



# The Communication Crisis in America, And How to Fix It

Edited by **Mark Lloyd**  
and **Lewis A. Friedland**



The Communication Crisis in America,  
And How to Fix It

Mark Lloyd • Lewis A. Friedland  
Editors

# The Communication Crisis in America, And How to Fix It

palgrave  
macmillan

*Editors*

Mark Lloyd  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, California, USA

Lewis A. Friedland  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Madison, Wisconsin, USA

ISBN 978-1-349-94924-3 (hard cover)    ISBN 978-1-349-94925-0 (eBook)  
ISBN 978-1-349-95030-0 (soft cover)  
DOI 10.1057/978-1-349-94925-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016947005

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Cover illustration Moodboard/Getty Images

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature  
The registered company is Nature America Inc. New York

## FOREWORD

In his 1822 letter to the then Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky William Taylor Barry, James Madison wrote that:

“A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

This Enlightenment Era belief in the crucial nexus of democratic governance and an informed public is captured more formally in the US Bill of Rights' First Amendment and its protection of the freedoms of speech, the press, peaceable assembly, and petitioning the government for a redress of grievances. The linking together of these four positive freedoms is no coincidence, as the quote from Madison makes clear. For citizens “to be their own governors” in the kind of representative system constructed by the Founders, they required the right to express their views individually and collectively, even if those views were in opposition to people in power. But to do so in a way that avoided “a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps both,” citizens required “information, or the means of acquiring it,” through institutions such as public education (the subject of his letter to Barry) and a free press.

Based on my own work and that of many other scholars, it appears that Madison had it right. All else being equal, “politically informed” citizens are more accepting of democratic norms, such as political tolerance,

are more efficacious about politics, and are more likely to participate in political and civic life in a variety of ways. They are also more likely to have opinions about public issues, to hold stable opinions over time, and to hold opinions that are ideologically consistent with each other. They are less likely to change their opinions in the face of new but tangential or misleading information, yet more likely to change in the face of new relevant or compelling information. Political information also affects the opinions held by different socioeconomic groups (e.g., groups based on race, class, gender, and age differences). More-informed citizens within these groups hold opinions that are both significantly different from less-informed citizens with similar demographic characteristics and that are arguably more consistent with their values and/or material circumstances. Political information increases citizens' ability to connect their policy views to evaluations of public officials and political parties, and to their political behavior. For example, informed citizens are more likely to identify with the political party, approve of the performance of officeholders, and vote for candidates whose policy stands are most consistent with their own views. Finally, and also consistent with Madison's view, it is clear that while being informed is driven by a number of factors, attention to the news media (i.e., the means of acquiring "popular information") is among the most important of these factors. Of course, information and the means of acquiring it do not, in and of themselves, assure a well-functioning democracy. There are instances where more information, if unbalanced or biased, can lead to less sanguine outcomes, or where ideology or partisanship can trump "the facts." Nonetheless, taken as a whole, the research strongly suggests that information and the means of acquiring it, if equitable, are crucial if people are to effectively be their own governors.

It was the importance of an informed citizenry and the central role played by the press in creating and maintaining one that gave the practice of journalism, in its different and evolving forms, its special status in the USA for most of our existence as a nation. As Victor Pickard notes in his essay in this volume, journalism is both a private and a public good, and "Like many public goods exhibiting positive externalities, journalism has never been fully supported by direct market transactions; it always has been subsidized to some degree." These subsidies have been both private (e.g., advertising) and public (e.g., reduced postal rates for the circulation of newspapers). The special status of journalism has also been reflected in both the regulations imposed on (e.g., the equal time provision, the fairness doctrine, and limits on cross ownership) and rights granted to

(e.g., shield laws) journalists and the organizations they work for. And it has been reflected in the real, albeit not fully successful, efforts over time to create and support a public media system that is independent of traditional market forces.

Driven by changes in the contemporary cultural, political, economic, and technological environments, this special status has eroded dramatically over the past several decades, at great expense to the profession and the institutions of journalism. In the last three decades, over 300 daily newspapers have closed, newspaper circulation has dropped by 35 percent, the number of professional journalists has declined by over 40 percent, and revenues are at the same level as 1950, when the population was half what it is today and the economy was one seventh its current size. Over this period the trends for local and national television news are equally grim, with nightly viewership dropping by over 50 percent and the average age of viewers rising to over 60. And public trust in the news media in general is at an all-time low. These are changes certainly worthy of being called a “crisis.” At the same time, however, the very cultural, political, economic, and technological changes responsible for journalism’s impending demise have arguably led to a plethora of new sources of public information and analyses, beginning with cable news and talk and extending to online news, blogs and microblogs, citizen journalists (and random acts of citizen journalism), crowd sourcing, online access to international media, and popular culture genres such as satirical news.

