

# A New Approach to Journalism



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By

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**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



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This book first published 2020

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-5509-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-5509-9

## **To the Truth**

*The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.*

—Winston Churchill

*An investigator needs facts and not legends or rumors.*

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, from the *Hound of the Baskervilles*

*However much you deny the truth, the truth goes on existing.*

—George Orwell

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## PREFACE

The book you are about to read took thirty years to create. I became a journalist to study journalism: to see its flaws and to see what needed to be done to resurrect a profession that once thrived in authority, but then collapsed in the anarchy of social media. As I was writing stories as a traditional journalist, I was also collecting information about the profession by conducting quiet studies and I dubbed what I did “method research.” I used empirical methods and experiments to see what worked in journalism, what didn’t and what could work, but wasn’t being tried.

The results of my foray became fodder for my numerous books, including a 2005 consumer manual for spotting hoaxes and propaganda, a post-mortem of journalism’s collapse in 2018, a book on how to spot war propaganda in 2020 and now the actual alternative to journalism is the book you are reading now.

The scenarios that I discuss in this book are not hypothetical fictions: these are the hidden factors that I found while working as a journalist over the years. My novel methods helped me uncover information before a problem exploded out of control, but often, the pitches were rejected as traditional journalism did not train news producers to develop a proactive eye for trouble.

When I was a university student, I would quote something from a news report, but then the professor or marker would chastise me for using such an unreliable source, even if I was using it to show its deficiencies. The alternative to journalism must be such that anyone—from an average citizen to a professor—can and should be able to use it without reservation. The journalist’s word must be a bond; otherwise, the journalist has nothing.

There are many exercises for you to try to reorient your perceptions for your chosen career: and rest assured, I was my own test subject in every single one. As a psychology student, I would try out the various experiments I studied in the real world: I am happy to report that most of them worked just as well in the real world as they did in a laboratory, with some minor modifications. When I decided to go into journalism to study it, I had been

inspired by my own hobby of verifying information I learned in my psychology classes.

I also encourage you to do the same with this book, as well as all your other classes. You will learn about the real world when you actively experiment in it. When you see the world as a stage, laboratory and classroom woven in together as one, it will also become your playground. That is the way to connect to this world to embrace it, care for it, understand it, love it and many times, even *forgive* it to leave it in a better condition when you pass than it was when you arrived. Good luck.



## **SECTION ONE:**

# **WHY TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM FAILED**



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE FAILURE OF TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM

Journalism was an industry that was a staple of democracies for decades. It was in existence in various forms for centuries and with the advent of the printing press in the 1600s in Europe, it started without the benefit of academic study, empiricism, or basic protocols. It was amateur in its beginnings, but as time went on, it became more than just a staple of democracy; it became a profitable industry with financial, political and social clout. It could be a king-maker or deal-breaker: it could show where scandals were slumbering, as it could turn average citizens into heroes, villains or victims in the eyes of the world. It could show trends, fads, celebrity and give fame and fortune to those who sought it and infamy to those who didn't. Its support and activism could determine which candidates would be elected to the highest offices in the world, which were to be ridiculed and which were to be shamed away.

Its power was wide and vast: it determined what issues were debated in the public and which transgressions they would respond to were greatly influenced by the gate-keepers in the press. How events and people were interpreted was also largely influenced by the news media's reportage. They were seen as a window to the world and for decades, what they decided was newsworthy (called a "newspeg" in its jargon) was taken for granted by the public.

If an issue, event or person did not get coverage, the slight meant that the entity was not seen as being newsworthy, as it did not meet the "standard" set by the profession, whether it was hard news or soft news. The press gave the world access to snippets, with explanations of who were the heroes, winners, victims, oddballs and villains. Watergate took down an American president. CNN's *The Boys of Baghdad* relayed the start of the Gulf War as it happened. The public had been dependent on the press for important information and much had been taken for granted.

