

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

NEW MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON OLD SCHOOL POLITICS

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. KAMARCK: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brookings and thank you for showing up on this rainy morning. We have a great panel today and I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, E.J. Dionne, to get the panel started. But I just wanted to start with a couple comments about the paper that I did her with my colleague, Ashley Gabriele. Ashley, raise your hand. And we specifically did this because we wanted to have a Baby Boomer-Millennial team looking at this question. I am not the Millennial, but I suspect you already knew that, unfortunately.

So we looked through tons and tons and tons of data and we said, okay, let's use a new media form, the listicle, and let's try to figure out what we think are some of the most important trends going on in media today. And then we're going to hand it over to a group of much smarter people to my right to figure out and tell us what these trends mean.

But just a brief review. It's clear that print is a dinosaur, that print newspapers are a dinosaur. One of the things that is following from that, although I think this is up for debate, is that hard news appears to be in danger. We don't have nearly as many people collecting hard news as we used to. And I think we can have a good discussion about whether that matters or not or whether it's being filled in some other way.

Television and radio are still important, okay, although they are morphing. Ashley watches television on her computer. I wouldn't dream of watching television on my computer and so there we go.

A lot of news is now digital, but exactly how that happens is an interesting phenomenon. Social media allows news to go viral and it allows, of course, real news to go viral, a story from a newspaper, and it allows a lot of nonsense to go viral,

as well. And I think that's something worth talking about.

And last but not least, for the younger generation, much to the surprise I think of many of us as it began to happen, news is delivered through comedy. News is delivered through comedy and satire, et cetera, which is something that was definitely not the case when their parents sat down to watch the CBS "Evening News with Dan Rather." Okay. That was anything but funny.

So those are some of the things we picked out. You've got the graphs and the charts in front of you. Those are some of the things we picked out.

We admit in this paper that we don't really know what it means. And I can tell you that every big technological change, if you go back historically, people tend to actually get it wrong. So when the telephone came into being in the last century, there were lots of newspaper articles about how this was going to reduce parental control over their daughters because their daughters would be able to have romantic conversations on the telephone that their parents couldn't hear. This was literally the big concern of the telephone.

When radio came in nobody saw it as a broadcast mechanism. As a matter of fact, it was a surprise the first time a symphony was actually broadcast to people. They saw radio as a great way to do ship-to-ship communication and that was a really big deal, ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communication. That's what people thought this new technology would be primarily about.

So I introduce those examples and there's many, many more to say how hard it is to actually figure out at the dawn of a new technological age what it's going to mean. But I have great faith that if anyone can, it is the gentlemen and lady to my right. And so I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, a senior fellow here in Governance Studies and a columnist for The Washington Post, E.J. Dionne.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you so much. I was going to begin with 17 reasons why Elaine Kamarck is a great friend and great scholar or 23 reasons why this is an awesome panel, and I'm really grateful to you. As you may know, 23 is a prime number, right? All listicles must be in prime numbers, which somebody might explain why on this panel. Maybe Emma understands this.

I'm going to introduce this great panel here and ask a handful of questions. I'll introduce them in the order they're going to speak. We'll start with Emma and work up the panel toward me.

Emma Green is the managing editor of The Atlantic, where she also writes about topics related to faith, religion, and culture. If you don't read Emma, you should read Emma. I told her today her task in life is to explain to people who fundamentally disagree with each other and often hate each other to each other, which sometimes has a lot of blowback from both sides.

She began her career in journalism with The Atlantic's fellowship program in 2012. She's been there ever since. I am proud to say she is a Georgetown grad. She majored in government as a George F. Baker scholar.

Howard Fineman is the global editorial director -- now that's a title, the global editorial director.

MR. FINEMAN: It's a heck of a title, yeah.

MR. DIONNE: I think his only promotion is interplanetary editorial director at the Huffington Post Group. (Laughter) Before he moved to Huffington Post in October 2010, he was Newsweek's chief political correspondent, senior editor, deputy Washington bureau chief. He got his start in journalism at a great newspaper, the Louisville Courier-Journal.

He's an award-winning writer, also an NBC News analyst. You see him

a lot on MSNBC, often with Chris Matthews. And Chris, bless him, actually does let Howard talk sometimes. (Laughter) Also on "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell" and "The Rachel Maddow Show." And he was for listicles before listicles were cool. (Laughter) He wrote a book, a wonderful book, called "The Thirteen American Arguments: Enduring Debates That Define and Inspire Our Country." And Howard explained to me that this book has been picked up widely by college courses because guess how many semesters -- how many classes in a semester has to teach.

MR. FINEMAN: Weeks in a semester.

MR. DIONNE: It's 13, but if it's 14, his introduction serves just fine.

(Laughter)

And Ken Bode is someone I have admired for such a long time. This is a great title, too. He is the Eugene S. Pulliam Distinguished -- anybody who's old enough to remember Gene Pulliam loves the irony of this, but the Eugene S. Pulliam Distinguished Visiting Professor of Journalism at DePauw University. That's what he used to be. He's now at Northwestern. He has served as an award-winning political analyst for PBS, CNN, NBC, covered every presidential campaign and administration since 1976. He's one of the smartest people in the country on the presidency.

Ken was the host of the longest-running news program on PBS from 1994 to 1999, Washington Week in Review. He was anchor or moderator or commentator for WETA's coverage of congressional hearings and other special events. And in addition to his time at DePauw, he was also dean of Northwestern School of Journalism, one of the great journalism schools, truly great journalism schools in the country.

So I'm going to pose four questions that come straight out of Elaine's paper. Is print a dinosaur? Does it mean that I'm getting old that I get four print

newspapers on my doorstep? Don't answer that question. (Laughter) Is hard news actually in danger? How important is Facebook? Look at the little number on Facebook in this paper. And lastly, will news as comedy decline with Stewart and Colbert moving?

