MARVIN KALB: Hello and welcome, welcome to the National Press Club and to another edition of The Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb and our subject tonight: All the News That's Fit to Print: Behind the Scenes at the New York Times. I don't know about you, but I am grateful for three things every day. One, that I get up in the morning. Two, that I live in a free country. And three, that copies of two newspapers are dropped off in front of my house every day, seven days a week. More reliable, I've found, that the United States Postal Service.

For me, the newspaper is a morning miracle. Imagine stories from all over the world, all over the country, science, sports, medicine, economics, finance. Truly, a morning miracle essential to the functioning of an open and free society. One of my morning newspapers is the New York Times, arguably the most respected newspaper in the United States, and certainly one of the best in the world. We are delighted to welcome Executive Editor Bill Keller, and Washington Bureau Chief Dean Baquet to the National Press Club and to The Kalb Report.

Bill Keller has been Executive Editor since 2003, and he has been with the paper since 1984; been a reporter since 1970. He’s been Bureau Chief in the Soviet Union and South Africa, he won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Soviet Union. And he’s also been a columnist and managing editor of the paper.

Dean Baquet has been with the Times since 1990, though he did take seven years off to be Managing Editor and Editor of the Los Angeles Times. He quit the L.A. Times when he refused a corporate order to fire more journalists. He, too, has won a Pulitzer Prize.

Okay, Bill and Dean, I've called your newspaper a morning miracle, and I mean it. I'm always amazed at what I can find in the newspaper. So how do you make a miracle? And Bill, I want to start with you with a couple of basic questions, sort of get the lay of the
land. You work in New York, which is the headquarters of the New York Times. How many people work for the Times?

BILL KELLER: Well, for the newsroom, not counting everything from the delivery truck to the advertising department, in actual journalists, it’s a little more than 1,100.

MARVIN KALB: Eleven hundred?

BILL KELLER: That includes reporters, editors, photographers, videographers, web produces, a whole panoply of clerks, but about 1,100, 1,150.

MARVIN KALB: But of the 1,100 how many are actually reporters who go out to cover stories?

BILL KELLER: Roughly 400.

MARVIN KALB: Roughly 400 of the 1,100? And on a normal day, when do you get in?

BILL KELLER: I usually get in about 8:30.

MARVIN KALB: About 8:30? And when is your first meeting, who attends and why do you have it?

BILL KELLER: Well, we’ve just changed our first meeting which for many years began at 10:30 and was mostly focused on sort of getting ready for the next day’s printed paper. We now start at 10:00 and we devote our time pretty much equally to things that we're thinking about for the printed newspaper and things we're thinking about for the
home page of the website. And so that's a meeting where we really look at what are the stories, the actual running news stories, first and foremost. How we're going to approach them, whether other editors at the table have thoughts on things they could bring to it.

MARVIN KALB: Who are the other editors who are there?

BILL KELLER: The heads of all the various news departments, the metro desk, the national desk, the foreign desk, the business desk, culture, science and so on.

MARVIN KALB: How many, about a dozen?

BILL KELLER: About a dozen. It ebbs and flows. For a while, we didn't have an environment desk. That was done under the national desk, but now we do have an environment desk and that editor comes. Likewise, we have a media editor. It used to be under the business report but is now more independent, so it fluctuates. People come, the head of the video unit comes, head of graphics comes, the head of photography comes and particularly when we're talking about the website we want to hear from them what they've got planned to keep the website feeling fresh and current through the day.

MARVIN KALB: How many of the meetings, formal meetings, aside from just bumping into somebody in the hallway, do you have in the course of a day?

BILL KELLER: Well, there are two main meetings; that morning meeting and then there's a 4:00 meeting where we pick the stories that are going to go on the front page the next day. And now also talk about what's going to be on the home page of the website first thing in the morning. Those are the two meetings that the day is kind of built around that all the key players come to. I've got a lot of other meetings that I go to, but those are the ones that really affect the journalism.
MARVIN KALB: And Dean, you're representing the Washington Bureau. Are you part of all of these meetings, too, the two big ones?

DEAN BAQUET: Yeah, the bureau is on the phone for the meetings, we're on a speaker phone participating in the meeting. And essentially just to amplify a little bit about what Bill described, each desk describes what it thinks are its best stories of the day for the home page and for the front page of the print paper and just sort of start the process of making a pitch for why you think your story should get the best play. So it’s the beginning of a competition of the day, too.

MARVIN KALB: And what do you think is your major responsibility representing Washington?

DEAN BAQUET: I think my major responsibility is to sift through the sort of mix of real news of the day, full news of the day, if you will, and try to give Bill a sense of the two or three really significant stories of the day in Washington.

MARVIN KALB: And how many reporters work for you in Washington?

DEAN BAQUET: There are total of about 45 people in the bureau counting reporters, editors and others. And I guess probably about 28, 29 of them are reporters.

MARVIN KALB: Would that make it the largest bureau outside of New York?

DEAN BAQUET: Yes.
MARVIN KALB: Bill, when in the course of a day do you yourself have a sharp feel for what it is that's going to be the *New York Times* the next day?

BILL KELLER: It depends. I mean, on a week when there's just major breaking news, when a country is in turmoil or you'll have a State of the Union address, some major event that you're watching very closely, you kind of know early on in the day. It’s what are the other pieces that you're thinking about. In a slow news period, I may not know until the page one meeting at 4:00, and sometimes considerably later than that, we’ll still be looking around for something that's substantive enough. It's more an art than a science, putting together the stories for the front page. But first and foremost, you want the page to feel sort of urgent and in the flow of events, not to seem sort of optional or light weight.

MARVIN KALB: But at the same time, there are days when the *New York Times* does not have a hard lead for the newspaper. And you're now prepared to go with something that used to, in the old days, be described as a feature story. Why do you do that?

BILL KELLER: As a rule, I would rather put some piece of enterprising reporting that is not breaking news but something we discovered, I'd rather put that at the top of the front page than some kind of incremental development in a running story that people will look at and say, “So what?” It’s tempting to do that. I mean, Dean can you tell you that Washington is a place where it’s particularly tempting because a piece of legislation passes a subcommittee and then it passes a committee and then it goes to the House and then it goes to the Senate and then et cetera. And you can take each of those moments as an occasion to write a big front page story. But nothing much happened between step one and step two and step three. So we generally try to relegate the more incremental news to inside stories and put the stuff out front that feels more momentous. Even if it’s not an
actual event that happened, but something that we just ran across in the course of our reporting.

MARVIN KALB: I remember about 20 years ago, I did some research at the Shorenstein Center on the front page of the *New York Times* and went back 30 years ago, then 20, then 10, then 5 and last year. And what I found was that you used to run many more stories on the front page. You used to run many more hard news stories on the front page. You ran many fewer photographs on the front page, and they were generally small. So the front page of the *New York Times* today is quite different from what it was 15, 20 years ago. Why the change?

