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THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Five Dollars

Goodbye Gutenberg



‘... to promote and elevate the standards of journalism’

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation.

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Sensing the Change

- 5 Caught in the Web BY JON PALFREMAN
7 A Dinosaur Adapts BY KEVIN CULLEN
8 Risk-Adverse Newspapers Won't Cross the Digital Divide BY CHRIS COBLER
10 Capital Crisis in the Profitable Newspaper Industry BY ROBERT G. PICARD
13 Newspapers and Their Quest for the Holy Grail BY MICHAEL RILEY

Pushing Forward

- 15 Tired of Waiting to Move Ahead BY GENEVA OVERHOLSER
16 Media Convergence: 'Just Do It' BY ULRIK HAAGERUP
19 Navigating the Road to Convergence BY RALPH GAGE
23 Meshing Purpose With Product BY PHILIP MEYER

Building Community

- 25 Community Building on the Web: Implications for Journalism BY CRAIG NEWMARK
27 The Challenge of Community Building BY GARY KEBBEL
29 Why Anonymity Exists and Works on Newspapers' Web Sites BY STEVE YELVINGTON

Finding Our Footing

- 31 Are Journalists the 21st Century's Buggy Whip Makers? BY WILLIAM DIETRICH
34 Looking Past the Rush Into Convergence BY EDWARD WASSERMAN
36 We Can Adjust to Changing Demands, But Should We? BY JOE ZELNIK
37 Evolving Definitions of News BY TOM BETTAG
39 Toward a New Journalism With Verification SPEECH BY BILL KOVACH
42 Journalism and Web 2.0 BY FRANCIS PISANI

Expanding Our Reach

- 45 Gathering Voices to Share With a Worldwide Online Audience
BY REBECCA MACKINNON AND ETHAN ZUCKERMAN
- 48 Blogging News in China BY LUWEI (ROSE) LUQIU
- 50 Puzzling Contradictions of China's Internet Journalism BY FONS TUINSTRA
- 52 Will News Find a Home on YouTube? BY MORRIS JONES

Converging on the Web

- 54 Myths and Realities of Convergence BY RANDY COVINGTON
- 57 When Walls Come Tumbling Down BY JIM KENNEDY
- 59 Enterprising Journalism in a Multimedia World BY JOHN SOLOMON
- 62 Confronting the Dual Challenge of Print and Electronic News BY PAUL E. STEIGER
- 64 Feeding the Web While Reporting the Story BY NEIL CHASE

Exploring New Connections

- 66 Taking the Big Gulp BY JANE ELLEN STEVENS
- 70 Sights and Sounds of a Newspaper's Editorials BY SUSAN ALBRIGHT
- 72 An Optimistic Plunge Into Multimedia Reporting BY JOE HOWRY
- 74 Narrative Journalism in the Era of the Web BY LEE HANCOCK AND MARK MILLER
- 76 Finding New People to Tell the Stories BY CRAIG COX
- 78 When the Web Feeds the Newspaper BY ERIC BLOM
- 80 Inviting Readers Into the Editorial Process BY ELLEN FOLEY
- 82 The Digital Reach of a Newspaper's Code of Ethics BY DEAN MILLER

Taking Words

- 84 Plagiarism Goes by a Different Name on the Web BY JUDY MULLER
- 86 Teaching Journalism Students to Value What Is Authentic BY BRENT WALTH
- 88 The 'P' Word in the Book Business BY MARGARET ENGEL

- 3 **Curator's Corner:** Examining the Core of the Nieman Experience BY BOB GILES
- 91 **Nieman Notes** COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE
- 91 Newspapers Have Met Their Enemy Within BY WATSON SIMS
- 92 Class Notes
- 102 End Note: Goodbye To All That—A Memoir BY EDWARD C. NORTON

Examining the Core of the Nieman Experience

The Curator explores how the foundation can best cultivate the skills journalists will need in the digital era.

By Bob Giles

In almost any gathering of journalists these days, the topic eventually turns to the state of our craft and the commercial enterprises that support it. A rapid transformation is taking place in journalism. The changes are driven by digital technologies, many of which have been brilliantly adopted by entrepreneurs capitalizing on opportunities they've seen that mainstream news companies failed to anticipate.

Members of the last Nieman class were consumed with worry over the demise of Knight Ridder newspapers and its potential implications for newspapers owned by publicly traded companies. (Two members of that class returned to jobs at their former Knight Ridder newspapers to find different ownership than when they'd left.) The relentless demand of institutional shareholders for extremely high profit margins and strong stock prices is incompatible with the historic role of the printed press as a public trust. During an afternoon discussion in late spring the fellows worked through two case studies with professors from the Harvard Business School; they examined how Google, a start-up, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, from the mainstream media, had shaped their business models to succeed in the digital age.

During their weekly discussions at Lippmann House, our fellows also examined and reexamined the more traditional issues of journalistic performance and, in particular, challenges to the watchdog role of the press. They were haunted by the acknowledgement that the press failed to report aggressively and authoritatively during the months leading up to the Iraq War. And they were troubled by the deepening conflicts news organizations are experiencing with the Bush administration and the federal courts over the journalistic disclosure of information, held as secret, that the public should have.

During a recent meeting of the foundation's advisory board, I asked for thoughts on how the Nieman Foundation might serve as an educational force in the transformation of journalism. It is a question we are still considering and one that invites thoughts and ideas from our family of alumni.

The influence of digital technology on journalism is realized largely through the Internet, which has become a powerful interactive platform, engaging voices that have not usually been as occupied as they are now in the conversation about news and newsgathering. The Nieman Foundation makes good use of online opportunities to encourage transformative thinking about journalism. What follows are examples of how we serve this purpose:

- Nieman Reports utilizes eMprint templates, developed by Roger Fidler at the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, to create newsbooks of its articles on specific themes in an easy to read and download format.
- The Nieman Watchdog Web site encourages investigative reporting by drawing on authorities in various fields to offer analysis of issues and questions the press might consider asking.
- The Nieman Narrative Digest, launched in April, advances the practice of narrative journalism by providing useful and inspiring resources for writers, editors, teachers and students of narrative, and offering a forum for the exchange of ideas and resources.

The foundation also can be helpful through its occasional seminars for journalists and the annual Nieman Narrative Conference. Such initiatives are part of the foundation's service to journalism. Though each is educational in nature, they don't fully address the question of what role the foundation, as a whole, might play.

The answer might be found in thinking about the core strength, which is the fellowship program. Through the years, Nieman Fellowships have been held largely by print journalists. Will the print media, especially newspapers, continue to provide the most serious, authoritative content? In recent Nieman classes, an increasing number of broadcast and online journalists, documentary filmmakers and freelance writers have been represented in the applicant pools and in the fellows selected. In future years, we need to ask ourselves, as part of our selection process, what the best mix of skills and work site will be to meet the needs of the digital era.

Every news medium, from newspapers to blogs, needs journalists who are committed to adhering to—and, we hope, elevating—the standards of journalism, who understand the press's role and responsibility, and who can bring authoritative knowledge to the stories they handle.

The Nieman experience can encourage more investigative reporting, contribute to a breadth and depth of global understanding, open fellows' thinking to new possibilities, help them continue a serious dialogue about journalism, renew their commitment to serving the public interest and sustaining our enduring values, and prepare them to contribute to the learning and development of their journalistic colleagues. When we are able to accomplish these things, the Nieman Fellowships will have an essential role to play in a challenging time for journalism. ■

Goodbye Gutenberg

Journalism is on a fast-paced, transformative journey, its destination still unknown. That the Web and other media technologies are affecting mightily the practice of journalism is beyond dispute. Less clear is any shared vision of what the future holds. Newsrooms are being hollowed out, and editors who resist such cutbacks are losing their jobs. Digital video cameras and tape recorders replace reporters' notebooks as newspapers—and other news organizations—train staff in multimedia storytelling.

In this issue, words about journalists' experiences in the digital era transport our vision forward, while our eye takes us on a visual voyage back to a time when newspapers wove communities together. For the use of photographic images in our "Newspaper Gallery," we thank Karen Wyatt, the Director of Collections and Visual Resources at the Newseum, and her colleague Carrie Christoffersen, Curator of Collections, for their guidance and assistance. For enabling us to include artists' renderings, we are grateful to Shaun O'L. Higgins, coauthor of "The Newspaper in Art" and "Press Gallery: The Newspaper in Modern and Postmodern Art," and to Julie Read, marketing assistant at New Media Ventures, Inc., the publisher of these art books. Permission to publish these pictures was granted by David L. Kencik, Collections Data Manager at the San Diego Museum of Art, and Paul Richelson, Chief Curator at the Mobile (Alabama) Museum. To them, we say thank you.

The photograph on this page was donated to the Nieman Foundation by Curator Bob Giles in 2003 and now resides, along with the photograph on page 48, at Lippmann House.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Max Schwartz and his brother Jacob often sold newspapers until 10 p.m.. Newark, New Jersey. December 1909. *Photo by Lewis W. Hinel/Courtesy Bob Giles.*

Caught in the Web

‘With the Web, we could be witnessing the most important development in expressive media since the advent of writing.’

By Jon Palfreman

In 1992, I helped produce a PBS television series about the history of the computer, grandiosely called the “Machine That Changed the World.” The episodes recounted humankind’s failure to grasp that computers were not simply number crunchers. They were “universal machines” that could do just about anything—from processing words to arranging music, from decoding genes to editing video.

The computer did change the world, but not nearly as much as what followed it. The Internet, in 1992 a clumsy system linking university researchers, was about to morph into the World Wide Web, a seamless, user-friendly, global infrastructure connecting potentially every human on the planet. I never saw it coming.

Today, we’re all caught in the Web. Physically, it’s embodied as a planetary necklace of ultra pure glass, through which pulses of laser light whiz back and forth (we connect to this necklace either directly or by wireless). Culturally, its reach is much greater. For those pulses carry the world’s gossip, commerce, govern-

ment and culture, along with our critical recording of events (our news). No field of human endeavor has escaped the Web’s reach.

On this glass highway, gossip has thrived: from cell phones—the fastest adopted global technology—to “spaces” where (mostly) young people show off, meet and hang out. Commerce, government and culture have also made smart uses of the Web: from online trading to public outreach, from international scientific collaborations to national archives.

As journalists, we think about what

the Web means for work we do in reporting and disseminating news and information. Given its transformative capacity, we can regard the Web as a problem or we can see it as a potential solution to a broader problem that we would have had to face anyway.

Let’s look first at the problem. Arguably, the Web has exacerbated journalism’s woes, contributing to the loss of advertising, the consolidation of media ownership, the erosion of readership/audience (especially among the young) with traditional media, and the loss of public trust. It’s hard

not to be offended watching media barons jostle to sell off “old” media assets like newspapers, radio and television stations and snap up “new” ones like, for example, the social exchange sites MySpace, Facebook and YouTube. Journalists fret that such outlets will lead to the abandonment of traditional core values of journalism, such as independence, autonomy, objectivity and fairness.

Engaging the Young

But there’s a more positive possibility.



Newsroom at the New York World. January 1890. *National Park Service Research Library/Courtesy Newseum.*

The Web may have arrived just at the right time to re-engage a generation that has abandoned newspapers. Why don't they read? Partly because today's 20-year-olds—who have grown up immersed in an audiovisual world of computers, video games, cable and satellite television—might be neurologically wired differently from their baby-boomer parents. A 2004 Michigan State study found that eighth-grade boys spend on average 23 hours a week—that's nearly an entire day each week—playing video games (girls spend about half as much). Even college-age males average 16 hours a week of gaming. According to The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, "On a typical day, more than half of U.S. teenagers use a computer and more than 40 percent play a video game." This generation's gossip is also shared in audiovisual ways, with exchanges involving not only written and spoken words but photos, videos and music.

Different wiring doesn't mean dumber wiring. While middle-aged professors moan about today's students' poor grammar, by other measures the MySpace generation is the smartest in history. Historically referenced IQ scores have been rising steadily since World War I, by a few points a decade. If you accept that IQ tests measure intelligence, then the world is getting smarter. Today's average child (with a score of 100) would have been considered a near genius 50 years ago (scoring around 115, as measured against the 1956 average).

This strange phenomenon of rising IQ scores is known as the "Flynn effect," named after the New Zealand-based psychologist James R. Flynn who uncovered it. And most significantly, the tests that show the greatest gains are abstract and visual. Students who might struggle with a history essay make short work of tests like Raven's Progressive Matrices. In this nonverbal intelligence test measuring spatial reasoning, subjects are presented with a series of figures with a missing piece. They must choose the correct piece from a set of similar looking choices, and their scores beat out all previous

generations of test takers.

A generation reared on video games is primed for an interactive multimedia platform like the Web. Indeed, the love fest between the MySpace generation and the Web may signal a profound moment in human culture. With the Web, we could be witnessing the most important development in expressive media since the advent of writing. One exciting if disruptive possibility is that under the influence of the young, the Internet will usher in a new era of interactive, audiovisual literacy. Though

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



A blue painted wooden newsboy wagon with white lettering that was used to deliver The Buffalo Evening News. 1915. *Newseum collection/Courtesy Newseum.*

written words will remain critical to human communication, it's likely they will no longer dominate in the exchange of news and information.

Journalists will have to meet this challenge—or perish.

New Ways of Telling Stories

Before the Web, storytelling was platform specific. Newspapers and magazines focused on text and photos, radio told stories with audio, and television dealt with moving pictures and sounds. Each platform has its tools and specialized skill sets, advantages and disadvantages. The Web forces these platforms to integrate. Today's best media Web sites are multimedia

productions combining text, stills, audio and video.

Over time, how will the Web, our first meta-platform, change our media landscape? I suspect our platform distinctions will not be completely eroded—nor will it lead to a total convergence among them, either—since, after all, the various platforms relate to sights, sounds and language, which are the primary channels that humans use to communicate. But the Web will likely force television, radio and print journalists to get to know each other better. By bringing these formats together, the Web should facilitate complementary storytelling approaches, something that should enrich the journalistic enterprise.

These speculations should be taken with a large pinch of salt. Media technologies have a history of developing in unpredictable ways, surprising even their pioneers. In 1947, for example, the Harvard computer engineer Howard Aiken argued that six electronic computers would satisfy the United States's computing needs. There was no way that he could imagine that one day there would be hundreds of millions of them used (mostly) for anything but arithmetic.

So my vision of what's ahead could be quite wrong. But if I'm right, the Web arrived just in time to re-engage what has turned out to be the MySpace generation. And even if old media continue their decline, there is still hope. Perhaps, with some guidance from us, our newly minted game-playing journalism graduates will find ways to reinvent the art of storytelling in the age of the World Wide Web. ■

Jon Palfreman, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is KEZI Distinguished Professor of Broadcast Journalism at the University of Oregon. A veteran of both U.K. and U.S. television, he has made more than 40 BBC and PBS one-hour documentaries including the Peabody Award-winning series the "Machine That Changed the World," the Emmy Award-winning NOVA "Siamese Twins," and the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Silver Baton-winner, "Harvest of Fear."

A Dinosaur Adapts

‘Unencumbered by the need to squeeze words into a finite space, the Internet proved better for me, as the writer, and I’d argue for readers, too, than newsprint.’

By Kevin Cullen

Last summer, on a glorious morning in Manhattan, I was sitting on Jimmy Breslin’s deck, 16 stories above the Upper West Side, bitching and moaning about how much the newspaper business has changed. As I whined, Breslin almost snorted coffee through his nose.

“Business?” he asked, incredulously.

He put his mug down and waved his hand at me, dismissively. “The business,” Breslin said, “is gone.”

Sometimes, it feels that way. The newspaper game my generation got into 25 years ago has changed dramatically. At many papers, circulation is falling, and the money growing on classified trees that let us do just about anything is gone. The bean counters are everywhere. Consultants tell us what news is. We click onto Romenesko every day, checking not for tips on how to do our jobs better but to see who else is getting bought out or laid off. There are fewer reporters and too many editors who seem to think it’s their job to suck the life out of copy, lest we be accused of bias or pride. Getting a story into the paper simply because it’s a good read is so much harder than it used to be.

What the hell happened?

“They took all the fun out,” Breslin said, nodding sagely. But as he’d be the first to admit, maybe he and the rest of us who think journalism is supposed to be fun at the same time it’s being important are just dinosaurs. And, like dinosaurs, if you don’t adapt, you die.

Trying desperately to adapt, a little more than a month after that cup of coffee I took my first assignment as a blogger. For reasons still unclear to me, the Goethe-Institut, a German cultural organization, asked me to be the U.S.

correspondent for a Weblog they set up to chronicle the World Cup matches in Germany. And so I found myself sitting in an English pub in Sarasota, Florida with my 12-year-old son, Patrick, about to watch England play Portugal. There are more British people living in Florida than in any other place outside of Britain and, if you have to ask why, then you’ve never felt the lashing rain of Blackpool, Manchester or London on your face.

I was based in London for several years, and in the course of living there Patrick became a devoted England supporter, much to the chagrin of our Irish friends in Dublin, my previous posting. The English team is to soccer what my beloved Boston Red Sox are to baseball. True, they did capture the World Cup in 1966, just as the Red Sox won the World Series in 2004. But, historically, like the Red Sox, England loses big games and loses them in such spectacular, heartbreaking fashion that their failures are far more memorable than their successes.

I decamped to Tony Middlemiss’s sports pub, Champions, fully expecting to chronicle yet another excruciating loss by England. I was on vacation and initially thought only of filing a blog entry, but decided to pitch a story to Joe Sullivan, The Boston Globe sports editor. Joe, who’s a pleasure to do business with because he encourages creative writing, signed on quickly, intrigued by the idea of all these sun-worshipping ex-pat Brits crammed into a Florida bar in the middle of the day. He saw the piece as a sidebar, part of a package with stories filed from Germany by Frank Dell’Apa, our soccer writer, and John Powers, one of the nation’s finest newspaper writers of sport and anything else.

Tony and his wife, Joy, had opened

their sports pub in the middle of a Sarasota strip mall less than two years earlier, after arriving from their native Newcastle. Like many Geordies, they are warm and welcoming, and Tony took an immediate shine to Patrick, who was wearing an England jersey. But not for nothing is Newcastle’s most famous musician named Sting. The Geordies, like all the English, know pain when it comes to losing on the soccer pitch.

When, in the 62nd minute, England’s talented but impetuous striker Wayne Rooney kicked a Portugal player where it hurts and received a red card, there was a collective groan in Champions. The young yelped, and their elders recalled when a young, immature David Beckham delivered a similarly ill-timed kick to an Argentine that resulted in a red card that precipitated an England loss on penalty kicks in 1998. This had all the makings of a preordained, Shakespearean tragedy: the English, down a man, kept missing scoring chances and a coy, calculating Portugal side seemed determined to have the game decided on penalty kicks after overtime.

Almost inevitably, it came to penalty kicks and, predictably, England lost, and the crowd at Champions cursed and cried and ordered more pints of Newkie Brown Ale to drown their sorrows. Patrick and I drove back to our rented condo, and in less than an hour I’d written and filed my Globe story and sent off a similar version to the blog. The blog took me about 10 minutes to write, a task made easier because I’d already hashed out themes and transitions. But after I realized how easy it was to write for the blog, I thought that maybe I should have done it the other way around.

Later, the sports copy desk called to say I needed to trim the piece. Space

was tighter than expected. So I began doing what I increasingly find myself doing as the years go by and the news hole, in its inverse relationship with my waistline, grows smaller and smaller. I chopped and cut, agonizing about what words, what quotes, what transitions had to go to make the damn thing fit. All the while, my blog entry circulated in cyberspace, being read by Germans, and who knows who else reads such things.

The next day, I compared my words that had gotten into the paper with what I wrote for the blog. The blog entry seemed better than the newspaper

story. It wasn't much longer, maybe by 300 to 400 words, but those extra words contained some good quotes, some stylistic segues, and a little more color. It was, without a doubt, a better read. Unencumbered by the need to squeeze words into a finite space, the Internet proved better for me, as the writer, and I'd argue for readers, too, than newsprint.

Now if the bean counters could only figure out how to make enough advertising dollars off this stuff, we'd be all set.

A few days later, I called Breslin, making plans to meet up with him

and his wife, Ronnie, at the Cape Cod premier of his 9/11 play-in-progress, "Love Lasts on Myrtle Avenue."

"So whaddya doin?" Breslin goes. "You workin on any good stories?"

I told him I was writing a blog and that it was better than writing for the paper.

"Blog?" Breslin growled. "Sounds like a (expletive) monster."

Could be, Jimmy. Could be. ■

Kevin Cullen, a 2003 Nieman Fellow, is a projects reporter for The Boston Globe.

Risk-Adverse Newspapers Won't Cross the Digital Divide

'Newspapers lacked the external vision necessary to see the vast range of opportunities created by the Internet.'

By Chris Cobler

When a University of Northern Colorado (UNC) punter stabbed his competition in the right leg, the story attracted national attention. At the Greeley (Colo.) Tribune, UNC's hometown newspaper, we didn't hesitate to post the story on our Web site as soon as we had it, scooping our print edition by more than 12 hours. The beat reporter also blogged about the news, and our multimedia editor shot and posted video of the injured punter visiting practice after his release from the hospital.

This might be called a success story in our company's quest to merge our newsroom's print and online cultures. However, the story also revealed how far we have to go. Our staff didn't think to call our multimedia editor when the UNC athletic department called a press conference to discuss the stabbing. Instead, we staffed it the traditional way—with a reporter and still photographer. And some staff members objected when we put the arrest warrant affidavit online as soon

as we had it, rather than waiting for the next day's paper. We shouldn't tip off the Denver TV stations to the details, one veteran reporter told me.

By combining their print and online operations, newspapers will remain profitable longer. Even with this approach, [Robert G.] Picard predicts, the day will come when newspapers will have to shift entirely to a new business model.

Print journalists still struggle with the idea of having what they do each day go up online so quickly—increasingly accompanied by audio and visual elements. Getting it also on radio and

TV is important, too. To get more comfortable, these journalists must develop new skills so they can be the ones telling stories on multiple platforms in our digital age. To do this, newspapers must invest in them, staffing newsrooms adequately and training journalists for this growth opportunity.

Instead, most large news media companies are slashing staff in a desperate bid to reduce expenses as profits plunge. This death spiral makes me fear for the future of an industry I love. As the spiral keeps spinning in this direction, what will metropolitan newspapers have left to offer Internet-savvy readers? Media economist Robert G. Picard estimates that only 15 percent of their printed content is unique to their newspaper. The low percentage helps explain how vulnerable metro newspapers are to digital competition. [See Picard's article on page 10.]

During my Nieman year, I sought out experts such as Picard, who was at Harvard as a Shorenstein Fellow, to discuss the future of newspapers.

Picard delivered the keynote address at the International Symposium on Online Journalism outlining this struggle. As he put it, newspapers' days as a cash cow are numbered as newspaper companies search for a way to extend their date with the financial butcher. By combining their print and online operations, newspapers will remain profitable longer. Even with this approach, Picard predicts, the day will come when newspapers will have to shift entirely to a new business model.

The Internet First Initiative

Since the age of 35, when I'd taken the editor's job at the Tribune, a family-owned company, I'd fancied myself remaining in this job for a few decades at least. And during the first of those decades, the paper did enjoy much journalistic success, including being recognized with the Robert G. McGruder Award for Diversity Leadership and The Associated Press Managing Editors' International Perspective Award. With our owners' commitment to community journalism, we were able to act like a newspaper much larger than our 26,000-daily circulation. Our staff was larger than the industry average, and we were willing to send our reporters wherever a local connection took us—from Mexico to the Dominican Republic and from Ethiopia to Liberia.

But while I was at Harvard, our company changed its name from Swift Newspapers to Swift Communications and prepared to launch an Internet First Initiative. Chief Operating Officer Robert Brown persuaded me to lead this initiative for 30 of our community newspapers while also operating the Tribune Web site.¹ I still had my doubts about leaving the job I loved, but I was touched deeply when one of our two owners—sisters who carry on the rich tradition of community service established by their father, who founded the company—personally thanked me for taking on the Internet challenge.

The Swift family's principled ownership gives me hope in these uncertain times. While publicly traded companies plan exit strategies, our owners seek ways to grow their newspapers. They're prepared to drop their profit margins if they believe they can build a path toward long-term growth. Of course, that's a huge gamble with their family business at a time when no one has figured out the new business model.

Fortunately, community newspapers have an edge in the digital age. We focus on the two ways Picard explained that newspapers generate value: through specialization and exclusivity. We specialize in local content that readers can't get anywhere else. With this cushion, we can buy ourselves a little more time to learn from the mistakes being made by others.

That time is limited, however. In my new role as Internet division publisher, I have tried to instill a sense of urgency in our newsrooms and advertising departments. For the most part, journalists get it. They've read the industry headlines of the past five years; they know they need to tell stories on multiple platforms. To head us in this new direction, we've taken the following steps:

- We've asked all Tribune reporters to blog to help them understand writing for a different medium.
- Our online readers vote on stories for the front page of the next day's print edition.
- We're training our staff to produce multimedia stories.

Even with these steps, we recognize we're a long way from being a truly converged newsroom. But we are seeing the rewards of our efforts in growing readership. Our Web sites in northern Colorado attract more than 1.1 million page views and 140,000 unique visitors monthly. Our surveys show most of these Web readers are not print subscribers, yet most live within our coverage area. Anecdotal

evidence also tells me many new readers are finding us online rather than in print. Through my blog, I've heard from many younger readers and from many studying or working at our local university. For these readers, the print newspaper had become irrelevant, yet they found the quick-hitting and interactive nature of the Internet suits their needs.

Newspaper Web sites with the highest market penetration are the ones with the highest percentages of original content—not just stories shoveled from the print edition. Some newspaper Web sites have four to eight times as many online users as print subscribers, according to Clark G. Gilbert, a Harvard Business School professor who worked on the American Press Institute's Newspaper Next project.² [See Philip Meyer's article on page 23 for more on the Newspaper Next project.] The catch is that advertisers pay only a fraction for each online user compared with a print reader.

Exploring the Business Equation

I didn't start my Nieman year with the idea that I'd spend the second half of it at the Harvard Business School. But that's where my search for newspaper's future led me. There, I found Gilbert and Clayton Christensen explaining new business models, disruptive technologies, and growth creation. Their faculty colleague Rosabeth Moss Kanter illustrated for me how little attention newspapers pay to managing change, and Elie Ofek, another professor there, reminded me how little newspapers spend on marketing and innovation. It long has chafed me that soda companies spend billions to convince consumers to spend more than a dollar on a drink that costs pennies to produce and is bad for you while newspapers produce what is the cornerstone of democracy and sell it for 50 cents, yet readers regularly complain about the cost.

¹ www.greeleytrib.com/

² Clark Gilbert's article, cowritten with Scott D. Anthony, about disruptive technologies is in the Spring 2006 issue of Nieman Reports at www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/contents.html

One of my bigger aha moments came during Andrew McAfee's "Managing in the Information Age" class. The Readership Institute's research has told us about newspapers as defensive cultures, but this hit home as I read a case study about a German investment banking company that experimented with creating an employee wiki. Here was what is perceived to be a conservative company in a conservative industry trying to find a new way to flatten its hierarchy and encourage contributions from its workers. It was a sobering moment as this example made me even more aware of how strongly newspapers fight change.

Newspapers lacked the external vision necessary to see the vast range of opportunities created by the Internet. Instead, the questions they asked pointed inward. Why create a search engine that might make it easier for Web users to read something other than the newspaper? Why give away classified advertising online for free? Why construct a social network for people who might post questionable material? Ask such questions, and the consequence is evident in many newspaper executives' slowness to adapt to a change they knew was happening.

Harvard Business School case studies are filled with examples of pharmaceutical companies spending billions on research and development. The

newspaper industry, on the other hand, has barely awakened to this need. The Newspaper Next project is a small first step in the search for a new business model for an industry so focused on protecting its once lucrative classified advertising franchise that it couldn't see how to grow the business in entirely new ways. Without a sense of vision, some appetite for risk, and a willingness to invest in future strategies, the path to irrelevance becomes much shorter.

Thinking Like a Disruptor

As the Newspaper Next project recommends, those of us at newspapers must learn to think like a disruptor. Such a mentality would tell us to act either by playing offense or defense. At the Tribune, we've chosen to go on the offense; in doing so, we've made aggressive moves into new markets such as creating a Spanish-language weekly and a youth-focused entertainment weekly. Each reaches readers well beyond the county boundaries of our traditional daily newspaper.

Many of our company's newspapers already are successful as free-distribution dailies. With the Internet setting the standard of free information, newspapers need to figure out how to compete. Unquestionably, this search for new business models will lower

profit margins. One question worth asking is whether we have the guts to go after market share at the expense of the bottom line.

The days of our monopoly business practices are over. Gone, too, are the times when journalists can write a story for print only and reach a mass audience. The Harvard Business School professors, among others, advise that we can view this change as a threat or an opportunity. To choose the path of opportunity means rewriting job descriptions of everyone who now occupies the newsroom. It means looking for new partners and being willing to collaborate far outside of our comfort zone. And it means knowing that we have to cannibalize our print edition rather than grudgingly having it happen because of a corporate dictate.

If we aren't ready to compete fully in this digital game, then to punt might be the way to go. I doubt, however, that we'll get very far by stabbing Google in the leg. ■

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Capital Crisis in the Profitable Newspaper Industry

Solving this 'will call upon levels of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship infrequently found in newspapers in recent years.'

By Robert G. Picard

The recent sale and breakup of Knight Ridder is symptomatic of the broader problems newspaper companies face due to their difficulties in creating value for readers and investors. These problems have resulted in a capital crisis in the industry because financing through the stock market, which is the primary

way in which the nation's leading and midsized newspapers get capital, is increasingly regarded as a less viable investment option by financial firms. This circumstance also has led to apprehension among journalists and industry observers, since managerial behaviors have changed in an attempt to satisfy investors.

This crisis arrives at a time when the newspaper industry is struggling, too, to respond to changes in technologies, society and in how consumers use media. Audiences are less willing to spend time and money on newspapers, and this induces advertisers to increase spending and to seek other market mechanisms in new media to

reach customers. The pace of change seems especially striking since the second half of the 20th century produced such dramatic advertising growth and an extraordinary era of journalistic and business success. But the conditions leading to that growth have all but vanished. In the past decade, news companies have slashed newsroom resources, made staff reductions, and cut back on the product they produce. Concurrently stress levels in newsrooms and boardrooms rose while morale sunk to its lowest point ever.

There is a widespread sense that investors, as well as some newspaper owners and managers, are giving up on the industry. Knight Ridder could have fought for its survival, but there apparently was little fight left in its board or top company executives. The board sold the firm and its 32 newspapers to McClatchy for 4.5 billion dollars

plus the assumption of two billion dollars in debt. McClatchy subsequently began selling off papers that were not in growth markets to private companies in the United States and Canada, including MediaNews Group, smaller newspaper groups such as Ogden Newspapers, Schurz Communications, and Black Press Ltd., and a private investor group formed specifically to acquire The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News. McClatchy accepted two billion dollars for 11 of the unwanted papers, covering 28 percent of its original purchase price and reducing the papers acquired by just one-third.

The secondary deals reduced the acquisition prices of the papers that McClatchy wanted, because the total asking price had undervalued the unwanted papers.

Why did McClatchy and others want to buy these papers when Knight Ridder no longer had the will to stay in

how can there be a crisis in an industry in which journalists and media critics consistently characterize it as pleasing investors by providing high returns, sometimes to the detriment of how those who work at the paper are able to do their jobs?

Lacking a Long-Term Vision

Although overall newspapers are highly profitable, publicly traded newspaper companies often show weakness in comparison with industries such as major drug manufacturers, telecommunications services, restaurants, resorts, department stores, property and casualty insurance firms, major aerospace and defense contractors, and hospitals. While newspapers tend to have better-than-average net profits and dividend yields and produce average returns on equity and average price/earnings ratios, they also tend to engage

in short-term planning rather than developing longer-term strategic visions and promoting company development. Investors pressure them for short-term returns more than they do other types of companies that are able to articulate a vision of a sustainable future.

In many instances, management, journalists and industry critics appear to have a skewed vision of what it is that investors expect. About 90 percent of shares in newspaper companies today are held by institutional investors—pension and investment funds, insurance companies, and financial institutions. Although those who are

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Newsboy holding newspapers, St. Louis, Missouri. He stands by the lightpost with the front page in his hand, scowling at passing pedestrians who aren't buying his paper. May 1910. Photo by Lewis W. Hine. National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.

the newspaper business? The primary reasons are these: The new owners believe in the papers' future; they determined the papers can be operated profitably without the management fees each paper previously paid to Knight Ridder, and they believe lower profit margins will still produce good returns on their investments.

Given this willingness to invest in newspapers, how can there be a capital crisis? And how can it exist in an industry that consistently produces above-average profits compared to other industries in which these same investors place their funds? Finally,

critics of public ownership often accuse these institutions of only being interested in short-term profits, the truth actually lies somewhere else. What these investors are looking for is a good return on their money; to get that they are willing to trade short-term profit for long-term growth and stability. But most publicly traded newspaper companies offer no credible plans (or a vision) for anything beyond the delivery of higher-than-average quarterly profits. With this mentality in place, investors pressure boards and managers for high returns so that they can recoup their investments in a shorter period of time.

Newspapers have tried to improve their market conditions in recent years by altering journalistic content and its presentation, by improving customer service, and slightly altering their business models. These actions have been quite limited and relatively weak efforts to woo readers, soothe investors, and give the impression of active managerial responses to the changing environment. Few real innovations to expand markets, reach new audiences, or provide new products related to company growth and sustainability have actually been made. In short, such surface change has done little to alter negative investor perceptions of the industry.

Concurrent with these limited innovative efforts has been a constant and deleterious chipping away of resources within newspapers. But such measures are only effective if they are accompanied by strategy-driven reorganization and reconfiguration that produces new value, improves the quality of products and services, creates something new, and attracts new customers. Such enterprise is what appeals to investors. Yet newspaper executives are rarely engaged in this developmental part of the change process; instead cost cutting is their standard annual activity. This, however, abets uninterested investors by draining resources from newspapers they believe have a limited (or no) future and leaves newspaper enterprises without sufficient resources to renew themselves. The prospect of demise, coupled with the lack of

strategic vision, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Creating Better Value

Investors' interest in newspapers is waning at a time when capital investment is very much needed as these companies transition themselves to compete in an era of new media. But many newspaper companies are confronting a crisis of value creation for investors because their ability to grow appears limited, consumption trends are poor, profits are expected to diminish in the future, and high levels of uncertainty surround these enterprises. For this situation to change, owners must demonstrate new value by demonstrating long-term stability while also creating new products and business models that emphasize their ability to establish connections (and interactivity) with readers using a range of different technologies.

Forward thinking requires newspaper companies to rethink their roles as creators and purveyors of information. Nowadays newspapers still try to provide something for everybody through a wide variety of features and sections; some of this is wanted by nearly everyone, but a lot is not wanted by many. Large amounts of material arrive on the pages from news services and syndicates but this same, or nearly identical material, is widely available in other places. Thus it is not surprising that the average reader doesn't bother with three-fourths of the newspaper content they've purchased; in time, consumers become unwilling to purchase them at all, especially when much of the content is available elsewhere for free and at a time when they want to read it.

To create lasting value, the business fundamentals of who they are, what they are, and how they serve readers and advertisers need to be examined by newspapers. What is offered in print must be unique and extremely relevant to the lives of readers. To do this might mean publishing not one but different types of newspapers for varied audiences in their markets. And because newspapers gain the atten-

tion of regular readers for only about three percent of their waking time, new delivery methods are necessary to entice customers at different parts of their day.

The challenge this presents to newspapers—and the level of capital investment that will be needed—will, of course, vary depending on whether the core market is national, regional or local. But if any of these newspapers are to survive, capital investment will be essential to their ability to function now and to innovate for future growth. To warrant investors' dollars, new revenue streams must be found; keeping revenues stable will not suffice. Achieving this, however, will call upon levels of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship infrequently found in newspapers in recent years. An alternative is to find investors who regard newspapers as socially responsible investments and thus might be willing to produce lower profits. Similarly, there is the possibility of seeking private ownership structures that are not dependent upon the stock market. Or another alternative is to remove investors interested only in short-term financial gain by creating or supporting nonprofit newspapers or foundation ownership.

Whatever solutions are pursued, the industry's capital crisis will need to be addressed. It is fundamental to the other issues newspapers—and journalism—confront today. If ignored, the situation will only worsen. Concerted action is needed now for newspapers to secure a sustainable future. ■

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Newspapers and Their Quest for the Holy Grail

Putting the Web first might be ‘the most difficult transformation in our mindset, but we should go ahead and flip our world on its head.’

By Michael Riley

Most leading-edge thinkers long ago accepted the digital revolution’s transforming reality and are now engaged in what amounts to the news industry’s Quest for the Holy Grail: the development of a business model that will pay for quality journalism in a digital world.

Like those brave knights of olden days, they are quickly learning that this Holy Grail is not easy to find. The search is not to determine whether online operations can drive new revenue and turn a profit; they’re doing that already, in a modest fashion. Instead, the quest is to find a robust business model that can support newsgathering enterprises during the bumpy transition from print to online and then whether that financial engine can fuel and sustain a complete digital transformation so that journalism exists at the other end.

Perhaps the best way to understand where newspapers are—and where they need to go—is to follow the money.

Ponder for a minute the predicament of a hypothetical daily newspaper, the Digiton Daily News, and consider a few back-of-the-envelope calculations. The Daily News has long been a profitable midsized regional newspaper, with daily circulation of about 150,000. Its annual revenues hover around \$100 million, with about five million dollars coming from its Web site. While circulation and print ad sales are slipping, online revenues continue to surge, increasing by some 40 percent over last year, a blistering pace of growth in an otherwise stagnating business.

But is that online growth alone enough to save the journalistic enterprise? Heck, right now that revenue doesn’t even cover the cost of the newsroom, which runs about \$12 million a year. So even if online revenues

continue to grow at the explosive rate of 40 percent each year—and that’s a daring leap of faith—it will be more than three years down the road before there’s enough revenue to cover only the cost of running the news operation. And that’s to say nothing of supporting any other departments, like advertising or circulation, or even about generating a profit margin (and most newspapers, as we know, have long been accustomed to margins approaching 30 percent).

Put another way, and assuming a continuing rosy (or even delusional) scenario of 40 percent annual growth, it would take the Daily News almost a decade to generate online the same amount of revenue it enjoys today. But by the time those 10 years pass, the world will have become so radically reshaped that today’s assumptions will no longer prevail. It would be foolish to bet all your chips on this scenario.

In short, it doesn’t look easy to get from here to there, at least not in a straight line. So how should newspaper companies think strategically about their survival, and what should they do to build a robust business model?

Some big players have recently joined the quest for the Holy Grail in a big way. The Los Angeles Times has dispatched a team of investigative reporters as part of its “Spring Street Project” to figure out its future. One former Knight Ridder executive has called for creation of a newspaper Switzerland, an ostensibly “neutral” group to organize the balkanized industry around an online future. A two million dollar industry white paper—called “Newspaper Next”—has put forth a blueprint of sorts. And most every other newspaper is desperately dashing forward in some fashion to figure out its future.

Principles for the Transition

No one has found the answer, and that’s because there is no single correct answer. There are, however, some overarching principles that will be important guides as we shape our future:

Adopt the new thinking: The old newspaper model is on life support, and we need to recognize and ride the meta-trends playing out in communication. Newspapers are no longer an all-powerful gatekeeper for news and information; anybody with a computer can be a publisher. News has become a multilayered conversation, not a monologue. Power resides in the individual, not a central authority, and newspapers ignore the power of the individual and the network at our peril.

Put the Web first: This might be the most difficult transformation in our mindset, but we should go ahead and flip our world on its head. Think of the Web first and print second. Imagine what might happen when we invert the traditional paradigm: It opens up a wide range of possibilities, many of which we cannot see from where we now look.

Embrace the smorgasbord: Print will remain vital during the transition, but it will need to change and adapt. Newspapers need to reenergize their print side by inventing an array of niche products to better target readers and serve advertisers. Smart ways must be found to keep the core newspaper strong.

Don’t be afraid to experiment; be courageous about change: Some new ideas will work and some won’t. That’s OK.

Try new ideas, like ancillary Web sites or niche publications. Evaluate their success. If they work, keep them going; if they don't, kill them and try something else.

Don't milk the cash cow dry: One predominant sentiment in the industry today is that newspapers, which are a mature business, are cash cows, and the best thing to do is to milk them for all the profits we can. But that shortsighted approach undercuts one of the best advantages newspapers have: to invest, and not simply milk, the profits by putting substantial portions of those margins into online. Just as newsrooms can become the content engine for the Web, newspaper profits, if properly marshaled, can fuel our online development, if we adopt a true investment mindset. What that means, however, is that we must intentionally embrace more reasonable profit margins and invest the difference in online ventures. That's a bold leap, but if we think of 20 percent margins as a ceiling, and not a floor, for instance, we can buy a lot of freedom to build a strong future.

Business Possibilities

If we adopt these guiding principles to focus our long-range strategy for creating a robust business model, then a slew of opportunities will arise to drive revenue, increase profits, and build a sustainable journalistic enterprise. Here are a few of these possibilities:

Create a stable of niche publications: Find targets of opportunity—working moms, local businesses, music aficionados, pets, resort communities, lawyers, doctors—and develop business plans to meet reader and advertiser needs. These are smaller but often lucrative ways to supplement the mass-market newspaper, though sometimes online efforts may make more sense than print.

Own local? Go global: Almost every region has something special that can play on a larger stage. In our region of Virginia, for example, bluegrass music is big, and we should expand on that

strength and create a Web site with tentacles reaching far beyond our circulation area. No, we haven't yet done that one, but every newspaper should identify similar opportunities and find a way to own them.

Develop a guerrilla video operation: Newspapers have long been hesitant to embrace video, but rising broadband penetration opens the door to developing some new and powerful storytelling with online video. And this offers a way ultimately to compete with local TV stations for viewers and advertising dollars. The trick is to start small, learn by doing, engage the newsroom, and then grow.

Think crazy: Not every idea will be related to traditional news and information; in fact, many of the best ones won't be. So look for significant audiences, and find a way to engage them online in ways that don't smack of a newspaper. Perhaps your news organization should pursue a social-networking and employment site for the large community of health-care workers in your region, or develop a pure music site for the region's bands and fans. Sure, it's not journalism with a capital "J," but it's a way to create places for audiences to gather and share information. That will meet audience needs and strengthen the business.

Own community information: The big, bad wolves that threaten newspapers are Google, Yahoo! and the next wave of online wannabees. They want to steal local audience, and they know that owning local information—from entertainment to employment to restaurants—is the way to do that. Take a crash course to gather up this information, pour it into a database, offer a dynamite search function, and become the best source of local information.

Experiment with different revenue models: Some newspapers, such as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, have been able to charge for content online, but most have not. There might be some opportunities to do that if you have a wildly popular sports columnist

or the like. And there are other ways to find revenue beyond run-of-site advertising and online classifieds ads, including e-commerce, generating specific leads for advertisers, tightly targeted ads, search and find results. A successful mix of revenue streams is mandatory.

Build and sell a good idea: Is there an online innovation you've created that can be sold as a one-off product to other operations? Perhaps it's some social-networking software, or an online video solution, or an interactive database. There are other newspapers hungry for smart solutions. You might be able to market and sell yours to them.

No doubt there are plenty of other good ideas, and these are meant only to stimulate some creative thinking. That raises a most important point. For so long, newspapers have imagined themselves as media enterprises, assembling news and information for the masses by reporting, editing, designing and publishing. But this new digital world requires us to imagine ourselves differently as we reinvent our future.

No longer are we purely media companies; we must become technology companies, too, and that means we must raise our technology IQ to compete in a digitally transformed world. A big part of our success will be tied into rethinking what type of people we hire. The premium, moving forward, will rest on attracting more innovators into our midst and finding ways to give them the freedom and the backing they need to experiment and help move us into a new realm in which we can preserve the journalism and make a robust business model work. ■

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Tired of Waiting to Move Ahead

With plenty of ideas about how to move journalism into its digital time, a journalist tries to push the industry past its natural inclination to ‘voice the “no ways.”’

By Geneva Overholser

I wonder if we could begin by just throwing a few notions onto the table. Not that we’d seek to *agree* on them. Just put them out there, take care of everyone’s itch to proclaim—and see if this could kind of ease our way into the heart of things.

Let’s say, for instance, that long-time journalists can be confoundingly oblivious to the vast opportunities of the digital world and insufferably sure that their way is the only way. Let’s say new-media hotshots tend to confuse hooting something down with analyzing it and are possessed of a regrettable infatuation with the charm of their insults. Let’s say it’s not our fault that citizens are entertaining themselves silly rather than feeding at the deep pool of substance. And also that the wisdom of the many is far greater than the wisdom of any single journalist or news organization. Let’s say that Wall Street ... well, enough. You get the drill. If we throw out a few of these gotta-get-it-said messages, can we then move on (as we so rarely seem to do) to the challenge: How do we guarantee to our democracy a continued supply of the information essential to it?

