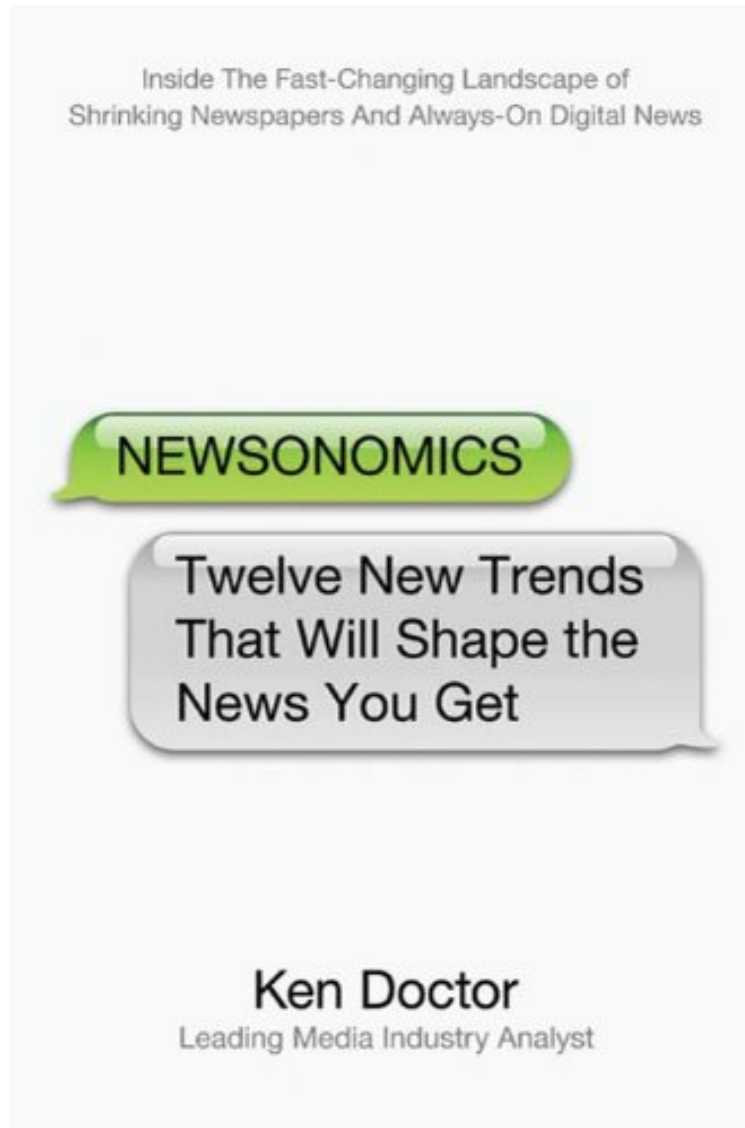


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Newsonomics: Twelve New Trends That Will Shape the News You Get

Ken Doctor

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Ken Doctor : Newsonomics: Twelve New Trends That Will Shape the News You Get before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Newsonomics: Twelve New Trends That Will Shape the News You Get*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Published in 2010, this book explains what went wrong ...By Sharon GeltnerPublished in 2010, this book explains what went wrong in the past and is also prescient. And the author's website, analyzing "Newsonomics" across a variety of journalism and business issues, is always fascinating and well

