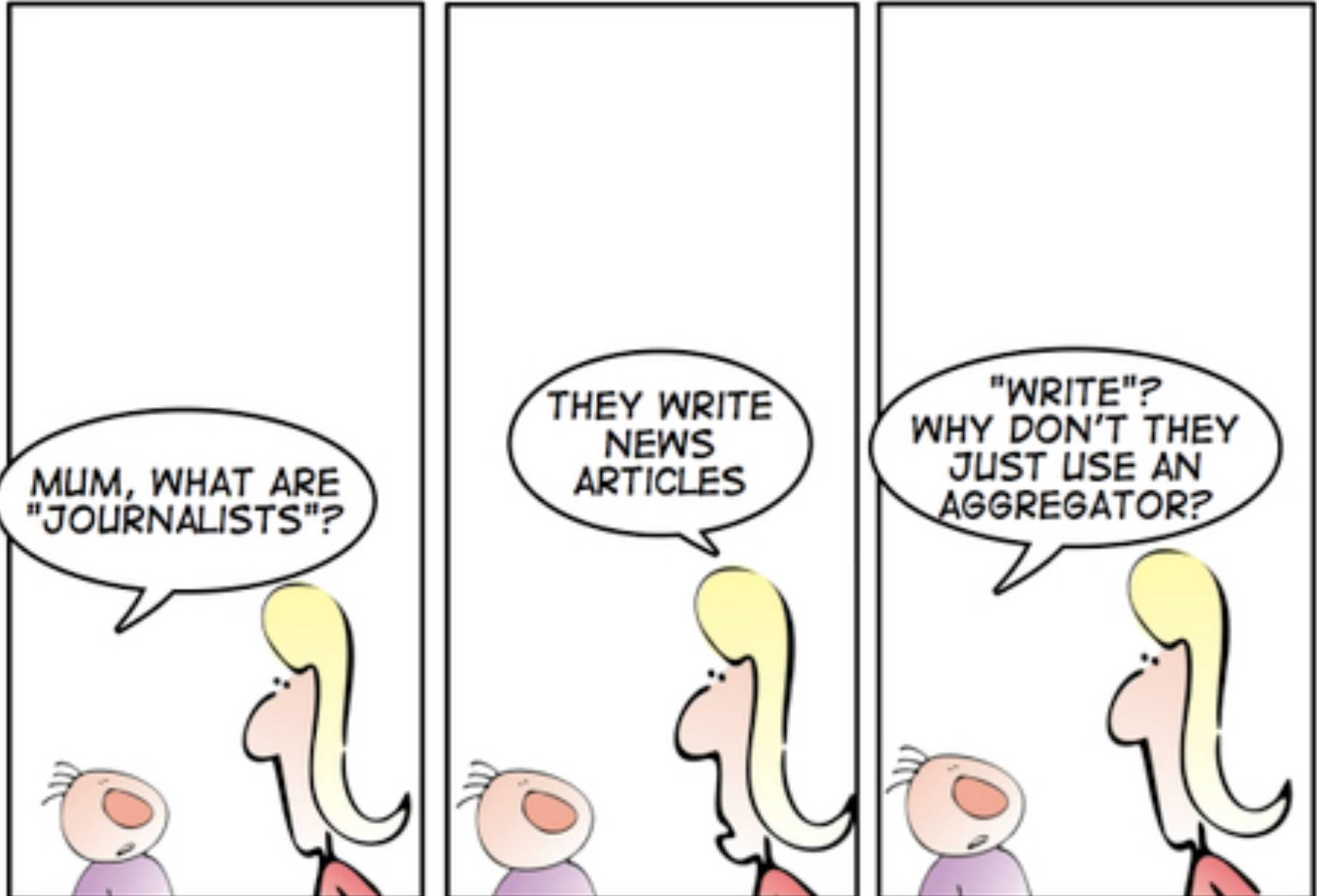


Journalists as 'Investigators' and 'Quality Media' Reputation

Alex Burns & Barry Saunders

Communications Policy Research Forum 2009

20th November 2009



MUM, WHAT ARE
"JOURNALISTS"?

