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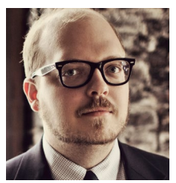

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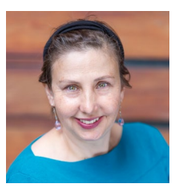

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CORRECTION

Due to a reporting error in "Pulitzer's Forgotten Classics" in the Summer 2016 issue, Herbert Bayard Swope was erroneously credited with winning the first Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. It was the first Pulitzer Prize for Reporting that he won in 1917.
Due to an editing error in "Pulitzer's Power Struggles," a photo of Hank Williams Jr. was identified as his father. It was the elder Williams who received a posthumous Pulitzer in 2010.

OPPOSITE TOP: JULIO CORTEZ/ASSOCIATED PRESS; BOTTOM: REUTERS/STRINGER

Donald Trump's rise to the presidency is being viewed by journalists and historians as an important time to reflect on the best way to move forward

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Features

The award of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature to Svetlana Alexievich has elevated the profile of oral history **PAGE 6**

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Jill Abramson: "You've got to get a younger generation in the habit of reading that highest-quality journalism"

The former New York Times executive editor on why she admires BuzzFeed, misses Gawker, and the public holds the press in such low regard

JILL ABRAMSON, *executive editor of The New York Times from 2011 to 2014, worked at the Times for 17 years. Now she is writing a political column for The Guardian; teaching journalism at Harvard, which is her alma mater; and researching a narrative nonfiction book about the media. Modeled on David Halberstam's "The Powers That Be," her book will look closely at the evolution of BuzzFeed, Vice, The Washington Post, and The New York Times over the past 10 years. During a talk in September at the Nieman Foundation, she said that the two online media outlets and their legacy counterparts are "sort of switching hats." The upstarts want the gravitas of the established print giants who, in turn, want to be "digitally innovative" and attract the young readers the upstarts have claimed as their own. Edited excerpts:*

On sexism in the media

It surprises me that there are still so many stories that I would see at the Times that, if it was about a woman at the top of business, would always describe her clothes, especially shoes. There's an obsession with shoes and heels that go, "Click, click, click."

It's not like I feel there should be strict rules, and you should never be able to describe someone, whether a man or a woman, or anybody's clothes. Sometimes it's revealing, and important to talk about it, but you have to demonstrate in your writing why you're bringing it up, why it's emblematic and important. That's rarely done.

I'm surprised that so many stories are still written that seem so stereotypical when women are the subjects, and that editors don't immediately edit it out. There were too many regrettable times at The New York Times when something went into print, and then you would get an avalanche of reader revulsion.

Because I was the first woman in a lot of the most senior jobs I had at the Times, I felt personally ashamed, always, because I couldn't possibly read everything that was going into the paper.

I thought it was a very cool achievement that the news masthead of the Times became 50 percent female during my first year as executive editor, but I don't think that generated much support. Don't expect a round of applause from your people, because it became synonymous with "Jill is playing favorites." I'm not saying other parts of my leadership were flawless by any means, but I thought that was a much bigger deal than most of my colleagues did.

On the importance of diversity

There's not enough diversity in most newsrooms. That's something I admire about BuzzFeed. Their newsroom is very diverse. They have succeeded. It can be done. You have to have leadership at the top who really cares about it.

If you have a diverse business, you get more customers. If you use diverse suppliers, you have a stronger business. It directly impacts the audience, because it means that, with stories affecting women, you won't have so many that talk about, dwell on, appearance. You won't be slow to realize that the Trayvon Martin case is a national story. The national news media was slow on that story. At least having been in The New York Times newsroom then, there weren't enough journalists—either editors or reporters—saying "This is a huge story. Wake up. Wake up, you mainly white editors." We're supposed to be reflecting the world.

If you're going to bring people the world, you better include people who are covering the world who have different perspectives and knowledge sets about the world. Your audience is not going to be diverse either, if you're only telling things from the point of view of a very privileged, cosmopolitan white person.

On the book she's writing

What I'm trying to do, which may be unattainable, is to write a version for now of "The Powers That Be," which was, I thought, a great book that David Halberstam, a Harvard man and a Timesman, wrote about the media in the late '70s. What he did is he focused on four institutions. It was The Washington Post, the LA Times, CBS News, and Time magazine. He made a narrative out of his theme, which was—it's laughable now, but it's that the media had become so powerful and so profitable that they towered over the political class, that they had too much concentrated power. What's ironic, and I have great fears for my own book, is as he was writing this, it was becoming untrue, slowly, but if you graphed the highs and lows, it was starting to go down. What I'm trying to do in the time frame that I picked— from 2006 to now—is chart the transition from a print world to a digital world.

I'm mimicking Halberstam. I'm looking at four institutions, and how they weathered those times. Why 2006? Because the iPhone was about to be introduced, Google bought YouTube, so video was really starting to become a big news conveyor. Twitter started in 2006. The Facebook news feed began in 2006. It's a totemic year. It's when BuzzFeed started, and it's when Vice, which is another institution that I'm looking at closely, was becoming the cool brand. They were very early video pioneers. They used YouTube as their distribution system. In a way, BuzzFeed and YouTube were the first distributed content purveyors. They used that model. It didn't matter to them whether you came to vice.com or buzzfeed.com. They were using social media or YouTube. In addition to BuzzFeed and YouTube, I am looking at the Post and the Times.

The thing that interests me most is that what BuzzFeed and Vice are both doing now is building up more conventional news muscles. They badly want to create themselves as lasting institutions and get the respect that so-called legacy news organizations like The New York Times or The Washington Post get. The Washington Post and The New York Times are trying to become digitally innovative, so they're sort of switching hats, and that interests me a lot. I'm interested in quality information surviving and growing. I haven't yet reached a definitive conclusion, at least one that I'm ready to share.

What I'm trying to do is write a version for now of David Halberstam's "The Powers That Be"

LISA ABITBOL

Jill Abramson said the rise in social media makes raising awareness of articles part of publishing

On the shift in publishing

In the old days, which are really fairly recent, when something went up on the web or rolled off of the presses, that was publishing. That was the end. It was a finite point.

With the rise of social media, raising the awareness of the work is part of the actual publishing system now. That you have to get it out. That you have to know how to use Facebook or Twitter. BuzzFeed has many platforms that they distribute on. They custom design every article. Even for Pinterest.

It's like, "We're the Times and the Post, and we've published these stories." Actually distributing them is not the job of trucks anymore. It's the job of the journalist to distribute and call attention to the content of their stories.

The Post and the Times want a larger young readership. They should. God forbid either one of them dies out when their average reader is about 46 years old on the web and in print it's a little bit older. When those people perish, the kind of journalism that the Times and The Washington Post uniquely do, you don't want that to go away. You've got to get a younger generation in the habit of reading that highest-quality journalism.

On the appeal of BuzzFeed and Vice

BuzzFeed and Vice are in tune with younger news consumers. BuzzFeed's legal editor, Chris Geidner, who is based in Washington, started covering the issue of gay marriage way earlier than many national news organizations. He knows the gay community inside and out so he was just on it. He knew this is a really big deal in the gay community, "Someone should have it as a beat, and that's going to be me." That was very early on. Vice's pieces for HBO are like mini-documentaries. They go and cover places that no one else goes to.

On the low public trust in journalists

"Why?" is hard. It requires a many-faceted answer. A big reason for it is the dumbing down of news, turning everything—even a presidential debate—into a celebrity, as my students said, cage match. People feel that there's no elevating or relevant purpose to investing your time in reading the news, because so little of it helps you figure out how to spend your day. What is really important? What isn't important? It's sort of a confusing jumble right now.

I love Eli Pariser's book "The Filter Bubble." At least in the U.S., there is a filter bubble and the way information spreads on social media and through algorithms means that you're basically getting news that you agree with. That's contributed to the polarization of news. Most people are not all that partisan so they're not that interested in highly polarized news. They don't really believe it when different outlets say they are not partisan.

On the demise of Gawker

I'm sorry it's gone. I would look at it a lot. I'm not above reading gossip and I thought that [founder] Nick Denton in many ways was absolutely right in premising his theory of publishing on: if journalists are going to be talking amongst themselves about something really juicy, share it. Publish it.

I obviously have problems with publishing things that are untrue. I don't think everything they published should have been published, but I like that spirit. I like juiciness in news. I do. ■

Breaking Through Barriers

Andrea McCarren, NF '07, finds a four-legged friend is an asset for her reporting

OVER DECADES OF REPORTING, MY TOOLbox has evolved: from a pen and notebook to a smartphone, and for the last year, a 75-pound English Labrador retriever named Bunce.

He's named for Marine Cpl. Justin Bunce, severely wounded while on patrol in Iraq. I'm raising this happy, energetic yellow Lab to become a service dog, who will some day help a veteran with post-traumatic stress or physical disabilities.

The Maryland-based Warrior Canine Connection relies on volunteers like me to train and socialize puppies their first two years. Part of that instruction is taking Bunce to work with me each day, on every assignment.

He's joined me at the White House, the Pentagon, on Capitol Hill, and at numerous crime scenes, where even hardened detectives paused to greet him. What I never anticipated was that Bunce would be influential in countless news stories, and the key to breaking some big ones.

In April, Bunce helped me confirm a critical tip in a case that captivated the Washington area for weeks. A young, beautiful firefighter had disappeared in Shenandoah National Park. Her car was discovered in a dirt parking lot along the rugged eastern border.

The closest town is Etlan, Virginia, so remote, there's no cell service. In small towns, people tend to be suspicious of the media. But with Bunce at my side, they let down their guard and open up. It wasn't long before we received a critical tip: "There was a note in the car. A suicide note," one of the locals told me, as she patted Bunce. "They're looking for a body."

We drove to that desolate parking lot, where a Virginia state trooper stood guard, along with some national park rangers and a few volunteers. One was a Vietnam War veteran and a Marine, who had grown up with a yellow Lab "just like Bunce." He was delighted to learn Bunce was from the "Semper Fi" litter. That's the Marine Corps motto, meaning "always faithful."

With Bunce at my side, even people suspicious of the media tend to let down their guard and open up

We talked about Bunce's mission to serve veterans with visible and invisible injuries. He said, "I wish these dogs were around when I came home."

The rest of the media was at the command post, on the other side of the mountain, more than an hour's drive away. Suddenly, our location became a hub of activity. Two-way radios crackled. A helicopter hovered overhead. The state trooper rolled out yellow crime scene tape. My colleague and I were asked to clear the area.

Bunce and I approached the Marine Corps veteran.

"I guess they found a body," I said.

"I'm sorry I can't tell you anything," he replied. His eyes locked onto mine. "You know, I've dealt with a lot of DEATH."

I nodded and mouthed the words "thank you." He winked and whispered, "Semper Fi." ■

Bunce, the English Lab Andrea McCarren is training to be a service dog for a veteran, goes with her on every assignment

OPPOSITE: DAVID FALCONER/THE OREGONIAN

At the Hinge Of History

Floyd McKay, NF '68, draws on his newsman days for a book about an era that transformed the state of Oregon

WHEN JOURNALISM BECOMES WORK—as opposed to adventure—it's time to move on; that's what I did after three decades as a reporter and commentator in print and television, at the Oregon Statesman in Salem and KGW-TV in Portland. Later, after 14 years teaching my craft at the college level, I returned part time to the adventure.

It took me into what was, at least for me, a new genre: the quasi-memoir. At first I thought I'd invented the term; Google disabused such thoughts.

Many of us veteran journalists covered a Big Story where we were uniquely connected to the key figures. Such was the case with an iconic period in the political and historical life of Oregon in the middle of the last century. I distilled it in my book "Reporting the Oregon Story: How Activists and Visionaries Transformed a State," published in 2016 by Oregon State University Press. It describes a creative and bold era (1964–1986) that made Oregon a national leader in environmental policies. The state passed a bottle bill, protected public access to beaches, and established progressive land-use laws, to name a few accomplishments. The era laid the foundations for 21st-century Portland as a national magnet for the young and creative.

Media and politicians of the era treated each other with skeptical respect and civility; the leading papers and television stations had full-time, experienced political reporters and their stories got good play. It was a prestigious beat. We rubbed shoulders with our sources without constant acrimony and we shared common goals.

In that age of paper, I had filled drawers with scripts, notes, and clips, and carried them with me as I made career moves. Ultimately they fed my writing of "Reporting the Oregon Story," which was augmented by the personal recollections reporters are wont to exchange over a few drinks.

Oregon Governor Tom McCall watches as Floyd McKay announces his re-election in 1970

As a professor, I burnished my interest in regional history, and mixed in with my freelance news stories were academic articles focused on the Pacific Northwest and its media. As I recalled the critical interactions of media and politics during the Oregon Story era, I realized that reporters like me were at the hinge of history, and our reflections would be a contribution to the region's history and to newcomers young and old who had little knowledge of how their environment was built.

Both the writing and post-publication book events were rewarding; we were "back in the day" and it is still an adventure. ■

A BETTER ADAPTER

BILL CHURCH, NF '16, SEEKS TO JOIN CORE VALUES AND NEW APPROACHES AS HE GUIDES NEWSROOMS TOWARD REINVENTION

WHAT SHOULD NEWSROOMS look like in the future?

No one knows the answer.

But there is energy in uncertainty. And the best way to find an answer is start an adventure. Even if it means getting up at 3 a.m.

Two flights later, I'm in Gastonia, North Carolina, a turn signal west of Charlotte. GateHouse Media editors representing four daily newspapers gathered to discuss the way forward.

Their tales were wistful and even wishful, yet editors of community newspapers are committed to journalism that makes a difference.

Michael Smith, executive editor of the Spartanburg Herald-Journal, has been in his South Carolina community long enough to raise a family to adulthood. He has moved up the newsroom ranks, seen the birth of a website and mobile products, and now is guiding his newsroom and three others in nearby North Carolina.

He's energized by the uncertainty and adventure. His teams still are about local news, but their newsrooms will be different. More focused. More adaptable, too.

My roles with the editors were listener, questioner, and organizational nerd.

During a recent term as a Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow, my multi-tasking at Harvard focused on organizational dynamics for small newsrooms.

Should newsrooms migrate to a hybrid organizational structure? Are so-called "legacy" newsrooms capable of systemic changes? Can small newsrooms shift to nonlinear decision-making?

Nerdy questions, indeed.

My research looked at publicly held companies, start-ups, international media organizations, and even hospital emergency rooms. What emerged was a recognition that uncertainty is an opportunity, that changing organizations must start with understanding relationships.

For the four Carolina newsrooms, defining relationships and "jobs to be done" offers a starting point in changing organizational structure. What could emerge is a hybrid model that focuses on local reporting in each community and cross-functional teams (such as regionalized digital-first teams) that provide operational adaptability.

Two months after the fellowship ended, my world changed. I'm no longer executive editor of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune and GateHouse southeast regional editor. That magical (if expired) Harvard ID card takes me to Austin as GateHouse's senior vice president of news.

Reinventing newsrooms takes more than a day trip to Gastonia. But I'm energized. Adventure awaits. ■

The Power of Oral History as Journalism

First-person reports about Bill Cosby and Chernobyl bring new attention to an old form of storytelling

BY KEITH O'BRIEN

"I THINK I STARTED EVERY INTERVIEW WITH: TELL ME HOW you met Bill Cosby." Noreen Malone, a senior editor at New York magazine, didn't plan the question ahead of time. As she set out to interview the 35 women accusing Cosby of sexual assault for New York's July 2015 cover story, Malone had other questions on her mind, like would the alleged victims speak to her at all? Could she get them to open up? But once she began interviewing the women, one by one, Malone realized that this question—neutral yet probing, simple yet cutting straight to the core of the narrative—was the perfect place to begin a painful discussion. "I let them choose the starting point for the story," she says. "It just put it on their terms. And it just went from there."

