

"Henry Jenkins is the 21st century McLuhan."

— Howard Rheingold, author of *Smart Mobs*



CONVERGENCE CULTURE

WHERE OLD AND NEW MEDIA COLLIDE

HENRY JENKINS

And so it went, in panel after panel. The New Orleans Media Experience pressed us into the future. Every path forward had roadblocks, most of which felt insurmountable, but somehow, they would either have to be routed around or broken down in the coming decade.

The messages were plain:

1. Convergence is coming and you had better be ready.
2. Convergence is harder than it sounds.
3. Everyone will survive if everyone works together. (Unfortunately, that was the one thing nobody knew how to do.)

The Prophet of Convergence

If *Wired* magazine declared Marshall McLuhan the patron saint of the digital revolution, we might well describe the late MIT political scientist Ithiel de Sola Pool as the prophet of media convergence. Pool's *Technologies of Freedom* (1983) was probably the first book to lay out the concept of convergence as a force of change within the media industries:

A process called the "convergence of modes" is blurring the lines between media, even between point-to-point communications, such as the post, telephone and telegraph, and mass communications, such as the press, radio, and television. A single physical means—be it wires, cables or airwaves—may carry services that in the past were provided in separate ways. Conversely, a service that was provided in the past by any one medium—be it broadcasting, the press, or telephony—can now be provided in several different physical ways. So the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use is eroding.⁶

Some people today talk about divergence rather than convergence, but Pool understood that they were two sides of the same phenomenon.

"Once upon a time," Pool explained, "companies that published newspapers, magazines, and books did very little else; their involvement with other media was slight."⁷ Each media had its own distinctive functions and markets, and each was regulated under different regimes, depending on whether its character was centralized or decentralized, marked by scarcity or plentitude, dominated by news or

entertainment, and owned by governmental or private interests. Pool felt that these differences were largely the product of political choices and preserved through habit rather than any essential characteristic of the various technologies. But he did see some communications technologies as supporting more diversity and a greater degree of participation than others: "Freedom is fostered when the means of communication are dispersed, decentralized, and easily available, as are printing presses or microcomputers. Central control is more likely when the means of communication are concentrated, monopolized, and scarce, as are great networks."⁸

Several forces, however, have begun breaking down the walls separating these different media. New media technologies enabled the same content to flow through many different channels and assume many different forms at the point of reception. Pool was describing what Nicholas Negroponte calls the transformation of "atoms into bytes" or digitization.⁹ At the same time, new patterns of cross-media ownership that began in the mid-1980s, during what we can now see as the first phase of a longer process of media concentration, were making it more desirable for companies to distribute content across those various channels rather than within a single media platform. Digitization set the conditions for convergence; corporate conglomerates created its imperative.

Much writing about the so-called digital revolution presumed that the outcome of technological change was more or less inevitable. Pool, on the other hand, predicted a period of prolonged transition, during which the various media systems competed and collaborated, searching for the stability that would always elude them: "Convergence does not mean ultimate stability or unity. It operates as a constant force for unification but always in dynamic tension with change. . . . There is no immutable law of growing convergence; the process of change is more complicated than that."¹⁰

As Pool predicted, we are in an age of media transition, one marked by tactical decisions and unintended consequences, mixed signals and competing interests, and most of all, unclear directions and unpredictable outcomes.¹¹ Two decades later, I find myself reexamining some of the core questions Pool raised—about how we maintain the potential of participatory culture in the wake of growing media concentration, about whether the changes brought about by convergence open new opportunities for expression or expand the power of big media.

Pool was interested in the impact of convergence on political culture; I am more interested in its impact on popular culture, but as chapter 6 will suggest, the lines between the two have now blurred.

