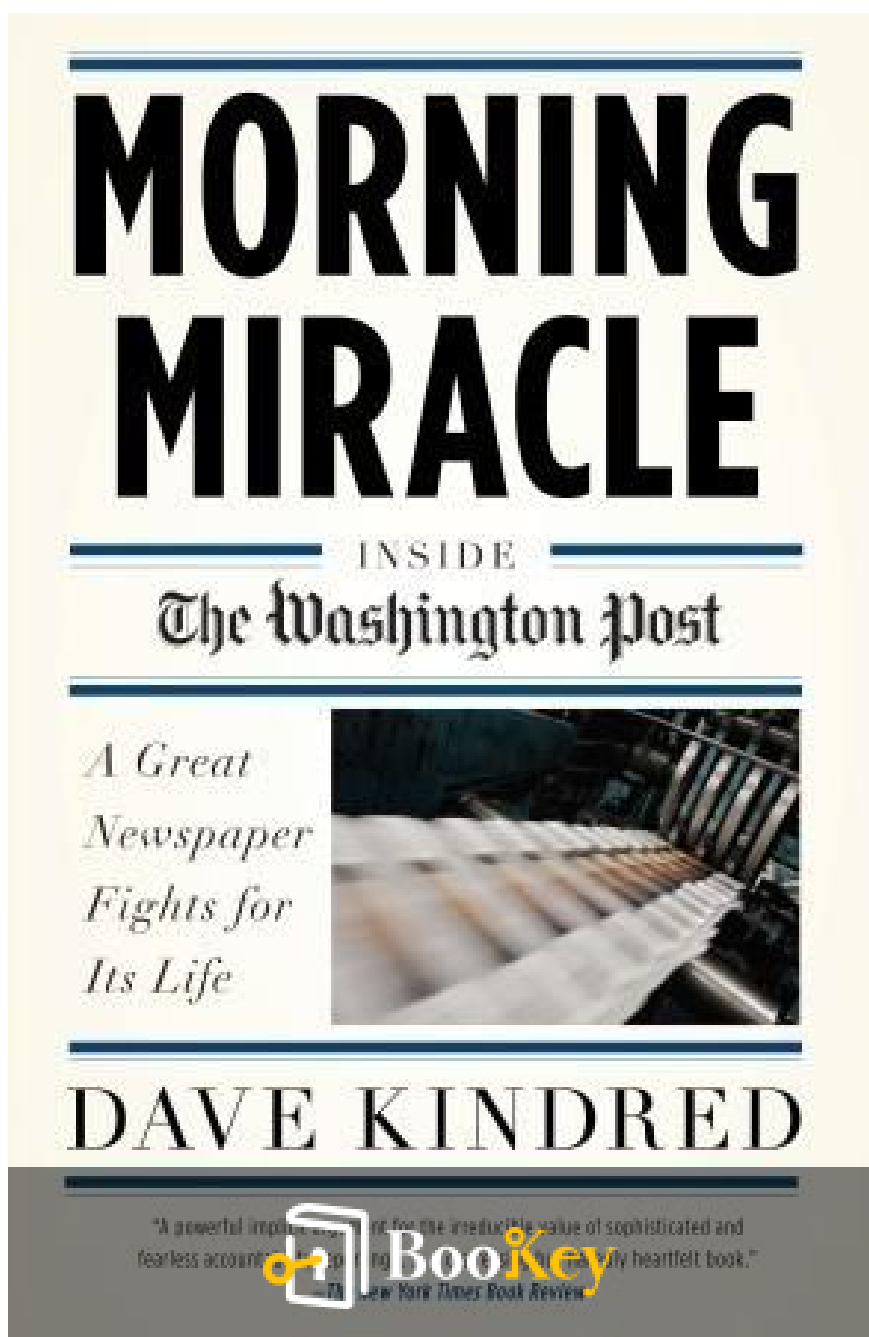


Morning Miracle PDF (Limited Copy)

Dave Kindred



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Morning Miracle Summary

Inside The Washington Post: Journalism's Evolution in a Digital Age

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "Morning Miracle," Pulitzer Prize nominee Dave Kindred delves into the rich history and recent transformation of The Washington Post, an institution that has played a crucial role in American journalism for over a century. The chapter begins by painting a vivid picture of the paper's traditional roots in print journalism, illustrating how it became synonymous with integrity and thorough reporting. Kindred emphasizes the significance of the Watergate scandal, a pivotal moment in the paper's history that not only solidified its reputation but also showcased the vital role of investigative journalism in upholding democracy.

