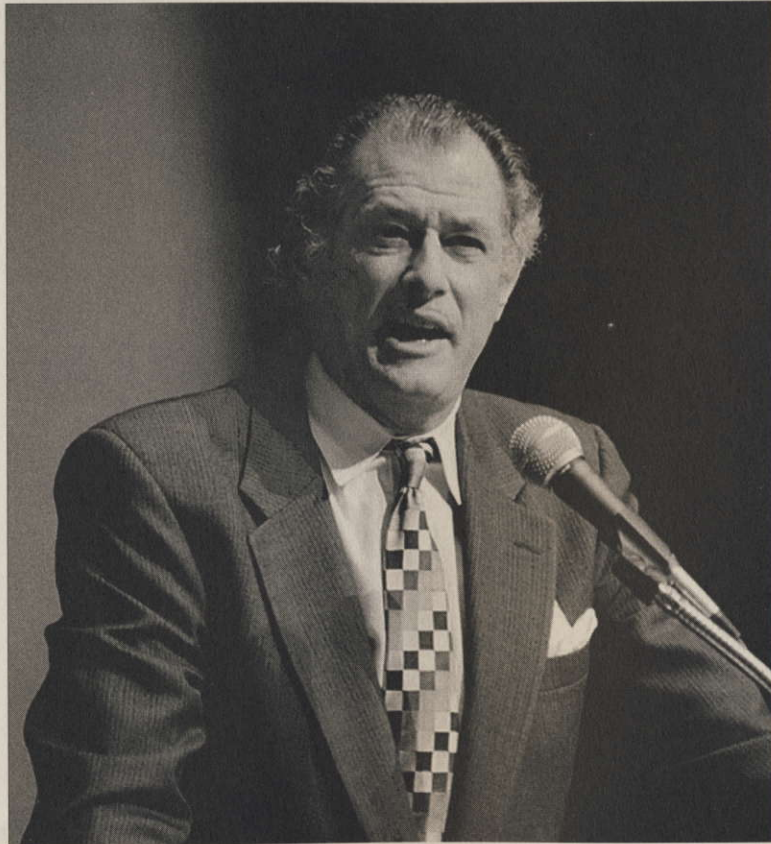


# THE MCGILL LECTURE



Frank Deford delivers the 18th annual Ralph McGill Lecture at The University of Georgia.

## Frank Deford

Sports commentator

*National Public Radio and ESPN*

Columnist

*Newsweek*

Correspondent

HBO's *"Realsport"*

**T**hank you, Ernie, for those uncommonly kind words. I really appreciate it, and I am delighted to be here with Mr. McGill's legacy. I was always a great admirer of his, though I never knew the man, but admired him tremendously both as a human being and as journalist.

Ernie mentioned, I'm afraid, that he was a sportswriter in the beginning of his life. I hope that that does not diminish his praise too much. Many of you are familiar, I'm sure, with a basketball coach in Bloomington, Indiana, Bobby Knight, who's also a great student of journalism, and Bobby once said, "The best time in every sportswriter's life were the three years he spent in second grade." If I had to spend three years in second grade, I'm glad Mr. McGill was there – at least in spirit – with me.

But not only as a sportswriter, but in other ways, I think I am imminently qualified to speak as I want to today about the future of print. In my one endeavor in newspapers, I managed to lose in the period of only a year-and-a-half \$150 million. This is a statistic I think that goes beyond anything we can even find in sports.

And as we look ahead, which we must do, particularly in a world that is so rife with technology, I also must admit that I am someone who still prefers not only to write on a typewriter, if I possibly can, but on a manual typewriter. I love to still feel the words, and technology scares me some.

But notwithstanding, I think that in any talk of the future of journalism, in particularly print journalism, we must look not at the idiosyncrasies of me, but at the conventional wisdom, which is approximately this: everybody gets their news from television now, especially those under the age of 95, and concurrently, nobody reads much of anything anymore, except possibly books by Howard Stern or about O.J. Simpson. Certainly, nobody reads newspapers. They are fish-



wrappers from the old and forgotten 20th century. And finally, something called the information superhighway is going to dominate journalism of the 21st century.

**L**et me say at the outset, I have no idea what exactly is going to happen, but I will bet you – I will guarantee you – that it will not be that. It will not be the conventional wisdom. Our greatest journalist, H.L. Mencken, once said, “The prophesying business is like writing fugues; it is fatal to everyone save the man of absolute genius.”