It is beyond my abilities to describe or fully document all of the changes that are occurring. My aim is more modest. I want to describe some of the ways that convergence thinking is reshaping American popular culture and, in particular, the ways it is impacting the relationship between media audiences, producers, and content. Although this chapter will outline the big picture (insofar as any of us can see it clearly yet), subsequent chapters will examine these changes through a series of case studies focused on specific media franchises and their audiences. My goal is to help ordinary people grasp how convergence is impacting the media they consume and, at the same time, to help industry leaders and policymakers understand consumer perspectives on these changes. Writing this book has been challenging because everything seems to be changing at once and there is no vantage point that takes me above the fray. Rather than trying to write from an objective vantage point, I describe in this book what this process looks like from various localized perspectives—advertising executives struggling to reach a changing market, creative artists discovering new ways to tell stories, educators tapping informal learning communities, activists deploying new resources to shape the political future, religious groups contesting the quality of their cultural environs, and, of course, various fan communities who are early adopters and creative users of emerging media.

I can't claim to be a neutral observer in any of this. For one thing, I am not simply a consumer of many of these media products; I am also an active fan. The world of media fandom has been a central theme of my work for almost two decades—an interest that emerges from my own participation within various fan communities as much as it does from my intellectual interests as a media scholar. During that time, I have watched fans move from the invisible margins of popular culture and into the center of current thinking about media production and consumption. For another, through my role as director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program, I have been an active participant in discussions among industry insiders and policymakers; I have consulted with some of the companies discussed in this book; my earlier writings on fan communities and participatory culture have been embraced by business schools and are starting to have some modest

impact on the way media companies are relating to their consumers; many of the creative artists and media executives I interviewed are people I would consider friends. At a time when the roles between producers and consumers are shifting, my job allows me to move among different vantage points. I hope this book allows readers to benefit from my adventures into spaces where few humanists have gone before. Yet, readers should also keep in mind that my engagement with fans and producers alike necessarily colors what I say. My goal here is to document conflicting perspectives on media change rather than to critique them. I don't think we can meaningfully critique convergence until it is more fully understood; yet if the public doesn't get some insights into the discussions that are taking place, they will have little to no input into decisions that will dramatically change their relationship to media.

The Black Box Fallacy

Almost a decade ago, science fiction writer Bruce Sterling established what he calls the Dead Media Project. As his Web site (<http://www.deadmedia.org>) explains, "The centralized, dinosaurian one-to-many media that roared and trampled through the twentieth century are poorly adapted to the postmodern technological environment."¹² Anticipating that some of these "dinosaurs" were heading to the tar pits, he constructed a shrine to "the media that have died on the barbed wire of technological change." His collection is astounding, including relics like "the phenakistoscope, the telharmonium, the Edison wax cylinder, the stereopticon . . . various species of magic lantern."¹³

Yet, history teaches us that old media never die—and they don't even necessarily fade away. What dies are simply the tools we use to access media content—the 8-track, the Beta tape. These are what media scholars call *delivery technologies*. Most of what Sterling's project lists falls under this category. Delivery technologies become obsolete and get replaced; media, on the other hand, evolve. Recorded sound is the medium. CDs, MP3 files, and 8-track cassettes are delivery technologies.

To define media, let's turn to historian Lisa Gitelman, who offers a model of media that works on two levels: on the first, a medium is a technology that enables communication; on the second, a medium is a set of associated "protocols" or social and cultural practices that have

grown up around that technology.¹⁴ Delivery systems are simply and only technologies; media are also cultural systems. Delivery technologies come and go all the time, but media persist as layers within an ever more complicated information and entertainment stratum.

A medium's content may shift (as occurred when television displaced radio as a storytelling medium, freeing radio to become the primary showcase for rock and roll), its audience may change (as occurs when comics move from a mainstream medium in the 1950s to a niche medium today), and its social status may rise or fall (as occurs when theater moves from a popular form to an elite one), but once a medium establishes itself as satisfying some core human demand, it continues to function within the larger system of communication options. Once recorded sound becomes a possibility, we have continued to develop new and improved means of recording and playing back sound. Printed words did not kill spoken words. Cinema did not kill theater. Television did not kill radio.¹⁵ Each old medium was forced to coexist with the emerging media. That's why convergence seems more plausible as a way of understanding the past several decades of media change than the old digital revolution paradigm had. Old media are not being displaced. Rather, their functions and status are shifted by the introduction of new technologies.