Malone is a magazine writer, not an oral historian. But her working method for the Cosby story could have been pulled straight from the oral historian's handbook. Ask open-ended questions. Get people talking, and keep them talking. The women, to Malone's surprise, did just that. And the more they talked, filling 232 pages in transcripts, the more Malone realized her voice, the writer's voice, would only get in the way. "The flow of a feature didn't feel quite right for it," she says. "To me, what was so effective was hearing from the women themselves and having that be as undiluted as possible."

Illustration by Alex Nabaum

Her editors agreed. So Malone edited the transcripts down by theme: how the women met Cosby, what happened, and why they came forward. And the story that resulted was something of a hybrid. Malone wrote an opening essay, followed by first-person "testimony" from the alleged victims—an oral history, of sorts, like writing, only completely different. "It's the opposite of writing," Malone says. "You're not taking a blank page and creating something new from it. You're sculpting away; you're chipping away; and cutting to make it so much better."

Oral history is undergoing something of a revival. In recent months, magazines like Rolling Stone (oral history of the Allman Brothers), Vanity Fair (oral history of the Comedy Cellar), and Outside (oral history of "Hot Dog... The Movie") have published panoramic tales using first-person interviews. In 2015, Belarussian author Svetlana Alexievich won the Nobel Prize for Literature for her body of work, including "Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster," a compilation of interviews, written as monologues, stretching at times for pages and detailing the horrors of the 1986 nuclear accident.

StoryCorps, perhaps more than any other organization, has helped make oral history mainstream. The project, which has recorded some 65,000 conversations since 2003, archiving them at the Library of Congress, specializes in recording first-person voices. In 2015, the organization made it even easier for people to preserve their stories, launching a free mobile app that has since notched up nearly 80,000 interviews. And, in general, more people are listening, according to Robin Sparkman, the organization's CEO: StoryCorps podcast listenership has doubled in the past year. "Human beings all over the planet, we're really trying to connect to other people," Sparkman says of the growing interest in oral history. "There really is a human need—a biological, emotional need—to connect with another person. And I think this is a way of doing that. It's a form of intimacy, and it's cathartic. It's being heard and being listened to."

Reporters interested in narrative are increasingly turning to oral history

COURTESY OF THE COMEDY CELLAR

Jon Stewart at the Comedy Cellar, the subject of an oral history in Vanity Fair

Even archival material—recorded long ago and stored away, often forgotten, in academic libraries—is in greater demand, observes Doug Boyd, director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky and president of the Oral History Association. "We used to brag about 500 people using our collection a year. We're getting about 8,000 to 10,000 a month now," he says. "We get requests, every day, from all over the world." And he's getting new material, too—new interviews—five times what he used to collect in a year.

"Everyone's speaking for themselves more," says journalist and documentary film producer Clara Bingham from her book-lined office on New York's Upper West Side. "Everyone's blogging. And there's less tolerance in having the editorial buffer of an editor, journalist, writer. People are gravitating now to first-person story voices more than they have in a long time. It just feels like we're in a first-person storytelling renaissance."

With "Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost its Mind and Found its Soul," which hit shelves in May, Bingham is part of that renaissance. Long interested in oral history, Bingham decided to do the book—the story of the turbulent times from 1969 to 1970, told through the voices of the peaceniks, protesters, and others who lived them—in the form.

But by the fall of 2012, her initial excitement was spiraling into doubt. "I had a bunch of dud interviews," she recalls, "where people didn't remember anything." Other key protagonists were long dead or unwilling to speak at the level of detail Bingham needed to carry the narrative in their voices. She had begun the project thinking it would be simpler than penning a traditional nonfiction narrative. Now, she was thinking something else: It would be so much easier to just write the book.

"I was just really struggling with this new form," she says. "If you're writing a straight history—if you're Rick Perlstein writing about Nixon in 'Nixonland'—I could use anything. I could use all of those documents. I could use all of the first-person and all of the histories, and weave it all in to tell the story. Instead, I had my hands tied because I needed to stick to the first-person voice."

That fall, over coffee at a midtown diner in New York City, Bingham met with her editor, Jon Meacham, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the best-selling author of biographies of Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, and others. And unlike Bingham, he wasn't concerned. "I remember he said, 'You know, this is your book. There are no rules. You can do whatever you want to do.' And the second I decided I could do whatever I wanted to do, that really freed me up."

Where Bingham struggled to get her characters to speak—on the record, to her—about their pasts, she plugged holes, borrowing tracts from the characters' diaries and memoirs. The decision kept her 656-page book in the first-person and revealed something else about oral history as a form: The rules are fungible. Journalists pursuing oral history narratives employ different strategies and techniques to tell their stories. But it's also clear—through a growing raft of magazine articles, radio pieces, and books—that reporters, interested in narrative, are increasingly turning to oral history as a vehicle for storytelling.

The term oral history has been around for decades, though, early on, it was primarily the domain of folklorists, archivists, and academics. In the 1930s, the Federal Writer's Project, funded by the New Deal, gathered the first-person narratives of former slaves, still alive in America; people who had traveled West in covered wagons; and others with interesting stories, say, about meeting Billy the Kid or surviving the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

But it wasn't until 1948 that oral history became an area of true academic study. Allan Nevins, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and historian formed an oral history department, the nation's first, at Columbia University. Nevins was worried about changes in the world—namely, the growing popularity of the telephone and the declining number of people keeping diaries—and how those changes might hurt future generations trying to tell stories about the past. "There was this fear that historians in the future were not going to have enough evidence in the archives to write the history of the contemporary moment," says Sady Sullivan, current curator at the Columbia Center for Oral History Archives.

So Nevins set out to conduct an experiment: He'd gather "oral autobiographies" of important policy makers who might later interest historians, transcribe the interviews and make them available to all. Like a memoir, Sullivan says, "It was meant to be read."

But by the 1960s and '70s, people interested in oral history were increasingly focused on gathering sound, and then using that sound—the interviews they had done—to build something all its own. The dawn of the portable stereo tape recorder made it an increasingly affordable endeavor. Great journalists, including Studs Terkel and George Plimpton, began to play around with the form, inventing something new. "A relatively new genre in publishing," Plimpton wrote at the time, "the use of oral history as a form of communication."

Some early guidelines, penned by longtime oral historian Willa Baum in her book "Oral History for the Local Historical Society," included tips that remain relevant even now: "An interview is not a dialogue ... Ask one question at a time ... Ask brief questions ... Don't let periods of silence fluster you ... Try to avoid 'off-the-record' information ... Don't switch the recorder off and on ... Don't use the interview to show off your knowledge, vocabulary, charm or other abilities."

Bingham realized early on how important those tips were. "I had to be a much better interviewer," she says. "I couldn't do any backfill. There was nothing I was able to add. I needed each one of my characters to tell their entire story. So it was a much more elaborate, intimate, involved interview—especially with the main characters—than it would be in a normal sort of history."

Bingham began by coaching her subjects. "I need you to be really basic in describing everything," she recalls telling them over and over again. No acronyms. No jargon. "Don't assume I know anything," she'd say, before asking her sources to walk her through the shootings at Kent State University, or the My Lai massacre, or the bombing campaign in Cambodia. "You need the person to introduce themselves and even talk about the most obvious things," Bingham says. "Very basic stuff that I could have found out, but I needed them to say it."

Often, they didn't—not intentionally, Bingham says, but because they went off on a tangent or didn't understand what she wanted. So she'd stop the interview and go back. "All the time," she said. "I'd circle back, circle back, circle back. And if I couldn't get the right answer, I'd ask it three different ways."

It's a problem every reporter faces, but one that's especially tricky when the writer is limited to using only the interview. That's why those who pursue the craft on a more regular basis are almost scientific in their approach.

"When you're putting together an oral history, you're part writer, you're part reporter, and you're part editor—all at the same time," says Cullen Murphy, editor at large at Vanity Fair. "And, if you're lucky, you're also working with a team of people who are in the enterprise with you. You're calling up one another and saying, 'Hey, I just spoke with so-and-so. Listen to this.'"

Few publications have pursued oral history as often—and as in-depth—as Vanity Fair. Since 2000, the magazine has published lengthy oral histories on "The Simpsons," Guantánamo, and the birth of the Internet, among other topics, building them out of detailed interviews and writing them in the voices of the characters themselves.

"In a way, it allows you to have your cake and eat it, too," says Murphy, who has helped edit some of the oral histories and co-written one himself, "Farewell to All That: An Oral History of the Bush White House," with Todd S. Purdum in 2009. "It allows you to bring a wide variety of voices into a story and really let them have their say, while, at the same time—because you're exercising editorial judgment and also you're shaping the material—you have a certain type of control over it."

The best ideas, according to Murphy, begin with a timeline: "It's just essential. And once you have that, you have a horizontal bar running from start to finish." The Vanity Fair team working on the story then identifies key points on that horizontal bar and makes a list of important players. "And when you're done with that, you basically have your game plan. You know who you want to reach. You know what you want to talk about. And, with the team of people, you begin doing it."

In the interviews that follow, Murphy is not looking for an intense back-and-forth, but rather a conversation focused on stories, and assessments and memories—of both the character's behavior and the behavior of others. "You want the person you're speaking with to just talk and talk and talk," he says. "From time to time, you interject a question to focus it or bring up something they've said. But it's deceptively passive. Because what you really want is for them to go on as much as possible."

For the Bush White House story, Vanity Fair spoke to about 50 people, generating some 2,000 pages in transcripts. Then it's the editor's job to begin asking questions: When am I learning something new? When am I getting a take on a situation that seems fresh? The best oral histories aren't just a walk down memory lane, but a journey into something new and hopefully revealing, moments people have never discussed before.

At that point, the timeline developed by the editors helps inform where the material will be placed in the narrative. But for journalist and author James Andrew Miller, it's important that reporters be flexible when working with oral history interviews. "I've never been a slave to any kind of outline that I've done," he says. "You have to be prepared for all these delicious surprises that come up. Otherwise, you're basically driving a Porsche at 40 mph. If you're not going to let yourself be swayed and moved and affected by what you're learning in these interviews, then it's pointless."

Miller is the co-author of the oral history narratives "Live From New York," the behind-the-scenes story of "Saturday Night Live," and "Those Guys Have All the Fun," about the rise of ESPN. This past summer Miller published his latest: "Powerhouse: The Untold Story of Hollywood's Creative Artists Agency," one of Hollywood's great power brokers, involving more than 425 interviews, many with people who'd never before spoken with a journalist.

Often Miller's biggest challenge is getting sources to go on the record, because, without the material, in their words, he can't use it at all—and with "Powerhouse," he says, that was certainly a problem he had to overcome. In the final stages of editing the new book last winter, Miller flew to Los Angeles to have meetings with nearly two dozen people, trying to convince them to put certain anecdotes on the record. "I pleaded and begged and tried to explain why I thought it was important," he says. In the end, there was no convincing some people. Still, oral history remains Miller's favorite vehicle for telling stories: "There's just nothing more revealing. The level of verisimilitude is much higher. The rawness is more apparent."

Noreen Malone, at New York magazine, doesn't always think so. "I actually don't always love oral history as a form," she says. She worries, at times, that oral histories can be lazy, an indication that the reporter couldn't figure out how to write the story and dumped the interview transcripts onto the page instead. But there's no question that the form is popular, not only among editors, but among readers. And there are numbers to prove it.

Svetlana Alexievich won a Nobel Prize in part for her oral history of the Chernobyl disaster

LEFT: SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE: MARK HUMPHREY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

StoryCorps, which has helped make oral history mainstream, has recorded some 65,000 conversations since 2003

The best oral histories aren't just a walk down memory lane, but a journey into something new and revealing

In 2009, New York magazine's oral history feature "My First New York"—with famous people recalling their first weeks in the city—drew more than a quarter of a million page views and a book deal. Four years later, the magazine commissioned another feature dubbed "Childhood in New York," with still more famous people telling stories, in the first person, about growing up in the city. Again, the piece resonated, generating nearly 700,000 page views, according to the magazine's internal statistics. And then came the Cosby cover story. The initial tweet, with the cover photo of Cosby's 35 alleged victims and Malone's story attached, racked up more than 13,000 retweets and four million impressions. At the newsstand, the print edition with the Cosby story was New York's top seller for 2015. And online, the Cosby piece was also tops—by both unique visitors, with some 1.7 million in all, and time spent—across all the magazine's digital platforms.

There was news value to the story, of course, and powerful photos of the women to go along with it. Both elements certainly helped the piece have an impact, well beyond New York City, the magazine's subscribers, and readers already interested in the broadening Cosby scandal. But editors at the magazine believe the oral history approach helped, too. For the first time, really, people got to hear from the women themselves—all of them together—and there was power in that, according to Malone. Back at her desk in New York, she prepared herself for a backlash—from critics, Cosby supporters, and Internet trolls. "But the response," Malone says, "was overwhelmingly in support of these women." Readers had heard their voices. ■

Crowdfunding the News

Crowdfunding's financial contribution to news is still meager, but journalists are finding that crowdfunding can bring what Google and Facebook so often take away: the crowd and the funding

BY GABE BULLARD

ERICH SCHLEGEL/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

The Texas Tribune's livestreaming of Senator Wendy Davis's 11-hour filibuster remains a seminal moment for its crowdfunding efforts

On June 25, 2013, Texas state Senator Wendy Davis spent nearly 11 hours on the chamber floor filibustering a bill that would have restricted access to abortion in her state. The speech drew the national eye to Austin, and many of the watchers followed the action live on a video hosted by The Texas Tribune. "We were one of the only ones carrying this early version of the livestream, which went viral," says Tribune editor in chief Emily Ramshaw.

The Tribune's stream drew nearly 200,000 viewers by night's end. That virality was powerful: Davis quickly became the face of the pro-choice movement; the pink sneakers she wore during the filibuster became the bestselling shoe on Amazon for a time; and that fall, boosted by the attention, Davis launched a campaign for governor.

The Texas Tribune launched a campaign, too. The newsroom posted a project on the crowdfunding website Kickstarter seeking $60,000 to stream live video from the gubernatorial race and "to make unfiltered video the norm in politics." Within 30 days, the campaign drew about 1,300 supporters and surpassed the goal. With the money, which totaled $65,310 ($35 of which came from me), the Tribune bought new equipment and was soon livestreaming debates, panel discussions, and interviews with candidates.

As a nonprofit, the Tribune was already adept at collecting reader contributions—as well as grants, philanthropic dollars, and money from events—to pay for operating costs. But crowdfunding presented a new way of soliciting and spending contributions. "From our major donors or our corporate underwriters or foundations, we're generally seeking broad operating support," Ramshaw says of the Tribune's typical revenue streams, while with crowdfunding, "We can really say, 'Your dollars allow us to go above and beyond what we already do.'"

The Tribune isn't the first newsroom to try crowdfunding, or the first to find success. In St. Louis, crowdfunding has spawned a partnership that's kept a reporter covering Ferguson after most national media left the city. In the Netherlands, crowdfunding helped launch a newsroom that's rethinking the daily news cycle. Crowdfunding has provided money to launch an education magazine for girls, to publish a book on Japanese video game developers, and to fact-check politicians in Argentina, among hundreds of other projects.

