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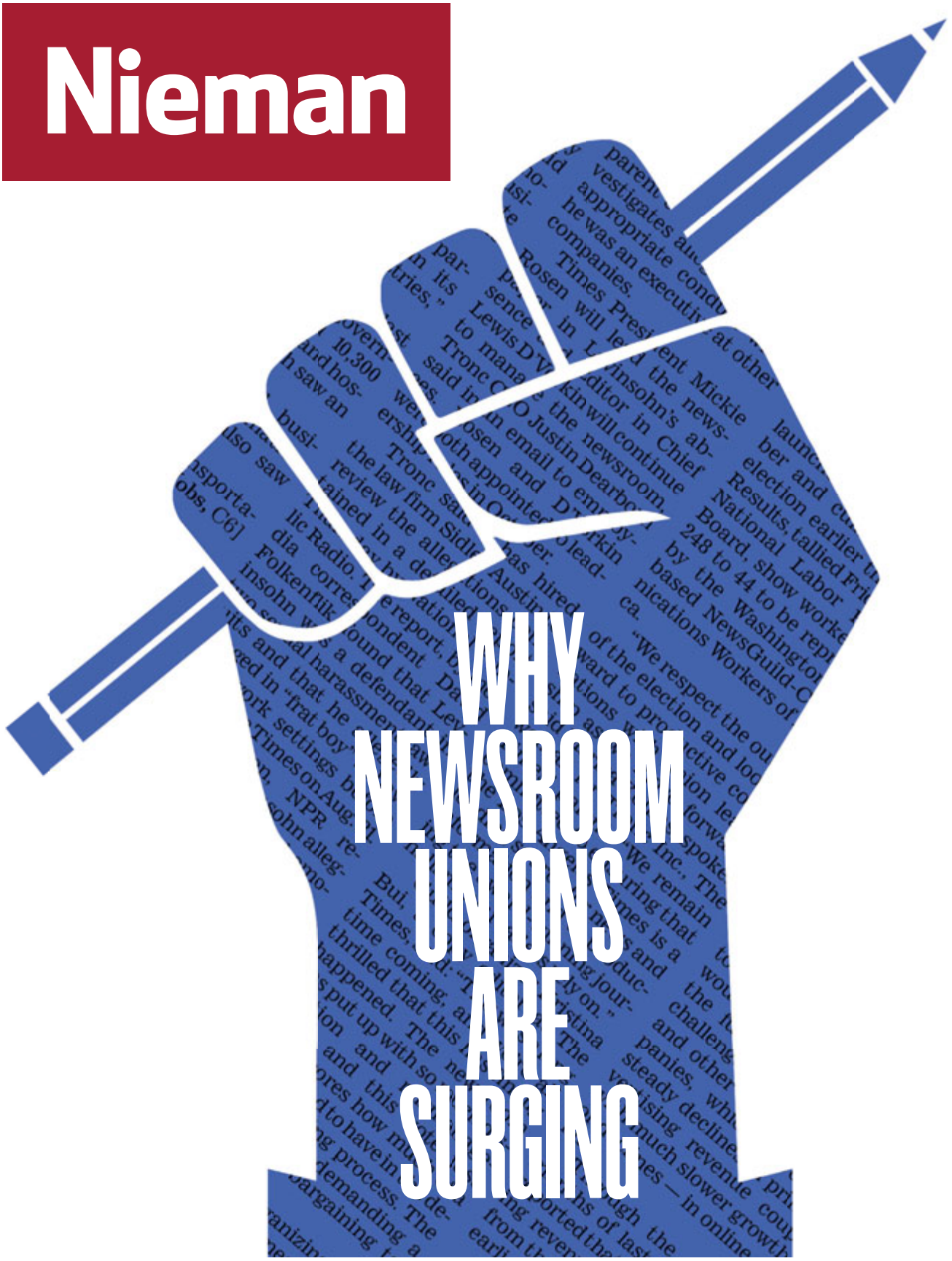

WHY NEWSROOM UNIONS ARE SURGING

Journalists at legacy and digital newsrooms respond to an industry in crisis with a new wave of organizing

BY STEVEN GREENHOUSE

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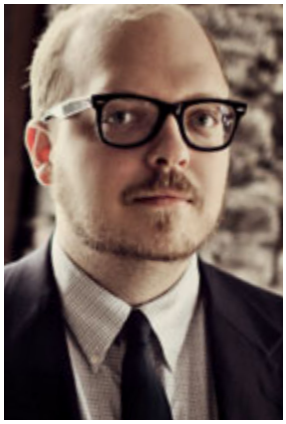

Gabe Bullard (page 6) has worked in public radio for nearly a decade, starting at NPR member station WFPL in Louisville, Kentucky. Currently, he is a senior editor at WAMU in Washington, D.C. and was previously the director of digital content for the show "1A," which is produced by WAMU and distributed by NPR. A 2015 Nieman Fellow, Gabe has also worked as deputy director for digital news at National Geographic.

Mary Louise Schumacher (page 16), the 2017 Arts & Culture Nieman Fellow, is an independent journalist and critic. She is currently at work on a documentary film about art critics in the midst of technological and cultural transformation. Until February 2019, she was the art and architecture critic at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, where she covered culture for the Midwestern newspaper for more than 18 years.

Issac J. Bailey (page 24), a 2014 Nieman Fellow, is a journalist, author, and race relations seminar creator and facilitator. He is the author of "My Brother Moochie: Regaining Dignity in the Face of Crime, Poverty, and Racism in the American South," published in 2018, and has contributed to Politico, CNN.com, Time, and The Washington Post. He is a former columnist and senior writer for The Sun News in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

OPPOSITE TOP: L.A. TIMES GUILD
BOTTOM: ANDREW HARNIK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Members of the Los Angeles Times Guild who, in 2018, voted overwhelmingly to unionize for the first time in the paper's 137-year history

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"The bubble is getting bigger, but not bursting"

Podcasting pioneers Julie Shapiro and Jake Shapiro on the state of the business, the importance of audience engagement, and brand building

"I think we hit a tipping point" is how the findings of a survey examining podcasting habits was described. Nearly one in three people listen to a podcast every month. Last year it was about one in four.

Edison Research's 2019 Infinite Dial report underscored that podcasting has gone mainstream and that big money has followed. Podcasting startup Luminary announced $100 million in funding and plans to offer subscriptions in its effort to be the Netflix of podcasting. Over the past year Spotify has increased the number of podcasts it offers and, in March, the music streaming service acquired podcast company Gimlet Media.

To make sense of these developments and to discuss podcasts by journalists, 2019 Nieman Fellow Francesca Panetta, who led The Guardian's podcasting team early on, brought together Jake Shapiro and Julie Shapiro (no relation to each other) for a conversation. Jake Shapiro is co-founder and CEO of RadioPublic, a mobile listening platform and marketplace for podcasts that was spun out of PRX. It is an app and a curated offering of podcasts.

Julie Shapiro is executive producer of Radiotopia podcast network from media company PRX. She also is executive producer of "Ear Hustle," a podcast that tells stories from within San Quentin State Prison in California. A fan of the list genre of podcasting, she named two favorites: WNYC's "10 Things That Scare Me," which features both well-known and ordinary people ("this collective tapestry of our national mentality right now," she called it), and "An Inventory of Philando Castile's Car" (an "enormous portrait of this man through the things in his car"), an episode of Minnesota Public Radio's "74 Seconds" about the killing of Castile by a police officer.

Panetta started with the business side of podcasting: "Is it a bubble waiting to burst?"

Edited excerpts:

On the state of business

Julie Shapiro: Fifty-one percent of people know what the term "podcast" means, which is more than when Edison Research counted last year. When you look at these trends, you look at the money coming in, you look at the excitement, and you look at the creative energy in the space, the indication to me is, no, we're not in a bubble that's going to burst. The bubble is getting bigger, but not bursting.

It's harder and harder for individuals to puncture through the noise and have a show that has enough listeners that you can support yourself, whether you're listener-supported through Patreon or you're big enough to start getting ads.

There are technologies and companies like RadioPublic that are trying to make it possible for every podcaster to earn money. But what is mostly happening is lots of money is going to big companies that have huge staffs, huge budgets, and investment money. There's the world of public radio—talent and mission-driven communities that started podcasts at stations—and there's the more commercial side that is working with more business-y models and venture capitalists.

Jake Shapiro: It is increasingly hard to be simultaneously excellent at podcasting and a good entrepreneur and a good marketer. It's also true that a lot of the mechanics of podcasting, because we're only four and a half years into the modern industry, are still pretty primitive.

Certain things that have existed in digital media around advertising marketplaces and dynamic ad serving don't yet exist in podcasting in an obvious way, and you have to patch together a bunch of different things. All of that's changing. You're seeing real-time investment in every step of the value chain of podcast technology—in data analytics, ad tech, and so forth—which means that there are more resources if you're trying to follow your own path, but the filter for breaking into a network or into an organization is higher. Now, you're asked, "Why should we support this? Do you have audience? Do you have some standing? Do you have some traction elsewhere?"

On the absence of an ad platform

Jake: I think it is a double-edged sword. Part of what's protected podcasting from some of the ills of digital media is that it hasn't had a hyper-efficient advertising network and the lowering of prices and the gaming of systems that can come with that. It's simultaneously inhibited the total economy of podcasting, but also protected it from some of the worst attributes.

There is no Google of podcast advertising. There's no Facebook of podcast advertising. In order to advertise, you have to talk to the publisher.

If you turn on a prominent podcast platform two years from now and you're hearing like nine terrible pre-roll commercial spots and you have to pay to skip them, then we've arrived at the worst version of that scenario.

On podcasting vs. public radio

Jake: Podcasts done right are radically different than broadcast radio. For a long time, podcasts were broadcasts that would just be time-shifted over. You're starting to see the form and format flow the other way. They're very different media. Not just free from the tyranny of the clock, but also how you expect an audience to be tuning in, what the role of a host is, and the idea that you're tuning into a channel which is largely just something you can go in and out of versus selecting something that's going to be in your AirPods.

On pitching a podcast

Julie: I'm always fighting for a more creative use of the form, to break beyond the things that are very familiar to people, and to think about what you can do through sound that you can't do on paper, or on a blog post. I want more shows that help you discover things you didn't know you were looking for.

Always start small. Start carefully, with great attention to detail, and a true artistic and narrative vision for what you're doing. All the pitch ideas that I get, I think, "What's the core idea in the pitch? Is it

ELLEN TUTTLE

Jake Shapiro and Julie Shapiro (right) talk podcasts with Francesca Panetta, NF '19

something I've never heard before? Did I physically respond to this email?"

Once you think you know your audience, who else might you attract? Push yourself to go beyond the primary audience you've identified.

What is going to make your show original to your shop or where you are? You can't do it well unless you've got time, people, expertise, some room to play, to pilot, to have a lot of iterations, work on things, get feedback, and have a strong vision for what you're going for from the start.

I think a lot of people pitch an idea and think, "Here's an idea," but that's where the vision stops. There's no sense of what it looks like in the world, and what's the voice of it in the world outside of the podcast, in social spaces?

How can you engage with an audience beyond just the content that you're making? You have to both zoom out and also be very intentional and zoom into exactly what you want to do.

> **"There is no Google of podcast advertising. There's no Facebook of podcast advertising. In order to advertise, you have to talk to the publisher**

What catches my eye is a plan for the engagement side. Like, "These are the ways we're going to stand out. This is what we can do differently than others. These are ways we can use the medium to reach out to the audience to come back to us."

On podcasts by media outlets

Jake: Local papers that are doing enterprising journalism have a great opportunity to develop a podcast. It has to be something you designed in from the beginning, and say, "We're onto something, and we want to start gathering audio." If you don't do that, and you're trying to go back and chase it, it's much harder.

Get a slightly better recording device than you already have, and put it a little closer to somebody who's speaking, instead of getting muffled sound from the back of the room. There are a bunch of practices like that that make a lot of sense, given that particular reporters are already recording these interviews. Record them with the thought that they might be used later. Get the permissions, if need be, and also get the person to say who they are on tape.

Podcasting as a way of cultivating an audience, sharing the brand of the newsroom, and getting journalists into the picture is a real asset, and draws on advantages that newsrooms have.

You will probably need to pull in freelance and outside resources to start with, but ultimately a place like The Boston Globe could have its own podcasting team.

With "The Daily" podcast, The New York Times is an exception, not a pattern. Host Michael Barbaro has the elusive X factor that makes him super compelling in that role. It's a latent trait. It's not necessarily obvious who's going to have it. It might be a junior reporter, the staff intern, or somebody you didn't expect. Internal talent scouting is the most critical piece.

Then you assemble the rest of it through training and investing in that capacity. What I love about some of the strategies for newsrooms and newspapers is that podcasting aligns with building trust and a relationship with your subscribers.

The New York Times built a hit show so it makes money on advertising, but they're hoping that it drives subscribers to the paper. It's also created insight into the process of journalism and brought the bylines to life. They intentionally build that into the production so you're getting a feel for how hard the work is. That's building the Times brand.

On the future

Jake: There's anxiety over what would happen if there's a winner-take-all model in podcasting, like if there is a Netflix of podcasting.

Or maybe even worse, if there is what we have in video, which is, "Oh, a great new show's out. Now, I have to figure out, am I supposed to be subscribing to this service or that service? I've got four different ones, like it's Netflix versus Hulu versus HBO versus..."

We don't want to have another situation where some private platform is dictating the business model, owning the audience relationship, calling the shots; we're now becoming a supplier, and they will change the rules on us.

One great thing about podcasting is that it's not yet owned by the major platforms. Like email, it's actually one of the few remaining tools that a publisher has to have a direct relationship with the audience.

We're doing a partnership with Bose and their sunglasses with built-in speakers. What we did with them is a very simple idea called HearMarks, where you can leave a bookmark in a podcast episode you're listening to by tapping on your glasses or on your headphones.

You could imagine reading an article and then walking out the door and being like, "Continue listening," and it starts reading it to you. I think that kind of future will be coming. ■

From Threatened Censorship to Box Office Hit

Many Colombians rallied behind a documentary by Margarita Martinez, NF '09, about the long difficult path to peace

A young female FARC rebel fighter rests on a trek in the northwest Andes of Colombia

I WAS READY for the premiere of my film. For five years, I'd been working on a behind-the-scenes documentary about the torturous and ultimately successful negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas. "The Negotiation"—"La Negociación" in Spanish—was scheduled to be presented in 24 movie theaters in 13 cities throughout Colombia in the fall of 2018 by the prestigious Cine Colombia chain.

Then former President Álvaro Uribe tweeted. Two days before the premiere, the political leader—now a senator—charged that the documentary lacked "objectivity" and asked the movie chain to not show it.

Uribe had seen only the trailer, not the 90-minute documentary. He asserted that "The Negotiation" accused him of being an enemy of peace. (The trailer said he is an enemy of the peace *agreement*, which he was without a doubt since he led a coalition urging citizens to vote NO in a referendum on the agreement.)

Shortly thereafter, the president of Cine Colombia told Colombia's most popular radio station that he hadn't yet decided whether to show "The Negotiation." Online ticket sales were halted.

The backlash was frenzied. In our nation of 45 million people, there were thousands of tweets, caricatures, magazine and newspaper columns, and Facebook postings. The censorship of "The Negotiation" was the fifth most tweeted subject in the world on November 27, 2018.

At the end of the day, Cine Colombia restored ticket sales. "The Negotiation" was a box office hit during the scheduled four-day run. Uribe's protest drove ticket sales as many people went to see the film to protest censorship.

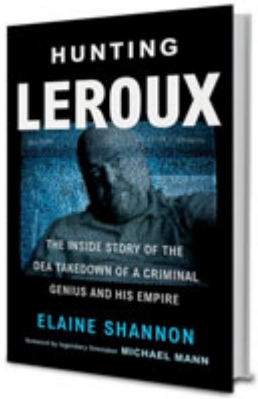
The five-decade war killed 200,000 people and displaced eight million. It is a story I have covered through my career, first as an Associated Press reporter, then as a filmmaker. The question that lingers is the last one in the documentary: "Will peace prevail or will Colombia start yet another cycle of violence?" ■

"Like a Box of Chocolates"

For Elaine Shannon, NF '75, knowing when to change course paid off with a new book

I WENT INTO journalism because it's like a box of chocolates. If you know what you're going to get, that takes all the fun out of it.

I got myself to Afghanistan in 2010 with frequent flier miles, a few hundred dollars cash from my day job, and permission, the only one ever granted, to embed with the contingent of Drug and Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents in the war zone. The DEA had quietly surged from six to about 100 personnel on a mission from the White House to reduce the flow of Afghan heroin dollars to the Taliban.



Film rights have been acquired for "Hunting LeRoux"

I had a straightforward plan—research and write a book about the new kings of heroin. Nobody had even printed their names, but I'd done enough reporting to come up with a short list. These South Asian gazillionaires were a bunch of dusty 4th century tribesmen riding horses, donkeys, and camels and wielding satellite phones. They were nowhere

TOP: RODRIGO ABD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS BOTTOM: HARPERCOLLINS
OPPOSITE: ANDY WONG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Live-Blogging the Stock Market

Deb Price, NF '11, is leading a team at the South China Morning Post to offer news average readers can use

WHY ARE CHINESE breweries trading up today? The question came in an email from a reader of the South China Morning Post's new live stocks blog. The blog has transformed how we cover mainland China and Hong Kong stock markets. It is lightning quick, and intensely focused on market moves as they happen as well as analysis and tips from experts. The blog's intended audience is mom-and-pop traders—from Kuala Lumpur to the United States—who are hungry to learn about these important markets. And we take questions from readers.

I, the editor of the stock blog and leader of its team, put my email address on a morning letter to readers. The "beer" reader's question was a good one. We jumped on it, and a short while later, the markets reporter of the day had pulled together an answer—a new cut to the value-added tax was likely to boost profits—and given it a forward spin: Tsingtao Brewery and a few other beer makers were likely to see their shares continue to rally.

It was news readers could use. And, for now, while the South China Morning Post has no paywall, it is free.

Our 116-year-old publication has been undergoing a digital revolution since it was bought by Chinese billionaire Jack Ma's Alibaba Group in 2016. The blog is part of that revolution, as what had been a Hong Kong newspaper known for its crackerjack coverage of the local property market sets its sights on becoming the go-to source of China news for an international audience.

Since launching March 20, the blog has kept readers up on everything from changes in analysts' rating of stocks to what casino operators are doing to best position themselves to rake in the biggest pile of chips in splashy Macau. We draw on the expertise of our entire business desk, including two reporters based in Shanghai. Each day is an opportunity to experiment. One day, for example, we created a new feature, "Crystal Ball," in which experts reveal their hot stock picks. Meanwhile, I have loosened up my headlines, playing off my art, like when I used a photo of a cowboy riding a bucking bull and made our headline, "Hold on tight, traders. It's a jumpy morning." And as we move through the day, we spin off the most important items or themes into daily stories or features, like our recent home run on investing in 5G.

Some outlets like Bloomberg and Reuters cover markets extremely closely through terminals aimed at professional traders and others in financial and media circles. But what we are doing is unusual, providing live coverage of mainland and Hong Kong markets for average readers who want to understand more as they make investment decisions. ■

Investors monitor share prices at a brokerage house in Beijing

as sexy and murderous as the Colombian and Mexican drug lords I'd profiled for Time and Newsweek and my 1988 book, "Desperados," but their money fed the quagmire. Agents called them "unarrestables" due to their influence with the Afghan power elite and usefulness to coalition forces.

The American people deserved to know all this, but no publisher was eager for a narrative with so little forward motion. I yearned to write a story with a beginning, middle, and kickass endgame. In Afghanistan, one or two investigations were coming along slowly. Meanwhile, I decided to look elsewhere for a chocolate-covered cherry.

I swerved onto the offramp. Cocaine, heroin, and Mexican meth were flooding across Africa on the way to Europe and the Middle East. Millions of dirty dollars were flowing into the coffers of organized crime and Islamist militants like Hezbollah, Al Qaeda in Africa, Boko Haram, and Al Shabab. I got into the DEA Special Operations Division and found investigators specializing in trafficking in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. I turned holidays in Istanbul and Paris—stops on the old but still vital French Connection—into work trips.

