

## Multi Nation Program



**Annabel Crabb** | Sydney, AUSTRALIA  
Chief Political Writer, ABC Online  
Television Panelist, *Insiders*, ABC Television

Two years ago, Annabel Crabb made a professional transition from a 10-year career as newspaper political correspondent to the online arena, as she felt a need to adjust her work practice in the face of monumental industry evolution over the past decade. She is now chief online political writer with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), writing a thrice-weekly online political analysis and commentary column. She is also the most followed Australian political reporter on Twitter, and pioneered a live Twitter broadcast of Parliament's Question Time.

Ms. Crabb began her fellowship asking “Can journalism survive the digital revolution?” and expecting to find a U.S. media landscape reeling from years of circulation loss, mass retrenchment and revenue collapse. Instead, she discovered a scene of adaptation and innovation, and concluded the answer to her question is “Yes! Just don’t expect it to look much like what you’re used to.” The once clear division between journalist and audience has blurred, altering the definition of journalism. Where this new lack of distinction once worried Ms. Crabb, her fellowship meetings enabled her to view it with exhilaration and as a source of opportunity. Today, many more people can freely access source material (e.g. press conferences, reports, and briefings) which journalists used to consider part of their exclusive domain. Thus, the old model of the journalist privately researching a topic and revealing the final account as a *fait accompli* to a captive audience no longer holds. The increased interactivity means that readers will pepper journalists with their share of abusive e-mails but also, and more importantly, serves as a valuable source of information.

Ms. Crabb determined that the 24-hour news cycle perpetrated by both cable TV and aggressive online websites negatively affects news coverage quality in the popular media. Charles Mahtesian, political editor at *Politico*, told her, “We’re not a daily. Or an hourly, really. I guess we’re more of a minutely.” In this environment, news scoops exist a matter of hours before becoming stale and the race begins for the next one. But Ms. Crabb believes that this effect is counterbalanced by the proliferation of easily accessible information, as well as specialist publications that understand their audience well, provide in-depth coverage on specific topics, and allow readers the opportunity to explore their individual interests in ways that wouldn’t have been possible in the past.

She concludes about her fellowship: “To take a break from a busy working life, and pause for reflection, is a gift. To be able to do so in the presence of great minds is a privilege. And to have this experience at a time when one’s entire industry is undergoing profound change creates an extraordinary opportunity.” Upon returning to Australia, Ms. Crabb plans to recommend restructuring the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's website to make it more interactive, and to adjust her own column's format to be more of a blog style. She also plans to work with many people she met during her fellowship on a variety of projects.

**Leaders bettering the world around them.**