THEY WRITE
NEWS
ARTICLES

"WRITE"?
WHY DON'T THEY
JUST USE AN
AGGREGATOR?

The Chronicle Review

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[Embedding Journalists in Academe](#) 🔑

As newspapers wither, can universities sustain serious news coverage and

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



AS THE NEW MILLENNIUM PROGRESSES, THE INCREASINGLY BELEAGUERED NEWS INDUSTRY BEGINS TO EMULATE THE **HUFFINGTON POST'S** PIONEERING BUSINESS MODEL.

THIS IS **GREAT!** WHY PAY **REPORTERS**--WHEN WE CAN JUST LINK TO **OTHER** PEOPLE'S REPORTING FOR **FREE?**



AFTER THE LAST REPORTER FILES THE LAST NEWS STORY, AN ARMY OF **CITIZEN** JOURNALISTS GAMELY TRY TO FILL THE VOID.

MY STUNNING EXPOSÉ OF NOISY GARBAGEMEN WHO WAKE ME UP AT SIX A.M. IS GONNA RIP THE **LID** OFF THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT!

WAIT TILL YOU SEE **MY** INVESTIGATIVE REPORT ON RANDOM SERVICE EMPLOYEES WHO ANNOY ME!

HAH! WHO NEEDS THE **M.S.M.** ANYWAY?



BUT EVENTUALLY, BLOGGERS ARE LEFT WITH ONLY **ONE** REMAINING FACT ABOUT WHICH TO OPINE.

HAVE YOU READ CHICKENPOTPIE'S CRITIQUE OF HIS SUPREME MAJESTY FRED THE FIRST'S TAKEDOWN OF FARTYBUTT'S POST ABOUT THE SOARING RAVIOLI BEAST'S ATTEMPT TO **RECONTEXTUALIZE** THE ONE REMAINING FACT?



BUT THEN THE BLOGS ARE SUPPLANTED BY **TWEETS**--WHICH ARE NOW LIMITED TO A **SINGLE** WORD, JUST TO KEEP THINGS **EXTRA** SIMPLE.



AND OF COURSE, **CARTOONS** HAVE LONG SINCE BEEN RENDERED OBSOLETE BY THOSE ENDLESSLY AMUSING **LOLCATS**.

HA, HA! THIS TYPO-PRONE CAT WANTS A CHEESEBURGER--WITH **PICKLES!**



TMM TmRrR©2009... www.thismodernworld.com

MEDIA 12 Nov 2009

The Future Of Journalism Needs Journalists

By Marni Cordell

The ABC's Mark Scott likes describing the media future as a 'town square', but is very quiet on how actual investigative journalism fits into that, writes Marni Cordell

It's official: ABC managing director Mark Scott is the darling of new media. He's been working on the image for some time, making regular appearances at media conferences and using every opportunity available to spruik his vision for the public broadcaster as a virtual "town square".

A year ago, I **identified this trend** and questioned whether it was the right direction for the ABC to be taking. Now that he has the support of a chorus of journalists and new media types it's even more urgent that we scrutinise this shift for what it is.



Tags: [media 140](#) [marni cordell](#)
[mark scott](#) [investigative journalism](#)
[abc open project](#) [abc](#)

‘Future of Journalism’

- No multiple ‘futures’: solutions to current problems
- Definitional ambiguities: which ‘journalism’?
- Romanticised ‘self-image’: institutions cannot be trusted
- Polarised: bloggers/social media versus journalists
- ‘Borrowed’ knowledge (Kellert) and ‘Bad’ theories (Ghoshal)
- Overlooks media history, past debates, profit imperative for adopting Citizen Journalists, and group and collective biases

Investigative Journalists

- Distinct from Citizen Journalists and some non-investigative journalists:
 - Journalistic code of ethics; proofing and sub-editorial skills
 - Knowledge of defamation laws and relevant legislation
 - Document analysis, source validation, interview skills
 - Sophistication in dealing with people and establishing rapport
 - Understanding the significance of contextualised information
- A cognitive dimension and sensitised to the truth
- Innate skills: courage and persistence
- Investigative skills that may come from another domain

Romanticised 'Self-Image'



'Quality Media'