It is also important to remind ourselves that even at its best, twentieth-century journalism was only partially successful in doing its part in the education of the American citizen. Public knowledge about political institutions and processes, substantive policies and socioeconomic conditions, and political and economic actors has been generally low in the USA, with a great deal of variance in what Americans know and which Americans know it. Of particular significance is the fact that sociocultural differences in the opportunities to access and process information have led to substantial knowledge gaps across demographic groups, with men, whites, older citizens, and wealthier citizens significantly more informed than women, non-whites, younger citizens, and poorer citizens, reinforcing other socioeconomic inequities in the material and political resources available to citizens. To the extent that information matters for citizens’ ability to effectively advocate for their individual and collective self-interest and their conceptions of the public interest, large segments of the public are and have been disadvantaged.

Viewed in this light, the current crisis also affords a rare opportunity to rethink journalism's role in American democracy, salvaging the best of the past while remedying some of its significant shortcomings. So what are we to do? While the answer to this question is complicated, a sensible starting point is to better understand the current state of affairs by answering two more specific questions. What *are* the information needs of the numerous communities—of geography and of interests—to which we belong? And how well and for whom do the complex, multifaceted information environments in which we now live—including but not limited to professional journalism—meet those needs? These are both empirical and normative questions that we as scholars are particularly well suited to help answer, but with two important caveats. First, understanding what citizens' need requires input from multiple voices. These voices should include scholars, information providers of various stripes, policymakers, and so forth, but it is crucial that citizens themselves have a voice in constructing this answer. After all, it is *their* information needs that we are trying to divine. And second, understanding both citizens' information needs and our media ecologies' ability to meet them will require a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach. These are questions the answers to which reside at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. That will require insights from disciplines such as communication; political science; law; history; economics; sociology; anthropology; and gender, race, and ethnicity studies. That will require data and methods running the gamut from ethnography, in-depth interviews, community-based case studies, and discourse analysis, to historiography, policy, and legal analyses, to survey research, to computational science approaches to content, behavioral, and geospatial analyses of “big data.”

Collectively, the essays in this volume take just such a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodological approach to understanding the current crisis in journalism, and its implications for information inequality in the USA. In doing so, they point the way to how we might take advantage of this crisis to better understand the information needs of the nation's various publics, and use this knowledge to improve both the quality of popular information and our means of acquiring it.

Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA, USA

Michael X. Delli Carpini



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the following people, without whom this project could not have been accomplished.

A special thanks to Ernest J. Wilson III, Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, and Carola Weil, Dean of the School of Professional & Extended Studies at American University. Much of this book grew out of their work on the Literature Review on the Critical Information Needs of American Communities, and their continuing engagement and support made this book possible. We also extend a special thanks to Phil Napoli, Katya Ognyanova, and Danilo Yanich, who have been with us and ahead of us from the beginning along with the other members of the Communications Policy Research Network.

We would also like to thank the many colleagues whose prior work deeply informed this project, especially Sandra Ball-Rokeach, Michael Delli Carpini, Hemant Shah, Greg Downey, Dhavan Shah, Hernando Rojas, Wick Rowland, and Jorge Reina Schement. And we feel obliged to acknowledge our many contributors who took time out from very busy schedules to meet what some would consider impossible deadlines to get this work out. We know you would have liked to have had more time to write and a larger word count.

Friedland would also like to acknowledge the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, UW-Madison, his lifelong intellectual home. Carmen Sirianni has been a colleague and partner in matters civic and democratic for more than 40 years. The project could not have been completed without the support of Stacey Oliker.

Sandra Knisely expertly edited and shepherded the manuscript from its earliest stages through submission (even on her honeymoon) and we thank her.

And last, but not least, we thank our editor, Shaun Vigil, who immediately embraced this work, as well as Erica Buchman and Michelle Smith who worked to see it through completion.

# CONTENTS

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Preface: New Approaches to Solving the Communications Challenge</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>America’s Critical Community Information Needs</b> <i>Lewis A. Friedland</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Understanding Our New Communications Economy: Implications for Contemporary Journalism</b> <i>Philip M. Napoli</i>	<b>17</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Researching Community Information Needs</b> <i>Katherine Ognyanova</i>	<b>31</b>
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Preface: Communication Challenges in a Changing America</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Understanding a Diverse America’s Critical Information Needs</b> <i>Mark Lloyd, Jason Llorenz, and Jorge R. Schement</i>	<b>49</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Feminist Perspectives on Critical Information Needs</b> <i>Carolyn M. Byerly and Alisa Valentin</i>	<b>65</b>