BILL KELLER: Well, it’s partly that it looks-- in the days when they would put 12 or 14 stories on the front page, most of them really didn't belong on the front page. It was just the day when the newspaper was regarded as a sort of pastiche of lots of little, or not so little, things that were going on. And even the slogan, “All the news that's fit to print,” I think harkens back to a day when the aim of the newspaper was to be comprehensive. We're going to tell you maybe only a little bit, but a little bit about everything.

And I think that slogan maybe describes an aspiration or a kind of mindset. But, now we tend to be more selective, but try to give you more depth to tell you the stories that are not obvious. In the days that you're talking about, they used to put the comings and goings of ships in the New York harbor on the front page. There aren’t that many ships coming and going in the New York harbor anymore, and mostly they don't matter all that much to your average reader.

MARVIN KALB: But you talk about all the news that's fit to print and you say that there was a time when the *Times* was a comprehensive newspaper. Are you saying that it isn't now?
BILL KELLER: Yeah, I don't think there's any such thing as a comprehensive--

MARVIN KALB: Well, how would you describe the Times today?

BILL KELLER: I think we try to tell you what you need to know to be a well informed citizen across the board. But that doesn't mean that every minor incremental development in a piece of legislation, that every inconclusive lawsuit, that everything that is news at some level is important enough to be in the New York Times.

MARVIN KALB: I accept that, but why then so many feature stories when there are, in fact, hard news stories that you could put on the front page?

BILL KELLER: What have you got against feature stories? [laughter] Some of my favorite stories are feature stories.

MARVIN KALB: I am of the sort who believes that the newspaper, as it gets smaller, which is the Times’ fate in recent years, as it is the fate of other newspapers, too, nothing distinctive about the Times, because you don’t have that much more room now, you ought to level with the reader and give us the hard news of the day. Do you really have the time to do the feature stuff?

BILL KELLER: Evidently, because we do a lot of it.

MARVIN KALB: I know, but should you?

BILL KELLER: Well, there are a lot of hard news stories that really do not justify the space. And there are a lot of feature stories that actually tell you quite a bit about-- I
mean, when you say feature stories, it’s an umbrella that covers a lot of different things. It covers profiles of interesting people in the news that you want to understand because they're actors. It may include snapshots of life in a community that's affected by the economy or by some upheaval overseas. Those are features, but they carry the values of the news. They help you understand what's going on in the world in the same way that the news of some foreign official’s speech or a cabinet member’s ribbon cutting would tell you.

DEAN BAQUET: Can I just toss in?

MARVIN KALB: Please, Dean?

DEAN BAQUET: I would back what Bill said, but I would do--

MARVIN KALB: That is not surprising.

BILL KELLER: You don't know Dean. [laughter]

DEAN BAQUET: But I would say something provocative. Newspapers were never comprehensive. I think newspapers, the sort of grand image of the comprehensive newspaper 30 or 40 years ago, they were sort of a little bit fake comprehensive. I think if you sat down with the editors, which I have, who ran papers during that era they would tell you the New York Times and the Washington Post fronted the British prime minister’s speech, but missed the rise of whole other parts of the world that were much, much more significant.
They might have fronted the fourth movement of a bill from a House subcommittee to another committee, but they missed, until very late, the dramatic shifts in the way women interacted in the workplace.

MARVIN KALB: But Dean, what you're describing, though, is--

DEAN BAQUET: Just to finish the thought, if you forgive me, I would argue that had newspapers had the sensibility they have now, those would have been covered and they were much more significant than the announcement of the British prime minister’s budget. And I would also argue that those probably would have been crafted as so-called feature stories, but they would have captured something much, much more significant at the time.

MARVIN KALB: That is entirely possible, but what you're describing are the changes in American society?

DEAN BAQUET: Right.

MARVIN KALB: The idea that we did not focus in the news business on women, children, health, was simply a fact. But that does not change the point about whether you're dealing with hard news or whether you're making an effort at presenting what Bill was saying, which is give the reader what that reader should know on any given day about the world.

DEAN BAQUET: But I guess I would counter, as somebody who worked at papers during some of that period, but also somebody who’s looked back at papers, that that is hard news. I mean, if you ask Gene Roberts, who is one of the legendary newspaper editors at the New York Times, and he also ran the Enquirer, Gene Roberts was the
national editor of the *New York Times*, and before that, he was a correspondent in the south during the civil rights movement. If you ask Gene Roberts what are the biggest stories that he missed as a journalist, which I have, none of them would have been the kinds of stories that people would traditionally characterize as hard news. He would describe them as shifts in the south. He would describe them as the biggest stories that newspapers missed while they were focusing on incremental news, as being the kinds of stuff, the movement of blacks from the south to the north, the changes in the workplace, the events that led up so that the country wouldn’t have been so stunned by Kent State.

**MARVIN KALB:** Dean, I have no argument at all with everything you've said. But every single one of those could have been, and probably would have been, a hard news story. If 50,000 blacks move from a small town in the south up to Detroit, when they got to Detroit and the effect it had on Detroit, that was a news story.

**DEAN BAQUET:** But it didn't happen that way. It didn't happen as an event the way newspapers have been trained to cover. It didn't happen on Monday.

**BILL KELLER:** It sort of oozed over years. When you've got something important, when people talk about hard news, they tend to mean events. The President did something today, something concrete happened. There was an accident, a disaster of some sort. That's what people generally talk about when they mean hard news. But that doesn't cover a whole realm of enterprise, investigative news that is not lying out there to be harvested easily by reporters. It requires time and digging, but I'm sure you would agree, is some of the most worthwhile journalism we do.

**MARVIN KALB:** Absolutely, I do, I completely agree. Moving right on. What is your competition today?
BILL KELLER: That's a really good question. It's something we ask ourselves a lot.

MARVIN KALB: I mean, is it the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, is it the wild web?

BILL KELLER: Yes and no.

MARVIN KALB: What is it?

BILL KELLER: It is all of the above in different ways. I still look at newspapers and newspaper websites, but even that category has extended beyond the immediate people who compete with us for circulation on the ground in the U.S. I read British websites, for example, the BBC, I read The Guardian, I look at the Telegraph sometimes. The Washington Post is still a competitor, the Wall Street Journal is very much a competitor because like the Times, it’s a national newspaper, not a regional newspaper. I look at all those other places, too. I look at Politico, I look at the Huffington Post, I look at the Daily Beast, and so on. Or, somebody looks at them and tells me because I can’t spend all day looking at other--

MARVIN KALB: No, I understand. But what, then, at the end of that day, is your feeling about the major competition? What would bother you the most, if a web had a story you didn't have, or the Wall Street Journal did?

BILL KELLER: By a very surprisingly small margin, the Wall Street Journal. Once upon a time, it would have been a larger margin. Now, I don’t like to get beaten by anybody. And the fact that somebody beats us on a substantial website means that it’s going to be all over the place. So I regard them all as competitors. And by the way, not just for the stories. They're competing, Politico, Huffington Post, places like that, are
competing with us for talent, they're hiring people, they're competing with us in the field of innovation. I don’t regard the Huffington Post as a particular aggressive competitor on coverage of international affairs, but the way they use social media is pretty instructive and we watch that.

