

NIEMAN REPORTS

# Nieman

## The Future of Foreign News

Mounting threats to  
correspondents  
put coverage at risk

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New voices  
emerge as legacy  
outlets retreat



# NiemanReports

The Nieman Foundation  
for Journalism at Harvard University  
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**Joshua Hammer**, who wrote the cover story (page 20), was a bureau chief on four continents and a correspondent at large for Newsweek. For the past eight years, the 2005 Nieman Fellow has been a contributing writer to Smithsonian, The New York Review of Books, and Outside Magazine.

**Tyler Hicks** (page 27) is a senior photographer for The New York Times. In 2014 he received the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography for his coverage of the massacre at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, where he is based.



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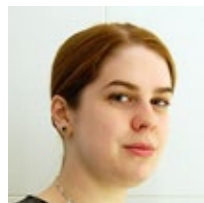
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**Kate Galbraith** (page 8) is a 2008 Nieman Fellow based in San Francisco. She writes for the International New York Times and Foreign Policy.



**Wahyu Dhyatmika** (page 14) is a 2015 Nieman Fellow and an investigative reporter for Tempo magazine in Jakarta, Indonesia.



**Helen Lewis** (page 38) is deputy editor of the New Statesman. She has written extensively on videogames, feminism, and online abuse.



**Joel Simon** (page 44) is executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists and is a regular contributor to Slate.



Covering foreign news often requires travel to remote areas like Pakistan's Swat Valley where the Pakistani Army in 2009 tried to clear out the Taliban

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## Running Toward The Danger

Nieman is creating  
a fellowship  
in honor of  
photojournalist  
Anja Niedringhaus,  
a member of the  
class of 2007,  
who died bearing  
witness so that we  
may see

BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI

FOR THOSE WHO CARE about foreign reporting, the news about the news isn't good. Reporters kidnapped, beheaded, disappeared. The Committee to Protect Journalists documents the toll with a grim menu of online search options. Deaths by type: Murdered. In crossfire/combat. On dangerous assignment.

Anja Niedringhaus was among them this year. The experienced Associated Press photojournalist, 48, was traveling in a protected convoy of election workers in Afghanistan when a uniformed police officer reportedly approached her car and began shooting. Anja was killed; her reporting partner Kathy Gannon was wounded.

Anja was a supremely gifted photographer, "one of the most talented, bravest and accomplished photojournalists of her generation," wrote AP photography director Santiago Lyon. The day after her death I sat with her book, "At War." Most striking about her photography was her ability to find humanity in the darkest moments—the little girl in the polka-dot dress reaching out to an armed policeman; boys in Kandahar playing on a broken Ferris wheel; Santa Claus in the Kuwaiti desert visiting Marines as they prepared to invade Iraq.



Guarding the home in Pakistan of a girl who was shot by the same Taliban gunman as Malala

A framed print of that last photo hangs here at Lippmann House, a reminder of another of Anja's achievements: she was a Nieman Fellow, a beloved member of the class of 2007. News of her death landed hard for the fellows and staff members who knew and loved her as family.

Lyon, her AP colleague and a 2004 Nieman Fellow, along with photographer Gary Knight, a friend of Anja's and a class of 2010 Nieman, have written to our alumni and others asking for financial support of a visual journalism fellowship next year in Anja's name.

They wrote: "We all are painfully aware of the growing threats to journalists around the world [and] need to support those courageous enough to tell the world's stories—like Anja—and offer them the resources,



Niedringhaus

tools and training that come with a Nieman Fellowship."

This issue of Nieman Reports features photographs by Tyler Hicks, the Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times photographer who recently gave Nieman's annual Joe Alex Morris Jr. lecture on foreign reporting. Many of these extraordinary pictures come from places increasingly challenging to access. They also serve as poignant reminders of how much we ask of those who bring us this news, especially photojournalists for whom proximity is vital.

An editor of mine who covered Vietnam used to say that when you see noncombatants running toward danger while everyone else is running away, chances are they're journalists. For the most experienced, this is not an act of recklessness, but a calculated decision about how best to bear witness.

Anja Niedringhaus died bearing witness so that we may see. Please consider supporting a Nieman Fellowship in her name. ■

To help fund the Anja Niedringhaus Nieman Fellowship for Visual Journalism, send a check to the Nieman Foundation, 1 Francis Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138 or donate at [nieman.harvard.edu/make-a-gift/](http://nieman.harvard.edu/make-a-gift/) and note the purpose of your gift. Call 617-495-2237 or e-mail suggestions about other funding sources to [niemandevelopment@harvard.edu](mailto:niemandevelopment@harvard.edu)

## I.F. STONE MEDAL FOR JOURNALISTIC INDEPENDENCE



**Poitras**

FILMMAKER LAURA POITRAS is winner of the 2014 I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence. Amy Goodman, host and executive producer of “Democracy Now!,” also has been selected to receive a special I.F. Stone lifetime achievement award. The two investigative journalists will be honored at a ceremony at the Nieman Foundation on February 5.

Poitras, a Berlin-based American documentary film director, journalist and artist, is co-founder of First Look Media’s The Intercept. She was

chosen for the I.F. Stone Medal in recognition of her reporting exposing the massive illegal National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance program disclosed by whistleblower Edward Snowden, which is the subject of her new film “Citizenfour.”

She has reported on Snowden’s revelations about the NSA for news outlets, including The Guardian, Der Spiegel, and The New York Times. Her NSA coverage contributed to the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service awarded to The Guardian and The Washington Post.

In recognizing Poitras’s contributions to journalism, the committee that nominated her for the award commented: “Her films address complex political realities through deeply moving personal stories, allowing viewers to connect emotionally to otherwise abstract issues. Her trademark is meticulous research and extensive filming.”



**Goodman**

THE COMMITTEE THAT nominated Goodman for the I.F. Stone lifetime achievement award stated, “As a journalist and independent media advocate, Amy Goodman exemplifies the ethos of I.F. Stone. By insulating herself against commercial pressures, she has fought vigilantly for a free press and has ensured that her reporting would always be done in service of speaking truth to power.”

For her exemplary work on “Democracy Now!,” in print and on television and radio, Goodman has won many

journalism awards and was the first journalist to receive the Right Livelihood Award, known as an “alternative Nobel Prize,” for “developing an innovative model of truly independent grassroots political journalism that brings to millions of people the alternative voices that are often excluded by the mainstream media.”

Established in 2008, the I.F. Stone Medal honors the life of investigative journalist I.F. Stone and is presented annually to a journalist whose work exemplifies the journalistic independence, integrity, and courage of I.F. Stone’s Weekly.

The 2014 I.F. Stone Medal selection committee was chaired by former Nieman Foundation curator Bill Kovach, NF ’89, together with author John R. (Rick) MacArthur, president and publisher of Harper’s Magazine, and Myra MacPherson, author of “All Governments Lie: The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I.F. Stone.”

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## New Nieman Visiting Fellows

The six journalists and media executives who have been selected as Visiting Fellows will spend time at Harvard to work on innovative projects designed to advance journalism. Candidates for the 2016 calendar year may apply this summer.



**Dean Haddock**, director of Web and information technology for StoryCorps, will design a system for recording, editing, and accessing user-generated interviews that will extend StoryCorps’ reach to the Internet and mobile devices.



**Jack Riley**, the London-based head of audience development for The Huffington Post UK, will research the future impact of smartwatches and wearable devices on journalism. He also will work on a prototype of a smartwatch publishing app.



**Melody Joy Kramer**, an editor and digital strategist at NPR, will develop a new model for public media membership to include non-financial forms of contributions and use of local stations’ physical space for community building.



**Freck Staps**, the head of the business news start-up NRC Q in the Netherlands, will research a set of issues related to journalism’s digital transformation, including leadership skills and newsroom buy-in.



**Donna Pierce**, who writes about food in a syndicated column for the Chicago Defender, will conduct archival research for a publishing project on the migration of African-American cooks and recipes from the South to elsewhere in the U.S.



**Amy Webb**, founder and CEO of Webmedia Group and co-founder of Spark Camp, will develop a program to reform journalism education by researching and publishing a blueprint that can be adapted within universities.

## Master of Immersion

### Washington Post reporter and editor David Finkel on gaining trust and staying close

**D**AVID FINKEL IS A MASTER of immersion reporting, most brilliantly showcased in his two books that follow U.S. soldiers in Iraq and their return to civilian life. A member of *The Washington Post* staff since 1990, he received a Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting in 2006 for his three-part case study of the United States government's attempt to bring democracy to Yemen. The following year, he embedded with a battalion of U.S. soldiers during the Iraq War, an experience out of which he wrote *"The Good Soldiers."* He followed that up in 2013 with *"Thank You for Your Service."*

During a talk with 2015 Nieman Fellow Dawn Turner Trice at Lippmann House this fall, Finkel described himself as a "pretty ferocious" reporter who favors silence as a reporting tool. He said he tries to recede from the scene in which he immerses himself "so something might occur as if it would have occurred if you weren't there, if that's possible." A 2012 MacArthur "genius" grant awardee, Finkel is now the Post's national enterprise editor. Edited excerpts:

#### On his immersion reporting

You don't know what the story is. There's just a question that illuminates the work to come. You don't know the answer. You don't know the story, but there is a precise question. The question I had in 2007—when the Iraq War seemed, by popular consensus, to have, perhaps, reached maybe its tragic moment, and then [President] Bush announced the surge and here go people into the teeth of this thing—is not to write a book about the Iraq War but to write a book to answer the question of what happens to someone who goes into such a war at such a moment.

I didn't know, but I went. I spent most of the deployment of this infantry battalion out of Fort Riley, Kansas, they went into the surge, and I went along and embedded with them.

I was just with them through the course of their deployment, trying to figure out the answer to that question, not knowing what would happen, if there would be a story.

It turned out there was, I'm afraid, a pretty extraordinary story of these guys. The thing I want to emphasize, all of this stuff, whatever you might think of writing or long-form writing or "feature writing" or immersion writing, the term I prefer is reporting.

Every sentence in this book is, first and foremost, an act of and a result of reporting. Every line in this book, there's nothing

assumed. There's nothing imagined. That's the death of a story to me. Every sentence I read is a defensible piece of reporting. If you point to any sentence, I can produce the documents or the interview or the paper, whatever you need to back it up.

What happened is it was a story finally of transformation in many ways, of resulting moral injury, and in so many cases of these 19- and 20-year-old guys who were going into war for the first time, the wiping away of a young man's sense of invincibility.

#### On pitching a story

Now, I have a team with six reporters at *The Washington Post*. They have to answer two questions [when pitching a story idea to me]. They have to be able to complete the sentence without clauses. "This is a story about..." They have some sense of what they're going after. They have to be able to complete the sentence, "This needs to go in *The Washington Post* now because..." It has to be a story that they have some understanding of and also occurring in a moment that elevates it to the front page.

#### On developing trust

It's the first book that allowed the second. The way I finally got their trust was the fact

*David Finkel, below in his home office, would rather observe his subjects than interview them*



## A RECORD OF WAR

*For his 2009 book “The Good Soldiers,” David Finkel spent eight months with a U.S. Army battalion deployed to Iraq under the command of Lt. Col. Ralph Kauzlarich. It begins:*

**HIS SOLDIERS** weren't yet calling him the Lost Kauz behind his back, not when this began. The soldiers of his who would be injured were still perfectly healthy, and the soldiers of his who would die were still perfectly alive. A soldier who was a favorite of his, and who was often described as a younger version of him, hadn't yet written of the war in a letter to a friend, “I've had enough of this bullshit.” Another soldier, one of his

best, hadn't yet written in the journal he kept hidden, “I've lost all hope. I feel the end is near for me, very, very near.” Another hadn't yet gotten angry enough to shoot a thirsty dog that was lapping up a puddle of human blood. Another, who at the end of all this would become the battalion's most decorated soldier, hadn't yet started dreaming about the people he had killed and wondering if God was going to ask him about the two who had been

climbing a ladder. Another hadn't yet started seeing himself shooting a man in the head, and then seeing the little girl who had just watched him shoot the man in the head, every time he shut his eyes. For that matter, his own dreams hadn't started yet, either, at least the ones he would remember—the one in which his wife and friends were in a cemetery, surrounding a hole into which he was suddenly falling; or the one in which

everything around him was exploding and he was trying to fight back with no weapon and no ammunition other than a bucket of old bullets. Those dreams would be along soon enough, but in early April 2007, Ralph Kauzlarich, a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who had led a battalion of some eight hundred soldiers into Baghdad as part of George W. Bush's surge was still finding a reason every day to say, “It's all good.”

that they did get to see what a journalist does. That I wasn't a know-it-all. That I was genuinely curious, that I wasn't afraid to ask a stupid question if I didn't know something, and then I stayed and stayed and stayed. I didn't go away. That helped.

The next thing that helped is this reporting depends a lot on serendipity. You go out, you see what happens. You don't go out expecting anything to happen, but you've got to go. Sometimes when I went out bad things would happen.

When the smoke cleared and the dust settled from an explosion or whatever's going on, and the soldiers are looking around, now they're seeing a guy with a notebook or a digital recorder. “Oh, this is what... He's not a problem for us. This is what he does.”

But finally, I think the thing that got the trust was by staying and doing my job and asking questions, it dawned on these soldiers, a lot of them, not all of them, that I wasn't there with a preconceived notion, and that I wasn't going to write some jingoistic, patriotic bullshit about the war effort. That in fact I was documenting what was happening to them. What was happening to them is that they were degrading.

Once they realized that, then they talked to me, and that trust is what allowed the second book.

### On never looking back

I don't know how you all feel about your own work. Whether when you're done you go back and read it and you feel a sense of

pride or revulsion. I don't go back and look at my work. I don't want to see it. I just remember all the mistakes and problems.

It's the same with these books. I can point to any page and look at a sentence and wonder what in the world I was thinking. But the total of it is this is work that I think I got right. I'm proud of these, despite their flaws. I'm proud of this journalism, and I've never been able to say that before, so that's not the worst thing.

### On his process

At some point in Iraq I realized as I was writing everything down, “Oh, I think the story here is the transformation.” It's embarrassing, because this may seem so obvious. What else does war do but transform you? But I didn't know it was going to do that, and I hadn't been in war before like this.

You finish the reporting for that story and then again it's very deliberate. I go over my notes, I index all my notebooks. I transcribe everything.

I reread everything. I'm looking for... because I'm not just a camera you turn on and I record everything. I'm trying to think my way through things. I'm trying to find patterns or I'm trying to find things that might relate in an authentic way.

You read your notes and read your notes and read your notes and eventually I come up with a very specific outline. The outline is guided a lot by, and it's not just knowing when I write this book, it's going to be this many chapters. But it's knowing where the book is going to end.

### On listening

I want to reach the point in the story where people aren't talking to me, where I'm just going along. The people I'm with, they no longer feel the obligation to be a host to me. You want to get past the special moment and let things go. You just want to be there. If people are going to be quiet, let them be quiet, and listen to them be quiet. If they're talking to each other, hear what they're saying to each other. That's much more valuable—don't you think?—than them answering a question. You have to ask questions. It's not that benign a process.

For the second book especially, so much of that was built on just being present and being silent. A lot of the second book, these families recovering, took place while they're in the front seat of the car fighting with each other, and I'm in the back seat just trying to stay behind the headrest so that maybe they'll forget I'm there.

### On getting close

When I went to Iraq the photo editor, the then-photo editor at The Washington Post, gave me a camera and he said, “This thing comes with a zoom lens. I've set it on wide. Don't touch it because it's going to force you to get close to your subject when you take a picture.” I've not heard a better description of the reporting I try to do.

It doesn't mean I don't move around, as we all do, to get different perspectives. But what I'm after finally is not distance, but to get as close as I can and stay as close as I can for as long as I can. ■

## For the People Lorie Conway, NF '94, tells the story of Beatrice Mtetwa, defender of justice

A FILM ABOUT BEATRICE MTETWA, the internationally known, hard-charging human rights lawyer in Zimbabwe, was a natural.

What was fortuitous is that it took root in Lippmann House. I co-produced the documentary “Beatrice Mtetwa and the Rule of Law” with Hopewell Rugoho-Chin’ono, NF ’10. Andrew Meldrum, NF ’08, is featured in the film.

“She’s the bravest person I’ve ever met,” is how Andy first described Beatrice. And he should know. According to him, he had been the sole remaining Western foreign correspondent reporting from Zimbabwe when the Mugabe regime put him on trial. Beatrice shredded the government’s case in the courtroom, leading to his acquittal. Yet the regime deported him.

While Andy was at the Nieman Foundation, we became friends. Our initial plan was to build a film around his memoir, “Where We Have Hope,” but we decided that a white journalist’s time in Zimbabwe was not the optimal vehicle.

“How can one better tell the story of a collapsing country?” we asked. After many meetings, it was my husband Tom Patterson, a professor at the Kennedy School, who suggested the prism in which to frame the film—the rule of law. Beatrice was logically the main character. But would she agree?

Within days of Andy sending Beatrice an e-mail, she signed on to a film centering on her efforts at “upholding the law in a lawless land.” Two years and many grant proposals later, I had raised barely enough money through grants from the U.S. Institute of Peace, the International Bar Association, Brit Doc, and small donations to support the production. We filmed Beatrice and some of



*Human rights lawyer Mtetwa continues to speak out despite being arrested and imprisoned*

her defendants in Zimbabwe and traveled to Swaziland where Beatrice grew up.

Beatrice is an ideal protagonist for a film—she’s courageous, smart, and strategic. But what I also learned is that Beatrice is very human. In spite of beatings by state police and an arrest and imprisonment last year—she was acquitted of all charges—Beatrice strives for normalcy. She’s a loving mother to two adult children, as well as to the children of her partner of 17 years. She’s an inveterate shopper of shoes and cooks up a mean curry. She loves to dance.

Beatrice’s back story is fascinating. She was born and raised “with many mothers

**Beatrice is an ideal protagonist for a film—she’s courageous, smart, and strategic**

and at least 50 brothers and sisters.” Her father was a polygamist with six wives. Beatrice was his eldest daughter. There was never enough money, so Beatrice was fighting for food and clothing for her siblings long before she entered law school.

Screenings and broadcasts of the film have taken place in dozens of places, including Harare, The Hague, London, Washington, D.C., and in Amnesty International chapters around the world. U.S. distribution of the film is through KCETLINK. Over 5,000 DVDs of the half-hour version of the film have been distributed to schools and community groups in Africa.

