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Redefining Foreign Correspondence

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Along with American journalism generally, foreign correspondence has evolved in the last 250 years so that it scarcely resembles its colonial origins. Not the least of these differences is that it never occurred to colonial printers to have a newsroom, let alone pay anyone to report from abroad. Colonial printers published travelers' letters and unabashedly lifted stories from European publications because they were free and tended to be non-controversial. Today, in contrast, the foreign correspondent for traditional news media enjoys prestige among professional peers and is a figure to be reckoned with by public policy makers.ⁱ

At the same time, paradoxically, establishment news media have de-emphasized foreign news. Critics have described the trend in Darwinian terms. The international news hole -- the space and time devoted to foreign affairs -- is an "endangered species," journalism historian Michael Emery lamented in the late 1980s.ⁱⁱ "Where there are still correspondents based abroad," former diplomatic correspondent and media critic Marvin Kalb noted, "the genre known as 'foreign correspondent' is becoming extinct."ⁱⁱⁱ

Not even the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, have changed that. The news media focused considerable resources on the Middle East, but this coverage was limited in geographic scope and duration. As a study commissioned by the Pew International Journalism Program found, 58 percent of foreign editors at those large and mid-sized newspapers that increased their foreign coverage anticipated that coverage would "gradually return to pre-September 11 levels."^{iv} Over half of all foreign editors in the survey -- presumably the gatekeepers with the most commitment to foreign news --

thought foreign news should not increase. Not surprisingly, studies show that morale among foreign correspondents is low.^v

Significant declines in the number of foreign correspondents and in the amount of space and time given foreign news by print and broadcast media have raised criticism that the news media are “progressively less good at providing the public the wherewithal with which to judge foreign policy issues.”^{vi} But do these declines accurately measure the quantity and quality of foreign reporting? This paper examines three forces changing the way Americans receive news about events abroad: the economics of traditional news coverage; the rise of global interdependence; and the emergence of alternative news delivery technologies. Because of these forces, journalists and media scholars need broader definitions of foreign correspondence and foreign correspondents in order to assess what Americans know about the world and how they will act on that knowledge.

1. The economics of foreign correspondence

Although Benjamin Franklin did not pay a farthing for the foreign news that went into his *Pennsylvania Gazette*, foreign news is now one of the most costly newsgathering endeavors. As such, foreign news is coming under increasing financial pressure.

Salaries and support costs for foreign correspondents vary widely. Reporters responsible for covering a large number of countries, say across Africa or Latin America, have higher travel expenses than reporters posted in a single country. Newspaper reporters command lower salaries than network reporters, who typically have agents to negotiate their contracts, but their pay nevertheless is relatively high compared to local reporters’. It is not unusual for a newspaper to budget well over \$250,000 a year to

support a foreign correspondent. Networks can pay up to twice that for a correspondent; a production team accompanying reporters raises the costs still more.^{vii} In the Pew study cited above, 53 percent of foreign newspaper editors identified cost as the greatest obstacle to increased foreign coverage. The next most important obstacles were lack of interest by senior editors and lack of experienced reporters, cited by only nine percent of foreign editors.^{viii}

The penny press was willing to underwrite foreign news because it was a selling point useful in attracting readers. “The Herald alone knows how to dish up the foreign news,” wrote James Gordon Bennet in one of his many promotional articles.^{ix} Today the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* cannot keep their core readership or status without maintaining a substantial core of fulltime reporters overseas. This incentive is less powerful, however, for the great majority of newspapers.

One of the prime reasons for this attitude shift is the changing nature of newspaper competition. The dueling New York dailies of Bennet’s time are long gone. The one-newspaper town is the norm. Only two percent of all U.S. cities still have competitive dailies.^x In addition, newspapers face a new kind of competition that also mitigates against financing foreign correspondence. Jack Fuller, President, Tribune Publishing Company, that has 12 daily newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*, and deploys 46 correspondents in 23 countries said:

What concerns me...is how the Tribune and the handful of other news organizations that still do a significant amount of original foreign coverage are going to be able to support this very important but very expensive

activity in the decades to come.... The reason that we'll be challenged over the next decades is two-fold: the rapidly falling cost of computing power, and the rapid expansion of bandwidth, which causes ... the cost of moving information from one place to another to fall precipitously.... Potential competitors will use the cheaper bandwidth and cheaper computing power to go after our advertising revenues and our audience.... [T]he ongoing fragmentation of the information environment will put pressure on the business model that supports excellent journalism, including and perhaps especially foreign coverage.^{xi}

Competition is a factor for television as well. Twenty years ago the three major networks were the exclusive source of broadcast images from abroad, notes Andrew Heyward, president of CBS News.^{xii} Sig Mickelson, the first president of CBS News, observed how overseas footage commanded audience attention during the Korean War: "A ninety-six-hour-late film story had just about as much impact as a much more recent one, if it provided pictorial coverage that had not previously been seen by viewers."^{xiii} Today, images stream into living rooms from a wide variety of sources. Expending great sums to add to this vast sea of images does not help network news add to its audience.

Commercial television decision-making has a bias against expensive programming and for programs that attract larger audiences, as media economist James T. Hamilton has noted. His studies show that a majority of Americans only follow foreign news "closely when something important or interesting is happening."^{xiv} The one exception is men aged 50 and older, but advertisers pay less to reach this audience than,

say, to reach women in the 18-34 range, about three-fourths of whom are not particularly interested in routine foreign news.

Publishers of weekly news magazines have their own test of readers' interest in foreign news. When *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *U.S. News & World Report* carries a cover story on a foreign topic, newsstand sales drops. Covers featuring celebrities or healthcare are economic winners. "In an age where information in general is getting cheaper, the cost of foreign bureaus is going up," the editor of *U.S. News* said in 1996. "So I think there is a long-term inevitable decline in the foreign bureau presence, and our challenge is to find ways to more shrewdly interpret and explain the impact of foreign events on our readers' lives."^{xv}

What economists call psychic rewards can induce owners to overlook the relatively high costs of foreign news gathering. Having a corps of elite foreign correspondents, a mark of commitment to public service, gives bragging rights to media owners and executives. But those psychic rewards are less powerful as media companies grow larger and more corporate, in some cases becoming part of non-media companies (e.g., NBC owned by GE). A family-owned newspaper or newspaper group can sacrifice short-term profits much more easily than can a publicly traded corporation. CEOs and their boards have an obligation to enhance profits for shareholders. Under these circumstances, it should not be surprising that media executives learn to do their bragging on Wall Street, where few people are likely to be impressed that a company is spending more money on news coverage. Anthony Ridder, Chairman and CEO of Knight Ridder, counts as one of his closest friends brokerage executive Charles Schwab, with whom he vacations in Europe.^{xvi} It is doubtful that he enjoys attending the annual meeting of the

American Society of Newspaper Editors, where one of the dominant topics of discussion is the evils of corporate ownership.

