

# CENTRAL CONCEPTS IN MEDIA OWNERSHIP RESEARCH AND REGULATION

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Trends and developments in social values, political ideologies, media policies, economic conditions, globalization, media technologies, and telecommunications networks have all interacted to generate significant changes in the nature of media industries, production, content, distribution, exhibition, and use. This book considers a wide variety of perspectives on one of those developments: changes in and consequences of media ownership, concentration, and conglomeration. This chapter highlights some of the central concepts in this debate, and some of the major perspectives and arguments of the contributors to this book.

## MOTIVATION AND CONTEXT

In 2003, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved sweeping changes in rules on media ownership that would allow forms of vertical and horizontal integration of the media and entertainment industries that have not been

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consolidation arguments that media ownership limits were inappropriate or unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court decided not to review the Third Circuit's ruling.

It is important to note that the Third Circuit Court's primary basis for rejecting the FCC ownership rules had to do with the empirical basis for their proposed changes. The two court rulings do not halt or even reject any such changes per se; rather, they have returned the process to the FCC and the legislature. The FCC could revise, drop, or resubmit the proposed rules with different supporting arguments, so this issue will continue. Indeed, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires the FCC to examine its rules every 2 years. However, part of the FCC's proposed rules change was one that Congress had already passed in December 2003 and January 2004—The National Television Ownership rule, raising the cap on the percentage of U.S. homes that any one company's stations reach from 35% to 39% (lower than the 45% proposed by the FCC but just high enough to allow two media conglomerates under the cap, Watson & Chang, Chapter 7, this volume).

As indicated by this controversy, many people are deeply concerned about the increasing concentration of media production and distribution in the hands of a few, highly interconnected corporations. They worry about the effect of such consolidation on diversity of opinion and content, creativity, commercialization, and democratic access to the marketplace of ideas.

Given this crystallizing event, there are two fundamental questions driving the various chapters in this book. The first is *whether media ownership is becoming more or less concentrated* (and how this varies across media sectors). This can and should be primarily an empirical question, given definitions of media sectors, ownership, concentration, and trends (Compaine, Chapter 9; Mitchell, Chapter 10; Noam, Chapter 8, this volume). The second is *what roles media have played, and do and should play, in the marketplace, society and culture, and what consequences follow from those*. This seems to be primarily a political and social question, given perspectives used to analyze and interpret media in a society such as the United States that claims democratic values (Aufderheide, Chapter 3; Bardach; Chapter 11; Lievrouw; Chapter 18; McChesney, Chapter 2; Warner; Chapter 5). And both of these questions can be understood and answered only through broader historical, political, legal, and social analysis (Aufderheide, Chapter 3; Bielby & Moloney, Chapter 13; Dunbar, Chapter 12; Epstein, Chapter 15; Harwood, Chapter 15; Holt, Chapter 6; Rose, Chapter 4; McChesney, Chapter 2; Napoli & Gillis, Chapter 14; Rose, Chapter 4; Warner, Chapter 5; Watson & Chang, Chapter 7).

## MEDIA OWNERSHIP LIMITS

A guiding principle in the founding of the nation and the Constitution was to locate power in the people, thus requiring *local and decentralized power*. This is

seen since before the trust-busting "Paramount decrees" of 1948. The consolidation possible under those proposed new rules would be even greater than before because it would take place on an unprecedented global scale and would have significant implications for the future of broadband access, the digital spectrum on which all media are converging.

The FCC's move in June 2003 not only energized the public in an unprecedented way, but it motivated lawmakers to question FCC responsibilities and policy. Despite the fact that FCC Chairman Michael Powell resisted holding public forums on the controversial regulatory proposals that were being considered by the FCC, several groups were successful in providing commentary to some of the FCC commissioners in a handful of public settings, either at press conferences or on university campuses. The organizations and nonprofit groups opposing the deregulation of ownership made a strong effort to present evidence of the harmful effects of media concentration on creativity and democracy.

However, it was alarming to see how little they were able to turn to academia for research on media ownership—largely because academia has been strangely silent on this issue. And this silence is the case even in disciplines that would be expected to address this crucial topic, such as film and television studies, communication, English, political science, sociology, and history. Compounding the problem of the lack of authoritative research on the social and political effects of media concentration was (and is) the general lack of press coverage on the regulatory debates. Not surprisingly, the conglomerates that own the media outlets and that lobby the FCC to loosen ownership rules see little benefit in having readers and viewers who are informed about the consequences of vastly increased media concentration. A Pew Excellence in Journalism study conducted a few months before the 2003 FCC vote found that 72% of Americans knew "nothing at all," whereas only 4% indicated they knew "a lot" about the proposed sweeping changes (Journalism.org, 2003).

Under pressure, the FCC itself commissioned 12 studies on topics ranging from viewpoint diversity in cross-owned newspapers and television stations, to radio market structure and music diversity. Almost all of them concluded that media concentration does not eliminate diversity, giving the appearance that the FCC had stacked the regulatory deck. The studies, carried out for the most part by FCC staffers, were sharply criticized by both scholars and the industry press for their limited scale and lack of methodological rigor.

As soon as the FCC decided to the change ownership rules, a broad and diverse range of civic groups, under the name of Prometheus Radio Project, filed suit to overturn this set of regulations. In June 2004, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Philadelphia (Third Circuit) agreed with the critics' assessment of the FCC's research, staying the implementation of the rules after finding that the FCC's studies employed contestable assumptions and inconsistencies. The court also found the FCC's "diversity index" used to assign weight to media outlets in a given market to be arbitrary and capricious, and strongly criticized the FCC for failing to release the diversity index to the public. The court also rejected industry pro-

especially true concerning media, so that they might best serve individuals and communities, and both monitor and challenge centralized government. Distrust of central control of public media is to some extent grounded in the media practices of local towns and communities during the U.S. revolution (Warner, Chapter 5).

This conflicts with a *centralization or concentration of media ownership*. Yet, centralized control may be required to avoid local confusion and even destruction of the common, public good, or, centralized corporate power, not foreseen by the founding fathers. So, for example, in 1927 the federal government took over control of assigning broadcast frequencies, to avoid interference from multiple stations using the same frequencies within and across communities. Furthermore, motivated by the concern with *localism*, it allocated the limited number of both radio and television frequencies to local market areas, and imposed limitations on broadcast power, so that the frequencies could be re-used in different local communities. Providing these limited, yet essentially public, frequencies was couched in terms of the common good: Licenses were given to stations for supposedly limited but renewable periods, conditioned on the station operating in the *public interest, convenience, and necessity*.

In line with the goal of supporting local control and orientation, the FCC initially limited ownership according to the 7-7-7 rule: no company could own more than seven AM, seven FM, and seven TV stations, with no two in the same market. Holt (Chapter 6) highlights the central role, ideologies, and significant cases of *anti-trust policy* underlying such media ownership regulation (and, as well, the reinterpretation of antitrust policy and goals during the Reagan Administration). These and related media ownership rules under antitrust and FCC policies have been significantly motivated by the goals of *diversity of voices and marketplace of ideas*, in particular as necessary to foster the access to information and opinions crucial to a democracy. But, as corporations had obtained the status of *corporate personhood* in the late 19th century, with rights and protections to those guaranteed to individuals, the question of First Amendment implications on affecting diversity of content in the media was relevant. Thus, media regulation has in general focused on structural instead of content limits on ownership (with some exceptions, such as libel, obscene and indecent content, children's programming, false advertising, etc.), presuming that diversity of owners and creators would generate their own diversity of content (Epstein, Chapter 15, this volume; Horwitz, 2005).