<b>6</b>	<b>Ethnic Media and the Social Incorporation of New Americans</b>	<b>81</b>
	<i>Matthew D. Matsaganis and Vikki S. Katz</i>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Do Spanish-Language Broadcast Media Serve a Changing America?</b>	<b>95</b>
	<i>Federico Subervi</i>	
<b>8</b>	<b>The Whole Community Communication Infrastructure: The Case of Los Angeles</b>	<b>107</b>
	<i>Minhee Son and Sandra Ball-Rokeach</i>	
<b>Section 3 Preface: Government Capture and Market Failure</b>		<b>125</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Confronting Market Failure: Past Lessons Toward Public Policy Interventions</b>	<b>127</b>
	<i>Victor Pickard</i>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Tripartite Regulation in the Public's Interest: The Overlapping Roles of the DOJ, FCC, and FTC in Consolidation of the Communications Industry</b>	<b>143</b>
	<i>Allen S. Hammond IV</i>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Same ol', Same ol': Consolidation and Local Television News</b>	<b>165</b>
	<i>Danilo Yanich</i>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Bridging the Content Gap in Low-Income Communities</b>	<b>183</b>
	<i>James T. Hamilton and Fiona Morgan</i>	
<b>13</b>	<b>The Online Participation Divide</b>	<b>199</b>
	<i>Eszter Hargittai and Kaitlin Jennrich</i>	

<b>14</b>	<b>Media Deserts: Monitoring the Changing Media Ecosystem</b>	<b>215</b>
	<i>Michelle Ferrier, Gaurav Sinha, and Michael Outrich</i>	
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Preface: Net Neutrality is Not Enough</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>The Constitutional Case for Addressing Critical Information Needs</b>	<b>235</b>
	<i>Mark Lloyd and Michael Park</i>	
<b>16</b>	<b>A Provocation on Behalf of the Excluded</b>	<b>249</b>
	<i>Ernest J. Wilson III, Sasha Costanza-Chock, and Michelle C. Forelle</i>	
<b>17</b>	<b>A Public Trust Unrealized: The Unresolved Constraints on US Public Media</b>	<b>267</b>
	<i>Willard D. “Wick” Rowland</i>	
<b>18</b>	<b>Addressing the Information Needs of Crisis-Affected Communities: The Interplay of Legacy Media and Social Media in a Rural Disaster</b>	<b>285</b>
	<i>Dharma Dailey and Kate Starbird</i>	
<b>19</b>	<b>Conclusion: The Fierce Urgency of Now</b>	<b>305</b>
	<i>Mark Lloyd and Lewis Friedland</i>	
	<b>Index</b>	<b>311</b>

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Sandra Ball-Rokeach** is a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. She is the founder and principal investigator of the Metamorphosis Project. Ball-Rokeach is the author or editor of seven books, including *Understanding Ethnic Media: Producers, Consumers and Societies* (with Matthew Matsaganis and Vikki Katz), *The Great American Values Test: Influencing Belief and Behavior Through Television* (with Milton Rokeach and Joel Grube), and *Media, Audience and Social Structure* (with Muriel G. Cantor). The Metamorphosis Project is an in-depth inquiry into the transformation of urban community under the forces of globalization, population diversity, and new communication technologies.

**Carolyn M. Byerly** is a professor and chair of the Department of Communication, Culture & Media Studies at Howard University. She is a feminist critical scholar who conducts research on gender and race in media. Her recent research in political economy of women's employment in newsrooms around the world was published in the *Global Report on the Status of Women in News Media* (2011) and *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism* (2013). She is co-author of *Women and Media: A Critical Introduction* (2006) and co-editor of *Women and Media: International Perspectives* (2004). Her book chapters and articles have appeared in *Critical Studies in Media and Communication*, *Journalism: theory & practice*, *Feminist Media Studies*, and others. She received her PhD and MA from the University of Washington and her BS from the University of Colorado.

**Sasha Costanza-Chock** is a researcher and mediamaker who works on social movement media, co-design, media justice, and communication rights. He is the Associate Professor of Civic Media at MIT's Comparative Media Studies program and is a faculty associate at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. His book *Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets: Transmedia Organizing*

*and the Immigrant Rights Movement* was published in 2014. He sits on the board of Allied Media Projects and is a cofounder of Research Action Design. He received his AB from Harvard University, MA from the University of Pennsylvania, and PhD from the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California, where he was a postdoctoral research associate.

**Dharma Dailey** researches how people get information in crisis contexts. She has an MS in Human Centered Design & Engineering (HCDE) from the University of Washington and BS in Interdisciplinary Studies from SUNY Empire State College. Prior to graduate school she spent over a decade working on accessibility of communications technologies to underserved populations in the USA. She is a PhD student in HCDE.