The implications of this distinction between media and delivery systems become clearer as Gitelman elaborates on what she means by "protocols." She writes: "Protocols express a huge variety of social, economic, and material relationships. So telephony includes the salutation 'Hello?' (for English speakers, at least) and includes the monthly billing cycle and includes the wires and cables that materially connect our phones. . . . Cinema includes everything from the sprocket holes that run along the sides of film to the widely shared sense of being able to wait and see 'films' at home on video. And protocols are far from static."¹⁶ This book will have less to say about the technological dimensions of media change than about the shifts in the protocols by which we are producing and consuming media.

Much contemporary discourse about convergence starts and ends with what I call the Black Box Fallacy. Sooner or later, the argument goes, all media content is going to flow through a single black box into our living rooms (or, in the mobile scenario, through black boxes we carry around with us everywhere we go). If the folks at the New Or-

leans Media Experience could just figure out which black box will reign supreme, then everyone can make reasonable investments for the future. Part of what makes the black box concept a fallacy is that it reduces media change to technological change and strips aside the cultural levels we are considering here.

I don't know about you, but in my living room, I am seeing more and more black boxes. There are my VCR, my digital cable box, my DVD player, my digital recorder, my sound system, and my two game systems, not to mention a huge mound of videotapes, DVDs and CDs, game cartridges and controllers, sitting atop, laying alongside, toppling over the edge of my television system. (I would definitely qualify as an early adopter, but most American homes now have, or soon will have, their own pile of black boxes.) The perpetual tangle of cords that stands between me and my "home entertainment" center reflects the degree of incompatibility and dysfunction that exist between the various media technologies. And many of my MIT students are lugging around multiple black boxes—their laptops, their cells, their iPods, their Game Boys, their BlackBerrys, you name it.

As Cheskin Research explained in a 2002 report, "The old idea of convergence was that all devices would converge into one central device that did everything for you (à la the universal remote). What we are now seeing is the hardware diverging while the content converges. . . . Your email needs and expectations are different whether you're at home, work, school, commuting, the airport, etc., and these different devices are designed to suit your needs for accessing content depending on where you are—your situated context."¹⁷ This pull toward more specialized media appliances coexists with a push toward more generic devices. We can see the proliferation of black boxes as symptomatic of a moment of convergence: because no one is sure what kinds of functions should be combined, we are forced to buy a range of specialized and incompatible appliances. On the other end of the spectrum, we may also be forced to deal with an escalation of functions within the same media appliance, functions that decrease the ability of that appliance to serve its original function, and so I can't get a cell phone that is just a phone.

Media convergence is more than simply a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by

which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment. Keep this in mind: convergence refers to a process, not an endpoint. There will be no single black box that controls the flow of media into our homes. Thanks to the proliferation of channels and the portability of new computing and telecommunications technologies, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere. Convergence isn't something that is going to happen one day when we have enough bandwidth or figure out the correct configuration of appliances. Ready or not, we are already living within a convergence culture.

Our cell phones are not simply telecommunications devices; they also allow us to play games, download information from the Internet, and take and send photographs or text messages. Increasingly they allow us to watch previews of new films, download installments of serialized novels, or attend concerts from remote locations. All of this is already happening in northern Europe and Asia. Any of these functions can also be performed using other media appliances. You can listen to the Dixie Chicks through your DVD player, your car radio, your walkman, your iPod, a Web radio station, or a music cable channel.

Fueling this technological convergence is a shift in patterns of media ownership. Whereas old Hollywood focused on cinema, the new media conglomerates have controlling interests across the entire entertainment industry. Warner Bros. produces film, television, popular music, computer games, Web sites, toys, amusement park rides, books, newspapers, magazines, and comics.

In turn, media convergence impacts the way we consume media. A teenager doing homework may juggle four or five windows, scan the Web, listen to and download MP3 files, chat with friends, word-process a paper, and respond to e-mail, shifting rapidly among tasks. And fans of a popular television series may sample dialogue, summarize episodes, debate subtexts, create original fan fiction, record their own soundtracks, make their own movies—and distribute all of this worldwide via the Internet.

Convergence is taking place within the same appliances, within the same franchise, within the same company, within the brain of the consumer, and within the same fandom. Convergence involves both a change in the way media is produced and a change in the way media is consumed.