But, of course, a central problem is just what *diversity* means (ownership, content, programming, media portrayals, outlets, voices, audiences, exposure, composition of media workforce), how it's measured, and whether these regulatory attempts have helped prevent reductions in diversity (Compaine, Chapter 9; Napoli, 1999, 2001, 2003; Napoli & Gillis, Chapter 14). In their chapter, Napoli and Gillis develop and justify a rigorous and reliable diversity index that takes into content (such as time or space for local news or public affairs), motivations for using different media, potential or actual audience reach, effects of media use (e.g., agenda-setting or civic involvement).

With the Telecommunications Act of 1996, declining support for arguments based on minority or civil rights (Horwitz, 2005), the spread of digitization (with implications for convergence of content across what had been separate technologies and thus regulatory arenas), and the development of the Internet as a worldwide distribution channel, the debate over diversity has become much more complex. For example, the same content can appear in multiple formats and combinations across multiple media, across multiple audiences and locales.

Horwitz noted that *scarcity* of the spectrum (available, noninterfering broadcast frequencies), conceptualized as a public resource, had, until the rise of many new media forms, been another primary motivation for regulating broadcast media. As Epstein emphasizes, because broadcast frequencies were considered a public resource, media ownership (at least broadcast media) is not a right; it is a government (i.e., public) benefit. But the confusion and interference stemming from new radio stations independently choosing what frequencies to use, and how strong their signals were, before they were formally allocated and licensed by the Radio Act of 1927, was a second major motivation. That is, although the frequencies might be public and thus "free," unregulated domination of frequencies also constitutes repression of freedom of speech of others. Epstein distinguishes between *allocational scarcity* (frequency, spectrum) from *economic scarcity* (the immense economic resources required to own and operate media). Scarcity arguments provided legal precedent for government regulation of some aspects of media, especially broadcast media.

Note the paradox of (a) concern by many authors, citizens, politicians, and lobbyists about control of media by government, and the central role of the First Amendment in protecting free speech as one of the checks on Congressional power, while (b) government policy and FCC rules have been, until recently, the primary forces behind preventing corporate control of media. Early U.S. legislation was specifically designed to limit commercial control of media (such as through the 1790 limited copyright and patent law; Warner, Chapter 5). Part of the motivation for the Communication Act of 1934 was a concern about joint ownership of wireless and wired media resulting in reducing competition in, and gaining monopoly control over, radio communications. This role of government in preventing control of media by corporations was stated most famously as: "Freedom to publish is guaranteed by the Constitution, but freedom to combine to keep others from publishing is not. Freedom of the press from governmental interference under the First Amendment does not sanction repression by private interests" (*Associated Press v. United States*, 1945, p. 20).

Furthermore, the concept of *ownership* itself can be misleading. One argument against ownership limits is that media corporations are, in fact, "owned" by stockholders. However, Noam (2006) showed that most media stock is held by large investment institutions, not individuals, and most copyrights are owned by corporations, not the original creators. Furthermore, Potter (2005) emphasized the distinction between *ownership* (generally, stockholders, unless it is privately held) and *control* of a media company (generally the CEO and top-level executives; also

affected by Wall Street expectations, changing technology, standards-setting bodies, government regulation, and competitors).

*Copyright* in some ways lies at the heart of media ownership issues. Ownership consists of control of distribution channels (media outlets), and of content. But content is controlled by those who own the copyright. If no one "owned" any particular content, then all the focus would be on controlling the distribution channels. Within copyright, there are two main debates: how digitization and networking affects control over copyright and content, and the length of the copyright (much extended under recent regulatory regimes, and much more expansive than initial U.S. copyright restrictions; Rose, Chapter 4).

As Rose argues, there is a tension in copyright definitions and legislation, between the need to protect the author's investment in their creative product (although most current copyrights are owned by media corporations, obtained from the original author as part of production and distribution contracts), and the need for society to be able to learn and develop through shared information—that is, *information as a private property* and as a *public good*. This tension is built right into the history, political and economic contexts, and wordings of initial copyright acts in England (the Statute of Anne in 1710) and the United States (both in the Constitution and in the Copyright Act of 1790). Rose argues that these cannot be resolved as mutually exclusive principles, but must be managed as interacting principles. Rose also shows how distinctions between private and public aspects of published material; the changing importance of printer, bookseller and author; and the conceptualization of the length and purposes of copyright, all developed over time (Warner, Chapter 5). Although the very definitions of what is patentable or copyrightable continues to expand, copyright now also confronts the ability and possibly right of media users to *reconfigure* media technologies and *remediate* content (Lievrouw, Chapter 18).

Horwitz (2005) provided a cogent analysis of how recent court decisions have strongly affected FCC attempts to implement rules designed to maintain or improve diversity. Both as an outcome of the institutionalization of Reagan-era deregulatory perspectives through court appointees, and an increasing emphasis on strict and explicit justifications for diversity rulings, the FCC found itself on the losing side of a variety of court decisions, and thus began moving toward less stringent ownership caps because they could not provide the empirical evidence supporting the supposed relationships between, and consequences of, ownership and diversity. Due to changes associated with social, economic and political ideologies, and industry pressures, other media policies were also "deregulated" (Epstein, Chapter 15; Holt, Chapter 6), such as the Fairness Doctrine and the Fin-Syn rules.

These altered media policies, and technological developments, helped unleash the wave of mergers and acquisitions that are the source of current concern about media ownership and concentration, and the impetus for this book (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, Compaine, Chapter 9; Holt, Chapter 6; Mitchell, Chapter 10; Napoli & Gillis, Chapter 14; Noam, Chapter 8; Potter, 2005).

"Deregulated" is in quotes for a reason. As Horwitz (2005), Napoli (2001), McC Chesney (2004, Chapter 2, this volume), Starr (2004), Warner (Chapter 5), Watson and Chang (Chapter 7), and others argued, prior government regulatory polices created, subsidized, shaped and protected different media at different times (thus rejecting the argument that there ever was or can be a "free market"). Indeed, the FCC and government media policy has often served marketplace interests even while invoking the rhetoric and goals of "public interest" and "diversity"—such as by providing spectrum for free, rarely rejecting license renewals, reducing protections such as the Fairness Doctrine, and so on. Indeed, any initial limits or decreases in ownership limits should be placed in the context of government policy fundamentally choosing a commercial broadcasting model, and providing free public resources to for-profit organizations (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

Table 1.1 summarizes past and current national, local, and cross-ownership media ownership levels, and some relevant major legislation.

