

# Program Development

## The Future of the Media in Society

The role of a free and effective press in a democracy and its impact on the formulation of public policy are at the center of two ongoing Academy studies. The first deals with how information about science and technology is diffused through the media. It is led by Donald Kennedy, former Stanford University President and Editor-in-Chief of *Science* magazine; and Geneva Overholser of the University of Missouri School of Journalism. The second examines reporting on business and the economy and includes among the project advisors Princeton University economists Alan Blinder and Alan Krueger. Both projects take into account the impact of new technologies and evolving patterns of news consumption on economic models that have long supported traditional print and broadcast media.

As Ghiglione points out, the technological revolution and market forces present traditional media with enormous challenges. Online advertising competitors devour major sources of revenue that have long been traditional media's lifeblood. With advertising and circulation revenues falling, traditional media shrink their news staffs, resulting in fewer resources for serious, investigative reporting.

Today, the future of journalism is best defined by a set of difficult questions. Who will provide the costly news analysis and worldwide coverage necessary to inform citizens? Will traditional media keep reinventing themselves to meet the demands of the economic, cultural, and technological future? How can business, government agencies, educational institutions, foundations, and other nonprofit organizations encourage needed changes in the media? Can the sense of excitement and experimentation that surrounds journalism on the web lead to new models of public-

service journalism? Can traditional consumers of news become more open to quality journalism presented in online formats?

Many of these questions served as the basis for discussion at an Academy meeting on the "Future of News" at the Time-Life Building in New York in December 2006. Hosted by Time, Inc. Chief Executive Officer Ann Moore and chaired by former Time, Inc. Editor-in-Chief Norman Pearlstine, the program included a panel consisting of John Carroll, former Editor of the *Los Angeles Times*; Jeff Jarvis, City University of New York journalism professor and blogger; Jill Abramson, Managing Editor of the *New York Times*; Jonathan Klein, President of CNN/US; and Geneva Overholser, Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Reporting at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

To advance the study, the Academy will partner with universities and other institutions with established journalism programs to sponsor a series of workshops designed to assess the transformation in journalism. According to Ghiglione, the Academy's multidisciplinary membership makes it an ideal convener of this project. Scholars and practitioners in journalism, computer science, technology, business, and other fields can advance our understanding of the future of news transmission – its quality, speed, and form. The social sciences can provide guidance on how to increase the accountability of those who report and analyze the news – to make their work more professional and transparent as a way of increasing public trust. The humanities can offer insights into such unchanging human needs as community and personal contact in a world where digital-age technology may diminish as well as empower the individual. ■



Photo courtesy of Northwestern University

**Loren Ghiglione**

*Academy Fellow Loren Ghiglione, the Richard Schwarzlose Professor of Media Ethics at Northwestern University, spent six weeks this spring as a senior visiting scholar at the Academy. He is developing plans to expand the Academy's work on the evolving role that the media are playing in our society, and especially the changing nature of journalism in today's digital world.*

*Elected to the Academy in 2004, Ghiglione edited and published newspapers in New England for twenty-six years before directing journalism programs at Emory University, the University of Southern California, and Northwestern University for a decade. He is former President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and former Dean of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern.*