informed. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Breaks down the news industry well
By Russell J. Lewis
None of this is news, but this is a good, coherent and relevant collection of thoughts on how the news industry got where it is and some discussions of how to move forward. Very realistic view points which I appreciate. I find the media hubbub about micro-payments frustratingly myopic. 26 of 31 people found the following review helpful. Don't get too excited about a book that virtually ignores 90+% of U.S. dailies
By Dane S. Claussen
Doctor writes this book from an elitist perspective, without ever telling the reader and, given his own journalistic background in places such as Eugene, Ore.; Boulder, Colo.; and St. Paul, Minn., perhaps without even realizing it. First, Chapter 1 is written as if every American is frantically searching the Web for the highest quality journalism about everything, all of the time. But while one-third (say, 33%) of the U.S. public uses Google every day, in a typical day less than 1% of the U.S. public is reading, on paper and online combined, The New York Times. The same goes for readership of each of The Dallas Morning News, the Chicago Tribune, The Economist, The Guardian, or viewership of CNN, BBC, News Hour with Jim Lehrer, or Rachel Maddow, and virtually all newspapers, magazines, TV shows, and radio programs that Doctor implies "everyone" is now consuming because of the Web. The fact is that The New York Times was widely available nationally on paper both before and after it was available on the Web, and the Times never was able to get even its Sunday on-paper circulation over 1.5 million in a country of roughly 300 million people despite supposedly everyone wanting to read it. All of Chapter One is written based on a claim, an assumption, that Americans want the highest quality journalism, but he provides NO evidence anywhere in the chapter that this is true for more than a small fraction of the public. It is not until page 81, in fact, that Doctor finally admits that most news consumers settle for "good enough content" (which is true now and always has been). But his recognition of John Q. Public settling for "good enough content" is in direct conflict with his Chapter 1, in which all of us are our own editor, frantically searching the Web all the time for the most excellent journalism. For a former newspaper editor, he leaves out numerous pieces of context that would show that the U.S. newspaper industry is not quite as incompetent, broke, etc., as it might seem. For instance, on page 10 and elsewhere, he mentions paid circulation figures only for on-paper editions and how quickly they are dropping; he leaves out that many metro dailies total readerships (print and online) have increased dramatically because online readership growth exceeds print readership decline. He also leaves out context for news media that show limited reach; for instance, on page 14, Doctor writes that half of all Americans watch a news video at least once a month. First, such self-reports always exaggerate real numbers. But even if accurate, that means that only 5 million Americans (out of nearly 310 million) watch a news video (such as Katie Couric with Sarah Palin, see p. 20) each day which, when divided by the number of news videos available, is not very many per video on average, and is not impressive in total number or percentage of the U.S. population. (Again: a tiny percentage of the U.S. population ever has seen the "gotcha" Palin interview, either live or on the Web.) Likewise, he reports that one-quarter of Americans reads a blog at least once a week. Even if these self-reports (claims) are true, that is a little more than 10 million persons doing it each day, which is only slightly more than 3% of the U.S. population: a large number, a tiny percentage. "For a former newspaper editor...." (continued): On p. 54, he takes 12 minutes a month on "local newspaper" (see below) websites as evidence that they have bad websites or other news organizations have better ones, but Doctor doesn't point out that local news on local newspapers' websites is not competing against state, national, or international news on other websites. The obvious conclusion is that in suburbs and small cities and even smaller towns all over America, people still want to read their local newspaper PRINTED ON PAPER. On p. 47, he vaguely concedes, "smaller city newspapers are faring a bit better" than regional or metro daily newspapers. Unfortunately, Doctor deemphasizes (to put it mildly) this rather key point, and omits entirely that more than 90% of all U.S. daily newspapers in the United States, as well as more than 90% of all U.S. weekly newspapers, are "smaller city newspapers." On p. 75, he claims that the Internet "began to affect their [newspapers] business in the 1990s," but this has been disproven in fine studies; U.S. newspapers began reacting to the Internet in the 1990s, but the Internet had virtually no impact on newspaper readership until 2003. (This was true for newspaper advertising, too, as Craigslist was still in only 18 cities by the end of 2002.) On p. 85, he writes, "Why has all this money moved [from newspapers] to online?" without a shred of evidence that anything other than much classified advertising has moved from newspapers (as opposed to other media or being new ad dollars) to online. Also on p. 85, he writes, "The Web just works better for so many advertisers than traditional media," again without provided a shred of evidence that is true for anything other than classifieds (cars, dating/sex, real estate, jobs, housing, Google listings ads, etc.). To full grasp how the U.S. newspaper industry is structured (which Doctor never bothers to tell you, either because he doesn't know himself or because it would get in the way of the narrative he has constructed in his head and wants to pass to you), I refer you to: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_the_United_States_by_circulation. There, you may note that newspapers #1, #2, #3, #5, and #63 are national newspapers. Almost all of the others in this top 100 list are or might be called metro dailies, except most of the ones from 89 to 100. The 1,300 U.S. dailies that are NOT on this Wikipedia list are ALL small-to-medium-sized newspapers. Doctor talks about the entire U.S. newspaper industry while, based on his book, seeming to know or care little to nothing about any daily newspaper except the largest 34 of them (St. Paul Pioneer Press [where, not coincidentally, he was managing editor] and larger) out of 1,400. In fact, Doctor never defines, and therefore can never keep straight, what is a "regional" newspaper and what is a "local"