TABLE 1.1. *Summary of Relevant Legislation and Media Ownership Limits*

**Major Relevant (related in some way to ownership) Acts, Decisions, and Policies**

- 1710: Statute of Anne, England's copyright Act
- 1790: U.S. Copyright Act (Justified explicitly in Constitution, Article I) – further public learning through making knowledge available to the public after 14 years of copyright ownership, renewable once
- 1792: U.S. Postal Act—heavily subsidizes delivery of newspapers and magazines
- 1886: Supreme Court (*Santa Clara County v Southern Pacific Railroad*) decision used as basis for claiming "corporate personhood," whereby corporations had essentially the same rights as a natural person, including First and Fourteenth Amendment protections. The 1978 Supreme Court *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti* ruling asserted that corporations can influence ballot initiatives and other political campaigns under their First Amendment rights (see <http://www.corporatepolicy.org/constit.htm>; Perrow, 2002; reclaimdemocracy.org; Thoennes, 2005). Although industry had been lobbying representatives, influencing newspapers, and suppressing workers' opposition, for such rulings for most of the 19th century, in both colonial time and in the new Republic, corporations had to obtain and request renewal of state charters, apply scaled voting to insure equal shareholder voting rights, avoid interlocking directorates, and so on. These and related rulings emphasize again the multiple layers of influences that media organizations have on society. Media corporations have the protections and rights as an individual (free speech, due process, equal protection), but also control the channels through which they both conduct their influence as well as which they might be opposed or criticized.
- 1890: The Sherman Antitrust Act makes illegal any restraint or monopolization of trade or commerce among the states or with foreign nations.

- 1914: The Clayton Act of 1914 (with extensions by the 1936 Robinson-Patman Price Discrimination Act; the 1976 Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act; and the Celler-Kefauver Amendment in 1950) prohibits price discrimination (including inducing or receiving that) between different purchasers, and engage in bribery, kickbacks, price-fixing, and similar activities, especially when it lessens competition or increases monopoly.
- 1927: Federal Radio Act.
- 1934: Federal Communications Act (with amendments in 1952, 1982, and 1993).
- 1948: The Paramount decision rejected the ability of the major studios to control movie studios, distribution networks, and theatres, stating that this was monopolistic and thus contrary to antitrust legislation, reduced competition, and threatened citizen's First Amendment rights to diverse information. As a result, studios divested themselves of theatres and stopped certain trade practices, and the principles of separating content from distribution, and limiting vertical integration, were central to FCC media regulation for decades to follow.
- 1949: Fairness Doctrine established, grounded in the Communications Act of 1937, where "equal opportunity" had to be offered to political candidates by a radio station that had provided broadcast access to any other candidate for the same office. The Fairness Doctrine extended this general principal to news programs, documentaries and interviews. Media companies, as well as journalists, were concerned about the First Amendment implications, so in many cases declined to provide any coverage of some controversial topics, which became known as the "chilling effect." By 1985, the FCC began disavowing the justification for the Doctrine, and a court ruling in 1987 indicated that as the Doctrine was not law, but FCC policy, the FCC was not obligated to enforce it, so the FCC removed it. Interestingly, in the Spring of that year, Congress had actually voted to make the Doctrine law, but that was vetoed by Reagan, and again by the first Bush Administration.
- Public Broadcasting Acts: 1952 Comparable Use Amendment to the 1934 Act; 1962: Educational Television; 1967: Public Broadcasting; 1971: Federal Election Campaign Act; 1974: Repealing Certification Requirements; 1992: Public Telecommunications Act
- 1970: The Financial Interest and Syndication Rules were established to foster content diversity, prevented television networks from owning parts of companies providing them programming, but these were relaxed in 1991, ruled against by the courts in 1993, and repealed by the FCC in 1996. (For a review of effects, see Chapter 13 by Bielby & Moloney, and Chapter 6 by Holt.)
- 1972: "Must Carry" rules requiring cable systems to carry all local television stations, which helped UHF stations survive and thrive, and to serve as a means for the development of Turner's CNN in 1980 and subsequent media empire, and Murdoch's Fox network.
- 1983: approval by Department of Justice of the founding of the Tri-Star studio, which combined cable, broadcast, and film interests—the first major signal of regulatory acceptance of vertical integration and the decline of antitrust concerns.
- 1984: The Cable Communications Policy Act
- 1985: Department of Justice no longer enforces the Paramount Decree, allowing vertical integration in the media industries once again, and a massive set of acquisitions and mergers.
- 1992: Financial Interest and Syndication rules rejected by U.S. Court of Appeals, and thus repealed and modified by FCC in next few years.

- 1992: The Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act. The Cable Act's "must-carry" rules required cable systems to carry local broadcaster content, scaled according to the cable system's capacity: "low burden" —fewer than 12 channels; intermediate burden—12–36 channels; and greatest burden—than 36. Systems with fewer than 300 subscribers are exempt. The act also included public access set-asides.
- 1996: Data Investment and Intellectual Property Antipiracy Act.
- 1998: Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)—extends copyright protection to include production and dissemination of technology that could overcome copyright protection devices, while limiting liability of online providers of users' copyright infringement.
- 1999: Bono Copyright Term Extension Act—extended copyright protection an additional 20 years to 70 years after the death of the author.
- 1999: Collections of Information Antipiracy Act.

#### Limits on National Broadcast Ownership

- Early on, national multiple television station ownership was limited to three stations. This limit was expanded to seven AM radio stations, seven FM radio stations, and seven television stations (no more than five VHF stations) in 1953; to 12–12–12 in 1984; and 30–30–12 in 1992, with a limit on television stations of 25% of the U.S. TV households. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 lifted these caps further, by removing any national caps for radio, with local limits of between 5 and 8 stations depending on market size, and the television cap of 12 as long as a company does not reach more than 35% of the national audience. Now, a company may own television broadcast stations that reach no more than 39% of the national television audience (the potential audience of a UHF station counts half against the cap).
- Initially, broadcast stations could not affiliate with an entity owning more than one network. Radio was freed from this restriction in 1977. This limit was reduced for television in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, whereby the entity could not control more than one of the four largest networks, or one of those and either the UPN or WB network. This was further relaxed in 2001 to allow one of those four to have a relation with UPN and/or WB.

#### Limits on Cable Ownership

- Cable had limits placed on it by the Telecommunications Act of 1996. No single cable company could be involved in cable systems passing more than 30% of nationwide households (this was changed to 36.7% in 1999 due to a new formula). And no cable company could have ownership interests with no more than 40% of programming on its cable systems, or, if their systems had more than 75 channels, they had to set aside 45 channels for nonaffiliated content. Both of these were overturned (found not sufficiently justified) by the courts in 2001.
- Before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, an entity could not control or own (typically, at least 5%) more than one television station in the same signal area, and no more than two AM and two FM stations in a market, and those could jointly exceed

information sector is less concentrated than in 1984, less than in 2001, but more than in 1996. However, the data provide different conclusions for each of four major sectors. Mass media were more concentrated than 1988, but was the least concentrated of the four sectors, with the highest being in the telecommunication and the information technology sectors. More familiar distinctions, such as among TV networks, radio networks, cable, and so forth, again provide different results, with only radio markedly increasing in national concentration. However, concentration among the five most vertically integrated firms has definitely risen since 1988. Noam intriguingly argues that the move toward digital convergence will raise the level of concentration in the traditional media up to the higher levels in the telecommunications and the information technology sectors.

Compaine forcefully argues that the diversity of sources has much expanded (such as total number of radio stations, the rise of public broadcasting which is equivalent to a major network, and new services such as satellite digital radio and Internet radio, especially using wireless protocols), and the control of audience markets by major media has much decreased (as measured by network television ratings). Indeed, some argue that the more media outlets there are, the more fragmented the audience becomes, the more likely it is that niche (such as minority) content and ownership can succeed. Looking abroad, Bielby and Moloney (Chapter 13) also show that even globalized, internationally conglomerate media are often challenged and reshaped by national and cultural business practices, story and character norms, technical standards, linguistic preferences, desire for co-productions, national policies about production locations and programming quotas, familiar genres, and format, and so on.

