Welcome to the age of the big thaw. It's not just the name of the report, but the current environment for journalism. While the old media structures melt away, new structures are rapidly taking its place. Will media producers adapt and lead this evolution or will they disappear into the Ice Age?

The Media Consortium, a network of the country's leading progressive, independent media outlets, commissioned this report because we want to help lead our members and other independent media outlets into a new era of sustainable and powerful journalism.

The Media Consortium works to define “progressive” broadly, since many individuals and organizations relate to the term differently. We share a belief in the common good that unites us all. Our members play an active role as champions for accountability for government, corporations and other institutions in society and our journalism shines a light on issues of social, racial and gender justice.

Progressive media outlets are not only at the forefront of critical journalism, but are also important members of a flourishing democracy. Progressive media is highly influential, with the ability to reach and inform tens of millions of actively engaged citizens on a daily basis. In 2006, 16 of our members pooled their various constituency —­subscribers, donors, registered online users and newsletter subscribers—to Paradyz-Matera, a third-party list-management analysis firm. With only a one in four overlap of names matched to two or more members, participating organizations had a combined list size of 2.9 confirmable names, which didn't even include the millions of radio listeners, television audiences, website visitors, newsstands purchasers and more.

In 2009, Catalist, analyzed almost one million names from another group of 15 consortium members and matched them with their database of 250 million voter-aged citizens. They found that 72% participated in the 2008 General Election, compared to just over 60% of U.S. registered voters and represented a wide range of the voting-age population.[[1]](#endnote-2)

The numbers alone demonstrate the significant influence and reach of the progressive media. But to survive and thrive in the new environment media-makers need to shift their understanding of journalism: Who consumes it, what content people want, how they want to consume it, and who produces it and how. Media organizations must match their production and delivery strategies to new consumer demand, technology and business models. Now is the time to stretch creative boundaries and evolve so that we can strengthen independent journalism thrive over the long-term.

I invite you to join us in charting a new future for journalism.

Sincerely,

Tracy Van Slyke

Executive Director, The Media Consortium

1. 11.3% were ages 25 to 34, 18.5% ages 35 to 49, 29.8% ages 50 to 64 and 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)