

# COLUMBIA GLOBAL REPORTS

Dear Reader,

Journalism is in crisis. The heart of the crisis isn't what most people think it is—the bitter struggle between Donald Trump and news organizations. The heart of the crisis is economic. Quite rapidly in the twenty-first century, newspapers, traditionally the major generators of original journalism, have gone into a downward spiral that has resulted in the disappearance of about half of their editorial jobs. This means that city halls, statehouses, and other essential institutions are going substantially uncovered, and therefore are essentially unaccountable. The problem is worldwide, but it is most severe away from the major capitals that get the attention of a swarm of journalists. Digital journalism, not long ago thought to be the solution to the problem, is now demonstrating that it, too, has trouble making enough money to support original reporting, especially locally.

Margaret Sullivan rose through the ranks at the *Buffalo News*, her hometown paper, winding up as its first female editor. She then became the public editor of the *New York Times* and the media columnist of the *Washington Post*. She is one of the most respected figures in American journalism. In *Ghosting the News*, her first book, Sullivan combines a deeply personal story about the Buffalo paper—what it has meant to the community and the difficult challenges it now faces—with extensive original reporting, in the United States and abroad, on the overall phenomenon and what it means for our democracy. The story Sullivan tells is not a happy one, but this is a book meant to give rise to hope, not despair. Many people, some of whom you will encounter in *Ghosting the News*, are working hard to bring local journalism back. Sullivan's aim is to point the way to solutions. That requires first taking a sobering and clear-eyed look at the problem.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Lemann