One day in 2013, an agent I'd met in my travels told me about a new kind of organized crime leader: brilliant, powerful, with no morals and no conscience. "He's like the guy in the James Bond movies, always at his computer," my friend said.

That's all I needed to hear. I started following the tortuous trail of Paul Calder LeRoux. It took me five and a half more years, but "Hunting LeRoux," published in February, is exactly what I was after—a chance to explore a marvelously complicated criminal mind and the equally complex brains of a small band of superb criminal investigators. Changing plans, staying loose, and following my gut won me every damn chocolate in the box. ■

Smart speakers are challenging the foundations of radio, and news outlets are racing to find a place on the platform

BY GABE BULLARD
ILLUSTRATION BY DAN PAGE

SMART SPEAKER USE IS GROWING. WILL NEWS GROW WITH IT?

ON MIDTERM ELECTION NIGHT

last year, NPR carried out its usual live coverage, coordinating stories from its reporters and from member stations across the country. Most of the audience followed along via these stations' broadcast signals.

But those not listening to the radio could get updates too, by asking Amazon's voice assistant Alexa for an update on election news from the NPR One app. The response to this request was a short report with the latest news.

"Obviously, there are people that are going to be just glued to election returns," says Tamar Charney, managing director of personalization and curation at NPR. "But we also know there's a lot of other people who have a lot of other things going on in their life. They're dealing with their kids, they're getting ready for the next day, but they may still want to be able to be plugged in."

The goal of the Alexa offering was to test two hypotheses: Would listeners find an option like this useful? And could NPR give it to them?

The answer to the second question was yes: A staff worked until about 3 in the morning to make updates available twice an hour.

But as to the first question, whether listeners would find it useful—it's not clear how many found it at all. NPR won't say how many people tried listening to the news this way, but, then again, the original commercial radio news broadcast in 1920 didn't draw a massive audience either. "It was our first time trying this out and it was successful because we developed a workflow and best practices for election night so that we are ready for the volume of listeners we will get in the presidential elections in 2020," Charney says. (Disclosure: While reporting this story, I was on the staff of the show "1A," which is distributed by NPR and produced by member station WAMU. I am now a senior editor at the station.)

At least 21 percent of Americans own a voice-activated smart speaker—Amazon's Echo is the most popular, while Google, Apple, and other tech companies make such devices, too. And sales are climbing: In 2017, only seven percent of Americans owned smart speakers. Meanwhile, radio ownership and social media use are dropping. The speakers and the artificial intelligence that powers them can replace or augment the functions of a radio or phone. By voice, users can ask their smart speaker assistants to play music, find recipes, set timers, or answer basic questions.

Users can also ask for news. And this simple request has the potential to challenge the foundations of radio, turning broadcasts into conversations, changing the stories people hear, and creating individualized streams of information.

Smart assistants have long been a feature on mobile phones, but with smart speakers proliferating in homes and the technology now coming preinstalled in cars, voice is pushing to the final corners of consumers' connected lives, creating new habits and leading users to rethink how they interact with their devices. And news outlets are racing to find a place on the platform. "If [voice] does become an ever-more-dominant interface, then it will probably have quite profound effects on the way that information and content is consumed," says Mukul Devichand, executive editor of voice and AI for the BBC.

For many publishers, there's not much question if voice will grow. The question is whether news will grow with it.

The low listenership to the NPR One election night experiment relative to the NPR broadcast can in part be attributed to the lack of people currently asking their smart speakers for news. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that just 18 percent of American smart speaker owners ask for news every day—this typically involves saying, "What's in

the news?" or a similar phrase and getting back short newscast-style reports from a publisher or publishers of the user's choice. Podcasts didn't fare much better: Only 22 percent of American smart speaker owners use the devices to listen to podcasts, according to the Reuters Institute report.

But podcasts and newscasts aren't designed to be played via voice command. Radio news bulletins are broadcast at specific times, usually with weather, traffic, and other soon-to-be-outdated updates. In podcasting apps, shows compete for eyes before ears—attractive art and episode titles have been found to boost listening for NPR's shows, according to Charney, and "asking people to choose without those cues seems like a nonstarter."

Asking a speaker for news is straightforward, but it can be frustrating in its own way. Echo owners, for instance, can stack up several updates from different publishers and hear them back-to-back. This can lead to hearing the same story told by different outlets in different ways, possibly at different volumes. There might be sponsorship messages at the end of each publisher's briefing. Depending on when the user asks, the stories may not have been updated recently. And local offerings are scant. A user who asks for a news update early in the morning could hear three outdated stories followed by yesterday's weather report.

However, it is possible to get broadcast-quality news from a smart speaker: Users just need to ask their device to play a radio station. This is something smart speaker owners have taken to.

The Reuters Institute report notes that more than twice as many people in the U.S. listen to radio on their smart speakers than ask for news every day. And public radio stations have noticed an increase in traffic to the online streams of their live broadcasts. NPR reported that—in the first quarter of 2018, across the entire system of member stations—smart speakers made up about 16 percent of streaming, though some stations have seen even more. For KCUR in Kansas City, Missouri, smart speakers accounted for 38 percent of online streaming for a week this January. Mobile phone and desktop computer streaming were each under 30 percent.

KCUR digital director Briana O'Higgins says these are mostly new listeners to the stream, not people who switched from streaming on their phone to streaming on their speaker. (Data is not yet available to indicate whether smart speakers are replacing listening to analog radio.) O'Higgins attributes the numbers to an on-air campaign encouraging KCUR broadcast listeners to ask their smart assistants to play the station.

ASKING SMART SPEAKERS FOR NEWS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHALLENGE THE FOUNDATIONS OF RADIO

KCUR has not invested heavily in creating content exclusively for smart speakers, but the rise in streaming has given the live broadcast a new relevance, and speaker listening at home is playing a role in programming decisions. The station recently moved the interview program "Fresh Air" to an early evening time slot. O'Higgins says the potential for people to listen to the show's longform conversations on smart speakers as they cook dinner wasn't the primary reason for the move, but it was discussed. On top of this, some stations have found that listeners who turn on the livestream with their speakers stay tuned in for longer.

"The actual speaker has become a radio replacement product. It is taking the place in people's homes, the physical location where radios had been—next to the bed, on the kitchen counter, in the living room," Charney says. "People are now turning to it, I think, to do some of the things they had used the old device, i.e. radio, to do."

"Play this radio station" is one of the more primitive—albeit intuitive—commands for a smart speaker. As people get familiar with their devices, and as publishers start designing news updates that take advantage of smart speakers' unique capabilities, streaming could wind up being a transitional behavior. "I think we're at early days of the general public even thinking of asking for news from a voice assistant," Charney says.

If the stream gives way to on-demand news on smart speakers, then public radio—or any radio stations offering smart speaker streaming—will have a lot of company on the platform. The list of available flash briefings for the Amazon Echo already includes not only radio outlets but TV networks, print publications, and websites. There are even updates delivered entirely by synthetic voices. "Our organization is very focused on us delivering the news where our audience is, and there is no question that audio is a growing segment of where audiences expect to find news," says Kelly Ann Scott, the vice president of content for the Alabama Media Group, which manages several publications in Alabama and is owned by the national media chain Advance Local.

Alabama Media Group is working on briefings and updates for voice platforms. The challenge is figuring out what, exactly, users expect to hear, and how it should sound. "When you put your own user hat

Members of the media surround the new Apple HomePod smart speaker during Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in San Jose, California in 2017

JOSH EDELSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

on and really think about what do you want from these voices that are coming through the speakers in your lives, you can learn a lot," Scott says.

The Alabama Media Group's website AL.com has a flash briefing, "Down in Alabama," hosted by local journalist Ike Morgan. As he runs through the top stories of the day, his casual delivery and Alabaman accent make him sound more like an informed neighbor than a stentorian newscaster. "It has an incredible sense of place," Scott says of the update, which is also available as a podcast. "That kind of authenticity makes it authoritative, too, when he's talking about the news. It's not talking at people. He really treats it like he's having a conversation with his listener."

Similarly, on midterm election night, Charney's team prepared reports for Alexa with the aim of making them sound distinct from a traditional newscast. They didn't want asking for news to be the same as turning on a radio. "It's subtle sometimes, but there's a difference between going on the air and giving a report on something and responding to a question," she says. "Newscasts are a little more presentation, and what we were aiming for is a more genuine answer to a question." Charney says the goal is to have updates sound more like the "engaging, compelling, human-to-human answer" that an actual person would give, rather than a machine playing back something recorded for millions of people to hear at the same time.

NPR and Google—maker of the second most popular smart speaker in the U.S.—are working separately on news experiences designed specifically for voice; they're open-ended and designed to travel with users whenever they find themselves near a voice device, which is to say, everywhere. Each one is a feed of audio stories curated largely by algorithms that learn a user's preferences over time.

NPR has been doing this, absent voice commands, since 2011, when it introduced its Infinite Player, later rebranded as NPR One. The app starts with a newscast consisting of a few short stories. The pieces tend to get longer the more a person listens, with news from local public radio stations interspersed where available. Since the beginning, NPR One has been compared to the music service Pandora, which learns listeners' preferences and plays them music they're more likely to enjoy.

The service Google is developing and testing, called News on Google Assistant, is similar. It uses the Google News algorithms to curate a stream of stories from a variety of news organizations, in and out of radio. As with NPR One, the feed starts with short pieces and expands to longer stories as listening continues. Its aim is to serve content based not only on user preferences, but also on which stories are the most important in their area, and which ones listeners have already encountered on other platforms.

These feeds cater to voice by removing the need for a listener to ask for a specific station or source each time they want an

NPR AND GOOGLE ARE WORKING SEPARATELY ON NEWS EXPERIENCES DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR VOICE

update (though NPR One still needs to be requested by name). There's also no need to search through a smartphone application to change settings for news playback, either. The experience is analogous to turning on a radio or opening a news app—with an endless feed of information. Both News on Assistant and NPR One end up sounding something like a radio newsmagazine. But unlike a radio show, "it's contextually relevant and it's dynamic," says Steve Henn, a former radio journalist who is now the content lead for audio news at Google.

These products are currently built to respond to a generic request like "what's in the news" or "play NPR One." But that's not the only way Charney and Henn imagine users asking their speaker for news.

In an example Henn uses, a listener in California could ask about the bankruptcy of local utility company PG&E and hear a piece from a local news outlet. "In the future you could ask a topical news question and get a story," Henn says. The technology could also someday allow a user to interrupt a story to get more information—"Alexa, who is this speaking?" "Hey Google, tell me more about PG&E."

This would require at least two changes: Platforms would need to allow news outlets' voice apps (called "skills" on Alexa) to respond to questions like this (or users would need to ask these questions of a specific news outlet); and news organizations would need to make sure that voice assistants can find their content and play it as an answer to specific questions.

Already, Google has published instructions for marking up text to point its search engine to the most relevant, newsy information in stories, which can then be read aloud by Assistant's synthetic voice. For audio to be discoverable by a search engine and played back in response to questions, sound files would need to be indexed and tagged. Speech-to-text technology could also transcribe entire stories for search engines. And this could lead to an even more significant change to audio content than voice alone.

With data on search terms from thousands of users flowing in, audio producers could cater their work to the questions users ask or the topics they most commonly search for when they're expecting an audio reply. This is common practice for text-based outlets, but new territory for radio producers. Search metrics are more immediate and precise than any other audience data audio producers currently have: Radio ratings take weeks to compile, and while website stats might indicate which topics are popular,

NOW HEAR THIS: AUGMENTED REALITY COMES TO AUDIO

The next step in wearable audio is content customized for a listener's location. What could this mean for news organizations?

BY GABE BULLARD

Ever since the invention of the transistor radio, audio has been a portable, personal medium. As early as the 1970s, Panasonic was making audio wearable, with an AM radio designed to be worn as a bracelet. The Walkman, the iPod, and now the smartphone have all made audio devices not just something we put in our ears, but something we wear on our bodies.

One next step in wearable audio—called "hearables" in some circles—is content customized for a listener's location.

Using a combination of a smartphone's GPS and motion detectors, as well as audio cues picked up through the microphone, experimental music applications promise to create customized soundtracks for listeners. And, just as iPods were used for playing songs before podcasts took off, news and information is following music's lead.

Bose sells a pair of sunglasses capable of offering the wearer audio augmented reality (AR). The glasses contain sensors that can detect where the wearer is looking and play information back about what they see. At the 2018 South by Southwest conference, the company's demonstration let reviewers look at restaurants and hear about the menu and how long of a wait it might be for a table. Bose touted this as the future of AR—an interface that doesn't superimpose any visuals, but instead gives information strictly through sound. Content for the glasses isn't yet widespread. Bose has purchased Detour, an audio walking tour startup, and is spending $50 million in collaborations with developers such as Yelp and TripAdvisor.

For news organizations, customizing content for a user's location could create a new genre of local reporting: stories that speak to exactly where a person is at a given moment. News on development projects, restaurant reviews, or community bulletins could be delivered at the most relevant time for users. Imagine getting pinged with a notification that repairs on the road you're walking down have been delayed due to budget cuts. Or consider asking a portable smart assistant about a statue you're looking at and hearing the story behind it.

However, the technology is not yet in wide release. And creating location-specific content presents a massive problem of scale: Can one organization possibly have news for every block it covers? Location-specific audio has an air of inevitability as wireless earbuds become less and less intrusive and users get accustomed to interacting with their devices through voice. As for whether the technology will succeed? The last heavily hyped AR wearable product, Google Glass, was designed for visuals and didn't catch on as a consumer product. The next few years will be a test for audio AR technology. ■

they don't correspond directly to what an audience is willing to listen to. Some radio newsrooms have developed popular series based on answering questions listeners send in; making audio discoverable through search could amplify these efforts. But there are hazards to basing editorial strategy entirely on data. What if no one searches for news on City Hall, for instance?

"Data can be abused," says Brendan Sweeney, director of new content and innovation at KUOW public radio in Seattle. "And it's simultaneously true that the myth of a journalist's or an editor's gut being the all-supreme thing, that's also problematic." The challenge, Sweeney says, is not to assume listeners avoid entire topics, but to instead look at the data more closely to see if something else might be turning them away. "If an important story isn't finding the audience it deserves, we need to adapt how we tell that story. Experiment with leads, framing, tone, etc.," Sweeney says.

The most successful ways of telling stories in an algorithmically-curated, voice-based news feed will be determined by user data. And many producers are experimenting now to see what works. NPR One provides stations with information on when in a story listeners decide to skip to the next option. Google's news product could offer similar information, and it's being developed and tested in partnership with a working group of publishers convened by Google.

Knowing questions users ask and granular details of users' listening habits could drive audio producers to make stories that almost perfectly fit listeners' habits and preferences. Conventions of storytelling and production that are common practice could change. Experiments could lead to new standards. However, until the data that could lead to these changes is widely available, the standard radio-style report will likely dominate. For its as-yet-unreleased stream, Google advises producers to keep their stories either under two minutes or between two and 15 minutes, and to make pieces sound-rich by including multiple voices and natural sound, techniques found in abundance on news radio.

Voice could lead to a burst of creativity around traditional beats, or it could lead to stories that don't connect with audiences vanishing. With algorithmic feeds, though, it's not just editors who decide which stories users hear. Reporters may experiment with their framing and writing for City Hall stories, but what's to ensure that they'll end up in streams that are out of a news outlet's control?

VOICE COULD LEAD TO A BURST OF CREATIVITY AROUND TRADITIONAL BEATS

Henn says the algorithm driving News on Assistant, which surfaces stories of local importance and isn't based on internet virality, is designed in part to fight filter bubbles rather than let them build if users skip past certain stories. "Our goal is to provide a diverse range of news, views, and opinions from as wide a variety of authoritative sources so that users can develop their own critical thinking on a story or subject," he says.

And NPR One has "an algorithm that offers other points of view to people who consume a lot of partisan podcasts," Charney says. "Human curation is a big part of what we do both to better inform and manage what the algorithm is doing, but also at times to ensure that certain stories aren't subject to any personalization."

Amazon declined to comment on whether it was planning any kind of algorithmic news product, but said the decision of what makes it into a flash briefing remains up to the user: "We don't consider Alexa a news outlet, we consider Alexa a conduit for the news—meaning we have hundreds of news sources customers can choose from and we leave that up to them on what they'd like to hear."

Even if algorithms and journalists keep users' best interests in mind, listeners could still end up getting slanted coverage through their smart speakers. Voice platforms are no more immune to trickery than any other platforms, and in some ways, they can be more vulnerable. The technology to create "deepfake" videos that show people doing and saying things they never did or said is developing. But the ability to re-edit, impersonate, or synthetically reproduce a person's voice is already here. In 2016, Adobe showed off a potential new feature in its Audition audio editing application that would allow editors to create new words and phrases from a sample of a person's voice. The demonstration involved creating new phrases from existing conversations. (It hasn't yet been commercially released.)

Completely synthetic voices play a large and growing role in voice technology, too. Smart assistants speak in them, and some news organizations are using text-to-voice technology for their news briefings. Quartz, for instance, uses two computer voices to deliver a few minutes of news every day. The text is drawn from the Quartz smartphone app, which is written as a series of conversational text messages. Voice simulation has improved to the point that John Keefe, Quartz's technical architect for bots and machine learning, says some users have told him they prefer the machine narration

for short updates. "The voices are getting better and better," he says. "It's very clear to me that they're just going to get to the point of human clarity. And probably better." At the moment, Henn says his data shows machine voices are less engaging than humans. And machines can't replace the humans who are quoted in stories, and whose voices convey information not just with words, but through tone and timbre.

To maintain trust, identifiers for the source of each story in a voice news feed will be key. Currently, this happens at the beginning of flash briefings. It's possible for a malicious actor to try and put a fake NPR skill in these devices' app store, but Amazon certifies new submissions to its flash briefing skill. And the company says it regularly audits available skills on its platform and reviews reports of "offensive or otherwise inappropriate content." On algorithmic feeds, like the one Google is planning, the identification of a source becomes an issue of sound design and programming. Google's specifications for creating news for Assistant include an introduction that identifies both the publisher and the person speaking.

To keep the sources on their platforms accurate, Henn says Google continues to research the origins and spread of fake news. The company is also working on using the same technology that creates deepfakes to recognize them, and they've invited developers to submit tools to do the same.

There's also a possibility that false information could spread not through news designed for speakers, but simply from falsehoods posted online. One feature of smart speakers is their ability to do quick web searches and return information—for instance, "how tall is the Empire State Building?" This gets complicated when users ask about news that's still developing. The Reuters Institute found that asking for the death toll in the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in the U.K. led to different answers from Amazon's and Google's devices, because they were drawn from different sources. These answers eventually changed to be the same, correct number, though Alexa was not forthcoming about its source, according to the report.

Whether smart assistants can be fooled by false information is a test of how they search for data—if they draw from Wikipedia, it could be edited or faked, while if they draw from other web sources, their algorithms will have to be capable of properly sourcing information. Keefe says trusting a speaker depends on how savvy a listener is, and their willingness to ask it for the source of a fact. He compares it to "the journalist adage: If your mom tells you she loves you, check it out." If Alexa tells you it's true, check it out.

IF ALEXA TELLS YOU IT'S TRUE, CHECK IT OUT

Building trust between a voice and a listener is a challenge publishers and platforms are working to solve. And there's also a question of trust between the two. As voice develops, publishers are again finding themselves relying on big tech companies to distribute their content, along with the content of their competitors.

The ease of using a voice device is partly due to it simplicity: Only one answer comes back in response to a question and there's no need to look at a screen (though smart speakers with screens and voice-activated televisions are available). However, this limits how voice platforms can present news, and how much of it they can present. A user may ask for an update on a big story, but rarely does only one news outlet cover a story. Voice assistants will have to figure out how to respond if a user asks "what happened in the Russia investigation" and every national news outlet has a story. "On big stories it's inevitable that we are going to have multiple partners covering the same event. In that circumstance we will be guided by what's best for the users," Henn says. "Often what is best for the user is giving them a choice. We are working on this but today for topical news queries we give users multiple stories on the requested topic and also offer to send them to their phone."