However, although the number and variety of channels and content seems to remove scarcity as a basis for regulating media, it also creates an overwhelming *media smog*, with complex levels of bias and accuracy, possibly much less variety in voices than outlets, and less control available to the individual (Aufderheide, Chapter 3). The range and complexity of our choices require, and concentration allows, media to both *funnel* and *filter* what is available to us. Increased concentration also increases control of the funnels and filters of the behind-the-scenes infrastructure, software programs, interfaces, display technologies, content, and intellectual property.

Mitchell (Chapter 10) provides very detailed descriptions of transactions, business strategies, executives' interpretations, and pressures within the nine sectors of the news industry during 2004. Although there continues to be buying and selling, the bulk of conglomeration occurred in the years immediately following the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and has recently been somewhat suspended as corporations await the long-term implications of the rejection of the 2003 FCC rules raising ownership caps, as there are fewer obvious acquisitions available, and as the allure of the promises of synergy has worn off (Holt, Chapter 6).

But there are other, broader, more philosophical and ideological arguments for or against media concentration. Bagdikian (1983) was an early voice of concern about the concentration of power, information and culture in media con-

25% of the market's audience share. In 1999, this was raised to two television stations in the same market area, as long as one was not in the four highest ranked stations, and if at least eight other stations in the market are independent owned and full power. (There are some exceptions relating to new stations, nonoperating stations, bankrupt stations, and lack of interest by outside owners.)

- A company may own up to five radio stations in markets with fewer than 14 total stations (but not more than 50% of the total) as long as no more than 3 of them being the same service of AM or FM, up to 6 in a market of 15 to 29 stations and no more than 4 of AM or FM, up to 7 in a market of 30 to 44 stations and no more than 5 of AM or FM, and as many as 8 in markets with 45 or more stations and no more than 5 of AM or of FM.

#### Limits on Cross-Ownership

- Initially, one company could not own a radio and a television station in the same substantial area. In 1989, this was relaxed in the top 25 markets if there would still be at least 30 separately owned independent media voices (radio, television, and some local cable stations or newspapers).
- Beginning in 1975, a company that owns a television or radio station may not own a daily newspaper in the same market (excepting most pre-existing arrangements). A company can own a television station (or two, if it meets the FCC's local television ownership "duopoly" rule described above) and up to 7 radio stations as long as 20 independent "voices" (separately owned radio or television stations) remain after the purchase. In smaller markets, a company may own a television station and up to four radio stations if at least 10 independent voices remain.
- Beginning in 1970, no company could own a cable system and a broadcasting network; but this was reduced in 1992 and eliminated in 1996. Furthermore, no company could own, in the same local market, a cable system and a broadcast television station. And, no company could own, in the same local market, a cable system and a telephone system; but the 1996 Act removed this limitation.

## CONCERNS: CONCENTRATION, IMPACTS, AND INFLUENCE

The evidence for whether media concentration is increasing or decreasing, as well as whether the effects of these trends are positive or negative, is, to many minds, mixed. Furthermore, Noam puts current views of concentration in context through a brief historical review showing that media were much more concentrated in the U.S. during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The primary measure of concentration is the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (see Compaine, Chapter 9; Napoli & Gillis, Chapter 14; Noam, Chapter 8). Noam's extensive analysis concludes that using this measure, overall, the entire

glomerates, especially when news media are incorporated into *vertically integrated* organizations that are necessarily motivated (and legally obliged) by market and profit concerns. This then has severe implications for biases and pressures on news content, and on the entire political process. For example, Mitchell's data document the decline in news as significant component (in terms of both expenses and mention) of media corporations.

Croteau and Hoynes (2006) and Dunbar (Chapter 12) report the staggering monetary influence media industries have in terms of campaign contributions, lobbying, junkets, and revolving doors. Dunbar documents that more than \$1 billion from 1998 to 2004 was spent by the media industry on lobbying, campaign contributions, junkets for lawmakers and staff; and nearly 400 former FCC or congressional employees responsible for regulating the media went to work for the media industry. His cases such as Sinclair Broadcasting in the television sector, revolving door industry professionals involved in affecting the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and the cable industry's fight against *à la carte* cable channel selection, provide compelling examples of the forms and extent of industry influence on media policy. Also see Aufderheide, Bardach, and McChesney, for implications on *media bias* and access to information; and Lievrouw, Rose, and Warner, for implications on copyright and access to information. Media conglomeration is also global in scale, with corporations attempting to control markets and audiences in different countries and regions; US media companies dominate much of this (Bielby & Moloney, Chapter 13). Fears about cultural homogenization and weakening of national industries join the concerns about diversity, access, and participation already noted.

Many are concerned that increasing concentration decreases content quality, news content, and diversity, and both increases and homogenizes the shaping of cultural images and values (Bettig & Hall, 2003). Some studies (see Potter, 2005, for a brief review; and Compaine, Chapter 9) do not find much evidence for such declines, and less for causality. Compaine summarizes a major empirical study concluding that media concentration did not much affect diversity of content or quality of news. Indeed, Potter summarized Einstein's (2004) argument that a much greater influence is the fundamentally commercial nature of the media—that reliance on advertising leads to limitations in content, program length, and controversy, all to reach, and avoid offending, valued audience segments (Aufderheide, Chapter 3; McChesney, Chapter 2).

However, Croteau and Hoynes (2006) documented a wide range of incidents, grouped into four categories: homogenization and imitation (imitation, declining localism), trivialization and sensationalism (superficial and confrontational content, scandal and light news), media (especially news) constrained by commercial interests, and media constrained by censorship and conflicts of interest (both self-censorship and corporate censorship in the service of commercial interests, and advertiser influence; see also Alterman, 2003, p. 25).

Consider the example of *The L.A. Times*. The newspaper had already gone through a crisis of commercialization after an economist and former marketing

executive for General Mills took over as chairman and CEO in 1997. His implementation of severe cost-cutting, the removal of the "wall" between business and editorial departments, the development of new paper sections light on reporting but attractive to audiences (and thus advertisers), the integration of links between advertisers and story content, and an arrangement with the Staples Center to split advertising profits from heavy news coverage about the center, all lead to reporter resignations, embarrassing coverage by its own reporters, and a subsequent steep decline in stock value. The Tribune Company took advantage of this opportunity to buy *The L.A. Times*, adding it to its ownership of other papers (including the flagship *Chicago Tribune*), television and radio stations, and other media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). At the time, newspaper staff and media critics were optimistic about this turn of events.

Auletta (2005) picks up the story at this point. He provided a detailed examination of the pressures of the "free market," corporatism, and media conglomerates on the news media. Although at first the new management of *The L.A. Times* allowed and supported increased investments in reporting, overseas bureaus, and investigative reporters, in 2003 the Tribune management began placing pressure on the editor, managing editor, and reporters to cut costs, reduce news space, consolidate the Washington DC bureaus, and dampen coverage of controversial issues. The corporate mission for profit maximization, driven by the inherent logic and potential competitors of the marketplace, was to maintain the nearly 30% profit margins from the Tribune's other newspapers, and follow the model of its overall multimedia business that had \$5.7 million revenues in 2004 (second only to the Gannett newspaper chain, with \$6.6 million). This orientation and associated organizational strategies appear to be inconsistent with what Dean Baquet, the managing editor of *The L.A. Times*, considers to be the main job of good newspapers: to help readers understand the world (Auletta, 2005).

