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Prologue to a Farce: Communication and Democracy in America (The History of Communication)

Mark Lloyd

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A popular Government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy or perhaps both.?--James Madison,
Mark Lloyd has crafted a complex and powerful assessment of the relationship between communication and democracy in the United States. In Prologue to a Farce, he argues that citizens political capabilities depend on broad public access to media technologies, but that the U.S. communications environment has become unfairly dominated by corporate interests. Drawing on a wealth of historical sources, Lloyd demonstrates that despite the persistent hope that a new technology (from the telegraph to the Internet) will rise to serve the needs of the republic, none has solved the fundamental problems created by corporate domination. After examining failed alternatives to the strong publicly owned communications model, such as antitrust regulation, the public trustee rules of the Federal Communications Commission, and the underfunded public broadcasting service, Lloyd argues that we must re-create a modern version of the Founders communications environment, and offers concrete strategies aimed at empowering citizens.

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