Increasingly, the story that's surfaced could be a local story. Google's working group of publishers testing News on Assistant includes a handful of local outlets. "Already roughly half of our content comes from local sources," Henn says. "When there are local stories that are nationally significant, hearing from a local reporter can add a tremendous amount of context and expertise to a story." NPR One data shows that listeners who hear a local newscast are more likely to return to the app.

This could be promising for local journalists who are increasingly fighting for space on global platforms. But an algorithm deciding when to play a story, or distributing stories without paying for them, raises familiar fears of tech companies choosing winners and losers in journalism.

"There's a long history and I think the skittishness is natural," Henn says. "Until we lay out a clear monetization strategy publishers are going to be worried." Henn declined to say what this monetization strategy looks like, in part because it's still being

developed. And that development is happening in a partnership between Google and publishers, through the News on Assistant working group. "Ultimately this product will succeed if it works for our partners," he says.

For monetization, Henn notes that voice creates the opportunity for interactive ads, and Google offers a way for listeners to tell their speakers to donate to nonprofit newsrooms after they hear a story. While flash briefings for Alexa often feature a sponsorship message at the beginning or end of an update, Henn says "we can't have a call for support after every one-minute-long story, so we're working on ways to smartly deliver these messages to Assistant users."

One term that's used in these conversations is "offramp." It's a way for users to leave the main feed of stories and build a deeper relationship with publishers whose work they find most valuable. This could mean hearing a feed of just one outlet's stories, opting into an email newsletter, or simply following them on social media. From there, publishers can try to convert these followers into subscribers, donors, or possibly advertising targets. "The piece we control is this single piece of audio. What all publishers want to have more influence on is what happens during, before, and after the listener hears that single piece of audio," says Tim Olson, the chief digital officer of KQED in San Francisco (another Google working group member, which has also received money as part of the Google News Initiative).

For skittish publishers, the rewards beyond revenue remain valuable. Forming a relationship with people on their speakers in the kitchen may make it easier to form a relationship with them on their headphones and in their cars as well. Working with tech companies now means shaping a growing platform; it's a rare opportunity for publishers to exert some control over a technology they don't own.

Radio producers moving toward voice have room to experiment in these early stages. Their primary audiences remain tuned in to the old devices: More than 90 percent of American adults listen to radio each week. Public radio ratings have never been higher. This might not last. And promotions for smart speaker skills are showing up between stories in radio news as smart speakers become another type of furniture in more and more American homes. It's not guaranteed the people in those homes will ask for news. But for now, publishers and tech companies are preparing, so if anyone does ask, they'll have an answer. ■

MORE POWER TO LOW-POWER FM

"Hudson Mohawk Magazine" demonstrates how hyperlocal news shows can make their limited broadcast range their strength rather than a limitation **BY GABE BULLARD**

While podcasts and smart speakers generate buzz, radio—AM/FM, over-the-air, old-fashioned radio—reaches more Americans than any other medium. And technological and regulatory change is still pushing the medium in new directions, one of which is low-power FM.

Low-power FM (LPFM)—a type of non-commercial broadcasting that reaches a very small area—was first granted legal status in the U.S. less than 20 years ago, though unlicensed "pirate" stations existed well before then. Because the signal usually can only be picked up within a few miles of its point of origin, many of these LPFM stations broadcast to concentrated communities, such as farmworkers or neighborhoods of immigrants, and they'll play announcements or music that might not otherwise be easily found or distributed. "Some of its limitations are some of its strengths," says Pete Tridish with the Center for International Media Action, a nonprofit that aids in setting up low-power FM stations.

In Troy, a city of about 50,000, 150 miles north of New York City, the Sanctuary for Independent Media serves its 10-mile broadcast radius with a hyperlocal news show: "Hudson Mohawk Magazine," an hour-long program assembled by a team of about 25 volunteers. The large volunteer staff and the limited range of the signal means producers can put out stories with an intense local focus that wouldn't fit in media with a wider audience. One day in mid-February, for example, a volunteer was editing a piece about the public comments from a city council meeting after one member of the council was revealed to have used racist language in a voicemail. The story was being covered in the local press, but the piece on the "Hudson Mohawk Magazine" would be "people of color in this community talking very knowledgeably and strategically about the entrenched problems of racism here," says Steve Pierce, executive director of Media Alliance, which owns and operates the Sanctuary.

"There's no other thing like that," he says. "Nobody is doing a 10- or 15-minute-long piece of people speaking in their own voice about the problems of the day. The newspaper does

The Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy, New York, which produces the LPFM hyperlocal news show "Hudson Mohawk Magazine"

TIMES UNION

a fine job of covering issues, but it's not in the voice of the people who are living it. And the commercial media are not in a position to do stuff that's more than a minute or so long, if they do it at all. And the noncommercial stations are focused on the state capital and not on the neighborhood."

With newspapers cutting staff or closing entirely, news deserts have been spreading across the U.S. While Troy, with its proximity to the nearby state capital Albany, isn't a desert, it's also not awash in local coverage. The local paper has seen cuts, and other outlets, like the local public radio station, serve a wider, regional audience.

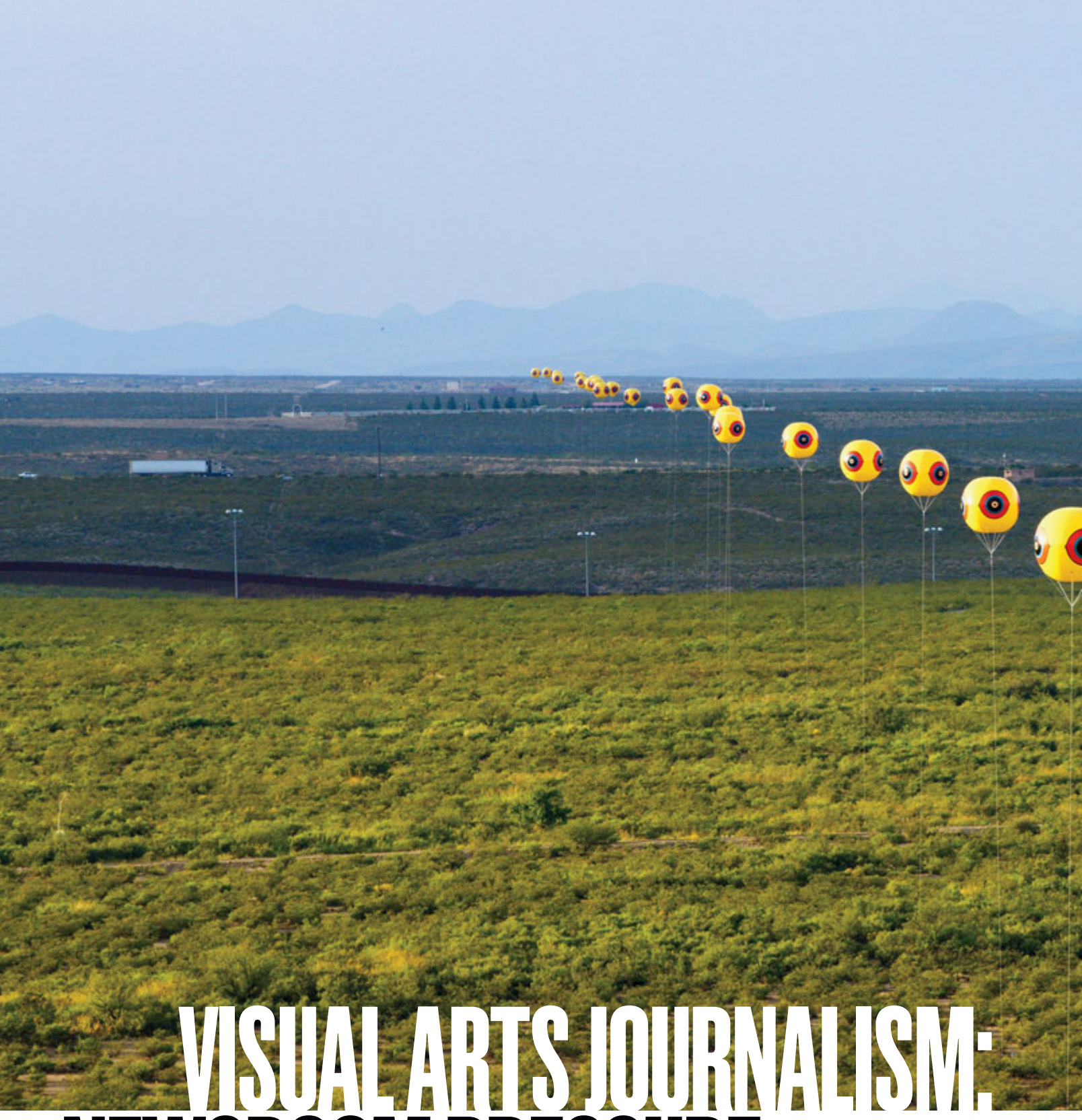
Pierce worked in news radio prior to joining the Media Alliance. But his inspiration for the show, he says, came from—of all places—a local Facebook page: "It's hundreds of people on Facebook who share points of view on what's happening in the city, many of which I don't agree with at all. But it's fascinating to see that those points of view exist. And it's important to know they exist." Pierce wanted to create a place like that on the airwaves—where people go to learn what happened in their community.

Because the Sanctuary is focused on social and environmental justice, the stories tend to cover marginalized groups and labor issues more than traditional media. And because the staff is all volunteers, the production isn't always as pristine as it might be on a larger station staffed with professional producers and reporters. "It's a lift. It's an experiment," says Elizabeth Press, a Sanctuary board member who also helps put the show together. "But I think it's a big question when the resources for legacy media are tight and there's less and less local papers: how do we share information to keep our community engaged in what's going on and create a population that cares about our town, our place?"

Some volunteers are in their 20s, some in their 70s. And all are responsible for getting segments together for the show. "Hudson Mohawk Magazine" airs every weekday evening at 6, and again the next morning at 7 and 9—hours when locals are commuting and more likely to be in their cars and near a radio. The station doesn't pay to get official ratings, so nobody knows how many people listen. The anecdotal evidence—contributions, calls, comments in the community—suggests people hear the show. The station also streams live to the internet and posts segments online for anyone to find.

This model could soon spread to other cities. Pierce is working with two LPFM stations elsewhere in upstate New York, and he plans to create a small network. He imagines the other stations will broadcast hyperlocal news to their communities and share stories of wider interest for others to broadcast. It's the NPR structure, writ small. If the "Hudson Mohawk Magazine" model can be replicated, it could mean more news coverage in more communities.

"There's hope," Pierce says. "The situation for journalism and media—media in general, journalism in particular—it's just very depressing right now. So for people to be able to put their hands on the problem and try to make a difference, however small it may be, that's a huge thing." ■



VISUAL ARTS JOURNALISM: NEWSROOM PRESSURE AND GENERATIONAL CHANGE

A survey of more than 300 journalists finds visual arts writers and critics addressing issues of race, gender, identity—and relevance

BY MARY LOUISE SCHUMACHER

WILLIAM WIDMER/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

AT A TIME

when we are increasingly understanding the world through art and images, the journalists who make sense of visual culture are facing a critical moment of generational change and insecurity.

As media companies continue to shed journalists—about 1,000 in one recent week—making the case for arts writing is as challenging as ever. Indeed, as we prepared to publish this article, my own job was eliminated by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel as part of a system-wide downsizing by Gannett.

"I've lost over 100 colleagues to layoffs in my career," tweeted Jeneé Osterheldt, a writer for The Boston Globe who explores culture and politics broadly, including visual art. "I wish that was an exaggeration. And the erasure of diversity, culture, copy-editing, and the arts in journalism isn't just scary. It's dangerous."

It isn't just that the art world has changed, with a proliferation of biennials, long lines for Instagrammable art shows, and mind-boggling art market records. It is that art's place in the world has changed, too. The planet at large is generating visual culture on a scale that is hard to fathom today. The once-rare tools of the artist are now ubiquitous, a swipe or a click away, in so many hands, and while not everything spilling through our social feeds is art, some of it actually is.

The job of discerning what's genuinely artful, what's worthy of our collective attention—the job of art critics and writers—has never been more relevant. While I was the 2017 Arts & Culture Fellow with the Nieman Foundation for Journalism, I invited my peers in the field to take an online survey about the priorities and pressures of their work.

We received 327 responses from visual arts writers and critics. They work for daily newspapers, alternative weeklies, magazines, digital journals, and websites in the U.S. and work from more than 100 cities in 38 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, as well as more than a dozen countries.

The survey, conducted in the summer of 2017, included more than 100 questions, some of which replicate those of a seminal 2002 study done by the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University under the leadership of András Szántó. That earlier study, which focused solely on visual art critics, provided a rare opportunity for comparison over a period of upheaval for both media and culture.

Much has changed since then. I remember taking that earlier survey, when Google was in its infancy, Facebook and Twitter still in our future, and rounds of newsroom buyouts less perennial. The large majority of respondents worked for daily newspapers then, while less than a third of the current group do. Indeed, nearly half work for web-only outlets today, many hustle to write for multiple publications, and nearly a quarter are running their own independent platforms at least part of the time, according to the new numbers.

The new survey points to an optimism about the art that's being made today and a

Kara Walker, who was among the artists mentioned by survey respondents, pictured in 2018 in front of her performative sculpture "Katastwóf Karavan" in New Orleans

PREVIOUS SPREAD: A view of "Repellent Fence," installed across the U.S.-Mexico border in 2015 near Douglas, Arizona, by Postcommodity. The art collective was mentioned by survey respondents when asked to name artists they believed were worthy of championing

belief that the definitions for art are expanding. Art beyond the art capitals of New York and Los Angeles is increasingly important, as are artists addressing issues of race, gender, and identity. As for influence, it's concentrated in the hands of veteran critics, a small cadre of mostly white men based in New York City.

In the Spring 2018 issue of Nieman Reports, I teased out a couple survey findings. I wrote about an emerging vanguard in visual arts writing, publications, projects, and individuals producing some of the most promising and inventive work today. I also highlighted the rise of Hyperallergic, the for-profit blogazine founded by Hrag Vartanian and Veken Gueyikian, which today rivals the arts journalism of legacy media, according to the survey. It was the only digital newcomer to top a list of publications well-regarded for criticism.

At this moment of transformation, what follows is my read on some of the topline takeaways from the survey, the data for which I'm sharing so others can dig in as well. Some will doubtless draw additional conclusions.

Art is often a lens through which debates that occupy the country—about race or gender, for instance—are seen. It may begin with a single artwork, an artist action, or a social media thread, but many art-world discussions have a way of becoming national debates. One sign of generational change is the degree to which arts journalists today are willing to write at the intersection of art and politics.

Several art-world controversies unfolded in the months leading up to our survey. Some called for the removal from the 2017 Whitney Biennial of a painting by a white artist that depicted the body of Emmett Till, a black teenager who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. Dana Schutz's "Open Casket" is based on a galvanizing civil rights-era photograph of the 14-year-old's mutilated body in his casket. Some suggested the artwork could not be divorced from the violence people of color face today and criticized the reiteration of the original image as callous.

Similarly, Native Americans and others accused the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis of trivializing the hanging of 38 Dakota men by installing Sam Durant's "Scaffold" on its grounds. The large, outdoor sculpture included representations of the gallows used in the mass executions by the U.S. government in 1862. And, of course, memorials and monuments to Confederate leaders are a flash point for debates about racism and white supremacy.

Art institutions are trying to keep up. While museums have talked about inclusivity for years, many are working at it more urgently in the political climate of Black Lives Matter, Time's Up, and the protests at Standing Rock, rethinking what they present, whom they hire, and how the story of art gets told in their galleries, for instance. The movement to decolonize museums, to rethink how work by some groups is presented, has been covered widely, from The New York Times to Teen Vogue to Vice.

"What we're learning in real time along with the rest of the world—and hoping—is that this really is a turning point in history," says Marcelle Polednik, director of the Milwaukee Art Museum. "I think this moment in time is a very significant one for us... in terms of how it's shaping the future of art history and the future of museum work."

THE JOB OF DISCERNING WHAT'S GENUINELY ARTFUL HAS NEVER BEEN MORE RELEVANT

In this moment of cultural reckoning, it makes sense to ask whether arts journalists have the competencies to engage with such issues and artworks, formally, culturally, and politically. Are the most relevant writers on art today those with the salaries and staff jobs? Do they come from the ranks of traditional arts journalists?

What we do know is that about a third of the arts journalists who took our survey write in a way that touches on politics regularly, while a healthy majority do so at least occasionally.

It is the kind of writing that can capture a larger audience, too. When The Washington Post's art critic Philip Kennicott, who often writes about art and politics from his perch in the nation's capital, reviewed the portraits of Barack and Michelle Obama, by African-American artists Kehinde Wiley and Amy Sherald, respectively, his review snagged a million sets of eyeballs. While that might have been a peculiar case, a particularly potent convergence of art and news, the audience size was unheard of for the arts team, says Christine Ledbetter, who was the Post's arts editor at the time. While traditional reviews tend to have small, loyal readerships, reviews or essays that address broader political issues tend to hold meaning for a broader audience, she adds.

The list of artists that arts journalists care about is also revealing. We asked survey respondents to name up to three artists that they believed were worthy of championing. The result was a very long list of more than 400 artists. Only about 30 of those artists were mentioned more than once, a function perhaps of respondents in a lot of places naming artists in their own backyards. Still, while there's little consensus about specific artists, many of the artists on the list have something in common: they tackle thorny, political issues through their work.

While this list shouldn't be considered a ranking, artists who came up more often than others, as a group, are illustrative. They include Postcommodity, a collective based in New Mexico and Arizona that installed massive scare-eye balloons across the U.S.-Mexico border a few years ago, bringing an indigenous perspective to the immigration debate; Kara Walker, who is known for mural-sized, black cut-paper silhouettes that explore racial stereotypes; Anicka Yi, who creates esoteric, gender-and-science-related experiences; and Kerry James Marshall, whose paintings are known for exploring black subjects typically left out of the art

historical canon. Hank Willis Thomas, whose work leverages branding aesthetics to address issues of social justice, is also in this group, as is LaToya Ruby Frazier, whose photographic projects explore black life and social inequality, particularly in America's small towns. Postcommodity, a collaboration between artists Cristóbal Martínez and Kade L. Twist, describes the collective as "a shared indigenous lens," while Walker, Marshall, Thomas, and Frazier are black artists. Yi is Korean-born.

These artists represent quite a contrast to 2002, when Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, quintessential postwar heavyweights—and white men—were the favorite living artists among art critics. The earlier survey posed the question differently, though, asking respondents to indicate how much they liked specific artists rather than asking them to name artists.

This is probably a good time to state an unsurprising finding: The field of arts journalism remains mostly white. About 60% of those who took our survey agreed to answer a question about the race/ethnicity that best describes them. Of those, 167 identified as white, four identified as black, five as Latino, six as Asian, and 20 additional respondents described other or mixed ethnicities. Our highest-paid colleagues, the fewer than 20 people who reported making $80,000 or more, are mostly white men, too. Not a lot has changed since 2002, when the field's lack of diversity, including among the then younger generation, was highlighted.

So what are the implications of a mostly homogenous field of arts writers? What is the cost to the culture of having the top jobs and much of the influence in the hands of a few white men?

The Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Ford Foundation recently began a new collaboration called Critical Minded, intended to support the work of critics of color writing about all artistic disciplines and broadly about culture. Last May, Elizabeth Méndez Berry, of the Cummings Foundation, wrote an important essay about the project, making the case for what's at stake when so many of our salaried critics are white and male. I'll let her speak to the issue: "While some white critics write thoughtfully about non-white aesthetics, too many enforce white aesthetic supremacy. The notion that only works emerging from European traditions are worthy of contemplation and celebration still shapes what is covered, what is held up as exceptional, and what is rendered invisible."

MANY OF THE ARTISTS MENTIONED BY SURVEY TAKERS TACKLE THORNY, POLITICAL ISSUES THROUGH THEIR WORK

One of her most important arguments was that white artists need to be covered by journalists of color as well. "Critical Minded exists to support ecologies of aesthetic excellence that are not predicated on the white gaze," she says.

While we attempted to be as inclusive as possible in our invitation, there are writers on art who may not be represented in this survey for any number of reasons, including because they do not identify as arts journalists.