MARVIN KALB: We're describing and we're talking about a very competitive world in journalism today. Does this competition mean that you have set what some people have called certain quotas for reporters? That those who get more hits on a story that they've done on the website might be rewarded financially, better assignments?

BILL KELLER: No. We have reporters who write four or five stories a year and they tend to be big, truly important, groundbreaking investigative stories. And we have people who write 400 stories a year. Obviously, most people fall somewhere in between. There is a sort of general question of productivity. If somebody is not covering their assignment as aggressively as they should be and they're getting beaten, then that's a black mark against them. But no, we don't measure the hits to their website and pay or promote them accordingly.

MARVIN KALB: Good. Dean, you've been Editor-in-Chief of a major newspaper, now Washington Bureau Chief of another major newspaper. You've been around journalism a while now. Your colleague, Jim Roberts, the Assistant Managing Editor of the Times says you all live now in a new timeframe in which you work. No longer 24/7, you need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Now, he says it’s 1440/7 meaning 1440 minutes a day and then 7 days a week. That describes a totally new psychology in journalism. How do you manage that at a major newspaper?

DEAN BAQUET: It’s tricky. It’s funny, a lot of what we do today with the balancing the website and the print paper reminds me of the afternoon paper where I started in New
Orleans where it was remarkably similar. When you came in in the morning, you had to come up with a way to move the ball for the afternoon editions in covering a story from the morning paper, so there's a similarity. It's tricky to manage. It requires a lot more decision making, faster off the mark decision making. You asked earlier what do I see my role at the front page meaning, and I said I see my role as sort of picking the two or three gigantic, most important stories of the day. I think that that shifts constantly through the day. You have to work harder to manage, for instance, a White House reporter’s time. A White House reporter now— in the pre-web era, a White House reporter could go to a press conference at 10:30 and go to lunch after. And now, the expectation is--

MARVIN KALB: No lunch.

DEAN BAQUET: No lunch. But now the reasonable expectation is that we have to figure out a way to file a story for the web shortly after the press conference, assuming it’s an important enough press conference. And then we have to start thinking about what are we going to provide the reader for the print paper, and maybe even the reader for later in the day? So it’s trickier.

MARVIN KALB: One of the things in my mind is when Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was shot, the Times reported on its website that she was killed. You reported that not because you had somebody in Tucson who fed you that information. You reported that because CNN and NPR had said she was killed. In other words, you used other news organizations as your sources. Now, I checked this, you did say news organizations say that she was killed. Technically, that's an accurate statement, but it was dead wrong. So how do you avoid in the future, how do you avoid, Bill, that kind of blunder?
BILL KELLER: Well, there's no such thing as an okay mistake whether it’s-- and especially when it’s one of that magnitude. Even the fact that it was on the website for seven minutes before it got corrected does not justify getting that sort of thing wrong. The way you protect it is a number of ways. First of all, you send a clear message to reporters that it’s nice to get it first, but it’s most important to get it right.

MARVIN KALB: But these were the editors who made that call, not the reporter.

BILL KELLER: It was essentially a rewrite man who--

MARVIN KALB: A rewrite person?

BILL KELLER: And it slipped past an editor. The second thing you do is you have not just one, usually, but at least a couple of editors who look at the story before it goes up on the website and whose job is to challenge material that isn't supported.

And the third thing you do, I think, is you teach people that it’s okay to be explicit in the story about what you don’t know. And all these are things we try to do. I make no excuses for that particular blunder and several people got a finger-wagging over that. But the fact is, it doesn't happen all that often, which is kind of miraculous when you think about it.

MARVIN KALB: It’s the morning miracle.

BILL KELLER: How do you put out a daily newspaper with all the authority, and so on, of the New York Times and still keep up with this daily news report where things are happening all the time? And my answer is almost every day we do it.
MARVIN KALB: Is the editing process for the newspaper the same as the editing process for the web story?

BILL KELLER: Yes and no. The standards are the same, and in most cases it goes through the same layers of editing, but it does it at an accelerated pace. So, it’s very much like the editing that a story gets on a tight deadline. And even before the internet, you always had these occasions. A story that broke 30 minutes before deadline did not get the same editorial attention as a story that broke in the morning. It just didn't.

MARVIN KALB: Let me take a minute now just to remind our radio, television and website audiences that they're watching or listening to The Kalb Report. I'm Marvin Kalb and my guests are Bill Keller and Dean Baquet of the New York Times.

On the Times, you have news and then you've got opinion. Now, should there be a wall between the two? Your ombudsman, Arthur Brisbane, says and I quote, “The news pages are laced with analytical and opinion pieces that work against the premise that the news is just the news.” Many conservatives, as you well know, criticize the Times as being a liberal leftwing newspaper and that those views get into the news part of your newspaper. Why do you allow this to happen?

BILL KELLER: We don’t allow it to happen.

MARVIN KALB: But it happens. But it happens almost every day.

BILL KELLER: According to Art Brisbane or according to you?

MARVIN KALB: Well, according to people who have read the New York Times for many, many years. There's more, what I'm getting at here, Bill, is there's more analysis
dipping into commentary and the editorial side of reporting than a straight hard news story.

**BILL KELLER:** I don’t mind analysis in the news pages. In fact, I encourage it every day. I think the discipline of objectivity or impartiality is something that is drilled into American reporters from their first day on the job. It’s different from a lot of other countries where the press is encouraged to be partisan. You declare your biases up front and then people can judge it accordingly. It's an aspiration and reporters and editors bring their own beliefs to their jobs and they are expected, just as judges are supposed to set their personal prejudices aside in judging a case, reporters and editors are expected to lay their personal prejudices aside in assessing the facts of a news story.

**MARVIN KALB:** And do you believe--

**BILL KELLER:** No, I don't believe--

**MARVIN KALB:** I haven't finished my question. Don’t you believe that there is more opinion commentary, analysis today in the paper however you choose to define it, than there was ten years ago? And if the answer is yes, tell me why?

**BILL KELLER:** Yes, I think there's a lot more analysis.

**MARVIN KALB:** Why?

**BILL KELLER:** Because I think that's what readers want and expect of the people who've actually been out and witnessed events and gathered the information. The reporters who cover a--
MARVIN KALB: Bill, aren’t you making that assumption that's what they want? How do you know that? Maybe what they want is just a straight news story and not your opinion?

BILL KELLER: Maybe, and we give them a lot of that, too. But they don't get my opinion. But if we're going to write a piece on a particular political figure, then supplying some context to his remarks or his activities is a service to readers, I think. I don't think any reporters are justified in saying, “Congressman X is wrong, or he’s a fool or he’s unqualified,” but you're certainly justified and expected to say, “Here's where these views of his come from. Here's what his constituency is. Here's who he listens to. Here's what he’s said in the past.” That's analysis, and I think it supplies the context without which the bare facts are not of much use to readers.

