



Free Press Viewpoint

Getting more news but trusting it less

Do people trust the news? Not a lot, says a new study from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, but the media is still more trusted than the government.

The center conducted the study on attitudes toward the media with a survey given to 1,500 adults around the country every few years since 1985. In that time, the percentage of people who say stories are "often inaccurate" rose from 34 to 66 percent. "Tend to favor one side" increased from 53 to 77 percent and "often influenced by powerful people and organizations" went from 53 to 80 percent.

This tracks with the rise of the 24/7 cable news networks and Internet news outlets. About 66 percent of the people surveyed get their news from television, 43 from the Internet, 31 from newspapers and 19 from radio. Television has been declining in usage over the past decade while the Internet has been steadily increasing.

What the survey results boil down to is that while people get most of their news from the television, they don't trust the big news conglomerates. It's not hard to see why. Accusations fly thick and fast as to whether Fox News is conservative and CNN is liberal. No one accuses them of being "too objective."

These and other national organizations are so worried about getting on the air when breaking news happens that the first reports are wildly inaccurate. This has extended into social media, where legitimate reporters are "tweeting" news that is either muddled or just plain wrong – and then everyone else picks it up and runs with it. Craig Silverman, who runs a blog on newspaper corrections, reported a story where a number of reporters spread a rumor that a CNN anchor had been fired, only to discover the rumor came from a hoax twitter account.

That doesn't mean nobody trusts the news. More people said they trust news organizations they use most than trust news organizations in general. So do people trust news sources they like, or do they like news sources they can trust? Hard to say.

The Pew Center acknowledges that people may be swayed in what they think of the media as a whole by what they think of the major cable news networks.

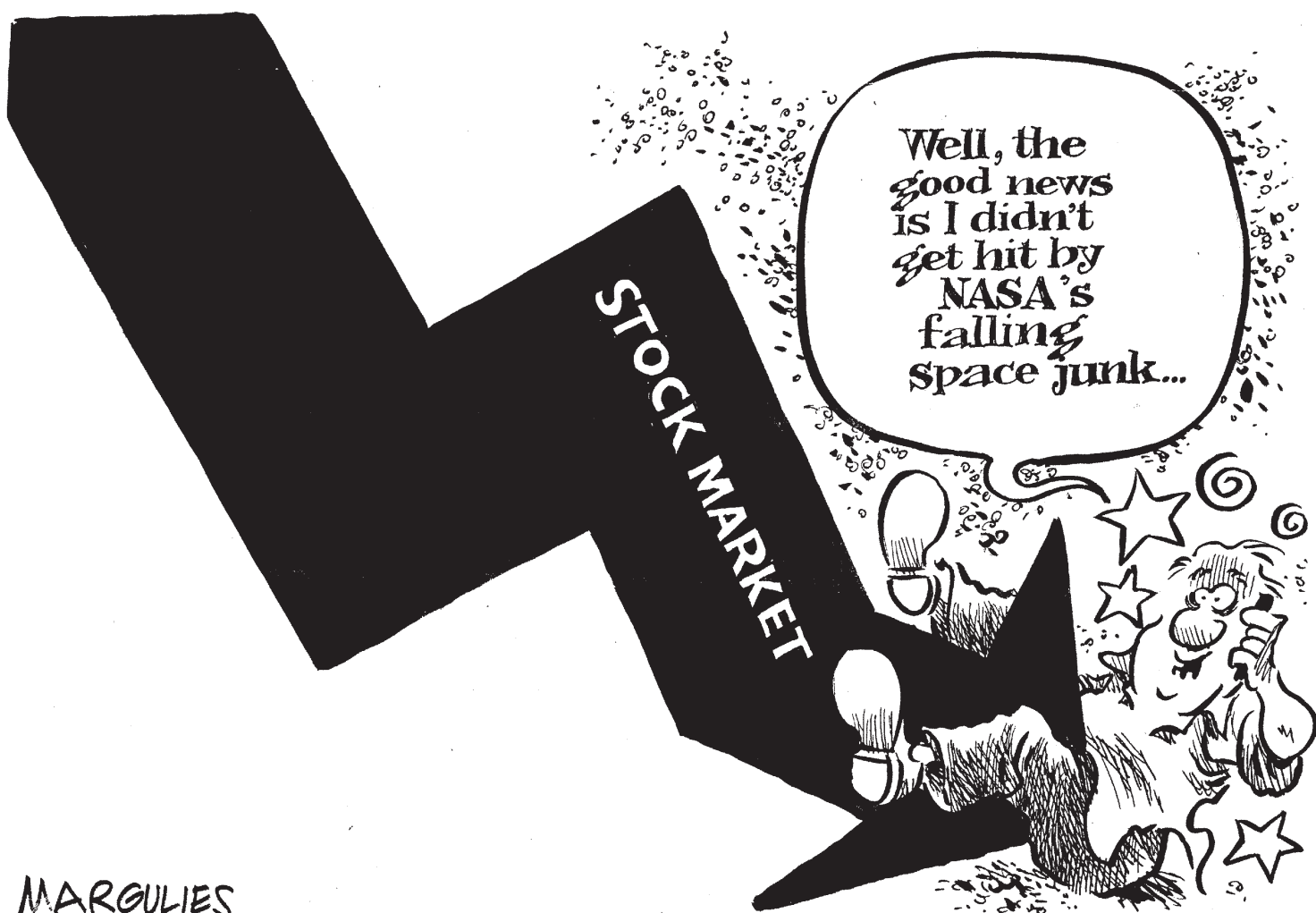
It's not all bad news for those of us who work in journalism. While people are evenly split between believing that journalists protect or hurt democracy, the majority believe that journalists are highly professional, care about doing a good job, and keep leaders from doing things that shouldn't be done.

