

The Web Will Set Us Free!

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The (Social) Web (2.0) Will
Set Us Free!

The *For* Argument:

- Information monopoly to information liberation
 - Producer-push environment to consumer-pull environment
 - To networks of information and people
- Producer-consumer-mediator:
 - E.pluribus unum to Unum e.pluribus...or whatever the correct Latin would be.
- Proliferation of choices and sources
- People power: not the government or business leaders, middle-class people/kids
- We have already seen what Social Media can do: The Arab Spring

The *Anti* Argument

- What was meant to usher in a bigger world instead can bring in a narrower world
- "[Beware The Filter Bubble](#)" by Eli Pariser: "We're seeing a passing of the torch from human gatekeepers to algorithms"
 - "We need to make sure that they also show us things that are uncomfortable or challenging or important."
- Only richer voices get heard
- And the Arab Spring not the first revolution spread by information: every single one before it was too: From American to French to Eastern Europe. (We can get overly enamored with our selves and our times.)
- Still the case that traditional media has the resources and training to do things that social media cannot

- NewsCorp. best example of both bad and good of traditional media
- **THE HARDEST TESTS AHEAD:**
 - Does social media actually help us get to better government, greater democracy
 - » Arab Spring to Egyptian democracy?
 - » Obama election to governance
 - » Tea Party
 - » China

What Matters to Free Societies?

- Information
- Exposure: light to dark places
- Involvement
- Connection
- Free speech
- Free thought
- Free assembly
- State monopoly on violence
- Freedom from deprivation: freedom to live, eat, sleep, study, work, rest and love

What Makes Money?

- Porn

The CONTEXT in which all media today live...

- Hierarchy of desire for information (concentric circles)
 - Loved ones
 - Others of import
 - Personal professional
 - Professional
 - Political and Societal (Global, for some)
 - Other (Global, for some)
- Hierarchy of sources (a pyramid)
 - Proximity to us/ the event
 - Credibility
 - Reputation, perceived power,
 - Enjoyment
 - X Factor (attraction, talent, titillation/exasperation)

Our inherent flaws as NEWS media:

- We can't be about your family, though some of us have tried to at least be about your block or neighborhood
- Some big names in media (AOL) have tried to create networks that will produce information that is high in both realms (information hierarchy and source hierarchy)
- Our success: will depend on our ability to find a **BUSINESS MODEL** that will allow us to make enough money to pay for information acquisition

The Dark Scenario:

- Credible sources of information cannot find a business model that works
- Distribution is not in the air, or even over air. There are still barriers to information, even digital information – and more than for the printed page in some ways.
 - For instance, digital information can go far and wide in the blink of an eye, but if you have no device to access it, it might as well not exist.
 - On the other hand: if a paper is near you, you can see it. Even if you are illiterate, you can look at its pictures or political cartoons
- A million flowers may bloom, but if no one can see them, it won't matter (Thank God for radio – since even TV is no longer over air in more and more places)

- **Diversion**

- Just as sober news producers could not force the world to pay attention when we had a near monopoly, it's harder now.
- The MSM have often failed to escape corruption, but we often have exposed it too.
- Information overload makes it more possible for those who want to just swim in their own stream of like-minded people and in their own immediate concerns and those of the people closest to them, in geography, blood and affinity
- Many people – most? – would rather watch baby kittens than news of the US deficit/spending fight

Transition? Convergence?

- Fewer of us
- **More of you**