Journalism is just one of the many industries where crowdfunding presents an Internet solution to problems caused by the Internet. When downloads and streaming wrecked record sales, musicians went directly to fans to finance new albums and tours; likewise with filmmakers, inventors, and novelists. Now, with more advertising dollars going not to news sites but to Google and Facebook—websites that are just an algorithm change away from redirecting millions of potential news readers—journalists, too, are finding that crowdfunding can bring what Google and Facebook so often take away: the crowd and the funding.

"Journalism is struggling right now because of how efficiently the web commoditizes content and disseminates stuff that gets people's attention," says Adrian Sanders, cofounder of the journalism-only crowdfunding site Beacon. "Directly communicating with your readership and asking them if the work you do is valuable (by asking them to pay) is the only way to discover a viable funding mechanism for journalism."

A VIDEO THAT WENT VIRAL HELPED THE TEXAS TRIBUNE LAUNCH A CROWDFUNDED CAMPAIGN

Crowdfunding's financial contribution to news—Kickstarter has raised more than $6 million for journalism projects since 2009, Beacon raised over $1.5 million in 2015 alone, and other platforms have brought in millions more—is still tiny compared to the more than $150 billion spent on digital advertising worldwide in 2015. And there's instability in crowdfunding platforms. In September, Beacon announced it was shutting down. It follows two other journalism crowdfunding sites—spot.us and Contributoria—that were also shuttered in the last five years. The company did not return a request for comment and didn't give a reason for the closure, but Khari Johnson, the founder and editor of Through the Cracks, a site that covers journalism made possible by crowdfunding, says Beacon's end is not likely an indicator of wider trends in crowdfunding. "Maybe it's evidence that a [crowdfunding] platform that's focused solely on journalism can't survive, but I don't believe this is evidence that crowdfunding in journalism is going anywhere," he says. "The platform is not the sun; it's a planet if it's anything. The crowd is the sun," he says. Despite Beacon's demise, crowdfunding is growing while many news sites' advertising revenue shrinks. And as The Texas Tribune and other crowdfunders have found, crowdfunding has benefits that aren't monetary.

But it's not a matter of opening a Kickstarter account and watching readers and dollars pour in. Like most start-up businesses, most journalism crowdfunding campaigns (more than 75 percent on Kickstarter) fail to be fully funded. Those that succeed, whether they're in Texas, St. Louis, or the Netherlands, come from journalists who want something besides a paycheck, and who are willing to use their support and supporters to produce reporting that's innovative, engaging, and about much more than money.

The Texas Tribune Kickstarter campaign gave the site $65,000 it didn't have before, but it also showed there was an appetite for enhanced coverage, and that people were willing to pay for that coverage. Spurred by its success, before election day, the Tribune launched a second project, partnering with Beacon to create what editors promised would be a "sweeping multimedia project on life inside the Texas shale boom." The Beacon page previewed a few stories that examined how rural and small-town Texas were changing as the shale oil industry grew.

TAMIR KALIFA/THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

In a crowdfunded examination of the shale oil industry boom, The Texas Tribune explores the proliferation of prefabricated housing for workers

The Tribune didn't offer magnets, buttons, or branded notebooks like it had on Kickstarter. Stories and the option to join a Q&A session with the Tribune's reporters were the only rewards. In one month, the outlet raised $6,030, more than enough to finance the reporting. The resulting project—"The Shale Life"—consisted of 15 pieces, either slideshows or videos with little text. The project credits list more than 20 names, reporters, developers, and designers who helped tell the stories the Tribune wouldn't have been able to tell without crowdfunding or without taking resources away from other reporting. The series won an Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association.

And the audience appreciated it. "These are projects that may have once been covered by newspapers or magazines, but today are falling through the cracks due to lack of funding," says Brent Boyd, a geophysicist in the oil industry and a Texas Tribune member who gave to the Shale Life campaign. "I am happy to give to stories that are being overlooked and need investigating. To me, the unsexy stories—the Boring But Important Stories—are the crowdfunding stories. They may not get the clicks or sell the papers, but they may affect us all in ways we don't yet know until we start looking into them and see."

By this point, it was clear that crowdfunding wasn't just a source of revenue or a way to gauge public interest in stories—it was drawing in new readers to the Tribune website. In all, the Tribune's five Beacon projects have attracted hundreds of donors—more than a third of them new to the Tribune—who have given a total of over $130,000. "It kills two birds with one stone," Ramshaw says. "We're always in audience development mode. We want to bring in as many new readers as possible. What's phenomenal is we end up making money for a project and also drawing in new readers at the same time."

The Tribune's crowdfunding success comes from a combination of story selection, targeted messaging, and audience engagement. But it's not just financial need that inspires their crowdfunding. "You pick topics that resonate with people," Ramshaw says, noting that the audience has to be willing to not just look at a story, but to pay for it. And how they look at it matters; Beacon encourages experimentation in presentation. "When someone gives you money to find information, understand it, and then report on it, they are expecting a format that works well in their daily lives," Sanders says. In addition to the Shale Life series, the Tribune has crowdfunded multimedia stories that look at water issues on the U.S.-Mexico border, the security of that border, the reasons why police officers use their service weapons, and they've also used crowdfunding to put money toward a political podcast. And Ramshaw says without Beacon, "I can only imagine we'll try to keep innovating in that space, on our own or with future partners."

With a topic chosen and the budget and goals set, the campaign turns into marketing. Ramshaw says the Tribune reaches out to the readers it had in mind for the project. For instance, they might ask subscribers to the site's healthcare newsletter to support a project that relates to public health. And the Tribune makes sure the story is still the main reason for these people to give—backers are offered behind-the-scenes looks at the editorial process rather than physical prizes, reinforcing the idea that the funding only goes to make the story possible.

Johnson says by not offering (or not being able to offer) the kinds of physical rewards seen in other types of crowdfunding,

journalists can ensure they get backers who are giving because they want a story to exist. "An editorial board is great, but if your readers decide something as a group and then pay for, that sends a message," Johnson says. "Crowdfunding is a form of reporting that consults the reader and it gives the reader a hand in the editorial practices of newsrooms. And that's a pretty awesome thing."

"The audience needs to be at the center of what you're doing because you're not pitching an idea to an editor, you're pitching a concept to an audience," says Ethan Mollick, an assistant professor of management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania who has studied crowdfunding in all industries, using Kickstarter's data and network.

Crowdfunding may never replace advertising, but crowdfunded work has become a "segment of journalism that's driven in large part by public interest and motivation," says Amy Mitchell, director of journalism research at the Pew Research Center. "It adds yet another way for the public to engage and potentially bring voice and visibility to certain kinds of projects and issue areas that may go unnoticed or not get produced."

One issue that long went unnoticed in the national media was race and class inequality in cities like St. Louis, Missouri. The August 2014 shooting of the unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in the suburb of Ferguson changed that. Within days, reporters from around the country swarmed the city. And what they found—apart from protests and a militarized police response—was a long-simmering discord that few people outside of the city knew about. When the Department of Justice issued a report alleging unlawful bias against African-Americans in Ferguson, the Gateway Journalism Review asked, "How did so many news organizations fail for so many years to uncover deeply unconstitutional police and court practices?"

"It was extremely beneficial that so much national media came," says Mariah Stewart, a St. Louis-based journalist who covered the protests for The Huffington Post. "They helped expose what was going on in the region, which I guess some local outlets did cover, but not to the extent national media brought attention." But, Stewart notes, "media parachuted in." And once the large, daily protests faded, so did the national press. Stewart remained. She stuck around Ferguson because there was more to say, and because hundreds of readers were paying her to say it.

Stewart was working at a mall near St. Louis when Michael Brown was killed. A recent college graduate with a degree in journalism, she felt compelled to go to Ferguson, even though she didn't have a newsroom to write for. "I just began live-tweeting" she says. After a few days, a professor told Stewart about Beacon: The site had raised about $4,000 to keep reporters covering Ferguson, and Stewart was soon writing pieces that Beacon published on its own site, using the publishing tools it made available for anyone who posted a project there. Later that month, The Huffington Post sought to continue the coverage and launched a campaign to hire Stewart full-time as the Post's Ferguson Fellow. Driven by readers' concerns that Ferguson would soon be abandoned by the national press, the project drew nearly 700 supporters and raised $44,626 to pay Stewart's salary.

As a crowdfunded reporter, Stewart has covered problems with municipal courts, she's told the stories of protesters who were arrested, and her reporting on the effects of the Black Lives Matter movement was nominated for an award from the National Association of Black Journalists. "The way in which Mariah embedded herself and that she embedded herself in lots of different situations brought a new lens to a lot of the landscape," says Nicole Hudson, a former journalist who works with Forward Through Ferguson to continue the efforts of the state's Ferguson Commission. Stewart's supporters, she says, motivated all of her work. "I feel extremely obligated to do my job well and thoroughly because these people who raised this money, clearly they care about the issue as much as I did," she says.

Stewart maintains an e-mail newsletter to let supporters know what she's up to, and she occasionally gets tips in response. This kind of back and forth with financial backers would be startling if Stewart were supported by a foundation or by advertisers. But she says the backers don't dictate what she covers. "When I know that people donated money, I do want to hear them out, but I'm not obligated to do what they want," she says. "I'm not going to step out of bounds just to please someone who donated to me." She adds that this hasn't been an issue she's needed to address, either.

Crowdfunding isn't a guarantee against bad actors, but if such issues did arise, Sanders says Beacon's structure kept the journalist from feeling the financial pressure. "Backers can't pull their funding once the project is funded, so there isn't really a need for a safeguard. As long as you're true to what you proposed in the project, and people supported it, it's pretty hard to push for more influence," he says.

"I don't think there's any more concern in crowdfunding from influencers than traditional funded journalism setups like advertising or large donor-backed nonprofits," Sanders says. "In some ways, having people pay up front and making a clear statement about what you are going to deliver is a lot more transparent and ethical." Johnson asserts this relationship is what makes crowdfunding unique, because it "consults the reader and it gives the reader a hand in the editorial practices of newsrooms," he says. "And that's a pretty awesome thing."

Stewart's work is vetted by an editor at The Huffington Post. And, occasionally, it gets a local review, too, since the crowdfunding has also affected a St. Louis-area newsroom. After a few months of ducking into coffee shops or libraries to work, Stewart's editor at The Huffington Post arranged for her to work out of the offices of The St. Louis American, an African-American weekly newspaper. This gave her a desk and reliable Internet access, and also a larger audience, as her byline began appearing in the American, which is distributed free across the metro area.

IN CROWDFUNDING, THE AUDIENCE'S, NOT THE NEWSROOM'S, NEEDS MUST COME FIRST

St. Louis American managing editor Chris King says the partnership and the crowdfunding have been "super-valuable" for the paper, because he didn't have the budget for another reporter and because the audience likes Stewart's work. "Many of her stories are among the best-read on our website," King says. "She's doing things our readers absolutely want to know about." When we talked, King said the top story on the American site was one Stewart wrote about Philando Castile, an African-American man killed by police in Minnesota, who had ties to St. Louis.

After the first year of Stewart's crowdfunded reporting, she and her editors "felt that there was more coverage that needed to happen," she says. So the Post and the American sought another $40,000 on Beacon for a second year of reporting. This time, with other stories of African-Americans killed by police dominating the news, Ferguson no longer seemed so isolated, and support was slow coming in. But King, who says he dislikes asking for money, helped expand the donor base by sending a personal appeal to about 100 friends, followers, fans, and contacts, outlining why the project was valuable and why he was breaking character to ask for support. Many of those recipients made donations and pushed the project to its goal. On the project page, The Huffington Post said Stewart's focus—not her career—was the only thing on the line, promising to pay her salary even if the crowdfunding didn't come through, but it also celebrated the benefits of a successful campaign. "Crowdfunding also creates a community of active, engaged readers—backers of journalism crowdfunding campaigns are often the most helpful when it comes time to share important stories and communicate their impact," the page states.

This has come true. In addition to clicks, Stewart's reporting gets reactions. "When I'm out and about, people are like, 'Hey, I read your work,'" she says. "It's a service to them and the community to make sure I continue this coverage as well as possible."

With Beacon closing and with the crowdfunding money running out in 2016, the Post and the American haven't decided whether to try for a third year of the Ferguson Fellowship. King says he's certain crowdfunding would pay for another year. And Ryan Grim, The Huffington Post's Washington bureau chief who works with Stewart, says it's possible they may seek more reader support, perhaps even through a subscription-like service such as Patreon. "I think the way to do it today is to do it in monthly or weekly installments to get people who want to be regular donors rather than look for the one-time hit," he says. Even if it doesn't continue as a crowdfunded beat, the Ferguson Fellowship helped prove that there is a community interest in issues of inequality in the area. Hudson says she's seen coverage increase beyond Stewart's work. "There are a number of reporters who now have the support and infrastructure to dig more deeply into [these issues]," she says.

It seems clear why the Ferguson Fellowship found the backers for two successful campaigns. In addition to picking the right topic and asking the right people, the reporting came from trusted outlets. "That's a relatively easy case where there's two built-in audiences, there's national interest in the story, there's local interest, and there's credibility," Mollick says.

Because crowdfunding supporters are "backing the person as much as backing the project," Mollick says, "credibility in the space is key." People have to know who you are if you're going to ask for their money, and they have to trust you to spend it wisely if they're going to give it to you. The Texas Tribune may not have been able to market itself as a site for live video had it not proven itself with the stream of the Wendy Davis filibuster. And had Stewart not quickly established herself as a reporter in Ferguson, The Huffington Post wouldn't have been able to make her the face of its reporting. And both the Tribune and the Ferguson collaborators were able to communicate with the audi-

In the wake of the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, citizens raised funds to hire a reporter to cover issues of race and justice

RICK WILKING/REUTERS

ence that trusted them, which is another key to successful crowdfunding.

"There's evidence to suggest that the amount of reach that you have online is going to have an impact on how much you're going to be able to raise," Johnson says. Mollick's research—which surveyed thousands of Kickstarter projects—concludes that most of the support for a given project comes from the host's community. Sanders says that's the case on Beacon, too. This community can be people who know the work a journalist does, like the Tribune's newsletter subscribers who are pitched on a new series idea, or it can be a personal network, like the one King reached out to for the second year of the Ferguson Fellowship.

Finally, Mollick says he's found that most successful pitches address a need the target community already has, rather than try to create a need among a broader audience. But with journalism, there's no way to tell what the story will be until the reporting is done. So a strong pitch for journalism needs to make it clear why the project has to exist. The Texas Tribune's pitch for livestreaming the governor's race offered a never-before-seen view into the political process. The Huffington Post promised to stay in Ferguson while other outlets left. The pitches were specific, they put the audience's needs ahead of the newsroom's, and they avoided an all-too-common complaint in the news industry. "Do not focus on 'Journalism is dying. Help us,'" Johnson says to anyone looking for advice in crafting a pitch. "People do not care enough."

This need for specificity doesn't mean crowdfunding can only be used for one-off projects or enhanced coverage. And it doesn't mean it's only open to existing newsrooms. One of the most successful crowdfunded journalism projects of all time was a start-up with no prior reporting to show its potential. But it embodied many of Johnson's and Mollick's principles for crowdfunding, and it put the crowd first.

From the beginning, De Correspondent was about the audience. Co-founders Ernst-Jan Pfauth and Rob Wijnberg had worked together at leading Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad, but they felt much of the paper's work was done to please advertisers and investors, not readers. So they partnered with a local creative agency and decided to design and build their own news site, where they could "only think about the needs of our readers, our members," according to Pfauth. They wanted to make a newsroom

DUTCH NEWS SITE DE CORRESPONDENT SET A RECORD WHEN IT RAISED $1 MILLION IN EIGHT DAYS

that wouldn't rush to liveblog the aftermath of a terrorist attack, but instead look at "the bigger developments behind such an attack, such as social inequality."

