisition important for CNN can be put into one word: relevance. In today’s technology and speed driven world, television is no longer the new, flashy service. More and more of what CNN and other networks need to do involves going online and expanding to new services to attract audiences and present the news in new, more engaging formats. CNN’s calling card as the “most trusted name in news” is no longer the sole attraction for new viewers, as many have turned to the more politically opinioned news sources Fox and MSNBC. According to Michael Kempner, founder and CEO of PR firm MWW, in a March 2012 *Huffington Post* column, “That strategy did CNN well for two decades, but that was back in the day when trust was all you needed to survive. Today, trust is only part of the strategy. In

order to attract viewership and keep eyeballs tuned in, cable news has to matter, to its customers, to advertisers and to viewers, and much more than the competition.”⁴³

Yet, CNN must react not just to its cable network competitors, but to the “rising tide of online media.” “More Americans get their news from online sources—and not from giants like Yahoo! or AOL, but from niche outlets like Politico or the Huffington Post,” Kempner said. “To be relevant, CNN recognizes the need to go where the viewers are, much like AOL realized [in 2010] before acquiring the Huffington Post.”⁴⁴ Without relevance, “a brand gets lost in the noise of a 24-hour news and social media cycle,” and, ultimately, gives viewers little reason to tune in. There still needs to be trust, but without relevance, viewers will not act. “Relevance is the difference between tuning in to CNN or turning it off,” Kempner said. But would acquiring Mashable (or a similar site) help the network? According to Kempner:

It remains to be seen if the Mashable acquisition—if it happens—will succeed in making CNN a more relevant brand. But these acquisitions tell us something else about relevance—it doesn’t always happen by luck or happy accident. Consider this statistic from the *New Yorker*: six out of ten YouTube videos that went viral [in 2011] were scripted. Not user-generated serendipitous discoveries of a great cat video, but scripted, programmed content, wired for relevance. What this means is that, with the right data and sound strategy, brands can design their own programs with higher potential for relevance.⁴⁵

Interactivity and Citizen Journalism

In the race for new media relevance, CNN already has another great service in its corner. CNN iReport, the network’s citizen journalism source, has had a number of successes since inception, including surpassing more than one million regular contributors in 2011.⁴⁶ “iReport continues to set the standard in citizen journalism and has farther plans to grow the platform in 2012,” according to a January 2012 CNN report.

“Included in those plans will be new tools and features designed to carry iReport into all the places where people are telling stories, and then connect them back to CNN and the wider web.”⁴⁷

How does iReport work? “On any big news story we’re always looking at not just our own reporting, but at hundreds, thousands sometimes, of videos that are sent to use from people who have shot them in the field,” Whitaker said in his November 2011 lecture. A team in Atlanta then screens the videos, makes sure they are authentic and checks who the source is, before they are posted on the web with CNN’s stamp of approval or shared on television.⁴⁸ The network vets between 5 to 10 percent of the approximately 15,391 iReports that are received each month. The service boasts 2.1 million unique users and has received iReports from every country in the world.⁴⁹

iReport is another great leap forward for CNN. Not only has the service gained a large public following, but it is miles ahead of Fox’s citizen journalism service, Fox uReport. According to the service’s website, uReport has a total of 16 registered uReporters and 806 approved uploads (as of March 20, 2012).⁵⁰ Compared to more than 15,000 iReports each month and more than one million iReporters, CNN is the clear winner in this case. CNN also has created another service that works in tandem with iReport, CNN Open Story, which launched in 2011. Open Story takes CNN’s footage and all the perspectives of iReporters on a story and compiles them, as well as a map and timeline, into one overarching news story.⁵¹

The iReport service has taken the driver’s seat in a number of breaking news stories, including the March 2011 Japanese earthquake. On television, CNN shot up in the ratings during the earthquake’s aftermath, attracting more than 2 million viewers

some nights, according to the *New York Times*. iReport added to the continued coverage, as earthquake victims in Japan shared their first-hand experiences on the web. In the week after the quake, CNN invited several iReporters on air to recount their experiences, allowing CNN to “enrich its reporting on the region as other news organizations were struggling to get their own reporters on the ground.”⁵² Such breaking news events prompt two waves of iReports: those who report right after the event (or as it happens), and viewers at home who are inspired by the early iReport coverage and want to tell their own stories.⁵³

iReport adds a huge dimension of interactivity to CNN, both on television and online. The network also has tried to garner more audience involvement through its program CNN Heroes, in which viewers can nominate and vote for who they believe are heroes, according to Whitaker. During its television programs, CNN has also made efforts to ask viewers “questions of the day” or have anchors read viewers’ emails.⁵⁴ This strategy also extends to Tweets and Facebook statuses, an integration which has benefitted the network.

In February 2012, CNN accounted for almost 13 percent of all social media mentions, making it the month’s most social cable network, according to social media analytics firm Trendrr. This amounted to 144 percent more social activity than MSNBC and 718 percent more than Fox News. CNN’s “Breaking News” Twitter feed has 6.75 million followers and two of its hosts—Piers Morgan and Anderson Cooper—have more than 2 million each.⁵⁵ On Twitter, the network has 1.8 million more followers than its closest competitor, the *New York Times*, and on Facebook its closest competitor is Fox.

On the social network, CNN outshines Fox by almost one million fans and MSNBC by three million.⁵⁶

Yet, while CNN's use of social media is clearly successful, the network has taken some criticism for its overuse of Twitter, as it sometimes references trending topics and hashtags, or just regurgitates tweets. This criticism came into the spotlight on "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" in July 2011 in a segment in which he pointed out the frequency of CNN anchors reading tweets from Twitter users with unprofessional sounding names like @ladybigmac.⁵⁷ Certainly, there is a fine line between good viewer interaction and bad viewer interaction. There is a big difference between reading an audience member's tweets on the air and actually engaging in constructive conversation with viewers and followers on the web. CNN should move away from just reading tweets, Facebook statuses or emails on television. It should promote online conversation—through Facebook, Twitter and email—but not spend a lot of on-air time on them. Twitter and other online services are being used more and more by journalists and other professionals, but oftentimes online conversations are not reputable. More than that, why show on television what can be easily accessed online?