These economic trends do not mean that the leading national print and broadcast news media will dispense with foreign correspondents. They do suggest, however, that mass media are not likely to increase the number of foreign correspondents they send abroad and, instead, will look for cost-saving alternatives.

One of these alternatives is “parachute journalism”, a technique that entails dispatching reporters to cover a major story. While expensive, it is less costly than permanently stationing reporters in a number of outposts. Some parachute journalists are based in the United States; some are based at jumping off points overseas. *USA Today* uses its seven overseas bureaus as regional bases, and sends several home-based reporters abroad regularly. CBS News employs eight correspondents overseas in London, Tokyo, Tel Aviv, Moscow, and Rome, but also has outposts in more than half a dozen other countries that are manned by lower level staff. This staff can file as needed and assists when a foreign correspondent arrives to cover a big story. These CBS staff often are foreign nationals, which points to another cost-saving technique.

The traditional view is that Americans are best equipped to be the public’s eyes and ears abroad and, even then, should not be based too long in any one country lest they lose their American perspective. Although many news executives still hold this view, the practice has quietly changed. Only 31 percent of foreign correspondents are American, according to a recent survey. This is a sharp decline from the early 1990s, when another scholar working off a similar database found that about 65 percent were American.^{xvii} Foreign nationals command lower salaries and require less in the way of special

allowances for children's education, housing, and so forth. As concluded by the study, we may be beginning the era of the *foreign* foreign correspondent.

2. Interdependence and foreign news made local

Reflecting back on his journey to become one of the United States' preeminent diplomats, George F. Kennan recalled that when he left his Milwaukee hometown, "I was hopelessly and crudely Midwestern."^{xviii} Journalists covering foreign affairs have seen themselves moving among the small, select circle of sources peopled by Kennan and his ilk. "Issues of domestic policy arise in agencies throughout the executive branch and have their supporters and opponents scattered through the Congress and in private interest groups," Bernard Cohen observed in the 1960s, "whereas foreign policy questions usually have a narrower set of sources in the White House, State Department, or Defense Department—i.e., a more clearly defined and restricted 'establishment'—and a narrower base of informed and specialized legislators in the Congress."^{xix} Foreign correspondents rely on even more rarefied, remote sources than foreign policy reporters in Washington, D.C.

Stay-at-home journalists have been comfortable with this distinction. A Midwestern city editor in the early 1950s typically acknowledged that his newspaper needed to provide some foreign news even though the public was not interested—but he hoped that such news would never appear "at the expense of local news."^{xx} Behind this view is the familiar sentiment that foreign news is foreign and local news is local, and people want and need more of the latter and less of the former.

Such distinctions, however, are now as anachronistic as hot type and copy boys. In a world of increasingly porous borders, the lines between foreign and domestic blur for news just as they blur for commerce, health, culture, and the environment. Local reporters can find sources for foreign news among those they interact with daily.

A late 1980s Congressional Research Service study shows just how diffuse foreign policy has become. The study examined federal government activities that aided foreign countries but were not financed through the regular international affairs budget. Of the 85 government entities queried, 78 reported their own foreign aid activities. Among these government bodies were the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Disability Research Center of the Education Department, the National Park Service, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Supreme Court. The CRS report, which was never published, concluded that these initiatives were uncoordinated and with some countries possibly not consistent “with U.S. foreign policy, national security and economic interests.... Even individual departments and agencies are not collecting and analyzing such information regarding their own activities.”^{xxi}

“There is no question that there is more involvement now,” says Larry Nowels, CRS Specialist in Foreign Affairs who has testified before congressional committees on the report. “In the 80s, domestic agencies were reluctant to talk about international programs for fear that they would be punished for spending resources outside their core responsibilities.”^{xxii} In later Senate testimony, an official from the U.S. General Accounting Office underscored the proliferation of agency activity abroad, noting among other things that “in 1995 we found that 23 departments and independent agencies were implementing 215 aid projects in the former Soviet Union.”^{xxiii}

The Logan Act restricts foreign affairs to the federal government, but the foreign involvement that CRS found among federal agencies is similarly rampant and unchecked among cities and states. “I think there is no such thing anymore as foreign policy,” Senator John Kerry said in mid-2002, “It’s all Main Street American policy.”^{xxiv} Farmers and agricultural extension agents pay close attention to the ups and downs of foreign markets for crops; local entrepreneurs, supported by community banks as well as state and local development authorities, identify investments and trading opportunities abroad; communities declare themselves nuclear free zones and state development authorities send delegations to monitor and lobby federal trade negotiators.

The list of foreign connections that reach into American communities goes on endlessly. “The dramatic increases in worldwide movement of people, goods, ideas is the driving force behind the globalization of disease,” wrote Dr. Jonathan Mann of the Harvard AIDS Institute. “For not only do people travel increasingly, but they travel much more rapidly, and go to many more places than ever before. A person harboring a life-threatening microbe can easily board a jet plane and be on another continent when the symptoms of illness strike.”^{xxv} Environmental degradation abroad has implications increasingly well understood by Americans, such as global warming and loss of biodiversity. Less discouragingly, young people dance to the beat of foreign music and films from all nations are marketed to international audiences. For all of these stories, local reporters can find local angles and local sources.

Two recent projects show the potential for assiduously mining local connections abroad. One, funded by the Carnegie and Ford foundations and carried out under the auspices of the Society of Professional Journalists in the mid-1980s, worked with

newspapers and some television news journalists around the United States. It led to a book detailing various approaches for making foreign news local, including advice on sourcing.^{xxvi} Two surveys conducted in connection with the project showed high readership of the stories. The American Society of Newspaper Editors mounted a similar project a decade later. The resulting handbook offered guidance on finding local stories, using foreign wire service news, and sending local reporters abroad for ad hoc assignments.^{xxvii}

Well before *global village* found its way into our lexicon, editors recognized the possibilities of educating their audiences by dispatching reporters overseas on short-term assignments. Charles W. Bailey, former Washington correspondent and editor for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, has pointed to the orientation of that newspaper under John Cowles, Sr. Cowles, who acquired newspaper property in Minneapolis in the 1930s, had a strong interest in foreign news and sent reporters overseas “not so much to cover breaking news — the paper’s wire services provided enough of that — as to explore and research situations that might underlie future crises and wars,” Bailey recalled. Public opinion surveys showed that public attitudes in the traditionally isolationist state became progressively more internationally minded. By 1953, three out of seven Minnesotans favored U.N. membership. “Because most of the Minneapolis reporting was done not by Washington or overseas-based correspondents, but rather by reporters who lived and worked among their readers, it was easier and more natural to keep in mind such questions of relevance.”^{xxviii}

The *St. Petersburg Times* and *The Anniston Star* in Alabama, as well as some broadcast stations, have carried on this type of parachute journalism, and they are not

alone.^{xxix} In 2002, the International Center for Journalists, the World Affairs Councils of America, and the Newspaper Association Managers launched a program sending reporters from medium and small media markets abroad to look for foreign links to their communities. The Pew International Journalism Program study of foreign editors found that 39 of the 81 largest newspapers at least occasionally had used parachute journalists; so had seven of the 72 editors representing the smallest newspapers.