The newsroom he and his cofounders had in mind would not take money from venture capitalists or subsidize its reporting with advertising, so they turned to crowdfunding.

Pfauth and his colleagues determined they needed 900,000 euro (about $1 million) to start the project. If they could get 15,000 people to pay the one-year subscription price of 60 euro (about $67), that would be enough. When they imagined who these 15,000 people might be—the community that Mollick and others say is so crucial to crowdfunding—Pfauth says they "didn't aim for 20-year-olds with a good income who live in cities; that seems like something advertisers depend on." Instead, they targeted a community of people linked by taste and interest, people "who have one wish—an antidote to the daily news grind."

With a community and a need identified, the founders next had to find a few doses of the antidote. At the time of the pitch, there was no De Correspondent website, there were no employees, and even though Pfauth and Wijnberg were established journalists, they weren't necessarily household names. So to sell their targeted community the concept, Wijnberg wrote a manifesto—10 points that would define De Correspondent's approach to news.

"[De] Correspondent prioritizes relevance over recentness, looks for alternative ways of doing journalism, is transparent about its journalistic choices and dilemmas, values thorough fact-checking, and takes into account in its own reporting the ways in which the wider news media shape our perceptions of the world," the manifesto reads.

And, the document promises something more than articles to subscribers. "[De] Correspondent wants to establish a lasting and meaningful relationship with its readers. Seen as members of a community rather than simply consumers of content, readers will be asked to weigh in on the investment of new funds and encouraged to contribute their expertise on specific topics."

De Correspondent's crowdfunding campaign went live in March 2013. It hit the goal in eight days. About 5,000 more supporters signed up in the following months before the site went live. At the time, it was the biggest journalism crowdfunding project ever launched. What came next, Pfauth says, was the most stressful part of the project—they had to deliver on the promise they'd made to 20,000 paying subscribers, and create a new, audience-focused newsroom.

One of the early stories Pfauth praises is a piece on the dangers of public wifi networks, in which a reporter and a hacker accessed the private information of people who were using wifi in coffee shops. Wifi isn't a hot enough topic to warrant daily news coverage, but it is a part of people's daily lives, and Pfauth says that's the type of reporting that proves his newsroom values "relevance over recentness."

And Pfauth points to a story on bureaucracy in healthcare as an example of how the site incorporates the audience into its reporting. Before beginning the story, the reporter asked readers for their suggestions on where to start reporting. These kinds of requests are standard at De Correspondent, where subscribers who wish to comment must identify themselves as experts in a certain area. This expertise is consulted again after a story is published, when the comments section turns into a discussion between readers and the journalist. Sometimes these discussions lead to further reporting, and sometimes that reporting is done by the audience.

After getting into a discussion on the comments section of a legal story, subscriber Marlies van Eck, who has a background in law, wrote a piece for De Correspondent on how to understand the language of judicial opinions. Van Eck was an original backer of the site. She says she signed up at first because she was interested in a news site that would break away from the daily coverage she already read, as Pfauth and his colleagues promised. And once the site launched, she enjoyed being able to interact with journalists and engaged readers on the stories she was paying for. That involvement—even if she's not writing full articles for the site—is a big reason she keeps

ANDREAS STAHL

Reporting on ISIS and refugees left in its wake, such as these Syrian residents of a camp in Turkey, is a priority for De Correspondent

supporting De Correspondent. "It feels like building something. All together, you build on a story, or on a story line," she says

Soon, Pfauth plans to roll out a new feature for the site in which the audience will be able to suggest stories. The site also asks readers to test out new features, and they've held hackathons in which the audience can help provide or build datasets that can inform reporting. Pfauth says one of these sessions led to a report about which companies own various adult websites.

After a year, De Correspondent faced a question: Would this kind of reporting and involvement be enough to get the initial backers to renew their memberships and keep the site funded? Subscriber numbers had been rising steadily all year, approaching 40,000. And when renewal time came, 60 percent of the original supporters signed up again, keeping the site alive. Mollick's research has shown that the most successful crowdfunding projects later become successful businesses, and that projects can be repeated, as long as the hosts are able to "build a community of people who trust you and want to work with you," he says. "You're not getting passive money."

De Correspondent's growth continues. The staff has expanded from 13 to 44, and there were 48,000 subscribers as of this fall.

Strictly speaking, this business model isn't new. It borrows some from public radio and some from ad-free subscriber-supported publications. What sets the way De Correspondent has evolved apart from these predecessors is how the audience was turned from a test market into a part of the newsroom, and how the spirit of crowdfunding remains in daily operations.

Increasingly, more traditional newsrooms are finding that opening the editorial process to followers can help build an engaged, paying audience. The start-up Hearken gives newsrooms the tools to let readers suggest and vote on stories to cover, and has caught on with public radio stations. In her exhaustive look at the public radio membership model, "Putting the Public into Public Media Membership," Melody Kramer, a veteran of public radio who now is in charge of audience development for Wikimedia, argues that supporting a newsroom should be thought of as much more than just a business transaction. She adds that "non-financial forms of involvement should be valued as much as financial ones, particularly if they're viewed as opportunities that could lead to further or deeper engagement with a station."

Kramer's report notes complaints from several people at public radio stations who say this kind of audience interaction is "time-consuming." Mollick's research concludes it takes 30 hours or so a week to manage a crowdfunding campaign, and Ramshaw and Johnson both say keeping up with crowdfunding is a full-time job. De Correspondent has addressed this by partially redefining a journalist's job to no longer be just reporting and writing a story.

Crowdfunding strategies differ from enterprise to enterprise, but most journalists who've used the technique agree on the essentials: Promise to make something unique and specific, make it for an audience you know and who knows you, and never focus only on the money.

Ultimately, these successful projects don't treat crowdfunding like a revolutionary new business model that will save journalism. For them, it's part of a philosophy. De Correspondent, The Texas Tribune's projects, the Ferguson Fellowship, and the hundreds of short-lived series and one-off projects funded every year don't exist because Kickstarter, Beacon, or the other platforms tapped a new source of funding online. These projects are made possible by the spirit that lets those platforms exist in the first place—a spirit that lets people get involved and make something new. ■

REPORTING ON ISLAM

With Islam threaded through beats from foreign affairs to crime to education, journalists are stepping up efforts to provide nuanced coverage of Muslims and their religion

BY CARLA POWER

2016 Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad is the first American Muslim to wear a hijab while competing in the Games

JAE C. HONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE CONCEPT WAS SIMPLE: SEVEN CALIFORNIAN Muslims, each photographed against a gray background, talking about the phrase "Allahu Akbar," usually translated as "God is great." No voice-overs. No cutaways. Just seven Californians, talking about two words.

If there's one phrase non-Muslims associate with acts of terror, it's "Allahu Akbar." Witnesses to the July 1 attacks on the café in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, in which 28 people were killed, reported hearing the assailants yell the phrase. The Paris murderers shouted it as they killed 130 people in November 2015, as did the Pakistani Taliban who massacred 21 university students and staff a month later in Peshawar. The U.S. Army psychiatrist Nidal Malik Hasan yelled it before opening fire at Fort Hood in 2009, killing 13 people.

Knowing that most Americans have only heard the phrase in Hollywood thrillers or terror-related news—and given that, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center poll, only 38 percent of Americans personally know someone who is Muslim—the Los Angeles Times set out in 2015 to make a video exploring its place in the lives of ordinary Muslims. "The idea was, How can we unpack this very charged word?" explains videographer Lisa Biagiotti, who made the piece with LA Times photographer Irfan Khan. "How do we get at some bit of the spirit of Islam in this word? How do we make it both intimate and relevant?" Their piece, "The Use and Misuse of Allahu Akbar," succeeds in making it both.

Mindful of the fact that Arabs comprise only 20 percent of the world's Muslims, Khan and Biagiotti chose a rich ethnic mix of interviewees, including Americans from Thai, Indian, African-American, Indonesian as well as Arab backgrounds, showing that the Muslim umma, or global community, is, much like the United States itself, an ethnic mosaic.

In the video, a motherly Indonesian-American notes that many Muslims say "Allahu Akbar" 85 times a day, as part of their daily prayers; she herself uses it when she sees a beautiful sunset. An Indian-American describes how he says "Allahu Akbar" on seeing people help after natural disasters, "like in Haiti or Katrina." An African-American in a suit and tie remarks that since the words appear in a prayer Muslims use before travel, he frets that "everyone's going to freak out" if fellow passengers hear him whisper "Allahu Akbar" before takeoff.

"Allahu Akbar" is the first phrase many Muslims whisper in the ears of their newborns. It frequently greets the joyous news of a wedding or to express awe. In 2013, after the disastrous collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory building in Dhaka, there were cries of "Allahu Akbar" from the crowd after a woman was pulled alive from the rubble, 17 days after the building crumbled.

Though commonly translated as "God is great," scholars tend to render "Allahu Akbar" as "God is greater," stressing its affirmation that the power and possibilities of God exceed everything else. For most Muslims, it is not a battle cry, but an acknowledgement of humankind's surrender to an omnipotent deity.

Misunderstandings around the meaning of "Allahu Akbar" show that, even as Islam surfaces in stories from presidential campaigns to city zoning debates, most media coverage of Muslims remains narrow, bound up with terrorism and violence. Muslims rarely appear in mainstream media as anything other than extremists or terrorists. Yet Islam is threaded through beats from foreign affairs to crime to education. How do reporters cover a faith that's shaping global geopolitical debate and whose 1.6 billion adherents range from Pathan tribesmen to Argentinian mystics to Kansan heart surgeons?

A Los Angeles Times video features seven Muslims explaining what "Allahu Akbar" means to them

LISA BIAGIOTTI AND IRFAN KHAN/LOS ANGELES TIMES

With both jihadis and Islamophobes eager to equate terrorism with Islam, chipping away at stereotypes is necessary but may not be sufficient for balanced coverage. For that, boosting coverage of Muslims outside the news cycle—and indeed, in the context of something other than their faith—would help. "I just long for a day when we can write stories about the Muslim community and we don't see a mention of ISIS or 9/11," says Brian J. Bowe, a journalism professor at Western Washington University who writes frequently on the media's portrayal of American Muslims.

Given recent terror attacks in New York, Orlando and Paris and ongoing conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, not to mention the inflammatory rhetoric of Donald Trump, that day seems still far off. This summer Trump belittled the parents of U.S. Army Capt. Humayun Khan, a Muslim-American soldier killed in Iraq. Khan's father, Khizr, had spoken out against Trump at the Democratic National Convention. In an interview on ABC News with George Stephanopoulos, Trump suggested that the soldier's father delivered the entire speech because the soldier's mother, Ghazala Khan, was forbidden as a female Muslim to speak. Trump's treatment of the Khans drew ire from the public and politicians—including many from his own party—and reignited harsh criticisms of his proposal to bar all Muslims from entering the country.

Few news outlets are doing much to counter prejudice against Muslims. Quantitative studies of Muslims and the media are few, but a 2013 report by international media consultancy Media Tenor examined nearly 7,000 Islam-related stories aired on ABC, CBS, and NBC news between 2007 and 2013 and characterized them as positive, negative, or neutral. In 2013, the study found three-quarters to be negative in tone, the highest percentage of any year in the study. Among those Muslims quoted in the stories, terrorists accounted for the majority. In addition, the number of reports about Muslims, Muslim religious leaders, and Muslim organizations dropped sharply from 2010 to 2013.

A 2008 analysis of coverage of British Muslims in nearly 1,000 articles in the U.K. press, from Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, found that 80 percent of articles associated "Islam/Muslims with threats, problems or in opposition to dominant British values," with references to radical Muslims outnumbering those to moderate Muslims 17 to one. Two percent of articles on British Muslims, the study found, suggested that the moral values of Muslims were similar to those of other Britons. During the debate about whether Britain should leave the European Union, tabloids like The Sun ("1 in 5 Brit Muslims' Sympathy for Jihadis") ran inflammatory headlines that drew thousands of complaints and led to the Independent Press Standards Organization demanding retractions.

"Muslims are represented most often as news, with the emphasis on the word

HELEN H. RICHARDSON/THE DENVER POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

Muslim leaders in Denver held a press conference in response to the terror attack on a Florida nightclub in June. ISIS claimed responsibility

A VANGUARD OF WRITERS IS WIDENING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE MUSLIM

'as,'" says Nathan Lean, author of "The Islamophobia Industry," which examines the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in the West since 9/11, and research director at Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative, a think tank studying the effects of Islamophobia. "We would never turn on the evening news and hear the types of stories about Christians or Jews or even atheists that we hear about Muslims."

And yet, terrorism unrelated to Muslims poses a greater risk to people living in the United States. In The New York Times last summer, sociologist and Muslim issues expert Charles Kurzman and David Schanzer, director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, noted that violent attacks by U.S.-based extremists from Muslim backgrounds had killed 50 people since 9/11. American right-wing extremists, by contrast, averaged 337 attacks annually, resulting in 254 deaths in the decade between 2001 and 2011. More recent terror attacks by right-wingers holding white supremacist views include the 2015 shooting at a Charleston church, in which nine people died, an attack on a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012, killing six, and a shooting at a Kansas Jewish community center and retirement home in 2014, killing three.

Despite the stats, headlines rarely read "Christian terrorists," even when a Christian commits an act of terror, as did Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik in 2011. When the story broke that 77 people had died after a man detonated a bomb in Oslo before opening fire on a summer youth camp, major papers speculated that the killer was Muslim. When it emerged that the killer was Breivik, a native Norwegian whose 1,500-page online manifesto accused Muslims of colonizing Christian lands, the tone of coverage shifted, notes Todd H. Green, associate professor of religion at Luther College, in his book "The Fear of Islam": "Media analysis of what was initially labeled a 'terrorist attack' quickly morphed into debates over right-wing 'extremism.' The word 'terrorism' no longer seemed applicable when the culprit self-identified as Christian."

When Muslims are involved in violent acts, there's often an assumption that their actions are religiously motivated. In June, Omar Mateen killed 49 people in a shooting at a gay Orlando nightclub. When he called 911 to confess, he pledged allegiance to ISIS's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—and ISIS was only too glad to claim the atrocity as its own. But in the days that followed, reports of Mateen's history of domestic violence and his own sexuality suggested the mass shooting was closer to a hate crime committed by an unstable man conflicted about his own homosexual urges.

Some object that phrases like "Islamic terrorists" are incorrect, and that "mass murderers" or "criminals" might be more accurate. Those opposed to that description cite studies by the European Network of Experts on Violent Radicalization, among others, which found that religion is not the key source of most extremist activity. Indeed, many violent extremists affiliated with groups like ISIS or Al-Shabab, Al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, have been found to be unversed in Islam, even if they claim to be acting in its name. Social or political anger, cultural isolation and the need for belonging tend to be far more powerful drivers of radicalization than faith.

After the Orlando attacks, then-Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump called on President Obama to step down for refusing to cite what Trump called "radical Islam" as the engine behind the shootings. Obama, having long made efforts to differentiate between Islam and terror, called the phrase "a political distraction." For Shadi Hamid, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of "Islamic Exceptionalism," Trump has "appropriated" the phrase, which tells us nothing, argues Hamid, except that the mass murderer practiced Islam: "It's a dog whistle, a stand-in for anti-Muslim bigotry." Hamid suggests more nuanced, contextualizing labels, such as "radical Islamism," "radical jihadism," "Islamic extremism," or even "radical Islamic terrorism."

