



The Knight Commission on the
Information Needs of Communities in a
Democracy

MEETING MINUTES

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Commissioners Present: boyd, Carroll, Decherd, Hundt, Isaacson (ex officio), Junck, Lozano, Mayer (Co-Chair), McCallum, Mooney, Nicely, Olson (Co-Chair), Sagan

Staff Present: Durkee, Shane, Silliman

9:15 Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Co-chair Olson welcomed his fellow commissioners and invited everyone present to re-introduce themselves. Each of the Commissioners present made brief remarks. Commissioner Isaacson noted the special contribution made to the creation of the Commission by Charlie Firestone, director of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program. Executive Director Shane noted the contributions also of program manager Erin Silliman and research associate Musetta Durkee. He also noted that Knight Foundation president and ex-officio Commission Alberto Ibargüen was regretfully, but unavoidably absent from the meeting because of a close friend's grave health situation.

Shane indicated that the information-gathering portion of the meeting would be devoted chiefly to discussion of the state of the media. To lead off the discussion, he introduced Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism and vice chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, an initiative engaged in conducting a national conversation among journalists about standards and values. Mr. Rosenstiel is a former media critic for the Los Angeles Times and chief congressional correspondent for Newsweek magazine.

9:40 Tom Rosenstiel, The State of the News Media

Mr. Rosenstiel explained that the Project for Excellence in Journalism which was first based in Columbia's Journalism School, is now based with the Pew Research Center. He created the Committee of Concerned Journalists in 1997, which tried to diagnose the changes occurring in newsrooms around the country. Jim Carey, a journalism scholar at Columbia, said that journalism is disappearing into a wider universe of media, but journalists themselves felt that journalism did something unique compared to other media and that this "something" is what enables journalism to survive and endure. The CCJ asked themselves, what are the values that journalism has that media does not have. Based on their research and interviews, Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach wrote a book called the *Elements of Journalism*, which tried to distill the elements of journalism.

To help orient the Commission on the state of journalism, Mr. Rosenstiel then presented a variety of data and conclusions from the PEJ's State of the Media 2008 report. He presented the

key conclusions as follows:

- The problems of the press are different from those most often imagined.
- Journalism must shift from being a product to a service (and this is even before we start talking about economics) because of the changing nature of citizenship.
- The new meaning of brand in news is shifting.
- The press has to become a partner with its audience.
- It is crucial to understand the new nature of citizenship in order to understand the current state of the media.
- "Citizen media" has exploded.

Key points from Mr. Rosenstiel's presentation include the following:

The problem in 2008 is *not* that the audience has gravitated away from the traditional media and traditional values of journalism to an unmediated, free-flow of information via blogs, etc. In other words, the gravitation away from "gatekeeper" media has not happened and in that sense, the media has not become "democratized."

Overall, people have stayed with well-known brands and gatekeeper journalism. Online, for example, the top ten traditional news sites have 29% of the market share for news (the top ten newspapers in print hold less market share than online). More people consume what traditional media produce online than in other media.

The bigger problem facing traditional newspapers is the decoupling of news and advertising. The web is more like the yellow pages than the newspaper in that advertisers no longer need to attach themselves to news to reach consumers. The model that started in the late 1890s is changing, display advertising isn't working anymore, and advertisers are not going to migrate online with the same kinds of advertising. For one thing, the audience may not even be the same.

Most newspapers have close to half their audience online but make only 10% of the profit online. Worse for them, online revenue growth is slowing (26% in 2007 versus 36% in 2006) and news sites are falling behind online sites for growth in general.

Madison Avenue is just as terrified, if not more, as the journalists of this online shift. Advertisers want better metrics of online news -- they want to know who is visiting the sites as well as how frequently.

People providing the news must understand how people use the web. Today, about two-thirds of traffic to a site comes through links, from search, from emailed stories, from blogs. In other words, people are accessing sites from the side door, instead of the front door: they will ask a question through Google and end up at a New York Times story. This is fundamentally changing the concept of brand, and people are starting to look at Internet itself as a brand, saying "I'm going online to ask about *x*," not, "I'm going to ask the NYTimes about *x*."

News must shift from being a product to being a service. The concept of a content provider is insufficient. Journalism is no longer just storytelling, as Tom Brokaw contended. Today, news is a service, not a finished product and it must evolve throughout the day with emails and updates and morning teams. News must also answer the things that consumers ask.

As a result of the shift to news-as-service, the role of the individual journalist is becoming larger in scope and more complex, even as newsrooms are shrinking. The online platform for news makes what journalists do more diverse, raises expectations of consumers, ties news more to the audience, and requires innovation, precision, and updates.

Olson: What do you mean by the word "journalist"? Someone who gathers and disseminates

information? More or less than that?

Rosenstiel: The concept does not mean that they have to work for commercial enterprises. Journalists are people who gather and disseminate information to serve the public interest. Their aim is to get people to think about things, though journalists are not invested in a specific outcome -- for example voting for Obama versus McCain. Journalists are interested in empowering citizens with the information needed to make their own decisions.

Mayer: Where does verification come into play?

Rosenstiel: The soul of journalism is the methodology of verification. The thing that distinguishes journalists most is that they verify their information. But this is not a sufficient condition; the journalists must want to disseminate information without an agenda in mind.

Journalists must be thought of as committed observers in society with loyalty to their audience first and their employer second and with a commitment to truth.

Carroll: By excluding people who don't seek a particular outcome from journalists, are you excluding bloggers, editorials, etc.?

Rosenstiel: If opinion journalists are journalists, then what is line? Journalists put their loyalty to audiences above their loyalty to the GOP or to Obama. They are in it to create conversation and while they may be rooting for Obama, they are not going to shave any of their facts to support their own personal feelings.

Journalists are there as independent observers with a point of view. An independent newspaper journalist once said: you cannot have a point of view without first examining all the other points of view.

Shane: Perhaps it would be helpful to distinguish between journalists as people and journalism as a practice. The better question to ask is, "Is this a work of journalism?" rather than, "Is the author a journalist?"

Rosenstiel: Blogs are like muffins, some are chocolate, some are blueberry. Blogs are only a form: expect newspaper bloggers to uphold the standards of newspapers. There are some bloggers who are activism-driven, and many corporations have bloggers on retainer to push specific interests.

Rosenstiel turned to the topic of journalistic "gatekeeping": Walter Lippmann said that journalists are supposed to filter out gossip, agenda, and innuendo give the facts to the citizens. The core notion of this is verification.

The question, now, is what happens when journalists stand at the gate and there is no longer a fence around the gate? Where do verification and authority come from in the new environment?

On issues of brand: today institutional brands still matter but every piece of content must stand on its own. That is, every piece that may be accessed from the side door must embody the values of the brand. Furthermore, while each web page is a front, the values of the brand in all articles have to be stronger in this environment than they used to be because two-thirds of web traffic comes through side doors.

Junck: It may be true that two-thirds of the traffic comes through links for the NYTimes and the Post, but for the St. Louis Dispatch, for example, about one-thirds come from links and two-thirds come through the front page.

Rosenstiel: That will erode as the newsroom shrinks.

Lozano: I am wondering about audience: who is your audience, who are you targeting, is the information being presented to the audience in a timely manner? Talking about how brands compete in this world also has to do with who the audience is, even with journalists defined as "uninvolved observers."

Rosenstiel: One of the things that is changing is that an article is now a stop along the way. Only 13% of websites allowed you to leave a site once you entered it just two years ago; a year later, 46% were a portal. To be useful to news consumers, you can't be a "no-outlet" street; you have to enable people to use the information more effectively. You must be a service provider more than a content provider. Today, a story in the NYTimes will take you to the Washington Post, which was unthinkable a year ago.

In terms of verification of sources, authority must be derived deliberately: usefulness is a key value for determining authority and recommendations are very important for authority (for example, because a friend whom I respect says this is a good article, I will read it).

