An edited volume totaling 540 pages, *The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights* is a collection of writings from many luminary media scholars and human rights advocates, including UNESCO’s Guy Berger, London School of Economics’ Bart Cammaerts and Sonia Livingstone, and University of Amsterdam’s Stefania Milan. Edited by Howard Tumber and Silvio Waisbord, the book contains five impressive sections that help fulfill the stated goal of the book: “[to] delineate key themes, questions and debates in the field of media and human rights, with the hope that it provides analytical connecting threads and encourages further research” (p. 5). The material is structured and organized in a very coherent manner and results in a rich work of 49 chapters that focuses on five major themes: communication, expression, and human rights; the political process as it relates to media performance and human rights; news and journalism in media performance and human rights; digital activism, witnessing, and human rights; and the cultural, social, and political media representation of human rights. This book is essential reading for any individual working on or interested in various aspects of media and human rights.

The first part, “Communication, Expression and Human Rights,” comprises 12 chapters that historicize, articulate, challenge, and critique media and human rights. The section begins with Guy Berger’s explanation of the right to free expression and, drawing from Habermas’ (1989) work, the understanding of media as the modern public sphere. It concludes with a contribution from Jan Servaes, who posits that human rights “have become a fundamental challenge to a market—‘no end to growth’—view of development” (p. 144), an approach shared by most governments and businesses today. Included in this section are historical accounts of media and human rights found in chapters by Mark Hampton and Diana Lemberg, as well as Helen Fenwick. Bart Cammaerts explores communication freedoms versus communication rights, and press freedom versus the need for state intervention. Ben Worthy heralds journalists as “innovators prepared to push cases through the appeal system” (p. 61), while Judith Townsend’s work revolves around an explanation of the *chilling effect* as “used to describe overt censorship” (p. 73); both chapters focus on freedom of information and the media. While Julian Petley’s chapter centres around human rights and press law, Kari Karpinnen extols digital technology as having realized and promoted human rights. Sonia Livingstone’s work critiques children’s rights as being informed by the need to protect them, and Divina Frau-Meigs deftly argues for the importance of media literacy for young people. Gavin Smith articulates how digital media today functions as “being simultaneously a relation of visibility, a type of commodity and a mode of power” (p. 127), a statement that encompasses the various roles of media in relation...
to human rights. This section is excellent and provides a great introduction to the study of media and human rights.

Part two meticulously maps out the political process as it relates to media performance and human rights in six thought-provoking chapters. In “Political Determinants of Media Freedom,” Sebastian Stier re-examines media freedom and concludes that “Press freedom is an endangered human right in all parts of the world” (p. 155). Mehdi Semati’s work also praises the press, especially those individuals who advocate for human rights more generally, particularly those who do so in authoritarian states and “pay the heaviest price for their writings and for their political and legalistic activities” (p. 158). Emma Briant warns against the increase of surveillance by intelligence services, which has impacted activism, free speech, and journalistic debate, and demands “constant vigilance” in addition to resolutions as means to ensure that human rights are protected. Vian Bakir echoes Briant’s statements and posits that political elites are using intelligence agencies to “further national interests and protect national security” (p. 179) while simultaneously sacrificing human rights. Ekaterina Balabanova believes in the “revolutionary role of media” and gestures to the role of social media in the Arab Spring and “the impact of mass release of data by Wikileaks and Edward Snowden” (p. 195). Amelia Arsenault ends the section with a look at public diplomacy, media, and human rights, and concludes that despite the challenges that come with complications between the media and human rights, new technology allows for “both proactive and reactive public diplomacy campaigns designed to advocate for or defend particular conceptions or treatments of human rights” (p. 205). This section is a vital part of the book and helps further our understanding of media and human rights.

The third part is comprised of seven chapters and delves into issues of news and journalism in relation to media and human rights. Stephen Ward’s study serves as an effective prelude to the section as he begins by providing the basic tenets of the section: that is, the need for a global media ethics, human rights as proposals to govern global interaction and to advance human rights. Michael Bromley takes an even more definitive stance in proclaiming investigative journalists as integral to the “recognition, protection and promotion of human rights” (p. 220). Giovanna Dell’Orto’s contribution focuses on international reporting and has a much different view of journalists. Dell’Orto distinguishes between the jobs of journalists and editors as independent purveyors of information and their possible desire to take action as advocates for human rights. Dell’Orto strongly discourages journalists and editors from advocating for human rights, gesturing to their need to remain impartial—despite “their sense of outrage at the many abuses they encounter” (p. 235). Jeannine Relly and Celeste González de Bustamante’s study explores the “importance of protecting those who gather information about war” (pp. 244–245) and advocate for human rights, especially due to the increase in anti-press sentiment worldwide. Matthew Powers concludes that many civic organizations are in dire need of media attention, as they face “substantial and uneven challenges in garnering media attention” despite advances in journalism and changes in “advocacy and human rights discourses” (p. 254). Glenda Cooper’s is an interesting study of the use of user-generated content (UGC) by mainstream media.
outlets, wherein photographs and videos of “crisis events and humanitarian disasters are sometimes considered even ‘more newsworthy than professional content’” (p. 257). Libby Lester concludes the section with a chapter that reports on the increased violence suffered by journalists and activists as a result of their work, in general, and environmental journalists, in particular. Overall, this section provides a number of different ways to think about the current relationship of news and journalism and media and human rights.