This phenomenon deserves more study. How many media outlets use parachute correspondents to cut back on permanent foreign correspondents? How many that previously could not afford any permanent foreign correspondents now send some abroad for short-term assignments? Ten percent of the smaller papers in the Pew study reported the use of parachute correspondents, an encouraging number given widespread concern about declining foreign coverage. While the costs of a permanent foreign correspondent may be increasingly prohibitive, the costs of short-term assignments may be more within the reach of news media with a hometown orientation, especially if they think it will serve and draw audiences.

How often, meanwhile, are media outlets searching for foreign connections locally? Eighty-six percent of editors in the Pew International Journalism Program study said that companies in their community had overseas investments. Of those who had foreign links, fifty percent said that they regularly or fairly regularly covered these stories locally. Similar splits were found for stories about immigrants, university connections, and foreign business and investment in the community.^{xxx} While this suggests that local print and broadcast news media have a long way to go to fully realize the potential for

drawing explicit links with events overseas, it also shows substantial interest in this direction.

“Local stories far from home” are topics in media conferences and in articles written in journalism trade publications. This demonstrates heightened recognition that local journalists can cover foreign stories.^{xxxix} “We’re in a new era now in which the ambiguity in what is national and what is international is very great,” veteran *Washington Post* foreign correspondent Don Oberdorfer said at one conference; “And I think that if we just...say that if the news isn’t coming from overseas then it’s not international, we’re misleading ourselves.”^{xxxix}

Just as we see the emergence of *foreign* foreign correspondents, we are seeing the rise of local foreign correspondents.

3. New media technology and foreign news

Until quite recently, only a few news organizations had the capacity to gather and disseminate reports on international events and issues. Audiences for international news gathered around whatever their newspaper, news magazine, or network news program offered. The audience was monolithic, generalized, and passive.

Now, however new media technologies have lowered the economic barriers of entry to publishing and broadcasting. Sources for foreign news are proliferating. The audience – fragmented and active – is far better able to choose and even shape the news. The result is yet another new class of foreign correspondents, who nevertheless have historical antecedents.

The Internet has made it possible for media companies to create special “wires” that they can retail at a premium. An obvious example is Bloomberg News. Bloomberg has about 255 print and 100 radio and television journalists inside the United States and far more – 1,000 print and 200 broadcast – outside. Given the quality of its financial reporting, its audience pays a premium to receive high-quality, specialized news in real time over their Bloomberg terminals: \$1,650 for a single terminal per month or \$1,285 a month a terminal if the client has more than one. New media technology, however, does not preclude Bloomberg from using traditional media as well. It syndicates news to 450 newspapers and 720 radio stations; owns ten television networks around the world, broadcasting in seven languages; and operates a 24-hour radio station.^{xxxiii}

Because fifty percent of Bloomberg’s subscribers are outside the United States, its staff cautions against describing its non-U.S.-based journalists as foreign correspondents. Markets are so global that a trader in New York could have as much interest in soybeans in China as a trader in Shanghai. As a result of the dynamic of the global marketplace, however, the reverse is also true. Farm news from Chicago is of interest to Chinese as well as Americans, so that all of Bloomberg’s journalists are foreign correspondents. Although Bloomberg will not provide detailed financial information the way traditional media will, general comments by staff suggest that the extensive use of local reporters overseas, plus advantageous economies of scale resulting from the large number of correspondents employed, lower overall per-correspondent costs.

Along with Reuters and Dow Jones, which have similar services, Bloomberg has a historical antecedent in Havas and Reuters. Charles-Louis Havas started Bureau Havas as a newspaper-clipping and translation service for embassies and government agencies,

banks and other businesses, and a few provincial newspapers. It later became the world's first news agency. Paul Julius Reuter began with a commercial information service to German bankers and merchants.^{xxxiv}

Yet another kind of foreign news service is in-house news and information gathering. Here, too, precedents exist. In the early 19th century, the Rothschilds established an elaborate communications system that used private couriers and carrier pigeons. What is different today is that the communications technology is far more advanced, lowering the costs of such services and increasing the need to use them to acquire information. To understand this need, one must look again at the rise of the global marketplace. Companies cannot succeed without timely information about political, economic, and social events abroad that affect their business.

In-house news services are particularly prevalent in large organizations with international activities. The staffs of the World Bank and Ford, to name just two such companies, are linked globally and pass detailed information daily. But even smaller enterprises have staffs abroad whose exclusive job is to provide updated market information.^{xxxv} A New Orleans-based copper and gold mining company with most of its operations in Indonesia employs two people – one in Louisiana and the other in Indonesia – to provide news summaries daily for the entire staff.^{xxxvi}

This phenomenon has not yet been studied in any depth. In part, this is because businesses are proprietary about such activity. In part, it is because businesses themselves do not think of what they do as journalism. In part, it is for the same reason that applies to other aspects of foreign correspondence mentioned in this paper: the habit of scholars as well as journalists to look at foreign news through a traditional lens. In-

house foreign correspondents are worth noting – and studying – not only because of their prevalence but also because of the implications for, among other things, news haves and have-nots. The Rothschilds are still remembered for their ability to use information to manipulate markets and gain political influence. Their network was so effective that Queen Victoria used it for banking services and booking hotel rooms. Advance news helped the Rothschilds profit from the Duke of Wellington’s victory at Waterloo. When telegraphic communication made news available to the public quickly, one Rothschild confided to another that “people are too well informed and there is therefore little opportunity to do anything.”^{xxxvii}

A third kind of technology-driven foreign correspondence is do-it-yourself reporting. With groups and individuals able to post information on websites, anyone now can be a publisher or, for that matter, a reporter. The precedent, as suggested in the beginning of this essay, is the diarist who sends personal reports back to colonial newspapers. Again, the contemporary manifestation dwarfs the antecedent:

- Web publisher and AIDS activist Wan Yanhai started his website, www.aizhi.org, in 1994 to “raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in China and support the rights of AIDS patients,” according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.^{xxxviii} “Notably,” reports CPJ, “his reporting for the project’s website has exposed an AIDS epidemic in Henan Province.... Wan Yanhai’s website has become one of the only independent sources of information on the epidemic in China.” Wan came to journalism in a roundabout way. He was previously an employee in the Chinese Ministry of Health.