I gave a broad list of questions so that our respondents can really say anything they want about Elaine's paper. And I start with Emma Green. Thank you, Emma.

MS. GREEN: Thank you so much for having me. So as the token Millennial on the panel I have an obligation to speak to the anti-Chicken Little point of view. So the point of view that the sky is not, in fact, falling, that democracy is not, in fact, in jeopardy, and that young people do care about the news. I think there were a few aspects of this paper in particular that struck me and caught my interest.

The first was the actual format of the paper. There's sort of a joke or a sly nod within the paper that this paper had to be structured in the way of today's Internet, so in the listicle format, which I appreciated because, you know, that's speaking my language, apparently so. But I think actually it speaks to an irony of the Internet, which is there are all of these patterns and idioms that have emerged in digital journalism, and it's easy to look at those and engage with them as such. So to say news is being reduced to a list format, news is being reduced to bars and graphs, and sort of bemoan the state of the traditional form of print journalism, I think the greater indication here is first something that was mentioned in the introduction as the fact that we're in a time of great and very fast-paced evolution of news, especially as it's presented online. This is most true in terms of those idioms, which tend to turn over very quickly.

The listicle, I hate to break it to you, actually is a little bit passé at this point. (Laughter) You missed the ship by, I don't know, eight or nine months.

MR. DIONNE: We knew it. We knew it, you know.

MS. GREEN: Sorry. I'm sorry. But I think it speaks first to sort of the short time limit on some of these idioms, so, you know, certain styles of headlines or certain memes that you'll see that spring up over time in cyclical fashion online.

And the second is that young people in particular, where they're seeking out their news, and this is highlighted in the paper, their platform agnostic. So there isn't a lot of romance about print news as such, so holding on to the piece of paper, although I do know some throwback Millennials who still love sniffing their *New York Times* over breakfast.

MR. FINEMAN: They're all living in Brooklyn, I'm sure. (Laughter)

MS. GREEN: It's true. It's true. But, you know, I think platform agnosticism is an important part of the story, which is to me it matters less what media information is traveling through and more the quality of that information, how it's being sourced and reported, by what types of organizations, and then also how a filtering process is happening. So, for example, on social media there's this worry about the putative citizen journalist and the fact that there won't be a filtering or a separating process between those stories that are reported by "citizen journalists" and those that come from traditional news outlets. I think those are legitimate concerns, but I don't think it solves the fact that platforms shifting should be a cause for concern.

I do think, too, that even though television has been defended as a sort of longstanding and defensible form of media that is still sort of safe from the larger distractions in the market, the most interesting graph to me is on page 10 of the packet, which shows the age breakdown of preferences for news platform conception. And you'll see that people who are 18 to 29 basically don't watch television news at all. All the people who are watching Hannity and O'Reilly are basically old people. Oh, sorry, I'm not supposed to use that kind of term. (Laughter) Whoops. It just slipped out.

(Laughter)

MR. FINEMAN: Thank you for skipping *Hardball* there. (Laughter)

MS. GREEN: Right. And, you know, the other aspect --

MR. DIONNE: Slightly diplomatic.

MR. FINEMAN: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

MS. GREEN: The other aspect here, too, which Pew has done research on, as well, is the racial demographics, which add on to the age demographics here. So in terms of racial breakdown it's basically older, white people, so people over 50 who are white, who consume mostly Fox News-style cable television, but also cable television across the board. That is not what our country is shaping up to be. And in certain ways you could count this in the column of pro democracy, so the fact that they're changing ways that different demographics who are going to be the more typical demographics of sort of generations, 20 years, 30 years down the line, they're consuming news in sort of new and different ways and those are, honestly, the forms that are on ascendency, so forms of digital journalism.

I think the point about news as comedy is also fascinating just in the sense that I think there's long been different formats of sort of understanding and engaging with news content through more analytical formats. You could even say that most talk shows and cable television are a form of entertainment, they're just not as funny as Stephen Colbert. (Laughter) And so I don't find it to be in itself a point of concern that Millennials are finding other ways to engage with current events through comedy as sort of a lower format. I don't find that to be sort of a lower or lesser format by default.

And I think, finally, that sort of leads to another interesting substance trend within the industry overall, which is a slide between an old category, an old division

between hard news, which is something that was mentioned in the introduction, versus opinion journalism. So in the days of yore, in some of our esteemed institutions still today, there's a hard line that's drawn between those stories that are reported as fact or a fact and those stories that are reported as opinion. Obviously, those walls exist for important reasons, which is that a journalist's duty, in certain ways, is to report news and facts without trying to bias it in certain ways. Obviously, we all know that that's not true, that there are slants and tilts to every story that's reported if only by the fact that journalists make selection choices about what they choose to report on and how they choose to present stories.

But I would say that in digital, in particular, which is, again, on the rise, has a lot of investment going on, is not necessarily in all places experiencing the same kind of contraction as traditional print news outlets. There's a slide that's going on where we're in a golden age of opinion journalism and there's greater analysis in a sort of more interesting gray zone that's happening in the way that's news is presented. And I think that speaks both to a sort of engagement and discourse type among Millennials, but also is an interesting for the dark future ahead.

I certainly would not sit here and suggest that I hold the key to the future of news. If I did, I would be making millions of dollars. But I do think that it's an interesting set of trend lines and one that ultimately shouldn't prompt outrage or sort of dismay, but rather is something to engage with and is a really interesting, creative challenge in the business.

MR. DIONNE: I always feel good about the future of news when Emma is on a panel. Thank you so much, Emma.

