

one's civic duty (p. 77). In contrast, news avoiders sometimes said they saw the potential social benefit to consuming news but felt little social pressure to do so (p. 89).

Finally, the book points to the influence of infrastructures, identified as the pathways and routines people use to discover and make sense of information. The authors focus on the habits people use to find information, including the views of news avoiders that news will find them; if it doesn't, they feel they are better off Googling information since they aren't sure what media to believe (pp. 131–138).

The authors, therefore, provide a framework for understanding a phenomenon that too often is glossed over as a disconnect between journalists and audiences. In doing this, they provide a multipronged call for change—what Chapter 7 calls “News for all people.” It borrows from the spirits of the public journalism movement and solutions journalism. This shift involves encouraging journalists to meet people where they are, both literally and figuratively, as well as pushing for journalists to provide the audience with more context and with information they can act on (pp. 156–159). They emphasize a renewed focus on news literacy, a public relations campaign for the value of accurate, independent journalism. This book takes a key step toward trying to understand audiences who, quite simply, do not see journalistic work as essential.

Postmedia Effect: How Vulture Capitalism Is Wrecking Our News. Marc Edge. New Star Books, funded by the Government of Canada, 2023. 206 pp. \$19.24

Reviewed by: Beth Potter, *University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, Colorado, USA*
DOI: 10.1177/07395329241247607

Author Marc Edge uses his consummate research of Postmedia Network in Canada to showcase the overall demise of the newspaper industry in Canada to hedge funds—the folks he calls “vulture capitalists.”

While none of what he says is surprising, parts of it are quite shocking for the folks out in reader land, or anyone, really, to contemplate. Even as outsiders, journalists and former journalists in the room contemplate this all too well-known story now, it still boggles the mind how quickly good, independent journalism has disappeared in both Canada and the United States.

Edge starts by reminding us in detail about the aftereffects of Conrad Black's brazen business decisions with his print newspapers in Canada. He follows that recap with broad brushstrokes that paint Paul Godfrey as Postmedia Network's central character. Edge does not sugarcoat any of the Postmedia industry news—laying out, just for starters that:

1. Godfrey says he won't merge competing newspapers in large markets and then does it without hesitation in several markets.
2. Godfrey gets a large bonus, then responds defensively that he could take the bonus and help the company or leave and not be able to help employees get severance packages.
3. If it wasn't for the funders who had the bonds and were able to convert them into equity, there would be no Postmedia.

Since the world does not run in a vacuum, we also know that Edge highlights hedge funds and bond owners for a reason. That reason is that Edge has shown that publicly traded newspapers in both Canada and the United States have shown themselves to be highly adaptable to changing conditions and is highly critical of the hedge fund owners. In fact, his research into financial data in that area is the subject of one of his previous books “*Greatly Exaggerated: The Myth of the Death of Newspapers*,” in which he points out that newsrooms can adapt until they are sucked dry, but hedge funds in large part have now sucked them dry.

In an interview to promote “Postmedia,” Edge says as much about the current state of affairs—that any shrinking financial returns from revenues at Postmedia Network now go to pay bond holders, not shareholders. His research clearly backs this up—showing that it was not until 2022 that Postmedia really started sinking (p. 202). Edge says that debt is crippling Postmedia newsrooms and will continue to. Postmedia’s hedge fund owners charge the company interest payments on top of everything else, pushing Postmedia to sell off hard assets such as real estate.

Sadly, none of this is news to U.S. readers. For anyone paying even the slightest bit of attention to the news industry, the collapse of the business model for Canadian print publications, or U.S. print publications, or any print publications around the world has happened at an astonishing rate. The “hedge-fundification” of journalism continues around the world, and democracy, especially, is worse for it.

For academics, Edge compares what is happening in the recent history of newsrooms in Canada to Gramsci’s theory of “the organization of consent” in which ruling elites are able to manage public opinion through cultural groups such as media, schools, and the church (p. 71). As a specific example of the negative way this might affect society, Edge writes that a small number of think tanks run by former prominent journalists now promulgate the general propaganda that may very well be changing the way Canadian society thinks.