This “yes, but what can we do about it now?” approach can find useful application in many a different discussion. Take media ownership. If we can’t restore the business model that’s collapsing around us, we can figure out

what works about it and what doesn’t, what are the needs that exist and what are the various ways they might be met. There are lots of possible approaches. Those who wish to do what they can to strengthen the existing media model might push for different board structures, incentives for responsible investing, or punitive taxes on short-term stock trading. A coalition of veteran editors and publishers might want to put their experience at the service of struggling new media owners.

Others could ponder different ownership models. Many a nonprofit is doing fine work; consider the investigative reporting of the Center for Public Integrity (acknowledgment: I’m on the board). How could more such models be encouraged? Or what public policy changes could ease the way for media company owners to return from public to private ownership? Or, in rarer instances, such as that of The Anniston (Ala.) Star, what could happen to turn newspapers into nonprofit operations? And how can we better spread the word about the astonishingly rich and promising array of public interest work on the Web, so as to encourage more entrepreneurialism among “old-media” journalists?

Or consider the question of how to guide (and speed) journalism’s transition in these unsettled times. Some will want to pursue means of ensuring that

core principles—such as verification and on-the-ground reporting—are translated even more richly onto the Web.¹ Others will work on fusing the power of citizens’ knowledge with the principles and processes of journalism, as is being done by American Public Media with its Public Insight Journalism project.² Others will want to gather journalists (moving across the old/new-media border) to grapple with objectivity, verification, accountability, transparency, how to make journalism more professional and also more responsive—and how to protect freedom of information.

I have found, in trying to pierce the gloom and get word out about the many possibilities through my immodestly named “Manifesto for Change”³ that we are all too ready to spot and voice the “no ways.” No way can we talk about a role for government (um, how about those Sunshine Laws?). No way can we sit down with the publishers. No way, no way.

Yeah, yeah. We’ve heard it all. We’ll hear it again. Just lay it on out there—and then (please) let’s move on. ■

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¹ www.journalism.missouri.edu/news/2006/10-19-hurley-projects.html

² <http://americanpublicmedia.publicradio.org/publicinsightjournalism/>

³ www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/Overholser/20061011_JournStudy.pdf

Media Convergence: ‘Just Do It’

Changing people’s way of thinking is key to ‘the media revolution’ in northern Denmark.

By Ulrik Haagerup

No beer was served at the early morning orientation meeting in the Nordjyske newspaper newsroom in November 2002. As things turned out that day, the absence of beer was one of the smaller changes to emerge from this gathering of the 250 staff members at the newspaper. As I walked into the room as the new newsroom editor, the reporters knew something else was about to happen. And it did.

At our first gathering, I asked if we could set two goals to work on together: It should be fun to be a reporter at Nordjyske, and together we should do good journalism.

Arms crossed, the reporters nodded to me in silence. Through the years they had built a reputation of being the heaviest union-controlled newsroom in Denmark and the one with the most strikes in the history of the Danish press. But now circulation was dropping like a piano thrown from a penthouse, and distrust and endless meetings about rules, procedures and contracts dominated daily life in the newsroom. Most of the reporters did their job, but not much more than that.

“The problem is that everybody wants progress but nobody wants change,” I told them. “If we want to keep our jobs, we have to develop ourselves and the way we work with journalism. But the consequence of progress is change; we have to do something else than we are used to doing and that brings with it insecurity. We get through it together, if we dare.” I then told them that in 10 months our regional newspaper, now slipping into a deep crisis, would become the most ambitious media house in Europe. “It will be tough,” I reminded them, “but when we’ve made it, we’ll have a future

in which it will be fun going to work every morning and a newspaper in which we will make good stories.”

Overhead, as I spoke, was a headline from my PowerPoint. It read: “Just do it!” Borrowed from Nike, it spoke to our tradition of a people not prone to talking so much about things but really meaning what little we say.

We had a choice, I explained. Either we could do as every other media company was doing and stick with what we’ve always done. (And then, please, could the reporters by the window do the rest of us the favor of jumping out the window, so we didn’t have to fire anyone like they did in so many other newsrooms?) Or we could do something else.

We needed to stop talking about crises and insecurity and the need for someone to do something. We should do it. Change. Believe in the future. We should try something new by moving toward a totally media integrated newsroom. And learn while we do it. Having this destination would put us on a path with neither tracks nor pavement since nowhere else were journalists working in the same newsroom for several media at the same time. Yet the future I told them about—the one that would happen within 10 months—would find them working at new desks, with new colleagues and perhaps new editors, meeting new deadlines, using new tools, working new hours, and doing all of this with new media.

Leaving the meeting, an experienced reporter lowered his voice and told his colleague, “That guy might become a stress factor”

Launching the Plan

During the preceding weeks, a group of editors and brave reporters had

worked on a plan for how Nordjyske could avoid the fate of other Danish newspapers, where layoffs, depression and budget cuts were part of the daily routine. With this plan in mind, my job as newsroom leader was to explain two critical things to the staff as a way of getting them to buy into the need for change:

1. What is the situation now? (Why is the toilet on fire, as we say in Danish, because if you don’t feel the heat, why move?)
2. What is the goal? And why will our situation be better than it is today? When people don’t share the vision of a better tomorrow, why change?

As the reporters and editors took seats in our big conference room they could hear the words of Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop” playing from big loudspeakers:

“Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow
Don’t stop it’ll soon be here
It’ll be better than before
Yesterday’s gone, yesterday’s gone”

From a big screen at one end of the room an insistent signal from an SMS-message took over, and a mobile phone in oversize showed the text: “Media revolution broken out in Northern Jutland. Hear more on your radio.” Then the morning host at the local radio station “ANR Hit FM” faded the music and, in a voice only excited radio hosts use, announced:

“We interrupt with breaking news. Media revolution has broken out in Northern Jutland. Media melt together, and journalists, who previously only

have worked for one medium, are now getting the opportunity to tell their stories on radio, on TV, on the Web, on mobile phones, and in both free papers and the traditional morning newspaper. It is the first time a media house goes all the way in the so-called media convergence. The goal is to do better stories for readers, listeners and viewers. See more on your TV. And the weather forecast for Northern Jutland is windy with the possibility of later clear sky and a lot more sun. My name is Katrine Schousboe.”

Then the news anchor from a TV station from a small, daughter-company in our city, that for years had produced a not very popular newscast, could be heard. Dressed in jacket and a tie, this anchor introduced a story about this impending media revolution using television at its best: It showed faces

and feelings in pictures from a small local bureau in which reporters and photographers had experienced media integration for about a year. “In the beginning it was hard and confusing, but later it was actually quite fun,” the news anchor said.

He then introduced other taped interviews with some of the journalists who were now sitting in the conference room. Some said they were worried about this new direction. Others indicated that they would never work in television and had difficulty understanding what all of this talk of change was about. And some reporters from the working group explained why they believed that, in time, it could be great fun working in a media integrated newsroom:

“The goal is to do better stories. Making sharper priorities and using

different media platforms to tell that part of the story at which that medium is best. And by sitting closely together in a newsroom without walls with colleagues with the same beats and interests, we can share ideas, sources, research and thereby produce more and improve the total quality of our work.”

The TV-anchor ended his portion of the show with these words:

“This morning the staff at Nordjyske meets to be informed about the plans. And right now a special edition of the newspaper is being distributed to the reporters. There they can read more about the plan and get perspectives and background material on media integration and the ambitious project that will change the media picture in Denmark.”

NEWSPAPER GALLERY

Marguerite Higgins adjusts her helmet sitting in front of her typewriter. She covered the fall of Adolf Hitler’s war machine as a 23 year old and six years later won a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in Korea. July 1950. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*



Fpc. Clarence Whitmore, voice radio operator, 24th Infantry Regiment, reads the latest news in *The Stars and Stripes* newspaper while eating during a lull in battle near Sangju, Korea. August 1950. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*



The lights went up, and the working group distributed the tabloid, “Nordjyske Media,” while Fleetwood Mac’s refrain, “Yesterday’s gone,” filled the air again.

Under the headline “No more excuses—here we go” the front page story appeared below a picture of Nordjyske with threatening darks cloud hanging over it. The story read in part:

“This is a bid on a future which does not come by itself. But it is a bid that will make it more fun to go to work. It is a bid that will create useful media. Stories that talk to both brain and heart. People in center. Respect for our customers. And—this is not the project of Ulrik Haagerup. Not alone at least. We have done our best. Because the salary has to come from somewhere. But mostly because we believe in the future. Hell, yes!”

The paper explained the plan in 16 pages—clearly showing that the printed paper was not dead but very useful if we use it to do what it is best at: overview, reflection and stopping time.

“Any questions?” I asked.

There weren’t any.

The meeting was finished in 22 minutes, making it the shortest informational meeting in the history of Nordjyske. Our future had begun, as different lyrics of Fleetwood Mac escorted the quite silent reporters back to work:

“If you wake up and don’t want to smile

If it takes more than a little while

Open your eyes and look at the day.

You’ll see things in a different way.

Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow
....”

Making It Work

So how did our plan work out? In short: It works.

Ten months later nearly the entire staff had changed jobs, offices, deadlines, editors, tools and colleagues.

As we launched a new, more focused newspaper and added a free commuter paper aimed at younger readers in the big cities, in our community we introduced a regional version of CNN “Headline News.” These instant updates as part of local TV-news became an instant success. Within six months from our launch, we had more paid subscribers to 24Nordjyske, our cable TV station that broadcasts regional news 24 hours a day, than we had on our newspaper, which dates back to 1767.

Reporters at Nordjyske ... now believe us when we told them that the media integration effort is a journalistic project—not a cost-cutting initiative.

Our 250 reporters—no, we didn’t fire anyone—are no longer organized into groups with the task to fill certain pages or sections in a newspaper. They work together in a matrix organization, all under the same editor in chief, and each with the same basic task of telling good stories to people in Northern Jutland using the media best suited to the telling.

We made it voluntary for newspaper reporters to work for radio or TV, or vice versa. We had to since their union contract did not specify anything about working for any other media than the one for which they were employed. In the beginning, nobody dared doing anything new. But when we stopped focusing on results and instead applauded the courage of the few reporters willing to try something new, suddenly more and more got the guts to take a chance at failure. Many realized it is not that difficult to do TV, nor is it that difficult for a radio reporter to write for the paper. And the work with the Web, many found easy. Of course they all learned, in time, that to become skilled and good at this would require training, and we had such an ongoing program in place.

Now, in 2006, reporters at Nordjyske don’t feel as though they work for any one medium. What they do know is that they work for people in Northern Jutland, and by using all of the various media platforms their stories can reach 97 percent of people in our area of half a million inhabitants. And they now believe us when we told them that the media integration effort is a journalistic project—not a cost-cutting initiative. In fact, this was and is a survival strategy, while also providing a more satisfying and fun life for reporters.

When a bridge collapsed over a freeway in May 2006, our print competitor published the news the next morning with the headline “One died, when bridged collapsed.” The problem was that the accident happened more than 20 hours earlier, and the “news” was no longer news. When such an event is this important to so many people in the area, it makes sense to use the fastest media first to deliver word of it: We were able to send out an alert on mobile phones only minutes after the accident to warn drivers. Then we stopped playing music on our local radio station to tell listeners to get off the road. The story then appeared on our Web site, and live broadcasting began from the scene on 24Nordjyske.

What the newspaper brought readers the next morning was what print media does best—an overview of what had happened; perspective on the accident, and answers to the questions “Why?” and “What now?”

Our reporters also know by now that media convergence is not about them doing every story for every media every time. When would they have time to do research and reporting on stories if they spent all of their time repeating the same story in all these different media? At its best, journalism ought to be about telling important, relevant and original stories to people when they want them in the form they want them. In any given week every reporter at Nordjyske does stories for two, three or four different media.

And what these reporters are doing

has brought them fame. Each week visitors from media companies from throughout the world come by to talk with them about their work in what the World Association of Newspapers now refers to as the most integrated media house in the world. In two years we've had so many visitors come through our newsroom that this summer we launched the first news helicopter in Denmark—paid for by the fees we have charged to tell people in the news media about the change process.

What we tell them is that the most important thing about media convergence is not expensive technology, yearlong training, or the right organizational chart—though all of that sure helps. The crucial obstacle is the mental one we impose on ourselves in sticking with the belief that our job is to print ink on paper and deliver it by the help of small boys in shorts before 7 a.m.. This change can be a hard one for journalists to make; it means realizing our task is to serve people in our community by telling them useful and entertaining stories through whatever technology they want to use.

The good old days are gone. Back then the business model was that we gave them what we wanted them to have, when we wanted them to have it, and how we wanted to give it to them. On top of that, we asked them to pay one year in advance before we made money on them, once more, by selling access to them to advertisers. Those were the days!

Now people have alternatives to the daily newspaper, which they turn to at such a rapid pace that we have difficulty keeping up. And this is creating the most dramatic paradigm shift that we've seen in centuries.

We tell visitors, too, that successful media convergence demands that one remember what Charles Darwin said. He did not say that the strongest survive, which so many journalists and newspaper editors wrongly attribute to him. Darwin explained that the species that are the best at adapting to change will survive. It won't necessarily be the biggest news organization (remember the dinosaurs), nor the newspaper that now has the highest circulation or has the editors and reporters earning

the highest salary. It will be the news entity that learns how to adapt fast to the changing media habits of those it serves, and newspapers have been notoriously slow in doing this.

A fellow newspaper editor gave a speech recently at an international conference. He started out by saying that his time was now so full of consultants that he had learned that he is not allowed to use the word "problems" anymore. They are now supposed to be called "options." So he ended his remarks by saying, "So let me conclude that we newspaper people are up to our neck in options."

He was more right than we like to realize. That is why the push from being a remote regional Danish newspaper in crisis to be named the leading media house in the world is a good story in an industry in which the tales of success are so few. But as they say in Northern Jutland: Stop just talking about it. Just do it! ■

Ulrik Haagerup is editor in chief of Nordjyske Media in Aalborg, Denmark.

Navigating the Road to Convergence

'Being small *and* a family-owned company are attributes that have helped us to become a multimedia news organization.'

By Ralph Gage

On the 100th anniversary of his newspaper, publisher Dolph C. Simons, Jr. shared his philosophy and perspective with those who'd assembled to acknowledge the Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World's milestone and to recognize the 200th birthday of the Bill of Rights. "We believe it is important to look upon our business as an information business, not merely a newspaper or cable television operation," he said. "We want to stay abreast of new developments and be able to deliver news and advertising, as well as other information, however a reader or advertiser might desire."

He spoke those words on December 12, 1991. Even those enmeshed in this process of change could not have imagined then how the Internet would become our catalyst to make colleagues out of competitors and precipitate physical and philosophical shifts in our newsgathering operations that continue apace today.

Being small *and* a family-owned company are attributes that have helped us to become a multimedia news organization. The daily Journal-World has about 20,000 subscribers, but our weekly newspapers—with our newer ones distributed free—reach an-

other 42,000 households. We operate a phone company through our cable infrastructure. It serves 12,500 lines and, with our cable TV programming, we reach more than 32,000 households. And in 2005, we acquired an ABC network affiliate television station in nearby Topeka. We're also an Internet Service Provider with 20,400 customers. Our Web sites extend widely the impact of what our print and TV reporters produce and also the reach of our advertisers.

We're news people, and this means to us that we are the storytellers for the communities we serve. Our founders

were journalists, and two members of our owners' family have served on the Associated Press board; all have been active in various trade organizations. Our organizing principle is that content brings readers and viewers to us and, in turn, those readers and viewers bring us advertising. It's an old business model to which we are bringing the advances our ever-changing technology allows. We are not afraid to take risks; if we're doing our job well, we know we are bound occasionally to upset some readers, viewers and advertisers. People don't need to like us, but we do want to earn their respect. We do this by focusing on quality, with the belief that if we take care of our customers and our community, they will take care of us.

When our publisher considered starting our cable TV operation, an industry leader advised against it; he'd scouted the city and observed the numerous television signals available off-air. Simons proceeded and later said of his decision, "I would rather have tried it and failed than to have seen someone else try it and succeed." This competitive, risk-taking spirit now propels us into the era of media convergence.

Bringing Parts Together

With our guiding principles as a foundation, in 2000 we decided to combine our newspaper and cable television news operations, putting print and broadcast reporters side-by-side in a newsroom, along with a small but growing staff in our Internet operation. To do this, we gathered as much information as we could about newsroom convergence by talking with people at the Chicago Tribune and working with Jimmy Gentry, who was then dean of the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. We traveled to Tampa, Florida to see its combined newspaper and television operation, and our architects and newsroom managers came along when we went to the Orlando Sentinel.

Once the lessons were absorbed, we bought an old Lawrence building, which is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and remodeled it as our News Center. It became the hub of our multimedia newsgathering operations and the place from which storytelling for our community emerges.

There was hesitancy and uncertainty in the minds of our news staff as we set out to make these changes. For years these reporters and editors had operated in competition, yet now they were being asked to meld into one multimedia organization. The mortar that would hold them together was prepared in a series of small group "convergence sessions" in which the company's owners and top managers shared with employees the history of the company and stressed the necessity and opportunity for the company to serve the community better by competing with the media from nearby metropolitan areas instead of among themselves. They also offered assurances that the proposed changes had their enthusiastic endorsement.

Groups of newsroom staff members—selected by me in consultation with managers—were launched into a week of exercises designed to help them to analyze how job duties could be shared. Multimedia assignments were created to help acquaint them with one another and with each other's responsibilities and prepare them for the time when they'd be working together. They were helped in overcoming their concerns and fears by the values they shared, such as honesty, accuracy and fairness, and by their day-to-day operations of planning stories and meeting deadlines.

Included, too, in these small groups were production staff, employees from the business office, circulation and advertising. Almost all of the departments of the broadband company and newspaper—managers and hourly employees alike—were represented in the training effort so that everyone would have some exposure to the change in operating philosophy. The intermingling of employees also gave staff members the opportunity to gain an appreciation of the company's various

components, but the primary intent of these training sessions was to focus on how the news staffs would operate in the converged company.

The training process stretched over a year because we did not want this transition to strain the news departments, which were short-handed when colleagues were excused for the convergence training. As each group went through the training, members provided ideas that were then incorporated into it, as well as leadership for the next group; this slower paced, learn-as-you-grow strategy provided additional opportunities for larger numbers of "competitors" to blend more easily into a single organization. At this time, too, print, TV and Internet news managers were working together to plan the layout of the News Center that would combine what had been separate facilities into a converged newsroom. Technology issues—our TV staff

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Linotype operators compose stories for The Evening Star of Washington, D.C. Photo The Evening Star. National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.

used PCs while our print and online people used Macs—were addressed with the creation of an Internet-based assignment system that enabled everyone essentially to be on the same platform.

In August 2001, news staff from television, newspaper and online physically moved into the News Center and began to deal with challenges that arose.

The Multimedia Effort

Now the job of the newsroom leaders changed from designing the workspace to dealing with the staff issues that surfaced within it. When newspaper staff were uncomfortable with appearing on television, they were not forced to do so, and TV staffers who didn't feel comfortable writing for the paper weren't forced to do that. Workloads were stabilized to assure that multimedia responsibilities would not overwhelm any individual staff member, yet everyone was encouraged to look for ways to contribute that took advantage of the converged newsroom. When reporters found documents to support their reporting, they would be scanned and used on the Web site. If a tape recording was made of an interview, key quotes would be extracted and used to enhance the Web site display of that story. As time went on, peer-to-peer training helped integrate more of reporters' work into multimedia presentations.

Soon the work of our reporters and editors was being featured in textbooks, and they were being invited to share their experiences at major industry seminars and conferences. Faculty from the University of Iowa and Kansas State University came by to study what we were doing, and the Associated Press Managing Editors sponsored credibility studies examining facets of our operations. Recognition of this kind offered a real boost to our small media company and reassured our newsroom staff of the value of their innovative work. Internally, the company recognized its top performers with a special round of pay increases.

During the past five years, news-

room leadership skills have evolved as the expectations of reporters' and editors' multimedia engagement have increased. Participation in these new approaches to storytelling is part of each of our employee's annual review process. Three phases of leadership emerged as a part of our convergence efforts:

1. The first phase laid the groundwork. A more collegial style encouraged rather than demanded participation. It facilitated efforts and was more project centered. Success was more likely than failure because the nature of the efforts allowed more time, involved more planning, and in many respects enabled staffers to self-select for involvement.
2. The second phase involved less hands-on management. It became what we termed "organic" convergence. Fewer projects were planned; more sprang from breaking news and the daily routine of more comfortably and confidently dealing with the multimedia tools and jobs.
3. The recently instituted third phase puts in place a manager with clearly defined authority. A managing editor for convergence can now make news decisions across all media. He doesn't need to encourage; he can command. This ensures that we do not miss opportunities that "organic" convergence might have overlooked or passed by. The authority and responsibility vested in this new leadership position demand a vision that transcends any one medium and a vision to maintain the company's role as the community's historian, storyteller and whistleblower. It definitely requires the gift of encouragement.

Training for employees is being reinstated at a time when news staff know that the expectations for their involvement in multimedia storytelling are increasing. We are instituting more frequent online chats with print reporters and pushing responsibility onto newspaper section editors and others, not simply leaving it to our online personnel. We also want pho-

tographers, no matter which is his or her primary medium, to be able to produce images for all media. In other words, it has become time to step up the pace. And we are paying particular attention to evaluating which medium works best with what kind of stories, or part of a story, and then having our coverage reflect those findings.

One recent example of news presentation involved this summer's release of local census data. The Journal-World reporters did an in-depth look at the numbers in the course of examining local government policies likely to be impacted by the surprising decline in the city's population. Our TV reporters used this news as a peg to tell the story of a family who moved from Lawrence to a small town nearby; their circumstance and concerns illustrated some of the factors influencing the census numbers. On our Web site we created an interactive database to help readers and viewers navigate through graphs of these trends; we also gave online visitors an opportunity to post their comments and offer feedback and tips to the news staff.

Growth Comes With Lessons

Convergence is neither easy nor simple, and the commitment to it must be renewed daily. In the transition to convergence, we've lost no staff member, but as we seek applicants for jobs in our multimedia newsroom we emphasize an expectation that employees bring a multimedia background. We seek versatility in our new employees and also look for an eagerness on their part to join with long-time staffers who have achieved status in their professional lives because they were "early adopters" of our convergence efforts. Today, in our News Center, print reporters also report and present stories on television and TV reporters and anchors produce stories for the newspaper. Their early embrace of multimedia storytelling has made them leaders within our newsroom; among them is Joel Mathis, who is now our managing editor for convergence. These multimedia staffers are paid better than one-dimensional peers at other

news operations our size, too.

Our print circulation climbed steadily as we ventured into convergence. In measuring our cable television viewership we found that our local news programs beat the networks. We are in 80 percent of the households in our core market, which has a low satellite dish penetration compared to other markets. Our company also has the highest penetration of cable broadband Internet customers in the nation. Our main Web sites record about 30 million page-views each month; Internet traffic has increased beyond our expectations, and this means we've virtually sold out of advertising "space" on our Web sites. Our experience with newsroom convergence also moved us into other "converged" efforts involving advertising, the business office, and human resources.

Convergence is expensive. As a private company, our financial circumstances are not revealed to the public, but we have invested significantly, especially for a company of our size. In 2005 our online revenues were just under one million dollars—profitable for the first time. The early years are ones we consider a long-term business investment. We expect profitability going forward and intend to capitalize on the abilities of the Internet to deliver customers for our advertisers.

What's next? More convergence, of course. Although we already produce podcasts and vodcasts and SMS-messages, they seem destined to become more prominent parts of the communications streams. We're reexamining our entire organization to look for other opportunities to use resources of our combined news staffs in a more integrated, efficient fashion. Such opportunities include creating new Web sites with the potential to capture national audiences. Achieving this goal will put a premium on the ability of our journalists to excel in the use of our multimedia platforms. We will likely also need to find or develop specialists—staff members who gather content for multiple media outlets but who do not themselves present it. One reporter, for example, might cover routine police, fire and city or county

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



A newsstand in New York City. January 1903. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

offices, preparing agate lists for use in the newspaper, and the information can also be used on television and podcasts.

It is possible we will rely more on contracted employees than we do today. Instead of continuing to add staff, we might seek out talented individuals for specific assignments to supplement the work of our full-time employees. Citizen journalism will play a significant role, too. In October, with the University of Kansas School of Journalism and Mass Communications, we conducted a citizen journalism academy, offering a level of practical training for some people, and for others a look at the ethical and other considerations that guide our work. The courses also served to demystify the process of gathering information and editing it for presentation to the community.

Even given an expanded region for our efforts, our focus remains intensely local, which is what our surveys tell us our readers and viewers want. With new content-management system software

we're developing, information will be brought more directly to the neighborhood level, and our customers will be involved in dialogues with us and their neighbors through online comments, blogs, forums and file-sharing opportunities.

Doubtless the road ahead will have unexpected twists and turns; we intend to drive it, as we always have, with our brights turned on. Only now we will be delivering information in many different ways and letting consumers decide on the delivery method they prefer at the time they want to access our product. No longer is this a one-way street: While they are choosing how to absorb what we can offer, we'll be listening carefully to them and to our newsroom staff to figure out new and better ways of interacting with one another. ■

Ralph Gage is chief operating officer for The World Company and a journalism graduate of the University of Kansas.

Meshing Purpose With Product

Heeding the warning against forcing ‘existing quality standards into new technology,’ a journalist is cautiously optimistic about the digital future.

Apopular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.
—James Madison, letter to William T. Barry, August 4, 1822.

By Philip Meyer

It is still possible to save journalism, but maybe not journalism as we know it. James Madison’s postpresidential remark is often cited in support of First Amendment issues. I have cited it myself to make a case for trying to save newspapers. But the context of the ex-president’s observation included neither journalism nor newspapers. The purpose of his letter was to encourage Kentucky’s development of a public education system and suggest that it model Virginia’s with its egalitarian provisions for educating the poor as well as the rich.

“Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people,” Madison wrote. “They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty.”

Saving journalism might be easier if we would zoom back and think broadly about ways to use the same technology that is disrupting the newspaper business to “throw that light over the public mind.” Getting newspapers to perform the task is not yet a lost cause. But we shouldn’t wait. Since the readership decline was first documented by Leo Bogart and other newspaper researchers in the 1960’s, newspapers have hired experts to tell them how to reverse the decline. All failed.

Part of the problem was that the industry was less interested in radical ideas than in cheap ways to tweak content to draw more readers. As it turned out, there weren’t any, at least none with sufficient power to turn back the tide of change.

A potentially strong exception to this pattern surfaced in September when the American Press Institute (API) released the results of a project led by Harvard Business School professor and new technologies marketing guru Clayton M. Christensen. This effort was oriented to the business side, but that’s okay. The first duty of a publisher, as my former Washington bureau chief, Edwin A. Lahey, likes to remind reporters, is to stay solvent.

Christensen has built on a tradition started at Harvard by the late Theodore Levitt, who urged businesses to look for customer needs and work backward from there to develop their products. Nearly three decades ago, I quoted a much-used Levitt aphorism (without knowing its source) to my colleagues at Knight Ridder’s Viewtron team when we were trying to invent an electronic home information system. “People don’t buy quarter-inch drills,” I said. “They buy quarter-inch holes.”

The Christensen metaphor, described in his and Michael E. Raynor’s 2003 book, “The Innovator’s Solution: Creating and Sustaining Successful Growth,” is broader: People don’t buy products as much as they hire them to get specific jobs done. I could have used that notion in my Viewtron days. I remember Al Gillen, the head of the Knight Ridder subsidiary charged with creating Viewtron, responding: “I don’t buy quarter-inch holes. I borrow my neighbor’s quarter-inch holes.” Christensen’s formulation would have covered that. Whether people buy a

drill or borrow their neighbor’s, they’re hiring it to get a job done.

The API project, called Newspaper Next,¹ instead of providing a list of potential new products for newspapers, creates a process for enabling them to innovate. That avoids the very familiar “not invented here” syndrome so common with newspapers. To prove that it works, Christensen’s team walked seven news organizations through pilot projects, and they came up with a provocative list of jobs that customers require. A few examples are listed here:

- Help me find local services (Suburban Newspapers of America)
- Help me plan my kids’ activities (The Dallas Morning News)
- Help me reach a targeted, upscale audience in a specific community (Richmond Times-Dispatch).

It is not a bad thing that this kind of thinking leads mostly to niche publications, either print or online. If there is a common thread running through technological change since the end of World War II—including FM radio, cheaper high-quality printing, computer-assisted target marketing, and the Internet—it is that specialized media do better than mass media. Newspaper Next helps news people to see this and to figure out a way to adapt.

But how do these specialized activities correspond to the journalism we, as a people, depend on? What about James Madison’s concern?

In my humble opinion, the basic job that newspapers traditionally do (remember, this is from the customer’s point of view) is to help me structure my time. A newspaper can do this because it is simultaneously informative and entertaining. It has to be entertaining

¹ www.innosight.com/newspaper_next.htm

to compete with all of the other ways technology has given us for structuring time.

An example from Newspaper Next illustrates the point. The free newspapers distributed at public transportation centers in some cities are not of particularly high quality. But they do compete with other ways of structuring time; if the only competition is boredom or looking out the window, the newspaper is an attractive option.

As journalists, we'd prefer the public to say, "Help me understand the workings of our government so that I can hold it accountable." It is pretty clear how much the public wants that job done when a crisis arises, and the clever circulation manager knows that's the time to order an extra large press run. But it's not a day-in, day-out job to be done. The daily job is more like what academics call "the surveillance function," giving broad but shallow information so that a citizen will at least be alerted when something important happens. Thus alerted, readers can seek out more specialized media for the desired depth.

When new functions arise, the entity doing them does not need to be of particularly high quality because, if the job is not being done, the only competition is nonconsumption. The transit rider's choice is reading the paper or riding while bored. This way of thinking is the source of Christensen's advice to be satisfied with "good enough" at the start of new product development. Products using new technology can start out with lower quality than established ones because they are cheaper or more easily available, and they capture a previously nonconsuming share of the market. Then, as products improve, they can move up-market. Sony's transistor radios, cheap, tinny and appealing mainly to teenagers when they were introduced in the 1950's, are one example offered in "The Innovator's Solution."

Journalism's equivalent to those radios might be the citizen-journalism Web sites where the audience supplies the content. When I discovered MyMissourian.com, an online news product of the University of Missouri's School of

Journalism, I touted it to some fellow educators. They were appalled. "Poor quality," they said. "That has nothing to do with journalism."

But citizen journalism has the capacity to get better, just as Sony gradually built from its teenage base toward

Products using new technology can start out with lower quality than established ones because they are cheaper or more easily available, and they capture a previously nonconsuming share of the market.

the high end of the audio market. Jay Rosen, a journalism professor at New York University and author of PressThink, a Weblog about journalism, has created NewAssignment.net to add editing and verification to citizen efforts and move them up the scale. This seems a logical place at which to begin. After all, Christensen and his coauthors warn against "cramming" existing quality standards into new technology, citing Kodak's decision to enter the digital camera market with a \$30,000 product to make images competitive with film. When digital photography finally took off, it started at the low, point-and-shoot end.

There is, of course, a brilliant counter-example to this principle. Charles Lewis started at the top after he walked away from his job as a "60 Minutes" producer at CBS and began a nonprofit group to perform investigative reporting at a higher quality level than CBS would permit. That might not be a fair comparison because his Center for Public Integrity is nonprofit, an entirely different ball game. And its consumers are elites, not the average citizen looking for a job to get done. But the case still holds promise for Madison's

vision since "popular information," of which he spoke, never was distributed uniformly across the population, not even in the glory days of mass media.

Paul Lazarsfeld, the Viennese-born mathematician who helped create modern sociology, found this out when he and his colleagues studied the 1940 presidential election in Erie County, Ohio. Direct effects of mass media, they discovered, were less important than personal contacts. Media were still powerful, but the flow went "to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population," he and his colleagues observed in their 1944 book, "The People's Choice."

This effect is now institutionalized in the political communication literature as the "two-step flow," from mass media to the elites and then to the public. What the new media forms now give us is a three-step, or even a multistep, flow. An idea or news report gets launched by a blogger, a citizen journalism site, or a nonprofit investigative site, and then it diffuses.

The model is robust. Diffusion steps can go through whatever is left of the mass media or they can link and network their way from citizen to citizen by what some call a "viral" transmission consisting of e-mail forwarding across all sorts of super-specialized media, some of which, by virtue of their performance, will have captured the public's trust.

Whether newspapers survive or not, the hope is that this process will eventually lead to the citizens whose job it is "to arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

I choose to believe that James Madison would have approved. ■

Philip Meyer, a 1967 Nieman Fellow, is Knight Chair in and professor of journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His book, "The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age," was published by the University of Missouri Press in 2004. This article is based on remarks given in November for the Dutch-Flemish Organization for Investigative Journalists in Mechelen, Belgium.

Community Building on the Web: Implications for Journalism

The founder of craigslist speaks about online lessons he shares with new media journalists.

By Craig Newmark

In creating craigslist—an online community of shared information, services, activities and ideas that has more than five billion page views each month—and doing customer service, my colleagues and I developed a reasonable sense of what the deal is with how people want to use the Web. After being invited by journalists into discussions about new media, I've come away with a few clues about how what I deal with online might help them as the news industry undergoes massive change in the digital era. And now I offer my outsider's take on how my experience might have some meaning to those engaged in journalism.

Craigslist is a place where people can give each other a break regarding everyday needs, such as finding a place to live or getting a job. From one perspective, it's basically a classified ad site. Penelope Green, writing in *The New York Times*, referred to it

as resembling “a marketplace on the ancient model—chaotic, unruly, and vividly human.”

Somehow, the craigslist community—its users and company—has

then we give those who come into our community real power to self-police. We do light management but, mostly, we stay out of the way and let people set the tone of the site. Somehow this approach works.

Reinforced for us is the sense that folks on the Internet are overwhelmingly trustworthy. But as in daily life, bad guys exist, and a few of them surface occasionally in our online neighborhood. We've found them to be a tiny but loud minority, an experience echoed by every successful Web site I've heard about. There are “spamvertisers” and scammers, and dealing with them involves a balance between passionate desire to pursue these bad guys and an interest in preserving the rights

of the accused. On occasion these Internet bad guys push us to provide the cops with a quick lesson in Internet forensics, privacy principles, and

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Sailors eagerly read an American newspaper during World War II. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

constructed a culture of trust. Basically people feel they should treat others as they want to be treated. Where we start from on craigslist is in trusting people;

law. (Sometimes this involves asking for help from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which does a lot of heavy lifting.)

Disinformation on the Web

Beginning early in 2004, we noticed a surge of Web-based efforts in our online forums to smear political candidates, such as John McCain. What was most disturbing is that the folks doing this would spamvertise political talking points, even ones known to be fraudulent. Those who posted these notices would occasionally pretend to be different people—and post the erroneous information again. (One man posted at times as a woman.) In this way, this decentralized network of posters would keep information in circulation, and then they would virulently discuss possible fetishes of candidates in terms that were unusual even for those of us in San Francisco.

Witnessing this online behavior, I started to think a lot about disinformation campaigns not only happening on craigslist but throughout the Web. Other Web sites—Wikipedia is a well-known example—have suffered from this problem. Of course, whispered rumors and smear campaigns in politics aren't new; they've been used since elections in ancient Greece. In late September, the policy director in the congressional office of Representative Charles Bass resigned after it was disclosed that he posed as a supporter of his boss's opponent in blog messages; the intent of what he posted was to convince people that the race was not competitive. (Bloggers traced his postings to his system.)

Nor is this phenomenon solely political. People try to use sites like ours to attack commercial competitors, often by spreading rumors; and posters recommend their own services while not forthrightly identifying themselves.

What's troubled me is that disinformation campaigns and information warfare appear to be amplified by the Internet. When the scent of bad information can taint a relationship built

on trust, this poses problems for the Web. This is especially problematic for news providers and news consumers since damage done to trust can be very costly on many levels.

After being invited to join some conversations involving journalists who were thinking about "new media," I started thinking a lot more about the role journalists play in a vigorous democracy and about the Internet as a distribution medium. (An early reaction I had is that at least on the business side of journalism people seemed to be exaggerating the effect craigslist was having on newspaper revenue.) But for me, sitting at a table surrounded by journalists offered an opportunity to absorb what it is reporters and editors do and why what they do matters to someone like me. What they wanted me to think about with them was how to do this in a new media that they figured I understood.

What my experiences added up to was one major piece of advice: The central requirement for news organizations has to be trust. Which version of a story can be trusted? As a consumer of news, this core issue of how to establish—and maintain—trust can be frustrating. For example, when I watch interviews and can tell when a reporter knows someone is lying, I wonder why they don't challenge the veracity of what's been said. This happens in what I consider to be clear-cut cases in which I, the viewer, know the reporter knows that he is being lied to. The only news source that shares with viewers the video that shows this is "The Daily Show." Often Jon Stewart will show a person saying one thing, then contradicting what he just said; similar clips are rarely, if ever, shown on broadcast news. Some reporters have told me of times when they knew someone was lying, but they couldn't report this.

Learning From Journalists

Meeting with journalists—including leaders in new media such as Jeff Jarvis, Dan Gillmor, and Jay Rosen—I've

had what amounts to a tutorial about journalism. In his essay entitled "The End of Objectivity," Gillmor describes reasons why reporters set out to tell both sides of a story, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that one side is likely to be wrong. His conclusion: fairness, rather than objectivity, ought to be the goal, and I agree. In listening to them talk about how journalism works, their words reinforced in me a lesson from when I read "The Boys on the Bus," a book about coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign, when I realized that "news" is determined by group thinking among editors who decide what news is and dismiss what's considered by them to be crazy thinking.

While mainstream journalism has its faults, today's excitement about the potential of "citizen journalism" fails, too often, to take into account the ethics, standards and skills of journalism—reporting, writing, editing, fact checking, and publication—practiced usually in this order. In most of the citizen journalism I've observed, fact checking and editing happens after publication, if at all. However, a strength of good citizen journalism is when the correspondent has the courage to speak truthfully even in the face of powerful opposition. In some respects, these 21st century Web correspondents (like some of the best journalists) are following in the footsteps of Martin Luther, John Locke, and Thomas Paine, whose words led to large scale, effective change.

From where I sit, the highest priority right now seems to be finding ways to encourage the convergence of what's now being done by journalists with what can be done when citizens add their voices to the mix. And this includes journalism's essential role of being a watchdog on government and other important social and economic institutions. In that regard, some interesting things are happening on the Web. For example, the Sunlight Foundation is behind Congresspedia,¹ which is like Wikipedia for Congress, an idea also being pushed by the Center for Media and Democracy, best known

¹ Congresspedia: www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Congresspedia

for exposing fake news in the form of video news reports.

Its Web site is overseen by an editor “to help ensure fairness and accuracy,” and tools are provided to help people investigate congressional “corruption,” whether it involves illegal or unethical behavior by those who serve or in legislators’ efforts to earmark funding to special projects. For example, earlier this year on the site an investigation was pursued into whether a home-district “earmark” by Speaker J. Dennis Hastert resulted in him making a two million dollar profit on the sale of land he owned. A similar effort is evident at Porkbusters,² where a Weblog that highlights wasteful spending encourages constituents to track what’s happening in their state and congressional district and post what they discover; on this site, too, a secret senatorial hold on a bill, which would put federal contract data online, was revealed.

There are other notable efforts of merging what is best about journalism and the Web (and with which I’ve been involved):

- Jay Rosen, who writes the PressThink blog³ and teaches journalism at New York University, is seeking a new model of investigative journalism at NewAssignment.net.
- Jeff Jarvis, who writes the BuzzMachine blog,⁴ is working with Upendra Shardanand, a former Time Warner executive and cofounder of Firefly Network, to build a new kind of news aggregator site, daylife.com.
- Dan Gillmor runs the Center for Citizen Media,⁵ where among other efforts he is trying to figure out what’s happening with citizen journalism.

Finally, there’s one effort that captures much of my concern and hope for the future of news media. There’s an investigative effort at The Patriot Project⁶ that is focused on disinformation campaigns that attack military heroes, such as the one used against Representative John Murtha, a decorated war veteran whose strong opposition to the Iraq War has made him a target of smears. On this site, the attacks are

tracked back to public relations firms that act as fronts for people who hold elective office. Is this site trustworthy? If feels so, but I really do want what I find there to be fact checked.

We all wonder whom and what to trust and want to know how information is verified. And we can only hope that people have opportunities, as I’ve had, to really think about how a free press preserves democracy. I’m hopeful that what I’ve learned about trust in our online community can help journalism achieve this in their digital enterprises. I’m here to help, and I’ll try not to get in the way. ■

Craig Newmark is customer service representative and founder of craigslist (www.craigslist.org) and is involved in a consulting role with NewAssignment.net, citmedia.org, and daylife.com, currently in alpha. Newmark adds that he has “a microscopic financial interest” in daylife.

² <http://porkbusters.org>

³ <http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/>

⁴ www.buzzmachine.com/

⁵ www.citmedia.org

⁶ <http://patriotproject.com>

The Challenge of Community Building

Knight Foundation asks whether the community role newspapers play can be replicated by new media and offers to support those who show it can.

By Gary Kebbel

A story told at most online journalism meetings is about the editor who said at a recent conference, “I don’t know what to do to make my paper successful in the digital age, but I’m ready to do it. Just tell me what it is.”

It is abundantly clear that the search for “it” is going on at all news organizations. New products and new distribution methods are needed to get

to where their audiences are. But in getting there, news organizations also must figure out how to retain the values and standards of journalism.

Knight Foundation is on the lookout for the next big idea to revolutionize the news industry and build geographic communities as audiences for news head online.

Oddly, perhaps, we decided to look backward as our guide to moving

forward. We asked ourselves whether the digital world is being used for the verification journalism and community building that Jack and Jim Knight did at their newspapers. Then we asked whether news and information in cyberspace are used to bring people together in real space and to help people where they live and work.

If they aren’t filling these roles, then is this an editing issue or a technology

problem? Have newspapers lost readers because they stopped delivering what their audience want—school menus and a watchful eye on property taxes, little league scores and city council votes? (Youth soccer and high school football do more to bring together communities than nearly any city council meeting. Woe to the community newspaper that doesn't report the game scores—via instant text messaging each quarter.) Are newspapers uniquely able to bring people together in their geographic communities? If so, as readers migrate to other media, will there be less on-the-ground community building? What other implications would this change have for our lives and public institutions?

When we raised such questions, answers were elusive. So we created the Knight Brothers 21st Century News Challenge—a \$25 million, five-year investment designed to encourage the formation of connective threads among what journalism does and what communities want and need. We hope journalists, as well as community members, will help us arrive at some answers and steer this initiative in promising directions.¹ Our challenge goes out to anyone seeking ways to use digital news and information to build geographic communities.

Newspapers—with their ability to go a mile wide and an inch deep—give neighbors the ability to debate, discuss and act as members of a shared place and enterprise. Can the Web—with its borderless dimensions—also do this? Or on the Web are we headed toward a time when our sense of shared space—our feeling of belonging to a community—will be experienced only in virtual ways? If so, how can this be reconciled with our geographically based political system?

Our democracy has organized itself around geography since our nation's founding, and news has breathed life into our civic debate and engagement. But at the dawn of the 21st century, news entities confront numerous issues in this digital transformation. Layoffs of journalists are on the rise.

Newspapers and television networks are losing subscribers and advertising revenue to companies without journalism's backbone, no grounding in its ethics and principles, no obligations for its First Amendment duties and responsibilities. At the same time, online destinations or games such as Monster.com, craigslist, Flickr, MySpace, YouTube and Mortal Kombat are gaining revenue and absorbing the time of those who might have turned to newspapers.

The Knight Brothers 21st Century News Challenge is an open, international competition for innovative ideas that offer ways of using news and information online to create or strengthen on-the-ground communities. We've set as few rules as possible to give ourselves the best chance to find creative thinkers and passionate entrepreneurs. Our award categories follow the cycle from idea to pilot project to broader distribution to commercial product or newly formed company. Maybe we will find the teenager who asks "What if" and has an idea worth backing, or the college student who refuses to conform to "the way things need to be."

Each quarter, as a result of the declining newspaper numbers revealed by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, new media converts emerge out of old media newsrooms. They understand the future of journalism doesn't lie with printing presses. What is less clear is whether a place in cyberspace can be found for those who value on-the-ground civic engagement and responsibility. Does the role newspapers play as community conveners have any meaning in cyberspace? Will younger generations, many of whom have never received their information from a newspaper, even understand what this role is and why it is important?

The 21st Century News Challenge sets in motion a process to see if new media can—or should—replicate certain old media functions. But for changes like this to succeed, news cultures also need to change. A publishing culture built around deadlines and the printing press doesn't exist in

the dynamic world of the Web. And the journalistic skills to succeed on the Web differ vastly from those employed today. Journalists on the Web tell stories in nonlinear, multimedia ways, and news exists in real time, with the expectation of accuracy, depth and insight.

In our digital age, neither newspapers nor newscasts can be a news organization's primary product, yet they will continue to exist in the foreseeable future. Managers and journalists must avoid, however, being so wowed by flashy techniques that old and essential values are abandoned. Newsroom management will need to change, too, for creativity to rise. An authoritarian manager accustomed to employees "paying their dues" will not heed the advice of an inexperienced new hire who likely knows more about how young people communicate and what they want to read and view than the entire executive committee. Nor will a newspaper built around journalists as gatekeepers easily adapt to citizen journalism and blogging. An important change they'll be missing is why they should become information guides, not gatekeepers, as people seek help in finding the news and information they need.