DEAN BAQUET: There's always been a certain amount of opinion. I mean, I think there is a fine line-- a thick line, rather-- between opinion and analysis. But there's always been a certain amount of opinion in newspapers. Book reviews are opinion, theater critics offer their opinions.

MARVIN KALB: But Dean, that's different. That's different from covering the White House and offering--

DEAN BAQUET: But I guess what I'm going to argue is that you're not going to-- the person in charge of covering the White House-- you're not going to-- you will see, I would argue, cogent analysis coming from the White House. You will see an attempt to do-- I mean, it’s an imperfect creature, a newspaper is. I think there is an expectation today that the audience does not want us to any longer say if Barack Obama gives a speech at a certain time of day, that Barack Obama said X yesterday. I think there is an expectation-- and I'm going to make the case again that newspapers may have failed in
not doing that 25 years ago. There's an expectation that the writer puts some of that in some context. There's an expectation that the writer reminds people that it’s a President who’s forced to make a certain kind of comment on a foreign policy issue because his last foreign policy issues were struggles, or whatever.

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely.

DEAN BAQUET: But I think that that's-- if you find us crossing the line farther than that in the coverage of that speech, then I would say that's a mistake. But I don't think that's the common occurrence Art or others might say it is.

MARVIN KALB: But you are both acknowledging that there is more analysis in the paper today because your judgment is that the reader wants that rather than recitation of the straight story? They want an analysis of-- you're saying they want your analysis of what the President meant? It reminds me during the Vietnam War, there used to be a 5:00 Follies in Saigon where the reporters were told by the colonel what it is that happened that day when the reporter was there watching it that day. Does it need the analysis of the colonel to tell them? And I'm only raising the question, but you've already answered it in a way, that maybe what people want is less of the analysis unless maybe you've done studies on this and you've concluded--

DEAN BAQUET: Just add one thing that I think I may have stressed too much. When I say it’s the readers’ expectation, I guess I'm not saying there's a readership survey and that the New York Times and other American newspapers are sort of yielding to the dictates of readership survey. I'm saying that the overall mission of the newspaper actually has changed hardly at all. The overall mission, which is to explain the most important events, to describe, explain and lay out the most important events of the day before and then Jim Roberts recitation the hour before.
I think the way of doing that has had to change, but it’s always had to change. It was different 60 years ago. So I would argue that's not so much-- that's not based on readership surveys, that's based on if you have a core mission that you're responsible for, it stands to reason that you're going to have to change in the way you deliver it over time.

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely. Let’s talk for a little bit about this new thing called a pay wall. I'm led to believe that that allows me to gain access to your website if I pay for that access. I'd like to project, say, a year or so into the future. What is that pay wall going to look like, as best you can estimate now?

BILL KELLER: Well, there are many different varieties in the species of paid online news. The one that we are adopting a little later this year is what we call a metered model. That means you get a certain amount for free, and beyond that point you're expected to subscribe. Most visitors, casual visitors to the website will never encounter that little billboard that says, “We would like you to subscribe.” And people who are home subscribers of the print paper won't encounter it, either. They continue to get it for free.

What we're saying is people who use the New York Times website as their newspaper, as something they come back to over and over, they spend a lot of time reading it, they treasure it, should pay a little something for it. We don’t want to scare away droves of readers, and we're actually prepared to make adjustments along the way so that we don’t lose a lot of the traffic to our website which advertisers particularly like and pay a tidy sum for.

MARVIN KALB: But if I have a subscription to the New York Times, which I do, and I then have access to your website?
BILLY KELLER: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: So as you then look into the future, that kind of a business model will continue?

BILL KELLER: I believe so.

MARVIN KALB: So you’re dealing mostly, when we talk about this pay wall, what is on the web. And I’m wondering whether as you make your calculations now between the printed newspaper and the web, what is more important to you? How many people show up in both worlds? Do more people read the paper than read the web?

BILL KELLER: They’re different questions. The printed newspaper still supplies the overwhelming majority of the revenues that keep the company going, but many more people come to us on the website than come to us in print. There are roughly speaking a million subscriptions to the printed newspaper each day. We get, by some estimates, as many as 50 million people who come each month.

MARVIN KALB: Fifty million?

BILL KELLER: Each month. It’s not quite an apples to apples comparison, but those are the metrics that the web provides. The numbers vary, there’s a Nielsen rating, there’s a couple of other ratings, but the round number is something like 50 million people worldwide, unique individuals, come to the New York Times website every month. And that number is growing.

MARVIN KALB: Do you, Bill, have-- I’m sorry?
BILL KELLER: And that number is growing, whereas the print circulation, of course, is not.

MARVIN KALB: Do you have a separate staff for the newspaper and a separate staff for the website?

BILL KELLER: Not anymore, or almost not anymore. When the website started out, it was a little kind of rump operation, it was even in a separate building. About five or six years ago, we decided that that was a big mistake. That you didn't want to treat the website like an afterthought. You were cheating people who came to the newspaper online of this kind of creative energy of this experienced news staff. And so we've been gradually remaking it into a single newsroom and it’s pretty much there.

MARVIN KALB: I got an old-fashioned question, which always bugs me. The reporter today working for the Times or CBS or the Post works very hard, in a way much harder than we did 20, 30, 40 years ago. And that is because that reporter has to service so much. It’s the paper and it’s the website and you find them on radio and television and it’s a big deal. When does a reporter have a chance just to think rather than produce? Is there a moment to reflect on what it is that is going on in the world?

BILL KELLER: That's a really good question, and it’s one that's dogged I think all news organizations as we've moved into this digital realm. You don't want to turn them into sort of hamsters on wheels or constantly producing updates. We've done a number of things. We created a kind of rewrite bank that will-- you have to leave a certain amount of discretion in the hands of the reporter. So if the reporter says, “I need more time to report, I need more time to think about this,” you can provide it and we do that. We will
assign the sort of web version of the story to somebody else, to a bank of rewrite people, or to another reporter.

MARVIN KALB: You don't get a demerit for that, do you?

BILL KELLER: No, you don't get a demerit for that. It is true that people have adapted-- I mean, reporters don’t like to let go of their story to somebody else and so more and more of them have come to think of filing for the web as simply sort of filing their first draft and they continue to revise over the course of the day. At the end of the day, they have the story about as good as it’s going to get.

MARVIN KALB: But Bill, is the reporter’s first responsibility when he or she comes upon a fact or an insight to provide it to the web?

BILL KELLER: If they can do that quickly in a way that we can get it up on the website and then we can liberate them to go do additional reporting to dig down, add some dimensions and some analysis to the piece, then yes. But we try to keep the lever in the hands as much as possible of the reporter because it really is-- we're not a wire service. I mean, I love wire services, but the wire service, the premium is on speed. I think people come to the New York Times for a kind of authority because they trust us to get it right and to explain it in a way that makes sense to them.