The discipline thrived in print, radio and television, with the peculiar rig of being a *one-way* form of communications where an audience did not have

the same access to the medium as those who owned it or worked for those who did. Journalism did not evolve as a profession because there was no need to alter the methods and models that seemed to work. However, with the beginnings of the mainstream use of the Internet and with the rise of social media, the press found itself in a freefall. No longer did their methods work as audience erosion increased rapidly in the short span of twenty years.

So how and why did traditional journalism fail?

In an Internet Age, the old rigs and rules that allowed the profession to originally prosper were no longer there. Punditry and opinions became devalued as anyone, regardless of knowledge, experience, morals, comprehension, or background could proffer their untested beliefs to billions. Advertisers and public relations were no longer dependent on media to disseminate messages and could go directly to audiences, as social media platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook could replace classified and traditional advertising with customized audiences. Traditionally ignored demographics could be emboldened to challenge journalistic narratives and the public could blog, vlog, podcast and stream, finding their own audiences as they bypassed the traditional press completely. Audiences fragmented into micro-clusters and the old business models could not account for the change in psychographical shifts that came when people had the means of posting their own information and opinions in a public platform.

The public's new habit opened up what was seen by the world: more kinds of people, places, events, issues and opinions than what were once presented before. The public saw diversity as it had never been able to do so in the history of humanity and the press began to pale in the comparison as it fell behind. No longer did they have exclusive interviews as newsmakers could use social media to give their accounts without an interviewer's hostility or editor's censoring. Scoops were no longer the news media's domain as smartphones allowed people to send pictures and videos of news events, from natural disasters to the execution of world leaders.

But the redundancy did not end there. Its traditional narrative, patriarchal structures and lack of empirical methods contributed to its collapse as those people and groups who were once labeled victims or villains could use social media to counter the narrative and show their side to the world. Political divides made the public distrustful of the press and its narratives often proved to be partisan and ideologically-based, rather than objective or



factual in nature. Worse, journalistic objectivity had never been defined or empirically tested, refined, or even operationalized, meaning the concept never had universal application, making the methods of the concept vulnerable to criticism. It would be a devastating blow to a profession whose very mandate is to present the landscape of reality to a general, mass audience.

Traditional journalism has collapsed with outlet closures to massive job losses. McClatchy newspapers, for instance, the second largest newspaper chain in the US, filed for bankruptcy in 2020, while in January 2019, over one thousand journalists in the US lost their jobs in a single day alone. Outlets closed as others in the US, UK, Australia and Canada saw the loss of thousands of positions in the profession. Online outlets fared no better, with many ceasing operations when they could not sustain their models through advertising or even through donations or public funding.

Yet why did the profession fail to see their own troubles and take proactive steps to stop the collapse?

The old methods had been accepted as truisms, without considering the changing landscape and the evolution of a medium that was significantly different than the previous three, all that were not interactive by design. When much of journalism became redundant and outsourced to the general public via social media and its scaffolding became antiquated and the public began to look elsewhere for information as they also began to put out their own information on their own.

Yet without relevant, reliable, valid and useful current information, a public remains uninformed, as they base decisions on flawed theories and sophistry at the best of times, lies, opinion and outright propaganda at the worst. However, the way information is gathered, vetted, analyzed, tested and disseminated must not be the same way it has been done in the past when most citizens had no tools to communicate with the world and to do so without filters, gate-keepers, or authorities. People do not need to be told how to think or to feel: free will and freedom of thought is essential to finding facts and solutions. Ideological diversity needs to be respected as we inform those who do not think the way we do, but how does a news producer do so in an age where anyone can broadcast to the world?

The answer is to provide empirical and narrative-free information that is free of political or ideological bias or unrealistic narrative that deifies

supporters, but villainizes detractors. Propaganda and fear-mongering are tools for manipulators who cause damage to societies. Information that a general public requires to make informed decisions is essential for survival, yet we require a different way of seeing the profession of information dissemination, one that informs with facts that have been vetted and gathered empirically and presented without a contrived narrative. When information is presented in a more precise way, then it is reliable, valid, useful and most importantly *trusted*. When there is respect for audiences as well as an understanding that different people will use the same information differently, a forum in a mosaic is possible and can thrive on its own.