- Media institutions which focus primarily on investigative journalism, serious reportage and op-ed commentary
- Provides reliable information for critical decision-makers
- Peer recognition and public impact of reportage
- Specific audience segmentation
- Operational and logistics support for reportage, and sources of finance to achieve this
- May differ in institutional form: publicly traded or private company, non-profit, philanthropic foundation

Research Questions

- Why would anyone pay for journalism?
- What differentiates investigative journalists from Citizen Journalists?
- What methods do investigative journalists use, and how do they use them *in situ*?
- How may investigative journalists affect the reputation of ‘quality media’ institutions?
- What support do ‘quality media’ institutions provide investigative journalists?

Study Methodologies

- A 'pilot' study that begins to gather an evidence base – methodology designed to be open-ended for later studies
- Custom database of 20 exemplar investigative journalists:
 - Investigative rather than non-investigative or op-ed columnist
 - Responsible for a major investigation
 - Demonstrable 'public impact' in past 5-7 years
 - Sampled book investigations, some are bloggers/magazine writers
- Equivalent to ARC's Futures Fellows cohort
- Recency, Survivorship and Cohort Selection biases; small sample size; reliance on secondary data sources

Data Coding for Cohort Analysis

- Year of Birth
- Disciplinary Training
- Investigative Methods and Analytical Techniques
- Major Investigations
- Career Pathway
- Funding Source
- Ancillary Markets and Spin-offs

- Company Data

Investigative Methods

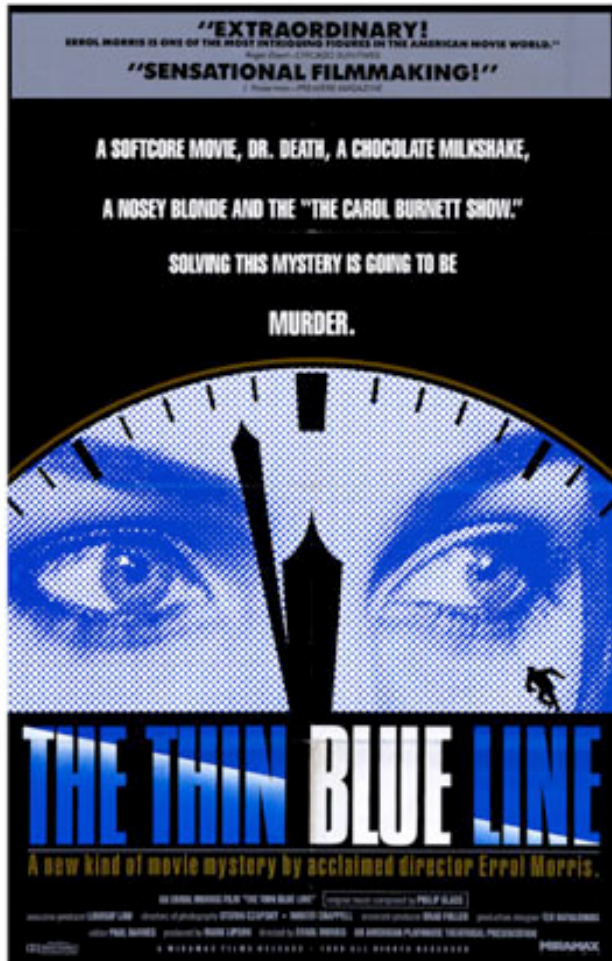
- **Open Source Intelligence:** publicly available sources
 - Exemplars: Steve Coll, Adam Curtis, George Packer, James B. Stewart, Lawrence Wright
- **M&A 'Due Diligence' and Funds Management:**
 - Exemplars: Bryan Burrough, William D. Cohan, Alice Schroeder, Gillian Tett
- **Forensic Accounting and Investment Banking:** data-mining, knowledge discovery, source validation, reconstructing the money flows
 - Exemplars: Neil Chenoweth, Bethany McLean

Seymour Hersh



- ‘Broke’ the My Lai massacre (1969) and widely reported details of Abu Ghraib (2004)
- Has a personal philosophy; perceives journalism as a collaborative process
- ‘Deep background’ interviews and protection of sources
- Mentor to other journalists