Cyberspace comes closer to the infinite than anything humans have ever invented. It operates at a speed nearly beyond human imagination. It is unfettered by geography—a Big Bang of thought and ideas and news and information that is remaking what we know and how we see and express ourselves. If more of cyberspace's power could be directed toward energizing our on-the-ground obligations and benefits of community, then those who convey news and information will understand better the significance of what they do and the essential role they play. ■

Gary Kebbel is the journalism initiatives program officer at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. He was news director at America Online and helped create USA Today.com and Newsweek.com

¹ www2.knightfdn.org/newschallenge/home.html

Why Anonymity Exists and Works on Newspapers' Web Sites

'If we require real names in print, shouldn't we do the same thing online?'

By Steve Yelvington

As more newspapers integrate print and online operations, print editors confront a strange new world, in which all of the familiar rules are being broken. In print, letters to the editor must be signed and, in news stories, sources identified, except in specified cases. But when newspapers move online, people in forums, chat sessions, or in comments find themselves engaged in conversations with the Mad Hatter or a Salty Dog.

Mad Hatter? How did we fall down this rabbit hole?

Should newspapers be running their Web sites this way? If we require real names in print, shouldn't we do the same thing online? Aren't there ethical considerations?

It's not that simple. Anonymity and pseudonymity are not merely common to Internet culture, there is a considerable historical, ethical and legal foundation for it.

In its early pre-Web days, most Internet discussions took place on a system called Usenet. Messages commonly were signed with real names and were sent from legitimate research and educational institutions. Exceptions tended to be jokes, such as the April 1, 1984 posting from "Konstantin Chernenko" at "Kremvax," sent long before the network extended into the Soviet Union. Early public online forums, such as the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL) and many CompuServe interest groups, also were dominated by real identities. The first newspaper online site I built, at the Star Tribune in Minneapolis, required real names.

But the Web unfolded in a different direction. Those cultures of identity still exist, but they have not grown at the rate of the overall Web. And once the Internet was opened to commercial

access and Web sites gained forum capabilities, they quickly attracted users from other cultures more accustomed to using "handles." Many early users were young and came from dial-up bulletin board systems, where some borrowed the identities of comic book heroes such as Judge Dredd. A huge influx of users from America Online, which allowed multiple screen names per account, permanently changed the culture of the Internet.

Once a culture is established, it can be difficult to oppose. "I used to post under my real name ... but I felt like the only naked person at a clothing-optional beach," wrote "Salty Dog" in a discussion of this issue at BlufftonToday.com. And for many people, posting under a pseudonym is a protective measure. "When your 13-year-old daughter picks up the phone and hears, 'We're going to burn a cross in your yard,' ... you change your attitude toward being 'out there,'" wrote "Wiley Coyote."

Identity: Practice, Ethics and the Law

Earlier this year, I was part of an ethics symposium convened by the Poynter Institute at which a mixed group of Internet media leaders and Poynter faculty tried to clarify a number of ethical issues that are encountered when publishing online. Identity was quickly seen as one of those questions with no simple answers. Instead, it raises more questions: Who is being served? Who is being hurt?

The contextual details are important. Gary Marx, professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, confronted the ethical questions surrounding anonymity in a 1999 paper, "What's in a Name? Some Reflections

on the Sociology of Anonymity." He wrote that "there are many contexts in which most persons would agree that some form of anonymity or identifiability is desirable. But there are others where we encounter a thicket of moral ambiguity and competing rationales and where a balancing act may be called for."

Marx lists a few: liberty and order; accountability and privacy; community and individualism; freedom of expression and the right not to be defamed or harassed. His list continues along those lines and ends with "the desire to be noticed and the need to be left alone"—a conflict we see being played out on MySpace.com today.

Marshall McLuhan observed that communications technologies reshape the world into a global village. Anyone who's ever lived in a small town knows that "everybody knows you" can be suffocating. One middle-aged man, a closeted homosexual in a southern community, wrote to me privately about how he felt a need to express himself in blog postings about gay rights but feared he would lose his job if his employer found out. Another frequent blogger's spouse is employed by the school district that he criticizes vigorously in his postings. For them, anonymity is essential to their ability to participate.

These issues are not unique to the Internet. Indeed, early American journalists often wrote under pen names, particularly in the Revolutionary period, when the oppressive danger was not merely a tyranny of the majority but a tyranny backed up by military force. Founding Fathers Ben Franklin, John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison were among those who occasionally took advantage of

pseudonyms. The “seditious libel” of which John Peter Zenger was accused included contributions from a number of anonymous and pseudonymous critics of the Crown.

But how does the law treat such anonymity today? Who is responsible for the content of these postings? Here a common Internet acronym applies: IANAL (I am not a lawyer), so an editor must consult his or her own legal resources and ultimately make an informed decision about risk.

A well-versed lawyer can cite the relevant cases—Stratton Oakmont, Inc. v. Prodigy, Cubby, Inc. v. CompuServe, Inc. and Zeran v. America Online, Inc.. The courts have struck down much of the Communications Decency Act, but the surviving portion includes a statutory “safe harbor” provision for operators of interactive services, and it is clear that Congress intended to promote the development of open conversation by freeing hosts from responsibility for actions taken by guests.

There have been several non-Internet cases in which courts have made it clear that freedom of speech does not come with a hidden price tag of speaker identification. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has said “the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld the First Amendment right to speak anonymously,” citing *Buckley v. American Constitutional Law Foundation, Inc.*, *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission*, and *Talley v. California*. In writing about continuing challenges to anonymity and pseudonymity, a briefing paper written for the conservative Cato Institute calls these ways of protecting one’s identity the “cornerstones of free speech.”

Even if the law ultimately shields the forum’s host, there is a danger of having to defend against nuisance suits and attempts by plaintiffs to intimidate pseudonymous bloggers by demanding disclosure of their identities. In unraveling this knotty problem, it’s helpful for editors to ask: Why do newspapers host online conversations, anyway? What are our real goals? To each of these questions, an editor should be able to answer with something other than “so we can get the page views.”

Silenced Voices Now Heard

There is a political value embedded in American journalism, a belief that what we do is essential to sustaining our participatory democracy. Editorial and op-ed pages exist to provide a forum for discussion of issues of public interest. Almost without exception, American newspapers require writers of letters

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Remington 2 typewriter, circa 1880. This typewriter was the first of its kind to have upper- and lowercase letters. The space bar is made of wood. *Newseum collection/ Courtesy Newseum.*

or op-ed pieces to identify themselves. Perhaps this reflects that in our culture order is more valued than freedom and accountability more than privacy, if we return to Marx’s list of competing rationales. One result, however, is that many voices are being silenced by fear of social consequences.

Those voices are now being heard on the Internet, where anyone can become a blogger in the two minutes it takes to fill out a form and create an account on any of the many free blog-hosting and social-networking sites. There is no longer a scarcity of places in which public conversation and interaction can happen. Some journalists, such as blogger Jeff Jarvis, have begun to question whether the editorial page has outlived its usefulness. Community conversation will thrive even if every

newspaper disappears. Is there a vital and continuing role for newspapers, or even for journalists, to play in providing such a forum for civic and social conversation?

Community conversation can benefit from a framework of goals, ground rules and leadership, and newspapers can perform a real public service by helping provide this. In online forums, five basic identity models exist, and below they are ranked from the “order” to “liberty” ends of the spectrum:

1. Real, verified, published names. It’s almost impossible to do this without requiring credit-card transactions.
2. Real names required but not verified. Most “real name” forums on the net today operate this way.
3. Pseudonyms allowed, tied to unpublished real names. Most newspapers with Web registration systems can implement this model easily.
4. Pseudonyms allowed with complete anonymity.
5. Completely open systems—post under any name. This “most free” environment is the most abuse-prone, but a peer-moderation system (such as found on *Slashdot.org*) can mitigate the damage of an abusive minority.

Among these routes, there is no “correct” path, just a need to consider all these issues and strike a balance. The middle road—public pseudonyms, private identity—might be the optimal, if not ideal, solution. The mask provided by a pseudonym might entice shy persons to contribute, just as they might open up at a costume party. But as with the real event, it helps if the host knows the identity of everyone in the room; knowing this tends to keep behavior from getting out of hand. ■

Steve Yelvington was a newspaper reporter and editor for two decades before moving to the Internet in 1994 as founding editor of Star Tribune Online in Minneapolis. He now focuses on strategy and innovation for Morris DigitalWorks, the online division of Morris Communications in Augusta, Georgia.

Are Journalists the 21st Century's Buggy Whip Makers?

Newspapers might vanish, too, if they continue to 'dream of past dominance while taking their product and trying to fit it into their competitor's terrain.'

By William Dietrich

In 1990, at the height of the Pacific Northwest battle over whether to cut the last virgin "old growth" timber, many loggers and sawmill owners panicked. Their specialty was cutting and sawing giant trees and, if the national forest supply disappeared, their equipment and skills were obsolete. Environmentalists were not sympathetic. These woods workers, they argued, were no different than the buggy whip makers put out of work when the automobile arrived. After all, times do change.

Today, the availability of inexpensive digital cameras and recorders, the triumph of the Internet, and the explosion of amateur Web-based publishing—MySpace.com, blogs, e-mails and Web sites—puts similar stress on those of us who remember the "good old days" of fat and sassy monopoly newspapers. When anyone can record and post information—the commodity for which reporters, editors, producers and photographers are paid—journalists are in danger of becoming a luxury society

no longer can afford.

The direct cause of shrinking news staffs is a loss of advertising and cir-

ulation to new digital competition. But my questions—and they are still only questions—are whether recent layoffs because of loss of revenue are only part of the technological earthquake. Will the ubiquity of information make traditional journalism less valuable or even obsolete?

Thinking Ahead

To paraphrase Andy Warhol, in the future everyone will be a journalist for 15 minutes. When crime victims can post wrenching accounts of assaults (and accompanying photos of bruises) and politicians bypass the press with Web-based campaigns, then the role journalists traditionally play is being usurped. Instead of sitting in the front row of history being made, we're now two or three rows back at hurricanes, tsunamis, wars and campaigns, with our view sometimes obstructed by on-the-spot, competing amateurs whose accounts of the event provide immediacy, passion and, yes, rumor, exaggeration and mis-



A man reads *The Detroit Times*. August 1942. *Library of Congress / Courtesy Newseum.*

interpretation.

That's exactly the point, journalists protest. We aren't simply descriptive witnesses of spot news, but careful, accurate and fair reporters of what we observe. We collect vast amounts of disparate information and synthesize it into coherent stories. We cover the whole range of news, not the day's fancy of the blogosphere. We provide a sense of history and perspective. We're eloquent. We're witty. The world's pundits, gasbags and gadflies take their cue from what we produce. In short, we're indispensable.

But let's face it; a fair amount of traditional journalism has been mechanical, shoe-leather stuff. Sit through a routine council meeting or congressional hearing. Check the police blotter. Travel to a disaster. Record what is going on in stenographic fashion. And the less inspired the reporting is, the more it becomes obsolete in the Internet age. Why cover a council meeting, publishers might ask, when the handful of readers who care about it can access documents and testimony online? Why travel to a distant forest fire when those who want to follow its progress can go on the Web to find photos, a wire story, and some eyewitness accounts?

People used to pay newspapers to gather information that was often expensive or tedious to find. But with the Internet, we have lost our monopoly on information. Yes, newspapers have numerous advantages, but so did horses. They were quieter than cars, less likely to get stuck, could be fueled in a field, and didn't depreciate as quickly. But have you commuted by horseback lately?

I live in a small city of about 15,000 about 60 miles north of Seattle. Citizen Web sites on contentious land use and community issues often offer more detailed information and trenchant analysis than the local weekly. Their weaknesses: one-sidedness and a tendency to come and go. Still, amateurs with a cause have more time to devote to researching an issue—and more Web space to show what they've discovered—than the harried reporter on the tiny staff of a paper publication. At our Starbucks, the only newspaper

Vanishing Jobs at Newspapers

Employment news at newspapers is bad, but just how bad depends on who's counting. Between 1992 and 2002, the number of full-time editorial employees at U.S. dailies fell 8,438, or almost 13 percent, by the estimate of Indiana University professor David H. Weaver, a coauthor of "The American Journalist in the 21st Century." The Project for Excellence in Journalism cites a smaller total of newsgathering and editing jobs—a peak of 56,400 in 2000—that had fallen to 52,000 by 2006, with most of the losses at the bigger papers. The American Society

of Newspaper Editors has newsroom employment nationally rising from about 42,000 in 1977 to today's 52,000, a 19 percent increase in 29 years, even after the recent cuts (compared to a 36 percent increase in U.S. population in the same time frame).

Editorial layoffs are making news: 45 jobs at The New York Times, 75 at The Philadelphia Inquirer, and 85 at the Los Angeles Times in 2005; and this year, 50 at the San Jose Mercury News, 111 at The Dallas Morning News, and 80 at The Washington Post, to cite some examples. ■ —W.D.

we can buy is The New York Times, published 3,000 miles away. This adds up to one mega coffee corporation plus one mega media corporation equals local journalism be damned. Seattle's dailies, by their admission, are more "Seattle-centric" due to newsroom budget cuts. [See accompanying box with newsroom cuts elsewhere.] Coverage of national and regional news—not to mention international stories—is increasingly left to the five big national newspapers—the Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and USA Today—and the wire services.

From an old-line journalist's perspective, what's even worse is our declining relevance to advertisers. I shop for an automobile, appliances, electronics and even clothes online. I found my house online. Some people find spouses online. Is it any wonder newspaper revenues are shrinking? And this same earthquake has rocked the travel industry, the advertising industry, the real estate industry, the telecommunications industry, and even the movie industry, where "a cast of thousands" is replaced by digitized extras. Guidebooks and maps give way to handy navigation systems and Web sites. Receptionists were long ago replaced with robotic telephone menus.

A New Media Terrain

While journalists might be becoming a luxury the media business is ready to do without, media jobs aren't disappearing. In fact, they are on the rise as Web sites and blogs emerge to disseminate an ocean of information in ever more clever ways. For someone who yearns to shuttle or repackage information, or comment on it instead of generate it, the good times are rolling. Specialty newspapers and magazines—aimed at enthusiasts—which pull in advertising by doing friendly pieces on the industries they cover are thriving. The number of books published and movies made each year grows, and TV channels are proliferating.

But the on-the-ground newspaper reporter—whose purpose is to fulfill an essential function of our democracy not just by disseminating information but also by analyzing it, detecting patterns, spotting trends, and increasing societal understanding—is being starved of resources. Lifetime security is long gone. Travel budgets are disappearing. Overseas bureaus are closed. The most veteran and knowledgeable reporters—expensive to keep on board—are being encouraged to leave through buyouts and cutbacks.

Despite this depletion of resources, the need to "make sense" will not go

away. Those who are adept at being incisive and eloquent will be even more valuable, migrating to national publications. (And I'll read what they write at my local Starbucks.) But what of local yeomen, journalists who make government and society function with more accountability and understanding because of their reporting on regional, state and local issues? Will they continue to serve this purpose or has evolution of technology doomed them like the dodo bird?

Newspaper journalism has a strong case to make. At its best, it offers a combination of perspective, authority, penetration, accuracy, comprehensiveness, brevity and ease of use that other media can't match. And newspapers offer something the Web can never really duplicate—the serendipitous discovery of an intriguing article or a remarkable picture, an eye-opening

cartoon or an explanatory graphic, all in the process of just turning the page.

But newspapers rarely do a very good job of making their case. Rarely do they directly challenge their competitors by touting the quality of their information; instead they dream of past dominance while taking their product and trying to fit it into their competitor's terrain. Yet newspapers have expertise and archives that dwarf the competition. Reporters use only a fraction of their notes. Almost none of a newspaper's decades of accumulated information—its archive of history—is effectively marketed and sold.

Maybe newspapers can—and will—reinvent themselves. It seems almost certain that journalists will write with more expertise for more targeted audiences willing to pay for slices of premium information. Some of the daily newspaper reporters laid off

from their jobs will likely migrate to special-interest publications. And this might be fine for the survival of our species (the reporter), but writing for narrow audiences sounds like a recipe for boredom and not particularly good for democracy, either. Our society already has too few who know a little bit about a lot and can make sense of the big picture.

The Web, meanwhile, has too few well trained in the pursuit of accuracy, fairness and perspective. Like the Platte River, Web journalism threatens to become a mile wide and an inch deep.

Surely folks want to keep us buggy whip makers around. But then again, sawmills did close, and if you want a buggy ride, go to Central Park. ■

William Dietrich, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, is an author and Sunday magazine writer with The Seattle Times.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY

A copyboy is about to tear off a dispatch from The Associated Press wire at The New York Times. September 1942. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*



Copyeditors in a newsroom of a city newspaper. 1952. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*



Looking Past the Rush Into Convergence

As technology drives big newsroom changes, what will happen to journalism?

By Edward Wasserman

During the next few years, the migration of news media to the Internet will start to become a background reality, a given. Paper publishing will still be around, as will over-the-air broadcasting. But both will be on their way to becoming niche artifacts. The technological superiority of online distribution for multimedia presentation and its vast potential for interactivity will make the Internet the principal venue for news and topical commentary.

So much for the objection that the concerns I'm about to raise are signs of resistance to technological advance. I've long argued that the news business needs to learn from Hollywood. A half-century ago, moviemakers sold five times the tickets they sell now (to a population half its current size). If Hollywood had stuck to the belief that its business is to pack theaters, it would no longer have a business. It has prospered, as Edward Jay Epstein recounts in "The Big Picture," by being technologically nimble, becoming the premier source of home-based entertainment content—first via broadcast TV (initially viewed as a mortal enemy), lately for cable, Web delivery, DVDs, podcasts, mobile and so forth.

The news business faces a similar set of technology-related opportunities. But as it addresses them, my question is, what will happen to journalism? And by "journalism" I mean a professional practice constituted by independent truth-telling that's intended to serve the public by illuminating important social and political realities. Some would object that this definition might exclude coverage of celebrity pregnancies and basketball drafts, and for the purposes of this polemic it does.

I worry that the answer to my question, judging by the industry's performance to date, is that the news

business will continue to marginalize journalism, as yesterday's newsrooms transform themselves into tomorrow's market-driven, multimedia information utilities.

Concern About Convergence

Concern about the consequences of this technological transformation for journalism brings us to the topic of convergence, which so far consists primarily of integrating audio-visual media and round-the-clock Internet distribution into formerly print-based news operations. (I applaud the interactive initiatives of some news organizations, but I don't see them as part of the convergence paradigm, which mainly concerns news distribution, not collaborative conversation.)

Convergence has swept the news business and has prompted, in some places, a radical overhaul of newsroom operations, affecting workloads, assignment philosophies, production expectations, and service goals. It has become, as a colleague observed, "the new orthodoxy." It is also, in its current form, deeply flawed.

Here I have four basic points to make:

1. Convergence has principally been a response to business needs, not journalistic ones. That seems obvious and trivial, but I think it's important.
2. Convergence isn't really "platform agnostic" at all, but instead privileges certain technical capabilities over others and certain kinds of information over others.
3. Convergence seems to engender management practices that degrade newsroom working conditions and that encourage journalism that is thin and hasty.

4. Intelligently blending powerful communications technologies could be a boon to journalism, but only if enhancing journalism replaces marketing objectives as the chief goal of the process.

To the first point: It's a commonplace to note that convergence has been driven by a recognition among the people who own and run news operations—especially monopoly metro dailies—that their future audience is turning to the Web for informational needs and that legacy organizations must create a strong and vital online presence. Leveraging their capabilities by developing sites and customizing their offerings to suit the Internet audience are essential to business success and, indeed, survival.

Fair enough. I'm all for survival. I simply want to point out that this technological redirection is not being decided in the name of better journalism, of seeking better tools with which to create more powerful reporting about matters of compelling interest and concern.

Once, news organizations embraced the telegraph, installed telephones, and issued walkie-talkies so they could gather news more efficiently. Not so with the migration to the Web. It hasn't been a response to demands from reporters for smarter technologies with which to get the news, better techniques to plumb realities that have heretofore been inaccessible, and new ways to hear from people who have important realities to share and until now have been beyond reporters' reach.

Those are the sort of things advanced communication technologies can enable us to do, and they might have huge importance to the practice of journalism. But those aren't the

concerns that are driving convergence. Instead, convergence is about enabling the legacy news business to colonize cyberspace. That is its DNA.

Secondly, we hear declarations from news executives about making their operations “platform agnostic,” a term embraced, most recently, by New York Times publisher Arthur Sulzberger, Jr.. I know what the executives mean—they want their staffs producing great work irrespective of whether it runs in print or with sound and pictures on the Web. But the hard fact is that technologies are not media-agnostic.

Once deployed in specific ways to accomplish certain objectives, they’re anything but indifferent. Once you commit to nourishing a round-the-clock Web operation that’s programmed to be on top of the news, you’ve taken on a hungry young monster, one that’s happy to devour whatever it’s given, but which must be fed. Do we hear journalists clamoring for the chance to post multiple versions of stories as the day progresses, or hungering to record and edit video they’re barely qualified to make, just in time to prepare radio scripts so they can post multimedia streams and feed audio to affiliated stations?

Welcome to the converged newsroom.

To the third point: What kind of a job is that, anyway? Based on recent coverage of convergence efforts in the *American Journalism Review* and *Editor & Publisher*, what I’ve described isn’t far from the realities of some enthusiastically converged newsrooms: The working conditions of journalists are being degraded, and reporting energies are being drawn away from the richly detailed, thoughtful reporting that exemplifies the best in journalism and that makes a difference in the lives of our communities.

Much of the problem seems to derive from enshrining speed as an operational priority. Newspaper staffs accustomed to meeting end-of-day deadlines are now running on round-the-clock Internet time, as if that was essential to their authority. Is it really? Is the public perpetually hungry for real-time updates on fast-breaking

near-news? Sometimes, perhaps they are. But in a larger sense I’m struck by the paradox of a business that wrings its hands ceaselessly over its shaky credibility and that is now reshaping itself to fit an operating mode in which half-understood stories are published with wire-service haste, in the belief that fixing them later, as facts are clarified, will repair the harm done by earlier versions.

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Publishing now, editing later—that seems an odd way to regain public trust.

We’re likely to see many of the same issues arise with the accelerating use of citizen-generated videos and photographs—generically referred to as “user-generated content”—on news Web sites and in newscasts. As with any information that comes from outsiders whose identity, circumstance and purpose are not known, authenticity has to be a constant concern, especially as news organizations come under greater marketing pressures to welcome YouTube-like input. True, nonprofessionals have given us historic news images, from the Kennedy assassination to the South Asian tsunami, but recently we can also thank them for supplying images of the Loch Ness monster and Bigfoot.

For now, convergence efforts have proven that you can convert a city room into a 24/7 cyber-news mill, tarted up with pictures and sound. But is this the only way to go? Of course it isn’t. Maybe the needs of the thoughtful, courageous journalism that contributes so much to civic life won’t fundamentally shape the way the news business makes its historic movement online. Media strategy, after all, may be too important to be left to journalists.

And to be fair, it’s early yet. The current state of convergence recalls the period soon after USA Today debuted and newspapers discovered plumage. Suddenly, everybody had to have color. What followed was a wildly iridescent period, which one savvy design person later described as “Fruit Loops,” colors lavished promiscuously and pointlessly around humble columns of gray. In time, good taste reappeared.

In that spirit, I can’t help but wonder what will happen when key decisions about technology are made by reporters and line editors, who ask how this epochal array of powerful tools will help them do their jobs better: How will it enable them to bring greater intelligence and reach to their reporting? Or to hear people who have been silenced? Or tell stories more vividly and compellingly? Or inspire and participate in a richer communitywide conversation?

That’s not about branding, repositioning, leveraging, monetizing or line extension. It’s about journalism, which is what the news business, converged or not, is supposed to be about. ■

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We Can Adjust to Changing Demands, But Should We?

‘People can adapt to anything if the order comes from the person who signs the paychecks.’

By Joe Zelnik

“Adapt or Die” is the headline on an article from *American Journalism Review* posted on the bulletin board at the weekly newspaper I edit. Golly gigabyte, that sounds serious.

Life’s not easy for some of us who still remember typewriters—and typesetters. And management isn’t helping when it keeps sticking stories on the bulletin board suggesting newspapers are going out of fashion. The most recent posting on our board, this one from *Publishing Executive* (What do they know?) was headlined, “Have You Started Planning for E-Paper?”

“What is the e-paper,” you ask? It’s evidently a “paper-thin, page-sized, flexible plastic monitor on which digital images can be displayed.” An e-head who works here wrote on the posted clipping that “it’s easy to envision someone carrying a ‘tab-sized’ piece of e-paper which plugs into a PDA or phone.”

It might be easy for him, maybe. Not so easy for me. All this downsizing of reading space sounds like a plot by optometrists, if you ask me.

But who would ask me? Linus carries a security blanket. I carry a pica stick (metal ruler) with me every time the production department calls. I borrowed it from the Columbus (Ga.) Ledger 50 years ago when Specialist Remer Tyson (also a Nieman Fellow) and I were in the army at Fort Benning and got to go “in town” in civvies once a week to oversee make-up of *The* (Fort Benning) Bayonet.

Reading teeny tiny print might not be a problem for many. Virgin Mobile is beaming novellas to cell phone users. They come in 160-character installments through two text messages a day for five weeks. The cost is five cents per message. Don’t look for “The Old

Man and the Sea.” Virgin’s first novella, titled “Ghost Town,” about a homeless teenager, was written by one of its copywriters. The teenager probably got thrown out of his house for running up his cell phone bill or becoming addicted to porn on the Internet.

I am not going to knock this because, if it flies, many journalist victims of downsizing (a kinder form of laid off) could pay the rent by writing novellas. Just shorten that novel now gathering dust in the bottom right drawer of your desk.

Graduates of Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism, we discover, will be expected to have learned how to tell their stories “across all of the print and digital platforms in words, audio and video.” To do that, they will train for this new era of journalism by heading out the door with a laptop computer, digital audio and video recorders, and video iPods. Presumably chiropractic care will be a new demand of The Newspaper Guild.

Does my attitude personify generational differences? Possibly, but don’t despair. A recent story in *Parade* magazine assured its readers, I mean audience, that “old dogs can learn new tricks.” A 10-year-old German shepherd was taught to sit, come, or go to bed on command. I can do all those things and more. It all depends, said *Parade*, on who gives the command. My view: People can adapt to anything if the order comes from the person who signs the paychecks.

Of course age is a factor. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that anyone under 30 “grew up with the Internet in one hand and a cell phone in another.” Sure, but they have to put one down to drink a beer.

My multitasking is limited to reading

a newspaper while I watch “House.” And when the show’s over, I frequently have to ask my wife, “What disease did he have?”

I do detect the onset of schizophrenia at newspapers. Most papers beg readers to go to their Web sites. But The New York Times Web site urges us to “Think Outside the Screen” and follows with a \$2.99-a-week subscription offer to receive the paper version.

Last December, I wrote a column about my newspaper being “on the cutting edge” and, tongue in cheek, announced that we’d be selling “Hipods” for \$9.99 “cash and carry.” The Hipod, I explained, was solar-powered, the size of a driver’s license, and fits in one’s wallet, while combining a computer, cell phone, camera, A-GPS receiver, calendar, address book, voice recorder, bottle opener, and flashlight. Most important, my weekly newspaper’s stories would be posted to it as they are being written. Why wait until Wednesday to read my words?

Two readers called to buy one.

The acceptance of new ideas is an individual thing. When I go on a trip, I have found AAA’s maps and directions vastly superior to those I find on MapQuest. When I rent a car, I decline navigational devices that tell me to “turn right in 100 yards.” I’ve found my wife’s directions to be a lot more dependable and her commands a lot more familiar.

But where the improvement is undeniable, I join right in. Those Crest Whitestrips really do work. ■

Joe Zelnik, a 1970 Nieman Fellow, is editor of the Cape May County Herald in New Jersey.

Evolving Definitions of News

‘Journalists may have thought it was necessary to set the old school aside to accommodate the new realities, but with the new realities there is no new ethic.’

By Tom Bettag

The Internet explosion has left us with no shortage of data, but the Web as a source of “news” comes with a credibility problem. The Internet turns out to be a magnificent source of gossip, rumor, conspiracy theories, and fascinating urban myths. Using it, one can find pictures of Hurricane Katrina that haven’t been seen anywhere else. The reason: They weren’t taken during Hurricane Katrina. Such discoveries leave viewers wondering whether any picture found online has been doctored by Photoshop.

In my world of television, people ask why a network anchor should be paid so much money just “to read the news.” There is a good reason, other than the perceived power of celebrity, and that is credibility. Credibility is so valuable today because it is so scarce.

When al-Qaeda attacked on 9/11, the spectrum of possible information sources was huge. In fact, a large majority of Americans picked one of just three sources: Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, and Dan Rather. Each had been broadcasting five nights a week for more than 20 years. Before that each had spent decades reporting throughout the world. That’s how journalists earn credibility.

In the summer months leading up

to 9/11 the two biggest stories on cable “news” had been shark attacks and the Gary Condit scandal. Those three anchors gave those stories little airtime and were criticized for failing to recognize what people *really* cared about. Rather had been particularly ridiculed for refusing to spend a single minute on the Condit scandal, saying that in his judgment it wasn’t of enduring significance. That’s how one earns credibility.

Americans need to know where to turn to on the Web when they are asking, “Who can I trust?” Already they are searching for places in the new media that they can count on for accuracy, for reporting without agendas—in short, for real news.

What Is News?

In thinking about what constitutes “real news,” I wrote the following words in 2000—and the questions and issues they raise remain relevant today.

When I first heard the question “What *is* news?” in journalism school, I was a bit shocked by the arrogance of the answer. “News is what I say it is.” That’s the way it was in the old school. The old pros who said it, meant it. *News is what we say it is.* They spoke as members of the journalism profession, which was to them almost the priesthood. They spoke as people who took pride in their training and experience, their discipline and professional ethics. They talked about journalism as

public service. They even used the phrase “a sacred trust.”

That was the way it was in the old school before things started to change.

Former Vice President Spiro Agnew’s attack on the “eastern elitist nattering nabobs of negativism” was at least correct on the “eastern” part. It was about this same time that television began having enormous impact, and we began to cope with the notion of journalists as celebrities. Walter Cronkite had problems reporting on campaigns and candidates because he drew more at-

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Three men look at a picture display in The Detroit News window. July 1942. Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.

tention than those who were running for President. People started calling anchormen “400-pound gorillas.” The question became “Who elected them?” or Richard Nixon’s well-remembered words, “Mr. Rather, are you running for something?”

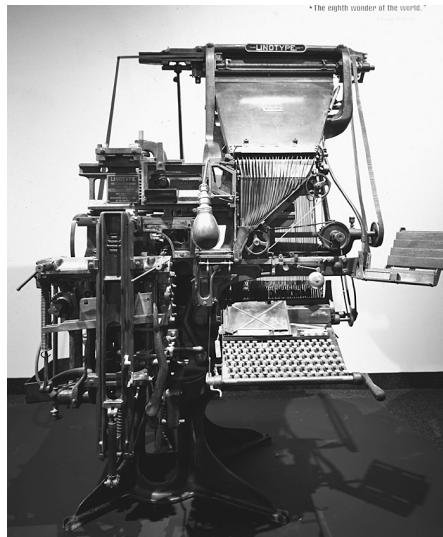
That criticism made us uncomfortable. Accepting accountability for providing news to our democracy was a heavy burden. We knew we weren’t omniscient, and we asked ourselves, “Who are we to think we should set an agenda for the nation? What made us any smarter than the next guy?”

A sociologist once asked me how we decide what news is. He was appalled at my response: Those of us in the newsroom decide what news is. His question was, “How can you call yourselves responsible when you don’t base your judgments on any scientific research?” His research tools were polls and focus groups.

It wasn’t long before every network had a “research” department. Some journalists resisted, but management said that was “old school.” We wouldn’t be slaves to research, they assured us; it would only be used for “guidance.” Focus groups were asked what they wanted to see on daily newscasts. In all too many places that move took much of the decision-making off the shoulders of the news staff. News consultants collated the responses of the focus groups and established guidelines for the newsroom. Soon every local station had health news, consumer news, happy news, pet stories. *News is what people say they want to know about.*

Then came the day when the networks were bought up by larger corporations whose primary orientation was not television. The Loews Corporation bought up CBS, and CEO Larry Tisch complained, “CBS News spends hundreds of millions of dollars. I can’t believe the people who run broadcasts and bureaus aren’t businessmen.” The journalists there tried to strike a more reasonable attitude toward the unwelcome marriage of news and business. News, which had never been expected to make money, was now to become a profit center. The new owners insisted

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



This model #1 linotype machine, built between January and June 1893, was first used in the Baltimore, Maryland area. It was sold to The Rappahannock Record circa 1925. *Newseum collection/gift, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gaskins and Mrs. Clara Christopher/Courtesy Newseum.*

that journalists were obsessed with a level of quality that meant nothing to the viewers. We could produce popular broadcasts without all those foreign bureaus, without all those people. Cheaper operations would yield greater profits. *News is what makes money.*

Then there was an even brighter idea. News would be a lot better (not to mention cheaper) if you simply removed the middleman, the journalistic filter. It started off benevolently with C-SPAN bringing debates from the floor of Congress or other previously unseen events, and it let viewers watch them in their entirety. Then the Republican convention broadcast GOPTV events brought directly to us by the party without meddling journalists. *News is anything you can get a camera to do.*

This served the purposes of the 24-hour cable service magnificently. Its constant challenge is how to feed a gigantic maw, and nothing chews up time like live coverage. It might be repetitious; there might not be much information to impart. Not to worry.

There were new realities. If you *can* cover it, you *must*. Be first, and don’t worry what it is you are first with. *News is anything you can cover live.*

But here comes the Internet and the ability to send video to your laptop. (Today, it can come into our phones.) It’s a pipeline that dwarfs the 24-hour cable channels. A desperate call has gone out for “content providers.” It’s where the money is, and journalists once again are scrambling to respond to new realities. Those realities are all about big money. The words “public service” do not even get lip service, much less “sacred trust.” What content? Any content—anything that will keep the pipeline from running dry. Is it accurate? Maybe. Who’s to say? *News is what fills the pipeline.*

Is it small wonder that the American people have become cynical about the news media? The only people more cynical are the journalists. Last year journalists were polled by the Pew organization. Asked if bottom-line pressures were hurting television news, 53 percent said yes. Asked if news organizations are moving too far into entertainment, 74 percent said yes.

The Committee of Concerned Journalists gathered more than 1,000 signatures on a “statement of concern” that is quite stunning. It reads, in part: “There is a growing debate within news organizations about our responsibilities as businesses and our responsibilities as journalists. Many journalists feel a sense of lost purpose. There is even doubt about the meaning of news, doubt evident when serious journalistic organizations drift toward opinion, infotainment and sensation out of balance with the news.”

Listen to Andy Rooney: “Corporate America was late discovering there was a profit to be made with news, and it’s trying to make up for its slow start.”

Listen to Keith Olbermann, who described his old nightly MSNBC broadcast on the Monica scandal “The White House Isn’t in Crisis, but We’ll Keep Calling It That Because There Is a Graphic.” At a graduation speech, he said, “I’m having the dry heaves in the bathroom because my moral sensor is going off, but I can’t even hear it, I’m

so seduced by these ratings.”

You are hearing stirrings of conscience.

The old-timers were on to something. “News is what I say it is.” They were putting their reputations on the line. They were taking responsibility, expecting to be held accountable. Journalists may have thought it was necessary to set the old school aside to accommodate the new realities, but with the new realities there is no new ethic. We were, in fact, abdicating our responsibility, letting ourselves off the hook.

Journalists are not omniscient. Journalists are better off if they can avoid being celebrities. Journalists are not necessarily good business people. What journalists are is a vital element in the operation of democracy. The First Amendment was not written to protect focus groups. The journalists who signed the “statement of concern” have it right when they speak of “a sense of lost purpose.”

It has been said that “democracy is the worst form of government except for everything else.” The old-school approach could be arrogant. It could

be elitist. And it is dangerous to suggest that journalists should look inside themselves for the answer to the question, “What’s news?” It’s the most dangerous approach except for everything else. ■

Tom Bettag is executive producer of The Koppel Group at Discovery Channel. He was the executive producer of ABC News’s “Nightline.” Some words from this article were published originally in The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics, Summer 2000.

Toward a New Journalism With Verification

‘This journalism must recognize that the distribution, the organization, and the sources of our work must change.’

When Bill Kovach, founding chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, was inducted as a fellow into the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) in October 2005, he also delivered the keynote address at that year’s SPJ convention. An edited version of his speech follows.

I had a chance to truly understand the power of information in a much deeper way in 1990, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, when Tom Winship, the late editor of The Boston Globe, and I organized the first conference between journalists from the West and journalists from the newly freed press of the crumbling Soviet Empire. For three amazing days in Prague we listened as speaker after speaker talked with great emotion of how the revolution in communications technology breached the Iron Curtain to allow uncensored news to pour through.

As Czech President Václav Havel explained, technology was “what allowed us to take back our language, a language which had been stolen by propagandists to convince us that show trials were ‘justice’ and slavery was ‘freedom.’” Only when the language had been freed, he said, could people begin to have honest thoughts about

political affairs, about the real state of the world, and about their place in that world.

It was an exhilarating time as we surveyed the rubble of an old order based on thought control and looked forward to the dawning of the new age—the Age of Information. The lesson Havel taught us that day is, I believe, relevant to us in the United States today. For now, a little more than a decade later, I believe we are caught up in a competition of our own over the uses of information that includes political uses but goes far beyond those to encompass our whole culture in a struggle that tests whether the press will serve a self-governing public or whether it will serve the power elites.

From the moment 24/7 digital news was introduced the process of verification—the beating heart of credible journalism in the public interest—has been under challenge. First came the temptation to publish now because “we can always correct it later.” Then to publish news simply “because it’s out there,” a challenge made more complex in the aftermath of the events of September 11th.

But the threat posed by centralized control of information by institutions of power is the one I would like to address. I know advocates of “we

media” believe that no one controls information anymore so that problem is solved. That potential may reside in cyberspace, but I have been unable to find support for that position. I’d like to talk with you about this because too many journalists, especially of my generation, remain confused about the challenges of this new media environment and remain dangerously passive about the opportunities presented to traditional journalism by the new communications technology.

Any doubt about the competitive nature of the media environment was surely washed away by the recent report by the Center for Media Design at Ball State University that found the media today engages more than two-thirds of the waking moments of some 400 people they studied in “Middletown USA.” Such engagement has transformed citizens from passive consumers of information to more proactive participants as they choose their own knowledge of the outside world. Citizens have become their own editors and publishers. Each day that passes swells the number of people who join this tech-savvy generation accustomed to receiving and communicating what they want, when, where, how and from whom they want it.

The question is: Do those who pass

along this information have the time, the motivation, and the skills this task requires? If not, then the question for journalists is: Do *we* have the skills and the will to help citizens gain these tools?

One concerned news executive told me recently that this media environment so confuses and intimidates both the business side and the news side that it is difficult to find an ally on either side of the organization when trying to employ new ways to address these questions. Our hesitancy to learn how to put the new technology to our use has left us at a serious disadvantage to other powerful institutions that become more important mediating powers with the help of this technology.

Think for a moment about the increasing ability of other mediating institutions to condition public thought and demand public attention:

- Government institutions carefully insert propaganda into the public information stream to create “conditioned” responses to government actions and proposals. Information is shaped by access to a computerized profile of intimate details of each citizen’s behavior and private life so information can be presented in its most appealing form. Consider the deeply sophisticated way the military first used fusion of data technology to engage the enemy on the battlefield and now uses the same approach to engage young minds with devices like video games to condition responses to issues of war and peace. Deep research into the use of information allows those in the political sphere to create reality for us, as an advisor to George W. Bush told Ron Suskind for his report in *The New York Times Magazine*. Remember the quote? “[Journalists] are in what we call the reality-based community That’s not the way the world really works anymore When we act, we create our own reality. While you are studying that reality ... we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study, too....”
- The entertainment industry rivals

all others in creating gripping new realities that spawn a popular culture conditioned by fear and self-indulgence. Such conditioning creates an environment more congenial to the marketing techniques of other mediating institutions: the you-can’t-trust-the-media-to-tell-you-the-truth mantra of government to cite only one example.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



This Nikon camera belonged to Hocine Zaourar, an Algerian photographer who was awarded the World Press Photo of the Year award in 1998. He is in hiding, wanted by his government in connection with a photograph he made. *Newseum collection, gift, Agence France Presse/Courtesy Newseum.*

- Social institutions, such as churches, are becoming more politicized and using their communication power not to create new realities based on communities of tolerance, love and compassion, but to turn major policy debates into conflicts between belief and pragmatic science. Many of these new realities discourage and demean independent pursuit of knowledge in favor of dependence on inspired individuals for interpretations of cause and effect.

Looking at the content of journalism today from this perspective, it is hard to ignore the fact that in many ways journalism is more dependent for its content on the handouts and assertions of these other institutions than it is on independently verified information. To mention only one obvious example, think of the virtually unchallenged assertions about weapons of mass

destruction in the run-up to the war on Iraq, assertions Colin Powell now confesses to be false and a “blot” on his career. This dependence is made all the greater as news organizations, in reaction to shrinking audiences, cut back on their newsgathering resources.

The “we media” culture suggests that since citizens can communicate with each other more easily, they will be closer to real truth and more accurate information. No doubt they can communicate more easily. Millions read blogs although the data suggest those numbers may already be stabilizing. Whether or not the end result is more verified and truthful information will depend on the degree of commitment to those goals the “we media” culture develops. For no matter how widespread this movement becomes, history tells us that society’s more powerful institutions use new technology in a very disciplined way to do what they have done throughout history—perpetuate their power.

The driving force of the Age of Enlightenment out of which the notion of individual worth and a public press grew was a search for truthful information—information that freed the public from control by the kind of centralized dictatorial or dogmatic power developing in our society today. If journalism of verification is to survive in the new Information Age then it must become a force in empowering citizens to shape their own communities based on verified information.

The changes brought by our wired world are much like the change in immediacy and intimacy that printing introduced in the Enlightenment. Then, as now, the public was acutely sensitive to current news. The difference is that then when news broke, dialogue was sought in public spaces like coffeehouses where communities of interest were incubated. Today when news breaks in the intimacy of people’s private communications system, they tend to seek out communities incubated in cyberspace.

As Walter Lippmann said more than 80 years ago: Citizens in a democracy do not act on reality but on the picture of reality that is in their minds. Most

of the guiding principles of journalism are shaped by this concept. As an organizing principle for newsroom values it has served democracy well. But the world has slipped beyond the reach of the light Walter Lippmann cast. Today we live in a media world in which competing interests are creating realities designed to encourage communities of consumers, communities of belief, and communities of allegiance. It is in this environment that a journalism of verification must find its place by using these new technologies to support communities of independent thought. Journalists must find tools that will enlist a methodology of verification in a more citizen-oriented way and help the public to weigh this against what they are told daily by the popular culture and political spin.

We have, I think, all accepted the fact that our old gatekeeper role is no longer a viable organizing principle for journalism. But the purpose behind that principle—the search for truthful information—must continue if informed self-government is to remain a viable form of civic organization. We must begin to think of news reports as in some ways tool kits for these new citizen editors and publishers, just as the early newsheets were the tool kits that helped the first self-governing people arise out of the mass. It was concern for the individual as capable of self-governing that made our work unique and of lasting value.

Today we must ask ourselves some important questions: Can we open our process of gathering, organizing and developing information by using the interactivity of the new technology to make citizens become active participants in a community of verification and discussion? Can this be done with well-thought-out tools to engage their knowledge and experience more directly as sources for reporting? As analysis experts? As assignment advisors? Can synthesizing technologies be used to help our audiences build communities based on current news disclosures and to solve community problems? If there are to be new realities, can we help people build their own based on verified facts?

Can we find in the tools of video, sound, data mining, narrative and interactivity ways to connect our work to the public in appealing *even if* educational ways? Can we find here an opportunity for more civic education in a way that helps people unlearn some of what they've been told by the popular culture?

We can if journalists learn how to use our information-rich environment to build more immediate and powerful narratives in the limitless well and the multiple layering of storytelling forms that this new technology allows. For example, we can offer stories to different audiences in a variety of ways using different kinds and forms of data. We can do this if we take as our guides narratives like Henry Mayhew's 19th century interviews with the street people of London that appeared in the London Chronicle and finally brought into the light of public attention an entire layer of society that had gone unnoticed until his stories gave them substance and visibility; or Joseph P. Lyford's "The Airtight Cage" and "The Talk in Vandalia" in the 1960's that changed Americans' views about the reality of poverty by the accumulation of minute detail and analysis of daily urban and rural life.

The kind of narratives once only possible in book-length presentation can now more immediately inform audiences in ways that allow the public to enter into the stories that help them discover realities more exciting, more engaging, and more rewarding than any artificially induced world. These kind of public affairs narratives could be utilized by our audiences to create new communities of interest that the sudden renewal of concern about the plight of poor Americans in New Orleans after Katrina clearly suggest are possible.