In the United States, a vanguard of writers and commentators, weary of being represented by others as others, is widening the conversation about what it means to be Muslim, both in new outlets and, increasingly, in the mainstream media. The tagline for Muslimgirl.com, a website with a pop-up picture of a young woman sporting a hijab and a black leather jacket, reads, "Muslim Women Talk Back." Founded in 2009 by the then-17-year-old Amani Alkhat, Muslimgirl.com is a far cry from older American Muslim publications in its funky and fearless approach to subjects many Muslims still view as taboo. Where first-generation publications tended to look back at the politics of the Old World, in Palestine or Kashmir, Muslimgirl.com reflects the concerns of American-born women who happen to be Muslim. Recent popular posts include an interview with a Muslim transgender activist, a piece on a Lebanese porn star, and a meditation on racism among American Muslims.

The Muslim portal of the multi-faith site Patheos, though more staid than Muslimgirl.com, still crackles with essays and op-eds on everything from ISIS's theology to the connections between singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen and Sufism, the Islamic strain of mysticism. A sign of growing journalistic confidence in the still-young Muslim media space: editor Dilshad Ali's decision to tackle sensitive political issues within America's Muslim communities.

Last winter, when tensions were running high over the decision by some American Muslims to participate in the Muslim Leadership Initiative, a year-long program with Muslim and Jewish co-sponsors designed to educate Muslim American leaders about Israel and Palestine, Ali ran guest essays on both sides of the controversy. "It's tough to produce and edit pieces like that," she says. "You know most of the movers and players in the community—and you're reporting on them. So things can get personal. You have to say, 'This is my job, and I'm going to report both sides of the story.'"

Increasingly, mainstream media outlets—from The Huffington Post and Salon to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz—are showcasing a new generation of young American-Muslim commentators. One of the most striking voices to emerge is that of Wajahat Ali, a California-born lawyer and former television host for Al Jazeera America. He began his writing career producing sober op-eds

GETTING BEYOND STEREOTYPES ON ISRAELI TV NEWS

A watchdog effort has increased the number of Arabs interviewed

GROWING UP IN A SMALL village in northern Israel, Janaan Bsoul loved watching news and current affairs shows with her dad. Bsoul is an Arab, and the people on television—anchors, pundits, interviewees—were almost all Jews, but she thought nothing of it. "I figured, that's just the way it is: only Jews appear on television," says Bsoul, 26.

The reality of mainstream Israeli media hasn't changed much since Bsoul was a kid. Although Arabs with Israeli citizenship account for roughly 20 percent of the country's population, during February they comprised only about 3 percent of interviewees on leading news and current affairs shows, according to a study by several Israeli organizations. When Arabs do appear on TV, it's usually in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict or of crime within Arab society, connections that reinforce negative stereotypes. Only around 10 percent of Arabs interviewed on the shows appeared as experts in their fields and not merely as representatives of "Arabness."

In Israel, Jews and Arabs lead largely separate lives. When they do interact, it is often through a veil of rancor and suspicion. This makes the media an essential bridge.

For decades, activists have tried to fight this trend by supplying journalists with lists of Arab experts, to little avail. But in 2016 Sikkuy, an Israeli nonprofit that works to achieve equality between Arabs and Jews, decided to take a different approach, one inspired by the campaign against "manels," media panels that include only male participants. That battle is waged on social media pages like the Tumblr blog "Congrats! You Have an All-Male Panel!," which shames exclusionary shows and events. A similar campaign in Israel targeted women's representation.

"The women's strategy worked, because journalists are hypersensitive to their own reputations," says Edan Ring, head of the Equal Media Project at Sikkuy. "We know that editors and producers of news shows are always busy, always under pressure. They tend to invite the interviewees they know well. Scouting for an unfamiliar Arab expert is a risk, and common wisdom is that having someone with an Arab accent on the show will hurt ratings. There's a price to pay. We needed to give them a reason to pay that price."

The solution was a weekly ranking list of 19 prominent television and radio shows, tracking the number of Arabs interviewed on each one and how many of them appeared as experts. Sikkuy created the chart with funding from the Berl Katznelson Foundation and the New Israel Fund, and in cooperation with a media watchdog called The Seventh Eye. Every week, The Seventh Eye publishes a report, citing shows that have failed to improve and praising the ones that did. To eliminate excuses from producers, another organization called ANU created a database of potential interviewees.

Mainstream media published stories about the campaign. A modest uptick followed: from 3 percent Arab interviewees in February, before the campaign began, to 5 percent in September. However, much remains to be done. According to The Seventh Eye, reports about the Muslim holiday of Ramadan in June featured 86 percent Jewish interviewees; most talked about the risk of flare-ups during the holiday.

For Dror Zarski, editor of daily current affairs show "London and Kirschenbaum," the campaign was a nudge in the right direction. "We were already making an effort to bring in more Arabs, but I admit that once it became such an issue we started working harder." The show's rise in ranking was dramatic: from 2.6 percent Arab interviewees in January 2016 to about 22 percent during the last week in September.

Looking for Arab specialists takes time and effort, precious commodities for Zarski's staff, which in recent years has been reduced by half. "And when we reach them they are more hesitant to come," he says. "Maybe it's the language, or fear of talking about explosive subjects like Jewish-Arab relations." But Zarski acknowledges that there's much more to the exclusion than logistics: "Usually, the media follows the masses: If viewers hate Arabs, the media will too."

Janan Bsoul is now a reporter for business magazine The Marker, one of a handful of Arab journalists working in Israeli media. "Television reflects the fear that Israeli society has of Arabs, an unwillingness to see us as people," she says, "but Arab society is also partly to blame. Sometimes, it's convenient to seclude ourselves, and I've had Arabs tell me they will not be interviewed for Israeli newspapers." Bsoul supports the campaign, but she thinks it's not enough. "The real solution is to get more Arabs working in the media. Then it will be natural for them to call up people they know and say, 'Hey, would you like to give me an interview?'"

—NAOMI DAROM

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Rose for Peace campaign in Washington, D.C. aims to counter anti-Islam sentiment

on issues like Israel-Palestine and Pakistan, but began developing his distinctive mix of humor and hard-hitting commentary while writing a 2008 op-ed for The Guardian, using a CNN transcript of a meeting between Sarah Palin and Pakistan's then-president Asif Ali Zardari to critique Pakistani-U.S. relations. For a Muslim writing on sensitive Islamic issues, humor "makes the medicine go down easier," he says. "If you can make it go down sweet, it gives people the comfort and space they need to ask difficult questions and have difficult conversations."

In April, after a college student was kicked off a plane for being overheard to utter the phrase "Inshallah"—Arabic for "God willing"—into his phone, Ali wrote a New York Times op-ed, "Inshallah is Good for Everyone," a deft weave of information about how inshallah—"the Arabic version of fuggedaboudit"—works in Muslim cultures, a first-person testimony from a young American Muslim, and a clear-eyed look at rising xenophobia in the campaign season. "I had all kinds of people—non-Muslims—telling me, 'Inshallah sounds awesome! I'm going to start using it!'" Ali says. The piece was a welcome break from what he calls "Muslim fireman" stories, "where you're asked to respond to the latest tragedy from the Muslim world, and you're suddenly having to act like a walking Wikipedia page."

For correspondents reporting from Muslim societies, on-the-ground realities can undermine op-ed section certainties. Conflicts cast as religious turn out to be about entirely different issues up close. National Book Award finalist Anand Gopal, whose 2014 "No Good Men Among the Living" explored the Afghan war from the perspective of the Taliban, has found that the Sunni-Shia divide used to frame conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria is sometimes misleading. "Categories that appear to be fixed from afar, like ethnicity, reveal themselves as more fluid when you go down to a local level," he says.

Reporting his piece for The Atlantic "The Hell After ISIS," about a family of internal refugees in Iraq, Gopal described a Baghdad neighborhood where Sunni-Shia tensions were high, due to reports of the Islamic State's Sunni extremism. Shia militiamen roamed the streets, and black Shia banners appeared on the fronts of Sunni stores. But Gopal's main character, an Iraqi Sunni patriarch sheltering in Baghdad after his village fell to ISIS, wondered if the flags were the result of Shia harassment of the shopkeepers "or had been placed there for protection by the shopkeepers themselves." In other words, while some explain the Sunni-Shia split through the lens of Iranian-Saudi rivalry or by going back to its seventh-century origins as a disputed succession argument, Gopal found a more local and urgent explanation: day-to-day survival.

In ISIS-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq, sectarian loyalties are often less signs of religious principles than strategic calculations about how to cope in a violent and fractured landscape. When the refugees Gopal profiled for The Atlantic mentioned Islam, it was "a very personal understanding of it," Gopal says, rather than anything to do with the wars tearing up their region. "It really helps to start with the understanding that the way people behave in conflicts is something that can usually be explained by the conflict itself. You don't need to go back 500 years to explain it." To simply see the actors in local conflicts through the lens of religious identities or international power plays, Gopal argues, is to ignore the local allegiances that make the conflict with ISIS so mercurial and complex.

CONFLICTS CAST AS RELIGIOUS TURN OUT TO BE ABOUT ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ISSUES WHEN REPORTED UP CLOSE

PROFILES OF LOCAL MUSLIMS HELP SHOW THAT THEY HAVE VALUES IN COMMON WITH NON-MUSLIMS

Recognizing that religious affiliations in conflict zones are often about "finding allies in a dangerous situation," Gopal changed his approach. Mindful that reporters "tend to be urbanites themselves and report from an urban perspective," Gopal skipped questions about global geopolitical narratives and kept his interviews with villagers rooted in the personal and local. Instead of asking outright why some Iraqi communities might initially support ISIS, he asked "about their lives, their house and friends growing up," conversations that eventually yielded much more about alliances than any ancient history. For the villagers he interviewed, hyper-local power dynamics were frequently far more important than ISIS's claims of creating a 21st-century Islamic caliphate.

Hassan Hassan, co-author of "ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror," also anchors his reportage in local context. Raised in a Syrian province currently controlled by ISIS, Hassan began using social media to contact former locals he'd heard had joined. "At first, I didn't even want to engage them very much because everyone agreed that the things they were doing were wrong, and they must have joined because they were crazy," he recalls.

But after an old classmate from Damascus University—whom Hassan knew to be rational, intelligent, and an ISIS sympathizer—explained the strategy behind the brutality, he recognized the importance of trying to understand the group's rationale: "My reporting is driven by a desire to understand these people, and what their motivations are. If we simply tell ourselves, 'These are crazies,' we'll repeat the patterns of old. Without understanding them, in 10 years' time we'll have a stronger Al Qaeda, a stronger ISIS, and on top of that something else."

Hassan's 2015 Guardian piece on why Europeans joined ISIS parses the feelings of isolation expressed by his dozens of interviewees, explaining how they might believe ISIS could be "empowering." Three of Hassan's interviewees said that ISIS was a movement conferring charisma or prestige. People with scant religious knowledge before joining ISIS become "like new converts," Hassan says. "They are zealous and excited about their new belonging."

The drumbeat of news from foreign wars and terror attacks often finds a counterpoint in local features. After news of a terror-related event, "local TV stations or papers often do a profile piece on a local Muslim doctor or student or a charity," notes Ibrahim Hooper, communications director at the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Such pieces help push back against the specious narrative that Islam is more about politics than personal piety. "If your pediatrician's a Muslim, or your checker at Walmart's in hijab, it's a lot less scary than when it's framed as the 'other' from 'out there.'"

After the Paris attacks, the Orlando Weekly did a cover story called "They're With Us," focusing on local Muslims, including an optometrist who runs her daughter's Girl Scout troop, a lawyer, and an opera singer. Illustrated with the smiling faces of the interviewees, and laced through with details of daily life, the piece frames its subjects as ordinary Floridians, albeit ones who felt their personal safety threatened by a national trebling in anti-Islamic hate crimes in the month after the Paris attacks.

At first, Nada Hassanein, the author of the piece, was hesitant to take on the subject of Muslims, as she is keen to write on a broad range of topics rather than being confined to covering Muslim issues. But she found her faith was "an advantage" in reporting the story: "I understand their way of life and their struggle, because I've lived it myself."

Like the reporters on the LA Times "Allahu Akbar" documentary, Hassanein found the vast majority of Muslims she approached to be eager to talk. Indeed, optometrist Farhana Yunus and her Haitian-American husband responded to Islamophobic incidents by hosting meet-and-greet barbeques.

Hassanein took care to select as interview subjects some women who wore hijab and others who didn't. "I wanted to show different perspectives, and the diversity of Muslims, even in Orlando," she says. "Muslims just want their voices and stories to be heard and understood, and for people to know there is so much similarity between a local Muslim and a local non-Muslim. They want to bridge the disconnect, to unveil the so-called 'other.'"

After the Orlando atrocity, Hassanein feels in-depth profiles of members of frequently misunderstood or misrepresented communities are even more important. Whether writing on the LGBTQ or Muslim communities, "whose societal struggles have many parallels," she says, covering these stories allows "the world an opportunity to get in their shoes, to understand their struggles rather than misjudge them due to ignorance." ■

After ISIS claimed responsibility for terrorist acts, Muslims, here in Milan the week after the Paris attacks in 2015, protest the violence

LUCA BRUNO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

REPORTING RESOURCES FOR COVERING ISLAM

THE SUNNI MAJORITY sect of Islam doesn't have a clergy, so finding a representative voice can be tricky. In this vacuum, extremists—both Muslim and Islamophobe—are only too willing to appoint themselves as "experts." For those wishing to vet sources for links to Islamophobic groups, the Anti-Defamation League and Southern Policy Law Center have profiled many groups and individuals pushing a virulently anti-Muslim message. Fear, Inc., a 2011 report from the Center for American Progress, has useful lists of links among named Islamophobic scholars, groups, politicians, and their media mouthpieces. For those looking for responsible sources on Islam, here are a few places to start:

Islamic Resource Bank
A joint project of three Muslim organizations—The Minaret of Freedom Institute, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists of North America, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought—offers an online database of scholars and activists providing expertise on Islamic issues and Muslim communities.

"Islam for Journalists: A Primer on Covering Muslim Communities in America"
Published by Washington State University's Edward R. Murrow College of Communications, this free e-book offers chapters on Islam and its civilization written by journalists experienced in covering Islamic issues, a glossary of key Islamic terms, and a raft of links to online resources.

Muslim Subjects at Michigan State University
The Journal/Islam section of this website, a collaboration between Michigan State University's (MSU) Muslim Studies Program and its School of Journalism, has a best practices guide for reporters on Islam, with useful points on sourcing, knowledge, and basic reporting rules, as well as links for further reading and access to materials from MSU's Reporting on Islam course.

Islamic Studies at Harvard
The website of Harvard University's Islamic Studies program includes articles, audio and video of lectures, and links to studies on Muslims by the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

Religion Link
A site for journalists run by the Religion Newswriters Foundation offers a useful overview of the history of Islam, sects and terms, and schools of thought. It also provides a rundown on important and contentious beliefs and provides examples of best-practice coverage.

—CARLA POWER

A GOOD NEWSPAPER, I SUPPOSE, IS A NATION TALKING TO ITSELF

ARTHUR MILLER

THE WAY FORWARD

Reflecting on this historic campaign and looking ahead to what newsrooms must do next

BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI, CURATOR OF THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION

FOR MANY MORNINGS ON MY WAY INTO THE CHICAGO Tribune newsroom, I passed by an Arthur Miller quote engraved in the lobby: "A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself."

