

## Media leaders discuss future technology

By Andrea Taormina

THE BATTALION

The only agreement among panelists at a discussion on Saturday about what media will be like in 12 years seemed to be that the newspaper will still be around but not in the form that is now common.

Dr. Charles Self, head of the Department of Journalism and moderator of the discussion, set the scene for the discussion of media in the 21st Century by talking about the current struggles in the media.

Self said all the struggles grow out of one paradox: convergence and fragmentation of the media.

Gerald Garcia, editor of the Houston Post, said he thought the newspaper of the future will be very specialized and targeted to specific markets that share the same interests.

Garcia said he visualizes a paper that is only one section long, about 20 to 24 pages, is on computer, and has everything in it that comes in the newspaper now.

Glenn Dromgoole, editor of the Abilene Reporter-News, did not see the paper of 12 years in

the future as radically different than it is now. It will still be the leading source of local and state news, Dromgoole said, and it will still emphasize good writing, good leads and information.

"Reporting stays the same however we deliver it," Dromgoole said. "We still have to gather the information before we disseminate it."

John Hotard, director of corporate communications for American Airlines, said a problem he believes exists right now is size.

People develop a great deal of data, Hotard said, but there is a difference between data and useful information. He said he thinks someone will still have to sift through information for people.

The main concerns raised by people in the audience and the panelists were focused on people losing the desire to read, and where the money will come from to pay for the new technology.

Becky Swanson, president of Benchmark Communications, said she thinks the cost will shift to consumers.

Swanson said the future in media is the development of more technology.



Kyle Burnett/The BATTALION

John Hotard (second from left), director of corporate communications for American Airlines, answers a question Saturday during a panel discussion on the media in the 90s held in the MSC.

She talked about how much computers already impact people's lives.

She said because people are now starting preschoolers on computers, there would be a

new generation of people that are comfortable with getting their media electronically.

The generation used to reading papers is dying out, Swanson said.

## Health Care

Continued from Page 1

"Medical individuals love fancy technology, and buyers don't care what it costs," Saving said. "The more buyers that you have who don't care about the costs, the higher the prices that the hospitals can get away with."

He predicted that in a system where everybody cared about the costs, hospitals would advertise lower prices.

"Until you change that, you cannot affect the cost of medical care," he said. "You can't have competition when neither side

cares what it costs. You have to make the buyers care."

Gay agreed it is very expensive to develop new medical technology. In a community the size of Bryan-College Station where medical care is competitive, when one hospital gets new technology, then others begin competing and you see an escalation in technology, he said.

"As a consumer, we are not discerning about whose technology we use," he said. "If a physician says you need it, you will get it no matter the costs. It is not like shopping for cars."

To solve some of these economic problems, Clinton's national plan introduces a theory known

as managed competition. Managed competition is basically an attempt to promote price competition in the national health care market.

The health care market, like other markets, is made up of buyers and sellers, but unlike most markets, the buyers and sellers ignore the cost of health care.

Experts agree an attempt to structure the medical market so doctors and hospitals compete for patients should lower health care costs.

Duke Hobbs, director for the Center for Executive Development, said managed competition stifles competition.

He called the term an oxy-

moron because if competition is managed, then it is not true competition.

Saving said a system using IRAs would work best.

The way this would work is that a certain amount of money is put into an account for every person in the country.

They spend that money throughout the year on their health care and receive, tax-free, the money that is left over at the end of the year.

"Suddenly, people will care what it costs for their health care," he said.

"That's the only thing that will work to control costs; that's real competition."

## Health care plan will hurt small businesses, experts say

By Stephanie Pattillo

THE BATTALION

Universal health care coverage for all Americans, the central goal of President Clinton's health care plan, will be costly to small businesses, say local and University experts.

In small business, according to the president's health care plan, the owners would pay 80 percent of employees' insurance premiums while the worker would pay 20 percent.

But for companies with fewer than 50 workers, government subsidies would keep health care costs at 3.5 percent of payroll for all workers making less than \$24,000.

Thomas R. Saving, director of the Private Enterprise Research Center, said if this plan goes through Congress, there will be a dramatic change to the cost of small business.

He said there will be a change in the demand of labor that will cause wages to fall.

Benefits that were available before will disappear, he said.

Duke Hobbs, director for the Center for Executive Development, said if the health care plan goes through Congress, then mandating companies with fewer than 50 employees to pay 80 percent of their workers insurance will force these small businesses to go bankrupt.

"If a company can't afford to pay wages for more than a handful of people, they can't afford to pay for health care," he said.

But Ron Gay, regional director of the southwest health plan at Scott & White, said although em-

ployers will have to pay for most of their employees' health care, they won't be losers in the long run.

Small employers who are providing benefits will have to raise the cost of doing business, he said.

According to analysts, the president's plan will affect the economy as a result of its impact on small businesses.

Hobbs said that because small businesses employ the majority of workers in America, employment mandates will be devastating to the economy.

**"If a company can't afford to pay wages for more than a handful of people, they can't afford to pay for health care."**

*-Duke Hobbs, director of the Center for Executive Development*

lowering health care will be passed on to consumers.

"While we have seen the price of a VCR stay constant, the price of medical care has gone up," he said. "What we will now see is a trade-off. Medical costs will go down while we see the price of a VCR go up."

Saving said employer mandates will affect the way businesses hire people.

Firms without insurance will pay more and therefore attract young, healthy people, he said.

"You will get what is called adverse selection; that is, firms that offer insurance will get sick people while the firms that don't pay more," he said.

Gay said more than just the healthy will profit from the health care proposal.

He said society will benefit if employees have benefits and good health care.

"I think that for the grass roots employee, they will be a winner," he said.

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