

**CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI  
REMARKS ON INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES  
COLUMBIA SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM  
NEW YORK, NY  
JUNE 10, 2011**

Thank you, Nicholas Lemann for hosting us today, and for your outstanding leadership of Columbia's Journalism School.

Thank you Alberto Iguarden for your thoughtful remarks, and for being one of the main reasons we are here today.

Discussing *this* report at *this* place has special meaning for me.

As Nick mentioned, I graduated from Columbia. I didn't attend the journalism school, though I did take a class here, and worked for the Columbia Journalism Review.

Journalism was a big part of my life back then. I wrote for the Columbia Spectator, and in last year here I reestablished Columbia's original newspaper, Acta Columbiana, as a competitor to the Spectator.

Some people have tried to infer from that certain views on media competition policy.

I've been lucky in life – or Zelig-like. At law school, I was an editor under a remarkably talented Harvard Law Review President who went on to great things.

At Columbia, I was an editor under a remarkably talented Spectator Editor-in-Chief who went on to great things.

When I wanted to hire someone to lead a major FCC project on the information needs of communities in the digital age, I called my Spectator boss, Steve Waldman.

It was the right call. Not only because the other fellow was busy, solving a financial crisis, reforming health care, and fighting two wars. Steve Waldman's unique background made him the perfect person to lead the effort on this report.

Steve worked for years as a highly respected reporter and editor at Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, and the Washington Monthly.

He then became a successful Internet entrepreneur, starting Beliefnet.com, a successful online multi-faith community that had millions of Americans as regular users. In his spare time, he wrote for WallStreetJournal.com.

Steve has done an incredible job with this project, and it's one of the highlights of my career to be his set-up man today.

I mentioned that I took a J-school course while I was in college here. Well, the course was with Fred Friendly, and I went on to become part of the great project he ran here at Columbia, helping him with books including *The Constitution: That Delicate Balance*, and with the incredibly engaging and informative PBS shows developed under Fred's leadership here at the Media and Society Seminars.

Fred, who was Edward R. Murrow's producer and then President of CBS News, was one of the great heroes of journalism. I'm so pleased that his wife, Ruth Friendly, is here today.

Another American hero – and another person I'm proud to call a mentor – is Newt Minow, President Kennedy's FCC Chairman. And like Fred Friendly, a legend. He delivered the powerful "Vast Wasteland" speech 50 years ago last month.

In another zelig moment, his daughter Martha Minow – now Dean of Harvard Law School – was my professor twice in law school, and through Martha Minow I got to know Newt Minow long before I became FCC Chairman. He has become a close and trusted advisor in this job.

Both Newt Minow and Fred Friendly helped shape my approach to today's topic.

Most of us remember Minow and Friendly as visionaries who realized that an emerging new technology – television – had the power to dramatically change our world for the better.

Fred Friendly called broadcast television, "the greatest teaching tool since the printing press."

In his "Vast Wasteland" speech Newt Minow spoke of how the new technology of over-the-air TV could help – quote – "destroy poverty around the world."

It would shortchange their legacies to limit their inspiring messages to the technology that was new back then.

To my mind, they weren't talking about the power and potential of one particular technology, but all communications technology.

They understood that just as the technology called the printing press changed everything, so would the technology called television, and so would future technological innovations in communications and media.

They both believed that it was critical for our nation to harness the power of communications technology – to seize the opportunity of new media. New technology, new media would be essential to meeting needs that are the foundation of a healthy democracy: a vibrant free press and an informed and empowered citizenry.

No technology in history offers more potential to facilitate that ideal than the Internet.

When we put out Spectator at Columbia when Steve and I were students, we used manual typewriters, giant typesetters, hot wax, and x-acto knives.

My son started college this year. He has a phone in his pocket with more computing power than anything we had access to in the 1980s. A device that gives people everywhere access to all the information in Butler Library, and much more; and that empowers people anywhere to publish words or photos onto a network that connects more than 2 billion people worldwide.

Internet connected phones like my son's have been used in our time to bring down governments, crack open closed societies, and pave the way to democracy and freedom.

When the bipartisan Knight Commission issued its report last year catalyzing the discussion we

continue today, they didn't predict what we've seen in North Africa and the Middle East. But they knew something was up.

Thank you Alberto Ibarguen for your vision, and thank you and the Knight Commission for asking the FCC to take a closer look at the issues around the changing media landscape.

As Chairman, I was happy to answer that request. And I'm pleased that, thanks to Steve Waldman and a remarkable team at the FCC, the Commission has now released an in-depth and thoughtful report on the information needs of communities in the broadband age, a report that's already drawn praise from a wide range of sources including a long list Journalism School Deans – thank you, Nick.

Steve Waldman is here today to present the report's key findings and recommendations. Before we hear from Steve, I'd like to highlight three reasons why I think this report is so important.

First, the report makes clear that new technology is creating a new world of opportunity to empower journalists and keep the public informed like never before.