A new form of journalism can be done and this manual is your guide on how to do it regardless of medium.

This book will guide you from the last days of the traditional model, but then introduce you to an alternative and empirical new model that takes account the cultural significance that liberated the lines of global communication, but left a void in how information is to be expertly vetted and presented. People may have the ability to post opinions, but they do not conduct primary research to ensure what they give to others is empirically sound information. It is in this area where a new model of journalism is needed.

But the form needed is vastly different than the one that was created in different times with more primitive technology and less evolved and enlightened perspectives. This book will show techniques and considerations to create useable information for not just a general audience, but an academic one as well. From diverse experiences, to uncovering deceptions and propaganda, to even empirical interviewing techniques, this book will explain the ways of modern information gathering, verification and dissemination. From how to conduct interviews to verifying and disseminating factual information, you will learn how to visual information, find hidden connections, immerse in a subject matter without becoming an apologist or advocate and present narrative-free information in a compelling form. You will learn to create dossiers that can show how a single fact has multiple implications and how to conduct empirically sound experiments as a journalist. The world is your laboratory, classroom and stage and you will learn how to use applied psychology to make the most of your resources and time to inform others of what is happening and what needs to be done.

But first, let us look at the traditional business model as begin to redefine a profession whose core essence is to inform the public of the world in which they live in.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BAD BUSINESS

Traditional journalism was never a public service. It is a business whose product is information, but not pure information or raw data. It is processed information embedded in narratives. It directs audiences how to *feel*.

For example, take the following *Los Angeles Times*' headline from February 20, 2020:

***Op-Ed: Jurors saw Weinstein for the monster he is. Here's why that's a crucial breakthrough***

The word “monster” clearly signals to the reader that the writer is discussing a designated villain. It would be sufficient to state that Weinstein was convicted of sexual assault to inform a public of his deeds; however, the Times did not think their readers could grasp what the conviction meant and implied that the jury's verdict was not enough.

More telling, however, is the second sentence, particularly the phrase “Here's why.” The article talks down to the audience, giving them a directive on how to interpret and perceive the conviction. *This is why labelling him a monster is important*, yet the case itself was a not an average one: the trial took place in the entertainment industry amid upper-class people. The accused was not a poor, working class, or middle-class man, nor were his victims people working in a typical venue. The article gives an average person a false impression based on a *single* high-profile jury trial. It is not about the relaying of information, but is a talking points memo instructing readers how to interpret a single event.

But “man convicted of committing a criminal sex act in the first degree and rape in the third degree” is fact; whereas “monster” is narrative. The word is not an empirically-defined term and it is one that ignores all those individuals who enabled him for decades inside an industry whose rigs and system rewarded him with both money and power. He becomes a convicted

felon and scapegoat as society is no better prepared for the next predator who comes along, as we are oversold on the notion that the system has now been permanently enlightened and repaired without concrete proof.

Even in an “opinion piece”, we expect facts and logic. *The New York Times* had various “counters” of how many days had passed since the last mass killing in the US, with the express theory that gun control was to blame in a November 6, 2017 editorial:

Still, Republican leaders in Congress do nothing. Or, really, so far they’ve done the same thing they have always done: offered thoughts and prayers. Soon, they will surely offer warnings not to “politicize” a tragedy by debating gun controls that might prevent such mass killings from happening again.

“We are not going to talk about that today,” President Trump told reporters in the days that followed the Las Vegas shooting, where 58 people were killed.

“I think it’s premature to be discussing legislative solutions if there are any,” the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, said.

If now is too soon to debate gun control, how long must Americans wait?