Think of the ways other institutions have learned to use technology to create new audiences. Major League Baseball and the National Football League are creating a new generation of fans by helping them interact with their own teams and leagues. Theirs is a world of fantasy, but is it possible we could imagine coverage of public affairs

in a way that allows our audiences to use verified information to engage effectively in self governance? Can we imagine coverage of foreign aid that allows our audiences to track what is sent, where and how it is used?

What I am talking about is the kind of engaging, verified information that helps the public resist the messages of fear and self-indulgence they receive so frequently from the popular culture: These messages of fear and self-indulgence are ones that favor a passive, not an engaged and alert, public.

This new Information Age calls for a new journalism that recognizes that to assure that our principles and purpose do not disappear we adjust to those things irrevocably changed by the new technology. This journalism must recognize that the distribution, the organization, and the sources of our work must change.

In June 1997, a group of 25 journalists met at Harvard to organize the Committee of Concerned Journalists (CCJ). In our statement of shared purpose, here is what those journalists said defines our work: "The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need in order to make informed judgments in a self-governing society."

Since then the CCJ has been engaged in training in newsrooms around the country to help journalists think more critically about how and whether the techniques they employ are working to achieve the purpose of journalism. As citizens become more proactive consumers, journalism must help equip them for that role and not continue to see them as a passive audience. Unless journalists can develop tools to do this, we will abdicate the role we once held—to provide the raw material of self-government. If, and only if, we can accompany citizens as they move into cyberspace will we be able to justify the hope placed in the press by Antoine Nicolas de Condorcet in 1794, when he wrote while in hiding from the Jacobin revolutionaries who would murder him, "We have now a Tribune ... whose scrutiny it is difficult to elude and whose verdict it is impossible to evade." ■

Journalism and Web 2.0

‘Tomorrow’s potential readers are using the Web in ways we can hardly imagine, and if we want to remain significant for them, we need to understand how.’

By Francis Pisani

YouTube.com, the Web site where people freely upload and view video of all sorts, has nothing to do with journalism as we know it, but it can teach journalists a couple of things that we ought to learn.¹ It reveals how many people have broadband and provides a good sense of how many people produce and publish “content.” It teaches us, too, about the increasing number of people who seem more interested in seeking out this view of the world rather than what journalists offer. If we want to reach these same people, we’d better find out what it is about, understand it, and react accordingly.

Web 2.0 is a catch phrase created after the dot-com crash to capture the dynamic capabilities and vision of the Web when many had lost hope in its potential. There is no towering new technology to consider, so the new experience comes mainly from “mash-ups,” the mixing of applications and/or content from different sources to create new services.² The experience is significantly different, though, and journalists need to learn a lot more about it, if only to figure out effective ways to use it to do the work they do.

Though Web 2.0’s definition remains in flux, its broad elements include these:

Platform: The Web is the platform through which nearly everything can be done: e-mail, document writing and sharing, commercial transactions,

phone communication, and much more.

Receive/publish/modify: The platform allows interaction; once information is received or found, conversation begins. Users comment and they upload their own words onto blogs and wikis; they might even modify the platform itself.

Broadband: The number of people whose computers have “big pipes” always turned on, and through which images, music and video can be transmitted, is on a rapid rise.

Contributions: Broadband makes using the “read/write/program” capacity of the platform easier. This means more people are willing to share what they have with others.

Network effects: Contributions build to create a sum of knowledge greater than its parts. Companies and technologies harness “user generated content” and develop business opportunities. This changes the nature of knowledge, suggesting the potential to harness collective intelligence.

Journalism and Web 2.0

Change starts at the edges. That’s where people—our readers and viewers—probe new practices. That’s also where their emerging culture is forming, a culture in which they look at media from a different perspective. And

so journalists’ new thinking needs to begin at the periphery, where change comes quickly among the younger generation of users, and a lot more slowly for us. Tomorrow’s potential readers are using the Web in ways we can hardly imagine, and if we want to remain significant for them, we need to understand how. Yet news organizations have been all too slow to notice movement in places that are away from what has been their center.

Start with the search engines. A significant part of the traffic of news Web sites comes from them; people arrive at a story without going through any of the thoughtful editorial organization usually put in place by editors. For the same reason, the content that is kept behind pay-walls is not indexed and, therefore, does not exist.

Craigslist.org, with its free online classifieds, siphons key revenue sources away from newspapers. But journalists can learn lessons there, too, from the way in which content is generated. Users place on the site what they have to offer, using a multimedia format if they desire and without limitation of space. Interactive software facilitates group creation that, in turn, contributes to brand recognition and people traffic.

Wikipedia.org demonstrates that access to information and the capacity to publish are no longer the privilege of a select few. The tendency to produce errors is compensated by the capacity to correct them, or so the thinking goes. This dynamic approach offers context

¹ Founded in February 2005, YouTube delivered more than 100 million video views by mid-2006 and was bought by Google for \$1.65 billion on October 9, 2006.

² One of the more well-known examples is HousingMaps (www.housingmaps.com) which brings information about houses for rent or sale from craigslist and puts them on Google Maps.

quickly, and with hyperlinks there is instantaneous access to in-depth information, an aspect of storytelling that news companies tend to ignore. (Information about the structure of the World Trade Center towers and a documented hypothesis about their collapse on September 11, 2001 were first published on this site.)

Google News, Yahoo! News, Wiki-news—sites that attract hundreds of millions of users—have their own news offerings that challenge traditional media. And Craig Newmark (craigslist's founder) is one of the nonprofit funders involved with NewAssignment.net, a reporting partnership among reporters and editors and citizen journalists. [See article by Newmark on page 25.]

A plethora of lesser-known Web sites also allow users to handle information in ways that go far beyond the one-way approach of traditional media.

- At del.icio.us readers share articles by tagging them and setting them “free” for others to read. This “folksonomy” replaces traditional taxonomies, and it substitutes for work normally done by editors.
- At Digg.com articles are submitted and voted on by readers. Winners move to the top of the screen.
- NewsVine.com adds the option for users to write their own articles.
- Wikio.com is designed to be a kind of integrated Google News + Google Reader (an “aggregator for dummies”) that pulls together stories from traditional news media and blogs. Users create word associations with personalized tags.
- Socializing in blogs. A small button dragged to the browser toolbar allows the user who reads an interesting article to “sphere it,” and thereby gain access to other articles or blog entries about the same topic. This provides a range of opinions and information to the user, adding the dimension of diversity to move beyond the journalistic benchmarks of

objectivity, balance and fairness.

- ChicagoCrime.org is a mash-up that puts crime-related information coming from the police department on a Google map. It can be browsed by street, ward, zip code, types of crime, and news stories.
- In Eugene, Oregon the Chambers neighborhood (www.cnrneighbors.org) used the Web to fight a development project with maps, pictures and 3-D images. Journalists can take ideas from this experience that can help them approach “coverage” of a local issue of intense interest to a community.
- At NewsTrust.net, still in pilot mode,

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



This 1990 Toshiba laptop was used by John Burns of The New York Times to cover assignments in Bosnia. *Newseum collection/gift, John Fisher Burns/Courtesy Newseum.*

volunteers “help people identify quality journalism—or ‘news you can trust.’” News is rated based on journalistic quality, not just popularity, and comes from hundreds of alternative and mainstream sources.

These sites—and thousands of others—affect journalism profoundly. Multimedia presentation replaces storytelling that has taken place in just one medium. The issues involving story selection, organization and presentation become preeminent in a time when the phenomenal growth

of blogs, moblogs, vlogs, stories told through maps (43places.com) or games (kumawar.com) cannot be ignored.

At the same time, the role of editors is under attack from three sides. On Google News and on sites such as Le Monde.fr, algorithms are used to redistribute stories onto the home page. Search engines direct readers to articles, effectively bypassing editors' guidance and, with RSS and aggregators, users grab what they want from sources they fancy and organize them in personalized spaces like NetVibes.com and tag them, too.

The wildness of the Web means that news organizations must format their content on all kind of platforms and for all kinds of devices—hoping to capture the attention of users, wherever they are, and however they want to interact with the information. Today, users expect to engage the journalist directly and to “be” journalists, too. Although citizen journalism is still looking for viable formulas, it is clear that journalism, as Dan Gillmor likes to say, is now less of a lecture and more a conversation.

Signs of such change abound. Madrid's El País makes it simple for readers to report an error. Next to its list of links of most recommended stories, Le Monde's site displays recent comments about articles. Clarin.com (Buenos Aires) lets users select the sections they want on the home page. The BBC has a special page on which people can upload pictures, stories and comments, and Korea's OhMyNews's online example of citizen-generated news coverage is spreading fast.³ Journalists will have to learn to practice their trade with the same rigor and demanding values in a much humbler manner.

What's Ahead?

Blogs, forums and readers' polls are ubiquitous, and the list of Web experimentation is as lengthy as it is prudent. But despite these reactive activities, a successful transition for journalism is

³ A list of such initiatives can be found at www.cyberjournalist.net/cyberjournalists.php

far from guaranteed. During a recent panel discussion about the new media business, Gillmorspoke for many when he raised the specter of a “complete unraveling of business models for traditional journalism.” Others spoke of the extreme slowness of the responses by traditional media. Yet all seemed to agree that no clear business model exists for the Web as a platform for the practice of journalism.

A new news ecosystem has to evolve, adapted to the multifaceted participation of people who not long ago were called an audience. Just this adjustment in language indicates the enormity of the cultural changes underway. Confidence in many public and private institutions has also diminished—in some cases, been lost—and people use technological tools to do

for themselves what distrusted institutions, such as the press, once did for them. Yet journalists can have a hard time understanding this shift—and the diminishment of trust with which their work is viewed—since many see themselves as critics of some of these institutions, too.

Journalists want to hold tightly to their ethics and standards, yet they also realize that a business model must support their enterprise. The real difficulty is that the broad participation of others through Web 2.0 challenge journalists’ share of the power they once held as conveyors of news and information as much as it does their ethics and sustainability. Their ideas will continue to bring change from the edges that will affect the work of journalists, as blogs did when they first ap-

peared on the media’s margins before being adopted by many mainstream news organizations. But change does not need to happen in this way. Rather than assuming a defensive position to these challenges, journalists ought to join in conversation with those who aren’t trained as we are and find ways to help them understand and acquire the values and skills that make what we do socially useful. ■

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NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Francis Luis Mora. “Morning News” (circa 1912). Oil on panel, 11 3/4 x 16 inches. San Diego Museum of Art. Bequest of Mrs. Henry A. Everett. From “The Newspaper in Art,” Shaun O’L. Higgins, Colleen Striegel, and Garry Apgar, plate 153, page 139.

Gathering Voices to Share With a Worldwide Online Audience

‘Global Voices pulls together interesting threads of conversation and reporting from the global cacophony of blogging voices.’

By Rebecca MacKinnon and Ethan Zuckerman

On Thursday, September 21st, “gnarlykitty” wrote on her blog from Bangkok: “Looks like things are getting back to normal, despite the country being under Martial Law. One new little change that this law brought us is the whole new level of censorship. No political gathering, no discussing politics, and of course no voicing your opinions whatsoever about the whole mumbo jumbo coup. (Oops did I just do that?)”

The next day gnarlykitty decided to check out an anticoup protest she had learned about from another blog—“Just to observe, I swear.” Upon returning she posted photos of a mob of what seemed to be several dozen journalists “all over the Guy With Mask and his crew,” and she linked to an Associated Press story on the International Herald Tribune Web site with the headline, “More than 100 people in Thai capital protest coup as undemocratic.” That story made no mention of there being many times more members of the news media present than protesters. Gnarlykitty let readers draw their conclusions from what she showed them.

This 20-year-old college student describes herself as being a “shopaholic, mobile phone dependent,” among other things. Her audience usually consists of people who know her—though not all live in Thailand—and she tends to write about gadgets she covets, videos of bands she likes, accounts of nights out clubbing in Bangkok, and complaints about school. But on September 19th, 2006, when the Thai military



Courtesy Newseum.

staged a coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, gnarlykitty became one of several English-language blogs providing firsthand accounts—in nearly real time—of what it feels like to live through a military coup.

Bloggers throughout the world discovered gnarlykitty’s words through blogs linked to friends, who linked to others, and who linked to her in a viral spread of links. Those who wanted to learn more about Bangkok’s situation that day found her blog through search engines. Soon journalists were quoting her posts and asking her to get more information.

Being an Eyewitness Blogger

Contrary to the fears of some news editors, most bloggers don’t set out to challenge news organizations for mass audiences. Most are like gnarlykitty: people who write (or post photos, video or audio) online to share their lives and interests with friends and family. Many others, including us, use personal blogs to share ideas and brainstorm with circles of colleagues and peers who are interested in similar subjects or issues—topics that tend not to be a focus of mainstream media stories.

Bloggers with small readerships occasionally find themselves in the midst of an event of great interest to millions—a tsunami, hurricane, coup or war. Or “niche bloggers,” who are experts on topics such as constitutional law, computer typeface (as happened during the CBS “Rathergate” blog storm), seismology or avian flu that suddenly emerge as being important to large numbers of people, might start reaching an international audience of hundreds of thousands. What happens next can be interesting to observe.

With gnarlykitty’s blog, her site’s sudden spike in traffic brought her many new readers who held different expectations than her usual audience. Yet she refused to change her chatty style or her pink-themed background. Feeling pressure to be something she didn’t want to be, five days after writing her first words about the coup, she found it necessary to “clarify some stuff”:

“... I am no expert at the subject (Coup, or politics in general). I don’t even know how to use some of the terms to identify those ‘officials’ in Thai or even in English. But the reason why I am blogging about this is that it is the least I can do to help report what is really going on while other channels of communications are altered, tampered, or even stopped. Over here in Thailand, to tell you the truth, there really isn’t much going around because all sources are monitored, some censored, by this new Martial Law.

“So I apologise [sic] if I cannot fully answer your questions about the Coup, or have a more ‘professional’ looking blog. I know people are coming here from all sorts of directions and I thank you all so much for linking but I’m just a girl who’s trying to graduate so she can get out of this big mess of a country, or at least get out there to help try to improve it.”

Apart from these accidental mass-audience bloggers, there are now tens of thousands of “bridge bloggers,” who blog routinely about events happening around them for a broad global audience. Perhaps the first bridge blogger discovered by the news media was a young Iraqi architect using the pen name “Salam Pax,” who offered powerful firsthand, “nonprofessional” accounts in English of living through the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Today, voices in the thriving blogospheres of Cambodia, Kenya, Jordan and China (to name just a few) engage with and, at times, challenge the reporting coming from wire services and foreign correspondents; these bloggers also serve as alternative voices to the customary news media coverage in these nations.

Mahmood Al-Yousif, an engineer living in Bahrain, wrote a biting (often bordering on sarcastic) analysis on his blog (Mahmood’s Den) about his country’s parliamentary elections in November. Details on his blog were not available in the English-language

Western press, and the frankness of his analysis was in stark contrast to the tone of Bahrain’s official English-language news sources. He earns no money from his blog, yet his words allow him to participate in his region’s political discourse, and they create a necessary bridge between East and West. As he tells readers who come to his blog, “Now I try to dispel the image that Muslims and Arabs suffer from—mostly by our own doing I have to say—in the rest of the world.”

The Role of Global Voices

For journalists, blogs are tempting sources of good information. But it can be challenging to try to find those with reliable information about news events, the political climate or social issues, especially when a story breaks. Even at less demanding moments, reporters wonder how to find time to track hundreds of relevant blogs.

Global Voices¹ pulls together interesting threads of conversation and reporting from the global cacophony of blogging voices. It provides a handy daily guide to online words, images, video and audio selected from various “citizen media” (primarily blogs) whose home is outside of North America and Western Europe. Our nonprofit project is hosted by Harvard Law School’s Berkman Center for Internet & Society and this year won Knight-Batten’s Innovations in Journalism award.²

The Web site evolved organically in the wake of a modest gathering of bridge bloggers from various parts of the world—Kenya, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Latvia and elsewhere—in December 2004. Our team of 10 part-time blogger-editors—hired because each is a respected blogger in his/her regional “blogosphere”—selects interesting and pertinent blog posts. They also oversee the work of about 60 bloggers, all volunteers to this project, who contribute lengthier posts about what bloggers in their countries

are buzzing about. Seven multilingual bloggers translate content from blogs written in Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian into English.

Every post published at Global Voices, an “edited aggregator” of blog content, is tagged with labels identifying the country and topic. This allows visitors to the site to easily locate what they are looking for. What bloggers post is published by us under a Creative Commons license, and we encourage other blogs and Web sites to republish it as long as they link back to Global Voices and also credit the original source. Sharing our content as widely as possible is consistent with our mission, which is to get developing world voices heard by as many in the developed world as possible. [See Global Voices Manifesto, written by the meeting’s participants, on page 47.]

We do this work because we don’t believe enough people in the West—especially in the Western media—make enough effort to listen to or report on developing world perspectives. On a given day, CNN.com is 12 times as likely to have a story from Japan as it does from Nigeria, even though the countries have similar-sized populations. With the closure of overseas news bureaus, the vast majority of developing world coverage comes from nations where Western powers are militarily entangled. Developing nations not in conflict—specifically not in conflict with the U.S. or European countries—see little or no media attention unless they’re affected by natural disaster.³

While Global Voices aims to redress news media imbalances, our community of bloggers is not seeking to supplant the mainstream media. We think this site can help journalists to forge new synergies between their reporting of events and conversations taking place on the Web. It is with this intent that the global news agency, Reuters, has become a key Global Voices

¹ globalvoicesonline.org

² www.j-lab.org/ba06finalists.shtml

³ See Ethan Zuckerman’s Fall 2004 Nieman Reports article at www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/04-3NRfall/51-54V58N3.pdf

The Global Voices Manifesto

We believe in free speech: in protecting the right to speak—and the right to listen. We believe in universal access to the tools of speech.

To that end, we seek to enable everyone who wants to speak to have the means to speak—and everyone who wants to hear that speech, the means to listen to it.

Thanks to new tools, speech need no longer be controlled by those who own the means of publishing and distribution, or by governments that would restrict thought and communication. Now, anyone can wield the power of the press. Everyone can tell their stories to the world.

We seek to build bridges across the gulfs that divide people, so as to

understand each other more fully. We seek to work together more effectively and act more powerfully.

We believe in the power of direct connection. The bond between individuals from different worlds is personal, political and powerful. We believe conversation across boundaries is essential to a future that is free, fair, prosperous and sustainable—for all citizens of this planet.

While we continue to work and speak as individuals, we also seek to identify and promote our shared interests and goals. We pledge to respect, assist, teach, learn from, and listen to one another.

We are Global Voices. ■

funder. Breaking news coverage on Reuters.com increasingly includes a special section on the Web page inviting readers to “see what bloggers are saying” about what Reuters journalists are covering.

As Global Voices evolves, we see in

the global blogosphere the emergence of a new kind of media ecosystem, in which journalists, bloggers and creators of online citizen media increasingly co-exist in beneficial and complementary ways. The Internet changed something fundamental about the way people can

learn about events and people who live on the other side of the world. In the past, a businesswoman in Boise, Idaho depended on journalists to tell her what her counterparts in Kenya might be thinking about. So when reporters couldn't be bothered to interview professional Kenyan women, she might not ever discover that women white-collar professionals exist even in Kenya. Now a Kenyan lawyer, such as Ory Okolloh (a.k.a. the “Kenyan Pundit”), speaks directly via inexpensive, easy-to-use blogging software, as the Internet spreads rapidly into the developing world.

This should not be viewed as a bloggers vs. journalists' zero-sum game. Both can win when we keep the goal in mind—of increasing access to international journalism. When journalism, in whatever venue it is practiced, serves the public discourse well, it does so by offering people what they need to make informed choices. Bridge bloggers such as Okolloh, Al-Yousif, and gnarlykitty contribute by offering valuable perspectives of those who live in the midst of events that journalists tend to report about—or should be reporting about. An important question for journalists to consider in this new digital era is whether and how they can improve the job they do by listening more closely as people speak out of their experiences, with each other and to the global community. It just might be time for journalists to incorporate these new global voices into their storytelling. ■

Rebecca MacKinnon and Ethan Zuckerman are cofounders of Global Voices and are research fellows at Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society. Zuckerman focuses on information technology in the developing world. He is cofounder of Geekcorps, a global technology volunteer corps. MacKinnon is a former CNN bureau chief in Beijing and Tokyo who has spent the past two years examining how blogs and citizen media are changing journalism. In January she will join the journalism faculty at the University of Hong Kong.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



People reading the newspaper on Broadway in New York City. 1861. Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.

Blogging News in China

‘In China, the Internet enjoys relatively greater freedom than other media. Even so, three of the articles I posted on my blog vanished without notice.’

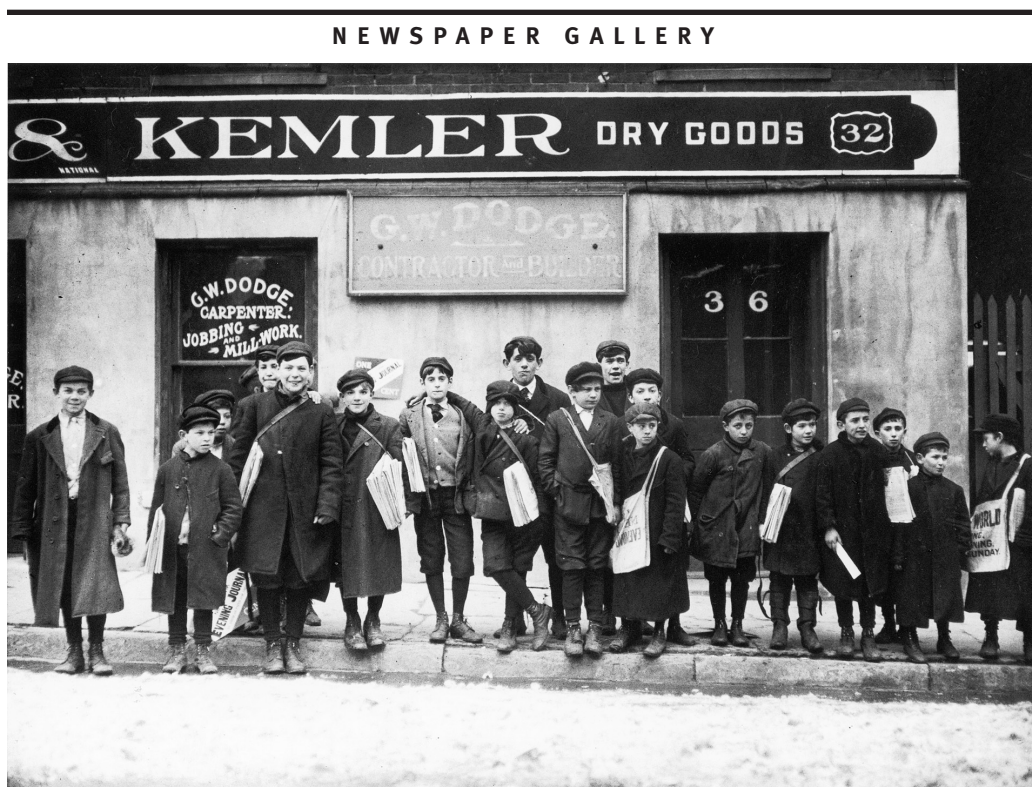
By Luwei (Rose) Luqiu

In November 2005, a friend who works for Sina, one of the three major Web portals¹ in China, invited me to write a blog on the site. As executive news editor of a very well respected television channel in China—Phoenix Satellite Television, based in Hong Kong—I was very reluctant to accept her offer. But given our friendship, I e-mailed her two articles I’d written for a Chinese newspaper, one about U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s visit to China and the other one about the bird flu. I was unwilling to waste time learning how to make a blog work, so I asked her to just post them on a blog they created for me.

The next day, I opened my blog. I was astonished; my blog already had 80,000 hits and 100 comments. The reaction to what I’d written was universally positive. And my words were sparking debates about some of the points I’d made, and these debates were taking place right on my blog. For me, it was love at first sight; I loved my blog’s interactivity, something traditional media were not able to offer. I named it “Rose Garden” and started to write on it nearly every other day. By now I have more than two million regular readers, and some get a lot of their words into my blog by regularly posting their comments.

What’s been created is a small (or maybe not so small) community.

The news programs I oversee are among the most heavily watched on Phoenix TV, where I’ve worked for



Newsboys return unsold Sunday papers. Many of them had been out since 5 and 6 a.m.. Hartford, Connecticut. March 1909. Photo by Lewis W. Hine/Courtesy Bob Giles.

almost 10 years. Our programs are available to those living in Southern China, and the Chinese government allows them to be watched by those who stay in high-priced hotels (primarily populated by foreigners) and in residential buildings where foreigners live in China. Our audience in China numbers more than 100 million people. This privately owned, 24-hour news channel also reaches Chinese who pick up the signal by satellite in countries around the world. Those who watch it tell us they turn to it for its more objective and balanced presentation and faster delivery than state-owned TV channels.

Even the top Chinese leaders have told people that they watch it every day.

What I’ve discovered is that my blog offers people without access to my programs a way to be connected with news. Among Sina’s more than 3,000 blogs (some of them written by China’s celebrities), mine is the only one focused on analyzing news and political affairs, domestic and international. Perhaps this is what helps my blog to be among the portal’s top 100 favorites. I try to give this community detailed information—background stories behind news—along with my point of view. On my blog, I am able

¹ The other two big ones are Sohu and Netease.

to go beyond the limitation of time I have on my TV programs. On it, I also have more freedom and can receive immediate feedback.

During my time at the TV station, I have gone with almost all of China's top leaders when they have visited foreign countries. At the end of 2005, during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting, I wrote in my blog about what I'd seen and heard and felt during my trip there with Chinese President Hu Jintao. My words attracted a very large volume of traffic to my blog and taught me that people are bored by typical reports that come from traditional (and in the case of China, official) media.

What interests them are the more human aspects of their government leaders—forbidden ground in China's news media. When I wrote columns for a newspaper in China,

I was told not to write anything about the leaders. Hong Kong's news media, including Phoenix, had fewer restrictions of this sort, but with limited airtime and not a lot of pictures, I was not able to tell some of the more vivid stories from this trip. On my blog, I could, and did so with words and photographs I took.

In China, the Internet enjoys relatively greater freedom than other media. Even so, three articles I posted on my blog vanished without notice. The Sina editor told me the government's Internet monitors took them away. This also happened with my blog on the Phoenix Web site, where sometimes I've not been able even to post my article. The editor at Phoenix told me this was because of a key word search that revealed my piece, and this is also how those other articles disappeared.

What's written on blogs can also lead me to news stories. Only a few days after I started my blog, someone in the city of Harbin wrote the following message to me: "It was rumored that the city government was going to shut down the water supply and people started to panic." These words reminded me of the explosion in a refinery plant at the neighboring city about 10 days earlier

and how they might have caused the river to become polluted. I checked with my local contacts, and they confirmed that the local government issued the notice but without giving a reason. I sent a crew to the scene, and the result was a big story that we broadcast long before other media were reporting about this disaster. Only after China's official news media, Xinhua, confirmed the pollution later that day did other news media go with the story.

According to organizations in China that track the growth of Internet use and blogging there, close to 125 million people use the Internet and, by the end of summer, bloggers were said

... some in China use blogs to release the kind of information usually handled by journalists.

to be reaching 75 million of them. As happens everywhere, most people who blog express their thoughts and describe their lives, but some in China use blogs to release the kind of information usually handled by journalists.

Blogs, News and China

Some people believe that with a blog anyone can do a reporter's job and do it with greater speed and more firsthand information. From what I've observed, bloggers can provide a lot of information and sometimes give clues that will lead to a big story, but few bloggers have the time and sources to go further with the reporting; often they also lack the ability to be a neutral observer, as journalists try to be.

My experience has shown me the value of having a blog featured on a well-respected and popular portal. With one of my recent articles, before Sina put the article on its front page only 2,000 visitors had seen it. Within two days, it received 80,000 hits.

Phoenix TV launched my blog on its portal in March as a way of attracting more hits and more advertisements. (News video produced by Phoenix can go on my blog, whereas on Sina

it is still only text and images because Sina hasn't launched video and audio uploads for its bloggers.) For Phoenix TV, my blog serves another function: On it, I can extend my reporting—for example, by writing about political leaders, the Cultural Revolution, and even the debate about democracy (subjects not permitted by China's press authorities in traditional media). To do this, however, I need to try to skip using certain key words in my writing. And sometimes other bloggers and Web sites will link to them.

Although Phoenix is based in Hong Kong, the company decided to put the portal server in mainland China; by doing this, the speed is faster for those who reside in China. But that means the Web site must obey the government's regulations, just as other local portals

do. These regulations don't give the Web site's reporters or anyone (other than Xinhua reporters) the right to conduct interviews; only Xinhua stories and quotes from other print media's stories can be used (and what is used must fall within the regulations). But on my blog, I am able to write about and show video from news I report, even in some cases when, for some reason, the story did not appear on our TV programs.

We are left to wonder whether in the near future China will allow citizen-journalism Web enterprises like Korea's OhMyNews to exist. If so, Chinese people would have more access to information about what is happening in their country and in the world. However, the restrictive changes Chinese officials recently instituted for the news media—both domestic and foreign—indicate they fear the power and the influence of the Internet. ■

Luwei (Rose) Luqiu, a 2007 Nieman Fellow, is executive news editor of Phoenix Satellite Television. Her blogs, in Chinese, can be found at <http://blog.sina.com.cn/m/luqiuluwei> and <http://blog.phoenixtv.com/user1/roseluqiui/index.html>

Puzzling Contradictions of China's Internet Journalism

A journalist who has worked in China says that 'the Internet has strengthened the power of the central government, not undermined it.'

By Fons Tuinstra

Look at the Chinese news media through Western eyes, and the view can be depressing. What dominates most of the West's news coverage about Chinese journalists are stories about reporters being brought into court and incarcerated and censorship of new media that appears to constrain rather than enlarge the realm of free speech in China. Fortunately, this perspective offers a limited view of the revolutionary changes China's news media are experiencing. In China, as in so many places throughout the world, the key propulsion for the enormous change is the Internet. That the pace of change doesn't match expectations of the digital vanguard, which predicted that authoritarian regimes would fall like autumn leaves, does not mean that the Internet in China is not profoundly reshaping its media terrain.

When I settled at the East China Normal University in Shanghai in the summer of 1994 to prepare myself for a stay as a foreign correspondent in China, my most important communication tool was my bicycle. The Internet was unknown. To send a fax abroad would cost \$15 for the first page, and mobile phones were also outrageously expensive. Chinese news media only brought forth boring propaganda. With a hundred other foreign students I shared two phone lines to the world outside Shanghai, and that was only if the moody telephone operator was not just enjoying her lunch, her lengthy afternoon nap, or just busy talking to another colleague. Conversations, she told us, should be held in Chinese or English, so she could improve her own language skills. If you spoke another

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



A man reads a newspaper while on a commuter train to New York City from Westport, Connecticut. Fall 1941. Photo by John Collier. Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.

language she would turn up her radio so loudly that any conversation would be impossible.

International newspapers were delivered—wrapped in brown bags so nobody else could read them—two to three days after they'd appeared elsewhere in the world. For this delivery, I

was charged an outrageous surcharge by the government department with a monopoly of importing foreign newspapers. The one Reuters correspondent in town had just purchased a direct computer connection to the Shanghai stock exchange, so he didn't need to spend hours in transport. The

device did not work.

The main source of information—and entertainment—for us was the rumor machine. Just like the Chinese students, I learned the art of picking up rumors and passing them on. With ample ways to get these rumors confirmed, corroborated or denied, passing them on was the most interesting activity at the campus. Fact checking would kill almost any good rumor, so people didn't do that, even when they could. One rumor being spread around at campus—true in this case—was that I was a journalist. After a few weeks at the campus I was approached by a Chinese student who said he had heard the rumor. I confirmed the story.

"Then you must be interested in meeting a real dissident," he said.

I was. In those post-Tiananmen years dissent was the most important subject for my foreign colleagues in Beijing. Shanghai's economic changes were in a very early stage and offered few interesting angles. Political activists in Shanghai mostly bought a one-way ticket to Beijing to pursue their activities in the capital. So I gladly agreed to meet our local dissident.

He was a rather young assistant professor in Chinese literature. At the massive student demonstrations in Shanghai in 1989 he had been one of the leaders. Unlike Beijing, Shanghai—where the demonstrations ended without violence—officials only rounded up the leaders of the unrest a few years after 1989. My assistant professor was jailed for some time and had returned to his old campus a few years earlier where he now taught literature in what seemed a dead-end job. He was loved by his students, since he read sexually explicit poems from the classics and was famous for an endless string of affairs with female students.

After a short handshake he exploded in a 30-minute exposé, denouncing the government, attacking its human rights record, lack of openness and democracy, almost without taking a breath. He did not often have this kind of opportunity to unburden himself of his beliefs and feelings in front of a foreign journalist. "Was this what you

expected?" he asked me with a smile when he had finished.

He let me ask some questions. I discovered that day just how isolated my Shanghai dissident was. Few people at the university, apart from his students, dared to talk to him about anything more than the weather. There was no network he belonged to. Apart from some direct family members, he was not supported by anybody. He was as isolated, well, as isolated as I was on my bicycle riding around the city and probably like others among the 1.3 billion Chinese.

An Internet Hoax in China

Move the clock 12 years ahead, to 2006. More than 125 million Chinese are online. That is less than 10 percent of its total population, but in the larger cities the percentage exceeds half of all households. More than 500 million mobile phone numbers have been issued, and each year billions of short messages are being exchanged. China is at the brink of yet another communication revolution as the third generation mobile phones will allow wireless broadband access, a move that might likely double the number of people with broadband Internet access in five to 10 years time.

On March 8, 2006 I woke up on another continent, in Brussels, and checked my e-mail and RSS-reader. The mailing list of Global Voices, a project of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School, let me know that the government's Internet authorities had possibly closed down three Weblogs, written by Chinese journalists, who use them to circulate stories they cannot get published in the heavily censored traditional media. [See article about Global Voices on page 45.]

A string of e-mails emerged a few hours after the blogs disappeared. While I made an entry on my own blog, others did the same, and soon news of this event raced around the globe. Reuters and the BBC started to file stories later that day. Reporters Sans Frontières in Paris, an NGO focusing on press freedom, issued an angry press

release denouncing Chinese censorship on the Internet.

But before I went to bed, the blogs reappeared on the Internet. It turned out that these Chinese journalists played a practical joke on the Western news media, as they later told us, misusing what they regard as the Western obsession with censorship on the Internet in China. Only later did they learn that such humor is not appreciated when it crosses cultural boundaries. But from my perspective, a prescient event had taken place in these 24 hours, for the episode offered a snapshot of the Internet's powerful position in China.

The Internet affects not only how journalists are able to collect and distribute their information, but also the ways in which media function. Even editors, like Li Datong of Freezing Point, who was removed by party authorities from his job in part because of a critical internal memo he wrote and published on the Internet (before it was censored), remain optimistic. (Not only did Li Datong lose his editor's position, but also Freezing Point was closed—then reopened—by Communist party officials.) According to journalist Philip J. Cunningham who wrote in *Nieman Reports* (Summer 2006) after meeting with Li Datong, this Chinese journalist believes that "China's press is freer than ever while paradoxically it remains as under control as ever. One way to illustrate this is an expanding balloon marked by a design that gets bigger as the balloon gets bigger."

Government Oversight

In its early days the Internet was seen—mistakenly in my opinion—as a tool that could undermine the sitting powers and change the political situation in China. My sense now is that the opposite is the case: The Internet has strengthened the power of the central government, not undermined it. I say this because for the first time in China's history the central government has a popular and relatively easy means of eavesdropping on what is happening and being said in their country.

From its first discussions about the Internet in the early 1990's, China's bureaucracy has been heavily divided about this new media tool. Departments focused on economic development saw the need to invest heavily in the rollout of the Internet. Without this online technology, China would not be able to develop economically, they argued. In the end, the central government supported their position, despite fierce opposition from the more security-oriented departments, which viewed their task as keeping a lid on the societal tensions. This job, as they saw it, would be heavily challenged by the Internet.

This internal power struggle still plays a critical role in the exchanges among competing bureaucracies. And a basic knowledge of this power struggle is necessary to better understand the often conflicting signals that arise out of China—on one hand, journalists are jailed while, on the other hand, a sense of personal freedom seems rapidly to be emerging. What might be difficult for us in the West to comprehend, but which I've come to understand after years of living and working in China,

is that when Chinese citizens engage with the Internet they do so not in fear of what the government might learn, but knowing that what they are doing offers them a powerful new way to reach the government.

The central government, and more and more provincial governments, monitor closely what is happening on the Internet. They do this to control its content, but also to listen carefully to the increasingly powerful voice of their online citizens. In this way the Chinese Internet fits very well into the long-standing tradition of other media by acting as a negotiation tool between the state and its citizens. Unlike Western media, China's media have never been and are not perceived by its audiences as an independent constituency.

The Chinese government regards the Internet, as it does other media, as a way to relate to its citizens. Too much censorship would serve only to cripple the very useful function of the Internet for the government. Like other media channels, the Internet is more often seen as an extension of the government than as a meeting place for opposition. Chinese Internet users

are neither amazed nor shocked that their government tries to control these new media just as they've controlled forms of media that have come before. Rather, they tend to see this control as an inherent part of their reality—and most of them would rather look for ways to deal with it than have their energy consumed by opposing it.

The hoax in March reminded us of how we tend to rush to judgment when what we think is happening fits conveniently into our worldview. But nothing is quite so straightforward in China when it comes to the interaction of new media and old politics. For those trying to understand what journalism's future might be like in China, the ones who bring a willingness to look beyond where Western eyes usually look are most likely to unearth the story. ■

Fons Tuinstra, a former foreign correspondent, is a Shanghai-based Internet entrepreneur and consultant focusing on new and old media, the Internet, telecom and China-related policy issues.

Will News Find a Home on YouTube?

With little original news reporting surfacing on this Web site, 'perhaps an important lesson learned is that tools don't make a tradesman.'

By Morris Jones

The success of YouTube has amazed a media world already acclimated to the hyperbole of the Internet's developing traffic patterns. This free online hosting service for video clips established itself quickly as the leading platform for this next wave of personal online activity. By offering a quick and easy way for citizen videographers to post whatever they shoot, and with broadband access expanding, uploading video to YouTube is now as common as starting a Weblog. It's little wonder that Google, despite its own might, decided to simply buy

YouTube rather than try to compete with it.

Millions of people have digital video cameras, either as stand-alone devices or as part of their digital cameras and cell phones. If a person is in the right place at the right time, what gets on video—and gets sent to YouTube—can entertain millions and/or it can propel a news story into the mainstream press. (Witness the person whose camera captured the campaign-stop remarks of Virginia Senator George Allen when he referred to a campaign worker affiliated with his opponent as "macaca.")

And it was the South Asian tsunami in December 2004 and the London underground bombings in July 2005 that demonstrated the potential for video of significant events to be recorded by amateurs in ways that the mainstream media couldn't duplicate.

Such is the buzz about YouTube, at least, among new media proponents. In practice, however, it's hard to find examples of high-quality amateur news on YouTube. In fact, the majority of content on YouTube is fairly trivial. Most of the clips have nothing to do with news. What news is to be found

on YouTube consists of clips recorded from mainstream news broadcasts and reproduced on the site; highlights from Jon Stewart's punditry on his satirical "Daily Show" rank high on the listing of what's popular. The standard fare seems focused mostly on gory voyeurism such as police shootings and footage of burning buildings, which appear occasionally in a raw, unedited format.

At times, however, videos show newsworthy events that have not found—and are likely not to find—their way to regular news reporting. For example, the actions of paramilitary groups in South America can be witnessed, and in one instance this fall, the posting of a video showing the sniper-like shooting to death of young Tibetan pilgrims on the Nangpa La Pass (at China's border with Nepal) by Chinese soldiers reverberated across other Web sites and into the press. Video images of these murders pushed the Chinese government to acknowledge the deaths; the official news service in China claimed the soldiers were "forced to defend themselves," yet the video clearly disputes this claim. It is certainly true that some videos are placed on YouTube by activists promoting their interests, yet the content can be interesting—and, at times, even significant—even if it is not a news report.

While it is true that most people will never witness anything as newsworthy as the London bombings, plenty of newsworthy events happen throughout the world each day. Yet such footage fails to show up on YouTube with any consistency. Does this indicate that YouTube might be another example of new media technology that has the power to transform newsgathering and news distribution but is, for whatever reason, failing to do so?

There have been trends like this before on the Internet. Free Web hosting services provided the opportunity to turn anyone—and everyone—into publishers, cheaply and easily. But when one looks at what's happened in that sphere, relatively few amateurs are taking the fork in the road that heads in the direction of reporting

news. Blogging—the next big trend for online publishing—is even easier than the work involved in updating a Web page, but it has generated a stream of self-styled commentators and pundits.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



This Kodak digital camera was used by a Time magazine photographer during the coverage of the Branch Davidian siege in Waco, Texas, April 1993. *Newseum collection/gift, Time, Inc./Courtesy Newseum.*

The majority of content in the blogosphere is uninspiring.

Perhaps an important lesson learned is that tools don't make a tradesman.

Why News Isn't on YouTube

A combination of factors appears to be preventing YouTube from delivering to its millions of viewers a cornucopia of clips from legions of citizen journalists. Digital video cameras might be cheap and accessible, but using them still requires skill and effort. Not everyone can hold the camera steady or compose a shot. Also, to state the obvious, the person holding the camera steady needs to be seeing something in the viewfinder that's worth recording. This requires the cameraperson to also have the ability to recognize that what he or she is seeing is newsworthy and why. In some cases—the London bombings, again, as an example—the event's news value will be evident to

any witness, and whatever images are captured, no matter their quality, will be much in demand and viewed as news. In other circumstances, personal judgment might be called upon and technical prowess will matter.

Even without technical barriers, there is an entrenched social paradigm that can be hard to shake off: Journalism is regarded as an occupation for those trained in how to interview sources, gather information, and distribute it. It's not been perceived as a hobby or a recreational activity. In fact, increasingly those who do it have earned advanced degrees, often in the study of journalism. Newsgathering is therefore seen as work, not play, and creative expression has been viewed as better served through the arts, such as writing stories or painting.

There still appear to be plenty of amateur video reporters who aren't deterred by these factors. But they are not the ones who seem attracted to YouTube, where money does not exchange hands. For them, when footage is newsworthy, why not sell it to someone who wants to pay for it? Mainstream news organizations are a more attractive outlet; at the very least, going through this media offers more prestige.

Perhaps the sheer accessibility of YouTube acts as a deterrent. The mediocrity of its content could scare people away. Can something serious really sit alongside college party antics? And YouTube, as a site, seems only half-interested in attracting amateur news. It features a category vaguely entitled "News & Blogs," which collects content so haphazardly that much of it has no relation to the category's stated theme. YouTube's overseers do seem interested in policing the site for illegal or offensive content, but they aren't strict on enforcing categories. With so many videos being uploaded, this makes the site logistically challenging for an army of volunteers, and the result is that videos generally float amidst thousands of others, carried along like detritus in a fast-moving, constantly updated stream of material. It's easy for material with a potential of being watched by millions to get lost and attract only

a few dozen viewers.

It also appears that the YouTube user community has, in its own way, defined what content on the site is really about. Most of the popular videos are focused on fun and frivolity, similar in format to the style used on the “Funniest Home Videos” television show. YouTube is for entertainment, like most television programming. The very use of the title “YouTube” implies a parallel to conventional broadcast television. The medium, and the message, have both been cloned.

YouTube has also placed limits on

the length of videos that can be uploaded for free, a move that’s ostensibly designed to prevent the site from being used for hosting pirated movies. But this can also make it difficult for a serious, lengthy report to be hosted on the site.

At some point in the future—and using this model—an online portal could establish a universal reputation as a source of quality news videos filed by the community at large. However, it does seem as though such an online experience would require close supervision of what’s going on the

site, and possibly some editing of it, similar to the way that editorial staff handle the content of conventional news publications. The way YouTube is set up right now, it’s a warehouse and not a producer or editor. Without proper management, online amateur video is likely to remain as generally pointless as the home pages and blogs that preceded it. ■

Morris Jones is a lecturer in journalism at Deakin University, Australia.

Goodbye Gutenberg | Converging on the Web

Myths and Realities of Convergence

‘... news organizations will be best served if they focus on stories—not delivery platforms.’

By Randy Covington

The ways in which people acquire news and information have changed far more than most newsrooms. It is a simple truth that explains why news organizations are struggling to match their journalistic values, traditions and strengths with the changing and sometimes fickle tastes of news consumers.

Statistics on news consumption tell the story. Newspaper circulation in the United States is falling at a rate of roughly five percent per year, and viewership of television news is also in decline, while new media outlets and fresh formats for telling the news are growing explosively. Internet penetration in the United States approaches 80 percent, and high-speed broadband accessibility is becoming commonplace.

Who could have imagined that a home video on a Web site that did

not exist two years ago could attract more viewers than the most watched programs on network television? Yet the most popular videos posted on YouTube.com do just that. I wonder how many editors, the ones tasked with attracting younger readers and viewers, have ever spent time on the YouTube site? How many have even heard of it? My hunch is not many, for there truly exists a widening disconnect between traditional news organizations and those who consume news and information.