Our hope in making the film is that it would inspire viewers everywhere, which affected our choice of the film’s ending. In the final clip, Beatrice is asked why she does it, why she risks her safety to stand up for the rule of law. She replies: “This has to be done. Somebody’s got to do it. Why shouldn’t it be you?” ■



## Voice Lessons Kalpana Jain, NF '09, teaches girls in India to report stories the media misses

THIS SUMMER, in the villages of north India, I trained rural young women, ages 15 to 22, in the skills of journalism so they could claim their own voices and tell stories being ignored by mainstream media.

For the first time, the 39 young women, who came from 35 villages in the state of Uttar Pradesh, stayed far from their homes without being accompanied by an adult male family member. Bringing them out of their homes had required gaining the trust of their families. A team at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, the nonprofit supporting the effort, had reached out to each family.

Gender discrimination in this region of India is high and a preference for sons sometimes leads to female feticide. A recent spate of brutal rapes in these villages had led to increased restrictions on girls and women.

The practice of journalism involves not just an ability to write, but also an attitude, with which we confront authority and ask questions. Thus, my first step was to empower my students through storytelling,

a skill I learned from Kennedy School senior lecturer Marshall Ganz. They were coached in how to articulate what he calls their Story of Self, their Story of Us (their shared values), and their Story of Now (how they could move the group to action).

Indeed, as the day wore on, each of the young women broke through her reticence to tell her story. They were most moved as Ranisha, choking on her tears, spoke. "After my sister was gang-raped, I was not allowed to go anywhere. Even my schooling was stopped," she said. Grim as the stories were, they were also full of courage and hope.

My students learned to articulate their concerns, such as sexual harassment, and to ask questions, which facilitated moving into

sessions on writing, storytelling, and ethics. By the third day, the students were ready to go to a village to do some reporting.

With no further guidance, they investigated the learning of children at a school and the availability of medicines at the health center. Before long, they confronted the village chief, asking him some tough questions about the state of school education and the absence of proper care at the health center. They published their first village bulletin this fall.

In my journalism, I have sought to bring power to the marginalized by making their voices heard. Now I work with the marginalized so they can develop their voices and, through their journalism, empower others. ■

*Jain sharing with her students the story of a woman who fought slavery in India*



## A NEW TRADITION CRISTIAN LUPȘA, NF '14, ON NARRATIVE'S INROADS IN ROMANIA

IN ROMANIA, there is little tradition of deeply reported, well-told true stories, partly a result of an immature media culture, partly a symptom of 40-plus years of communism that has made people suspicious of sharing their lives with others.

In 2009, I was part of a group of daring journalists that launched *Decât o Revistă*, a magazine that aimed to build that tradition. We try to be as wide-reaching and in-depth as an Eastern European *The New Yorker* wannabe can.

To become better at the craft and spread this gospel, we in 2011 started an annual conference, *The Power of Storytelling*, where we mainly invite American storytellers to share inspiration and tips.

Over the years, we've learned something

important. While some younger journalists responded eagerly, older ones didn't, saying they already know how to write and report. And a growing number of attendees are non-journalists—various communication professionals, managers, entrepreneurs, activists, designers, and artists, all people who instinctively understand the power of stories. Every year the conference sells out. This past October

350 people packed the hall. So we've come to think

of this conference less as a journalism gathering, and more as a celebration of telling true stories. Most of our speakers are still reporters and writers, but we've broadened our exploration to look at the role of stories in art, values-driven marketing, and leadership. In a country that is still struggling to come to terms with its totalitarian past, we need new and better stories everywhere, so our communities can grow stronger, and people can become more trusting of one another. ■

IN 2011, AS THE ARAB SPRING dawned, young Lebanese journalist Ibrahim Nehme yearned to play a role in the changes sweeping the Middle East. The region's print media, he believed, didn't measure up to the hopes of the demonstrators, who demanded democracy and fresh ideas. So Nehme resolved to start his own magazine as an outlet for the voices of the younger generation. He drained his savings, took out a loan, and asked family and friends for help. The first issue of *The Outpost*, a quarterly English-language print publication featuring long-form articles on the choices facing the Arab world, appeared in September 2012.

"I felt there's an opportunity to say and make something different, make something that would become part of the revolution," says Nehme, now 28. The idea was to create a "media voice that can capture our imagination, provide us with a space to dream, speak up, think freely, be who we are as Arab youth."

Launching a print magazine today is courageous; some would say foolhardy. Indeed, two years in, Nehme has slowed his publishing pace from quarterly to semi-annu-

al as he faces a constant struggle to make ends meet. But *The Outpost*, with a print run of about 3,000 per issue, is hardly flying solo. Worldwide, new print titles have been popping up to cover a breathtaking array of topics, from new-age agriculture (*Modern Farmer*) to handyman ingenuity (*Makeshift*) to Californian culture (*The California Sunday Magazine*).

And some of these publications are highlighting long-form narrative as a key selling point. Take *Lucky Peach*, a food magazine launched in 2011, with its award-winning features on Manhattan chef and restaurateur Wylie Dufresne and canning Southern fruits, or *The Caravan*, a venerable monthly that Delhi Press relaunched in 2010 after a long hiatus, with its essays on anti-Sikh violence, Hindi literature, and the full spectrum of politics and culture in between. For these publications, print still offers a powerful brand flagship as well as a source of revenue that digital platforms can supplement but not yet supplant.

Those launching print titles today are generally independent publishers, driven by passion, with little expectation of big prof-

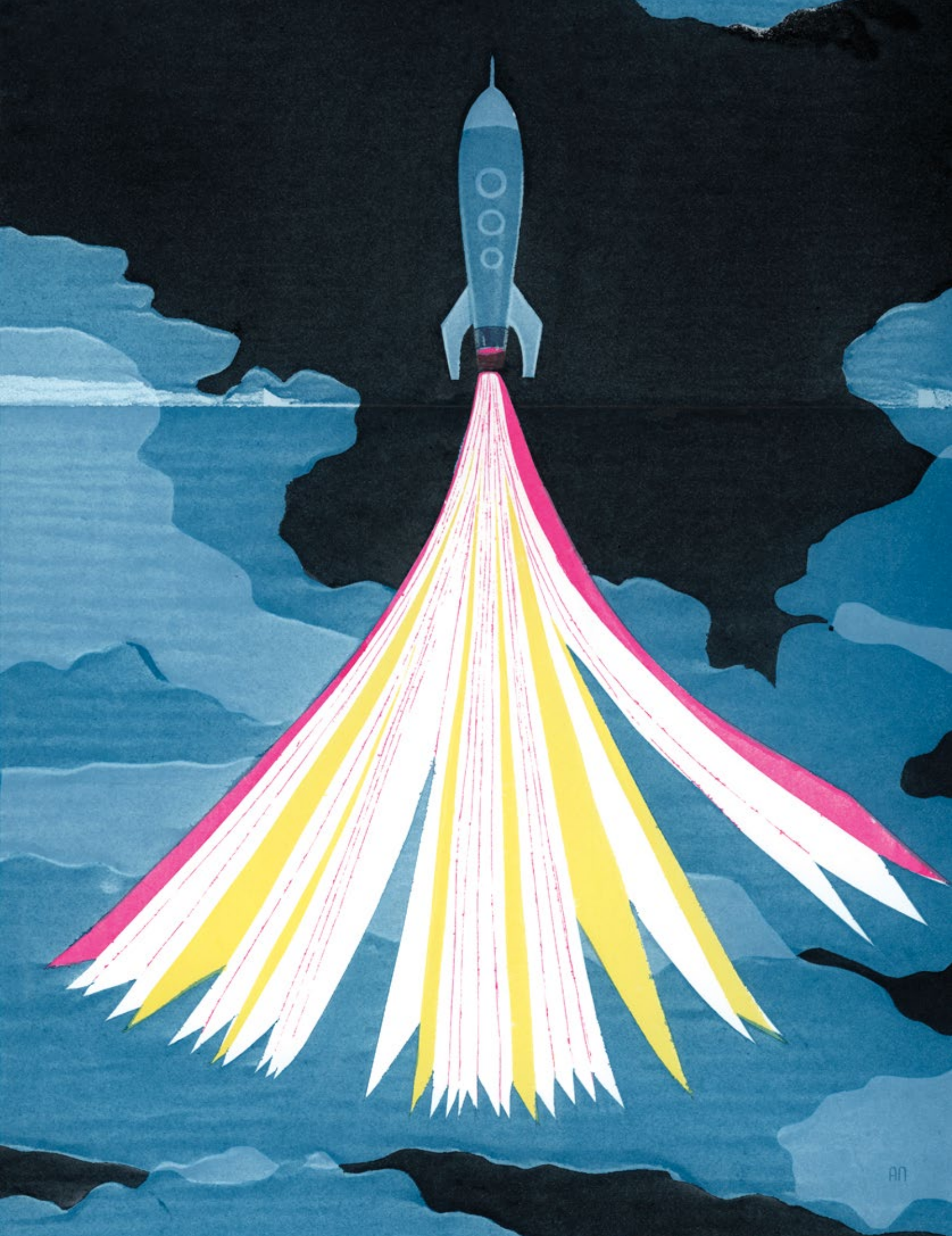
its. "When was the last time you heard of a [new] magazine coming from Time Inc.?" asks Samir Husni, director of the Magazine Innovation Center at the University of Mississippi. The number of launches has fallen over the years, as has magazines' collective circulation, yet new titles keep coming. What it takes to survive, according to magazine entrepreneurs like Nehme, is targeting a clearly defined niche, finding committed backers and creative fundraising methods and, above all, a willingness to be scrappy and innovative.

Of all the types of magazines to consider starting during the digital age, travel seems among the least likely to succeed, though Airbnb plans to launch a travel magazine called *Pineapple*. Digital travel tips have practically obviated the need for guidebooks, making *Lonely Planet* (my first writing job out of college) look almost like *Baedekers*. The graveyard of recently shuttered magazines includes *Executive Travel*, *National Geographic Adventure*, and *Everywhere*. And yet the circulation of *Afar*, started by Greg Sullivan and Joseph Diaz in 2009, in the teeth of the Great Recession,

## Why niche publishers are launching new print magazines

# Start the Presses

BY KATE GALBRAITH



has grown to 250,000, a five-fold increase from its launch, and advertising—the saving grace of the travel market—has become the core financial pillar. Plus, the business is now profitable, says Sullivan.

Afar’s genius is targeting a different sort of journey, which the editors have dubbed “experiential” travel, in which the visitor interacts with a place as the locals do and sees it through their eyes. It’s not, says San Francisco-based editor in chief Julia Cosgrove, about a “vacation built around escapist fantasies of going to the beach.” Local markets, local dress, local cuisine—all are featured, often in long, narrative formats. A popular feature is Spin the Globe, in which writers are sent to random destinations; one that captured particular attention was a 2011 trip by Ryan Knighton, who is blind, to Cairo, a city rich with history but difficult to navigate. The magazine avoids “homogenizing” its writers’ voices, says Cosgrove, keeping “the stories as personal and fresh as possible, because I think that has more staying power than that sort of uni-voice that you find so often in magazines.”

Cosgrove says Afar keeps a lean staff,

with just nine editors, yet puts original content on its website, largely by encouraging readers to volunteer their work. “In Paris, if you discover this really great coffee shop, you can take a photo, upload to afar.com, and describe the experience,” says Cosgrove. “People are willing and then wanting to share this information with other travelers.”

Afar’s success reflects the importance of targeting a highly specific audience. “You just have to find your audience much more explicitly now than you’ve had to,” says Dana Chinn, a media analytics strategist at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. Such strategies are behind magazines like Yoga Digest, a Dallas online community that launched a national magazine in November; Good, a newly re-launched magazine focusing on people making a positive impact in the world; and Makeshift, which features acts of ingenuity from around the world.

Knowing your audience can pay off in revenue beyond subscriptions and advertising, the traditional pillars of print profit.

“You’re building a community,” says Chinn, “an audience who wants to be associated with each other.” Afar derives revenue from excursions it organizes each year to destinations like Cairo, Johannesburg, and Montreal. The journeys, which cost \$1,800 to \$4,500, offer readers a chance to meet locals, including politicians and activists, as well as like-minded Afar readers. The trips “bring the pages of the magazine to life in a very literal way,” Cosgrove says.

The narrative niche itself can sometimes be the source of a title’s appeal, as readers seek out longer reads and deeper analysis. That’s why newsweeklies are losing relevance, according to Anant Nath, editor of The Caravan, which claims to be the first magazine in India devoted to long-form narrative. “Weekly journalism is increasingly a regurgitation of the past week’s news, which is of little relevance,” he says. “An 8,000-word profile of a politician, wherein the reporter has done some 30 to 40 interviews, presents a lot of new information,” and thus presents greater appeal to readers.

Even subjects like food, normally more associated with recipes than long-form, can

**THE OUTPOST**  
*Beirut journalist Ibrahim Nehme, below, founded the English-language magazine to give voice to a new generation in the Arab world*



IEVA SAU DARGAITE

lend themselves to narrative. “Twitter is awesome, but you don’t disconnect from the stress of your daily life and sink into your couch with your iPhone,” says Lucky Peach co-founder Peter Meehan. “You maintain the paranoia.”

Lucky Peach, which prints about 100,000 copies of each issue, happily publishes long pieces on trends like Malaysian street food and Christian culinary traditions in India. The magazine won five James Beard awards this year for articles on, among other topics, gay influences on cooking and the tale of a Long Island chef who blended cuisines long before it was cool, like roasted lobster flavored with soy sauce. “For us, it was like, Where are our strengths? What can we do that Bon Appétit can’t do?” Meehan says, recalling the thought process that went into starting the company. “Literature is nourishing.”

Technology has brought down printing costs, but launching a magazine remains extremely expensive. For The California Sunday Magazine, which debuted this fall with a print run of more than 400,000, the magic number was \$2 million. Douglas McGray,

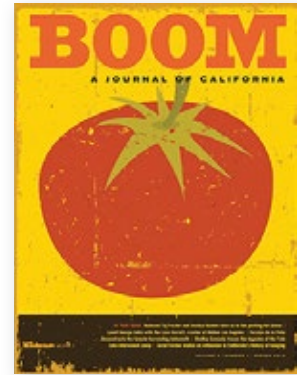
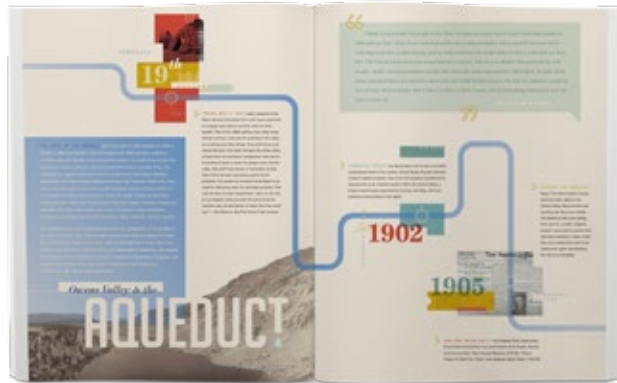
one of the co-founders, says he and his colleagues raised that amount from a mix of individual investors, some from Hollywood, publishing, and the technology world. With its emphasis on artfulness and narrative style, California Sunday carries echoes of The New Yorker, but with features on virtual reality and Blue Bottle Coffee instead of opera and Manhattan traffic. Perhaps inevitably for a publication born in the spirit of Silicon Valley, McGray doesn’t see it as a print launch. The same content that reaches readers at their homes the first Sunday of each month also appears on apps and the Web. McGray, a longtime feature journalist, and publisher Chas Edwards got the idea for California Sunday from Pop-Up Magazine, their live “magazine” of on-stage storytelling whose performances up and down the West Coast sell out in minutes. Pop-Up performs at night, a time when even people in tech-frenzied California relax and open their minds to stories. A Sunday magazine could pleurably fill non-working hours, he reasoned, especially if people could read it however they wanted—on tablets, on phones, in print. And California had no an-

swer to The New York Times Magazine or The New Yorker, though Pacific Standard fills some of that role. “It started to strike me as strange that with all the people in California and the West, and all the cultural, political, and business influence, that when we read big national features about [life and ideas in the West], it tends to be made in New York,” McGray says.

His backers’ money allows McGray to pay well for quality freelance work. The magazine currently has no staff writers. “We’re trying to be as lean as possible everywhere except for stories and art and the things that bring readers stories,” he says. The November issue included a long tale about the dangers and opportunities of deep-sea mining, with reporting from Papua, New Guinea. A photo essay told the story of the U.S.-Mexico border fence: one image showed a scattering of shotgun shells, another a battered soccer ball, a third the high, rust-colored border fence extending down a sandy beach.

Print has emerged as a core part of California Sunday’s business model. Rather than laboriously building a subscriber base

**BOOM**  
*This California history and culture quarterly, based at UCLA, made a splash with an issue devoted to Los Angeles and the politics of water*



by itself, California Sunday piggybacked on the distribution of existing newspapers. The magazine currently arrives as an insert in certain home-delivered editions of the San Francisco Chronicle, the Los Angeles Times and The Sacramento Bee, as well as San Francisco-area copies of The New York Times. Paying newspapers to distribute a magazine is far cheaper than mailing them out individually, of course, and the big initial circulation numbers also allowed California Sunday to attract high-dollar advertisers such as Lexus and Nest Labs, the Google-owned maker of smart-home hardware. “We’re trying to be nimble,” McGray says. “We’re launching with the footprint of a magazine that a big media company would produce, but we’re really influenced by the start-up culture of Silicon Valley.”

California Sunday is an outlier. For most fledgling magazines, print cannot pull in the necessary advertising dollars. Crowdfunding goes only so far, and few print magazines launch with enough subscribers to entice advertisers. Nor are many sufficiently well funded at launch to keep publishing long enough to build the circulation

and reputation that attracts advertisers. (Afar is one exception; its founders, Diaz and Sullivan, as well as another investor, Ernie Garcia, have pumped \$20 million into it.) The Outpost had hoped initially to generate virtually all of its revenue from advertising, but now has given that up. “We’ve literally stopped contacting or approaching advertisers,” says Nehme, the editor in chief. “It’s just discouraging and demotivating and we’re worlds apart.” The alternative is a higher price for subscribers and single issues—in effect, forcing readers to pay more for the content.

Still, print often carries a cachet that digital formats do not, at least not yet, many entrepreneurs say. A print product—a copy of The Economist or The New Yorker lying on a coffee table—is a fashion statement. At Boom, a three-year-old quarterly about California history and culture published by the University of California Press, “the print edition is the beautiful, substantive and evocative object at the center of the whole enterprise,” says editor Jon Christensen. Boom features long essays and photographs on everything from John Muir to the

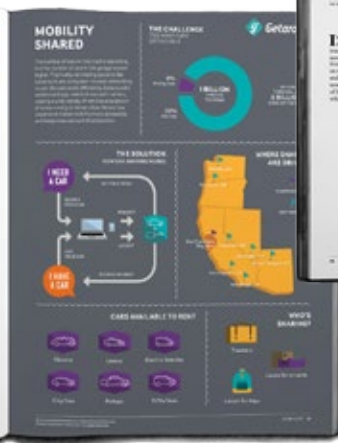
San Francisco housing boom and is somewhat reminiscent of Monocle magazine, but on a California level. Last year, when Boom devoted an entire issue to the controversial history of Los Angeles’ water imports from the Sierra Nevada mountains, it generated plenty of attention despite the magazine’s modest circulation.