Remaining relevant by using online services and new technologies is a necessary step for CNN, especially when its television audience is smaller than some of its competitors. What CNN must do, however, is remain as objective with its use of social media and other online tools as it does on television. Continuing to fact- and source-check iReports is a part of this, as well as only sharing viewers' tweets, or other online communications, when they add substance to news coverage. That @ladybigmac's favorite burger place is "Five Guys Burgers & Fries! Way over the fat limit, but tastes so

good! Reminds me of high school lunches at the drive-in,” according to a tweet shared on CNN’s “American Morning” on July 20, 2011, means nothing to viewers, and, ultimately, is not news.⁵⁸ Even in the 24-hour news cycle, there must have been something else to cover.

Back to TV: Strong Personalities, New Programs

Although online media has an increasing role in the news landscape, CNN must continue to reformat and grow its television presence. Internet and mobile news audiences are on the rise, but television news still has its place. According to Tony Maddox, executive vice president of CNN International, in a March 2012 interview with BBC World Service:

I think as new sources of information come along and social media takes an increasing role in news gathering, people shouldn’t feel as though that will replace traditional news. The skill is to be able to fold that into our broadcasting. We always tend to assume that when something new comes along it replaces what went before. The truth of the matter is that’s not true. CNN was an incredibly disruptive force as a 24-hour channel, yet the radio channels, the established news sources, they’re all still there, and I think that will be the case with these new arrivals as well. They’ll certainly take an important role, but there will still be a role for traditional broadcasting as well.⁵⁹

Throughout 2011, median prime-time and daytime viewership of the three cable news channels—CNN, Fox and MSNBC—was up one percent, according to Nielsen Media Research. Although the television news audience is largely made up of older viewers, with 65 year olds and older spending an average of 49 hours per week watching traditional television, there is no denying that television news still has a following. For CNN, this is shown in a 16 percent increase in median prime time viewers to an average of 665,000, and a 5 percent increase in daytime viewership to an average of 474,000. On

top of this, CNN's television audience still outweighs its online audience. According to digital business analytics firm comScore, CNN averaged 73 million unique visitors to its websites each month throughout 2011. According to Nielsen, the television channel averaged 99 million viewers per month. And, while CNN grew in viewership throughout the year, Fox News' prime-time audience dropped by 3 percent to 1.9 million viewers.⁶⁰

CNN might still be behind the conservative-leaning news organization, but it made significant changes to its programming line-up in 2011, resulting in an even more significant growth, a trend that CNN should try to continue. This can be accomplished by promoting its already successful anchors, such as Anderson Cooper and Wolf Blitzer, as well as its relatively new additions, such as Piers Morgan and Erin Burnett. This is not to say that CNN should treat its anchors as personalities or stars, as discussed in Chapter III, but that its anchors should be promoted (and act) as though they are professionals and serious journalists, not talk-show hosts trying to entertain guests and audiences.

Public Service v. Business

It is easy to sit idly and pontificate about what CNN should do to improve cable news, but it is important to remember two facts. First, journalism is a public service, and, second, journalism is a business. In the end, no matter what it does, CNN must balance what is right for the good of the public, and what is right for its survival against its competitors and new technologies. This includes balancing the views and expectations of its parent company, AOL Time Warner, as well as advertisers which keep the network alive.

On the business side, CNN's profits, which are combined with its sibling HLN, were projected to increase 11 percent to \$595.8 million in 2011, compared to \$534.8 million in 2010, according to financial research firm SNL Kagan. This is significantly less than the projected 12 percent increase in profits of Fox from \$779.6 million to \$869.2 million. Yet, it is much more than the 11 percent profit increase of MSNBC, which grew from \$168.8 million to \$186.6 million. Revenue-wise, Fox was the leader as well, with a projected growth of 9 percent (\$1.47 billion to \$1.6 billion), compared to CNN's growth of 7 percent (\$1.21 billion to \$1.29 billion) and MSNBC's growth of 8 percent (\$378 million to \$409.3 million). With regard to advertising revenue, however, CNN and MSNBC were the leaders with 11 percent projected growth. CNN's advertising revenue increased from \$492 million to \$547 million, and MSNBC increased from \$188 million to \$208 million. Yet, Fox, while its revenue was projected to only grow 7 percent, is still the advertising revenue leader, growing from \$622 million to \$663 million.⁶¹

Maintaining a revenue and profit stream is important, but more important are the strategies CNN should employ to maintain the stream, and whether or not they are for the good of journalism itself and not just the network's profit center. According to Mark Briggs, CEO of Serra Media and author of "Journalism 2.0," "The business model for journalism is crumbling."⁶² For CNN's Whitaker, too, "The industry is in a very turbulent time right now where the old business models of journalism are falling apart."⁶³ The question is: how can the business model for journalism be corrected? In a 2008 report for the Neiman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, Briggs wrote:

Can marketing save journalism? It's a heretical question for some to consider, I'm sure, since journalists have long valued their practice as more "pure" than marketing and public relations. But these seemingly disparate forms of communication are melding together, and journalism can benefit from integrating new marketing strategies and tactics. This type of marketing is not advertising, or slogans, or logos. As it has evolved in the digital age, it has become more transparent, authentic and collaborative, which I will argue are all traits that describe good journalism today, too.⁶⁴

Briggs' answer is for news organizations to create "social capital" by becoming a "trusted center" within a "structure of relationships through digital communication."

