

Benedetta Brevini, Arne Hintz, and Patrick McCurdy (Eds.), **Beyond WikiLeaks: Implications for the Future of Communications, Journalism and Society**, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 281 pp., \$31.00 (paperback).

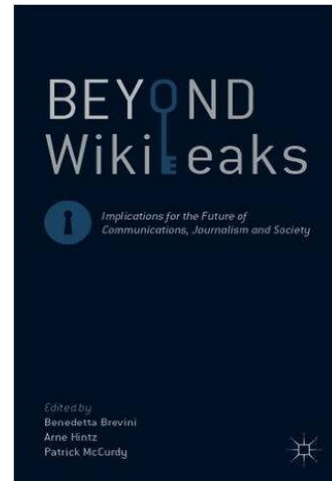
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WikiLeaks, depending on who you ask, is either the poster child for freedom of expression and information or the representation of everything that is wrong with journalism. But whatever we decide it is, there is no refuting the fact that WikiLeaks as a platform used by journalists and whistle-blowers to anonymously release sensitive information has become a serious topic of debate in the field of journalism and also in academia in general. WikiLeaks has greatly shaken the worlds of ICT and journalism and has put governments all over the world on the defensive. The transformative or damaging effect of WikiLeaks is up for debate. Whether it is good for journalism or detrimental to the safety and security of nations the world over is a topic that polarizes opinions. The ideology behind WikiLeaks is not necessarily a new phenomenon. Citizens have always found ways to hold government accountable, and through the course of history people have fought for a more transparent and honest government. WikiLeaks, through its publications, opened the eyes of the public to some of the inner workings of government and even to some wrongdoings that various governments around the world swept under the carpet. The means by which they got this sort of information has been considered unethical by some prominent journalists and treacherous by others. These publications were made possible by the growth and spread of digital media and the increased usage of electronic media to transmit sensitive information.

After WikiLeaks released a video in early 2010 showing America soldiers shooting and killing 17 civilians in Iraq, there have been numerous attempts by scholars and students of communication to understand the ideology behind WikiLeaks, its history and growth, and how it has influenced global policies. It is, however, worth noting that actions carried out by WikiLeaks and its founders is still a growing trend and as such it would be difficult to fully grasp the multifaceted effect their publications have had on the world of journalism and international politics. One of the best attempts to explain the growth and spread of WikiLeaks as well as its implications for the future of journalism is the book titled ***Beyond WikiLeaks: Implications for the Future of Communications, Journalism and Society***, edited by Benedetta Brevini, Arne Hintz, and Patrick McCurdy. The book is a good source of academic knowledge on journalism ethics, whistle-blowing, and communication generally, and it also gives us firsthand descriptions of the inner workings of WikiLeaks from people who were actually involved in the group's activities. It is more than an academic text; it is a glimpse into WikiLeaks as an organization and the ideology behind the group's actions.



Birgitta Jonsdottir, a member of the Icelandic Parliament and currently representing the Pirate Party, starts off the book with a well-written foreword detailing the events surrounding the release of the *Collateral Murder* video and the role she played. She goes on to contemplate and somewhat explain the impact these revelations had all over the world. She generally tries to justify WikiLeaks as an organization and the ideology behind their actions. This might be off-putting for some readers who might find it a little biased in support of WikiLeaks, and it might influence how they feel about the rest of the book. The forward sets the stage for what to expect in the book; it is engaging, well written, and very easy to understand.

The first chapter was written by Yochai Benkler, who elucidates the emerging patterns of the "networked fourth estate," which is basically a combination of traditional news elements and new influential forces of media production. He gives an unbiased explanation of the dynamics and complexity of traditional and contemporary media. He is particularly careful not to categorize any media (new and traditional media) as good or bad; instead he focuses on the attributes and peculiarities of each medium. Toward the end of the chapter, Benkler recommends a collaborative effort between traditional media and the new networked fourth estate—such as WikiLeaks—as the solution to creating a vibrant public sphere where the public can get the information they need but in a secure and ethical manner.

In a contribution titled "Following the Money: WikiLeaks and the Political Economy of Disclosure," Brevini and Graham Murdock discuss the cost in terms of people, money, and skills needed to sustain platforms like WikiLeaks. The chapter goes beyond its initial focus on WikiLeaks and shines some light on the restrictions on Internet freedom. They argued that leading commercial corporations are exercising increasing control on the media, and as such it is imperative that counterinstitutions based on public service should spring up to strengthen democratic institutions and their ideals.