People also trust the media more than government and businesses. 59 percent of those surveyed said they trusted national news organizations some or a lot, compared 51 percent who trust state government, 50 percent who trust the Obama Administration and 41 percent who trust corporations. The lowest on the list? Congress and candidates running for office.

Of course, people trust local media, such as the *Colby Free Press*, a lot more than any of those other groups, to the tune of 69 percent. We believe this is because the people covering the news at these organizations live and work in the community. We are there to respond to criticism directly and we can do the "smaller" stories that are often more important to people than the bigger ones.

We hope people continue to trust local media. It is a two-way street, after all. We endeavor to do a quality job covering local news and events so that people trust us to do so and use us as a news outlet, and the more people who do, the better we're able to keep covering the things that are important to our readers.

—Kevin Bottrell



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Reality mania takes a new downturn

I will admit upfront that I am not a fan of all things "reality." I don't know when our nation began its slide into the morass of folks behaving badly and the rest of the nation wanting to be a witness to it.

For years the closest thing to a reality show was the Miss America Pageant or the Howdy Doody Show, or the Dating Game. If you wanted to see folks behaving badly, you went to a family reunion and added beer.

Now, every network is trying to outdo each other with the worst possible behavior for 30 minutes to an hour. When I sit down to watch TV, I want to be entertained – not listen to someone shouting expletives at someone else.

I tried watching *Survivor* and got bored early on and never tuned in again. The scenery is usually interesting but the players leave much to be desired. The *Amazing Race* provided some entertaining moments in some very interesting places, but still not holding my interest week after week.

Now we have *Teen Moms*, wives of various places, *Bridezillas* and many other shows of the same genre. I just can't imagine behaving in public like these folks and having a camera in my face doing it.

I hope they are being paid well to immortalize themselves as the dregs of humanity. What happens to these folks when the cameras turn



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

off? Do they behave like this every day or is it just all an act?

How would you feel if these folks were related to you? Would you tell everyone that they were your relations or would you just bring more beer to the family reunion? If my children or theirs acted like this in public, I would be ashamed to admit that I knew them, any the less, was related to them.

I guess maybe I am old fashioned in wanting to be entertained and not have my intelligence insulted. I don't care about Snooki's latest crisis or Kim's newest x-rays of her hindside. Someone in my office said, "What happened to the real in reality?" I thought it was a great point. We have become a nation of voyeurs and the juicier the story the better.

The flip side of the coin is that there are some shows that show folks in much calmer situations. *Antiques Roadshow*, *Pawn Stars*, *American Pickers*, *Storage Wars* to mention

a few. When you watch these shows you can really learn something about history, art and value hidden in the oddest of places. I enjoy seeing someone reacting to the fact that the piece of pottery Mom left them is a priceless piece of history and worth a small fortune. When they find out how much it's worth they say they will stop putting potted plants in it. One gentleman found out that the odd bowls his dad had bought were rhino horn and now worth over seven figures. Everyone agreed that they did not want to eat out of them, but what a find!