That sentiment, as sturdy as the travertine marble into which it was carved, now seems a comic irony. We are, in all our media, a nation screaming past each other. Miller's genteel aspiration proved an antique this campaign cycle and nothing about our post-election world has corrected for that. President-elect Donald Trump, not satisfied to have won the election, continues his work as social media provoker-in-chief, energizing his followers and baiting a wounded press corps.

The smart essays we have commissioned and collected here reflect on this historic campaign for the White House and point the way forward for journalism. Some of the paths are provocative: Historian and New Yorker writer Jill Lepore, having sounded the alarm bell on polling a year ago, has seen enough and argues it's time to regulate the publication of pre-election polls. One urges journalists to borrow from Trump's success: Harvard political theorist and Washington Post contributor Danielle Allen

calls for storytelling that acknowledges our transition from a reading to a watching culture.

The weeks since the election have underscored the urgency for new approaches. As frightening as the proliferation of "fake news" (an oxymoron for the post-truth age) is the specter of some journalists spreading known lies. That's fake news too. After Trump stormed Twitter with bogus claims about millions voting illegally, we woke to this headline leading the CNN homepage: "I won the popular vote." A tepid qualifier was tucked beneath a photo of the president-elect giving the thumbs up: "Without evidence, Trump claims fraud cost him popular vote." It is painful to see the good work of journalists like Brian Stelter, whose media criticism for CNN was among the most responsible of the election, effectively mocked by his own newsroom.

Prevaricating politicians are not new. What did I.F. Stone say? "All governments lie." Stone mined for stories in government records and archives, didn't care about access, and never pulled a punch to protect it. Journalists jockeying for stories and status at a dissembling White House, rather than out in the agencies and beyond, will be the least effective in covering this administration. What a spectacle to see the biggest names in television news parading into an off-the-record meeting-turned-scolding with Trump two weeks after the election. The New York Times got it right, insisting their meeting with Trump was on-the-record, reported in real time, and followed with a complete transcript.

The lessons of Joseph McCarthy's destructive legacy are also instructive. Nieman Reports and Louis M. Lyons, the legendary curator of the Nieman Foundation, advocated for "interpretative reporting" to overtake the stenography that characterized much coverage of McCarthy. And it was journalist Edward R. Murrow plainly speaking truth to power that helped bring a stop to the Wisconsin senator's reckless accusations of treason.

Still, these waters feel uncharted. "The news media," James Fallows wrote, "are not built for someone like this." The ease with which a tweeted untruth can dominate a news cycle and hijack newsrooms for days is new in presidential politics. It comes at a time when lightning is the only acceptable speed for posting a candidate's utterances, let alone a president's.

But we can apply news judgment in that moment between tweet and retweet rather than serve as accomplices to destructive claims. How different the vote fraud coverage could have been had more journalists seen that the news lay in the fact that the president-elect lied. As Nieman's Lyons once said in the wake of McCarthy, "Who but a newspaperman can show you the record?"

With no evidence that the rhetoric has turned from campaign to presidential, journalism must cope quickly. Soon enough, @realDonaldTrump will be @POTUS.

The majestic Tribune Tower, home to the Chicago Tribune for almost a century, recently was sold and the newsroom will move to make way for new development. Much of the building is landmarked and protected, but not the lobby with the engraved Arthur Miller quote, the fourth-floor newsroom with its inscription of the First Amendment, or this from Flannery O'Connor: "The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it."

Across the street from the Tribune, the barge-shaped building that long housed the Chicago Sun-Times on the banks of the Chicago River was demolished over a decade ago. In journalism's place, a developer built a 98-story skyscraper and affixed his name in stainless steel letters, 20-feet tall: TRUMP. ■

Closing Gaps in the Name of Democracy

Making improvements in polling, news literacy, and the use of technology is urgent

BY EVAN OSNOS

Evan Osnos is a staff writer at The New Yorker covering politics and foreign affairs.

EVERYONE HAS A STORY ALONG THE LINES OF MINE. At a family gathering in October, I was chatting with a cousin about the campaign, and, since we didn't see it quite the same way, each of us was speaking delicately. When he informed me that Trump had been "endorsed by Pope Francis," I said that wasn't true. He'd seen it on Facebook; he couldn't recall the news outlet.

Later, I looked it up. "*Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President*" was an obvious piece of Internet fiction, churned out by a goofy Macedonian website that learned long ago how to monetize clicks by promoting plainly false stories on Facebook. They pursue American marks because American clicks pay four times better than foreign clicks. (For the record, the Pope harshly criticized Trump, saying he is "not Christian.")

I didn't think much of the exchange, other than the faint flicker of pity that you feel for someone who falls for, say, a Nigerian email hoax. That was a mistake.

Before the election results were in, when people still thought that Hillary Clinton was going to win, the technology community was pleased to hear people observe how much of this campaign was being conducted and litigated and experienced on social media. Nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults now report getting their news from social media, up from 49 percent less than four years ago.

But after the election, at a conference Q&A, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was asked about the role of his company in featuring and disseminating fake news stories. "Personally I think the idea that fake news on Facebook … influenced the election in any way is a pretty crazy idea," he said.

That wasn't much of a surprise; he was going to defend his company. But I suspect that, on some level, Zuckerberg is privately horrified. No, he doesn't think he helped elect Donald Trump, but he's too smart and progressive and alert to the nature of our information lives to really believe his company was irrelevant.

In the business of information, there are few innocents left by this election

And in that sense, this has been an important moment. Much as Zuckerberg and his peers started off hoping they could avoid dealing with D.C. bureaucrats too much, they quickly realized that they could not, and they built a large, sophisticated lobbying operation.

This is an extension of that process; they now have additional evidence that they have created enormous, and, in the wrong hands, dangerous power. The crowd is not always wise. Without human editors to separate real news from fake, the casual reader—the busy cousin with a job and a toddler to chase—will continue to be duped. Technology development is always a process of iteration, and the technology of news on social media is desperately due for an upgrade. Our technology leaders see themselves as world-changers, and in some ways they are absolutely right. When it comes to facts, it's not clear if the world is changing for the better.

In the business of information, there are few innocents left by this election. Most serious news organizations were unprepared for a Trump win. Trump supporters say this was because we ignored the white working class. I'd encourage them to read some of the best by Larissa MacFarquhar and George Packer.

No, probably our biggest mistake was the assumption that a lot of people, even among those whom Trump praised as "the poorly educated," would be turned off by Trump in the end. But it turned out that they kind of liked him, even if they weren't going to admit that to a stranger on the phone from a polling outfit. Self-consciousness around racial anxiety is not a new problem, and we should have remembered this phenomenon. (Google the "Bradley Effect.")

Another mistake was misreading how much people hated Hillary Clinton. On the campaign trail, I heard dozens of times a nearly verbatim list of accusations: Benghazi, lies, ambition, untrustworthy, emails. But actually she had become a byword for hatred of Washington, and we underestimated how broadly that was felt. We drifted into a kind of seductive fiction that reading "Hillbilly Elegy" was all you needed to do to understand Trump's electorate. It was always larger than that.

On Election Day, I went to a polling station in Clifton, Virginia, a prosperous town less than 30 miles from the White House. One person after another told me that they were either voting for Trump—or against Clinton. Both forces prevailed. But, as a community, we pretended for way too long that it was all Appalachian coal workers.

The last and greatest mistake was relying too much on the seductive and fragile science of public-opinion research, even after there was abundant evidence—Brexit, etc.—that polling is a perilous business. No matter how smart you are as a reporter, you are captive to data if only because relying on anecdote over data is an even larger sin. But the numbers on the page were never firm. As they say, garbage in, garbage out.

So, what do we do? We need to get better at polling—or get better at ignoring it. We need to get better at working with technology companies to make accuracy a value that they cherish much the way that we do. And we need to teach people to vet the quality of their news much the way that we teach them to vet their sources for a term paper. That's a new problem and an urgent one.

On that last point, a couple of months before Election Day, I had a prescient interview. W. Taylor Reveley IV is the president of Longwood University, a small liberal-arts college in rural Virginia that hosted the vice-presidential debate. His scholarly focus is the American presidency, and he told me that he saw a connection between education, reconciliation, and our current age of polarization. "What has gone awry in American politics is not purely that we've got issues with the mechanics of democracy," he said. "Over the past two generations, the idea of education being about teaching people how to engage in public affairs has been lost. At one point, the core curriculum at the college level was focused on: How do you get ready to be an active citizen in America? How do we make democracy endure? Today, education is almost exclusively thought of in terms of career preparation. That's what we've lost." ■

All Journalism Is Local

To get beyond celebrity- and pundit-driven news, newsrooms need to become civic reactors—hubs of community information and activity

BY NICCO MELE

BEING A POLITICAL ANIMAL, ONE OF MY first thoughts after the election was, "Who's going to run for president now?"

You can rest assured that there are a dozen or so billionaires slamming their fists on their kitchen tables in frustration that they sat this one out. "I'm smart enough to be president, smarter than him!" But, ultimately, a major part of Trump's success is his celebrity. He is among the most well-known figures in American culture. The antidote to Trump isn't Elizabeth Warren; it's Oprah.

Dwayne Johnson, the actor better known as The Rock, told British GQ this spring that he could see himself turning to politics: "I can't deny that the thought of being governor, the thought of being president, is alluring." I doubt he is the only celebrity considering a mid-career pivot.

In retrospect, we shouldn't be surprised. News—especially cable news—has been trending steadily toward entertainment over the last two decades. There is the explicitly entertainment variety—"The Daily Show"—which still confounds, simultane-

ously making smart news more accessible and making smart news dumber. And then there is the implicitly entertaining: cable news. CNN and MSNBC have been steadily following the lead of Fox News, year-over-year replacing journalists with pundits at an even pace.

The tension between entertainment and news is an old and familiar one. Bill Paley famously complained at a CBS stockholders' meeting in 1965 that news coverage—notably of civil rights demonstrations and the funeral of Winston Churchill—had cost stockholders six cents a share due to lost ad revenue. But with the proliferation of channels, from cable to Facebook, the competition for audience has intensified. Celebrity provides a competitive advantage, just at a time when culturally we are downgrading expertise.

Journalism is familiar with this particular trend. The de-professionalism of journalism has been a small but significant part of emerging tech culture for the last couple of decades. "Content creator" isn't the same thing as journalist. De-professionalization, when combined with celebrity culture, threatens to overpower journalism, especially with a reality TV star as president of the United States.

With a declining respect for expertise, a world-view inextricably shaped by celebrity, and an intense desire for escapism to avoid the pressing challenges of our moment, Donald Trump seems suddenly inevitable. But a resignation to inevitability is not an honest or just response. There is really only one thing to do: Go local. The emphasis on national politics is drawn like a magnet to celebrity. The stories in our own backyards tether us—an urge we resist with the quiet, hidden calm of Facebook-like intensity—but that local connection is our salvation. It can redeem our journalism and our politics.

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The local is also not just about the neighborhood. The collapse of local news institutions means that Americans don't have independent eyes and ears in Washington, D.C. A recent Pew study shows that 21 of 50 states do not have a single local daily newspaper with its own dedicated Congressional correspondent. That means 21 Congressional delegations that don't have to confront a reporter from back home while going about their D.C. business. But that also means 21 states where Americans don't really know what's going on in our national government.

The heart of the challenge here is that we do not have a sustainable business model for local news. As Robert Putnam chronicled in his canonical "Bowling Alone," over the last few decades, Americans went from bowling in organized bowling leagues to bowling by themselves, even as more people started bowling. Putnam showed how over the same time span, Americans purchased more air conditioners, started watching more television, and built fewer homes with front porches. Overall, Americans were staying inside more, not interacting with the neighbors, and becoming more distant from their communities. Local news—and local politics—lose their currency, and celebrity culture asserts itself.

A possible future for journalism is more in the mold of grassroots organizing, where the newsroom becomes a sort of 21st century VFW hall, the hub of local activity. The current buzz is around audience acquisition through social media. What about audience acquisition through local physical presence, opening up potential trickles of revenue from events and other local activities?

The danger of social media "audience acquisition" is that it repeats the mistakes of cable television, rendering us captive to celebrity, national news stories, and clickbait. Newsrooms as "civic reactors," the beating heart of our communities, offers greater promise—not to mention the skills of grassroots organizing are cousins to traditional news-gathering skills, rather than the alien skills of marketing and public relations.

"Res publica," loosely translated, means, "public matter," presumably one pertaining to "real" people. It is up to us to make sure it is not the kind of "real" in reality television, but the kind of "real" you find at PTA meetings and traffic court hearings. ■

The Problem with Polls Isn't Technological, It's Political

As a matter of civic ethics and good governance, it's time to regulate the publication of pre-election polls

BY JILL LEPORE

"ELECTION POLLING IS IN NEAR CRISIS," THE political scientist Cliff Zukin wrote in The New York Times in June of 2015, a year and a half before the Dewey-Defeats-Truman of Donald Trump's unexpected victory over Hillary Clinton. Zukin is a past president of the American Association for Public Opinion Research. Like any political scientist who'd been paying attention, Zukin had observed that election predictions have been very wrong in very many places in the last few years, from Israel to the United Kingdom.

Jill Lepore is David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History and Harvard College Professor at Harvard University.

The very science of polling has been falling apart. Plummeting response rates, down from above 90 percent in the 1930s to the single digits in the last election, have wildly skewed results. Meanwhile, meaningless, instant Internet polls, pure publicity malarkey, which are difficult for most voters to distinguish from so-called scientific polls, have proliferated, sowing confusion, and making even good polls into bad polls, by influencing their results.

Poll aggregators and data scientists promise to address these problems by abandoning conventional polling in favor of data extraction and more sophisticated electoral algorithms. But, as I reported in The New Yorker in November of 2015, the bigger and far deeper problem with polls isn't technological: It's political.

Election prediction isn't really a field of political science; it began as, and remains, a form of journalism. George Gallup, who founded the field in 1935, was a professor of journalism, and his American Institute for Public Opinion Research was founded as the Editors' Research Bureau; both provided services to newspapers.

The idea of publishing election predictions months before an election, and asserting that the results were "scientific," seemed to many people so obviously injurious to the democratic progress that Congress has several times conducted investigations into the polling industry, as has the Social Science Research Council. None of this stopped newspapers and television networks from deciding to conduct their own polls.

Modern, media-run presidential polling began in 1975, when The New York Times conducted a telephone survey jointly with CBS News, a practice that many people condemned as ethically dubious, on the theory that a news organization ought not to manufacture news. Small colleges like Marist began founding polling institutes in the late 1970s, partly in order to offer an alternative to media polls; also, academic initiatives that allegedly promote democracy bring in a lot of grant money. By 2012, 1,200 polling organizations made more than three billion phone calls; most Americans refused to speak to them.

In 2016, polls were used, for the very first time, to winnow the field of candidates eligible to participate in primary debates, and even to decide where they would stand on the stage (Trump at center). Reputable polling organizations refused to directly participate in this extraordinarily fishy process. And yet still the polls were conducted, and still the polls were reported, and news organizations, desperate for the cash that comes with every click, tarted up their homepages with charts of blue and red. In the election of 2016, polls were at once more unreliable than ever before, and more influential.

Other nations regulate the publication of pre-election polls, as a matter of civic ethics and good governance. It's time for the United States to do the same. ■

Predicting Outcomes is Not Our Job

Poll stories masquerade as serious journalism. We're in the business of providing real news and analysis so people can make their own decisions

BY KEVEN ANN WILLEY

Keven Ann Willey is vice president and editorial page editor at The Dallas Morning News and co-chair of the Pulitzer Prize Board.