MS. GREEN: Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: By the way, I do think that it's fascinating that you called

attention to news preference by age, that when you look at the 18 to 29s it's really striking that The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Economist, et cetera, I'm very interested in what the et cetera is on The Economist, but that suggests some very old habits among very young people. But we're going to --

MR. FINEMAN: Can I ask a quick factual question? Where it says "news blogs," what are you referring to there?

MS. KAMARCK: I think those are all sorts of specialty news blogs that people answered in the question.

MR. DIONNE: It's your reporting, Howard.

MR. FINEMAN: No, no. But, no, are you talking about news websites, like The Huffington Post, or what are you talking about there?

MS. KAMARCK: You would have to ask the International Business Times.

MR. FINEMAN: Well, it's in here. I just wondered what it means because I don't see, for example, TheAtlantic.com listed or, you know, news websites.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah.

MR. FINEMAN: Is that what that refers to?

MS. GREEN: I assume that *The Atlantic* would be listed under *New Yorker*, et cetera, so.

MR. FINEMAN: Well, no. But I don't know, does the list include the websites of the publications?

MS. GREEN: Yes.

MR. FINEMAN: Yes?

MS. KAMARCK: Yes, yes, yes. Uh-huh, yes.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay.

MR. DIONNE: Let me Google -- go on and I'm going to try to Google that to see if I can get the answer to that, proving the value of these things, which I actually want to talk about.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay.

MR. DIONNE: Go ahead.

MR. FINEMAN: Well, let's see, where to begin. I'll just take E.J.'s questions.

Is print dead? No. Print is just not on paper. Print is very much alive, words are very alive. And a site like The Huffington Post, which is now one of the largest in the world, we have -- just for a second, if I can explain, The Huffington Post didn't exist 10 years ago. We now have 15 editions around the world, we have about 250 million unique visitors a month around the world. We publish in 10 languages. We have one of the biggest bureaus in Washington and I think one of the best. We have beat reporters of the old-fashioned kind. We have a full-time labor reporter here, which I think *The New York Times* does not at this point.

MR. DIONNE: No, they got one again.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay. After Steven Greenhouse, they finally got one again, okay. We've won a Pulitzer Prize for our reporting on wounded warriors. I would put our bureau up against any in town at this point. And none of that is published on a piece of paper. It's all on the website.

I think there are other news organizations that are either web native or, as some people like to call it, social native who are doing the same thing. Journalism is not dead. It's just transforming itself and I'm generally optimistic.

We're about to open in Mexico. We're opening in -- you know, we're all around the world. And my challenge with that ridiculous title I have is to try to figure out

what synergies and cross-fertilization we can get around the planet. We're one of the few truly planetary news-gathering organizations in the world right now. And as I said, we didn't exist 10 years ago.

The same is true of something like Vice, the same is true of BuzzFeed. There's all kinds of ferment and excitement and growth going on in the non-dead tree portion of print. (Laughter) So print is fine.

And yes, it's a golden age of opinionizing and I agree that the movement of deconstructionism, which you know originally began in literature -- in France, of course, where all pernicious trends begin (Laughter) -- has now been extended to journalism and usefully and rightly so. If you know your history, you know that journalism in America began without the thought that anything could be objective in the true, scientific sense. Most newspapers were organs of partisanship and of political parties. If you look at The Washington Post it says in the editorial page at the top, "An independent newspaper." Why does it say that? Because most newspapers until that point were organs of political parties. So in many senses, we're just reinventing the wheel in the golden age of opinion that Emma refers to.

But real reporting, real digging is happening and it's worthwhile because one of the few ways to break through the fog on the Internet is with real reporting. Real reporting is actually -- can be rewarding. So all of that's positive.

A couple other positive things. Distribution by viral means, that is peer-to-peer, person-to-person, referral is the way most things are being distributed right now. That can be very, very powerful and very positive. I'll give you an example from The Huffington Post.

We happened upon an impassioned six-minute speech by Chris Christie in New Hampshire the other week about the death of a friend of his due to his addiction

to painkillers. This was fertile ground in New Hampshire, where the number one issue is heroin addiction, believe it or not. It's the number one issue in New Hampshire. This video by Chris Christie, which we captured in a very nice way with a really good videographer and our good reporter up there, has, at this point, had almost 9 million views, which is very powerful. And it was by accident, strictly by accident. So that's the positive power of viral.

As to the positive power of democratization of reporting, I would point you no further than Ferguson, Missouri. Had it not been for people with these, the most powerful journalistic tool on the planet, that wouldn't have been distributed and known. The whole Black Lives Matter movement, the whole new focus on the police is all very positive.

On the negative side, video which can be very positively powerful can also be very deceiving. Everything at The Huffington Post, and I'm sure at The Atlantic is the same, has got to have video attached. You can't go viral, you can't distribute the news unless you've got video. Now, that can be great if it's good video, but if it's a snippet that distorts reality you've got big, big problems, and that happens all the time, as well.

And more fundamentally than that, the way news is distributed now can be very isolating and stovepiping, meaning that people get in a reality that is a cocoon of their own devising. They don't need a dictator to tell them what reality is. You don't need Adolph Hitler standing in front a newsreel. People create their own realities and live in them. And that concerns me because in the book I wrote about the virtues of argument in America, how arguing defines who we are as a people and makes us creative, I realized a little later after writing that rather upbeat book that if the dark matter of a shared reality isn't there, the universe falls apart. And what I worry about is that people

are getting so tied up and immersed in a specific reality, all encompassing -- don't forget, in the days of a print newspaper you could put the newspaper down and look at the rest of reality around you. Okay, I'm worried about this thing.