MARVIN KALB: Yeah, but I have the feeling that you are operating, forgive me, despite what you just said, you're operating in a world that lives by speed, by this 1440/7. Now, that's different from 24/7. The psychology is different.

BILL KELLER: That's true.
MARVIN KALB: You're asked to do something for the web, the minute you have something, put it on the web. Well, I mean if you're going to write something decent, you want to sit down and talk to somebody and then write it. That takes time.

BILL KELLER: That's true.

MARVIN KALB: All right, so what's the responsibility of the journalist now, to deal just with the web at that point? Does he alert Dean in Washington, if you have a Washington reporter doing this and say, “Hey, I got something really good but I've got to write it first for the web?” and you allow him to do that?

DEAN BAQUET: Sure. I mean, we should differentiate between the way you describe the sort of factoid. The truth is, I don't think people come to the New York Times for the factoid. We're not talking about the big, gigantic running story of the day where the factoid is something large. If a reporter wandered into my office with a story about an unimportant appointment and I had to balance that against a more important story, I'm going to say, “Don’t push the--“ and I think Bill would agree, “Don’t put the unimportant factoid on the website.” But if you're talking about-- I'll give you a classic example-- a reporter who knows he is competing against the Washington Post or the Wall Street Journal or somebody else on a story, who is ready to write the story at 2:00 in the afternoon, I want that story up at 2:00 in the afternoon. And that's a judgment we make all the time.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Let’s talk about the WikiLeaks phenomenon for a bit. WikiLeaks, as we know, the leaking of secret government cables, many of them embarrassing, harmful to the United States. The Times has published many stories based on these cables. Bill, you've written eloquently about it in defending the Times decision. There are a couple of questions that flow through my mind. Would Wiki leaks, which seems to
have a very specific anti-American flavor or impulse, is WikiLeaks a legitimate source for the New York Times?

BILL KELLER: Well, WikiLeaks is a source.

MARVIN KALB: It is a source?

BILL KELLER: And sources tend to come with agendas, they come with biases, sometimes they come with distasteful biases. It is true that WikiLeaks has a kind of, to the extent that you can define an ideology, it’s a little sort of anarchistic. It’s anti-institutions, anti-important governments, anti the United States. But every source comes to you with some kind of agenda. What you have to do is focus on the information that you get. Is the information true? Is it valid? Is it newsworthy? And in our relationship with WikiLeaks, we said at the outset, and we knew at the outset, a fair amount about this organization and their biases and their agenda. And we made it very clear that we were going to treat them as a source and nothing more than that. That is, we will take their information that they offer us, we will vet it, we will supply context, we will censor it, which we did. We edited out any material that we had reason to believe could put lives at risk. We did not consult WikiLeaks on what we would write about or what we would write about any given subject.

MARVIN KALB: Do you believe, Bill, that WikiLeaks is a legitimate news organization deserving of the First Amendment privileges that the New York Times enjoys?

BILL KELLER: Well, those are two questions.

MARVIN KALB: Answer them both.
BILL KELLER: I will more or less answer them both, in part because I'm not a lawyer. I think somebody who has a job like mine should be a little humble about deciding who gets to call themselves a journalist or who doesn't. WikiLeaks is not in my ball park of journalism. They do not practice the kind of journalism that we practice at the New York Times or at most serious news organizations. They're an advocacy group, or you can call them a vigilante group or whatever.

The question of whether they're entitled to First Amendment protections, though, is a somewhat different question because First Amendment protections are not only afforded to the press. And it’s a very tricky question for lawyers to parse, and I'm not a lawyer. What's the difference between somebody who takes a lot of raw material and publishes it on a website and somebody like us who vets it, massages it, shapes it into stories and publishes it in a newspaper?

MARVIN KALB: But in a way, Bill, the New York Times became the enabler of WikiLeaks by publishing a lot of stories based on the cables that WikiLeaks provided. When I use the word ‘enabler,’ I'm not using that in a positive way, as I think you know.

BILL KELLER: And I think it’s the wrong word. I think WikiLeaks and its leaders were entirely capable of publishing the material on their own and it would have--

MARVIN KALB: WikiLeaks would have published it on its own?

BILL KELLER: Absolutely, they would have published it to a website available to anybody who wanted to look at it. The information would have circulated through the blogosphere in a day and people would have been cherry picking out the information that was most interesting to them, using it in, I imagine, some interesting ways and some
alarming ways. But it would be published. The difference between Daniel Ellsberg who leaked the Pentagon Papers and WikiLeaks is that Daniel Ellsberg really needed something like the *New York Times* unless he wanted to spend the rest of his life in a Xerox machine.

**MARVIN KALB:** But bear in mind that Daniel Ellsberg took the Pentagon Papers and went first to Congress to try to get legal action against the war. He went then to Harvard University, I don't know why, to try to get something--

**BILL KELLER:** And in the end, in order to get it out, he needed the *New York Times*.

**MARVIN KALB:** Then he went to the *Times*, exactly. And WikiLeaks needed the *Times* also.

**BILL KELLER:** No, it didn't.

**MARVIN KALB:** It didn't?

**BILL KELLER:** No. I mean, we certainly gave a lot more attention and currency, along with the other news organizations that published and wrote about it, than they would have gotten on their own. But I think it also came out in a much more publicly valuable way.

**MARVIN KALB:** There's no question about that.

**BILL KELLER:** --than if it had been posted on a website.

**MARVIN KALB:** Not arguing that point at all, I totally agree with you on that. The question I'm getting at is this: if the *New York Times* had not published all of those
stories, and it had been left to the Guardian in England, and a couple of other newspapers around the world, it would have been reported in the United States on page 16 of the Times, the AP--

BILL KELLER: Oh, you're so wrong.

MARVIN KALB: Wrong?

BILL KELLER: You're so wrong. It would have been on the front page. The day after the Guardian published its stories, versions of the Guardian story would have been on the front page of every newspaper in America and--

MARVIN KALB: Do you believe that there was somebody--

BILL KELLER: And on CNN and everywhere else.

MARVIN KALB: Did you believe that you broke many news stories? Do you believe that WikiLeaks gave you one new thing that you didn't know about Afghanistan?

BILL KELLER: Yes, actually.

MARVIN KALB: Like what?

BILL KELLER: I thought I learned a lot from those reports. I realize one of the criticisms that's been launched at these WikiLeaks documents is, “Well, they didn't tell us anything profoundly new about the world.” Most news does not tell you something profoundly new about the world. News moves in inches and feet, it moves in increments.
WikiLeaks told us, for example, that the people who are running the war in Afghanistan have grave misgivings about the role that Pakistan plays, our important ally in the region.

**MARVIN KALB:** I could point to 20 stories in the *New York Times* that said the same thing.

**BILL KELLER:** Not one of them was based on the dispatches from people in the field.

**MARVIN KALB:** They were based on very good digging, talking to secretaries of state and defense. All of the guys working for Dean in Washington knew that, and reported that.

