

Access to Dominant Media (Greenway Ballroom I)

Mark G. Kiyak - Valdosta State University - No American Citizen Left Behind

As it stands today, the power of virtually all network news results from the traditional five step model of: Newsmaking, Agenda Setting, Interpreting, Socializing and Persuading. The key step is the second, Agenda Setting, where the media select what will be covered. Many Americans would agree that much of the news being reported each night is not information which is essential for each citizen to be a potentially, well-informed voter. Therefore, the addition of a new step between Newsmaking and Agenda Setting should be considered. Perhaps the proposal of a new FCC regulation, called No American Citizen Left Behind, requiring these organizations to list and promote the existence (on a separate area of their websites) of a raw listing of all potential news stories (without going into detail) from that day should be considered. If news organizations are forced to list every possible story under consideration for broadcast to the masses, it would stand to reason some of those stillborn fragments would interest a certain cross-section of people. The enactment of such a regulation would guarantee public access to all news before it is pasteurized for public consumption. It could also cause unwanted embarrassment for “gatekeepers” when the public, armed with its new access, compares possible news stories versus actually reported news stories. The idea of “we report, you decide” would come under increased scrutiny and media organizations who continue to embrace the sensationalistic would be perceived as “having something to hide.” If their ratings slip, they would have no other choice, but to cover stories of real importance to the public. All these possible scenarios would, at the very least, not only result in a greater potential for citizens to engage in deliberate democracy within the public sphere, but could also result in governmental policies which actually mirror the public will.

Duncan Brown, Eddie Ashworth - Ohio University - Turning Disruptive Media into Digital Dollars: How New Technologies are Forcing the Recording Industry to Change its Existing Business Model

In the 1980s new digital technologies presented the recorded music industry with an unprecedented business opportunity. Many of the customers who had bought a vinyl album in the past could now be sold another version of the same product in the form of a CD, and the industry was pulled out of a serious slump into a period of expansive growth. But

during the 1990s clouds soon began to dim this bright future for the industry. As digital and computer technologies advanced it became easier for an individual user to also become a music distributor. Although the major corporations in the recorded music industry are undoubtedly facing a difficult future this paper concludes by reviewing the potential benefits of a shift to a new business model in the recorded music industry. Established artists are already beginning to question the old distribution systems and even whether they need the support of a major record label. And, crucially, new artists -- who are the future of the industry -- are finding alternative ways to distribute their music. Perhaps the 'threat' the RIAA perceives will prove to be a renaissance for recorded music by freeing it from the limits imposed by an increasingly obsolete business model.

Mari Castaneda - University of Massachusetts - Independent Latino Media in the U.S.

This paper examines the current state of independent Latino media in the US. For years, Latinos have struggled to have their voices heard in the mainstream media outlets (both in English and in Spanish), and therefore have had to develop independent media spaces in order to address issues that affect Latino communities. In the last five years, a slew of grassroots, community-based newspapers have emerged in an attempt to create outlets for Latino voices. Interestingly, many of these papers have also developed an online presence in order to reach a broader readership and have partnered with local community Spanish-language radio in an effort to maximize minimal resources. Although there are many opportunities given the number of Latinos in the US, there are still many obstacles that inhibit the emergence and sustainability of independent Latino media outlets, whether print, broadcast or online. In addition to mapping out the landscape of independent media for and by Latinos, this paper will also discuss the ways in which the political-economy of media along with cultural attitudes about Latinos affect the sustenance of independent and community based media for one of the fastest growing ethnic populations in the US.

Emily Shaw, Christian Sandyig - University of Illinois - Does Infrastructure Require Policy?: Limits of Community-Based Broadband

The Southern California Tribal Digital Village (SCTDV) is a community-based WiFi project that provides broadband Internet access to more than a dozen Native American reservations scattered throughout the mountains of San Diego County, California. The SCTDV has achieved remarkable success in overcoming the physical barriers of rocky, rural, mountainous terrain, the political hurdles of autonomous tribal governments who do not always see eye-to-eye, and the social obstacles of building and operating a WiFi network in communities that are geographically isolated and have been systematically marginalized throughout American history.

The SCTDV has succeeded where so many community WiFi networks have failed, and its operators have become innovators in the use of solar and battery power at their tower sites. Yet story of the SCTDV also reveals the incredible difficulty of building and maintaining the infrastructure, personnel, and funding required to make a rural community wireless network achieve its Internet service goals. So what can policymakers learn from the SCTDV? In the context of dismal rural broadband deployment in the U.S., the SCTDV's unlikely success is a rich example of the need for policies that specifically address the broadband needs of underserved rural communities that are not able to build and operate an advanced wireless network like the SCTDV.

Lydie Nadia Cabrera - St. Thomas University - Red Lion Red Bull,
Ownership Consolidation of Broadcast Media, Commercialized
Programming of Public Issues and the Necessity for the Return of the
Fairness Doctrine

The consolidation of the broadcast media during the last two decades has been dramatic. The media industry has experienced an intensive consolidation since late 1987, which coincides with time that the fairness doctrine was repealed. At the time of the repeal of the fairness doctrine, the media industry consisted of approximately 50 media companies with the recent merger of Newscorp and Dow Jones the industry has imploded into only 10 media companies. This rapid consolidation and homogenization of the media industry in to a medium for conservative discourse programming is reminiscent of the Lord of the Ring passage,

“one [view] to rule them all, one [view] to find them, one [view] to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.” The result is a commercialized homogenization of programming that permeates the American psyche.

A corollary to the consolidation of the media industry has been the elimination of ownership opportunities for small, locally owned media companies, which often provide non-conservative programming such as issues of local concern and pertinent matters of interests to the general public. In an effort to ensure that non-conservative programming was also broadcasted, the Federal Communications Commissions’ (“FCC”) established the fairness doctrine, in part, to regulate content by requiring licensees to provide programming on issues of public disagreement. The fairness doctrine is based upon the First Amendment constitutional right to freedom of speech and of the press. It is not an absolute right. No where is that more prevalent than the FCC’s repeal of the fairness doctrine, which was upheld by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1987. The repeal of the fairness doctrine was due, in part, to the FCC’s misunderstanding that media diversification was adequate and the fairness doctrine was no longer necessary. The Prometheus decision in 2003 further eroded the FCC’s media ownership policies. Lack of diversity in media ownership bares a strong statistical significance to the commercial character of programming content and the move away from programming which deals with localism and pertinent matters of interest to the public. Since the repeal of the fairness doctrine, Congress’ attempt to mandate the fairness doctrine has been unsuccessful.

The time has come for a re-assessment of the necessity for the fairness doctrine upon a public policy principle of access to dominant media. The reality is that the public having played no role in the transference of airwave ownership (a public resource) to private ownership becomes captive to the opinions of broadcasters’ preferences. The broadcast media industry has developed into a non-competitive, conservative insular market that permeates the American economy and psyche.