Training in New Techniques

We observe this struggle for relevance—perhaps even survival—from the vantage point of the Ifra Newsplex at the University of South Carolina. Journalists arrive here from countries throughout the world to study and

train on next generation techniques for handling the news. It really does not matter what language is being spoken or whether we are working with broadcasters or print journalists. The conversations and concerns are remarkably similar.

The Newsplex philosophy, boiled down to a sentence, is that news organizations will be best served if they focus on stories—not delivery platforms. The focus on production once made sense, but in today’s interwoven media environment, in which consumers track stories throughout the day from a lot of sources, news organizations need to meet these consumers in places and formats that are meaningful and relevant to them.

It sounds so simple. Just focus on stories, which is after all the reason most of us went into journalism. But this reality is far from simple for most

news organizations, which are confused about how to respond to the changing patterns of news consumption, especially at a time when budgets are constrained. There are so many questions—and so many priorities that seem to conflict:

- Do I file first for our Web site, or do I hold my story for the next day's newspaper or evening newscast?
- If the story does go to the Web first, will news consumers pick up the paper the next day or watch my newscast that night?
- When my editor asks me to produce rich, deep content for use on new media platforms, will I do this on top of my usual workload or instead of some of what I already do?

These are, indeed, difficult questions, but answers are starting to become clear. Much has changed in our understanding since Newsplex opened here four years ago. (A parallel facility, Newsplex Europe, opened in September 2005 at Ifra headquarters in Darmstadt, Germany.) Drawing upon our experience with some of the leading media houses in the world, what follows are 10 common concerns, perceptions and myths about convergence, as well as some perspective we've gained in addressing them:

1. Convergence is just a nice way of saying the organization wants to cut costs.

The truth is convergence costs money because usually it requires additional staff and more technology. Efficiencies are associated with convergence, but organizations that approach convergence as a way of saving money invariably are disappointed. Convergence needs to be undertaken as a growth strategy, not a cost-cutting measure.

2. News organizations are full of creative people with great ideas who will figure this out.

Sorry, a successful convergence strategy requires a strong vision and commitment from the top. Providing news and information seven days a week, 24 hours each day, across delivery platforms requires a different kind of newsroom structure. Yet it is not in our

nature to give up power willingly, no matter how beneficial the change might be. That's why someone at the highest level of the organization must declare that convergence is important, set priorities, and then provide the resources to make necessary steps happen. However, top-level commitment alone is not enough; grass-roots engagement must be part of this strategy. Creative people with good ideas will play important roles, but their success will be stunted if they are working in silos or duplicating each other's efforts. That is why fundamental, structural change is so important.

3. Convergence requires technology, which is difficult and expensive.

Not so. In Newsplex, we usually work with cheap and sometimes even free software programs. We select them because they are easy to learn. Excellent programs like Dreamweaver, Flash or Final Cut Pro can be purchased, but the learning curve can be pretty steep for journalists who would prefer to be at their beloved Royal typewriter. If resources exist to

acquire the higher-cost software—and train staff to use it—then do so, but if resources are tight, lots of good alternatives exist.

4. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Au contraire! Even reporters who covet their typewriter are capable of generating content to be used in new formats and for different media. Some of our best students are traditional print journalists with little or no multimedia experience. From what we've discovered, most newsrooms already have on staff journalists who would enjoy the opportunity to do cross-media work.

5. Every reporter should be a backpack journalist.

The premise certainly is alluring, but in our hearts we all know that not everyone is going to be successful working across formats in different media. Those organizations like the BBC that have tried to go this route have been displeased with the results. The reporter who has the governor's private phone number and can get a return call in the middle of the night

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Staff of the Daily Reporter, Utah Territory, in front of their tent office. 1869. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

remains just as valuable, regardless of whether he or she is podcasting or doing slide shows. However, if no one on your staff is working across a range of media, an opportunity is being missed. Plus news organizations are stronger when everyone on staff has at least an appreciation for the strengths of different media and formats, even if they don't work in them.

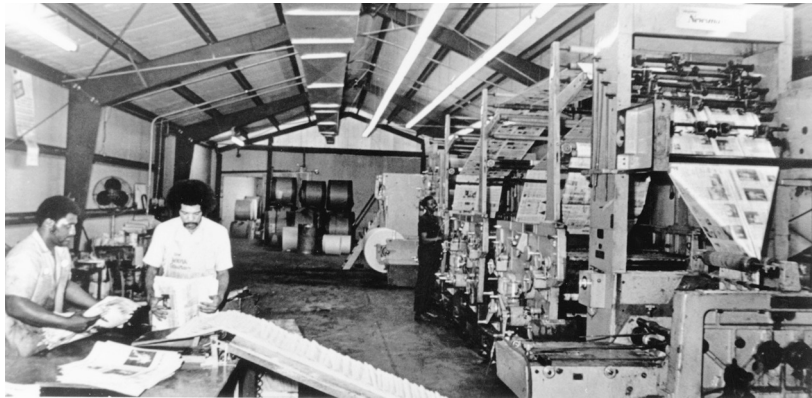
6. Print reporters do not have sufficient skills to do TV work. It is true that most print reporters are less than successful when someone thrusts a microphone in front of them and tells them to report for television. But that doesn't mean print journalists are doomed in a broadcast environment. In Newsplex, we have developed a format that helps print reporters be successful by emphasizing their strengths (knowledge of the story) and de-emphasizing their weaknesses (typically, their on camera performance).

7. Audio and video are easy. This statement is half true. Audio is relatively easy. It usually takes just a few minutes to transform an inexperienced print journalist into a podcaster. Certainly it takes much longer to do more complicated mixes, but most print journalists pick up the techniques fairly quickly. However, video is much more difficult to learn. Some newspapers are hiring a core group of television or video professionals to produce this content. As broadband access becomes more pervasive, multimedia content, including video, becomes more important. What is exciting to see is that some newspapers are reaching out beyond the traditional one minute and 30 second TV clip to create new story formats that work well on the Internet. I often tell our university students that some of the best TV jobs in the future will be on newspapers.

8. Posting community-generated content will draw an audience. In 2006, user-generated content has been one of those "flavor of the month" trends. Newspaper editors believe they are connecting with their readers by creating Web sites where they can post pictures and comments. The idea of inviting citizens into the editorial process is a good one, but then dumping their content into a Web site ghetto does not work. The most successful examples of news organizations using community content include profes-

sional editing and usually involve the integration of that material with work done by professionals. OhMyNews in Seoul, with more than 40,000 citizen journalists and generally regarded as the world's most successful community journalism initiative, has a professional staff of 70.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



The press room at the Houston Forward Times, a black-owned and operated newspaper in Texas, circa 1960-69. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

9. We make most of our money in old media, so a significant commitment to new media just doesn't yet make sense. It is a given in the world of advertising that money follows eyeballs. As those eyeballs increasingly shift to new media and formats so, too, will revenues. For most U.S. news organizations, the percentage of revenue coming from new media is still relatively small, but trends are clear. In Norway, the news

organization VG reports it now makes more money from new media than its traditional newspaper.

10. Our newsroom staff is already stretched too thin, how can we possibly be asked to do more? No question gets asked more by those in newsrooms dealing with convergence issues than this one. Certainly, there is a lot of truth in it, especially in an era of limited resources. But is the work that stretches everyone so thin relevant to your readers and viewers? This is an obvious second

question that typically receives far too little attention in newsroom debates. A good convergence strategy requires setting priorities; for managers who want it all, remember that if everything is a priority, then nothing is.

Obviously, much more can and will be said about the evolution of news delivery and consumption. Perhaps the single most important thing

journalists troubled by these changing times can do is to look out the window or even in a mirror to see how they themselves use media to acquire news and information. ■

Randy Covington is director of the Ifra Newsplex (www.ifra.com/newsplex) at the University of South Carolina (USC) and an assistant professor in the USC School of Journalism & Mass Communications. He worked for 27 years in television news, serving in management positions at television stations in Houston, Louisville, Boston, Philadelphia and Columbia, South Carolina.

When Walls Come Tumbling Down

The Associated Press is making ‘radical adjustments’ to its news reports and business strategies in response to the Web.

By Jim Kennedy

Ten years ago this October, The Associated Press (AP) launched its first multimedia service for the Internet. Appropriately, it was called “The Wire,” and it quickly enabled hundreds of AP affiliate newspapers and broadcasters to display breaking news on the Web in a format that linked text stories with photos, audio, video and motion graphics.

For its time, The Wire was cutting edge. It provided news in real time, instead of in tomorrow morning’s newspaper. Video, despite painfully slow dial-up connections, was available on demand on the PC and not just by appointment on the tube at 6 and 11 p.m.

It was a time when everything we thought we knew about the news was about to change. Just a decade later, it has.

Fast forward to 2006, and we are still coming to grips with the revolution those early days unleashed. Even those of us who have been along for the whole ride have been surprised by the magnitude of the speed and the bumps. It was supposed to be just another medium, like the coming of radio and, later, TV. But the Web turned out to be so much more, even in spite of a sudden collapse midway through its first decade.

In 1996, it was all about “repurposing”—taking what had already been produced for an established medium (the newspaper, radio and television) and repackaging it for the Web. What’s more, we all aped the “news by appointment” model, expecting Web viewers to “bookmark” news sites like loyal subscribers and return day-in and day-out when they “logged on” to the new-fangled Internet.

We were in for a shock. We managed

to enjoy a few years of subscription-like viewing, but when the 9/11 attacks brought unprecedented numbers of

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



This camera is The Associated Press Nikon N90 NC 2000e digital camera with a Kodak motor and a Nikon 135 mm lens, which was built for the AP. *Newseum collection/gift, The Associated Press/Courtesy Newseum.*

people online, the bookmarked sites couldn’t keep up. And a geeky little search engine called Google taught the world how to “search” for news, instead of subscribe. We’ve been playing catch-up ever since.

The Internet of 2006—many call it “Web 2.0”—is no longer repurposed. It is chock-full of original content, produced more by the audience than by professionals, and on-demand access has permanently replaced the quaint notion of surfing the Web. Hardly anyone under the age of 25 knows any other way to consume the news. You can bet that most of them won’t be padding out to the driveway for their morning newspapers or tuning into the network TV news in the years ahead, as

their parents and grandparents were conditioned to do.

This new generation of news consumers is already aggregating and sharing news across multiple screens (handheld, desktop and set-top) and adding their own comments and original coverage to a new media ecosystem where consumers, creators and distributors of content all share power.

Will the so-called “mainstream media” survive this revolution? Almost certainly—but not without some radical adjustments to their news reports and business strategies.

The Old Meets the New

At The Associated Press, the world’s oldest and largest news agency, the challenge is huge. We had just reached the peak of our “old” media model when the Internet turned it upside down. For a century and a half, we had carefully built up strong, media-centric businesses—one to churn out text and photos for newspapers, another repurposing the text for radio and adding audio, and a third repurposing all that and adding video. Each business had its own journalists, its own production and distribution system, even its own business administration.

Those were the days. We could chase a story for print and give a polite nod to our colleagues from broadcast at the scene, each flank confident that AP’s customers and audience would be ably served by one media type or the other. Today, the demands are entirely different. Journalists are organized and deployed across media type, and content flows into a single database for production and distribution. Our customer base, too, has changed. We serve AOL, Yahoo! and scores of new

media companies in addition to newspapers and broadcasters.

Since 2003, coinciding with the arrival of new Chief Executive Officer Tom Curley, the AP has been on a mission to make an uncompromising digital shift. That mission has necessitated a total overhaul of our strategy so that we put online news production ahead of other formats.

Embracing new technology has been key to that transformation, and we are installing new engines in the AP jumbo jet even as we keep flying it. We have our multimedia database in place and are in the process of retiring the old legacy systems that served up one media type at a time. The database combines—and cross-references—stories, photos, graphics, audio and video, and it can be searched via a password-protected browser by our journalists and customers alike.

The shift is enabling changes in our business as well. With the database in place, AP can serve its core newspaper customers with more news content than ever before (video, for instance, in addition to text and photos) and many new customers—commercial Web sites, mobile networks, etc.—can be served worldwide by segmenting their access to particular slices of the same database. In the coming year, AP will make it possible for its member newspapers to share their own branded content with each other and to link to one another's Web sites by sending their stories and photos into the database to receive standardized "metadata."

The invisible, but machine-readable, metadata will be used to electronically tag everything from bylines and headlines to famous names in the body of the content, so that news from all providers can be automatically linked and accessed whenever a Web traveler searches or clicks for more related information on a news topic.

As Web 2.0 unfolds and becomes 3.0, 4.0 and beyond, the online environment will increasingly feed off search, links and sharing, and news providers need to harness that new energy and get into the new flow. The bottom line is that no publishing or broadcasting "container" will be strong enough to maintain a hold on any digital content of value. No printed paper, no scheduled television broadcast, no bookmarked Web site will be able to match the power of the user and his or her search "remote." Indeed, if content is to realize its true value in a search-driven economy, it must meet users wherever they are.

Research firms have been telling us for more than a year that we must change to meet the new needs of the online audience:

- Forrester urged its media clients at the end of 2005 to prepare for a future defined by search and other Web-based software programs for accessing and manipulating content on the fly.

- Gartner proclaimed in December 2005 that search would become the "main entry point into a content experience" by 2008 and that "architectural planning [by content providers] must begin in the next 18 months."
- Outsell, in a March 2006 alert, advised its news industry clients to pursue "three-year transition plans" to digital platforms and strategies, or risk being left behind.

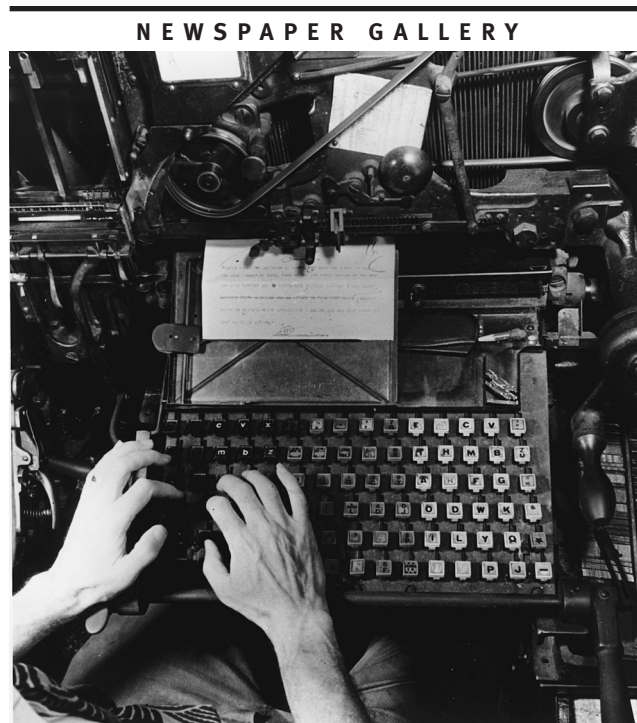
The stock market then chimed in with an even more brutal message, as it pounded and, in some cases, dismembered old media companies whose responses to the online shift were too slow.

When we talk about the challenges ahead of us at AP, we often reflect on the circumstances surrounding our birth in 1846, when the smart founders of the agency organized around the telegraph—the Internet of its day. Back then, the telegraph so dramatically improved the gathering and distribution of the news that old solutions—pony express, pigeon carriers, and the mail—were rendered quickly, almost comically, obsolete.

Such is the magnitude of the change now upon us. "The wire" of the next century and a half will be plugged into a database that will be able to deliver almost any kind of news experience, from text headlines to rich images and sounds.

Has AP completed the transformation necessary to enable that new world of newsgathering and consumption? Not yet. But the next two to three years will be an exciting time to be inside the walls of a big mainstream media company—because those walls are coming down. ■

Jim Kennedy is vice president and director of strategic planning at The Associated Press.



Copy is prepared on a linotype machine in the composing room of The New York Times. September 1942. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

Enterprising Journalism in a Multimedia World

With video, audio and interactive data, The Associated Press makes its investigative reporting accessible, useful to other news outlets, and compelling to its consumers.

By John Solomon

When people first see the title on my new letterhead—Director, Multimedia Investigative Reporting—they often greet me with a blank stare or funny smirk. “What? Were all the good jobs already taken?” my brother joked during his recent visit to the Washington, D.C. bureau of The Associated Press.

I can’t blame my brother or numerous other wisecrackers for wondering what’s going on. For years I held some of the more standard management titles in the AP, such as news editor or assistant bureau chief. But I’ll confess that my new one is growing on me, much as is the work that goes with it.

A little more than a year ago, Executive Editor Kathleen Carroll and Washington Bureau Chief Sandra Johnson put me in charge of an intriguing experiment to combine multimedia reporting with investigative reporting. Their idea was as straightforward as it was tantalizing: take a half dozen of AP’s best print reporters, tell them they can pursue any investigative story across the globe but only if they can command audiences in the AP’s four news formats simultaneously. The challenge, which was a new one for many AP reporters, was to produce compelling journalism that would captivate a wide variety of news consumer tastes. It also meant adapting to the different attention spans and interests of print, Web, television and radio audiences.

When I heard the proposal, I thought this would be easy. I’d made a few friends through the years in AP’s TV division. I listened to NPR during my daily commute, and I’d even gotten into the habit of reading newspapers online, often leaving the print copies in the driveway for my wife to read.

How difficult could this really be?

Ask any of our team members today, and they’ll explain.

Arriving from our print orientation, this was the journalistic equivalent of “Survivor” contestants trying to fashion rocks into flints so they could light a fire. Every tool, term and colleague from another AP news division seemed completely foreign to us. Our first interactions with TV producers must have looked like American tourists in Paris rifling through a translation guide trying to figure out what was just said. None of us had ever worked in a “cutting room” before nor responded to a request for “b-roll.” At one of our first organizational meetings, I tried to introduce the team to software used to create Web interactivity. “Anyone here ever heard of Flash?” I asked innocently. “That’s what the digital camera does when you press the button, right?” one reporter replied, relieving all of us of some of the tension attending our transition.

Our first efforts bordered on comedy. A reporter new to carrying a digital video camera shot what he thought was compelling video—until he realized the lens cap was still on. Great sound, but a very black picture greeted his return. A loud scream (and a few choice words) reverberated through the office on the day when videotapes of interviews with September 11th survivors got lost in the mail between AP departments. The tapes were a key part of an investigative project looking into government disaster loans that went to companies that weren’t hurt by the September 11th attacks. Headlines we proposed to tease Web stories came back to us reading in ways we found nonsensical. And an important interview recorded for its ambient sound had to be redone when the microphone on the recorder

wasn’t fully plugged in.

Fortunately our growing pains were overshadowed by stories the team’s reporters investigated and by the limitless possibilities these various formats provided us in presenting what we’d found in our reporting. It didn’t take long for team members to rally around a concept that became our mission statement: “Don’t just tell readers the news, let them experience it and interact with it.”

Here are some ways in which our mission has translated into work:

- When Ted Bridis obtained Pentagon memos showing a growing number of crashes caused by hot-dogging military pilots, he wasn’t satisfied with just documenting the evidence. He wanted readers to be able to experience the consequences. So he persisted and eventually located video—shot from inside the cockpit of a helicopter—that showed a pilot ignoring the advice of his copilot as he tried to squeeze his Apache helicopter between two trees at a high speed. The rotors clipped the trees, the cockpit started shaking, and the copter crashed to the ground. Bridis’s doggedness and ingenuity meant that our online and TV news consumers were introduced to what he’d uncovered from a seat inside that chopper.
- Sharon Theimer and Larry Margasak sought to expose the ruse of congressional caucuses. Even with their official sounding names, they often turn out to be nothing more than social clubs that collect special interest money to fund recreational activities for lawmakers. The reporters used a camera to “catch” lawmakers shooting with lobbyists

at a gun range and playing golf with them while Congress was in session and they were supposed to be doing the people's business. The video footage anchored the Web and video packages, and this reporting provided the lead anecdote for the print story.

- Theimer and Margasak did video interviews with lawmakers running to catch planes at Reagan National Airport for the weekend to highlight another story that examined how lawmakers collected personal frequent flier miles on airline tickets paid for by taxpayers and special interest groups. In documenting how former Congressman Tom DeLay spent one million dollars he'd raised from donors to fund lavish trips to Caribbean cliff-top resorts, outings at PGA golf courses, and meals at five-star restaurants, the Web, TV and print audiences were taken inside some of DeLay's favorite destinations. Web viewers could look at the menu for one of these restaurants and see that the prize of appetizers started at \$35.
- Mishi Ebrahim, who joined AP from "60 Minutes," teamed with several colleagues to transport news consumers inside the Bush administration's briefing room on the day before Hurricane Katrina hit. Watching this scene, viewers saw how relaxed President Bush and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff were—unsuspecting of the magnitude of the tragedy that would soon befall the Gulf Coast.
- Ebrahim also found ways to tell the poignant story of two whistleblowers who were fired for exposing how their company stole September 11th relief supplies, only to become devastated when the company wasn't prosecuted. The reason: FBI agents had also stolen items related to September 11th.

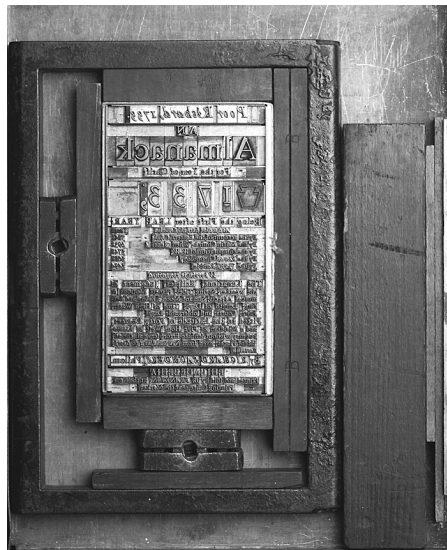
Benefits to Traditional Print Media

One obvious question is whether we have left the traditional print media behind as we focus on making video,

sound and Web widgets. The resounding answer is no. In fact, the pressure on the team's reporters to work with a 4-D vision serves to improve what we do in print.

Reporters go back to videotapes they shot to review details that make their print stories richer, livelier and deeper. Rita Beamish and Frank Bass spent days going through their video

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



A replica of the form used to print Poor Richard's Almanack in 1773. *Newseum collection/gift, Michael Anderson/Courtesy Newseum.*

footage and digital pictures—and their notebooks—before crafting their exposé on how the march of human development has spoiled the great vistas of America's national parks. As a result, their print stories sang like few I've seen before. Likewise, in getting the videotape of the hot-dogging helicopter pilot—and watching what his reporting had suggested was happening—Bridis's print story also became exponentially richer.

This new approach to investigative reporting also prompted the AP to better leverage its geographic expanse and wide-ranging expertise. This, too, improved what we are able to do in print. Reporters in every state and country were activated to investigate

and report issues that crossed borders and transcended regional interests. As a result, reporters and editors in the field who had great sources and insight on issues in their statehouses or cities began proposing investigative projects that far exceeded their local resources.

Two of the team's projects with the greatest impact started this way. Dirk Lammers, a newsman in South Dakota, first spotted a September 11th disaster loan going to a local country radio station and questioned whether the federal government was giving away money unnecessarily. After months of investigation involving dozens of reporters, AP had an award-winning project that appeared in hundreds of newspapers. Likewise, Chicago News Editor Niki Dizon first spotted a loophole in the No Child Left Behind law that allowed schools to ignore test scores of underperforming minority students. Before long, another nationwide investigative exposé was under way.

From the start, we'd expected this experiment to pay dividends in leveraging AP's global resources to change the genre of storytelling. But an intangible benefit surfaced once our efforts were underway. With the attention and feedback that our stories on the Web and television generated, the interest by newspapers in using our stories multiplied. Editors who had to make nighttime wire copy decisions would call me to say they'd heard about a story from bloggers or seen a clip on TV, and this was prompting them to consider using the AP story. Likewise, when AP obtained the videotape of Bush's final briefing before Hurricane Katrina, the footage received global play on TV newscasts within hours. This meant that morning newspapers were compelled to showcase the print story on their front pages. In other cases, some large newspapers have written editorials about subjects highlighted by AP investigative stories even when their paper has not run the original story in print. The reason: These stories had created such a buzz among bloggers that editorial writers felt compelled to weigh in.

Documents, Data and Transparency

We now have the ability to routinely offer readers access to multiple levels of reporting, including original documents, photographs and video, as we present our investigative work. This gives our reporting a new and welcomed transparency, and we believe it also expands its impact. Last year, we exposed that federal researchers had been using foster children to test experimental AIDS drugs with serious side effects. In most cases, the researchers had failed to get permission from parents or provide safeguards required by federal and state law. AP brought Web and TV viewers inside the foster homes where these children lived and let viewers see and hear from the children and the foster parents. Documents we unearthed were put online to illustrate how researchers promised protections to the children that they never provided. Within days, congressional, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and local investigators had downloaded AP's information from the Web and begun investigations that led to sweeping changes.

Readers now have a chance to interact with the news. When our reporting exposed bad decisions the Homeland Security Department made during Katrina, Margasak crafted a popular interactive quiz that let Web viewers play the role of homeland secretary. Six decision-making situations were presented, and they chose their option to each. After submitting their answers, they could see what Secretary Chertoff decided in the midst of the crisis and what the experts in the after-action reviews determined was the better course of action. Likewise, when we wrote about an obscure agency that has a four-letter acronym, Web readers got to play an "alphabet soup" game we created in which they tried to match federal agency acronyms with their missions. And when AP learned that the government was keeping secret the scores

they had calculated for the health risks of the air Americans breathed in every neighborhood in the United States, we created an accessible database that was easy to use. Hundreds of thousands of readers each day punched in addresses and got risk scores that most likely led to some interesting conversations at dinner tables across the country.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Sargeant Bill Mauldin, cartoonist for the World Telegram and The Stars and Stripes, holds a drawing pad. June 1945. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

The AP's member news outlets also benefited from our team's work by being able to report important stories in their local areas. On six major investigative projects we worked on during the past year, AP was able to obtain never-before released federal data that covered every city in the nation. AP's TV and newspaper members were given advanced access to the data and to our stories so they could highlight related stories in their communities to produce a local angle. For example, Bass and Lammers' award-winning project exposing how September 11th recovery loans went to companies that were not hurt by the terrorist at-

tacks demonstrated the power of this approach. In Utah, member news organizations reported on the Salt Lake City dog boutique that received such a loan at the same time that Caribbean news organizations focused on a Virgin Islands perfume shop. Similar stories engaged reporters at hundreds of news outlets—based only on our original reporting of this story and the access to the data we made possible.

Likewise, Bass, Dizon and several colleagues across the country teamed together to expose how nearly two million mostly African-American students across the country were having their test scores excluded from being counted under the No Child Left Behind Act because of a loophole that was letting failing schools escape penalty. Every AP member in the United States had the opportunity to highlight children being "left behind" in their local schools. And parents could look up the record of their schools on the Web. Our story—and the chorus of local reporting prompted by it—produced outrage and forced the Bush administration to quickly close the loophole.

Interacting with readers. Localizing news. Experiencing the news. Influencing policy. These are the early byproducts of AP's experiment. And members of the multimedia investigative team feel liberated by their ability to tell their stories in multiple formats and by being able to reach and engage people who probably would not have seen similar investigative stories a few years ago. Our reporters continue to embody the journalistic values embedded in solid investigative reporting, even as they are emboldened to bring to their work more than just a pen and pad. In just a year, the digital video cameras, tripods and lavalier microphones have become comfortable—dare I say nonexpendable—tools in their reporting arsenal. ■

John Solomon is the director of multimedia investigative reporting for The Associated Press.

Confronting the Dual Challenge of Print and Electronic News

‘To make best use of both editions, we need to be increasingly disciplined about what goes where.’

By Paul E. Steiger

A short time ago two of my colleagues returned from a visit with one of the great technology innovators of our age, who blithely told them that newspapers would disappear within five years—or perhaps seven years, to be generous. This man did allow that there are some things he truly enjoys about curling up with a good newspaper. “I’d also like to leave work early and spend time throwing a stick with my dog,” he said. “But I don’t have time for that, either.”

I believe in the future of journalism. That billionaire who likened my print edition to his dog and a stick still reads *The Wall Street Journal* every day online. I even believe that print has a future. But we are not going to get there without working harder and thinking smarter.

There is no magic wand to wave or time machine we can climb into, to return us to when newspapers enjoyed monopolies in many of their markets, making their investors and employees comfortable, if not rich. Newspapers struggle now with broken business models and expanding competition, amid rampant disrespect by the young and Web-adept.

In this environment, journalists must decide whom we are going to serve with our journalism and how to be paid for that service. And we have to be disciplined and hardheaded about that decision. While I might want to write about global affairs and culture, to do so means I must offer something not available in *The New York Times* or on *BBC.com*. If I want to write about American politics, I’ll need to outper-

form *The Washington Post*. If I want to cover business, I’d better keep my sights on *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNBC* and *Yahoo! Finance*. And if I want to be the leading—or only—daily in my local metropolis, maybe I’ll need to figure out how to publish every high school wrestling result in the nine nearest counties.

Most of us have recognized that our journalism is more important than the means of delivering it. Newspapers and magazines have Web sites, and some of those are experiencing growth in revenues of 20 percent a year or more, even as their print editions struggle to eke out single-digit growth rates—and struggle to prevent their circulation from declining. Given this situation, many are tempted to believe that if they can just shift faster to the digital zone, their troubles will end.

There are two problems with this way of thinking.

1. It is a blessing and a curse that because of differences in advertising rates a print reader is worth three times as much to a news organization as an online user. Ad rates (and possibly subscription charges) will have to grow much faster than the market now seems to allow before this balance shifts.
2. More terrifying, search engines such as *Google* and *Yahoo!* and their budding competitors are sucking much of the oxygen out of the room. Advertisers who might otherwise keep much of their budgets in print and put the bulk of their Web spending on news sites are instead

plunging into search. They hope to target directly the people whose Web destinations indicate they are prospects to buy the advertisers’ goods or services. Search on the Web promises to cure the classic problem of advertising (and the resulting bonanza for publishers) that is perhaps best summed up by the famously wry comment by a major retailer that “half of my advertising spending is wasted; I just don’t know which half.”

While this presents a huge challenge for us, there are things we can do to enable us to survive and, ultimately, to thrive.

Fitting the Web and Print Together

Powerful journalistic models—such as *Bloomberg’s*—have emerged in the electronic space and others undoubtedly will. Of course, news organizations that have grown up in print confront a task that can be more complicated; while they pump increasing resources into growing their electronic side, they must also continue to nurture the print publications that still provide the bulk of their revenue. At *The Wall Street Journal*, we are learning how to operate complementary print and online editions, and we’re having considerable success marketing the two editions together.

The Web’s advantages are speed and efficiency of delivery, personal selectivity, availability on demand, and the almost cost-free capability to

store additional content and accept additional users. Print favors portability, the relative ease of reading sustained narratives and longer arguments, and serendipity. By serendipity I mean the ability of readers to scan full pages or portions of pages and spot headlines and stories that they would not have expected to be interested in. There is a wonderful sense of discovery in learning something you didn't think you needed to know, and print still delivers that best.

To make best use of both editions, we need to be increasingly disciplined about what goes where. More and more of our readers will get an increasing share of their spot news electronically—and we hope it will come from us. That puts the burden on the print edition to emphasize what it does best—compelling narratives, investigations, explanations, trend-spotters, context, exclusive interviews—what I call “scoops of fact” and “scoops of ideas.” That doesn't mean that the print edition abandons reporting of pure spot news. While our readers increasingly can get their news from the Web, they don't always do it—they might have meetings all day or a kid's soccer game to attend—and when that happens they depend on us to protect them the next morning. But our newspaper will increasingly deliver that pure spot news in the form of briefs and summaries, taking a progressively smaller share of total space.

It isn't enough just to reorder how we deliver what we've always delivered. News organizations need to focus hard on what it is that should be delivered and to whom. What audience are we trying to attract? Once we decide that, our next step is to find ways to provide coverage that in some ways uniquely suits that audience, coverage that they can't easily get elsewhere or assemble for themselves.

My friend Richard Lambert, the distinguished former editor of the *Financial Times*, reminded me the other day that market statistics used to be a prime selling point—perhaps the prime selling point—for our respective publications. The *Wall Street*

Journal doubled its circulation to two million from one million between the 1960's and the 1980's, in part because it provided over-the-counter stock quotations and other financial data unavailable elsewhere. Now such data are available everywhere electronically, typically free of charge. So the *Journal* has cut out eight pages of such stats in recent years and will cut more. We are replacing it with content that we hope will hold similar allure—more exclusive stories and proprietary stats that give deeper insight into what the markets are doing than can be gleaned from simple stock-price quotations.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Peter Braestrup used this Olivetti typewriter during his time as a *New York Times* national and international correspondent. Circa 1963. *Newseum Collection/gift, Kate Braestrup/Courtesy Newseum.*

News organizations also should explore alternative business models. The *Los Angeles Times* has been undergoing turmoil over cost cuts when its profit margins—the ratio of profit to revenue—are in the neighborhood of 20 percent. Those are great margins for many businesses, but publicly traded companies usually must hold out the promise of growth, and that appears to be the missing element in *Los Angeles* and with the *Tribune Company* that owns the *Times*.

This suggests that an alternative might be ownership by public-spirited citizens with enough means not to need a market rate of return on the

investment—although, as evidenced recently in Philadelphia and Santa Barbara, California, local ownership is not a panacea for tensions between the business and journalistic sides of news organizations. Another model might be employee ownership. A third might involve some form of nonprofit structure, such as has played a role at the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Whether the business models are conventional or unconventional—and I think they will be both—the public's need and desire for what news organizations uniquely produce will ultimately be enough for them to succeed financially. Some Web advocates argue against this assumption, contending that the Internet has transformed citizens into becoming their own journalists, thereby obliterating the need people had for journalists to act as information gatekeepers. People will put online what they see and believe and, with the help of technology, these Web advocates contend, good information will overwhelm the bad.

I don't doubt that this dynamic happens sometimes. Witness how fast search engines like Google and Yahoo! can deliver fascinating arrays of information about a limitless universe of people, events and things. But the capacity to search won't satisfy humanity's quest for knowledge if the content available isn't informed by the rigor of inquiry that resides at the core of journalism's standards and ethics. Even with the incredible search abilities that exist on the Web today it is difficult to find a reliable and comprehensive analysis of a complicated issue.

People will continue to need information relevant to their lives that is quickly and carefully gathered, sifted, verified and reported to them. Said another way, they will need journalism. Our challenge is to find the best ways to accomplish this in a world that promises to change even more rapidly in the future than it has in the past. ■

Paul E. Steiger is managing editor of The Wall Street Journal and a vice president of Dow Jones & Company.

Feeding the Web While Reporting the Story

At The New York Times, multimedia storytelling is becoming more a part of the journalism and less of an afterthought.

By Neil Chase

A decade after newspapers began to publish online, there is still trepidation about technology among reporters and editors, columnists and photojournalists. Some reporters worry that they will look like traveling junk dealers as they try to gently approach reluctant sources in the field while juggling video cameras, audio recorders, notebooks and satellite phones. Yet fear is yielding to innovative thinking about how what we do online can enhance the quality of journalism.

One example: Having to file midday updates for the Web, like radio or wire reporters already do, seems to conflict with the idea that a newspaper journalist spends the day doing the interviews and thinking through the analysis that form tomorrow's story. But many at The New York Times who have tried this new approach are finding it makes their work better, not worse.

Experiencing the Change

The transition to real-time journalism is easier for reporters who've done it before, like Micheline Maynard,¹ our Detroit bureau chief. With experience at United Press International and Reuters, Maynard knows how to file quick updates. What is different now is that as she covers breaking news by filing to our Continuous News Desk (CND) she is also working on her next-day article for the paper.

"Now, because I'm going to be writing at least two versions, I have to be present tense and future tense in the way I handle a story," Maynard said. "So as I'm reading a release, or talking

to sources, my questions aren't simply, 'What happened and what does this mean?' but 'What's going to happen as a result of this?'"

Writing quickly for the Web, picking a lead, and then backing it up with a complete story filed to the paper's news desk causes Maynard to focus on what's most important and how she'll approach the rest of her reporting day. "The Web story is essentially the first effort," she said. "Then that helps me find the thread for the print story that will take it forward."

Science writer Andrew C. Revkin agreed about the challenges of reporting for rolling deadlines. Not only do Times reporters file to the Continuous News Desk, but they also meet the European and Asian deadlines of the International Herald Tribune (IHT), which is owned by the Times. "Filing early for CND and the IHT can create issues, particularly when the news hasn't quite gelled," Revkin said. "But it always helps me focus my thoughts and provides at least a skeleton to build the final version of the story on."

Revkin also enjoys taking direct questions from readers online, as he did in October after he reported on sharp declines in spending on energy research by governments and corporations. From such exchanges he can learn the names of new sources and get ideas for follow-up stories while he helps readers to better understand the news.

And there's another advantage: space. "The best thing about the recent energy-climate conversation was that it gave me an opportunity to get elements that didn't fit in my energy challenge

story into the paper's online side," Revkin said. "In quite a few of the 60-plus back-and-forths with reader/commentators, I actually was able to slip in quotes and other context that had to be cut from the print story."

The additional space available online enables new approaches to journalism:

- Some reporters use blogs to deliver short bites of news during the day while working on their longer stories for the newspaper, as a team of metro reporters does while covering state politics through a blog called The Empire Zone.
- Some articles that have to be trimmed for print can run longer online.
- During the World Cup, reporters delivered real-time play-by-play coverage online while fans joined in a simultaneous conversation.

There are many more examples, but in each case there's a similar theme: Journalists are able to cover their subjects more deeply, in new ways, and deliver more to the reader than was possible before.

Revkin's involvement with "Times Topics"—Web pages dedicated to in-depth examinations of specific topics—illustrates the long-term value of publishing online.² Newspaper stories are designed to be read the next day, but Revkin's Web page about global warming collects relevant Times articles, multimedia reports, links to other Web resources, and more. His personal page highlights his best articles, his multimedia work, and even a window into his

¹ http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/micheline_maynard/index.html

² http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/andrew_c_revkin/

other passion: Readers can download music from his band, an acoustic-roots quartet called Uncle Wade. Insight into his work and background on his topics “helps build the credibility of our product and a connection with us as trusted guides to complicated issues,” Revkin said.

How to Get Multimedia Stories Online

Whether it’s filing quickly for the Web, recording video or audio, blogging, or just thinking smartly about the way a story will appear both in print and online, one strategy has worked well so far at the Times: letting journalists decide what’s comfortable for them. Rather than forcing new ideas on people, Web and video producers at the Times make equipment and training available and invite participation.

Some of the new things reporters are often asked to do take only a small amount of time:

- Talk to a producer on the phone for 15 minutes about the story and an audio slide show of the story will be readied to appear online.
- Sit in front of a camera for a quick video interview, perhaps to relate a different way to understand today’s news or to create a video “sidebar” with an angle that won’t make it into the printed story.
- Take notes about what Web sites were used in reporting the story. Decide which might be of use to

readers and post them with the story. Sometimes this means copying a quick link, but it can also be more work: “I had to spend a couple of hours working up a set of links to include in my energy-climate research story,” Revkin said. “But I think it’s great to have the extra depth there for readers who are inclined to seek it.”

the Web site when a link to the full interview is worth adding to a story. In most cases, reporters who put in the extra effort say they’re pleased with the increased readership and enthusiastic reader response.

Another successful strategy: Play to your strengths. After 25 years of reporting on the U.S. Supreme Court and a Pulitzer Prize for Beat Reporting, Linda

Greenhouse was clearly the reporter to write the obituary of Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist when he died last year. But she also spent a significant amount of time on something new—a long-form video obituary. The mix of audio, video, photographs and Times’ headlines from previously published stories offered a compelling way to capture in one place the scope of Rehnquist’s lengthy and influential career—something that could only be achieved with the unique combination of Greenhouse’s expertise and the archive of stories and photos.³

Reporters and editors who think about material they can obtain to enhance the telling of their story—audio, video, CDs containing data, Web sites—from the beginning of an assignment often end up with compelling online packages. Piecing such

packages together after reporting has taken place is more difficult, and the resulting product can be less rewarding.

Economics columnist David Leonhardt uses online components to explain some of the complex issues he tackles.⁴ “Throughout the reporting for each week’s column, I try to think

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Copyreaders at The New York Times foreign desk. In the foreground, foreign desk editor spikes a story. September 1942. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

Other things take more effort, but the expenditure of time and energy can prove to be worthwhile. Some reporters carry video cameras, especially in foreign bureaus; many use digital audio recorders (simple models are available for less than \$120) instead of cassette recorders and keep sound files on their laptop computers that can be sent to

³ http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/linda_greenhouse/index.html

⁴ http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/david_leonhardt/

about what will make for good Web extras,” he said. “I ask researchers if they’ll send me PDFs or links so we can post their work online. I talk to the graphics department about what to show online.” Leonhardt sometimes runs into the problem of having more good ideas than the Web producers or graphics editors have time to execute, and this is becoming a familiar challenge. Efforts are underway to develop tools to allow reporters and editors to do more on the Web without having to learn extensive new skills or invest large amounts of time.

Perhaps the biggest change in the newsroom since the advent of Web publishing is the response from readers. Reporters sometimes have the joy of watching their story climb toward the top of the “most e-mailed articles” list. Or they will respond to a few reader

questions and hear from dozens more. “It’s common for subsequent reader responses to cite earlier ones, suggesting that the writer read both the column and the replies,” Leonhardt said.

Interacting with readers and doing the extra work required for blogs and other new forms of journalism does take additional time, and editors are working closely with reporters to manage those demands. Sometimes it means a change of assignments or dropping something else to make room in the schedule. Sometimes it means sneaking in bits of online work whenever there’s time. But the limited number of hours in the day mandates smart time management as the demands of online journalism continue to grow.

Multimedia note-taking can create advantages for reporters. “When I’m

doing field reporting and shoot pictures or video,” Revkin said, “while it can be a pain, it can also help the final written product—particularly when I’m in circumstances that prevent a lot of note-taking, as was the case when I was on a bobbing fishing boat with Carl Safina last summer, and in the Arctic. The images and video then provide detail—What color was that coat?—and a record of conversations that I can review later, when conditions allow.”

While helping Revkin to refresh his memory, this valuable trove of sounds and images—with the Web producer’s assistance—will bring his story alive online. ■

Neil Chase is editor of the Continuous News Desk at The New York Times.

Goodbye Gutenberg | Exploring New Connections

Taking the Big Gulp

‘The Web is its own medium with its own characteristics. It is not newspapers. It is not TV news. It is not radio.’

By Jane Ellen Stevens

The Web is swallowing everything, and most newspaper companies are responding by doing what they’ve always done when big news stories roll into town—throwing everything they can at them. Two years ago, they threw blogs. Last year, podcasts. This year, it’s videos.

The Web—mysterious, frightening and inspiring—is all of these things (blogs, podcasts, videos), and it is none of them. And if newspaper companies (as well as television and radio news organizations) take the time to understand this new medium and set strategic goals to transition to becoming

Web-centric news organizations, they’ll remain an integral and important part of the journalistic enterprise. If not, they’ll go the way of blacksmiths—not disappearing, but pushed into a niche so far off the highway that they no longer are traveling on it.

This journey toward the new begins with the basics—and this means learning the characteristics of the Web. A journalist might ask why anyone needs to know something so seemingly arcane as the characteristics of a communications medium, but when you don’t know how a game—football, soccer, baseball—works, it’s hard to

play it. And if you don’t understand foreign words, you can’t speak the language. Another way to look at it is this: The first film was a recording of a theater production, and film isn’t theater. The first TV production was a radio program, and we know that television isn’t radio. But when the Web came along, newspapers thought it was a place to put text and still photos; radio news thought it was a place to put audio files (and text scripts of audio files), and television news treated it as a place to put videos (and text scripts of video stories).

The Web is its own medium with

its own characteristics. It is not newspapers. It is not TV news. It is not radio.

Understanding the Web

Before the Web existed, there was (and still is) the Internet. From the get-go, the Internet was a solution-oriented medium: Ask a question, get an answer. And it was an interactive medium: No longer were you sitting back and waiting to be told what you needed to know. You asked the question. The Internet was participatory: You and all of those other people out there were connecting—and sharing and talking—with everyone else.