Now, some of you subscribe to The New York Times you got with your Sunday paper their virtual reality box where you put your iPhone in it and you immerse yourself in the reality they want. This is very positively powerful, but also potentially dangerous. So that's the big thing I worry about with where we're heading, but in terms of digging for news, I think we're on the right track.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Howard. I am very grateful, in particular, that you made the point that the history of American journalism begins with very partisan newspapers. And if you go around the country there are lots of newspapers with Democrat or Republican in the title. My favorite is there are lots of newspapers with Whig in the title. (Laughter) You may think that the Whig Party is dead, but if you go to your device and put in Whig.com you will actually get the Herald Whig, which is a still-thriving newspaper in Quincy, Illinois. There's another Whig paper in Cecil County, Maryland. There are a few others.

And so Howard's point, I think, is very important that part of what's happening is a return to where we started. And I think part of the question is how can we thrive with a more opinionated journalism, but, at the same time, preserve a journalism of fact and not simply assertion or verification, as Kovach and Rosenstiel call it.

Ken, I am so grateful you are here. I've been thinking about the new media stuff in relation to your life. There was a time, for example, when you were the only person in the country other than Elaine that understood the new Democratic Party rules after 1971, '72. (Laughter) And I can only imagine what you could have done with all of these resources to explain all of this to people. But I just toss that out to you, but I'd

love you to respond to Elaine's paper. And I would love you to reflect on what you might have done that you couldn't do back then with what's available now.

MR. BODE: Well, you know, first of all, I'm glad Howard brought his box along with him because I got that box with my Sunday subscription to *The New York Times* and I said to myself no, no, no, no. (Laughter) I'm not putting my cellphone in there, it might disappear. (Laughter)

But I don't know really quite how to do that, E.J. The technology we have now is so mysterious to me even now that I'm sure I -- but maybe I was younger then. Maybe I could have gotten a grip on it then, back in the late '60s, early '70s. I'm not sure.

But part of the question you asked is, is hard news in danger? And I would like the panel at some point to turn a little bit toward what we're probably spending much of our time thinking about these days, which is the 2016 presidential race. The primaries begin in a couple of months and the debates are going on now as the campaigns are going on now. And I'm wondering whether or not -- how these new technologies are affecting what's being reported and how the candidates are campaigning.

For example, there was a study that was done up at Harvard about the 2012 presidential race in which the author of the study, who was a CNN correspondent, Peter Hamby, wrote a long paper on "Did Twitter Kill the Boys on the Bus? The 2012 Presidential Campaign." And his conclusion, I think, having read through that paper a couple of times, is that, yes, if it didn't kill the boys on the bus, it seriously endangered them because these new technologies, particularly the ones that are being used by the reporters covering the campaigns, are really polluting what gets put into the national conversation about these candidates, their policies, their backgrounds, their character,

what have you.

And one of the other things that I kind of read back over again before coming here was Matt Bai's book, *The Week Politics Went Tabloid*, in which he says there's an unbridgeable divide between people like E.J. and I and Howard, who covered these campaigns, that candidates don't want us around anymore. They simply don't want to talk to us because they think that we're an endangerment to their ability to get their message out, their ability to run a good campaign, and so forth.

Now, my experience has always been that you don't really report on presidential candidates until you really get to know them. And I don't mean get to know them necessarily personally, but that really does help to do, but so that you get to know them from good reporting by everybody or others who are covering these campaigns. Now, we used to have a period in presidential politics coverage that we referred to as the profile period. It was the earliest time of the campaigns when reporters went out to do the research that they needed to do about the backgrounds of the candidates, their families, their educations, their policies, how they had behaved in the jobs in politics that they've had before. Obviously, that's going to be tough this year because you've got three leading Republicans how have no experience in politics to speak of and so it's a little harder to do. But we're now turning a little bit late to some of the examination of the backgrounds of the candidates, what they've said, what they've done, and so forth.

And I think that what I'm wondering -- because I don't Twitter, I don't Tweet I guess is what you say. (Laughter) I never signed up for it. I was encouraged when I wrote a column for the Indianapolis Star for 10 years, I was the only liberal on the very conservative Indianapolis Star editorial page. They said they wanted me to sign up for Facebook and Twitter so that the readers could have more direct access to me and I could communicate to the readers. Well, they always ran my column with my email

address right at the bottom under my name and my picture, and so there was no doubt, nothing between the readers and me that was keeping them away. And so, you know, I was called a Communist weekly by the very conservative Tea Party crowd in Indianapolis.

MR. DIONNE: See, on Twitter you could be called a Communist daily, that's the difference. (Laughter)

MR. BODE: Hourly.

MR. DIONNE: Hourly, exactly.

MR. BODE: But I'm wondering, since I don't Twitter, I know Howard does Twitter, I suppose Emma does, too, you Twitter, too, I'd like to have them tell me why they think it's a good deal because there's every evidence, I talked to a couple editors who say Twitter gets in the way of real reporting. I guess, Howard, you're an editor, too, aren't you, on this thing?

MR. FINEMAN: Allegedly, yes.

MR. BODE: Allegedly, okay. So I'm going to leave it at that and we'll go on.

MR. DIONNE: I Tweet, also, and I've gotten to love Twitter. My kids make fun of me for that, rightly so in a way. But what I find, Twitter is partly a self-promotional device and that it gets whatever you or someone else writes out to a whole bunch of people who happen to follow you, who can then send it to other people. But I like to use it a lot to send out other people's pieces that I really like, like Emma's recently. And where if I read something I think is really good and I've got my people out there, they read it and if they like it, they send it to other people. So to me, it can be very useful. It's also replaced spin rooms after debates. I think functionally that's one of its roles. But Twitter is actually kind of old technology now, but we can get into that. (Laughter)

There are three questions I have and because I want to get to the audience I'll put them all on the table and you can either answer all three, skip all three, or do some mix.

MR. BODE: Excuse me, E.J. I guess you answered the second question yourself, right, that you are not a dinosaur?

MR. DIONNE: What?

