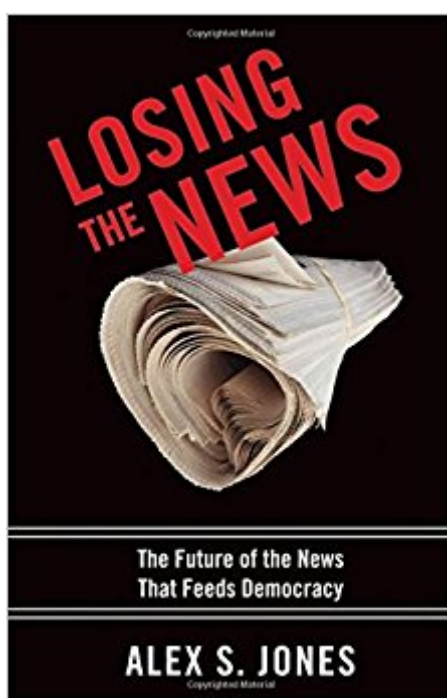


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Losing The News: The Future Of The News That Feeds Democracy (Institutions Of American Democracy)



Synopsis

In *Losing the News*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Alex S. Jones offers a probing look at the epochal changes sweeping the media, changes which are eroding the core news that has been the essential food supply of our democracy. At a time of dazzling technological innovation, Jones says that what stands to be lost is the fact-based reporting that serves as a watchdog over government, holds the powerful accountable, and gives citizens what they need. In a tumultuous new media era, with cutthroat competition and panic over profits, the commitment of the traditional news media to serious news is fading. Indeed, as digital technology shatters the old economic model, the news media is making a painful passage that is taking a toll on journalistic values and standards. Journalistic objectivity and ethics are under assault, as is the bastion of the First Amendment. Jones characterizes himself not as a pessimist about news, but a realist. The breathtaking possibilities that the web offers are undeniable, but at what cost? Pundits and talk show hosts have persuaded Americans that the crisis in news is bias and partisanship. Not so, says Jones. The real crisis is the erosion of the iron core of news, something that hurts Republicans and Democrats alike. *Losing the News* depicts an unsettling situation in which the American birthright of fact-based, reported news is in danger. But it is also a call to arms to fight to keep the core of news intact. Praise for the hardcover: "Thoughtful."--*New York Times Book Review* "An impassioned call to action to preserve the best of traditional newspaper journalism."--*The San Francisco Chronicle* "Must reading for all Americans who care about our country's present and future. Analysis, commentary, scholarship and excellent writing, with a strong, easy-to-follow narrative about why you should care, makes this a candidate for one of the best books of the year."--Dan Rather

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Customer Reviews

Pulitzer Prize journalist Jones (coauthor of *The Patriarch*) argues that the demise of the newspaper industry is corroding the iron core of information that is at the center of a functioning democracy. Increasingly, he contends, what is passed off as news is actually entertainment; puff pieces have replaced the investigative reporting that allows citizens to make informed decisions. We seem poised to be a nation overfed but undernourished, a culture of people waddling around, swollen with media exposure, and headed toward an epidemic of social diabetes, he writes. Sifting through a history of the media that touches on such technological improvements as the Gutenberg press and the telegraph, Jones focuses on the Internet and the damage he believes it has wrought on print newspapers. Weaving in the story of his own family's small newspaper in Tennessee, Jones presents an insider's look at an industry in turmoil, calling plaintively for a serious examination of what a nation loses when its newspapers fold. Unfortunately, he offers few answers for saving print journalism, but his compelling narrative will incite some readers to drum up solutions of their own.

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"Thoughtful."--New York Times Book Review
"An impassioned call to action to preserve the best of traditional newspaper journalism."--The San Francisco Chronicle
"Penetrating analysis of an industry in turmoil."--The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
"In a style both compellingly personal and fully professional, Jones provides a concise social history of news, ethics and First Amendment issues. He then grapples with some fundamental questions. Is news, as presented by professional journalists, as essential to democracy as we tell ourselves? Can it survive on its own in a marketplace where the advertising subsidy is waning and the accompanying entertainment segments are being unbundled and peddled separately?" --American Journalism Review
"Alex Jones's *Losing the News* is an important book. It is insightful and highly readable, at a level only a great journalist and master storyteller such as Jones could achieve with this subject. This isn't a book for or about just journalists and their profession. It's must reading for all Americans who care about our country's present and future. Analysis, commentary, scholarship and excellent writing, with a strong, easy-to-follow narrative about why you should care, makes this a candidate for one of the best books of the year."--Dan Rather
"No one knows more about journalism than Alex Jones. No

one watches it more scrupulously. No one cares more deeply for its future. Losing the News also proves that no one writes of the subject more persuasively or more beautifully. Journalism could have no surer champion."--Roger Rosenblatt"Drawing on his unique experiences as a prize-winning reporter, director of the major center on politics and the press, and fourth generation of a newspaper-owning family, Alex Jones provides an authoritative account of why journalism is vital, how it has lost its bearings, and which can be done to reinvigorate this essential foundation of a democratic society."--Howard Gardner, Harvard University"Losing the News reviews the role of news media in a democracy to set the stage for chapters assessing particular aspects. These include discussion of the fragile First Amendment, objectivity's last stand, media ethics, the curious story of news, the crumbling role of traditional newspapers, the newer media, and what can - and should - happen." --Communication Booknotes Quarterly