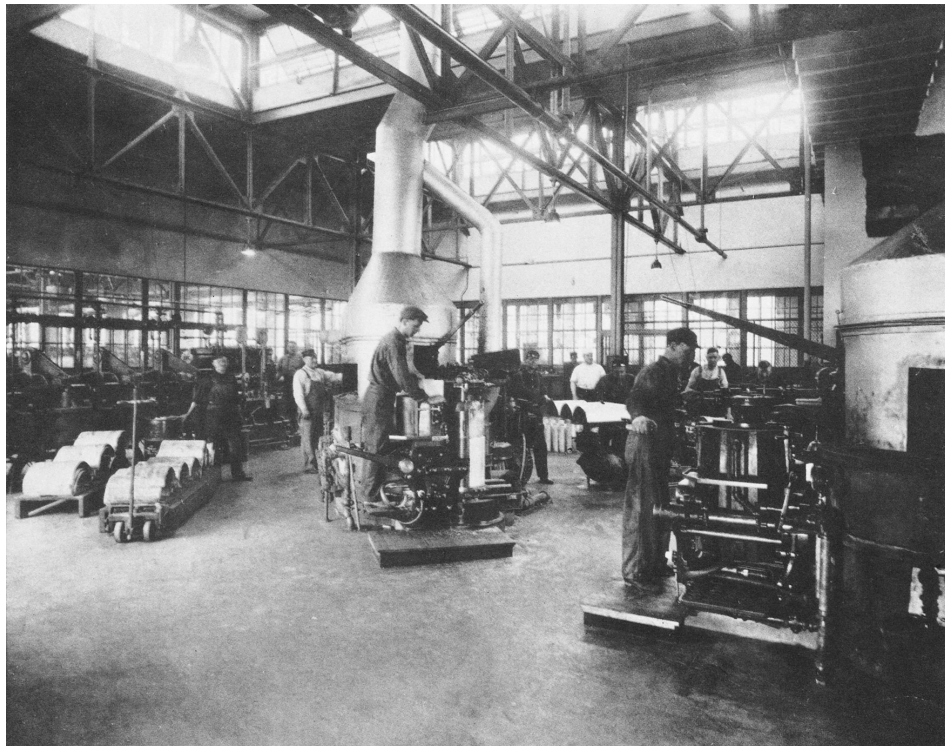
Along came the Web, and not only were these basic traits—solution-oriented, interactive and participatory—expanded with new technologies, but other facets emerged. Rather than go through the chronology, here are the characteristics as they apply to news organizations:

Solution-Oriented Stories: No longer can news organizations just point out the problem. They've got to address a solution, including looking at other communities that have solved the problem. News organizations can do this by providing links to these successful efforts. Also, no longer are solutions personal—as in how you can make your home thief-proof? They're also community-oriented and aimed at prevention. How can my community be more thief-proof? How can we prevent people from turning into thieves?

Context: The Web is infinitely deep and all points on it are connected. That means stories no longer stand alone. They're embedded in a matrix—a Web shell—that connects to stories done in the past, to data, to all the players and organizations involved in the story or the issue addressed, and to resources.

Real Time = Continuity: For the first time, a communications medium mirrors life. Artificial constructs of 24-hour newspaper deadlines or multiple daily TV or radio deadlines are gone. Most

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



“The stereotypers handle fifty-six tons of metal daily.” *Caption and image from “The Detroit News 1873-1917,” William A. Ulman, ©1918 by The Evening News Association, Detroit, Michigan.*

news organizations figured this out a while back and have established continuous news desks or are busy doing so now. This also means the end of “been there, done that” journalism. Just because journalists drop in, do a story, and go away, the issue doesn't.

Occasionally, for example, news organizations do a series about domestic violence in their communities. Once they publish, they won't tackle the subject again for at least a year, usually longer, and rarely do they cover this issue with regularity, unless celebrities

Must-Read Books

To understand the larger media environment in which journalism is practiced—“the new ocean we're swimming in,” as Jane Ellen Stevens calls it—she offers four must-read books:

“The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture,” by John Battelle.

“We the Media: Grassroots Journalism By the People, for the People,” by Dan Gillmor.

“Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution,” by Howard Rheingold.

“Everything Bad Is Good for You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter,” by Steven Johnson. ■

or politicians are involved. But domestic violence is often the leading felony aggravated assault in a community and the economic and emotional costs in dealing with it are enormous. In some large cities, grappling with the effects of domestic violence takes a big bite out of the budgets of the medical community (EMTs and emergency rooms), the police, adult courts, juvenile courts, welfare agencies, child protective services, and schools. Now community members have a communications medium that is on 24/7 and can absorb input from many sources to foster solutions to problems, whether journalists are involved or not.

Participatory: Blogs, ratings sites, wikis, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, etc. To traditional top-down journalists, this looks like a cacophonous community at its best and communication anarchy at its worst. To those who embrace the Web, it looks like a dynamic opportunity for continuous worldwide conversations. The bottom line: News organizations need to embrace and integrate the community's conversation. Perfectly positioned for Web 2.0, with its emphasis on social networking, news organizations have an opportunity to provide a place for such interactions and also involve the members of their communities in reporting. Besides community Web sites (with citizen blogs, podcasts and videos), it's time to institutionalize the knowledge of the community, as Michael Skoler has done with his Public Insight Journalism at Minnesota Public Radio.

Personalization: Stories embedded in a matrix of data and resources enable people to "personalize" the story to

pursue their own interests and questions that arise when they read, see or experience it. The BBC's Iraq site,¹ for example, provides links to maps; updated graphics of oil production, civilian deaths, and school openings; timelines; photographs; historical information, and others involved in the conflict. Other news organizations don't do this nearly as well. For example, The New York Times has com-

nonlinear format in which the information in each medium is complementary, not redundant. Emphasis is on the visual, with supporting text. In newspapers, stories have to be told in text, with accompanying photographs. On TV, stories have to be told in video. In radio, stories have to be told in audio. On the Web, the story decides how it is to be told. That sounds a little Zen-like, but here's the point: When doing

a story, a journalist evaluates what part of it works best in photos, what part in audio, what part in video, what part in text, what part in infographics, and then assembles the story using the best parts in each medium. This makes for much more powerful and informative storytelling.

Becoming a Web-Centric News Organization

By understanding the medium, a news organization can set goals for a transition to a Web-centric newsroom, which is oriented to doing stories for the Web first, then spinning off text, photos, audio, video and infographics for print, PDAs, iPods, iPods with video, cell phones, and any other communications platform.

A list of steps to take to become a Web-centric newsroom emerged after two years of cyber, phone and occasional face-to-face conversation among members of a think tank called Journalism That Matters (JTM).³ JTM involves the thinking and experiences of many different kinds of journalists: citizen and community journalists, newspaper editors and managing editors, newspaper reporters, freelance reporters, bloggers, TV producers, a former chief financial officer for a major metropolitan daily, directors of journalism think

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle at his typewriter. March 1944. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

parable news coverage but hasn't taken such advantage of the Web.² There's an added benefit to this approach: A news organization that provides "one-stop shopping" for an issue or beat creates a place that people come to even before they search across the Web.

Multimedia Stories and Information: On the Web, storytelling and information become multimedia stories and information. When done well, these multimedia presentations offer some combination of video, text, audio, still photos, graphics and interactivity in a

¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2002/conflict_with_iraq/default.stm

² <http://nytimes.com/pages/world/worldspecial/index.html>

³ http://bcs.blogs.com/rejournalism/2006/04/the_list_short_.html#more

tanks, a media expert from Wall Street, and a general manager from a forward-thinking (and doing) news company. What follows is the collective advice that JTM generated after a face-to-face meeting in October 2005:

1. For those who are entangled, disentangle from Wall Street and 20-plus percent profit margins. The Wall Street average is 11 percent. Put the rest into training, updating and research into figuring out how to transition from a print-centric to a Web-centric news organization. (1A. Stop calling yourself a newspaper! 1B. Stop calling yourself TV news! 1C. Stop calling yourself a radio news organization!)
2. Set one-year, two-year, three-year, four-year, five-year goals to transition from a print-centric to a Web-centric news organization.
3. Merge online and print/television/radio.
4. Train reporters and editors to be multimedia reporters and editors. At the core of the economic model of a newspaper, radio and many TV news operations is one story/one reporter. That means all reporters have to be backpack, or multimedia, journalists. Adding a layer of multimedia producers to “enhance” reporters’ print stories is not economically sustainable.
5. Hire Web infographics editors and database programmers who understand news; they are integral to a Web-centric news organization.
6. If you haven’t, set up a continuous news desk. The people assigned to this desk distribute news in different media (audio, video, text, photos) to different platforms (cell phones, PDAs, video updates on the Web, multimedia stories to the Web, etc.).
7. Journalists’ major roles: managing breaking news (including content from citizens) and contextual information in Web shells; acting as community watchdogs who provide in-depth, ongoing stories of consequence to the community, and as traditional storytellers.
8. Every story belongs in a Web shell, the area where journalists express their role as managers of information and news in the form of searchable databases, backgrounders, maps and links to resources, archives and research.
9. All stories are multimedia stories. That doesn’t mean that all stories have video. It means that the story and resources (time and staff) dictate the approach taken. Maybe the story is a few words on a timeline. Maybe it’s a series of photos with audio. Maybe it’s only video. Maybe it’s a mix of stills/audio/video/text. Maybe it’s graphics with supporting text. Moment of Zen: The story will tell you.
10. For local news organizations: Local. Local. Hyperlocal. That doesn’t mean ignoring national and international news; it means making the connection to the local community.
11. Distribute news organization staff throughout the community. That means journalists’ main office is in or near the community they’re covering. It’s the end of cavernous or centralized newsrooms.
12. News is a conversation, so involve the members of the community via blogs, wikis, adding to stories, pursuing follow-up on stories, and helping to direct stories.
13. Set up neighborhood Web sites where stories from community members and professional journalists appear together. In other words, don’t put citizen journalism in a ghetto.
14. Set up separate youth, kids, mothers, parents, ethnic, sports, etc. sites. These Web sites—and the neighborhood sites—are often the first points of entry to the news organization’s community of sites. Going through the home page is not a given.
15. For newspapers, publish a print edition one to four days a week and change the content. No more breaking news. Putting breaking news in the newspaper is like going to Jack-in-the-Box, ordering a hamburger and having it delivered, cold and tasteless, on your doorstep 12 hours later.
16. Stay in close touch with top-notch Web advertising (or in the case of public radio, fundraising) staff who are focusing on incorporating local advertisers into the news organization matrix to keep tabs on the approaching print/Web, TV news/Web, radio news/Web tipping point.
17. Use a content management system that can handle all of this.

This list is just the beginning. No one news organization is doing all of these things, but a few have decided to take the big gulp and start the transition to a Web-centric news organization. To keep tabs on their progress, and to see any changes to this list or updates that will emerge as part two of “The Road Map,” keep an eye on Rejournalism—the Journalism That Matters group blog.⁴ It’s a place where the talk is all about what journalism is in the arena of the Web. ■

Jane Ellen Stevens does multimedia reporting and storytelling for a variety of organizations and consults with news organizations that are committed to making the transition to a Web-centric presentation. She also teaches multimedia reporting at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley and for the Knight New Media Center’s multimedia reporting workshops.

⁴ <http://bcs.blogs.com/rejournalism>

Sights and Sounds of a Newspaper's Editorials

An editorial page editor describes 'a wide-open, creative new world for journalists who want to make use of new media and relate to newspaper readers in new ways.'

By Susan Albright

There we were, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, toiling away in my family's living room: Our daughter's piano teacher was warming up to play Maurice Ravel's virtuosic "Jeux d'Eau" while her husband, in real life a classical guitarist, played recording engineer. As he placed mikes and adjusted recording levels, I turned off the phones and removed the dog.

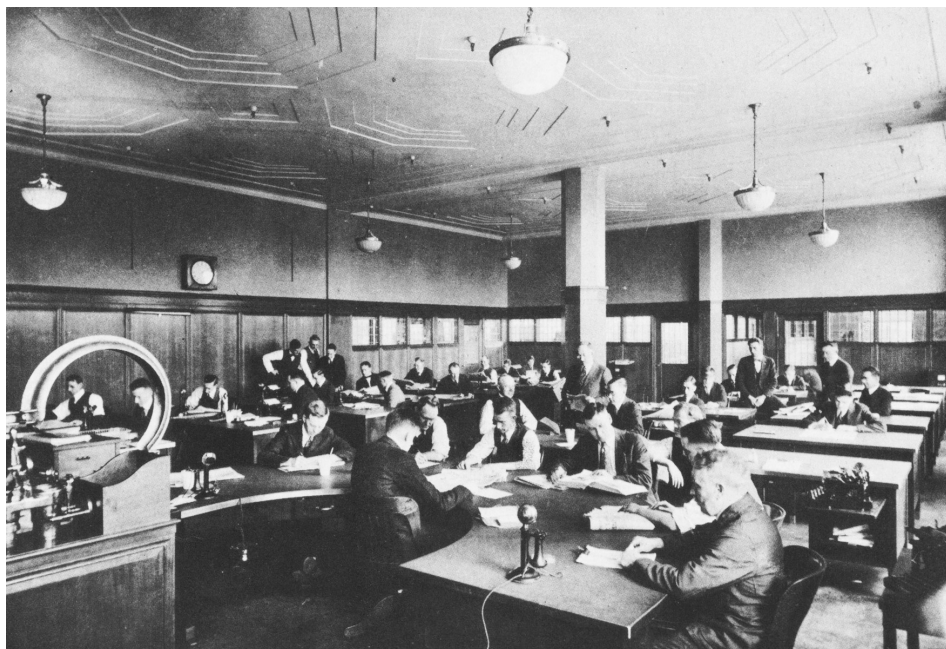
A few takes later, everyone was pleased: We had the soundtrack for an online slide show of historical Minnesota photographs. The music would become a component of the Star Tribune editorial department's special, ongoing project on water quality in Minnesota.

A few months ago, that scene was still novel. No more. In September one of our editorial writers, accustomed to toting a reporter's notebook and pen, wielded a digital microphone as he interviewed a southern Minnesota farmer about conservation practices and pollution runoff—then waited for good late-afternoon light to photograph the farm. From his efforts we created slides to illustrate the farmer's recorded words, thereby enhancing another part of the water series, a segment on Mississippi River pollution.

And now the online innovations are really getting out of hand: Last week our op-ed editor, working on prototypes for a proposed audio satire project, asked me if I'd be part of a chorus singing the lyrics "Give me Nixon!" as backup to a baritone's rendering of a political, "updated" spiritual. Oh, and could we record that in my living room, too?

It's actually great, liberating fun—a wide-open, creative new world for journalists who want to make use of new media and relate to newspaper readers in new ways. Sure, we still

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



"In the editorial department the complexities of life are reduced to their graphic elements." *Caption and image from "The Detroit News 1873-1917," William A. Ulman, © 1918 by The Evening News Association, Detroit, Michigan.*

put most of our efforts into our core work: choosing and editing op-ed commentaries and letters and developing persuasive editorials that we hope will change the world—or at least help get a local ordinance passed. But my staff and I are spending more and more time dreaming up new ways to interact with our readers, both in print and online.

Innovations: Time and Money

This is both exciting and daunting. The expanded possibilities for creating and presenting opinions are indeed wide open, from recording audio and video

to devising new blogging and podcasting opportunities. Still, no newspaper I know of has extra money to toss around these days, let alone the kind of money it would take to hire additional staffers to realize all those possibilities. Yet innovations take time—time to imagine them and time to carry them out. They take skills—like editing audio, for example—that your typical print journalist might not (uh, probably doesn't) possess. Heaven knows, we were busy enough already!

(And now, even as I write this piece, my op-ed editor is asking me whether he can record my doorknob turning and my door opening and closing. I don't even ask why; I just nod.)

Luckily, new technology has helped us save staff time that we've used for new efforts. Letters to the editor, for example, used to arrive via snail mail or fax and had to be typed and/or scanned into our publishing system. Now most letters arrive as e-mails that can be quickly cut and pasted into the system. This saves so much time that we were able to shift letters' personnel to different work, including the writing of a new weekly column on political blogs.

For editorial writers, instant Internet access to news-related documents has saved incredible amounts of research time. When the Supreme Court ruled last June, for example, in the *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* case on the treatment and trial of terror suspects, we were able to immediately download and analyze both the opinion itself and related documents, such as texts of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Geneva Conventions. The same speed applies to locating commission findings, Government Accountability Office conclusions, or a U.S. Surgeon General's report—and a lot of other documents we need.

New Web tools have also allowed us to offer readers new ways of responding to our work. Our online readers, for

example, can now peruse an editorial then click and post a comment on it in a "talk" area of Startribune.com. Successive readers can then comment on the editorial itself or on fellow readers' posts, thereby creating a reader conversation. Offering this in addition to the letters-to-the-editor function isn't particularly time-consuming for us, and it gives readers a way to register immediate feedback and interact with one another. We've also created a feature called "Netlets," which are letters from readers that were submitted for newspaper publication but didn't make the cut; they're perfectly fine letters, but we have room for a dozen at most on a given day in the print publication, so we're putting the overflow online.

Ironically, technology can also slow things down. Individual editors and writers receive much more mail now that it comes principally via e-mail. I personally receive hundreds of e-mails a day, some critical to my work and some worse than useless. Yes, company filters reject or divert much of the spam, but I still get plenty of investment advice, prescription come-ons, and offers to check out Russian coeds. Add to that dozens of public relations releases, which I've programmed to plop into a PR folder; mass-mailed op-ed submis-

sions, which I must delete or forward to the right editors; misdirected queries; shared/forwarded "wisdom;" list-serv missives from editorial colleagues from around the country—and just enough timely and/or important mail that I have to keep on my toes or risk missing a critical meeting notice or a query requiring action or a reply. It takes discipline and determination to deal with it quickly and effectively.

The most perplexing new wrinkle in the e-mail world is that some of our e-mailers expect not only a personal reply to an initial query or comment, which I'm happy to provide, but an ongoing, personal back-and-forth discussion on issues of the day as well. Some are bent on becoming pen pals on a regular basis. That I cannot do, or I'd get nothing else accomplished.

Managing e-mail is truly an art form and an acquired skill, one I'm getting better at as the snail mail dwindles. This is good because I need every minute for core priorities—like helping our political columnist figure out whether to create a blog or a podcast during the next legislative session. ■

Susan Albright is the editorial page editor of the Star Tribune in Minneapolis.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



"Train Station" (circa 1940), Saul Berman (American, b. Russia, 1899-1972). Oil on canvas. 20 x 35 ½ inches. *Mobile Museum of Art, purchased with proceeds from The Mobile Art Association's Treasure Benefit and Museum Purchase Fund. From "Press Gallery," Shaun O'L. Higgins and Colleen Striegel, plate 70, page 121.*

An Optimistic Plunge Into Multimedia Reporting

‘One columnist took on a controversial local issue and covered it in a way we’d never done before.’

By Joe Howry

Hanging with journalists isn’t a lot of fun these days. There’s a lot of sobering talk about what journalism’s future will be, or even if there will be one. Those who are resigned to a hopeless fate come in two categories: Some only hang tightly onto the ship, hoping it doesn’t sink before they retire, while others vow to stubbornly, and self-righteously, go down with their flags flying high. Among those with some modicum of hope, many are waiting for someone to come up with the “Answer” or are paralyzed by fear and leave any risk-taking to others.

Then there are the cockeyed optimists. This is the flag to which those of us at the Ventura County Star happily swear allegiance. Not only do we see a bright future for journalism, but also we find the present to be a dynamic period of boundless opportunities. And the source of our optimism is our plunge into multimedia journalism. This is no toe-dipping experiment, but a full-fledged cannonball into the deep end of the pool.

With help from Jane Ellen Stevens, a multimedia lecturer at the University of California-Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism, in early 2006 we made a commitment to give multimedia training to all in the newsroom who wanted it. [See Steven’s article on page 66.] They learned how to do stories in print, online text, with video and audio, as well as slide shows, sometimes packaged in Flash, and often interactive with the readers. In a relatively short time, each learned how to produce such presentations.

What did we expect to gain from all of this? We weren’t quite sure, but we knew a few things, and they were enough to convince us to take the plunge. Our newspaper audience

was fragmented and growing more so every day. We realized the Internet had disrupted our business and showed no signs of letting up. We also knew that despite fragmentation and disruption, a strong demand exists for credible and reliable information. What had changed, however, is that people now expect and want a choice in how they get to this information; we wanted to give our readers those options.

Training Begins

The training program Stevens developed, although streamlined and condensed, requires a considerable commitment of time. Because of this, as well as limitations with equipment and the ever-present demands of producing a daily newspaper, it became apparent that we could not train everyone at once. So we broke the training down into six-week segments, training teams consisting of reporters and editors that were supplied with multimedia equipment, including video cameras, laptops and, perhaps most important, Flash software.

During this training time, their marching orders were clear: Learn to be multimedia journalists. Learn how to tell stories through a variety of media that allow our readers to get the information they want in the way they want it. Though it sounds simple—and many technical aspects of it proved to be quite easy to learn and perform—we found that the implications of these changes are profound and revealing.

A significant indicator of our commitment—and a real key to the success of our training—was that we freed participants from their daily duties. As the editor, my highest hurdle was in taking eight productive journalists out of the daily newsroom mix for this

period of time. I worried that a huge gap would be left in our daily coverage and an extra burden would be put on the rest of the staff. But I leapt this hurdle because I believed that a little short-term pain was a small price to pay for a possible long-term gain. Among the many pleasant surprises we encountered was the willingness of staff members to step up and fill in these gaps. They did so willingly because they realized that when they took their turns for training others would cover for them. A new sense of teamwork blossomed in the newsroom.

Through serendipity, we turned out to be extremely fortunate in our choice of the first eight trainees. Twenty-three people volunteered for the initial training session, and though I realized the selections were critical, the criteria I initially used were primarily based on minimizing the pain in any one department. I decided to try to spread the pain around. Later on in the process I figured out that the most important factor to consider was compatibility. But luck was on my side, and the initial group of trainees was compatible and supportive of one another. They also became enthusiastic ambassadors for the training to the rest of the newsroom and effective advocates to those who feared the learning curve was too steep.

Stevens’ program began with three days of intensive training. Before the training started, each two-member team was asked to come up with a multimedia story idea. That idea would serve as the basis for this initial training. The goal: In just three days’ time each team would produce a project. The idea was that in doing this they’d figure out that the transition to doing this multimedia work would be easier than they might have expected it to be.

Multimedia Coverage

During five weeks, with Stevens' steady, guiding hand, teams churned out multimedia projects ranging from features to breaking news. One columnist took on a controversial local issue and covered it in a way we'd never done before. For many of our staff—and members of our community—this story marked a coming of age in our multimedia coverage.

This story involved a massive letter-writing campaign against the city of Camarillo's planned Fourth of July fireworks show next to an animal shelter. Those who organized the campaign claimed the fireworks traumatized the animals, and the show should be moved. Members of the local Lions Club, which sponsored the fireworks, and some city officials argued that the concerns were very much overblown and portrayed them as coming from overzealous animal rights activists. They also argued it was too late to change the location.

Columnist Colleen Cason saw an opportunity to break away from the standard "he said, she said" coverage. She decided—with the assistance of our Web site and multimedia tools—to let readers see for themselves the effect the fireworks had on the animals. She wrote her column for the newspaper, then she prepared a multimedia story using Flash technology that used audio and video to take readers inside the shelter before, during and after the fireworks show. In Cason's multimedia presentation, as the fireworks start, viewers can clearly see the effect they have on the animals. The online story concludes with a local

veterinarian, who volunteered to help calm the animals, talking about working with two traumatized dogs.¹

Reaction to Cason's presentation was immediate. She was flooded with calls and e-mails thanking her for going inside the shelter and showing the impact of the fireworks on the animals. Supporters of the event were noticeably quiet. Perhaps the newness of the reporting caught them off-guard. We expected complaints about bias—charging that Cason chose to

newsroom's organizational structures will change, as will the ways in which we report the news. This is because multimedia journalism is not just about using new storytelling tools; when done right, it involves journalists thinking deeply about how to tell stories in different ways and also what new stories can—and should—be told.

One thing our reporters have learned in this process is that they need to vastly expand their sources. The welcome mat needs to be extended

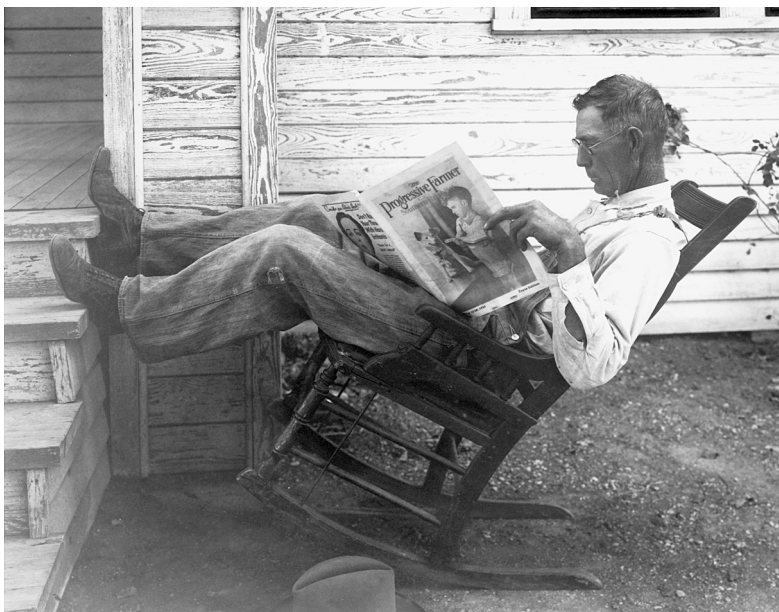
into our communities so new voices will be heard in our news coverage. To tell stories that are genuinely reflective of our communities and to cover issues at the core of the community's concern means transforming our "readers" into partners in the entire storytelling process. And finding ways to do this will be a lengthier, but equally important, part of our staff's transitional training.

Many approaches exist in reinventing what we, in newspapers, can do. I only hope there are enough cockeyed optimists willing to explore all of the possibilities. Claiming what is new

and making it ours while refusing to leave behind the core values of tough, honest, courageous and fair reporting that sustain us now—and will, I hope, in the future—is an exciting yet daunting adventure. It's one our reporters and editors embarked on without an absolutely clear sense of where we were truly headed. I think now we know we are headed in the right direction, even if we don't know our final destination. ■

Joe Howry is editor of the Ventura (Calif.) County Star.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



A farmer reading his trade paper. Coryell County, Texas. September 1931. *George W. Ackerman, National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

take video of only those animals that reacted to the fireworks. But all we received were more expressions of outrage and praise.

As quickly as we could, we began training a second group of eight journalists. As important as the first group was, this next one seemed even more critical to our mission. With them, the newspaper transitioned from an experiment in multimedia journalism to establishing the foundation of a full-fledged multimedia organization on which succeeding groups of trainees will build. And as we do, our

¹ <http://web.venturacountystar.com/special/2006/05/projects.html>

Narrative Journalism in the Era of the Web

‘Once the idea of using footnotes took hold, the question became whether we could use them for more than their usual purpose of attribution . . .’

By Lee Hancock and Mark Miller

Consider the footnote.

Long ignored by reporters and editors, the old-time reference tool might be what newspapers need to lure readers into complex narratives—and show the depth of work such stories require in the newspaper and on the Web. A recent Dallas Morning News narrative series on the financial exploitation of a fading beauty queen convinced even some of our newsroom’s skeptics about the value of a device once relegated to academia. The combination of extensive footnotes, source documents and historical records and other multimedia elements with cliffhanger storytelling and investigative reporting drew an unprecedented online readership for “Mary Ellen’s Will: The Battle for 4949 Swiss.”

The four-day, serial narrative tells the story of Mary Ellen Bendtsen and her once grand home on Swiss Avenue, in Dallas’s original mansion row. As her looks and memory faded, the octogenarian grew increasingly desperate to hang onto the decaying palace that had been her home for a half century. This meant that Bendtsen was vulnerable when two antique dealers with a history of befriending elderly Dallas residents began tussling with her only daughter. At stake was who would make decisions about her finances, her care and, ultimately, who would inherit her estate.

The tip that led to the project came after the paper published a three-day series on problems in the state’s adult protective services system, focusing on the agency’s abysmal handling of abuse and neglect cases involving the elderly and disabled in Dallas County. We kept digging for cases that might provide a window for our readers into



“Young Woman in Bed Reading a Newspaper” (circa 1890’s), Louise Lyons Heustis (American, 1865-1951). Graphite on Bristol board. 12 ½ x 16 ¾ inches. *Mobile Museum of Art/Gift of Mrs. Carter C. Smith. From “Press Gallery,” Shaun O’L. Higgins and Colleen Striegel, plate 7, page 54.*

the financial exploitation of elders. In late March 2005, we heard about the Bendtsen case, which had begun the previous month with a guardianship fight and morphed into a Byzantine will contest lawsuit after she died in early March from complications of a stroke.

Bendtsen’s saga had irresistible elements. It revolved around larger-than-life Dallas characters and a Southern gothic plot line that could have been lifted from a Hollywood screenplay. Even early on, it was apparent that the case’s intricate legal twists would illustrate the legal system’s limited ability to quickly protect vulnerable seniors.

It didn’t take long to realize that sorting it out would require dozens of interviews, as well as exhaustive reviews of thousands of pages of court files and transcripts, medical records, and state elder-abuse investigative reports. It would be a challenge to figure out how to explore the characters and their relationships, telling the story of Bendtsen’s personal life and her aspiring family’s place in an image-conscious city and explain the often-arcane legal issues without overwhelming readers. We knew it was going to take serious reporting before we even had a handle on how we’d know how to get readers to stay with such an intricate story—and keep them

coming to it over several days.

Before we got very far, Lee was sent to New Orleans the day before Hurricane Katrina made landfall and ended up spending much of the next six months covering the storm's aftermath. This meant we wouldn't focus on the elder-exploitation series until the end of March 2006.

The Web and Footnotes

After about a month of intensive research and interviews, we agreed on a narrative approach. Then we met with our online colleagues, Karen Davis and Oscar Martinez, to show them the extensive documents and other source material that they could draw from to design the Web presentation. Included were reams of records from Texas Adult Protective Services and local courts that demonstrated how one or both of the antique dealers involved with Bendtsen had previously courted other elderly Dallas residents and ended up with significant chunks of money, houses and, in one case, an estate. We also alerted them to some amazing visuals—Christmas home movies, family photos dating back an entire century, Depression-era modeling shots of Bendtsen, and decades of newspaper and magazine articles detailing her youthful flirtation with fame and her mansion's historic significance.

When we called Poynter Institute writing guru Chip Scanlan for coaching on developing the tale into a mystery serial, complete with daily cliffhangers, he mentioned footnotes as a solution for providing adequate sourcing without bogging down this intricate tale. We already had been thinking about using them, so we looked at other projects that had used footnotes with success. To understand possible pitfalls, we exchanged e-mails with Los Angeles Times reporter Sonia Nazario about her use of them in the 2003 narrative project, "Enrique's Journey." We also visited with Morning News projects editor Maud Beelman about her footnote-reliant investigative work in her previous projects post at the Center for Public Integrity.

News Managing Editor George

Rodrigue was also enthusiastic. So we decided to use footnotes for the online edition and later committed to publishing them in print editions of the newspaper. The reasoning: Our traditional readers deserve as much information about sourcing material as our online audience.

Once the idea of using footnotes took hold, we realized that they offered more than just a vehicle for attribution—as they'd been used by other newspapers. They could allow us to provide contextual information and let readers dig deeper into topics of particular interest. We realized, too, that the Web offered another possibility we had not seen used by any newspaper. We could build in "pop-up boxes" so online readers could click on a footnote number in the text and reveal sourcing notes. According to our online colleague, Davis, it could be done by building an html page for each annotation. (By the time the project was published, she had built 133 footnote html pages.)

But we wanted to do even more. We asked Davis to add PDF files of original source documents to these pop-up footnotes. Those would allow readers to explore investigative reports, transcripts, medical records, police reports, wills, deeds and other historic documents that had been amassed in the reporting of the story. This added a level of transparency would leave no doubt about the depth of reporting that went into a story that we wanted to read like good fiction.

After the series was published, Davis and her Web colleagues were amazed at the popularity of the PDF documents. "People wanted the in-depth information," she told us. "They became involved. They wanted more in-depth information."

On each day of the series, the Web edition featured new video elements—ranging from a home movie of Bendtsen's last Christmas to dramatic footage from a hospital emergency room as the antique dealers and their lawyer friend convince Bendtsen to sign a deathbed will. News Web designer Mindy Leichter also created a lush character page, a family "scrapbook" photo album, and

other Web elements designed to look like promotional materials for a commercial-run movie. Our videographers added their clips and put together a catchy introductory video segment.

"Because we started early on we were able to put together an experience that fit the story instead of just taking the print content and shoveling it online," Davis says. "Multimedia presentations are successful when you can connect emotionally with someone, immerse them in a reality, and take them through it with an online narrative."

The result was an unparalleled reader response—both online and in print.

Consider a few statistics from *dallasnews.com*: A recent page-one Sunday news story about the difficulty of keeping track of registered sex offenders drew 2,369 Web page views. That same day, October 1st, breaking news about the Dallas Cowboys trouncing the Tennessee Titans had 6,258 page views. In contrast, "Mary Ellen's Will" drew 7,383 page views on a Saturday afternoon when the first story in the series went up on our Web site; that happened on the day before it was published in our Sunday paper on August 13th. By midnight of that next day, more than 26,000 Web visitors had pulled up the first installment. A midweek Internet chat drew one of the larger live audiences that the News had ever experienced, easily swamping even a recent chat with independent gubernatorial candidate Kinky Friedman. Before week's end, the series and accompanying online multimedia elements had garnered nearly a quarter of a million page views. And by the end of September, the four-part narrative, plus an August 16th postscript and several follow-up stories, had received well over 300,000 page views.

Enthusiastic e-mails arrived by the hundreds. Several included confessions from impatient readers who had tried to hack our Web server because they didn't want to wait for installments that weren't yet posted on our Web site. There were a few harrumphs about "eye-glazing annotations" and "going all David Foster Wallace-ey," but most

of those came from journalists.

Many of our newsroom colleagues recognized that something special happened between our readers and us with “Mary Ellen’s Will.” The overwhelming reader response has strengthened their interest in narrative storytelling. That online readers kept coming back to explore source documents, video clips, and other online elements has also prompted continuing discussions

about wider use of footnotes, online multimedia elements, and other Web technology.

Perhaps the most gratifying reaction came from one of the paper’s assistant metro editors who’d been skeptical about the idea of footnotes in a daily paper. After reading our day one installment, he called Lee on his day off to declare, “Footnote 32 alone was worth the \$1.50 for the Sunday paper!” ■

Lee Hancock is an enterprise reporter for The Dallas Morning News. Mark Miller was assistant managing editor for Sunday and enterprise reporting at The Dallas Morning News from May 2004 until October 2006, when he was named assistant managing editor of Newsweek. He now works in New York.

Finding New People to Tell the Stories

‘... progress in democratizing journalism doesn’t necessarily translate into more or better news coverage—at least not yet.’

By Craig Cox

Late in July, when a former member of the Minneapolis City Council went on trial in a high-profile bribery case, I received an e-mail from a local community activist alerting me to a woman who was determined to sit through the entire proceedings and describe the finer points of a trial that was headline news in the Twin Cities media.

I went to the blog site where she was filing her report and spent the next half hour or so riveted by the excruciating detail she was providing. For better or worse, her words were the closest thing to a court transcript the public would ever see. And as the editor of the Twin Cities Daily Planet,¹ a new online publication covering local news, I coveted any sort of reportage on a case that had been awash in controversy for the past six months.

I dashed off an e-mail to the blogger, a south Minneapolis political activist named Liz McLemore, and asked her if she would allow me to publish her courtroom chronicles for our Daily Planet readers. She was predictably flustered, curious as to why I thought

her work was worth publishing, and keen to reveal her own political biases (she had worked on the campaign of the defendant’s opponent in last year’s election). But she eventually agreed to a deal: She would crank out her daily report on the trial, and I would grab it and post it on the Daily Planet.

The following day, we offered the most detailed description of the trial available in the Twin Cities, trumping the sound bites of TV news and the 20-inch summary on the Minneapolis Star Tribune’s front page. It was, I believed, the Daily Planet’s first real testimony to the power of citizen journalism. But when I went to McLemore’s blog to gather up her words about the third day of the trial, I found Day Two still sitting there like a day-old salad—interesting to look at, but with little appeal. My zealous reporter, so determined to chronicle history, was already burned out. The stress of all that reporting and writing was a bit more than she had expected. And our big scoop quickly became yesterday’s news.

The McLemore “scoop” is an object lesson in the way citizen journalists can

captivate and confound editors trying to build and maintain the credibility of their publications while encouraging ordinary citizens to tell their story. Captive to the vagaries of personal schedules, political biases, and reportorial limitations, these amateur reporters can require delicate handling even as they bring greater passion than many veterans.

Journalism Isn’t Easy

There is much to applaud about the rise in citizen journalism. From CBS News to our local newspapers, a lot of people are exploring new ways to bring news consumers into more active roles in shaping the media. The “blogosphere” is now a major influence on our political culture, and pretty much anyone who has a computer and Internet access can publish his or her views.

But this progress in democratizing journalism doesn’t necessarily translate into more or better news coverage—at least not yet. Here at the Daily Planet, a publication of the nonprofit

¹ www.tcdailyplanet.net

Twin Cities Media Alliance (TCMA), launched last fall as a way to encourage citizen journalism and highlight the work of the neighborhood and ethnic press, we've struggled to recruit and sustain a stable of citizen-reporters and develop a workable editorial planning process.

In my nearly 30-year career in journalism, I've logged plenty of hours assigning and editing stories by amateur reporters. They typically bring lots of passion to their work and are genuinely appreciative of constructive editing. They even pay attention to deadlines, most of the time (and I know some pros who don't). But no matter how dedicated they might be to following a story—and even learning the trade—very few are able to sustain their participation for very long.

That's not because they lack the necessary discipline or commitment to following through with assignments (though some do). It has more to do with the realities of their lives. Reporting, when done well, can be an all-encompassing exercise—in identifying and contacting the best sources (and getting calls returned), in understanding the broader context of the issue being explored, in gathering information through interviews and other research, and in writing a clear and compelling story that fairly represents diverse perspectives.

These are not easy tasks for even the most experienced reporters, so it's not surprising that many citizen journalists find the process vexing and frustrating—given that they typically have full-time jobs that take up much of their day and most of their energy.

As a result, we're finding that the bulk of our citizen-journalist submissions lean toward the opinion piece, the basic profile feature, and the meeting (city council, school board, zoning board) story. None of these assignments hinge on gaining access to multiple sources or require several interviews

the TCMA board, teaches a rigorous six-week beginning journalism class a couple of times a year as a way of encouraging ordinary citizens to tell their stories through the Daily Planet and other media outlets. And on this evening his students were attentive, curious and motivated.

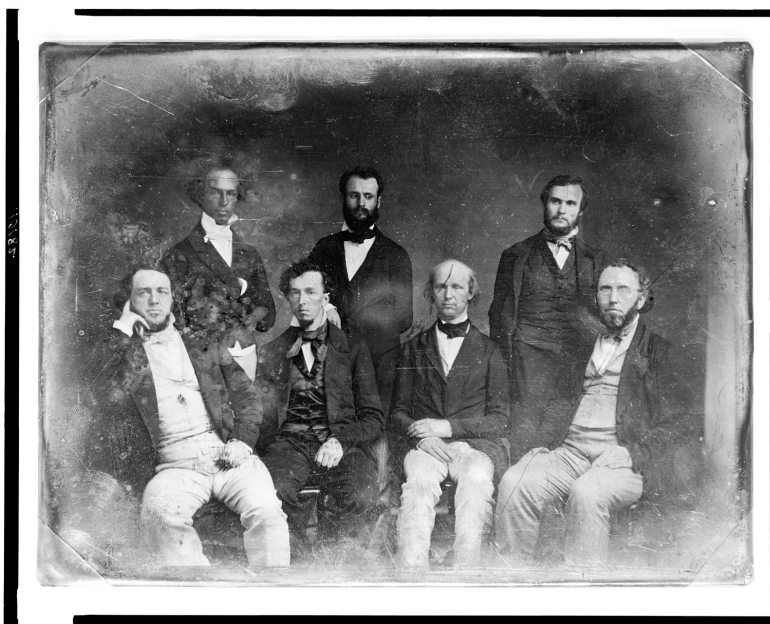
Having a place where they know their work can be featured, and an editor who will consider their submissions with an eye toward their fresh voice rather than their journalistic credentials, is important to these students. And we hope that McGill's efforts will help us recruit and retain a growing number of citizen journalists.

But we also need to go out into neighborhoods and explain the power that can come from storytelling to people for whom the media remains a monolithic, authoritarian machine that holds little interest or importance in their daily lives. In the end, a large part of our challenge is to teach media literacy to those who live in communities that are too often either overlooked in regular news cover-

age or featured only when crime and violence intrude. Ultimately, we'd want such people not to be the bystanders who are occasionally quoted but the tellers of their own stories.

This is not an insurmountable challenge—just one that must be undertaken on several fronts, including journalism training, media literacy education, and an editorial process that invites and sustains participation. One of the roles editors need to play in assigning stories to neophyte reporters is to gauge their personal interests, since those are often what keep them focused throughout the

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



The editorial staff of the New York Tribune is seen in a group portrait. Seated, left to right: George M. Snow, financial editor; Bayard Taylor; Horace Greeley; George Ripley, literary editor. Standing, left to right: William Henry Fry, music editor; Charles A. Dana; Henry J. Raymond. Circa 1844-1860. Produced by Mathew Brady's studio. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

to complete.

While we're delighted to receive these submissions, the level of journalistic participation by our readers (and local citizens) still falls far short of our goals.

Training Citizens as Journalists

I recently sat in on one of Doug McGill's citizen-journalism classes when he was teaching nearly a dozen aspiring reporters the basic structure of a news story. McGill, a former New York Times reporter and a member of

project. At those times when I receive a submission from a citizen journalist that is clearly biased in favor of the author's point of view, I will post the story as an opinion piece and include biographical information that clearly identifies the author's connection to the issue.

One of McGill's students, a young woman named Crystal Myslajek, who is passionate about issues revolving around social change, has written

a couple of solid stories during the past few months. One of her articles required a fair amount of city hall reporting. I helped her locate the sources and gave her some context and history behind the issue. In this case, her story explored the effect a major street reconstruction project was having on a struggling, predominantly black business district in north Minneapolis. A couple of weeks later, her story arrived in my in-box. I gave

her words an edit and posted the piece on the Daily Planet's front page before it occurred to me that we had actually beat the local paper to the story.

The Star Tribune would catch up to it a few days later, but for that small moment, I caught a glimpse of the future of journalism. And I have to say I liked what I saw. ■

Craig Cox is the managing editor of the Twin Cities (Minn.) Daily Planet.

When the Web Feeds the Newspaper

The letter 'i' in iHerald stands for 'interactivity, the individual and the Internet.'

By Eric Blom

Our newspaper's digital journey started off as a rather old-style conversation. In the spring of 2005, we were thinking about ways to attract new readers and came up with the idea of launching a Monday business section in the Portland (Maine) Press Herald. But as we thought more and more about doing this, it didn't seem the right approach.

Instead, two of our paper's senior editors, Jeannine Guttman and Eric Conrad, suggested we move in a completely new direction. That's when I was asked to develop a Monday "interactive section" of our newspaper. In researching how this might be done, I came across a wide range of innovative newspaper/online initiatives. In absorbing them, a thought came to me: Nearly all of the convergence strategies I was reading about involved print journalists producing content for the Web and using the newspaper itself to promote the really cool things that readers could do online.

I started to wonder about whether we couldn't reverse this process by having the Web bring something to the newspaper. I'd run into a few examples of reverse publishing, in which com-

ments made online found their way into print. But such examples were rare and scattered and, when they did occur, they did not seem integrated into the print newspaper in any meaningful way.

With this concept in mind, we set out to create a weekly section that would seek to bridge the divide between what's in the newspaper and what's on the Web. "iHerald" launched on September 19, 2005.¹ The "i" stood in for a few important "i" words—interactivity, the individual, and the Internet. We hoped to create a conversation and, as part of that conversation and to the extent possible, we wanted to let readers collaborate in the production of each week's iHerald section, which in the Monday paper would be a hybrid of citizen journalism and professionally produced content.

We also tried to create a loop between our online site, MaineToday.com, and the iHerald. For example, online visitors post comments about newspaper stories at MaineToday and some of them are published in the newspaper after names and towns of residence are confirmed. And their comments can be used as a springboard

for stories or columns in the newspaper. Then, in turn, those stories are published online and comments on them are encouraged, and this creates an interactive loop.

How iHerald Works

In one way or another, readers suggest most iHerald stories. The Monday section from last March offers a good example. Our featured story arrived as a suggestion from a reader who knew college students participating in an alternative spring break in which they used vacation to help distressed people, such as those in the Gulf Coast disaster area. We produced a staff-written story and married it to a first-person essay by someone who'd gone south and could describe the plight of pets that hurricane evacuees left behind. A graphic artist on our staff incorporated pictures taken by those who'd participated in these projects into an illustration. We also included a column by one of our readers who wrote about another young Maine relief worker who had died in a Gulf Coast bus crash.

In a different iHerald, the state's

¹ www.maintoday.com/iherald/

middle-school laptop program became the focus. A staff writer contributed a traditional newspaper story describing how the program was doing and quoted experts about its future prospects. With it, we published companion essays by middle-school students writing about their experiences with the laptops; these were quite candid reflections about what worked for them educationally and also about how the computers were sometimes being misused. The combination of stories generated online discussion, and this was then reverse published into the newspaper to provide another forum for this debate. Schools hung the section on bulletin boards and discussed the topic in class.

iHerald is unusual in the extent to which we're able to create content across our print and Web-based platforms. In print, we regularly publish a column by an online producer who ruminates on a particular topic and also shares people's remarks about that topic from their online posts at MaineToday. We've experimented with having a newspaper staff writer produce first-person online-only essays that relate to the week's featured topic. When we published a package of stories about people no longer wanting their tattoos, our staff writer, Giselle Goodman, shared with readers her regret about getting a certain tattoo.

