

## WHO OWNS THE MEDIA?

Most Americans have very little understanding of the degree to which media ownership in America—what we see, hear, and read—is concentrated in the hands of a few giant corporations. In fact, I suspect that when people look at the hundreds of channels they receive on their cable system, or the many hundreds of magazines they can choose from in a good bookstore, they assume that there is a wide diversity of ownership. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

In 1983 the largest fifty corporations controlled 90 percent of the media. That's a high level of concentration. Today, as a result of massive mergers and takeovers, six corporations control 90 percent of what we see, hear, and read. This is outrageous, and a real threat to our democracy. Those six corporations are Comcast, News Corp, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS. In 2010, the total revenue of these six corporations was

\$275 billion. In a recent article in *Forbes* magazine discussing media ownership, the headline appropriately read: “These 15 Billionaires Own America’s News Media Companies.”

Exploding technology is transforming the media world, and mergers and takeovers are changing the nature of ownership. Freepress.net is one of the best media watchdog organizations in the country, and has been opposed to the kind of media consolidation that we have seen in recent years. It has put together a very powerful description of what media concentration means. Some examples from Freepress:

## COMCAST

2011 Revenue: \$55.8 Billion

In 2011, the Federal Communications Commission approved Comcast’s takeover of a majority share of NBCUniversal from General Electric. This merger combines the nation’s largest cable company and residential Internet service provider and one of the world’s biggest producers of TV shows and motion pictures. Comcast’s media holdings now reach almost every home in America. It serves customers in thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia. In addition to its vast NBCUniversal holdings, Comcast has 23.6 million cable subscribers, 18 million digital cable subscribers, 15.9 million high-speed Internet customers, and 7.6 million voice customers. Comcast recently entered into a partnership with Verizon in which each company will market and sell the other’s services.

**TV:** NBCUniversal; twenty-four television stations and the NBC television network; Telemundo; USA Network; SyFy; CNBC; MSNBC; Bravo; Oxygen; Chiller; CNBC World; E!; the Golf Channel; Sleuth; mun2; Universal HD; VERSUS; Style; G4; Comcast SportsNet (Philadelphia), Comcast SportsNet Mid-Atlantic (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.), Cable Sports Southeast, Comcast SportsNet Chicago, Mountain-West Sports Network, Comcast SportsNet California (Sacramento), Comcast SportsNet New England (Boston), Comcast SportsNet Northwest (Portland, Ore.), Comcast Sports Southwest (Houston), Comcast SportsNet Bay Area (San Francisco), New England Cable News (Boston), Comcast Network Philadelphia, Comcast Network Mid-Atlantic (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.); the Weather Channel (25 percent stake); A&E

(16 percent stake); the History Channel (16 percent stake); the Biography Channel (16 percent stake); Lifetime (16 percent stake); the Crime and Investigation Channel (16 percent stake); Pittsburgh Cable News Channel (30 percent stake); FEARnet (31 percent stake); PBS KIDS Sprout (40 percent stake); TV One (34 percent stake); Houston Regional Sports Network (23 percent stake); SportsNet New York (8 percent stake)

**Online Holdings:** MSNBC.com (50 percent stake); Hulu (32 percent stake); DailyCandy; iVillage; Fandango

**Telecom:** Clearwire Communications (9 percent stake)

**Other:** Comcast Interactive Media; Plaxo; Universal Studios Hollywood; Wet 'n Wild theme park; Universal Studios Florida; Universal Islands of Adventure; Philadelphia 76ers; Philadelphia Flyers; Wells Fargo Center; iN DEMAND; Music Choice (12 percent stake), SpectrumCo (64 percent stake)

## WALT DISNEY COMPANY

2011 Revenue: \$40.1 Billion

The Walt Disney Company owns the ABC television network; cable networks including ESPN, the Disney Channel, SOAPnet, A&E and Lifetime; 277 radio stations, music- and book-publishing companies; film-production companies Touchstone, Miramax and Walt Disney Pictures; Pixar Animation Studios; the cellular service Disney Mobile; and theme parks around the world.

**TV:** Eight television stations and the ABC television network; ESPN; Disney Channels Worldwide; ABC Family; SOAPnet Networks; A&E (42 percent stake); Lifetime Television (42 percent stake); the History Channel (42 percent stake); Lifetime Movie Network (42 percent stake); the Biography Channel (42 percent stake); History International (42 percent stake); Lifetime Real Women (42 percent stake); Live Well Network (42 percent stake)

**Radio:** ESPN Radio Network; Radio Disney

**Print:** *ESPN The Magazine*; Disney Publishing Worldwide; Juvenile Publishing; Digital Publishing; Disney Music Publishing; Marvel Publishing

**Entertainment:** Marvel Entertainment; ABC Studios; ABC Media Production; Pixar; Walt Disney Pictures; Walt Disney Records; Hollywood Records; Mammoth Records; Buena Vista Records; Lyric Street Records

**Other:** Buena Vista Concerts; Disney Mobile; Disney Theatrical Productions; the Disney Store; Disney theme parks and water parks; Disney English; Disney Interactive Media Group; Disney Games; Playdom, Inc.

## NEWS CORP

2011 Revenue: \$33.4 Billion

News Corp's media holdings include the Fox Broadcasting Company; television and cable networks such as Fox, Fox Business Channel, National Geographic and FX; print publications including *The Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Post*, and *TV Guide*; the magazines *Barron's* and *SmartMoney*; book publisher HarperCollins; film production companies 20th Century Fox, Fox Searchlight Pictures, and Blue Sky Studios; numerous Web sites including MarketWatch.com; and nonmedia holdings including the National Rugby League.