ONE THING I WORRY ABOUT is the seeming expectation that the press should have been able to predict the outcome of the election. And that "we got it wrong." Clairvoyance is the stuff of fortune tellers; journalists report on the world. We find truths, examine ideas; we tell stories of experience, struggle, aspiration. Editorials provide interpretation, perspective, advocacy.

There's a legitimate discussion to be had about whether the media told a full range of stories to accurately portray America's mood leading up to this election. But to morph that assessment into fault for failing to predict the election's outcome seems a subtle but significant error in expectation.

All the media mea culpas I'm reading are starting to feel a bit like schadenfreude.

Yes, scientific polls have value as a diagnostic tool. For example, learning that white women—across the board, college educated or not—favored Trump over Clinton by 10 percentage points is useful information for what it tells us about message-resonance with that cohort.

But the media too often portray election polls as implicit predictors of an outcome. Poll stories masquerade as serious journalism, bumping more meaningful and, admittedly, complicated stories to second-tier status in both development and presentation. This reduces political coverage to a horse-race spectator sport—who's up, who's down, who said this, who said that.

Economists say the U.S. is experiencing the highest rates of discouraged and unemployed men ages 20-65 since 1940. Nicholas Eberstadt, Andrew Sullivan, J.B. Vance, Robert Putnam—among others—have written about the decline of white lower-middle-class America. The statistics are gruesome. The news isn't that there's an income disparity, it's that this disparity is deepening at an alarming rate and fueling ugly waves of fear, prejudice and anger across the country.

How much did you read about this in the mainstream press during this campaign season? Or on your Facebook or Twitter feeds? Compare that to how much you read about the latest poll or the latest outrageous candidate quote.

The contrast is stark.

This loss of hope for economic prosperity across much of America may have had the biggest impact on the election's outcome, yet it's the phenomenon most Americans read the least about.

It's good to remind ourselves that the media aren't in the business of telling people what to think. And we shouldn't assess our success or failure by how many voters "agree with us"—whatever that means.

We're in the business of providing real news, pertinent information, and valuable analysis so people can make their own informed decisions. ■

The media too often portray election polls as predictors of an outcome

Reporting for an Oral Culture

The majority of Americans prefer to watch or listen to the news rather than read it. Will newsrooms deliver stories in forms Americans want to consume?

BY DANIELLE ALLEN

SOMETIME LATE LAST WINTER, I BEGAN TO FOCUS closely on what would happen in the primaries on Super Tuesday, March 1, 2016. I realized I really needed to get on top of Donald Trump's policy proposals. My first step was to go to his website. There I found nothing to read. The campaign did add text policy documents later, but at any early point, as best as I could tell, all that was available was video: 30-second clips, 2-minute clips. Nothing longer than that, as I recall. For me, this was torture. I craved an extended, efficient, information-rich text. There and then, I understood that this election was different.

In each video Trump was seated at his desk, wearing his characteristic jacket, white shirt, and tie, staring directly at the camera and delivering an emphatic statement. I don't remember which issue areas I watched. Maybe trade. Maybe immigration. Maybe terrorism. It didn't matter. The messages were the same as those he was delivering on the stump. I realized that the Trump campaign wasn't talking to readers; it was delivering content to watchers. This meant Trump had identified an audience for himself different from that of any other candidate. He was the only candidate campaigning exclusively through television. All the other Republicans, despite appearing on television, were campaigning in text. They produced policy statements; they read written remarks. Even Marco Rubio, in delivering his concession speech, read from a text.

Trump appears to have understood that the U.S. is transitioning from a text-based to an oral culture. I don't mean by this that a commitment to text will disappear, only that it has become a minority practice, once again a mark of membership in a social elite.

Barely more than a decade ago, the majority of adult Americans, with a high school degree or above, were daily readers of newspapers and news sites. Today this is no longer true. Now, at best about 40 percent of American adults "frequently" get their news from newspapers and their websites. In contrast, roughly 60 percent frequently get their news from television. Of course, television has dominated since the era of the broadcast Big Three. What's new is reading's precipitous decline. On average people now give 20 minutes of weekend leisure time to reading and 3 and ¼ hours to television.

To suggest that we are transitioning from a text-based to an oral culture is not to make an evaluation. The majority culture in ancient Athens was also oral yet the large public performances of drama that engaged the citizenry were of high literary and intellectual merit. Also, it was possible for the city to conduct serious public decision-making, with a citizenry in which the majority relied almost exclusively on oral modes of communication.

As I watched the Republican primary and became attuned to this issue, I began paying attention to the analyses of the different grade levels at which each candidate spoke. Ted Cruz routinely came out at the highest level—at about twelfth grade; his approach was especially effective with Republicans who held post-graduate degrees and pretty effective with college grads. Of course, there are fewer of those voters, though they do have high participation rates. Rubio's speech was a bit simpler; and John Kasich's even simpler than Rubio's.

Trump's language was, of course, simplest of all. He clocked in just below the sixth-grade level. As we have seen, he did exceptionally well with white voters without college degrees. There are a lot of those voters, more even than Trump actually tapped into in this election. They have historically had lower rates of registration and participation than college-educated Americans, a phenomenon that scholar of education Meira Levinson has dubbed the participation gap.

In 2010, Adam Sherk, vice president of SEO and social media for Define Media Group, took advantage of a then recently released Google search filter that permitted filtering sites by reading level: basic, intermediate, and advanced. He used this tool to analyze news sites. It's worth looking at his whole review, but it's striking that less than 10 percent of Bloomberg Businessweek and The New York Times content studied was at the basic reading level while 28 percent of CBS News and 41 percent of ABC News content scored at the basic level.

Those media organizations that have their roots in television have registered the downshift in the population's interest in reading and appear to peg their content accordingly. Those organizations that have their roots in text, in contrast, generally deliver content at more sophisticated linguistic levels.

In other words, we are seeing two intersecting phenomena that probably both reflect and drive underlying shifts in American culture. The majority of Americans now prefer to watch or listen to their news rather than to read it. And the textual content produced by organizations associated with television and by those associated with traditional newspapers differs in the demands made on readers.

We are hearing a lot, in the wake of post-election analysis, about how our leading journalistic organizations failed to hear and tell the stories of working class and rural Americans. But there's another issue, too. Which of those organizations is prepared to deliver those stories in forms the broad majority of Americans desire to consume? It is possible to deliver high-quality intellectual content in basic language and in visual-oral forms. To what degree should every news organization be responsible for attempting that? That, I suppose, depends on whether they wish to serve the country as a whole or only an elite. ■

Trump appears to have understood that the U.S. is transitioning from a text-based to an oral culture

Danielle Allen is a political theorist at Harvard University and a contributing columnist for The Washington Post.

Four Steps to Strengthening Journalism's Role in Our Democracy

The question isn't, "What lessons can we draw from 2016?" The question is, "Which of the many answers should we focus on?"

BY MICHAEL ORESKES

FOCUS IS ONE OF JOURNALISM'S MOST IMportant skills. It's that separating the wheat from the chaff thing. In an age of distraction we need THAT skill now more than ever. (Is anyone going to explain why Ronald Reagan's 1980 campaign slogan has made such a comeback?) We need to apply that focus to ourselves right now. The question isn't, "What lessons can we draw from 2016?" Answers have already flooded in to Nieman at a pace to induce future-of-news vertigo.

The question is, "Which of those many answers should we focus on?"

To pick, we first have to decide our goal. Are we asking which lessons we need to heed to create a stronger media? Or a stronger democracy?

We need to articulate this. Because we talk a lot about our crucial, dare I say privileged, role as guardians of democracy. Yet, not all of our actions conform to the notion that democratic society is our North Star. We know all about news organizations that pursue partisan factions as audience. But what about news organizations with clearly elite strategies? They seek wealthier audiences, for example, because that's who advertisers buy. Is a partisan niche any worse for democratic discourse than an economic one?

Michael Oreskes is NPR's senior vice president of news and editorial director.

This is hardly all our fault. The business crisis of journalism has been intense. A paywall, to pick one example, may reduce access to information citizens need. But without it, there won't be revenue to sustain the news organization as it gathers that information. And any effort to create broadly democratic conversations by reaching broader audiences runs headlong into the role of our "platform partners," Facebook, Google, Twitter, and the rest.

Much has been said about all this by more business-savvy people. So for here and now, let's stipulate that our goal is to strengthen our democratic purpose in the faith that if we focus on fulfilling society's needs, successful business models (including serious efforts by platform owners) will follow. Let's face it, this is actually our only course. Strong business models and a weak democracy won't really help us, as our colleagues in Turkey are finding.

So with that stipulation, what should we do?

Here are four steps to strengthening journalism's role in our democracy: We should focus on being more local, more networked, more diverse, and fiercely independent. This will improve community access to reliable information, rebuild trust in us, and strengthen democracy.

LOCAL: All politics is local, said Tip O'Neill. So is the most essential journalism. Whether it is journalism that holds local public figures to account or that connects communities across divides of race, creed, class, origins, or orientation. We have an essential role in bursting filter bubbles. This can most effectively and productively be done in local communities. Some of these communities are physically isolated from others (more on that under "networked"). But in many cases, they are actually cheek by jowl.

During the election, David Greene of NPR rode a public bus line that connected downtown Milwaukee and adjacent suburbs. He traversed from Clinton country to Trump country, capturing how citizens viewed each other. Those communities are all within the circulation of the Journal Sentinel and the signal of WUWM, Milwaukee Public Radio. I mention them only because they have an existing record of working together to serve their communities better.

There is a lot more to be done. Milwaukee is a lucky place to have the Journal Sentinel and WUWM, as well as Wisconsin Public Radio. Many local communities have become little more than "news deserts," according to a recent report from the University of North Carolina. If we mean to be one country, we should no more tolerate letting some of our fellow citizens go ill-informed than we would consent to see them ill-fed or ill-clothed. The Public Broadcasting Act instructed us in public media 50 years ago to fulfill needs unmet by commercial media. The loss of local journalism is clearly one of those needs.

NETWORKED: We can't expect to simply rebuild all of the newsrooms damaged by the disruption of the newspaper industry. We need to build something new. Many folks are using the word collaboration here to describe how by combining forces we can maintain and even expand strong journalism. When I talk about networked I mean all that and more.

NPR is already a network of community based news organizations in every state. (We have 264 members broadcasting over close to 1,000 signals, radiospeak for channels.) We are committed to working together to strengthen their local journalism, which then becomes the basis for the stories we tell the country about itself. In other words, our sense of the country doesn't come from the coasts. It comes from everywhere.

Like, say, Laramie, Wyoming. There were many questions about President-elect Trump's promise to save coal mining jobs. Stephanie Joyce at Wyoming Public Radio understood both the miners and the industry. Coal's fundamental problem, she reported from Laramie, isn't government regulations, which President-elect Trump

could change. Coal's problem is the rise of cheap natural gas, which Trump has vowed to expand. More gas, less coal. There is no substitute for local knowledge and on-the-ground reporting.

There are efforts in many states and cities to form not-for-profit news organizations to take up the slack left by the decline of newspaper newsrooms. For 2017, NPR will be working closely with public radio stations and others to strengthen coverage of state legislatures and government. Public radio sounds like America because it is everywhere in America. We aren't the only ones with this idea. Gannett is building a network of newspapers with very much the same goal. A democracy the size of the United States has plenty of room for both of us.

DIVERSE: The subject of diversity has been on newsroom agendas for a long time. We haven't done a good enough job. Not only do we still have much work to do to bring journalists of color into our newsrooms and into positions of responsibility, we have to recognize that broadening our perspectives includes others, too.

Take my NPR colleague, Sarah McCammon, who covered the Trump campaign this year. Sarah is from Kansas City, Missouri. She was raised in a conservative Christian home. Her background made a real difference in her ability to cover evangelicals. "These aren't zoo creatures," McCammon told The Pub, a podcast covering public media. "These are human beings who think differently than a lot of people in Washington."

Diversity of audience is crucial here too. Danielle Allen raises the important question: Who are we speaking to? There are a lot of business pressures that push many media companies toward niche strategies. If we accept our role as serving the public's information needs in a democratic society we need to include all of the public. That means it may fall to journalists to argue inside our own organizations for approaches that reach out for broader audiences rather than narrowing them based on income or any other demographic. It also means speaking forcefully to the platform companies like Facebook, Google, and the rest in favor of transparency in their algorithms and a recognition that they have a large effect on who gets the work we do. We have a democratic responsibility and so do they.

INDEPENDENT: This is everything. Without it the rest won't matter. Ask yourself as a journalist, "Who do I work for?" If we can't reply that our first allegiance is to the public, we confirm the worst of what a lot of that public thinks of us: That we are tools of some amorphous corporate establishment.

To win the public's trust, we have to be the public's media. Connected locally. Networked nationally and awash in diverse perspectives on what is newsworthy and how to report it. When we ask hard questions or hold leaders to account we must always remember we are doing it on the public's behalf, not for our own aggrandizement or advancement. We are their eyes and ears. Their windows on other points of view. We must be their information partners in the work required of each citizen to make democracy effective.

We have a distance to travel to become this. But if we focus our efforts we can do it. ■

Get Serious About Getting Rid Of Fake News

Hiring editors at Facebook is key to the health of our information ecosystem

BY JOSHUA BENTON

Joshua Benton, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is director of Nieman Lab.

ONE WAY TO THINK OF THE JOB JOURNALISM DOES IS telling a community about itself, and on those terms the American media failed spectacularly this election cycle. That Donald Trump's victory came as such a surprise—a systemic shock, really—to both journalists and so many who read or watch them is a marker of just how bad a job we did. American political discourse in 2016 seemed to be running on two self-contained, never-overlapping sets of information. It took the Venn diagram finally meeting at the ballot box to make it clear how separate the two solitudes really are.

The troubling morning-after realization is that the structures of today's media ecosystem encourage that separation, and do so a little bit more each day. The decline of the mass media's business models; the continued rise of personalized social feeds and the content that spreads easily within them; the hollowing-out of reporting jobs away from the coasts: These are, like the expansion of the universe, pushing us farther apart in all directions.

There's plenty of blame to go around, but the list of actors has to start with Facebook. And for all its wonders—reaching nearly 2 billion people each month, driving more traffic and attention to news than anything else on earth—it's also become a single point of failure for civic information. Our democracy has a lot of problems, but there are few things that could impact it for the better more than Facebook starting to care — really care—about the truthfulness of the news that its users share and take in.

Some of the fake news on Facebook is driven by ideology, but a lot is driven purely by the economic incentive structure Facebook has created: The fake stuff, when it connects with a Facebook user's preconceived notions or sense of identity, spreads like wildfire. (And it's a lot cheaper to make than real news.)

One example: I'm from a small town in south Louisiana. The day before the election, I looked at the Facebook page of the current mayor. Among the items he posted there in the final 48 hours of the campaign: Hillary Clinton Calling for Civil War If Trump Is Elected. Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President. Barack Obama Admits He Was Born in Kenya. FBI Agent Who Was Suspected Of Leaking Hillary's Corruption Is Dead.

Getting Mark Zuckerberg to care about [fake news] is absolutely key to addressing the problem

These are not legit anti-Hillary stories. (There were plenty of those, to be sure, both on his page and in this election cycle.) These are imaginary, made up, frauds. And yet Facebook has built a platform for the active dispersal of these lies—in part because these lies travel really, really well. The pope's "endorsement" has over 868,000 Facebook shares. The Snopes piece noting the story is fake has but 33,000.