As the narrative progresses, Kindred examines the seismic shifts in the media landscape brought about by the rise of digital technology. He thoughtfully explores the challenges faced by The Washington Post in adapting to this new era, illustrating the tension between maintaining editorial standards and embracing innovative delivery methods. Through personal anecdotes and interviews with key figures within the organization, readers gain a deeper understanding of the resilience and commitment of the journalists and staff who strive to uphold the paper's legacy.

Amidst these challenges, Kindred highlights the emergence of new strategies aimed at engaging readers in a rapidly changing world. The transition to a digital future is marked by significant transformations in storytelling

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techniques and audience interaction. Despite the pressure to evolve, the essence of The Washington Post's mission remains intact: to deliver high-quality journalism that informs and empowers the public.

Ultimately, Kindred's exploration underscores the enduring importance of journalistic excellence, affirming that while the mediums of news distribution may change, the core values of impactful reporting and the pursuit of truth remain timeless. The chapter serves as a testament not only to The Washington Post's storied past but also to its hopeful journey toward a vibrant future in an increasingly complex media environment.

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About the author

In "Morning Miracle," Dave Kindred weaves together a tapestry of sports journalism that not only showcases athletic prowess but also delves into the deeper societal implications surrounding the world of sports. Through his years of experience, Kindred offers readers a unique lens on the challenges athletes face, both on and off the field. The chapters unearth themes of perseverance, resilience, and the impactful life lessons gleaned from the sporting arena.

As Kindred chronicles various athletes' journeys, he illuminates their struggles and triumphs, illustrating how these experiences resonate beyond mere competitions. The narrative often highlights broader cultural themes, shedding light on the intersection of sports, identity, and the human experience. With a focus on the heart behind the headlines, Kindred's storytelling skillfully captures the essence of his subjects and their impact on society.

Each chapter introduces new characters—athletes from diverse backgrounds who embody the spirit of determination and the will to succeed against the odds. Readers are drawn into their personal stories, gaining insight into their motivations and the sacrifices they face. Kindred's deep respect for these individuals is evident, as he portrays their journeys with empathy, helping the audience connect with the emotional and psychological aspects of sports.

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In summary, "Morning Miracle" stands as a testament to Kindred's narrative prowess, offering an insightful blend of journalism and storytelling that celebrates the perseverance of athletes while reflecting on the universal human spirit. Through his evocative prose, readers are invited to explore not just the world of sports, but also the rich life lessons that emerge from it.

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Chapter 1 Summary: Prologue: Reporters and Editors

Prologue Summary

The prologue introduces a diverse array of journalists and editors who exemplify the enduring principles of journalism, integrity, and a commitment to uncovering the truth in an ever-evolving media landscape.

Ben Bradlee, the venerable former editor of the **Washington Post**, reflects on the crucial role of journalists in society, underscoring the timeless dedication to truth that defines the profession, especially in the context of his involvement in the Watergate scandal—a pivotal moment in American political history that showcased the power of investigative journalism.

David Broder, known for his insightful analysis and cluttered workspace, emphasizes the necessity for honesty in news coverage, confessing that journalists must acknowledge their limits in depicting complex realities accurately, thereby fostering trust with the public.

Representing the new wave of journalists, **Chris Cillizza** embodies youthful enthusiasm and a certain naivety, reacting dramatically to electoral surprises, which highlights the difference in perspective between seasoned



reporters and newer entrants in the field.

The journey of **Len Downie**, who transitioned from high school sports reporting to executive editor, illustrates how many journalists arise from humble beginnings, yet it is their dedication that elevates them within the profession.

Don Graham, the chairman of the *Washington Post Company*, reflects on the shifting landscape of newspapers, recognizing the divide between the dramatic portrayals of journalists in media and the intricate reality of daily news operations.