According to Briggs, "French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu suggested social capital can be developed through purposeful actions and then transformed into conventional economic gains. This concept very closely aligns to the traditional business model for news of generating revenue based largely on a public service." This type of business can be implemented by news organizations through social media. According to Briggs:

To maximize a news organization's social capital and marketability, its journalism today must be transparent, authentic and collaborative. This is why blogs and Twitter work for news organizations. Neither will replace traditional journalism, and that shouldn't be the objective. These new digital tools bring journalists closer to readers and readers closer to journalism by removing barriers to a more networked conversation.⁶⁵

Already CNN has created a vast online and social media following. If Briggs' ideas about the future business model for news organizations are correct, then CNN will continue to succeed as a business, and, more than that, stay relevant.

In the fall of 2007, online publishing entrepreneur Elizabeth Osder spoke to journalism students at the University of Southern California about entrepreneurial journalism. She said, "Start with the impact you want to have. Figure out what audience you need to assemble to have that impact and what kind of content is needed to do that. Then price it out: How much money do you need to do it?" When one student

complained that her speech made journalism sound like business school, she replied: “It forces you to be relevant and useful versus arrogant and entitled.”⁶⁶

This lesson can easily be applied to CNN. Balancing its role as a public service and a business is no easy feat for CNN, or any other news organization, but what will make it successful is finding the right balance between what its audience needs and how much that costs to provide. This can be achieved through interaction and collaboration with its audience, whether it’s through social media or other means. According to Whitaker in a July 2011 interview with National Public Radio, “A big challenge for CNN now is to really decide who its audience is, and to really focus on doing the best job possible for that audience and not think it can be all things to all people.”⁶⁷

Ultimately, CNN is not “tethered solely to its ratings” as it still makes hundreds of millions of dollars in profits each year. What needs to change, however, is what news is covered. According to Whitaker, all too often “cable news outlets are like 5-year-olds playing soccer—a mob darting here and there—chasing the story of the moment as one.” CNN, Whitaker said, “needs to keep its eye on the full playing field.”⁶⁸ This means keeping its eyes on good news coverage.

According to John Lavine, dean of Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, “journalists must tell stories that are relevant to people’s lives and truly distinct from the media flotsam that washes past. Part of the formula requires taking elements of marketing and applying those elements to journalism—a concept that has sent some traditionalists into a tizzy.” The necessary marketing does not, however, mean pandering to audiences. “You have to have great journalism or else they won’t come,” Lavine said in a fall 2006 *Northwestern Magazine* article. An example he proposes is

what Starbucks has done with coffee. The chain has “created an ambiance with its décor, music and baristas to enhance the experience of drinking its coffee.” The same can be done with journalism, according to Lavine, but “it starts with providing excellent coffee.”⁶⁹

The Future: Can CNN Fix Cable News?

Ever since people emerged from the caves, figured out how to light a fire and gather around it, storytellers have held our attention. That’s not going to change, whether the fire is a TV, a website, a radio, an iPad or some other gadget that has yet to be invented. It’s an exciting time.

—Judy Muller, former correspondent for ABC and CBS⁷⁰

Although the future of journalism holds many unknowns, news gathering and delivery will still be an integral aspect of daily life. Whether or not Fox News will still be on top, or if politically opinionated news will remain popular, or what new technologies will emerge for news organizations to utilize, are all questions that have yet to be answered. What remains is this: Based on CNN’s history and how it operates in today’s ever-changing news environment, there will still be a place for it as a news source in the years to come. But can CNN fix cable news?

If CNN continues on its course—providing substantial national and international coverage, maintaining nonpartisanship, and making its services easily accessible to its audiences—then it has the potential to redirect cable news’ current course away from opinion news and infotainment, and re-popularize serious news. In the end, CNN should, as corny as it sounds, just be itself, a notion that James Poniewozik of *Time* magazine puts best:

Like the prime-time networks and other big news outlets in the niche era, CNN has to manage decline. That reality accepted, CNN can focus on being the best version of itself for an age of contested reality, combining its still formidable news gathering with informed, impassioned hosts who are dedicated to being more than the self-conscious, nervous, vanilla midpoint between Fox and MSNBC. What should CNN do? My ideal CNN would be the one that acts like it doesn't care what anyone thinks it should do.⁷¹

Endnotes

¹ Stephen Galloway, “Whatever Happened to Ted Turner?” *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 29, 2012. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/ted-turner-jane-fonda-cnn-time-warner-295773>.

² Ibid.

³ Kerry Picket, “PICKET: Ted Turner on CNN: I Don’t Like Everything I See.” *The Washington Times*, October 24, 2011, sec. Blogs. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/watercooler/2011/oct/24/picket-ted-turner-cnn-i-dont-everything-i-see/>.

⁴ Bonnie Anderson, *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News*. Jossey-Bas. (2004):77.

⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁶ “CNN Earns Prestigious Peabody Award for Hurricane Katrina Coverage.” *Time Warner*, April 5, 2006. http://www.timewarner.com/newsroom/press-releases/2006/04/CNN_Earns_Prestigious_Peabody_Award_for_Hurricane_Katrina_04-05-2006.php.

⁷ Matea Gold, “CNN Aided by Katrina Reports.” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 2005. <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/sep/01/news/wk-quick1.5>.

⁸ “CNN Earns Prestigious Peabody,” *Time Warner*.

⁹ “Media Largely Ignored CNN’s Legal Victory over Government Restrictions on Katrina Coverage.” *Media Matters for America*, September 14, 2005. <http://mediamatters.org/research/200509140008>.

¹⁰ Eason Jordan, “Turner Reflects on CNN at 25.” CNN, June 2, 2005. http://articles.cnn.com/2005-06-01/entertainment/turner.25th.cnn_1_world-report-program-cnn-eason-jordan?_s=PM:SHOWBIZ.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mark Whitaker, “Covering the World 24/7: CNN’s Role in a Changing Media Industry,” 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFN9vGiVDuw&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

¹³ “CNN’s Unfiltered Look at Reporting Inside Syria.” *CNN Press Room*, March 5, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/05/cnns-unfiltered-look-at-reporting-inside-syria/>.

