



JOURNALISM IN A SMALL PLACE: Making Caribbean News Relevant, Comprehensive, and Independent by Juliette Storr

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Caribbean Journalism's Media Economy: Advancing Democracy and the Common Good?¹

Caribbean journalism has always occupied a contested exogenous and endogenous space. Bordered by its British colonial past and its dominant northern neighbor, the United States, Caribbean journalism has developed in a milieu that has been constrained by both external and internal forces. The region has accepted the historical dependency that has been foisted on it since colonization and has subsumed everything under its power. In the postcolonial period, American domination has added new layers to the region's dependent nature. Despite the external controlling forces of core states, as described by Immanuel Wallerstein,² contemporary Caribbean journalism exists amidst a perplexing paradox: rapid technological and market-led reforms are changing the practice and the profession, but the current successes have stopped the closure of media organizations. At the time of this research, countries in the English-speaking Caribbean had increased their number of media outlets, their advertising revenues, and their circulation numbers in the midst of a global decline in the news industry. But these economic successes may not last long, and we must ask, at what cost are they achieved?

American and European media scholars blame the commercial success of media organizations for the failures of journalism and its decline as a public service. Some scholars see the dictates of the market in every facet of the media, from hybrid discourses, mixed genres of journalism and advertising, to convergence in broadcast and internet media. Other

critics believe American and European media firms are competing with the same content and blame increased competition for the increase in program duplication in broadcasting, and a decline of content diversity and quality in other fields.³ Are these trends now visible in the Caribbean, and do they raise concerns for the common good? Are news industries in the Caribbean putting profit ahead of serving the public?

Journalism's Global Trend

At the turn of the twenty-first century, journalism, especially as practiced in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Western Europe, has been subject to dire predictions as to its imminent extinction. According to Rick Edmonds, 142 newspapers were shut down in the United States in 2009.⁴ As newspapers throughout the United States ceased their operations, journalism's demise dominated the discourse on the future of journalism.⁵ Academics and practitioners began advocating for new models of journalism in a rapidly changing media landscape.⁶ Amidst these rapid changes Michael Schudson, a professor of journalism at Columbia University, "sees the promise of a better array of public informational resources emerging."⁷ The 2010 Pew Center report on the state of the news media predicts "this new ecosystem will include different 'styles' of journalism, a mix of professional and amateur approaches and different economic models—commercial, nonprofit, public and 'university-fueled.'"⁸

Every year since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the most debated question among American and Western European journalists has been "will journalism survive?" The old economic model of the news industry was centered on advertising—that is, selling readers, listeners, and viewers goods and services, everything from real estate, automobiles, apparel, and food, to employment opportunities, dream vacations, and prescription medication. But that model is in free fall in the United States and Europe, with a rate of decline that grows every year. The 2009 figures for advertising revenue in the United States reveal how urgent the situation has become. According to the Pew Center's 2010 report, "newspapers, including online, saw ad revenue fall 26% during the year, which brings the total loss over the last three years to 41%."⁹

Further, the report notes "local television ad revenue fell 24% in 2009; triple the decline the year before. Radio also was off 18%. Magazine ad

revenue dropped 19%, network TV 7% (and news alone probably more). Online ad revenue overall fell about 5%, and revenue to news sites most likely also fared much worse.”¹⁰ Cable news had a better advertising performance; indeed it was the only sector of the news industry that did not experience a decline in revenue in 2009. However, future predictions for the news industry overall see advertising revenue continuing to decline as more people seek alternative sources of information. To further complicate this forecast, online advertising does not offer much hope, as studies have shown online advertising cannot sustain the news industry.

The Pew Center’s 2012 report brought mixed news on the state of the US industry. The good news: New technologies such as mobile smartphones and tablets were increasing news consumption among adults. The not so good news: “New technological intermediaries continue to control the future of journalism.”¹¹ Most significantly, these technological emissaries may control the future of advertising revenue.

In addition, the 2012 report highlighted two major trends, both of which overlapped and reinforced “the perception that the gap between the news and technology industries is widening: First, the explosion of new mobile platforms and social media channels represents another layer of technology with which news organizations must keep pace.”¹² The second trend that emerged is “a small number of technology giants began rapidly moving to consolidate their power by becoming makers of ‘everything’ in our digital lives.”¹³ These companies—Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and others—“are maneuvering to make the hardware people use, the operating systems that run those devices, the browsers on which people navigate, the e-mail services on which they communicate, the social networks on which they share and the web platforms on which they shop and play.”¹⁴ What does this mean? These companies now have the ability to gather detailed personal data about each consumer. They also have the ability to sell more products and services targeted specifically to an individual’s needs and wants.

By the end of 2011, according to the 2012 report, five technology companies accounted for 68 percent of all online ad revenue, and that list did not include Amazon and Apple, which get most of their dollars from online transactions, downloads, and devices.¹⁵ By 2015, Facebook was expected to account for one out of every five digital display ad sold.¹⁶ Facebook’s 2014 buyout of WhatsApp for \$19 billion portends more control of

the digital domain. The Pew Center's 2013 and 2014 reports emphasized the continued dominance of mobile news consumption, a year of small gains for newspapers in 2013, a 3 percent decline in circulation in 2014, and audience increases in broadcast news, both local and network. Cable television was experiencing declines by the end of 2014.

In Europe, the trends are similar. European Publishers Council (EPC) 2012–2013 *Global Media Trends Book* identified the news industry's growing use of social media to deliver content and engage with audiences. Despite this increased use, the EPC noted "the challenge of adapting to new media platforms, new trends in media consumption as well as the challenge of new areas of competition and a host of new players which are not bound by the same rules as the media and publishing industry."¹⁷ According to the EPC's 2012–2013 report, the professional media may have strong, trusted brands, which created new audiences online, "where we find soaring popularity for quality news, comment and debate. But with more competition for less revenue, profits remain elusive."¹⁸ The report noted that "profit comes more easily for some because of their investment in high quality content, often creating the illusion of 'everything for nothing.' Enticing though this might be to consumers, there is the risk longer term of a very impoverished media—generating less fact-based journalism and undermining our professionalism, threatening jobs, titles and future investment and innovation."¹⁹

The EPC based its findings on data gathered by the nonprofit international media research organization, World News Media Network. The EPC report also noted that since the devastating 2008 global financial crisis, a steady pattern of growth has emerged, particularly in the internet, television, and out-of-home advertising sectors. "While overall advertising rose 4.7 percent in 2011 and 5 percent in 2012, print media has experienced a decline both years, while broadcast and internet have enjoyed a rebound effect."²⁰

The report also cited MAGNA GLOBAL data, a major media-for-profit organization, which indicated the most significant growth in advertising revenues has been happening outside of Europe and the United States. "The most spectacular advertising growth is happening in China, Peru and Argentina, with more than 21 percent growth from 2011 to 2012, followed by Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, India and Indonesia, which experienced an 11 percent to 20 percent surge in advertising revenue growth

from 2011 to 2012.”²¹ The economic and technological challenges remain core elements of the EPC’s 2013 report and the Pew Center’s 2013 report, but both emphasize the continued growth in mobile advertising, the importance of strong trusted brands, and increased profits from paywalls amidst concerns for financial data safety.