Sagan: Are you measuring audience as reach or frequency?

Rosenstiel: Tracking numbers in media is very difficult. We don't know what a visit means anymore -- unique visitors? I've looked at the same data from different measurement companies and seen different results. Newspaper websites are trying to do total audience (that is, unduplicated online audience and print audience -- but we don't even know what these two groups mean). Surveying data is very difficult; comparing online and print is difficult; comparing network and local news is difficult.

NBC during the Olympics is monitoring panels of users to see how they interact with all the different broadcasting platforms and to see how people are using this stuff.

How people consume information -- where they go, how they use it, when they use it -- are all clues in accurate measurements. People need to be more sociological and understand how people are using information in addition to refining measurement techniques.

Mayer: Data are a mess online because you don't get audience selection. As data sets get large, things move from a browse model to a search model, and when people end up on information through a search, it is hard to know who they are and where they're coming from. You don't have audience selection through search vehicles online and so the advertising has to be linked, not to audience demographic, but to content. Journalists, also, do not know the demographics of their audience/readers.

Rosenstiel: It's also easier when you have a huge market share. The long tail works for content but not for economics: Google can charge for advertising by content online, but local news sources don't have the same surveys or share to be able to do so.

There is no one model of journalism anymore. The traditional model is the *journalism of verification*. This is the gatekeeper model.

In the 1980s, journalism went towards the *journalism of assertion* with cable news. This model is characterized by accusations and a story that evaporates by the next day and is not in the newspapers. It is much easier for a newsmaker to make an assertion and stories can live-on for quite a while because there isn't any time to check it out. Much of what goes on is a discussion of assertion instead of spending the time verifying the assertion. Things are moving too fast and verification is not happening; this results in a sort of "knock-down" journalism.

Another shift is towards the *journalism of affirmation*. This is a commercial, not partisan move. Bill O'Reilly, for example, is a commercial brand of affirmation. The question is here, does the story work for a particular market? The question is: what develops audience? MSNBC's programming does not reflect a partisan commitment on the part of GE (MSNBC) to be anti-Fox News; it is because counterprogramming makes money.

Finally, there is the *journalism of activism* which consists, not of professional journalists, but citizens, activists, doctors, bloggers, lawyers, PhDs, people are just interested in communication and may see themselves working on the behalf of this person or that group. They are not formally organized.

Olson: These are models of dissemination of information, not looking at gathering information. As a lawyer, I've noticed that journalists want the protection to gather information, to investigate.

Rosenstiel: Gathering information resides almost entirely in the traditional model of journalism. It is the dirty little secret of the news business that news gathering occurs only in the traditional model of the journalism of verification and that the other models just recycle those stories.

Locally, the largest news organization in the community is the local newspapers, by far. Traditional journalism lives in the newspaper newsrooms.

Olson: Is news-gathering becoming less because the reward for it is less? Because once you put the information out there, you can't get a premium for it?

Rosenstiel: It requires skill, subsidy, and takes more time, so yes, journalism of verification is diminishing and journalism of assertion and affirmation are becoming more prominent because these models requires smaller monetary and time investments.

Olson: Are the assertion and affirmation models a byproduct of some of the changes that are taking place, namely that fewer people are going out and gathering information that local communities need?

Rosenstiel: There was previously more of a premium on "scoops"; today, on the other hand, so much of information is scooped and then forgotten.

There is commodity news (news that can be found anywhere) and franchise news (news that can be found only through a unique outlet and that will be applied to its brand). Newspapers and journalism are turning to the hyper-local where there is more franchise news and less competition.

However, this leads to a sort of paradox: we have more reporters covering fewer stories and if we need to cover the big story of the day, then we can't spend time on more local stories (franchise news).

Junck: There are fewer traditional news outlets today.

Rosenstiel: Yes; look at regional reporters. Lee Group at one point had 250 regional reporters in Washington; today it has seven. Local newspapers are trying to cover more local stories and are cutting out regional stories.

Isaacson: The Chicago Sun-Times has one reporter to cover the entire south side of Chicago, so this phenomenon is happening on the local level as well.

Rosenstiel: Who are the new users of information? The "prosumer" (producer + consumer) model is overstated. The "citizen editor" is a better model. The citizen editor searches for information, is proactive rather than passive -- a sort of hunter-gatherer. Serendipity plays a role in his or her consumption, and more and more news is "on demand."

MSNBC saw this shift when it noticed that most news consumption was happening during the day. It used to be that news consumption occurred in the mornings (around the breakfast table) and in the evenings (network newscasts). This has totally changed today and it is no longer Walter Cronkite telling citizens: "That's the way it is." For example, a lot of news consumption happens after lunch when people get back to their computers and want to look up something they heard about during the lunch-time conversation.

Traditional journalism plays a role, but it is diminished. It's not that old media died, but traditional journalism has been pushed over. It is not only the role that traditional journalism plays as reporter and verifier; it also plays a role as an instigator. For example, when photography was invented, people thought painting would die, but really it just pushed painting out of the limelight.

Information and information consumption is not controlled by the news-gatherers anymore. However, the user (the citizen editor) is not taking the reporter's place, but merely serving as an aide. Only one-third of journalists say citizens posting content is a good thing, but a full 76% of journalists say that comments on articles are helpful.

On citizen journalism sites, while only 10% of sites allow readers to post content on the site, almost all of them allow readers to comment on stories posted and written by citizen journalists.

What does the future look like? The newsrooms, not the business side, are seen as the place for innovation today. Ten years ago, the business side was the innovative side, but today the newsrooms are pushing against the business side that just isn't moving. While the newsroom is becoming excited about new media, the business side is still wary.

You can get people in your community to get new information to supplement traditional journalism needs. For a community to have a vital amount of information, what has to happen is that the newspaper, or the "next newspaper," needs to find a way to survive. Television is doing better economically but is not going to provide the same kind of information that the community needs from journalists. Furthermore, citizen and volunteer journalism will not provide this information because of a lack of skill, training, funding, time, etc.

Some version of the newspaper has to find a way to survive. The newsroom of the future looks a lot more like the newsrooms of the past than when I started.

Carroll: I expect that in you've probably read more reports about journalism than anyone else in this room, including the Hutchins Report. This Commission is being charged with a similar task but hopefully one that will be more effective. What can this Commission actually say that will advance the public's information needs and public awareness?

Rosenstiel: Doing an audit of what information is available in some communities will be important. For example, what was covered ten years ago and what is available now? This would get our heads around to what extent new media is supplanting old information and to what extent new media are providing new and better information.

And also, come at it from the opposite direction: what does a citizen need to be able to function in a local community? When the San Francisco Chronicle eliminated 25% of its staff in one fell swoop, that was an amputation. What it means is that one-quarter of what was going on in this

community is now in shadow when it was once in sunlight.

What are the essential things that a citizen needs to be aware of?

Finally, how does the user operate, even in this search-driven information age? There are still things that we *need* to know about that we won't find out about through search. It is great for the community, for example, that there is a 15-part series about the local water supply; even though citizens may not read the whole thing, they will be better informed about an issue that they would not have been previously aware of.

People from outside the newspaper don't understand that the newspaper business is two-fold: the newspaper has to build loyalty with the consumer and then lends/rents that loyalty out to the advertiser. This complexity of interrelation between serving the readers and renting out those readers to the advertisers has been constantly negotiated in every newsroom.

However, I don't know if this model -- selling trust to the consumers and then renting out the consumers to advertisers to make money -- will still work when people are searching and reading stories but are not getting the same trust and loyalty as with the news brand.

Sagan: Can you reflect on pre-Web? Were the changes the Web has accelerated there before the Web? Newsrooms and newspapers were inner city and their audience has moved to the suburbs and their pace has changed even before the Web. Expectations of 40 and even 50% profit were not unusual for newspapers.

Rosenstiel: The problems are different for different media. While the loss of advertising is hurting newspapers, the loss of audience is hurting television.

