Chapter 8-A: An interactive network, to which anyone can contribute and in which information is exchanged rather than simply delivered, creates ethical issues that go beyond those faced by professionals working in traditional media environments.

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It is comforting, and therefore tempting, to say that "journalism is journalism" and so the ethics that guide journalists and inform their work in one medium should also be just fine for all the rest. Similarly, one might suggest that advertisers, public relations practitioners, or people in the entertainment industries all create messages that serve particular needs in our society – and those needs don't change just because technology does.

Yet I think the medium does matter, not because it changes human needs or human nature but because it changes how we humans interact. And ethics are essentially all about interactions: the ways in which we deal with one another. Social life in a network involves new types of relationships and connections, including some that pose challenges for media professionals.

Consistency … and Change

The list of principles and guidelines for, say, broadcast journalists (as put forward by the Radio-Television News Directors Association) contain pretty much the same key points as those for newspaper journalists (from the American Society of Newspaper Editors), and the umbrella Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) encompasses both. The core ideas that journalists use to highlight their special way of serving the public – telling the truth, safeguarding independence, striving for fairness, and so on – are the same. Many of those

principles, notably a commitment to truth-telling, can be found in codes of journalism ethics all over the world (Cooper, 1990).

Many of the same principles guide the work of other media professionals, as well. The Public Relations Society of America code of ethics, for example, stresses fairness and independence; it also pledges adherence to "the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent and in communicating with the public." The American Marketing Association code states its members "will tell the truth in all situations and at all times," while at the top of the American Advertising Federation's list of principles is the statement that "advertising shall tell the truth and shall reveal significant facts, the omission of which would mislead the public."

These concepts are no less valuable now. In fact, they may even be ***more*** valuable. Here's why: When the ability to disseminate information was limited to those who owned the printing press or the broadcast transmitter, making information available to the public was one of the communication professional's main functions. Today, the availability of information isn't an issue in our society. Virtually anyone can be a publisher, and information is in overwhelmingly abundant supply – along with what seems to be equally abundant misinformation and disinformation.

That means people need some way to judge which is which and to figure out whom among all these information providers they can trust. Being an ethical communicator in this world comes to rest more solidly than ever on the decisions that are made as information is gathered, assessed, and converted into media messages – a news story, a press release, an advertisement, and so on – and, importantly, how easy it is to see what went into those decisions. Ethics, one might say, are what distinguish trustworthy communicators from the millions of other "publishers" in today's vast media network.

But it's not quite so simple, is it? Journalists may have a commitment to truth-telling, but that does not mean they have a monopoly on the truth – or that they always meet that commitment. They may try to be fair and balanced in their stories, but there is never enough space to include the voices of everyone involved or affected. Even with the best of intentions -- and the moral strength to follow them amid the pressures created by deadlines, downsizing, and doctors of spin – 21st century journalists can and do face a great many ethical challenges.

Here is another way to put it: Commitments to truth-telling, independence, and other ethical precepts are indisputably necessary in a networked environment. But at least as currently understood and interpreted by most media workers, they may not be sufficient. That is, they may not be enough to guide us as we move into new territory – "new," I would suggest, not just as in "uncharted" but also as in "different." For that is the heart of our debate: Are relatively unfamiliar digital media essentially the same as what we now call "traditional" media, such as newspapers and television, or are there fundamental differences? If the latter, what might such differences be? How might they affect the ways that media workers do their jobs and think about their roles in society?

Again, I think the biggest difference lies in the fact that the digital media such as the internet constitute a network. Unlike all the other forms, what they contain at any point in time is neither finite nor concrete nor discrete. Instead, all content in a network is fluid; it can be continually changed, expanded, and combined with other material. Everything and everyone are inextricably connected. Your news story includes my comment about it. My advertisement is connected to your consumer evaluation of the product I am advertising. Your YouTube video of the rally downtown is linked to my press release about the event – and shows a very different view of what happened.

To explore the effects of those differences, let's look at several key ethical principles shared by journalists, advertisers, and public relations professionals. I am not going to deal

directly here with entertainment media, social networking sites, or personal media technologies such as iPods; however, you might think about whether the ideas apply to those forms of communication, as well. Each principle is vital regardless of the medium in which communication takes place. But, I will argue, each also needs to be thought of in new – different – ways.