Consider, in journalism, for example, the most assured conventional wisdom of this century that TV will destroy both movies and radio. But both Hollywood and the dial adjusted, and adjusted quite well.

Who would have ever predicted 30 or 40 years ago that as we approach the millennium, radio would be more powerful, more vibrant, in fact, than it's ever been, even in its heyday, and it even exists, whether some of us like it or not, it boasts probably the single most significant journalist in this country today in Rush Limbaugh. That's true.

Also, by the way, and parenthetically, because I know there are a lot of broadcasters here, as someone who works both in radio and television and, for that matter in print, I've always found that radio and print are the true cousins. People lump radio and television, because they're both electronic. But to me, that's only coincidental. What really seems to work together are radio and print. I think that's because they're both sort of more literal, and television is more visual.

And also I couldn't help but think as I drove here today from South Carolina how distinguishing radio is – perhaps more so than any other institution in our culture. It's so hard in the United States today, on the surface, to have any idea where you are. I mean, as you drive down the road, and whether you're in Oregon or Tennessee or Vermont, everything is the same Holiday Inn and the same Burger King and the same Pizza Hut, and everybody is dressed the same. But the one way you can tell where you are is to turn that radio dial, and cumulatively, what's on that radio dial will tell you, as it did this morning, that I am in the South, or wherever I would have been at that time. Radio really means, remains so important to us, and so very much involved in our lives.

At the same time, even as TV killed off the most popular giant magazines of the mid-century, *Life*, *Look*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and all the others rose up – the magazine industry thrives – which my wife and children remain grateful for. So, however chic and however gargantuan gets that damn information superhighway, I believe that magazines and newspapers, the printed press, the word, will be with us for as long as the mind can imagine.

It simply does not interest me, as it does others, in what form the printed word will take. Whether we read it off of stuff still made from trees which gets on our hands and makes them all dirty, or whether we will read them off some kind of a screen that stretches our eyes.

However, I'm amused that this is the argument that consumes so many people. It's almost the first question I always get. What is going to happen to the Web? How is that going to change things?

I'm told that this argument has even reached another level by people who are called techs and lits and engages them most passionately. At a recent conference of the Association of American Publishers, some of the old-time lits got absolutely apoplectic when a tech speaker stood up and predicted, dare I say it, the bookless future. To wit, he said, and one can imagine it most dramatically, “For every reader who dies today, a viewer is born,” and editors swooned.

But the fact is that if screens are new, if screens are new and impressive – simply because they are new and [for] all the things they can do – newspapers are not standing still. Newspapers are really more attractive all the time. Look at the ones that even a great editor like Mr. McGill put out a few decades ago, they look positively Paleolithic compared to what you pick up today. Indeed, [former Washington Post editor] Ben Bradlee, when he retired, even noted that the single most significant thing that had happened during his lifetime in newspapers was the improvement in design. Nothing to do with Watergate or anything that his paper had written or led the way with. No, no, no, just simple design.

So newspapers can still fight fuzzy screens and they're portable, and you can still use them at the bottom of bird cages. But anyway, so what? The form of the future does not interest me nearly so much as the approach. The attitude, if you will, of print.

To gauge that, it's important first to look at what's up with journalism now, or, more properly as we usually address that, what's wrong with journalism now? Why is it that we keep hearing it's the information age, but we're less informed than ever about our own business of distributing information?

Let us first, as we usually do, consider television first. TV, TV news, shows you everything, but I'm afraid it tells you almost nothing. And print, it only tells you what it wants you to read and curiously, nowadays, most all of that is negative.

If it's one thing we've found with this Republican Congress in Washington today, it is that the press, not as advertised, the press is not pro-liberal. It's just anti-office. Never mind print. Very interesting figures from network news, which, as I say, is almost insipidly bland: in the 1992 election, 80 percent of the news about the Republicans was unfavorable, which sounds terrible until you realize that 80 percent of the news about the Democrats was unfavorable. Ninety percent about Congress itself was unfavorable, and 93 percent about the whole government was unfavorable. And keep in mind that's television, which isn't suppose to have any opinions at all.

---

TV NEWS SHOWS YOU  
EVERYTHING, BUT I'M  
AFRAID IT TELLS YOU  
ALMOST NOTHING.