This analysis focuses on the United States and Europe. What is happening to the news media industry in the rest of the world? In 2009, Bob Franklin, professor at Cardiff University in the United Kingdom, described the global media landscape more optimistically. Franklin believes the pessimistic tone concerning the imminent demise of newspapers in the United States and Europe is unrealistic for the rest of the world:

The precocious pessimism and unwarranted hyperbole of those who wish to proclaim the imminent demise of the newspaper, is clearly unsustainable. It articulates a curiously North American and Eurocentric view of the press, which seems blinkered to the explosion of new titles and readerships in other parts of the world; the future of newspapers is more open and considerably more nuanced than some observers imagine. Globally, there is no cause for pessimism about the future of newspapers with the most recent data gathered by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) detailing unprecedented growth.²²

According to Franklin, this growth is evident in the fact that “daily paid newspapers, globally, have recorded an average 17% growth from 9,533 to a record breaking 11,142 titles between 2002–2006, although rates varied markedly across Asia (33.1%), Africa (16.7%), South America (12.6%), Europe (5.6%) and Australia (1.4%).”²³ Based on WAN data “the circulations of paid daily newspapers also increased by 8.7% across the same five year span to a record high of 510 million copies, while the distribution of free daily newspapers expanded three-fold from 13,795 millions to 40,802 millions.”²⁴ Regional variations were noted in that some of these publications were relatively new free daily newspapers recording extraordinary growth figures of 77 percent in South America, 65 percent in Europe but only 18.4 percent in Asia:

Market share is uneven, however, with Europe claiming 66% of the free daily market by circulation, while Australasia manages only 1%. In some settings the growth of newspaper titles and readerships across all sectors has been striking. In India, for example, the 330 daily titles with 2.5 mn readers in the early 1950s mushroomed to an estimated 5,638 titles and 59.1 mn readers in 2001 (Bhaskar 2005, 19). These data offer a sobering corrective to the pessimists' case; the global newspaper business is booming.²⁵

What do these trends mean for the Caribbean? The news is mixed. On the one hand, the Caribbean data, discussed below, indicates that the region is following the trends found in Latin America, India, China, and Africa with regard to the growth of the news industry. On the other, the region is so close to the United States that it is also feeling the impact of the growing use of new technologies and commercialism. The countries of the English-speaking Caribbean are caught between two major trends and fluctuate between cycles of growth and decline.

Further, as receiver cultures, countries that do not invent new information technologies, but rather consume foreign ones, especially from the United States, the technological and commercial trends will also impact their news industry. But even more daunting, the concerns about dependency, cultural domination, and media imperialism will continue to grow. Unless Caribbean countries find innovative ways to use these technologies to create something new, their dependency will continue and concerns for the erosion of cultural identity will be heightened. Theories of hybridity offer an opportunity for Caribbean societies to rethink their political, economic, and cultural relations, both internal and external. They should guide the development of the cultural industries in the region. Yet while these industries offer an opportunity to reverse external dependencies, regional decision-makers must include a long-term plan to change cultural taste for foreign products if their efforts to develop indigenous cultural products are to succeed.

In the United States and Europe, the decline of newspapers continues to raise questions about the civic responsibilities of journalism in the twenty-first century. As the traditional primary source for people in government and civic affairs, what will happen to this type of news, which is

so important in democratic states? Despite the Western news conundrum, the 2012 Pew report predicted if the current trends continue, news and journalism will still have a more positive future. Journalism as a business in the United States and Europe is evolving rapidly and no one has come up with a good business model that could be applied to the whole industry. In other regions of the world, for now, journalism and media industries are experiencing a period of growth. However, questions remain about the relevance of journalism in the twenty-first century as more and more digital venues emerge for accessing information. News industries must continually reinvent themselves if they want to survive in the digital future. Journalism as a profession must continue to position itself as relevant to civic engagement and responsible governance; it must continue to serve the common good; most importantly, it must rethink how best to tell and sell its stories. The future is uncertain but most practitioners and scholars believe journalism will be around for a long time, albeit in revised forms. It is against this background that the present chapter focuses on the trends of the news industry in the English-speaking Caribbean and raise questions about the future of these receiver cultures.

Trends in the Caribbean News Industry

Media has become big business in the Caribbean. At the time of this research, the industry in the English-speaking countries of the region was experiencing a period of growing profits and expanding empires. This growth began with an explosion of new media channels, particularly in broadcasting, from the late 1980s to the present, which were ushered in through policies of deregulation and liberalization that opened these former state-controlled markets. These policies led to the privatization of many state-owned institutions, including state broadcasters, and an increase in the number of media organizations, particularly in broadcasting, within these markets.²⁶ Many Caribbean media markets went from one state radio and television broadcaster to as many as sixty private radio and television stations. These increases created highly competitive media markets. (See Table 1).

Historically, newspaper ownership in the region has been mainly private; the recent growth in media markets has not changed this. According to the World Association of Newspapers, the English-speaking

TABLE 1: LIST OF MEDIA IN FIVE CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

	Newspaper Daily	Newspaper Other*	Radio	Television	Cable	Magazine	Internet Penetration
Bahamas Pop. 377,374	4	7	17	3	1	6	203,653 (45 %)
Barbados Pop. 287,733	2	2	18	2	5	4	205,756 (71.8 %)
Belize Pop. 327,719	N/A	11	22	2	7	1	60,000 (25 %)
Grenada Pop. 104, 890	N/A	5	11	3	1	N/A	37,860 (35 %)
Jamaica Pop. 2,889,187	3	10	25	9	52	30	1,158,100 (55.1 %)
Trinidad and Tobago Pop. 1,400,000	5	11	21	13	8	29	677,583 (55.2 %)

* Compiled from various sources in 2012: internet, media houses, local governments, chambers of commerce. Includes weeklies, special supplements, bi-weeklies, monthlies throughout each country.
For a complete list of sources for this table see page 222.

Caribbean's media growth follows trends in India, China, Latin America, and parts of Africa where newspapers are also successful.²⁷ But many of the editors and publishers interviewed believed it will be only five to ten years before these countries follow the pattern of the United States and Western Europe.

In addition to economic growth in the news industry, journalism in the Caribbean is experiencing a period of rapid change led by technological innovation and economic reform. But in the midst of these changes, journalism as a business is prospering as advertising revenue and the overall circulation of tabloids, broadsheets, and specialized magazines multiply and the number of news channels (free dailies, broadcasting time, magazines, online news portals) has increased over the last decade.

In 2009, Omatie Lyder, editor of the *Trinidad Express*, described the difference this way: "Trinidad, and by extension the Caribbean ... are somehow caught in a wave where ... newspapers continue to grow. The *Express*, our paper, has put out a 240-page paper on a Wednesday—240 pages is bigger than the *Sunday [New York] Times*. How is that possible? We are inundated with ads, we're actually refusing ads."²⁸ In 2014, these newspapers were still making profits. In 2011, the *Nassau Tribune* created a new weekly tabloid paper, *The Big T*, which sold out in its first two months of distribution, and remains profitable still.