MR. BODE: You're not a dinosaur.

MR. DIONNE: No, but I sure look like one. (Laughter) But thank you for that.

So the first question is the difference these things make. I mean, more and more people consume news, including me -- I mean, I am nearsighted so the phones are great for me because I just take off my glasses and I can read a long piece without any trouble and you can read long as well as short pieces. I have more media on this through my apps than I ever had available to me before, including media from around the world. You know, I'd like to talk about the phone.

I would like somebody to deal with the Facebook question because Facebook really has become a kind of editor and Google, as well. And I'd just like somebody to talk about that.

The third is something that both Ken and Howard alluded to, which is the -- well, let me just put in concrete terms. Ben Carson is engaged in a fascinating operation right now where he is essentially saying -- and I heard you talk about this the other night, Howard -- that forget what they're saying, listen to my version of reality. You know, now this goes back. Republicans started attacking the liberal media under Nixon and had some real success at it. Pat Buchanan's very eloquent on the success of this campaign against liberal media. Then as you pointed out the other night, the Clintons

were very successful in pushing back on the media in '92. You know, what does that tell us?

So the phone, Facebook and Google, and what can we learn from the current kerfuffle over Ben Caron's bio?

MS. GREEN: So in an elegant way I think all three of your questions actually connect really well together.

MR. DIONNE: That's why I love Emma. (Laughter)

MS. GREEN: So, you know, on the question of Twitter, just as sort of a segue into Facebook, the best formulation that I ever heard for the role that Twitter plays in media is that it's basically a trade publication for journalists. And I think to a degree this is true. You don't put something on Twitter in order to get some sort of viral amplification to make it sort of spread like wildfire across the Internet. You do it, first of all, to share it with your peers, so people who may very well capture what you're writing about and either incorporate it into their own writing or link it out. And then, also, just to sort of watch what the rest of the media is doing.

And I think, you know, insofar as Twitter is a distraction, anything is a distraction. Reporters have been a distracted for as long as reporters have existed. But I think it's a very useful tool. I use it all the time for sourcing story ideas, just to sort of watch and keep informed on what's going on within my beat, but also within media more broadly.

But I think in terms of the broader news and how all of these platform questions are relevant here, mobile is very much connected, the rise of mobile is very much connected to the rise of Facebook. They go hand in hand. And this is largely about sort of the portals through which people access information and engage when they're on their phone. So phones are app-based, so you're often going through these

doors that are seeking to be sort of your home environment for experiencing a lot of different things.

Facebook has cultivated an identity of not only being a space for people to share their cat pictures and their wedding pictures and whatever, but also to be a news platform. And this is actually good business sense for Facebook. They have a vested interest in making sure that their app, their home environment doesn't turn into a junkyard. So they have actually promoted news organizations and quality outlets that do really good reported work and they do that actually, technically, algorithmically. They make it so that stories from certain publications, mostly legacy media brands, pop up more frequently in the Facebook algorithm, sort of the flow of the newsfeed.

But this is also changing and the train is always shifting, so you, if you're interested, may go and read after this about the reported changes in traffic or readership that outlets will sometimes experience because of sort of unknown changes in the algorithm on Facebook. Some outlets, particularly newer websites, tend to get a huge portion of their readership from Facebook.

And there's an additional question that's now happening, which is do readers even need to come back to a website at all? So Facebook rolled out earlier this fall a feature called Instant Article. Some of you may have seen this on your phones, where when you click on an article, when you see it in your Facebook newsfeed, it instantly loads. You don't actually exit Facebook as the app and go back to a web browser, and so basically you're staying within that home environment.

In order to lure -- "lure" is maybe the wrong word because it imputes some sort of malicious intention, but in order to get legacy media outlets to participate and then send articles Facebook did a lot with the branding and the experience to make sure that it was something that they felt would be good for their readership and for their

brand over time. But it does raise an existential question, which is if there's no reason for anyone to go to The New York Times, what does that mean for the future of The New York Times? How can you sustain, for example, ad models that are built off of browser-based sort of serving of ads against articles? And what does that mean in general for your mobile advertising model, which is something that is a big question raised by people using phones?

MR. DIONNE: Could I just say something real quick? Twitter can contribute to humility. You know, you mentioned dog and cat pictures. One day, one of our daughters took a beautiful picture of our dog and so I couldn't resist and I Tweeted it out and got a lot of love for that dog picture. Then I Tweeted out my column. The dog beat me about 10-to-1. (Laughter) And so that was a good lesson.

Howard.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay, but when I worked for the Louisville Courier-Journal, whatever I wrote and reported was printed on paper and distributed by trucks powered by gasoline that drove all around Kentucky and Southern Indiana and put the newspapers in aluminum tubes at the end of driveways. I didn't care at all about the means of distribution of my work. I just wrote the stuff, gave it to the copy desk, this vast physical machinery that I didn't care a whit about took care of the rest. I occasionally noticed the vast fleet of green and white trucks that said Courier-Journal on the side leaving 6th and Broadway in downtown Louisville at 2:00 in the morning to distribute the paper, but otherwise I didn't care.

At The Huffington Post and in the world I inhabit now, which is the same as Emma's, distribution is a huge part of what everybody cares about. And there are two ways to distribute things digitally in the news: either through search or through social.

Search is Google. And when I first came to The Huffington Post, we had

a guy at The Huffington Post whose entire mission in life was to figure out what his opposite number at Google was doing to monkey with the search algorithm of Google. And it was kind of like "Spy vs. Spy" in the old Mad Magazine. (Laughter) You know, what new wrinkle of search were they developing at Google that Huffington Post needed to match?

Now, you know, Huffington Post first huge traffic with one of the all-time great search headlines, and here's what it was: What time is the Super Bowl?