The piece created a false world where citizens had to “wait” and were helpless from taking any action of their own. They could not lobby or implement their own remedies. They were labelled as infantilized victims who were inferior to authorities.

The article did more than create a false world where no one but a handful of elected officials had any freedom to think and to act. *Violence* control was not considered, nor that statistically speaking, people are far more likely to be murdered by a spouse in their own home than a stranger in a mass shooting. It did not consider that guns were just as easily obtained illegally, could be manufactured in a simple shop, or with a 3D printer. It did not consider that other countries with gun control, such as Canada, France and the UK, also had seen violent outbursts, with mass killers using guns, bombs, machetes, knives and even trucks (Canada saw its worst mass murder spree in April 2020 when a gunman wearing an RCMP uniformed murdered 22 people).

The article did not look at the number of mass killers who were on psychiatric medication and were seeing mental health professionals before

their deadly outbursts. It did not consider that many killers informed their therapists or wrote online manifestos of their intentions prior to their act. It instructed readers that the only solution was “gun control” and shut out other factors that refuted their simplistic hypothesis. It was a confirmation bias with no factual basis.

What compelled these individuals to kill? Were there any previous warning signs? Why is there continued violence and no systems in place to deal with it proactively? How realistic is it to expect 536 people (1 president, 100 senators and 435 members of Congress) to control the behaviours of over 331 million citizens? If people are willing to break the law to commit mass murder, then how realistic is it to expect them to obey the law of not acquiring an illegal firearm or look to other methods, such as bombs or trucks to do what they wish?

This typical piece of traditional journalism provides no *utility*. Audiences who read it are no wiser or more informed than if they ignored it entirely. The article provides no examination of the process of governance, nor is there an attempt to rationally analyze facts. There is no insight into how tragedy occurs. There is nothing a reader can use to help themselves, others, or use as part of their professional research.

And it is here where we can begin to see why traditional journalism has faltered: it seeks to blame a single person or item, not to inform or provide the big picture. That is patriarchal narrative: there is a single Chosen One and right answer and anyone who is not in full agreement or has a conflicting interest is a villain. It is Us versus Them. It does not see the nuances of reality to show us where we need to actively fix a problem, but to be confined by the hypothetical constructs dictated by narrative. We have no role to play in the world; we are passive conduits of the whims of institutions, corporations, evil-doers and fate.

The inherent narrative assumptions of the news product also reflect the business model of the profession. The product it is supposed to represent reality as it happens, not shade or interpret it. When there was little ability for regular citizens to be exposed to diverse and global perspectives or express their own views, the business model did not matter as much: people would pay to subscribe to a newspaper or magazine and advertisers wishing for an audience would pay to be showcased in print and on radio and television. The audience demographics and psychographics were imprecise but useful enough for advertisers who were looking for either a local pool

of potential customers, or those based on gender, age, education, occupation, hobby, or socioeconomic status.

For other outlets based on a public service model, they relied on hybrid methods of funding (taxpayer funding with advertising revenue, paid subscription and donations from the public or large philanthropic support). There will also be fees for database use of old articles and reprints.

When audience erosion began in the late 1990s, some newspaper companies began to lobby for laxer standards as to what constituted as a “paid subscription.” For example, the Newspaper Audience Databank (NADbank) had allowed papers sold as little as one penny to be counted as part of paid circulation in Canada, which usually meant bulk stacks of unread newspapers in diners and college campuses were counted as paid, even if no one read them.

The gambit did not work as companies preferred the more precise and immediate feedback they could get by advertising on social media and Internet sites such as Facebook, Google, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, who all had global audiences with coveted demographics, precise intelligence on potential audience and simpler and more effective ways of reaching them. The traditional news media could not compete or keep up and the industry lost significant revenue without devising alternative business models to replace their antiquated static ones. Interestingly enough, online news sites fared no better in the bargain.

