

Victor Pickard: Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society.

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MARTIN EIDE

University of Bergen

Victor Pickard has written a comprehensive, nuanced, and fascinating book on the crisis of American journalism. The Annenberg scholar provides a sharp and important analysis based on historical and sociological perspectives. Victor Pickard uncover the roots of the crisis, in order to reinvent journalism.

The underlying problem is a toxic commercialism that prioritizes profit over democratic imperatives and, consequently, degrades journalism. Pickard envisions a way out, based on a need for a publicly owned and democratically governed media system. With scholars like Robert McChesney and John Nichols, Victor Pickard argues that this social democratic approach is as American as apple pie!

In *Democracy Without Journalism?* Victor Pickard launches three competing narratives about journalism and the election of Trump. First: news media enabled Trump's ascendance through a horse-race coverage. Second: a newfound appreciation for the Fourth Estate. Third: the needed public service was precisely the journalism that failed.

Pickard's analysis has a strong historical and political economical basis, including normative aspects, in providing a rigorous account of social agents in power. Among Pickard's illuminating formulations is the following: Journalism should provide the nation's early warn-

ing system, “so problems can be anticipated, studied, and debated and addressed before they grow to crisis proportions”.

The book locates different failures in the US media system to confront “the misinformation society”, in which “Fake News” plays a central role. However, Victor Pickard finds the concept to be “a deeply problematic term”. Unfortunately, he doesn’t have much more to say about “Fake News” and its relationship to Pickard’s preferred phrase – the misinformation society.

A strength with Pickard’s approach is his focus on journalism’s deinstitutionalization and how media figure within larger power relationships. This position also provides journalism with opportunities. It allows us to reimagine what journalism could be, and brings into focus journalism’s normative foundation.

Pickard’s proposal is to regard journalism as a public good. His new book is a great resource in confronting “the misinformation society” and offering an investigation of the infrastructure of democracy. Pickard’s contribution is helpful in an important endeavor to reimagine journalism. “For too long, US society has held the wrong debate over what new business model might support journalism,” Pickard argues. His proposal is to “clarify the structural roots of the crisis, expand the political imagery for potential futures, identify alternatives, and help chart a path toward actualizing them.” Pickard’s well written book will set us straight.

MARTIN EIDE

Professor

Dept. of Information Science and Media Studies

University of Bergen

martin.eide@uib.no

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