**DEAN BAQUET:** Except here's where I think you're wrong. First, I actually think this is-- I know this doesn't go over big in Washington-- is sort of an unimportant argument. I think the debate over whether or not WikiLeaks had a dramatic new factoid. If by that you mean the dramatic new factoid that said, “A head of state took a bribe and you didn't know about it,” I think that's sort of an odd argument. There's no question as somebody who has edited and been involved in a bunch of the stories about-- before WikiLeaks-- about Afghanistan and the war in Iraq, there is no question that WikiLeaks added tremendously to the understanding anybody who cares about those wars in the world have about those wars in the world. It’s one thing to have sort of second, third-hand reporting that says, “The rulers of countries in the same region as Iran were afraid to say it publicly are very nervous about the rise of Iran and Iran’s nuclear capability.” It’s another thing to have it in the words of the diplomats who were talking to those people. So I would argue that those are rich documents.

But what I would flip back is put aside the debate over what WikiLeaks provided. Isn’t it unimaginable to anybody that the *New York Times* would have had the arrogance to have
this stuff and not publish it? To me, whenever the question’s been raised to me, “Was the
*New York Times* behaving in an arrogant way or sort of flaunting its ability to publish this
stuff,” enabling WikiLeaks, working with WikiLeaks, whatever, to me the most
unimaginable arrogant thing the *New York Times* could have done was to have this stuff,
look at it, say, “This is interesting. Let’s have an ethical debate. Let’s put it back in the
computer and let’s go have lunch.” That to me would be shocking.

**MARVIN KALB**: You misread me. You misread me.

**DEAN BAQUET**: Well no, I'm not misreading you. I think I'm using this as an
opportunity to address other people--

**MARVIN KALB**: No, I do understand what you're doing. But please understand that
the thrust of my questions is based on a profound respect for the *New York Times*.

**DEAN BAQUET**: I understand.

**MARVIN KALB**: But the position of the *New York Times* in American journalism and
global journalism, so that when Bill Keller makes a decision, he’s making a decision not
just for the *Times*, you're making a decision for American journalism, too. Now, that puts
you in a very special position. And I think we've done that subject, and I want to move
on. [laughter] Rupert Murdoch.

**BILL KELLER**: Who?

**DEAN BAQUET**: He's a guy in the WikiLeaks document, a little guy.

**MARVIN KALB**: Is he good for journalism?
BILL KELLER: Well, he’s spending a lot of money employing journalists, so in that respect, and particularly the way the market for journalists has been over the last few years, I have to applaud that. And I think he loves news of a particular kind.

MARVIN KALB: Of a particular kind?

BILL KELLER: Well, as he has often said, his personal taste is more for the sort of New York Post tabloid kind of journalism. But he’s bought a wide range of journalism, invested in a wide range of journalism and I think that's a good thing. I think his most lasting effect in this country is Fox News.

MARVIN KALB: And what is the effect of Fox News on American journalism?

BILL KELLER: I think the effect of Fox News on American public life has been to create a level of cynicism about the news in general. I think it has contributed to the sense that they're all just out there with a political agenda. But Fox is just more overt about it. And I think that's unhealthy. I think Fox has also raised the-- we've had a lot of talk since the Gabby Giffords attempted murder about civility in our national discourse. And I make no connection between the guy who shot those people in Tucson and the national discourse. But it is true that the national discourse is more polarized and strident than it has been in the past. And to some extent, I would lay that at the feet of Rupert Murdoch, yes.

MARVIN KALB: Quick question. You said of Bob Woodward, of the Washington Post, that he wrote, “All but authorized accounts of the innermost deliberations of our government.” If the Times had a chance to hire Bob Woodward, would it?
BILL KELLER: In a heartbeat, of course. The point of that remark was--

DEAN BAQUET: We would have edited him differently. [laughter]

BILL KELLER: No, I have enormous admiration for Bob Woodward and what he’s done, and I’ve read an awful lot of Bob Woodward. The point of that remark was in Washington, officials complain about secrets when they don’t like them, but they collaborate in the dissemination of secrets when they think it will serve their purpose. And, of course, people talk to Bob Woodward because they think it’s a way of furthering their agenda.

MARVIN KALB: We’ve got about a minute and a half left, so the question goes to Bill. There are a lot of journalism students out here. Would you encourage them to plunge into it despite all of its problems, or go to law school? [laughter]

BILL KELLER: You just made the choice real easy. You know, with all due respect for the legal profession, of course I would encourage them to go into it. First of all, there are a number of places that are hiring again, not for large sums of money, but then most of us didn’t start out getting large sums of money in this business, either. What I generally tell aspiring journalists is let’s say the worst case scenario happens and news organizations dissolve and it all becomes as kind of free-for-all. Nobody’s paying money for people to be reporters. If you can master the skills that you’re supposed to master, gathering information, vetting it, sorting it out, making sense of it, writing it, presenting it in a way that’s accessible and even engaging, then you can find work in a lot of fields. There are a lot of fields from the law to academia to science where those skills will serve you extremely well.

MARVIN KALB: Well, and Dean, do you buy into that?
DEAN BAQUET: Oh, sure.

MARVIN KALB: You would tell these kids to go ahead and do it?

DEAN BAQUET: I would even say that with the arrival and the rise of the website, it’s probably more of a blast now for kids going into journalism than it would have been ten years ago.

MARVIN KALB: Well, that's fantastic. Our time’s up, I hate to tell you. And I want to thank, first, our wonderful audience. I want to thank, too, our radio, television and internet audiences all over the country; and for that matter, all over the world. But most of all, I want to thank our two guests, Bill Keller and Dean Baquet, two remarkable reporters representing the New York Times. Thank you for being with us. [applause] And to all of you out there, all of you who cherish a free press in a free society, I'm Marvin Kalb, and I like to use Ed Murrow’s last line, good night and good luck. [applause]

BILL KELLER: I just noticed there's an audience out there. I thought this was just us talking.

MARVIN KALB: Well, that's the way it should be. Well look, ladies and gentlemen, we now have an opportunity for you all to ask the questions that you wish, and what you have to do-- where is that microphone? Back there, and the microphone right over here on the right. So please go to the microphones, ask a question, identify yourself. And if I have the impression that you're about to make a speech, I'm going to cut you off. So I'm alerting you all right now. Go ahead, start here.
QUESTION: I'm Lindsey Leif, I'm a journalism student at George Washington. My question goes back to WikiLeaks, but in a little bit of a different direction. Mr. Keller, when you originally published the first round of WikiLeaks information, I believe it was in July, you included a fairly comprehensive editor’s note, and you even answered, personally answered, readers’ comments and questions. Do you think that in the changing media environment it’s important to open the door to your editorial room and to your editorial decisions like that?