In addition to analyzing digital activism in terms of human rights, the fourth part of the book includes a distinct focus on the social media use of traditionally underrepresented groups, such as LGBT and the disabled. Ella McPherson’s chapter outlines some of the risks involved for human rights advocates who utilize social media, in contrast to the techno-optimists who rightfully point out “the medium’s potential for providing new channels of not just visibility, but also accountability, mobilization, and other benefits for social, political and economic freedom” (p. 285). Trevor Thrall and Dominik Stecula characterize the rise of transnational celebrity advocacy for human rights as representing “a relatively healthy—even necessary—response to the rise of the Internet and the other major trends affecting global politics in the 21st century” (p. 295). Beth Haller’s work credits social media as providing accessibility to the disabled to form their own “networked public” (p. 302). Eve Ng promotes the use of social media among LGBT activists, but warns against its limitations and challenges, including surveillance and censorship. Summer Harlow’s chapter invokes the use of the “protest paradigm” as a lens in querying the many aspects of human rights activism in a digital era. Stefania Milan’s study “looks at how social movements put media and technology at the service of human rights and other related struggles” (p. 327) in addition to understanding protest and activism as fundamental human rights. Kari Andén-Papadopoulos suggests that photojournalism be viewed as “a key component of political culture,” and argues that “it has a decisive role to play in the process of engaging the audience in facing up to injustices” (p. 342). Stuart Allan’s chapter explains how regular citizens who witness, take videos of, and share videos of human rights abuses participate in advocacy, and have become, in the words of Madeleine Bair, “a critical aspect of news and human rights reporting” (p. 347). Sandra Ristovska’s chapter focuses on the way video as evidence was utilized during the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Steven Livingston’s chapter concludes the section by heralding the use of forensic science in human rights advocacy.

Part five of the book contains 13 chapters, the most out of the five sections of the anthology. While several of the studies in this section chastise the media for their role in subverting human rights, more sanguine observers make a compelling argument regarding the media’s support for human rights. Ibrahim Sewaga Shaw proposes that the media is at least partially responsible for how we understand other cultures. Using Islam as an example, Sewaga Shaw posits that “the mainstream media too have played a major role in the cultural violence and hence failure of intercultural communication” (p. 384) through sensationalism and the acceptance and promotion of all too familiar tropes such as “us” versus “them.” In her study on media and women’s rights, Barbara Freeman notes that in media and journalism studies “a number of unanswered re-
search questions” (p. 392) remain, despite the multitude of research into sexual and other forms of violence against women, colonialist assumptions about Muslim women, sex trafficking, and the denial of women’s basic human rights in war or in peacetime. Meghan Sobel indicates an increase in the media coverage of female genital cutting (FGC), but writes that “country-to-country differences in FGC prevalence level and government responses do not drastically change the way(s) that news media frame the topic” (p. 405). Jolyon Mitchell and Joshua Rey argue that human rights stories can be framed as religious stories and vice versa as boundaries between religion and human rights “can be blurred and amplified by different kinds of media framing” (p. 411). Cynthia Carter’s work raises some provocative new questions regarding the news media’s role in advancing children’s civic inclusion in democratic societies. In contrast, Martin Conboy chastises the news media for “the representation and recycling of negative images of outsiders” (p. 426) through various linguistic devices in his critique of the British press. Lisa Brooten crystallizes the notion that the media is key in downplaying radical political movements, promoting a globalized marketplace, and “reinforcing common tropes of the Western saviour and ‘us’ versus ‘them’” (p. 444). In a similar vein to Brooten, Kerry Moore’s chapter depicts the media as promoting negative stereotypes and discourse against newcomers and migrants. Anya Schiffrin and Beatrice Santa-Wood are more generous with the media, acknowledging its impact on how society sees and even addresses a problem partly by changing how it is “framed.” Sonja Wolf considers the media’s critical role in public safety. Paul Mason addresses the British media’s dominant negative discourse concerning prisoners and their rights. Melissa Wall elaborates on conflicting aspects of media coverage of human rights abuses during wartime. Brigitte Nacos opines about the difficulty between “declaring free speech a fundamental human right and calling for nation states to prohibit terrorist incitement” (p. 496). This section provides a nuanced look at the various roles media undertake in relation to varying types of human rights around the world.

I highly recommend The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights for instructors teaching media and human rights, for scholars in the field of media and human rights, and for those who have a genuine interest in the current climate surrounding, as well as the intersections between, media and human rights. Given the rise of populist movements worldwide, the book is a timely and impressive read as it counteracts these movements while simultaneously appealing to a variety of individuals. The works in this collection are not only important in taking the field into new territory, but should also serve to inspire many, particularly those who are advocates for equality and human rights.

Reference

Rhon Teruelle, Purdue University Northwest