Young and promising, **James Hohmann** showcases early potential in journalism, hinting at the innate drive many reporters share, as evidenced by his ambitious start in publishing at just five years old.

Anne Hull stands out for her narrative journalism, which prioritizes societal issues and marginalized voices, emphasizing the importance of storytelling that reflects a broad spectrum of human experience.

Sally Jenkins demonstrates versatility through her writing, capturing the essence of significant events with poignant narratives that resonate with readers.

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The distinguished career of **Walter Pincus**, dedicated to impactful, hard-hitting journalism, embodies a commitment to uncovering difficult truths, while **Dana Priest**'s adventurous spirit propels her to cover crucial stories in challenging environments, emphasizing the lengths journalists will go to reveal the truth.

Tony Reid shares insights on the fulfilling nature of journalism, despite its often meager financial rewards, grounding the profession in passion and purpose rather than just profit.

A dedicated foreign correspondent, **Anthony Shadid** focuses on the deep-seated questions of life and conflict, highlighting the daunting realities journalists face in war-torn regions.

With an engaging and humorous approach, **Gene Weingarten** recognizes the swift transformations within the journalism field while asserting the enduring nature of truth-telling.

As a potential leader of the *Washington Post*, **Katharine Weymouth** represents a compelling mixture of personal background and professional aspirations, drawing curiosity about her future contributions to journalism.

Lastly, **Bob Woodward**, celebrated for his investigative prowess, continues to embody a passion for journalism and writing, finding profound

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joy in his work and solidifying his status as a pivotal figure in the field of American journalism.

Together, these narratives weave the complex tapestry of modern journalism, highlighting the timeless dedication to truth, integrity, and the relentless pursuit of impactful storytelling in an ever-changing world.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Part I - “It Makes the Paper Safe for Donnie”

Chapter 2 Summary

Part I: "It Makes the Paper Safe for Donnie"

1. Balls and Ghosts

Eugene Meyer, a distinguished businessman and former Federal Reserve Board member, finds himself grappling with feelings of purposelessness after retiring. His wife, Agnes, persuades him to purchase The Washington Post, a financially struggling newspaper owned by the erratic Edward Beale McLean. Despite its precarious state, Meyer recognizes the potential of the paper as a vehicle for influence in American society.

The chapter juxtaposes the extravagant, reckless lifestyle of McLean with Meyer's humble beginnings as the son of a French immigrant. Meyer's acquisition of The Washington Post in 1933 becomes a pivotal moment, marking a commitment not only to revive the ailing paper but also to forge a lasting legacy for his family. This decision sets the foundation for his daughter, Katharine, and her husband, Phil Graham, to take charge and



ambitiously expand the paper's reach, leading to the capture of local competitor Times-Herald.

2. "I'm an Investigative Reporter!"

Under the new leadership of Ben Bradlee, a dynamic and practical manager, the Post undergoes a cultural transformation that boosts its journalistic ambitions. Bradlee's charisma inspires a new generation of reporters, including the notable duo Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, whose thorough investigation into the Watergate scandal epitomizes the paper's resurgence as a critical organ of American democracy. This chapter highlights the Post's newfound dedication to rigorous reporting and public accountability, setting a new standard for journalism across the country.

3. Hollywood on the Potomac

As the Post evolves, so too does the perception of Washington D.C., which begins to shed its previous image as merely a Southern colonial city. The newspaper, increasing its influence in national debates, becomes a reflection of the changing times. However, the chapter also addresses the challenges of maintaining credibility, illustrated by reporter Janet Cooke's scandal involving a fabricated story about a child addict. This incident serves as a cautionary tale about the temptation of sensationalism in journalism, underscoring the delicate balance between storytelling and truth.



4. Boiling Frogs

The rise of digital media presents a formidable challenge that the Post's executives are initially slow to embrace. As the landscape shifts towards electronic news consumption, they face the daunting prospect of print's decline. Kaiser's memo is a crucial turning point, underscoring the necessity of adopting digital platforms. Despite initial skepticism, the eventual acceptance of online journalism signifies a transformative moment for the Paper, setting the stage for its adaptation to the fast-evolving world of news delivery.