Bardach's summary and transcription of the experiences and insights of the managing editors from *The New York Times*, *Slate*, and U.S. edition of the *Financial Times* defies the easy binary contrast between advantages and disadvantages of media concentration. Rather, they noted the demoralization of journalists and journalism, the welcome if still disorganized challenge from online bloggers, and the increasing fragmentation of news sources, audiences and advertising revenue. On the other hand, these three text news media are probably the least likely to suffer from corporate pressures on news coverage and resources, as the two U.S. media are owned by families and not by either public or conglomerate organizations, and the newly acquired *Slate* has not been intruded upon by its British headquarters. However, they and Bardach note the numerous examples of cost-cutting, profit maximization, and declining quality of news coverage at other newspapers, both major and minor.

Another concern is reduced access to media, both in terms of meaningful ownership and production of content (Lievrouw, Chapter 18; Potter, 2005). But this is debated as well. The rise of computing components, digital content and transmission, Internet outlets, and alternative media has both increased control

over ownership of and voice in the major mass media, as well as provided many more opportunities for individual content production in low-cost print and online media (Aufderheide, Chapter 3; Lievrouw, Chapter 18). McChesney, (Chapter 2) asserts that media ownership patterns as well as other social trends are generating several *crises of the media*, relating to debating and covering war, covering elections, and *hypercommercializing* of all aspects of society through the media.

The crucial point here is that no longer are media separate from business and the political process—they *are* major industries and *are* political actors. After all, free speech and a free press were central elements of the Bill of Rights specifically to monitor and challenge centralized power, then meant as the government. Concentrated and corporatized media are less and less able or willing to perform the central role of providing a check to centralized power, whether government or industry (i.e., the press as the fourth estate, serving a watchdog function). Furthermore, the media control access to political debates, and public exposure, so that voices (such as aspiring or opposing political candidates) become dependent on the favor and orientation of those same media outlets.

Clearly, this threatens crucial values and processes of any democracy, and challenges founding social values. These forces are also reshaping what it means to be a democracy and what those guiding social values are. And that is part of the wider debate as to what kinds of cultural, informational and symbolic representations, and social identities, a society wants and feels are useful, valuable, and meaningful (Harwood, Chapter 16; McChesney, Chapter 2). From this perspective, the number of owners or outlets is almost irrelevant; the logic of the marketplace is the prime regulator, generating consequences that are perfectly understandable and desirable. As Horwitz (2005) noted, even antitrust regulation is largely designed to foster economic efficiency, not to promote social equity, except for selected emphases on communities, small businesses, and the like.

## THE MARKET MODEL AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE MODEL

Thus, there seem to be at least two very different perspectives on the question of the media in general, and the role and implications of media ownership in particular (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006): the *marketplace perspective* and the *public sphere perspective*. (There are of course many other ways of labeling this underlying distinction and tension, but these two terms seem appropriate and useful.) Both emphasize their own sets of factors and outcomes, and ignore others. As the FCC has intended to foster competition and innovation among media, as well as fulfilling the *public interest*, there is a built-in tension and contradiction between market interests and public sphere interests.

## The Marketplace Model

The first perspective emphasizes the role and influence of media in the *marketplace*. It looks at media as essentially no different from other businesses operating in a competitive, commercial marketplace. Under this perspective, commercial media companies must follow market logic—maximize revenues and resources, protect against competitors, minimize costs and risks, and seek new markets and audiences—to both satisfy investors and avoid extinction. Furthermore, they are required by law to do this, or they may be seen as not fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility to their stockholders. As a sign of the changing underlying ideology of the role of the FCC in particular, and government in general, embedded in The Telecommunications Act of 1996 is the belief that the U.S. government's role is to support rather than hinder media industries in the marketplace, because a *free market* works best (most efficiently) without control or interference (regulation).

Under the market perspective, maximizing profit is a valid, desirable, motivating, and socially beneficial goal. To the extent that media industries have unique economic advantages (the repeat use of content across different media, copyright ownership), traditional advantages (*economies of scale and scope*), and competition is reduced (through *horizontal and vertical integration*), they should have higher profits. Indeed, return on revenues average around 14% (7% for audiorecordings and 10% for books, to 20% for radio and 22% for television broadcasting) while return on assets average around 16% (from 9% for film, and cable/pay television, to 24% for magazines and 26% for newspapers; Potter, 2005). These are extraordinary profits for mature industries, and, as seen earlier, put tremendous pressures on traditional news divisions to cut costs and reduce news collection and coverage.

*Horizontal integration* means owning companies operating at the same point in the "value" chain of media inputs, production, distribution, exhibition and sale (i.e., a publisher acquiring more newspapers) which increases concentration in the market. *Vertical integration* means owning companies either prior or subsequent in the "value" chain (i.e., a cable operator buying a film company to obtain content for distribution over cable channels). *Conglomerate merger* means acquiring both other media companies and/or non-media companies (i.e., a conglomerate that includes newspapers, radio stations, and manufacturing companies). The reverse may also happen, where non-media corporations acquire media companies (Potter, 2005) because of their much higher profit ratio.

*Economies of scale* means that marginal costs of a product or service become lower than average costs, because of the diminishing effect of large capital costs for initial production, large production runs, and leveraging suppliers (paying less for a given amount of resources) because of large orders. Media companies especially benefit from economies of scale because additional uses of content once produced, and additional audience viewers, are nearly costless (as the image, text,

or sound is what is being charged for multiple times, not actually the material it comes in or through). The production and use of digital content increases this benefit even more, as storing, distributing and displaying the image, text or sound is nearly costless, and the content can be disassembled and used in a variety of ways, unlike material-based content, such as a printed magazine or book. Thus, as Potter (2005) and others noted, media companies are especially motivated to increase the number of their consumers (audience). However, larger and more complex organizations require greater coordination costs, so there may be limits to economies of scale. For example, experiments of large media conglomeration such as Disney/ABC, AOL/Time Warner or Vivendi have essentially failed (Holt, Chapter 6). *Economies of scope* means that with a wider range of media outlets, and the ability to recombine the product (media content), media companies can create more variations and recombinations of initially produced product, use information about the product and audience across media outlets and audiences, and take advantage of alliances and cross-market opportunities (Aufderheide, Chapter 3; Harwood, Chapter 16).

