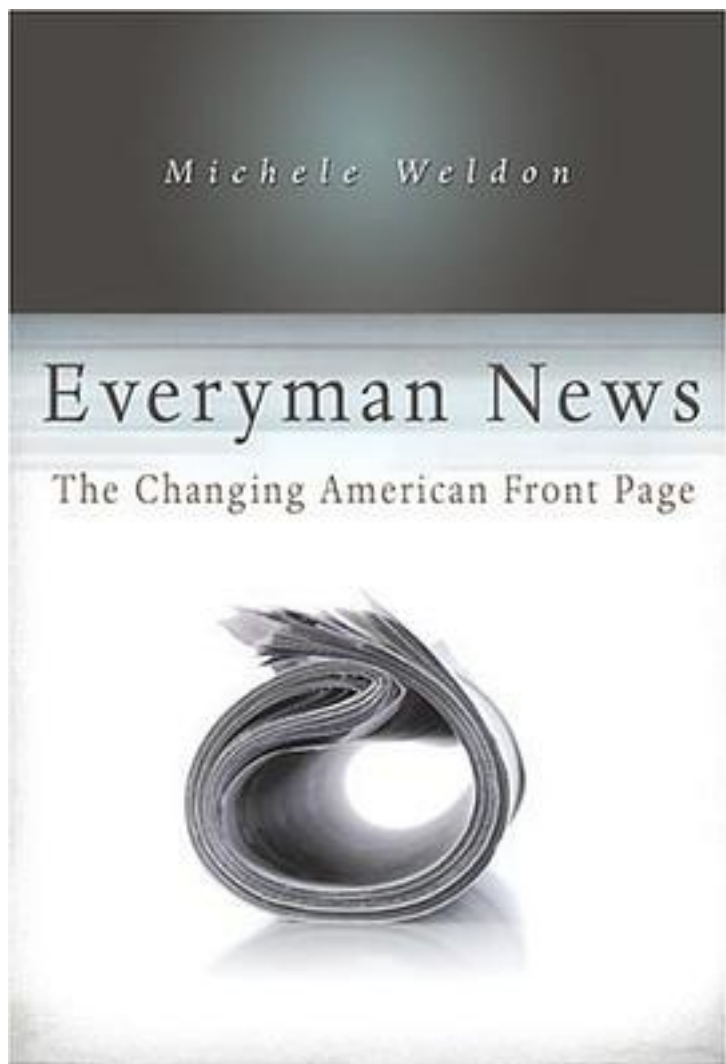


Everyman News



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One need only look at the front pages of newspapers over the past few years to see that something has changed. Stories are more personal, more inclusive, less distant from readers' experience. Once called the first draft of history, news has become more of an anecdotal companion. The evidence is telling: stories use more unofficial sources than ever before; the "inverted pyramid" from of news writing is barely practiced; and, especially after 9/11, tragedy has become more humanized. Scanning the crowded media landscape, Michele Weldon--a journalist passionate about her profession--takes a fresh look at how newspapers have carved out a narrative niche that reflects society's fascination with personal stories and readers' demands for diversity in content. Comparing some 850 stories, story approaches, and unofficial sourcing in twenty American newspapers for eight dates in 2001 and 2004--a total of 160 front pages--she shows a shift toward features over hard news, long with an increase in anecdotal or humanistic approaches to all stories. Everyman News offers a provocative look at why American newspapers have become story papers, with their content and style saying as much about our culture as they do about the journalists who write them and the readers who consume them. Weldon shows that a variety of forces both inside and outside journalism--blogs, citizen journalism, newsroom diversity, and other factors--have converged to remake the front page, and she unveils the content of "everyman news" as a commodity apart from the model of delivery. Her assessment also incorporates more than fifty interviews with people connected to journalism about what these changes mean--revealing that not everyone in the industry believes they are for the better. Is everyman news perhaps right for its time, or it merely a symptom of what Weldon calls "Chicken Little journalism"? Weighing in on such matters as the New York Times's "Portraits of Grief" series and the dangers of the blogosphere, she invites readers to make their own calls. This is this original and important contribution to the study of media. Everyman News is a book that will contribute to our understanding of newspapers in the new century--must reading for professionals and an eye-opener for anyone trying to comprehend the significant shifts in today's front pages.

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