One of the most insightful writers on the Schutz controversy, for example, was novelist Zadie Smith, and the Globe's Osterheldt is an important voice on art, despite having the broader title of culture writer.

The art critic who holds most influence in the U.S. today, according to her peers, is Roberta Smith, co-chief art critic at The New York Times. Survey respondents were invited to name up to four critics whom they considered "most influential," and more than a third named Smith, considerably more than anyone else.

Smith is known for her unsparing but generous criticism and for promiscuous interests, especially ceramics, textile art, visionary or so-called outsider art, design, and video art. She's been writing about art for more than 45 years and views her job as "getting people out of the house," making them curious enough to go see art, according to her bio at the Times.

While the survey didn't define influence, the consensus about Smith is presumably, at least in part, a recognition of her work. That seems significant, given how rarely female art critics are so celebrated. There was some lamenting when the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for criticism went to Smith's husband, New York magazine's senior art critic Jerry Saltz, rather than to her, some even likening the loss to Hillary Clinton's in 2016.

Margaret Carrigan was among the first to weigh in for The Observer: "I wake up most days and think at least once, 'What if Hillary had won?' Today I woke up and thought, 'What if Roberta had won?'" A headline in The Art Gorgeous read "The Hillary Syndrome: Everyone Thought Roberta Smith Should Have Won The Pulitzer," while another in The Guardian read "Congrats, Jerry Saltz – but when will a female art critic win a Pulitzer?"

A. SCOTT/PATRICK MCMULLAN VIA GETTY IMAGES
OPPOSITE: DAVID JOLES/STAR TRIBUNE VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's a fair question, and it's been a while. Richard Nixon was president the last time a female visual art critic won the Pulitzer for criticism. That was Emily Genauer in 1974, the second year the prize for criticism was awarded, for her writing for the Newsday Syndicate. Manuela Hoelterhoff snagged one, too, in 1983, for writing about a broad range of subjects, including art. And Jen Graves, the former art critic for The Stranger, was a finalist in 2014.

Smith got her start accidentally, writing a fiery rebuttal to a piece in Artforum about Minimalist artist Donald Judd. She joined the Times, where she had freelanced for a while, in 1991 and wrote for The Village Voice earlier in her career. She is also the first woman at The New York Times to hold the position of co-chief art critic.

Beyond Smith, the most influential critics are veteran voices, mostly white men based in New York City. It should be noted that, for our question about influential critics, more than half of the mentions went to just six writers. Smith was the only woman in that top tier. And while a majority of the survey's respondents were women—who are generally less likely to hold staff jobs and more likely to believe they are expendable—few of them were well ranked in terms of influence. Jillian Steinhauer, former senior editor of Hyperallergic and now herself a frequent contributor to The New York Times, and Carolina A. Miranda, an arts writer for the Los Angeles Times, were the women ranked behind Smith.

In that very top group of six, Saltz, known for ardent and engaging writing, as well as social media showmanship, was ranked immediately behind Smith. The Pulitzer board praised him for "a canny and often daring perspective on visual art in America, encompassing the personal, the political, the

pure and the profane." Others in this august group are Holland Cotter, the other co-chief art critic at The New York Times; Peter Schjeldahl, art critic at The New Yorker; Ben Davis, national art critic for artnet News; and Christopher Knight, art critic for the Los Angeles Times.

Except for Davis—an outlier in this pantheon; more on him in a moment—all of these critics have been writing about art for more than 30 years and work for legacy publications, many with long traditions of publishing art criticism regularly. Schjeldahl is the most veteran among them. He's been writing for more than 50 years. This indicates that influence may be accrued and tied to the reputation and reach of a critic's publication. Except for Knight, notable as the only West Coast critic and perhaps the only one writing for and about a local region, they are all also based in New York, a critical proving ground for the art world.

Davis is the only critic in this top tier working for a web-only publication, and he's been writing for fewer years, about 15. Among his peers, he's known for trying to make sense of the more image-driven arts writing of the internet era, what he calls "post-descriptive" criticism, and his much-discussed collection of essays, "9.5 Theses on Art and Class," published by Haymarket Books in 2013, was nominated for Best Work of Criticism by the International Association of Art Critics. Davis, who got his start at a community newspaper, the Queens Courier, and has written for a range of publications including The Brooklyn Rail, e-flux, The New York Times, and Slate, is currently working on a book about artistic appropriation.

It's worth noting that the question of influence was specifically about critics, and those who made it to the top of the list do carry that formal title. What happens to this ranking when those who've been writing for more than 25 years are removed from it may hint at what's ahead for art criticism—including more women, more critics of color, and wider ranging purviews.

Some of the less veteran voices in the mix—in addition to Davis, Steinhauer, and Miranda—include Hrag Vartanian, editor-in-chief and co-founder of Hyperallergic; Claire Bishop, an art historian, contributor to art publications, and author of "Artificial Hells," an overview of participatory art practices; Hannah Black, a conceptual artist and writer known for challenging the Whitney Museum of American Art for exhibiting Schutz's "Open Casket" painting; Paddy Johnson, founder of Art F City; Andrew Russeth, co-executive editor of ARTnews; Claudia La Rocco, a poet and critic with a special interest in performance; Antwaun Sargent, an arts writer focused on black contemporary art; Hito Steyerl, a philosopher, filmmaker, and author of "Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War"; and Maggie Nelson, a MacArthur "genius" known for vulnerable, personal criticism that she sometimes calls "autotheory."

These writers don't fit the mold of their forerunners. They are as likely to write about a cat video festival (Steinhauer), neoliberal capital (Steyerl), or the history of death cultures (Black) as they are to engage artworks on a museum wall. Most write more broadly about culture and society, addressing ideas that surface through contemporary art. Some explore the ways visual culture is reshaping our lives.

"If you look at the veteran critics list and then you look at this other list, the first thing that comes to mind is the word 'nontraditional,'" says Steinhauer. "I feel like the veteran critics all have these staff jobs and fill this sort of old-school critic role." The latter group, she said, offers a "much more varied picture of what criticism can be and can do."

"They are largely independents who have carved their own niche," says Charlotte Frost, a scholar of digital art criticism and executive director of the London-based gallery Furtherfield. "But that's where art criticism originated from," she adds, noting that the earliest critics were similarly independent writers with multiple expertises. "So it's a return to tradition or origins in some sense."

Given the interest in politics among arts writers today, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the election of Donald J. Trump had an impact on the profession. I decided to add a question about Trump's election at the last moment, after talking with a colleague who told me she was recommitting to her job after he had won the presidency. The survey reveals she was not alone. Trump's election changed the way many arts journalists feel about what they do. This was true for journalists across the spectrum of experience, from veteran writers to those entering the field, according to the survey.

It should be noted, too, that we are a very liberal bunch. Of the more than 200 arts journalists willing to share information about their personal politics, more than eight in 10 identify as either liberal or progressive. In fact, arts journalists were more likely to vote for the Green Party or to describe themselves as "other" than to vote Republican in 2016.

Of those who've reframed their thinking in the Trump era, many were willing to elaborate at length within the context of an anonymous survey.

A woman hangs up a protest sign on a construction fence near the controversial sculpture "Scaffold" at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden (part of the Walker Art Center) in May 2017. The sculpture was ultimately removed

OPPOSITE PAGE: New York Times co-chief art critic Roberta Smith and her husband Jerry Saltz, senior art critic for New York magazine, were both among the most influential critics noted by survey respondents

"I am more aware of having to defend the arts as key aspects of personal freedom," wrote one respondent, a full-time staff writer at a website.

"I have always known that I write to build creative community, to support makers...but I have become more conscious of the need to give people who feel silenced, isolated or shut out a place to speak..." wrote a freelancer for regional publications.

"A democratic society thrives on a diversity of opinions, a healthy tension between ideas, free expression, and open debate—all attributes, I feel, of the best of contemporary visual art," said an editor and writer.

A staff reviewer for a major newspaper wrote, "It has made me look at art (even historical art) with more of an eye to political climates and conditions, sometimes at the expense of being able to focus on and appreciate other aspects of the work the way I could before... It's also made me more impatient with some art-world rituals that are tied to social and market forces."

"The election of Donald Trump made it seem more futile when I write strictly about art, but in a way, it's also reiterated the importance of things like art, and contemplation, and the ability to just enjoy something, or think quietly, or talk to people in an open way," wrote a freelancer working for an arts publication in Florida.

Of the respondents who answered the question about Trump's election, many also felt that Trump's presidency should have no bearing on their work. Here's a pretty typical example of what these journalists had to say: "Artists and art writers have no advantaged perspective on what to do about Trump. I stick to what I know."

Conventional wisdom in recent years suggests that visual arts journalists, particularly critics writing for print and mainstream audiences, are increasingly rare, the dodo birds of the art world. End-of-an-era talk has become commonplace, one of our favorite pastimes. In a typical example, art critic Deborah Solomon offered up a "little prayer for art critics" on WNYC radio in 2013. Describing critics as bossy and easy to hate, she reported what she believed to be a sorry fact: that there were only 10 full-time art critics left at newspapers and magazines in the U.S. That same year, Johanna Keller, who founded the arts journalism program at Syracuse University, said: "If you are counting full-time critic jobs at newspapers, you may as well count tombstones." Referring to print jobs in particular, Saltz, echoing his wife, Smith, suggested in 2015 that there were "these last 20 jobs left in the United States" and that "they're going to be gone." In a more recent interview with In Other Words editor Charlotte Burns, Saltz said: "I'm a dying breed. Critics are a dying breed."

Mirroring an ad for the Whitney Museum's Andy Warhol retrospective, this poster—in the style of a Warhol screenprint—was made to protest the involvement of Warren B. Kanders, a Whitney board member and owner of a company that made tear gas canisters used against migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border

A lot hinges, of course, on how one counts and defines critics, or arts journalists more broadly, for that matter. Some count only those who are full time or on staff, without some kind of a hybrid beat like my previous one as art and architecture critic for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Others are primarily interested in those with the "critic" title and who write mostly formal reviews.

While the survey was not designed to provide a definitive headcount, so to speak, it does suggest that arts journalists may be less rare than some imagine, which is not to suggest losses are not real. When the 2002 survey was conducted, most major general-interest news publications had at least one visual art critic, though there were notable exceptions, including one of America's largest newspapers, USA Today. Also, the odds of a publication having a critic dropped for lower-circulation publications then. Again, the 2002 survey looked at a more tightly focused group of traditional art critics, and Szántó and his team identified 230 of them. We don't need data to tell us that jobs and coverage have been squeezed and eliminated since then.

Still, the field is gathering new voices. Arts journalists who've been writing about art for a decade or less but who've made it past the two-year mark represent 47% of our survey's respondents. More than 75 individuals in more than 20 states described themselves as the "chief art critic" or equivalent for their publication. Of those, more than 25 hold a staff position at a newspaper, a count that's incomplete because we know some newspaper critics didn't take the survey.

With that said, arts journalists believe their beats are at risk. Most of the survey's respondents felt moderately secure in their jobs, at best. For those that have some kind of a formal position, a third thought their media organization would not make a priority of replacing them if they left, and only about one in 10 believed it would be a "great priority."

About 30% of respondents have been writing about art professionally for more than 20 years. And while such lengthy tenures point to some stability in the field, it

may also indicate a lack of opportunities for advancement. Consider that less than a third of the survey's respondents pursue their work on a full-time basis with a staff position. About two-thirds are freelancers, many of whom work for several outlets and the vast majority of whom are working without a contract. For those who do have staff jobs, fewer than one in 10 felt "very secure" in their positions. A third of all respondents report that their jobs are "not at all secure."

Income patterns tend to reflect employment patterns. The majority of arts journalists—60%—make only half of their total earnings or less from their arts writing. More than half make $20,000 or less a year. This raises serious questions about who has access to our field and who can afford to work for such wages. One of the critical questions facing the profession is how to support the work of cultural writers in a sustainable way.

In some ways, the survey was a referendum on the internet and what it's meant for art. A large majority of arts journalists believe that the definitions for art have expanded since the rise of the internet. They also believe their audiences are both more informed—and confused—about art in the digital era, that society is oversaturated with images and the art world overpopulated with art.

On the whole, though, arts journalists are pretty optimistic about the art being made today. Most believe artists are breaking genuinely new ground. About eight in 10 respondents said most of their work is focused on the art of today.

Indeed, a majority of arts journalists are proud of the work that's been produced in the last 25 years, much as those in 2002 were proud of the art produced in the quarter-century before that survey. Nearly a quarter of the survey's respondents even believe we are witnessing a "golden age" of art today, slightly more than believed so in 2002.

But there is another side to this coin. While some believe we're living through the most exciting time for art, almost as many say the glory days have faded. More than 20% of respondents believe that "there was a golden age of American art and it has passed." Moreover, the overwhelming majority rejects the idea that we're witnessing a golden age—75% dispute this, and 30% do so strongly.

TRUMP'S ELECTION CHANGED THE WAY MANY ARTS JOURNALISTS FEEL ABOUT WHAT THEY DO

When it comes to the artists we care about today, many of them are working outside the art capitals. More than half of the artists worthy of our ink, so to speak, exist beyond New York and Los Angeles, according to the survey. Some of those artists also create work rooted in or about off-center geographies, like Postcommodity on the border.

Arts journalists have also grown more bleak about the impact of money on art. More than half say the art world is too dependent on the market and commercial institutions, and more "strongly agree" today than did in 2002, a leap from 29% then to 51% today. A small minority—about 16%—disagree, and most of those only "somewhat." And while the contemporary art market continues to set records—including a recent auction record for an artwork by a living artist, David Hockney, which sold for a bit more than $90 million—a significant majority of arts journalists don't cover such things. Only 10 people said they report regularly on the market, auctions, and collectors.

Arts journalists are covering a very different world today. When the 2002 survey was conducted, writing for a web publication wasn't even a consideration and there wasn't a real-time discourse driven by hearts, likes, retweets, and hashtags. Most of the 2017 respondents believed the internet had changed criticism in meaningful ways, and younger journalists were even more inclined to say so.

As I've been writing these last paragraphs, artists and activists with the group Decolonize This Place have staged demonstrations at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, protesting the presence of Warren B. Kanders, owner of the company Safariland, on the museum's board, after reports that the company's tear gas canisters were used against migrants and asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border. The flow of images and insight that led to this protest was swift, from wrenching and viral images from the border, including a mother and her daughters being teargassed, to reporting by art sites like Hyperallergic to online organizing around a hashtag to a highly Instagrammed protest at one of the nation's most august museums. A poster created for the protest by Decolonize This Place and the collective MTL+, done in the style of an Andy Warhol screenprint, replicates images of the canisters and is made in the fashion of an advertisement for the Whitney's blowout Warhol retrospective, of which Kanders is listed as a significant contributor. Now, images of the poster are free to proliferate, too.

As ARTnews reported, protesters "implicated Kanders's involvement in the Whitney within larger global histories of colonialism, queer erasure, gentrification, class struggle, and violence."

In such moments, visual literacy, news literacy, social justice, global politics, and art become part of a rapidly moving whole that arts writers and critics contribute to and respond to. With audiences speaking so directly to art institutions, this raises questions about what the role of arts journalists can and should be.

As we consider this question at a moment of generational shift—as those who hold influence prepare to leave the field—the survey's respondents offered up some important self-critique. Many are critical, for instance, of the field's focus on high-profile artists and exhibits at the expense of other deserving artists and issues. A large majority of the journalists, across age groups, agreed on this point. They also believe that the field as a whole is focused on the art centers of New York and Los Angeles at the expense of deserving artists and issues in the rest of the country.

These critiques and others mentioned in this article raise lots of questions about the future. While most of the survey's respondents believe what they do has an impact on the art in their region, one might ask what will become of local and regional critics working outside the heat and energy of the art capitals, not to mention the artists they cover. Also, if new competencies are called for today, are there new pathways into the profession? Where should hiring editors be looking for new voices? Will we look back in another 15 years to see a field that remains mostly white?

It's also worth asking this: What will be the fate of the traditional art review amid all of this change? Respondents were lukewarm on the idea that critics are doing a good job of championing artists who will be seen as important in the future. While most agree, less than 5% do so strongly. As our focus is being recast, what—and who—are we not paying attention to?

Arts journalists have the capacity to form narratives, shape canons, set cultural agendas, or, at least, to inspire curiosity and "get people out of the house," as Smith put it. With the relevance of our work on the line and a lot at stake just now, we should confront the questions facing our field—and the pressures on it. ■

The full survey can be viewed online at www.niemanreports.org. If you would like to discuss the survey or its results, please email the author at marylouiseschumacher@gmail.com.

HOW IMPLICIT BIAS WORKS IN JOURNALISM

Avoiding the pitfalls of hidden biases can lead to better story selection and more inclusive reporting

BY ISSAC J. BAILEY
ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG CHAYKA

[redacted] was born in Charleston, South Carolina, the city where the Civil War began, and attended a school system still segregated and underfunded nearly half a century after Brown v. Board of Education, a system that didn't know quite how to handle students like me.

Nearly everyone in my high school received free or reduced lunch. I received free lunch and food stamps and big, rectangular boxes of government cheese.

By the time I reached college, I couldn't count all the days of ridicule I had experienced in class and in the hallways and on the playground because I was different. Every day, I had been underestimated and overlooked for something over which I had little control, something which shaped my life like nothing else. At private, elite Davidson College, I knew no one would understand what I had experienced in my young life. There wouldn't be enough people like me around.

Things got no better after I had secured a degree and had been recognized for my writing and thinking abilities. That's why I walked into interviews thinking it unlikely I'd land a job—and walked out knowing my initial fears had been realized. The process repeated itself multiple times. My credentials and talent and potential didn't matter.

Though I'm two decades into my journalism career, little has changed on that front. In an industry struggling with a decades-long lack of diversity, I'm still facing the same barriers I faced when I was a young boy because my chosen profession employs too few people like me, too few people who understand the challenges I face.

Yes, I am a black man who grew up in a racist South and work in an industry with a horrific track record on racial diversity. Your brain has probably conjured images of potential employers, probably a white man, not a woman, because "employer" and "white man" so easily go together.

However, I'm not referring to my difficulties dealing with race, but rather with a nearly-lifelong struggle with a severe stutter that has cost me more professional opportunities than the color of my skin. It is the first thing I think about when I wake up every morning, wondering how I will cope throughout that day. My race matters—it can't not matter where I live—and it remains near the top of my mind as well. But it does not shape my daily perspectives and mood nearly as much as my stutter.

That's how I first came to understand the concept of implicit bias, long before I knew researchers had coined the term and tried to measure it. Having to contend with how others responded to my stutter taught me that people's brains run on autopilot more than they like to admit. I relied upon that knowledge to conduct race relations courses I designed, telling participants to close their eyes and report the image that automatically popped into their heads when I uttered words like "criminal" and "drug dealer." Most of them would sheepishly reply they imagined a black man.

That's implicit bias at work.

While research into implicit bias is still developing, what we know now has important implications for journalism. A commitment to grappling with implicit bias could become an effective way to help the industry produce news coverage that more accurately depicts an increasingly diverse world, transform audience engagement and increase trust, and identify and overcome unspoken and unrealized internal divisions that negatively affect relationships within newsrooms.

Implicit bias refers to an automatic or unconscious tendency to associate particular characteristics with particular groups. It is not malicious but could lead to disparate treatment of individuals and groups.

The phenomenon was illustrated in an analysis of orchestra auditions. Until the 1970s, orchestras were only 5 percent female, even though those conducting the auditions were convinced they were choosing candidates based solely on the quality of their play. Then most major orchestras began doing something called "blind" auditions, in which a screen concealed the identity of the musician, allowing the jury to judge only the music being played without unwittingly being influenced by gender.

According to "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians" by Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse, "using a screen to conceal candidates from the jury during preliminary auditions increased the likelihood that a female musician would advance to the next round by 11 percentage points. During the final round, 'blind' auditions increased the likelihood of female musicians being selected by 30 percent."

Disparate treatment also shows up in job applications with black-sounding and white-sounding names on resumes that are otherwise identical, on dating sites, and in choices people make on Airbnb. It's been detected in housing decisions that have led to increased segregation.