In 1999, Canadian newspapers were using NADBank to dubiously define what paid circulation meant; by 2017, they were lobbying their federal government to outright fund them. The Public Policy Forum’s paper entitled *The Shattered Mirror* decided the only way to save newspapers was for taxpayers to foot the bill for a product they did not wish to buy. Many in the business used the pages of their own newspapers to openly lobby for public funding. Newspapers, such as the *Toronto Star* had used their news vehicles to demand their government fund them, in their January 26, 2018 edition:

To make matters worse, in announcing her government’s decisions, Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly emphasized her government wasn’t interested in bailing out “industry models that are no longer viable.”

Left starkly unclear was where quality journalism would then originate. And newspaper executives, myself included, were left asking: if this is what the

Trudeau government really thinks, then why did we go through this lengthy process?

The demand that the government solve the problems of the industry was curious as it was a de facto admission that the old guard, who were expected to challenge their governments, not ask them to become benefactors, were no longer capable of functioning. This misuse of the medium all while they had completed questionable mergers that the Competition Bureau found it necessary to investigate them and seize their files. Even despite receiving government subsidies, Postmedia still scuttled 15 newspapers in February 2020.

In the US, the situation was not any better. “News deserts”, defined as towns without a newspaper, began to grow as “asset-squeezing” owners bought newspapers to sell their assets, such as real estate holdings before reducing staffing levels and even print frequency before selling those properties once again. Some larger companies, such as Gannett and GateHouse (owned by New Media Investment Group) merged, while McClatchy declared bankruptcy. TorStar sold its *Hamilton Spectator* building in 2019 in a secretive deal for over \$25 million to McMaster University, meaning taxpayers had been forced to bail out the newspaper through questionably ethical means. The backdoor bailout made the newspaper company seem far less credible in the bargain, as they already had a quiet deal with the federal government previously, but when the deal was made public, it was quickly terminated.

The old models no longer worked for the same reasons why the model of journalism itself faltered: the Internet—the *fourth* medium after print, radio and television, made the old ways redundant. People had a choice and were now exposed to new worlds. With a free marketplace, businesses had new worlds of potential customers open up to them with detailed feedback and interaction, fostering relationships directly with customers through Facebook pages and the like. The middle man of journalism was cut out and replaced with a new conduit of social media and one which allowed direct contact between companies and citizens.

Social media also allowed direct contact between newsmakers and citizens. When a world leader can bypass the mainstream press to relay messages via Twitter, he is no longer beholden to the press, meaning neither are advertisers. Facebook, for instance, allows companies to tell potential customers which one friends “like” their product. The customized and personalized endorsements can be as effective as the ones of high-profile



celebrities. With social media “influencers” touting products, the need to pay media outlets for the privilege of exposure was no longer necessary. A superior method has been in play for over a decade.

The public service model is equally problematic: traditional publications that attempted a non-profit model folded and could not find their footing. When media outlets had the revenue, they were still losing viewers and readers, meaning any kind of bailout will not translate to restoring a base of any sort and of those outlets that do rely on government funding, such as the CBC in Canada and the BBC in the UK, they are still losing audiences, with the BBC News forced to cut 450 jobs in January 2020, while the according to their own annual reports, the CBC saw a nearly 30% decline in their local news programs and a drop of ad revenue by over 50% in 2019. For those looking for a risk-free shortcut with guarantees and simplistic answers, the public-funding model is as antiquated as the private sector one.

From 2004 to 2019, over 2000 US newspapers ceased publication, many over a century and a half old, translating to roughly one in five newspapers. The grim pace accelerated in 2020 during the COVID-19 panic. The newspaper industry had once been one of the largest employers in the country and suddenly, it could not stem the changes social media brought in. In Canada, the number stood at 250 closures in a decade while in the UK 245 papers had ceased operations in the same decade. With thousands of closures in a short span of time and tens of thousands of jobs lost, the old models of traditional journalism have failed to work. Journalism thrived during wars and depression and now it collapsed as it shattered regardless of circumstances.