*Synergy* can be thought of as the popular term for implications of horizontal and vertical integration, and economies of scale and scope. It means bringing media components together, allowing conglomerates to cross-develop, -promote, -license, -distribute, and -combine media products (see examples from the movie *Titanic* and the Disney empire in Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). Ownership concentration allows both control and acquisition of supplies at below-market cost, multiple uses and combinations of media content, multiple distribution outlets, and multiple revenue streams. Particular content can be recombined into a wide variety of media products, thus gaining multiple returns from the initial production costs. Media products from separate industries can be combined into more integrated products (such as theme parks and video games). Different media outlets can promote and license the content from other outlets (such as placing actors in the ballpark from films or television programs owned by the same company that is televising the game or even owns the team or the sports stadium, or placing products within television, film and videogame programming; see Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

There is of course considerable competition among media businesses, for creative and production talent, for audiences through content and media, and for advertisers through offering access to specific valued consumer audiences. Potter (2005) noted, based on 2004 Census data, that the total spent on media in 2003—\$700 billion—was more than the total spent by the U.S. government on education, job training, social services, transportation (highways, airports, trains), natural resources and environment, agriculture, international affairs, and national defense; and 75% of the amount spent on media goes to indirect costs, primarily advertising (see also Croteau & Hoynes, 2006, for a summary of the financial growth of media). Constrained and pervasive brand image is critical to media marketers, because, to the extent that most content for similar audiences, and features

for similar media products, are similar, companies attempt to distinguish themselves among potential audience groups on image, brand, logo, or style (Porter, 2005), and to increase attention to and consumption of content in another medium. Not often mentioned in discussions of increasing media concentration is the concomitant increased concentration among advertisers and advertising agencies, which then also are less interested in local media and local audiences (Porter, 2005). Furthermore, to the extent that the percent of gross national product spent on mass media is relatively constant (around 3%), companies must compete for a fairly constant percent of available resources within an economy. So the stakes are high, the profits extraordinary, and the competition severe.

*Advantages and Disadvantages of the Market Model.* The market model of course offers a variety of advantages (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006).

- When markets are competitive and not hindered by regulation promote organizational efficiency.
- Markets are responsive to both technological developments (what can be supplied) and consumer preferences (what is demanded).
- They are flexible, not delayed by centralized decision making or rigid long-term plans.
- Markets promote ongoing innovation in products and services.
- They enable the production, marketing, and distribution of media products like material goods.

But, markets also have disadvantages and limits:

- They do not correspond to the one-person, one-vote philosophy of democracy—rather, influence is proportional to financial power; inequalities in control are reinforced through increased financial leverage and influence over the content produced and distributed through media.
- Markets do not discriminate between positive and negative social consequences, especially long-term or collective ones.
- Markets are driven solely by products and services that can be profitable—thus needs of small consumer groups, of those with little income or marketing salience, or whose social benefits cannot be easily appropriated by the providers, will not be valued or produced.
- Markets do not fully represent the benefits and costs of all products and services—consider the widespread consequences of pollution or smoking, which generates significant costs to individuals and society that are not part of the production costs or consumer price.
- They are seldom “free”. Inherent market tendencies (oligopoly and monopoly, risk avoidance, hidden prices due to vertical and horizontal integration, short-term criteria such as quarterly dividends stifling long-term develop-

increased interactivity—is not sufficient to overcome media conglomerate trends and implications.

## The Public Sphere Model

The second perspective, based on founding democratic principles of the United States, as well as initial FCC criteria, emphasizes the role and influence of media in the *public sphere*. Much of the media regulation just noted, especially by the FCC, is grounded, whether well-founded or not, in public sphere principles of diversity, localism, access to information for an informed citizenry necessary for democracy, monitoring and challenging of centralized power, free speech and freedom of the press, and scarcity of the public resource of broadcast frequencies. The concept of the public sphere not only includes the public interest and democracy, but also the more general Habermasian goal of fostering continuous public dialogue (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Rose, Chapter 4). Croteau and Hoynes argued the media should serve the public interest in four ways:

1. *Diversity* of cultural and political views and experiences.
2. *Innovation* in both the *technology and content* of the media.
3. *Substance of content*, whether in news or entertainment, that considers significant social issues.)
4. *Separation of the sources and channels* that provide coverage and information, so as to prevent centralization of power, whether in the government or the marketplace.

The public sphere model of course demands much more explicit norms, goals, and values being applied to decisions as to what kinds of structures, content, and social implications are desirable. Conversely, the market model implicitly embeds preferences and assumptions about norms, goals and values, but limits their scope to internal market efficiencies and narrowly defined social benefits. It would seem that in addition to the familiar public sphere themes, more general themes of equity, ethics, and fairness should be considered (Harwood, Chapter 16). For example, consumers can be seen as primarily a means to an end for the media organization, which a Kantian imperative would challenge, whereas citizens can be seen as primarily an end fostered by the media organization. So, for example, a lower rate of profit might be a valuable exchange for greater localism and diversity (Bardach, Chapter 11; Harwood, Chapter 16).

As many note (Horwitz, 2005), the marketplace model inherently biases content toward that which is attractive to large audiences with disposable income, and also fosters concentration of control of both media distribution and content. So the commercial media system is potentially (some say inherently) a threat to diversity, the marketplace of ideas, and free speech. Thus, the role of the FCC (until recently) in attempting to limit common and cross-media ownership of

ments) can distort the market itself. Indeed, a successful strategy of marketplace dominators is to reduce competition from other companies.

- Rarely do markets fulfill the classical economic theory assumptions of perfect information to buyers and sellers, costless access to information about the value of products and services, low barriers to entry, and no one (or few) producers or no one (or few) consumers can influence the market.

Some of these limits are exacerbated when the informational, or non-material, aspects of media are considered in the market process. When this happens the following can occur:

- Markets do not easily handle the unique aspects of information goods, as opposed to material goods—their value is uncertain over time and dependent on the user, they cannot be easily kept from being used multiple times by multiple users, and they may be licensed or sold multiple times after initial production costs are recovered.
- Content, especially with digitization, can be used (i.e., charged for) multiple times across multiple media. This is fundamentally different from material goods (such as an apple), which, once sold, belong to the owner. Books, for example, seem to be a material good, but consumers only purchase the right to keep that one copy. They do not buy the content—that's what copyright is all about—and in fact the media company owning the copyright can resell versions of that content in a wide variety of ways. Furthermore, to the extent that a company is vertically integrated, it can promote that content, and use different combinations of that content, across its multiple distribution networks and media outlets.
- Involving media may not have the direct relationships with consumers (buyers) required by the classical market model—consider that all media using advertising to support their costs (which varies by medium) are selling consumers to the advertisers, so the content becomes an intermediary whose primary function is to help the media business attract certain audience segments valuable to certain other businesses.

In Chapter 2, McChesney, in particular, points out that many arguments for decreased media regulation are myths, or simplistic and uninformed assumptions. He asserts, instead, that (a) the media did not arise from a "free market"; (b) the current commercial and conglomerate media system was not intended or even conceptualized by U.S. founding principles; (c) current professional journalism standards are not strong enough to counter media corporatism and the logic of the marketplace; (d) the current media system does not necessarily give people what they want—it is after all oriented first toward advertisers, and second to only some segments of the audience; furthermore, it creates and then reinforces preferences; and (e) new technology—both in terms of decreased scarcity and

both distribution and content. Under the market model, the public consists of consumers. Under the public sphere model, the public consists of citizens.