---



The press today reminds me very much of a remark that Henry Jordan, the old Green Bay Packer, made about his martinet of a coach Vince Lombardi. When he was asked how Lombardi treated his players, Jordan replied, "He treats us all the same – all like dogs."

Print today is all cynicism. But unfortunately much of what we see on local television news, where we really live our lives as citizens, is either mayhem or it is fluff. There is, unfortunately, no context whatsoever that I see.

When Ben Franklin was arguing for the creation of a national Post Office, he claimed that it was needed primarily for the dissemination of useful information, and that essentially explains why this information age and the information superhighway just don't seem to inform, because so very little of what we journalists tell you is useful. We need, if not a useful information highway, at least an information avenue or an information lane that is useful.

**H**owever, before I fall on my sword before you with disgust for you who are not journalists, I don't believe that all of this is our fault. Journalism today seems to be more of an abusive relationship, wherein the worse that we treat you, the more you ask for more bad stuff. Constantly we hear television is too violent, newspapers are too negative. But every time someone tries to break that cycle, you turn the dial to "Geraldo" or you pick up the National Enquirer one more time.

If we are at fault, I think it's more – and this is to use, and perhaps properly so, an addictive word – we are enablers in journalism. We allow you your worst instincts. Surveys show that you believe that the ethical standards of print and television are down to around 15 on a scale of a 100, and, by the way, [there is] not a nickel's worth of difference between writers and announcers. But it is, and let's face it, very often the least ethical amongst us who thrive. And you can fill in the names.

Of course, we also should not be surprised that if we share what the French call "nostalgia de la boue," which translates to "a desire to wallow in the mud," if we share that together, it's bound to color our attitude about everything. It isn't just journalists who suffer your disgust. Everything that we write about is also diminished because we are journalists. The mud passes on. Government, business, church, sports, all our institutions seem to be despised today. And you seem to like that, so we pour it on to satisfy you.

The New Yorker today refers to journalism as "weird, free-form nastiness." The Columbia Journalism Review calls their own people in their own craft today, a generation of vipers.

But we fall into the negative so naturally, don't we? Years ago, presciently, David Ricseman referred to this as "the gullibility of the cynical:" a failure to believe that anything can possibly ever work for the good, which would certainly contradict what you said about Mr. McGill thinking that more and more each generation will be better than the other. James Fallows' recent book, which I'm sure you've all read about, titled, I think rather breathlessly, "How the Media

Undermines American Democracy," even makes with that title traitors of us all in his profession.

The best description of all of this, oddly enough, I find comes from a rather fluffy movie that I'm sure many of you saw a few years ago titled "Pretty Woman," with Julia Roberts, who I believe is a Georgia girl, is she not? And she plays the hooker, and she is saved by the noble businessman, Richard Gere, and as he finds himself falling in love with her, he tries to fathom how it is that this wonderful person fell to such a low estate. And she starts to explain that she took a misstep here and all of the sudden one there, and eventually had fallen all the way to end. And she turns to him and she says, "The bad stuff is easiest to believe, isn't it?" I think that's a wonderful line. I think that sums up our time, the nineties, better than all the books and all the speeches. "The bad stuff is easiest to believe, isn't it?"

Surely this is particularly so in print. Television is something else. Television is proof that seeing is not believing. The visual by itself is the most compelling lie, because we saw it with our own eyes.

At a forum, I imagine not unlike the one that you're having right now, about tabloid TV, the general manager of a station in Providence, Rhode Island, defended a story of his in which his reporter in a sweeps month had dipped turkey legs into acid to show the Providence viewers how a murderer had disposed of a body.

"Look," said the station manager in defense, "you're college educated people, but you're only 20 percent. The other 80 percent is dumb as hell and getting dumber all the time." No doubt helped along by that station manager and his philosophy.

One of my favorite commentators is Neil Postman, who is a magnificent observer of television. He made the observation once that education as we know it probably began with Gutenberg and the invention of the printing press, and that not too long in the future, we will look back and we will say that education as we know it ended with the invention of television.

Television affects our lives, always and even more, so not always, but so often in the negative. That's after all why negative advertising in politics works so very well. It's found the right place, and it's why television, I think, is so especially invidious. It is not that you see something so you're inspired to do something, to follow the man on the white horse or to get up and try to affect anything. Rather, you see something and so what you do is sit there and try to see something else.