Honesty

For journalists all over the world, truth gets pride of place as an ethical principle. Advertisers and public relations practitioners also view honesty as central to their professions, as we saw above. Indeed, truth-telling is basic to all forms of human communication; without it, others cannot trust the information they receive and therefore cannot confidently base their own ideas or actions on that information (Bok, 1999). The special type of information called "news" is (at least in the eyes of the people who provide it) central to democracy itself, so the stakes are high indeed. A journalist who makes things up or otherwise deliberately misrepresents reality is not a journalist for long.

Most journalists try to reflect the world as they see and understand it as faithfully as possible in their stories. Indeed, this desire to discover truth, regardless of whether absolute "Truth-with-a-Capital-T" can actually be attained or described, lies at the heart of journalistic ethics (Merrill, 1997). However, even 100 percent accuracy, difficult as it is to reach, does not necessarily add up to truth. For one thing, the truth is always too complex to be contained within the confines of a news story or even a series of stories, which must fit within logistical limits of time, space, and media format. (A photograph, for instance, may capture a scene with admirable fidelity, but it cannot reveal what led up to that scene, or the thoughts of the people in the picture, or much of anything about what was happening outside the camera's frame.) For another, we can only look at the world through our own eyes, not through anyone

else's. We will never see all there is to be seen, and what we do see will be filtered through our own interpretive lens. Moreover, as history painfully teaches us, journalists are perpetually vulnerable to being misled by sources who claim with great authority to speak the truth even when they do not. Quoting them accurately produces fidelity but not truth.

The journalist seeking to be truthful in a networked environment can and should continue striving to faithfully record and reflect the world he or she sees. But the nature of the network demands that the journalist not stop there.

It is not feasible, logistically or economically, to give every television viewer time on the air nor every reader of a newspaper access to newsprint and the printing press. But it is both feasible and ethically desirable to give all users both opportunity and encouragement to contribute to an online story. The result may include some bits that are ungrammatical and potentially even inaccurate. But the overall result is likely to be closer to the truth than the journalist's story alone.

There are several reasons why this is so, of which two are of particular interest in our discussion of whether ethics are, or should be, different in a networked environment. The first is somewhat hypothetical, though it offers an insight into how traditional notions of "truth" are changing. The concept of a "marketplace of ideas" suggests that truth is what prevails among various competing ideas: It is the idea that withstands and ultimately triumphs over all challenges. "Let her and Falsehood grapple: Who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" John Milton wrote nearly 350 years ago in *Areopagitica*.

In Milton's world, that idea could never be put to the test. In ours, it can, through the open, wholly participatory medium of the internet. In this networked world, news is not a lecture but rather a conversation, as journalist, blogger, and media observer Dan Gillmor (2004) likes to say – and our audience, the people engaged in that conversation, know more than we do, collectively and, often, individually. That is, truth potentially is revealed not just

from the top down, as in traditional mass communications, but also from the bottom up: Instead of relying solely on the journalist to tell us what he or she believes to be true, this premise suggests that a more multi-faceted and therefore "truer" version of reality is created when lots of people contribute and defend (or fail to adequately defend) their ideas. A similar idea holds for other public communicators, as the Public Relations Society of America highlights in its Statement of Professional Values: "We provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts, and viewpoints to aid informed public debate."

In parts of the online world, information may not be tested for truthfulness at all before it is published. Some bloggers, for example, post preliminary thoughts or observations and rely on the resulting conversation to sharpen the focus and correct any errors. But we are concerned here primarily with journalists, and I am not suggesting that journalists skip their fact-checking and start uploading any old thing onto the internet to see if it survives the test of rough-and-tumble discourse. I am, however, suggesting that journalists necessarily relinquish a substantial degree of control over what is included in, and connected to, their stories when those stories go online – and that doing so produces something closer to truth than the original story alone. When more people contribute their ideas, insights, and, yes, even rebuttals and corrections of what the journalist wrote, the story becomes a richer, more complete rendition of always-complex reality. To date, those contributions have mostly come in the form of comments appended to items provided by the professionals, but many other options for integration and cross-referencing exist.

This brings me to the second, less hypothetical, reason why the notion of truth changes online: not necessarily because of the clash of ideas but on the contrary, because of their synergy.