Overall, this chapter not only chronicles the historical trajectory of The Washington Post, its leadership evolution, and pivotal moments in journalism but also reflects on the broader cultural shifts demanding a reimagining of media's role in society.

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Chapter 3 Summary: Part II - “How Could Anyone Not Want to Be a Reporter?”

Chapter 3 Summary: The Deterioration of Traditional Journalism

Existential Crisis in Journalism

The chapter opens with an insightful discussion between veteran journalist Walter Pincus and colleague Dave Kindred, highlighting the staggering decline of traditional newspapers in the digital era. Pincus expresses a profound concern over the dwindling audience and attributes this decline to an industry fixation on internal accolades rather than genuine reader engagement. He critiques the abandonment of journalistic objectivity and accountability, suggesting that the profession's moral compass is wavering.

The State of the Industry

Statistics paint a grim picture of the industry, revealing that prestigious publications like the Washington Post have suffered steep declines in daily circulation along with widespread layoffs and buyouts. Pincus laments the transformation of the Internet into a mere aggregator of headlines, which diminishes the role of newspapers as sources of in-depth reporting. He suggests that newspapers have become increasingly self-indulgent, losing



touch with the communities they are meant to serve.

Management Changes and Future Concerns

Amidst these challenges, Pincus voices apprehension regarding management changes at the Washington Post, particularly the potential loss of its family-owned ethos under corporate influence. Uncertainties surrounding succession planning raise concerns about the future viability of the paper, especially following the retirement of long-standing figures like Don Graham, leaving its legacy in jeopardy.

The Impact of Buyouts

The chapter notes the adverse effects of two rounds of buyouts on newsroom morale, introducing a climate of instability among reporters. Many express fears that the integrity and mission of the newspaper are compromised, as corporate priorities overshadow journalistic integrity.

Fear of a Diminishing Role

Marc Fisher, a long-standing columnist, articulates his disillusionment with the current demands of journalism that favor social media interaction over traditional reporting. This shift leaves him feeling betrayed, embodying a larger existential crisis within the field that threatens the foundations of



journalism as a watchdog institution.

Spotlight on Investigative Journalism

In the midst of these concerns, the chapter celebrates impactful investigative journalism, particularly the work of Dana Priest and Anne Hull, who exposed the mistreatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Their diligent, ‘shoe-leather’ reporting reaffirms the critical role of traditional journalism in revealing profound truths, even as the industry faces unprecedented changes.

Emerging Reporting Styles and Adaptation

The narrative shifts to innovative storytelling approaches exemplified by Gene Weingarten, who embodies the adaptability of journalists amid evolving media landscapes. Contemporary events, such as the Virginia Tech shooting and ongoing coverage of the Iraq War, further illustrate the expanding responsibilities of reporters in modern journalism.

The Nature of War Reporting

Focusing on war journalism, Anthony Shadid shares the raw intensity of his experiences reporting from Iraq. His connection with local populations provides vital context to the human toll of conflict, emphasizing that

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compelling storytelling must transcend mere statistics, delving into the emotional and complex realities of those affected.

Conclusion

To conclude, Chapter 3 offers a poignant commentary on the journalism industry's struggles, illuminating existential fears surrounding the decline of traditional media and the fragile state of journalistic integrity. It underscores the urgent need for reinvention and adaptability, while reaffirming the crucial importance of credible and engaged journalism during times of societal crisis.

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Chapter 4: Part III - “The Greatest Day in the History of the Washington Post”

Chapter 4 Summary: The Changing Landscape of The Washington Post

Introduction

In Chapter 4 of "Morning Miracle" by Dave Kindred, the narrative delves into a pivotal era for The Washington Post, spotlighting the formidable challenges it faces amid the swift transformation of the media landscape post-2000.

Challenges to Traditional Reporting

The chapter outlines the struggles confronting print journalism in the wake of digital media's ascendance. Concerns reverberate within the industry about the sustainability of in-depth investigative reporting. Journalistic stalwarts like Bob Woodward voice urgent worries that with print newspapers on the decline, the depth and quality of news coverage will suffer significantly. This urgency is intensified by the apprehension that publishers are failing to respond adequately to strategic warnings regarding the industry's transition to a digital format.

