



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

# LEARNING LAYER

## The risks of transparency

The author calls for greater transparency in journalism. But, like anything else, transparency can be overdone. Scholars Stephanie Craft and Kyle Heim [warn openness in journalism may produce unintended consequences](#). An example: If journalists were to act exactly like scientists and reveal every source of information, sources that wanted anonymity couldn't have it, and those stories would be lost.

### Discussion at three levels:

**Flashlight:** What other things might go wrong if journalists are “too transparent”? Think about transparency in everyday life. What information do doctors, lawyers and other professionals keep to themselves? Should there be some things that journalists simply don't discuss?

**Spotlight:** The “[open journalism](#)” page at *The Guardian* invites users to explore how the news organization reports its top stories. This major news organization routinely asks for help from the public to analyze large numbers of documents. Its readers help shape the articles it writes and share their own content and comments. What do you think of this way of doing journalism?

**Searchlight:** Jeff Jarvis from New York University, in his book *[Public Parts](#)*, argues that the benefits of being more open outweigh the risks. Jarvis gives as an example his own battle with cancer, which he openly discussed. Would you have revealed a life-threatening illness to the world? Why or why not?

**Extra credit:** Consider this scenario: A journalist interviews a local businessman about unethical activity. The interview went badly for the businessman, so he issues a “[prebuttal](#)” to defend himself. The journalist, knowing that could happen, had immediately posted the raw interview footage. With interview and reply already online, what sort of story, if any, should the journalist create? Ask students to make a short video of their opinion.