Errol Morris



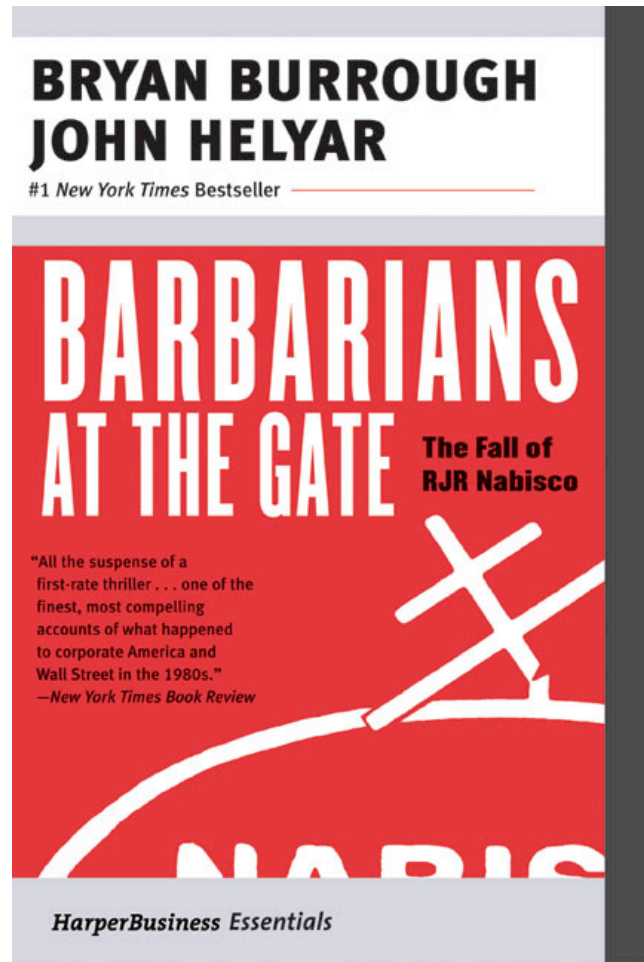
- Investigated Ed Gein and other serial killers
- *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) changed the outcome of a murder investigation
- 1989 recipient of MacArthur Foundation 'genius' grant
- Inventor of the Interrotron
- Director of *The Fog of War* (2004) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008)

Adam Curtis



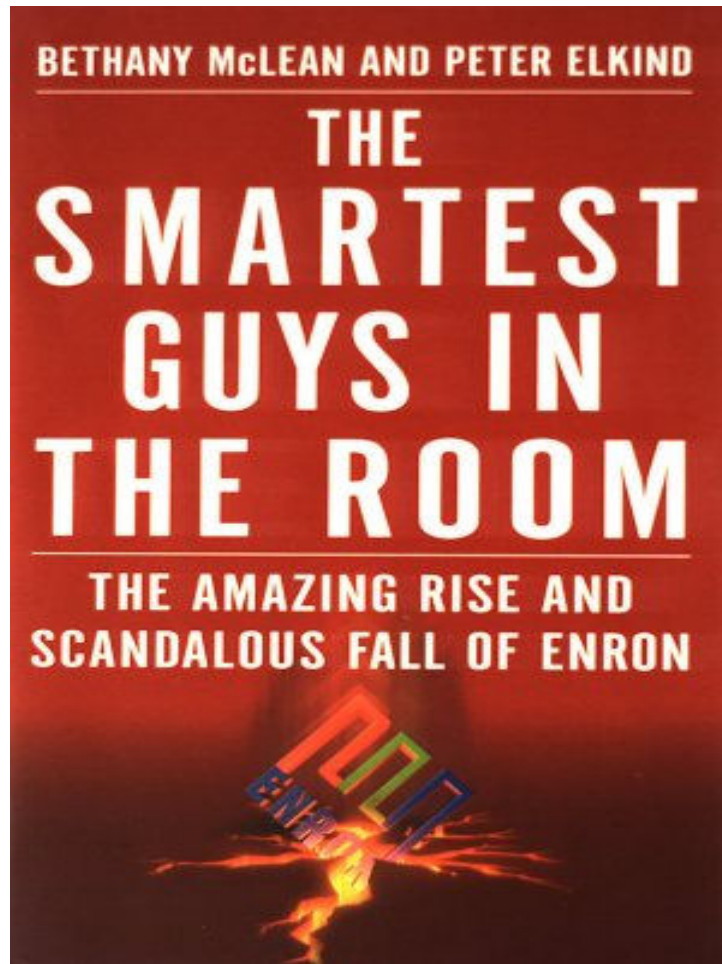
- BBC documentary filmmaker — archival sources and interviews
- Creator of *The Century of the Self* (2002), *The Power of Nightmares* (2004), and *The Trap* (2007)
- Legal issues mean that YouTube and Internet Archive make his documentaries available — no official BBC release yet