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Leadership Changes and Vision

The resignation of Stev Coll, a former managing editor, serves as a critical inflection point for The Post. Coll's optimistic vision for digital transformation through innovative journalism starkly contrasts with a prevailing reluctance among other leaders to embrace change. This tension encapsulates the broader debate within the paper on how best to adapt to the shifting media landscape under the leadership of Don Graham, the chairman grappling with the newspaper's future.

The Internet's Role

Recognizing the Internet's burgeoning significance, Don Graham attempts to harmonize the online presence with traditional newsroom operations. However, the historical practices of the newsroom often clash with the evolving expectations of a digital audience. This dissonance is compounded by internal resistance to change and mounting competition from digital newcomers that threaten the newspaper's established model.

Editorial Ambitions vs. Business Realities

The Post's newsroom remains steadfast in its quest for innovation and high-quality journalism, yet the financial constraints loom large. The chapter chronicles the ongoing struggle to balance the aspiration for ambitious



investigative work with the grim necessity of maintaining the newspaper's financial viability. This underscores a brewing conflict between journalistic ideals and commercial pressures that are reshaping operations.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Part IV - “Dude! Cool!”

Chapter 5 Summary: The Transition of Power at The Washington Post

Executive Changes in a Changing Media Landscape

As The Washington Post navigated the challenges of an evolving media environment, the transition of leadership became a focal point. With hints from Weymouth and Downie regarding the future of the executive editor role, it was clear that changes were underway. Weymouth's ascent to publisher was not only anticipated due to her familial ties to the newspaper but also underscored the necessity for a modern leader skilled in digital strategies, reflecting the financial strains the paper was facing.

The Search for New Leadership

Following Downie's announcement of his resignation, Weymouth embarked on the search for a new editor to steer the publication through its financial crisis, which projected significant losses for 2008. The decision to appoint Marcus Brauchli, formerly managing editor at the Wall Street Journal, was pivotal. As Weymouth navigated conversations with family regarding the newspaper's profitability, it became increasingly clear that sustaining quality journalism hinged on financial viability.

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Navigating the Knowledge Gap and Staff Sentiments

Despite her qualifications, Weymouth questioned her suitability as publisher, feeling inadequately prepared due to her lack of direct reporting experience. This inexperience complicated the decision-making process surrounding the new editor. Conversations within the newsroom reflected a desire for change countered by apprehension about potential shifts in management style and direction.

Veteran Farewells Amid Uncertainty

As the specter of layoffs loomed, many long-time journalists, including Groer and Reid, faced difficult choices about their futures. The atmosphere was charged with emotional farewells, as staff acknowledged both their past achievements and the involuntary losses within the newsroom, marking a painful yet necessary transition.

Covering a Pivotal Election

The unfolding of the 2008 presidential election presented the editorial board with critical endorsement decisions, highlighting the delicate balance between financial pressures and editorial integrity. Despite the looming revenue challenges, the newsroom rallied to deliver comprehensive

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coverage, reaffirming their commitment to impactful journalism during this transformative period in American politics.

Conclusion: Embracing Change in Journalism

As leadership transitions settled amid the election fervor, it became evident that The Washington Post was at a significant crossroads. The chapter encapsulates a time of transformation not only in leadership but also in the broader media framework, emphasizing the importance of adaptation and resilience. Through the collective experiences of its journalists, the narrative illustrates a steadfast commitment to maintaining journalistic integrity, even in the face of uncertainty and industry evolution.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Part V - “Marcus was as Good as Bradlee and Downie”

Chapter 6 Summary: Something Must Be Done

Introduction

On September 21, 2009, journalist Bob Woodward published an impactful article on the Afghanistan war, collaborating closely with The Washington Post’s editor, Marcus Brauchli. This critical story emerged amidst significant challenges faced by the newspaper, highlighting both the urgency of national security issues and the evolving role of journalism.