Although some of the newspapers in the region were affected by the 2007–2009 global recession, which led to a decline in advertising profits, many have largely rebounded and circulations have increased. The impact of the economic recession was most visible in Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Barbados, while Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and Belize did not report a decline. In 2009, the Caribbean technology blog *Silicon Caribe* noted the *Gleaner*, Jamaica's largest newspaper, reported their worst financial loss in the company's one hundred and seventy-five-year history, noting a drop in 2008 of 444.69 million Jamaican dollars from the previous year's profits.²⁹ Among the factors that contributed to the decline in revenues was a drop in advertising revenues. "Advertising, which contributes 53% of total revenue, incurred a 7.3% decline due to shrinking advertising budgets."³⁰ The company also reported a loss in their publications (books and stationary), which fell by 16.9 percent when their contract to provide textbooks to the government of Jamaica was reduced in 2008. However, despite the loss in advertising revenue, circulation, which accounts for 20

percent of overall revenue, had increased by 13.8 percent, though this rise in circulation was attributed to increased prices. The *Gleaner* acknowledged that this reflected the global trend of dwindling demand for printed newspapers.³¹ Despite the negative global forecast for print newspapers, company executives at the *Gleaner* expected significant future growth through online media usage. At the end of 2008 Caribbean media scholar Hopeton Dunn reported that overall newspaper readership had grown in Jamaica from 1.4 million in 2007 to 1.6 million in 2008.³² In 2010, the *Gleaner* Company annual report noted an increase in profits of over \$270 million compared to 2009 thanks to regained advertising revenue. The 2010 report also noted a significant growth in the company's online media products. The *Gleaner* Company continued to increase its profits in the second decade of the twenty-first century, despite the challenges of new technology, competitive markets, and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) economic austerity plan.³³ In 2013 the *Gleaner* Company reported a profit of \$86 million, and \$118 million in 2014.

Other newspaper companies in the region also reported similar trends for the years 2007–2009, but by 2010 they had regained advertising revenues and increased circulation by implementing new strategies—mergers and acquisitions, the hiring of accountants, collaborative partnerships, global markets, and integrative online services. Some news organizations created joint operational agreements to share rising costs. In July 2007, in the Bahamas, the *Nassau Guardian* and *Nassau Tribune*, the two largest daily newspapers, and the *Freeport News*, a subsidiary of the *Nassau Guardian*, signed a joint operating agreement to share rising operational costs. According to media economists John Busterna and Robert Picard, joint operating agreements are entered into to save a newspaper from failure.³⁴ The joint operating agreement (JOA) strategy was applied to many news organizations in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. However, since the 1990s, many US newspapers rescinded their JOAs as they were no longer economically viable, or one or both parties were no longer willing or required to continue joint operations.³⁵ The *Nassau Guardian* and *Nassau Tribune* dissolved their joint operation agreement in 2009 for similar reasons.

Under the joint agreement, both newspapers increased circulation. After the dissolution of the JOA the *Nassau Tribune* continued to report increases in its circulation, while the *Nassau Guardian* held stable

circulation numbers. Since 2009, both newspapers reported increases in circulation (see Table 2) and advertising revenues. Although advertising revenues are better indicators of success, advertising data was not available from these private companies, and the present research relied on available annual reports and circulation revenue. The *Nassau Tribune's* daily circulation increased from 12,000 in 2002 to 21,000 in 2012, while the *Nassau Guardian* increased from 14,100 in 2002 to 17,000 in 2012.³⁶ In 2011, both newspapers added supplementary sections with increased advertising content. Using the Pew Research Center's formula—daily circulation number multiplied by the cost of the newspaper—the estimated annual circulation revenue for the *Nassau Tribune* increased from \$825,000 (Bahamian dollars) in 2007 to \$1,575,000 in 2012; the *Nassau Guardian's* was \$450,000 in 2007 and increased to \$1,275,000 by 2012. The Tribune Group, owners of the *Nassau Tribune*, is the largest media conglomerate in the Bahamas. It owns five radio stations, an online media news aggregate service, two newspapers, a broadsheet, and a tabloid. The second-largest media conglomerate, the Nassau Guardian Group, owners of the *Nassau Guardian*, has two newspapers, two radio stations, and a television station. Colina Holdings, parent company of Colina Insurance, owns 60 percent of the Nassau Guardian Group and has reported “continual profits” since it bought majority shares in the newspaper in 2002. There were no additional details on revenue dispersion. The Tribune Group, a family-owned company, has no public record of its revenues.

Barbados has two national daily newspapers, the *Barbados Nation* and the *Barbados Advocate*. The *Nation* merged in 2005 with Trinbagonian media giant Caribbean Communications Network to form the largest media conglomerate in the English-speaking Caribbean, One Caribbean Media (OCM). Since the merger, the *Nation* newspaper has increased its advertising revenues and circulation. In 2002 it had a circulation of 32,000; by 2012, circulation had increased to 35,000.³⁷ Its circulation revenue was estimated at \$320,000 (Barbadian dollars) in 2002 and \$350,000 in 2012. The *Nation*, now a subsidiary of One Caribbean Media, is the largest media conglomerate in Barbados. The Nation Corporation owns the radio stations of StarCom Network (seven radio stations—four in Barbados, one in Trinidad and Tobago, and two radio stations and a television station in Grenada), an internet service company, Nation Logic; and a real estate holding company.³⁸ Its rival, the *Barbados Advocate*, has also become a

media conglomerate, acquiring Sun Printing and Publishing in Antigua, the parent company of the *Antigua Sun*, and the *Grenada Advocate*, and it owns radio stations in Barbados, Grenada, and Antigua. The *Barbados Advocate*'s circulation increased from 15,000 in 2002 to 22,000 in 2012. Using the Pew Research Center formula, circulation revenue was estimated at \$150,000 in 2002 and \$220,000 in 2012.³⁹ The success of the news industry in Barbados was overshadowed in 2015 by the country's economic crisis. Since the 2008 recession, the Barbadian economy has been struggling to reverse a negative trend of indebtedness; the country has turned to the IMF to reduce its debt-to-GDP ratio. By the end of 2013, OCM reported that the economic climate in Barbados and the eastern Caribbean presented challenges, particularly in advertising revenue. At the end of 2014, OCM reported "Barbados however continued to face serious economic challenges and our operations in this market reported a 23% decline in profitability."⁴⁰ To stabilize its media operations in Barbados, OCM applied several strategies, including "the closure of a non-performing business unit, staff cuts and cost efficiency improvements."⁴¹

Trinidad and Tobago's media market is dominated by Caribbean Communications Network (CCN), which owns the *Trinidad Express*, TV 6, and four radio stations. As noted, in 2005 CCN merged with the largest newspaper company in Barbados, the Nation Group, to form One Caribbean Media. OCM owns newspapers, television and radio stations, and publishing companies in seven Caribbean countries—Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. OCM's third-quarter report for 2012 shows a net profit increase of 7 percent. The report also notes the company's newspapers, television and radio stations "continue to grow and extend their audiences."⁴² OCM also acquired four new radio stations in the third quarter of 2012, three in Trinidad and Tobago and one in St. Lucia. Despite the economic turbulence in Barbados, OCM reported that 2013 and 2014 were profitable years for media holdings in Trinidad and Tobago, although there were only marginal profits for 2014.