The third chapter, titled "The Leak Heard Round the World? Cablegate in the Evolving Global Mediascape," was written by Lisa Lynch. This chapter focuses on the 2010 leak of diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks and explains the collaborative effort between WikiLeaks and some mainstream media to release these documents. The chapter is well thought-out and informative and gives a thorough analysis of this collaboration. Lynch suggests that without this collaboration between mainstream media and WikiLeaks, it might have been very difficult to bring leaked cables to broad public attention. This chapter, although thorough, underestimates the immediate and substantial impact social media can have on getting information, especially radical information, out to the world. The role social media played in the Arab Spring is still very fresh in mind, and so begs the question as to why Lynch feels only mainstream media can ensure a wide reach for WikiLeaks' releases.

In chapter 4, Chris Elliott reflects on some of the hard choices his organization, *The Guardian*, had to make when collaborating with WikiLeaks to publish leaked documents. This chapter tries to balance the need to promote public interest against the need to protect vital values such as national security. Elliott makes a compelling argument to justify publishing the WikiLeaks releases. He gives us an insider account of how journalists working with *The Guardian* at the time discussed issues surrounding the leaks and balanced the risk before opting to publish.

Hopeton S. Dunn continues with the trend of the book and explains in this chapter the importance of new and old media working together. Dunn identifies the evolutionary changes of media creation, outlines its distribution and consumption, and explains that it is ideal to have a collaborative effort between traditional and new media. He justifies this stand by explaining that if online whistle-blowing organizations choose to go it alone without bringing in more traditional media, they risk compromising the lives, reputation, and security of a lot of people. But he quickly makes it clear that is absolutely necessary for organizations like these to exist since without the boldness of WikiLeaks some government excesses might never have been known. The underlying argument in this chapter is simply that although new media and whistle-blowing sites leave little to be desired in terms of journalistic ethics, their importance as a source for truthful, unbiased, and unedited news information cannot be overemphasized. He cautions, however, that it would be better if more traditional media houses could collaborate with them to ensure that the ethics of journalism are upheld and maintained.

The subsequent five chapters of this book focus on the effects (disruptive and otherwise) of WikiLeaks in terms of how their model impacts society. In chapter 6, Einar Thorsen, Chindu Sreedharan, and Stuart Allan give a detailed analysis of whistle-blowing, explain how the act itself has been framed and discussed throughout history, and consider how new/digital media has helped make whistle-blowing possible. The role of digital media in whistle-blowing is more thoroughly discussed in chapters 8 and 9, by Arne Hintz and Dwayne Winseck, respectively. Here, they discuss the opportunities and challenges of freedom of expression, especially in this new era, as well as examine the role of Internet service providers in all of this. Chapter 7, written by Patrick McCurdy, discusses the Pentagon Papers and gives a comparison between Daniel Ellsberg's case in 1971 and Bradley Manning's recent whistle-blowing. Throughout this chapter, the author constantly reminds us of the polarizing opinions on the ethics of whistle-blowing especially as it concerns sensitive government information and begs us to form our opinions based on facts that he has effectively presented in the chapter.

The rest of the book aims to direct our attention to the aftermath of WikiLeaks and tries to determine if WikiLeaks and their actions have triggered a new social movement, an online revolution, and increased activism. Stefania Milan compares online and offline advocacy and explains how they have evolved over time. She makes it abundantly clear that she supports the idea of cloud activism and states that WikiLeaks and the hacker group Anonymous represent the center of a social movement that puts individuals and public interests first. She believes that any future form of activism would definitely have a strong online presence. Jillian C. York looks at the effect of the WikiLeaks drama on government policies and discusses how governments around the world have become more transparent—or at least pretend to be—since the leaks went viral. She goes on to argue, however, that WikiLeaks as an organization might be over, especially considering the controversy surrounding Julian Assange, and as such it is more likely that new organizations that will inevitably come up will continue the work of ensuring global transparency.

Geert Lovink and Patrick Riemens begin wrapping up this book by offering twelve different arguments about WikiLeaks. On the one hand, they argue that WikiLeaks represents a decline in journalistic ethics and investigative journalism generally and as such embodies everything that is wrong with modern journalism. On the other hand, WikiLeaks is seen as progressive in terms both of how they gather and disseminate information and also of the medium through which they choose to do it. In the

end, the authors do not force one stance over the other, but gently guide readers into deciding for themselves whether or not the activities of WikiLeaks are progressive.

The book is a timely and important read, especially since it examines a very important issue of debate in journalism and communication generally. As predicted in the book, a lot of similar organizations have sprung up and there has not been a decline in whistle-blowing. The group Anonymous has become very prominent, and appears that they might have been accepted as a necessary evil. The not-so-recent leaks by Edward Snowden detailing U.S. surveillance programs targeting its own citizens points to the fact that the ideology birthed by WikiLeaks has far-reaching consequences and will remain for as long as the anonymity provided by the Internet continues to exist. It seems that the Internet will remain the major platform on which wars between advocacy groups and governments/organizations will be fought. It would be ideal for the authors and editors of this work to produce a follow up that would include the recent effects of WikiLeaks and the current trends in whistle-blowing and how governments around the world respond to them.