Implicit bias has also been found when human beings create technology to do the judging impartially. Software engineer Jacky Alciné discovered that Google Photos was classifying his black friends as "gorillas." It's a problem Google has acknowledged will take time to fully contend with, which is why it blocked its algorithm from recognizing gorillas, and at least for a time racial terms such as "black man" or "black woman."

Journalism has not been immune to the phenomenon, with research showing that female politicians are treated differently in news stories, and by voters, from male politicians, while black families are overly associated with crime and Muslims with terrorism by media outlets convinced they treat every group fairly. Studies such as one in Political Research Quarterly have found that stories in which the candidates running are only women, the focus is more often about character traits and less often about issues. Researchers at the University of Alabama found that terror attacks committed by Muslims received 357 percent more coverage than attacks committed by others.

The bias blind spots in our thinking are

MY STUTTER TAUGHT ME THAT PEOPLE'S BRAINS RUN ON AUTOPILOT MORE THAN THEY LIKE TO ADMIT

NIGEL FRENCH/PA WIRE VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

largely the result of how the brain processes the flood of information it constantly receives. We receive billions of bits of information every day, most of which we can't consciously process. The brain sorts through what we need to focus on, often prioritizing things that will ensure our survival. That's why we can be startled by a sudden, unknown sound or a shadow that shows up unexpectedly in our periphery. It doesn't matter that it's unlikely to be a bear or a ghost; our brains automatically cause us to respond as though it might be, just in case. Live in an environment long enough and such associations can lead to automatic, misleading responses.

Because we live in an environment that includes centuries-deep stereotypes about groups, it also seeds the ground for negative associations that affect how we view others. When you live in an environment that repeatedly reinforces the idea that "criminal" and "black man" is the norm, the brain has a tough time making you comfortable with dissimilar pairings.

The growing recognition of implicit bias is happening as the U.S. undergoes profound demographic shifts and as technological and other advances make it possible for the formerly-unheard to be heard. In homogenous groups, in which everyone believes and shares the same values and outlook and experiences, implicit bias can seemingly lay dormant. The effects of implicit bias become more noticeable when a well-established order, no matter if it was good for a few and bad for the majority, is challenged. Today, seemingly everything is being challenged.

White evangelical Christians believe they see implicit bias, or even intentional animus, at work in how mainstream media depict them.

Liberals believe they see implicit bias because journalists and media outlets have become so concerned about cries of "liberal bias" from conservatives they've slanted coverage to avoid that label.

Native Americans suffer from a host of disparities on a variety of issues, as much as African Americans, but are often left out of discussions and media coverage.

Asian Americans and Latinos too have expressed concerns about their portrayal in media.

Women feel the sting of limiting gender stereotypes in print, online, and on the air.

Journalists of color know the dismal statistics about their representation in most newsrooms in the United States.

Linking to an article about Wimbledon's all-white garment policy, The Wall Street Journal tweeted "Something's not white!" along with a photo of Venus Williams

A growing number of white men feel put upon for being white and straight.

Then there are the disabled and mentally ill, who often feel excluded.

What about police officers who feel unfairly attacked by media because of the focus on statistically-rare police shootings?

Gays and lesbians and bisexuals and the transgendered and Muslims and Arabs and the overweight—the list is long—are among others who feel aggrieved.

For journalists, correcting for implicit bias can be a way to account for gaps in our knowledge and perspective that might be undermining our work in ways of which we are unaware.

Take my stutter, for example. I know most people are aware of stuttering but believe they understand it better than they do. They probably rarely encounter severe stuttering, forcing their brains to rely upon incomplete and often distorted information even as they try to make sense of what they are encountering.

That's why bullies and non-bullies have

initially laughed when hearing me speak. The bullies did so explicitly, purposefully, to belittle me. Non-bullies, including family members and friends, have done so reflexively—as though they couldn't help it—because my stutter made them uncomfortable.

Each of them viewed me the way a gaggle of producers at broadcast outlets—NPR, MSNBC, CNN, and NewsOne among them—have since come to see me. They don't use the words "too dumb to talk," like the kids who taunted me on the playground, while rescinding offers to appear on air. But the result has been the same: a broad-based silencing by a media infrastructure built, maybe unwittingly, to nearly almost always exclude voices that don't sound quite ... right.

A similar process may be at play in the minds of readers, listeners, and viewers as they process a journalist's work, answering unanswered questions based on their own experiences and interpreting a report based on the context provided. Take, for example, a tweet by The Wall Street Journal about the 2017 Wimbledon tennis championships: "Something's not white! At Wimbledon, a player failed his pre-match undergarment check." The tweet accompanied a photo of Venus Williams, a high-profile black player who, along with her sister Serena, helped redefine the sport over the past two decades.

Readers could have understood the tweet as a light-hearted attempt to discuss Wimbledon's all-white garments policy. Including the photo of Venus Williams was a reasonable journalistic decision. But a better choice would have been a photo of the white 18-year-old male player referenced in the tweet, or a differently-worded tweet. Williams was doing unexpectedly well in a major tournament late in her career and, a week earlier, had to change out of a pink bra that violated the all-white policy. That's why choosing her photo seemingly made sense. It provided important context.

That's not all it did. Many readers viewed the tweet as a not-so-subtle jab at Williams's skin color. While the journalists who pulled together the tweet, story, and photo had reason to believe they had checked all the appropriate journalistic boxes, they neither accounted for implicit bias—their blind spots, or their audience's—nor appreciated the still potent issue of race.

Those journalists could have earnestly believed writing "something's not white" over the photo of a black player had nothing to do with race. That's how implicit bias works. It's not ill-natured, but it can blind you to other people's realities. For many Venus Williams fans, there is no escaping the import of race. She isn't well known only because she's a great player, but because she's a great black player in a sport that had long felt off-limits to black people. In less than an hour, The Wall Street Journal had deleted the tweet and apologized.

Another example of this phenomenon is the intense reaction to a New York Times article about Michael Brown, whose shooting death at the hands of a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, led to explosive protests. Brown was said to be "no angel." On the surface, it was just another benign descriptor that parents across the globe have used to sometimes playfully refer to their own children. The intent of the journalist John Eligon was likely a sincere attempt to describe Brown's past run-ins with authority and a much-discussed strong-arm robbery as part of a fuller picture of the complex life the teenager had lived. Eligon told Times public editor Margaret Sullivan that in proposing a profile of Brown he wanted to tell the story of a young man who, "despite his challenges and obstacles, was someone who was making it." Brown had graduated from high school on time and was planning to attend college.

In the context of the emotional issue of questionable police shootings, to many readers, it signaled something sinister. Young black men are "no angels" even when they are on the receiving end of bullets. It suggests there is an inherent link between criminality and blackness, particularly given that such descriptors have rarely been used for young white men, such as Dylann Roof, who have committed massacres in churches, movie theaters, and schools.

A journalist who fails to recognize she has blind spots can unintentionally distort the meaning of her reporting. Not understanding the country's racial history can unwittingly convince even the best journalists to write about minority groups in ways that can lead to harmful racial stereotypes—or exclude them from coverage all together. That's why implicit bias researchers are more concerned with providing journalists with tools to help them recognize their biases than expecting training to automatically lead to changed behavior.

"Implicit bias became a popular topic a few years ago, but the election of Donald Trump as president really accelerated journalism organizations' fervor to be as accurate as possible," says Tonya Mosley, the senior Silicon Valley editor for KQED in the San Francisco Bay area, who helped create an interactive implicit bias workshop for journalists while a Stanford University Knight Fellow. "We don't think 'bias training' offers some magic solution, but a real discussion about how our work is impacted is valuable."

Mosley, along with Knight Fellow Jenée Desmond-Harris, conducts workshops designed to help journalists think about their individual work and their approaches. Journalists are asked to reflect on their upbringing and how their "interactions and world views creep into their approaches to journalism." Often, journalists "just want to talk freely about the challenges they are dealing with. This shows us that there is a want, a need, to talk through one of the main tenets of journalism—and that is objectivity," Mosley says.

The workshops are not an easy fix, but neither were sexual harassment and cultural competency trainings, says Mosley. One of the most powerful tools in her toolkit is the self-audit, an objective examination of one's own work. Are almost all your sources white men? Is your work devoid of voices that don't

A crowd prays outside of Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston. The Post and Courier discussed implicit bias's implications when covering the mass shooting there in 2015

STEPHEN B. MORTON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IMPLICIT BIAS IS NOT ILL-NATURED, BUT IT CAN BLIND YOU TO OTHER PEOPLE'S REALITIES

neatly fit into a number of "traditional" categories? If so, ask yourself why. Is it because there are no credible voices on your beat outside of the traditional ones? Or is it because your source list was built upon a foundation of traditional voices who most frequently recommend other traditional voices for inclusion in your stories?

Sometimes, the best voice for a particular story will be a straight white man. The self-audit, though, forces the journalist to stop and think, to reconsider how her source list was built and is being used on a daily basis.

Maybe non-traditional voices are available and can deepen your stories but will take an extra call or two to identify, contact, and include. If implicit bias is essentially having our thinking on autopilot, the self-audit is the journalist re-taking the wheel.

A journalist can use such a periodic assessment to determine if they are reliant upon a particular kind of voice, while unwittingly ignoring others.

"It takes daily practice by individuals and a company/organizational commitment for there to be a true cultural shift. We talk at length about journalists building a toolkit, and using those tools on a daily basis, sometimes story by story," Mosley says. "We ask journalists to reflect deeply and examine how their own upbringings, interactions, and world views creep into their approaches to journalism."

Virtual reality may be part of the solution to the implicit bias conundrum by allowing people to do the seemingly impossible: have firsthand experience about what it feels like to live in another person's skin. As Joshua Rothman of The New Yorker reported, researchers have found that "inhabiting a new virtual body can produce meaningful psychological shifts."

In one study, white participants spend around 10 minutes in the body of a virtual black person, learning tai chi. Afterward, their scores on a test designed to reveal unconscious racial bias shift significantly. "These effects happen fast, and seem to last," one of the researchers told Rothman. A week later, the researchers found that white participants still had less racist attitudes.

While virtual reality and other efforts have shown promise, there is no guaranteed solution to correcting for implicit bias in news coverage. Mosley and others have said training efforts can even backfire if not well-designed, creating resentment and obstinance.

But there are several things outlets can do to lessen the likelihood implicit bias will influence their work. Innovative thinking aimed at reforming the criminal justice system speaks to the challenges and potential of such efforts.

Adam Benforado, a law professor at Drexel University, tackled implicit bias in "Unfair: The New Science of Criminal Injustice," a detailed look at cognitive processes—not impartiality, racist malice, or a nuanced understanding of evidence—and how they affect seemingly-benign factors, such as "the camera angle of a defendant's taped confession, the number of photos in a mug shot book, or a simple word choice during a cross-examination," which in turn help determine guilt or innocence in court cases.

Researchers have found that jurors viewing a taped confession are more likely to believe the suspect is making a voluntary statement when the camera is focused on the suspect. When the camera is positioned to show the interrogator and suspect in profile, "the bias toward believing that the suspect is making a willing statement is removed." It affects every level of the system, from the cop on the beat to the juror in the jury box and the judge presiding over it all.

Benforado has proposed a radical solution to a radical problem, which amounts to, among other things, creating a kind of veil for courtrooms to do to criminal justice what blind auditions did for elite orchestras. He wants to eliminate as many factors as possible that might trigger a person's implicit bias. No more telling jurors to consider the defendant's body language or allowing them to even know the race of the defendant. The goal is to remove the possibility that jurors, judges, prosecutors, and police officers will unwittingly rely upon implicit-bias triggering factors to make what should be impartial decisions. The system may need to move to a kind of virtual courtroom so judges and jurors can't be influenced by a witness's attractiveness, a defendant's skin color, or a prosecutor's body language, Benforado wrote.

He knows journalism can't adopt the same reforms but believes three changes can make a substantial difference now: Remove racial identifiers from resumes, adopt a blind resume review, and stop using personal connections and word-of-mouth to make hires, practices that are sure to reproduce the kinds of staffs that have always been produced.

"Really trying to make newsrooms more diverse is really, really critical," Benforado says. "We are all biased, but people are biased in different ways. You don't want everyone with the same perspectives. Eventually you will bring someone in for an interview, so think of ways to tie your hands a little more to focus on the metrics you are looking for and less on the intangibles, such as thinking they 'feel right' or 'fit' our culture. Any unconscious biases could come in there."

Hiring reform is only part of the solution. Internal practices must also change. Newsrooms should begin aggregating and studying data about their coverage decisions, including tracking how many stories are told about a particular area and who is usually included in the stories as sources, among other things. "If you are working as part of a team, have an outside person review it with racial cues removed to look for problems," Benforado says. "It's possible that in interviewing white people versus black people, the same journalist might be asking different questions but think they are asking the same question. How many stories are about white wealthy people? Poor black people? It could tell you there is a problem, whether it is implicit or explicit."

It might not be possible to pinpoint how implicit bias influenced an individual story or hiring decision, but these kinds of tests can force newsrooms to not only think anew, but to implement strategies and procedures that lessen the likelihood that implicit bias will keep quietly shaping coverage and hiring patterns.

The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina has had discussions about the implications of implicit bias, though it hasn't done testing or comprehensive training on the subject. Its newsroom is not diverse. But covering racially-charged news events has forced it to grapple with the issue in ways it had not previously.

In 2015, a white North Charleston police officer was caught on video shooting a black man who had his back to the officer. Just a couple months later, Roof, the young white

supremacist, killed nine black people during a Bible study at one of the nation's longest-standing black churches.

"We talked a lot among ourselves, and we sought advice and feedback from our community," says executive editor Mitch Pugh about coverage decisions. "We listened a lot. Maybe not as much as we should have at first, but as these stories continued, I think we realized we needed to listen more." A few of their journalists, such as Jennifer Berry Hawes, Glenn Smith, and Doug Pardue, "understood the limitations of their own experiences and did their very best to ensure their stories reflected what was really happening in Charleston and the impact on all our readers."

But Pugh has not heard much about implicit bias testing and training options. "We are woefully behind in terms of building a newsroom that accurately reflects our community," he says. "But we have to be better. Plain and simple. The nature of some of the biggest news stories of the last five years has forced us to reckon with issues we're likely more comfortable avoiding."

The New York Times has mandated implicit bias training for all hiring managers, which must be completed before managers conduct interviews. Like many other organizations dealing with the issue, the company believes a newsroom-wide mandate might make the training less effective. But it has been made available to non-managers, and hundreds have voluntarily taken it.

National editor Marc Lacey has found the program helpful. "It prompts you to question your assumptions," he says. "It prompts you to not assume that your first judgment of something is the right one. It prompts you to realize that there are points of view other than your own. All of these things are healthy for good reporters. It's not just one group that has unconscious bias; it is something that everybody on the planet has and is something we can work on."

Although the Times employs journalists from all over the world and has committed to training designed to eliminate blind spots, it has not been without controversy. The Times was heavily criticized for a piece that got pilloried as "the Nazi next door." Its coverage in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election, particularly a piece that suggested the investigation into the Trump campaign was bearing no fruit even as it featured an abundance of critical stories about Hillary Clinton's email usage, has been scrutinized. Critics claim the paper has had a long-running bias against the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee.

Does that suggest diversity and implicit bias training isn't all it's cracked up to be? Not necessarily, says Lacey, who believes the training should be embraced by more in the industry. "Taking unconscious bias training does not mean that every story that one handles in the weeks and months and years after that training is going to be without criticism and that everybody is going to like that story," Lacey says. "It won't result in perfect journalism. What it does is prompts one to be reflective."

THE NEW YORK TIMES HAS MANDATED IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FOR ALL HIRING MANAGERS

NPR has also been tackling the issue. The podcast "Code Switch," hosted by Shereen Marisol Meraji and Gene Demby, is one of the most high-profile, tangible manifestations of a national media outlet's attempt to contend with its blind spots concerning race. NPR has not required journalists to take the implicit bias test, but its human resources department brought in an implicit bias trainer in 2017 for a few workshops. Keith Woods, vice president for newsroom training and diversity, hopes to conduct more. New hires participate in orientation workshops held monthly during which they talk about coverage of race issues. Such discussions also take place when news desks and shows are grappling with coverage questions.

Still, Woods doesn't believe "we do a good job at all wrestling with racial bias" because, "like the rest of society, we've pushed the issue of bigotry so far to the extreme in our heads that unless you're wearing your sheets at night or sporting a swastika tattoo, you don't regard that as a personal challenge. People believe that if they're already on the side of the angels as a journalist, they're not the ones who need the work. The reality is that we all need it."

The difficulty is having a sustained commitment.

"There's only one way to improve this: more talking," Woods said. "There have been times in the eight years I've been at NPR when we were doing that better than we are now, but it's never been enough. Like everywhere, we struggle to find the time or money, or the people motivated enough to pull those conversations together."

He has noticed a difference in how white journalists and journalists of color view NPR's efforts, a split not unique to NPR. That phenomenon showed up during the 2016 election cycle when many journalists of color were exasperated by the "economic angst" narrative embraced by many white journalists to explain why blue-collar white voters chose Donald Trump. "White journalists not pressing the question much; journalists of color often frustrated by what does and doesn't get covered or how it's covered," he says. "But that's a surface description. Our most recent sourcing research tells us that Latinos, for example, aren't included much by anyone but Latinos. And every racial group has blind spots about somebody else."

Other outlets are grappling with these issues in a variety of ways that touch on various biases, implicit and otherwise. National Geographic put together an entire issue to examine race, as well as the magazine's own racist history. Journalists such as Wesley Lowery of The Washington Post have said other media organizations should examine their history with race. The Financial Times is examining ways to better reach women, who only make up roughly 20 percent of its subscribers.

Ed Yong of The Atlantic has been open about the difficulty of trying to "fix the gender imbalance" in his articles through self-audits. He was surprised to learn that 35 percent of his stories in 2016 included no female sources, and he used men as sources more than three-quarters of the time in his stories. A colleague of his found that women made up less than a quarter of her sources.

It took effort, but Yong increased those numbers, adding an estimated 15 minutes of work per piece to his workload. Since then, he's been using lists of tips that teach journalists how to diversify sources and a database of underrepresented experts in science, the field he covers. It's the kind of effort that can lead to enriched stories that better illustrate the complex reality of the world—while serving as a bulwark against implicit bias.

To combat their blind spots, Tim Carney, commentary editor at the Washington Examiner, says his writers sit at the same desk and talk through issues. His staff includes two immigrants, one a Pakistani Muslim, and a mix of "Midwesterners,

Northeasterners, rural folk, city folk, millennials, Gen X-ers." They speak freely about difficult issues, he says. "On the most difficult issues like race and sexuality, we really try to press one another to think through the issues from everyone's perspective. It helps that we have diversity but also are fairly unified ideologically. In other words, I think we talk more openly about race and ethnicity at our desk because we're all conservatives and not worried about some opportunistic liberal jumping out and calling us racist."

But conservatives have a few disadvantages when it comes to seeing clearly on race, Carney says. They've been called racist publicly so frequently it "inures us to complaints about microaggressions and implicit bias." Young conservatives are likely to believe that perspective doesn't matter, which makes it harder to sympathize with others or examine their own biases. And conservatives simply don't have as many black and Hispanic people "among our ranks."

Carney says he will consider implicit bias training for the opinion page at the Examiner. He knows well that "one's experiences matter. It's a contradiction to state that journalists can and do cover issues objectively and that race matters."

Objectivity is a nebulous term. Still, for the longest time, white male journalists set the standard for objectivity, which was affected by their experiences and background even when they didn't acknowledge that reality. And for a long time, I let broadcasters off the hook because I was convinced they had objectively considered having a stutterer like me on the air before turning me away. That's why it took nearly a decade before my voice was heard on NPR airwaves.

I began to gently push back because I wanted those broadcasters to realize that the infrastructure they built to produce a daily or weekly show works well for what it's been designed to do, which means almost always excluding potential sources who are inconvenient, no matter how much value those sources may bring to an on-air discussion. I wanted them to know that journalists must decide if the convenience of the status quo is more important than the disruption of eliminating journalistic blind spots in hiring and coverage decisions. Those of us who present real difference can't just be shoved into programs designed for people unlike us.