Mayer: I don't agree with your claim that the newsroom of the future looks more like the newsroom of the past. New media have changed the unit of consumption -- from the album to the song, from the newspaper to the article.

Having the echo chamber effect in which an article bounces around various media platforms unchanged devalues content.

There is a page on Wikipedia on the investigation of the anthrax scare. Wikipedia is shifting towards a news source because it is publishing a living article instead of a static article that can only be updated a limited amount in staid increments.

What if news organizations said, "This is our [wiki] page on the Iraq War, this is our page on community health care," and these pages would then act as hubs for living articles?

There is a huge gap in journalists not using the internet as the living medium that it is. The static article is not the best way to use the medium and this gap will be filled by citizen journalism, wikipedia, etc., and maybe even journalists collaborating on a single wiki page/living article. For example, put out a topic on the masthead and have brand journalists and fact-checkers make a living article or story. And then consumers can subscribe so that the day-to-day changes and updates to the page are sent by email.

Rosenstiel: I think it is a powerful idea but we have to be cautious about our language. What is the "atom?" Not a story, but a "topic" and the "subject" with story-lines within that. The thing about the web is that it has the capacity to give us infinite speed (which is the current focus), but is also gives us infinite depth.

The weakness of news is that it is so incremental. The Web allows us to come in where we know

what's going on and go from there.

When I say "newsrooms of the past," I mean the skills of the past. On that topic page, the Washington Post editors will have to show me where else good information can be found.

You can create brand around ability and you can also build franchise with specific pages and topics.

Mayer: I'm disagreeing with the process of updating bit by bit and saying that there can be a kind of continuous and living updating. Furthermore, there is potential for a new advertising model with such living pages.

Messrs. Olson and Shane thanked Mr. Rosenstiel for his presentation, and called for a brief break.

11:15 Reconvene, beginning of Additional Views of the Current and Future State of Media

Co-Chair Olson reconvened the Commission, and Mr. Shane explained that he wanted to supplement the Rosenstiel presentation with a couple of other angles that would shed a different sort of light on the Commission's themes. Several Commissioners had stressed inclusiveness as a key concern and, with that theme especially in mind, Mr. Shane had invited to the meeting Loris Ann Taylor, executive director of Native American Media.

11:20 Loris Ann Taylor, Executive Director, Native Public Media

Ms. Taylor began her remarks, saying she was honored to speak to the Commission and that the issues under discussion are especially important for local Native American communities.

Ms. Taylor is a Hopi person raised on a reservation -- the oldest, longest inhabited reservation in North America -- in northeastern Arizona. She recounted that her family lacked telephone and electricity during her childhood. She heard her first radio broadcast at age 10 over a transistor radio that her father had gotten from a tourist and they listened to Elvis and Patsy Kline late at night. She was sent away to boarding school and had her first real exposure to media there. She learned that not having exposure to media can lead people to being labeled as ignorant or worse.

According to the Navajo Public Utilities Commission, one in three people on Navajo land do not have telephone in their homes. Many media services that most Americans take for granted, Navajo people do not have access to. While most Americans are embracing the emergence and transference towards new media technologies, broadband, and digital television, the 562 Native nations in this country face barriers of media access, control, and ownership. For them, the digital divide is alive and well and the problem is more than just hardware. The problem is also about native identity, inclusiveness, and getting our voices heard.

The mission of Native Public Media is to strengthen Native American's media capacity and to empower a strong, proud Native American voice.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right and without the freedom of expression, Native Americans risk being unheard as citizens. For Native Americans, freedom is a right that belongs fundamentally to an individual -- the right to communicate ideas, thoughts, opinions and random information through speech, writing, music, art and storytelling. This also involves the right to listen to others, the human right to arm ourselves with information, and the right to meet with others and to join groups with like-minded people. Free expression is necessary to advance truth. People must be open to the strange and the new and must always be seeking the truth. Native Americans have the right to part of the discussion and decisions that will affect our lives.

People without a voice are excluded from the deliberative process that shapes public opinion and the public policy that governs the community.

The free expression of views helps find a balance between consent and consensus. Freedom allows groups of people to strive and arrive at the right choices through deliberation and to discover those choices made through manipulation or coercion.

To the extent people are part of the decision-making process, they are more able to accept the ultimate decision even if they don't agree with it. The government must be governed by public opinion and not the other way around. Native Americans have learned that to rest is to risk the loss of our freedom.

Non-Indians know very little about American Indians today. To many non-Indians, native history has abruptly ended. History can be full of hope and full of horror. No history has been written that was not first an idea in the minds of man. Far too many of us are content to stand by as unattached observers. Those who stand by or are simply not included in our media cultures are victims of history rather than the shapers of history.

As the journalists and as citizens, Native Americans have had the opportunity to reconstruct their identities, shape their histories, and have had the freedoms to pursue these freedoms in the future. The freedom of the future is the freedom of individual sovereignty. Native people must never give up the rights and freedoms to work and live according to their own rules and customs, and those who work in the media must work towards this end as well.

MacCallum: Are the business models in Native American media fully subsidized?

Taylor: Traditional subsidies that have been giving to Native American Radio are being reduced.

MacCallum: So those communities are funding the operations?

Taylor: Not yet; the idea is that they will pool the significant amount of money they have into a larger media system.

Lozano: Media has the opportunity to drive better understanding of native people and native cultures. While having indigenous media is extremely important, what are some of the models of dominant media that would include diversity of opinion?

Taylor: We're finding that mainstream media are simply not interested in Native American stories because they are market-driven and there is not a lot of monetary benefit for Native American voices.

We found that sending out 5,000 press releases is not the way to go. The best way is to have ownership and control over our media outlets. We have 33 stations right now, we have seven coming, and 55 applications with the FCC.

11:40: Ron Williams, Founder, Detroit Metro News and other alternative weeklies; Publisher, Happy Frog (www.happyfrog.ca)

Shane: To round out our picture of the state of the media, I wanted the Commissioners to have a presentation also on alternative media. Ron Williams founded the Detroit Metro News and is now the president of a web-based media company in Canada called Happy Frog that works on the hyperlocal and community-based level, so he has seen "alternative media" in a variety of forms.

Mr. Williams explained that he has always used journalism in the service of social change, having

ties to both the non-profit and for-profit sectors. He organized his presentation around the question, do we need alternative media.

Mr. Williams explained that “alternative media” have often been defined in the negative, as supplying what “mainstream media” are missing. He prefers a more positive view – that alternative media are more typically defined around social challenges and potential solutions, attempting to move the public to action. Alternative media moves citizens from anger and cynicism to empowerment and action. In the end, it is an act of faith.

Web 2.0 has marked a time of opportunity for alternative media, but a shakeout period is happening. Not everyone on the web has something to say. The lack of media literacy may limit participation. Only a handful of revenue streams have emerged for alternative media, and traffic is difficult to monetize. The social value of online connections is still evolving.

In this environment, Mr. Williams stated as vision for alternative media as follows: Alternative media embraces and celebrates new voices and genuine diversity. Alternative media should nurture, train, and strengthen local bloggers. Alternative media plays the role that the second daily paper used to play and is important for mature, adult industry niches. There should be a coalition of municipal, educational, media and NGOs that would come together to frame community issues, create a digital commons, invite debate, and use the tools available to them.

In Mr. Williams’ view, there has been little risk-taking on the editorial side of alternative weeklies (a lot of "Best of Austin's" exist, for example), and alternative media have been as scared of Web 2.0 as the mainstream press.

Readership is the most overlooked asset of alternative weeklies: there are 130 alternative weeklies across the country that reach 25 million people in print and online on a weekly basis.

Because alternative media often focus on particular niches, Mr. Williams chose to present the diversity of alternative media by focusing on a variety of publications in the green/environmental/sustainability domain. He thinks that, in view of the energy crisis, he expects a coming wave of re-localism in which things are going to be downscaled and increasingly local.