**TV:** Twenty-seven television stations and Fox Broadcasting Company (Fox Network, MyNetworkTV); Fox News; Fox Business; Fox News Radio Network; Fox News Talk Channel; FSN (12 regional sports networks); FX; SPEED; FUEL TV; Fox College Sports; Fox Movie Channel; Fox Soccer Channel; Fox Soccer Plus; Fox Pan American Sports; Fox Deportes; Big Ten Network; National Geographic U.S.; Nat Geo Adventure; Nat Geo Music; Nat Geo Wild; Fox International Channels; Utilisima; Fox Crime; NEXT; Fox History & Entertainment; the Voyage Channel; STAR World; STAR Movies; NGC Network International; NGC Network Latin America; LAPT TV; Movie City; City Mix; City Family; City Stars; City Vibe; the Film Zone; Cinecanal; Elite Sports Limited; BabyTV; STAR India; STAR Taiwan; ESPN STAR Sports; Shine Limited

**Online Holdings:** Hulu.com (32 percent minority share)

**Print:** HarperCollins Publishers; the *New York Post*; the *Daily News*; News International (the *Times*; the *Sunday Times*; the *Sun*); News Limited (146 newspapers in Australia); Dow Jones (*The Wall Street Journal*, *Barron's*, *SmartMoney*, Factiva, Dow Jones Newswires, Dow Jones Local Media, Dow Jones VentureSource)

**Telecom:** Satellite: BSkyB (39 percent minority share); SKY Italia

**Entertainment:** Fox Filmed Entertainment; Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment; Twentieth Century Fox Television; Twentieth Television; Fox Television Studios

**Other:** Marketing/advertising: News America Marketing Group; News Outdoor; Fox Library; IGN Entertainment, Inc.; Making Fun, Inc.; Wireless Generation

## TIME WARNER

2011 Revenue: \$29 Billion

Time Warner is the world's second-largest entertainment conglomerate with ownership interests in film, television, and print.

**TV:** One television station and the Warner Brothers Television Group; Warner Brothers Television; Warner Horizon Television; CW Network (50 percent stake); TBS; TNT; Cartoon Network; truTV; Turner Classic Movies; Boomerang; CNN; HLN; CNN International; HBO; Cinemax; Space; Infinito; I-Sat; Fashion TV; HTV; Much Music; Pogo; Mondo TV; Tabi; CNN Español

**Online Holdings:** Warner Brothers Digital Distribution; TMZ.com; KidsWB.com

**Print:** Time, Inc.; 22 magazines including *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Time*, *Life*, *InStyle*, *Real Simple*, *Southern Living*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Fortune*

**Entertainment:** Warner Brothers; Warner Brothers Pictures; New Line Cinema; Castle Rock; WB Studio Enterprises, Inc.; Telepictures Produc-

tions, Inc.; Warner Brothers Animation, Inc.; Warner Home Video; Warner Premiere; Warner Specialty Films, Inc.; Warner Brothers International Cinemas

**Other:** Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment; DC Entertainment; DC Comics

## **VIACOM**

2011 Revenue: \$14.9 Billion

Viacom is the world's fourth-largest media conglomerate, with interests primarily in cable television networks, programming production, and distribution. Viacom controls over 160 networks that reach more than 600 million people around the globe.

**TV:** Viacom Media Networks (160 cable channels including MTV, VH1, CMT, Logo, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, TV Land, Spike TV, Tr3s, BET, and CENTRIC)

**Online Holdings:** ParentsConnect.com

**Entertainment:** Viacom Filmed Entertainment (produces motion pictures under numerous studio brands including Paramount Pictures, Insurge Pictures, MTV Films, and Nickelodeon Movies)

**Other:** Nickelodeon Games Group

## **CBS**

2011 Revenue: \$14.2 Billion

CBS Corporation “has operations in virtually every field of media and entertainment, including broadcast television (CBS and the CW—a joint venture between CBS Corporation and Warner Bros. Entertainment), cable television (Showtime Networks, Smithsonian Networks, and CBS Sports Network), local television (CBS television stations), television production and syndication (CBS Television Studios, CBS Studios International, and CBS Television Distribution), radio (CBS Radio), advertising on out-of-home media (CBS Outdoor), publishing (Simon & Schuster),

interactive media (CBS Interactive), music (CBS Records), licensing and merchandising (CBS Consumer Products), video/DVD (CBS Home Entertainment), motion pictures (CBS Films), and socially responsible media (EcoMedia).

**TV:** Twenty-nine television stations and CBS Television Studios; CBS Entertainment; CBS News; CBS Sports; CBS television stations; CBS Studios International; CBS Television Distribution; the CW; Showtime; CBS College Sports Network; CBS Television Network; Smithsonian Networks

**Radio:** CBS Radio and 130 radio stations

**Online Holdings:** CBS Interactive; CNET

**Print:** Simon & Schuster; *Watch!* magazine; Pocket Books; Scribner; Free Press (publishing house)

**Entertainment:** CBS Films

**Other:** CBS Outdoor; CBS Connections; EcoMedia

No sane person denies that the media plays an enormously important role in shaping public consciousness and determining political outcomes. The current media situation in America, where a handful of giant corporations controls the flow of information, is a very serious threat to our democracy.

The very first amendment to our Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press, the right of the people to express their points of view from the rooftops, to allow themselves to be heard. That is something I passionately believe in, because it is the essence of democracy. Unfortunately, as A. J. Liebling wrote back in 1960: "Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one." And the people who own the press, radio and television stations, and book publishing and movie companies are becoming fewer and fewer, with more and more power. This is a crisis that can no longer be ignored.