We are the media

In his book Mediactive (available online because of its Creative Commons licensing) participatory media expert Dan Gillmor makes this argument: “We’re in an age of information overload, and too much of what we watch, hear and read is mistaken, deceitful or even dangerous. Yet you and I can take control and make media serve us – all of us – by being active consumers and participants.”

Class discussions at three levels:

Flashlight: 1) Are people the media now? 2) If you think this is true, what impact does this have on the kind of media that is being produced in the 21st century? 3) Does it have a negative or a positive effect? Explain your answers.

Spotlight: Go over these questions one by one. Ask how many students agree, then discuss with each group why they feel that way:

- I am misinformed by the news media, even though I know my own behavior determines how I learn credible information.
- When I am misinformed, the primary blame falls upon the media, not me.
- Computers put the “me” in media; I often can match news to my interests.
- I am in control of the information I get from the news media.

Searchlight: Some say young people do not care about news or community engagement; others argue exactly the opposite. Participant Media thinks younger people are ready for their own serious cable channel, Pivot. Participant’s media work includes social change campaigns, such as this one on news literacy. At the Missouri School of Journalism, a class specializes in the 18-24-year-old demographic it calls YAYAs (Youth and Young adults). Assignment for students: Can you find academic research showing whether young people today are more or less informed and engaged than previous generations?