WARNINGS FROM SKEPTICS OF IMPLICIT BIAS TESTS AND TRAINING SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED

That's why warnings from skeptics of implicit bias tests and training should not be ignored. Among the skeptics is Olivia Goldhill, who says the implicit bias narrative "lets us off the hook. We can't feel as guilty or be held to account for racism that isn't conscious," she wrote for Quartz in December. "The forgiving notion of unconscious prejudice has become the go-to explanation for all manner of discrimination, but the shaky science … suggests this theory isn't simply easy, but false. And if implicit bias is a weak scapegoat, we must confront the troubling reality that society is still, disturbingly, all too consciously racist and sexist."

Goldhill cited a recent meta-analysis that looked at 492 studies from several researchers, which found that "changes in implicit measures are possible, but those changes do not necessarily translate into changes in explicit measures or behavior."

That remains among Goldhill's primary concerns about implicit bias tests, or even attempts to definitively declare what result is or isn't caused by implicit bias. "Journalists should be focusing on behavior. I'd be very careful about referring to anything as 'implicit bias' without evidence," she says. "I do not think racist police shootings or the lack of women in senior positions can be unequivocally attributed to unconscious prejudice. Within the newsroom, as in all offices, I think the focus should be on behavior, and there should be repercussions for prejudiced behavior … I think using data to monitor articles and how various groups are portrayed helps create clear evidence of bias and shows how articles need to change."

Ultimately, for Goldhill, "If you act in a prejudiced way, then you should be held accountable," she says. "Far too many people shirk responsibility by suggesting their unconscious is to blame, rather than themselves."

Jennifer Dargan, a Knight Fellow who took a leave of absence from Wisconsin Public Radio to research the subject, urges journalists to participate in workshops like those created by Mosley and Desmond-Harris. They include history lessons, solid definitions of bias, and exercises "around getting comfortable talking about your own social identities." She also recommends training by Patricia Devine of the University of Wisconsin, which "approaches prejudice, the action you take on a bias, as a habit to be broken." That training resulted in increased hiring of female faculty in science, technology, engineering, and medicine departments and showed that participants were more likely to speak up about racism two years later, she says.

"In my personal experience at Wisconsin Public Radio, I have seen diversity training lead to conversations about coverage, changes in coverage, reflections of coverage," Dargan says. "I have also seen more acceptance about the need for diverse teams as a result of learning about bias."

She doesn't want to make sweeping claims about the effects of implicit bias awareness or training in newsrooms. It's just too new to know or provide many concrete examples about change that can be directly linked to that rising awareness and training. "It's a hard thing to measure; it's not like measuring how many clicks you get on an article," Dargan says. Some of the ways to measure effectiveness include more diversity among colleagues, sources, and audience, and better retention of employees from marginalized communities.

Which brings me back to questions about implicit bias concerning me and my stutter. How will I ever know if I had been left out of stories for a decade because of implicit or explicit decision-making? Does the answer to that question matter more than the reality that I had been excluded for all those years? I've decided to stop wondering and start focusing on what broadcasters can do to make sure people like me aren't left out any longer.

To accommodate someone like me, broadcasters will have to commit to treating me differently—because I am different. That may even mean leading the segment with a brief explanation about why I sound different than the typical guest.

No reputable journalistic outfit can credibly claim ignorance about blind spots that affect coverage. It is a choice to try to tackle those blind spots or leave them as is, no matter if the bias is implicit or explicit. And while I understand the hesitance to make bias training mandatory, I can't help but think of that as evidence that the industry isn't quite ready to change. The value of the implicit bias debate is that it's becoming clearer that journalists can—and must—decide. ■

Journalists are saying yes to unions to lift salary floors, win or improve basic benefits, and provide some cushion to the industry's volatility

BY STEVEN GREENHOUSE

WHY NEWSROOMS ARE UNIONIZING NOW

In January 2015, The Washington Post's labor reporter at the time, Lydia DePillis, wrote a story called "Why Internet journalists don't organize." DePillis observed that many writers were individualistic and had "built personal brands" and therefore apparently had scant interest in unions and collective action. One employee she interviewed said digital media workers were "half-looking to jump elsewhere," so why fight to have a union if you're not going to stick around? An editor told DePillis that despite the industry's low salaries and instability, digital journalists were "so unprepared for anything like union organizing...They all went to good schools, and very few of them seem to have any experience with labor in the real workforce."

Two months later, Hamilton Nolan, a senior writer at Gawker, was talking with an organizer from the Writers Guild of America, East, a union largely of film and television writers, when the organizer told him that workers at one news website she hoped to unionize seemed scared of retaliation if they pushed for a union. Nolan surprised her by saying why not try to unionize his company, Gawker Media, which included Jezebel, Deadspin, Gizmodo, and Jalopnik. Soon Nolan was chatting up his coworkers, and within three weeks, nearly 40 Gawker workers met one afternoon at Writers Guild headquarters to discuss unionization.

The next day, Nolan posted a piece on Gawker with the headline "Why We've Decided to Organize." While noting that Gawker was "a very good place to work," Nolan wrote, "Every workplace could use a union. A union is the only real mechanism that exists to represent the interests of employees in a company."

"It was obvious that you needed to be unionized for the same reason that newspapers needed to be," Nolan says. "There is always a structural imbalance in the workplace without a union. You can talk about getting better wages, better benefits, editorial protections, all those important things, but regardless of how good your job is, if you're not working under a contract, you'll always be at the mercy of your boss if you don't have a union."

Within days, an extraordinarily transparent debate had erupted in which Gawker employees posted their thoughts, pro and con, about unionizing. This online debate was fully accessible to the public. Also unusual, Gawker's founder, Nick Denton—unlike many corporate executives in the U.S.—did not declare war against unionization. Denton instead said he was "intensely relaxed" about it. Tommy Craggs, Gawker Media's executive editor, added that he was "politically, temperamentally, and, almost, sentimentally supportive of the union drive."

In promoting unionization back in 2015, Nolan said he wanted to ensure that everyone received a fair salary and that pay and raises were set in a fair, transparent, and unbiased way. In what became a recurring theme, he added, "We would like to have some basic mechanism for giving employees a voice in the decisions that affect all of us here."

On June 3, 2015, Gawker's employees voted 80 to 27 to unionize, becoming the first major website to take that step. (Truthout, a nonprofit progressive website, had unionized in 2009.) Gawker's move sparked a movement, and within months, journalists at Salon, Vice Media, HuffPost, and the Guardian US had unionized. As this union wave grew, journalists at about 30 websites unionized and so did journalists at the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, The New Yorker, New York magazine, and The New Republic. And newsrooms are still continuing to unionize; the Hartford Courant, the Virginian-Pilot, Refinery29, Fast Company, and WBUR in Boston have unionized in recent months, and workers at BuzzFeed, the Allentown (Pa.) Morning Call, and podcasting startup Gimlet Media have asked for union recognition. (Gawker Media filed for bankruptcy protection in June 2016 as a result of Hulk Hogan's lawsuit, and two months later Univision acquired the company and picked up the union contract, even as it closed down the Gawker.com website.)

The legacy newspapers that have unionized recently have done so largely because of accumulated anger about downsizing, years without raises, and ever-worsening health benefits. Digital news sites generally unionized for different reasons: to lift the salary floor, win or improve basic benefits, and provide some cushion to the industry's volatility. In digital, there was also a desire to bring some rules and rationality to what often seemed like capricious workplace decisions. In both legacy and digital, journalists also said they wanted a union so they could have more of a voice on the job.

"It feels like a real movement. There's a lot of energy," says Lowell Peterson, executive director of the Writers Guild of America, East. "It's not as if we're dragging people who are reluctant to talk to us. They're eager to talk to us and sign up and get going."

The recent burst of media unionization is one of the bright spots in a labor movement that has been declining for decades. Organized labor first achieved major strength in the United States during the New Deal, with the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, which gave private-sector workers a federally protected right to unionize. In 1930, about 11 percent of non-agricultural workers were union members; that climbed to almost 35 percent in 1954, before sliding to just 10.5 percent in 2018. The decline in recent decades has been fueled by many factors, including the loss of manufacturing jobs, corporate America's growing resistance to unions, and labor's image problems, including union corruption and unions often being viewed as obsolete and obstructionist. But with many Americans upset about stagnant wages and increased income inequality, unions have their highest approval rating in 15 years, with the strongest approval coming from Americans aged 18 to 34.

Unionization of journalists caught fire soon after the Newspaper Guild was founded in 1933. Many reporters and copy editors had grown fed up with low pay, layoffs, and earning far less than typesetters and pressmen. One challenge the Newspaper Guild's organizers faced was convincing journalists that unions weren't just for the blue-collar proletariat. In city after city, the Newspaper Guild won raises, overtime pay, and a guarantee that layoffs could only be for just cause, and it ultimately won health coverage and pensions for most Guild members. At some papers, the journalists also won a guarantee that powerful publishers—they often tilted well to the right—could not tilt the newsroom's journalism. To be sure, unions at some newspapers were weak and not terribly effective at winning raises or better conditions.

Today's wave of media unionization comes as the industry is in crisis. Many legacy newspapers, especially local ones, face a severe financial squeeze. Digital media are in the middle of a shakeout, with too many websites chasing too few advertising

dollars, as Facebook and Google gobble up much of that revenue. There have been layoffs galore—for instance, Vice Media laid off 250 in February and BuzzFeed laid off 200 in January. Just weeks later, BuzzFeed's staff announced a major effort to unionize with the NewsGuild.

Some longtime critics of labor say unionization has hurt media companies' profitability and fueled some of the layoffs. But labor's supporters say the layoffs and shakeout had already begun before the wave of unionization. "In an extreme situation, a hardball union play could potentially hasten the shutdown of a publication," says Alan Mutter, a former newspaper editor who recently retired from teaching media economics at the University of California, Berkeley. "But my guess is there are very few union leaders who would push so hard that they accelerate those forces of demise. The problem is that neither union nor management, even when operating hand in hand and heart to heart, can prevent any of those forces that are bearing down, especially on local newspapers."

David Chavern, president of the News Media Alliance representing 2,000 newspapers in the U.S., says, "We are neither for or against unionization." He adds, "We are focused on the challenges posed to journalism by the major platforms (Facebook and Google, in particular), and I don't think that having or not having a union changes those market dynamics."

But union organizers say unionization actually improves publications and thus helps increase readership. They argue that unions, by bringing better pay, benefits, and working conditions, attract better journalists and reduce staff turnover, by helping persuade journalists to stay. "In the past five years, we've seen a lot of businesses starting on the backs of people who haven't been properly compensated and doing tricks to make people work longer and harder," says Emily Bell, head of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. "If costs go up because creating a union means you have to figure in health coverage, working hours, proper compensation for leave, that has to be a positive thing, even if it means we have fewer digital businesses."

"This generation is tired of hearing that this industry requires martyrdom, that it requires that you suck it up, that you accept low wages and long hours," adds Nastaran Mohit, chief organizer for the NewsGuild's New York local. "The demands of this work have increased significantly. The industry has been asking workers to do more and more with less."

Vice Media was one of the first companies to unionize after Gawker. "The biggest motivating factor was money," says Kim Kelly, a longtime music editor at Vice who was one of the 250 Vice employees laid off in February. "We were being paid very, very low, very much under the market rate. People were having a very hard time living in New York, and they expected us to deliver this inspiring, challenging content at the same time that people couldn't afford rent, couldn't afford lunch, were living with their parents—all while Vice's founder was buying a $23 million mansion."

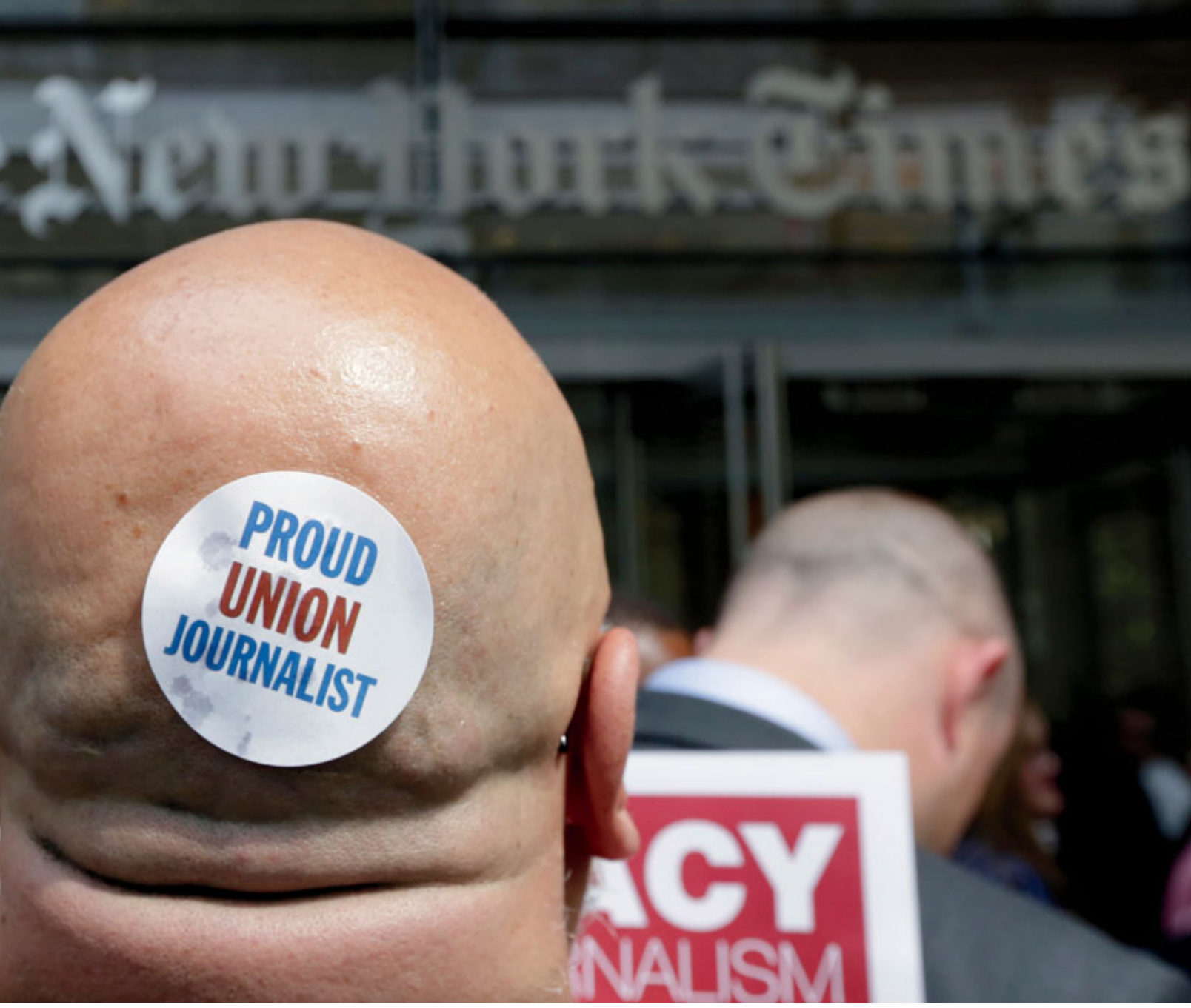
Several of the early digital contracts made impressive gains. Some Vice writers were earning just $35,000, and the contract set a $45,000 floor, giving some writers an immediate $10,000, or 28 percent, raise. Gawker's first contract called for a 9 percent raise over three years, as well as a minimum salary of $50,000 for any full-time employee and a minimum of $70,000 for senior writers and editors. To help reduce the helter-skelter aspect of raises, every Gawker employee was given the right to meet at least once yearly with his or her supervisor to discuss merit raises. In case of layoffs, Gawker pledged two weeks' severance pay for every year on the job, and it improved its 401(k) plan to give a dollar-for-dollar match for the first 3 percent of pay.

Impressed by such gains, more digital journalists unionized, including those at Thrillist, Mic, Salon, Jacobin, ThinkProgress, and Al Jazeera America (before it closed). "Once Gawker did it, other folks said, 'We could do this,' and it quickly became the norm in the new media world," says Dave Jamieson, HuffPost's labor reporter.

"TODAY'S WAVE OF MEDIA UNIONS COMES AS THE INDUSTRY IS IN CRISIS

Tony Barone, a NewsGuild of New York official, in June 2017 joins New York Times employees protesting plans to lay off copy editors

RICHARD DREW/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



HuffPost's first union contract, reached in January 2017, had some innovative language to enhance newsroom diversity and ensure editorial independence amid concerns that publisher Arianna Huffington's business interests—her being on the board of Uber, for instance—could skew coverage.

Battered by cutbacks and layoffs in traditional newsrooms, the NewsGuild, formerly the Newspaper Guild, at first held back from seeking to unionize digital newsrooms. The main reason: the NewsGuild, which represents 25,000 journalists at 200 media organizations, was in a defensive crouch, preoccupied with the industry's crisis and newspaper shutdowns and layoffs. But seeing the Writers Guild unionize numerous news sites, the NewsGuild jumped in and unionized the Guardian US, Law360, and In These Times.

The NewsGuild had at first viewed digital and legacy differently. Many newspapers were big, lumbering, decades-old companies, while digital sites were often new, small, and funded by Silicon Valley, with many workers doing coding and video, far different from the work done by traditional newpaper journalists. Nowadays, however, as newspapers and magazines have vastly expanded their digital work, Grant Glickson, president of the NewsGuild's New York City local, says, "We don't view digital and legacy print as different—we view it all as one and the same."

For decades, the Los Angeles Times had a reputation as the nation's most anti-union newspaper. That was perhaps understandable, considering that a union activist dynamited the Times building in 1910, killing about 20 of the newspaper's employees. General Harrison Gray Otis, who acquired partial ownership of the Times in the late 1800s, was a vehement foe of unions, and so was his son-in-law Harry Chandler. Those views persisted at the Times throughout much of the twentieth century, with the paper serving as a megaphone for the LA business community's campaign to keep the city as "open shop," as non-union, as possible.

Not surprisingly, Times employees were wary of pushing for a union. Nor was there any urgency to do so during the last quarter of the twentieth century because the Chandlers had transformed the Times into one of the nation's finest newspapers and paid its journalists handsomely. But all that began to change after the Chandler family sold the paper to the Tribune Company in 2000. That company—which real estate magnate

Gawker employees, on the company's rooftop in June 2015, discuss voting to start a union. The website, now defunct, sparked a wave of unionization at digital media outlets

RUTH FREMSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

Sam Zell bought in 2007, before dragging it into bankruptcy—didn't have the Chandler's expansive public-minded view about investing in journalistic excellence. Instead, the Tribune Company, caught up in the legacy media's financial crisis in the digital era, shuttered many of the Times's domestic and foreign bureaus, downsized its newsroom from 1,200 to around 400, and didn't give across-the-board raises many years.

"It felt like death by 1,000 cuts," says Carolina A. Miranda, a culture reporter for the Times. Bettina Boxall, who won a Pulitzer Prize for her environmental coverage, says, "I've been here for 30 years, and the past 20 years have been endless corporate tumult and mismanagement. It has taken the form of not just endless layoffs and buyouts, but also years without raises and having to pay more for health benefits and more for parking."

Discontent grew in October 2017 when an ownership team that succeeded Zell (and renamed the company Tronc for Tribune Online Content) fired the Times's top editors and named as editor-in-chief Lewis D'Vorkin, whom the newsroom believed wouldn't champion robust journalistic values. Then Tronc eliminated the weeks of accrued vacation pay that employees had accumulated over the years. "That sort of sparked it," says Anthony Pesce, a data reporter.

Pesce and a half-dozen co-workers formed the nucleus of a pro-union effort. "There was just an overwhelming sense that management was bad, that there wasn't anything we could do about it," Pesce says. "We didn't have a seat at the table. That was when people really realized that if they stand up and say something about this, we can actually effect some change."

Pesce contacted the NewsGuild, and it dispatched Mohit, who was based in New York. Pesce admits that he and his coworkers knew little about organizing. They were in a rush to announce their effort on social media and hold a unionization vote. But the NewsGuild urged them to slow down. "They said, 'You've got to talk to everyone,'" Pesce says. "'You have to make sure everyone's views are heard. You have to hold everyone's hands a bit.'"