One of the most improbable new titles of recent years is Makeshift, a quarterly magazine devoted to the ingenuity of ordinary people. Myles Estey, editor in chief and co-founder, had been living in Liberia for a couple years and became fascinated by the informal economy there—how people built and fixed their own motorbikes, how discarded stuffed animals were cleaned and re-used, how people scraped and scrapped for a living. And so, in 2011, he and a like-minded engineer, Steve Daniels, decided to start a magazine devoted to this niche.

The subject matter was so specific that they knew they wouldn’t attract many advertisers or even enough subscribers to break even, but they pushed forward nonetheless. Print was the obvious choice, according to Estey, because magazines have

**MAKESHIFT**

*The ingenuity of ordinary people in Liberia was the impetus behind the founding of this quarterly, which markets itself via new tools, such as Magpile and Stack*



a special way of telling stories and building community. Makeshift has built a following by publishing long essays on subjects such as the blind hawkers in Mumbai's train stations and how the tunnels under the border between Gaza and Egypt are built and destroyed. "It's a lot of work," admits Estey, who spends much of his time in Mexico City and has written about drug smuggling and film pirating. Makeshift's editors all work other jobs, because no can yet make a full-time living from the magazine. It's an advantage, Estey argues, because editors pull ideas from their outside lines of work.

Readers—and, just as crucially, sponsors—have responded enthusiastically. Makeshift has built its circulation to 20,000. Crowd-funding helped with the early issues, which also received support from an engineering group; subsequent sponsors have included General Electric. The magazine is now expanding into design consulting and teaching as other ways of raising revenue.

It has also innovated on the distribution side, taking advantage of new digital tools that can help small publishers reach wider audiences. Single-issue copies can be pur-

chased at Magpile, an online library and media shop that charges sellers like Makeshift a monthly fee and takes an 8 percent cut of an issue's cover price. Publishers themselves are responsible for mailing out the magazines. Another service is U.K.-based Stack; founder and director Steve Watson buys a different magazine each month to send out to his subscribers. Watson aims for interesting, fresh titles, and Makeshift, says Estey, is in the 2015 lineup.

For these nascent titles, digital strategies diverge. Many lack an elaborate Web presence; Lucky Peach, for example, has a Tumblr presence, but mostly steers users toward its print edition ("We're going to start a real site next year, with daily content," says Meehan.) The Web has a faster metabolism, as Casey Caplowe, co-founder of Good magazine, puts it. "The Web is a great place for the more quick and news-responsive thing," he says, whereas print allows for sitting back and digging into nuance.

Yet the question remains whether digital media will one day erode print so profoundly that it disappears completely. There are signs, in fact, that users are increasingly

comfortable reading long-form writing on tablets and mobile devices. Earlier this year people spent more than 25 minutes reading a 6,000-word BuzzFeed story on their phones about buying a cheap home in Detroit, according to The Atlantic. The story received more than a million pageviews, with nearly half the people accessing it from mobile devices.

The venture planned by former New York Times executive editor Jill Abramson and journalist and media entrepreneur Steven Brill, which will feature mammoth long-form stories each month in digital rather than print, shows that even old media types are considering digital as a way forward for long-form journalism.

For now, though, the new print magazines are living in the moment, and hoping to expand. California Sunday, for one, has grand plans. McGray hopes to increase distribution, on apps and in print, and steer the publication toward biweekly and finally weekly frequency. "We talk around the office of not having the benefit of 100 years of history," says McGray. "But we don't have the burden either." ■

**LUCKY PEACH**  
Magazine  
co-founders David Chang, far right, and Peter Meehan, in Chang's New York Momofuku noodle bar. Lucky Peach recently won five James Beard awards



*Joko Widodo, shortly before he won the Indonesian presidential election in July. Earlier in the campaign, one of his rivals was media tycoon Aburizal Bakrie*







# WHO OWNS THE NEWS?

**In Indonesia, corporate media ownership mixes with politics to create challenges for independent journalists**

BY WAHYU DHYATMIKA

# A

COUPLE MONTHS before Indonesia's presidential election last July, all the members of the VIVAnews editorial board received a strongly-worded e-mail. The sender was the popular news site's boss, Anindra Ardiansyah

Bakrie, known as "Ardie," the son of Indonesian media and coal tycoon Aburizal Bakrie.

In the e-mail, Ardie complained about a VIVAnews main headline, posted to the site just a few hours previously. It was a straight news item about presidential frontrunner Joko Widodo, the candidate for Indonesia's Democratic Party of Struggle, who went on to win the election and was inaugurated in October. Jokowi, as he's more popularly known, made a campaign stop, said a few words, and moved on. Nothing special. What made the story unacceptable to Ardie was that his father, Aburizal Bakrie, who owns VIVAnews, TVOne, ANTV, and several other news outlets, is also chairman of the Golkar Party and was then one of Jokowi's rivals in the election.

Ardie, in the e-mail, accused whoever uploaded the news item of being a "traitor" disloyal to his family and to his father's company. He even invited anyone who disagreed with him to resign immediately. "I'll be waiting for your resignation letter tomorrow at dawn, before the rooster crows, at the latest," he wrote. "I'm not afraid of doing anything when I have to defend my father's interest." (In response to news about the e-mail, Ardie said he did not send it, though he does agree with its content.)

Ardie's intervention is commonplace in Indonesia, where corporate media ownership intertwines with politics in ways that make for a difficult and often hostile environment for independent journalism. Mainstream news outlets provide less and less space for investigative journalism, and when they do take on political topics they play it safe, avoiding stories that could stir animosity from big media owners. Tougher competition, shrinking revenues and dwindling audiences make running a media company in Indonesia an increasingly expensive proposition. Few people who favor independent journalism have pockets deep enough and skin thick enough to take on the challenge.

Of course, there are exceptions. Tempo, the magazine I work for, is one of them. Founded by author and journalist Goenawan Mohamad in 1971 as a weekly newsmagazine of narrative journalism, Tempo evolved to become the country's leading muckraker, uncovering many scandals involving the police and politicians. Although regarded as the most credible voice in Indonesian media, Tempo is barely audible above the din of more popular (and populist) corporate-owned titles.

Hary Tanoesoedibjo, one of Indonesia's wealthiest businessmen, owns Media Nusantara Citra (MNC), which runs several TV stations and two newspapers. Producers working in MNC's newsrooms say Tanoesoedibjo regularly summons them to meetings to ask for favorable coverage of his business interests. "Once he bought an airline on the brink of bankruptcy and asked us to change our tone in reporting this company so he could turn it around," says Dhandy Dwi Laksono, a former MNC

**IN INDONESIA, FEW PEOPLE WHO FAVOR INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM HAVE POCKETS DEEP ENOUGH TO TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE**



*Media owner Aburizal Bakrie's son, Ardie, with his family after voting, nixed coverage of his father's political rival on a major news site he manages*

producer. The situation became even trickier when Tanoesoedibjo launched a career in politics.

Soon after losing a leadership bid for the National Democrats, Tanoesoedibjo joined another party, Hanura, as its vice presidential candidate. Within days, his TV stations and newspapers switched allegiance, too. The MNC Media Group no longer praised the National Democrats as the ultimate savior of Indonesia. Tanoesoedibjo then started showing up in all kinds of MNC programs—from teen dramas to talk shows to the Indonesian “Idol” music contest—promoting Hanura and his vice presidential bid.

In the final days of the general parliament campaign, MNC Media Group management sent an internal memo to its employees—some journalists said they got it too—instructing them to appear at the 80,000-seat Gelora Bung Karno, Jakarta's

biggest stadium, on April 5 for a massive pro-Hanura rally. “If you are unable to attend,” the memo read, “ask permission from your supervisor.”

Tanoesoedibjo saw nothing untoward in this request. “I am the CEO,” Tempo.co quoted him as saying the next day. “What’s wrong with inviting my employees to an event related to me? I just invite them to a gathering.”

Bakrie and Tanoesoedibjo are typical of Indonesia’s current media landscape. Sixteen years after a pro-democracy student movement forced the military-dominated government of President Suharto out of office, freedom of the press is once again under threat from self-censorship, political interference in the newsroom, and conflicts of interest.

Before Suharto was ousted in 1998, journalists had to be careful not to offend “the

men in uniform.” One veteran editor recalls ordering an entire page of the paper to be blacked out because government officials objected to an article and it was too late to change or replace it. Today, the call comes not from the presidential palace but from the boardroom, and the message is delivered by the editor in chief. “You know it’s not right, but you do it anyway because that’s what your boss told you,” says one TV journalist about the political pressures.

Centralization of media ownership is threatening the freedom of speech and political participation Indonesians still enjoy. A 2012 report by the Jakarta-based think tank Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance and international development organization Hivos’s regional office in Southeast Asia found that Indonesian media ownership is concentrated in 12 large groups, about half of them controlled

by businessmen-turned-politicians. “The current media oligopoly has endangered citizens’ rights to information as the media industry has become profit-led,” Yanuar Nugroho, principal investigator of the report and a research fellow at Manchester University in the U.K., wrote, “and media companies represent a profitable business which can be shaped by the owner’s interests and are thus highly beneficial for those seeking power.”

More than 90 percent of the population own a television set, so who owns those sta-

tions—and what they do with them—matters. Some fear that Indonesian TV news, stripped of its social responsibility, will cause trouble. “Many TV stations broadcast intolerant views regarding minority groups, such as the gay community, and religious sects like Ahmadiyya” (an Islamic movement that was condemned as heresy by Islamist ulema), says Shita Laksmi, a leading media activist with the Southeast Asia Technology and Transparency Initiative. “Unfortunately, that kind of content will eventually shape our culture.”

The situation is complicated by a lack of clear broadcasting regulations and the fact that media watchdogs are largely toothless. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission has long been known for its wishy-washy stance on media cross-ownership and the repeated violation of Indonesia’s broadcasting code of conduct. The country’s press law includes an article specifically guaranteeing newsroom independence, but it is never enforced. In the days leading up to the presidential election, the chairman of the commission recommended that the government

FAHMI ALI

*The inauguration this fall of the new Indonesian president, known as a “man of the people,” raised hopes for a cleaner government*



## CITIZEN JOURNALISM IN INDONESIA HAS UNLEASHED CRITICISM OF THE MEDIA ESTABLISHMENT



not renew the licenses for two TV stations because of their partisan political coverage. Yet the government only issued a reprimand and allowed the stations to stay on the air.

Another watchdog, the Indonesian Press Council, is in better shape, though it is a voluntary body that only works if all parties agree to comply. After receiving numerous reports about Tanoesoedibjo's and Bakrie's newsroom interference, the council finally released several weak statements appealing to all media stakeholders to remain independent.

The picture is even bleaker from the inside. The broadcasting commission, which oversees content and issues recommendations for frequency allocation, consists of nine members selected by parliament every three years. According to one former broadcasting commissioner, ingrained corporate interests are crippling the selection process. The most qualified candidates are routinely passed over, while those with strong ties to the broadcasting industry are selected.

Journalists working under these conditions face difficult choices. TV producer Luviana—who, like many Indonesians, goes by only one name—says she was sacked from Metro TV in February 2012 because of her repeated protests against the station's imbalanced coverage of the National Democratic Party. Surya Paloh, who owns Metro TV, is currently chairman of that party. "Most of the journalists [at Metro TV] are courageous and independent," Luviana says, "except when they have to report about Surya Paloh and his party." She says the edict to report only positive news about the party is unquestionable: "It's like your employment contract: If you don't like it, don't work here."

**B**efore she was fired, Luviana and likeminded colleagues tried to set up a union to challenge what they felt was an unfair distribution of bonuses. A week after their first meeting, Metro TV's human resources department asked her to resign. She refused, took her case to the industrial court and, after a long trial, lost. The judgment had a chilling effect on the Metro TV newsroom. Metro TV journalists interviewed for this article didn't want to talk about the issues. "I just want to work," one says. "I don't talk about internal politics."

Change is coming, however, mostly from the digital world. The VIVAnews and MNC episodes were all widely discussed on social

media, sparking a nationwide debate about the role of the media during elections. Now, more and more journalists are using Facebook and Twitter to talk openly about what happens in editorial meetings. Some use their real names; others tweet anonymously. When Tanoesoedibjo's representatives tried to order the newsroom in the MNC office in East Java to broadcast rosy clips of the Hanura Party last May, someone recorded the conversation and uploaded it to YouTube, where it soon went viral.

Digital-first initiatives are starting to have an impact, too. Late last year, the Alliance of Independent Journalists launched a mobile app and website called MataMassa (which means "the eyes of the crowd") through which journalists and netizens can report election violations, including owners' interventions in newsrooms. Founded by undergraduate students in Jakarta, the Remotivi website is increasingly vocal in criticizing the media establishment, recently collecting thousands of online signatures to shame the broadcasting commission for its inaction.

In 2007, in the remote town of Pontianak in West Kalimantan, several journalists and activists founded community-based station Ruai TV. One of the flagship programs, Ruai SMS, is a citizen journalist project in which users send texts about the news happening around them. "The program empowers indigenous people who have no means to communicate their problems and so far have been neglected by the mainstream media," says Ruai SMS founder Harry Surjadi.

Initiatives such as these may, in part, be responsible for the increasing resentment toward politicians who own media businesses and the poor showing of Golkar, the National Democrats, and Hanura in last April's polls. But these are incremental changes. A permanent shift is essential. "We need to revise the press law so we have clearer regulation, especially on media monopolies and cross-ownership," says Nezar Patria, a member of the Indonesian Press Council.

Change will be difficult, but not impossible, especially with people like Patria in the press council. He understands the issues better than most. The former deputy editor in chief at VIVAnews, he resigned immediately after receiving Ardie's e-mail last April, not even waiting for the rooster to crow. "There are many good journalists who cannot do anything because of the pressure," he says. "We need to do something for them." ■

THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN NEWS

# BEING THERE

**The escalating personal and financial cost of foreign reporting is changing the way correspondents cover the world**

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

*Four months after a 2005 earthquake devastated mountain villages in Kashmir, a survivor finds shelter in a tent in Pakistan*





IN OCTOBER, AS EBOLA raged out of control and unsettled much of the world, I began making plans for a reporting trip to West Africa. I had covered a minor outbreak of Ebola in Uganda for Smithsonian magazine two years earlier, and I had become fascinated by the science, the public health issues, and the human drama surrounding the virus. I wanted to write about the epidemic, despite the risks. The question was, how?

A decade ago, when I was correspondent at large for Newsweek, the answer would have been easy. I would have made a few calls, found a fixer, gotten on a plane, and hit the ground running. But like many of my peers who are still journalists, I work as a freelancer, obliged to hustle for assignments and deal with logistics I never had to worry about as a coddled staff correspondent.

I sold an editor at Matter on a long profile of a noted Sierra Leonean doctor who died of the disease in July. But I still had to deal with the complicated logistics.

After reaching out to half a dozen companies I struck a deal for evacuation insurance with Global Rescue, though the fine print indicated that, if I contracted Ebola in Sierra Leone, I'd be flown to Europe *only if* a rescue plane was available.

I came up with a budget for the trip, but wildly exceeded it. My total expenses—including an unexpected three weeks of quarantine at an Airbnb apartment when I got home, at the request of my son's nursery—came to nearly \$10,000. Given the medical risks and the huge costs, it wasn't surprising that I hadn't seen a single other reporter in a week of traveling in the country.

In a year dominated by crises—the twin horrors of Ebola and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Russian President Vladimir Putin's showdown with the West over Ukraine, the Gaza war—foreign reporting is once again in the spotlight. What's most striking about the coverage now is just how different the people reporting it look from a decade ago. The veteran correspondents from the so-called legacy media who once flooded the crisis zones have faded away. In their place has come an army of upstarts: staff reporters for new outfits such as Vice Media and BuzzFeed and freelance journalists patching together assignments.

A handful of new digital publications, such as The Atavist and Matter, want long-form narrative, love foreign reporting, and will pay for it. There's also been an explosion of citizen journalists, including activists and rebels, sometimes armed with nothing more than iPhones and Twitter accounts, who have provided visceral on-the-ground descriptions, if not analysis, of such epochal events as the 2009 pro-democracy protests in Iran and the Syrian civil war.

The abundance of new reporting venues has also given rise to new questions. Are outlets like Vice and BuzzFeed providing the same quality of coverage as The New York Times and The Washington Post? Given the spate of kidnappings in Syria, and the horrific killings of James Foley and Steven Sotloff, are news organizations using freelancers who aren't adequately prepared? And is it ethical to use their work without giving them the institutional benefits only big outlets can provide?

Another death, in early December, adds urgency to these questions. Freelance photojournalist Luke Somers was killed by his

captors in Yemen when they realized a U.S. effort to rescue him was underway.

Since citizen journalists are often the only source of news in conflict zones, how do we know which information to trust? And with nongovernmental organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch becoming more important sources of news, how do we ensure we're getting information free of any one organization's agenda? If foreign reporting is replaced by personal opinion and propaganda, what's left? As NPR's Deborah Amos says about the civil war in Syria, "The problem is, we really don't know what's happening inside."

In 1993, when I landed my first overseas assignment for Newsweek, as sub-Saharan Africa bureau chief, getting a sense of what was going on inside seemed a lot more straightforward. Newsmagazines and newspapers had the budgets to sustain in-depth reportage by seasoned correspondents. But after I moved on in 1996 Newsweek closed its Nairobi bureau, one of the first casualties in a nearly two-decade retrenchment.

The statistics are sobering. The number of foreign correspondents working for U.S. newspapers dropped from 307 in 2003 to 234 in 2011, according to the American Journalism Review (AJR), a fall of about 25 percent. The number of foreign press members covering the United States mirrors the trend in American reporting abroad. The number of media visas issued by the State Department, an approximation of how many foreign journalists enter the U.S., peaked at 18,187 in the year after the 9/11 terror attacks, but fell to 14,298 in 2013.