The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence

Another snapshot of the future: Anthropologist Mizuko Ito has documented the growing place of mobile communications among Japanese youth, describing young couples who remain in constant contact with each other throughout the day, thanks to their access to various mobile technologies.¹⁸ They wake up together, work together, eat together, and go to bed together even though they live miles apart and may have face-to-face contact only a few times a month. We might call it tele-cocooning.

Convergence doesn't just involve commercially produced materials and services traveling along well-regulated and predictable circuits. It doesn't just involve the mobile companies getting together with the film companies to decide when and where we watch a newly released film. It also occurs when people take media in their own hands. Entertainment content isn't the only thing that flows across multiple media platforms. Our lives, relationships, memories, fantasies, desires also flow across media channels. Being a lover or a mommy or a teacher occurs on multiple platforms.¹⁹ Sometimes we tuck our kids into bed at night and other times we Instant Message them from the other side of the globe.

And yet another snapshot: Intoxicated students at a local high school use their cell phones spontaneously to produce their own soft-core porn movie involving topless cheerleaders making out in the locker room. Within hours, the movie is circulating across the school, being downloaded by students and teachers alike and watched between classes on personal media devices.

When people take media into their own hands, the results can be wonderfully creative; they can also be bad news for all involved.

For the foreseeable future, convergence will be a kind of kludge—a jerry-rigged relationship among different media technologies—rather than a fully integrated system. Right now, the cultural shifts, the legal battles, and the economic consolidations that are fueling media convergence are preceding shifts in the technological infrastructure. How those various transitions unfold will determine the balance of power in the next media era.

The American media environment is now being shaped by two seemingly contradictory trends: on the one hand, new media technologies

have lowered production and distribution costs, expanded the range of available delivery channels, and enabled consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways. At the same time, there has been an alarming concentration of the ownership of mainstream commercial media, with a small handful of multinational media conglomerates dominating all sectors of the entertainment industry. No one seems capable of describing both sets of changes at the same time, let alone show how they impact each other. Some fear that media is out of control, others that it is too controlled. Some see a world without gatekeepers, others a world where gatekeepers have unprecedented power. Again, the truth lies somewhere in between.

Another snapshot: People around the world are affixing stickers showing Yellow Arrows (<http://global.yellowarrow.net>) alongside public monuments and factories, beneath highway overpasses, onto lamp posts. The arrows provide numbers others can call to access recorded voice messages—personal annotations on our shared urban landscape. They use it to share a beautiful vista or criticize an irresponsible company. And increasingly, companies are co-opting the system to leave their own advertising pitches.

Convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers. The promises of this new media environment raise expectations of a freer flow of ideas and content. Inspired by those ideals, consumers are fighting for the right to participate more fully in their culture. Sometimes, corporate and grassroots convergence reinforce each other, creating closer, more rewarding relations between media producers and consumers. Sometimes, these two forces are at war and those struggles will redefine the face of American popular culture.

Convergence requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media, assumptions that shape both programming and marketing decisions. If old consumers were assumed to be passive, the new consumers are active. If old consumers

were predictable and stayed where you told them to stay, then new consumers are migratory, showing a declining loyalty to networks or media. If old consumers were isolated individuals, the new consumers are more socially connected. If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, the new consumers are now noisy and public.

Media producers are responding to these newly empowered consumers in contradictory ways, sometimes encouraging change, sometimes resisting what they see as renegade behavior. And consumers, in turn, are perplexed by what they see as mixed signals about how much and what kinds of participation they can enjoy.

As they undergo this transition, the media companies are not behaving in a monolithic fashion; often, different divisions of the same company are pursuing radically different strategies, reflecting their uncertainty about how to proceed. On the one hand, convergence represents an expanded opportunity for media conglomerates, since content that succeeds in one sector can spread across other platforms. On the other, convergence represents a risk since most of these media fear a fragmentation or erosion of their markets. Each time they move a viewer from television to the Internet, say, there is a risk that the consumer may not return.