¹⁴ Arwa Damon, “72 Hours Under Fire.” *Huffington Post*, March 9, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arwa-damon/syria-bombardment_b_1335758.html.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ John Sutter, “Slavery’s Last Stand - CNN.com.” *CNN*, March 18, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/index.html>.

¹⁷ “CNN Goes Undercover in Mauritania,” *CNN Press Room*, March 14, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/14/undercover-in-mauritania/>.

- ¹⁸ Sutter, "Slavery's Last Stand."
- ¹⁹ Jesse Holcomb, Amy Mitchell, and Tom Rosenstiel, "Cable: CNN Ends Its Ratings Slide, Fox Falls Again," March 2012. <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2012/cable-cnn-ends-its-ratings-slide-fox-falls-again/>.
- ²⁰ Jordan, "Turner Reflects on CNN."
- ²¹ Whitaker. "Covering the World 24/7."
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Jon Friedman, "CNN: 'Quality Journalism Is Good Business' Jon Friedman's Media Web." *MarketWatch*, March 14, 2012. <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/cnn-quality-journalism-is-good-business-2012-03-14>.
- ²⁴ "Fox Acknowledges Its 'Hard Right Turn'." *Media Matters for America*, September 27, 2011. <http://mediamatters.org/research/201109270027>.
- ²⁵ Mark Greenbaum, "CNN's Rapid Decline and the Future of Cable News." *The Huffington Post*, April 2, 2010, sec. Media. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-greenbaum/cnns-rapid-decline-and-th_b_522696.html.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Friedman, "CNN: 'Quality Journalism.'"
- ²⁸ Whitaker, "Covering the World 24/7."
- ²⁹ "The CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery - CNN.com Blogs," <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/>.
- ³⁰ Jay Rosen, "'CNN Leaves It There' Is Now Officially a Problem at CNN." *Pressthink*, July 3, 2011. <http://pressthink.org/2011/07/cnn-leaves-it-there-is-now-officially-a-problem-at-cnn/>.
- ³¹ David Folkenflik, "New CNN News Chief Takes Stock : NPR." NPR.org, July 1, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/07/01/137538689/new-cnn-news-chief-takes-stock>.
- ³² "Lisa Weaver on the Future of Television | Future of Television." *OurBlook*, n.d. <http://www.ourblook.com/Future-of-Television/Lisa-Weaver-on-the-Future-of-Television.html>.
- ³³ Picket, "Ted Turner on CNN."
- ³⁴ Whitaker. "Covering the World 24/7."
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Lucas Shaw, "CNN Behind on TV Ratings, Ahead of Rivals Online." *Reuters*, January 26, 2012. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/01/26/television-us-ratings-digital-idUKTRE80P1XR20120126>.
- ³⁷ Daniel Frankel, "Why CNN's Digital Strength May Cause Problems For Fox." *paidContent*, January 27, 2012. <http://paidcontent.org/2012/01/27/419-why-cnns-digital-strength-may-cause-problems-for-fox/>.
- ³⁸ Ryan Lawler, "CNN Everywhere: The Future of Video News Online?" *GigaOM*, March 16, 2011. <http://gigaom.com/video/cnn-everywhere/>.

³⁹ Holcomb, “Cable: CNN Ends Its Rating Slide.”

⁴⁰ Brian Stelter, “CNN Is Said to Be in Talks to Acquire Mashable.” *The New York Times*, March 12, 2012, sec. Media Decoder Blog. <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/12/cnn-in-talks-to-acquire-mashable-sources-say/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Szalai, Georg Szalai, “AOL CEO: CNN-Mashable Deal Talk Shows Value of Online Content Business.” *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 13, 2012. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/aol-ceo-tim-armstrong-content-strategy-value-cnn-mashable-deal-299022>.

⁴³ Michael Kempner, “CNN and the Race for Relevance.” *The Huffington Post*, March 15, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-kempner/cnn-and-the-race-for-rele_b_1345800.html.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Megan O’Neill, “CNN iReport Now Boasts Over 1 Million Citizen Journalist iReporters.” *Social Times*, January 25, 2012. http://socialtimes.com/cnn-ireport-now-boasts-over-1-million-citizen-journalist-ireporters_b88452.

⁴⁷ “CNN iReport: 1,000,000+ iReporters Around the Globe.” *CNN Press Room*, January 23, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/23/cnn-ireport-1000000-ireporters-around-the-globe/>.

⁴⁸ Whitaker. “Covering the World 24/7.”

⁴⁹ James Glynn, “The Future of User Generated Content? CNN, iReport and Open Story.” *Generated by Users*, March 28, 2011. <http://generatedbyusers.wordpress.com/2011/03/28/the-future-of-user-generated-content-cnn-ireport-and-open-story/>.

⁵⁰ “uReport - Fox News Citizen Journalism.” *Fox News*, March 31, 2012. <http://ureport.foxnews.com>.

⁵¹ Glynn, “The Future of User Generated Content?”

⁵² Simon Owens, “How CNN’s iReport Enhanced the Network’s Coverage of the Japan Earthquake and Its Aftermath.” *Nieman Journalism Lab*, March 22, 2011. <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/03/how-cnns-ireport-enhanced-the-networks-coverage-of-the-japan-earthquake-and-its-aftermath/>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Whitaker. “Covering the World 24/7.”

⁵⁵ Lucas Shaw, “CNN Takes Social Media Crown in Cable, Not in Ratings.” *The Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 2012. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/sns-rt-us-cnn-socialmediabre82e15y-20120315,0,5571622.story>.

⁵⁶ Shaw, “CNN Behind on TV Ratings.”

