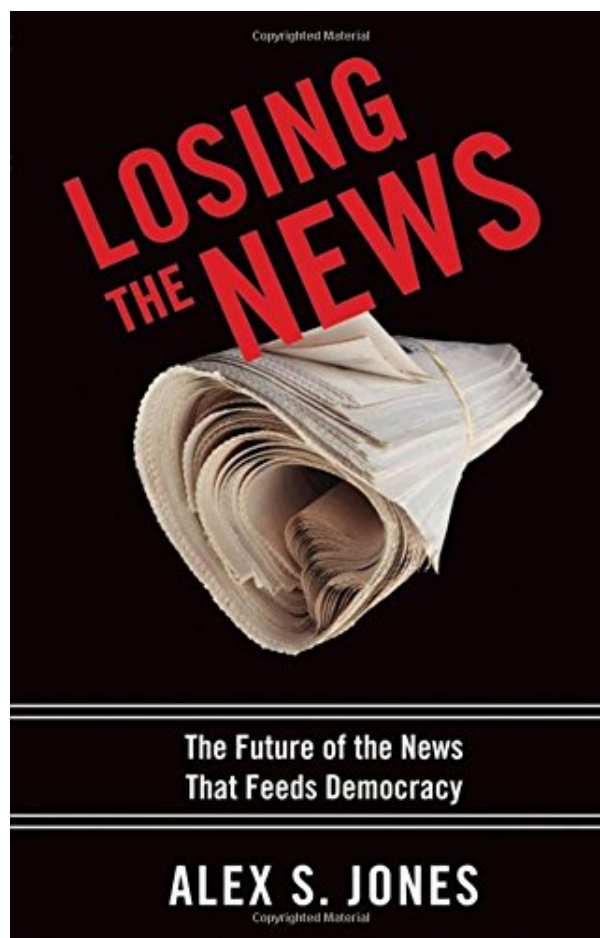


**LOSING THE NEWS: THE FUTURE OF THE
NEWS THAT FEEDS DEMOCRACY
(INSTITUTIONS OF AMERICAN
DEMOCRACY) BY ALEX JONES**



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That Feeds Democracy

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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

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- Sales Rank: #275082 in Books
- Published on: 2011-01-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.50" h x .70" w x 8.10" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 256 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

37 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting At Times

By To Be Simple

There is no question that Alex S. Jones has more than enough credentials to write a book such as "Losing the News." His vast experience at a variety of levels in the field of journalism, combined with his sense of thoughtfulness, make for an author who should excel at penning a book on the history and future of the news. "Losing the News," succeeds at times, but also falls short to some extent in giving an accurate analysis of the current newspaper crisis.

First off, this book will prove to be a valuable read for people who have little to no knowledge of the role of print media in America over the decades. Jones skillfully explains how print journalism has evolved over the years, and why it has been important for the survival of democracy. However, there is not any groundbreaking information presented for people already familiar with such areas.

The most interesting aspect of Jones' book is his discussion of the erosion of the iron core of "accountability" news. Jones is highly critical of the television news' propensity to offer up opinionated talking heads in place of solid news reporting. He also is critical of the increase, over the years, by media outlets to stray away from hard news, and instead do more reporting of personal interest and entertainment stories. His argument is that this phenomenon leaves people less informed, therefore weakening democracy on the whole.

Jones also discusses in detail the concept of "citizen journalism" brought on by the Internet. He obviously feels that the proliferation of blogs and nontraditional news web sites are a threat to traditional journalism.

Jones strongly believes that in order to be called a journalist, one needs to be trained as a journalist. He states, "The concepts of citizen journalism and soliciting reader input are hot at newspapers, which are looking for ways to engage people as well as to capitalize on the expertise that is undeniably out there. But that is not journalism I see it." Additionally, he speaks on the subject of how to finance journalists in an age of declining newspaper revenues and increase in news on the Internet that is free to users.

There are a couple of problems I have with "Losing the News." First, Jones does not attribute nearly enough importance to the filtering of news by the corporate interests of the owners of media sources. Perhaps the reason for the large rise in citizen journalism is because the traditional news sources are indeed filled with fluff and are negligent in giving unbiased hard news and solid investigative journalism. This leads me to my second criticism -- how does Jones think the news can be saved? Jones' prescription for saving the news is, "Journalists must hold fast and persevere. Owners must do the right thing. And citizens and news consumers must notice and demand the news that they need." Well, that is a nice thought, but far from practical advice as to how to save the news as Jones desires. Anyone with a reasonable level of understanding of the economics and technological change in the news business can immediately see that Jones' prescription is fanciful at best.

In closing, "Losing the News" does serve as a good primer for learning a basic history of journalism in America. It also raises some good questions about the direction the news has taken over the decades, especially more recently with the rise of the Internet. Unfortunately, there is a glossing over of the magnitude of corporate control of the media, which in turn leads to some significant errors in diagnosing some of the pressing problems in the media, as well as the prescription to remedying these problems.

22 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

Must Read

By J. Soller

Losing the News challenges the reader to assess the importance of news---its purpose, content, value, delivery and business mechanisms, and ethics. And, in that assessment, the reader reevaluates the importance of his or her responsibility as an `every day' American citizen and consumer of media information.

Who is this reader Alex S. Jones addresses? In keeping with major themes of the text---how news interacts with democracy, Jones writes this book for those who love to read print newspapers, for those who are connected to news electronically, for lovers of US history, government, ethics, and all social sciences, for newspaper people and journalists, elected officials, policy makers, and private citizens. The wise teacher or professor who wishes to deliver a dynamic, thought-provoking, provocative (and, probably, the most popular on campus) course will use this book as a text.

But, most of all, Losing the News is for people who love good books. Written by a master storyteller, the prose is gorgeous. Jones' style empowers the reader to enjoy the book from his or her unique experience.

I noticed the Amazon release date for Losing the News is August 19; a very fitting date as it is the birthday of the great 20th century British writer and fierce journalistic defender of freedom, Bernard Levin, CBE. Whether your purchase is print or Kindle (ironic chuckle), Losing the News by Alex S. Jones is a must read.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

"the nation's traditional news organizations are being transformed into tabloid news organizations..." (p. 51)

By DWD's Reviews

Alex S. Jones is a journalist who has just about seen it all: he has owned and managed a paper, he has written features, he won a Pulitzer Prize, he has taught journalism, he has done radio journalism and he has written several books. He knows of what he writes.

Jones is concerned about the evolution of news gathering services (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines) from expensive investigative work to nonsense tabloid stuff (this week it is Tiger Woods - thanks to serious news organizations I know more than I've ever wanted to know about his wife, his doctor, etc. - but just go out and try to get some solid info about the health care debate!)

He bemoans a number of trends, including the synergy type news that ABC, NBC & CBS do to promote new books, movies or shows. He is concerned that the "iron core" of news is being ignored and is shrinking because it is hard to produce and can be costly. By iron core he means the serious analysis news (not opinion pieces) and investigative journalism that the public can trust. He is also unhappy (but not enough, in my opinion) at advocacy "gotcha" journalism that undermines the public's faith.

He includes a nice history of journalism in America and plenty of first-hand examples from his own family's experiences. His analysis of technological trends is spot-on and ties in neatly with the analysis in the book *Free: The Future of a Radical Price* by Chris Anderson. At the end of the book he offers some interesting predictions about where news is heading.

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