The U.S. numbers continue to shrink. Eighteen newspapers, including The Boston Globe and the Chicago Tribune, plus two





*Libya, above in 2011 after an air strike, is one of the dangerous places where the Associated Press no longer sends freelancers*

newspaper chains, closed down all their overseas bureaus between 1998 and 2011, the years that AJR surveyed. The Los Angeles Times has cut its foreign bureaus from 22 in 2004 to 10 today. Network TV news coverage is also in retreat. According to Pew's State of the News Media 2014 report, network coverage of foreign news in 2013 was less than half of what it was in the late 1980s.

The legacy media story isn't all bad news, though. The wire services are still alive and well, and outlets with a robust foreign presence have become more robust. The Associated Press (AP) maintains bureaus in 81 countries, while Bloomberg has correspondents in 73. NPR has added 13 bureaus abroad since 2004, and the Financial Times has added 10 during the same period. The Wall Street Journal has kept up a strong foreign presence, and Time and The Economist still have eight and 21 bureaus, respectively.

The New York Times continues to expand its global footprint, reopening an Istanbul bureau, launching bureaus in Warsaw and Tunis, hiring a contract correspondent in Tehran. Due in part to its merger with the International Herald Tribune, the Times has 75 foreign correspondents, a historic high, and 31 bureaus, seven more than it had 10 years ago. Readers are hungry for global coverage, says Michael Slackman,

a former Times Cairo correspondent who is now the international managing editor, and the shrinkage of overseas news in other major U.S. papers has given the Times all the more reason to boost its foreign coverage.

But legacy media face a challenge from newcomers chasing a younger demographic and loaded with cash. Pew found that 30 of the largest digital-only news organizations account for about 3,000 jobs, and one significant area of investment is global coverage. The Huffington Post hopes to grow to 15 countries from 11 this year. Quartz has reporters in London, Bangkok, Delhi, and Hong Kong. In December 2013, Vice Media co-founder Shane Smith committed

\$50 million to a new venture, Vice News, which now has 34 bureaus around the world and has produced a series of remarkable—and sometimes controversial—documentaries.

In early 2013 Vice's filmmakers accompanied former Chicago Bulls star Dennis Rodman on a trip into authoritarian North Korea, where Rodman engaged in a bizarre round of "basketball diplomacy" with the country's leader Kim Jong-un and later praised the dictator as "a great guy." A five-part documentary, "The Islamic State," by veteran filmmaker Medyan Dairieh, provided an unprecedented look at life inside the ISIS stronghold in Raqqa. In both cases the filmmakers had the kind of access that most media can only dream about, but Vice also came under fire for giving two of the world's most horrendous regimes a popular platform.

That's hardly to say that Vice specializes in puffery. In April 2014 gunmen seized Vice correspondent Simon Ostrovsky in the separatist enclave of Slovyansk in eastern Ukraine, where he had been producing a series of hard-hitting reports on the conflict called "Russian Roulette: The Invasion of Ukraine." Ostrovsky was interrogated and held for three days.

Kevin Sutcliffe, Vice's head of news programming in Europe, says mainstream TV

**NPR AND THE FT ARE  
AMONG THE NEWS  
OUTLETS THAT HAVE  
ADDED FOREIGN  
BUREAUS SINCE 2004**

## THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN NEWS

networks wrongly assumed young people weren't interested in foreign news. The problem "was the worn-out approach, with newscasters, tight packages, and live feeds from Washington. The world is a rough, raggedy place, and young people want journalism that reflects that. They want authentic close-up reporting, less packaging, less mediation." Vice News has racked up more than 160 million video views and has one million YouTube subscribers, evidence, Sutcliffe says, that the 30-and-under crowd will flock to foreign news if it's delivered in an edgy and immersive way.

He shrugs off criticism that many of Vice's documentaries lack context and promote their millennial reporters over their subject matter, and says he's proud of the Rodman-in-North-Korea and life-in-the-Islamic-State stories. "Those pieces got enormous notice and provoked discussion," says Sutcliffe. "You come away with indelible and extraordinary images that give you insight into what's going on there."

BuzzFeed has 175 million unique visitors a month and enough venture capital to take a run at the journalistic establishment. In July 2013, BuzzFeed hired Miriam Elder, a former

Moscow bureau chief for The Guardian, to build a foreign-bureau system from the ground up. Elder has hired full-time reporters in Istanbul, Nairobi, Kiev, and Cairo, as well as correspondents who report exclusively on women's rights and international lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) issues. "There's a huge activist community in the USA, and our thinking was, 'This is a natural audience for us, and [an international beat reporter] is a great way to get them interested in other countries,'" says Elder, who's planning to hire reporters to cover China and Mexico.

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*The long-running war in Afghanistan poses coverage challenges. Below, a Northern Alliance soldier in 2001 with a rocket-propelled grenade*



It's typical of the ways in which BuzzFeed has sought to differentiate itself from legacy media. "The younger generation is getting their news through Facebook, Twitter," Elder says, "so every story we write has to be breaking news." The formula so far is working. A \$50 million investment from the Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz will help Elder grow her correspondent corps.

Jonah Peretti, BuzzFeed's founder and CEO, says he's building a global media brand and sees foreign news as essential, a view that aligns him with such old-school media

moguls as Henry Luce. Though BuzzFeed's primary audience is between 18 and 34, Peretti insists, "Our investment is for a global audience of all ages. We do [foreign news] because it matters to readers and can have a big impact on the world. ... BuzzFeed has figured out a business model to support journalism. We have the resources to invest in foreign reporting, investigative journalism, narrative features, and beat reporting."

BuzzFeed's foreign reportage has been sophisticated and informative. Recent standout work includes Middle East correspondent Mike Giglio's lengthy report from the Syria-Turkey border on the illicit oil trade that is enriching ISIS, and Max Seddon's piece about how the rebels in Donetsk, Ukraine were quietly creating the trappings of an independent state. "BuzzFeed is our competition now," the Times's Slackman says. "We'd be foolish not to take them seriously."

How is BuzzFeed getting it right? Mostly by marrying a reputation for hipness and irreverence with smart hiring. Elder has brought aboard half a dozen reporters with formidable expertise in the subjects they're covering, such as Gregory D. Johnsen, their inaugural Michael Hastings National Security Fellow, who wrote a well-received book about Islamic extremism in the Middle East, "The Last Refuge: Yemen, al-Qaeda, and America's War in Arabia."

Still, not all of BuzzFeed's journalism would pass muster at more established news organizations. A recent piece, by Mike Giglio, purporting to be an exclusive interview with a man who has smuggled ISIS fighters into Europe, was pieced together largely from a single unnamed source, with a handful of pro forma denials, a method not generally regarded as the best practice in journalism.

**M**ost of the new digital startups don't have the advantage of BuzzFeed's huge bankroll. GlobalPost, founded in 2008 by Charles Sennott, a former Boston Globe Middle East correspondent, and Philip Balboni, a Boston cable TV executive, set out to replicate, on a low budget, the foreign correspondent corps of American newspapers in their heyday. The site put a dozen marquee reporters on retainer, but much of its reporting has been provided by young American freelancers, who are paid a few hundred dollars per story. (I signed on as a contributor

to GlobalPost early on, but pulled out when I realized I didn't have the time and the pay was low.) As a business venture, GlobalPost has struggled. "We have not yet reached break even," says Balboni, GlobalPost's president and CEO.

Lately, Sennott has scaled back his involvement to develop a nonprofit venture called The GroundTruth Project, which relies on grants and focuses on training locals in some of the world's hot spots to do in-depth reporting. Sennott has worked with a group of international editors, journalists, and advocacy groups, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters Without Borders, the Overseas Press Club, and the Frontline Club of London, to draft a new set of shared expectations and responsibilities for news organizations and field correspondents—whether staff or freelance or local hires.

Shared standards would be timely since the rising demand for freelancers has its perils. Before the spate of kidnappings and killings of journalists in Syria, it was common for media organizations to rely on freelancers in war zones and send them on assignments without proper insurance and training, says Farnaz Fassihi, a Beirut-based staffer for The Wall Street Journal. The pay was low, competition was fierce, and they often took "crazy risks," according to Fassihi, to distinguish themselves from the pack. That practice is less common in Syria now, she adds.

In Syria, more than 80 journalists have been kidnapped—with about 20 still missing—and at least 70 journalists, nearly half of them freelancers, have been killed since 2011, according to the CPJ. The vast majority of those killed were Syrians. Seven, including freelancers Foley and Sotloff, were Americans or Europeans working for Western news organizations.

Ayman Oghanna, an Istanbul-based freelance war photographer for Al Jazeera America, says that in 2012, he made a vow never to go into Syria without having an assignment and his insurance covered. "Not many media were willing to give me that," he says. "A number of prestigious magazines said, 'Go in, and when you're out of danger we'll take what you have.'"

Oghanna was outraged by the failure of these publications to assume responsibility for him, but he knew plenty of other freelancers who were willing to accept those terms to get assignments.

Foley had been freelancing for GlobalPost and Agence France-Presse (AFP) before he



crossed the border into Syria in the fall of 2012. AFP global news director Michèle Léridon says Foley was not on assignment for the agency, but he would “propose images to us when he thought he had something interesting to file. We did not discuss movements with him, and we never asked him to go to any particular area.”

GlobalPost maintained a closer relationship with Foley, but Balboni stresses that he went into Syria on his own after rejecting Balboni’s offer of a staff job in South America. Once he was inside Syria, GlobalPost’s editors took his stories. “We’ve been reflecting on this question [of Foley’s kidnapping] every day. There’s a lot we need to learn from this,” says Sennott, who points out that GlobalPost made certain that Foley took a hazardous environments training course before traveling to the Middle East. “We mounted an extraordinary effort” to locate Foley and obtain his release, Balboni insists. “We had people on the border within a week. They went into Syria, and they investi-

gated for months. We spared no expense, no effort.” A video showing Foley’s beheading was released in August. ISIS said it killed Foley in retaliation for U.S. airstrikes in Iraq.

Kathleen Carroll, executive editor of the AP, says her agency never uses freelancers unless they’ve been vetted and have insurance and protective gear, and won’t send them to Syria or Libya. “Plenty of journalists go out on the branch until the branch is cracked, and our job is to pull them back,” she says. “We owe them that. To say ‘I trust their judgment’ is a complete abdication of responsibility.”

In November 2013, AFP decided that it, too, would no longer accept photos or any other contributions from freelancers who travel into rebel-held Syria, although it would continue to use material provided by Syrian nationals.

The Foley and Sotloff nightmares have prompted a reckoning in the new media world. BuzzFeed’s Elder says the company keeps a security adviser on retainer and has

## THE ABDUCTIONS AND KILLINGS OF JOURNALISTS IN SYRIA HAVE USHERED IN A NEW ERA OF CAUTION

turned down recent requests from Giglio to travel into Syria. When he worked along the border on the oil story, Giglio stayed in continual contact with the home office and had his movements tracked by a GPS device. “We are always assessing and reassessing the risks,” says Elder.

Organizations are springing up to provide the institutional support freelancers need. Storyhunter, a Brooklyn-based organization founded in 2012 that works with freelance overseas journalists, provides its members with medical insurance through April International, a company also used by Reporters Without Borders. (For more on start-ups for foreign correspondents, see “Have Laptop, Will Travel” on page 30.)

Away from the conflict zones, some freelancers are thriving. Kathleen McLaughlin has contributed from Beijing since 2006 to The Economist, GlobalPost, BuzzFeed, and Women’s Wear Daily. She often finances her travel in China through grants and works in media ranging from video to long-form narrative. There’s no question, she believes, that freelancers fill an essential role. “There is a misconception that people work as freelancers because they can’t do anything else,” says McLaughlin. “It’s exactly the opposite. Once you figure out how to make a living at it, you can do anything.”

So how can such work be supported, especially in crisis zones? One way is for news organizations to underwrite the cost of risk and hazardous environment training, and pay freelancers a day rate that allows them to buy insurance. Foreign correspondents are more vulnerable than ever, in part because they are no longer regarded as indispensable channels of information to the public. “The bad guys don’t need foreign correspondents anymore because organizations like ISIS can now get their message out directly,” Carroll notes.

## 4 MONTHS IN MYANMAR

A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER based in Houston, Spike Johnson estimates he works 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week when he’s abroad. His profit-and-loss statement from a trip to Myanmar—covering child soldiers, a beauty pageant, and political prisoners—is typical of freelancers. Johnson does expect another \$3,000 from his child soldier and beauty pageant work, meaning he will have earned roughly \$10 an hour during the trip. Yet Johnson calls the payoff huge. “I have the rare chance to take glimpses into other lives, to learn from those interactions, and to connect empathy from continent to continent. This is the real wage. The money is just a way to stay alive, and to keep doing what I’m doing.”

*\*Johnson paid \$200 for hotels, then stayed with a friend for free*

### INCOME

Photos for two magazines (US, UK)  
 Photos for a French TV station  
 Photos for a UK newspaper  
 Photos for an NGO  
 Story for a Myanmar newspaper  
 Travel grant from a journalism nonprofit

**TOTAL INCOME: \$9350**

### EXPENSES

Accommodations \$200\*  
 Fixers \$975  
 Flights \$2000  
 In-country travel \$1220  
 Food \$1830  
 Insurance \$400  
 Internet, phone, & website \$775

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$7400**

**BOTTOM LINE: +\$1950**

## WHY WE TAKE THE RISK

*When entire regions are no-go zones for journalists, what do we accept as news?*

BY TYLER HICKS

NINETY-FIVE PERCENT of my job is just to get to places, to read body language, to get past people who are trying to stop me from taking my pictures. The other five percent is once you realize you're in that moment and you push the shutter on your camera and you start getting what you arrived for.

People ask me why I take the risks that I do to do this job. We take these risks because we want to validate what's happening around the world. We hope that by being there to document it firsthand that it will bring truth and hopefully positive change.

One of the places that really allows you to gauge the type of risk that you take is Gaza. It's a place that you can work with an enormous amount of freedom. It's small. It doesn't take very long to get to places. People are brave: the drivers, the translators. They've grown up with this. It really represents everything about what a photojournalist would hope as far as a place that you can cover and make decisions in the field as to how far you want to push it.

The way that Gaza permits us to make those decisions about risk—about when to run out onto the beach, about when to go out driving around at first light—that arena is getting smaller and smaller.

Libya started to transform the way we cover some of the darkest parts of the world. A lot of people decided it wasn't worth the risk anymore. The organizations that sent us out there decided that



*Access can be a matter of luck. Tyler Hicks happened to be nearby as terrorists struck a Nairobi mall in 2013*

they were not going to send us anymore, even people who wanted to go. You could really feel the noose tightening on our ability to work.

It's really hard because these are important stories, in Syria, in Iraq and all throughout the region that ISIS now controls. We've watched helplessly as fellow journalists have been very publicly executed. This fear campaign has worked. It's not only terrified the journalist population but an entire region of the world.

We have to ask ourselves, though, what we are accepting as news when we're not able to go there. How can we accurately report on the ground without correspondents walking through that territory, collecting shell casings, studying blast patterns, having that

amazing photographer-correspondent team that creates such rich journalism? Do we rely solely on local contacts to do that? That can work. There are some amazing journalists there. But we're not any longer deciding, "Do we go down this road or not?" or "Should we go to that hospital or not?" We're deciding whether we go to entire regions or entire countries anymore.

I've never before seen the quality of the propaganda ISIS claims to be news. Some of these things, they're like music videos. They reach a lot of people. I certainly have not seen anything like that from any other insurgent group before. But the big question is, what do you accept as real? What do you accept as news?

We have to be thankful to the people who have

sacrificed their lives in these places. We have to remember that all of these people were taking a huge risk to bring information about other people, people they cared about strongly enough to risk their lives. I applaud them. I think about my friends who have died, or my friends who have been very badly injured, and I think they'd want me to keep doing this work. To stop is almost like, "That's what I gave my life for? Now there's going to be less information out there?" I feel like there should be more.

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*Tyler Hicks is a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer for The New York Times. This essay is an edited excerpt from his Joe Alex Morris Jr. Memorial Lecture delivered on November 6 at the Nieman Foundation*

It's not only the bad guys who are bypassing the mainstream media. Citizen journalism reached a critical mass during President Bashar al-Assad's vicious crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Syria in 2011. "The international media could not go to Syria, because [the government] blocked off all the visas," says NPR's Amos, who has covered Syria since the conflict began. Many of these young Syrian activists were influenced by the bloody events in 1982 in Hama, where President Hafez al-Assad's regime put down a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood by killing between 10,000 and 30,000 people. "These young Syrians said, 'This time there will be pictures. This time people will know what happened here,'" Amos says. Western governments started sending iPhones and cameras, set up Internet links, and created radio stations along the border. The result: "Some Syrians gradually morphed into actual professional journalists, and they're very good at it," according to Amos.

Outlets for citizen journalists are expanding. GuardianWitness and Global

Voices enable citizens to tell their own stories, with a focus on foreign news. The Guardian also holds training programs in places like Delhi and Johannesburg to encourage locals to do reporting. Citizen journalism fills an important need, but the reporting often lacks the analysis and context that experienced journalists provide.

### CITIZEN JOURNALISTS AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ARE AMONG THE NEW PLAYERS COVERING FOREIGN NEWS

Other nontraditional players have gotten into the business, too. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees fields a team of a dozen journalists to produce multimedia stories about Syrian refugees, Iraqis displaced by ISIS, and other victims of the Middle East conflict. The work has appeared on The New Yorker, Time, The Atlantic, and The Guardian websites as well as Mashable and BuzzFeed.

Peter Bouckaert, emergencies director for Human Rights Watch (HRW), travels to crisis zones that mainstream media rarely visit, contributing to Foreign Policy, The Washington Post, and The Telegraph as well as to HRW's own reports. He and a HRW colleague have made 12 lengthy trips to the war-torn Central African Republic in the past 18 months. With its donor contributions, HRW has been able to operate largely free of the financial considerations that constrain news outlets. "When I tell correspondents what kind of resources I draw on, they end up very jealous," Bouckaert says.

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*The cross-border war between Israel and Hamas was a major foreign story of 2014. Below, Palestinians prepare to bury a member of Hamas*



## BURN AFTER READING

*Surveillance technologies make it more important for journalists abroad to protect sources*

BY MICHAEL FITZGERALD

**MODERN COMMUNICATIONS** and the rise of the surveillance state make it harder than ever for journalists abroad to protect their sources. The consequences for sources can be dire, even fatal.

Journalists going abroad need to start by asking if encryption is legal where they will be. Does the government forbid certain kinds of apps? Do you need to show your ID to get a SIM card for your cell phone? “Find out the answers to these questions before you go,” advises Susan E. McGregor, assistant director of Columbia’s Tow Center for Digital Journalism. She adds that reporters also need to know if the telecommunications companies are state-owned. “If they are, you will need to be careful never to send specifics about people or locations via text message or e-mail especially.”