In another effort to connect our print and online platforms, we regularly list in iHerald what stories were most popular at MaineToday during the previous week in terms of page views. A library researcher at the Press Herald also puts on our site a feature about what interesting Web sites people can visit. And we write a mini-profile of someone in the community who offers their favorite online sites.

Techniques we use in iHerald can be

used by other newspapers. And other sections of our own newspaper are starting to borrow some of what we do. Our opinion pages, for example, recently began reverse publishing some comments posted online along with traditional Letters to the Editor. This can certainly be used by a sports section to get some citizen-generated content onto its pages. A feature story could be

think about what appears on the pages of their newspaper.

This has been a valuable experiment in helping our newspaper evolve to meet the new digital demands, and the recognition it has received is gratifying. iHerald was named the 2006 winner of the New England Newspaper Association Reader First award, which "honors a newspaper for improved products and/or relationships with customers and readership growth and is designed to increase readership and innovation in the industry." It also was named this year as a notable entry in the Knight-Batten Awards for Innovations in Journalism that recognize organizations that "spotlight the creative use of new information ideas and technologies to involve citizens in public issues."

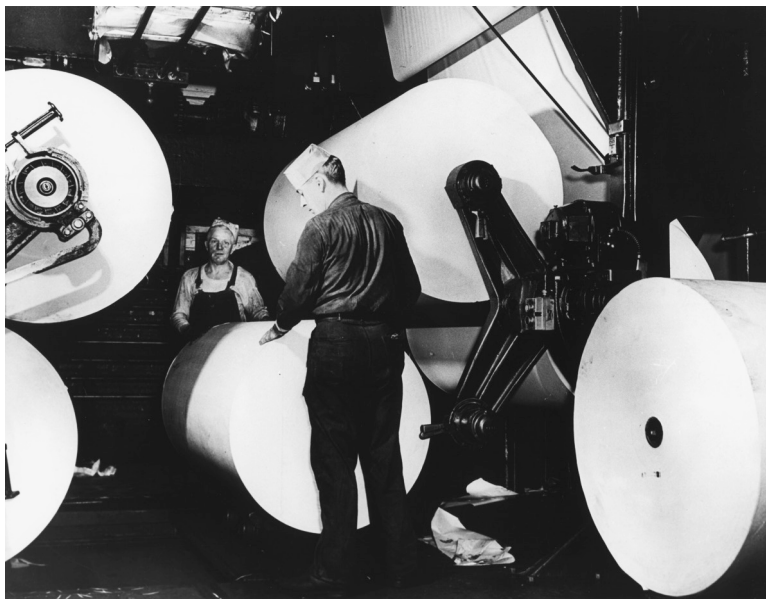
From our focus groups, it's clear that younger readers are more comfortable with a fluid content mix than older people. The younger readers appreciate having the chance to contribute directly to the

section. Our initial strategy was to try doing this as a way to bring younger readers to our newspaper's pages more often. One indication that we are having some success is that schools in the Newspapers in Education program are asking for more copies of the Monday newspaper because students want the iHerald.

While newspapers are right to be exploring all sorts of strategies through experimentation on the Web, I also hope that newspaper sections such as iHerald demonstrate the potential for innovation to flow both ways. ■

Eric Blom is acting features editor of the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram. He also has worked as business editor, city editor, and staff writer at the paper.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



The press room of The (Washington, D.C.) Evening Star. Photo National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.

accompanied by first-person accounts and reader-generated opinions. News coverage can be enhanced by meshing a traditional article with what readers have to say about issues of public concern and controversy.

Producing the Monday iHerald section is labor intensive. We need to confirm the identity of individuals posting anonymous messages online to use their content in the newspaper. And the involvement of citizen reporters, along with our staff, requires more planning and oversight than would be required for a traditional section of the paper. It also continues to be a challenge just to describe the mission of the Monday section since it is focused on the technique of interactivity rather than a topic such as business or sports. This is a new way for journalists to

Inviting Readers Into the Editorial Process

In online polling about story selection, editors at the Wisconsin State Journal learn that ‘the readers who vote consistently do choose weighty stories.’

By Ellen Foley

This September our newly appointed multimedia editor and our managing editor invited 90 newsroom colleagues at the Wisconsin State Journal in Madison, Wisconsin, to a brown-bag lunch to talk about “our rapidly expanding online initiatives.” We expected about a dozen people, so we booked a conference room with 20 chairs. About 50 staffers balancing laptops, cell phones, notebooks and sandwiches jammed into the room, many sitting on the floor or craning their necks from the packed hallway.

With hindsight, I realized I made a huge error that day. It had nothing to do with booking a larger room. I should have had the sense to pull out my Smartphone and take a video of the scene to send to the stock analysts who make me crazy with their conclusions that the newspaper industry is not a good bet for investors because it does not have the necessary enthusiasm for the multimedia world.

In the absence of streaming video, I offer this dispatch from flyover land to answer those critics and scholars who are not sure that the newspaper industry can fulfill the mandate to transform itself in the face of the “disruptive change” of the Internet.

I am intrigued by media consultant and critic Jeff Jarvis’s “Number One Lesson of the Internet.” He argues that a media company has “to give up control of the Internet in order to gain control.” For me, the process of gaining control becomes a little more proactive and involves the serenity principle. As editor of the State Journal, I work very hard to accept the things I cannot change, find the courage to change the things that I can, and seek the wisdom to know the difference. It’s the part about finding the wisdom

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



“Telegraphic dispatches to the news exceed 75,000 words a day.” *Caption and image from “The Detroit News 1873-1917,” William A. Ulman, ©1918 by The Evening News Association, Detroit, Michigan.*

that scares me.

Great journalism has always involved risks. And newsrooms acting with wisdom in this digital era appear to be places in which top editors are comfortable taking big risks often with little financial support. There isn’t time to wait for the industry, as a whole, to come up with a patch to put on our tattered business model. Instead, editors with courage are taking what we know about journalism and putting it to work in the digital arena while we fervently hope that the business side can figure out the economics to support what journalists are supposed to do.

I have worked for seven newspapers. At some, editors in charge of the newsroom made it very clear that

they would not cooperate with the Web operation, mostly out of fear that circulation would drop and journalism, as they practiced it in print, would disappear. So it is not a surprise that newspaper editors sometimes get hostile vibes from their peers on the Web site. Healing such rifts is essential. Nor does it surprise me that given papers’ bleak advertising picture, large news organizations funnel new technology to places now generating advertising dollars and not into newsrooms.

None of this means that we who inhabit these newsrooms should sit on our hands. Our digital competition is increasingly entrepreneurial and nimble and often embarrasses us with its low-cost technological wizardry. In

some cases, we should first apologize for not “getting it” earlier, even if we were not directly in charge. And then we need to push our slow moving bureaucracies to give us the tools. If that doesn’t happen, we need to figure out ways to “create” the generally low-cost tools and skills we need.

Reader’s Choice

We tried to do this at the State Journal with a very simple yet elegant tool called Reader’s Choice poll.¹ This idea was hatched by Managing Editor Tim Kelley and me in an effort to signal to readers our seriousness about interactivity. The cost involved programming time to create the ballot that appears on our Web site on weekdays—on which readers vote for which of four or five story choices they’d most like to see on the next day’s front page—and an editor’s time to manage the voting. Ten months after we came up with the idea, the first ballot appeared on our Web site. [See accompanying box.]

On most days we receive between 100 and 200 votes in a news market arena of about 450,000 people. We’d like for the number of votes to increase, but financial resources to spur more activity aren’t available. Now, almost a year into this effort, we are pondering how the newsroom can take this important experiment to a new level. Can we pool e-mail contacts into a group list and send daily reminders to potential voters? Which person in the newsroom could do this using Outlook? Can we afford to hire a programmer who can improve the online balloting process? Should we sacrifice some of our reporting staff’s time to try to increase participation?

A number of news organizations, many of them national, have written and aired stories about our Reader’s Choice poll, characterizing it as an enterprising way to connect with readers. But at our paper, we aren’t getting much traction for it outside of the newsroom. We find more awareness of our project at conferences in

The Quickening Pace of Change

In March 2005, David Stoeffler, then vice president of news for Lee Enterprises, issued a challenge to the company’s newspaper editors: Give me ideas that will revolutionize your paper.

Wisconsin State Journal editors sent Stoeffler a proposal that called for a daily online ballot through which Web users could select a front-page story for the next day’s print edition. Managing Editor Tim Kelley and I felt that empowering readers to make such choices would demonstrate our investment in interactivity. This feature, we also felt, could serve as a starting point from which the newsroom’s top editors could push other online initiatives.

As simple as this idea seemed to be, it still took nearly a year for us to reach readers with it. Why the delay? The short answer is that this idea was a low priority of the information technology crew at Capital Newspapers, which publishes the State Journal. More pressing was the creation of other Web features to serve users and advertisers. A time-consuming redesign of madison.com, the Web portal for the State Journal and its partner newspaper,

The Capital Times, also took precedence.

What the Reader’s Choice experience taught me, however, is that there is no substitute for stamina. We could have given up, but we believed in the idea so passionately that we refused to let it go.

Moving into 2006, the pace of change and responsiveness accelerated. We wanted to buy digital video cameras for reporters and that request was honored. But a paired request for a computer that we needed to edit the images our staff would shoot was denied. We pointed out to company managers that without this machinery newsroom staff could not use the cameras; this time we got a distinctly different answer than wait-and-see.

“We’ll get back to you tomorrow afternoon,” one of Lee’s Internet executives told me. The next day he called with the resources we needed to buy the editing computers.

We’ve also learned that it’s hard to argue with success. Good ideas and great execution yield credibility. Having success with one small step garners attention and resources that allow us to take the next. ■ —E.F.

Boston, for example, than we do in Madison.

What’s been interesting for us to learn through Reader’s Choice is that the readers who vote consistently do choose weighty stories. On one day recently readers voted onto Page One a lengthy package of stories on the gubernatorial election. Competing for this front page spot was a story about physicists’ discovery of what has the potential to produce a Star Trek-like cloaking device. Such decision-making has surprised—and encouraged—our editors, who’ve been told by studies and in training sessions that time-starved readers want only news-you-

can-use and entertaining breaks to ease the strain of their day.

For now our sputtering experiment continues. As the tool for tallying votes improves, we will be able to gather more information about what our readers want—and expect—from the newspaper. And such strategies will equip our younger editors, those in their 30’s and 40’s, with information that we hope can keep our journalism robust in the digital age.

Advancing on the Web

Two years ago the State Journal² was somewhat sleepily posting three to

¹ www.madison.com/wsj/blogs/inciteful/index.php?ntid=69839&ntpid=8

² At www.madison.com/wsj, the Wisconsin State Journal shares a portal with other media outlets.

five of our newspaper's stories a day on our Web site. Today nearly every print story gets posted to the Web site, and staff at the paper blog. On the Web site, we present forums on specific topics, along with audio slide shows, breaking news alerts, and other Web-only content. Video is next for us. Our TV station partner, which installed a camera outside my office, will air interviews with our reporters on major stories. After this happens, we will tackle streaming video with our new digital cameras.

While we take pride in steps we are taking to enter the digital era, we remember that our newsroom's ability to report the news remains foremost. The recent school shooting in nearby Cazenovia, Wisconsin, in which a high school freshman was charged with killing his principal, reminded us of this as

our newsroom excelled in its coverage of the day's tragic events. Our series on tainted city water and another examining the issues involved with stem cell research—each of which had unique online features—are among the best examples of enterprise reporting that I've seen in 30 years.

What we, as editors, struggle most with is figuring out what we must give up as we try to move in the many new directions brought to us by the Web. A few years ago editors were not obsessed with e-mail pushes, online ballots, reader/user interactivity while, at the same time, working to come up with fresh angles for print stories about school shootings. Our jobs, at least how we practice them today, and our comfort level with all the new directions in which we are being asked to turn simultaneously has to do with the

kind of journalism we will practice. My colleagues and I will need to tap our collective wisdom on how to rock the boat because our jobs, retirement funds, and ability to pay for our family's health care are also on the line.

From our perch in Madison, Wisconsin, we look to the broader community of journalists for good ideas that might instruct and guide us on our way into digital journalism. For now, we're taking some risks, trying some new things, and delighting in the knowledge that journalists who work here will pack conference rooms on their own time to figure out how to take what we do best and find different ways to bring it to old and new audiences. ■

Ellen Foley joined the Wisconsin State Journal and madison.com/wsj as editor in April 2004.

The Digital Reach of a Newspaper's Code of Ethics

'It offers readers ideas and phrases to use in their criticism of our journalism, which has a way of sorting serious critics from simple haters.'

By Dean Miller

On the Post Register's Web site we spell out our newspaper's code of ethics, thereby empowering those who want to examine our work. Of the many advantages of digital-enhanced journalism, this one arguably does the most to uphold and strengthen the important ethical traditions handed down through newsrooms for hundreds of years.

Few people actually use a printed ethics code. Most newsroom ethics booklets aren't even up-to-date, and current ones often can't be found on newsroom desks. Take it a step further into the homes of readers, and any

reader who keeps a printed copy is either planning to sue the paper or needs insomnia medication.

But a paper's ethics code—and examples of how it works—should be readily accessible to readers and staff.¹ When journalists get something wrong, even a casual reader needs to know the ethics standards in detail. And when that reader contacts the newsroom, the reporters and editors need to be familiar with their ethics policy, as well.

With the code online, readers can click through from lofty principles like "Seek Truth" to specific standards of

practice, such as prohibitions on the use of unnamed sources. They can find post-enforcement reports² about when ethics standards were not upheld; these reports let readers (and staffers) understand that the code's principles will be enforced. Newspapers print names of folks who are convicted, and even accused, of crimes, so journalists should not be exempt from public disclosure when they violate the paper's standards.

Along with the code, there are disclosures of unavoidable conflicts of interest,³ such as the politically active spouse of the editor or a real estate

¹ www.postregister.com/ethics/polestars.php

² www.postregister.com/ethics/enforcement.php

³ www.postregister.com/ethics/disclosures.php

investment by the person who covers the neighborhood. And there is an annotated version of a controversial story that helps readers to understand why certain facts are left out of a story or how narrative journalism, while reading like fiction, still gets at the truth, or how certain assertions find their way into an article even without a specific source attached to them.⁴

Even though the paper's lawyer will quail and the union will gripe, arguments against doing this aren't strong. Imagine being an editor who refuses to give readers a copy of the ethics code. Any lawyer will have a copy in the first round of discovery; ditto with the examples of enforcement. And posting this material online sends a powerful message to readers. But don't expect much to happen when it first goes up. The citizenry will not storm the gates, even if attention is called to it by reprinting the ethics code in the paper with links scattered all over the page.

But when the newspaper prints—as ours did—the name of a minor who stole his father's police car or includes the words “Stupid sonuvabitch!” in a

story about a football game brawl, having the ethics code in front of both of us is a good place to start with callers. It's a way to talk about the competing forces of seeking truth and minimizing harm and provides a way to describe how one newspaper's code differs from others due to peculiarities of its community.

Ten minutes of give-and-take and only the most unreasonable critics will fail to notice the newspaper's seriousness of purpose or realize it's not as simple as they thought. And each conversation spreads the idea that a code of ethics is not some philosophical jujitsu manual by which any bad decision can be rationalized. Rather, readers learn your ethics, like theirs, are the starting point for searching conversations, the weighing of alternatives, and the honest treatment of what is known and not known.

Our Web site's ethics section was built after a year and a half of spirited, sometimes acrimonious, debate—involving staff and readers—about decisions we made to publish the contents of (illegally) sealed court files and our

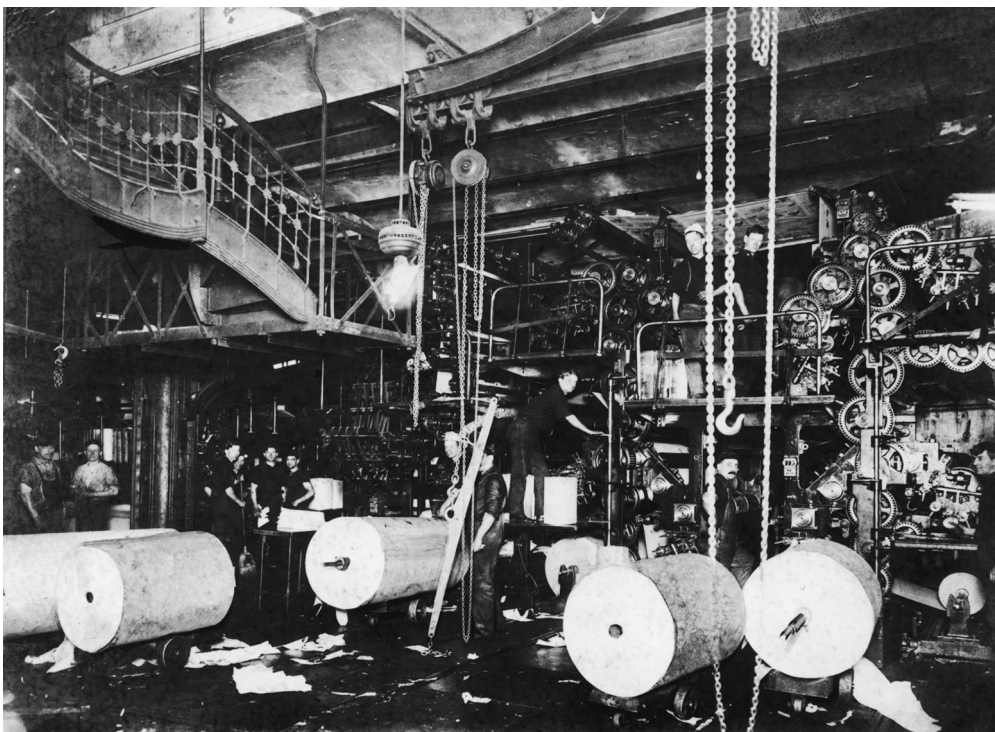
refusal to identify a recovering family of methamphetamine addicts we'd profiled in harrowing detail.

When a newspaper does breach its code, a thoughtful correction, prominently published, will do as much good for the paper's reputation as the item did it harm—if not more. For six months we've had this kind of ultratransparent newspaper ethics and discovered no downside. It offers readers ideas and phrases to use in their criticism of our journalism, which has a way of sorting serious critics from simple haters. Most importantly, it encourages meaningful dialogue that reconnects journalists to communities and to the high standards reflecting the civic obligations of the American press. ■

Dean Miller is executive editor of the Post Register in Idaho Falls, Idaho. In creating the Web pages, which were done as part of his public service project as a 2006-2007 Poynter Ethics Fellow, Miller relied on the newspaper's Web designer, Aaron Avery.

⁴ www.postregister.com/ethics/walkthrough.php

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Old Press Room, Pulitzer Building, 1908. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

Plagiarism Goes by a Different Name on the Web

A journalism class experiences firsthand ‘the slippery new terms being used in our slippery times.’

By Judy Muller

If the Internet is the Wild West of our times, with boom towns sprouting up too fast for the law to keep up, then perhaps “repurposing” is the rustling of our times, where original material is stolen from its home pasture and brazenly rebranded under the name of another Internet site.

Of course, repurposing—when practiced correctly—is not theft. It has a legitimate aim: to take news stories done by traditional news organizations and modify them to fit other formats, such as the Internet. Yahoo! News does this all the time—and well. Yahoo! News always credits the original reporters and often links back to the original source material. “Yahoo for Yahoo!” I say. The problem with repurposing is that it is open to interpretation by various outlaws roaming the World Wild West, who think it’s just fine to grab original material and post it as their own.

Where I come from, this is known as plagiarism. My journalism students at the University of Southern California (USC) think so, too, especially after they got burned.

This past summer, I worked with 11 talented graduate students—10 from USC and one from Harvard—on a reporting project called News21, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The program involved journalism schools at USC, the University of California at Berkeley, Northwestern and Columbia, as well as the Shorenstein Center on the Press,

Politics & Public Policy at Harvard. Each school immersed the students in a single subject for a semester-long seminar and then turned them loose to report on that subject during a 10-week paid summer fellowship. The goal: to report original, important stories that would be published or broadcast on professional news media outlets, including television, radio, newspapers and the Internet.

In other words, young reporters were given several months to learn a subject in depth, to develop sources and story ideas, and then were provided with the time and money to tell those stories to a large audience. Working reporters should be so lucky.

Reporting the Story

At each school, students explored different topics, but each one fell under the umbrella heading of “National Security in a Post 9-11 World.” At USC we chose to focus on immigration, which has become one of the bigger stories of the year.¹ While happy to be concentrating on such a timely topic, we realized that the competition in finding original stories to report would be fierce. I cautioned the fellows to keep their work confidential.

One story, in particular, seemed to have a potential for being scooped. During the seminar portion of our program, graduate student Shawna Thomas found a story in Naco, Arizona about a group of teenagers living near the border who had joined an Explorer

Scout program that trained them to be junior Border Patrol agents. She and two other students, Millicent Jefferson and Karl-Erik Stromsta, traveled to Naco to interview the students, their parents, and the Border Patrol. The parents were understandably wary and would not let their teenagers appear on camera. But our intrepid reporters still managed to cobble together a story for their class project. Later, they sent a copy of the story to the families they’d interviewed in Naco, which established with them a new level of respect and trust.

As the program moved into the summer workshop phase, the students agreed that the Naco story was worth pursuing. But we expanded it to look at the lives of teenagers who live in the “mirror” communities of Naco, Arizona and Naco, Mexico and the ways in which that same border fence affects their lives. This time, students David Eisenberg and Melanie Roe joined the other three reporters for the trip to the border, since the new team of five would be creating stories for television, print and the Internet. This time, because of the groundwork laid during the first trip, the teenage Border Patrol scouts were willing to talk on camera.

The result: a print story by Karl-Erik Stromsta that appeared in the L.A. Weekly newspaper in August and a broadcast story by the whole team of five destined for ABC’s “Good Morning America.” A longer broadcast version appears on the News21 Web site,² with

¹ <http://newsinitiative.org/project/immigration>

² www.newsinitiative.org

links to the L.A. Weekly story.

The students were understandably proud of the work they'd done on this story. Not only had they managed to develop an excellent news report during a period of many weeks on a very competitive beat, but also they had learned the rush of digging up original material and sharing it with the world. As Shawna Thomas wrote in her reporting blog: "This reporting fellowship puts us in an enviable situation where we don't necessarily have to make the story we found fit into some preconceived notion of what the story was going to be. Our story actually gets to grow from the extensive reporting and interviewing that was done on the border. This is in contrast to the current atmosphere of the professional news business, which sometimes breeds writing the story before reporting on it. Lucky us; we get to write the story after the reporting."

The Story Gets 'Repurposed'

There is a point to this rather lengthy exposition: It helps explain the outrage felt by the News21 reporters when they heard that their story had suddenly shown up under the headline "Border Patrol Trains Teens for Action" on an Internet site named Buzzle.com. But credit was not given to them; instead, the story was credited to the "reporting staff" of the site.

The students were tipped to this, oddly enough, by the Border Patrol agent interviewed for their story and who had already seen the piece in the L.A. Weekly. "Isn't this your story?" he asked.

Well, yes, it was.

Shawna Thomas sent an angry e-mail to the editors of the Web site, saying "The author of the article liberally takes quotes from an L.A. Weekly article from an August issue and does not back it

up with his own research. I know this because I was part of the team that did the reporting on the original article I'm not completely sure if this is a normal practice on this site, but I would say it's damn close to plagiarism."

What especially riled the students was the photograph that accompanied the article on Buzzle.com. It showed young trainees aiming guns at targets.

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Newsgirls sell newspapers in Wilmington, Delaware. 1910.
Photo Lewis W. Hine. Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.

Our team took many photos, including the Explorer Scouts practicing their handcuffing technique, but none of those photos showed anyone handling a gun. Wrote Shawna: "It is not one of the pictures we took, and it is misleading and shoddy journalism to use photographs that are not directly related to the article."

The author of the L.A. Weekly story, Karl-Erik Stromsta, also wrote a protest to the site and, in a separate e-mail to me, said "If this is the new journalism, I want nothing to do with it."

An editor from Buzzle.com, Michael Wist, wrote back, apologizing to "the team that worked on the original piece. Although we stand by our author and assert that no plagiarism took place, the fact that there was even a question indicates that we failed in properly demonstrating our sources." The site was "updated" to include references to the original article and the author and misleading photo were removed. The editor seemed to take our concerns seriously, saying "given our role as a secondary content source, we simply could not function if we made a practice of plagiarism."

Now there's an interesting description—a secondary content source, to go along with the new terminology of "repurposing." These are the slippery new terms being used in our slippery times. How was this not plagiarism, we wondered? And if someone we knew hadn't happened onto this site, how would we ever have known about it? How would we know that we'd been repurposed into oblivion? The answer is we would not have known unless we'd somehow stumbled across it. What this made us wonder is how often this happens. Perhaps someone reading this article now is thinking, "Hey, change a word here or there—and we can put this on our blog."

What's scary is that they would probably get away with it. Back in the Wild West, if the marshal was out of town, the community just gathered up some neighbors and went after those rustlers themselves. Maybe what we need is an E-Posse. ■

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Teaching Journalism Students to Value What Is Authentic

‘I thought by sheer will I could be the one teacher who led his students away from plagiarism.’

By Brent Walth

“You have to watch students nowadays,” an experienced professor told me before the first day of the first class I ever taught. “They will get away with whatever they can.”

I had asked for this advice, and these drops of poison fell into my cup. Harvard’s summer school program had hired me to teach a beginning journalism course, and I sought all the guidance I could get about how to run a class, what textbooks to order, how to grade papers and, generally, how to not be a bore.

I got plenty of advice. Eventually, most teachers mentioned that plagiarism was a bigger problem than ever. Many veteran teachers blamed the Internet; others, the general decline in education and moral standards. Almost everyone told me to expect it.

So I girded for the worst. My syllabus carried Harvard’s stern policy about plagiarism and a terse note of my own: “Plagiarism and fabrication are not tolerated in journalism. That goes for this class, too. Your work here must be original.” All of this I considered prudent, but I didn’t like that the underlying message sent by so many was this: You can’t trust your students. I refused to buy it. I believed I could show them that in all things—and journalism especially—original-

ity mattered. I thought by sheer will I could be the one teacher who led his students away from plagiarism.

So nothing prepared me for the crushing feeling when it happened—and it happened twice in my course. Inside, you know they’re the ones who’ve done the cheating but, as their teacher, you tumble into a dark spiral,

convinced that you’re the one who has failed.

Confronting Plagiarism

My class didn’t have any Harvard undergrads. Instead my 15 students ranged from juniors in high school to students from other colleges to adults

looking for a new career. And they were, overall, terrific—smart, energetic, eager to please. I piled on the exercises and tossed them out the door and into the world to find stories. But before I did, we talked about ethics—a lot. They read a Stephen Glass article and vigorously debated the author’s style and reporting techniques—until they realized it was all hokum (and plagiarized) and experienced firsthand what it feels like when a reporter betrays the reader.

I also went over the policy against plagiarism several times, and we talked about where the word came from: the plagiarii, Latin for kidnappers. “In this class,” I told them on the first day we were together, “don’t steal any babies.”

“You put your name on your work, and that byline isn’t for credit or fame,” I added. “It’s for accountability. It tells the reader the name of the person—you—who is pledging that what follows is accurate, original

NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Farmer Fred Wilfang sits on a rocking chair, reading Wallace’s Farmer while listening to the radio. November 1939. Black Hawk County, Iowa. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

and authentic.”

I got blank stares at the word authentic. I tried to explain what I meant, something about putting only what's real on the page. My words were met by more blank stares.

The course went off without any problems until near the end, when I tripped over the first case of plagiarism. I had asked students for the first draft of a 1,000-word personality profile that they would later have to revise. Most looked promising. But one student's story was just plain awful. I considered sending the student back immediately to try again but then I thought I could help.

I recalled the student telling me that his subject had once been written about in *The Harvard Crimson*—a fact I assumed the student had told me to prove his subject was newsworthy. So I went looking for the *Crimson* article, suspecting nothing, but instead intending to do what I could to help this student make his article better.

That's how I found it. Of the seven paragraphs the student had turned in, three had been cut and pasted straight from the *Crimson*. My instincts as a reporter suddenly kicked in. First I called the student. No answer. Then I tried to track down the subject of the student's profile. Couldn't reach him. So I grabbed a notebook to dash out the door and track them both down—and then I stopped and laid down on the floor of my apartment and covered my face. I'd have to turn the student in, and I'd have to resign as well.

“There isn't a teacher who's been through this who hasn't felt the same way,” an assistant dean reassured me when I told him that I felt responsible for this. “The guilt is a normal feeling. But just remember—you didn't do this. Your student did it.”

At Harvard, you formally charge a student suspected of plagiarism and a council of administrators reviews the case and hands out the punishment. The instructor has no say—and that came as a relief.

The student quickly confessed in a remarkably candid account: He had put off the work to the last moment and thought he could get by on a first

draft using the *Crimson* article. He took full responsibility for his actions. The college kicked him out of my class, the \$2,200 in tuition his parents had paid for the course flushed away.

I knew he had received the proper consequences, but when the student wrote me a letter of apology, heartfelt and full of remorse, I wanted him back, even if Harvard didn't. With some hard work, I thought, he could learn from this experience. Besides, despite the condolences from other teachers and college officials, I still couldn't shake the feeling that I had failed him.

Looking for Reasons Why

Had I pushed too hard? I had told students that—if they ever felt panicked—they should call me and we could work something out. Had I not made myself accessible enough? I increased the number of one-on-one conferences and spent even more time checking in with students as their writing load swelled toward the course's conclusion. I didn't tell my students this, but I backed off some of the exercises, in part because they didn't need them, in part because I didn't want to raise the odds of another panicked student.

None of that mattered the second time it happened.

One student had already shown herself as a corner-cutter. When I told the class to go cover an event, she instead stayed in that night and interviewed friends about what they had done. In another exercise, she had pulled some statistics off the Internet without attribution—a minor infraction, but one that got a tough warning from me nonetheless.

During one conference with me, she told me she would write her profile assignment—due in three days—based on the author of a new book. She held up the book and said, “His whole story is right in here.” I told her that, under no circumstances could she rely on the book alone and that she had to cite it whenever she drew from it.

So when I first read her assignment, I saw a lyrical lead, background delicately embroidered with twinkling detail, and long, graceful quotes that

sounded like a finely tuned speech, not how people really talk. In other words, a phony. I felt the rush I often had during my years as an investigative reporter, the sense you had someone cornered and you were just about to prove it.

I went to online and within 30 minutes I had discovered that of the six quotes in her story one came from Wikipedia and two others from her subject's book. Then I drilled down on every one of her phrases and soon found eight sentences that she had tried to pass off as her own she had instead pirated from the book.

The case nailed, I suddenly balked. I thought I could have helped the first student and never had the chance. What about this one? One plagiarist was bad enough; a second would certainly expose me as a failure.

I went ahead and charged her. Rather than admonishments from the college, I got more condolence and even more praise for my diligence. But her case proved more complex than the first. Rather than confess, the student fought every step of the way. In her letter of defense, she told the board she was simply too good a writer to ever need to plagiarize. She even brought her mother to class to plead her case to me.

The college put her on probation, a punishment that meant her final grade would forever carry a black mark telling the world she had been disciplined for dishonesty. The first student I thought I could reach and help was gone; the one who showed no remorse would stay.

The program director, sympathetic to my situation, sent me a journal article by writing instructor Richard J. Murphy, Jr. called “The Cheating Disorder,” which was an excerpt from his 1993 memoir, “The Calculus of Intimacy: A Teaching Life.”

Murphy's candid essay if nothing else told me I was not alone. He spoke of anger toward cheating students, the time squandered in dealing with their lies, and the growing paranoia that other students—most innocents—were also conning him. Murphy's essay became painfully familiar when he

spoke about “the thrill of the chase” as he suspected a plagiarist and obsessively worked to run down the cheater. The discovery of evidence, he wrote, “promised a solution to the puzzle that had eluded me. They reinforced my sense of judgment and my sense of self-satisfaction at the thought that, in some small way, I was preserving the integrity of the university.”

As the class wound up, I reflected on what these cheaters had in common, and in hindsight I saw warning signs: They both had shown little effort in the early assignments and seemed oblivious to my suggestions for improvement. They’d also given themselves away by mentioning their outside sources. And they had left their stealing easy to detect: It was just as simple for me to backtrack their steps using the Internet as it was for them to dig out their lifted words.

Understanding Authenticity

On the last day, the woman in the second case didn’t show up for class. Just

as well—I had asked the 13 remaining students to make presentations based on the lessons they had learned in the field as they reported their stories.

Most talked about overcoming their fears—of asking for interviews after facing rejection, watching their cherished writing undergo critiques in class. One student, when the course began, had trembled as she told me of her fears of interviewing strangers; now, she eagerly told her classmates of how much fun she had dashing around Boston, talking to a dozen people she had never met before, to finish her final assignment. Some admitted that they had panicked as deadlines approached—but they didn’t cheat and instead crashed through anyway with work that was sometimes uneven and erratic, sometimes beautiful and elegantly plain and clear.

And then one student said, “I know now what you meant by authentic.” I looked back, perplexed, and then recalled how I had struggled to explain what I had meant all those weeks back. They had discovered, on their own,

that authenticity meant not just putting something real on the page, but the experience of discovery.

I stood to speak for the last time. No one looking back at me knew about the fate of the two colleagues. None of them knew that the betrayals had made their work all the more valuable to me—or made the authenticity of their experiences all the more powerful. The cheaters stole babies; these students rescued their children and, as it turns out, they rescued me as well.

I started to read some final remarks I had jotted down but—out of exhaustion, relief, whatever it was—my voice cracked. I couldn’t finish. I paused and put my notes aside.

“Look, here’s what I want to really say,” I told them. “You walked in here as students, you walk out as journalists. I’m so damn proud of all of you.”

I couldn’t say any more. I had trouble meeting their eyes, so I stared straight ahead, at the two empty chairs. ■

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The ‘P’ Word in the Book Business

‘Newspapers constantly editorialize about other professionals hiding their misdeeds, but with this they were silent.’

By Margaret Engel

It is the strangest feeling to be reading a book you didn’t write and suddenly realize that you’re reading words that you did write.

This happened to me while I was reading a book about mail-order foods that came out of a major publishing house. The words I recognized were ones that came from a book I’d written with my identical twin, Allison Engel, about regional American food companies. Our book¹ was published

by HarperCollins in 1984; ultimately we wrote two more editions, in 1991 and 2000. We also created a television show based on the book, now in its sixth season on the Food Network.

My twin and I were both newspaper reporters, somewhat accustomed to the occasional happenstance of seeing news stories we wrote show up, rewritten, on the next-day pages of other publications. Sometimes, the stories borrowed a quote or two, but

there were those other times, when Allison was Midwest editor for Pacific News Service and she saw her enterprise reporting very closely rewritten by a major East Coast newspaper. Her editor complained, but no corrections or apologies ever were forthcoming. Parade magazine once printed a cover story on small towns and dangerous industries that featured, out of the entire Midwest, the exact towns, sources and sequence of events that Allison had

¹ The book’s title is “Food Finds: America’s Best Local Foods and the People Who Produce Them.”

highlighted in a story she'd reported several months earlier. I still bear a grudge against Ms. magazine, where I sent my newspaper profile of legendary Cleveland newscaster Dorothy Fuldheim, asking for an assignment to expand it for the magazine. No answer, but several months later, a quite similar profile appeared in Ms.. Just coincidence, I'm sure.

So we didn't come to this moment as innocents of journalists' bad habit of rewriting stories and reusing ideas without credit. But nothing prepared us for the willful blindness of major league plagiarism in the book industry.

Reacting to Stolen Words

Our first reaction was shock about the outright theft. We underlined all of the similar sentences, not to mention product selection, and totaled up the damage. It was bad. Knowing how hard we'd worked to choose the best mom and pop maple sugar producer, for example, out of the dozens across the five states we researched, we had a right to be mad that another writer used our work as a shortcut. We knew how many late nights and early mornings we'd invested in this book, stealing time away from our husbands and kids. Both of us worked fulltime at newspapers so we'd completed the book on nights, weekends and vacations, exhausting our modest advance on travel, phone calls, and buying of products from across the nation.

So it was personal. But all we wanted from the authors—and company—who stole from us was an apology and for the offending book author to either credit us in print or have her book removed from sale. We contacted our publisher, full of righteous indignation. When the offending author was reached, her story was that she must have received the same press releases from the food companies as we did, insinuating that we'd all lifted identical sentences from canned PR materials.

Most of the food companies in our book were tiny operations, including monasteries and farms. Many had handwritten price lists. One didn't even have

a telephone. Blaming the plagiarism on press materials that didn't even exist at many of our places was laughable. Of course, we also were insulted by the accusation that we would lift sentences from any press releases.

The stage shifted from the editorial to the legal department. We still didn't want to clog the court system with our complaint, but we realized we wouldn't get an apology from this prevaricator dealing editor-to-editor. At our expense, my sister and I traveled to New York to explain the situation to our publisher's in-house lawyer. We received sympathy, but not much traction. It took four months of pestering before the lawyer agreed to send a strong letter to the other publisher.

The reason, we learned, is that there are so many instances of author borrowings that no publisher can afford to get high-handed about such theft. Too many publishers are linked by the transgressions of too many authors, so a lot of plagiarism goes unremarked or is quietly settled. We got the distinct feeling that a lot of horse-trading goes on among the small fraternity of attorneys representing publishing houses. No lawyer who represents editors who we came across seemed shocked by the plagiarism. It seemed to us that it was a given that it happened frequently. At one meeting, the lawyer for HarperCollins listed six or seven publishing houses his office was dealing with then over plagiarism cases—with transgressions on both sides.

By now we were so angry that the offending author hadn't come clean and had accused us of lifting others' work that we insisted that any settlement we reached be made public. As far as we could determine, we were among the few authors who'd insisted on this. For most, a cash payment ends the unpleasantness. But when this happens, readers, other authors, editors and agents never learn about this circumstance of plagiarism, and this means they never fully confront the problem.

Both my sister and I had covered regulatory boards, from the Iowa Board of Medical Examiners to the California Board of Funeral Directors

and Embalmers. The book publishing world's culture of silence was sounding exactly like the hush-hush settlements that allowed bad doctors and others to move from state to state, continuing to harm the people because the public was kept in the dark. For this to happen to the work of journalists—in a publishing arena in which so many of us write—was something we wanted to bring to public attention; with such exposure, perhaps we could make some difference.

As we wrote to HarperCollins's lawyer at the time: “[The plagiarist's] crime was all too public. It is impossible for her apology to be private. The journalism world needs to know about this situation Neither Allison nor I could live with a situation where, in the interest of some false feeling of professional comradeship, we allowed plagiarism of our work to be quietly buried.”

Silence Greeted the News

The months dragged on. Finally, because we were angry and wouldn't quit, the lawyers from both houses reached a settlement. In exchange for us not suing, the offending book was pulled from the shelves, we were sent a check and, most important to us, a press release would be issued containing details of what had happened.

All of this took place before the Web (and e-mail) was in use, so the release was mailed to every news outlet that had reviewed or mentioned either book. We were prevented, by the agreement, from saying much beyond the press release, but we trusted that the stark words of the statement would speak for themselves.

Our biggest surprise—and disappointment—of the journey was about to happen. Despite being sent to hundreds of news outlets and publishing trade publications, our victory over plagiarism didn't merit a single mention anywhere. No one cared. Newspapers constantly editorialize about other professionals hiding their misdeeds, but with this they were silent. We felt ashamed of our profession for caring so little about other journalists who

were trying to maintain high standards in our practice. The publishing house lawyer wondered why he'd spent so much effort demanding transparency for nothing.

In the era of the Web and blogs, I'd like to think news such as ours would have traveled far and fast and been commented on by many. Perhaps some industrious blogger would have done a comparison of the two books and displayed how our words were misused. From there, perhaps chat rooms would have been filled with discussion of these transgressions. Then, perhaps pushed by the bloggers' attention, perhaps some newspapers and Publishers Weekly would have grabbed onto this issue and written editorials about the silence accompanying its practice.

Of course, it's just as possible this would not happen. Even in new media, where transparency is touted, I suspect that our news might have

been greeted with a similar silence. Given bloggers' ubiquitous practice of linking and "borrowing" content that has appeared elsewhere, our concerns about someone taking our words and making them her own would likely be brushed aside.

The offending author went on writing for other news outlets. We weren't trying to put her out of business, but I still wonder if any of her editors ever found out that she had used others' work without attribution. As an assigning editor, I would certainly want to know.

Since that episode, we have heard the experiences of several other writers who have seen their work appear, uncredited, in other books. Unless the borrowing is extreme, most of their publishers have shrugged it off. It's seen as too messy and too commonplace for their overworked legal departments to invest the hours to correct. The

unspoken agreement we saw firsthand appears to be alive and well, except in rare cases, usually involving bestselling authors. But for midlisters, like us, no one can be bothered to blow the whistle on theft.

The public is the loser because trust and accountability vanish. Plagiarism breaks the contract between reader and writer. Once burned, readers now must view every word with suspicion, rather than the natural skepticism that any reader would employ. Do we really want to finish each article and book with the thought, "Well, yes, if it's true." And for writers, finding their words plagiarized just kicks up their cynicism another notch. ■

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NEWSPAPER GALLERY



Father and child share the Sunday paper in their backyard in Alexandria, Virginia. 1943. *Library of Congress/Courtesy Newseum.*

Newspapers Have Met Their Enemy Within

‘The question is not whether the newspaper is dead, but whether it can be rescued from unreasonable demands.’

By Watson Sims

When I left The Associated Press (AP) to join the Battle Creek Enquirer in 1971, a colleague warned that editing a newspaper would prove far different from working for a nonprofit organization such as AP. “Your worst enemy will be the advertising director,” said Max McCrohon, managing editor of the Chicago Tribune. “He’ll sell your children into slavery if you don’t watch out.”

Jack Newman, the Enquirer’s genial advertising director, was an unlikely choice for an enemy, and in fact he became a good friend. Even so, the years have convinced me that McCrohon was a prophet for then, as now, editors and advertisers were locked in a struggle for the body and the soul of newspapers.

Jack’s responsibility was to please advertisers, while mine was to meet what I perceived as the needs of readers. Sometimes we skirmished over what attention should be paid to an advertising client, or whether certain space in the paper should carry advertising or news. When we disagreed, the matter was settled by Publisher Bob Miller, whose father had founded the Enquirer. Bob often ruled in Jack’s favor, but on matters of principle he usually found for my side. Deeply involved in community affairs, he required only modest profits from the newspaper’s operation.

In July 1971, Bob sold the Enquirer to the Gannett Company, along with newspapers he owned in Lansing

and Port Huron, Michigan; Boise, Idaho, and Olympia and Bellingham, Washington. Under the new owners, Newman won more arguments and the newsroom came under tighter restraint. Whereas the Enquirer had

Can the newspaper regain its place in American society? I believe the answer is yes. While the Web provides unlimited detail for the dedicated seeker of information, the average consumer still finds more depth and durability in newspapers than in electronic news sources.

received news and photos from AP and United Press as well as The New York Times News Service, budget pressures required me to discontinue all but AP. Readers accustomed to the journalistic equivalent of soup, salad and dessert were served only meat and potatoes.

In October 1971, the Gannett executive committee visited Battle Creek, and a somewhat apprehensive Bob Miller asked me to join him at the meeting. The first question by Gannett Chairman Paul Miller (no relation to Bob) was “Well, how are things going?”

Somewhat nervously, Bob replied, “I think you are cutting us too close and taking too much out of Battle Creek.”

“You do,” said Paul Miller, appearing surprised. “Well, I’ll look into that.”

I don’t know where Paul Miller looked, but pressure on the news department grew tighter in the years that followed. Pages were reduced in size and number, and some jobs were eliminated. The Enquirer’s circulation declined, but its profit margin increased.

Bob Miller, Jr., was publisher of The Idaho Statesman in Boise, and on a visit to Battle Creek he said too much was also being taken out of that newspaper. “Somebody’s got to stand up to those bastards,” he told me.

That someone had to stand up for news against advertising was a cry heard at many newspapers in the years that followed. Time and again, editors answered the call, but almost without exception their rebellions failed and the editors lost their jobs. At some newspapers, editors chose to resign in protest of newsroom budget reductions.

There was, however, a lucrative alternative: By joining, rather than standing up against slashing of newsroom budgets, editors could not only protect their jobs but share in profits to be made under the new style of management. Often they acquired stock options in public-owned corporations such as Gannett.

Like many other editors, I accepted stock options, and watched my salary grow far beyond my earlier expectations at AP. This followed a pattern in which many editors joined operating

committees that answered to investors no less, and perhaps more, than to readers. Many newspapers earned profit margins of 25 percent or more, well above the average of Fortune 500 top companies.

In recent years the Internet has taken advertising that traditionally went to newspapers, and publishers, more likely to be corporate executives than community patriarchs, offset the loss of income by further reductions in newsroom budgets. Inevitably, the depth and quality of most newspapers were affected. Front pages once sacrosanct to news began to carry advertisements, and some papers dropped weekend editorial pages. Sunday comics that once offered magical art to attract young readers became a jammed hodge-podge in which dialogue and action were often hard to follow.