What does the alternative press do? It is advocacy meeting journalism; it is at its best when it is crusading, when it is righting wrongs and sounding alarms. It exists because of what is going on and not being covered in the mainstream press.

There are a number of online alternative weeklies:

- Pathtofreedom.com is a grassroots, family operated alternative that is pretty significant in Web 2.0 applications.

- Happyfrog.ca is a nonprofit directory and social media site whose goal is to make it easy for people to share their favorite local green things. The user-generated content making up the site includes blogs, events, question and answer reviews, and others. All businesses that are listed are open to public ratings and reviews. The site is trying to use and adapt Web 2.0 tools to accelerate the growth of sustainable economic activity.

- Wiseearth.org, the website of the book *Blessed Unrest*, has a wiki platform and can be edited by its users. *Blessed Unrest* heads the largest movement for social change that exists right now and is basically an invisible movement that comprises a million NGOs in the world, organizing 100 million individuals. This movement has no head speaker and no hierarchy. It is spontaneously created, but lacks the ability to communicate with each other. On the website,

today, there are over 100,000 NGOs that have signed on and can communicate via a wiki platform.

Mr. Williams believes the Knight Commission can offer important and timely recommendations. Local information is the web's weakest link. Ironically the killer application of the world wide web will be the ability to re-weave local community and make it one's own. Communities are going to need tools to discuss challenges and fashion solutions. And communities will need to become more sustainable.

12: Time for questions

Sagan: Can you expand on the idea of infrastructure?

Williams: I'm talking about coalitions and creating a digital commons. Not solely digital, but a combination of face-to-face and digital is very powerful. The fact that we have all these amateurs is incredibly good news for alternative media. We have been highly critical of media consolidation saying that voices have not been included and that there is a lack of diversity of voices. The means of media production have been opened and the freedom of the press is now open to all those who own a modem.

I don't know the form, but I hope the Commission will conceptualize this further. A coalition of legacy and print, educational institutions, libraries, and NGOs need to come together and exploit the potential of Web 2.0, to bring some training and improvement in quality, and to create a space in which all these different voices and forms can come together and discuss the concerns of the local community.

Instead of worrying about what this means for legacy franchises, alternative media is worried about the future of democracy and enabling the largest possible cross-section of citizens that will lead to democratic conditions.

Olson: We need tools to enable citizens to foster community. When Loris [Ann Taylor] was talking, it became clear that the biggest need is for the tools for media participation. How can the industry, government, private sector be motivated to give them the tools needed for active participation?

Taylor: Broadband penetration is at 60% on the high end and 10% on the low-end for Native populations. All this great innovation is not occurring for the entire population.

What kind of democracy is it when citizens are not given their voices? In terms of native public media, we need training, awareness, knowledge of how to navigate the internet, as well as hardware. We need ways to get citizens to participate in the system that would otherwise leave them behind. Native Americans get further and further behind when the rest of the country is having this great conversation about Obama versus McCain. When people are still worried about their creature needs (shelter, food, etc.), they are not interested in the local media question, let alone international issues.

As it stands, we are just serving more of the same, serving more and better technology for those who are already well-connected. Current policy is not reflective of native people's dreams for the future. The media power we are talking about are really in the hands of the few. I think we've moved so far ahead that we've forgotten that there are millions of people left behind.

Mayer: I have a question about the type of isolation that happens. Yes, there is a lack of tools but there is also a lack of outreach and participation.

One of the biggest enemies of democracy is apathy. In terms of alternative media, the audience is already people who are deeply involved in causes. How can alternative media reach out beyond the "already-interested" sphere?

Williams: We are really in the first inning of this project. The question is how do we create a digital commons online and then extend that space across various platforms. The idea would be to reach out along different opinions and different viewpoints that would create change and changes in policy.

Rosenstiel: Two points relating to that: The tradition of alternative media in this country is grounded in the idea that it is advocacy journalism, as opposed to just activism, and this is part of that commons function. The other thing is that a lot of people worried that we would lose incidental news acquisition, but this isn't actually what is happening. Most people actually do go to places like Yahoo and look at what their top stories are. There is still an interest in "what's new," "what's happening."

Mayer: We could build tools that would build a digital commons but that would just bring those who are already-interest to these spaces. Are there instances of tools that can reach out beyond the already-interested spheres?

Shane: How is the "cause" function doing on Facebook? People who go to a non-cause-driven website and how many people get together?

Williams: Institutions that make these spaces will bring people into these spaces. Bloggers would welcome the opportunity for a neutral third-party to connect them. Part of the process is to create a stream from a neutral third party. The Blogosphere alone has the ability to revitalize and reshape journalism, media-making, and opinion.

1:20 Reconvene, Further Discussion of Presentations from Today and June 24

Mr. Shane asked the Commissioners for additional thoughts based on presentations from June or this morning. He indicated that the Commission would also discuss the preliminary paper on "democratic information communities," and the recommendations offered for Commission process.

Hundt: Here's a rather dire definition of local news. Imagine the following hypothetical headline in the Boston Globe, on the front page, "Man Killed During Latin American Vacation" and on page 16, "Latin America Abolished by Atomic Bomb."

We have to think about a way to challenge the whole idea of local news and this was really brought to a boil with Ron's [Williams] presentation. The way we should think about local news is not to think about the story itself, but about Web 2.0. We ought to think about participation and communities and we will get a picture of their needs.

Here are four hypotheses. We do not need to all sign up for them, but at least they will be provocative.

1) First, the facts are out there, they are just looking for journalists. This is just my sense listening to these great presentations today with Loris [Ann Taylor]'s talk about those who are bereft of atoms of information and tools and Tom [Rosenstiel] speaking the cri de coeur of journalism: the news is just out there, but it is looking for journalists. The facts are there whether they are reported or not. The interpretation of these facts is there to be uncovered and provided, and there are a lot of facts out there that aren't getting reported.

2) The journalists are out there, but they are looking for a platform. As Marshall McLuhan said, all new mediums use the old mediums as their content. There is no more clear an example of this than online newspapers at the very beginning in which they would just cut and paste newspaper pages online. This is unsatisfying for journalists.

3) Newspapers are looking for a new network. Newspapers are in a two-sided network: on the one side, taking the content and selling it to the audience and on the other side, selling the platform to the advertisers. In the same way, credit card companies have to sell their cards to the consumers but they also have to sell their service to restaurants so that the consumer can use the credit card.

- As soon as newspapers lose the ability to have a large network [that is, sell their content to a large audience], newspapers lose the ability to get advertising [because advertisers want to reach as many potential consumers as possible].

- Newspapers, today, are looking to be part of a network that would reposition their role in this two-sided system instead of being forced out the network altogether [i.e. a direct content-to-advertiser link that cuts out the newspaper-as-platform].

4) The conduct of the business of journalism -- the activity of journalism -- follows function. Journalistic ethics is a subset of the conduct, and journalistic conduct cannot exist apart from the actual function of journalism. The ethics of journalism has not been constant in every era. A new code of conduct comes into being whenever journalism reorganizes its mission and institutions.

It is not at all clear that a new set of values will be better or worse. It is not going to get transported unchanged from one place to another. We are not going to see a translation of conduct without an alteration in this process.

If we want to think about recommendations or advice, one approach is to think about the core elements that are not lost in the translation.

Sagan: Reed's third proposition often exists as a winner-takes-all function in terms of getting a large enough audience. Google is a great example of a winner-take-all on the ownership side but on the editorial side, it is not winner-takes-all. Google, for example, by using content developed and initially distributed by other companies and then generating advertising revenues from it, has an enormous network and just keeps getting larger and larger.

Hundt: I believe that all network-effect businesses have a tendency to move to consolidation unless your network effect is of diminished value and strength. It isn't that the network effects of newspapers have declined; it is rather that their particular network has lost its position in the competition for the share of the profit pool.

