

# COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

## Opening Shot



MARIA CALLE OVER THE COFFIN OF HER SON, GEORGE DELGADO, WHO WAS KILLED IN IRAQ IN LATE MARCH. Delgado may have been the four-thousandth American soldier to die in the war. According to a recent poll, most Americans don't know how many lives have been lost in Iraq. Why do you think that is so? How has the Bush Administration tried to keep the emotional reaction to the casualties to a minimum? How has that paid off? Studies also show that news coverage of the war and its toll is down. Why do you think these are getting less space in print and on the air? Come up with five stories that localize the Iraq War and its ramifications. Write one of them.

## Talking Points

IN THIS ISSUE, CJR looks at the future of writing and reading. Regarding the former, Alissa Quart visits the Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism and finds herself dividing the journalism world into two distinct groups: Lost Media (generally the old fashioned print journalists) and Found Media (bloggers and their ilk). Which group represents the future, and what does it mean for those people entering the profession? Will you, as a future journalist, really have to choose sides, or is there common ground between the two? And if bloggers who largely aggregate news become kings, and if the number of journalists out on the street continue to dwindle, who will do the kind of digging and reporting that our democracy depends on?

As for reading, Ezra Klein takes a close look at Amazon's e-book reader, the Kindle. Does it or other e-books represent the future of reading? If so, what does it mean for those people out there who like the feel of paper under their fingers? Can Lost Media find a home in a digital medium?

Look into your crystal ball or your liquid crystal display. What does it say to you?

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**WHO WILL TELL US? P. 4:** What do you think is the main reason why the accuracy rate of political reporting has plummeted to “new lows”? How might layoffs and buyouts in newsrooms affect the course of the general election? Why do you think there are seemingly more pundits than there are reporters on television? Would you prefer to be a pundit or a reporter? Explain. Will the Huffington Post “reinvent the American newspaper”? Why or why not? Should the American newspaper be reinvented? If not, why not? If so, how would you reinvent it? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Watch two or three news talk programs. Listen carefully to the pundits and list the sources they cite to back up their opinions. Locate and read the source material. Are the pundits accurately relaying what was reported? What is “conventional wisdom”? Who determines what it is? Find on-the-ground newspaper reports from the most recent primary campaigns. Does the reporting support or buck conventional wisdom? Explain.

**LOST MEDIA, FOUND MEDIA, PP. 30-34:** Comment on how Alissa Quart categorizes Lost Media and Found Media. Do you agree with her definitions? Why or why not? How do members of Lost Media and Found Media differ in their attitudes toward journalism? Which group do you find more attractive in terms of your own future? Explain. As the editorial notes, print and electronic media are cutting back on reporters. How will that affect the future of Found Media? Are we as a society benefitting from the zooming popularity of blogging? Why or why not? According to Quart, members of Lost Media must try to “learn or steal” what they can from Found Media. Like what, for example? Would we be better off with the scenario imagined by Quart on page 34, where journalists ply their trade for free with fame or notoriety as payment? Comment on David Cohn’s heroes (p. 34). Who are yours? Why? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** List the strengths and weaknesses of Lost Media and Found Media. Which do you think will ultimately prevail? Why? Write an essay that imagines a conversation between a Lost Media-ite and a Found Media-ite. Let the conversation be as focused or as far-ranging as you choose on a subject or subjects also of your choosing.

**Quick Takes**

- 1) Find copies of any three 2008 Pulitzer Prize winners for journalism. Read them and discuss what made them special and what they teach you about writing and reporting.
- 2) Pick up a copy of any one of the winners of the National Magazine Awards. Critique its content and discuss why you think it merited its award.
- 3) Create a syllabus and reading list for a course on teaching journalists how to understand economic issues and report and write about them.
- 4) Create what you think would be a great exhibit for the Newseum.

**THE FUTURE OF READING, PP. 35-40:** What are the benefits

**Between the Lines**

- 1) If you were the cultural editor of *The New York Times*, what would be your policy for subsequent references to rap artists (p. 14)?
- 2) According to two entries in “Hard Numbers,” (p. 15) many journalists feel their profession is heading in the wrong direction. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
- 3) Do you think that the outsourcing of editing and reporting (p. 15) represents the wave of the future? Why or why not?
- 4) After reading Cameron McWhirter’s account of his dealings with the special prosecutor’s office (p. 23), what would you have done, had you been in his shoes?
- 5) What were the lessons that Mike Pride learned during his year in the trenches (p. 45) that any young reporter should take to heart?

and drawbacks of e-book readers from the points of view of authors and readers? Have you ever tried a Kindle or another e-book reader? If so, what did you like and not like about it? What does Ezra Klein like about e-book readers in general? Do you agree? Do they represent the future of reading? Why or why not? If you were an author, would you prefer to have your book released electronically or on paper? Explain. **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Download a copy of the National Endowment for the Arts report, “To Read or Not to Read.” Discuss its implications for journalism. Suggests solutions to remedy the problems raised in the report.

**SHOP STEWARDS, PP. 55-57:** Weigh the benefits and drawbacks of *Der Spiegel’s* ownership model. Would you like to work at a magazine that operated the same way? Why or why not? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Read the latest issue of *Der Spiegel* online. Critique it, and compare it to the major American newsweeklies. Find out whether there were similar employee-owned and operated journalistic efforts in the United States. Were they successes or failures? Why?

**THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS, PP. 18-20, LOVE THY NEIGHBOR, PP. 48-52:** Contrast the different views of the Christian right movement in the two stories. What do both stories have to say about the best way to cover religion? Do you agree or disagree? What do they say about stereotypes and pre-conceived notions? Both stories discuss how polarized the country is around the subject of religion and its relationship to secular society. What do you think are the reasons for it? Is it the role of the journalist to reduce the polarization? If not, why not? If so, how? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Imagine you have been asked to create a beat on your newspaper that would cover religion, the Christian right and other activist religious groups. Write a memo laying out how you view the beat and how you would cover it. Suggest five in-depth stories you’d like to do.