

MEDIA

Technology Industry Lends Support to Print Media

From First Business Page

Brown, director of the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University and the former editor in chief of MSNBC.com.

“They’re concerned about where the country is going and share a commonly held point of view that what we do is important for democracy,” said Mr. Brown, who is also a partner at the venture capital firm DFJ Frontier.

This union of the press and digital patrons is sometimes awkward. For starters, tech moguls seem to do their best to stay as far away as possible from the news media’s prying questions. Mr. Jobs was famously prickly around the press, while Mr. Bezos has shunned all interviews about his purchase of The Washington Post except for one — with The Washington Post.

Technology’s helping hand has mostly been extended to newspapers and magazines. And some tech-focused companies, like Yahoo, have long been involved in the news business, hiring their own reporters and editors, setting themselves up as direct competitors to traditional news outlets.

On the business side of newspapers, executives have done little to hide their suspicions about the technology companies that are reaching out. Several years ago, while Mr. Hinton was publisher of The Wall Street Journal, he described Google as a “vampire” sucking the blood from newspapers because of how it aggregated news articles on its Google News site.

Frank A. Blethen, the publisher and chief executive of The Seattle Times, scoffed last week at the overtures Craig Newmark, the founder of Craigslist, had made to journalism causes. “He clearly disrupted classified advertising,” Mr. Blethen said. He added dismissively about Mr. Newmark’s efforts in journalism ethics, “and now he’s portraying himself in this public policy realm.”

Many critics of the newspaper industry say its predicament is

Brian Stelter contributed reporting.



ANDREW GOMBERT/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

Jeffrey P. Bezos, above left, founder of Amazon.com, bought The Washington Post. Craig Newmark, left, of Craigslist, said he backed journalism because he valued news he could trust.



HYUNGWON KANG/REUTERS

its own fault for allowing upstarts like Craigslist to outflank it with better methods for advertising automobiles, rental apartments and other merchandise.

Mr. Newmark declined to comment on why newspaper officials blamed him. He said he supported journalism initiatives — media ethics and fact-checking are two pet causes — because he valued news he could trust. He said he was not even convinced that Craigslist had hurt newspaper classified advertising.

“I’m still waiting to see any hard evidence for cause-and-effect,” Mr. Newmark said. “I’ve been paying attention for a long time.”

Mr. Newmark said he donated \$42,000 to the Poynter Institute, a journalism school in St. Petersburg, Fla., to host a seminar re-

lated to a book Poynter recently published on journalism ethics and for the development of a related Web site.

When the complaints about Google from newspaper executives reached their peak in 2009, Eric E. Schmidt, then the company’s chief executive, told an interviewer that Google had a “moral responsibility” to help the press because of its societal role of providing transparency.

Since then, the search giant has been cozying up to journalists in a growing variety of ways, financing reports on the impact of the Internet on journalism, sponsoring journalism conferences and donating to press advocacy groups. Last week, it hosted TechRaking, an event on the use of data in reporting, at its Silicon Valley campus with the Center for Investigative Reporting.

Richard Gingras, senior director of news and social products at Google, said complaints from newspaper publishers in the past were based on a false belief that Google News was diverting traffic from their sites. He said relations between publishers and Google, which sends news sites about six billion visits a month,

have improved steadily over time.

“These have been challenging times for traditional publishers,” Mr. Gingras said. “I think we’ve also come a long way in the sense of recognizing that we need to be more up front in how we speak to the industry.” The money that technology companies and their founders are spending to support journalism can be viewed in a more cynical way: as an investment in public relations with a struggling industry that can still cause trouble for them or, conversely, further their business interests. The sums are relatively small in any case. The \$250 million Mr. Bezos is paying for The Washington Post, for example, represents about 1 percent of his estimated \$25 billion fortune.

But Esther Wojcicki, a teacher of high school journalism for several decades in Palo Alto, Calif., and the mother-in-law of Sergey Brin, a co-founder of Google, said the motivations of the tech people supporting the press, many of whom she has spoken to, were more sincere.

“They are concerned,” she said, “that what they’re doing has impacted a very important part of American culture.”



A stereoscopic image featured in “Soldiers’ Stories,” about World War I’s Somme offensive. American soldiers don gas masks.



KALLISTRI MEDIA

3-D’s Appeal Wanes, but New Releases Are Still Planned

From First Business Page

get out of its way,” Ms. Bullock said last month during a presentation at the Comic-Con International fan convention in San Diego.

On Sept. 20, film purists may feel shock of another kind, when a much-loved classic, “The Wizard of Oz,” is released for an exclusive, one-week run on Imax screens in a 3-D version from Warner Brothers. Relatively few people now living have ever seen the 1939 film in a theater, never mind in three dimensions.

The mini-release will help promote a five-disc home video set, which includes a version playable on 3-D televisions. It is also part of an Imax strategy intended to create unusual events on its large-format screens during the late summer and early fall weeks when the blockbuster business has trailed off.