Industry insiders use the term “extension” to refer to their efforts to expand the potential markets by moving content across different delivery systems, “synergy” to refer to the economic opportunities represented by their ability to own and control all of those manifestations, and “franchise” to refer to their coordinated effort to brand and market fictional content under these new conditions. Extension, synergy, and franchising are pushing media industries to embrace convergence. For that reason, the case studies I selected for this book deal with some of the most successful franchises in recent media history. Some (*American Idol*, 2002, and *Survivor*, 2000) originate on television, some (*The Matrix*, 1999, *Star Wars*, 1977) on the big screen, some as books (*Harry Potter*, 1998), and some as games (*The Sims*, 2000), but each extends outward from its originating medium to influence many other sites of cultural production. Each of these franchises offers a different vantage point from which to understand how media convergence is reshaping the relationship between media producers and consumers.

Chapter 1, which focuses on *Survivor*, and chapter 2, which centers on *American Idol*, look at the phenomenon of reality television. Chapter 1 guides readers through the little known world of *Survivor* spoilers—a

group of active consumers who pool their knowledge to try to unearth the series' many secrets before they are revealed on the air. *Survivor* spoiling will be read here as a particularly vivid example of collective intelligence at work. Knowledge communities form around mutual intellectual interests; their members work together to forge new knowledge often in realms where no traditional expertise exists; the pursuit of and assessment of knowledge is at once communal and adversarial. Mapping how these knowledge communities work can help us better understand the social nature of contemporary media consumption. They can also give us insight into how knowledge becomes power in the age of media convergence.

On the other hand, chapter 2 examines *American Idol* from the perspective of the media industry, trying to understand how reality television is being shaped by what I call "affective economics." The decreasing value of the thirty-second commercial in an age of TiVos and VCRs is forcing Madison Avenue to rethink its interface with the consuming public. This new "affective economics" encourages companies to transform brands into what one industry insider calls "lovemarks" and to blur the line between entertainment content and brand messages. According to the logic of affective economics, the ideal consumer is active, emotionally engaged, and socially networked. Watching the advert or consuming the product is no longer enough; the company invites the audience inside the brand community. Yet, if such affiliations encourage more active consumption, these same communities can also become protectors of brand integrity and thus critics of the companies that seek to court their allegiance.

Strikingly, in both cases, relations between producers and consumers are breaking down as consumers seek to act upon the invitation to participate in the life of the franchises. In the case of *Survivor*, the spoiler community has become so good at the game that the producers fear they will be unable to protect the rights of other consumers to have a "first time" experience of the unfolding series. In the case of *American Idol*, fans fear that their participation is marginal and that producers still play too active a role in shaping the outcome of the competition. How much participation is too much? When does participation become interference? And conversely, when do producers exert too much power over the entertainment experience?

Chapter 3 examines *The Matrix* franchise as an example of what I am calling transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling refers to a new

aesthetic that has emerged in response to media convergence—one that places new demands on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities. Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via on-line discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. Some would argue that the Wachowski brothers, who wrote and directed the three *Matrix* films, have pushed transmedia storytelling farther than most audience members were prepared to go.

Chapters 4 and 5 take us deeper into the realm of participatory culture. Chapter 4 deals with *Star Wars* fan filmmakers and gamers, who are actively reshaping George Lucas's mythology to satisfy their own fantasies and desires. Fan cultures will be understood here as a revitalization of the old folk culture process in response to the content of mass culture. Chapter 5 deals with young *Harry Potter* fans who are writing their own stories about Hogwarts and its students. In both cases, these grassroots artists are finding themselves in conflict with commercial media producers who want to exert greater control over their intellectual property. We will see in chapter 4 that LucasArts has had to continually rethink its relations to *Star Wars* fans throughout the past several decades, trying to strike the right balance between encouraging the enthusiasm of their fans and protecting their investments in the series. Interestingly, as *Star Wars* moves across media channels, different expectations about participation emerge, with the producers of the *Star Wars Galaxies* game encouraging consumers to generate much of the content even as the producers of the *Star Wars* movies issue guidelines enabling and constraining fan participation.