(Laughter) And if I ever write a book about new media, that may be the title. (Laughter)

Okay, so that was search. And Huff Post arguably was the first big search native, if you will, website. But then Facebook came along and peer-to-peer and social referral came along. And suddenly, the way you distributed news was not by having people search for something and end up on your site, but by referring to their friends and other people that they knew things that they thought interesting. The power of that is beyond exponential.

Google still controls search for the most part, although Bing is around. Facebook basically is the big dog in social, as Emma was saying. And now everybody wants to know how is Facebook changing its algorithm? Because we all live and die with Facebook to a large degree. And I think one of the things that they've done is put video higher up in their hierarchy of what they deem elevatable and beneficial to their site. And that's one reason why in mobile and on desktop video has become as important as it has.

As for the instant articles that Facebook is doing, one might argue that people who used to thrive by aggregation in the old days -- and by "the old days" in this world I'm talking 10 years or even 5 years ago -- have no right to complain if essentially Facebook is doing the same thing with instant articles, if you use. They're just aggregating on top of aggregating, one might argue.

So how we deal with these things is really crucial. And Google and Facebook, we live in their universe to a large degree. And how we deal with all of that is very much a part of both the positive and the troublesome aspects of the world we're now all living in.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I'd love, Ken, for you to deal, if you could, with the Ben Carson question because there's parts of this that seem very familiar to me, and I go back with you on a lot of this. I also realize the highest paying job in journalism will soon be managing editor for algorithms. (Laughter)

MR. FINEMAN: Yes, whatever an algorithm actually is. (Laughter)

MR. BODE: Well, I think it's very concerning about the Ben Carson and Donald Trump and Carly Fiorina on that side and probably Martin O'Malley on the Democratic side. How much do you know about these people now as we head into the primaries? We're finding these things out in a very aggressive fashion by the press pushing Carson, for example, about his veracity about his own background. And Trump, of course, is a whole other gold mine of potential to figure out exactly who this guy is and what he's up to.

But I think that probably when we talk about all the various ways that information is available, I'm wondering whether the information is getting out to these folks by any but basically the standard, old-style newspaper reporting and magazine reporting. And I don't know because I'm just not a blog follower very much and I do basically get most of my news from the standard stuff that the people who are in the 65 and over category do, not from Fox News, but from a daily newspaper and so forth.

I'm concerned the tenor it has taken to smoke Ben Carson out about what his real background is, Donald Trump, as well, and how Carly Fiorina can just simply look at the camera and say what we know not to be true is true about her

witnessing an aborted fetus that was kicking on the table and the people around her were saying we got to do something to harvest the brain out of this baby.

So I don't know, Howard, do you find that there's a debate in The Huffington Post about how to cover these things?

MR. FINEMAN: Yeah, and we even published a -- I knew I was living in a new world when we decided to publish on the front page of The Huffington Post what had been an internal conversation on something called Slack, which is a messaging system that a lot of companies use now, between one of our editors in Washington and one of our editors in New York about how to cover Ben Carson. This was like meta, meta, meta, meta, meta. And I was thinking in the old days, who cares? I mean, why would we ever publish that?

But interestingly, I was just looking at the numbers and a lot of people read it, which I thought was fascinating because it shows people, on the positive side of this, people are involved in understanding the process of news-gathering. And if we're living in a world where everybody can be a reporter, then everybody must be an editor. And the only answer, by the way, to all of our problems is education because if that's true, we've all got to be educated citizens.

But in any case, on Carson, it goes back to this thing I was talking about. Carson is only addressing his people. He is addressing a reality in which they believe and in which they immerse themselves. I believe he has 4-1/2 or 5 million Facebook Likes I believe. He's got his own world. He's got a world of his books. He's got a world of his websites. He's got a world of his Facebook page. And he's got some sympathetic news organizations out there, if you can call them that. And so he's only speaking to his world. They live in a separate reality from ones that other people do. And what's fascinating to me about Ben Carson is that he sort of rejects the idea that anybody has a right to

question him about his story about himself.

Now, I haven't thought this through -- it's true of much of what I say

(Laughter) -- but there's --

MR. DIONNE: You got to post it too quickly.

MR. FINEMAN: Yes, right. But there's got to be some relationship between the fact that people can create a personality for themselves online, okay. It turns out that everybody did not create an avatar of themselves. Remember when avatars were going to be the next big thing? That hasn't quite happened. Actually, people have short-circuited that. Rather than create a cartoon version of themselves online, they've created themselves online, and Ben Carson is an example of that. And so if people are allowed or even encouraged to do that online, why can't presidential candidates do that online? And who is anybody else to tell them that it's false? Because it's online, therefore, it's real.

And I realize I'm getting a little like 3 a.m. in the dorm here. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: Just don't sing the Matchbox Twenty song.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay. There's something out there about this. There's something out there about this about accepting a common reality and facts.

You know, Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously said everybody's entitled to their own opinion, sir, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Well, I wish that were still true. Everybody thinks they're entitled to their own facts. They're creating the facts. They're creating the narratives. And in many respects, Ken was talking about how we don't get to know the candidates anymore; the candidates don't want us to know them at all. They want to create their own reality and now they have powerful ways to do it that completely short-circuit the media structures and the boys on the bus and everything else that existed in the past.

Ben Carson really doesn't give a flip what The New York Times says about him. And that's a big change.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Howard, for creating the viral moment of this event. (Laughter) I think that's going to go out there. Two quick observations. We're running out of time, which I apologize for. I want to go to the audience and maybe three folks I can bring in quickly and go down the panel for various reactions. I just want to make two observations.

One is I really recommend to everybody Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's book *Blur* because I think one of the points they make is in this new period we as citizens really have to become our own editors. We need more knowledge about how the media work in order to consume all of this intelligently, and it's a really good book.