Thus, “Metallica Through the Never,” another unusual 3-D film, this one from Picturehouse, will have an exclusive one week-run in Imax theaters beginning Sept. 27.

Its novelty comes not just from the placement of cameras inside the heavy metal band’s perimeter during performances of a semi-violent concert-in-the-

round, but also from an effort to bring sound — lots of it — into the equation.

“The audio is a massive contributor to the effect of 3-D,” said Greg Foster, a senior executive vice president for Imax Corporation.

Speaking by telephone recently, Mr. Foster said the future of movies in 3-D depends on the willingness of directors like Nimrod Antal, who made the Metallica film, to treat the medium and its potential with respect. “It all depends on the filmmakers being fully invested, and owning it,” Mr. Foster said.

One deeply invested filmmaker is Robert Redford, who is working on a subtler but no less intriguing project in 3-D. Mr. Redford is contributing one segment to an anthology-style documentary, “Cathedrals of Culture,” about various architectural masterpieces.

Overseen by Wim Wenders, whose contribution is a 3-D look at the architect Hans Scharoun’s Berlin Philharmonic Hall, the film is expected to appear both on television and in theaters sometime next year. Mr. Redford is directing a 26-minute examination of the Salk Institute’s mysteriously placid ocean-side campus, which was designed by Louis Kahn and built 50 years ago in La

Jolla, Calif.

“Some people have said it’s a sacred place,” said Laura Michalchysyn, who is a producer of the project.

Speaking jointly with the film’s cinematographer, Ed Lachman, Ms. Michalchysyn said that in July Mr. Redford finished shooting scenes that find symbolic correlation between repetitive elements in Mr. Kahn’s design and the DNA research that is being done on premises with 3-D technology.

Mr. Lachman, for his part, shot entirely with natural light, to catch the daily cycle of changing color at Salk, while using 3-D to capture spatial relationships that might evade conventional cameras. “Kahn created almost a 3-D effect in the structure of the building,” he said.

Experiments like Mr. Redford’s do not appear likely to affect the business prospects of 3-D technology. “I don’t believe there are sufficient encouraging signs that it will ‘leak’ into adult films in the near future, other than intriguing experiments,” said Ian Jessel, president of Legend 3D.

But the search for new — or, sometimes, very old — 3-D experiences continues.

Another documentary-in-progress, titled “Soldiers’

Stories,” has discovered 3-D images in a fold of history — inside the bloody trenches of the Somme offensive of World War I; more than two million soldiers fought in those battles, and over a million were killed or wounded.

According to Nick Reed, a producer, French combatants were inclined to photograph the action on then-common stereographic cameras. Having combed through perhaps 10,000 of the resulting images, Mr. Reed and his director, Jonathan Kitzen, are turning about 400 of them into a 30-minute, 3-D tour through the vast battle, to be shown in museums, and perhaps in commercial theaters as centennial remembrances of the war approach.

“You get a sense of scale, it’s a very different experience,” said Mr. Kitzen, in describing his own shudder at viewing trench warfare in a rapid succession of contemporaneously shot 3-D stills.

Mr. Kitzen, whose earlier film “Cosmic Journey: Through Hubble and Cassini” rendered the universe in 3-D via space telescope images, noted that some things are simply too grand for two dimensions.

“You just don’t know how big a galaxy is until you’ve seen it in 3-D,” he said.

Media Decoder

Behind the Screens, Between the Lines

Time Magazine Branches Out Into Documentary Films

By CHRISTINE HAUGHNEY

As most print news outlets scramble to find greater profits in a punishing media market by adding more online video content, they are trying to figure out exactly what kind of video content they want to provide. Do they produce short, televisionlike broadcasts? Clips from the latest news events? Or do they try something more ambitious?

Time has decided to venture into documentary films and recently started a new unit called Red Border Films, named after the magazine’s red border. The division will produce one 10-minute film a month and two longer, more ambitious projects each year. While some of these projects will tie in to articles in the magazine, other videos will stand alone.

Kira Pollack, Time’s director of photography, said Time editors started thinking about creating a unit after the success of a project tied to the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. That project, which featured print interviews with 40 people affected by the attacks, including George W. Bush and Rudolph W. Giuliani, appeared on the Time Web site and resulted in an hourlong special on HBO and CNN. Time also published a special magazine is-

sue with some of the interviews.

“That was a really successful project where it was about journalism and it was about world histories,” Ms. Pollack said.

Ms. Pollack said Time editors also noticed that many of the photographers they worked with were expanding into video journalism, giving them a familiar pool of expert video journalists to work with on the new projects.

Time plans to release its first documentary on Wednesday, tied to the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech, which is later this month, Aug. 28. Other topics include the film “Ashes to Ashes” on the cremation industry, which was broadcast as a test project in conjunction with an article that ran in the magazine’s June 13, 2013, issue.

One of the first videos Red Border plans to release is a documentary about a Bobby Henline, an Iraq war veteran and comedian. The video, called “Healing Bobby,” will be paired with a photo essay in the print magazine.