⁵⁷ Lauren Indvik, “Jon Stewart Pokes Fun at On-Air Tweets [VIDEO].” *Mashable*, July 28, 2011. <http://mashable.com/2011/07/28/jon-stewart-twitter-joke/>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “CNN Into the Future.” *BBC World Service*, March 1, 2012.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/2012/03/120301_tony_maddox.shtml.

⁶⁰ Holcomb, “Cable: CNN Ends Its Rating Slide.”

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Mark Briggs, “The End of Journalism as Usual.” *Nieman Reports*, 2008.
<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100689/The-End-of-Journalism-as-Usual.aspx>.

⁶³ Whitaker. “Covering the World 24/7.”

⁶⁴ Briggs, “The End of Journalism as Usual.”

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Folkenflik, “New CNN Chief.”

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Kwan, Josh. “The Future of News,” *Northwestern Magazine*, Fall 2006.
<http://www.northwestern.edu/magazine/fall2006/cover/cover.html>.

⁷⁰ “Judy Muller on the Future of Television | Future of Television.” *OurBlook*, n.d.
<http://www.ourblook.com/Future-of-Television/Judy-Muller-on-the-Future-of-Television.html>.

⁷¹ James Poniewozik, “Can the CNN-ter Hold?” *Time* 175, no. 17 (May 3, 2010): 60.

APPENDIX

Timeline

First regularly scheduled television service in the United States begins
July 2, 1928.

Ted Turner born
Nov. 19, 1938

NBC News founded and airs first television news broadcast
Feb. 21, 1940

ABC News founded
June 15, 1945

CBS Evening News airs for the first time
May 3, 1948

First color television broadcast
Jan. 1, 1954

Ed Turner, Ted Turner's father, kills himself
March 6, 1960

First half hour news program
Sept. 9, 1963

CBS' *60 Minutes* airs for the first time
September 24, 1968

Ted Turner acquires Channel 17 in Atlanta, Ga.
January 1970

Ted Turner starts SuperStation, his satellite channel
1976

Ted Turner buys the Atlanta Braves
1976

Ted Turner begins to think about a 24-hour news channel
1978

16 Million homes in the United States wired for cable
May 1980

CNN goes on the air
June 1, 1980

CNN adds independent candidate John Anderson to the 1980 Presidential Debate
1980

CNN breaks the news of the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan
March 30, 1981

Ted Turner and Reese Schonfeld file suit against ABC, CBS and NBC for creating the
White House pool
May 11, 1981

CNN earns its place as “The Fourth Network” in the White House pool
1981

ABC partners with Westinghouse Electric Company to create Satellite News Channels
(SNC)
August 1981

Ted Turner speaks out against SNC at a meeting with cable operators in Boston
1981

CNN2, later Headline News (HLN), goes on the air
Dec. 31, 1981

ABC shuts down SNC
October 1983

Ted Turner interviews Fidel Castro
June 29, 1990

CNN launches CNN International
Jan. 1, 1984

Larry King joins CNN
June 1985

CNN airs the only live coverage of the Challenger disaster
Jan. 28, 1986

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos asks CNN Tokyo to broadcast his speech to the
U.S.

1986

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi holds a press conference open to western media
1986

CNN covers the Baby Jessica rescue
October 14, 1987

Soviet foreign ministry broadcasts a statement condemning the U.S. invasion of Panama
on CNN
1989

Ted Turner bans on-air commentary on CNN
1989

CNN anchor Bernard Shaw announces the bombing of Baghdad in the early hours of the
Gulf War
January 16, 1991

CNN launches CNN Airport Network
Jan. 20, 1992

CNN debuts its news website CNN.com
Aug. 30, 1995

Fox News Channel airs for the first time
Oct. 7, 1996

Turner Broadcasting merges with Time Warner
Oct. 10, 1996

MSNBC airs for the first time
July 15, 1996

CNN launches CNN en Español
March 17, 1997

Plane crash and death of John F. Kennedy Jr. sparks weeks of news coverage
July 16, 1999

CNN launches CNN Turk
Oct. 11, 1999

America Online (AOL) acquires Time Warner, creating AOL Time Warner
Jan. 10, 2000

CNN covers the Elian Gonzalez story
Jan. 12, 2000

CNN airs “Wolf Blitzer Reports” for the first time
Dec. 8, 2000

Anderson Cooper joins CNN
September 2001

CNN breaks the news of the September 11 attacks first
Sept. 11, 2001

CNN launches CNNj, a collaboration between CNN and Japan Cable Television
March 1, 2003

“Anderson Cooper 360” airs for the first time
Sept. 8, 2003

Michael Jackson is arrested, CNN’s “Larry King Live” spends 8 shows on the story
before the year’s end
Nov. 18, 2003

CNN Headline News headlines its 11 p.m. newscast with the 26-hour old story about
Janet Jackson’s wardrobe malfunction at the Super Bowl
Feb. 2, 2004

Wolf Blitzer’s “The Situation Room” replaces CNN’s “Wolf Blitzer Reports”
August 8, 2005

Hurricane Katrina makes landfall, CNN makes around-the-clock coverage
Aug. 29, 2005

CNN files suit against Hurricane Katrina emergency operations chief Terry J. Ebbert and
Lt. Gen. Russell Honore, who ruled that the press could have “zero access” to body-
recovery operations
Sept. 9, 2005

CNN launches CNN- Indian Broadcasting Network (IBN)
Dec. 16, 2005

CNN launches iReport
Aug. 2, 2006

Fox launches uReport
March 19, 2007

Campbell Brown joins CNN
Feb. 2008

CNN launches CNN Chile
Dec. 4, 2008

CNN introduces new graphics package, a comprehensive redesign of their on-air presentation
December 2008

CNN anchor Lou Dobbs resigns on air
Nov. 11, 2009

CNN airs “Rick’s List” with host Rick Sanchez for the first time
January 18, 2010