- *Eurotrash*, a web log set up by journalists David Gallagher and Joyce-Ann Gatsoulis, used journal entries from ten non-journalists to chronicle their experience coping with the European switch to a continental currency. Gallagher and Gatsoulis' aim was to go beyond the slick accounts in the mass media, to keep "track of the quirky human side of this gloriously epic yet tediously mundane transition, with correspondents in ten countries sharing their experiences."^{xxix}
- Mark Rankov, one of the 700 people taken hostage by Chechens in October 2002 in a Moscow theater, provided a first-hand account of the three-day standoff. Using a cell phone, Rankov contacted his friend Olga Brukovsky who took down his words and published them on livejournal.com, a web log service that allows anyone to create a journal online. According to a story in Wired News.com, Rankov "wanted his countrymen to know that it wasn't just his Chechen captors who favored holding a rally on the Moscow streets to end the war in Chechnya, as Russian television had reported. So did a number of the hostages." Anton Nossik, one of the founders of a Russian group on the web log LiveJournal, said "It's quite natural to regard LiveJournal as a news feed." The site has become an important source of information for people living in remote parts of Russia where news agencies seldom send reporters.^{xl}
- The environmental organization Greenpeace uses its website, www.greenpeace.org/international_en/, to carry news along with its views. On a given day, a reader can find a story on Greenpeace shutting down "all of Luxembourg's Esso stations," an update on continuing health problems for

victims of the Union Carbide plant explosion in Bhopal, and a report that an international commission is studying the implications for biodiversity of genetically engineered crops. True to its agenda, Greenpeace prefers to use the phrase *genetic contamination* when talking about genetically engineered crops, but the event itself is fact and not likely to be found in a local newspaper.

Alternatively, a reader may get news about Esso from Exxon Mobil

(www.exxonmobil.com/corporate/).

“Today and in the future,” veteran television correspondent Garrick Utley observed of do-it-yourself journalism, “anyone sending information from one country to another is a *de facto* foreign correspondent. The number of correspondents, accredited or not, will rapidly increase. Equipped with camcorders and computers, they will send out and receive more foreign dispatches.”^{xli} Meanwhile, consumers of Internet news are taking on functions once the province of editors.

Internet users can be much more specific about the international news that they want to read, view or listen to. MSNBC’s site allows consumers to personalize the type of international news by region (www.msnbc.com). The New York Times’ news tracker allows people to create a subject or keyword-based filter alerting them when an article is published with those words. Audience members can surf for their own news.

Immigrants or U.S. Citizens with a particular interest in another part of the world can read foreign newspapers online, a process that creates another new variety of foreign correspondent: the foreign national correspondent, who as an example may be a reporter in India writing for an Indian daily, whose work is read over the Internet by a resident of Indianapolis. That same reader also can access specialized websites run by non-

journalists. With regard to conflict in the Gulf, people may get a breaking story directly from the Iraqis (www.uruklink.net/mofa/) or the U.S. Department of Defense (www.defenselink.mil/).

A recent study, “One Year Later: September 11 and the Internet,” confirms some of these changes. When the terrorist hijacking occurred, Internet traffic soared. People expressed sympathy, provided assistance, and found hard news. Nearly one-half of Internet users looked for news about the terrorist attacks; about 25% “sought out information about Osama bin Laden or Afghanistan,” wrote two authors of the report.^{xlii} While overall Internet use declined afterward, the percent “getting news from the Web on a typical day the next year rose to 25%-28% of Internet users after the attacks, from 22% on any given day in the four weeks prior to the attacks.” This fits a larger pattern identified in a multivariate analysis done by my colleague Eric Jenner and detailed in Appendix 1. Specifically, those interested in foreign news are likely to be heavy users of the Internet as well as other media.

“Do-it-yourself-journalism,” wrote Alex Halavais, another author of the “One Year Later” study, “has been a staple of Internet activity for years and the terrorist attacks give new prominence to the phenomenon.”^{xliii} Web logs have become the most recognized electronic evolution in news: from the highly personalized and niche journals mentioned above to mass audience chronicles hosted on the likes of msnbc.com and the website of *The Christian Science Monitor*. Fark.com, whose motto is “It’s not news, it’s Fark,” is dedicated to the amusing or unusual. But recognizing the urgency of meeting public needs during the September 11 terrorist crises, it posted breaking news. Acting like journalists, Internet users were able to “investigate the facts of a story without

leaving the living room.” Halavais, a professor at the University of Buffalo, concluded that journalists “place current events in the context of recent history, indicate how the day’s news might illustrate the culture or ideals of a society, and help news consumers to plan a course of action. The Web fulfilled these functions in important ways post 9/11.”

The Internet provides a serious threat to traditional foreign correspondence at several levels, yet it has only begun to be studied or even comprehended. In describing his competition during the speech mentioned above, Jack Fuller noted that the Tribune Publishing Company’s newspapers deploy more foreign correspondents than any U.S. news organization except Dow Jones and the Associated Press. He ignored Bloomberg, whose overseas presence far outstrips his. Worries are justified that Internet foreign news, especially when provided by do-it-yourself journalists, can lead to “new sources of error, rumor, propaganda.”^{xliv} But it is also true that amateur reporting offers valuable perspectives on the news often missed by traditional media, especially when the number of traditional foreign correspondents is in decline. Moreover, the ability of the public to get foreign news for itself may offer one of the best solutions to dwindling foreign reporting by traditional media.