Chapter 5 extends this focus on the politics of participation to consider two specific struggles over *Harry Potter*: the conflicting interests between *Harry Potter* fans and Warner Bros., the studio that acquired the film rights to J. K. Rowling's books, and the conflict between conservative Christian critics of the books and teachers who have seen them as a means of encouraging young readers. This chapter maps a range of responses to the withering of traditional gatekeepers and the expansion of fantasy into many different parts of our everyday lives. On the one hand, some conservative Christians are striking back against media convergence and globalization, reasserting traditional

authority in the face of profound social and cultural change. On the other hand, some Christians embrace convergence through their own forms of media outreach, fostering a distinctive approach to media literacy education and encouraging the emergence of Christian-inflected fan cultures.

Throughout these five chapters, I will show how entrenched institutions are taking their models from grassroots fan communities, and reinventing themselves for an era of media convergence and collective intelligence—how the advertising industry has been forced to reconsider consumers' relations to brands, the military is using multiplayer games to rebuild communications between civilians and service members, the legal profession has struggled to understand what "fair use" means in an era where many more people are becoming authors, educators are reassessing the value of informal education, and at least some conservative Christians are making their peace with newer forms of popular culture. In each of these cases, powerful institutions are trying to build stronger connections with their constituencies and consumers are applying skills learned as fans and gamers to work, education, and politics.

Chapter 6 will turn from popular culture to public culture, applying my ideas about convergence to offer a perspective on the 2004 American presidential campaign, exploring what it might take to make democracy more participatory. Again and again, citizens were better served by popular culture than they were by news or political discourse; popular culture took on new responsibilities for educating the public about the stakes of this election and inspiring them to participate more fully in the process. In the wake of a divisive campaign, popular media may also model ways we can come together despite our differences. The 2004 elections represent an important transitional moment in the relationship between media and politics as citizens are being encouraged to do much of the dirty work of the campaign and the candidates and parties lost some control over the political process. Here again, all sides are assuming greater participation by citizens and consumers, yet they do not yet agree on the terms of that participation.

In my conclusion, I will return to my three key terms—convergence, collective intelligence, and participation. I want to explore some of the implications of the trends I will be discussing in this book for education, media reform, and democratic citizenship. I will be returning there to a core claim: that convergence culture represents a shift in the

ways we think about our relations to media, that we are making that shift first through our relations with popular culture, but that the skills we acquire through play may have implications for how we learn, work, participate in the political process, and connect with other people around the world.

I will be focusing throughout this book on the competing and contradictory ideas about participation that are shaping this new media culture. Yet, I must acknowledge that not all consumers have access to the skills and resources needed to be full participants in the cultural practices I am describing. Increasingly, the digital divide is giving way to concern about the participation gap. Throughout the 1990s, the primary question was one of access. Today, most Americans have some limited access to the Internet, say, though for many, that access is through the public library or the local school. Yet many of the activities this book will describe depend on more extended access to those technologies, a greater familiarity with the new kinds of social interactions they enable, a fuller mastery over the conceptual skills that consumers have developed in response to media convergence. As long as the focus remains on access, reform remains focused on technologies; as soon as we begin to talk about participation, the emphasis shifts to cultural protocols and practices.

Most of the people depicted in this book are early adopters. In this country they are disproportionately white, male, middle class, and college educated. These are people who have the greatest access to new media technologies and have mastered the skills needed to fully participate in these new knowledge cultures. I don't assume that these cultural practices will remain the same as we broaden access and participation. In fact, expanding participation necessarily sparks further change. Yet, right now, our best window into convergence culture comes from looking at the experience of these early settlers and first inhabitants. These elite consumers exert a disproportionate influence on media culture in part because advertisers and media producers are so eager to attract and hold their attention. Where they go, the media industry is apt to follow; where the media industry goes, these consumers are apt to be found. Right now, both are chasing their own tails.

You are now entering convergence culture. It is not a surprise that we are not yet ready to cope with its complexities and contradictions. We need to find ways to negotiate the changes taking place. No one group can set the terms. No one group can control access and participation.

Don't expect the uncertainties surrounding convergence to be resolved anytime soon. We are entering an era of prolonged transition and transformation in the way media operates. Convergence describes the process by which we will sort through those options. There will be no magical black box that puts everything in order again. Media producers will only find their way through their current problems by renegotiating their relationship with their consumers. Audiences, empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture. Producers who fail to make their peace with this new participatory culture will face declining goodwill and diminished revenues. The resulting struggles and compromises will define the public culture of the future.