newspaper. On p. 24, he says they both "shrink rapidly." On p. 45, he refers to the metro daily Minneapolis Star-Tribune as a "local" newspaper, and on p. 46, he says that seven "local" newspapers are in bankruptcy while referring to the following metro dailies: Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Minneapolis Star-Tribune, Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News, and others. (Nor does he tell you that they were all put into bankruptcy by overleveraged buyout deals combined with the recession, and not put there by the Internet generally, the "Dirty Dozen" or any other external force.) On p 53, he refers to the Gannett Company as if it consists of nothing but "large dailies," but Gannett Co. owns 82 dailies: one national paper (USA TODAY), 10 metro dailies (Phoenix, Detroit, Indianapolis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Nashville, Rochester, Des Moines, Honolulu, and Wilmington), and 71 medium-to-SMALL sized dailies. Bottom line: Gannett, far from being all large dailies, consists overwhelmingly of NOT large dailies. And Doctor is dead wrong when he says on page 6 that "every city" has or had "hundreds of journalists." (The typical U.S. daily, which has a circulation of less than 13,000, has a news/editorial staff of about 15 journalists, not "hundreds.") On page 16, Doctor provides the wrong lesson regarding The New York Herald Tribune and the weekly Life magazine, saying that they died because they did not "excel." In reality, they were both superb, but the Herald Tribune (the quality of which nearly matched, and sometimes exceeded, The New York Times) folded because of a massive union strike that hit all New York City dailies, while Life magazine's advertisers mostly left for network TV while its readers still loved it (it was closed in December 1972, despite a January 1972 rate base of 5+ million circulation!). HINT: Is this what is happening to daily newspapers? Readers drifting away slowly while advertisers leave too quickly? On p. 29, when he makes his point about top journalistic achievement coupled with poor financial performance, he doesn't point out that one can find prominent examples of this in media over hundreds of years! But then Doctor obviously is no historian, journalism or other. On page 18 and several other places in the book, Doctor never answers the question of whether the average news consumer, or whether anyone, wants or needs the 4,000 news sources on Yahoo! or Google. (Not the least of which reason is this: based on what he tells repeatedly, there are not 4,000 different news organizations doing their own reporting on anything, even Pres. Obama or the Iraq War; only wars get 400, most U.S. national political news can barely scrape together 40 news organizations, so virtually all of the content in 4,000 news organizations is duplicative. Doctor never tells you that either.) But perhaps the strangest Doctor error or omission in the book is that he almost always leaves out the Great Recession (the largest economic collapse in world history since the Great Depression of the 1930s), which started during Fourth Quarter 2007 and ended during Third Quarter 2009, with a very weak recovery since except Fourth Quarter 2009. On p. 2, he notes drop in U.S. newspaper advertising revenues in 2009, but doesn't mention the Great Recession. Doctor makes the same omission in writing on p. 77 about both revenue figures and the acquisitions of the Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and Chicago newspapers, and on p. 78 on why no one would buy a newspaper the last 2 1/2 years. On p. 85, for the very first time, he finally admits it was a "deep recession." But after having repeatedly told the reader what happened to newspaper advertising revenues the last several years, Doctor still has omitted to tell the reader what happened during the Great Recession to the supposedly booming Internet advertising industry that he is so excited about: \$21.2 Billion in 2007 revenues, up to only \$23.4 Billion in 2008 revenues, and DOWN to \$22.7 Billion in 2009 revenues (note: U.S. daily newspapers still bring in more advertising dollars by themselves than all Internet ad dollars spent in the United States!). On p. 109, Doctor merely asserts that newspapers couldn't withstand a 25-35% drop in their Web traffic if they cut off Google. He has no proof for this at all, and in fact, elsewhere has told us repeatedly that local newspapers' websites have hardly any traffic and aren't doing well selling ads. My take: if nothing plus nothing equals nothing, then nothing minus nothing also equals nothing. On p. 114, David Simon is quoted as saying that bloggers aren't in the city hall or courthouse covering the news. Doctor tries to razz-ma-tazz the reader all through chapter 6 with all the things the bloggers are doing, but by the end of Chapter 6, he still hasn't told us of a single blogger who is personally covering news in city hall or at the county courthouse. Simon goes completely unanswered! On p. 126, Mary Lou Felton tells us that banner ads on the Internet are ignored by 99% of people, and on p. 170, we're again told about the "complete ad blindness that is now prevalent on the Web as a whole." Doctor doesn't dispute this, and one wonders how he can be so confident back on p. 85 that "Why has all this money moved to online?" (a question that has no stated factual basis other than classified ads) and especially this whopper, "The Web just works better for so many advertisers than traditional media." How can the Web work better than newspapers or television or magazines if Internet users are BLIND to ads??? On p. 131, Doctor estimates that the average newspaper has 15 journalists blogging. Strangely, the AVERAGE U.S. newspaper has only about 15 journalists working for it, so Doctor is WAY off. And should Doctor (let alone the rest of us) be impressed that 70 NY Times journalists blog out of a news/editorial staff of about 1,150? For a book that as "onomics" in the title, which suggests that Doctor knows something about media economics, he is again WAY off on pp. 135-136 in his analysis of bringing in (and charging for) traditional real estate advertising versus blog-related real estate advertising. He is enthusiastic about a hits or results oriented ad on a blog bringing in \$1,950 to \$4,875. Doctor doesn't seem to know that even even medium-sized daily newspapers bring in more than that much from one full-page ad from a realtor, placed, priced, and charged the old-fashioned way. Why is Doctor (and so many others) so excited about new media having 4,000 hits on a blog, or 400 followers on Twitter, while old media (even in 2010) deliver numbers like 40,000 total readers (daily newspaper on the small end of the medium-sized range); 400,000 total