Journalism boxed itself in with its obsolete model along with its archaic business practice. It could not connect to the reality of the world to see how to update their methods, always falling back on what worked before the advent of social media, whether the model was a private sector one or a public-funding model, but it was also the lack of innovation from the traditional models that served as a barrier as the following chapter discusses.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BAD EDUCATION

Universities are designed to be the cradles for new and innovative ideas. The institution is the incubator for novel approaches in thoughts and actions for the express purpose of evolution, improvements and ground-breaking novelties. For many disciplines, their financial success can be thanked by academia's various methods of inquiry and discovery, from the Polio vaccine to the Internet. If there is any one place where untested ideas have a chance to be refined until they become reality, it is in academic halls.

Yet traditional journalism did not take advantage of those halls and floundered without recovery.

The popularity of journalism programs exploded after the release of the 1976 movie *All the President's Men*, a film based on the book from Watergate reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein. Some journalism schools opened after the film, such as Concordia University's journalism department. Other university-based publications started after it such as the now defunct *American Journalism Review* a publication from the Phillip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. Both the book and the film captured the imaginations of a generation and inspired many to go to study the profession to be the next Woodward and Bernstein.

The initial promise slowly eroded as the profession began to falter, yet the educational system did not foresee or remedy those problems. Journalism education began quietly as a *fin de siècle* undertaking, but it was in the 1970s when it became a popular degree to pursue. Unfortunately, the educational aspect had not been one that was on the vanguard of the profession; it merely followed the lead of the industry. This subtle submissiveness would cause problems for the profession later on.

Traditional journalism had been fraught with problems in both the private and public arenas. It was not as if one had better fortunes or bigger audiences than the other. There is a reason for it: the rules, rites and rigs they were

taught in their early days were not questioned or challenged. You are reading this textbook as part of your class and are in a course that is teaching you a *different* system. This method is an alternative to the traditional model, meaning your educational institution has broken away from the system that no longer works. You are now part of an innovative program, yet this turn has not always been the case.

Journalism schools or “j-schools” did not conduct experiments to see how to best gather information, interview sources, analyze information, disseminate data, or present what they gathered to the public. It did not come up with innovative or novel approaches, or even conduct market research to see what the public needed or wanted. It did not create various structures of business models or schools of journalism. It was not scientific in its approach and when it did attempt to look inward, the results were wanting.

For example, Ryerson University of Toronto had put out a report entitled *Toward 2020: New Directions in Journalism Education* in 2014 in an attempt to explain the rapid erosion of the profession, without empirical study. It came to various conclusions such as this musing:

Social media are now the primary carriers of breaking news. Online news sites, blogs and social media are far more often willing to publicly shame elites than legacy media. The locations of opinion and debate have moved to digital media. All of this has reduced the need for and influence of news organizations.

That passage isn’t quite true, nor is it the entire picture. Traditional journalists have shamed people for decades. Social media is unfiltered and unverified. Debate and opinion have always been filler. Had the profession had more discipline and more focus, they could have easily kept up with the times and been viable.

There is another questionable truism: “Journalism isn’t an art, nor is it a science.”

It was neither art nor science because of a collective willful choice to neglect the profession. It is a profession that chose to be feral and uneducated. There are more excuses than reasons in the report, claiming that journalism schools were co-opted by industry. This was not the case as the industry wasn’t keen on education for decades. Having a journalism degree to get into the profession isn’t required.

One paper mused of “A Foucauldian Foray into How Power Operates When Journalists and Public Relations Officers Meet”, a philosophical interpretation, not an empirical one with actual data and facts as no one conducted studies or provided primary sources and research. STEM-based disciplines had no such problems, yet traditional journalism never grasped the difference.