Let me offer as an example a look at how this can and does happen through something called "crowdsourcing." In 2006, readers of *The News-Press* in Fort Myers, Florida, began

calling the paper to complain about outrageously high charges for connecting newly built homes to water and sewer lines. "Rather than start a long investigation and come out months later in the paper with our findings, we asked our readers to help us find out why the cost was so exorbitant," Kate Marymont, the *News-Press* editor in chief, told *Wired* magazine. The response was overwhelming. Newspaper readers, joined by other people who followed the story online, organized their own investigations. Retired engineers analyzed blueprints, accountants pored over balance sheets, an inside whistle-blower leaked evidence that bids were rigged. And ultimately, the city cut utility fees by more than 30 percent (Howe, 2006).

The illustration shows how people with diverse areas of expertise can provide the details and conduct the analyses that are beyond the abilities of most journalists. That has always been true, and such people have always served as sources for diligent journalists. What is different is that their knowledge no longer needs to be channelled through the journalist to reach the public. Instead, the story becomes a cooperative effort. In my example, the newspaper instigated the process of turning news tips in a story, but it need not work that way; any contributor might have been the initial publisher who alerted the rest of us to an issue or idea. The pursuit of truth becomes a partnership that does not need a middleman to get the word out.

So what is the role of that middleman -- the journalist -- in this world of multiple paths to multi-faceted truths? I think that although the role continues to be one of information gatherer, it also entails a shift toward more "sense-making." Lots more people can and will contribute pieces of the story, but the individual pieces may not look like much until someone fits them together into a coherent whole. And some may not fit the overall picture at all – they may turn out to be wrong or misleading or irrelevant. So journalism in this participatory world is a process of synthesis and verification – both checking the facts and helping us understand what those facts add up to (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001).

That sounds a lot like journalism in the "old" world, doesn't it? It is. The important difference is that the journalist no longer is alone in carrying out this process of determining what is true and meaningful – or in disseminating the results of that process. The role of truth-telling, of striving for honesty, is far more broadly shared at every stage of a story. The ethical principle of truthfulness, then, is stretched in different directions in this networked world – directions that encompass many seekers of truth and incorporate many voices in reporting and relaying it.

Respect for Others

The American Marketing Association urges members to "acknowledge the basic human dignity of all stakeholders." The Society of Professional Journalists urges journalists to "minimize harm" by treating "sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect." The principle underlies the Golden Rule of Judeo-Christian thinking, and philosophers as well as practitioners have drawn on it over the centuries, from Kant and his "categorical imperative"(1998, p. 38) to Rawls and his "veil of ignorance" (2005, p. 12). Respect for others remains crucial to ethical behavior regardless of the medium, the message, or the messengers.

That said, a globally networked world does create a few new wrinkles. The "harm" that those in mass communications are most likely to cause generally is not physical. Rather it involves a disruption of the psychological space that people need to live their lives. Perhaps the most pertinent such disruption involves invasion of personal privacy, and it is in this area that many of the new challenges arise. Let's look at a couple.

To start with the obvious: The amount of information available online is incomprehensibly vast and still growing exponentially. And none of us has control over what someone else might decide to publish – about their political views, their pet goldfish … or you or me. Just ask John Seigenthaler, a retired newspaper executive and former president of

the American Society of Newspaper Editors. In May 2005, on a bit of a lark, someone whom he had never met posted a "biography" on Wikipedia that stated Seigenthaler was "thought to have been directly involved" in the assassinations of both John and Bobby Kennedy, "though nothing was ever proven"; the item also stated that the journalist lived in the Soviet Union for 13 years in the 1970s and early 1980s, a period when he in fact was serving as publisher and then chairman of the *Tennessean* in Nashville and as founding editorial director of *USA Today*. The item remained on Wikipedia for more than four months before the site's editors, alerted by Seigenthaler, removed it. By that time, it had been picked up by Answers.com and Reference.com, where it remained for another three weeks before finally being deleted (Seigenthaler, 2005).

The point, of course, is that there are no safeguards around what is published and freely available on the internet. Some of that information may be embarrassing; much of it may be downright wrong (and, in our example above, libelous, as well). How to respond is a relatively easy ethical call for journalists. The openness of the digital network is, as suggested above, one of its strengths, but it also drives home my point about the importance of verifying information before putting it in a story – and the difficulty of doing so in a world with no barriers to publication. Being an ethical journalist requires being very savvy about recognizing potential truth and very diligent about exposing potential untruth.