### Other Comparisons

There are other ways to compare underlying assumptions about media ownership. Warner contrasts *networking vs. broadcasting*, most obviously highlighted by the rise of the networked computer (most importantly, the Internet, but also all forms of information sharing across digital devices), but in fact inherent in social traditions and media forms of U.S. history. Networking is manifested by, and fosters, one-to-one and many-to-many, symmetrical, decentralized and participatory communication. Broadcasting is associated with one-to-many, asymmetrical, centralized, and institutionalized production of communication. Warner emphasizes that the form of networking or broadcasting is not inherent in any particular communication technology; how those technologies are used is shaped by political, social, legal, rhetorical, cultural and economic forces and decisions, with significant implications and consequences for those same factors. An excellent example is of the role of U.S. Postal regulation in subsidizing and thus fostering widespread distribution and economic survival of newspapers and other journalism (see Chapters 2 and 5). The two fundamentally different ways of structuring and perceiving media are also implicated in the current regulatory and industry debates (such as, e.g., copyright aspects of peer-to-peer music sharing and webcasting, or the socially fragmenting or integrating functions of blogs and portals).

Conceptualizing and regulating media from a broadcast perspective may be increasingly less relevant, however. Interactivity has changed "audiences" into "users" who create, publish, and exchange, as well as consume, content. In Chapter 18, Lievrouw describes how more personal, digital and networked media are being integrated into traditional media industries. More importantly, perhaps, is that more oppositional, alternative, critical, counter-commercial, participatory, artistic, and ironic media forms and uses—what is called *oppositional new media* (culture jamming, alternative computing, mediated sociality and mobilization, and Indymedia)—are also developing. These are firmly based in the networking perspective, but also explicitly oppose the commercializing, homogenizing, and institutional nature of traditional media. But the very attributes of networking, digitization, programmability, personalization and media vertical integration have also increased the frequency, pervasiveness, and utility of collecting personal data, and corresponding concerns about individual privacy (Chapter 18).

A related tension is between *Big Media* (mainstream, vertically integrated, little participation by audience, potentially better control over accuracy, high institutional costs, reinforcing ruling politics) and *Little Media* (alternative, distributed, personalized, audiences as both users and producers, little control over accuracy, low cost, challenging ruling politics) (Chapter 3). But the Big Media are making major inroads into acquisition, control over, and presence in Little Media.

## CONCLUSION

Curran (2000), Entman and Wildman (1992), Epstein, and Horwitz (2005), among others, argue for a mixed media approach, combining the benefits of both the market and the public sphere models. Epstein argues that there is legal and Constitutional basis for developing a system where media corporations can trade off public access for increased ownership. Horwitz (2005) argues that the very concept of *the marketplace of ideas* rhetorically biases the debate toward the market model, so proposals should avoid this term and emphasize issues of diversity and integration between the two media models. Croteau and Hoynes (2006) propose a variety of possible public sphere-oriented media policies, some linked to license renewal assessment. These might include a minimum amount of public affairs and citizen-oriented content, mandated public access programming, free air time during election periods, application of the former Fairness Doctrine, support for low-power radio, converting one of the forthcoming multiplexed digital channels from each station to public access, insuring universal access to the Internet, municipalities offering wireless broadband, maintain postal subsidies for low-circulation publications, expand public broadcasting in ways that avoid the market model, greater coverage of media ownership and policy issues by journalists, greater involvement of citizens in media issues, greater development of and access to alternative media. Media debates need to be popularized, and media users need to become involved and informed (Chapter 2). And, as Aufderheide, Lievrouw, Rose, and Warner argue in their chapters, there needs to be room for both big and little media, mainstream and oppositional media, networking and broadcasting, and sharing and owning.

Table 1.2 provides a list of Web sites providing extensive additional information, arguments, and resources about media ownership research and regulation.

**Table 1.2. Web Sites on United States Media Ownership: Economic Issues, Education/News, Government Policy, Legal Issues, Marketing Aspects, Media Conglomerate Tracking, Public Involvement**

### Economic Issues

- Alliance for Public Technology (a nonprofit membership organization "concerned with fostering access to affordable and useful information and communication services and technologies by all people"): <http://www.apt.org/about>
- The Angry Economist: <http://angry-economist.russnelson.com/media-concentration.html>
- The Gathering Storm Over Media Ownership: <http://www.alternet.org/story/15654>

- The Communications Act (Pike & Fischer's listing of the major amendments, 1934-1996): <http://www.pf.com/telecomAct1934TOC.asp>; part of its comprehensive summary of Communications Law and Regulation: <http://www.pf.com/commLawISP.asp>
- FCC—Media Ownership Policy Reexamination: <http://www.fcc.gov/ownership/>
- Media Law and Policy: <http://www.obs.coe.int/medium/law.html>
- Media Ownership Rules Under Review: <http://www.journalism.org/resources/research/reports/ownership/rulechart.asp>
- The Cross Media Ownership Campaign: <http://www.xmedia.org.au/>
- Tracking the Payback: <http://www.opensecrets.org/payback/issue.asp?issueid=MO1&CongNo=108>

### Legal Issues

- Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom: <http://keywords.dsvr.co.uk/freepress/bodyphtrm?doctype=&id=156>
- Center for American Progress: <http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=bjJR8OVF&b=108399>
- Domination Fantasies: <http://www.reason.com/0401/fe.bc.dominatation.shtml>
- FortCulture — on Digital Rights and Media ownership: <http://www.fortculture.org/>
- Media Access Project (A non-profit public interest telecommunications law firm; see their issues on Media Consolidation page): <http://www.mediaaccess.org/programs/diversity/fcc.html>
- On Media Concentration and Diversity Question (very comprehensive review of FCC media ownership regulations and opposing philosophies): <http://communication.ucsd.edu/people/Concentrationpaper/CA.htm>
- Sfgate: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2003/05/12/MIN53063.DTL>

### Marketing Aspects

- Adbusters Media Foundation (an alternative and oppositional forum for social activist movements through media): <http://www.adbusters.org>
- Advertising Age Online (access to wide variety of updated media tables and charts): <http://adage.com>
- National Alliance for Media Arts Culture (Dedicated to the support and advocacy of independent film, video, audio and online/multimedia arts): <http://www.namac.org/>

### Media Conglomerate Tracking

- CPT's Selected Data—Concentration in Telecommunications and Media Markets: <http://www.cptech.org/telecom/seldata.html>
- A Survey of Who Owns Europe: <http://www.ifi.org/pdfs/europeownershipupdate2003.PDF#search='media%20concentration,%20europe'>
- American Press Institute's The Media Center Convergence Tracker (search engine for mergers, concentration, etc.): <http://www.mediacenter.org/convergenctracker/search/index.cfm>
- Columbia Journalism Review's Who Owns What (summarizing more than 50 of the biggest media companies): <http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/index.asp>