Ms. Pollack said that by producing only one 10-minute short each month and focusing on longer projects, the magazine hoped to produce high-quality content. “There’s going to be a lot of time to make those excellent,” Ms. Pollack said about the videos.

Spanish Station Draws Young Fans

By BEN SISARIO

On New York radio, the sound of success is a Latin dance mix and a Spanish-speaking D.J. excitedly sending listeners to his Instagram feed.

Last week, WSKQ-FM in New York, known as “La Mega 97.9,” celebrated a rare victory in the ratings. The station, which mixes tropical Latin music with some high-energy pop, beat English-language mainstays like Z100 (WHTZ, 100.3 FM) and Lite FM (WLTW, 106.7 FM) for the No. 1 share position among two key demographic groups: adults aged 18 to 34, and 18 to 49. In the 25-to-54 ranking, La Mega was second to Lite FM by just a tenth of a share.

The overall audience for WSKQ is dwarfed by those of mainstream English-language stations in the greater New York metropolitan market, which is 23 percent Hispanic, according to the tracking company Arbitron. In Arbitron’s July ratings, La Mega averaged almost 2.6 million listeners a week, putting it at No. 10; Lite FM, owned by Clear Channel Communications, was No. 1 with 5.2 million.

But younger demographics are those most prized by advertisers, and La Mega, which is owned by Spanish Broadcasting System, won its high share rating — a measurement of a station’s command of overall listening time — because its listeners keep the station on for longer periods of time than the listeners on other stations. Aided by high “time spent listening” statistics, La Mega’s share among the 18-to-34 group has nearly doubled since January, going to 9.2, from 4.7.

To accomplish this, the station plays music beyond the tradition-

al salsa and merengue, with Dominican bachata and the hip-hop-influenced rhythms of reggaeton. On its midday show, the host Alex Sensation mixes pieces of Latin, electronic and pop hits in quick succession like a club D.J., singing along and calling out his various social media accounts.

“We have connected to the audience in an emotional way,” said Jesus Salas, the executive vice president for programming at Spanish Broadcasting System, or SBS, which operates 20 stations in the United States.

Like other radio stations — in any language — La Mega has used its on-air personalities and local presence to stand out in the age of Pandora and YouTube. Bill Tanner, a radio consultant and former SBS executive, said that La Mega also benefited from the fact that the Hispanic audience had kept a much closer connection to radio than other groups.

“Hispanics listen to the radio much more than English-language listeners do,” he said. “If they are longer listeners, as Hispanics are, and if the station does a nice job with programming, which WSKQ does, then you have the formula for success.”

Last year, WSKQ had \$22.4 million in advertising revenue, making it No. 11 in the market, according to the media research firm BIA/Kelsey. Minority stations have often complained their ad rates are lower than those for white-owned stations with lower ratings, but Mark Fratrick, BIA/Kelsey’s chief economist, said that was slowly changing.

“As the Hispanic population grows, advertisers have increasingly recognized how important it is to reach those markets,” he said.

WBAI-FM Lays Off Most of Staff

By BEN SISARIO

WBAI-FM, the noncommercial radio station that has been a liberal fixture in New York for more than 50 years, laid off about two-thirds of its staff last week, including its entire news department, because of long-simmering financial difficulties.

In a tearful on-air announcement on Friday, Summer Reese, the interim executive director of the Pacifica Foundation, which owns WBAI, said that after talks with SAG-Aftra, the union that represents broadcasting talent, “we will be laying off virtually everyone whose voice you recognize on the air,” effective Monday.

She said on the air that 75 percent of the staff would be let go, but in an interview over the weekend she said that the final number was 19 out of the station’s 29 employees, about 66 percent.

Andrew Phillips, the former general manager of another of Pacifica’s five stations, KPFA-FM in Berkeley, Calif., has been appointed WBAI’s interim program director.

A spokeswoman for SAG-Aftra declined to comment.

Pacifica also operates stations in Washington, Houston and Los Angeles, and syndicates popular

public affairs programs like “Democracy Now!,” which started at WBAI in 1996.

WBAI, which broadcasts at 99.5 FM, has long struggled financially, and its leadership structure has been described as anarchic. But its problems multiplied last year after Hurricane Sandy, when it was forced to vacate its studios on Wall Street. In March, the station began a drive to raise \$500,000 to pay back rent on its transmitter. Ms. Reese said the station had millions of dollars in debt and had operated at a loss since 2004. She said the Pacifica network had repeatedly drained its finances to cover WBAI’s expenses. The station, she added, could no longer afford to make its payroll and was laying off employees to pay its transmitter rent and to avoid being forced to sell its broadcast license.

WBAI is not the only troubled Pacifica station. Ms. Reese recently said that WPFW-FM in Washington might not be able “to get through until September.” Over the weekend she said that since Pacifica had been dealing with these troubled stations, “the entire enterprise is distressed,” but that by fixing its finances the network could survive.