**Michael X. Delli Carpini** is Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication. His research explores the role of the citizen in American politics, with particular emphasis on the impact of the mass media on public opinion, political knowledge, and political participation. He is author of five books and a number of articles, including *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (1996, winner of the 2008 American Association of Public Opinion Researchers Book Award), *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life and the Changing American Citizen* (2006), *Talking Together: Public Deliberation and Political Participation in America* (2009), and *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment* (2011), as well as numerous articles, essays, and edited volumes on political communications, public opinion, and political socialization. Dean Delli Carpini was awarded the 2008 Murray Edelman Distinguished Career Award from the Political Communication Division of the American Political Science Association. Dean Delli Carpini is the former Director of the Public Policy Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

**Michelle Ferrier** is the Associate Dean for Innovation for Ohio University's Scripps College of Communication. Ferrier is the principal investigator for and founder of The Media Deserts Project and is the president of Journalism That Matters, a nonprofit organization focused on helping professionals and educators navigate the new media landscape. Ferrier has received grant funding for a platform to deal with online harassment and a hyperlocal online news project. She has also convened sponsored regional and national conferences around media entrepreneurship and community needs. She received a PhD in Texts and Technology from the University of Central Florida and a master's degree in journalism from the University of Tennessee.

**Michelle C. Forelle** is a doctoral student of communication at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism. Originally from Venezuela, her dissertation work examines how the "Internet of Things" is changing legal interpretations of property, contract, and labor. She has

presented and published on a wide variety of topics, ranging from the use of games in national electoral get-out-the-vote efforts, to the epistemological obstacles in the way of media ownership diversity policy, to the emergence of the interactive music video genre online.

**Lewis Friedland** is the Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and Departments of Sociology and Educational Psychology (affiliated), University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he directs the Center for Communication and Democracy and holds the Leon Epstein Fellowship in Letters and Sciences. Friedland is author or co-author (with Carmen Sirianni) of five books on civil society, the public sphere, and civic innovation in America. He is completing a book on civic communication in a network society (for Polity Press) and writing on the communication ecologies of American communities, most recently in the *American Behavioral Scientist*.

**James T. Hamilton** is the Hearst Professor of Communication and Director of the Journalism Program at Stanford University. His books on media markets and information provision include *Democracy's Detectives: The Economics and Impacts of Investigative Reporting* (forthcoming); *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News*; and *Regulation Through Revelation: The Origin, Politics, and Impacts of the Toxics Release Inventory Program*. Through research in the field of computational journalism, he is exploring how the costs of story discovery can be lowered through better use of data and algorithms.

**Allen S. Hammond IV** is the Phil and Bobbie Sanfilippo Chair and Professor of Law at Santa Clara University and Director of the Broadband Institute of California. Hammond has a publication record spanning 30 years. He is co-author of a forthcoming casebook on Regulation of Broadband Communications. His prior positions include attorney, White House Office of Telecommunications Policy; program manager, NTIA; counsel, WJLA-TV, MCI Communications and Satellite Business Systems; attorney, Media Access Project; and professor, Syracuse University College of Law and the New York Law School.

**Eszter Hargittai** is the Delaney Family Professor in the Communication Studies Department and Faculty Associate of the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University, where she heads the Web Use Project. Her research looks at how people may benefit from their digital media uses with a particular focus on differences in people's web-use skills. She is editor of *Research Confidential: Solutions to Problems Most Social Scientists Pretend They Never Have* (2009) and co-editor with Christian Sandvig of *Digital Research Confidential* (2015), both on the realities of doing empirical social science research.



**Kaitlin Jennrich** is an undergraduate student at Northwestern University majoring in Communication Studies with a certificate in Integrated Marketing Communications.

**Vikki S. Katz** is an associate professor in the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University. She is author of *Kids in the Middle: How Children of Immigrants Negotiate Community Interactions for their Families* (2014), and second author of *Understanding Ethnic Media: Producers, Consumers and Societies* (2011). Her research addresses challenges that immigrant parents and their children face as they integrate into US society, with particular interest in how media and technology are implicated in these experiences. Her work has been published in a variety of academic journals, and she has authored multiple policy briefs related to digital equity initiatives for low-income and immigrant children and families. She received her PhD from the University of Southern California.

**Jason Llorenz** is a part-time lecturer at the Rutgers University School of Communication & Information and staff member at the Rutgers University Office of Diversity & Inclusion (OIDI). His research and teaching focus on telecommunications and Internet policy, as well as the role of digital and social media in the innovation economy. Llorenz holds a BA from Cazenovia College and juris doctor from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law. His writing often appears in the *Huffington Post*.

**Mark Lloyd** is a Professor of Professional Practice of Communication at the University of Southern California – Annenberg School, where he teaches communication policy. He was an associate general counsel at the FCC, served as the general counsel of the Benton Foundation, and was as an attorney at the law firm Dow, Lohnes & Albertson. Lloyd has conducted research at the Civil Rights Forum on Communication Policy, the Center for American Progress and at MIT. An Emmy Award–winning journalist, including work at NBC and CNN, and an author and contributor to several books and articles, Lloyd graduated from the University of Michigan and the Georgetown University Law Center.