Second, I have to say a word for NPR, which I have done work for for a long time, which I think is a really interesting model. It's been very successful in terms of continuing to report that the money has come in. Mostly it's not federal money, that's 15 percent; the rest of it is from viewers. But also, they found a way to find a new audience and it shows how new technology works because they had the old radio --

MR. FINEMAN: It's terrific. It's kind of a new golden age of NPR, in my view.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, yes.

MR. FINEMAN: It's terrific. Terrific. On radio. On radio.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, thank you. Because they not only have people coming in on the radio who tend to be older folks, but now they've developed a whole new world of podcasts, which are very popular among young people. And that's just an interesting model. And forgive me, I love NPR, so I had to throw that in.

Three questions. First, the gentleman in the back right there. Please take the mic. If you could identify yourself.

SPEAKER: Thank you. If the mic was on I would. Is it on?

MR. DIONNE: I should make it an odd number, but.

SPEAKER: Yes, okay. In terms of the 2016 presidential election, looking forward which tipping group do you believe will be the most important?

MR. DIONNE: Which group?

SPEAKER: Which demographic group will be the most important to electing the next President of the United States? And how will the parties use their own influence to make that group vote for that party?

MR. DIONNE: Great question. Hang on to that. Next question, another hand. This lady back here and then that gentleman in front of her. I am sorry about everybody else. We just got carried away in our passion up here.

SPEAKER: Hi. Mr. Bode and Mr. Fineman, you both talked about real journalism. What does that mean, real journalism, in the new digital age?

MR. DIONNE: Excellent question. And then the gentleman right up front here.

SPEAKER: This conversation has sort of dichotomized between hard news and opinion news, and I'm wondering if the more important distinction isn't between corporate news and social movement news?

MR. DIONNE: That's a great question. Why don't we -- let's go down the panel. Why don't I start with Emma and continue with this? Just start with Emma and move on on all three questions: swing groups in the election, real news, corporate news.

MS. GREEN: So those are an interesting set of questions. I'll start with

the last one first.

So I think this goes back to something I spoke about at the beginning, which is I think the interesting questions about the future of journalism and the state of media are less about sort of platform nostalgia and more about substance. And I think the way that journalists source and report stories is obviously always a really important and interesting question, but even more so in the digital age.

So just to sort of speak about what I think is a prescient and wise concern, I do think that there are certain ways in which a digital ecosystem tends to rarify forms of power in terms of information sourcing. So, for example, you will often see a phenomenon where many publications are drawing from the reporting of a single outlet, so riffing on AP, riffing on *The New York Times*. *The New York Times* then in turn will riff on another organization. They actually have just started a new Breaking News desk which is built around this model, so to riff off of information sources that are basically coming from one place.

The reason why I bring this up is that I do think that in terms of sort of corporate voices or voices that have power maybe a bit more broadly, there is a certain degree to which those voices can be reified and amplified, particularly if journalists aren't on the ground in communities working their beats in terms of going to the local school board meeting and talking to Joe Shmoe who has a perspective on XYZ local issue. And they're talking to sources of power because they're mostly writing from the perch of sort of a broad national perspective.

I do think that the social movement aspect is really interesting because that speaks to the Ferguson question, citizen journalists, people who have become sort of voices in the mediasphere who are from within a movement and who are exposing different perspectives. And to me, that, again, speaks to sort of a substance change that

is interesting, not a cause for fear. I think those can be really great and legitimate sources of news and information not only for the broader world by social media, but also for traditional news outlets. So drawing on, for example, Black Lives Matter and some of the work that those advocates do, they might not necessarily be journalists, but they are presenting important information for the public to be used in interesting ways.

Even though the real journalism question was not directed at me, I will go ahead and answer it anyways. So I actually, funny enough, had this debate last night at dinner with my mother, who is a journalist by training. And we were talking about what is journalism? You know, what is journalism? And so my answer to that question was that I think journalism is fundamentally the art of going out and trying to see the world as it is. And I think in the past that this has been constructed in sort of that hard news idiom, so going out and going to the local school board meeting. And I think that's important and I think that's actually largely what's lost in the shifts that have happened. Some of that really, really local reporting just doesn't happen anymore.

But, you know, back to sort of this recurring question about the golden age of opinion journalism, when I say that I actually don't quite mean classical opinion writing. I mean sort of analytical writing and -- ha-ha, good for me -- magazine writing. Analytical takes on the news and I think you can be a journalist and do that kind of work. You can go and try to see the world as it is. You can present honestly the perspective from which you're coming and then try to share facts about the world as you see them as they are. And I think there is great work that's being done with that. I don't think that that work is dead at all. So real journalism is alive and well.

And then finally, back to the question about demographics in the 2016 election. I think this is a little bit off the path of news. I will just say as sort of swinging into my other -- taking off my sort of digital media guru Millennial hat and putting on my

religion reporter hat, I have thought it's really been interesting in these sort of pre-rounds of the ever-lengthening election coverage cycle the way that old patterns die hard. So one group that I'm watching in particular that I think is really interesting to watch is evangelicals, and particularly white evangelicals, and the way that the news media reports on this group; the way that their demographic preferences, particularly in early polling about, for example, Donald Trump, sort of defy and trouble the traditional paths for news-gathering that organizations often rely on.

You know, for example, polling that shows why evangelicals supporting by far Donald Trump I think is interesting and a time to sort of step back and reflect. And I think it's a time to sort of think about this broader demographic question of what 2016 is going to look like.

But I also think, in a certain way, you're talking about existential crises for media, it sort of troubles all of these old mechanisms that we have because I think there are a lot of ways in which those statistics can be misleading. So this was a roundabout way of not answering that question. But I will say, just for what it's worth, I think the demographic question is almost to me a meta question in light of what we've been talking about, which is I think this election in a new media era is a time to sort of reevaluate how we're thinking about pinning down those demographics and structuring narratives about who votes for who and why.