Professor Robert Putnam at Harvard has made a study in which he has found conclusively that people who watch a lot of television refuse to join in. This goes and strikes into the very heart of what we have always called ourselves right back to De Toqueville, a nation of joiners. Professor Putnam even found out that people don't join bowling leagues anymore. It is not that they like bowling any

---

TELEVISION IS  
PROOF THAT SEEING  
IS NOT BELIEVING.

---



less, it is just simply that they cannot commit themselves to a league, to joining anything in the face of the allure of television. He also found, as other studies have, that TV watchers are more pessimistic and more generally skeptical about goodness. Do you ever see that on TV, goodness?

The classic division, which you may have heard of, between those who read and those who watch, was in – I hate to bring it up but I must for purposes – the O.J. trial. It was discovered in the middle of the trial that those who took their news primarily from television thought that he was innocent. Those who took their news from print thought he was guilty. It was a huge division. It was almost a bifurcation of the two types of people. And since Judge Ito had

originally barred from the jury all those who had read much about it, one can say that the case was essentially settled at the very start.

This stuff is awful when you hear it. Not just that O.J. is free, because it seems that he has found most recently a prison all of his own, but that this cliff-drop continues. We grant 15 percent ethics in journalism now?

---

### WHAT TV IS GOOD AT DRIVES OUT, TOO OFTEN, THE GOOD IN US.

---

How long before it will be down to zero? And I'm sorry, I don't mean to be pessimistic; I can't foresee any considerable change in television, any improvement.

Television requires the lurid and the controversial on a regular quotidian basis. We must not be diverted by the odd, cute "National Geographic" special about penguins. What TV is good at drives out, too often, the good in us. That is the Grisham's law of television. And keep in mind, this is not the typical print person attacking television. I work in television. I spend a lot of my time in television, and so, I, if anything, can only be accused not of being unfair, but being hypocritical.

And there is no evidence that all that new competition, all those 500 channels that will be with us, encourages variety, not when it comes to the news or to basic entertainment. Everything goes after the same big audience. Every day in television is sweeps month.

In Europe, whenever government channels have been de-federalized and the market has been allowed to impose its own force, as has always been the case here in the United States, the result has been a decline in the integrity of serious journalism. People have run to the European Geraldos. So I believe in my pessimism, my cynicism, in my conventional wisdom, that if responsible journalism is to survive, it must do that in print, in newspapers. The word is still the answer.

And the corollary to that is that newspapers as we knew them, as we know them, must give up the ghost and stop playing at being a mass medium. They must be printed to appeal to readers—to people who like to read and who do read. Readers.

The first thing that newspapers of the future must do is to be, and dare I offer such sacrilege, they must be less objective. Newspapers must learn to be more opinionated. That sounds so terribly awful and downright un-American. But understand, subjectivity doesn't necessarily mean ugliness, and skepticism doesn't necessarily mean cynicism.

Keep in mind, too, that the natural state of the written press is not objectivity. Newspapers have traditionally, historically, been partisan, very partisan, and especially today, where we get the news from so many other electronic sources delivered more or less unadulterated at the top of every hour. Newspapers can better serve the public. They can better serve the public by venturing opinions, by guiding the public with their expertise and their edge.

I don't think that it's any coincidence that in Europe – where the situation exists where papers have traditionally been on one political side or the other – there's a much higher percentage of people who vote. They're encouraged to vote by this partisanship, which brings issues to the fore better than we do. There's a higher level of discourse there.

Nothing, nothing in journalism, be it print or television, upsets me more than when you see the foreign correspondent or read him in the newspaper, and let's say for the sake of argument that The New York Times or NBC has sent somebody to Beijing. It is probably someone who has gone to school to study China. It is someone who is very educated, who is very well paid, who probably knows the Chinese situation as well as all but 15 or 20 people in the world, and yet, the instant something happens in China, do we hear from that correspondent? Do we hear what he thinks? No, he goes out on the street and interviews fools who know nothing whatsoever, so that we get a fair . . .

Another thing about objectivity. It's not an objective word. It's a very loaded word. You're saying to the other person, "I'm objective and you're not," and that's exactly what we journalists are doing when we pretend that we are objective. The polls show, by the way, that readers don't believe us anymore, so what's the point of trying to stay objective?

