THE NEW WORLD OF TRANSITIONED MEDIA: DIGITAL REALIGNMENT AND INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION, GALI EINAV (ED.) (2015)
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One of the themes of this edited volume is the rapid change in usage of new media, focusing particularly on digital media delivered via the Internet. These media are viewed on multiple platforms – television, personal computers, cell-phones and tablets – thus complicating the measurement of audiences and thereby the economics of advertising. Media viewing has become more social. People are sharing media via social networks that did not exist a decade ago. Because of rapid change in technologies, the consumption patterns of chil-dren differ markedly from that of their older brothers and sisters. In an intro-ductory essay, the editor provides an excellent summary of arguments that are contained in the ten following chapters.

The second chapter by John Carey focuses on how the growing use of multiple platforms is transforming how we think about social spaces. Mobile devices, in particular, provide users with navigational tools that make it easier to find things. Because users can easily share their images and location with others, sometimes unwittingly, the boundaries between private and public may be blurred. We are all familiar with examples of people speaking into a mobile device in a public space as if they were in a private space. The rules of etiquette for this behaviour are not yet firmly established. Similarly, the recent increased use of 'selfie sticks' has led some museums to ban their use.

The third chapter by Liel Leibovitz deals with the use by large companies of a single social networking platform, Twitter, to communicate with their customers. The lessons learnt from this study seem to be that, even though social network-ing with customers is relatively inexpensive when compared with, for example, telephone help desks, there are unexpected risks. An inappropriate comment on a social network can go viral and do great damage to the reputation of the firm. The flip side, of course, is that if these platforms are used appropriately (particu-larly in a friendly or even humorous way) the firm can benefit greatly.

In the fourth chapter Kristen Daly tackles the question of whether disease-specific social networks and networked health-related devices can improve health outcomes. She discusses the growing use of wearable devices to measure pulse, blood pressure, blood sugar, etc., as well as the use of social networks for the collection and dissemination of information – e.g. via crowd sourcing. She argues that social networks might make it possible for physi-cians and other care providers to develop stronger personal relationships with patients. She concludes that the potential for improvement is certainly there, but that there are risks for patients associated with, for example, misinforma-tion, the violation of privacy rights, and the lack of access to networks in low-income populations.

In the fifth chapter, Rich Groner explores the world of the hacktivists: hack-ers who are pursuing some sort of political agenda. He addresses the motiva-tion of actors like Wikileaks and Anonymous, arguing that they seek 'a steady stream of glory' and view '… competition not as a race to the end but a natural

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state of being'. Such individuals and groups aim to '… alter a persistent environment …' by altering the code (59). Julian Assange, Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden share a belief 'that all information wants to be free' (60). So, according to Groner, the Internet has created a space for the single-minded pursuit of radical agendas that make the world more dangerous.

Noam Lemelshtrich Latar addresses the 'robot journalist' in the sixth chapter. The use of robotic software to write stories for publication in newspapers and magazines has the potential to eliminate or at least reduce the demand for human journalists. The most notable example of this is the use of a robot editor by Google to aggregate stories written by human journalists for their Google News Service. Lemelshtrich Latar points out that robot journalists may be good for certain tasks, such as providing stories based on analysis of large databases or data streams, but that they cannot independently figure out what questions to ask or how to write 'opinions'. More importantly, says Lemelshtrich Latar, 'No robot journalist can become a guardian of democracy and human rights' (79).

The seventh chapter is an overview of the current state of information channels in the digital age by Gali Einav and Nathan Lipson. The authors provide statistics on changes in advertising revenues and profitability (mostly in a negative direction) in traditional media. Over the air broadcasters and pay TV networks are fighting back by various methods. Comcast, for example, is providing TV Everywhere via its Xfinity services. New forms of advertising are producing revenue streams for online content. In the absence of strong net neutrality rules, content providers like Netflix are paying Internet service providers like Comcast for faster connections to their consumers. New mega-media mergers are in the works. The authors conclude by linking the separate discussions of print and broadcast media, arguing that the disruption of traditional media by new media is good for consumers because, in order to survive, the traditional media will have to provide higher quality content. I would argue, in contrast, that this will depend a lot on the regulatory environment. An unchecked further concentration of power in the owners of digital distribution channels will not have this result.

The next three chapters deal with open-source marketing, how advertisers can reach mobile consumers and the next generation of video-game consumers. These are all short pieces of only moderate value. They might have easily been left out in favour of a good concluding essay.

To summarize, this is a useful collection of articles on new media and social networks. The authors provide new data about and analysis of current trends in the industry. The volume's focus on the move towards mobile and multi-platform usage and the disruptive nature of that change is helpful. The book bravely deals with a media environment that is rapidly evolving and does a good job of highlighting some of the more important aspects of that evolution.

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Jeffrey A. Hart is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Indiana University. His research has centred on the politics of international competitiveness in advanced national industries. He has published books on the world flat panel display industry and on the politics of HDTV. He is currently working on books about the politics of the Internet and about politics and film.

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