So, whatever we come up with, in any industry in which there are unavoidable, high sub-costs, that will become a consolidated network. We can't imagine that we will have a highly unconcentrated, multiplayer universe in terms of the physical infrastructure or search.

Sagan: It sounds like the Hopi problem.

Hundt: The Hopi problem won't be solved by creating a free-standing network that will serve only their needs.

Mayer: We're looking for a network, yes, but we are really looking for a consolidation of consumer attention. They are not losing the large audience; they are just spending a lot less time getting news. If you're losing consumer attention time, then you're losing advertising revenues.

Sagan: But actually people are spending as much, if not more, time [getting news] but this is separating the inefficient ad buys from newspaper and therefore newspapers are losing revenues.

Rosenstiel: The question we need to ask is, "What is the function of journalism?" instead of focusing on what values will survive or not. The values of journalism flowed from the function that news played in people's lives and the ethics of journalism flowed out of the marketplace and flowed from the commercial businesses. Journalistic values flowed from what codes of conduct would best serve the consumers' needs.

What is the function of journalism? It is many things. One function is that it casts things that were otherwise in darkness into light [Lippmann quote]. It creates a common space and a common vocabulary so that people can understand things, it creates a baseline of facts so that discussion about and from these facts can take place. Another function is agenda-setting which is an interaction between journalists and citizens.

Journalism and news-gathering helps people create an idea of what their community is. An ultimate product of news is the answer to "What is Denver?" or "What is Aspen?" and this is the end product of all these other functions.

How does this creation of community work if there is not a centralized place that organizes all these functions?

Hundt: I meant that ethics follows function. However, the judicial statements on journalism have been on the function side, market behavior, etc. that would affect/bring about certain ethics. And I think you can ask, what are the ethics that emerge?

Decherd: We're using the past tense a lot here. Marissa [Mayer]'s company is doing well and is not a monopoly because it is not a place where the people and places covered are in the same area.

The other point is that we tend to talk a lot about newspapers in this conversation, partly because of the pressure that the industry's under and partly because we know the newspaper best. However, the majority of Americans get their news from television. I would place my bet on all of this coming together on a flat screen in people's living rooms. We need some acknowledgement of how local TV news is the way people get local information.

The press in America does an extraordinarily good job of serving democracy. What goes on in this country is remarkable and we should keep this mind as we continue.

Definitions need to be discussed among us: "monopolies" have been used in a facile way; "gatekeepers" -- the journalistic definition is those editors who put vast amounts of information in digestible forms but the business definition is different.

Journalism schools are vastly different places than five years ago.

Here are some distinguishing points:

- local versus national media -- lens is important
- our own media usage habits -- most of the people engaged in the debates on the future of journalism has sophisticated journalism habits, but the majority of the public has comparatively unsophisticated user habits.

What does the concentration of media power really mean? On the newspaper front, the last 30 years were driven by classifieds. You cannot be all things to all readers over a long period of time, especially not without any more classifieds. When you take a high margin of business out, we have to go to our original business model and ask what the role of local newspapers is for communities of different sizes.

For example, someone said that local television audiences are declining, but in local markets, while the share of audience has declined, the absolute audience has remained relatively stable. In Dallas, for example, there was the same or more absolute audience in 1995, but the share has fallen because the market has grown.

How does this all come together on screens? The converter box is the public, not the large flat screens.

All the things Tom [Rosenstiel] and Ron [Williams] talked about are substantially accurate. However, what they have talked about are things that have been present in journalism since the beginning of free speech, only telescoped down at such an intense rate and changed because of the presence of instantaneity. When there is no time for digesting or production cycles, there is no room for the review of substance/content.

In terms of distribution platforms, the vertically integrated business structure is failing. But we are still talking about distribution platforms and when we talk about local media, we are talking about the ability to provide local perspectives and the ability to edit and make sense of all of this for local communities. We have to have proprietary content, and we have to find distribution platforms that are profitable.

What is presently a common interest of local media and local business is that they both want each other to succeed and they both want the ability to reinvest.

Shane: Tom [Rosenstiel], since you also write a book about television, can you tell us a bit about television?

Rosenstiel: The ratings for individual programs are down, but if you look at the total audience over the course of the day, the audience is stable. Networks are adding newscasts in the morning to serve the habits of viewers. However, when you are taking the same size newsrooms over more hours of newscasts, you are stretching the newsroom thin and are challenging how much contemplation, verification, etc. are possible. When we saw the number of correspondents drop, we saw the percentage of use of syndicated material rise. We also saw effort having to be spread across more hours and because of this, the nature of the content was changing.

I believe there is a lot of misinformation and myth about how local news is put together. For example, the idea that you have to "hook" the audience with a visually compelling lead and then "hold" the audience with teasers is false. Leading with visually compelling material was not as important at "hooking and holding" an audience as the information contained in the lead-off story.

In a half hour newscast, there is about 8 to 12 minutes of news with fires, accidents, and crime acting as the lead story (60% of the time) because these stories are visually compelling and easy to get, not because they attract the audience.

Much of what is available in the local newspaper is not available on local television.

Lozano: Journalists understand that they are in a service-providing role and that their role is not just about gathering and disseminating information but also about providing a service to the audience.

People's lives today are much more complex and people are looking for relevancy in the information that is given to them. Journalists are used to having a role of sitting back and giving information. But today journalists not only have to go beyond that and provide a service, they also have to empower their local communities. Finding content that is relevant is one part of the

equation; the other part is not just about disseminating information but about being a tool to empower the community.

Traditionally, journalists have not normally been comfortable in this latter role.

In terms of relevancy, we need to look at the information needs, not just the news needs. How do we know what communities want? We have to figure out a better way of gathering information that helps us define what is relevant for local communities. It cannot be the traditional role; local communities have to be at the table to help journalists know what is important, what services they need journalists to provide.

Media is an empowerment tool. The voice of local communities is essential in helping us identify what [information] is relevant.

Shane: I have a question to that effect. Included in your briefing book is an article that said, "If you want good news, learn Spanish." The traditional journalists I've heard speak about their role say that they are involved in empowering people and they think they empower people by giving people information. Is that different from what you are talking about?

Lozano: There is a level of trust in Spanish-language media that is not necessarily present in Anglo-media. They [Spanish-language media] serve as an intermediary, as a voice for the community, and as a way of educating people about what their needs are.

In some ways, as a Spanish-language media outlet, you are there to defend a community that is unfamiliar with certain systems, you serve as an interlocutor between local communities and the mainstream, and you serve as an informational and educational tool that mainstream outlets do not usually touch upon.

Olson: Our function, as a Commission, is to talk about information needs. We've talked about newspapers, broadcasters, journalists, and so-forth. But we also want to focus on ways that we can communicate back and forth with one another. The extent to which the legacy press can do this is questionable.

Changes in technology have undermined the market model, created different incentives, and have also affected the ways of providing information on a local and national level. I want to know about ways in which incentives can be provided, either by the marketplace or by the government, to provide communities with the information and the information-gathering resources they need to be empowered.

I haven't heard anything about copyright. The changes in technology have diminished the effect of copyright to do research, to make a product, but there is no incentive because as soon as they publish the story, others will make a profit on it.

We better talk about the people in society who don't have these tools, who don't have the technology. We need to figure out how we as government or as promoters of the marketplace can provide motivation for people to gather and disseminate information in this new technology environment.

How do we get technology into the hands of the people along with the ability to use it? How do we give people incentives to use this technology?

Carroll: We're going to have to get pretty deep into the economics of the newspaper business. The reporter is the basic element of the news business and the flow of money is moving away from institutions that fund reporters and to companies that do not employ reporters.

We have conditions that are rapidly shrinking the number of reporters and if we subtract from these reporters with no civic purpose (those chasing Britney Spears, for example), we have even fewer.