BILL KELLER: Yes, I do. I mean, I think it’s, to some extent, unavoidable. But I think it’s actually useful to do that. I'm sure Marvin can cite you polls that show the steady decline of trust in the American media. If you take those polls with a grain of salt, they sort of lump together all of the media into one basket. It’s like members of Congress, if you ask people what the think of Congress, they thumbs down. If you ask what they think of their own congressman, it’s thumbs up. But nonetheless, there's been a steady erosion of trust in the media and I think it’s a useful way to help regain some of that, to explain what we do and why we do it.

MARVIN KALB: Are you going to be doing that, Bill, on a regular basis, not in response to a specific story, but just every month you're going to do a column?

BILL KELLER: Well, we've been doing it on a fairly regular basis and we try to mix it up, different people in the newsroom will take questions; reporters sometimes, editors, sometimes we've done them just with no particular prompting and we've done them around particular stories that generated a lot of controversy.

MARVIN KALB: Yes?
QUESTION: Hi, how are you? Connie Lone, independent reporter since 1968. In the rich old days of journalism, there was an arrogance and a smugness among the established press. Do you see any greater acceptance now of the bloggers and the independent journalists?

BILL KELLER: I was going to say some of my best friends are bloggers, but actually some of my best employees are bloggers. We have about, I think, 50 blogs at the time. Yes, I think we're past the point where blogger is a term of opprobrium. There are bad blogs and good blogs, smart ones and not-so-smart ones. There are blogs that have a huge audience and blogs that are read by two or three people. So, I think any kind of sweeping generalization is probably unfair. But I think the blog as a form is exciting and allows you to do things that more conventional journalistic formats don’t. And I think the blogosphere, if you will, as an entity has drawn a lot of interesting people into journalism.

MARVIN KALB: Bill, do you have a blog, you yourself?

BILL KELLER: No.

MARVIN KALB: Dean, do you have one?

DEAN BAQUET: No.

MARVIN KALB: Are you going to have one

BILL KELLER: They're very time consuming and both of us have--

DEAN BAQUET: To do well.
BILL KELLER: --more or less full time jobs.

DEAN BAQUET: To do well and to have something-- I mean, the most effective blogs have something to say and it’s not just somebody who just sort of throws out whatever ideas that grow off the top of your heads. And the one downside of being an editor, I think, is that you are farther and farther away from the news.

BILL KELLER: I will say that the half a dozen times or so that I've gone online to have a kind of open, flowing discussion with readers is pretty much a blog experience. And it’s kind of fun.

MARVIN KALB: When you say there are 50 people at the Times who have blogs, you mean reporters?

BILL KELLER: Yeah.

MARVIN KALB: Who in addition to everything else that they're doing also write a blog?

BILL KELLER: Well, some of them are just hired to be bloggers.

MARVIN KALB: Oh, I see.

BILL KELLER: Tara Parker-Pope writes one of the most popular blogs. We then take some of her blog material and print it in the printed newspaper. But her job is to be the health blogger for the New York Times.

MARVIN KALB: I see. Please?
QUESTION: Good evening, James Reed, a student at George Washington University. Over the course of its history, the New York Times has been awarded many journalistic honors, including 104 Pulitzer Prizes. With print newspapers fading, how does the New York Times hope to maintain its journalistic excellence in the new digital age?

BILL KELLER: Well, I think we're already doing that. Much of the conversation tonight, I think, touched on some aspects of-- I mean, moving from principally print to principally digital represents some challenges, the pace and everything has accelerated so there's a danger that you make stupid mistakes. You have to build safeguards against that. The internet is a ferocious venue for opinions. We talked earlier about the division between news and opinion. Online, the temptation to kind of slip into the voice of a polemicist is a danger that we have to guard against.

But, at the same time there are tremendous things you can do online that you just can't do in print. If you look at how the New York Times covered upheavals in Egypt, we have a videographer on the ground who’s doing the kind of television work that I think most television networks would be proud of.

DEAN BAQUET: You know, it’s a particular malady of journalists that we-- because we do it in the way we cover things-- that we jump right to the negative result of events. But the reality is the rise of the internet and newspapers is like the greatest thing that has hit us since sliced bread. Bill mentioned far more people read us online than before. We have far more people reading us. If you read culture criticism in American newspapers, when I was a kid growing up in New Orleans, if you read a review, you only had access to the Times Picayune. Now, you can not only read the New York Times, the Guardian, I mean the world has sort of gotten bigger and it’s largely a good thing. And all of these pressures are-- we shouldn't focus just so much on the pressure to maintain our standards
as much as we should focus on this explosion has made us more relevant, better, better read. So I think it’s--

**BILL KELLER:** The news gathering tool is tremendous. The stuff that comes in through social media or we did a series on Putin’s Russia that Cliff Levy, one of our Moscow correspondents came up with. And before we published each article in the series, we translated it into Russian, posted it on the most popular Russian blog site and harvested the comments from ordinary Russians who wrote back in, translated some of those, or a lot of them, back into English so that the Russian readership enriched our stories about Russia. The guy who came up with that idea is a traditional print journalist who just relished the possibilities of this new tool that we have.

**MARVIN KALB:** Bill, something that just occurred to me, the bloggers who work for the *New York Times*, are they encouraged to give their opinions?

**BILL KELLER:** No, they're not.

**MARVIN KALB:** So in terms of what the blogger is doing--

**BILL KELLER:** Most of the columnists, or several of the columnists on the op ed page who are opinion writers will have a license to opine.

**MARVIN KALB:** No, I'm not talking about that.

**BILL KELLER:** They have blogs, too. Nick Kristof is a prolific blogger and also a wonderful reporter. But no, the people who blog for the News Report or the *New York Times* are not sanctioned to give opinion. Some of those blogs are the work of
individuals, some of them are collective endeavors. We have one called The Caucus, which is our political blog, a number of reporters contribute to on a regular basis.

**DEAN BAQUET:** And Michael Shear is the lead reporter who follows the same standards, who works for me in the Washington Bureau, follows the same standards as everybody else. And in fact, is very much a traditional Washington reporter, we hired him from the *Washington Post*.

**BILL KELLER:** One of my students.

**MARVIN KALB:** Yes, I can’t bend to see you, but please?

**QUESTION:** Good evening. Gentlemen, my name is Ethan Marin, and as a lawyer, first just like to say I second the call to go to journalism school. [laughter] But, regarding WikiLeaks, to me one of the interesting questions here is-- and I'm a big open government guy, I firmly believe in open government. And I think that as journalists, as reporters, you clearly also have a very strong interest in open government. And I'm wondering about the cost to open government of running with the WikiLeaks material? Because at least to some extent, it seems to already have, and be likely to continue to have, the effect of reaction, of people in Congress, people in government saying, “Whoa, this leaking, this transparency was a bad thing, so we won’t necessarily support things like FOIA, like posting documents, reports, to government agency websites without--

**MARVIN KALB:** You're going to ask a question, right?

**QUESTION:** Of course, I'm sorry. So I guess my question is do you think that there has been a cost, there has been a reaction? And do you think it was worth this-- that the cost was worth the benefit of running this material? Thank you.
BILL KELLER: Well, I share the concern and the one fear that has sort of niggled at the back of my brain throughout this process was that it might become a pretext for some people who don’t much like some of the freedom of the press has to essentially criminalize the publication of secrets. For example, amend the Espionage Act, or in some other way make criminals out of journalists. That has worried me. So far, and I don’t know, I can’t foretell the future, but so far there has not been much of a serious effort to do that. And clearly, I think it’s safe to say diplomacy hasn't stopped in its tracks as a result of-- so there was not that dire consequence, as some people were predicting. So, if there's been a cost so far, I don't see it as a cost that would have justified withholding the information.