They know, the readers do, as Shakespeare said in "The Merchant of Venice," "The devil can cite Scripture for his own purpose." And we – straight forward, tedious, by-the-book – we can't understand it then when people are drawn to believe [filmmaker] Oliver Stone that General Motors and the AARP and the Rotary Club and that gang was what assassinated President Kennedy. Or they believe [convicted Watergate co-conspirator and radio talk-show host] G. Gordon Liddy that [White House counsel] Vince Foster was Mafia or an alien or whatever he says at the time.

But you see, where I might disagree so with Liddy, and I particularly don't like the way he misuses the truth, at least I know where he is. That's, to me, very important. My favorite movie reviewers are not the ones I necessarily agree with, but the ones that I know where they are. I have one movie reviewer that I will never go to see anything that he likes. But that's good, that's a compass pointing in the right direction for me every time.



Objective, alas, believes nothing. That's the flip side of objectivity. We are, in the wonderful words of a professor named Ted Smith at Virginia Commonwealth University, "omni-principled." We're captious. We're Olympian, or at least we're Olympian want-to-bes. "We are," he says, "not in society, but we try to be above society."

And for the lack of a better word, if you will excuse me, we are wise asses, and nobody, as you know, likes a wise ass. I pray, I pray that we don't have to be mean-spirited to get you to read us. But I am convinced that we must go back to the future of opinion and partisanship of newspapers if we are to survive. I'm so positive because I have seen the other alternative and it is called USA Today. Seems like there's some USA Today fans in the room.

USA Today and its local clones have, to my mind, begun with the syllogism that since television is the choice [of] journalism, then newspapers can only survive by being like television. Now, this is not to say that USA Today does not impress me in certain ways. I never knew, for example, that weather came in stripes until USA Today came along, and when I ran the late-lamented National Sports Daily, I stood in awe and envy over the way that USA Today could

distribute their paper. It was like Hannibal taking those elephants over the Alps and doing it every morning by six o'clock, day after day after day. Their logistical legerdemain is absolutely amazing.

USA Today is a nice bulletin board. But you know for all its vaunted color, in a way, it is the least colorful journal of them all. I read it. I skim it. I peruse it. I look at the

graphs. I turn the pages and I am reminded again and again of what the movie director Fred Zinneman replied when someone asked him what a famous movie star was like. "Like?" he answered. "What makes you think she's like anything?"

But even with all that snootiness on my part, I will acknowledge that there is something to be said for one USA Today – one painless, national paper like that. We need a yellow pages. It's just that we don't need two or three or four. And what angers me are the copycat newspapers. The copycat mini-USAs Today that seem to be run by polls rather than people.

The Miami Herald, once a very, very distinguished newspaper, recently decreed that the newspaper will now concentrate on nine subjects that a poll of its readers declared most vital to their interests. It just turned out that none of the nine subjects happened to be either national news or international news. Or The Buffalo News redesigned recently to make sure that never, polls had told them this, never more than three stories should be on the front page. Three stories in all the world to choose from. Recently one of the three stories was that

Blondewood and Dagwood, Blondie and Dagwood had gone to a marriage counselor.

You see, no matter how hard you try, a newspaper simply cannot make a better television set than can a television set be a television set. Your peons apparently are a little bit wiser to this than we are.

Not long ago, a year or so ago, a new Parisian daily was started called Info Matin, and it was begun very much like USA Today for the singular purpose of attracting especially young readers who had lost faith or had never had any faith in newspapers, who only watched television. Info Matin was a tabloid. It featured lots and lots of color and very short, shorter and shortest stories. It went out of business with a great loss of money after about a year-and-a-half.

Our poor American newspapers, though, are scared. They're frightened and sadly, most of all, they are traitors, for they look in that direction, of fewer words, to save them. They are vehicles, these papers are, of the written word, who do not believe in the written word. And I don't think that they can survive that way.

It was very interesting that when I ran the National, we had a mid-section, a large story in the middle, which we called our "Main Event." It was, if I recall, 2,000, 2,500 [words], maybe even longer. And the people who were most critical of it from the outset were not the readers, but other members of the press, other editors. They said people will not buy this. They won't like this. They won't. You're crazy. This is the wrong thing to do. On the contrary, we found that a significant number of our readers liked it. I'm quite sure that if, like The Miami Herald, we'd had a poll, no, it wouldn't have gone into the top nine. But the people who liked it liked it very much.