Technology can also help journalists defend those who would talk to them. In countries that don’t ban encryption, journalists can use

encrypted e-mail tools, like Pretty Good Privacy, encrypted hard disks (FileVault2 for the Mac, PGP or TrueCrypt, BitLocker or DiskCryptor for PC), encrypted phones, encrypted chat (SilentCircle, Wickr, to name just two), and encrypted voice (Signal).

If encryption isn’t allowed, don’t take your regular laptop with you. The Associated Press (AP) sends reporters on overseas assignments with freshly scrubbed systems that don’t have data on them. These computers are scrubbed again when the reporter returns. The PCs are encrypted whenever legally allowed, though reporters must be careful, says Ted Bridis, editor of the AP’s Washington investigative team. “When you use the tools of a spy, you start being suspected of being a spy.”

Reporters should also use software like Tails and Tor to anonymously surf websites. The tools are complicated and clumsy, but they are important.

Bridis says there’s a limbo zone on international flights where the plane is outside any

terrestrial jurisdiction. “It’s just a matter of time,” he says, before AP reporters find themselves confronted in-flight, or at border crossings, by U.S. or another government’s border police, demanding to copy electronic devices and asking for encryption keys.

In many countries, journalists work out of government offices, where the government controls the communications. To make a phone call that isn’t bugged requires leaving the office.

Code words need to be developed for writing about sensitive subjects. And journalists should avoid putting data into the hands of cloud providers like Amazon or Google, because it’s easy to subpoena the information. Journalists working abroad should avoid hotel WiFi, Internet cafes, and corporate networks, especially when transmitting data. Even journalists who use encryption can have their keystrokes captured by a key logger.

Digital eavesdropping is just one problem reporters face; old-fashioned

surveillance still happens, too. Things shift based on circumstances.

Judith Matloff, a veteran of two decades of foreign reporting, wrote, “In some situations, you should go low-tech, like meeting on park benches. In other circumstances, use sophisticated encryption software and proxy servers but don’t use encryption in a country that bans it.”

Matloff also teaches conflict reporting at Columbia University’s journalism school, and like every journalist contacted for this story, refused to share every method she uses to protect sources.

She says journalists should avoid social media and SMS messaging, because it can reveal their whereabouts. She recommends “dummy” notebooks that have no compromising information in them. Computer cameras can be turned on without your knowing, and she recommends covering them, and putting a cover above your hands when typing. Paper is fine for taking notes, but remember to burn, not shred, the notes.

But is the agenda-driven reporting by these organizations really news or just another form of PR, albeit for worthy causes? Bouckaert argues that the difference between HRW’s work and foreign correspondence is negligible: “We’re trying to draw attention to international crises and hold the perpetrators responsible. Objectivity and impartiality are important for us, and lots of journalists want to make a difference in these places as well.”

The days when big-city newspapers nurtured a bond of trust between readers and

experienced correspondents have given way to a more haphazard, fluid environment. Some see danger in that. “We’re losing the mature, in-depth reporting about what’s happening in more remote places of the world,” says Bouckaert. “The reflective reporting that is done by experienced journalists with resources behind them is rapidly disappearing. And it’s not being replaced by Vice. I consider that to be self-centered journalism. It’s ‘Look at the crazy shit I’ve been up to’ rather than drawing attention to horrific suffering.”

Others give new media ventures their blessing. “We can’t afford to be too snooty about anyone who’s trying to engage people about what’s going on in the world,” says the AP’s Carroll. “If we can rid the profession of the castor oil tendency—‘Read this. It’s good for you’—that’s good.”

Correspondents have traditionally provided us with an education, albeit sometimes flawed, about the real world. Despite all of the challenges, the reporters are there. Now we need to find a way to protect and pay them. ■

THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN NEWS

# HAVE LAPTOP, WILL TRAVEL

How a clutch of start-ups is supplying the foreign coverage once provided by staff correspondents

BY JOHN DYER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

*Covering war has always been dangerous but in the chaos of Libya it became riskier. Here, a natural gas facility burns in 2011 as opposition fighters push on.*









**I**N MARCH, WHEN IT became clear something big was happening in Crimea, Jacob Resneck packed his knapsack with a laptop, sound recorder and camera and boarded a one-way flight from his adopted hometown, Istanbul, to the peninsula on the Black Sea. There the Californian met up with a British photographer friend who speaks Russian, rented a room for a week in a Simferopol boarding house, and began reporting on one of the biggest stories of the year—Russia’s annexation of Crimea—for outlets like USA Today and Radio France Internationale.

Resneck, a freelancer, spent less than \$1,000 of his own money traveling to Crimea to write and produce a handful of stories that paid around \$250 apiece. He also took a serious risk. His American insurance plan wouldn’t have airlifted him to a Western hospital if he had been injured. He had travel insurance that may or may not have covered a self-employed reporter in the field. And he didn’t take a flak jacket because, well, he doesn’t own one.

“I’m not a photographer,” he says. “I don’t need to be right up there to see guys running around dodging explosions. Anyway, at that time in Crimea, if you went through a checkpoint, the separatists would say, ‘Oh, sweet, you have a flak jacket. I’ll take that.’ They had rifles, so you couldn’t argue with them.”

Resneck filed his print stories to newspapers via Associated Reporters Abroad (ARA), a Germany-based group of more than 100 international freelancers (where I work as an editor, though not on Resneck’s stories). He arranged his radio pieces through

GRNlive, a service in London that hooks up freelancers with TV and radio broadcasters around the world. Both services act as go-betweens that make it easier for freelancers to land assignments rather than sending out pitches, waiting for editors’ responses, and re-pitching if necessary. “They know which client wants the story,” he says. “It’s difficult to do it yourself when you roll into a new city.”

ARA and GRNlive are among a clutch of freelancer-based ventures trying to fill the vacuum left by the thinning of the ranks of old-school news bureaus and staff correspondents that once covered foreign news. Often founded by expat journalists who witnessed brutal cuts amid the rise of the Internet and the collapse of the traditional news business model, they are expediting coverage in faraway places for news outlets that don’t have the resources to send staff into the field.

Most act as clearinghouses for foreign editors who need copy or videos and journalists who often assume the costs and risks of setting themselves up overseas. The risks were most recently highlighted by the murders in 2014 of freelancers James Foley and Steven Sotloff, after being kidnapped in Syria, and freelancer Luke Somers, a year after he had been kidnapped in Yemen.

For editors, the start-ups are like temp agencies that provide on-the-spot workers on short notice, an important resource at a time when the Web has created a newshole that’s never filled. For journalists, the start-ups are a way to maximize their income in the so-called “gig economy,” the patchwork of stories, consulting work, and other short-term projects that often comprise freelance careers.

Journalist-entrepreneurs like Jeremy Walker, co-founder of the U.K.-based NewsFixed, don’t believe the conventional wisdom that interest in foreign coverage is lapsing. To Walker, it’s the best of times and the worst of times for international news. Industry cuts have forced journalists abroad to be more resourceful than ever, but that hasn’t stanching demand for foreign news or interest among journalists to go overseas, he says. He cites a recent essay by tech entrepreneur and Netscape co-founder Marc Andreessen arguing that the climate for journalism is rife with opportunities.

“Some of the best news about the news business is the gigantic expansion of the addressable market, a function of the rise of the developing world plus the Internet,” Andreessen wrote on the website of Andreessen Horowitz, his investment firm, in February. “So how big is it? If you extrapolate from the number of smartphones globally, the total addressable market for news by 2020 is around five billion people worldwide. However, we all have to get more sophisticated about defining and segmenting markets. It is critical to really understand the *who*, *where*, *when*, and *why* to serve that massive market effectively.”

Walker believes the addressable market for news includes a lot of people like him—people who frequently travel and/or live abroad. As a New Zealander married to a Yemeni who lives in London, he pays attention to events on three continents. His professional experience also told him there was work to be done hooking up editors with reporters. After working in India for The Hindu newspaper and a stint freelancing, he landed a job at the BBC. There, working overnight shifts, he often struggled to find

correspondents in far-flung locales, even though, based on his experience in South Asia and the Middle East, he knew there were writers, photographers, and videographers desperate to report in even the most isolated corners of the world. Someone needed to connect those journalists with audiences who cared, he says. In September 2012, he quit the BBC and started developing NewsFixed.

“On one level, everyone wants to cut down on foreign reporting because it’s costly,” says Walker, in a Skype interview from his office at Seedcamp, a venture capital fund at Google’s start-up incubator in East London’s hip Shoreditch district. “At the same time, foreign news is increasingly relevant to people’s lives. We live in a very globalized world. People are living in places they weren’t 15 years ago.”

NewsFixed has six employees who connect more than 1,000 journalists with editors at outlets like Al Jazeera and The Economist using a database that’s part online classified ad platform, part social

network, and part content management system. Journalists upload profiles and story ideas that editors can search using criteria like location, experience, and expertise. Walker declined to say how much money he’s received from Seedcamp, but the fund gives as much as \$250,000 to its ventures and provides mentoring and other help, according to its website.

Walker views NewsFixed as a tech solution to the imbalances on foreign desks—editors under intense pressure to deliver unique foreign coverage on budgets too slim to send anyone in the newsroom abroad but who have enough funding to commission freelancers if they only knew whom to call. He and his staff don’t edit stories. His only quality control is vetting journalists who join the site. Everything else is the client’s job, though NewsFixed can also handle payments.

Cathy Otten, a British journalist in Iraq, says the start-up landed her assignments with Al Jazeera and Sky News. Without NewsFixed, she’d have been an untested

reporter sending e-mails to editors she’d never met. NewsFixed smoothed her way to assignments. NewsFixed also provided at least a modicum of security for Otten during the recent blitzkrieg rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or ISIS—the terror group that killed Foley—by simply keeping in touch with her, a job once reserved for bureau chiefs. “Over the summer, NewsFixed was really great at sending out updates and checking in during the ISIS story,” she says. “It was nice that they were involved and had that concern.”

ARA is more hands-on, acting like a co-op, providing editorial guidance—copy editing and crafting pitches—to member reporters on behalf of clients like USA Today and The Washington Times. Its connections between editors and writers arise from relationships built by longtime international freelancer and managing editor Jabeen Bhatti and eight full- and part-time staffers. Launched out of a small attic space in 2008, it now has an office in Berlin’s expat-friendly Kreuzberg neighborhood and runs as a nonprofit.

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*Days after taking this image in Libya in 2011, Tyler Hicks was held captive by government soldiers for six days along with three other journalists*



Working for ARA and GRNlive has helped Resneck achieve the freelancer's goal of routinely repackaging reporting for more than one venue. ARA steers him to whoever wants his copy immediately. That print reporting then gives him bona fides to provide broadcast outlets with news via GRNlive. "They can show that I'm on the ground and say, 'Hey CBS radio, this guy just wrote a piece for USA Today or The Washington Times. He's close to the action. Do you want to have him on your program?'" The agency takes a bit but I get paid," Resneck says. "I come from a newspaper background. As much as it breaks my heart to admit this, I couldn't make a living only writing."

Brooklyn-based Storyhunter takes a similar approach. Founded in 2012, the start-up launched a new website this summer that uses algorithms like online dating sites to match editors' needs and journalists' story ideas, drawing on the input of more than 3,500 videographers and documentary filmmakers that co-founder Jaron Gilinsky says have signed up for the service. He views Storyhunter as a management system to replace foreign editors' Rolodexes and Excel spreadsheets of names, numbers, and e-mail addresses.

Editors and journalists rate their experiences with each other after they have completed projects, letting others know

## FOR EDITORS, THE START-UPS ARE LIKE TEMP AGENCIES, AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR THE WEB'S LIMITLESS NEWSHOLE

whether a story went well or not, and why, in the same way customers rate their experiences with landlords on the Airbnb apartment-sharing service. Storyhunter also arranges payments, offers clients editorial services, like video editing or scriptwriting, for a fee, and provides work insurance to reporters while they are on assignments commissioned through the site, a huge benefit given how freelancers often go to hazardous locations with little or no protection against unforeseen mishaps. Gilinsky declined to describe his funding, saying only that he's raised about \$1 million through private investors. So far, he says,

Storyhunter's clients include Al Jazeera Plus, MSNBC.com, and Fusion, the ABC-Univision joint venture.

Fusion digital news editor Jared Goyette says Storyhunter gives his operation a pool of videographers who plug holes in the footage they take from their ABC and Univision partners. During civil demonstrations in Venezuela in February, for example, Storyhunter produced extra contextual pieces that complemented Fusion crews who were covering day-to-day events. "You need that on-the-ground presence to do anything with any authority," says Goyette.

Most of the start-ups take small cuts of the payments for stories they arrange, usually in the form of a fee or a percentage, depending on whether their staff contributed to the work. But since most of the start-ups are young and burning through capital, it's not certain their business models will work. As an editor at ARA and a former editor at the shuttered Boston-based online start-up Latitude News, which covered foreign stories that had parallels in the U.S., I know foreign coverage outside hot zones is not easy to sell. Before the Ebola outbreak, for example, few editors cared about the scandalously poor state of public health in West Africa.

An established group that was founded in 2000 but took off with the second Iraq war

## FOREIGN NEWS START-UPS

THE CONNECTING OF buyers and sellers that is so much a part of online culture—as well as the rating of each party by the other—has arrived in the world of foreign news. Now freelancers have more ways to find editors interested in buying their stories and editors have more options to get foreign news covered. Most start-ups are low-budget operations, while Storyful, acquired for \$25 million at age 3, is the grand success story.

— JOHN DYER



**Founded:** 2008  
**Location:** Berlin, Germany  
**Number of correspondents:** 100  
**Number of employees:** 8  
**Edits stories:** Yes  
**Major clients:** USA Today, The Washington Times  
**Funding:** Self-sustaining nonprofit  
**What makes it different:** Associated Reporters  
**Abroad works like a co-op. It places stories, assigns coverage of breaking international news, and coordinates regional stories using its freelancer-members on the ground as stringers.**



**Founded:** 2000  
**Location:** London, UK  
**Number of correspondents:** 1,000  
**Number of employees:** 3-5, depending on need  
**Edits stories:** No  
**Major clients:** Australian Broadcasting Corporation, CNN, Fox News  
**Funding:** Self-sustaining for-profit  
**What makes it different:** Working mostly with radio and broadcasters, GRNlive provides interviews from the field and ongoing coverage for major news outlets seeking phone interviews, video footage, and spot news feeds.



**Founded:** 2014  
**Location:** London, UK  
**Number of correspondents:** 1,000  
**Number of employees:** 6  
**Edits stories:** No  
**Major clients:** Al Jazeera, The Economist  
**Funding:** London-based Seedcamp investment fund and mentoring program  
**What makes it different:** NewsFixed connects editors with journalists in the field and vice versa, streamlines commissioning negotiations, and handles payments. Journalists' profiles are automatically updated with their latest stories.



*The demand for foreign news coverage was fueled by the Second Persian Gulf War. Above, a bombed-out palace in Baghdad in 2003*

in 2003, GRNlive keeps overhead low in order to maintain financial viability. GRNlive links journalists and producers for phone interviews and radio and video pieces without becoming involved editorially. Founder Henry Peirse estimates that he generates around \$1 million a year, a testament to how

much Fox News, Deutsche Welle, and his other clients need footage. Most of that revenue is passed on to reporters, however. He has a staff of three to five employees who rotate in and out according to need. It's a lean operation in London with a simple website and no production facilities or expenses

besides office rent and some computers. "We really run the business on cash flow," says Peirse. "In this age of technology, you don't need a lot of stuff."

Other start-ups are more focused on earnings. Like NewsFixed and Storyhunter, Melbourne, Australia-based Newsmodo



**Founded:** 2013  
**Location:** Melbourne, Australia  
**Number of correspondents:** 1,000  
**Number of employees:** 5  
**Edits stories:** Yes  
**Major clients:** The Sun (UK), NBC's "Today" show  
**Funding:** Melbourne-based Oxygen Ventures  
**What makes it different:** Newsmodo connects writers and videographers with editors in an online marketplace. But its marketplace is not exclusive to journalists. It also arranges branded content and other freelancing gigs.



**Founded:** 2010  
**Location:** Dublin, Ireland  
**Number of correspondents:** 0  
**Number of employees:** 100  
**Edits stories:** No, but verifies content  
**Major clients:** Wall Street Journal, New York Times  
**Funding:** Angel investors, Irish government, and venture funds before being bought by News Corp in 2013 for \$25 million  
**What makes it different:** Storyful acquires and verifies freelancers' and citizen journalists' videos for news outlets and obtains licenses for videos found on social media.



**Founded:** 2012  
**Location:** Brooklyn, NY  
**Number of correspondents:** 3,500  
**Number of employees:** 10  
**Edits stories:** Yes, for a fee  
**Major clients:** Fusion  
**Funding:** Independent investors  
**What makes it different:** Appealing primarily to videographers, Storyhunter connects journalists like a dating site—editors and correspondents write profiles and story pitches and see who is interested in working with each other. Later, they rate each other to help others pick partners in the future.



**Founded:** 2011  
**Location:** Paris, France  
**Number of correspondents:** 0  
**Number of employees:** 10  
**Edits stories:** Yes  
**Major clients:** The New York Times Syndicate  
**Funding:** Independent investors  
**What makes it different:** Worldcrunch obtains licenses to translate and sell stories from China's Caixin Media and major newspapers like France's Le Monde, Argentina's Clarin, and Italy's La Stampa to English-language publications.

## THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN NEWS

takes editors' requests for print and broadcast story ideas and solicits pitches for them from journalists—and vice versa—through an online marketplace that has 15,000 members, including 1,000 journalists. Like ARA, its staff of five employees also sometimes provides initial edits to stories and foot-

age before they're filed to NBC's "Today" show, British tabloids like The Sun and The Mirror, and others. But unlike the others, Newsmodo also supplies so-called "branded content" to corporate clients.

Rakhil Ebeli, who founded the start-up in 2013 with money from Oxygen Ventures

in Melbourne, finds that freelancers are more than happy to pursue both types of work. Funded by advertisers or other sponsors, branded content employs journalistic storytelling and fact-finding for pieces that resemble news but often hew to the intended themes of their financial backers. It's not

*On a continent where crises dominate foreign news coverage, the founding of South Sudan, in 2011 after the loss of two million lives, is cause for celebration*



a new strategy. Outfits like Atlantic Media's Quartz have folded branded content into their business models, too. Staff writers can be expected to have ethical quandaries about writing with advertisers in mind. Freelancers, who are constantly working as hired guns for different clients, may have

no such qualms if the pay is right and the work steady.