Conclusion

The typical foreign affairs reporter, Bernard Cohen observed in his mid-1960s classic *The Press and Foreign Policy*, “is a cosmopolitan among cosmopolitans, a man in gray flannel who ranks very high in the hierarchy of reporters.”^{xlv} Contemporary studies persistently reaffirm this elite image of the foreign correspondent. “Twice as many foreign correspondents as Main Street journalists have attended private colleges and four

times as many have graduate degrees,” according to one such examination. The glamour and status of being a foreign correspondent is so palpable that this same survey sought to find out how many had celebrity parents.^{xlvi}

This image of foreign correspondents as elites offers an incomplete picture. As this paper has sought to demonstrate, traditional foreign correspondents no longer have hegemony over foreign news. Taken as a whole, the new classes of foreign correspondents are neither so elite nor so easily defined in their personal characteristics, outlook, or work habits. While this is sharply at odds with Cohen’s perspective, it is still important for scholars to assemble good data on foreign affairs coverage.^{xlvii}

As Table 1 suggests, the emergence of new foreign correspondents presents a wide range of new questions that need exploration. Foreign nationals may now offer the promise of greater international perspective in foreign reporting, but will it turn out that way? Will foreign nationals end up seeing the world through an American lens, with the only advantage being that they will work for less? Will local foreign correspondents promote greater international awareness or, as some have suggested, accentuate provincialism?^{xlviii} As already mentioned, we need to make more careful distinctions about parachute journalism and its implications. How will foreign policy change in the Internet age? Will the elites become even more powerful because of their access to advanced media technologies? Or will the increase in news formats, which offer more entry points for the public, lead to an increase in non-elite interest and participation in foreign affairs?^{xlix}

Bernard Cohen worried that “even if one could succeed in attracting substantially larger numbers of readers to a discussion of foreign affairs that has been simplified by the

use of pictures and one-syllable words, leavened with human interest, and related to everyday life on Main Street, the degree of simplification involved would be so great as to cause some doubt whether there would be any net increase in the capacity of the American people to understand and think through the undeniably complex issues of international relations.”^l It is too soon to know if foreign policy making will become less elite. What we can know, however, is that foreign news flows are themselves more complex.

The traditional elite foreign correspondent is a yardstick that does not measure. We cannot assess the health of foreign correspondence merely by counting the number of reporters sent abroad by major dailies and the networks, or by only analyzing stories in the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and CBS News. To think otherwise is to display what several scholars have called a “fortress journalism syndrome,” referring to an inclination of scholars to think in terms of a familiar media system instead of the people who consume news and information.^{li}

The elite image of the foreign correspondent retains its power not only because we are trained to see it, but because it is still there to be seen. However, it is not all there is to see anymore. If we want to know what Americans know about the world, we need to look carefully in different places.

Appendix 1

Modeling Online News Use and High News Media Use as a Function of International News Interest

The Internet offers an abundance of information on foreign affairs. But to what extent are those people interested in international affairs going online to get foreign news?

To answer these questions, we analyzed the latest available data from one of the publicly available surveys of media usage.^{lii} A first look at the data shows the person who follows international news “very closely” is much more likely to be a daily user of the Internet for news. Figure 1 shows that over 42% of the respondents who follow foreign news “very closely” claim that they use the Internet for news every day, whereas less than 20% of the respondents who follow the foreign news “not at all closely” use the Internet every day. Figures 1 through 4 illustrate that the tendency of a respondent to use the Internet everyday diminishes as his interest in foreign news diminishes.^{liii}

While these data show that there is an apparent relationship between high interest in foreign news and online news usage, other factors could be at play. Therefore, we modeled online news usage as a function of four demographic variables (Age, Income, Sex and Education)^{liv} and news interest variables (International, Politics, Sports and Business).^{lv} By taking into account other possible reasons for online news use, we should be able to determine to what extent interest in international news actually predicts whether people will use the Internet to get that news.^{lvi}

The findings, presented in Table 1, show that international news interest does not significantly predict online news usage, controlling for the other variables in the model. Results indicate that political and especially business news interest, in addition to some demographic factors, appears to drive online news use.^{lvii}

But what if increased online news usage occurs irregularly with interest in foreign affairs? When we model online news usage as a function of dichotomous international news usage variables as well as the other news interest and demographic variables, there is a significant effect found among those who follow foreign news “very closely.”^{lviii} As show in Table 2, those individuals most interested in international news exhibit a significant increase in online news usage.

Finally, broadening the dependent variable somewhat to reflect everyday use of television news, Internet news and newspaper, we find that the intense news consumer tends to be older, wealthy and better educated.^{lix} In this case, continuous variable *International* does have a significant effect. Table 2 shows that increased interest in international news is associated with high news media use, controlling for all other variables in the model.

Overall, we can infer from these findings that interest in international news, modeled as a continuous variable, fails to predict high Internet news use. However, the small contingent of people who are very interested in foreign news will use the Internet more for news than those who are not as interested. Second, according to the data here, increased interest in international news, in addition to interest in sports business and politics, is also associated with high use of news media. The more an individual is interested in foreign news, the more he or she will tend to be an every-day consumer of news across the various media.

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Figure 1
Online News Use by Individuals Who Follow International News “Very Closely”

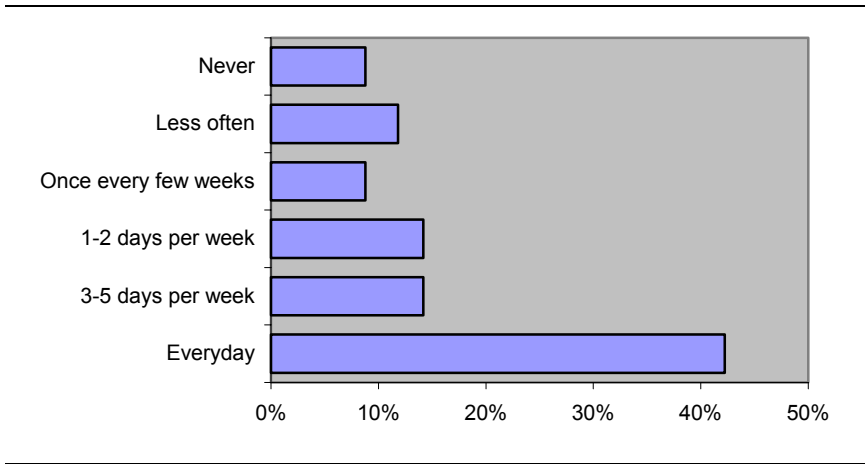


Figure 2
Online News Use by Individuals Who Follow International News “Somewhat Closely”

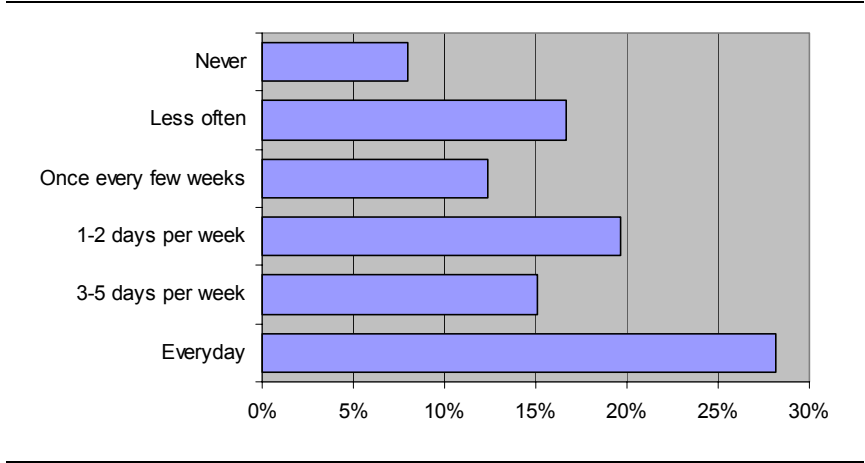


Figure 3
Online News Use by Individuals Who Follow International News “Not Very Closely”