Bryan Burrough



- Coauthor with John Helyar of *Barbarians At The Gate* (1990) on the RJR Nabisco merger
- Defined M&A's public image for two decades, and influenced Bethany McLean and others
- Script consultant for Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* sequel *Money Never Sleeps* (2010)

Bethany McLean



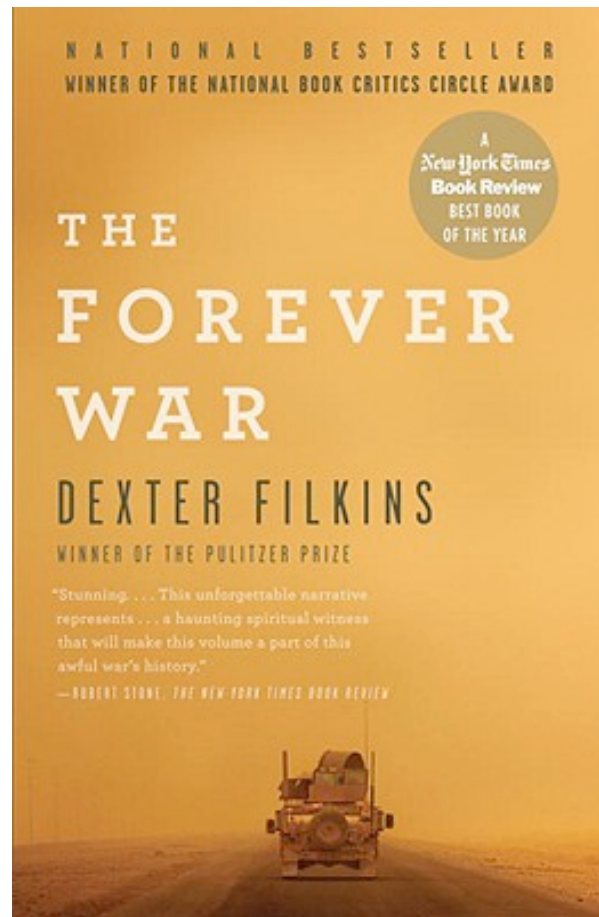
- McLean trained as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs
- *Fortune* cover-story 'Is Enron Overpriced?' (19th January 2006) credited with helping to 'break' the Enron scandal
- 2003 book adapted into a 2005 award-winning documentary

Neil Chenoweth



- Chenoweth is a 'forensic journalist' for *Australian Financial Review*
- Winner of multiple Walkley Awards
- 10 year investigation for *Virtual Murdoch* (2002) on Rupert Murdoch
- ASIC's shock loss in *ASIC v Rich* (2009) on 18th November 2009 means that Chenoweth may need to revise or update *Packer's Lunch* (2006) on the One.Tel affair

Dexter Filkins



- 10 years reportage on Afghanistan's Taliban, Iraq and September 11
- 'Personal costs' of investigations and 'fieldwork' reportage
- Value of 'long-form' journalism in the 'attention economy': more insight-per-page than blogs

Cohort Journalist Lessons

- Create a 'body of work' (James Bamford, Adam Curtis)
- 'Broke' stories early on in career (mid-thirties)
- Project-based investigations and career paths (mid-career may join a bureau, foundation or university)
- Long-term citation and network effects on stories (Abu Ghraib, Bear Stearns, 'insider trading')
- Methodological innovation in interview protocols and the cultivation/use of institutional sources
- Some journalists are very social media savvy, both as public bloggers and as distinct information sources