According to Omatie Lyder, the editor of the *Trinidad Express*, Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest per capita consumption rates of newsprint in the Caribbean. The country's four major newspapers—the *Trinidad Express*, the *Trinidad Guardian*, *Newsday*, and the *Tobago Evening News*—had a daily circulation of 240,000 in 2002; by 2012 this had

TABLE 2: DAILY NEWSPAPER CIRCULATION IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN (2012)

	Bahamas	Barbados	Belize* (No Daily)	Grenada (No Daily)	Jamaica	Trinidad and Tobago
	<i>Tribune</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Amandala</i>	<i>Grenada Today</i>	<i>Jamaica Gleaner</i>	<i>Trinidad Express</i>
2002	7-14,000	32,000	N/A	N/A	259,000	51,000
2012	11-21,000	35,000	45,000	28,542	509,000 (est.)	75,000
	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Advocate</i>	<i>Reporter</i>	<i>Grenada Informer</i>	<i>Jamaica Observer</i>	<i>Guardian</i>
2002	10-15,000	15,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	46,760 (est.)
2012	6-17,000	22,000	6,500	20,448	115,000	67,000
	<i>Bahamas Journal</i>			<i>Grenadian Voice</i>	<i>Herald</i> (weekly publication)	<i>Newsday</i>
2002	N/A			N/A	N/A	25,000
2012	2,000			6,816	20,000	40,000
	<i>Freeport News</i>			<i>Grenada Advocate</i>		
2002	N/A			N/A		
2012	3,000					

Source: The figures were compiled from various online reports in 2012—annual reports, special commission reports, country profiles of media systems.

*The figures represent weekly circulation numbers. Based on 2007 data.

For a complete list of sources for this table see page 223.

grown to more than 300,000. The most popular newspapers are the *Trinidad Guardian* and the *Trinidad Express*. The *Express* has 40 percent of the readership, while the *Guardian* follows closely, with 37 percent. In 2002, the *Trinidad Express* had a daily circulation of 51,000; the *Trinidad Guardian* had 46,760, *Newsday* 25,000, and the *Trinidad Evening News* 33,770. In 2012, the *Trinidad Express's* daily circulation had grown to 75,000.⁴³ The *Trinidad Guardian*, its major competitor, had an estimated daily circulation of 67,000 in 2012.

Of the six countries in this study, Jamaica's media organizations have the most detailed public records of their revenues. The *Jamaica Gleaner*

and the *Jamaica Observer* dominate the country's newspaper landscape. In 2002, the *Gleaner* had a circulation of 259,000; by 2009 it was 432,000. The readership grew in 2010 to 509,000, an 18 percent increase. Its rival, the *Jamaica Observer*, had an estimated circulation of 115,000 in 2010. The *Sunday Gleaner*, a weekly edition published by the Gleaner Company, had a readership of 671,000 in 2008. This dropped to 640,000 in 2009, but increased again to 745,000 in 2010, a 16 percent growth. The Gleaner Company's tabloid publication, the *Star*, also had a high readership—653,000 in 2009 and 884,000 in 2010, for a 35 percent increase. In 2011, the Gleaner Company continued to make profits but reported flat revenues, with a \$431 million (Jamaican dollars) profit in 2010. The Gleaner Company's 2011 profit was \$118 million, a drop from 2010, but the *Jamaica Gleaner* increased its revenue by 1.5 percent. The company's 2013 annual report indicated that the company continued to increase its profits with a growth of 1 percent in its media services. The company's digital strategy expanded in 2013 with the introduction of mobile applications for Android and iOS operating systems.⁴⁴ By the end of 2013, the Gleaner Company had assets valued at \$3.7 billion (Jamaican dollars), and it showed an increase in profit of \$6 million over 2012. Profits also increased in 2014. That year, the *Gleaner*, following the model of the *New York Times*, added a partial paywall to its online edition. The Gleaner Company, recognizing the challenge of maintaining continued profits in the midst of the country's economic crisis, hopes to remain profitable by diversifying its financial portfolio.

The Gleaner Company is the largest media conglomerate in Jamaica, with assets of \$3.6 billion as of December 2013. The Gleaner Company operates media services in Jamaica, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, including newspapers, both online and print—the *Gleaner*, the *Sunday Gleaner*, the *Star*—two radio stations, and book and magazine publications. The Gleaner Company, like many of the larger media companies in the region—the Tribune Company, The Nassau Guardian Group, One Caribbean Media—has employed a global marketing strategy that focuses mainly on the Caribbean diaspora. The second-largest media conglomerate in Jamaica is Radio Jamaica Rediffusion Communications Group (RJR), with assets of \$1.2 billion as of 2011. RJR owns Television Jamaica, Reggae Entertainment Television, TVJ Sports Network, Jamaica News Network, and radio stations RJR 94 FM, FAME 95 FM, and HITZ

92 FM, and it also owns shares in One Caribbean Media.⁴⁵ The *Jamaica Observer* comes third. Gordon “Butch” Stewart, owner of Sandals Resorts International, owns the *Jamaica Observer*.

The Jamaican media landscape will face another gigantic change when the Gleaner Company and RJR merge, making the former one of the biggest conglomerates in the region. The Gleaner Company announced the pending merger in the *Gleaner* in August 2015. The Gleaner Company also published details on its website, which includes a lengthy explanation of the merger in a twenty-nine-item Q&A section. The company explained that it was undertaking the merger with RJR, “to remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment and take advantage of economies of scale to provide better products and services.”⁴⁶ The merger was approved by the shareholders at the end of 2015.⁴⁷

Belize and Grenada have a slightly different story. In 1990, Omar Oliveria described Belize’s media context as “economic dependence, limited natural resources, no military forces, small population, and a lack of national integration.”⁴⁸ There are no daily offline newspapers in Belize, though daily online newspapers started in the mid-2000s. In 2002, *Amandala*, a biweekly newspaper in Belize, had the largest circulation, with about 45,000. In 2013, its circulation remained the same and its estimated circulation revenues were \$90,000 (Belize dollars). *Amandala* also owns one radio station, Krem. The *Reporter*, the second-largest weekly, had a circulation of 6,500 in 2012. There are thirteen additional newspapers in Belize that offer print and/or online versions and are published weekly, biweekly, and monthly. These include the *Ambergris Today* (which is now offered only online), the *Belize Times* (the political newspaper of the ruling PUP), and the *Guardian* (the opposition party’s newspaper). The largest Belizean island, San Pedro, has a daily newspaper, the *San Pedro Daily*, and a weekly newspaper, the *San Pedro Sun*. Circulation figures were not available for these newspapers, but online sources estimate a range of approximately 5,000 to 20,000. In 2006, a new paper, the *Independent Reformer*, was started first as a print publication and then as an online newspaper as of 2011. In November 2014, Belize Media Group started the fast breaking online news service Breaking Belize News, similar to On the Ground News Report in Jamaica.