Storyful in Dublin is likely the best example of a start-up that scored big, accepting a \$25 million acquisition offer from News Corp last year. Launched in 2010 with about \$4 million from angel investors and Enterprise Ireland, a government economic development agency, Storyful verifies the authenticity of video reportage found on social media and elsewhere online for clients like The Wall Street Journal (its only current News Corp partner), The New York Times, and Britain's Channel 4 News. But its 100 employees, around double the number since last year, also secure licenses to videos found on social media that it sells to clients like Yahoo, Mashable, online advertisers, and others. If those videos go viral, they generate revenues for Storyful, the client, and whoever originally shot the video—often not professional reporters at all but citizen journalists who happened to be in the right place at the right time.

**D**avid Clinch, Storyful's executive editor and a former CNN producer, advises start-up journalists to stick to the news rather than a tech or advertising firm that's seeking only to generate cash and clicks rather than quality content. "Partner with big news organizations and seek investment or acquisition," he says. "Web platforms are great partners for us but the risk for start-ups is that a Web platform would take their take but kill the editorial."

Regardless of the business model, journalists in start-up mode need to quickly disabuse themselves of dreams born of Silicon Valley. According to Worldcrunch co-founder Jeff Israely, an American living in Paris and former Time correspondent in Europe, the runway for journalism start-

ups is long and paved with trust rather than immediate financial returns. Editors are swamped, but they are also understandably cautious about accepting stories or videos from unknown, potentially unreliable writers and producers.

With about \$100,000 in seed money, Worldcrunch launched in 2011. It obtains the rights to foreign newspaper stories, translates them into English—often using multilingual freelance journalists—and sells them to English-language media around the world through clients like The New York Times Syndicate. It took a while to convince American editors that Worldcrunch was a legitimate operation run by professional journalists. "Everyone is up to their necks," says Israely, referring to editors and other gatekeepers. "As a start-up, the first challenge is trying to get the time and attention of busy, confused people. It's a lot of legwork. You've got to make it as easy to say yes as possible."

Fusion editor Goyette and his colleagues initially also wondered if they could trust Storyhunter to provide reliable journalists. But they heard good things so decided to use Storyhunter in a pinch, an experience that built up trust. "You are willing to take more risks when you know the story is hot and you want someone there," he says. "You'll take someone and make it work because you know you need stories from this place."

No matter how they operate, all the start-ups depend on hustling freelancers like Resneck who don't mind being on their own. During his March trip to Ukraine—he's taken a total of four reporting trips to the country this year—Resneck took \$40 flights to and from Turkey, split the \$350 cost of a room that he shared with his photographer friend, where they cooked meals, and shared taxi fares with Spanish journalists he met along the way. Working on shoestring budgets like this, he might earn \$1,000 in a good week. In a bad week, his take-home pay can be around \$100.

Resneck's margins are slim. But his overhead is way lower than the newsgathering operations of yesteryear, in addition to being arguably more flexible and just as effective. Groups like ARA and GRNLive have provided him with an ecosystem that's helped him make a living. If he were a staffer based out of a news bureau in a foreign capital, he'd still be working overtime. In his current situation, at least he's his own boss. "Nobody has ownership over what I'm doing," he says. ■

**FOR FREELANCERS,  
THE FREEDOM  
OF BEING YOUR OWN  
BOSS CAN TRUMP  
THE LOW MARGINS**



## What GamerGate can teach news organizations about handling social media storms

BY HELEN LEWIS

# IT'S NO GAME

“ACTUALLY, IT’S ABOUT ETHICS in games journalism.” Earlier this year, this simple sentence came to encapsulate a vicious online debate. Was the social media storm known as “GamerGate” an honest attempt to expose the cozy relationship between the video games industry and the reporters who cover it—or simply an excuse to harass women on the Internet?

Whatever your view on GamerGate—and, like many online controversies, its details are complex and convoluted—there is one thing on which both sides agree. The rise of social media has made journalists more open to accusations of bias, as their connections are now easier to trace. We now talk with potential sources openly on Twitter. We might be Facebook friends with public relations and press officers on our patch. From our online CVs and archived stories, anyone can trace our favored topics and the angles from which we cover them.

Alongside this, it has never been easier for readers to get in touch with journalists—and to encourage others to do so. The media might refer dismissively to “Twitter storms,” but responding poorly to outrage over ethical lapses—whether the anger is genuine or confected—can cause lingering reputational damage. For individual writers, being the focus of an online “swarm” can be a painful, even traumatic, experience.

We can draw some lessons from the saga known as GamerGate. It began when a 24-year-old Eron Gjoni wrote a rambling blog post about the acrimonious breakup of his relationship with a game developer

called Zoe Quinn. His cause was taken up by users of the website 4chan—the image board that spawned LOLcats and the hacker group Anonymous—who spread the (false) rumor that Quinn had traded sex with Kotaku writer Nathan Grayson in exchange for favorable reviews. This allegation was debunked by Grayson’s editor, Stephen Totilo, who pointed out that the writer had never reviewed Quinn’s game.

GamerGate eventually evolved into a sprawling, amorphous mess of allegations—and it resulted in death threats against Quinn and other women in the industry. One of the most prominent examples happened in October, when Utah State University received an anonymous e-mail warning that “the deadliest school shooting in American history” would take place if the school did not cancel a talk by feminist culture critic Anita Sarkeesian, whose YouTube series “Tropes vs. Women in Video Games” takes on gender issues in video games. Sarkeesian cancelled her appearance after being told that, under Utah state law, the school could not bar the audience from bringing guns to her talk.

That said, whatever its supporters’ true intentions, GamerGate did start a conversation about ethics in games journalism. As a result, several gaming websites updated their codes of practice. For example, Kotaku—a site that is part of the Gawker group—has banned its writers from contributing to crowdfunding appeals for independent games, in case they are later asked to review them.



# online HARASSMENT

*Anita Sarkeesian, below at a TEDxWomen talk, has been threatened with violence for her critiques of video game culture*



In 2007, Sarfraz Manzoor suggested in *The Guardian* that most writers knew the subjects that most reliably generated online anger. The ideal story “would probably combine Islam, Israel and 9/11 conspiracy theories with immigration, feminism and [London Mayor] Boris Johnson. And it would be written by Richard Dawkins.” But the first lesson of GamerGate is that what might prompt an angry mob is difficult to predict, given the potential viral nature of anything published online. A whimsical self-deprecating column or an op-ed full of sarcastic hyperbole might not trouble a print audience familiar with the writer’s style—but a casual reader might feel very differently. “All news outlets now surely know you don’t start a fire and walk away” is how Columbia University journalism professor Emily Bell puts it. “The larger problem is not always knowing what is combustible.”

She cites the outing of an online troll by Sky News as an example. The troll, Brenda Leyland, was found dead soon after the piece aired. It was initially reported as a suicide, although the postmortem examination was inconclusive. Throughout the backlash, Sky News did not comment, saying it would be “inappropriate” while a police investigation was going on.

In other circumstances, however, failing to respond—or responding poorly—simply fuels the controversy. In the age of the screenshot, editing or deleting the offending article is unlikely to solve the problem and could even provoke a larger backlash. Perhaps the biggest challenge is the speed at which a Twitter storm can ignite.

“Prior to the rise of the real-time social Web, we only really experienced these problems through much more contained mechanisms, like comment threads or e-mail campaigns, both of which you could exert some control over,” says Bell, who edited *The Guardian*’s website before moving to America. She adds that negative feedback is “an institutional challenge as well as an individual one these days.” It is also an equality issue, as research by the British think tank Demos shows that among journalists, women receive three times as many abusive tweets as men.

While journalists cannot control the response on Twitter, they can perhaps take some of the heat out of a social media storm by responding swiftly and publicly. Margaret Sullivan, *The New York Times*’s public editor, is known for her deftness in doing just that. “I would say that in many cases where there’s a major social media uproar, there

is something there,” she says “[although] it might not be of the magnitude or the level of alarm that’s being assigned to it.”

One such case was the recent criticism of a *New York Times* piece about the executive producer of the television series “How to Get Away With Murder” and other successful dramas, which began: “When Shonda Rhimes writes her autobiography, it should be called ‘How to Get Away With Being an Angry Black Woman.’” Readers felt that invoking this stereotype was offensive; but the writer, Alessandra Stanley, says in an e-mail that she referenced it precisely to praise Rhimes for overturning “trite, insidious clichés about race on television.”

In her column responding to the huge backlash the piece provoked, Sullivan was careful not just to ask for an explanation from Stanley, but to seek comment from her editors, too. She also wrote about the larger problem of the lack of racial diversity in the culture team. Was it a deliberate decision to switch the focus from the personal to the structural? “Yes, the impact on individual writers of such swarming can be pretty tough,” says Sullivan. “A writer can really feel under siege in a very debilitating way.”

Stanley declined to be interviewed for this piece, saying in an e-mail that she has learned “whenever there is this kind of social media tempest, anything the subject says about it just inflames it further. This ado was certainly the most intense one I’ve experienced.” Other journalists say much the same. When complaints come from dozens of people at once—some of whom have a sketchy understanding of the original grievance—trying to respond individually on Twitter is impossible and may even make the situation worse.

For Sullivan, this is the biggest change from the pre-Internet landscape: any comment or explanation offered by a newspaper is “likely to be parsed and found wanting, and thus to generate the next level of uproar.” She now makes a point of trying to respond to the underlying issue in a considered post, acknowledging—but not focusing on—the online swarm.

According to Bell, organizations should think about having an “outward-facing presence” to deal with complaints—someone at one remove from the writers or editors involved in a controversial piece. Such employees go by different names—public editor, ombudsman—but the roles are similar.

Having a dedicated staff member to deal with complaints is particularly important when you consider the sheer numbers that can be involved. Stephen Pritchard, the readers’ editor at *The Observer*, recalls that he received 1,000 e-mails in 24 hours after the newspaper published an op-ed by columnist Julie Burchill that referred to transsexuals as “shemales” and “bed-wetters in bad wigs.” Burchill has a long history as a purveyor of deliberate provocations.

One of the main lessons from the incident, in Pritchard’s view, is “not to fall for the numbers game. Fifty identical e-mails are not a cause for panic, but 50 thoughtful and considered protests on the same topic deserve attention.”

It’s a point echoed by Gawker’s editor in chief Max Read, whose site was one of those targeted by GamerGate for taking an allegedly “anti-gamer” stance. He says he is currently the subject of an online petition to have him removed from his job; the petition site automatically e-mails him every time a signature is added. “It’s not persuasive, it’s just annoying,” he says.

Read is much more impressed by individual e-mail complaints that make a “good faith case” against a piece than by Twitter storms, which can often involve an element of performance. “I’ve never had my mind changed about a story on Twitter,” he says. “Convincing arguments about stories and ideas tend to come at lengths longer than 140 characters, and the public nature of Twitter debates favors point-scoring and attention-getting.”

That public nature is exactly what attracts activists, of course—stories snowball as the volume of conversation around them increases, and hashtags make it easy to track a growing controversy. The challenge for news organizations is to pick out the valid complaints from the surrounding noise, and to find a way to give a coherent answer.

# THE CHALLENGE FOR NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IS TO PICK OUT THE VALID COMPLAINTS FROM THE NOISE

Unfortunately, there is little guidance from professional bodies on how journalists should deal with accusations of unethical behavior made online. The subject is not mentioned in the Independent Press Standards Organisation code recently published in Britain, nor in its American counterpart, issued by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). “The code that went before was from 1996, the same year The New York Times website went online,” says Andrew Seaman, chairman of the SPJ Ethics Committee. The updated version acknowledges that “journalists no longer just exist behind a byline—they typically have some kind of social media presence.” Nonetheless, because the new code is designed to be “platform neutral,” it does not offer specific advice for social storms.

**F**or Seaman, the key advice contained in the code is this: Be transparent. Avoid conflicts of interest, and disclose any that are unavoidable. “If there’s something you can’t separate from who you are, in your work, you need to be transparent about that,” he says. In earlier eras, he adds, it was only columnists and other “marquee journalists” whose personal lives were known about by readers. Now, through social media, LinkedIn, or Google, most journalists’ personal histories and archived articles are traceable, making it easier to gather evidence for accusations of bias.

However, there is sometimes a mismatch between readers’ expectations of what constitutes bias and the generally accepted standards among writers and editors. When the freelance journalist Jenn Frank wrote about GamerGate in September, she asked The Guardian to disclose that she had publicly supported Zoe Quinn’s work in the past, although she had never previously written about the developer. The newspaper removed this information, ruling that it “did not fulfill the criteria for a ‘significant connection’ in line with The Guardian’s editorial guidelines.” After the piece was published, however, Frank was subjected to such a barrage of criticism that she announced her “retirement” from games journalism, and she successfully lobbied the newspaper to include the full disclosure statement.

Elsewhere in GamerGate, journalists who wrote pieces on the subject were added to crowdsourced lists of enemies. Alex Hern, tech reporter at The Guardian, says one of his articles was added to a Google spreadsheet documenting “the anti-male



*Video game developer Zoe Quinn, top, was GamerGate’s first target. Columnist Julie Burchill, above, provoked complaints from readers by insulting transsexuals*

cabal in gaming journalism.” Writers on such lists were targeted for protests, boycotts and letter-writing campaigns to advertisers on the sites that hosted them.

Such online swarms undoubtedly take a toll on free speech. Gawker’s Read says many journalists treated GamerGate with kid gloves because of the effect it would have on their online experience: “Which, just to be specific, is hundreds of tweets directed at you for weeks, at best accusing you of ‘bias journalism’ and at worst threatening you with violence.” Bell is concerned that reporters may be censoring themselves through fear of online retribution: “The chilling effect of collective outrage does curb free expression in the exchange of ideas. Perhaps you could argue that’s no bad thing, but it has a kind of moral conservatism attached to it.”

What about the other side of the equation—what does it feel like to upbraid a journalist or news organization on Twitter? “It feels rather draining,” says author Jeremy Duns, who has uncovered several examples of plagiarism and sockpuppeting (using anonymous accounts to attack your rivals) by prominent journalists. He was involved in uncovering the plagiarism of former Independent columnist Johann Hari, who had taken quotes interviewees had given to other journalists, or written in books, and pretended they were said to him. Duns was dismayed that Hari’s ideological

allies—other left-wing commentators and celebrities—were slow to acknowledge he had done anything wrong.

This feeling of industry chumminess drives many Twitter storms, according to Duns. People believe that without a storm, journalists’ tendency is to rally round and protect their own. This is what many GamerGaters say. When The Washington Post’s Hayley Tsukayama asked supporters what the movement was about, answers included “a consumer revolt against proven collusion and agenda-driven journalism.”

A similar analysis is offered by @crushingbort and @blippoblappo, two anonymous Twitter users who have accused both BuzzFeed’s Benny Johnson and CNN’s Fareed Zakaria of repeated plagiarism. Johnson was fired from BuzzFeed. Seven of Zakaria’s articles at Newsweek now carry editorial warnings about attribution.

Like Duns, @crushingbort and @blippoblappo say they have been dismissed as cranky outsiders or obsessives. “We can sympathize with reporters reluctant to take anonymous criticism from Twitter to heart,” they write in an e-mail. “Anyone who’s read a journalist’s tweets can see a number of unfriendly replies that can be boiled down to, ‘I don’t like your [perceived] politics.’ But if criticism can be independently verified, then—regardless of whether it came from anonymous tweeters or a sealed envelope slipped under a reporter’s door—it shouldn’t be dismissed.”

Zach Schonfeld, a Newsweek reporter who wrote about the internal investigation into Zakaria’s work, says that his description of the pair as “self-styled watchdogs” was not intended to be pejorative: “Their anonymity doesn’t change the fact that their allegations are worth paying attention to.” He adds, however, that Newsweek would prefer whistleblowers to contact them via e-mail—which is what @crushingbort and @blippoblappo did after it became clear the publication was willing to listen to them.

Perhaps, then, the only real way to distinguish those with genuine grievances from those indulging in performative scolding is by asking: what does the complainant want? Social media is perfect for letting off steam and drawing attention to an issue, but change is more likely to come from a nuanced discussion out of the glare of an angry mob. Yet unless media organizations offer a way for their readers to make constructive criticisms—and to make them feel those criticisms are taken seriously—there will be no end to the age of the Twitter storm. ■

## Watch This Space How can the digital news experience be made as easy and friction-free as TV?

BY JOSHUA BENTON

I REALLY TRY TO UNDERSTAND why people watch TV for news but it baffles me. It's so unpleasant and you barely get any news."

That's a tweet written this October by Emily Nussbaum, *The New Yorker's* television critic. Her followers seemed to agree, handing over 110 favorites, Twitter's currency of approval. And I confess her TV news habits mirror mine: Local TV news enters my family's home only when we've forgotten to turn the set off after a sporting event, and the race for the remote is quick when we realize our mistake.

Still, there's something remarkable about a television critic not understanding the appeal of television. TV is Americans' number one source of news, ranking ahead of all digital sources and well ahead of print and radio. Just under half of all American adults say they watch local TV news "regularly," with many millions more tuning in now and then. (It's hard not to think of another *New Yorker* critic, Pauline Kael, who semi-apocryphally said she couldn't understand how Richard Nixon had been re-elected president when no one she knew had voted for him.)

It's also a useful reminder that journalists and their audiences often value different things in the news they consume. What Nussbaum considers unpleasant others will take as friendly and energetic. What she considers substantive and considered—say, a long *New Yorker* profile—others might take as dry and long-winded. And that gap applies both to the content of news and to the user experience it offers.

In Nussbaum's case, a number of media tweeters tried to suggest why TV news might be appealing to so many. CNN's Brian Stelter—who's already gone digital-to-newspaper-to-TV in his young career—suggested a few: companionship, reassurance, ideological affiliation, community, entertainment. Re/code's Peter Kafka added habit to the list. I particularly liked the idea *The New York Times's* Jeremy Zilar offered up: "simple delivery." TV news is easy to access and easy to consume, packaged in a way that usually asks little of its audience. It's not surprising that, in a world where people work hard all day, they'd opt for a low-effort, low-friction way to get their news.

It's nothing new for the media habits of journalists and the rest of the country to diverge, of course. (Our culture industry generates an infinite supply of "Mad Men" recaps and "Serial" think pieces, even though the audiences for those shows would be a rounding error for, say, "NCIS" or "The Big Bang Theory.") You could spin it as a matter of class, education, regionality—or just taste.

But it's also a matter of how much work people are willing to do. For journalism, that manifests itself as the gap between those who actively seek out news and those happy to stumble upon whatever news finds them during the day.