But here's a tougher question: What about information, including harmful information, that people publish about *themselves*? Who would do such a thing? You would, quite likely. Think about your Facebook or MySpace page, for instance. Does it contain material you would rather your mother not see? A potential employer? A journalist? Many people think of such pages as private, something between a personal diary and a journal shared among friends. But they're more. Virtually all of the information they contain is

published in a space open to so many people that it is "public" by just about any definition. Legally, that makes it fair game for anyone who comes across it – including journalists.

So it is probably legal for journalists to use or refer to information from your Facebook profile in a story. But is it ethical? Here is where the principle of respect comes in handy – along with some serious soul-searching about news values and what the public really needs to know. Are you the president of your university? If so, a Facebook photo of a very inebriated you and your beer bong is likely something the community, in which your university likely plays a significant economic and social role, has a stake in knowing about. Are you the president of your fraternity? The editor of your school newspaper? The head of the campus Democrats? How about if you're just an average 19-year-old … who is majoring in social work and has an internship with the local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous?

The point is that journalists need to ask themselves tough questions about the degree to which a story that will make someone look bad serves the public's need (not mere desire) to know. Using you and your alcohol-guzzling paraphernalia to indicate that some underage college students drink lots of beer may harm you -- the personnel officer at that PR firm with which you're desperate to get a job may decide you're not the best choice to "interface" with its corporate clients -- but it isn't much of a public service to anyone. (It's not news, either, is it?) Letting people know the university president thinks it appropriate to post a Facebook portrait of himself with a bong perhaps says something important about this community leader's judgment, not to mention his taste in beverages.

(Think this is all hypothetical? At my university in England, the head of the campus chapter of a national political party posted highly offensive comments about gays on his Facebook profile; he also was listed as head of a group called "Homos burn in hell." The campus newspaper reported this, prominently. He said it was all just a private communication among friends. Nonetheless, the campus party lost no time in removing him as their leader. In

fact, within short order, he was no longer a member of the party at all. At last report, the police were determining whether he would face hate crime charges.)

One more, somewhat broader point about respecting others may be helpful in thinking about whether the networked environment raises different ethical concerns. Some aspects of what constitutes both respect and harm rest on cultural norms that are not universal, particularly as we are generally not talking about physical harm. In a world of concrete media forms, it was relatively easy to weigh how a particular message would affect one's own community – the audience for that message. News or advertising images of a female student wearing shorts and a T-shirt, for example, would not raise many eyebrows in the West. But they could be quite problematic if that student were a member of a religiously conservative Muslim community. When media content is part of an interconnected network, an item produced anywhere can be seen everywhere. So the medium demands especially close attention to a broad range of cultural sensitivities. Again, this need to walk in another's shoes (Rawls, 2005) is true for professionals working in traditional media, as well … but online, there are a whole lot more shoes to consider.

Independence

Journalists, particularly in the United States, have made independence part of the fiber of their being and have fiercely fought any attempts, real or perceived, to curtail it. "Journalists," the SPJ code says, "should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know." Practitioners have staked their claim to independence on the obligation to inform the citizenry without interference from, influence by, or obligations to the government or other external forces – and what might constitute an external force has been broadly defined. For instance, widespread professional resistance to the public journalism movement of the 1990s was based largely on suggestions that it would undermine

journalists' ability to make their own independent news judgments and report accordingly (McDevitt, 2003).

The principle, like those we already have discussed, remains valuable in a networked environment – as long as it is interpreted fairly narrowly to mean independence from potential conflicts of interest that can compromise integrity. Indeed, when everyone can and seemingly does publish an opinion with a few quick clicks on a keypad, the value of an even-handed and impartial observer and analyst is heightened. The problem is that "independence" seems too often to go beyond the intention to safeguard fairness and to translate to "a kind of self-imposed solitary confinement from society at large" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 101). In a traditional media environment, that stance can quickly turn to arrogance. In a network, it's an even quicker route to irrelevance.