The largest private media company in Belize is RSV Media Center, which owns the largest private radio station, Love FM, three smaller radio

stations, and Love Belize Television. The second-largest media corporation is Kremandala Limited, with major shares in the press, radio, and television, which includes *Amandala*, Krem FM radio, and Krem television station. Channel 7 and Channel 5 are the two largest privately owned television stations in Belize. Channel 7 is owned by Tropical Vision Limited and has been on air since 1981, producing its own news since 1994. Channel 5 is a subsidiary of Great Belize Productions (GBP), a company based in Belize. GBP was a subsidiary of Belize Telecommunications Limited (BTL), the largest telecommunications company in Belize. Prior to the nationalization of BTL, in 2009, BTL sold GBP so that it would remain a private company.

Like the other Caribbean countries, Grenada's media market has grown significantly over the last twenty years. Liberalization, deregulation, and privatization opened this market to intense competition. Given the country's size (133 square miles, with a population of 100,000), there is a lot of media in Grenada. While there is no daily offline newspaper, there are five weekly newspapers, eleven radio stations, three television stations, and one cable provider. Grenada's newspapers are also operating online versions with daily reports.

In 2007, Barbados-based Systematic Marketing and Research Services conducted a survey of local newspapers in Grenada. Based on those findings, the *Grenada Today* was identified as the leading newspaper, with 67 percent of the country's readership, which was recorded as 42,600, or nearly half of the population. The *Grenada Informer* came in second, with 48 percent, and the *Grenadian Voice* came in third, with 16 percent. The remaining newspapers, the *Spice Isle Review* and the *Grenada Advocate*, were ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. Weekly newspaper readership was fairly high, at 75 percent.⁴⁹

Like Belize, political partisanship is evident in Grenada's media and its history is intertwined with the history of the 1979 revolution. At the time of the revolution, the two contending political parties, the Grenada National Party and the New Jewel Movement, had their own newspaper, the *Vanguard* and the *Jewel*, respectively. In 2013, Laurie Lambert described the role newspapers played in the revolution, concluding that "the Grenada Revolution was a discursive political process where branding and narration were necessary elements in securing the revolution's authority and legitimacy."⁵⁰ She argued Cuba functioned as a metonym through which

the revolution was translated in Grenadian periodicals: “Even before the coup of 13 March 1979 Grenadian media represented the New Jewel Movement—the revolutionary party—as Cuban-inspired and socialist.”⁵¹ In order to examine how socialism in general, and the socialist character of the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) in particular, were narrated, Lambert compared two newspapers—the government-run *Free West Indian* and the privately owned *Torchlight*. She examined competing discourses on Cuban communism “for the ways in which they stood in for the Grenadian people’s hopes, aspirations, and anxieties in the midst of radical political change.”⁵² Issues including race, gender equality, property ownership, freedom of religious practice, and freedom of travel were examined in relation to capitalism and socialism, and the PRG’s efforts to maintain narrative authority of the revolution. Political partisanship is still evident today in Grenada’s newspapers and broadcast media.

OCM bought majority shares (60 percent) in the Grenada Broadcasting Network (GBN) in 2007, making it the largest media network in Grenada. The government of Grenada retained 40 percent of its shares in GBN. GBN has two radio stations and a television station. Grenada’s media market was further divested when the *Barbados Advocate* bought the *Grenada Advocate* and two radio stations in the country.

The current wave of mergers and acquisitions is creating regional conglomerates that are controlling major portions of the Caribbean media market. In the English-speaking Caribbean, there are no media anti-trust laws, and this trend raises concerns for fair competition and good public information.⁵³ The creation of media oligopolies (the domination of the market by a few companies, which leads to high levels of concentration) has been criticized by American media scholars such as Herbert Schiller, Ben Bagdikian, and Robert McChesney, who have been concerned about the impact of concentrated media ownership on journalism’s role as a public service.⁵⁴ McChesney and Bagdikian have criticized policymakers for the way in which antitrust laws have failed to control the mergers and acquisitions of multinational and transnational media corporations like Viacom and CBS, AOL and Time Warner, Time Warner and EMI, and Tribune and Times Mirror. In the UK and Australia, Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation has become a media behemoth. The fear is a few media oligopolies will control the content of global, regional, and national

information and thereby impact editorial independence and content diversity. This fear is emerging in the Caribbean as well.

In 2000, Norman Solomon wrote an article, “Coverage of Media Mergers: Does it Provide a Window into the Future of Journalism?” in Harvard University’s *Nieman Report*, in which he discussed press freedom in today’s environment of mega-media mergers. Solomon believed the accelerating mergers are good for the profits of big business but “bad for journalism and democracy.”⁵⁵ He summarized the impact of media mergers by quoting American journalist A. J. Liebling, who several decades ago wrote that “freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.”⁵⁶ As noted earlier, eight (now seven, with the merger of the *Jamaica Gleaner* and RJR at the end of 2015) media conglomerates control the majority of the global news and information flow in the Caribbean. Solomon also quoted American media critic Mark Crispin Miller in the same report. According to Miller, “the implications of these mergers for journalism and the arts are enormous. It seems to me that this is, by any definition, an undemocratic development. The media system in a democracy should not be inordinately dominated by a few very powerful interests.”⁵⁷

In the smaller markets of the Caribbean, this concern is an urgent one. Having broken the history of state-controlled media over the last ten years, the emergence of the private control of information in the region may be even more damaging to regional democracy. To ensure the independence of the media, particularly the news, Hopeton Dunn believes Caribbean policymakers need to implement anti-trust laws to ensure fair competition, diverse content, and editorial independence.⁵⁸ Other media owners in the region agree with Dunn. In particular, Charles Carter, owner of Carter’s Marketing and Communication in the Bahamas, identified media conglomeration as the other danger of free market enterprise, where it is really the survival of the fittest.

Sometimes ... there is a player that is not playing as fairly as the other people ... or who has grown so big that he is the biggest bear in the cave, and the cave can only accommodate so much. Yes, we are facing that, and that is the danger, the vulnerability if you like, of markets of all sizes is that the major players, the ones who create media conglomerates ... those who are able to put together all the modes of communication under one umbrella,

the print and electronic, and say to the marketplace “more bang for your buck.” ... After a while, that sense of democracy that you thought you created, you have created something that is undemocratic where the message is being shaped by just one medium.⁵⁹

Carter believes that if regional governments are concerned about media democracy, more care should be taken to ensure that checks and balances “that ought to exist in a democracy, exist here [in media ownership] as well.”⁶⁰