Luckily, while this is Edge’s seventh book, it is not expected to be his last. Edge now wants to tell the story not only of Canada’s bailouts of its print newsrooms but also how nonprofit journalism might be the best way forward. He also suggests that Canada’s government subsidies have served as a somewhat positive counterpoint to hedge funds. He points out that The Local Journalism Initiative gave \$595 million in tax credits to newsrooms in underserved communities in a way to keep journalism more healthy than it would have been otherwise. The Canadian government’s willingness to help journalism not only staved off the inevitable downfall for at least 5 years, it also gave U.S. journalism and nonprofit groups a possible model of a way that it worked elsewhere and an idea of a way to move forward in the United States.

Edge also suggests that it would be nice to be able to sell off historic news publications to individual buyers rather than to hedge funds in the near future as a way that could keep some of them alive. This certainly is not a business decision or one that hedge funds might consider, but it shows his care for the industry. He also has pointed to the success of some online publications as a future area of research.

As an important side note, the book was published in the time frame of newsrooms fighting back against Google and Meta publishing news content for free, a situation that has played out much more as a struggle in Canada than it has in the United States. Meta even has said it will not allow the public to have access to news on its platforms in Canada, but the struggle seems to continue, regardless, between some news publishers and the tech giants.

What all this bad news in Canada leads to is a bit of good news for at least a small part of the western United States. At least one printing press from western Canada recently was sold to a group in the United States led by the National Trust for Local News. That traditional Goss press will be shipped to Colorado to help local newspapers.

Regardless of the stakes, Edge is the type of writer who looks at the industry with clear eyes and hope.

Community Media Representations of Place and Identity at Tug Fest: Reconstructing the Mississippi River. Michael O. Johnston. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2023. 136 pp. \$90 hbk, \$45 eBook.

Reviewed by: Kimberly A. Lauffer, *Keene State College, Keene, New Hampshire, USA*

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It is a good thing this book is categorized under sociology and rural/urban studies because it does not address media representations to a degree one would expect of a book aimed at a journalism and mass communication audience. The author had an opportunity to provide a comprehensive look at how media reflect and shape understanding of place and identity, but he omits significant swaths of literature in community media, gender representations in media and media framing (although sociologist Erving Goffman is cited frequently).

The book focuses on a summer event—Tug Fest—held annually in LeClaire, Iowa, and Port Byron, Illinois, which are on opposite sides of the Mississippi River. For this event, river traffic is halted while 11 tugs-of-war are waged with “a 2,700-foot-long-rope [sic] that weighs 750 pounds and spans all the way across the Mississippi River” (p. 3).

The author asserts in the introduction that “The media analyzed for this study included *Quad-City Times*, YouTube, and Facebook . . .” (p. 8). However, when the reader reaches the appendix (pp. 93–95), the sample is described as 98 *Quad-City Times* articles from 2000 to 2019. In the appendix, the author describes the method as “an ethnographic content analysis” (p. 94). Both the method and the sample seem inadequate for what is billed as an examination of “how media shapes place and identity.”

Lack of clarity and imprecision in writing make this book less than pleasurable to read. While one reviewer on the back jacket noted the book was “clearly written and engaging,” this reviewer was distracted by writing and editing errors, redundancies and repetition and inadequate support and citation.

The author’s “analysis of a ten-year period of media coverage” is scattered throughout the five chapters, and rarely does the analysis fill more than a page of any one chapter. For example, in Chapter 2, Kiddy Tug, Farm Boys, and Beefy Women, seven paragraphs focused on analysis of newspaper content are evident in 13 pages. The concepts of tourist attractions and tourist experiences and environments in Chapter 3, Hands Covered in Resin: Party Tourism or Sport Tourism, were intriguing