Historically, journalists have literally walled themselves off from the world outside the newsroom each day in order to produce a self-contained media product such as a newspaper or a TV news program. But digital networks such as the internet, as we already have seen, are all about connections – among products and among people. This means a virtually unbounded number of participants simultaneously serve as sources, audiences, and information providers for one another. All communicators and all communication become interrelated parts of a whole, neither finite nor free-standing. The roles of message producers and consumers are interchangeable – you can be reading a news item one minute, writing and publishing your own the next – and inextricably linked. And, again, we all lose some control over our message as soon as we upload it into an environment in which it can be freely copied, exchanged, extended, and challenged by anyone and everyone. So in this world, journalists find their precious independence challenged not so much by government—the threat they have guarded against for centuries—but by the very citizens whom they ostensibly serve (Singer, 2007a).

To illustrate the ways in which the ethical principle of independence is challenged in a digital media world, let's look more closely at a staple of American journalism: the notion of objectivity. What follows comes largely from an article I wrote for *Media Ethics* magazine in 2007 (Singer, 2007b). See what you think.

Objectivity is closely connected to independence because it provides a rationale for journalists to maintain their distance from both sources and readers, and thus presumably from any direct influence they might wield. An objective journalist stands apart from the world on which he or she reports, observing but not observed, attending (both in the sense of being physically present and the sense of paying attention) but not participating.

But in a digital network, all distances collapse. Boundaries of all sorts -- among products, among ideas, among people, among social roles – are difficult to sustain. Just as physical distance is erased by the immediacy with which any message can span the globe, professional distance is erased by the interconnections among all manner of information producers. Standing apart from this world in order to observe it may no longer be as desirable as in the past. Such detachment is deeply isolating, and in a networked world, the one thing that has virtually no value is isolation.

Certainly, we still need journalists to be observers and to refrain from participating in the events they observe. We still need people who are willing and able to serve as trustworthy eyes and ears in places we cannot be. We still need people who can convey what they saw and heard from a perspective that bears in mind the interests of the public as a whole rather than the interests of a few of its members.

But journalists within a network do need to rethink what they mean by both "objectivity" and "independence." The terms do not mean obsessive detachment. They do not mean erecting walls around the journalistic product, process, or person. They do not mean a determination not to care about an event or its effects. They cannot mean those things if

journalism is to retain any relevance in a world in which we are all so thoroughly intertwined.

Instead, objectivity and independence in a networked environment mean a recommitment to the professed rationale behind making them ethical principles or goals in the first place: They help safeguard the credibility of what journalists produce, ostensibly free from outside pressures that might shape information toward ends that serve only vested interests (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007). As we have seen, the pubic no longer occupies a distinct space or role apart from the journalist's within the media environment. We *all* are citizens of the network, and we all contribute to it. As the discussion of truth-telling suggested, serving today's public means conveying not just the "news" itself but also as much as possible about the people, process, and products that shaped it -- including us as journalists. In a networked world, there no longer is the "journalist," the "audience" and the "source" (Singer, 2007b). All those roles are intertwined; together, they form the network.

Accountability

That last point brings us to ways in which people within a network are accountable to one another. Like truth, accountability is a controversial and multi-faceted concept, incorporating such notions as responsibility, responsiveness, and transparency. From the 19th century utilitarians and their emphasis on maximizing positive consequences (Mill, 1863) to present-day communitarians (Lambeth, 1986; Christians, Ferré & Fackler, 1993), ethicists have stressed the social nature and effects of actions, including those of media practitioners. Aside from a few dictatorships, most nations around the world have a least one code of press ethics that delineates the nature of accountability to peers, sources, subjects, and audience members (Bertrand, 2000).

We started our consideration of digital ethics with a look at the matter of trust. In a traditional environment, journalists tend to simply ask readers or viewers to trust them -- to

trust that they are being truthful, that they have been both diligent and open-minded in gathering information, that they have captured the most important part of a story in the 10 inches or two minutes allocated to it. It is a lot to ask. Perhaps, as the declining reputation of the news media suggests, it is too much (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007).

The online environment, though, offers unlimited space and thus the opportunity to actively foster trust, not just demand it. Journalists, along with advertisers and public relations practitioners, can do this in at least two important ways. One involves personal disclosure, and the other involves the provision of supporting evidence for what they create.

The second way is easier for journalists to get their heads around, although many have been slow to take advantage of available opportunities (Paul, 2005). When everything is connected to everything else, media practitioners can show where their information comes from – and, obviously, provide links to it. They can offer background about their sources, expand the depth and breadth of any story, and solicit and accommodate additional input and feedback from users. Users can, ideally, ascertain who provided the information, check out those sources for themselves, and figure out what sorts of standards a provider believes are important (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007).