Factors Influencing Media Growth in the Caribbean

What accounts for this economic success? There are several factors, perhaps the most significant of which is small markets. Size matters. International research shows that over the last decade, newspapers in small markets are faring better than their large-market counterparts. The 2012 findings of US research and consulting firm Borrell Associates confirmed this trend.⁶¹ Prior to the recent economic woes of Barbados, the *Jamaica Gleaner*, has had the most significant loss, but it has presented steady financial reports since the significant losses of 2009, and revenues have increased since 2010. The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) noted in its 2013 report that print newspaper circulations continue to rise in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Latin America, while they declined in mature markets in the West.⁶² Vincent Peyrègne, CEO of WAN-IFRA, noted that “even if paid circulation declines, newspapers reach a vast number of readers—print, online and mobile—and the latest trends show that advertising engagement in print keeps performing well and improves in many countries.”⁶³ WAN-IFRA’s 2014 report on world trends revealed a robust industry that continues to evolve and grow. More than half the world’s adult population—2.5 billion—were still consumers of print newspapers; more than 800 million were digital consumers.⁶⁴

New economic strategies have also been employed. One of the major global strategies is revenue diversification. The editor of the *Nassau Tribune*, Paco Nunez, explained that beyond the hiring of a plethora of

accountants, some media organizations also created new partnerships and expanded their markets globally to include the Caribbean diaspora.⁶⁵ The *Nassau Tribune* and *Nassau Guardian* experienced growth after their JOA and they have shifted their focus to a mixed marketing environment using a combination of online and offline advertising to expand growth. In Barbados, both national dailies, the *Nation* and the *Advocate*, increased circulation and revenues after mergers and acquisitions created media conglomerates. The same trend has emerged in Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, where mergers and acquisitions have created new media empires. Caribbean editors and media owners also noted that they have extended their markets by diversifying their financial portfolios. In 2013, OCM acquired a 51 percent share in Innogen Technologies Inc., a new energy company in Barbados.

Two other factors have contributed to this period of prosperity, and they are related to cultural aspects of the region: oral traditions and interpersonal selling. Caribbean societies have very strong oral cultures.⁶⁶ Caribbean societies still rely on interpersonal storytelling to disseminate information. This aspect of the culture plays a significant role in the newspaper industry, as those who do not purchase newspapers rely on those who do to tell them the day's events or pass on important information. This oral tradition is coupled with the culture of selling newspapers. In many of these countries, newspapers are sold on street corners by street vendors, at neighborhood convenience stores, or other public venues. In these spaces there is high interpersonal interaction and a lot of storytelling goes into the act of selling newspapers. Marketing scholars Paolo Guenzi and Ottavia Pelloni believe interpersonal relationships play a significant role in customer satisfaction and loyalty.⁶⁷ Many of the editors interviewed for this study indicated that because of these cultural factors, they expected newspaper readership to remain significant over the next five to ten years. But many also expected some changes with increased access to digital technologies. According to a 2013 survey of media in the Bahamas, access to the digital environment has grown significantly, and was presenting some challenges to traditional news media, particularly in breaking news.⁶⁸ By the end of 2014, the anticipated changes in readership behavior were happening rapidly in each of the countries covered as access to technology grew.

Omatie Lyder, editor of the *Trinidad Express*, has explained the cultural influence on media performance in the region in the following terms:

It's all a part of the interesting paradox of why in a world of dying newspaper industries ours is still alive and healthy and making money, and again that goes back to connectivity. A significant number of the population depend daily on what comes out in the paper in terms of where [they are] from, what's happening in terms of traffic and getting to their flights an hour ahead because of the Summit [of the Americas] coming up, to where we going to lime this weekend.⁶⁹ So it's incredibly important in terms of our culture and social development.⁷⁰

As of 2014, competition has increased in the countries with higher internet penetration. As previously noted, in Jamaica, OGNR became an instant competitor of traditional media when it began gathering and disseminating news using social media and citizen reporters. However, since its initial interruption, OGNR has become just another media channel as traditional, or legacy, media organizations continue to make a profit. In Antigua and Barbuda, *Caribarena* shook up the status quo when it started its online operation in 2007, and although it is still regarded as an “opposition press,” its initial shock has worn off. Caribbean News Now, an online site based in the United States, has had a similar impact.

Another aspect of the cultural influence is the newspaper-reading culture in the region. Ken Gordon, one of the shareholders of OCM, explains this culture in Trinidad and Tobago:

Whereas abroad, many newspapers have lost circulation because of the internet, and ... advertising rates have fallen ... many of them have had to close or merge or whatever. So your production costs have gone down because technology has made that possible, but your revenues have fallen so sharply that you have not really improved the net position of your company, and ... their profits have dropped dramatically. This hasn't happened here. ... My view is that this [the internet] has been around long enough now to see—to make a judgment about how it's likely to impact the habit of picking up the paper for your granddad

and your father on the street—is so strong. I waited for a while to see if that would disappear and it hasn't. ... There's a habit of picking up that paper from that vendor, which is an easy thing. It's built in with the society, into the culture, into a whole host of things, and somehow, the fact that circulations ... basically have grown by in excess of 40 percent ... in spite of the internet and in spite of the fact that newspapers are available to read on the internet and so on. And I think that will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. So newspapers have benefited in a net way, because on the one hand the production costs have gone down and on the other hand they have not lost as a result of the same circulation adversity that the people have had [in other parts of the world].⁷¹

Another factor affecting the continued success of newspaper readership is demography. The Caribbean population has a high percentage of older people. However, much is still unknown about the demographic makeup of this group, as data on the elderly is still scarce throughout the region. But, as noted by a 2004 report from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the region has, aside Europe and North America, the highest percentage of elderly people in its population.⁷² A 2006 UN report also noted that by 2010, more than 10 percent of the Caribbean population would be over sixty, except in Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Haiti: "It is estimated that the Caribbean will experience absolute and relative increases in the elderly population over the next 50 years and that the elderly population, which constituted 4.5% in 1950, will increase to 18% in 2050."⁷³ According to several editors and publishers interviewed for this book, this group of consumers still has a marked preference for print newspapers. The younger generation is shifting to the online/mobile environment for their information and entertainment. Roxanne Gibbs, editor of the *Nation*, in Barbados, believes that when the older generation dies out, the region will experience a significant drop in newspaper readership.⁷⁴

Technological factors that are impacting these changes involve advances in digital technologies. At the time of this research, the relatively low internet connectivity in the region was also impacting the growth of Caribbean newspapers. According to Hopeton Dunn and Omatie Lyder

the region has 100 percent wireless phone usage. In 2013, internet penetration was highest in Barbados (72 percent) and the Bahamas (65 percent), moderate in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (55 percent), and low in Belize (29 percent) and Grenada (35 percent). Bermuda and St. Lucia had the highest penetration, at 88 percent and 81 percent, respectively.⁷⁵ By the end of 2014, internet connectivity had increased significantly throughout the region. The Bahamas increased to 90 percent penetration, Barbados to 77 percent, while Grenada and Belize remained low, at 35 percent and 31 percent, respectively. Jamaica remained the same (55 percent), and Trinidad and Tobago increased (64 percent).⁷⁶ Global media trends indicate that most of this digital consumption is being done through smartphones and most of the advertising growth is through mobile advertising. News organizations throughout the region could use these trends to their advantage and drive new market developments. The *Jamaica Gleaner* has incorporated this strategy in its marketing mix. Further, OGNR has also taken advantage of Jamaica's high smartphone usage. Although there are ethical concerns when it comes to citizen journalism (such as issues of accuracy, accountability, privacy, and harm), OGNR's model has been extended throughout the region as citizen journalists participate in the dissemination of information in rural areas where traditional media has done a poor job. Andrea Polanco, a Belizean journalist attending the 2011 Commonwealth Broadcasters Association and Caribbean Broadcasting Union's two-day symposium on "New Media, Journalism, and Democracy in the Caribbean," indicated that they were currently implementing this strategy in the way they gathered information in remote parts of Belize.⁷⁷ These efforts should be organized and integrated in public journalism or community journalism projects.