The McChrystal Assessment

General Stanley McChrystal, who commanded U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, submitted a classified assessment detailing the troubling state of the war. Woodward acquired this vital document, believing it to be essential for informing the public and government officials about the pressing need for additional military forces to avert mission failure. The assessment served as a catalyst for broader discussions on U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

The Dance with the Pentagon

Navigating the complexities of national security concerns, Woodward and

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Brauchli engaged in a delicate negotiation with the Pentagon regarding the publication of the assessment. While initially met with caution and resistance due to the potential risks involved, the duo successfully reached an agreement on necessary redactions, allowing Woodward to publish the information and contribute to the urgent discourse surrounding the conflict.

Pressures and Changes at The Washington Post

The Washington Post faced financial turmoil, prompting Brauchli to take decisive steps to uphold its journalistic integrity amidst declining revenues and a shrinking readership. The newspaper underwent significant restructuring to adapt to the digital age; however, this shift was met with skepticism and unease within the newsroom, highlighting the internal struggles facing traditional media.

Katharine Weymouth's Controversial Initiatives

Katharine Weymouth, a key figure in the newspaper's management, attempted to merge business strategies with journalistic standards through initiatives like dinner meetings with lobbyists. This venture raised severe ethical concerns, resulting in a backlash that forced the cancellation of the series and ignited intense debates about the influence of corporate interests on journalistic integrity.

Crisis in the Newsroom

The chapter draws to a climax with a physical confrontation between editors



Henry Allen and Manuel Roig-Franzia, symbolizing the mounting frustrations and strains within the newsroom. This altercation reflected the broader discontent among journalists who felt pressured by systemic changes that endangered the integrity and legacy of The Washington Post.

Conclusion

Through the interconnected narratives of ambition, ethical challenges, and the transformation of journalism at The Washington Post, this chapter encapsulates the struggles faced by media organizations as they strive to adapt to a rapidly changing landscape without compromising their foundational values. The tensions within the chapter illuminate the broader implications of ethical journalism in the face of commercial pressures, setting the stage for ongoing debates about the role of the press in society.

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Chapter 7 Summary: Epilogue

EPILOGUE

The epilogue of this narrative encapsulates the pressing issues and evolving landscape of journalism, particularly through the lens of *The Washington Post*. It reflects on the insights of Len Downie and Bob Kaiser, authors of "The News About the News," who highlight a troubling trend in journalism's decline. By the summer of 2006, the industry began to experience a downturn, escalating by 2008 with significant drops in newspaper circulation and revenue that suggested a systemic crisis.

Public sentiment towards the media had severely deteriorated by late 2009, underscored by a survey revealing that 63% of Americans felt the media frequently misrepresented facts. This skepticism mirrored the struggles faced by well-known newspapers such as the Rocky Mountain News and the Post-Intelligencer, both of which shuttered their operations, further diminishing public confidence.

Prominent journalist Anthony Lewis raised critical questions about the American press's role during pivotal moments in history. His commentary pointed to a troubling decline in accountability and investigative reporting—hallmarks of journalism's tradition—that had previously



established the media's credibility.

In a bid to reverse these trends, Downie and fellow journalist Michael Schudson proposed a roadmap for journalism's revitalization. They emphasized the necessity for new digital strategies and inter-collaborative efforts. Their vision included nurturing a fresh generation of reporters dedicated to the ideals of independent and principled journalism, especially crucial during the industry's financial upheaval.

David Hoffman and Sally Jenkins reinforced the transformative mission of journalism to uncover, illuminate, and convey the truth without hesitation. They shared personal insights that highlighted the urgent need for a new breed of journalist committed to these foundational values, particularly in an era of misinformation.

Looking ahead, notable figures like Bob Woodward expressed optimism about the adaptability of journalism despite the decline of traditional print formats. He foresees a transition towards digital platforms that will still maintain high-quality information delivery. The challenge remains to uphold the standards of rigorous journalism while navigating the changing media environment.

In conclusion, the narrative emphasizes a hopeful perspective for the future of journalism. It underscores the importance of embracing new platforms



while adhering to core journalistic principles. Even amidst challenges, the enduring quest for truth and factual reporting is portrayed as a resilient thread woven into the continuously evolving tapestry of news.

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