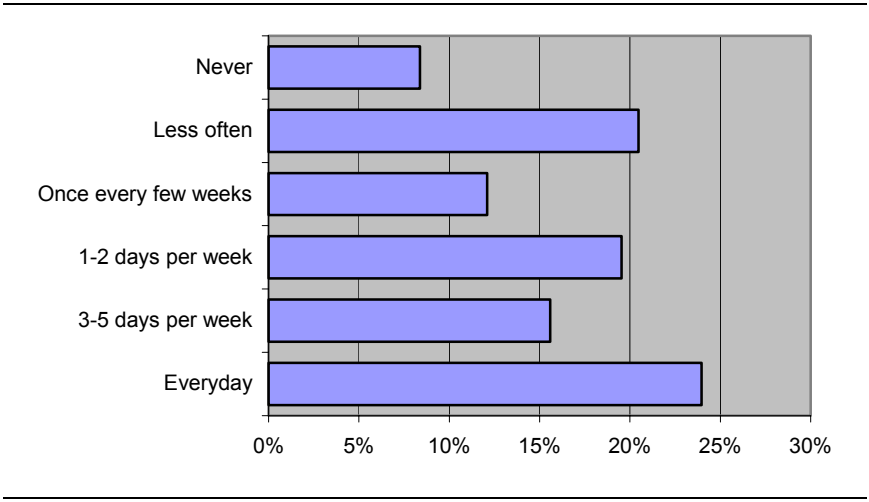


Figure 4
Online News Use by Individuals Who Follow International News “Not at All Closely”

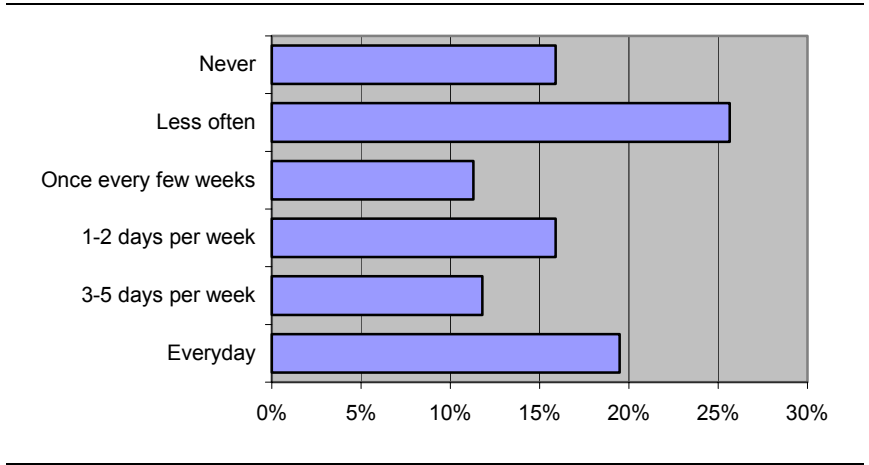


Table 1:Modeling Internet News Use: Partial Slope and Standardized Coefficients
Demographic and Public Affairs Interest Variables

| | b | B | t |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|
| <i>Constant</i> | 4.465 | -- | 13.871 |
| <i>Demographic</i> | | | |
| Education | .107** | .091 | 3.515 |
| Sex | -.330** | -.098 | -3.689 |
| Age | -.014** | -.116 | -4.460 |
| Income | .025 | .028 | 1.072 |
| <i>Public Affairs Interest</i> | | | |
| International | .067 | .034 | 1.238 |
| Politics | .088* | .046 | 1.666 |
| Sports | .032 | .021 | .827 |
| Business | .396** | .216 | 7.762 |

* p<.05; ** p<.01;

N = 1525' Adj R2 = .105

Table 2:

Modeling Internet News Use: Partial Slope and Standardized Coefficients
 Demographic and Public Affairs Interest Variables
 (International Modeled as Dummy Variables)

| | b | B | t |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|
| <i>Constant</i> | 4.420** | -- | 13.402 |
| <i>Demographic</i> | | | |
| Education | .107** | .091 | 3.496 |
| Sex | -.326** | -.097 | -3.645 |
| Age | -.014** | -.117 | -4.492 |
| Income | .025 | .029 | 1.080 |
| <i>Public Affairs Interest</i> | | | |
| <i>International</i> | | | |
| “very closely” | .299* | .064 | 1.656 |
| “somewhat closely” | .134 | .040 | 0.917 |
| “not very closely” | .180 | .046 | 1.186 |
| “not at all” | -- | -- | -- |
| Politics | .089* | .047 | 1.676 |
| Sports | .031 | .021 | .808 |
| Business | .395** | .214 | 7.725 |

* p<.05; ** p<.01;

N = 1525' Adj R2 = .139

Table 3:
Modeling High News Media Use: Partial Slope and Standardized Coefficients Demographic and Public Affairs Interest Variables

| | b | B | t |
|--------------------------------|---------|------|--------|
| <i>Constant</i> | 1.011** | -- | 3.000 |
| <i>Demographic</i> | | | |
| Education | .027** | .051 | 2.484 |
| Sex | .041 | .025 | 1.240 |
| Age | .010** | .195 | 10.406 |
| Income | .041** | .098 | 4.724 |
| <i>Public Affairs Interest</i> | | | |
| International | .060** | .064 | 3.000 |
| Politics | .068** | .074 | 3.462 |
| Sports | .090** | .122 | 6.190 |
| Business | .139** | .159 | 7.327 |

* p<.05; ** p<.01

N = 2512; Adj R2 = .162

ⁱ By traditional news media we mean long-established newsgathering through such outlets as daily newspapers, magazines, wire services, and broadcast (e.g., *Dallas Morning News*, Associated Press, *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and CBS).