Digital innovations have made the gathering and distribution of news and information faster, less expensive and more democratic.

In the U.S. today, more people are getting their news from the Internet than newspapers. And we see more and more news and information entrepreneurs pursuing their visions online and on mobile with creativity and confidence in their ability to succeed.

That's true of startups – for-profit and non-profit – and it's true of an increasing number of established media entities as well.

It's true of recent graduates and students of journalism schools like this one. Because under the leadership of Nick Lemann and others, journalism schools have been changing their curricula to respond to the digital opportunity, and originating more journalism.

Empowering individuals with new digital tools has given us breakthroughs like “hyperlocal” news. Even in the hey-day of newspapers, this type of block-by-block news and information wasn't available.

Much is going well when it comes to the Internet and journalism.

In our nation's history, we have never had a greater opportunity to realize our founding vision of a vibrant democracy bolstered by a strong free press and informed citizens.

So the first contribution of the report is its focus on the *opportunities* of new technologies. The second is its focus on the *challenges*.

Foremost is the disruptive impact the Internet and economic pressures have had on local news gathering.

Newspapers have cut back staff and – something we would have thought impossible 10 years ago – shut down. Many local broadcasters have cut back on news budgets; many stations have no news at all.

The report identifies an emerging gap in local news reporting that has not yet been fully filled by

digital media.

This matters, because if citizens don't get local news and information, the health of our democracy suffers.

Journalism provides a vital check against corruption by those with power. The less quality local reporting we have, the less likely we are to learn about government misdeeds, schools that fail children, hospitals that mistreat patients or factories that pollute the water.

Journalism is essential to accountability. That's why Thomas Jefferson said he'd rather have "newspapers without government" than "a government without newspapers." The technology has changed, but the point endures.

The third important contribution of this report is that it suggests thoughtful and practical initiatives to help address the challenges it identifies.

In crafting recommendations, the report starts with the overriding and correct recognition that the First Amendment significantly limits the role government can play in addressing issues around news and speech.

There's a school of thought that would have government help journalism through content mandates on journalism outlets. Steve and I didn't go to that school.

But the report also recognizes that, as Nick Lemann and other Journalism school deans said in commenting on the report: "Whether digital journalism can fully realize [its] potential depends in significant part on public-policy decisions—about who has access to fast Internet service, how freely Internet users can get all the information available online, and how well professional journalists are able to fulfill their duty to inform the public."

As Steve has put it, while government is not the main player in this drama, there are areas where government can make a positive difference. And Steve and his team developed a creative set of recommendations for government, the private sector and nonprofit sector that can help make success possible for journalists and entrepreneurs that are trying to seize the opportunities of the digital revolution.

The report's recommendations focus on several key areas:

- on ongoing vigilance to ensure low entry barriers for news and information entrepreneurs, including preserving Internet freedom and openness;
- on streamlining and removing burdensome rules and obstacles for traditional news providers seeking to distribute their work on digital platforms, and encouraging new innovative news partnerships involving non-profits;
- on enabling the development of business models that can sustain news and information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- on government transparency and encouraging the development of ideas like State C-Spans.
- on moving public information from paper files to the Internet in a way that's easily available to consumers, citizens, and reporters; and

- on achieving universal broadband access for all Americans.

Let me elaborate on this last point.

The principle of universal access to information goes back to the early years of our Republic. In 1832, newspapers accounted for 95% of the weight carried by the Postal Service, and those newspapers received a discount for postage.

The primary news delivery mechanisms of the past -- newspapers, radio, and TV -- were all universal. The emerging news delivery mechanism of the future -- broadband -- of course must be too.

Achieving universal access to the open Internet would have multiple benefits: not only bringing the vast online libraries of information to all Americans, but also improving online business models.

To get to 100% broadband adoption from today's level would represent a 50% increase in the online audience.

The larger the online market, the greater the scale, the more likely a news and information online business can succeed.

Universal broadband and healthy online journalism are mutually re-enforcing goals.

And moving more public information online makes this a virtuous circle. It empowers journalists and reduces news gathering costs. It also enables new applications to serve citizens and communities, and boost broadband demand – which is why the FCC recently teamed up with the Knight Foundation to announce an Apps4Communiites competition, with awards for applications that make the best use of government data that was put online.

The bottom line: Thanks to Steve Waldman and his team, the FCC has issued a thorough and thoughtful report that deepens our understanding of how technology is affecting the information needs of our communities; a roadmap and a set of practical and First-Amendment friendly recommendations to fill real gaps and improve the news and information landscape.

Some of the issues addressed in the report involve debates that have gone on for decades. An experienced observer of the space yesterday said this report marks “a pivotal change in the conversation” that can make a real and positive difference.

We'll do our part at the FCC to prove that right – because getting it right is essential to the health of our democracy.

It's my privilege now to welcome Steve Waldman.