Not every situation has a happy or profitable ending, but no one screams at anyone. Granted these are not high-anxiety shows, but there are quite a few laughs along the way. Imagine finding out that the priceless heirloom grandma left you is actually worth very little – or the garage sale find is worth thousands.

I guess I will just have to admit that I am swimming upstream, but I am comfortable with that. Maybe you can share how you feel about this with us and we can all have a laugh or two.

Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at sfriedlander@nwkansasc.com.

Doodlebug and jitney brought the news

As a youngster my dad used to read two newspapers daily. His newspapers of choice were the *Kansas City Star* and *Denver Post*.

Both arrived on the same day and both contained the latest news from that date in history. The doodlebug or jitney brought the two papers from Kansas City 358 miles to the east and Denver, 255 miles to our west. We farmed outside the small Sheridan County community of Seguin.

For you younger readers a doodlebug was the common name for a self-propelled railroad car. Doodlebugs sometimes pulled an unpowered trailer car, but were sometimes used singly.

They were popular with some railroads during the first to middle part of the 20th century. Jitneys provided passenger and mail service on lightly used branch lines, often in rural areas with sparse populations.

By operating these two-car trains in northwestern Kansas, the Union Pacific didn't need to use conventional trains consisting of a locomotive and coaches. Several railroads, mostly small regional and local networks, provided their main passenger services through doodlebugs in a cost-cutting effort. This also freed up the Union Pacific to use its locomotives for the transportation of wheat, milo, barley and livestock.

Our home was located a little more than a block north of the tracks and from the time I saw my first train I was fascinated by the sound, smoke and the sight of these hulking metal monsters. I couldn't wait to see them, hear them, count the cars and eventually ride on one of them.

Doodlebugs were considerably quieter than the steam locomotives that carried millions and millions of bushels of grain from the breadbasket of the world where I grew up to hungry mouths across the globe. These two-car trains were typically equipped with a gasoline-powered engine that turned a generator which



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

provided electricity to traction motors, which turned the axles and wheels on the trucks.

The doodlebug that stopped in our little village, population 50 with dogs and cats, usually came mid-morning, about 10:15. Back in those days you could almost set your watch by its arrival.

And that's how my dad received his two daily papers on the same day. A half century later after the rail lines were torn up and steam engines were a distant memory my dad subscribed to the *Salina Journal*. One of his neighbors, Elmer Reitcheck, subscribed to the *Hays Daily News*. After they'd read their copies they'd swap.

The funny thing about this is that Dad and Elmer were now reading yesterday's papers. To be more exact, it often took two days to receive their daily papers. That's right. With all our technology, the lightning-quick U.S. postal service required two days to deliver a paper 94 and 188 miles.

Talk about old news. You know the old saying, "That's a heck'eva way to run a railroad." Well, I can't remember how many times I heard my dad say, "bring back the railroads."

I guess, you could blame part of the demise of today's papers on transportation and the government, but then both take a beating daily anyway, so back to the story of doodlebugs and those days of yesteryear.

I took one of my first train rides on a doodlebug. I also accompanied my dad to see our relatives in Denver by way of the Rock Island Rocket. That was nearly 60 years ago and the

250 mile trip on this streamliner took less than three hours. We literally flew across the plains traveling at speeds of 90 miles per hour in this red and silver rocket. It takes four hours to cover this same distance traveling on Interstate 70 today.

For my sixth birthday, I asked my parents for a train trip from Seguin to Oakley. It was a little under 50 miles by train and Mom and Dad drove part of the way beside my sister, Cathy, and me as we dawdled in the doodlebug on our way to Oakley. This slowpoke traveled half the speed of the Rocket – maybe less.

During part of the trip the engineer allowed me to put my hand on the huge silver, metal throttle and as I told my friends later, "I drove the doodlebug part of the way to Oakley."

Bet I couldn't get anywhere near a train throttle or computer-operated engine room today. SOPs (standard operating procedure), rules and regulations being what they are.

Maybe I really didn't go on this train ride across the High Plains back in the mid '50s. Maybe this story is all a dream. Something I thought up to fill this column.

Don't count on it. It was real. It was a birthday I'll always remember. Now those were the good old days.

And who knows maybe one day trains will once again play a vital role in transportation on both coasts. One thing is certain, they won't carry newspapers anymore.

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 Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansasc.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan., 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