To rally workers behind the union drive, Pesce, prize-winning investigative reporter Paul Pringle, and other Times staffers did something highly unusual—they did some hard-hitting investigative reporting about their own company, specifically about the excessive spending of Tronc's executives. The Los Angeles Times Guild posted those stories on Twitter, Facebook, and its own website, and shared them with other publications.

The union supporters wrote that even as Tronc was chopping newsroom positions, Michael Ferro, Tronc's chairman and largest shareholder, used a private jet that cost the company $8,500 an hour to operate and a total of $4.6 million in less than two years. Tronc's CEO, Justin Dearborn, had received $8.1 million in compensation in 2016. In December 2017, two weeks before the scheduled unionization vote, the LA Times Guild's investigating team reported that Tronc had awarded a $5 million-per-year "consulting agreement" to Ferro for three years.

"It was just rapacious," Miranda says. Matt Pearce, a national desk reporter, adds, "Tronc's model was they'll continue pumping equity out of the paper, and they'll figure out what comes next, and we in the newsroom will continue to make sacrifices and do dangerous work, all without annual raises to keep up with the cost of living in Southern California. It was untenable. We saw that things were getting worse. So we carved out our own path."

The company hired anti-union consultants to fight back. Management distributed a flyer to the staff, saying, "Don't be misled by the Guild's promises." Tronc warned that things could get worse with a union, telling the newsroom, "There is no obligation on the part of a company to continue existing benefits and it is not against the law for the company to offer reduced wages and benefits in bargaining."

Notwithstanding management's opposition, in January 2018, the Times journalists voted overwhelmingly, 248 to 44, to unionize for the first time in the paper's 137-year-history.

Throughout the unionization drive, there was a largely unspoken goal—to pressure Tronc to sell the newspaper to a

public-minded owner who cared about journalism and would invest in the newspaper, instead of siphoning away its resources. A month after the unionization victory, Tronc agreed to sell the Times and The San Diego Union-Tribune for $500 million to Patrick Soon-Shiong, a billionaire doctor.

With its new owner, the LA Times is hiring dozens more reporters and editors and re-opening bureaus. The paper has revamped a diversity training program that staffers complained was being misused to hire top-notch reporters of color for low pay. Before unionization, complaints about the diversity program were largely ignored, but with unionization, the program was fixed.

Even so, contract talks between the union and management still got bogged down, most recently over discussions regarding intellectual property. Early this year, the union argued the company was being "draconian" about restrictions on journalists' selling rights to books and other creative projects. Norman Pearlstine, the LA Times's executive editor, insisted that the company's stance on intellectual property was reasonable. Pearlstine notes that the company has increased payroll by more than 10 percent as "a significant investment in retention and recruitment," while also improving paternity benefits and transit benefits. "We have also committed to giving employees a voice in many matters, such as diversity and inclusion," he says.

The LA Times journalists helped precipitate a sale to a deep-pocketed, public-spirited owner, and journalists in several other cities hope that unionization will help them achieve a similar result. Unions are among "the few people making the point about the failure of the local press to represent the public interest," says Ken Doctor, a newspaper industry analyst who writes the Newsonomics column for Nieman Journalism Lab. "Union efforts have put back into the public conversation what is the responsibility of those who own the press and work in the press to their communities."

Even though most news websites have liberal reputations, their executives are sometimes unenthusiastic or outright opposed to unionization, an attitude that sometimes angers liberal readers. In one of digital management's first major statements about unions, Jonah Peretti, BuzzFeed's founder and CEO, said in August 2015 that unions might be appropriate in a factory setting, but not in a field like digital journalism, which he said requires dynamism and flexibility. "A lot of the best new-economy companies are environments where there's an alliance between managers and employees. People have shared goals," Peretti said, adding that often when there's a union, "the relationship is much more adversarial." Saying that unions often insist on rules defining individual roles, he said, "for a flexible, dynamic company" that "isn't something I think would be great."

In February of this year, three weeks after BuzzFeed laid off 15 percent of its workforce, its editorial staff announced that 90 percent of eligible workers had signed cards saying they wanted to join the NewsGuild. Ben Smith, editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed News, said the company looked forward to "meeting with the organizers to discuss a way toward voluntarily recognizing their union." Neither Peretti nor Smith would comment for this story.

Like Peretti, Jacob Weisberg, at the time the Slate Group's chairman and editor-in-chief, also voiced opposition to unionization. In an email to staffers in March 2017, he wrote that unionization would disrupt the "flexibility and fluidity" of Slate's newsroom and could threaten efforts to be "a sustainable, profitable business." Weisberg added that a future with a union is "filled with bureaucracy and procedure. That world is just not Slate-y … A union fosters a culture of opposition, which is antithetical to our way of doing things."

Nonetheless, Slate's staffers voted overwhelmingly in January 2018 to join the Writers Guild. Over the ensuing 11 months, however, Slate's workers grew frustrated about failing to reach a contract with management. So in December, Slate's staff voted 52 to 1 to authorize a strike. The main sticking point: Slate's management, despite the website's progressive reputation, was insisting that workers be allowed to opt out of paying any fees to their union—similar to right-to-work laws abhorred by unions and liberals. In January, Slate dropped that demand. "We were super relieved and surprised," says Slate audience engagement editor Aria Velasquez. With that demand dropped, the two sides quickly negotiated a contract that includes a $51,000 minimum salary and across-the-board raises with higher percentages for those with lower salaries. The deal also codifies anti-harassment policies, creates a diversity task force, and gives Slate's journalists rights to derivative works. Slate executives declined to comment.

> "CRITICS OF LABOR SAY UNIONIZATION HAS HURT MEDIA COMPANIES' PROFITABILITY

Probably the most-discussed unionization episode in digital media involved DNAinfo and Gothamist, two local news websites owned by Joe Ricketts, the billionaire founder of TD Ameritrade and patriarch of the family that owns the Chicago Cubs. DNAinfo bought Gothamist in March 2017, and the next month, the vast majority of the sites' combined staff in New York signed cards saying they wanted to unionize, fearing the merger could result in layoffs. Ben Fractenberg, the longest-serving reporter for DNAinfo, says there were also concerns about fair pay, editorial standards, and the "very scattershot" way raises were given.

Ricketts declined to recognize the union based on the signed cards, insisting instead on a formal unionization vote conducted by the National Labor Relations Board. Ricketts made his opposition clear, writing to the staff, "As long as it's my money that's paying for everything, I intend to be the one making the decisions about the direction of the business." Dan Swartz, chief operating officer of DNAinfo, sent the staff a letter, noting that Ricketts had invested "literally tens of millions of dollars of his own money" in the site and asking, "Would a union be the final straw that caused the business to be closed?" In September 2017, the month before the unionization vote, Ricketts wrote a blog item called, "Why I'm Against Unions At Businesses I Create": "I believe unions promote a corrosive us-against-them dynamic that destroys the esprit de corps businesses need to succeed … It's my observation that unions exert efforts that tend to destroy the Free Enterprise system."

Nonetheless, 25 of the 27 workers at the news sites' New York office voted in October 2017 in favor of unionizing with the Writers Guild. A week later, Ricketts shut down the sites, not just in New York, but in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and

Washington, costing 115 workers their jobs. That day Ricketts, who founded DNAinfo in 2009, posted a letter online that said in part: "DNAinfo is, at the end of the day, a business, and businesses need to be economically successful if they are to endure. And while we made important progress toward building DNAinfo into a successful business, in the end, that progress hasn't been sufficient to support the tremendous effort and expense needed to produce the type of journalism on which the company was founded."

Journalists at DNAinfo and Gothamist were shocked to discover their websites suddenly shut down and redirecting readers to Ricketts' letter. "I was definitely stunned," says Fractenberg, who was covering a Manhattan Supreme Court hearing when he learned of Ricketts' decision. "I couldn't believe it happened.... It was seen that they were laying us off only because of the union." In a statement at the time, a spokeswoman for DNAinfo said: "The decision by the editorial team to unionize is simply another competitive obstacle making it harder for the business to be financially successful."

When journalists took jobs at Law360, a news service that covers legal matters, they were sometimes surprised to discover a noncompete clause in the boilerplate of their employment contract. Those who voiced concern were often told, "Don't worry—it's just a formality; it's never been enforced."

But when Stephanie Russell-Kraft left to take a reporting job at Reuters in the fall of 2015, an attorney for Law360 sent her a letter, telling her she was violating her noncompete. Law360's lawyer also wrote to Reuters' general counsel about Russell-Kraft's noncompete, and two days later Reuters fired her.

"That was really the galvanizing moment for people at Law360 to unionize," says Juan Carlos Rodriguez, a senior writer who covers environmental law. "The noncompete was outrageous. It completely violated industry norms. We started to see what it was—a wage depressant. By preventing us from going to competitors who paid better, they didn't have to pay us more."

Several other management policies were also riling Law360's employees. According to Rodriguez, Law360 had a policy that didn't pay time-and-a-half when employees worked more than 40 hours a week, but instead paid just half of their regular hourly pay, sometimes less, for their overtime hours. It also had a quota system—about the number of stories written, stories edited, and news pitches—that many found onerous. Another concern was salary; Law360, based in Manhattan, paid some employees just $40,000.

After the noncompete contretemps involving Russell-Kraft, several workers formed a union organizing committee, and within months a majority of workers had signed pro-union cards. Law360, a subsidiary of LexisNexis, rejected the workers' request for voluntary union recognition, and a unionization vote was scheduled. To persuade workers to vote no, Law360 hired the Labor Relations Institute, an anti-union consulting firm. Law360 had its employees attend four anti-union sessions, where they were warned that things might not improve with a union and that workers might be unhappy with what's in their contracts. Rodriguez, who was one of the leaders of the unionization effort, said one consultant told the workers, "Not voting in the union is free. Voting the union in, you pay dues."

Notwithstanding Law360's anti-union push, its workers voted 109 to 9 to unionize with the NewsGuild in August 2016.

In early 2018, after a year of negotiations without reaching agreement, Law360's workers were frustrated. Danielle Smith, a general assignment reporter, says, "We thought management was playing hardball to drag out the negotiations. We saw that the only way to get significant movement at the bargaining table was to show our solidarity."

One day the workers walked out of their offices, on West 19th Street in Manhattan, for 30 minutes. Next came an hour-long walkout. In late October the staff voted 141 to 11 to authorize a strike. Then in November came an even longer walkout, with the NewsGuild placing a 15-foot-tall inflatable rat outside Law360's offices.

> "FOR DECADES, THE LA TIMES HAD A REPUTATION AS THE NATION'S MOST ANTI-UNION PAPER

When a top executive of the company visited, the workers wore union T-shirts. One Friday in December, everyone walked out and picketed the front and back doors. Two days later, the two sides finally reached a deal. The Law360 workers celebrated and approved the contract, 168 to 0. "Over the course of several years the bargaining committee could talk until it was blue in the face," Smith says. "But it wasn't until the company saw the union was solidly behind the bargaining committee that they would make some real movement." Law360 and LexisNexis officials declined comment.

The contract provides an immediate 22 percent raise on average and sets a $50,000 minimum. It provides for an annual bonus pool of at least 3 percent of payroll, and for the first time, the workers are guaranteed paid sick days and bereavement time. As for the noncompete provisions, Law360 had agreed to remove them earlier when New York State's attorney general threatened to sue over the issue.

The Law360 contract has an unusual successorship provision, meaning that if LexisNexis sells Law360, any acquirer would be required to comply with the contract's provisions—and could not, for instance, order a pay cut. Law360's union said in a statement, "Let this incredible contract be a testament to what media workers can accomplish when they unionize and win a seat at the table."

Law360's successorship clause was one of several innovative provisions that digital journalists have demanded—and won. Workers at the Gizmodo Media Group, formerly Gawker Media, have also won a successorship clause. The Nation's contract gives four months of fully paid parental leave to employees with one year or more of service. In their first union contract, journalists at The Intercept won unusual language on parental leave, calling for four months of maternal leave and four months of paternal leave. The Intercept contract also has an innovative provision on diversity, saying, "the Employer will ensure that it interviews at least two candidates from groups traditionally underrepresented in journalism (i.e. women, people of color, or those identifying as LGBTQ+) prior to making a hiring decision."

The Onion's union contract includes anti-harassment language and calls for hiring a consultant to "conduct a climate assessment" of how workers are treated. The new Vice contract negotiated by the Writers Guild contains non-discriminatory language

DNAinfo reporter Ben Fractenberg addresses a rally, hosted by the Writers Guild of America, in New York City in November 2017, days after DNAinfo and Gothamist were shut down

SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

about not just race and gender identity, but also socioeconomic status and criminal convictions. Some of these provisions in digital media contracts go far beyond what was included in traditional newspaper contracts.

Charles J. Johnson, a homepage editor at the Chicago Tribune, couldn't help but notice the explosion of unionization in digital media, and he began thinking, "Why not us, too?" The Tribune's newsroom had been repeatedly downsized, and its once-good salaries had fallen well below those at the unionized Chicago Sun-Times.

The Tribune, which has won 27 Pulitzer prizes, has long been Chicago's establishment paper, with a conservative editorial page and a staunch anti-union history. The Sun-Times has been a feisty tabloid for blue-collar Chicago and has long been one of the nation's best tabloids. But even as the industry crisis forced the Sun-Times to cut back its staff and journalistic ambitions, its union contract helped maintain its pay scale, pushing it above the Tribune's. (In 2013, the Sun-Times was purchased by a group of private investors that included the Chicago Federation of Labor.) Under the Guild contract, Sun-Times journalists earn at least $66,000 after five years, while one prominent Tribune reporter complained of earning $54,000 after eight years.

In October 2017, Johnson heard that journalists at the LA Times were unionizing with the NewsGuild. (At the time, Tronc owned both the Tribune and LA Times.) "That re-energized me," says Johnson, who, daunted by the challenge, abandoned an earlier attempt to organize the paper's newsroom.

Johnson reached out to the NewsGuild and to two fellow reporters: Megan Crepeau, who covers Chicago's criminal courts, and Peter Nickeas, who covers violence. The three brainstormed, chatted up others, and soon there was a 40-person organizing committee. Two nationally known columnists, Clarence Page and Mary Schmich, joined the effort.

The Trib's staff was overflowing with grievances. "This famously anti-union place, there wasn't a union here for a long time in large part because people felt they didn't need it," Johnson explains. For decades, the Tribune had paid its staff more than the Sun-Times did to help keep a union out, but things had changed as owners Sam Zell and then Tronc were tight-fisted about raises and benefits. "Some people work second and third jobs to afford to work at the Tribune," Johnson says. "There are reporters here with super-significant beats making less than 50 grand a year. These are professional-class jobs paying working-class wages, and these people have working-class worries about being downsized, laid off, cast aside in a market that is really stripped down."

As in Los Angeles, the Tribune's journalists weren't fighting just for better pay, but for better journalism. "The newsroom was bleeding. It continues to bleed," Crepeau says, noting that the newsroom has 184 employees, down from 223 last spring. "Salaries can't keep up. We can't retain talent. The Guild folks provided us with pay scales for papers all around the country. That made me want to cry."

In April 2018, the Tribune organizing committee went public and within weeks, 85 percent of the staff had signed pro-union cards. Tronc initially rejected the union's call to grant voluntary recognition, but under pressure, it recognized the union in May. Bruce Dold, the Tribune's editor-in-chief and publisher, said, "As we move ahead, we need to be united as one organization with an important purpose—to help the company transform and thrive as a business, and to serve our readers world-class journalism." (In October 2018, Tronc changed its name back to Tribune Publishing. The company did not respond to requests for comment.)

"The short of it is people don't like the instability in the newsroom, and they wanted some way to advocate for themselves," says Nickeas. "The Tribune hasn't had an ownership that's interested in journalism in years. A union is a way to say, these are our priorities. We don't want to be dictated to by Sam Zell or whoever spins us into bankruptcy or whoever is our fourth or fifth owner in so many years."

Tribune Publishing and the union have not yet begun contract negotiations, but the company has already shelved a threatened move to adopt a health insurance plan staffers say is worse than the current one.

"I don't think anyone said this was the perfect solution to what ails the Tribune or the media writ large," Johnson says. "But this is the tool available to us, and we're finally starting to use it." ■

Agents for Good: How Bots Can Boost Accountability Journalism

In "Automating the News," Nicholas Diakopoulos is optimistic about a hybrid human-algorithm journalistic practice

Nicholas Diakopoulos, director of Northwestern University's Computational Journalism Lab, is optimistic about the role algorithms can play in the media, but he acknowledges that ensuring their ethical use will require vigilance. Bots with nefarious aims make a lot of headlines. This excerpt from his book "Automating the News: How Algorithms Are Rewriting the Media," published June 10 by Harvard University Press, focuses on bots with a public-spirited and/or accountability purpose:

In just one month in 2017 an unpretentious little bot going by the handle "AnecbotalNYT" methodically pumped out 1,191 tweets addressed at news consumers on Twitter. It's perhaps surprising to see people genuinely engage the bot—a software agent that presents itself as nothing more—replying to or agreeing with it, elaborating on the views it curates, responding emotionally, rebutting or explicitly disagreeing with it, even linking to contradictory videos or articles. Eighty-eight percent of the replies were from the user the bot had initiated contact with, but 12 percent were actually replies from other Twitter users. By catalyzing engagement both with the targeted user and with others who could then chime in, the bot opened the door for human users to interact more with each other.

I designed AnecbotalNYT as an experiment to help raise awareness for interesting personal experiences or anecdotes written as comments to New York Times articles. It works by first listening for tweets that have a link to a New York Times article. Then it harvests all the article's comments, scoring each text based on metrics such as length, readability, and whether it describes a personal experience. The comments are ranked by an overall weighted score, and the bot selects a comment likely to contain a personal story or anecdote. The selected comment is then tweeted back at the person who had originally shared the article link. If the person was interested enough to share the link on Twitter, maybe they'd also be interested in someone's personal experience reflecting on the story.

The goal of AnecbotalNYT was to bridge the New York Times commenting community back into the network of people sharing links to New York Times articles on Twitter. People who might not otherwise pay attention to New York Times comments thus became a new potential audience to engage. And engage it did. One tweet the bot sent received 124 retweets, 291 likes, and 5,374 people clicking on the comment to read it in full. That article was about Cassandra Butts, an Obama-era appointee who died waiting for confirmation from a Republican Senate. AnecbotalNYT's curated comment for the story struck a chord with liberals, capturing a common sentiment and sharply critical attitude toward a US Senate viewed as playing political games at the expense of individuals like Cassandra. That's just one example of the kind of engagement the bot can generate. Over the course of April 2017 Twitter users engaged with 57 percent of the 1,191 tweets the bot sent, including some combination of retweets, likes, and replies.

Presenting information via chat interfaces also offers new possibilities for framing that information using the persona of the bot, which can enliven and provide levity to the interaction and make complex material more accessible. It's here where we truly see the medium start to differentiate itself as something more than a straightforward disseminator of information. One of the more offbeat examples of this approach is a project from the German broadcasting corporation Westdeutscher Rundfunk called "Superkühe" (German for "super cows"). The project followed three cows (Uschi, Emma, and Connie) from three different farms over the course of thirty days in 2017, exposing and contrasting differences in the agricultural production of milk on an organic farm, a family farm, and a factory farm. Daily reports included images, videos, and written content produced by reporters who were following each cow as it gave birth to a new calf and entered into milk production. Sensors placed around (and inside) the cows tracked milk production, health, eating behavior, and activity level.

All of the structured data and content about the cows then fed into a chatbot on Facebook Messenger, which allowed users to interact and chat with a simulation of any of the three cows. By personifying the experiences of each cow and using the chat interface to frame a more intimate encounter, the bot creates an opportunity to empathize with the animal's experience and learn about animal conditions and treatment relating to different agricultural approaches in a casual and even entertaining format. Instead of reporting *about* an entity such as a cow, the use of bots creates an opportunity to interact directly *with* a simulation of that cow, leading to a shift in perspective from third to second person. Consider the possibilities for news storytelling: instead of reading a quote from a source a reporter had interviewed, readers themselves could chat with that source via a bot that simulated responses based on the information the reporter had collected. One advantage might be to draw users in closer to the story and the "characters" of the news.