**Matthew D. Matsaganis** is an associate professor in the Communication Department at the University at Albany, State University of New York. He is first author of *Understanding Ethnic Media: Producers, Consumers and Societies* (2011, with Vikki Katz and Sandra Ball-Rokeach). His research addresses issues of ethnic media consumption, production and sustainability, the role of communication in building community capacity, health disparities, and the social determinants of health, as well as the social impact of technology. His research has also been published in *Journalism: Theory, Practice, & Criticism*, the *Journal of Health Communication*, the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, the *International Journal of Communication*, and the *Journal of Information Policy*, among other outlets. He received his PhD from the University of Southern California.

**Fiona Morgan** is the Journalism Program Director at Free Press. She began her journalism career at Salon.com, and then reported for *Indy Week*, the alternative newsweekly in Durham, North Carolina. She received a master's degree in public policy from Duke University in 2011. She authored a report for the New America Foundation's Media Policy Initiative on the media ecology of North Carolina's Research Triangle region. She was a research associate at Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy before joining Free Press in 2015. Her work focuses on the information needs of underserved local communities.

**Philip M. Napoli** (PhD, Northwestern University) is the James R. Shepley Professor of Public Policy in the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. His research interests focus on media institutions and media policy. His books include *Foundations of Communications Policy: Principles and Process in the Regulation of Electronic Media* (2001); *Audience Economics: Media Institutions and the Audience Marketplace* (2003); and *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences* (2011). His research has been funded by organizations such as the Ford Foundation, the New America Foundation, and the Democracy Fund.

**Katherine Ognyanova** is an assistant professor in the Communication Department at the School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University. She does work in the areas of computational social science and network analysis. Her research has a broad focus on the impact of technology on social structures, political and civic engagement, and the media system. Prior to her appointment at Rutgers, Ognyanova was a postdoctoral researcher at the Lazer Lab, Northeastern University, and a fellow at the Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University. She holds a doctoral degree in communication from the University of Southern California.

**Michael Outrich** is a senior at Ohio University studying Geographic Information Sciences and pursuing a minor in meteorology and a certificate in wealth and poverty. He has plans on pursuing a master's degree in urban planning with a social equity focus and is passionate about empowering economically disadvantaged and marginalized communities. As a GIScience analyst/cartographer PACE Fellow with the geography department at Ohio, he processes the geographic data and generates maps and statistics for the Media Deserts Project under the direction of Michelle Ferrier and Gaurav Sinha.

**Michael Park** is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University. He specializes in media law, communications policy, and sports communication. His research interests include critical media studies in race and masculinity. Michael's writing has appeared in communication and law journals. His professional experience includes stints at William Morris Endeavor, in Beverly Hills, California; and the Federal Communications Commission, in the office of FCC

Commissioner Michael J. Capps. Michael completed his doctorate at the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism at the University of Southern California and is also a graduate of the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

**Victor Pickard** is an associate professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously he taught at NYU and the University of Virginia, and he worked on media policy in Washington, DC, at Free Press, the New America Foundation, and Congresswoman Diane Watson's office. He has written over 50 scholarly articles and book chapters, and his op-eds have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, and *The Atlantic*. He has authored or edited several books, including *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights* (with Robert McChesney), *The Future of Internet Policy* (with Peter Decherney), and *America's Battle for Media Democracy*.

**Willard D. "Wick" Rowland** is dean and professor emeritus of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado and is president and CEO emeritus of Colorado Public Television (KBDI-12). He has held appointments at the University of Illinois and at PBS in Washington, DC. Rowland writes in communication policy history, media institutions, and communications studies, and he lectures and conducts research internationally. He has lobbied frequently on behalf of public media and is the recipient of national public television advocacy and Colorado broadcaster awards. He also has been a leader of several national journalism and communications academic associations and public television and Colorado broadcaster groups.

**Jorge R. Schement** became Rutgers Vice President of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion on July 1, 2013. He is also professor II in the Bloustein School of Public Policy and in the Department of Latino-Hispanic Caribbean Studies. Previously, he was dean of the School of Communication & Information at Rutgers University. A PhD from Stanford University, he is author of over 200 papers and articles, with eight book credits including *Global Networks* (1999/2002). A Latino from South Texas, his research focuses on the social and policy consequences of the production and consumption of information, especially as they relate to ethnic minorities. Schement is editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Communication and Information*.

**Gaurav Sinha** is an Associate Professor of Geographic Information Science and Geography in the Department of Geography at Ohio University. He has a BSc degree in Geological Sciences from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, India, and MA and PhD degrees in Geography (GIScience) from the University at Buffalo. He teaches courses in GIScience and conducts research on cognition-driven semantic modeling of landscape features. He was also engaged for several years on an NSF-funded project on climate change adaptation in rural

Tanzania, and also collaborates on research projects related to geospatial health science and geospatial media analytics.

*Minhee Son* received her PhD in communication from the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California and is a postdoctoral research associate with the Metamorphosis Project. Her most recent work identifies the communication and church participation factors shaping civically oriented attitudes and behaviors among Korean-born immigrants in Los Angeles. She has conducted research and written on communication ecologies, migration, civic engagement, and intergroup communication.