We need to look at reporters on the street. While investigative reporters get the most attention, this is the least of our problems. Propublica, for example, is a 24-reporter newsroom that is doing great investigative reporting. National investigative reporting can be supported but local reporting is falling. All of these local reporters are going out everyday, looking under one rock and then looking under another rock until something of relevance is discovered. There aren't enough rock turners. And there rock turners are essential for civic democracy.

The LA Times failed to report on Nixon in the late 40s. If local reporters go, we're going to have a lot of problems. In the 1920s and 1930s they ripped all the oyster beds out of Chesapeake Bay. But then, low and behold, they realized the bay was silty. Why? Because they oysters kept the water clean. If you take out all of the reporters and still expect the communities to remain clean, you will be disappointed.

What we're talking about is the economics of reporting, not necessarily from tree-media. One aspect is the decoupling of advertising from content, but there are other aspects that, taken together, could be terminal. We hit a fork early on in this revolution when we thought that news-gathering would make its money online off of advertising on the Web. But this is not looking good.

Warren Buffett said that owning a local newspaper was a local monopoly and was like owning all the local utilities market.

We have no power with advertising now; Google sets our rates and we have no pricing power at all. You can assemble audiences for the advertisers, but not with almost no expenditure on content. For me, and I risk being laughed out of the room, it is no longer the advertising audience, but the content and if you can't get paid for the content, the reporters will suffer.

In relation to copyright, if you generate content in the newsroom, it doesn't belong to you for more than 30 seconds. Newspapers have always gathered the information and other media would rewrite it. The economics of today make large armies of reporters unsustainable and this is a threat for the local information economy.

Junck: I am the optimist in the room. First, we have bigger audience than we ever have had before because the readership of the newspaper is flat and then more people read news online as well. We're getting a lot of traction in local communities.

Second, on the economic side, the biggest problem of the moment is classified advertising (down 15% to 30%). The biggest thing that is going on for the classified market is that our entire economy is down and this is pressuring employment advertising. A third of employment revenue is online now and we're in the same business that Yahoo, Monster, and Careerbuilding are in. The auto industry is also questionable. We've got some problems with classifieds as a newspaper business, but that is partly a problem of the larger economy as a whole.

Right now, product advertising is staying pretty stable. But the retail businesses aren't so hot either so that affects the local advertising as well.

I'm betting that if we knew how many letters to the editor we got five years ago in response to stories, we probably have 2, 3, 4 times as many interactions with readers today as we did 5 years ago.

Bill Kling [President of American Public Media Group]: You're all avoiding one big question: why can't you charge for content online?

Junck: A number of newspapers have tried that, but it doesn't work. The Internet is free.

Decherd: The Internet is free; it is not pay for content.

Mayer: Legacy media is just not working well in the interactive space. The summary of the advertising business is that people are searching for jobs, for employment, etc. and are not searching for luxury goods.

There are a lot of different technologies. The television is almost always going to be a one-to-many experience and so is the newspaper. However, phones are one-to-one experiences. There are many good models for changing one-to-many spaces into one-to-one experiences. For example, American Idol voting via text message or the U2 concert texting for donating to a charity. There are ways to get a huge amount of participation in using multiple media platforms in much more fluid and flexible ways that build a feasible economic model.

2:40 Discussion of Preliminary White Paper: "*Democratic Information Communities*"

Peter Shane presented a preliminary discussion paper, entitled "Democratic Information Communities." He explained that the paper is a first attempt to define in principle the information needs of communities in our American democracy, thus responding to what Alberto Ibarguen has identified as the first question facing the Commission. He specifically invited Commissioners to alert him to any propositions in the paper they think are incorrect or incomplete because, otherwise, the framework set forth is going to inform the subsequent research drafts that are prepared on the Commission's behalf.

The paper makes three points about why we care about communities. We care about local communities because local, real spaces are important to the ways people live their lives, because we share governance over local resources, and because our democracy is organized geographically. Early trends on the world wide web favored the global and national.

Junck: How do you know that the world wide web originally did more to proliferate national and global information?

Shane: Because of various studies that have been conducted.

danah boyd: There is more local coverage with Web 2.0 applications, social networking etc. However, there is far more coverage overall on the national and international levels.

Shane: With only an internet connection, it is often much easier to find out information about the proceedings of the Justice Department than about or own community meetings.

Mayer: That makes sense because the early model of the internet was of small pockets of information here and there that weren't well integrated.

Shane: The second part of the paper tried to identify the information needs of local communities.

- coordination
- accountability
- problem-solving (taking from Vincent Price): identifying the problems, developing options, estimating consequences, weighing the consequences in light of the values and costs, deciding among options

- connectedness.

What difference does democracy make? The paper would differentiate our framework from other discussions of democracy and media in the following ways. Most of the time, democracy is used descriptively. We are really using "democracy" as a normative value, expressing the form of government that is legitimate. Democracy's claim for legitimacy rests on the prospects it affords for helping people to better realize political freedom and political equality. Democracy's claim is that when decisions get made, at least our institutions are organized so that all of people's interests have been included.

If this is right, then our democratic life is richest if community information is also created, disseminated, and discussed in democratic ways.

Peter said that the paper's vision of a democratic information environment is perhaps best captured in this paragraph:

"A democracy protects itself from the distorting effects of any one intermediary by embracing a sort of "checks and balances" within its communications environment. A genuinely democratic information environment requires a pluralistic system of intermediaries that makes available and is genuinely responsive to multiple frames, narratives, and worldviews, not all of which will be consistent. Such pluralism sustains the hope that a locality's communication pathways will cumulatively bring information to the public in a way that is ultimately attentive to the interests, needs, opinions, or perspectives of every subset of the community – thus, protecting political equality. Moreover, unless communication pathways are open to the full span of community voices interested in shaping the locality's shared narrative and helping to set the direction of public affairs, a significant measure of political freedom will not be available to all."

The question then is: how do we go about creating, organizing, disseminating, and discussing information in the service of coordination, accountability, problem-solving and connectedness?

While the word "journalism" carries a lot of baggage, what I want to focus on is not, "who is a journalist?" but really "what is the set of practices that are critical for local information and for empowering us with information?" Journalists are not trying to get us to buy something, to take over state power, or perform any other specific agenda; they are trying to get us informed and to sort out what is true and what is not true. Because of the sheer avalanche of information available, we need people with training and skills to be able to help us navigate this avalanche.

Olson: This seems unrealistic and idealistic. It is not possible for us to know what is true. Everyone has a point of view. If you are looking for people who are working in only in the public interest, you will not find them. And, don't we also want all the other stuff -- arguments, opinions, etc.?

Shane: We are going to be awash in all the other stuff (arguments, opinions, etc.), but we are lacking are those with "no master but the public interest."

Olson: No one is going to actually serve only the public interest.

Shane: There are things that are true and there are things that aren't true and I think we need to include this function [journalists who perform this function of differentiating truth from falsehood] in the web of information intermediaries.

Olson: Well, then call them "truth-seekers."

Shane: Let's move on a bit more and then come back to this. The media I have focused on is the one-to-many model. Clearly when media coincide with journalism, we have some amazing successes. However, the media do give rise to a number of challenges in the democratization of the information flow (access, diversity, relevance). Not everything that is provided by the media is relevant to our welfare and with media power, because we are all audiences of the media, we start to see the world in media symbols. We begin to recognize formats and signs that may mislead us as to the character of the information with which we are actually being presented.

Doing the work to provide information that local communities need requires resources. However, exclusive reliance on markets to create information is most likely going to fail because people can't vote with their dollars for information the existence of which they don't know about. For example, how much is it worth investigating corruption that I don't know is necessarily going on? Information is, in a certain sense, a public good: it is non-excludable, non-rivalrous. If no one invests in an informed public because we all expect someone else is investing, the result will be that we don't have an informed public.

We need a combination of market and non-market forces to ensure that the information needs of local communities are met. What this framework implies is that, in a democracy:

- Communities need access to information

- Communities need access to the tools and skills that enable all citizens so inclined to participate vigorously in the community's information networks.