Philanthropic Foundation Model

The Nation Institute

DEDICATED TO A FREE AND INDEPENDENT PRESS

JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIPS | NATION INTERNSHIPS | EVENTS & READINGS | ANNUAL AWARDS

Journalism Fellows at The Nation Institute

The Journalism Fellowship Program was established in 1995 to enable prominent journalists to write on pressing and complex social issues free of the constraints of the mainstream media. We invite our fellows to contribute wherever possible to the independent media, thereby adding to the vitality and breadth of the alternative press. We also encourage our fellows to publish their work in a wide variety of magazines, newspapers and web-based resources, to pursue book projects and to appear in person as commentators, critics or analysts on radio and television formats. The current roster of Institute fellows includes Amy Alexander, Jonathan Schell, Gary Younge, Katha Pollitt, Jeremy Scahill, Pamela Newkirk and Chris Hedges, writing on fields ranging from labor to social justice to international affairs.

MacArthur Foundation's 2009 'Genius' Grants

Lynsey Addario »

Istanbul, Turkey
Age: 35

Photojournalist
creating a powerful
visual record of the
most pressing conflicts
and humanitarian
crises of the 21st
century.



Jerry Mitchell »

Clarion-Ledger
Jackson, MS
Age: 50

**Investigative
Reporter** ensuring
that unsolved murders
from the Civil Rights
era are finally
prosecuted by
uncovering largely
unknown details of
decades-old stories of thwarted justice.



Cohort Companies

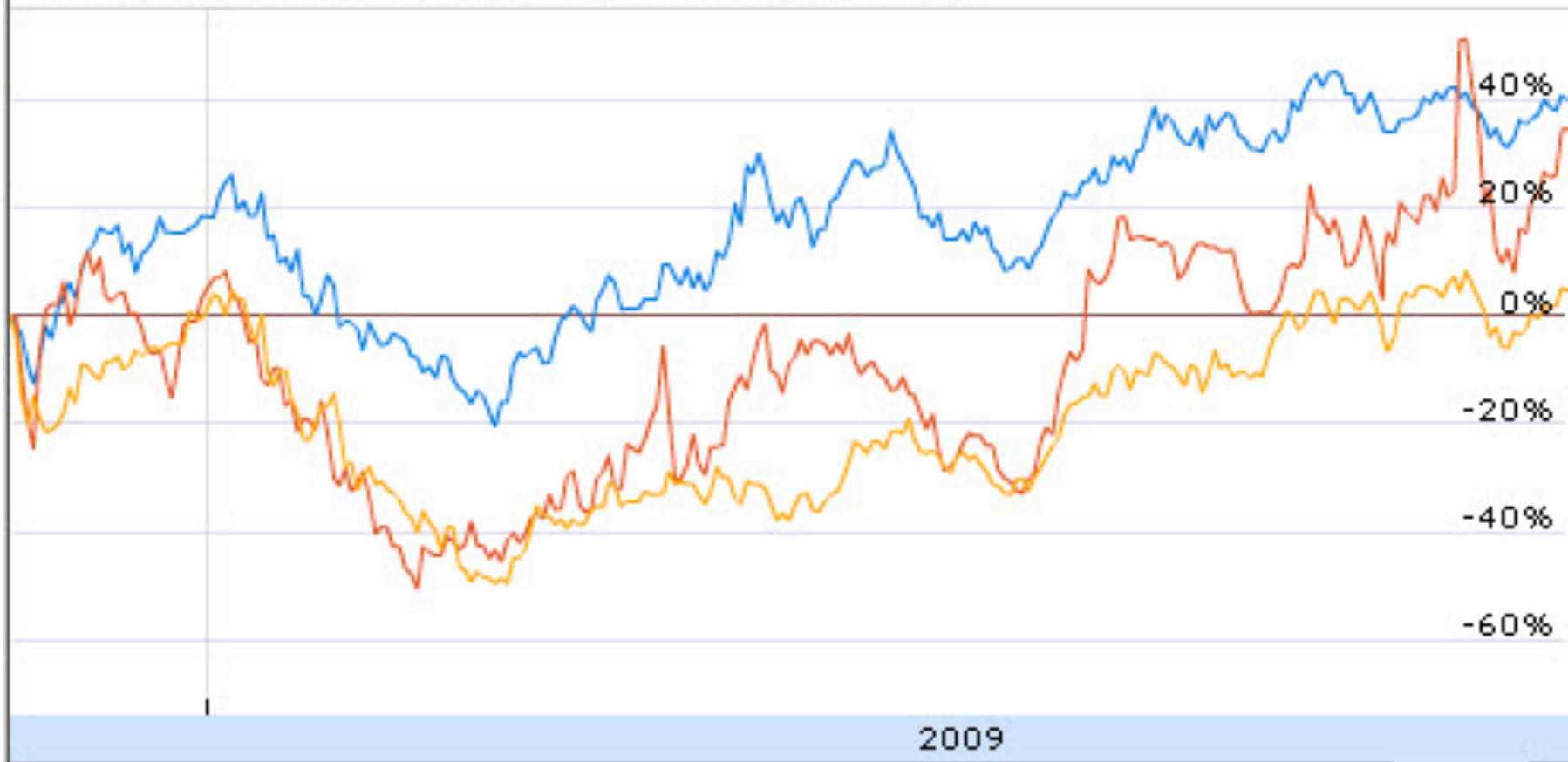
- *The Australian Financial Review* (Fairfax Media, public company)
- British Broadcasting Company (BBC, state owned entity)
- *The Los Angeles Times* (Tribune Company, in Chapter 11 bankruptcy)
- *The Nation* Institute (private/philanthropic institute)
- *The New York Times* (NYT, private company)
- *The New Yorker* (Conde Nast, private company)
- *The Observer* (Guardian Media Group, private company)
- *The Wall Street Journal* (News Corporation, public company)

