

THE CONVERSATION



The Conversation is an independent source of news, sourced from the academic and research community and delivered direct to the public over the Internet. Founded in 2011 in Australia.

theconversation.com

Revenue model: charging content creators (universities pay membership fees to have their faculties serve as writers), grant funding

Interview date: February 4, 2016

Interviewee: Andrew Jaspan, founder

Profile written by Paul Stacey

Andrew Jaspan spent years as an editor of major newspapers including the *Observer* in London, the *Sunday Herald* in Glasgow, and the *Age* in Melbourne, Australia. He experienced firsthand the decline of newspapers, including the collapse of revenues, layoffs, and the constant pressure to reduce costs. After he left the *Age* in 2005, his concern for the future journalism didn't go away. Andrew made a commitment to come up with an alternative model.

Around the time he left his job as editor of the Melbourne *Age*, Andrew wondered where citizens would get news grounded in fact and evidence rather than opinion or ideology. He believed there was still an appetite for journalism

with depth and substance but was concerned about the increasing focus on the sensational and sexy.

While at the *Age*, he'd become friends with a vice-chancellor of a university in Melbourne who encouraged him to talk to smart people across campus—an astrophysicist, a Nobel laureate, earth scientists, economists . . . These were the kind of smart people he wished were more involved in informing the world about what is going on and correcting the errors that appear in media. However, they were reluctant to engage with mass media. Often, journalists didn't understand what they said, or unilaterally chose what aspect of a story to tell, putting out a version that these people felt was wrong or mischaracterized. Newspapers want to attract a mass audience. Scholars want to com-