- Communities need a robust set of information intermediaries oriented to the public interest

- Communities need a for-profit media environment attentive to issues of access, diversity, relevance, and power.

- Communities need organizations and information practices – journalists, libraries, and institutions of higher learning -- committed to the creation, organization, and dissemination of factual information and interpretive analysis in a way that takes into account the interests of all community members and in which all community members have opportunities to participate and have voice.

- Communities need an economic and public policy environment that enables such organizations and practices to thrive.

These things that communities need are so all-encompassing that we are not just telling people what they need but also the things that we think will empower them. We are trying to look at information needs from the public standpoint. If we need a new business model, it is only to serve the public, not to save the newspaper. We need to look at media, both as a practice and as institutions. And our recommendations can be aimed at government, nonprofits, media institutions, etc.

boyd: I realize that there is a force that goes through all this that we haven't accounted for. Communities are thriving, they just look different. But we have to acknowledge or recognize that local communities aren't the same as they were before. The local news fails when it tries to function as a one-to-many model. However, there is a huge shift in content-related and interest-driven communities, for example basket-weaving communities or friends from work.

We are not accounting for the fact that communities have changed. What is the role of information in serving these communities? Why has new media accomplished all the things [in Shane's conclusion and on pg. 36 of the briefing book] in terms of communities of interest but not for co-located communities?

Rooney: I strongly agree with everything danah [boyd] has said. If we really can succeed and we

really can serve the information needs of the local community, what would we have? We would have an informed citizenry. I think that this paper is missing the piece of an informed citizenry.

Many of us believe that there are preconditions for citizenry. It is hard to conceive of citizenship without food, health, levels of safety and so on (taking from the work of economist Amartya Sen). Even though the Commission may not have a lot to say about these things, they are still important to understanding this idea of an informed citizenry.

We may have to think about communication as a sort of precondition of citizenry.

What is the relation between media and citizenry? We have talked about access and content but we also need to talk about motivation and cultural values. There are neighborhoods in Chicago that have developed a culture of thuggery that is anti-citizenry, anti-civic life where freedom of movement and citizenry are devalued.

Is there a relationship between communication and citizenry that will lead to engagement and motivation of the citizenry?

Finally, citizenry demands a set of skills including the ability to determine truth from falsity. A sort of media literacy skill that enables a kid to determine truth from falsehood.

We have also lost the skill of public discourse. Many know what a farce public hearings have become. We have lost the skills of public and civic discourse.

Rosenstiel: I just wanted to touch on Ted [Olson]'s concerns that are extremely important. I think this whole enterprise can stumble if people reject the whole role of "journalism." I would like to suggest some language that might help.

What you're calling "journalism" is something that needs some definition. Journalists are reportorial information gatherers. These are the people who are looking under rocks. They are steeped in verification and enterprise that distinguish them from other parts of the information web. Their goal is foundational public debate that will lead to understandings of truth. They are not the sole arbiters of truth and they have a different role from arguers. They also function as verifiers, have a role as referees, and see these as part of their function. They are not the sole gatekeepers -- they are a subset, but if you lose them, you lose something important in terms of information gathering.

I would like to talk to danah [boyd]'s point about communities of interest. Does hyperlocal mean "things that happen locally" or "things that relate to the hyperlocal community"? We need to talk about the intersection of interest and geographic communities -- one or the other is not the whole picture.

Shane: If we solved all these problems, what would it look like? It is really hard to answer this question without the really rich empirical evidence. Tom, you and I are on the same wavelength and I am looking for facts relating information flows to civic engagement.

Decherd: I think your draft was much more in line than your presentation which used the word "ideal," which was misleading.

Hundt: I would like to push the conclusion more and add, "and those needs must be met in such a way that communities can have reasonable power over shaping their own environment."

This is getting to the point of "why do we care?"

Democracies are organized geographically, and I'm assuming that means a sort of Greek, republican model in which there is a diverse and varied public that exists in a wide-geographic locale.

Economic and political governance are not necessarily geographic, however. Why should we care about local information? Because there are a number of forces that exert power on local communities from outside their control. When you talk about problem-solving, etc., you aren't talking about these in a way that empowers local communities.

There is a tension between where the local community ought to have dominion and where outside forces may be working. So, if we agree with that, then journalism is a means to an end. And if the end includes the end that I am offering then we see that is it important for the definition of journalism to empower and to enable local governments to shape their own environments. And this is something that communities of interest and local communities have in common: empowerment.

There is something to gather around, then, with this core ideal of journalism.

Shane: It would be a mistake to think about this Commission as a tendency towards the hyperlocal. We need the power to shape one's own information environment and for people to live their lives effectively in the needs of their geographic and their interest communities.

boyd: You have these different kinds of communities at play. I think there is a lot to be learned about information flow among communities of interest. Rather than think that our journalism model will revitalize, we have to look at how this model has changed.

4:10 Discussion of Commission Process and Future Meetings

Executive Director Shane explained that the Commission should have several members present at each of our planned community forums, for Mountain View, Philadelphia, and Missoula. If volunteers do not step forward, he will begin recruiting.

He then drew the Commission's attention to his July 23, 2008 memorandum to the Commission outlining proposed Commission procedures. He corrected the date of the November meeting in Chicago: it is on 17th, not the 20th. He asked that, should Commissioners need to miss any future meeting, they should – if they disagree with some of the issues or perspectives outlined in briefing materials shared beforehand, they should let him know in advance so that your disagreements can be taken into account. Shane explained that staff continued to pursue bibliographic research, interviews, and an email listserv of helpful parties. He is hoping by November to have papers assessing whether the information needs of communities are being met and synthesizing the current trends and anticipated developments shaping the opportunities for meeting community information needs.

In terms of recommendations, on any issues that seem worth pursuing, staff will put papers together on the competing sides of each argument and give that to the Commission for consideration. The Commission should have, as its goal, a unanimous consensus behind us for the final report. It would be a big deal if a group as diverse and distinguished as the Commission can agree. Hopefully, this will be a report that everyone is happy with.

Commissioner Carroll asks whether the report has a target audience. Peter Shane said that he thought there would be multiple audiences, including all information and policy making institutions, including the government, legislative bodies, universities, libraries, the press itself. Carroll raised the prospect of communicating Commission findings to communities themselves. Shane agreed, and noted that the Knight Foundation has committed support for a year-long

follow-up.

Commissioner MacCallum urged that attention be given to sharpening our ideas about the Commission's final product and its target audience. Thinking about how we want to communicate might enable the Commission to accomplish more and clarify both our premises and hypotheses.

Commissioner Hundt asked whether all Commission meetings have to be webcast and videotaped. Peter Shane said some thought will have to be given to finding ways to permit the most candid exchange among Commissioners, while preserving the Commission's concerns with openness. He will pursue this with the Knight Foundation.

Shane added that he hoped the Commissioners would use the list he collected of various people's suggestions for areas of possible initiative for the improvement of community information environments to help clarify our evolving hypotheses as to how communities are doing and what would help. He added that the Commission should be thinking not only of multiple print presentations, but video presentations as well.

Commissioner MacCallum noted that the Nike Foundation's current campaign became successful only after the Foundation truly clarified its goals. She thinks the Commission needs to have a better picture of what kind of transformation we want on the level of local communities on the ground, which will help sharpen our recommendations.

Commissioner Lozano asked whether the desired impact should be seen as a more informed and more participatory citizenry? She wondered what the outcomes would look like of a successful community information model, and thought answering these questions would help drive the Commission in a specific direction.

Commissioner Sagan expressed a need to get more deeply into the local level. He thinks "more informed citizenry" is not specific enough. We need to get people to look at local trends.