readers (smaller metro daily, or medium-sized national magazine or viewers of a small national cable channel); or 4 million (viewers of network news broadcast)? On p. 150, Balboni tells Doctor and us, in fact, that blogs are NOT of interest to advertisers, which seriously calls into question Doctor's speculation on pp. 135-6. On p. 142, Doctor is unfair to newspapers handling their business sections. What almost all newspapers did was cutting back on or eliminating stock tables, bond tables, currency prices, commodity prices, etc., which typically took up 2-4 full pages. Most metro dailies almost never had more than 2-3 full pages of actual news and feature stories about business, and many of them were Associated Press. On p. 149, Doctor says that Americans have reacted to low quality news on TV. This is true. But Doctor is misleading to even imply or suggest that Americans rejecting crappy local and national TV news also means that Americans are dropping newspaper subscriptions also because of low quality. In every way, metro newspapers have more and higher quality news than metro TV stations, and small market newspapers also have more and higher quality news than small TV stations (assuming that a small daily even has to compete directly with a local TV station covering local news, which most of them don't). Most Americans settle for "good enough" news, and the really sad part is that a lot of local TV news is not even "good enough" for consumers to settle for it. On p. 159, Doctor claims that 15 years ago, "many" newspapers didn't even know the names of their subscribers. Perhaps "many" out of 1,500 dailies, but utterly false for a very large percentage of them. Fifteen years ago, most U.S. newspapers had already spent 20-30 years telemarketing subscriptions to former subscribers, new residents, etc., and they knew EXACTLY who they were calling. Doctor, typically, cites no source for this insulting assertion. On p. 167, Doctor writes that blogs, Google, etc., are "totally transitory." If true, then he certainly is incorrect that "every...rule, every best practice, and every bit of conventional wisdom has been devalued." If that were correct, blogs and Google, etc., would dominate, be permanent, etc., and not "totally transitory." On p. 169, he mentions a blogger breaking a news story from his/her living room. Seriously, Mr. Doctor, what story of any significance, could be covered from someone's living room, unless it was being covered entirely by leaks, a la Matt Drudge (and he's no typical blogger)? On p. 191, Doctor says that "changing news and classified games" are the reason for "bankruptcies and near bankruptcies" of newspapers. This is simply false. The reasons for bankruptcies and near bankruptcies of MediaNews Group, Tribune Co., Minneapolis Star-Tribune, the Philadelphia papers, the Chicago Sun-Times based group, GateHouse Media, Journal Register Co., and others have been: too much debt from paying too much to buy too many newspapers in a few years leading up to the Great Recession, and the Great Recession resulting in huge cuts in U.S. advertising (most of which did NOT simply move to the Internet). On p. 203, Doctor writes that there are 200,000 students in journalism schools right now who want to go into journalism. But based on the annual surveys done by Dr. Lee Becker and his team at The University of Georgia, the number of students in U.S. journalism/communication schools who want to go into journalism (print, broadcast, cable, Internet, wire service, etc.) is more like 15% (at most) of the 200,000 total enrollment figure, or maybe 30,000. The other 170,000 students are interested in: public relations, advertising, marketing, speech/rhetoric, Web design, graphic design, printing, technical writing, creative writing, photography, e-commerce, videogames, non-news TV (drama, talk shows, game shows, comedy, children's programming, religious programming, documentaries, etc.), radio announcing and DJing, television/cable production, radio production, event planning, fundraising, pursuing a master's degree in journalism/mass communication, going to law school, etc. And new enrollments are not up by big percentages at average j-schools, or most of them; those percentages are based on just a few. Doctor can't seem to make up his mind in the book whether "media" is a singular or plural noun (hint: it's plural).

