

Problem/ Solution

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Type: Drupal Node (story)

THE PROBLEM

The Media Giraffe Project responds to growing public concern that U.S. media are increasingly less able to equip citizens with knowledge they need to demand accountability in government. This threatens effective democracy and communities.

In a time of rapid technological change, some view American journalism as adrift, lacking a sense of mission, perhaps even a sense of purpose. Journalists are unsure how a new era of web logs ("blogs") and "citizen journalism" can support independent monitoring and oversight of government and institutions. More specifically, they are uncertain about the willingness of their readers, viewers, listeners and contributors -- their customers -- to support that mission.

Changes in the financing and incentives of our nation's media institutions have left them less able 'watchdogs' of government, institutions or social trends. Newspapers are failing to attract or retain younger readers and daily circulation is stagnant or declining. Major newspapers have laid off thousands of reporters in the last decade. On Nov. 21, 2005, *The Wall Street Journal* reported, "Radio is in a tough spot. Like many older media such as television and newspapers, it is losing audience time as people spend more hours on mobile phones, the Internet and even videogames." The network news audience is declining, and research shows less and less airtime devoted to stories about politics and public policy.

Much of the U.S. public appears distracted from for news about civic affairs. They may be short of time. Or unpersuaded that it matters. Newspapers are failing to attract or retain younger readers. As watchdog resources and interest wanes, governments are increasingly in the shadow, vulnerable to unchecked missteps.

Yet at the same time, *The New York Times'* web site attracts 20 times more readers each day than the print edition. Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* provides on television a unique mix of comedy-with-news, attracting significant numbers of young-adult viewers. Online, thousands of blogs written, spoken, photographed or videod by one-time amateurs or mainstream media expatriots garner double-digit audience growth -- and, in some cases, meaningful advertising revenues.