I'm also reminded of a poll recently – yeah, I'm a wonderful journalist, I attack polls and then cite all the ones that support me. It was a poll in The Los Angeles Times, I don't know if any of you here in Georgia ever see the Times, but in the left-hand column, not unlike The Wall Street Journal, on the front page, it has a feature – a long, long take-out, which moves inside. It almost tries to stop you from reading it. It is as if they are attempting with all of their vigor to keep you from reading this piece. It breaks to an inside page in another section, and then it goes through the lingerie ads, and it wanders and it wanders and it wanders, and it's usually, though, a really wonderfully written piece.

Now the L.A. Times polled its readers, and in a simple question of, "Do you like long articles or do you prefer shorter articles?" Oh, everybody, voted for the shorter articles. We haven't got time today. Everything, this is the modern world. It's rough stuff. We need shorter articles. But when, in a sort of open-ended question, the Times asked its readers to cite memorable, notable things that the readers had read recently, an extraordinary and a disproportionate number of them were contained in that longest article of all.

Essentially, I think, what the newspaper of the 21st century, and for that matter what magazines, the general-interest magazines of that time, must be in the future is opera. They must go upscale. When movies came along, vaudeville

---

A NEWSPAPER SIMPLY  
CANNOT MAKE A  
BETTER TELEVISION SET  
THAN CAN A  
TELEVISION SET BE A  
TELEVISION SET.

---



and burlesque, which were the entertainments of the common folks, the "hoi polloi," they died. But opera survived and thrives today.

Granted, there's a certain amount of, and you must always be afraid of this, there's a certain amount of snobbish elitism in this, but what the hell. Journalists are elite today. We're not working class the way that we used to be. Mostly, though, forget that. Taking newspapers upscale seems to me to be simply pragmatic. What's the choice? The figures of those getting news from newspapers and magazines combined, that is the number of people getting their prime news from print, is now below 50 percent, and plummeting would be the correct word to describe that draft.

Once upon a time, virtually every American, or certainly every American family, had a newspaper in its house and read it. Now four out of 10 skip newspapers altogether. Female readership is in an absolute free-fall. Women simply do not read newspapers anymore. And really, it's only the much maligned sports pages that keep men reading papers.

I learned today from Conrad Fink of your journalism department that it has been suggested that as high as 40 percent of all men who read newspapers read them, basically, only for sports. By the way, this suggests as more and more women get interested in sports, which indeed they are, that maybe there is a hope there for newspapers, that they can bring women back.

But I somehow don't think that newspapers can base their whole future on that premise.

For those of you who are students here, your whole generation has virtually stopped reading papers. The mean age of a reader is in the 40s and it is rapidly going north. The jig is up, and it seems to me that the reason is quite obvious.

For the first time in history, ever, we have a large core of people who have been taught to read, but simply do not choose to. Sven Birkerts in his book, "The Gutenberg Elegies," defines it thusly: "There has been a break with reading."

Think about that. That's almost like saying there has been a break with eating. There has been a break with sex. There has been a break with reading?

These people whom I call intentional illiterates, they may read road signs, or television graphics, maybe – maybe they flip through TV Guide to get to the listings – but they won't read, not as a primary response. And so, it seems to me that no matter how attractive Ben Bradlee's newspapers are made, these people won't care. Newspapers are not speaking a different language to these folk, they are presenting a written language, and the intentional illiterates aren't buying that.

**S**o, those of us in print, we've got to stop being evangelists. It may be a horrifying thing to say, but I believe that if parents and teachers have not, by the time a child reaches maturity, taught him or her to love to read, to want to read, then no one else is going to entice him to read at some later time – to allure him to read with graphs and with weather maps.

Reduce the net, I say, to those who really want to read, and improve the products specifically for them. The opera does not go out and try to recruit from amidst rappers or country and western fans. Newspapers must go to the readers. Go to that well and cater to them.

A large part of this consideration, by the way, can help newspapers feel less guilty. That's the matter of technology and how it has changed us, and this, too, by the way, fits into that original premise of mine that nothing ever happens the way that you think it will.

With us, with the world, technology at first tended to bring us to together, whether it was the invention of the telegraph or the choo-choo train or whatever. Anything that improved communications bound us, made us more one.