Faced with toughened competition for attention, newspapers chose not to improve their product, but to cut and run. Not surprisingly, a study by Washington University found in that in

2005 just over 50 percent of Americans were reading newspapers, compared to 77 percent in 1977.

“Who Killed the Newspaper?” asked a recent issue of *The Economist*. I believe the newspaper was not killed but acquired by owners concerned more with profits than public service. Its potential for building and binding communities remains, but like the golden goose it has been weakened by demand for more eggs.

Can the newspaper regain its place in American society? I believe the answer is yes. While the Web provides unlimited detail for the dedicated seeker of information, the average consumer still finds more depth and durability in newspapers than in electronic news sources. “Look at this” or “read this” permits a sharing of experience far superior to being shown what has been found on a computer screen.

The question is not whether the newspaper is dead, but whether it can be rescued from unreasonable demands. For modest profit, perhaps

less than was earned by the *Battle Creek Enquirer* under Bob Miller, it can reclaim its role in community affairs and perhaps build a better-informed nation by luring readers back from the shallow waters of television news.

First, however, the enemy must be identified and, as Max McCrohon suggested, the place to look is the advertising department, where the demands of investors are made known. ■

Watson Sims, a 1953 Nieman Fellow, left stock options on the table in departing Battle Creek to become editor of The New Brunswick (N.J.) Home News in 1978. He retired in 1986, and one year later the Boyd family, which had owned the Home News for more than 100 years, sold the newspaper to Gannett. Sims later directed media studies for The George H. Gallup International Institute in the United States and Eastern Europe.

—1951—

Dwight Sargent was inducted into the Maine Press Association Hall of Fame in October 2006. Sargent, who was Curator of the Nieman Foundation

from 1964-1972, began his journalism career in Maine, working at newspapers in Bar Harbor and Biddeford. After moving to the *The Standard-Times* of New Bedford, Massachusetts, he returned to Maine to work at the

Portland Press Herald as a reporter and then as editorial director. After his years as Nieman Curator, he served as president of the Freedom of Information Foundation at the University of Missouri and as editorial page editor at the Boston Herald-American. He was also an editorial page editor for the New York Herald Tribune and national editorial writer for Hearst Newspapers in New York.

Sargent was chairman of the National Conference of Editorial Writers. He also conceived the idea for the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award, given each year by Colby College, as a way to connect the importance of journalistic freedom with his alma mater’s concern for academic freedom.

Sargent died at 85 years of age in 2002 in Princeton, New Jersey.

Corrections

In a note for **Julius Duscha**, NF ’56, in the Fall 2006 issue of *Nieman Reports*, Duscha was identified as a president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors and as editor of *The Hartford Courant*. He did not hold either of these positions.

In that same issue, NF ’61 **John D. Pomfret** was confused with his son, John Pomfret, in a note announcing the publication of the book, “Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China.” The note lists John D. Pomfret, the father, as the author. However John Pomfret, the son, who is not a Nieman Fellow, is the author of this book.

Our apologies to Julius Duscha, John D. Pomfret, and John Pomfret for the errors. ■

—1958—

Dean Brellis died of complications from throat cancer on November 17th in Santa Monica, California, at the home of his daughter, Tia. He was 82 and lived in Santa Monica and New York City.

While planning to spend his life as a fiction writer, Brellis instead began his writing career as a journalist for The Boston Globe while attending Harvard University. He then worked as a correspondent for Time-Life from 1949-1954 before his first novel was published in 1958. "The Mission" was based on his experiences while stationed in Burma, where he worked in military intelligence for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. Two novels quickly followed, "Shalom" in 1959 and "My New-Found Land" in 1963.

Brellis continued his work as a journalist with NBC News, covering the Middle East, North Africa, Cyprus and Vietnam in the early 1960's. He anchored a nightly news program in Los Angeles in 1967, worked with CBS News, and then returned to Time magazine in 1974 as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Bryan Marquard, writing in The Boston Globe, noted that despite Brellis's love of writing fiction, "... he knew well the economic reality of writing full time and that supporting a family would be a far cry from living as simply as Henry David Thoreau on Walden Pond. 'There is a great deal to be said for living like Thoreau,' Mr. Brellis said in a 1963 interview with the Globe, 'and the time comes when every writer has to make a decision in this regard.'" He was, however, able to combine his life as a journalist with that of a novelist. He also wrote four nonfiction books and had finished the draft of a fourth novel at the time of his death.

Brellis's wife, **Mary Anne Weaver**, said to Marquard, "Writing was always his love. His writing has always been very, very evocative. ... He could capture the essence of personality extraordinarily well, whether it was in fiction or

in his cover stories for Time magazine. People would just talk to him."

Along with Tia and his wife, Brellis also leaves daughters Doran and Jane and a son, **Matthew**, who is a 2002 Nieman Fellow and assistant metro editor at The Boston Globe.

John Edward Pearce, writer and editorial board member of The Courier-Journal, died on September 25th, his birthday, from complications of throat cancer in Kentucky. He was 89.

Pearce was the son of a Norton, Virginia newspaperman who founded the Coalfield Progress. When the Great Depression hit his family, Pearce, one of seven children, took a job in a meatpacking plant. He later left his hometown to attend the University of Kentucky, where he ran the school paper while waiting tables and clerking at a local racecourse. He spent four years in the Navy during World War II and remained in the reserves for another 27. During this time he began his career as a journalist, which he wrote about in his 1997 book, "Memoirs: 50 Years at the Courier-Journal and Other Places."

Pearce was hired as associate editor and editorial writer at The Courier-Journal in 1947, where he also wrote features and columns and contributed to the newspaper's magazine, The Forum. He earned the reputation with Forum editor Keith Runyon as a "foxy" newsman whose "words rang from one end of the Commonwealth to the other," and he was credited as key writer in the Courier-Journal's 1967 Pulitzer Prize-winning campaign against strip mining.

After retiring in 1986 he continued writing under contract until The Forum folded in 1991. From 1990 until his death, Pearce was a contributing columnist for the Lexington Herald-Leader.

Throughout his career he wrote short stories. His first—and many subsequent ones—were published in The Saturday Evening Post. Pearce's words can be found in the archives of The New York Times, The Washington Post, national magazines, and in books

and television plays under his byline. Several of his colleagues remembered him as the best writer in Kentucky.

"He knew an awful lot, and he wrote it in a way that seemed effortless—conversational and literary at the same time," said **John Carroll**, NF '72 and Visiting Knight Lecturer at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard, in the Herald-Leader. "John Ed himself came across in his writing as a wry, admittedly imperfect character who'd watched Kentucky politicians come and go and knew better than to hope for much. ... Talented, deeply rooted people like John Ed don't turn up at a newspaper very often. He was a real gift to the readers of Kentucky."

Don Mills, former editor of the Lexington Herald-Leader, said that of all the Kentucky journalists he has known "no one could write better than John Ed. No one had a better understanding of the English language. ... He knew Kentucky well, like no other Kentuckian."

Pearce also served Kentucky as a governor-appointed original member of the state park board, overseeing the creation and development of several of Kentucky's parks.

Twice married and divorced, Pearce is survived by five daughters.

—1965—

Smith Hempstone died on November 19th of complications from diabetes at a hospital in Bethesda, Maryland. He was 77.

Hempstone was a syndicated columnist who served as U.S. Ambassador to Kenya from 1989 to 1993, during the rule of Daniel arap Moi. Hempstone began his journalism career as an African correspondent for The Chicago Daily News after having spent four years in Africa as a fellow at the Institute of Current World Affairs. He wrote two books during that time, "Africa: Angry Young Giant" and "Rebels, Mercenaries and Dividends," about the attempt of Katanga, the southern province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to secede.

Following his Nieman year, Hempstone was based in London for *The (Washington) Star*, covering Europe and the Middle East. He became editorial page editor of the paper but left in 1975 over disagreements with the new owner of the newspaper, Joe L. Allbritton. He syndicated his column, “Our Times,” on his own, and it eventually ran in 90 newspapers.

In a description of Hempstone’s tenure in Kenya, Adam Bernstein of *The Washington Post* characterized Hempstone as “... an effective, aggressively undiplomatic critic of the country’s ruler, Daniel arap Moi.” Bernstein reported that Hempstone “was credited with helping usher multiparty elections into an African country that, although a U.S. ally during the Cold War, had little tolerance for political dissent.” He continued, “Several of his jobs ended in a personality clash. His service as President George H.W. Bush’s ambassador to Kenya was no less testy, a point he appeared to relish by titling his 1997 memoir ‘Rogue Ambassador.’”

At Smith’s memorial service in Washington, D.C., the celebrant said, “St. Alban’s School is known as a bedlam

of eccentrics. Smith was perfectly at home here. Here’s to Smith, an intrepid Marine, journalist, ambassador and American, and a good and tolerant friend for more than 40 years.”

Hempstone is survived by his wife, **Kathaleen (Kitty)**, and a daughter, Katherine. Over the years, Kitty Hempstone has been especially helpful in her work with Nieman Fellows from Africa, assisting them in the process of getting to Harvard and coordinating their activities while in the United States.

—1966—

W. Hodding Carter, III was honored by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) when he received the Burton Benjamin Memorial Award for lifetime achievement in the cause of press freedom at an awards ceremony in New York City in November. Carter spent almost 18 years as a reporter, editorial writer, editor and associate publisher of his family’s newspaper, the *Delta Democrat Times*, in Greenville, Mississippi. He went on to work in Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter’s presidential campaigns, served as spokesman for the State Department

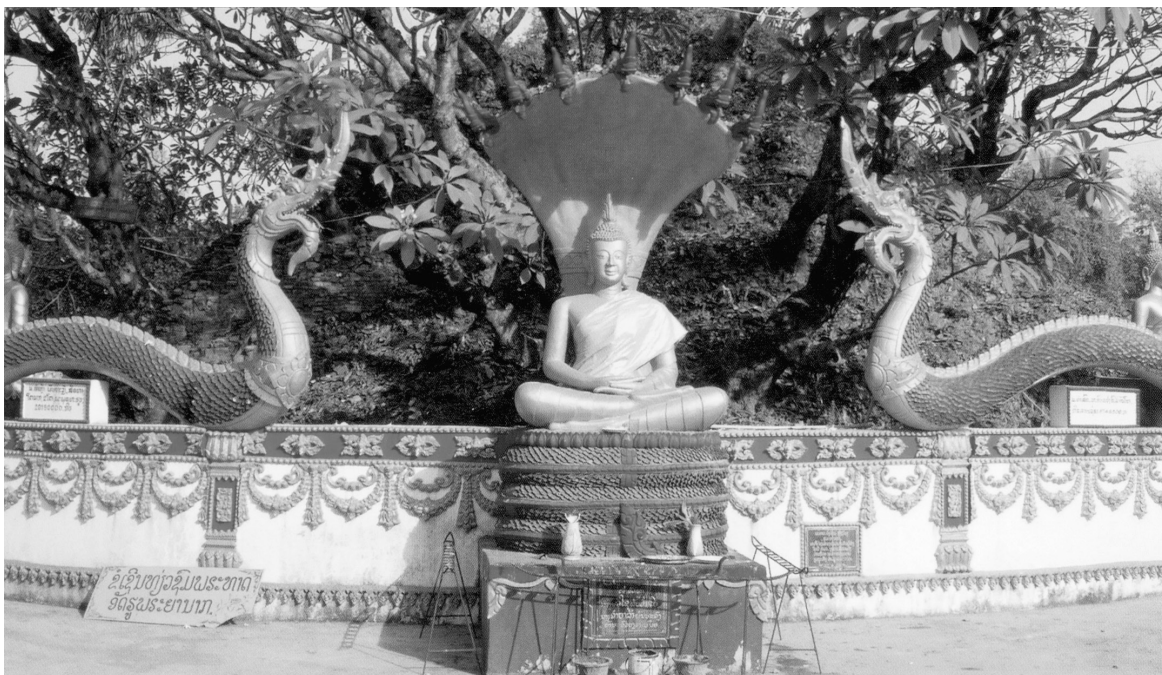
and as assistant secretary of state for public affairs in the Carter administration until 1980. He then moved into public affairs television as a reporter and anchor, and panelist for “This Week With David Brinkley.” During this time, he won four national Emmys and the Edward R. Murrow Award for his public affairs television documentaries. From 1985 to 1998 he ran *MainStreet*, a TV production company also specializing in public affairs programming.

In 1998, Carter became president and CEO of the Knight Foundation, where his focus included support for local journalists in developing countries and journalists at risk. In January, 2006 he was appointed to the position of University Professor of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

At the November ceremony, the CPJ also honored four journalists—from Colombia, Yemen, the Gambia, and Iraq—and marked the 25th anniversary of their organization.

—1968—

Jerome Aumente conducted workshops in economic reporting last sum-



Meditating Buddha protected by nagas, seated before a ruined stupa at Vat Nak (Temple of the Naga). Photo by Steve Northup (see his note on page 95). From “Naga Cities of the Mekong.” Martin Stuart-Fox and Steve Northup.

mer in Belgrade and Nis in Serbia for print and electronic journalists. The last time he was in Serbia was in 1998 when he conducted workshops in four cities for journalists who were in opposition to Slobodan Milosevic. Aumente has also conducted workshops for journalists in Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia and codirected an ongoing program between University of Sarajevo and Rutgers University in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

He has completed five workshops in the United States for Arab journalists from eight countries in the Middle East and is designing a proposal for an ongoing Internet and face-to-face exchange of American and Arab journalists to follow up on the earlier initiatives. He was invited to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia last year to conduct workshops for Arab journalists and deliver a paper on the journalism initiatives at the university.

Aumente is finishing a book, "From Ink on Paper to the Internet: Past Challenges and Future Transformations for New Jersey's Newspapers," which will be published in spring 2007. The research was supported by the New Jersey Press Association, which will

celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2007 as the oldest continuing operating press association in the United States. The book examines the history of the newspapers, current efforts to reinvent themselves within the newer media and Internet environment, and new educational and training efforts universities must launch in a multimedia era.

Aumente is also program evaluator for a six-year program with the University of Missouri and Moscow State University Schools of Journalism, which concludes in 2007. He travels to Russia on a regular basis for the project, and his assessments are included as a chapter in a book just published in Russia by the two schools examining current trends in journalism education and professional training.

He lives with his wife, **Mary**, in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and welcomes correspondence on any of his projects, or just to hear from old friends. His e-mail address is aumente@scils.rutgers.edu. Aumente is distinguished professor emeritus at Rutgers University and special counselor to the dean in the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies.

—1970—

Larry L. King now has a theater stage named after him. In late October, the Austin Playhouse rechristened its second stage as The Larry L. King Theatre. King, a native Texan, wrote the play "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," the musical for which King was nominated for a Tony award; the Off-Broadway plays "The Night Hank Williams Died" and "The Kingfish," and "The Dead Presidents' Club," which is often regionally produced. Scenes from the plays were presented at the dedication. The outdoor theater marquee bears King's likeness, and in the lobby of the theater is a bronze bust of King made by sculptor Patrick Oliphant. Don Toner, the producing director/manager of the playhouse, says the newly refurbished space will host the annual Larry L. King New Play Festival, along with a full season of other plays.

—1974—

Steve Northup has a new book out, "Naga Cities of the Mekong: A guide to the temples, legends and history of Laos," with his colleague Martin

The shrine of the Pha Bat, or footprint of the Buddha, in Vat Tham Fai, Pakxe. Photo by Steve Northup (see his note on this page). From "Naga Cities of the Mekong." Martin Stuart-Fox and Steve Northup.



Stuart-Fox and published by Media Masters Pte Ltd, Singapore. Stuart-Fox is professor emeritus of The University of Queensland in Australia and Northup, a former photographer for Time magazine, now freelances. Northup adds, “Martin and I were a UPI reporter/photographer team in Vietnam in 1965 and ’66 and have been good friends ever since. We’re planning at least one more project together.”

In a section of Stuart-Fox’s text, he tells the mythical story of how the word “naga” came to be used. For over a thousand years, the Laos people settled and have lived along the Mekong River. While normally a placid river, it did at times turn dangerous, with severe rapids swirling between high banks. When this happened, Stuart-Fox writes, “... narrow canoes tipped suddenly or were dashed against rocks, people fell into the water. Some drowned. If their bodies were later found, washed up along the banks, they appeared drained of blood, and strangely marked. People took this as signs that the dead had been taken by the creatures they sometimes glimpsed in those swirling currents at

dusk or in the early dawn light. They had seen what looked like serrated crests or coiled bodies momentarily breaking the surface.”

These images were seen as spirits of the river, “... in the form of snakelike water dragons; some fierce and unpredictable, some more benign.” The Lao called the spirits “ngeuak,” but later learned another word for them, the Indian word “naga.” “In Buddhist mythology,” Stuart-Fox continues, “a great naga had protected the Buddha when he was meditating, and the Lao believe that nagas will continue to protect all those who practise the truth he taught.” Three cities were seen as protected by the naga, Luang Phrabang in the north, Viang Chan (Vientiane) in the center, and Champasak in the south.

“Naga Cities of the Mekong” tells the stories of these cities in historian Stuart-Fox’s words and photographer Northup’s images.

—1981—

Gerald Boyd died on November 23 after complications from lung cancer;

he died at his home in Manhattan at the age of 56.

Gerald Boyd “... always had a drive to run a newspaper. That was his love,” said colleague **Tom Morgan** (NF ’90), in The New York Times obituary by Felicity Barringer. “He really did have a drive. Most people spend their college years trying to figure out what to do. Gerald always knew. There was no doubt.”

Boyd first connected with journalism as a child, through an aunt who read newspapers. In high school, despite working many hours at a neighborhood grocery where he grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, he wrote for his school newspaper. In his senior year he applied for—and won—a full scholarship to the University of Missouri at Columbia. The scholarship was sponsored by The St. Louis Post-Dispatch to encourage African Americans to become journalists. Along with the scholarship, he was guaranteed a job at the Post-Dispatch following his college education, and he joined that paper in 1973.

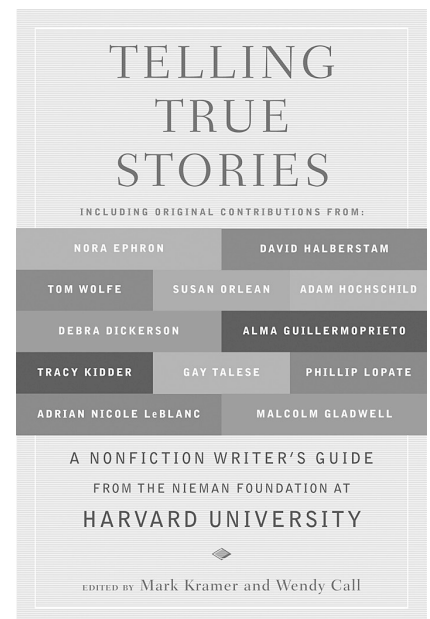
In his rise through the world of journalism, Boyd was often the first

Narrative: A Writers’ Guide

“Telling True Stories” is an anthology of the shared guidance of 51 leading practitioners of narrative nonfiction in the United States. Plume is expected to publish this book in February 2007. Edited by Mark Kramer, director of the Nieman Foundation’s narrative journalism program, and Wendy Call, a freelance writer and editor based in Seattle, Washington, the 90 selections bring to the book’s pages the voices of narrative practitioners who have offered their experiences and insights to thousands of journalists who have participated in annual Nieman Narrative conferences.

In the preface, Kramer and Call write that “‘Telling True Stories’ offers a step-by-step guide that can help you at every stage, from idea to publication [It] offers nonfiction storytellers a sourcebook that helps name and describe many aspects of this difficult but rewarding work.”

Information about the narrative conferences can be found at www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative. Audio recordings from various sessions are available. The Nieman Narrative Digest—a compilation of the best in narrative journalism—is at www.nieman.harvard.edu/narrative/digest/index.html ■ —Melissa Ludtke



A Gerald Boyd Remembrance

In the early 1970's, when I first met Gerald in our journalism classes at the University of Missouri, he was a fairly terrifying figure. He was working hard to win more respect for African-American students on campus, and he was often fierce and unapproachable. When we met years later, covering some event in Washington, D.C., the anger, but never the intensity, had faded. This was the sweet, companionable side of Gerald. Having been a Nieman the year before, he asked about some of the amazing offerings he could choose. He was delighted to be on a campus that didn't require grades, just curiosity. He served as a final judge for the Alicia Patterson Fellowships and gave the applicants his all, despite the overload of his editorship at The New York Times. Gerald truly had a passion for our profession and reached its highest levels because of his hard work, enterprise, and talent. I will miss him. —**Margaret Engel**, NF '79

African American holding his particular job. He once said, "Throughout my life I have enjoyed both the blessing and the burden of being the first black this and the first black that, and like many minorities and women who succeed, I've often felt alone."

Boyd, who joined The New York Times in 1983 as a political reporter, was named deputy managing editor in 1997 and managing editor in 2001. He resigned in March 2004, along with executive editor Howell Raines, over the scandal involving the discredited reporting of Jayson Blair. In the Times's obituary, Executive Editor Bill Keller said, "Gerald was a newsman. He knew how to mobilize a reporting team and surround a story so that nothing important was missed. He knew how to motivate and inspire. And, tough and demanding as he could be, he had a huge heart. He left the paper under sad circumstances, but despite all of that he left behind a great reservoir of respect and affection." Recently, Boyd had been working as a consultant in journalism at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Boyd was a part of the editing teams that won three Pulitzer Prizes for the Times, for articles about the first bombing of the World Trade Center, about children of poverty, and for the series "How Race Is Lived in America." In 2002, he was selected journalist of the year by the National Association of Black Journalists.

He is survived by his wife, **Robin Stone**, and a son, Zachary.

Jim Stewart retired in November as a correspondent for CBS News after working for more than 16 years with that organization out of his 37 years as a journalist. Based in their Washington, D.C. bureau, he covered the Department of Justice, FBI, CIA and, since 1994, counterterrorism. He also contributed to "60 Minutes II" during its run from 1999 to 2005. Before joining CBS News, Stewart was national security correspondent for Cox Newspapers in Washington from 1985 to 90. Before that, he spent 12 years with the Atlanta Constitution as a reporter, special assignments editor, and assistant managing editor for news operations at the Constitution and the Atlanta Journal.

In an interview on the CBS Weblog Public Eye, Stewart was asked what he would miss most about his job. He said, "That's easy to answer. ... I will miss people the most. It's not about the stories, it's about the people. I learned after switching from newspapers to broadcast journalism that this job is much harder to do. You can travel with a certain anonymity as a print reporter, with your pencil and your notepad and a quizzical look on your face. [In television news] sometimes you drag along two-ton trucks, antennas, camera crews, producers, bright lights, and televisions. It's hard to get spontane-

ity. It's hard to get past the veneer that people now automatically put up when they think they're 'on TV.'"

And in response to a question about how he has been able to develop his sources, he said, "... the advice that I always give to the young journalists when they ask that question is this: understand the people that you are covering. And what I mean by that is learn the culture. Example: When I covered the Pentagon I could stand in front of a general officer or an enlisted man and I could read his history on his chest. I knew what those decorations meant. I knew where he'd served, with what distinction he served, I knew where those units were. I could read his career.... Many a time I'd call somebody at the FBI and never ask a question about something that may have been burning in my mind to know the answer to. But I would just call and gossip with them about the latest promotions announced by the director. That bought me a lot of entrée into an organization that is usually very close-lipped."

Stewart has won a number of awards and honors, including four Emmy Awards (one being the 2001 individual honor for best story in a national broadcast), the Sigma Delta Chi Gold Medallion for National Reporting, and the National Headliner's Award.

—1983—

Bill Marimow resigned in October from his job as vice president for news and information at National Public Radio in which he had supervised the work of 350 employees and 36 domestic and international bureaus. He assumed the job of NPR's ombudsman.

Then, in early November, he was offered the job of editing his hometown paper, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the newspaper from which he launched his journalism career during the time when **Gene Roberts**, NF '62, was that paper's editor. He accepted the job and now returns to a top editor's position at a metropolitan newspaper under similar circumstances to those he faced at The (Baltimore) Sun just prior to joining

NPR. Having left The Sun after clashing with its publisher about the tightening of budgets and cutting of newsroom jobs, he arrived at the Inky at a time of difficult union negotiations with a new publisher, Brian Tierney, who as part of a consortium of local business people bought the paper in 2006 from McClatchy. Tierney warned that additional newsroom cuts appear to be “unavoidable,” citing the possibility that as many as 150 of the remaining 415 Inquirer newsroom jobs could be lost. In his first meeting with reporters and editors in the paper’s Broad Street newsroom, Marimow reportedly told them, “We have to figure out how to thrive in an era of reduced resources,” while acknowledging that the paper will focus its limited resources on coverage of the Philadelphia area. “We will no longer be sending battalions of staffers to cover news like Hurricane Katrina and the war in Baghdad,” he explained.

—1991—

Tim Giago has published the book “Children Left Behind: The Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools” (Clear Light Book Publishing, August 2006. For copies e-mail harmon@clearlightbooks.com.) Weaving together memoir, commentary, history and poetry, Giago’s book details the extreme policies in mission schools that denied generations of Indian children their native languages and traditions. He drew off his own childhood experience at a mission school in writing this book. Giago’s story “becomes a metaphor for the experience of many Indian children, who were literally ripped from their tribal roots,” an experience that for many “resulted in isolation, confusion, and intense psychological pain, as they were forced to reject their own culture and spirituality,” said a press release from Clear Light.

The book was also called “a major event in Indian education” by Ryan Wilson, president of the National Indian Education Association. “He challenges Indian Country to co-exist

with the truth of what actually happened at these schools,” Wilson wrote in his review.

Giago was recently recognized by RezNet (www.reznetnews.org) Project Director Denny McAuliffe for his integral role in establishing the Native American Journalists Association, which began under the name Native American Press Association.

“Tim Giago ... was the driving force behind creating the new group called the Native American Press Association [NAPA]. Giago sent letters to known Indian newspapers around the country, inviting them to attend, and raised money for the meeting with the help of Penn State journalism professor Bill Dulaney. In acknowledgment of Giago’s crucial role, members of the newly created NAPA made him their first president. It’s time we start giving Tim Giago his due and recognize his important contribution as founder of the Native American Journalists Association, the group that has helped keep Native American journalism going and growing,” said McAuliffe.

—1992—

George de Lama was named managing editor for news at the Chicago Tribune. His appointment was announced early in November, three weeks after the death of his father, Frank, a Cuban immigrant who never finished high school yet, in George’s words, “read the paper every day, all of it, and gave me my lifelong love of newspapers when I was a boy. He would have appreciated being able to see this happen to me, and I’ve felt his loss keenly these last few weeks.” He assumed his new editing duties following the abrupt departure of his longtime colleague and friend, Jim O’Shea, who went to the Los Angeles Times as that paper’s new editor, as the rumors of a possible sale of Tribune Company or some of its newspapers continue to swirl.

The confluence of the loss of his father, the departure of his friend, and the uncertainty at the Tribune has made this “a bittersweet time” for him. George shared some of the thoughts

he passed on to his Tribune staff when he assumed this new job: “One thing my father’s death has done is help give me a certain measure of detachment and perspective in looking at all the turmoil surrounding our company and our industry these days. We’re only here for a short time, and we can only control what we can control. This means focusing on producing the finest journalism we can each day and putting it in the hands of as many readers as we can reach. No matter what happens to this company, I told them, this is our mission and our bond. We’ll see soon enough what’s next.”

—1997—

Debbie Seward writes:

“My family and I have moved from New York City to Prague, where I am executive producer/newsroom at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). The newsroom provides reports with audio, which are used by RFE/RL’s broadcasters. This year I have been working to put out a faster, timelier news report for the broadcasters and to integrate the English-language online and broadcast editing staffs into a converged newsroom. It has been great to learn new skills, including web publishing and audio editing. My husband, **Nick**, a Nieman affiliate, has finished novel number two, ‘The English Lesson,’ and our daughter Anna (two at the time of our Nieman Fellowship) is now 12 and a thriving 7th grader at the International School of Prague.”

—1999—

Chris Hedges, a senior fellow at The Nation Institute in New York City, received one of five literary awards given by the Lannan Foundation, a family foundation “dedicated to cultural freedom, diversity and creativity through projects which support exceptional contemporary artists and writers as well as inspired Native activists in rural indigenous communities.” The award recognizes established writers as well as those with the potential for excel-

lence. The financial award, which for the Literary Writing Fellowships totals \$425,000, is designed to provide time and support for writers to complete or continue with specific projects. Hedges, who was a foreign correspondent for nearly two decades, is the author of "War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning," "What Every Person Should Know About War," and "Losing Moses on the Freeway: The 10 Commandments in America." His new book, "American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America" (Free Press) is to be published in January 2007.

—2001—

Anil Padmanabhan's biography, "Kalpana Chawla: A Life," was published by both Penguin Books India and Puffin in 2003, shortly after Chawla died in February 2003 on board the space shuttle Columbia. Chawla was the first Indian woman to travel into space. In writing the book, Padmanabhan spoke with her family, friends and NASA colleagues to portray the intelligence, perseverance and faith associated with Chawla and her accomplishments.

After several years as New York bureau chief of India Today, Padmanabhan has returned to New Delhi where he will be part of the leadership team that is launching a new economic daily for the Hindustan Times group.

—2002—

Geneive Abdo's book "Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11" was published by Oxford University Press on the fifth anniversary of September 11th and has been called the first detailed investigative work on Muslim life in America since the attacks.

"Geneive Abdo's work captures in great detail the immense hardships Muslims face in the post-September 11th world and offers hope for their success and co-existence in America," said Archbishop Desmond Tutu in a quote on Abdo's Web site. "Her book shatters stereotypes about Muslims and teaches us that more understanding of

Islam is needed for global peace."

Writing in The Washington Post, Steven Simon said, "The net result, Abdo concludes, is a community increasingly inclined to separatism. Elsewhere, this has provided fertile ground for radicals such as Osama bin Laden. The United States is scarcely on a slippery slope to Europe's fate, but the security of our society, Abdo shows, now depends on a spirit of inclusiveness and generosity."

Abdo is currently liaison for the United Nations Alliance for Civilizations, a project established to improve

Islamic-Western relations. In her 20 years as a journalist, she worked as Iran correspondent for The Guardian, a regular contributor to The Economist, Cairo-based correspondent for The Dallas Morning News, and Moscow-based correspondent for Reuters.

Abdo is the author of "No God but God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam" and coauthor of "Answering Only to God: Faith and Freedom in Twenty-First-Century Iran." Her commentaries about Islam have appeared in several national newspapers, including The Washington Post and The New York

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund has supported a variety of prominent initiatives at the Nieman Foundation since its endowment in November 1996. From 1998 to 2001, the fund supported four Watchdog Journalism Conferences that focused on the roles journalists play in monitoring those who hold positions of power and influence. The fund now supports the Nieman Watchdog Web site, which was launched in spring 2004. This Web site enables authorities in various fields to suggest questions the press should be asking. The fund has also supported the publishing of conference excerpts and articles regarding Watchdog-style journalism both in Nieman Reports and on the Nieman Web site. In spring 2006, the fund provided the opportunity for three Guatemalan reporters to travel to Cambridge to enhance their investigative reporting skills during 10 intense days of training at the Nieman Foundation. Marder is a 1950 Nieman Fellow.

The following is an accounting of expenditures for the fund from November 1, 2005-October 31, 2006.

Beginning Balance at 11/1/05	\$185,798.94
Income	
Interest on balance at end of FY06 (7/1/05-6/30/06)	2410.01
Endowment Distribution for FY07 (7/1/06-6/30/07)	115,201.91
Total Income	117,611.92
Expense	
Editor's and Interns' Fees	162,449.03
Travel/Lodging/Meals	4,118.34
Web site Hosting and Maintenance	6,011.90
Guatemalan Reporter Hosting	6,209.69
Miscellaneous	1,608.98
Total Expense	180,397.94
Ending Balance at 10/31/06	\$123,012.92

Times, and she has appeared on CNN, NPR, BBC, “The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,” and other programs.

—2005—

Alma Guillermoprieto is a 2006-2007 Radcliffe Institute Fellow in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where among her projects is the libretto for an opera.

Guillermoprieto, who has been writing about Latin America for more than 20 years, has written for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*, among others. She covered the insurrection against Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua for *The Guardian* and, in January 1982, was one of two reporters who broke the story of the El Mozote, El Salvador massacre (the other reporter was Raymond Bonner of *The New York Times*). In that December 1981 massacre, an estimated 900 villagers were killed by the Salvadoran army.

Guillermoprieto has written four books, most recently “Dancing With Cuba: A Memoir of the Revolution” (Pantheon, 2004). The others are “Samba,” “The Heart That Bleeds,” and “Looking for History: Dispatches from Latin America.” She has received a number of awards for her work over the years, including the Latin American Studies Association Media Award in 1992 and the 2000 George Polk Award for a series she wrote on Colombia.

—2006—

Bill Schiller, reporter for the Toronto Star, writes: “... Some of you have e-mailed and inquired about the turbulence here at the Star, after both our publisher and editor in chief were fired. It has been unsettling to be sure, but the incoming team has done much to stabilize the situation, made swift decisions on reconfiguring the management team, and announced a number of new appointments and assignments.

“Which brings us to some personal news: **Mary [Kirley]** and I are headed to China. It won’t happen until the

New Year, but the Star has decided to re-open our Asia bureau, which was previously situated in Hong Kong, and locate it now in Beijing. Needless to say we’re quite excited about it and at the prospect of having a great reunion with **Yaping** and **Li Hong**. [Schiller had been foreign editor of the Star but left that post when he became a Nieman Fellow.]

“How soon this will all take place depends on how quickly we can obtain visas. Last week we began the application process by contacting the Chinese Embassy and filing all the appropriate papers, but there is really no telling how long it will take. Ideally we hope to hit the ground and begin organizing in March. So it’s a period of high adrenaline, expectation and excited initial planning. What excites us most, of course—aside from seeing Yaping and Li Hong—is all the learning ahead. Just this past weekend we started to accumulate a small library of books on China and have begun to immerse ourselves in endless reading. Any suggestions you might have are all welcome!”

Brent Walth, class scribe, has an update on two other fellows [see Walth’s article on page 86]:

Jon Palfreman has been named the KEZI Distinguished Professor of Broadcast Journalism at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication. Palfreman, an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning producer, is founder and president of Lexington, Massachusetts-based Palfreman Film Group, which has produced documentaries for the BBC and PBS, including the programs “Frontline” and “NOVA.” [See Palfreman’s article on page 5.]

Takashi Oshima, a reporter with *Asahi Shimbun* in Tokyo, Japan, is in the midcareer program at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. ■

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A Nieman Classmate Remembers M.G.G. Pillai

By Hennie van Deventer

In 1977—nearly 30 years ago, remember!—I wrote a fighting article for Nieman Reports trying to explain South Africa’s racial policies. The headline was: “Some Misconceptions About South Africa.” My subeditor was my fellow Nieman and fellow resident of Crimson Court, **Ganga Pillai**, from Malaysia. In his impeccable handwriting he suggested certain corrections to my shaky English grammar. He also suggested an addition or two to my historic arguments—which I appreciated even more. The years 1976-77 were not always easy for a white Afrikaner in the liberal academic circles of New England, and every sign of sympathy or support gave me much needed fresh heart.

In 1984 I was invited to the Republic of China. I wrote to Ganga in Kuala Lumpur, supplying my itinerary. What about a meeting somewhere in the East, I ventured. On my way back I spent two nights in Hong Kong. After my first night out on the town there was a note on the floor when I entered my room in the Ambassador Hotel in the bustling, impressive Kowloon. The handwriting on the envelope was unmistakable. Ganga was in town. He had answered my call.

We spent an unforgettable day, doing the tourist rounds, talking about a changing world, and reminiscing over great moments and great people of our Nieman year. When we parted he took a pewter vase that he had had engraved: “To my friends, Hennie and Tokkie [my wife], from Ganga Pillai, Kuala Lumpur,

Malaysia. January 1984.” In an accompanying letter he wrote, “The presence of this vase in a South African home should at least symbolise a common thread of humanity that transcends political barriers.”

Now the big man Ganga is dead—the first of our class to take leave. In Melkbosstrand (near Cape Town), South Africa, I mourn his death. I shall remember Ganga as a living example of that “common thread of humanity” he spoke of.

One day on a Nieman outing Ganga jokingly explained his bulk with the remark that in every fat man also lived a thin man. “Yes, and you’re eating for both of them,” I retorted. Ganga laughed. How he would have laughed if he could see me now: also a fat man with a thin man inside. And yes, Ganga, I am eating (and drinking) for both of them!

Editor’s note: Ganga Pillai died on April 28, 2006. ■

Ganga Pillai, left, and Hennie van Deventer, 1977
Nieman Fellows, reunited in Hong Kong in 1984.



Goodbye to All That—A Memoir

‘My introduction to daily journalism began with a murder. My introduction to Niemanry also began with a murder.’

By Edward C. Norton

In 1962 I walked into the White Plains, New York Reporter-Dispatch (R-D) and asked for a reporting job. Editor Bill Bookman asked a few questions—would I work nights? Did I have a car? When could I start? It was all easier in the manual typewriter days, no personnel forms, no writing tests.

The night shift on an afternoon paper was interesting. It meant covering police news and government boards in a string of affluent Westchester County towns—on-the-job training. The second or third night on the job I was reading the log at Greenburgh, New York police headquarters when two cops literally carried a blood-soaked fellow into headquarters, while a third cop trailed carrying a short shotgun.

The obviously drunk suspect had just shot his wife. It was her blood on him. I immediately trolled for details and got live quotes from the officers. Back at the office later I dug into the story and shortly had a two-take story of a lively domestic murder.

The next day I searched the paper in vain for my story. When I got to the office for my shift I found the copy on my typewriter with a note from the

city editor to the effect that the R-D did not print stories of local violence by Negroes. The term “black” was not in use then.

Welcome to the world of American

... there are tens of millions of bloggers out there—each one his/her very own reporter-pundit-city editor. If you doubt the sea change, ask the growing list of print reporters who have been found to be plagiarists by the unseen, lurking bloggers waiting in the electronic editorial bushes to scream foul.

journalism pre-civil rights era. There were all kinds of unsaid rules and regulations about all the news fit to print in those days. They quickly made me understand why my fellow reporters were so cynical and callous. The play/movie “The Front Page,” heretofore a comedy to me, suddenly became a documentary.

The years slipped by and the rules continued. The most basic were that

reporters knew more than they wrote and editors slept better when their papers operated on the “Afghanistan” principle—all the details when the story was farthest from the newsroom,

but when the story was in the circulation area, well, best keep the bulls and sacred cows quiet.¹ That all changed in 1972, of course, with Watergate and the two unknown Washington Post reporters, backed by a gutsy lady publisher and her brave editors.

When I reported for Niemanry in September 1972, however, that journalism sea change was not complete. But it was time for the second odd murder, as yet unsolved. The class of 1973—as tradition held—met with university big shots and medium shots at the first introductory reception. One of the Harvard medium shots was Joseph Strickland, a 1969 Nieman Fellow, ex-Detroit reporter turned graduate school scout for worthy minority students. We fell into conversation and a few scholarly arguments. He won a few; I won a few. At the end of the evening he needed a lift to Roxbury, so we continued our seminar in the car. He declined my offer to take him to his apartment for,

¹ In the late 1960's I was among the first “official” investigative reporters, duly certified by the American Press Institute at Columbia University. I believe it was my articles about organized crime in New Jersey—pre-“The Sopranos”—that got my Nieman ticket punched.

as he said, it was not safe at night for a white guy in that black district.

Two days later we awoke to read in *The Boston Globe* that Strickland had been shot to death in his apartment by a small caliber pistol, and no robbery motive was apparent. I called the Boston detective handling the case and explained how and where I had dropped Strickland.

The story was a two-day news affair because of the Harvard connection. The detective felt Strickland knew his killer, and perhaps it was a romance gone awry. Then and now I feel the case for the Boston cops was strictly a 9-to-5, no overtime, 33-year cold case and no solution before the last commercial. Over the years I often think that Strickland and I might have had lots of good arguments and conversations.

It was later in October when I fell into conversation with Nieman luncheon guest Ben Bradlee, whose brow was wrinkled with worry about the irregular series *The Washington Post* was running about the Watergate break-in fiasco. Bradlee was worried because: a) most daily papers were *not* picking up the Woodstein articles on the Post wire, and b) Bradlee was unsure where the story was going and how much it could cost the Post if the story were a bust.

With the confidence that comes with a grasp of the obvious, I told Bradlee that of the 1,700-plus daily papers in the United States, about 1,650-plus would endorse Nixon for a second term—thus the lack of interest in the ongoing series. Nixon took 49 states. And it took the unraveling Watergate thread two more years to drive Nixon from office.

The Ground Shifts

Watergate was a sea change for American newspapers on many counts—first, a new generation of reporters wanted to be investigators driving the wicked

from office. The story drew young people to the trade and to journalism classes and programs all around the nation. By the mid 1970's the movie "All the President's Men" made the young eschew banks and brokerage houses for a manual typewriter.

During that period I taught news writing at two colleges and warned my students—as did an article in *The Wall Street Journal*—that while there were about 30,000 journalism students, Woodstein wannabes, there were about 300 jobs in the trade available for cub reporters—maybe.

During that same period an undercurrent ran little recognized outside the business offices of newspapers. The 19th century newspaper industry was colliding with reality—hot type to cold type and union-manning rules fighting with financial efficiency. The collision resulted in the 88-day New York newspaper strike of 1978 that drove me out of the newsroom and to the corporate world, where—amazing!—they had *electric typewriters* and, soon, *computers*.

From 1983 all my writing was done on a computer, including a couple of novels. Big business paid the mortgage, and when folks occasionally asked if I missed daily newspapers, I would reply, "Sure, the way I miss steam locomotives."

By the early 1990's, it was apparent to all but the *really* dense that there was a new form of communication that would challenge the traditional news gatekeepers. Reporting and all else had changed radically—first e-mail, then the novelty of the Web.

In that period I connected with a Web pioneer in Durham, North Carolina, who framed and developed one of the first Web magazines devoted to columns and editorials on books, music, cuisine and my irregular rants on whatever irritation moved me. I called my contribution *The Electric Ikonoklast*. Soon I found I had readers

responding from Denver, Colorado, and Kunming, China, and places in between. The Web magazine, which had readers in more than 150 nations, lasted about seven years—to the death in 2004 of its founder-editor, radio and television veteran Richard Hughes.²

During the same period—late 1990's—I became involved with a novel daily Web newspaper on Cape Cod, perhaps a first local daily in the United States without a print version. As I had done in White Plains, I wandered into its tiny office in affluent Osterville, Massachusetts and asked the 20-something editor if he could use a local columnist with lots of print experience who knew the rules of libel and the AP stylebook.

The Web daily was called *The Cape Cod Journal (CCJ)*, and during its exciting run I ran around collecting local stuff, reviewing plays, and covering public boards like the old days. CCJ was fun while it lasted, but the owner of the Internet provider decided a few years later that while the Journal drew advertising and readers, his expenses saw no blue sky ahead. Print or electronic—the cash register rules.

Meanwhile during the 1990's daily newspapers across the nation were starting Web sites, offering their daily product *free*. Result: Today you can read as many newspapers online as you have time.

The New Order

Whither journalism and newspapers today? Some critics say the *end is near* for print; optimists predict that historic print corporations will soon move their entire news product to the Web, to be read on PCs, laptops, phones or BlackBerries, or the next digital marvel to spring itself on the public.

The late press critic Joe Liebling once wrote that freedom of the press belongs to those who own one. Today we all own one, in the sense that there

² In 1994 the Drudge Report went online without too much notice, the first major aggregator of the world's media. Matt Drudge broke the Clinton-Lewinsky story that ultimately led to the first impeachment of an elected President in U.S. history. The "gatekeeper" (*Newsweek*) didn't want to break the story. Today the DR is read by 8-10 millions each day.

are tens of millions of bloggers out there—each one his/her very own reporter-pundit-city editor. If you doubt the sea change, ask the growing list of print reporters who have been found to be plagiarists by the unseen, lurking bloggers waiting in the electronic editorial bushes to scream foul.

Is all this good for the reporting trade? I think so. The vast majority of bloggers write about beekeeping, restoring 1956 Chevys, and where to find the best ice cream in Chicago. Only

a few specialize in guerrilla warfare against what they call mainstream media. As someone said, we're all entitled to our opinions, but no one is entitled to his/her own facts.

The future is here, critics say: Amazon used to be a river; Yahoo was a bumpkin; a googol is 100 zeros, and Google is a noun, verb and adjective. The past is good for a few laughs with old colleagues. Do I miss it? Sure, the way I miss steam locomotives. ■

Edward C. Norton, a 1973 Nieman Fellow, has survived three newspaper crash landings, two major corporations and has had six novels published, and with wife Mildred now lives in retirement on Cape Cod. He can be reached at ecnorton@cape.com

NEWSPAPER GALLERY | END NOTE



Painting by William H. Jackson depicting the Pony Express and Crossings Station on the Sweetwater. *National Archives/Courtesy Newseum.*

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