The subtitle of this impassioned essay -- " The Future of the News that Feeds Democracy" -- tells half the story, one that's familiar to any alert reader of today's major newspapers. The other half of the story, equally familiar, is about how the Internet is undermining the newspaper industry and, in the process, steadily replacing the world as we know it with a frighteningly unknown future. Alex Jones, a Pulitzer-Prize winning author, comes to these themes honestly as the scion of a small-town Tennessee newspaper family. It's no wonder he feels threatened. In all fairness, there is considerable reason for apprehension over the decline of America's major newspapers. Reflecting shrunken profits, repeated staff layoffs, closed news bureaus, and greater reliance on syndicated material, the nation's once-fat dailies are slimming down at a terrifying pace. In place of the papers' often earnest efforts at "objectivity," we are increasingly basing our views on the unedited diatribes to be found on the likes of Fox "News" and the daily blogosphere. The perils for democracy in America are obvious. For example, could the so-called "Tea Party" have thrived in a world largely dependent on newspapers for its information? Or is that sad testament to the profound ignorance of the American people a product of Fox News, talk radio, and organized Internet rumor-mongering? You won't be surprised to learn that there is no question in my mind that, despite its familiarity to the 19th-Century No-Nothing movement, I'm convinced the Tea Party is an artifact of the channels through which we now receive so much of our political information. Jones writes well, and my harsh criticism may not be entirely deserved. However, it comes from my nagging feeling as I read this book that its underlying theme is nostalgia, a craving for the day when so much of the news that appeared in the nation's dailies and on the air originated in the early edition of the Old Gray Lady, The New York Times. Those days are fast receding into history, and as Jones himself writes, there's

not much anyone can do about it other than "Adapt or Die."(From Mal Warwick's Blog on Books)

Jones outlines the death of real news exceptionally well. From his insider perspective he traces the forces and pressures that have given us, as my wife says, "fluff news" on the air and little of substance in our newspapers. Made me re-examine the papers I was receiving and how much actual news, as opposed to fluff about kittens rescued, personal interest stories, fluff pieces of all sorts, I was getting from my local papers. Result? I cancelled my subscriptions when I realized it was taking me ten minutes to read the Sunday paper because almost nothing in them was serious news. The effects and consequences of this are shown clearly - and they are not good.

Alex S. Jones draws to light what many of us already know... good reading thus far... Jones is objective as a mediator of the truth and candidly relates small-town newspaper takeovers as well as the larger circulators. He knows the history and shares it well. Hopefully more people take notice. Accountability news is beyond necessary in a democracy. Without it, we lose many of our freedoms and get robbed by those in public service and corporations. This is a must read book and Alex Jones shows why he has already been honored with one Pulitzer. Jones sums it up in the book's closing sentences, "If the iron core should gradually rust away, American will have squandered part of their birthright. Surely we will not allow that to happen."

Aside from the power of the net, the news we receive has been influenced by a whole array of behind the scenes judgments, prerogatives, and decisions. This is the crux of this insider's view of the ethical dilemma of news reporting in the still potent print, TV, and radio mediums of today. We are a long, long way from the days of the independently owned newspaper...most of which have died on the vine in the last 20 years....including Jones's own family newspaper. So...He writes from direct first hand experience on the transformation of the down-home journalism of the past, into the Darwinian big business media empires of today....and the many influences upon it...all driven by money...and ratings....and profit. To Jones, it's this entertainment and opinion smoke screen....over and above hard objective news....that lies in jeopardy of depriving citizen's the right learn of the facts...hard, unpleasant, but true...as they often are. This is what he means, when he writes of "iron core" of the news. The one important caveat I have about his book is that I wish Jones had addressed, more thoroughly and carefully, the impact of the net....but his ethical perspective towards the news holds true no matter. The fact is that hard information, as had been unavoidable and intrinsic in old traditional media, is now also greatly expanded in the electronic media...but only

for those who SEEK it. His thesis is that the public has not been well served in the traditional commercial media environment...which they actually own...is central to his thesis of continual ethical challenge to the bedrock of democracy...an informed citizenry. I recommend this book for anyone who wishes to understand just how fragile the First Amendment truly is. Jones's insistence that ethics, and objectivity, and accountability, need to find their way to the center of both our new, and old media world, to me is timelessly convincing....as is his faith that we must eventually rediscover the "iron core" of objective news, to balance the fire storm of too often uninformed personal opinion...or lose the most essential element of our American public discourse. It's a healthy thing to raise these questions...noting well that perfect objectivity is rarely, if ever possible...however, I agree with Jones, that it's worth the effort...and, that we can do a lot better than what we have today. For the general reader this book, is a good and fascinating intro into this ever evolving subject.

This excellent piece of non-fiction alerts us to the dangers of losing the old fashioned news paper and people relying solely on news sent via cyberspace. The book is well researched and convincing.

Great! An amazing read

keep up the great work

good

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