ⁱⁱ Michael Emery, "An Endangered Species: The International Newshole," *Gannett Center Journal*, 3, no. 4 (1989): 151-164. For various studies on declining news -- and there are many -- see Daniel Riffe, C.F. Aust, and S. Sundar, "The Shrinking Foreign Newshole for the New York Times," *Newspaper Research Journal* 15, no.3 (1994): 74-88; Daniel Riffe, Charles F. Aust, Rhonda J. Gibson, Elizabeth K. Viall, and Huiuk Yi, "International News and Borrowed News in the New York Times: An Update," *Journalism Quarterly*, 70, no. 3 (Autumn 1993); Daniel Riffe and Arianne Budianto, "The Shrinking World of Network News," *International Communication Bulletin* (Spring 2001):18. Furthermore, concern with declining news from abroad. As one example, Russell F. Anderson, "News from Nowhere: Our Disappearing Foreign Correspondents," *Saturday Review of Literature*, Nov. 17, 1951, Peter Arnett, "Goodbye, World: Why Foreign News Is Vanishing from America's Newspapers," *American Journalism Review* (November 1998): 50.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marvin Kalb, "Foreword," Simon Serfaty, ed., *The Media and Foreign Policy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990): xiv.

^{iv} Dwight L. Morris & Associates, "America and the World: The Impact of September 11 on U.S. Coverage of International News," published by the Pew International Journalism Program (2002): 4.

^v H. Denis Wu and John Maxwell Hamilton, "U.S. Foreign Correspondents in the 21st Century: Issues and Implications," (paper delivered at national convention of Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communications, Miami, Florida, August 7, 2002).

^{vi} Ernest R. May, "The News Media and Diplomacy," in Akira Iriye, ed., *Rethinking International Relations: Ernest R. May and the Study of World Affairs* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1998): 170.

^{vii} Networks do not divulge salaries on foreign correspondents; rough estimates here provided as background by network source. Newspapers are more forthcoming. The \$250,000 figure is mentioned, for instance, by John Yemma, deputy managing editor, the *Boston Globe*, email to author, October 23, 2002. The *Globe* has five bureaus. The *Dallas Morning News*, with the same number of bureaus, some with television reporters working for other Belo prosperities; costs for single bureaus with newspaper reporters are closer to \$200,000, according to Bob Mong, President and Editor, *Dallas Morning News*, email to author, October 27, 2002.

^{viii} Morris & Associates, "America and the World," pp. 21-2.

^{ix} James Gordon Bennett, *New York Herald*, August 16, 1836, quoted in Alan Nevins, *American Press Opinion: Washington to Coolidge* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1928): 118-119.

^x Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, (Washington: CQ Press, 1997)

^{xi} Jack Fuller, speech, Annual Dinner of the International Center for Journalists, Washington, D.C., October 8, 2002. Fuller also cites the \$250,000 figure for maintaining foreign correspondents.

^{xii} Andrew Heyward, talk given at Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, October 17, 2002.

^{xiii} Sig Mickelson, *The Decade That Shaped Television News: CBS in the 1950s*, (New York: Praeger, 1998): 28. Further to this point, Mickelson notes that the network brought half a dozen or so correspondents home each year for a "Years in Crisis" series. The expense was "considerable," but so was the publicity and good will it generated. "It was an invaluable opportunity to showcase a superior reporting staff and promote the entire news and public affairs function," pp. 196-97.

^{xiv} James T. Hamilton, *News Goods: How the Market Transforms Information into News*, (forthcoming): 3-31. I am grateful to James Hamilton for his help in thinking through the economic implications of foreign correspondence.

^{xv} Robin Rogrebin, *New York Times*, September 23, 1996, p. C2.

^{xvi} Ridder conversation with author, April 8, 1999.

^{xvii} H. Denis Wu and John Maxwell Hamilton, "U.S. Foreign Correspondents in the 21st Century: Issues and Implications," (paper delivered at national convention of Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communications, Miami, Florida, April 1, 2002).

^{xviii} George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (New York: Pantheon, 1983): 9.

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- ^{xix} Bernard C. Cohen, "Mass Communication and Foreign Policy," James N. Rosenau, ed., *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1967): 199-200
- ^{xx} Oscar S. Stauffer, "World Versus Local News," *IPI Report* (December, 1952): 4.
- ^{xxi} Theodor W. Galdi, Carol Kuntz, Erin Day, Robert Shuey, "U.S. Government Activities Not Directly financed through the International Affairs Budget Account Yielding Benefits to Foreign Nationals or Foreign Governments: 1983-1986," Congressional Research Service, (August 1, 1989): 2-22
- ^{xxii} Larry Nowels, email, October 24, 2002.
- ^{xxiii} Benjamin F. Nelson, Director, International Relations and Trade Issues, National Security and International Affairs Division, United States General Accounting Office, statement before Task Force on International Affairs, Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate, *International Affairs: Activities of Domestic Agencies* (Washington, D.C.,: GAO, June 4, 1998). Many other reports hint at the uncontrollable blurring of lines between foreign and domestic agencies, for instance: "The autonomy of other agencies has increased in the past few years in part as a result of these agencies' communications capabilities; no longer do overseas messages have to go through State or intelligence agencies' communications channels and, thus, no longer does the Ambassador have exclusive control of information." GAO report to Congressional Committees, *Foreign Affairs: Perspective on Foreign Affairs Programs and Structures* (Washington, D.C.,: GAO, November 8, 1996): 11.
- ^{xxiv} Kerry quoted in James Dao, "Attacking Bush, Kerry Sets Himself Apart," *New York Times*, July 31, 2002, p.1.
- ^{xxv} Jonathan M. Mann, introduction to Laurie Garrett, *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994): xii.
- ^{xxvi} John Maxwell Hamilton, *Main Street America and the Third World* (Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 1988).
- ^{xxvii} *Bringing the World Home: Showing Readers their Global Connections*, American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999, Reston, Virginia.
- ^{xxviii} Charles W. Bailey, "Foreign Policy and the Provincial Press," Simon Serfaty, ed., *The Media and Foreign Policy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990): 185.
- ^{xxix} For an examples see Laurence Zuckerman, "If Mitterrand were from Schenectady..." *Columbia Journalism Review*, (September/October 1981): 5.
- ^{xxx} Morris & Associates, "America and the World," 26.
- ^{xxxi} Bill Kirtz, "Local Stories Far From Home: 'Globalizing' brings world affairs into focus," *Presstime*, (September 2002): 26; Charles Layton, "It's a Small World," *American Journalism Review* (June 2002): 52. Also see "Local Stories in a Global context," (Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center conference report, November 6, 1997). The International Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and mass Communication announced a student competition for a local international story.
- ^{xxxii} Oberdorfer quoted in "International News and the Media: The Impact of September 11" (conference report, the Pew International Journalism Program, Washington, D.C., 2002): 15.
- ^{xxxiii} Background on Bloomberg from email from William Schmick, Bloomberg editor, and from interview with Chris Taylor, both October 16, 2002.
- ^{xxxiv} Robert W. Desmond, *The Information Process: World News Reporting to the Twentieth Century* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1978): 134-138, 147-148.
- ^{xxxv} David Anable and John Maxwell Hamilton, "Where Executives Get Their News," *Nieman Reports* (Winter 1992): 49.
- ^{xxxvi} Interview with Jay Handelman, consultant, Freeport McMoRan, December 12, 2002.
- ^{xxxvii} Ferguson, Niall, *The House of Rothschild: Money's Prophets, 1798-1848* (New York: Viking, 1998): 234.
- ^{xxxviii} CJP 2002 news alert, September 5, 2002. Report notes that public security agenda had detained Wan.
- ^{xxxix} Eurotrash [website], s.l. [cited 23 November, 2002]; available from: <http://lightningfield.com/eurotrash/>
- ^{xl} Sergey Kuznetsov, "Russia: Dial 'H' for Hostage" on Wired News [website], s.l. 30 October, 2002 – [cited 23 November, 2002]; available from: <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,56073,00.html>. The LiveJournal account of the hostage crisis is reported on in Wired News article.
- ^{xli} Garrick Utley, "The Shrinking of Foreign News: From Broadcast to Narrowcast," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1997): 9.