The New NewsReports of the death of the news media are highly premature, though you wouldn't know it from the media's own headlines. Ken Doctor goes far beyond those headlines, taking an authoritative look at the fast-emerging future. The Twelve Laws of Newsonomics reveal the kinds of news that readers will get and that journalists (and citizens) will produce as we enter the first truly digital news decade. A new Digital Dozen, global powerhouses from The New York Times, News Corp, and CNN to NBC, the BBC, and NPR will dominate news across the globe. Locally, a colorful assortment of emerging news players, from Boston to San Diego, are rewriting the rules of city reporting. Newsonomics provides a new sense of the news we'll get on paper, on screen, on the phone, by blog, by podcast, and via Facebook and Twitter. It also offers a new way to understand the why and how of the changes, and where the Googles, Yahoos and Microsofts fit in. Newsonomics pays special attention to media and journalism students in a chapter on the back-to-the-future skills they'll need, while marketing professionals get their own view of what the changes mean to them.

From Publishers Weekly Doctor spent 21 years working in various capacities for the Knight Ridder media empire until the company's sale in 2006, and he offers an overview of the very changes that swept him out the door. But far from expressing bitterness about the barrage of blogs and Web sites that have brought old media giants like his former employer to their knees, Doctor is an enthusiastic, even giddy champion of how advances in digital technology are reshaping news media. He reels off buzzwords and corny catchphrases (It's all beta, baby; I'm not a Chump, I'm a Champion), but sheds little in the way of insight, analysis, or, frankly, news. His rules for newsonomics tend to be

disappointingly obvious: Create multimedia, aggregate, blog, master the technology, and market virally. Perhaps to compensate for the lack of substance, Doctor has tricked out the book with sidebars, bullet-point lists, and interview transcripts, emulating the eye-catching style so prevalent in the blogosphere. In doing so, he inadvertently draws attention to what some might consider the chief limitation of the digital boom; that for all the technical innovation, there's still no substitute for good writing and solid reporting. (Feb.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Ken Doctor is one of the smartest people I know in the news business. Where so many people have their heads in the clouds or under the table, he faced reality a long time ago. He gets the economics, the technology, and the personalities of the new news world. He knows the winners from the losers. His book is quite simply the best primer so far to the future of the news".--Michael Wolff, author of *The Man Who Owns the News: Inside the Secret World of Rupert Murdoch*