*Kate Starbird* is an assistant professor at the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering (HCDE) at the University of Washington (UW). Kate's research is situated within human-computer interaction (HCI) and the emerging field of crisis informatics—the study of the how information-communication technologies (ICTs) are used during crisis events. Specifically, her work seeks to understand and describe how affected people, emergency responders, and remote individuals come together online to respond to major crisis events, often forming emergent collaborations to meet unpredicted needs. Kate received her PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder in Technology, Media and Society and holds a BS in Computer Science from Stanford University.

*Federico Subervi* has been teaching, conducting research, publishing, and consulting on issues related to Latinos and the media in the USA since 1982. He is author and editor of *The Mass Media and Latino Politics. Studies of U.S. Media Content, Campaign Strategies and Survey Research: 1984–2004* (2009). In fall 2015, he retired from Kent State University but remains active in his research, consulting and travel as president of the Association for Latino Media & Markets Communication Research, secretary of the Board of Directors of the Latino Public Radio Consortium, and member of the Advisory Board for Hispanic Child Trends.

*Alisa Valentin* is a doctoral student in the Communication, Culture and Media Studies Program at Howard University. She is also a teaching assistant in Howard's principles of speech program, a graduate assistant for the *Howard Journal of Communications*, and a member of the Howard Media Group, a faculty-student research collaborative focused on communication policy. Her research interests include communication policy and social media in social movements. She received her MS in journalism from Northwestern University and BS in telecommunications from the University of Florida. She is a former broadcast journalist specializing in urban affairs reporting.

*Ernest J. Wilson III* is the Walter Annenberg Chair in Communication and Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. He is also a Professor of Political Science and a faculty fellow at the USC Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School. He has worked

in government at the White House National Security Council and served on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting from 2000 to 2010, the last year as chairman. His most recent books are *Governing Global Electronic Networks* and *Negotiating the Net: The Politics of Internet Diffusion in Africa*. Wilson received a PhD and MA in political science from the University of California, Berkeley, and a BA from Harvard College.

**Danilo Yanich** is an associate professor and director of the MA program in Urban Affairs & Public Policy in the School of Public Policy & Administration at the University of Delaware. He leads the Local TV Media Project and focuses on the nexus of the media, citizenship, and public policy. Recent research has examined the effect of consolidation on local television news content, political ads, and news and citizen information needs. His work has been consistently cited by media reformers and policy makers, including the Federal Communications Commission. Yanich is also a charter member of the Communications Policy Research Network.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 8.1	Anglos vs. Latinos vs. Armenians in Glendale	112
Fig. 8.2	Latinos in Glendale vs. Pico Union	113
Fig. 10.1	Comcast/NBCU timeline	151
Fig. 10.2	AT&T's proposed merger with T-Mobile	154
Fig. 11.1	Percentage of duplicated stories on the SA/LMA/duopoly stations	173
Fig. 11.2	Distribution of the use of same script/video on the SA/LMA/duopoly stations	175
Fig. 11.3	Distribution of the use of the same anchor/reporter on the SA/LMA/duopoly stations	177
Fig. 14.1	Change in total number of daily newspapers serving a ZIP code between 2007 and 2014	225
Fig. 14.2	Change in circulation penetration of daily newspapers serving a ZIP code between 2007 and 2014	227
Fig. 18.1	Examples of information needs in the Catskills over the course of the Irene crisis	288

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 11.1	% who got news about politics and government in the previous week from...	169
Table 14.1	Change in number of newspapers serving a ZIP code between 2007 and 2014	225
Table 14.2	Total number of newspapers serving a ZIP code in 2014	226
Table 14.3	Newspaper circulation penetration for a ZIP code in 2014	227
Table 14.4	Change in newspaper circulation penetration for a ZIP code between 2007 and 2014	228
Table 16.1	Data gathered from: U.S. Census Bureau 2007; Federal Communications Commission 2014; Corporation for Public Broadcasting 2011 <sup>a</sup>	252
Table 16.2	Data gathered from: American Society of News Editors 2014; Papper 2015; and Corporation for Public Broadcasting 2011 <sup>b</sup>	252
Table 16.3	Wilson–Tongia Formulation	258

# INTRODUCTION

## SOLVING AMERICA'S COMMUNICATION CRISIS

Mark Lloyd and Lewis A. Friedland

The critical information needs of the diverse American public are not being met. There was a clear instance of failure when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012. Inadequate warnings and other communication problems led, in part, to billions of dollars in damages and over a hundred deaths. But communications failures are also evident in both the loud political battles filled with hateful rhetoric and soaked in dark money, and in the too-quiet local elections in far too many cities where far too few turn out to vote. Rather than addressing haphazard communication in the face of an environmental disaster, or the often ugly and apathetic nature of our democratic conversation, policymakers are too often focused on the latest gadget or proposed merger or some other passing interest of the powerful. It is long past time that we begin addressing the critical information needs of all Americans.