Shane: It would be good to get some examples of what this statement would look like. We don't yet have the data/research to say, "Do X to your information and Y more people will vote," or "Do Y to your information environment and people will be more Z per cent more empowered." If you do things right, we suspect the life of the community will be more robust, more participatory, and more meaningful and everyone will be more able to help shape their community identity -- we just don't know what these things are that need to be done.

Decherd: I agree with Lisa [MacCallum]'s comments on the level of a business model. It is far easier for the Commission to make recommendations about the role of libraries, universities and journalists in terms of disseminating information -- and the Commission should do this. You say this in your paper and this is important.

In terms of a result, that will go a lot further than getting into a debate of legacy versus new media. Never has there been another debate in the history of humanity in which there has been so much written about a topic by the people who make up the profession of that topic.

Sagan: You can link them in ways that aren't as self-interested. So much is written about the old versus new media, but more needs to be written about the risks of these trends. What are the risks of these shrinking newsrooms?

The needs of local communities are linked to the risks communities face resulting from these changing technologies.

Carroll: If you want to know if a new breast cancer cure is coming, look on the business page. The

question is: what will America know and what won't it know?

Rosenstiel: No one cares about the media. The question is what are the information needs of the citizen? One could get quite specific about this.

Carroll: If we spend three sentences on cross-ownership in this report, that will be too much.

Hundt: I totally with Robert [Decherd] and I would like to add that there are metrics and we ought to think about what these metrics are. If the answer is that there aren't metrics, then maybe we haven't pushed ourselves hard enough. We know from polls about the lowest voter turnout, we know that people don't know about things regarding their civic life. I regard these metrics as evidence of problems. What would be the way that we start to address them?

I hope that we could come up with a set of proposals and new ideas that would really be a part of the new and would change behavior, not only offering policy recommendations.

Shane: I think that's what Alberto is looking for, as well. No one wants a report that will only show up on Journalism school syllabi and that will have no impact. That is not the model we want to follow.

There has been a lot of discussion about information propositions that are purely normative and are taken to be self-evident, e.g., "The media are not serving the information needs of local communities because more people know about Britney Spears than the names of their representatives," but we're trying to get past treating these propositions as if they were self-evident.

We're also trying to get past the assumption that people don't know the names of the Supreme Court Justices, therefore the media aren't doing their job and community information needs aren't being met.

These are not self-evident and they take a very slim view of democracy. We want to ask, what does the public need? What's at risk?

Mr. Shane then referred to a memorandum by Commissioners Hundt and Powell responding to his request asking them to prioritize, in terms of community information needs, the policy issues currently in front of the FCC. He noted that each of them indicated that the top policy priority within that domain should be an ambitious broadband strategy that would include at least some kind of broadband service to the entire country.

Mr. Shane suggested that, instead of thinking in the abstract about the kind of approach the Commission might make, the Commission could look at some concrete areas of concern and see what approaches emerge. This would be a more iterative approach to trying to figure out what we're talking about.

MacCallum: Are we looking at international models on the agenda?

Shane: If you recommend that it be put on the agenda, then it's on the agenda!

Lozano: I think that asset-mapping in local communities may be helpful. Instead of understanding the mapping of communities as geographic, what are the assets of local communities? How do communities engage with the civic life around them? How do people influence public policy? How is their voice heard? How do we create discourse that better informs and engages people? Maybe this is a different notion of communities that might be helpful.

boyd: I don't think that people have any idea of what local communities do. People don't even know what the city government does! I don't think that people get either the assets or concerns.

Taylor: One of the models of Indian country is to prescribe policy 3,000 miles away. There are the policies that look to "fix" people who don't know what's good for them.

Each community is going to have to share in its own media destiny. They may use radio, they may use different platforms and different mediums, and they may go into capacity building. I think building on the assets of the communities is helpful to figuring out these specific media needs and helpful for offering support to local communities without specifically telling local communities how to do their work.

Shane: The idea of communities knowing themselves is really getting at something. There is a community self-knowledge that ties together a bunch of these themes. Maybe the big concept that Lisa [MacCallum] was talking about is community self-knowledge.

Nicely: There is also a will to take pride in the community. We read an article about people who aren't engaged, etc.; this is a means to enliven and engage people once again. If we do this right, it could be something that local communities use to empower themselves and engage in self-knowledge and civic discourse and to create a way for the community to be re-enlivened. We're really talking about the will of the community to reengage and to figure out itself what its local community is.

Carroll: Everything on pg. 39 [of the Briefing Book] is pretty on point.

We need to persuade our readers of things that we are already persuaded of. It is a public policy issue that has not been addressed by the US: the web is creating many positive things and great opportunities but also is creating potential deficits that add to the problems and these things should be taken head on and we should not let them drift by.

The other things we need to focus on, which is a hobby-horse of mine and may not be of interest to the other Commissioners, is the question of what kind of market will provide the kind of journalism that the public needs?

Mooney: Who's our audience? What we're going to talk about at the 30,000 foot level will be different than what local communities want to talk about. "Yes, broadband is interesting, but what I really want is to find a job." We're going to have to decide who we're talking to and what we're recommending. We're going to have to be very careful when we're talking about what local communities need.

Nicely: What is the purpose of the community meetings we are organizing?

Shane: Three roundtables are scheduled throughout each day. One involves non-media people talking about the information needs from groups that do not feel they are being served, such as immigrant communities in San Jose (and maybe Philadelphia) and rural communities in Montana. There will be another roundtable with media people. And then in Philadelphia, where there is a very rich alternative media culture, we will have a roundtable on alternative media, in Silicon Valley there will be a roundtable on technology and how this can affect local information needs. In Missoula, the last roundtable will be about other-than-rural community needs.

Obviously these is not grade "A" anthropology, much less rigorous statistical data, but it is meant to give us some contextualized richness to get us to go beyond statistics.

Junck: That sounds great, but what about regular folks?

Shane: Absolutely - there will also be a time to hear from the public at each forum.

Hundt: Is there a Wikipedia page going on for the Commission? Shouldn't we have one?

boyd: What are we trying to do? Are we trying to create a community forum for the Commissioners?

MacCallum: While in the midst of working through these issues, let's have something that gets the public engaged with what's going on.

Hundt: I think some co-fabrication before the output would be helpful; like some sort of wiki page.

Mooney: This also assumes that people know how to use Wikipedia and have access to it.

Shane: All of this has been shared with a lot of people before you got to this document. One could think of creating an online community to deal with these issues, but we have to prioritize our staff activities?

Do we want to move ahead rather quickly with the question of broadband to make a recommendation? If people want to move quickly on this issues, then we want to get a briefing paper together quickly to get things done.

For example, in the next three weeks, we can have a lot going into a policy briefing for broadband or to creating a community forum, but not both.

boyd: I vote to use our energy here to use our expertise and to feed it into a specific policy issue. Creating an online community forum is much more difficult and time consuming.

Olson: I read this paper [broadband memorandum] and this makes sense to me. The memorandum from Reed [Hundt] and Michael [Powell] I understand and I don't see a reason not to move forward on broadband deployment.

boyd: There are things in the memorandum that they agree on, but there are things that they don't agree on, and there are things that are missing -- like filtering and net neutrality.

Shane: We are going to focus on aggregating this group's expertise; we will look at broadband; and we will need a way to get everyone on the Commission involved in conversation.

Mooney: We're taking a stand on broadband -- which I don't object to -- but it seems odd to make recommendations on what communities need without talking to them about this.

Hundt: I agree with Andrew [Mooney] that I did not mean to imply that I was driving the Commission's agenda.

Lozano: Is this a possible recommendation that needs to be vetted and talked about?

Olson: Yes, and we would talk about it in San Jose.

boyd: We're trying to see if there is a space for which we would make a recommendation using all of our different expertise, viewpoints, and backgrounds.

Shane: The question is only if I should try to figure out a set of policy materials for you by

September on broadband deployment. If I don't hear from people, I will assume that this okay with everyone.

5:15 Meeting Adjourned