Personal disclosure is tougher for journalists; people committed to maintaining at least a veneer of objectivity tend to be uncomfortable talking about who they are or what they think, largely because of a not-irrational fear that such information could provide ammunition for those looking for bias behind every byline. But other members of the vast internet community have given this element of transparency a central place in their ideas of how life in a network should work. Bloggers, in particular, have turned disclosure about the blogger's actions, motives, and financial considerations into their own "golden rule" (Lasica, 2005). In doing so, they have offered journalists and other media professionals a route to transparency: through their own blogs.

Blogs have become commonplace among the online offerings of major media outlets; public relations firms, are making increased use of them, as well. For example, industry giant Hill & Knowlton has a large assortment of blogs on the "Collective Conversation" section of its website; over at competitor Edelman PR, bloggers include president and CEO Richard Edelman. In general, corporate communicators are finding that because of their informal conversational tone, blogs can help companies convey "some sense of human attributes existing behind an organizational façade" (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

Journalists are finding that the inclusion of blogs on media websites contributes to accountability in at least two ways. First, journalists are using them to explain the rationale behind the news, particularly the reasons for making controversial editorial decisions – putting a disturbing photo on the front page of the newspaper, for instance, or including the name of a minor in a crime story. Second, blogs offer a way to humanize the reporting process. For example, Anderson Cooper's "360 Blog" for CNN and Brian Williams' "Daily Nightly" blog for NBC (both of which draw extensively on contributions of behind-the-scenes journalists) have been used to offer "how we got the story" information. Blogs enable the journalist to talk about the experience of covering a particular story or about personal reactions to news events (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007). And of course, blogs offer additional opportunities to solicit contributions from users, as well.

Speaking of blogs, they raise a final point about the ways in which notions of accountability are shifting in a digital environment. Being accountable entails opening oneself up to criticism. And oh my, is there plenty of that to go around! In the networked environment, oversight of media workers' behavior has become a team sport, and once again, the professionals no longer control who gets to play. Journalists as a group are notorious for relishing the role of dishing out criticism but being far less happy when they are on the receiving end. In recent years, they have perhaps been startled by the scrutiny under which

they have suddenly come -- and by the fact that most of those doing the scrutinizing see them not as nobly independent and scrupulously objective but rather as active, and not necessarily altruistic, participants in the construction of news (Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007).

Scary though it is for practitioners, this often-pointed criticism is essentially a healthy thing. Again, a network necessarily means connections, and connections necessarily mean relationships among whatever – or whoever – is connected. Those relationships cannot flourish and grow without partners being accountable to one another: communicating openly about their concerns and working together to resolve them. Media workers had far less impetus to do that when they controlled information than now, when they must share it.

So … Are Ethics Different in a Digital Environment?

Does all this add up to a new animal or simply an old one with its nose pointed in a new direction? I have not offered any radically new ethical standards here for journalists or other professional media communicators. Nor have I suggested that existing commitments to truth-telling, respect for others, independence, or accountability be jettisoned; on the contrary, I have urged that those commitments be strengthened. The underlying values are not only sound but perhaps more important than ever; I am not alone in hoping they endure.

But in order to endure, the way that media professionals think about and enact them needs to change to suit the new relationship with the people who once were the "audience" but now share a common communication space. The task of the professional communicator used to entail controlling the flow and content of information disseminated to the public. But no longer. The nature of the network forces such control to be relinquished and replaced with the give-and-take of a far more collaborative arrangement. The ethical principles guiding this communications partnership put significantly more emphasis on openness and cooperation, while norms designed to erect and maintain boundaries of various kinds become distinctly less useful. Serving the public becomes less about telling people what information exists than

about sharing in its discovery, verification, and interpretation, as well as providing help with its synthesis into meaningful knowledge.

A case could be made that these all are differences of degree, not of kind. But how many degrees of difference does it take before they add up to real change? At what moment in the change process does a caterpillar become a butterfly? Social change is almost always a cumulative process; each step along the way may not seem to take us to a place that is all that different from the one before, but eventually, we end up with something that can take wing and fly rather than only crawl along inch by inch. I think the networked nature of this medium adds up to changes that are similarly dramatic and significant.

Where can this ethical metamorphosis take us? The sky's the limit.

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