But this is not simply an indictment of policymakers. A vast majority of Americans with real political influence and power are stuck in an old way of thinking about how we communicate and why that way of communicating matters so much. We push against the idea that legacy media (newspapers, movies, radio, television) do not matter. We push against the notion that we should only be concerned about the new coming media, or with the dominant media. This way of thinking is not new; it is too simple, and it has not worked very well in the past.



There is little question that the operation of communications markets has changed. This change is not only about the dwindling circulation of newspapers or the struggle to make money from the Internet. It is also about the way the Internet has sped up decisions on Wall Street and how once-private information is now gathered and archived and marketed by by “Silicon Valley” corporations which remain largely unaccountable for their decisions to the public. Our struggle with change is also about how new digital technologies have altered the fundamentals of funding media—that is, how media funding has altered the way communities get information. Our struggle is with what this change means for marginalized communities.

Too many think they are imagining the future of all Americans as they wrestle with the rules regarding digital technologies or work toward getting everyone online. They are treating digital communication just like society once treated television, forgetting that other media also matter and continue to play an important part in how we communicate with each other. The Internet is not another stand-alone communication system; it is not another silo. The idea that getting everyone broadband is the answer to the problem of information inequality is simplistic. The new world is bigger and broader and much harder. To understand it as citizens and policymakers we need to begin thinking about our complex, interactive, interdependent, and dynamic communications ecology.

Moreover, our rapidly increasing diversity adds to this complexity. And by diversity, we are not referring only to what has been called the digital divide, or the separate and unequal status of black and white. It is not even just about acknowledging the full range of ethnicities in America. Our concern with diversity is also about Americans of all colors struggling to make ends meet, including those Americans with disabilities and those Americans who do not live in cities rich with fiber-optic cable; it is about those Americans who live on tribal lands, or who farm the land, or work on the energy platforms off our coasts—all far from robust Internet service. It is also about older Americans, and Americans who do not speak English.

Even as this book is being finalized, the impact of our communications crisis on the US political conversation is front and center. A few see it, with most of the handwringing focused on the media’s role in the political success of the businessman and TV reality show star, Donald Trump. And as happens in almost every presidential campaign, some blame the horserace coverage of the media and the failure to examine issues in any real depth. A few focus on the 24-hour news cycle of cable combined with social media. Some decry the rise of partisan cable channels. But we have not found anyone who has bothered to note that most of the crude and substantive national “debates” have aired

on pay TV, limiting the access of the roughly 12 million households (mostly minority and poor and rural and increasingly young) who do not get pay TV.

When asked about the 2016 national presidential campaign, CBS president and chief executive officer Leslie Moonves was perhaps more honest than he intended when he said, “It may not be good for America, but it is damn good for CBS. The money’s rolling in and this is fun.” Political ads, spin, and “Tweets” may be fun, but they do not substitute for a place where *all* Americans can make a serious choice about the serious challenges ahead and how best to meet those challenges.

There is a communications crisis in America. The lives of all Americans and the very fabric of our society are at risk if we do not address it. Our communication infrastructure does not serve our nation not because we lack the technology. Our communication markets do not serve our nation not because the markets have failed to generate profit for investors. Our communication ecology is not meeting the critical information needs of the public because our public policies are badly made and misinformed.

This work is an attempt to sound the alarm; we hope to be heard not only by our students and other teachers but also by our fellow citizens and those who represent us in the halls of government. While we understand many challenges in communication are global in nature, this is a book about the problems in the USA. We believe that the best approach to understanding our complex communication environment is to draw on multiple disciplines. Network theory, gathering stories from our fellow citizens, and crunching data all have a place in clarifying the current crisis in communication. And so, this is a multi-disciplinary work of media studies, economics, sociology, history, political science, and law. We do not put one branch of social science above another nor do we place social science above legal analysis or solid journalism. Each of these disciplines has something to teach us, and together they provide a well-rounded way to understand our complex world. And, even at that, we understand that we cannot adequately cover all the perspectives or issues that need to be addressed in solving the communications crisis in America.

We acknowledge the limits of our efforts but seek to reach you, the reader, despite them, at least in part because we believe scholarship must begin to reach beyond the walls of academia and try to communicate with the public’s servants and the public...and that this crisis requires immediate attention. We have asked each scholar to hold on to the depth and rigor of her or his discipline but to write in such a way that other experts and the general public might better understand their various insights. We have tried to keep it somewhat short...but not simple.