QUESTION: First, thank you for the excellent publication and the very interesting evening. My name is Dan Diamond, I'm a loyal subscriber. I also visited the site about 50 million times last month, so it felt--

DEAN BAQUET: He’s the one.

QUESTION: I was privileged to hear a conversation, Dean may actually remember this, it was moderated by another call brother on a similar topic. And in that conversation, the came up of the front page, as tonight, too. Two years ago, the question was there's a story on the front page about a TV network’s decision to move one of their shows to a certain hour, and was that worthy of front page coverage? Well, that show was the “Jay Leno Show” moving to ten p.m., and I think in retrospect the Times has been borne out for being well ahead of that story.
In terms of this week, though, with the turmoil in Egypt occupying so much of the front page, I’m curious what the competition is like to get other news fronted and if you hold off on enterprise reporting, if it’s that much more-- what the calculus is?

BILL KELLER: Well, yeah, it’s been a very hard week for non-Egypt news to elbow its way onto the front page, that’s for sure. I don’t think anybody would argue that Egypt is not hugely important. And we have a lot of good reporters on the ground there doing great work. Yeah, it probably means that some stories that would have normally been on the front page got played inside. It means that some stories that are holdable (sic) are being held. That’s the tradeoff you make.

I’ve spent much of my life trying to assure reporters that the front page is not the only page of the newspaper. Not a one of them believes me.

MARVIN KALB: Bill, if the story is being held, wouldn't it be put on the web?

BILL KELLER: It depends. If we have an investigative piece that is not competitive, sometimes we do break investigative pieces on the web. But if we don’t know how quickly we're going to be able to get it into the print paper, we may hold it for a week like this.

MARVIN KALB: Yes, please?

QUESTION: Hi, my name’s Corbin Hair, I'm with PBS Media Shift. I'm wondering about the future you see for collaboration with web-only organizations like ProPublica, perhaps even with journalism schools like you have a collaboration right now with Studio 20 at NYU. Do you see more of that happening in the future, and what other organizations are you looking to work with and how can that benefit your coverage?
BILL KELLER: Yeah, I think so. I mean, we've moved pretty tentatively and carefully into that realm. We're working with ProPublica, which we did on an investigation of the hospital in New Orleans, that piece which won a Pulitzer Prize. Doing business with ProPublica was fairly easy. Paul Steiger, Steve Engelberg, the people who run the place, are editors that we've known and respected for many years. And as Steve Engelberg has worked for me, so they didn't have a proving period to go through. We have collaborations in the San Francisco Bay area, in Chicago, and in Texas with online journalism organizations. We basically provide space in the printed paper to create a local edition a couple of times a week and those, we think, have been quite successful. We vet the people who-- we don’t hire them, we don’t run these organizations, but we vet their work very carefully and we read their stuff before we put it in our paper and subject it to editing rigors of the New York Times.

I think these days, we're just in an era of experimentation. And as long as we're persuaded that we can undertake an experiment without putting the credibility of the paper at risk, we're game to try it.

MARVIN KALB: Yes, please?

QUESTION: Hi, I'm J. J. Steele, I'm here with the Washington Journalism Center. I'm going to start my internship tomorrow with The Hill newspaper. My question is when you have two people applying for a job as a reporter, you got one guy who’s worked at a daily newspaper for a couple years, and you got another guy who had an internship for a semester and then went to law school or got a masters in public policy. Who are you going to go with?

DEAN BAQUET: Would that be you? [laughter]
BILL KELLER: Dean, why don't you take that one?

DEAN BAQUET: I mean, everybody’s got their own hiring formula and Bill’s might be different from mine. I don't think that that-- it’s hard for me to discern between the two resumes. I think you look at somebody’s writing, you look at the way somebody thinks, you look at the way somebody talks when you sit down and talk to them. It’s hard to know. If the New York Times hired somebody like Chris Chivers who had probably a less likely background and is without question one of the best reporters at the paper, it really-- I think what I would argue is that the goal should be you have to be able to write. Not only because for obvious reasons, but the ability to write reflects an ability to think with some clarity, to my mind. You have to be intensively curious about the world. So to me, the resumes are less important than what your work shows about those skills.

BILL KELLER: Dean’s reference to Chris Chivers is the fact that before Chris got into journalism, he was a marine. There is, I think-- and we're not doing a huge amount of hiring these days given the state of the larger economy and the newspaper economy-- but one thing that we found the last few years that we look for is a sort of diversity of experience. There are not enough people with military experience, for example, or people who come from rural backgrounds. There are not enough people who are evangelical Christians in the newspaper business. And we're not going out and recruiting at evangelical churches or at the Marine Recruiting Center for journalists. But, if somebody comes in and their background gives them a different perspective on the world, then that's a plus.

MARVIN KALB: And as you said a moment ago, that journalism right now is in an experimental stage. That the kind of ideas or beliefs that we might have held 15, 20 years ago may not be applicable today. But how do we, at the end of the day, how can we be
comfortable that the solid aspirations of journalism of years ago are going to be continued today in the rush to get things on the air, that's television and radio now, but to get things on the web? The pressures on reporters to get something? It would seem to me you've got a huge responsibility now, way beyond anything that an editor of the New York Times 20, 30, 40 years ago had. Do you feel that?

BILL KELLER: Gee, you make me want to go take an overdose of sleeping pills or something. [laughter] That's a really depressing description of the--

MARVIN KALB: Well, then we’ll leave it that way.

BILL KELLER: Look, I think we have to constantly remind ourselves, and I say we, I should say the quality news organizations, the places that have high standards and high aspirations. We have to constantly remind ourselves that just the facts, raw information, is a commodity. It’s out there all over the place. People have a lot of places they can go to find out whether the stock market went up today or down today. They come to us because they want something more than that. They want to know if it’s the stock market they care about, they’d like at least some idea why it went up or why it went down. They’d like us to be delving into the fundamentals of the economy and what’s working and what doesn't. And that takes time and it takes reflection and it’s not just that we have to keep telling the world, “This is what we offer you,” we have to keep reminding ourselves to do that.

MARVIN KALB: That time and reflection, of course, is so terribly, terribly important. Gents, you've been terrific. Thank you so much for being with us. And thank you all for being with us as well. Be well, thank you. [applause]

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