

I write to urge the FCC to institute its proposed rules on media transparency. I am a journalism educator who works with both journalists-in-training and with young adults who will interact with journalism as a part of their social environment. In both cases, I focus on the importance of evidence. Journalists must be able to evaluate truth claims—particularly those that contradict each other—and members of society must be equally sensitive to the forces that drive journalism itself. In both domains, journalistic transparency is critical. Thus, I support the recent efforts by the FCC to make the link between resources and TV programming easier to examine. In the one case, putting online TV stations' public-inspection files is simply a no-brainer. Equally obvious is the value of putting "sponsorship identification" online. In both cases, local TV stations already collect and archive this information; online availability will simply make it a bit easier for interested parties to examine these types of evidence. I am quite sure that TV stations will be wary of this move to the online environment, but limiting such evidence to hard-copy files simply makes no sense. My students would find this state of affairs laughable, and I would find it difficult to discern a rationale for TV stations' stubbornness other than the potential credibility costs associated with a set of news practices that could be construed as fraught with conflicts of interest.

Sharon Dunwoody  
Professor, School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Wisconsin-Madison