

Alternative Voices

Essential Books and Media that Most Libraries Don't Carry, But Should
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#1

MEDIA CONSOLIDATION:

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Introduction

The implications and effects of media consolidation became a topic of debate starting about the latter 1960s. By the mid-1990s, it had become a major cause of the progressive left. New writings on the topic appear regularly. This brief bibliography is a critique of media consolidation and is composed of significant titles to date. One book, *Global Media: menace or messiah?*, counter-argues the notion of a global media conspiracy, and is included here to present another side of this complex issue. Media consolidation is an extensive topic, one related to a number of subjects. The Library of Congress catalogs the works here under one or more of the following headings: mass media-economic aspects, mass media-social aspects, mass media-political aspects, mass media and culture, mass media policy, mass media ownership, mass media criticism, and communication, international. The headings could be extended to include, for example, mass media-global aspects, mass media and advertisers, mass media and the public sphere, mass media and citizen activism, mass media-intellectual freedom aspects, mass media and deregulation, and mass media and democracy. Critiques of media consolidation involve a number of issues and notions:

- that consolidation and globalization of media over the past decade have been massive
- that media consolidation is served by government deregulation and subsidization of the airwaves
- that media consolidation and globalization are viewed as predecessors of global capitalism
- that the bottom line of corporate media is profit, not content
- that media industries have become media oligopolies, that is, media conglomerates are not agents of a democratic citizenry, but of a business and state elite
- that critiques of globalization and corporate power are marginalized
- that media audiences are treated as consumers rather than citizens
- that the traditional notion of media having a public interest obligation has disappeared, and
- that democratically-based media outlets have expanded and while marginalized provide an alternative to corporate media messages

Bibliography

Bagdikian, Ben H. **The Media Monopoly**, 6th ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000. ISBN: 0807061794 (paper); 0807061840 (electronic book [NetLibrary])

Originally issued in 1983, this book has become a classic critique of corporate media. Bagdikian, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and dean emeritus of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley, updates his argument that concentrated corporate ownership of media and mass advertising effects the nation's news and influences the nation's political and economic agendas. The book will serve as both an introduction to and a wake up call on what's happening in mass media and how

this influences political power. It will leave little doubt that mass media's firmest marriage is to advertising and profits, leaving the public without a way of identifying, analyzing, and assessing alternative social forces. A population that is unable to weigh alternative points of view sustains the status quo.

Barnouw, Erik. **Conglomerates and the Media**. New York: The New Press, 1997. ISBN: 156584386X

Looks openly and critically at the impact of conglomerate ownership has had on the media. The bottom line for today's corporate media is to be profitable. Those who cannot afford to consume, that is, contribute to the profits, are likely to be factored out. The implications of this are significant for marginalized groups. Introduces developing characteristics in media, including the decline of journalistic integrity, the dumbing down of the publishing industry, and the diminished seriousness of the broadcasting industry.

"Big Media and What You Can Do About It." **The Nation** 274, 1 (January 7/14, 2002).

Six editorials: Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols, "The Making of a Movement: getting serious about media reform"; Jeffrey Chester and Gary O. Larson, "Something Old, Something New"; Mark Crispin Miller, "What's Wrong With This Picture? The media cartel and its cultural effects"; Al Franken *et al.*, "Take This Media...Please!"; "The Big Ten," media corporations and their holdings; and "Your Favorite Media Sources," alternative media outlets.

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. **The Business of Media: corporate media in the public interest**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2001. ISBN: 0-761986405

While not radical, an excellent introduction to the issues of corporate media industry. The book is divided into three parts: Part I provides a framework and historical context for considering the media industry by sketching out a market model and a public sphere model; Part II describes the major media industry trends of the last decade; and Part III uses the public sphere model to provide a critical analysis of contemporary media. Concludes by exploring how policy and citizen activism can help produce media that are more responsive to the needs of citizens in a diverse democratic society. Useful information is found in numerous tables and an appendix of online resources. Could readily be used as a textbook.

Demers, David. **Global Media: menace or messiah?** Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1999. ISBN: 1572732938

Presents counter-arguments to a global media conspiracy. This book can help sharpen one's own point of view by seeing the other side of the argument. Begins by stating that global media organizations, like other businesses, have had to consolidate to become more efficient. In order to supply more markets, global media organizations have had to become more differentiated, and this structural differentiation has led to less concentrated power, not more. While the media is unlikely to elevate the tastes, values and ideals of humankind beyond their present levels, it equally is unlikely to control the thoughts and beliefs of nations in order to dominate or destroy indigenous cultures. Media organizations are not concentrating on disseminating some central set of themes and values designed to influence and sway large numbers of people to adopt a particular set of economic or political systems.

Electronic Empires: global media and local resistance. Edited by Daya Kishan Thussu. London; New York: Arnold; Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN: 0340718951; 034071896X (paper)

Seventeen contributors explore the recent history of media domination, the displaced "public sphere," a defense and critique of media imperialism, and resistance to electronic empires. A central theme is the implications of the growing power of media conglomerates that control both the delivery systems and the content of global media networks. Global media business are building empires where international frontiers do not exist, national polices are irrelevant, and regulatory laws are minor hazards.

Herman, Edward S. **The Myth of the Liberal Media: an Edward Herman reader.** New York: Peter Lang, 1999. ISBN: 0820441864

The book is made up of essays that review and enhance Herman's work of the past thirty years. Herman's thesis is that the market controls the media, and media shapes the picture of the world that reaches the general public. The ways the media reaches a mass audience is closely linked to state power. Dissident ideas are not legally banned, but are simply unable to reach mass audiences. Proposes an alternative structure of media closer to ordinary people and grassroots organizations that would replace, or at least offer an important alternative to, the mainstream media.

Herman, Edward S. and Robert Waterman McChesney. **The Global Media: the new missionaries of corporate capitalism.** London; Washington, DC: Cassell, 1997. ISBN: 0304334332; 0304334340 (paper)

Establishes four points. First, a global commercial media system has developed quickly over the past decade. Second, this system is dominated by some ten mostly U.S.-based transnational media conglomerates. Third, the system is an indispensable component of the globalizing market economy. Fourth, the system does not serve democracy or self-government. Concludes by chronicling the widespread global efforts to establish and strengthen community and non-commercial media.

McChesney, Robert W. **Media Rich, Democracy Poor: communication politics in dubious times,** rev. ed. New York: The New Press, 2000. ISBN: 1565846346 (paper)

McChesney is a prominent scholar and author in the area of media consolidation. Here he documents corporate and global media concentration along with all-encompassing commercialism as the three forces since the 1960s that have transferred control of the news, broadcasting, music, film and other media into the hands of a few wealthy investors, corporate executives, and advertisers. Places media concentration in the context of larger societal issues: hypercommercialism, concentration of political and economic decision-making in the hands of an ever-smaller power elite, and the decline in the number of citizens participating in elections. Examines the perils and promises of the Internet and concludes that it will lead to a new wave of concentration in the press.

Schiffrin, Andre. **The Business of Books: how international conglomerates took over publishing and changed the way we read.** New York; London: Verso, 2000. ISBN: 1859847633; 185984362X (paper)

The book is Schiffrin's personal account of the changes in the publishing industry starting in the 1960s. He believes that the free marketplace of ideas does not refer to the market value of each idea, but rather that "ideas of all sorts should have a chance to be put to the public, to be expressed and argued fully and not in soundbytes." Corporate publishers are less willing to gamble on a challenging new book or author, and jeopardized are important works of nonfiction. Founded The New Press as an alternative medium to deal with the social and political issues neglected by conglomerate publishers.