CNN airs live coverage of the Baja California 7.2 magnitude earthquake, MSNBC runs “Why Planes Crash”
April 4, 2010

Campbell Brown leaves CNN
May 18, 2010

Ken Jautz replaces Jonathan Klein as president of CNN
Sept. 24, 2010

Final edition of “Larry King Live” airs
Dec. 16, 2010

CNN introduces its most recent graphics package
Jan. 10, 2011

Piers Morgan hosts the first edition of “Piers Morgan Tonight”
Jan. 17, 2011

Syrian uprising, part of Arab spring, begins; CNN provides continued coverage
March 15, 2011

CNN correspondent Nic Robertson covers reports of heavy gunfire and explosions in Tripoli, MSNBC airs “Lockup,” CNN is No. 1 in ratings
March 22, 2011

News of Osama Bin Laden’s death breaks on Twitter, CNN reaches the top of the ratings in television coverage
May 2, 2011

CNN is No. 1 in ratings with coverage of the New Hampshire Republican candidate debate

June 13, 2011

CNN cancels Eliot Spitzer's 8 p.m. show "In the Arena"

July 6, 2011

CNN begins using TV Everywhere through CNN.com and mobile apps

July 18, 2011

CNN acquires Zite

Aug. 30, 2011

CNN's prime time audience increases by 49 percent

Sept. 2011

CNN airs "Erin Burnett OutFront" for the first time

Oct. 3, 2011

News of Whitney Houston's death breaks on Twitter, CNN reaches top of television ratings in subsequent coverage

Feb. 12, 2012

CNN launches "Slavery's Last Stand," an expansive story on slavery in Mauritania, on CNN.com

March 18, 2012

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amanpour, Christiane. "Why do I do it?" *Brill's Content* (December 2000): 50-54.
- Anderson, Bonnie. *News Flash: Journalism, Infotainment and the Bottom-Line Business of Broadcast News*. Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Bauder, David. "CNN remaking morning lineup with Soledad O'Brien," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2011, sec. NY AP Top News,
<http://online.wsj.com/article/APb8a6660a97b94d84a4e3f0a9874915e5.html>.
- Brants, Kees and Yael de Haan. "Taking the Public Seriously: Three Models of Responsiveness in Media and Journalism." *Media, Culture & Society* 32, no. 3 (May 2010): 411-428.
- Briggs, Mark. "The End of Journalism as Usual." *Nieman Reports*, 2008.
<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100689/The-End-of-Journalism-as-Usual.aspx>.
- Carter, Bill. "Bin Laden News Gives CNN a Ratings Victory," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising,
<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/bin-laden-news-gives-cnn-a-ratings-win/>.
- Carter, Bill. "CNN Finishes Last in Ratings for Prime-Time Cable News." *The New York Times*, October 27, 2009, sec. Business/ Media & Advertising.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/business/media/27rating.html>.
- Carter, Bill. "CNN Tops Cable Ratings Amid World News Bounty." *The New York Times*, March 22, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/23/business/media/23msnbc.html>.
- Carter, Bill. "Debate Coverage Brings CNN a Ratings Win," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising,
<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/debate-coverage-brings-cnn-a-ratings-win/>.
- Carter, Bill. "Fox News Marks a Decade at No. 1 in Cable News." Media Decoder Blog, *The New York Times*, January 31, 2012.
<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/>.

- Carter, Bill. "MSNBC Is Close to Falling to Third Place in Cable News Ratings," *The New York Times*, September 26, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/27/business/media/msnbc-is-close-to-falling-to-third-place-in-cable-news-ratings.html>.
- Carter, Bill and Brian Stelter. "As Larry King Leaves CNN, Everyone's Talking," *The New York Times*, December 13, 2010, sec. Arts / Television, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/14/arts/television/14king.html?scp=1&sq=larry%20king%20prepares%20to%20sign%20off%20everyone's%20talking&st=cse>.
- "CNN Earns Prestigious Peabody Award for Hurricane Katrina Coverage." *Time Warner*, April 5, 2006. http://www.timewarner.com/newsroom/press-releases/2006/04/CNN_Earns_Prestigious_Peabody_Award_for_Hurricane_Katrina_04-05-2006.php.
- "The CNN Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery," *CNN*. <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/>.
- "CNN Goes Undercover in Mauritania," *CNN Press Room*, March 14, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/14/undercover-in-mauritania/>.
- "CNN Into the Future." *BBC World Service*, March 1, 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/2012/03/120301_tony_maddox.shtml.
- "CNN iReport: 1,000,000+ iReporters Around the Globe." *CNN Press Room*, January 23, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/23/cnn-ireport-1000000-ireporters-around-the-globe/>.
- "CNN's Unfiltered Look at Reporting Inside Syria." *CNN Press Room*, March 5, 2012. <http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/05/cnns-unfiltered-look-at-reporting-inside-syria/>.
- Coddington, Mark. "This Week in Review: Talking Bin Laden on Twitter, Journos' Online Freedom, and Apple Gets a Taker." *Nieman Journalism Lab*, May 6, 2011. <http://www.niemanlab.org/2011/05/this-week-in-review-talking-bin-laden-on-twitter-journos-online-freedom-and-apple-gets-a-taker/>.
- Crupi, Anthony. "Can Piers Punch Back?" *AdWeek*, February 21, 2011, sec. Television, <http://www.adweek.com/news/television/can-piers-punch-back-125797>.
- Cumming Jr., Joseph B. "Ted Turner: 'Captain Outrageous'." *Saturday Evening Post* 252, no. 7 (October 1980): 66–69.