### Education/ News

- Action Coalition for Media Education (Teaching media education: knowledge, skills and activism): <http://www.acmecoalition.org/>
- Broadcasting & Cable Online (media industry news): <http://www.broadcastingcable.com>
- Copyright and the Boy Scouts (Merit badge for copyright): [http://news.com.com/2061-10796\\_3-5693563.html?part=rss&tag=5693563&subj=news](http://news.com.com/2061-10796_3-5693563.html?part=rss&tag=5693563&subj=news)
- Cross Media Ownership: <http://www.digital-law.net/benderdiss/book.html>
- I Want Media: <http://www.iwantmedia.com/consolidation.html>
- Journalism.org (Research, Resources and Ideas to Improve Journalism: see their "State of the Media" annual report on ownership, issues, etc. across various media, including online journalism): <http://www.journalism.org>
- Local Media: One of the most comprehensive directories for local, citizen-oriented, and progressive media groups and organizations (micropower, radio, news, internet radio and tv, legal resources, local music sites and band web pages, etc.): <http://www.citizensmedia.org/linkset.html>
- Media Concentration: <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifissues/mediacconcentration.htm>
- Media Education Foundation (study guides, handouts, downloadable materials, videos on media ownership, informed citizens, media content, etc.): <http://www.mediaed.org>
- Media Ownership Overview: <http://www.womenarts.org/advocacy/MediaOwnership.htm>
- Media Ownership Timeline (Summary of major deals March 1989 – December 2002): [http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr/icopyright\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1820240](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/thr/icopyright_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1820240)
- Media Ownership: <http://www.wan-press.org/rubrique112.html>
- Mediawatch (PBS NewsHour coverage of information industries; see list of journals, media criticism, media studies centers, media organizations): <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/media/resources.html>
- Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Television (see entries for media policy issues): <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/>
- Project Censored (tracks major stories not covered by corporate media): <http://www.projectcensored.org/>
- Technology and the Limits of Media Ownership: [http://news.com.com/Technology+and+the+limits+of+media+ownership/2010-1071\\_3-5072792.html](http://news.com.com/Technology+and+the+limits+of+media+ownership/2010-1071_3-5072792.html)
- The Western Media: [http://www.krysstal.com/democracy\\_media.html](http://www.krysstal.com/democracy_media.html)
- World Newspapers (A site that lists magazines, research, articles and links on media criticism): <http://www.world-newspapers.com/media.html>

### Government Policy

- BNA's Web Watch: <http://www.bna.com/webwatch/mediaownership.htm>
- Center for Responsive Politics (a nonpartisan, nonprofit research group based in Washington, that tracks money in politics, and its effect on elections and public policy): <http://www.opensecrets.org/>
- Center on Democratic Communications of the National Lawyers Guild (devoted to protecting the right of all people to a system of media and communications based on principles of democracy and cultural and informational self-determination, not dominated by commercial concerns): <http://www.nlgcdc.org/>

- Corporate Influence in the Media: <http://www.globalissues.org/HumanRights/Media/Corporations/Owners.asp>
- Diversity, Democracy and Access—Is Media Concentration a Crisis?: <http://www.mediachannel.org/ownership/front.shtml>
- Media Concentration: <http://www.moveon.org/moveonbulletin/bulletin7.html>
- MediaChannel (A lovely/scary ownership interconnection chart of the six largest media conglomerates): <http://www.mediachannel.org/ownership/chart.shtml> and more detailed text summaries at: <http://www.mediachannel.org/ownership/granville.shtml>
- MediaGiants—Who Owns What?: <http://www.thinkandask.com/news/mediagiants.html>
- National Organization for Women on Media Control: <http://www.nowfoundation.org/issues/communications/tv/mediacontrol.html>
- PBS Frontline—Media Giants: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/giants/>
- Stop Sleeping: <http://home.earthlink.net/~platter/media-ownership.html>
- The Big Ten: <http://www.thenation.com/special/bigten.html>
- The European Commission and Regulation of the Media Industry: [http://www.medi-alaw.ru/laws/other\\_laws/european/e-eh.htm](http://www.medi-alaw.ru/laws/other_laws/european/e-eh.htm)
- The FCC and Media Cross Ownership: <http://www.polarity1.com/pfcc.html>
- The Global Network for Democratic Media: <http://www.mediachannel.org/ownership/>
- The Nation Magazine's Description of the Holdings of the 10 Biggest Media Conglomerates (AOL/Time Warner, AT&T, General Electric, The News Corporation, Viacom, Walt Disney, Bertelsmann, Vivendi/Universal, Walt Disney, Sony): <http://www.thenation.com/special/bigten.html>
- US Public Interest Research Group—Media Ownership and Concentration: <http://www.pirg.org/consumer/media/>
- Well-Connected (Tracking the Broadcast, Cable and Telecommunications Industries): <http://www.openairwaves.org/telecom/default.aspx>
- Who Owns the Media (Ownership databases; ownership charts; ownership resources; media, politics and money; interlocking boards of directors): <http://www.freepress.net/ownership/resources.php>

#### Public Involvement

- Alliance for Community Media (ACM); on behalf of millions of Americans nationwide, ACM supports competition, diversity, and localism in media. The ACM supports requirements that companies using public rights-of-way and public spectrum provide the means for local community use of media.): <http://www.alliancecm.org>
- Benton Foundation (on Media Ownership): <http://www.benton.org/initiatives/ownership.html>
- Center for Creative Voices in Media (nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving America's media: the original, independent, and diverse creative voices that enrich our nation's culture and safeguard its democracy): <http://www.creativevoices.us/>
- Center for Digital Democracy—Media Ownership Action: <http://www.democraticmedia.org/issues/mediaownership/index.php>
- Center for Media and Democracy (a nonprofit organization serving social change activists, journalists, researchers, policymakers, and the public at large by countering

- propaganda, informing and assisting grassroots citizen activism, promoting media literacy, and sponsoring "open content" media): <http://www.prwatch.org/cmd>
- Creating a Culture of Peace: <http://www.orncenter.org/justicecollection/media.htm>
- FreePress (a national nonpartisan organization working to increase informed public participation in crucial media policy debates, and to generate policies that will produce a more competitive and public interest-oriented media system with a strong nonprofit and noncommercial sector): <http://www.freepress.net/content/ownership>
- Future of Music (not-for-profit collaboration between members of the music, technology, public policy, and intellectual property law communities): <http://www.futureofmusic.org/>
- Global Media Ownership: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/debate.jsp?debateid=24&id=8>
- Independent Media Center (network of independent and alternative media organizations and activists): <http://www.indymedia.org>
- International Freedom of Expression eXchange (a site on media ownership reforms): <http://www.ifex.org/es/content/view/full/49805/>
- Media Ownership—Get Involved: [http://www.mediaownership.org/get\\_involved.cfm](http://www.mediaownership.org/get_involved.cfm)
- Media Reform Information: <http://www.corporations.org/media/>
- Media Tank: <http://www.mediatank.org>
- OurMedia (provides free storage and bandwidth for your video files, audio files, photos, text or software, as a way of handling personal copyright and distribution in the digital age): <http://www.ourmedia.org>
- Prometheus Radio Project (not-for-profit association dedicated to the democratization of the airwaves through the proliferation of noncommercial, community based, micropower radio stations; see their interesting guide to the FCC!): <http://www.prometheusradio.org/>
- Reclaim the Media (envisions an authentic, just democracy characterized by media systems that inform and empower citizens, reflect diverse cultures, and secure communications rights for all): <http://www.reclaimthedia.org/>
- Rocky Mountain Media Watch (Challenges citizens to resist and change the manipulative and toxic formulas of Big Media's news products): <http://www.bigmedia.org/>
- Take Back the Media: <http://www.takebackthedia.com/owners.html>
- The Center for Public Integrity (investigative journalism in the public interest; lobbying, political parties, 527s, etc. See especially Telecommunications and Media Ownership for data on contributions, junkets, lobbying and revolving doors between politics and telecomm industry; also has a cool "media tracker" where you can enter your zip code, and find out about all media coverage and ownership in that area): <http://www.publicintegrity.org/telecom/>

Note. All Web sites valid as of October 27, 2005. There are, of course, probably many other very useful and informative websites on media ownership. Also, this list avoids blog-like or personal opinion sites.

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