



Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters Now

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An urgent account of the revolution that has upended the news business, written by one of the most accomplished journalists of our time

Technology has radically altered the news landscape. Once-powerful newspapers have lost their clout or been purchased by owners with particular agendas. Algorithms select which stories we see. The Internet allows consequential revelations, closely guarded secrets, and dangerous misinformation to spread at the speed of a click.

In *Breaking News*, Alan Rusbridger demonstrates how these decisive shifts have occurred, and what they mean for the future of democracy. In the twenty years he spent editing *The Guardian*, Rusbridger managed the transformation of the progressive British daily into the most visited serious English-language newspaper site in the world. He oversaw an extraordinary run of world-shaking scoops, including the exposure of phone hacking by London tabloids, the Wikileaks release of U.S. diplomatic cables, and later the revelation of Edward Snowden's National Security Agency files. At the same time, Rusbridger helped *The Guardian* become a pioneer in Internet journalism, stressing free access and robust interactions with readers. Here, Rusbridger vividly observes the media's transformation from close range while also offering a vital assessment of the risks and rewards of practicing journalism in a high-impact, high-stress time.

Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters Now Details

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Author : Alan Rusbridger

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Camille Kraus says

I won this book in the giveaway. I found this to be extremely informative and thoughtful. I am an avid reader of the New York Times and found Alan Rusbridger to be knowledgeable.

Oonagh Smyth says

This is a fascinating read for three reasons:

- the insight behind the scenes into some modern media scoops like the Snowden papers
 - it's a real life strategic case study of an industry having to respond to fundamental changes which threaten its very existence
 - it reminds me about the importance of an objective, free and values based media which seems increasingly rare
-

E says

While a bit into the weeds at times, I felt, with regard to advertising costs - and not nearly critical enough of his own newspaper at all - I still found this a fascinating look at a large internationally recognized newspaper and how it grew in the age of digital media. Since The Guardian was also one of the paper who broke the News of the World phone-hacking scandal and was trusted with Snowden, I found those chapters particularly fascinating. This is a book I'd recommend to those with an interest in journalism, and/or the role and relevance of the press in the age of the Internet.

NC Stone says

This is an extremely important story for our American democracy and Rusbridger covers the main points very well.

I didn't agree with him completely on all his conclusions but he generally states the history and current situation very well. Journalism is on life support and it must be revived or we'll lose our republic.

Fraser Bridgeford says

A must read on why it is important to have a range of independent journalistic sources. Why fake news proliferates and how it has been combated. A great read.

Ginni says

It was a bit sobering reading this right after hearing the announcements of sweeping layoffs in many major news outlets.

Breaking News is equal parts information and memoir. At times it's rather dense. But it's important. Certainly a must-read for aspiring journalists, but arguably also for anyone who has never stopped to question how they are informed about the world.

Having spent almost 20 years as editor-in-chief of the Guardian, Alan Rusbridger has a lot of first-hand experience with the rapidly changing field of journalism. You're probably familiar with the Guardian, by now one of the most-read English news outlets in the world. If you're not, you definitely will be by the end of this book. Rusbridger lovvvvvves this newspaper.

To me, the most important thing this book does is pose questions. How do you break important stories in a country where freedom of the press is not legally protected and a lawsuit could bankrupt you? How do you keep the lights on when the public now expects to get their news for free? Should you give the public the news they want to read, or the news they need to read? Who gets to decide what information is too sensitive or dangerous to be released? Should journalists share their opinions? What is a journalist's responsibility? *What is journalism?* We see Rusbridger wrestle with the complicated ethics of a field that's rapidly being redefined and threatened. It may not look anything like it did a hundred years ago, but one thing is certain: the news is more important now than ever before.

(I received this book for free through a Goodreads giveaway.)

Chandar says

Outstanding book! Alan Rusbridger had a ringside seat through two decades of the most tumultuous years of news media, as Editor of The Guardian. The serious challenges posed by social media, digitization and fake news to how mass media news is consumed should alarm all of us. Scary, and true.

Keen says

“To be a journalist in these times was bliss-for us, anyway. I’m afraid we felt a bit superior to those without the same access to information that we enjoyed. It was easy to confuse our privileged access to information with ‘authority’ or ‘expertise’. And when the floodgates opened-and billions of people also gained access to information and could publish themselves-journalism struggled to adjust.”

So says Rusbridger in the introduction to this book, expressing his fears and doubts in a rather frank manner. As many who pick up this book, will probably know, Rusbridger was the editor of the “The Guardian” from 1995 to 2015. In many ways this is a long love letter to the paper and could just as easily be called, “Why I Believe The Guardian Is Wonderful”, which may grate on those who do not agree with him.

I am a big fan of his long term work colleague and pal, Nick Davies, who has done some great work and written some fine books over the years. I am aware of all the many high profile stories that Rusbridger has

been involved in over his editorship and so I was really interested to see what he had to say.

He traces the origins of the paper back to the Peterloo massacre, which triggered a series of events that saw John Edward Taylor, a Mancunian business owner, create “The Manchester Guardian” which came into being in 1821. In 1959 it changed to “The Guardian” and in 1961 it moved premises to London.