Back when reading your local daily and watching TV news were truly mass-market activities—something hundreds of millions of Americans did every single day—the gap between the most and least informed was relatively small. Sure, some people read multiple newspapers and magazines, and some read none. But the broad middle class of news consumers—the middle 50 percent, say—had access to most of the same information.

Today—just as in other areas impacted by the rise of technology—the ends are diverging, and the middle is being stretched rather thin.

Are you an active, motivated news consumer? Congratulations: You have access to more information in more forms than ever before. Follow the right people on Twitter, set up the right Google alerts, track down

the right niche news sources, and identify the best people on the beat, foreign and domestic—you'll be miles ahead of anyone who was reading mainstream news before the Web.

But not everyone wants to work for news. As old news habits fade, it's unclear what is replacing them; news becomes something you might see occasionally in your social stream. When Pew Research Center surveyed people last year about how they got news on Facebook, one response stood out: "If it wasn't for Facebook news, I'd probably never really know what's going on in the world because I don't have time to keep up with the news on a bunch of different locations."

It's easy, in other words.

You could frame the big challenge for the next few years of digital news this way: How can we create a news user experience that's as easy and friction-free as Facebook—but as good as the best a dedicated news power user could assemble?

Earlier this fall, I had the pleasure of serving on a panel discussing the state of journalism at the 45th reunion of the Harvard Class of 1969. Alongside three distinguished journalists from the class, I was the token young guy—a role I'm increasingly happy to play the closer I get to 40.

The tone of the discussion wasn't a happy one: lots of talk about the closing of foreign bureaus, the decline of quality journalism, and how their local daily newspaper was a lot thinner than it used to be. Playing my role, I tried to highlight the positives of digital news, and for me, that meant talking about Twitter.

Twitter isn't perfect, but it's without a doubt my single best source of news. Spending time on Twitter is, for me, a mix

**It's not surprising that, in a world where people work hard all day, they'd opt for a low-effort, low-friction way to get their news: TV**

of the best cocktail chatter and a personalized team of journalists tracking the topics I care about; the people and organizations I follow there are like an external reflection of what I'm interested in. You can dip in and out at will and know it'll always show you an ongoing conversation among smart people about interesting things. It's tremendously useful.

But after the panel, an alumna of that Harvard class came up to talk to me. She said she'd tried Twitter out and found it to be a confusing mess. Its odd constraints and peculiar jargon didn't click for her. She couldn't figure out how to find the right people to follow, or how to make sense of what was important and what wasn't. She'd followed a few news sources she knew well, like *The New York Times*—but that meant she saw on Twitter what she was already getting elsewhere. The idea of a constantly moving stream of information was more terrifying than promising; she wanted summation and highlights and priority, not a never-ending drip of tweets.

Hearing her complaints made me realize how much time I'd invested making Twitter work for me—literally years of follows and

## **Twitter is, for me, a mix of the best cocktail chatter and a personalized team of journalists tracking the topics I care about**

unfollows to get my Twitter stream just right—and how much time I still put in to keep up with that eternal stream of unprioritized tweets, some banal, some wonderful. She was willing to work for news, but she couldn't see how Twitter would reward her effort. So she—a smart, educated, motivated news consumer who could have benefited from the riches of digital news—was left hoping her local daily didn't shrink out of existence.

Twitter is perhaps an extreme example of a user experience filled with roadblocks—the company is well aware of how vexing it can be for newcomers—but the same ideas apply to all news organizations.

Does yours run a website that surrounds every news story with a dozen garish blinking ads? Or have an app that's slow to load

and clunky to use? Or a video player that forces you to watch an ad and then crashes?

Are its big interactive graphics unusable on people's phones? Is its social media presence robotic rather than engaging? Does it send breaking news notifications later than the competition? Is searching for a story from yesterday an exercise in frustration?

"Quality" isn't just about how many foreign bureaus you have or how long your big features can run. It's about every step of the process that moves from a reporter's idea to a reader's eyes. Too many news outlets make too many of those steps frustrating—and frustrated readers are all too happy to go back to playing *Candy Crush*.

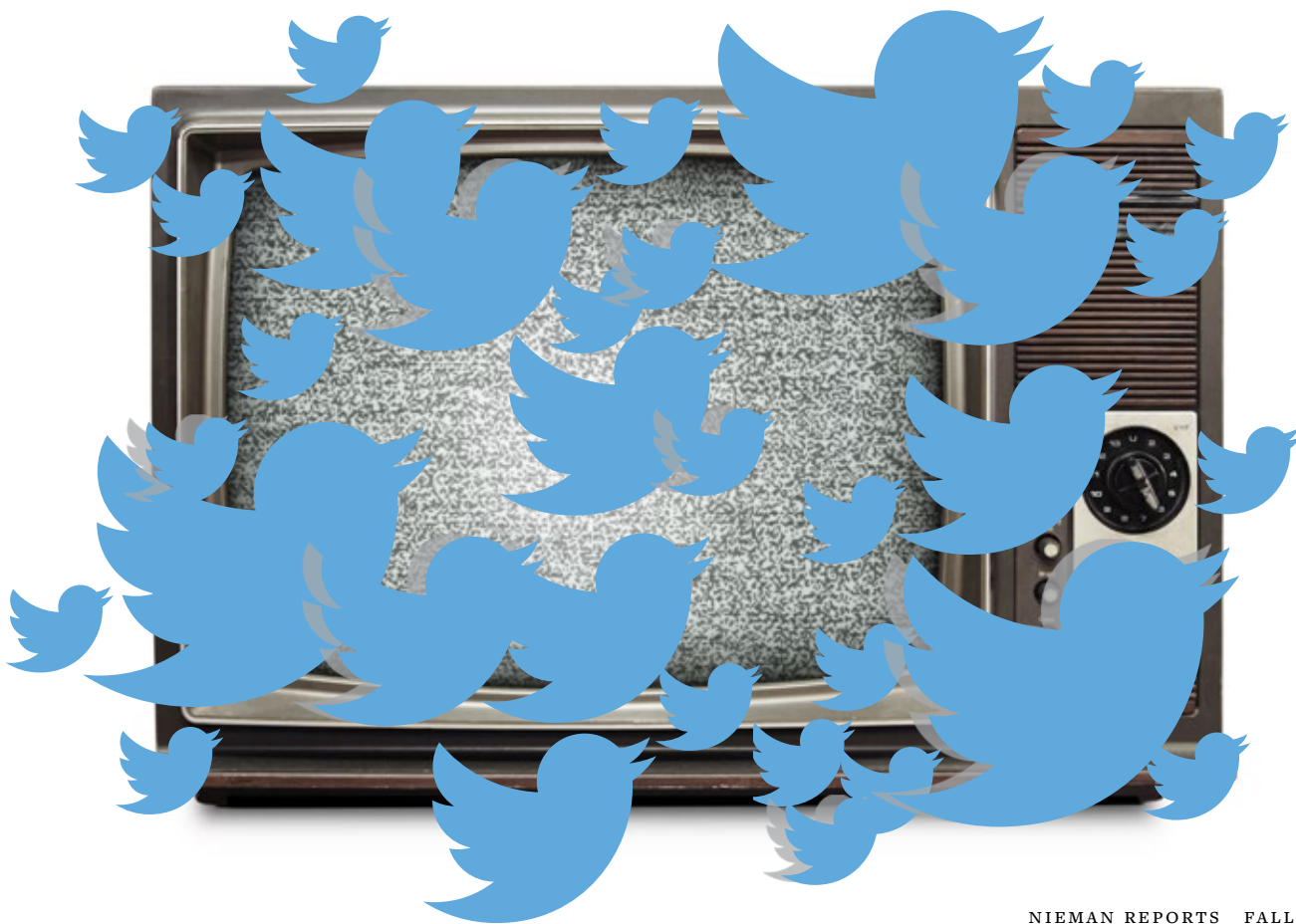
So yes, TV news isn't for me, or for Emily Nussbaum. But it *is* for many millions of Americans. What will be the easy, frictionless digital news experience those millions move toward? And how can we make sure that experience can bring the best of the Web to people who aren't interested in working for it? ■

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*Joshua Benton, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is the founding director of the Nieman Journalism Lab*

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**Unlike TV, Twitter offers what can feel like an overwhelming number of news sources to follow**



## Free Speech and a Free Press

### As technology changes how news is gathered and delivered, should journalism continue to be sharply distinguished from activism and other kinds of free speech?

BY JOEL SIMON

**A**T A MARCH 2013 MEETING in Doha, Qatar, in which press freedom activists gathered to develop a strategy for responding to the violence in Syria, a heated discussion broke out about what constitutes journalism in an environment in which professional reporters work alongside a new generation of online communicators who dub themselves “media activists.” Using social media and public platforms like YouTube, these activists have provided firsthand accounts of the fighting, the toll, and daily life in a war-ravaged country but make no claim to objectivity. Some are fairly journalistic in their approach and others essentially propagandists for the rebel forces. A few are armed and participate in combat.

To give a few additional examples from other parts of the world, in China, a leading blogger, Zhou Shuguang, who uses the online moniker Zola (a nod to the French writer-journalist), has traveled around the country with a video camera documenting injustice but insists, “I don’t know what journalism is. I just record what I witness.” In Vietnam, a blogger named Nguyen Van

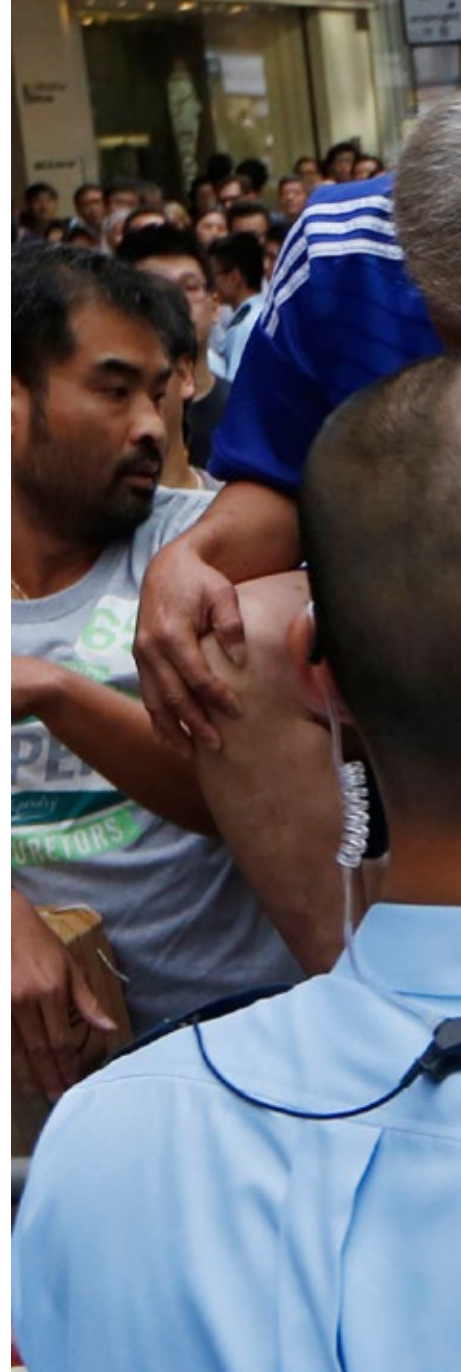
Hai who took a similar approach was given a 12-year jail sentence. In Turkey, while mainstream media ignored the Gezi Park protesters, activists using Twitter and other social media became the essential source of independent news. Even New York police seeking to control access to the Occupy Wall Street protests struggled to differentiate between accredited journalists and sympathetic citizens who used smartphones to disseminate information to the public.

In an era in which technology has changed everything about the way news is gathered and delivered, is it possible to draw a line between journalism, activism, and other kinds of speech? And is it necessary to do so? The answer is extremely significant for several reasons. First, because it directly affects the way journalists themselves understand their role. Are the rights of journalists distinct from others who provide information and commentary? Is the ability of journalists to perform their role as media professionals dependent on preserving some sort of distinction? Second, because it goes to larger questions about the kind of global information environment that would best preserve and even expand the accountability, oversight, and transparency that have historically been the function of independent media.

The advent of blogs and online media raised new questions. As the volume, complexity, and speed of information increased,

the process of defining journalism has become more and more unwieldy. The trend has accelerated in the last several years, with the explosion of social media and its increasing use to accomplish basic journalism: documenting events and disseminating information to the public.

Some traditional journalists are deeply uncomfortable with the blurring of lines, which they feel undermines the integrity of the profession while also making coverage of conflict more dangerous. NBC’s chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel told the U.N. Security Council during its July 2013 briefing on journalist security, “Protecting journalists these days is hard, perhaps harder than ever, because one has to tackle the question of who is a journalist and who is an



*Reprinted from “The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Media Freedom” by Joel Simon. Copyright 2015 by Joel Simon*



*Pro-democracy protests, like one in Hong Kong this fall, highlight tensions surrounding the right to free expression*

activist in a way that never existed before.”

Engel lamented the ways in which the advent of social media has eviscerated the special status that international correspondents once enjoyed, eliminating distinctions between professional journalists, activists, and “rebels with cameras” and “state broadcasters” who are “fundamentally different from journalists.” “If one cannot or will not write an article that goes against one’s cause, then one is not a journalist and does not deserve to be treated like one,” Engel explained. He proposed that the diplomats on the Security Council make a distinction between the broad defense of freedom of expression and the defense of “dedicated and trained professionals who take risks to deliver the kind of information council

members need to make their decisions.”

But inviting governments to differentiate journalists from non-journalists would set a dangerous precedent. Many governments—Turkey, Egypt, China, and Venezuela, to cite some examples—seem to believe “journalists” support government policies while “activists” oppose them. Journalists and

**Many governments, including China and Egypt, seem to believe “journalists” support government policies while “activists” oppose them**

media freedom organizations have long resisted any effort by governments or government-controlled bodies like the United Nations to define who is and who is not a journalist, arguing that such a distinction is tantamount to licensing, which is anathema to the journalism profession.

Indeed, journalists themselves are divided on the issue, with opinion writers tending to take a more expansive view. The New York Times’s Nick Kristof argues that a press freedom group needs to be “as broad as possible when thinking about its mission and role. It would be pusillanimous if they helped only full-time journalists and let everyone else take the heat,” he argued. “You need to speak up for everyone like that even if you don’t call them journalists.”



*Regardless of whether WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange is considered a journalist, he is part of the new global information ecosystem*

In the last three decades, the way in which journalists define their role has evolved considerably. Defending the human rights of persecuted colleagues, once viewed as activist special pleading, is now widely accepted. But today, precisely because the distinction between journalists and non-journalists has broken down so dramatically, journalists are confronting a new dilemma: Should journalists more broadly embrace the freedom-of-expression cause? Or should they speak out—as Engel suggests—only in defense of their professional colleagues?

This debate played out in dramatic fashion beginning in April 2010, when WikiLeaks released a video provocatively labeled “Collateral Murder.” The video showed the crew of a U.S. helicopter gunship in Iraq opening fire on a group of Iraqi men who had been identified as insurgents, some of them armed. A journalist and media assistant from Reuters who were with the group were killed. A van that tried to rescue the wounded media worker also came under fire. Two children in the van were wounded, and their father, the driver, was killed.

WikiLeaks was co-founded by Julian Assange in 2006, with the goal of making public documents of “political, ethical, diplomatic, or historical significance,” a description that of course covers just

about everything. But it wasn’t until the “Collateral Murder” video that WikiLeaks garnered widespread public attention. The video—which Reuters had tried to obtain unsuccessfully from the Pentagon under the Freedom of Information Act—was provided to WikiLeaks by a disgruntled low-level military intelligence analyst named Bradley Manning. Manning also shared with WikiLeaks hundreds of thousands of confidential State Department cables that WikiLeaks began publishing in November 2010 under the heading “Cablegate.”

The response of media organizations and press freedom groups regarding Assange and WikiLeaks was confused and ambivalent. The tepid embrace by the media community was based in large measure on the fact that most professional journalists did not identify with Assange or his methods. And Assange did not help matters at all with his dissembling and obfuscation. Assange presented himself as a journalist at times,

**Journalists must embrace the broader struggle for freedom of expression and make it their own**

but his justifications for WikiLeaks’ actions ranged from disrupting government communications, to ending war, to “crushing bastards.” These are not necessarily journalistic motives. He also violated the most basic of journalistic ethics by failing to remove the names of human rights activists and journalists who had interacted with U.S. authorities in repressive countries, putting these individuals at grave risk.

Should Assange be disqualified from support from journalists and press freedom organizations because of his lack of journalistic ethics and his generally loathsome behavior? I don’t think so. On the other side of the equation, WikiLeaks has tried to suggest that it functions as a journalistic entity. I’m skeptical. WikiLeaks is best described as an anti-secrecy advocacy group that uses journalistic strategies to advance its goals.

Although the question of whether Julian Assange is a journalist is interesting, it’s not ultimately resolvable or even that relevant. The real question is whether Assange and WikiLeaks are part of the new global information ecosystem in which journalists operate. Here the answer is clearly yes. And the other important question is whether prosecuting Assange under the Espionage Act would threaten that system. Here again the answer is yes.





*"The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Media Freedom"*  
By Joel Simon  
Columbia University Press

The 1917 Espionage Act makes it a crime to obtain, copy, or publicize documents relating to the defense of the United States. The language is both broad and vague and could be construed to apply to the media. However, journalists have not been previously charged for a number of reasons. The first is that legislative history suggests that Congress never intended that the law be used to prosecute the press. A prosecution would also almost certainly have to overcome a First Amendment challenge. Finally, the Justice Department has resisted prosecuting journalists because of the likely adverse public reaction and the damage that such a prosecution would do to the country's international reputation.

Journalists may find Assange personally distasteful and generally disapprove of the reckless way in which the information was released. But WikiLeaks has in fact made an extraordinarily valuable contribution to the work of the media. The initial revelations from Cablegate were, of course, reported simultaneously in mainstream media outlets, from *The Guardian* to *Le Monde*. But the cables have also served as an invaluable resource that has enriched day-to-day coverage from Pakistan to Mali. Global citizens have benefitted tremendously as a result. Holed up in the Ecuadoran embassy in London, Assange seems a reduced figure. But if the U.S. government should ever proceed with prosecuting him under the Espionage Act, journalists around the world should rush to his defense, and the outcry should be loud and sustained. Not only would the prosecution threaten traditional journalists, but it would erode the new system of information distribution on which global citizens all depend. In other words, Julian Assange may not be a journalist, but journalists should defend him as if he were.

As the Assange case illustrates, journalists can no longer protect their own interests by advocating solely for press freedom. Instead, journalists must embrace the broader struggle for freedom of expression and make it their own.