Cohort Financial Performance

Zoom: [3m](#) [6m](#) [YTD](#) [1y](#) [5y](#) [10y](#) [Max](#)

Nov 18, 2008 - Nov 17, 2009

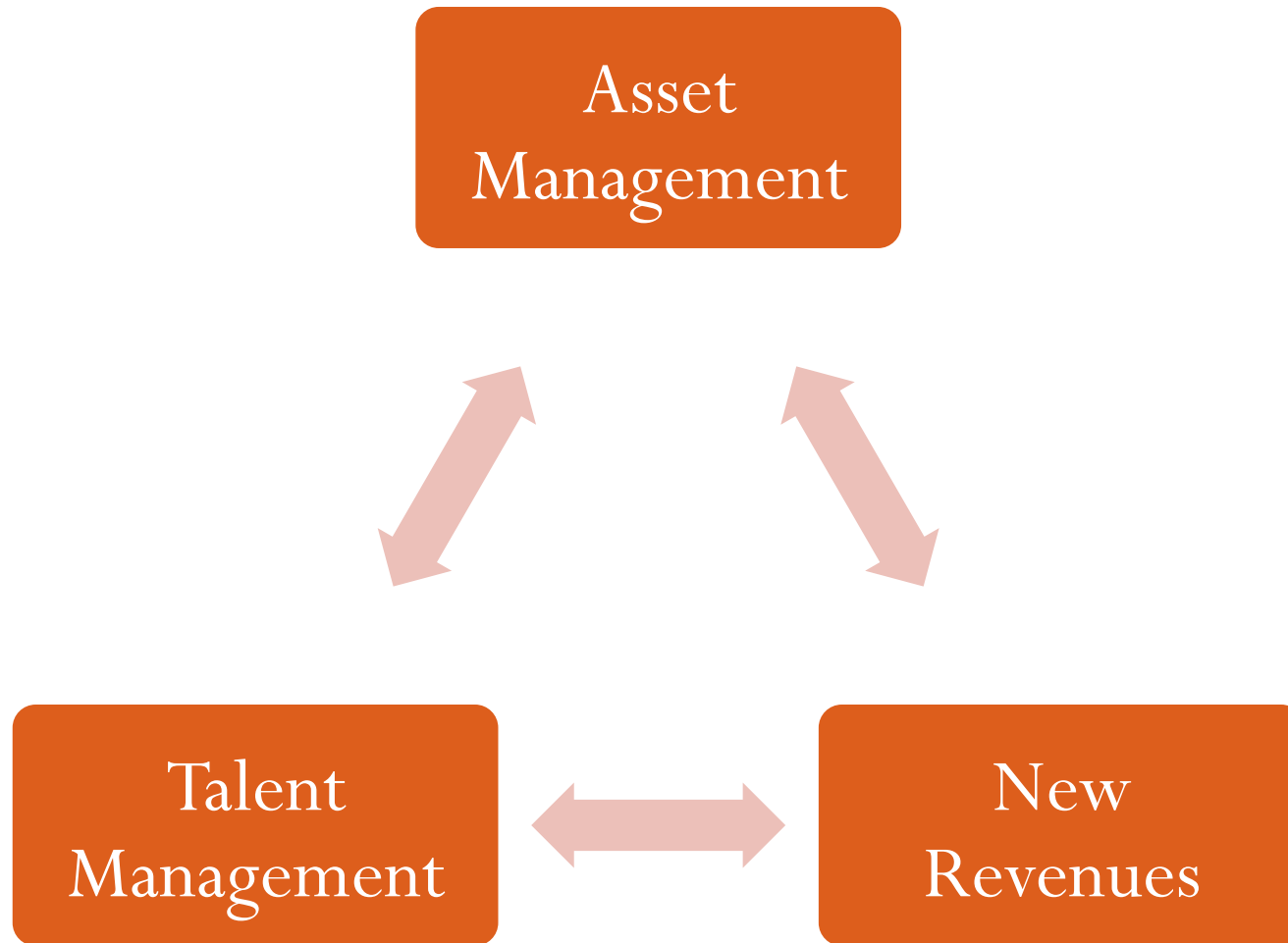
● **ASX:FXJ** +4.55% ● **NYSE:NYT** +34.50% ● **NWS** +39.85%



Cohort Lessons for ‘Quality Media’

- C-level executives allocate the institutional resources to finance the major investigations
- Middle managers ‘greenlight’ the investigations
- ‘Invisible’ infrastructure: editors, bureau chiefs, logistics, fact-checkers, legal support
- Many journalists are ‘boundary-spanners’ with their own social networks (local sources, other journalists, academics who have subject matter expertise)

'Out of the Crisis'?



New York Times 'Star System'

Business Columnists

THE MEDIA
EQUATION
David Carr
Monday



DEALBOOK
**Andrew Ross
Sorkin**
Tuesday



ECONOMIC SCENE
**David
Leonhardt**
Wednesday



STATE OF THE ART
David Pogue
