

LEADING THE WAY

Owen Youngman, vice president of new products at the Chicago Tribune, makes it his business to know the business of the future. Medill checks in with an industry veteran to find out what's ahead.

What do you hope will happen in media by the year 2021?

It's difficult to look at what will be happening in 17 years. What I like to say is: If you can imagine something, it can happen. The major forces that are at work today—the consolidation of ownership and the fragmentation of readership—I see nothing that's going to change them.

What won't happen?

I don't think the printed word will go away. I don't think that one-to-one marketing will eventually replace mass marketing. I don't think that people will retreat to their houses and never go out because technology brings it all to their door.

What's the most exciting possibility in the future of media?

I would hope that it would be that people can learn from each other and sort of collaborate by taking advantage of the tools that media give them to improve their lives. In the future, [the media] should be able to serve [the consumers'] needs better.

Who will be the key players in the future of media?

As a group, the consumers of media will be key. This goes back to the idea of fragmentation. It's going to be much less about Michael Eisner, Bill Gates and Leslie Moonves and much more about you and me.

What tools/devices will be available in the year 2021?

How will they be useful?
Trends in devices will continue: They'll be smaller, faster and more pervasive. What we don't know is what business models are going to put information in consumers'

hands. Are people going to pay for the device or the information? Today, people pay for the device and not the information. In the future, I think it will be the other way around.

What should journalists do to adapt to the changing face of media?

What journalists should do is learn to listen to consumers. Not to act on everything they tell them, but to treat every reader's phone call, letter or e-mail as a starting point of data. Technology has given journalists the ability to be in contact with thousands of people everyday. At the end of the day, it doesn't change what we do, but how we do it.

— Andrea Damewood
(BSJ06)