- Downie Jr., Leonard and Robert G. Kaiser. *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril*. Vintage, 2003.
- Durbin, Jonathan. "Who's Winning The News Wars? (Cover Story)." *Maclean's* 117, no. 40 (October 4, 2004): 28–30.
- Farber, David. *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s*. 1st ed. Hill and Wang, 1994.
- Farhi, Paul. "The Twitter Explosion." *American Journalism Review*. April/May 2009 (April 2009). <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=4756>.
- Fitzpatrick, Alex. "Pew: Social Media Not Yet Driving News Traffic." *Mashable*, March 19, 2012. <http://mashable.com/2012/03/19/pew-state-of-media-technology/>.
- Folkenflik, David. "New CNN News Chief Takes Stock : NPR." NPR.org, July 1, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/07/01/137538689/new-cnn-news-chief-takes-stock>.
- "Fox Acknowledges Its 'Hard Right Turn'." *Media Matters for America*, September 27, 2011. <http://mediamatters.org/research/201109270027>.
- Frank, Reuven. "When News Was the Star." *New Leader* 85, no. 2 (March 2002): 35-37.
- Frankel, Daniel. "Why CNN's Digital Strength May Cause Problems For Fox." *paidContent*, January 27, 2012. <http://paidcontent.org/2012/01/27/419-why-cnns-digital-strength-may-cause-problems-for-fox/>.
- Friedman, Jon. "CNN: 'Quality Journalism Is Good Business' Jon Friedman's Media Web." *MarketWatch*, March 14, 2012. <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/cnn-quality-journalism-is-good-business-2012-03-14>.
- Galloway, Stephen. "Whatever Happened to Ted Turner?" *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 29, 2012. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/ted-turner-jane-fonda-cnn-time-warner-295773>.
- Garrison, Chad. "The Future of News? Media Trends Suggest Social Media, Partisan Reporting and Brevity." *Riverfront Times*, January 20, 2011.
- Glynn, James. "The Future of User Generated Content? CNN, iReport and Open Story." *Generated by Users*, March 28, 2011. <http://generatedbyusers.wordpress.com/2011/03/28/the-future-of-user-generated-content-cnn-ireport-and-open-story/>.
- Gold, Matea. "CNN Aided by Katrina Reports." *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 2005. <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/sep/01/news/wk-quick1.5>.

- Goodale, Gloria. "With Show's End, What Larry King Leaves Behind." *Christian Science Monitor*, June 30, 2010.
<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2010/0630/With-show-s-end-what-Larry-King-leaves-behind>.
- Greenbaum, Mark. "CNN's Rapid Decline and the Future of Cable News." *The Huffington Post*, April 2, 2010, sec. Media. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-greenbaum/cnns-rapid-decline-and-th_b_522696.html.
- Gross, Doug. "Tweeting Osama's Death: The Accidental Citizen Journalist." *CNN*, March 10, 2012, sec. Tech. http://articles.cnn.com/2012-03-10/tech/tech_social-media_twitter-osama-death_1_sohaib-athar-abbottabad-citizen-doctor?_s=PM:TECH.
- Hammp, Andrew. "CNN the TV Channel Is No Match for CNN the Website." *Advertising Age*, June 11, 2007. <http://adage.com/article/mediaworks/cnn-tv-channel-match-cnn-website/117244/>.
- Henry III, William A., Anne Constable, Michael Duffy, and William Tynan. "History as It Happens. (Cover Story)." *Time* 139, no. 1 (January 6, 1992): 24.
- Holcomb, Jesse, Amy Mitchell, and Tom Rosenstiel. "Cable: CNN Ends Its Ratings Slide, Fox Falls Again," March 2012. <http://stateofthedia.org/2012/cable-cnn-ends-its-ratings-slide-fox-falls-again/>.
- Indvik, Lauren. "Jon Stewart Pokes Fun at On-Air Tweets [VIDEO]." *Mashable*, July 28, 2011. <http://mashable.com/2011/07/28/jon-stewart-twitter-joke/>.
- Jordan, Eason. "Turner Reflects on CNN at 25." *CNN*, June 2, 2005.
http://articles.cnn.com/2005-06-01/entertainment/turner.25th.cnn_1_world-report-program-cnn-eason-jordan?_s=PM:SHOWBIZ.
- "Judy Muller on the Future of Television | Future of Television." *OurBlook*, n.d.
<http://www.ourblook.com/Future-of-Television/Judy-Muller-on-the-Future-of-Television.html>.
- Kempner, Michael. "CNN and the Race for Relevance." *The Huffington Post*, March 15, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-kempner/cnn-and-the-race-for-rele_b_1345800.html.
- Kwan, Josh. "The Future of News." *Northwestern Magazine*, Fall 2006.
<http://www.northwestern.edu/magazine/fall2006/cover/cover.html>.
- Lawler, Ryan. "CNN Everywhere: The Future of Video News Online?" *GigaOM*, March 16, 2011. <http://gigaom.com/video/cnn-everywhere/>.

- “Lisa Weaver on the Future of Television | Future of Television.” *OurBlook*, n.d.
<http://www.ourblook.com/Future-of-Television/Lisa-Weaver-on-the-Future-of-Television.html>.
- Loory, Stuart H. “CNN Today: A Young Giant Stumbles.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 4 (October 2005): 340-343.
- McMillan, Graeme. “Tumblr Hires Journalists to Write About Tumblr” *Time*, February 2, 2012. <http://techland.time.com/2012/02/02/tumblr-hires-journalists-to-write-about-tumblr/>.
- “Media Largely Ignored CNN’s Legal Victory over Government Restrictions on Katrina Coverage.” *Media Matters for America*, September 14, 2005.
<http://mediamatters.org/research/200509140008>.
- Morris, Jonathan S. “The Fox News Factor.” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10 (July 1, 2005): 56–79.
- Neuharth, Al. “Why Larry King Still Is ‘The King’ on Air.” *USA Today*, April 19, 2007, sec. Opinion. http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/columnist/neuharth/2007-04-19-neuharth-king_N.htm.
- Nitz, Michael, Tom Reichert, Adonica Schultz Aune, and André Vander Velde. “All the News That’s Fit to See? The Sexualization of Television News Journalists as a Promotional Strategy.” *Journal of Promotion Management* 13, no. 1/2 (January 2007): 13.
- O’Neill, Megan. “CNN iReport Now Boasts Over 1 Million Citizen Journalist iReporters.” *Social Times*, January 25, 2012. http://socialtimes.com/cnn-ireport-now-boasts-over-1-million-citizen-journalist-ireporters_b88452.
- Pach, Chester. ““Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press’: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969–1973.” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (June 2010): 555–565.
- Pickett, Kerry. “PICKET: Ted Turner on CNN: I Don’t Like Everything I See.” *The Washington Times*, October 24, 2011, sec. Blogs.
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/blog/watercooler/2011/oct/24/picket-ted-turner-cnn-i-dont-everything-i-see/>.
- Poniewozik, James. “Can the CNN-ter Hold?” *Time* 175, no. 17 (May 3, 2010): 60.
- “Press Widely Criticized, But Trusted More Than Other Information Sources.” *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, September 22, 2011.
<http://www.people-press.org/2011/09/22/press-widely-criticized-but-trusted-more-than-other-institutions/>.