There were those who thought journalism students should learn anti-overdose training, but not how to save their own profession. When Columbia University chose Nicholas Lemann to be their dean for the Graduate School of Journalism in 2003, he did not look to empirical reinvention as he told the *New York Times*:

But [Lemann] said he sometimes wished he had had more schooling beyond his undergraduate years. “I have gone through life wishing I had three months to read Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and to discuss the master ideas that are most likely to be of use in journalism and then linking them to the practice of journalism,” he said yesterday. “That is a different process from any old undergraduate education, because it is more specific.”

It was a critical juncture in the profession and it was an opportunity squandered. J-schools failed to see the changing landscape and update and revolutionize the profession. Its overseers did not take advantage of academia to provide research in audience engagement, interviewing and dissemination. How does asking loaded questions alter responses and memories? J-schools did not look for the answer the way their colleagues in the Psychology Department did repeatedly. Journalism is a form of applied psychology, yet there wasn’t any collaboration with any discipline that could have provided valuable insights to help rejuvenate the profession.

The fear of change stifled debate on how to best transform journalism. It was not allowed to re-invent itself; it continued to refine the craft, not building a new model based on global shifts in communications. How do we inform children of newsworthy events? How do we inform people in a culturally diverse world? How do we remove narrative to paint a picture of reality? How do psychological disorders impact perceptions and interpretations of reality? How do we spot war propaganda? How do we conduct *experiments* to find information? How do we avoid the confirmation bias? How do we interview people who are traumatized, but willing to speak with us? What are the differences between truth, reality, perception and interpretation and why should it matter to journalists? How do we present information in a world where anyone can broadcast on YouTube, Vimeo, Periscope or Twitch? With WordPress or Square Space,

anyone can have their own publication; so how does journalism become relevant to the public once again?

These questions were not considered for many years. Part pride, part fear, part adherence to old traditions without question had stymied the natural progress of a once vital profession. Even the most basic concepts such as journalistic objectivity had never been empirically defined or tested, nor were troublesome habits such as journalistic appeal to authority been addressed. It was a fatal error and it prevented the evolution of the discipline to allow it to keep up with the times.

With an empirical alternative, the beginnings are in this very place where journalism faltered: new generations of would-be reporters did not begin with the notion of starting fresh from scratch. However, education is not about memorizing static rules in a vacuum: it is about learning to innovate and negotiate with the world around you. It is to help those apprentices learn to find new solutions and methods as they work in their chosen profession. With an empirical and experimental mindset, a new method of chronicling the world emerges. As you progress throughout this book, you will learn new methods the old guard did not.

But before we can do that, let us examine the underlying ideological barriers that had prevented an industry's rejuvenation in the first place.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE ROTTEN CORE

The base assumption of traditional journalism has always been that the reporter has access to information a regular citizen does not. It is also assumed that the job, by its very nature, is a noble and important one, regardless of what celebrity gossip and soft news it presented from a publicist or press release without empirical standards or vigorous testing. The film *All the President's Men* romanticized the discipline, while the actual real-life version was soon forgotten. Had *All the President's Men* been a documentary and not a Hollywood film, the trajectory of the profession would have gone a radically different way.

But the failure to see that the one-time gate-keepers no longer had any gates to keep when then tsunami of social media tore those gates down, had its price. When the President of the United States could bypass the press by using the simplest of all social media platforms known as Twitter, there was a permanent shift in what information streams could be used most effectively. Those who worked in the traditional model became reactionary in trying to reclaim something permanently lost with negative coverage of those who broadcast to a global stage through modern means, but it did not to impede technological progress in communications.

There have been many casualties as a result of following the antiquated script. The Australian Associated Press, the nation's main wire service could not function and had to cease operations in early 2020:

AAP chief executive Bruce Davidson said the decision to drop the axe was due to the decline in the number of media companies subscribing to its services in recent years.

...AAP's press release distribution business Medianet and its media intelligence business Mediaverse will be put up for sale.

"AAP has been a critical part of journalism in Australia since 1935 and it is tragic that it will come to an end," Mr Davidson said.