The newspapers in the six countries included in this book have integrated online media into their operations. Caribbean editors and publishers in the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago indicated digital technologies would play a major role in the future of their newspapers. Internet and wireless technologies are changing the practice and profession, allowing Caribbean journalists to research, access, and disseminate information quickly, providing interactive elements in news content, and increasing the competition for readers, viewers, and listeners as more citizens have the ability to publish information on the internet or disseminate it via wireless technology, Twitter, Facebook, and

WhatsApp, and other social media platforms. These are the strategies that Gunn Enli urged public service broadcasters to adopt to survive and succeed in the digital age.⁷⁸ Fortunately, for now, as a Bahamian managing news editor indicated, the credibility for news sources still lies with the professional journalists and traditional media, so the competition from bloggers, although making an impact, is limited.⁷⁹ However, change is occurring. In 2013, according to Juan McCartney, the editor of the *Nassau Guardian*, the impact of the internet and social media on traditional media in the Bahamas was more significant.⁸⁰ Editors of the *Jamaica Gleaner*, the *Jamaica Observer*, the *Barbados Nation*, and the *Barbados Advocate* also noted the increased impact of the internet and other social media on the consumption and distribution of news. However, despite the popularity of new online sources, such as OGNR, not everyone views these organizations as credible. For example, Karyl Walker, online news content editor of the *Jamaica Observer*, is not worried about the competition, “because we have a wider audience that we carried over from our traditional days and I believe we are seen to be a more credible source than OGNR. ... I think it’s good they do this thing with alacrity but we do more checks sometimes we find the On the Ground News Reports not entirely correct.”⁸¹ Other journalists throughout the region share Walker’s views.

The growing use of digital technology by citizens and the media industry indicates that Caribbean media markets are facing similar technological challenges as their American and European counterparts. The number of “mass self-communicators” is growing, and the amount of information produced by people who are not employed as journalists has increased substantially. American and European journalism scholars like Jay Rosen and Mark Deuze described the changing power relationships in media industries, especially journalism, as the emergence of “consumers as co-producers, the democratization of media access, and the redistribution of agency from news and creative producers to owners and employers.”⁸² Rosen and Deuze identified these changes from two perspectives—that of “the people formerly known as the audience” and “the people formerly known as the employers.”⁸³ These changes indicate the kinds of challenges that have emerged in the newsgathering, editing, and publishing industries. Media critics and journalists in the region believe this new form of journalism is good for democracy. One of the areas in which journalism is being most notably affected is investigative journalism, as citizen bloggers

and news aggregators publish stories online that traditional journalists are not able to publish. According to the Barbadian journalists David Ellis and Reudon Eversley,⁸⁴ citizen bloggers are filling a void in the Caribbean. However, despite these advances, investigative journalism throughout the region is still constrained by access to information laws, and other economic and cultural factors.

The Cost of Media Success: The Common Good?

Making a profit comes at a price. As news organizations in the English-speaking Caribbean become more commercially oriented concerns for the public interest have grown. Caribbean journalists believe many media organizations are placing profits ahead of good journalism. Competing in commercial environments, media organizations throughout the region are resorting to the tactics of their global counterparts to increase profits and cut costs. Over the last ten years, there has been a greater emphasis on sensational, tabloid-style journalism, increased mergers and layoffs. Journalists in Barbados and Jamaica discussed the issue of layoffs that came about as a result of mergers or acquisitions and overall decline in the economy. There was no accurate figure of the number of journalists who have been laid off in these countries, as much of this data has not been collected and this work relies on the anecdotal stories of journalists. While the absolute number is small in comparison to the United States and Western Europe, it is significant in terms of proportionality. Further, there have been few newspaper closures in these countries over the last five years. The trend in the English-speaking Caribbean is not closure but mergers and acquisitions, as new strategies are employed to ensure the future of the newspaper industry, and media industries in general.

Ken Gordon believed the change to market-oriented journalism has created a crisis in journalism throughout the region.⁸⁵ He has argued the crisis came about because the marketplace opened up quickly and the new competitors were unprepared to operate media organizations, particularly radio and television stations. Consequently, Gordon believes, this led to the erosion of standards. Other journalists throughout the region agree with Gordon's assessment. Peter Christopher, a journalist at the *Trinidad*

Express, believes the current crisis was not just the result of the way some journalists practice, but also of the emphasis owners placed on “quick, attention grabbing, salacious stories that sell in the marketplace.”⁸⁶ He contends that media owners’ emphasis on selling journalism in the competitive marketplace to get advertisers’ support led to the current crisis in Trinbagonian journalism. Christopher believes there was a change in the type of journalism in that country after owners placed more emphasis on making money and less emphasis on the quality of journalism. Caribbean journalists are concerned about this trend as they believed the emphasis on sensational, tabloid-style journalism does not bode well for the advancement of democracy and the common good.

Another prominent trend, an increase in mergers and acquisitions, could also endanger democracy in the region. According to Roxanne Gibbs, editor of the *Barbados Nation*, senior members of that paper’s editorial team were laid off when the company merged; they were replaced by young, inexperienced reporters.⁸⁷ As a result, what emerged in the Caribbean was a lot of “green” newsrooms. This change resulted in increased public criticism about the quality of journalism. Of course, this trend is not unique to the Caribbean, but is rather common in countries across the globe, from the United States to Australia.

Green newsrooms also exist because these competitive media markets created a high turnover of employees. This is largely a result of the movement of journalists from one media organization to another, where many are in search of higher wages and better benefits. This movement has led to a lack of continuity and professional development. A journalist in the Bahamas expressed concern over his meteoric rise from cub reporter to senior reporter to editor in the short period of one year. He agreed the high turnover was partially responsible for the quality of their work and the increased public criticism. But he also believed the fragmented, fast-paced media environment was also to blame.⁸⁸

Clearly, Caribbean journalism is in transition. The profession is going through a period of rapid change brought on by the shift to commercialized markets and technological innovations. Like its global counterparts, the homogenization of Caribbean journalism, the rise of sensationalism, and the advent of more entertainment-oriented reporting, as well as the blurring of boundaries between news and advertising, has resulted in complaints about the quality of journalism. Roxanne Gibbs believes the

market model may be good for selling products but not for providing the kind of information citizens need. Her concerns reflect those of media scholars such as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, John Keane, Herbert Schiller, and Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, who warned of the influence of commercialization on the democratic process. Here, Gibbs described what happened to journalism in Barbados when the business model became the dominant approach to news production:

We were known as the people's paper and we did what we called people's journalism. ... [When] the *Nation* became a public entity ... some of the changes began to be apparent. ... First of all, the whole pace of journalism began to change. Not only here in Barbados but elsewhere too. The *Advocate* was actually taken over by a businessman who said quite plainly and frankly he was really not that interested in journalism, he was interested in the business aspect of it. ... The fight or the conflict between the advertising and editorial department has now become more intense because the advertising department is now saying, well you know, without us the paper's going out of business. ... It's changing the way journalists are beginning to think. What it is doing is making some of us traditional journalists very disheartened.⁸⁹

In the region, traditional media have added new technologies to their operations and new players like OGNR, *Caribarena*, and other bloggers and online news aggregates have emerged as competitors of traditional media. The level of new media competition varies among the countries based on internet penetration, but smartphone technology is making up for low connectivity in many of the remote areas of the region. The increased level of new media usage in the region has resulted in a sporadic emergence of a discourse on the relevance of traditional media in advancing democracy in the region. The 2011 symposium “New Media, Journalism and Democracy in the Caribbean” is one of the few debates on journalism and its future in the region. During that symposium, all of the panelists acknowledged new media's impact on traditional media and society. They argued traditional media will continue to play a significant role in the gathering and dissemination of information, but that new media will create more

competition, and hence more opportunities to disseminate public opinion. Paul Ashley, one of the panelists, believed traditional media would always have a place in people's lives, but that new media would be more influential because digital technology makes it easier to capture, manipulate, store, transmit, and retrieve data. Consequently, Ashley explained, digital technologies would lead to "a widening of freedom of expression, a deepening of democracy but with that comes invasion of privacy."⁹⁰ He conceded the manipulation of information would cause harm—defaming private citizens and politicians—and would lead the state to react. As Mark Beckford argues, "one of the ways the state will react is that the state will demand every user of a smartphone and every user of a computer be registered, so that big brother will know who you are and what you have said, and you will be held to account for your advent into unprotected journalism."⁹¹

Other panelists at the 2011 symposium believed that along with issues of privacy, new media can also lead to the distortion of information. One of the drawbacks of the speed at which information can now be disseminated is the increase in inaccurate and unreliable information. Caribbean journalist Karen Madden James argued that, though

there is a place for such agents as On the Ground News Reporting and Twitter and Facebook and so on ... there's [also] an inherent danger in that these reporters don't have to substantiate their claims, there is nobody suing [them]. ... They are not liable to the same ethics of journalism that traditional media is obliged and obligated to. Somebody will sue you; nobody is going to sue OGNR, anonymity is bliss, nobody knows who you are. But I believe there is a place for social media, but we have to differentiate the positions and responsibilities, because they are different.⁹²

Some scholars have lauded the use of new media to advance democracy; others are concerned about its inherent dangers. New technology has produced a new type of journalism. Anyone can become a journalist without formal training, but the lack of editorial oversight and control in the new journalism has caused many to pause and revert to traditional media to verify the accuracy and reliability of information. The new form

of journalism is generated anywhere, involves new forms of writing, relies on a fragmented audience, is delivered quickly, and is interactive and participatory. While many of these characteristics could advance journalism and democracy, some practitioners fear they may also threaten them. Both advocates and opponents continue to weigh in on this debate as use of new media technologies continues to change our social, political, and economic interactions. No matter which side of the debate you support, the fundamentals of journalism—truth, accuracy, and good storytelling—should remain. Further, each society will have to determine what rules should be applied to the new disseminators of information.

In the midst of advancing technologies and the growth in commercialism, concern for the public sphere and the advance of democracy remains a focal point for journalists in the English-speaking Caribbean. What is at stake in a heavily commercialized news market? According to many scholars of democracy and media's role in it, the sacrificial lamb is the common good. Concerns for the common good date back more than twenty-five hundred years, and is centered on the ideas of early philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and later Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, whose general concerns were equality and liberty for all. In 1992, Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, and Michael J. Meyer noted the common good consists “primarily of having the social systems, institutions, and environments on which we all depend work in a manner that benefits all people.”⁹³ This is particularly important in democracies.

Most democratic theories propose that people are equal in some important ways and all deserve a voice in their governance. They hold that all democratic governance should be open and accountable to citizens. To accomplish these basic tenets, democratic societies turn to journalism to ensure governments and other institutions are accountable to citizens. Normative theories of media's social responsibility have filled the literature from the early days of mass media, from the printed press to the radio, from television to the current technologies driving convergence. The ideals of normative theories of the media come from a tradition of good public communication. This tradition can be traced to the doctrines of early Greek and Roman debates on the role of public discourse in democracy. At the core of these debates are issues of freedom of expression, truth, and citizen participation. Over the centuries, normative theories of public discourse have evolved to express more explicit ideals of public

communication based on various cultural and political systems. Today this debate has become a global conversation.⁹⁴

As part of that conversation, Clifford Christians, Theodore Glasser, Denis McQual, Kaarle Nordenstreng, and Robert White define the normative theory of public discourse or public communication as “the conceptual foundation, the explanatory rationale of a particular institutional organization of communication in a democracy.”⁹⁵ From their perspective, democracy is seen as an essential form of communication in which citizens debate the decisions of governance and monitor the activities of those elected. Today, much has changed in terms of how citizens expect this to happen. There is more demand for direct participatory communication, and the theoretical foundations for public communication have become a major concern in many societies throughout the world. Christians et al. argue “that a foundation of normative theory is extremely important for the vitality of democratic communication and for the media that support and implement”⁹⁶ that process. Key elements of normative theories of public communication emerge in normative doctrines on communication ethics, communication policies, and professional leadership. Christians et al. organize these elements hierarchically, with the communication values of a culture (public philosophy) at the top, followed by social theories and normative theories of public communication as proposed by academics and philosophical community; national/international policies of communication including legislative measures that are designed and implemented by politicians; the social responsibility of the culture industries with media entrepreneurs as actors; a professional code of ethics proposed by professionals; and personal ethics/ideals.⁹⁷

Arguments can be made in favor of each of these elements. However, it is my belief that all are equally important and should be placed on a continuum, not a hierarchy. As Christians et al. point out, there are dialectic tensions among and between each level. Communication values in a given culture impact the professionals who work in delivering public communication and vice versa. It is because of these tensions that each level should be weighed equally. For, as Christians et al. argue, “each normative element relies on personal ideals and values, as well as persons acting according to their conscience about the kind of public communication that represents truth, justice, and respect for human dignity.”⁹⁸ Further, all of

these elements should be weighed equally, not hierarchically, if democratic principles are to be upheld among people and nations.

How do these elements play out in the Caribbean context? What is news? What are the normative practices of the media in carrying out the kinds of public communication that impact democracy and the common good? The concern, as reflected in earlier comments about the quality of Caribbean journalism, indicate that the media, particularly the news media, have abandoned their social responsibility to provide good public information in favor of a market-driven model of communication that is more concerned with selling a product.

These concerns are dealt with in the remaining chapters, which focus on the ideals, values, and practices of journalists in the Caribbean, and their implications for the advancement of democracy.