“Comment is free, but facts are sacred.” as C.P. Scott, a long term editor of the paper once said, a sentiment that is possibly more relevant and important than ever. Without doubt Rusbridger’s time at the paper was an era of phenomenal change and upheaval in the news and publishing industry. Along with the emergence of the internet and all of the tax shy, regulation dodging multi-billion dollar behemoths that came along with it. There were many high profile law suits and trials and campaigns that made for a fairly intense and colourful journey.

We get a really interesting modern history of the paper, which includes the likes of the price war with Murdoch, the libel case with Jonathan Aitken. We get all the drama and revelation surrounding Bradley Manning, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, each story was a game changer in its own way and shows how vital and influential “The Guardian” and papers like it are throughout the world.

He goes into some detail about various other British papers, their ethics, their motives and the people behind the stories, we get some really interesting insights into the Barclay twins who own “The Daily Telegraph” and the vitriol from the likes of Paul Dacre, Andy Coulson, Rebekah Brooks and Kelvin MacKenzie. As he says of MacKenzie, “It was all good fun until it wasn’t” he later goes onto say of him, that he ruled in “An era of considerable bigotry, cruelty and prejudice rather than wit, brio and much envied (and imitated) professionalism.”

“Reach before revenue.” and “News before views.” are just some of the mantras that seem to keep popping up throughout his recollections. Much of this book focuses on his paper’s website. I had no idea how popular or successful the website was, but the author ensures that he tells us time and time again and in plenty of detail too, breaking down the details, which can sometimes grow a little tiresome and tedious. But overall Rusbridger makes for really good company and this was a thoroughly enjoyable memoir, and it should be of particular interest to fans of the paper and those who enjoy brave, high quality journalism.

Vasil Kolev says

Very interesting insight into the Guardian (which seems to be one of the few remaining usable newspapers), their transition to a "digital" (online) publication and how they managed it without killing the paper, and journalism in general. This should be one of the books anyone interested in media should read. (and the parts about Wikileaks and Snowden are a good introduction to the matter, for anyone who had lived in a cave in the last 10-15 years :))

It's not as comprehensive as I would've liked it to be, but is still informative and seems to be the pretty much the only one of its kind.

Shanti says

I have been raised as a Guardian person, and I adore the Guardian—enough that I donate to them (not much

cause I'm skint) every month, and many of my favourite journalists work at the guardian, and I appreciate their content so much and their app is great and yadayadayada. I have mostly been paying attention to the Guardian since Katherine Viner was editor though, but I thought that this would be interesting.

I was just aware enough of the news (thanks to the Guardian weekly haha) at the time of the phone hacking that I had some idea of it, and I know sort of about Edward Snowden, because my dad is a big fan and of course the Oliver Stone movie, but it was fascinating to learn more about these things from the perspective of the people who really made them happen. The Guardian is a very cool organization. And as an avid consumer and kinda producer of news content, I appreciated some of the insight into the contemporary nature of news that Rusbridger offered.

I have to admit, however, that the book becomes less compelling as it goes along. I read the first two thirds almost without breaks; I was working in Indonesia at the time, and I would flip through the pages as I took notes in hotels, waited for people to finish their smoke breaks, wandered through dire apartment complexes, hesitated in traffic etc. But it all became a bit much. this is partially, I think, because the book is long. Alan Rusbridger is totally thorough, and that is good, but at the same time, the promotion of the Guardian was somewhat unrelenting. I had hoped to learn more about who he was, other than a couple of references to his early days of reporting and stress. Also, all the Fleet Street politics, though obviously important if you work in the British media, didn't interest me all that much.

Rusbridger never quite goes all the way; he cannot critique his own newspaper, or acknowledge mistakes he made (even the financial ones) or just admit that not everyone wants the same thing from a newspaper that he does. In the second half of the book, he gets mired in the details, or else is over eager to make mostly dire (but just hopeful enough not to sound entirely dire) generalisations. This is very relevant to traditional Western media and I definitely gained a lot of insight from it. But it is not everything (more recommendations for books about newspapers, and more fun ones at that, are welcome! Novels count too!)

Susanne says

I found this to be a fantastic read. Highly recommended.

Bimbo says

A really great book on the Guardian, the British press, unrelenting media crisis and transformation, shift to social media etc. that just fell short of five stars. What Rusbridger write about the doings and goings at the Guardian is no small feat, but I'd wish him to add some of less glorious bits - for the sake of balance and credibility. The epilogue, however, is a five star piece all by itself.

Carolyn says

It's a little technical, but really important book about how journalism is trying to remain relevant and profitable in the age of the internet.

Devina says

I enjoyed the look at how print journalism was forced to evolve at breakneck speed after the world wide web changed media. Pertinent insights in the current era of media. As a journalist, I genuinely enjoyed this read.

Ellen says

I'm a fan of good journalism and I read The Guardian online. Thus, I'm the perfect audience for this astonishingly-detailed, well-formulated narrative about the journey of journalism from The Guardian's point of view. A hefty, well-deserved 5-stars for me!
