

# Rethinking Media Policy in the Age of New Media

Quello Center Communications Law and Policy Symposium  
The National Press Club, Washington, D.C., May 19, 2009

Free to the public, but please register at <http://quello.msu.edu>

Internet-based new media are reshaping the media landscape. The effects on the print and broadcast media have been most dramatic. The newspaper industry is collapsing, the magazine industry is consolidating around fewer publications with reduced circulations, radio profits have declined substantially, and broadcast television ratings continue to slide. Multichannel services (cable, satellite, and telco IPTV) are net gainers, but more impressive has been the rise and proliferation of online sources of content. Recent Pew surveys show that more people now get their news online than from newspapers. The variety of content available online vastly exceeds what is supplied by traditional media. These changes have been rapid and are not yet incorporated in our thinking about media policy. This symposium explores the implications of new media for U.S. communications policy by focusing on traditional goals of media policy and asking how they might best be achieved in the new and emerging media environment.

## Schedule

### 1:00-1:10 **Welcome**

Steven S. Wildman, Co-Director, Quello Center for Telecommunication Management and Law,  
Michigan State University

### 1:10-1:40 **Opening keynote address**

Richard E. Wiley, Partner, Wiley Rein and former Chairman, Federal Communications  
Commission

### 1:40-3:10 **Scarcity, Diversity, Efficiency: Media Structure Regulation Reconsidered**

Diversity and Efficiency are policy goals traditionally pursued through Congressional mandates and FCC regulations that relied heavily on media ownership restrictions to promote competition within individual media industries and limit concentration of voices. While there is some disagreement among scholars, a basic assumption of these policies is that less concentration promotes diversity and, within limits, efficiency—especially when the number of outlets is limited. The rise of internet-based suppliers of content raises questions about whether scarcity concerns are still valid, while at the same time undermining the economics of traditional media. On the one hand, this means fewer traditional media outlets are likely to survive in the future, which, other things equal, would heighten concentration concerns. On the other hand, some consolidation may be necessary to preserve outlets and, perhaps, voices. It must also be asked whether rising prominence of internet sources should allay concerns about concentration in traditional media.

Chair: Larry Patrick, Patrick Communications

- Kevin J. Martin, former Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
- John B. Horrigan, Pew Internet and American Life Project
- Eli M. Noam, Columbia University
- Patricia Aufderheide, American University
- Allen P. Grunes, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck

### 3:10-3:30 **Refreshments**

3:30-5:00 **Media Proliferation and Fragmentation: Media Content Regulation Reconsidered**

The regulatory response to the proliferation of media outlets in recent decades has been diminished regulation of content, even as remaining content regulations have become more asymmetric: treating alternative platforms and delivery modes quite differently. The widely accepted notion of a marketplace of ideas holds that a larger number and diversity of media outlets contributes to a vibrant civic society and might justify even less regulatory oversight. However, new research suggests that bias may matter more than could be documented in the past. Further, there is work showing that political participation on the local level is influenced by the media consumed and available to local citizens. On the other hand, there is growing concern that a proliferation of content options is fragmenting media audiences to the point that we can no longer count on shared media experiences and exposure to opposing ideas, and this is leading to a less productive policy dialog and increasing polarization. This session explores the implications of these trends and conflicting observations for the future of media content policy.

Chair: John D. Evans, John D. Evans Foundation

- Robert M. Entman, George Washington University
- Gigi B. Sohn, Public Knowledge
- Frank Pasquale, Seton Hall Law School
- Matthew Hindman, Arizona State University

5:00-5:15 **Concluding remarks**

Johannes M. Bauer, Co-Director, Quello Center for Telecommunication Management and Law, Michigan State University

5:15-6:00 **Reception** (Winners Room, National Press Club)