But who would have ever guessed that at a certain point technology would begin to work to divide us, and that is exactly what has happened lately. I mean, as recently as say the 1950s, it was different altogether. With radio, we all heard the same shows, the same with television. A nation together watched "I Love Lucy" or Milton Berle. A nation was involved in the same tunes on "Your Hit Parade." But now, technology permits us to divide ourselves into so many little groups which are, quite literally, accurately, called interest groups. Technology in the end has fragmented us. What was once E Pluribus Unum is now E Pluribus Niche.

So newspapers and magazines, all print, are, in a way freed, they're liberated. They're no longer mass mediums and they don't have to care about everybody. They can simply look to their niche.

Just suppose, for example, that the truly literate cohort bottoms out at 20 or 25 percent of the population. In a nation of 300 million or whatever, that's still an awful lot.

Newspapers again construct themselves and their material to appeal to their readers. In opera, you know, they still have "Aida" and "La Traviata" and "Carmen" time after time. They don't go out of their way to try to bring those people off the street with something tricky.

Especially in this politically correct world, which I understand sadly is at its most oppressive on campuses, newspapers could be more candid, more honest, more aggressive with sensitive issues.

I'd like to believe in the great unwashed democracy, but if the television brethren, the coach potatoes, do not choose to participate, it is all the more important that the literate minority – well, let us fall back on an old and tarnished word, the intelligentsia, okay. Let us hope that the new intelligentsia is even more capable of leading us.

And above all, newspapers and magazines, to survive and be significant, simply must be better written. I know that sounds terribly old-fashioned, but

---

ABOVE ALL, NEWSPAPERS  
AND MAGAZINES, TO  
SURVIVE AND BE  
SIGNIFICANT, SIMPLY  
MUST BE BETTER WRITTEN.

---



more and more attention must be given to that. And if they're well-written, believe me, the people who read will read them more. Eisenhower warned us 40 years ago about the military/industrial complex, but that's been a long, long time. It's the entertainment/amusement complex that threatens us now. And journalism must watch that it is not too easy and subsumed by all that.

"Sometimes," [Editor] Tina Brown of The New Yorker has said, "sometimes we are too easy, and we must bite the hand that reads us." Print cannot be television, and I say this respectfully, you understand, as someone who works in television, but we in print must render unto Caesar.

There are so many things that print simply can't do anymore or can't do well.

---

PRINT MUST INFORM,  
ILLUMINATE, ARGUE,  
ADVISE, GUIDE, UPSET,  
AND MAYBE, BY ALL  
THAT, LIGHT THE WAY.

---

It can't beat TV showing visual stuff.  
It shows the game better than  
anybody can tell you about it in print.  
It can't beat Larry King schmoozing.  
It can't beat Peter Arnett sitting there  
describing how the bombs are coming  
down right on his head. It can't beat  
the tabloids, supermarket or TV, in the  
business of fabricating. It can't beat  
talk-radio haranguing. And it can't

beat any of them, radio, television, movies, at being entertaining. It just can't do it. Print must inform, illuminate, argue, advise, guide, upset, and maybe, by all that, light the way.

Let me frame it in this context. Many of you, particularly those of you in journalism, are familiar with Thomas Jefferson's famous remark about journalism. "Were it left to me," Mr. Jefferson said, "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." I'm sure all of you in journalism have heard that, because we repeat it ad nauseam, patting ourselves on the back. God, do we love that remark.

The problem is, if Mr. Jefferson were here today, and he heard me quote him, he would scream bloody murder and very properly so, that there go those newspaper bastards again quoting him out of context. Jefferson's point was not to celebrate newspapers, to honor print. Rather, he began with this preamble: "The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right," and then, he got into the business about preferring newspapers. But, he concluded: "But I should mean that every man should receive those newspapers, (everybody should get them) and be capable of reading them."

How we in journalism best serve ourselves and the people, well, we must create written words that people who are capable of reading, as Mr. Jefferson said, want to read. We must give them our best. We must engage them, not amuse them or titillate them or anger them or be cynical before them in a facile manner.

The future of print is ultimately, very much I think, tied up with the future of a wise and a just and a civil society. And every person who receives our papers should be capable of reading them and understanding them and hopefully drawing wisdom from them.