Thursday



HIGH & LOW
FINANCE
Floyd Norris
Friday



TALKING BUSINESS
Joe Nocera
Saturday



YOUR MONEY
Ron Lieber
Saturday



FAIR GAME
**Gretchen
Morgenson**
Sunday

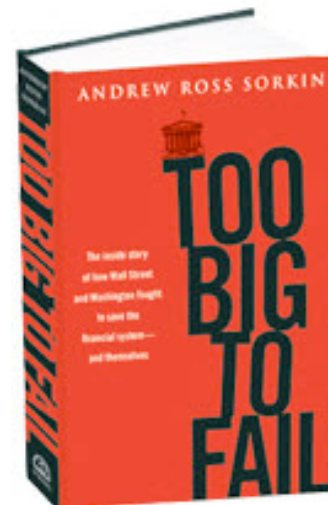


FLIPPED



Video Feature

A look at how private equity dealmakers can win while their companies, like Simmons Bedding, lose.



Bloomberg LP



Conclusion

- ‘Pilot’ project suggests an evidence-based approach to current debates about ‘future of journalism’
- The skills necessary for powerful investigative journalism are *rare* – and are drawn from *outside* journalism education
- Cohort insights on education, projects, methods and career pathways can be applied to researchers and other areas
- Media institutions offset the high costs that individuals would face to gain such specific knowledge

Thank You!

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@barrysaunders