"The ability of bots to monitor aspects of public life and behavior invites examination of how they may contribute to the accountability function of journalism

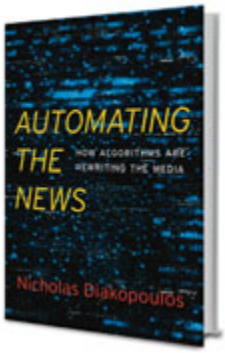
SUPERKÜHE/WDR

A German broadcaster made a chatbot to share the experiences of a cow named Uschi

In some cases bots not only gather information but also process that information to operate as public-facing monitoring and alerting tools. Given the importance of Twitter to the Trump presidency, Twitter bots are routinely oriented toward monitoring Trump-related activity on the platform. For instance, the @TrumpsAlert bot tracks and tweets about the following and unfollowing actions of Trump and his family and inner circle in order to bring additional attention to relationships at the White House. The @BOTUS bot produced by National Public Radio (NPR) had the goal of automatically making stock trades based on monitoring the sentiment of Trump's tweets when he mentioned publicly traded companies. Another Twitter bot, @big_cases, from USA Today monitors major cases in US district courts, including those relating to Trump executive orders. Quartz built a bot called @actual_ransom that monitored the Bitcoin wallets of hackers who had blackmailed people into sending a ransom in order to unlock their computers. The bot, which broke news on Twitter, was the first to report that the hackers had started withdrawing money from the bitcoin wallets. Although none of these monitoring bots is interactive, all do demonstrate the potential of bots to complete the autonomous gathering, analysis, and dissemination circuit in narrowly defined domains.

Bots can also be connected up to streams of data produced by sensors to provide additional monitoring capabilities over time, including of environmental conditions such as air quality. A notable example of a monitoring bot is @GVA_Watcher, which posts to various social media channels when air traffic sensors run by amateur plane-spotters around Geneva's airport in Switzerland recognize a signal from a plane registered to an authoritarian regime. The bot is intended to draw attention to the travel patterns of authoritarian leaders who may be entering Switzerland for nondiplomatic reasons, such as money laundering.

The ability of bots to monitor aspects of public life and behavior invites examination of how they may contribute to the accountability function of journalism. Can bots help hold public actors accountable for their behavior by drawing more attention to those behaviors on social media platforms?



"Automating the News: How Algorithms Are Rewriting the Media" by Nicholas Diakopoulos (Harvard University Press)

The attention bots bring to an issue can, at the very least, serve as a constructive starting point for discussion. Take the @NYTAnon bot on Twitter, for example. John Emerson designed the bot for the express purpose of accountability. "It was to kind of put pressure on the Times to be a little stricter about when its sources are or are not anonymous," he told me. The practice of using anonymous sources by news media is a fraught one, because while it may be justified in some cases in order to protect sources, it also undermines the reader's ability to evaluate the trustworthiness of the information source on their own. The key is to not overuse anonymous sources or be lax in offering anonymity just because a source is feeling timid. The bot actively monitors all articles published by the New York Times for the use of language relating to the reliance on unnamed or anonymous sources. If an article uses any of 170 different phrases such as "sources say," "military officials said," or "requested anonymity," the bot will excerpt that piece of the article and tweet it out as an image to draw attention to the context in which the New York Times is using an anonymous source. The initial reaction to the bot included some independent blog posts as well as a post by then-New York Times public editor Margaret Sullivan suggesting that at the very least she and perhaps others in the newsroom were aware the bot was monitoring their use of anonymous sources. Still, despite the NYT's awareness of the bot's exposure of its practices, Emerson lamented that he still didn't know "if it's changed policy or made reporters think twice about anything."

To try to answer this question I collected some data on the proportion of New York Times news articles that had used any of the 170 terms the bot was tracking over time, both before and after the bot was launched. Did reporters use fewer phrases with respect to anonymous sourcing after the bot started monitoring? The results indicated that there was a slight shift downward in the use of anonymous sources, perhaps as much as 15 percent, in the three months after the bot launched, but that the use of anonymous sources then increased again. There was no clear or definitive signal. I talked to Phil Corbett, the associate managing editor for standards at the New York Times about the pattern. According to Corbett they didn't "detect any major shift" in their use of anonymous sources during that period, but he wasn't able to firmly refute the possibility of a change either. "I will say that I don't think much attention was paid to the Anon bot, so that seems to me unlikely to have had much effect. On the other hand, Margaret and some of the other public editors did periodically focus attention on this issue, so that could have had some impact," Corbett added. The more likely route to accountability here was perhaps not the bot directly, but rather the public editor drawing attention to the issue, which in at least one instance was spurred by the bot when she blogged about it. Bots may not be able to provide enough publicity or public pressure all by themselves. But to be more effective they could be designed to attract attention and cause other media to amplify the issue the bot exposes. ■

NIEMAN NOTES

1964

Robert J. "Bud" Korengold, who served as a foreign correspondent in Europe before transitioning to a career in diplomacy, died on March 15 in Vernon, Normandy, France. He was 89. Korengold was a UPI correspondent in Paris and London and bureau chief in Geneva and Moscow. Following his Nieman year, he returned to Moscow as Newsweek's bureau chief, then became bureau chief in London. He joined the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency in 1973 and went on to serve in diplomatic roles as a press officer and counselor for public affairs at U.S. embassies around Europe, including Brussels, Belgrade, London, and Paris.

1971

James F. Ahearn, a longtime reporter and editor in New Jersey, died in Rhinebeck, New York on April 13. He was 87. After starting his career at the Boston bureau of UPI, he was assigned to the Trenton bureau to cover New Jersey politics. The Record newspaper in Bergen County, New Jersey recruited him in 1961 to run its Trenton bureau. He spent more than five decades at the paper, among New Jersey's biggest in terms of circulation, including a decade as managing editor.

1990

Ann Marie Lipinski has been honored as the namesake of the Lipinski Journalism Fund, a gift given by retired Chicago Tribune chairman and CEO John W. Madigan and his wife Holly Madigan to The Michigan Daily, the University of Michigan's student paper, to support future journalists by funding programs for Michigan Daily staff members and high school students interested in pursuing a career in journalism. Lipinski, formerly editor of the Tribune, and Madigan are alumni of the University of Michigan.

1997

Richard Read has joined the Los Angeles Times as the paper's Northwest correspondent, based in Seattle. Read, most recently a member of the NerdWallet investigations team, spent more than two decades as a reporter at The Oregonian in Portland.

1999

Pippa Green has been appointed South Africa's press ombudsman, a position she has held since April. The ombudsman serves as a member of the country's Press Council, an independent regulatory body that helps settle disputes between media organizations and members of the public.

2000

Andreas Harsono, a researcher for Human Rights Watch, traveled throughout Indonesia—an archipelago about as sprawling as from London to Baghdad—for three years while working on "Race, Islam and Power: Ethnic and Religious Violence in Post-Suharto Indonesia." The book was published this spring by Monash University Publishing.

2003

Frank Langfitt is the author of "The Shanghai Free Taxi: Journeys with the Hustlers and Rebels of the New China," published in June by PublicAffairs. The book is based on Langfitt's experiences providing "free rides for good conversation" while he was a Beijing-based NPR correspondent.

Susan Smith Richardson has been named the CEO of the Center for Public Integrity, a nonprofit investigative journalism organization. Most recently, Richardson was editorial director at the nonprofit Solutions Journalism Network. Prior to that, she was editor and publisher of The Chicago Reporter.

2004

Masha Gessen is a recipient of the 2018 Arthur Ross Book Award, receiving the bronze medal for her 2017 book "The Future is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia." The annual award from the Council on Foreign Relations recognizes nonfiction books that make an outstanding contribution to the understanding of foreign policy or international relations.

Geoffrey Nyarota is now head of journalism and communication training at the Christian College of Southern Africa. A longtime journalist, Nyarota has held academic positions at Nordic-SADC Journalism Centre in Mozambique and Oslo University in Norway, and he has been a board member at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University in the U.K.

Susan Orlean's latest book, "The Library Book"—which was published by Simon & Schuster in 2018 and tells the story of the 1986 fire at the Los Angeles Public Library that destroyed thousands of books—is being adapted for television by Paramount and Anonymous Content, in association with Brillstein Entertainment. Orlean will help adapt the book and serve as an executive producer.

2009

Hannah Allam has joined NPR as a national security correspondent, focusing on counterterrorism and domestic security. Previously, she was a national correspondent covering race, religion, and culture at BuzzFeed News.

2010

Maria Balinska has been named the executive director of the US-UK Fulbright Commission, which supports educational exchange between British and American citizens at universities on both sides of the Atlantic. She will begin her new position in July. From 2016 through January, she was co-CEO and editor of The Conversation US, a nonprofit digital publication with work written by academics, edited by journalists, and shared with news organizations.

2012

Jonathan Blakley has been appointed the executive director of radio programing at KQED, an NPR-member station based in San Francisco. Previously, he was program director at Minnesota Public Radio.

David Skok is a new member of the Nieman Advisory Board. Skok is the founder and editor in chief of The Logic, which provides in-depth reporting on Canada's innovation economy.

2013

Finbarr O'Reilly has joined the board of A Culture of Safety (ACOS) Alliance, a coalition of major news organizations, freelance journalist associations, and press freedom NGOs working to promote safe journalistic practices for freelancers and local journalists working around the globe. ACOS Alliance provides free hostile environment training, support, and access to resources to help journalists stay safe on the job.

2014

Tammerlin Drummond in March joined the ACLU of Northern California as a communications strategist. Previously she was a metro

columnist for the Oakland Tribune/Bay Area News Group.

Anna Fifield, Beijing bureau chief for The Washington Post, is the author of "The Great Successor: The Divinely Perfect Destiny of Brilliant Comrade Kim Jong Un," published in June by PublicAffairs. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the rise and reign of one of the world's most infamous—and elusive—tyrants and his North Korean regime.

Taylor Goldenstein joined the Houston Chronicle as a reporter in their Austin bureau in March. Previously, she was a reporter at the Austin American-Statesman.

Tim Rogers has a new position at Univision, where he's a producer for "Real America with Jorge Ramos," a news show that appears on Facebook Watch. Previously, Rogers was Fusion's senior editor for Latin America.

2015

Gabe Bullard is senior editor at NPR-member station WAMU in Washington, D.C. Previously, he was director of digital content for "1A," a nationally-broadcast WAMU show.

David Jiménez is the author of a new book, "El Director" ("The Editor"), which was published in Spain by Libros Del Ko in April. It is an insider's account of the crisis at Spain's El Mundo newspaper, where he was brought on as editor only to be fired a year later, in May 2016.

Jieqi Luo has been awarded a research grant through Crossing Borders, a program of the German charitable institution Robert Bosch Stiftung, conducted in cooperation with the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin. Luo plans to use the funding, which begins in July, to research a nonfiction narrative book about love and desire among the elderly.

Denise-Marie Ordway is a new member of the Education Writers Association's board of directors. Her two-year term officially began at the EWA's annual national seminar in Baltimore in May. A former education reporter at the Orlando Sentinel, she is managing editor of Journalist's Resource at Harvard's Kennedy School.

2016

Wendi C. Thomas is a new member of the Nieman Advisory Board. She is the editor and publisher of MLK50: Justice Through Journalism, a Memphis-based nonprofit newsroom focused on poverty, power, and public policy.

2017

Katherine Goldstein is the creator and host of a new podcast, "The Double Shift." The reported narrative podcast focuses on stories of mothers who work, with jobs everywhere from the campaign trail to the (legal) brothels of Nevada.

Mary Louise Schumacher has been invited to participate as the 2019 Distinguished Critic in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Clarice Smith lecture series in November. The Clarice Smith Distinguished Lectures in American Art were established in 2004 to present new insights in American art from the perspectives of the finest artists, critics, and scholars.

2018

Maryclaire Dale has a new beat at The Associated Press, where she is one of two reporters assigned to coverage focusing solely on the #MeToo movement and gender politics. Dale, who is based in Philadelphia, was a key AP reporter covering the Bill Cosby sexual assault case.

Matt Karolian is the new general manager of Boston.com, a website covering Boston and the surrounding area that is operated by Boston Globe Media. He began in that role in April and continues to be The Boston Globe's director of new initiatives.

Christine Mungai has joined The Elephant, a Nairobi, Kenya-based publication examining the African condition through essays, features, and longreads, as a curator. Previously, she was a writer and editor at africapedia.com.

Frederik Obermaier is featured in the Alex Winter-directed documentary "The Panama Papers," which was released in October and is being screened around Europe and North America. Obermaier and his Süddeutsche Zeitung colleague Bastian Obermayer initiated the investigation into the Panama Papers in 2016 after an anonymous whistleblower leaked the documents to them.

2019

Matthew Teague's 2015 essay for Esquire, "The Friend: Love Is Not a Big Enough Word," is being made into a movie. The essay details his wife Nicole's death from ovarian cancer and how the couple's close friend uprooted his life to move in and help Teague and his two young daughters before and after Nicole's passing. Directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite and staring Casey Affleck, Dakota Johnson, and Jason Segel, "The Friend" began filming in Fairhope, Alabama—where the Teague family lived—in February.

KATHY RYAN

Eliza Griswold, NF '07, winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction

'A Classic American Story'

Eliza Griswold, NF '07, wins a 2019 Pulitzer Prize

Each year, more than 2,500 entries are submitted for just 21 awards in the Pulitzer Prize competition. Eliza Grisworld, NF '07, in April joined the more than 100 Nieman Fellows who are Pulitzer Prize winners. Griswold won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction for her book "Amity and Prosperity: One Family and the Fracturing of America," published in 2018 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. The Pulitzer Board called the book, set in the small town of Amity, Pennsylvania, "a classic American story, grippingly told, of an Appalachian family struggling to retain its middle class status in the shadow of destruction wreaked by corporate fracking."

Griswold, who is currently a contributing writer at The New Yorker and a distinguished writer in residence at New York University's Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, spent seven years doing on-the-ground reporting for "Amity and Prosperity."

Why the Stories of Everyday Moments Matter

The only way to get at truth is to get out of the newsroom and report with all your senses—and your heart

BY YOSHIAKI NOHARA

As a reporter, I have written numerous stories about people. I hope I got as many stories right as I could, but I'm sure I missed many, too. The one I most regret not capturing is a personal one.

That is the story of my grandmother, my father's mother, Hamako Nohara.

She died at the age of 86 in January 2006, when I was learning the ropes on my first reporting job at The Herald in Everett, Washington. I was too busy writing about strangers in the U.S. to be up to date on my family in Japan, my mother country.

By the time I traveled back to my parent's place in Yamaguchi, a prefecture in western Japan, her funeral was over. My parents apologized for not having told me that she had been hospitalized for a broken leg. They had expected her to recover and didn't want to worry me. But her chronic liver problem got worse fast, and she died.

Her death devastated my parents. I remember how small and fragile they looked. My father, a truck driver with thick forearms, openly said he was lonely. That surprised me as he rarely talked about his emotions. He talked about his mother's story, parts of which I had never heard.

My grandmother grew up in a rural town in Yamaguchi as the oldest of six siblings. She was the best student among them. Her

parents kept her test scores while tossing out the others. She used to walk several miles to school wearing sandals made of rice straw despite getting frostbite. She loved studying and dreamed about becoming a teacher.

But World War II took everything from her—her dreams, her home, and her husband. She became a widow with two children too small to remember anything about their father. They moved from one relative's place to another and at one point lived in a place that was more like a horse shed than a house. My grandmother held various jobs, including in construction, and suffered tuberculosis, but she persevered to build a better life for her children and her grandchildren, including me.

My father recounted an event to me. One day when he was small, he was taking a walk with his mother along the river in our hometown. He remembers her stopping and asking him: "Shall we jump off from here?"

He got so scared, but spoke up. "No, I don't want to," he shouted.

She listened to him and decided to live. When she was alive, I took my grandmother for granted. When I was a boy, she used to tell me and my brother to study all the time. I didn't know why she was so passionate about education. I got to know why after she died.

As I gained more experience as a journalist, I got to appreciate her story more because it was so typical back then and therefore resonated with hundreds of thousands of other war widows. Her story was Japan's story.

I regretted not fully knowing the sacrifices she'd made and not asking her questions to get her story. I should've asked how she felt when I moved to America in 2000, her former enemy, to become a journalist. I should've asked why she never badmouthed America or Americans. I should've known about the event along the river. I should've thanked her for her perseverance.

I've tried to reconstruct the riverside scene over and over in my mind. So much so, I realized, that it affected my work as a journalist during my remaining time at The Herald and at Bloomberg News in Tokyo, where I have worked since 2009.

I am old-school in terms of not putting myself in a story, but I can't fool myself about what kind of stories I care about most and report and write with my heart. I have taken pride in writing about a Japanese-American and his twin brother who fought for the U.S. after being sent to an internment camp, a problematic foreign workers program in Japan, and the plight of Japanese single mothers and their children.

My Nieman year gave me time to pause and reflect on my career. I asked myself simple questions: Why am I drawn to those stories when nobody is telling me to do them? Why do I think data analysis and interviews with experts and policymakers are not enough for an enterprise story? Why do I feel compelled to report on the ground and listen to people?

As I searched for answers, I thought about the riverside scene and I tried to imagine once again what it was like for my grandmother to survive after the war.

I realized I've been trying to capture stories like hers, stories about ordinary people who are left behind to struggle due to greater forces. I believe that a truth, if not *the* truth, exists in everyday moments and the struggles of those people. And the only way to get such a truth is to get out of the newsroom and report with all my senses and my heart.

I am glad I interrogated my motives as a journalist. I see my own path going forward with more clarity. And I thank my grandmother for that. ■

Yoshiaki Nohara, a 2019 Nieman Fellow, covers economics for Bloomberg News in Tokyo

"I realized I've been trying to capture stories like [my grandmother's], stories about ordinary people who are left behind to struggle due to greater forces

OPPOSITE: LISA ABITBOL

Nieman Online

“[Georges] really helped me prepare for asking the tough questions and being more up front with your university....[it] really helped me move forward.”

—

Ian Brooking
Student journalist

Attendees of the 2019 Christopher J. Georges Conference on College Journalism, including Ian Brooking (second row, far left), pictured with keynote speaker Marisa Kwiatkowski (front row, center). See videos from the conference at www.nieman.harvard.edu/sites/the-2019-christopher-j-georges-conference-on-college-journalism/

NiemanReports

Uprooting Corruption in Israeli Media
Corruption in the Israeli news industry is rampant, but it’s not too late to start anew. Shaul Amsterdamski, NF ’19 and editor at Israel’s public broadcasting corporation Kan, argues that many Israeli journalists and news outlets must make amends—and big changes—in order to regain the public’s trust.

NiemanLab

Newsonomics: The New LA Times
News industry analyst Ken Doctor takes a look at the “new” Los Angeles Times where, under the ownership of billionaire Patrick Soon-Shiong, tens of millions in new investment and ambitious digital plans are paving the way for revitalization—and top-notch journalism—following the Tronc disaster. Doctor’s Newsonomics series focusing on the Times includes in-depth interviews with Soon-Shiong and executive editor Norm Pearlstine.

Podcast World
In Hot Pod, a weekly newsletter about podcasting that’s published on Nieman Lab’s website every Tuesday, Nicholas Quah provides a deep dive into the happenings and the movers and shakers of the booming podcast industry. Topics include Spotify’s podcast acquisitions and ambitions, public radio podcasts as a vehicle to increase donations, unionization at podcast shops like Gimlet, and the latest podcast-listening statistics.

NiemanStoryboard

Newsroom Odes
In a 10-part series of poems, Don Nelson—who, currently the publisher and editor of the Methow Valley News in Washington, has been in the newspaper business for nearly 50 years—chronicles the legacy newsroom and its unique, but sadly disappearing, culture. Each poem is written from a different perspective, including city editor, photographer, and longtime subscriber.

High Notes from Writers, Editors
Following the 2019 Power of Narrative conference, Storyboard shares some nuggets of wisdom about the craft from the conference speakers, including “Columbine” author Dave Cullen and Storyboard’s own Jacqui Banaszynski.

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