This does not mean that journalism is going to disappear or that professional journalists are indistinguishable from bloggers, social media activists, or human rights advocates. And it certainly does not mean that the quality and accuracy of the information is irrelevant. Precisely because the line is growing blurrier by the day, those who define themselves as professional journalists need more than ever to maintain standards and report with seriousness and

objectivity. However, it is up to journalists themselves to make distinctions between journalism and other kinds of speech, and these distinctions will always be fluid and subject to debate. Governments should not be participants in these discussions any more than they should be expected to weigh in on the debate about what constitutes poetry. Governments must protect all speech, whether journalistic or not. Respect for freedom of expression is the enabling environment for global journalism.

Aside from the political and practical considerations, there is also a legal question. Are journalists or the press as an institution entitled to special protection under law? Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes no distinction between journalistic and nonjournalistic speech. It states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

**T**O SUGGEST THAT journalists are entitled to special legal protections is even more problematic in countries around the world where the media as an institution is historically compromised and the boundaries between journalism and other forms of expression are rapidly breaking down. In many countries "traditional" journalists who would be the beneficiaries of greater "press freedom" are hardly the most trustworthy or independent sources of news. Take Egypt during the Tahrir Square uprising. Most professional journalists in Egypt—coddled by decades of government largesse—continue to take their marching orders from the authorities. It was a relatively small number of independent journalists working with bloggers and activists who broke [President Hosni] Mubarak's information blockade. Throughout 2013, as demonstrations erupted in Russia, Turkey, and Brazil, the institutional media performed woefully, forcing protesters to turn to bloggers and social media activists for independent information. Independent journalists in these situations operate in a "freedom of expression" environment that they share with other independent voices seeking to document and disseminate information.

Historically, even if journalists did not enjoy any special legal status, they have been treated with some deference by govern-

ments because of their perceived political clout. The logic is summed up by the maxim "Never pick a fight with someone who buys ink by the barrel," a phrase that has been attributed by a top aide to President Gerald Ford but whose origin is in dispute. What it meant was that while governments would take on leakers and others who disclosed confidential information, they were less likely to challenge the media that published the information. This is still true, but the distinction is breaking down as the media fractures and its power diminishes. Prosecutors in the Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning case who argued that she should have been convicted of espionage and "aiding the enemy" because she knew that the documents she leaked, once public, would be accessed by al-Qaeda acknowledged that they would have presented the same argument had the materials been published by *The New York Times*. Meanwhile, British investigators are considering laying terrorism charges against *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger for publishing accounts of the documents leaked by Edward Snowden.

Journalists play a unique and pivotal role in every society and must be able to do their work without interference from the state. But as the boundaries between journalists and nonjournalists continue to erode and any meaningful definition of journalism becomes more and more elusive, journalists have to recognize that their rights are best protected not by the special realm of "press freedom" but rather by ensuring that guarantees of free expression are extended to all. While it is natural and normal for journalists and press freedom organizations to give special emphasis to their journalistic colleagues, they can't stand on the sideline of the broader struggle for freedom of expression, both online and off, and must actively defend the rights of all people everywhere to gather news, express their opinions, and disseminate information to the public. ■

## 1954

**Richard Dudman** was inducted into the Maine Press Association Hall of Fame in October. In his 31 years with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, he covered many wars and revolutions around the world.

## 1969

**Jonathan Yardley**, a book critic for The Washington Post for 33 years, retired in December. After writing 3,000 reviews, he's ready to read purely for pleasure. He is the author of two biographies and a memoir, among other books. He was at The Washington Star when he received a Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 1981.

## 1971

**Josephine Thomas's** coverage of the conflict and peace process in Northern Ireland has been recognized by a human rights group, the Irish-American Unity Conference, which established the Jo Thomas Award for Journalism.

## 1979

**John C. Huff Jr.** has retired from the editorship of the Independent Mail in Anderson, South Carolina, a position which he had held since 2008. During Huff's tenure, the newspaper received more than 100 awards in the South Carolina Press Association's yearly journalism competitions.

## 1982

**Johanna Neuman** is a New York Historical Society fellow. A Ph.D. student in history at American University, she is utilizing the society's archives to do research for her dissertation exploring how New York socialites impacted the women's suffrage movement.

## 1983

**Callie Crossley**, a WGBH host, won a Clarion Award from the Association for Women in Communications, a regional Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association, and a Massachusetts/Rhode Island Associated Press radio and television award for "Witness to History," a radio documentary featuring WGBH Radio's coverage of the 1963 March on Washington. Crossley wrote, produced, and co-hosted the documentary.

## 1990

**Ann Marie Lipinski**, Nieman Foundation curator, joins the Poynter Institute's Board of Trustees in January.

**George Rodrigue**, formerly managing editor at The Dallas Morning News, is now assistant news director at the Dallas-Fort Worth TV station WFAA (Channel 8). After joining the paper in 1983, he served in the paper's Washington bureau and covered news abroad.

## 1993

**Rick Bragg** has written a biography of Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Jerry Lee Lewis, titled "Jerry Lee Lewis: His Own Story," published by Harper on October 28. Bragg is a professor of writing at the University of Alabama.

## 1999

**Fannie Flono** has retired from The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer after 30 years at the paper, including 21 as an editorial writer and columnist. Flono served as city editor, political editor, and assistant state editor before she joined the Observer's editorial section in 1993. In a column about

her leaving the paper, editorial page editor Taylor Batten called her "the conscience of this community."

## 2000

**Thrity Umrigar's** newest novel is "The Story Hour," published by Harper in August. It revolves around the friendship between an American psychologist and an Indian immigrant.

## 2001

**Ken Armstrong** was recognized by the Online News Association for breaking news reporting he did for The Seattle Times. He and **Craig Welch**, NF '07, along with another Times reporter, were honored for their coverage of the Oso mudslide.

## 2002

**Lisa Stone**, a co-founder of BlogHer, is now chief community officer for SheKnowsMedia. BlogHer, a media network created by and for women in social media, was acquired by SheKnowsMedia in November.

## 2005

**Ceri Thomas** was recently appointed editor of "Panorama," BBC One's flagship current affairs and investigative show. He previously served as head of programs for BBC News.

## 2006

**Cathy Grimes** was recently named communications manager for Virginia Tech's graduate school.

## "SHIRT-SLEEVE EDITOR"



**William German**, NF '50, former editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, died October 15, 2014. He was 95.

As editor, from 1993 to 2000, German helped transform the Chronicle from the third paper in a four-newspaper town to the city's premier publication of record and the largest newspaper north of Los Angeles.

German was known for his distinctive writing style and his meticulous edits. "He was the finest shirt-sleeve editor I have ever known," said David Perlman, the Chronicle's science editor who met German in Columbia's journalism graduate school. German's headlines were of particular note: for a story with a negative take on the coffee in San Francisco, he wrote, "A Great City's People Forced to Drink Swill."

He started his career at the paper as a copy boy, a position he received upon graduating from Columbia in 1940. He left the paper to serve in World War II, rejoining the paper when his duty was up. Upon returning from Harvard after his fellowship year, German quickly began ascending the ranks at the Chronicle. Over the course of his career, he served in a number of leadership roles, including copy desk chief, executive news editor, and managing editor.

German became an editor emeritus in 2000, but he maintained his presence at the paper with a weekly column on the media. He said he did not think "emeritus rhymes with mellow."



*Eli Reed, NF '83, selected 250 images for "A Long Walk Home," a retrospective of his career being published by University of Texas Press in May. Above, Ginger on the road between Delaware and South Carolina, 1972*

## 2007

**Christopher Cousins** was recognized by the Online News Association (ONA) for his feature story in The Bangor Daily News about living "the good life" in Maine.

**Juanita Leon**, a journalist and founder of Lasillavacia.com, a news site about Colombia, has joined the board of directors of Global Voices, a citizen media platform.

**Craig Welch**, a reporter for The Seattle Times, received two awards for "Sea Change: The Pacific's Perilous Turn," about ocean acidification. One was given by the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. The other was from the ONA for explanatory reporting.

## 2008

**Jenifer McKim**, a senior investigative reporter for

the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, received a Publick Occurrences award from the New England Newspaper and Press Association. She was recognized for her work chronicling fatalities among children in the Massachusetts welfare system.

## 2010

**Maria Balinska** has joined The Conversation US, a news analysis and commentary site, as deputy managing editor.

**Kevin Sites**'s "Swimming with the Warlords: A Dozen-Year Journey Across the Afghan War" was published by Harper Perennial in October. He is an assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong's Media Studies Centre.

## 2011

**Nazila Fathi**'s "The Lonely War: One Woman's Account of the Struggle for Modern Iran"

was published by Basic Books in December. Fathi was 9 years old in 1979 when a revolution in Iran swept the shah from power. In 2009, she was a Tehran-based correspondent for The New York Times when her family fled the country.

## 2012

**Jonathan Blakley** has joined Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). Blakley, formerly of NPR, oversees MPR's news coverage as its program director.

**Anna Griffin** was promoted to managing producer for storytelling at The Oregonian. She oversees writing and craft at the Portland paper.

**Dina Kraft** received an Ochberg Fellowship at the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at Columbia University. She is the associate program coordinator of the Media Innovation track at Northeastern University's School of Journalism.

**Samuel Loewenberg**, whose work focuses on global health, has been named a fellow with the Investigative Journalism Project at Harvard's Safra Center for Ethics.

## 2013

**Karim Ben Khelifa** took part in the Sundance Institute's New Frontier Story Lab, a week of development workshops, this fall. The institute selected Khelifa for his project "The Enemy," which he worked on during his Nieman year. It focuses on how hostile groups perceive themselves and their enemies. Khelifa is an artist-in-residence at MIT's Open Documentary Lab.

## 2014

**Alison MacAdam** was one of three editors of "Melissa's Story," which received a best documentary award in the Third Coast/Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Competition. "Melissa's Story," about a former teen mother, was produced for Radio Dreams and NPR.

## 2015

**Maggie Koerth-Baker**'s New York Times Magazine story, "Danger! This Mission to Mars Could Bore You to Death!" was selected for the 2014 edition of the "The Best American Science and Nature Writing," published in October by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

**David Jiménez**'s "Children of the Monsoon," translated from the Spanish by Andrea Rosenberg, has been published by Autumn Hill Books. This collection of his literary journalism draws on his years of reporting about children as the Asia bureau chief for El Mundo. The book was first published in Spanish in 2007.

## Complicated, Beautiful Stories Trying to cover the city as if it's a foreign land

**G**ROWING UP, IF MY SISTER and I were reading, we didn't have to do chores. So, we read all the time. We loved a good story.

My mother wanted us to read work by the poets. Gwendolyn Brooks was the first African-American poet to win the Pulitzer Prize and wrote eloquently about the Chicago community in which I came of age. Maya Angelou's memoir "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" was the first book that made me cry. Langston Hughes made us consider "What happens to a dream deferred?"

*Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?*

My father wanted my sister and me to read books by W.E.B. Du Bois, who believed that in order for blacks to be leaders and change the world, they needed a classical education; and, Carter G. Woodson, who believed that the purpose of an education was to make a living and later a life.

These writers and scholars taught me that writing could be poetic and message-oriented with a strong point of view. But it had to be well-researched and well-reasoned. And, you had to tell a good story.

In 2001, a few months before the September 11th terror attacks, my editor at the Chicago Tribune asked me to write a column. I wasn't sure I had anything to say. But I decided to do it and I often chose hot-but-ton topics that I believed columnists were supposed to write.

I examined those topics in a way that showed I had done my research well enough to argue my point to a pretty satisfying conclusion. What I wrote wasn't bad. It just wasn't me. I wasn't fully realizing my own strengths, my own voice, as a writer and storyteller.

But in 2007, I wrote a two-part column about my childhood best friend, Debra, who was in the process of remaking herself. She was 42 years old and had just graduated from college. She had done so while in prison serving a 50-year sentence for murder. The column was about how she and I had started out in virtually the same place—as smart, self-possessed, 8-year-old adventurers. But during our teen years our paths diverged.

I had meant for the story to be about Debra's transformation. But I later realized it was also about my own as a journalist. While rummaging around in my past, I found my voice.

I've lived in the Chicago area for much of my life, but I try to cover the city as though it's a foreign land. I don't often get stories from press releases. I get them from regular people who say things like: "Here's someone

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### Dawn Turner Trice



**By rummaging around in my past to write about a childhood friend who was remaking herself after spending time in prison, I found my voice**

I think you should meet, or some issue you should look into."

Josephine Stout came to me that way. Her quest for citizenship was an odyssey that added a twist to the immigration debate. In 2010, I was interviewing a nun for a column on a food pantry when she happened to mention a "little old Irish lady" who sometimes visited the pantry and had lived a life filled with tragedy.

The nun told me that Mrs. Stout had been in this country for nearly nine decades but only recently had learned that she wasn't a U.S. citizen. I wanted to meet her immediately but she had no telephone, no current address on record at the pantry and the organization helping her assemble documents for citizenship feared the press might hurt her case more than help it.

It took me two years, but Mrs. Stout finally agreed to meet with me. Her story ran on page one of the Tribune on Christmas Day 2012 and made international news. As I was reporting the story, immigration officials agreed to expedite Mrs. Stout's application for citizenship. But she passed away on February 24, 2013, before the approval was finalized.

I am drawn to stories about people or issues that allow me to discover a new angle or see a soft spot in an argument I once thought I'd reasoned all the way through.

Some of my favorite stories are about resilience, and how people overcome the unimaginable. I'm also curious about why folks head down certain paths. Sometimes it's a path of their choosing; sometimes—not so much. But if they find themselves in the wrong place, I'm interested in how they manage their way back.

When my first novel was published in 1997, Maya Angelou gave me a book jacket blurb for it. I've always appreciated the last line, which read: "Dawn Turner Trice has told a complicated story, beautifully."

I don't know that I did so with that book. But it's what I aspire to do every time someone gives me the opportunity to share their story. ■

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*Dawn Turner Trice, a 2015 Nieman Fellow, is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune*



*B.B. King wraps up his performance at Lippmann House in 1980. The visit was arranged by King's biographer, Charlie Sawyer, who writes about the intimate concert, a recording of which is online*

[+ NIEMANREPORTS.ORG](http://niemanreports.org), "HARVARD'S HOUSE OF BLUES"

**“I’ll do it,  
provided it’s  
understood  
that I won’t  
speak until I  
have my guitar  
in my hand.”**

—B.B. KING

ON THE INVITATION TO ADDRESS  
NIEMAN FELLOWS

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- Janine di Giovanni, Middle East editor of Newsweek, on protections needed for freelance foreign correspondents
- Links to guides where journalists can learn more about how to protect their sources and stories-in-progress from surveillance

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### 5 Questions for ...

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- The New York Times's Amy O'Leary
- NPR's Deborah Amos, NF '92

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Producers of hit podcast "Serial" chat about storytelling, structure, and whodunit

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### Required Reading,

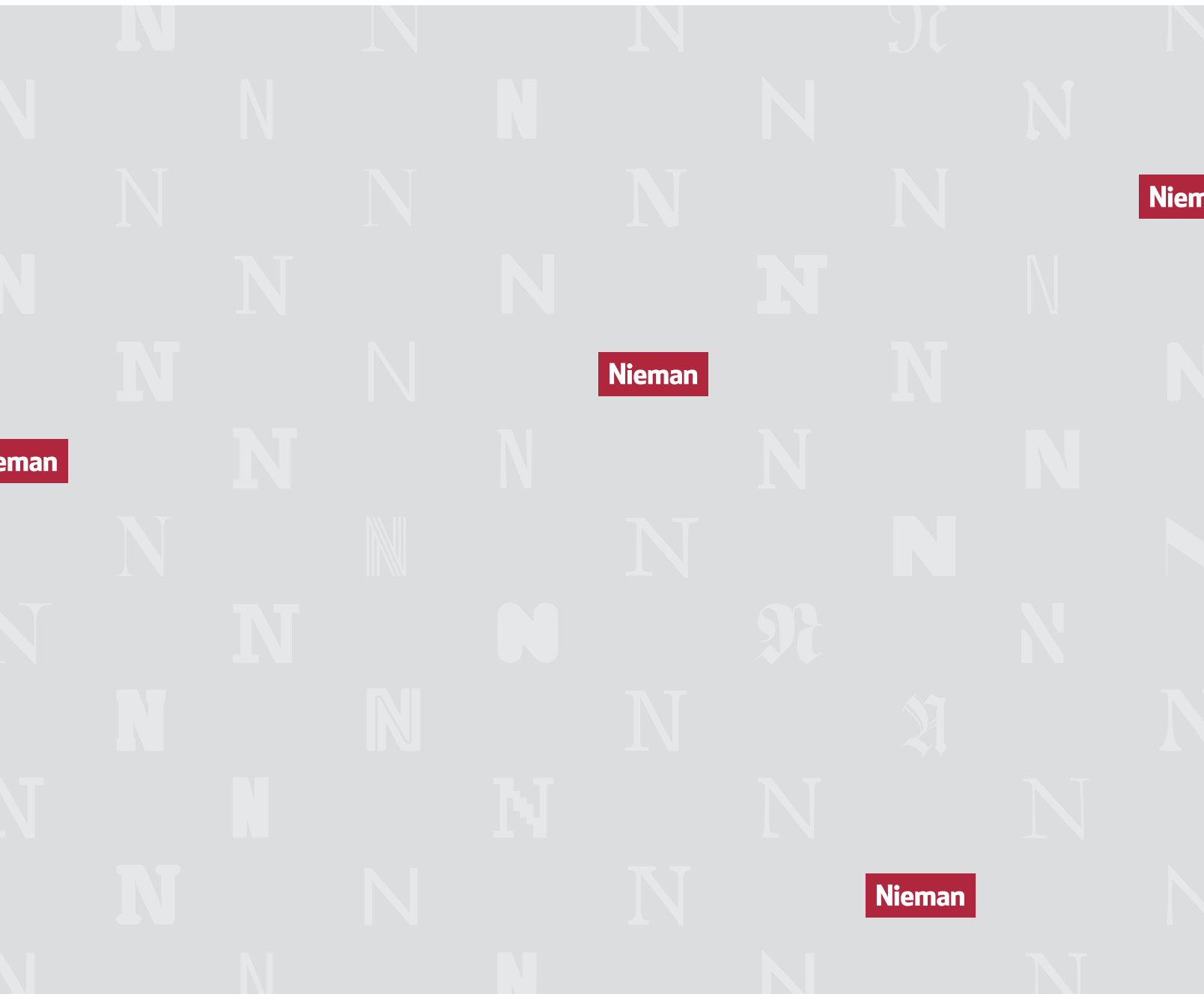
The stories that teachers of narrative nonfiction writing recommend

# NiemanReports

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TO PROMOTE AND  
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