^{xliii} Steven M. Schneider and Kirsten A. Foot, "Part 2: The Web after September 11," in Pew Internet & American Life Project, *One Year Later: September 11 and the Internet*, (September 5, 2002): 17-25, available online: <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.

^{xliiii} Alex Halavais, "Part 3: The Rise of Do-it-yourself Journalism After September 11," in Pew Internet & American Life Project, *One Year Later: September 11 and the Internet*, (September 5, 2002): 31, available online: <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.

^{xliiv} Halavais, "The Rise of Do-it-yourself Journalism," 26-32.

^{xliiv} Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963): 17.

^{xlivi} Stephen Hess, *International News and Foreign Correspondents* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1996): 12.

^{xliivii} Cohen, *Domestic Sources*, 210.

^{xliiii} Richard O'Mara, "The Tyranny of the Proximate," *The Quill*, (June 1985): 30, is negative about local angels. Among these other studies is David C. King, "Selling International News," unpublished paper, (October 13, 2002). "Public's News Habits Little Changed by September 11," Pew Research Center for People and the Press (Washington, D.C., June 2002), notes that Americans cite as a major reason for not following news lack of background knowledge and seeming irrelevance of news; also that the public pays more attention to news that has an apparent impact on the lives.

^{xlix} Matthew A. Baum, "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public," *American Political Science Review* vol. 96, no. 1 (March 2002): 106.

¹ Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, 259.

ⁱⁱ Clifford G. Christians, Theodore L. Glasser, Dennis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Robert White, "Normative Theories of the Media," book prospectus, (no date): 9.

^{lii} Data obtained from "Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audience," from The Pew Research Center for People and the Press, (Washington, D.C., 11 June, 2000) – [downloaded July 15, 2002]. Available online: <http://people-press.org/dataarchive/signup.php3?DocID=24>

^{liii} As the respondent becomes less interested in foreign news, the tendency to use online news, as defined by the median category, drops. The median category in for respondents who follow foreign news "very closely" is "3-5 days per week." The median category for people who follow foreign news "somewhat closely" is "1-2 days per week." The median category for respondents who follow foreign news "not very closely" is "1-2 days per week," and the median category for respondents who follow foreign news "not at all closely" is "once every few weeks."

^{liiv} The dependent variable, "online news use," is a six-point scale from "everyday" to "never"; Age is measured in years; Income is an eight-point scale from 1 (less than \$10,000) to 8 (\$100,000 or more); Sex is a dummy variable (1=men; 2= women); Education is a seven-point scaled variable (1=none or grades 1 to 8; 7= post graduate or professional schooling).

^{liv} News interest variables are identical categorical measures of the respondents' interest in different types of news. The Pew survey asks the respondent, "Please tell me how closely you follow this type of news either in the newspaper, on television, or on radio...very closely, somewhat closely, not very closely, or not at all closely?" International affairs, business and finance, and politics are three of the 13 measures.

^{livi} Past research indicates that the adoption of new media or technologies is associated with higher income and education. For more on this see: C.A Lin and L.W. Jeffres, "Factors Influencing The Adoption Of Multimedia Cable Technology," *Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly* 75 (Summer 1998): 341-352; E.M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1995); W. Dutton, P.L. Sweet, and E.M. Rogers, "Socioeconomic Status And The Early Diffusion Of Personal Computing In The United States," *Social Science Computer Review* 7 (1989): 266-67. Those without the financial resources or education are much less likely to adopt a new technology. But it also makes sense that as the technology becomes less expensive and more pervasive, other variables like need for information become more significant in predicting the adoption of that media or technology. Early research suggests that much like traditional print newspapers, people use the Internet for information gathering. See: S.S. Sundar, "Exploring Receivers' Criteria For Perception Of Print And Online News," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 76, no. 2 (1999): 373-386; P.K Korgaonkar and L.D. Wolin, "A Multivariate Analysis Of Web Usage," *Journal of Advertising Research* 39, no. 2 (1999): 53-68; S.L. Althaus and D. Tewksbury, "Patterns Of Internet And Traditional News Media Use In A Networked Community," *Political Communication* 17 (2000): 21-45.

^{lvii} More educated people, younger people and men all tend to use the Internet for news more, controlling for all the other variables in the model.

^{lviii} International news interest is separated into dummy variables reflecting each of the four supposedly ordinal categories. Three of the variables are entered into the model as an alternative to the continuous variable International.

^{lix} High News Media Use is an additive measure created from two dichotomous variables designed to measure daily usage of TV and newspaper for news and a scaled variable that measures Internet news usage. One technique to gauge daily usage of a medium is to ask whether the respondent used that media yesterday. The Pew Survey uses this methodology. The TV and newspaper questions asked: “Did you watch the news or a news program on television yesterday, or not?” and “Now, on another subject... Did you get a chance to read a daily newspaper yesterday, or not?” respectively. The Internet use variable was reduced from a six-point scale to a dummy variable (1=everyday, 0=not everyday) to make it more parallel with the other two dichotomous variables. From these three original variables, an additive four-point variable was created to measure intensity of news media use. A score of zero means that the person has responded that they do not read a paper or watch a news program yesterday, nor do they use the Internet for news everyday. A score of four reflects high news media usage: the respondent read a newspaper and watched news yesterday, and claims to use the Internet for news every day.