*Book Organization*

A short preface begins each major section in an attempt to pull each section together and help the reader understand how each essay contributes to the whole. We have divided the work into four main sections:

- Section 1 establishes a foundation for approaching our communications challenge, defining critical information needs, examining the current market impact on journalism, and surveying different research methods employed to better understand our communications ecology.
- Section 2 shifts focus to the public and looks at the challenges of understanding critical information needs in an era of rapid demographic change. This section focuses especially on the different ways racial/ethnic groups and women interact with our communication ecology.
- Section 3 turns to the problems of government capture and market failure. This section brings together historical, sociological, legal, and economic perspectives to examine the inability or unwillingness of regulators to confront the failure of communication markets to adequately serve the public interest.
- Section 4 directly confronts the rationale for the failure to develop policy on the critical information needs of all Americans with the tools of constitutional analysis, network analysis, historical analysis, and empirical research.

The public and policymakers, and even perhaps you, the reader, are impatient for solutions about how to fix the crisis we are in. We have heard: “Yes, we all know there is problem; how do we fix it? What policies do you propose?” We understand the urgency of our current situation. We believe another environmental disaster is imminent; we see not only our crumbling bridges and vulnerable levees but also our frail communications infrastructure. We do not believe these public problems will be solved by the market or new technologies. Informed public policy is necessary. We know smart public policy is hard when our political environment is part of the problem. While solutions are proposed throughout the book, we pull a few of them together in our conclusion. But more importantly, we seek to speak directly to our fellow citizens to urge them to demand a statement of action from their party and candidate of choice. We believe that the communication crisis in America can be fixed.

## Preface: New Approaches to Solving the Communications Challenge

Our first section sets out the foundation of our broad thesis. In order to clearly understand the communications challenge and how to begin to think about it, we must begin to answer: What are critical information needs? What is happening in our communication markets today? And what research is necessary for us to find solutions?

Friedland proposes eight critical information needs of American communities and argues that both their severity and potential solutions vary greatly by community and neighborhood. Napoli demonstrates that the explosive growth of new media has undermined the business model for traditional information, but that new media still depend on “old” media for much of their content, particularly content that addresses critical information needs. Ognyanova reviews the range of approaches and methods that have been used to model community communication ecologies and discusses why these community-based methods are still necessary in a new media era.

While much of the following chapter draws on the Review of the Literature Regarding Critical Information Needs of the American Public written for the Federal Communications Commission and the work of the Aspen/Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, neither this chapter nor this book repeats those efforts. This chapter captures recent research and analysis necessary to understand the new approaches to solving the communications challenge in America.

# America's Critical Community Information Needs

*Lewis A. Friedland*

Americans need information to govern themselves, to participate effectively in society, and to be safe. Even as the American public remains divided on so many issues, this proposition should generate near-universal agreement. In order to understand what critical community information needs are and how they are delivered, two points stand out. The first is that our mixed system under-delivers information (public goods) that the public needs to survive and thrive. These public goods are systematically under-produced, penalizing both individuals and whole communities. The second, mirroring the first, is that public policy for the democratic provision of community information needs *can* make a difference.

For example, without civic information, we cannot know what laws our elected officials are proposing, who may be supporting those laws, and who is contributing to political campaigns. We cannot monitor whether laws are being implemented well or fairly. As fewer and fewer American communities have regular sources of news that cover political campaigns at the local level, we often cannot even know who our candidates are or what they stand for.

Information flows are also the lifeblood of our economic system. But the provision of information by and about markets is uneven at

---

L.A. Friedland (✉)  
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA

best. Although it is true that information might be more transparent in competitive markets, many information markets really are not competitive. For example, most Americans have no choice in their cable provider or what kind of cable service they receive. Similarly, in the twenty-first century, the “market” for broadband service, the very gateway to an information society, effectively consists of a series of local monopolies enforced by state legislators who too often limit competition, especially from local governments. As a result, large swaths of Americans are squeezed out from real participation in an information society. Our economic system has left us with a fast lane, a slow lane, and an “entrance closed” lane.

In addition to civic and commercial economic information flows, the American system for providing information even in emergency situations lacks transparency and consistent access. The provision of content is often from government (the National Weather Service or the National Centers for Disease Control, for example) via privately owned and operated media, over a delivery infrastructure owned by the public (spectrum and public streets).

This chapter first establishes the concept of critical community information needs. It then offers eight sets of critical needs that individuals and communities need to thrive. We next discuss how critical community information needs are embedded in local communication ecologies, and drawing from authors in this volume, argue that they need to be studied ecologically. Finally, we discuss the failure to develop public policy toward critical community information needs and point to some new directions.

## DEFINING CRITICAL INFORMATION NEEDS

Critical information needs of local communities are those that must be met for citizens and community members to live safe and healthy lives; have full and fair access to educational, employment, and business opportunities; and to fully participate in the civic and democratic lives of their communities.

In 2012, the University of Southern California (USC) was funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to examine a wide range of social sciences from multiple disciplines to propose a set of critical information needs (Friedland et al. 2012). USC reached out to a team of scholars collectively identified as the Communication Policy Research Network (CPRN). That group identified more than 1000 articles drawing from the disciplines of communication and journalism, economics, sociology,