- Rosen, Jay. "'CNN Leaves It There' Is Now Officially a Problem at CNN." *Pressthink*, July 3, 2011. <http://pressthink.org/2011/07/cnn-leaves-it-there-is-now-officially-a-problem-at-cnn/>.
- Rosenstiel, Tom. "Five Myths About the Future of Journalism." *The Washington Post*, November 22, 2011, sec. Opinions. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-the-future-of-journalism/2011/04/05/AF5UxiuC_story.html.
- Rosenstiel, Tom. "How CNN Hurt Journalism." *Wilson Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1994): 134-135.
- Rosenstiel, Tom. "The Myth of CNN (Cover Story)." *New Republic* 211, no. 8/9 (1994): 27-33.
- Salerno, Steve. "Journalist Bites Reality!" *Skeptic* 14, no. 1 (March 2008): 52-59.
- Schuker, Lauren A.E. "CNN's Piers Morgan Debuts With 2 Million Viewers." *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2011, sec. Media & Marketing. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703954004576090224055658868.html>.
- Shaw, Lucas. "CNN Behind on TV Ratings, Ahead of Rivals Online." *Reuters*, January 26, 2012. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/01/26/television-us-ratings-digital-idUKTRE80P1XR20120126>.
- Shaw, Lucas. "CNN Takes Social Media Crown in Cable, Not in Ratings." *The Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 2012. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/sns-rt-us-cnn-socialmediabre82e15y-20120315,0,5571622.story>.
- Siller, Raymond. "At CNN, Perhaps a Little, Um, Creativity Is in Order." *USA Today*, June 14, 2010. http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2010-06-14-column14_ST1_N.htm.
- Silverman, Craig. "Q&A: Blur Author Tom Rosenstiel." *Columbia Journalism Review*, December 3, 2010. http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/qa_blur_author_tom_rosenstiel.php.
- Stableford, Dylan. "Matt Lauer Makes \$17 Million, Topping Annual TV News Salaries." *Yahoo! News*, August 10, 2011. <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/cutline/matt-lauer-makes-17-million-topping-annual-tv-150858412.html>.
- Steinberg, Brian. "Why in An Exploding Media World the Advertising Community Still Needs CNN." *Advertising Age* 81, no. 35 (October 4, 2010): 4-22.

- Stelter, Brian. "CNN Cancels Spitzer Show As Part of Lineup Change," *The New York Times*, July 7, 2011, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C05E5D71030F934A35754C0A9679D8B63>.
- Stelter, Brian. "CNN Is Said to Be in Talks to Acquire Mashable." *The New York Times*, March 12, 2012, sec. Media Decoder Blog, <http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/12/cnn-in-talks-to-acquire-mashable-sources-say/>.
- Stelter, Brian. "Larry King Is Losing the Ratings War to Fox and MSNBC," *The New York Times*, May 26, 2010, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/27/business/media/27cnn.html>.
- Stoddard, Maynard Good. "Cable TV's Ted Turner: Spirited Skipper of CNN." *Saturday Evening Post*. Saturday Evening Post Society, Inc., March 1984.
- Streitmatter, Rodger. *Mightier Than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History*. Second ed. Westview Press, 2007.
- Sutter, John. "Slavery's Last Stand." *CNN*, March 18, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/index.html>.
- Szalai, Georg. "AOL CEO: CNN-Mashable Deal Talk Shows Value of Online Content Business." *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 13, 2012. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/aol-ceo-tim-armstrong-content-strategy-value-cnn-mashable-deal-299022>.
- "The Tablet Revolution." *Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism*, October 25, 2011. http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/tablet?src=prc-headline.
- Thornburg, Ryan M. *Producing Online News: Digital Skills, Stronger Stories*. CQ Press College, 2010.
- "uReport - Fox News Citizen Journalism." *Fox News*, March 31, 2012. <http://ureport.foxnews.com>.
- Weinman, Jaime. "What Killed Larry King?" *Maclean's*, July 19, 2010. <http://www2.macleans.ca/2010/07/19/what-killed-larry-king/>.
- Wolford, Josh. "Whitney Houston Death Broken By Citizen Twitter Journalists 42 Minutes Before AP." *WebProNews*, February 13, 2012. <http://www.webpronews.com/whitney-houston-death-citizen-journalists-2012-02>.

Whitaker, Mark. "Covering the World 24/7: CNN's Role in a Changing Media Industry," 2011.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFN9vGiVDuw&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

Whittemore, Hank. *CNN: The Inside Story: How a Band of Mavericks Changed the Face of Television News*. 1st ed. Little Brown & Co (T), 1990.

Zoglin, Richard. "The Pioneer of Cable-TV News." *Saturday Evening Post* 253, no. 8 (November 1981): 32–36.