MR. DIONNE: Excellent. Howard.

MR. FINEMAN: Okay. I'll turn it upside down and start with the voting group question first. I think that when you look at the General Election, which we'll, believe it or not, eventually get to, I think young voters is what I'm going to look at most. It's going to make the difference. I mean, every group makes the ultimate difference, so it's kind of a silly discussion in a way. But the numbers for viewing the debates have

been pretty impressive. People are interested and I want to see what young voters, meaning under 30, do. I think they'll be determinative, obviously.

In terms of real journalism, I agree, analysis pieces, opinion pieces, hard news, it's always been hard to differentiate among them. It's useful and healthy that the lines are blurred because you always have to -- you need the passion of the opinion and you need the trenchancy of the analysis to make the facts mean something. So, in a way, they're meaningless distinctions. It's a continuum. It's a gray scale continuum between it rained last night and Black Lives Matter.

And to talk about *The Atlantic* for a second --

MS. GREEN: Only say things that are positive.

MR. FINEMAN: No, no, I'm about to. Ta-Nehisi Coates' essays are world-shaking and are facts in and of themselves. There's an opinion piece that's a fact and very powerful and one of the most important things printed in a long, long time.

Now, as for corporate versus social movement, this is America, my friend. Social movement are co-opted by corporations all the time. And there's money to be made in social action on the Internet, as there has always been in America. And differentiating between a true social movement that grows independently on the Internet and one that's kind of ultimately either created or co-opted by corporate America is hard to figure out.

I think Ferguson was a genuine thing. I think having the cameras, looking at the cops, looking at what was going on there, that's real. No corporation invented that. No corporation particularly wants that. So there's that.

But there's also the fact that the dominant players in the digital world are companies like Facebook and Google and so forth, who have big corporate interests, as big as any companies in the world. They're some of the most highly valued companies

on the planet, so it's a paradox in which big corporations -- and I'm including now the phone companies, the big Internet companies and so forth -- create the platform for social movements. And there's a tension there that's always existed and I would argue that that, too, is healthy.

MR. DIONNE: Ken.

MR. BODE: Let me go back to the demographics, start with the demographics question, especially the way Emma talked about it. I mean, there are two ways to look at demographics. One is with racial and Hispanic, black voters, things like that, and the other is age demography.

I'm interesting in you mentioned Trump and the evangelicals who are voting for Trump. If Donald Trump gets past, keeps his pluralities going and Carson fades, and we get past March 15th, when the Republicans can begin to select delegates by winner take all, and they do that and Trump actually becomes the nominee of the Republican Party, how much do you think there is a Trump constituency in the angry, white, middle class, lower middle class, working class, Democratic and Independent group out there, which I have not seen anybody polling about at all? Would Trump be a more -- you know, everybody thinks Trump is going to be easy to beat. Would he disrupt the Democratic Party's base in the same way he's disrupting the Republican Party's base? Because I don't think evangelicals are strictly Republican, though they tend to be more so. But angry, white males are Democrats as well as Republicans. So that's just a question that I have about that.

The fact about citizen journalists, we all need to recognize that when we all have a cellphone and we all have Twitter and we all have Facebook and so forth, that we all have got to be editors, but that's not happening. I mean, you know, the quickness and speed with which you can Tweet and re-Tweet and pass things on, I just don't see

anybody who says that there's seriously a lot of editing that's going on. It all happens so fast.

I don't remember what the other question was now. What was the other question?

MS. GREEN: Real journalism.

MR. BODE: Pardon me?

MS. GREEN: Real journalism.

MR. FINEMAN: The corporate question.

MR. BODE: Real journalism.

MR. FINEMAN: Corporate versus --

MR. BODE: No, real journalism.

MR. FINEMAN: -- social.

MR. BODE: Let's just take real journalism. I still believe, and I probably have said this at least once in this panel, that it's very important to find out everything you can about these guys who are running for President, and women who are running for President rather than wait till after you've elected one of them and find out afterwards. And I haven't really seen the kind of in-depth reporting on many of the candidates. I mean, it's really been largely Bernie and Hillary on the Democratic side and Trump and Carson on the Republican side, though I suspect that we probably have got down the two nominees by that. But we really owe it to both ourselves and to those people who are running to find out a lot more about them, and I haven't seen that coming out so far.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you so much. I'm going to take 20 seconds to answer 2 questions real quick.

One, the demographics. One is just turnout, which we really have to pay attention to. Do young people, African Americans, and Latinos turn out in large or at

least substantial numbers or not? If they do, the Democrats I think almost certainly win. If they don't, the Democrats are in trouble and Republicans have a real shot.

Also, in terms of swing, working class, white voters, particularly women, though men, also, particularly in states like Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and New Hampshire, these groups are going to be appealed to through very different media. And I think that's going to be an interesting part of the election.

And just on the corporate media side, I think, you know, that old line freedom of the press applies to those who can afford to buy one. (Laughter) And I think the issues about corporate control and influence that Howard pointed to are correct. But my friend Tom Rosenstiel also talks about the reappearance of the pamphleteering tradition because the cost of entry is much lower in this new world and it is at least possible for groups, like Black Lives Matters, some of the community organizing groups, to have a presence before large numbers of people that didn't exist before. And I think those two work against each other.

The test of a good paper is how much good conversation it provokes, so, Elaine and Ashley, you get an A+++.

Emma, thank you. You are the digital media Millennial guru, as you said, and it's great to have you. Howard, the passionate new media mogul with an old media heart. (Laughter) And Ken Bode, an all-around wise man. Thank you all.

Thank you all for coming. (Applause)

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