**Journalism Has Entered A Golden Age**

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CNN host Brian Stelter was kind enough to have me on his show, "Reliable Sources," over the weekend. In response to one question, I said that journalism has entered a "[golden age](http://reliablesources.blogs.cnn.com/2013/08/11/amazon-ing-the-washington-post/)."

Judging from the Twitter reaction, many of Brian's viewers agreed.

One viewer, however, a former print journalist, called this assertion "absurd."

It's true that "golden age for journalism" is not usually the first thing that you hear when you go to conferences and listen to panels of middle-aged newspaper people talk about the state of the newspaper business.

But I wasn't talking about the newspaper business.

I was talking about journalism.

And what I was suggesting is that — far from the picture of unremitting gloom occasionally painted by newspaper folks — journalism is now in better shape than it has ever been.

Consider:

* **The world is vastly better informed than ever before.** Yes, there have been high-profile examples of "iconic" news organizations cutting back or shutting down, but there has also been a mind-boggling explosion of other news and information sources over the same period, including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Bloomberg LP, Google, WikiLeaks, thousands of digital news and information sites, YouTube, and the installation of cameras, audio recording devices, and instant publishing tools in the pockets of nearly two billion people worldwide. Meanwhile, the vast majority of traditional news organizations including TV, radio, magazines, *and even most newspapers* still exist, and many are thriving. The standard by which the health of journalism should be judged is the degree to which important facts are being unearthed and shared and important stories are being told. And even the most diehard newspaper fan would admit that, these days, more people around the world are being informed about more important facts than ever before.
* **More great journalism is being produced today than ever before.** There are thousands upon thousands of successful professional news organizations in the world, and they employ hundreds of thousands of professional journalists. In addition, anyone in the world with an Internet connection can now create journalism — and lots of them do. You don't need a printing press to create and distribute journalism anymore. You don't need a broadcast network or a radio station. All you need are your eyes, ears, nose, and storytelling and digital publishing tools, the latter of which are included for free on every smartphone. If anyone anywhere publishes an important fact or tells an important story, people will find it and share it. And it will get the attention it deserves.
* **Every journalist on earth can now reach nearly every human on earth —directly and instantly.** On the Internet, everything is a click away. What's more, on the Internet, all stories can be stored permanently and viewed from anywhere, anytime. Compare that to the world of 20 years ago, when news had to be distributed on paper or broadcast over ephemeral air waves, and news consumers had to either lay their hands on a newspaper or magazine or plop themselves (at the appropriate time) in front of a radio or TV.
* **The struggles of the traditional news business have been greatly exaggerated.** Despite all the hand-wringing about the hardship in the newspaper business, the world's overall news-gathering and publishing capacity has been radically increased over the past decade. Even within professional journalism, the overall picture is healthy. Yes, some newspapers and magazines have closed. Yes, others are cutting back. But the TV news business is still growing, and many newspapers and magazines are hanging in there. And, importantly, the growth of professional digital news organizations is exploding.
* **Digital news organizations now employ a whole new generation of talented journalists, and these organizations are getting better, more comprehensive, and more sustainable by the day.** In the early years of the cable news business, the capabilities of networks like CNN were a mere fraction of what they are today. Today's native digital news organizations are already producing excellent journalism, and their talent, reach, and resources are continually increasing. Over the next few decades, vast new global news brands will be built that take full advantage of the capabilities of this new medium. And they will produce journalism that is more comprehensive, faster, more efficient, and more effectively distributed than ever before.
* **The proliferation of mobile gadgets has made it possible to consume news anywhere 24 hours a day.** As recently as 20 years ago, news consumption was limited to morning and evening papers and TV and radio broadcasts. For most of the past two decades, meanwhile, this consumption was largely limited to anywhere you had a tethered Internet connection. Now, you can get your news anywhere, anytime, in the palm of your hand. Just as important, you can immediately share it.
* **Today's journalism now offers a full range of storytelling formats:** No longer are journalists limited to text when telling their stories, or to an occasional picture, or to broadcast "packages" produced with audio and video. Today's journalists can use whatever storytelling tools and formats will best communicate their stories, and they can mix and match them in whatever way is most efficient and effective.
* **There are no longer any time or space limits for any story.** Stories in print or broadcast are constrained by physical time and space, regardless of the merit of the material. Digital stories aren't. If the best story length for a reader is just a link to another web site, today's journalists can publish a link. If the best story for the reader is a book-length investigative article, the journalist can write one of those. If the best story for the reader is a short or long video, or audio snippet, the journalists can produce those. Each story can be exactly as long or short as it needs to be.
* **There are no space or topic constraints for the broader publication.** In the physical world, publications have to be either general (newspapers or broadcast news networks) or specialized (focused magazines or networks). In the digital medium, there is no such limitation. A fully developed digital news network can (and will) be both extraordinarily broad and extraordinarily deep.
* **Publications can now take advantage of many different forms of distribution.** We still have paper, air wave, and cable distribution. And we also now have digital distribution, which is vastly more flexible, cheaper, and ubiquitous. With digital, content can roam free: There's no all-powerful "gate-keeper" who can control information, set the terms of the conversation, and capture an outsize share of influence and profitability. And digital publications can build many different sources of distribution within the medium, including direct, search, social, and referrals, thus further reducing dependence on "distributors."
* **There is now more media accuracy and "consensus knowledge" than ever before.** Yes, social media and news organizations still get things wrong. But that's nothing new. And thanks to the 2 billion fact-checkers who use the Internet every day, all information can be instantly and publicly challenged, debated, debunked, and sometimes even corrected by the source publication faster than ever. And the subjects of journalism can respond to stories directly, without the need of an intermediary.
* **It is easier than ever before for talented aspiring professional journalists to start practicing their trade.** Think you might want to be a journalist? Then start being one! All you need is a laptop, a cellphone (camera), a blog, and a few social media accounts. Once you demonstrate that you are good at unearthing facts, sharing images, and telling stories readers like, you'll be off to the races.

I could go on.

But you get the picture.

The business of journalism is changing, certainly, especially at newspapers. You can't have change without loss. And loss is often painful and disruptive.

But journalism itself is entering a new golden age.

And, contrary to the assertions of some newspaper owners, even the journalism *business* is going to be okay.

In fact, when some of today's upstart digital news organizations have matured, and the transformation of the newspaper business is complete, the journalism business is not just going to be okay. It's going to be excellent.

All we have to do is get through this tumultuous transition period.

In the meantime, journalism itself has never been in better shape.

Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/a-golden-age-for-journalism-2013-8#ixzz2dMXx5gc5>