In a column just before the election, The New York Times's Jim Rutenberg argued that "the cure for fake journalism is an overwhelming dose of good journalism." I wish that were true, but I think the evidence shows that it's not. There was an enormous amount of good journalism done on Trump and this entire election cycle. For anyone who wanted to take it in, the pickings were rich.

The problem is that not enough people sought it out. And of those who did, not enough of them trusted it to inform their political decisions. And even for many of those, the good journalism was crowded out by the fragmentary glimpses of nonsense.

I used to be something of a skeptic when it came to claims of "filter bubbles"— the sort of epistemic closure that comes from only seeing material you agree with on social platforms. People tend to click links that align with their existing opinions, sure—but isn't that just an online analog to the fact that our friends and family tend to share our opinions in the real world too?

But I've come to think that the rise of fake news—and of the cheap-to-run, ideologically driven aggregator sites that are only a few steps up from fake—has weaponized those filter bubbles. There were just too many people voting in this election because they were infuriated by made-up things they read online.

What can Facebook do to fix this problem? One idea would be to hire editors to manage what shows up in its Trending section—one major way misinformation gets spread. Facebook canned its Trending editors after it got pushback from conservatives; that was an act of cowardice, and since then, fake news stories have been algorithmically pushed out to millions with alarming frequency.

Another would be to hire a team of journalists and charge them with separating at least the worst of the fake news from the stream. Not the polemics (from either side) that sometimes twist facts like balloon animals—I'm talking about the outright fakery. Stories known to be false could be downweighted in Facebook's algorithm, and users trying to share them could get a notice telling them that the story is fake. Sites that publish too much fraudulent material could be downweighted further or kicked out entirely.

Would this or other ideas raise thorny issues? Sure. This would be easy to screw up—which is I'm sure why Facebook threw up its hands at the pushback to a human-edited Trending section and why it positions itself a neutral connector of its users to content it thinks they will find pleasing. I don't know what the right solution would be—but I know that getting Mark Zuckerberg to care about the problem is absolutely key to the health of our information ecosystem. ■

What Went Wrong—and Right—with Campaign Coverage

Journalists still have a lot to learn, but are also producing some exemplary coverage to learn from

BY PERRY BACON

THERE WAS A WHOLE LOT THAT WENT right in 2016 campaign coverage.

If you were reading Slate's Jamelle Bouie, PRRI's Robert Jones, or New America's Lee Drutman, you understood how race, identity, and our changing culture were deeply shaping this election, creating a kind of "white identity politics." The crew at Vox was excellent at linking Trump's rise with that of nationalist leaders and parties in Europe. The New York Times's Nate Cohn wrote a piece in June explaining Obama's relative strength with white, working class voters and how Clinton needed that bloc to win in states like Ohio and Wisconsin.

My NBC News colleague Katy Tur was on the road every day with Trump and did what the best candidate reporters do: deeply understand the person that they are covering. When others would say "now Trump is going to pivot" and behave like a traditional candidate, Tur would always remind the audience that the businessman was determined to campaign and win his way. She was right.

A week before the election, The Atlantic's Ron Brownstein described the risky approach Clinton was taking, campaigning in states like Florida and North Carolina in the final days instead of Michigan and Wisconsin. In the final days, FiveThirtyEight's Nate Silver emphasized that Clinton was the favorite, but there was great uncertainty in part because of the large number of undecided voters. Bingo.

But a lot went wrong as well. And there are lessons for political journalists looking forward.

1. Stop Predicting: I first suggested Trump wouldn't win a single primary, then that he wouldn't win the overall GOP primary, and then that he would lose the general.

But I don't think the problem was that my predictions were wrong, but that I was making them in the first place. Too much of political reporting has turned into predicting events that will happen right in front of us in a few days or weeks. When will Hillary Clinton announce? Who will run her against her? Can Jeb win? When the "Access Hollywood" video came out, the coverage quickly became "how does it affect Trump" in x state or among y voting bloc.

The increasing use of data and political science in political reporting is a huge plus. When I covered campaigns in 2004 and 2008, way too much time was spent suggesting various events were so-called game changers. I think most campaign reporting now recognizes how unimportant most campaign events and speeches are compared to factors like approval and disapproval ratings and partisanship.

That data can help us explain to our audience what is happening or just happened in a more sophisticated way than in a previous era of campaign coverage. But way too often, that data is used to predict, instead of to explain.

I understand why this happens. It's human instinct. I live in D.C., a city full of policy wonks. And yet I was asked nearly every day for two years the same question: who is going to win?

On my best days, I would say "Clinton is the favorite, but I don't know." Political journalists need to use those last three words a lot more.

2. Understand race, gender, culture, and identity and tell that part of the story: Identity has always been a part of politics, particularly in the post-1960s era, with civil rights legislation entrenching blacks in the Democratic Party and pushing Southern whites to vote Republican.

Both the Black Lives Matter movement and the rise of Trump were stories in part about identity, race, and culture. And I think at times the press either failed to understand these stories were about identity or was not fluent in discussing that aspect of them. The coverage of Trump supporters and their views on race and other issues was lacking in sophistication, as if journalists had not read the many dozens of studies and books on subjects like racial resentment, Reagan Democrats, and the rise of Islam in America.

A lot of the coverage on election night and afterward was cloaked in euphemisms, that Trump had won "rural America" or the "working class," with journalists I think wary of using the term "white" but thereby obscuring the fact that black and Latino working class and rural voters did not back Trump.

Trump was often criticized for not having policy ideas. In the traditional sense of white papers, he did not. But if you view politics through identity and culture, Trump was speaking quite clearly about his goals as president. He constantly told his audiences what he favored and what he opposed. But he mostly spoke in terms of values and ideals, not taxes and spending.

Perry Bacon is senior political reporter for NBC News.

3. Cover what the candidates say: Traditionally, candidates are "on message" and their speeches are exactly what they said the day before. But the major candidates in 2016 did not follow this model. Trump's words were important because he often said things that were demonstrably false or mused publicly about ideas that he hadn't really vetted yet but then became part of his campaign. Clinton, if you listened carefully, was the most pro-civil rights, pro-abortion rights, pro-gun control Democratic nominee in recent memory.

I often heard people suggest that this campaign was not about policy. The 2016 race may have not been covered as a policy debate by the press, but Clinton (and her de facto running mate President Obama) were constantly arguing with Trump about inclusion, tolerance, globalization, security, policing, immigration, and other issues.

To conclude, I would suggest that many of the weaknesses of the 2016 coverage overall were addressed during 2016, by some of the best coverage. We have much to learn, but also some people to learn from. And I hope political journalists, including myself, address some of our shortcomings immediately and not wait till 2020. ■

Relevance Over Reach, Value Over Volume

Notes toward an empathetic journalism for the right half of America

BY JEFF JARVIS

AMONG JOURNALISM'S MANY FAILINGS IN THIS ELECTION, our greatest, I think, is this: We in liberal media (let's admit that much, at least) abandoned and, in turn, were abandoned by conservative Americans. They do not trust us. Thus we could not inform them. We left a void that was readily filled in by fake news factories, including Fox News (which brainwashed my own parents; I've seen the results), Breitbart, Drudge, and countless meme-makers who learned how to use social media to insert themselves into voters' conversations.

To begin to fill this void instead with responsible, reasonable, fact-based journalism, I will argue in favor of investment in new, conservative media. Of course, I'll also argue that other underserved communities—African American, Latino, LGBTQ, disabled, to name only a few—also deserve such direct and relevant service. But it was angry, white voters who bred Trumpism, so they, too, need attention—urgently.

As journalists and news organizations, we must begin by listening—and let's be honest about this, too: We're not good at listening in our field. This is why, at CUNY, we started a new degree in social journalism, to teach journalists to understand and empathize with a community's needs before bringing content and our many other new tools to the task of informing them. Once we reliably reflect a community's worldview and serve its needs, only then can we begin to earn back its trust and have any hope of informing that worldview.

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Then we need to use whatever media convening power we have left to bring together communities—conservative, liberal, white, black, Latino, immigrant, unemployed, evangelical, old, young, gun owner, gun victim, etc.—who fear but do not know each other so that we can promote, inform, and improve civic discourse. We must build diversity in our newsrooms to enable this. We must build diversity in the news ecosystem to serve communities, no longer the mass. And we have the opportunity to build connections across these communities for greater understanding.

As if these tasks were not challenging enough, we must also, of course, reinvent our business model so we are not still dependent on mass-media economics, still addicted to scale for its own sake. Follow the money and it leads to Donald Trump, who was the clickbait candidate, the perhaps inevitable culmination of mass media, of amusing ourselves to death. We must find new models that support relevance over reach, value over volume. The way to do that is to better serve communities, including Trump's, so they have facts to inform their conversations and actions. That way, perhaps, they will value journalism again. ■

Looking for "Whitelash"

Newsrooms need to see the connection between journalism, white anger, and the politics of racial resentment

BY WENDI C. THOMAS

THE SIGNS THAT SOMEONE like Donald Trump was coming were right there, in online comments lousy with creatively spelled racial slurs that slipped past even the best filters. They were in the vicious tweets and voice mail nastygrams aimed at journalists of color, especially when we wrote about race. It was in the hundreds, if not thousands, of racist and xenophobic emails that clogged my inbox during my 11-year-tenure as a columnist at The Commercial Appeal in Memphis.

Never before had white readers been exposed to the regular opinions of a black woman; I was the paper's first black female columnist. But even as this angry tribe of white readers grew, many of my nonblack colleagues—particularly editors and publishers—insisted these readers were outliers. (And I knew these readers were white because they almost always told me so, using phrases like, "I'm a white reader in the suburbs and I want you to know I'm tired of your racist shit.") Never mind that all the basements in the world couldn't contain all these folks.

Don't focus on the haters, I was told, as if my attention was what gave them fuel. People who send death threats are just venting, I was reassured. They wouldn't actually do anything, as I took different routes home from work. Perhaps, it was suggested, I wrote about race too much, even though I was the only black columnist on staff in a city that's nearly 65 percent black. The solution was in my control. Concede the floor, put myself on mute.

At my own and other papers around the country, too many newsroom leaders—87 percent of whom are white, according to the latest figures from the American Society of News Editors—saw white readers' seething rage as separate from journalism. They saw little connection between this anger and public policy that was disastrous for people of color. They didn't get that these same readers were also voters, voters who would be receptive to a presidential candidate who stoked racial resentment at every turn.

This willful blindness didn't infect every news outlet. Some organizations—such as Mic, The Atlantic, Slate, Vox, and national newspapers—connected the dots. Most mid-sized newsrooms, where I've spent most of my career, did not.

History doesn't repeat itself, but it does echo—but too few journalists were listening for the reverberation. Jim Crow followed Reconstruction. The war on drugs followed the civil rights movement. There was no reason to believe President Obama's election would be followed by a post-racial utopia, especially when yawning racial disparities remained.

We should have been looking for the "whitelash," as CNN commentator and political activist Van Jones labeled it after the election.

So where do we go from here? We recommit ourselves to doing our jobs. We help readers make sense of their world. We link the present to the context of the past. When we're not sure, we turn to historians and academics for help. And we listen to colleagues who are black and brown and immigrant and LGBT and members of other historically marginalized groups.

If you are a newsroom leader in the middle of the country, when these journalists tell you what they see, believe them. Trust them. And govern your organization's reporting accordingly.

Starting today, we can promise to look for the signs. I guarantee that they're all around us. ■

Wendi C. Thomas is a 2016 Nieman Fellow and a senior writing fellow with the Center for Community Change. In April 2017, she launches MLK50, a yearlong reporting and civic engagement project on economic justice.

So where do we go from here? We recommit ourselves to doing our jobs. We help readers make sense of the world. We link the present to the context of the past

Still an Outsider in Mainstream Journalism

Trump's rhetoric forces us to redefine what it means to be a Latino and a professional journalist

BY RICARDO SANDOVAL PALOS

I WATCHED ELECTION-NIGHT COVERAGE on television with acquaintances from Europe, who seemed flummoxed by what was unfolding on the screen. I spent a lot of time explaining the Electoral College and unpacking why I thought that Donald Trump was getting enough votes, in the right places, to win the election.

Early on, it was a fun night. We laughed as I, a Mexican-American, gladly accepted the moniker, Bad Hombre. Trump had set a tone on the first day of his presidential campaign, calling out Mexican immigrants as rapists and drug dealers. And, by the end of the campaign, he'd cemented his hard stance, asserting there were some "bad hombres" out among the population of Mexican immigrants. It became a bitter joke among Latino men. But as the CNN map turned redder and redder that night, the laughs disappeared. It appeared that many voters had taken Trump's hyperbole as gospel.

This brought me to a conundrum: As a proud, professional journalist, I am politically neutral. I've worked to hold the feet of politicians of all stripes to the fire. But on election night I began to wonder: How do I remain the neutral observer when the president-elect and his advisers have used openly racist language about Mexican immigrants, people like me?

He may call himself simply a nationalist, but Trump adviser Steve Bannon has made money and fame hawking white nationalist notions on the Breitbart website and his radio program. He's praised Jason Richwine, formerly of the Heritage Foundation, as "one of the smartest brains out there in demographics, demography, this whole issue of immigration, what it means to this country." Richwine has argued that Hispanic immigrants "do not have the same level of cognitive ability as natives." He echoes eugenics theory, which ranks me and mine well down the ladder of able races.

Add in talk during the campaign of walls and registries that would shield us from people demonized as dangerous and running amok. The result: an environment that's deeply unsettling to many journalists of color.

Which brings me to this.

I haven't ever said this publicly, but even though I've accomplished a great deal, I've often felt like an outsider in mainstream journalism. Perhaps it's my start in life as a barefoot kid on the dirt streets of Tijuana, in Mexico, or the fact that there are so few Latinos in the upper reaches of English-language media, despite our growing share of the U.S. population. I'd wanted to be a journalist from early on, starting a school newspaper in the sixth grade. But for me, scraping together money to go to a good state university was an achievement, especially after few teachers in high school expressed confidence in me.

Today, my bookshelves are dotted with major journalism awards. I was fortunate enough to work for a decade as a correspondent in my native Mexico, and I've held positions of authority in prominent newsrooms in print and public radio. But my climb in the business was accompanied by remarks like these:

"Now that we've hired you, we can make a normal hire."

"Don't we already have a Hispanic in the business section?"

Those words were from colleagues and supervisors, and they left me with a sense that my stay was transient—that for me and other journalists of color the margin for error was thinner and our roads to success much more serpentine.

Ricardo Sandoval Palos is managing editor of 100 Reporters, a nonprofit investigative news organization and board president with the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

That gut feeling had actually taken root when I was a kid, growing up near the border, south of San Diego. I'll never forget that police officer who used to park in my neighborhood and often asked to see my ID as I walked to school.

But the most humiliating incident occurred just after I got my college degree. It was on a train from San Diego to Los Angeles. I was dressed in my one sport coat and button-down shirt, ready for lunch with an editor at a large daily newspaper. Back then, uniformed border agents routinely patrolled trains northbound from San Diego, looking for passengers who seemed to radiate "otherness." I traded stares with the agent, and he demanded that I produce my ID and proof of status. I bit my lip against a smart-mouth retort and produced my California driver's license and my green card. I was born in Mexico and was not yet a U.S. citizen.

I had believed my shiny new degree in journalism from California State University proved I belonged. Getting singled out by this agent instead made me feel shoved back in my place. He had asked no one else to produce an ID. The interaction reminded me that no preppy sport coat could completely cover my brown skin.

I know that many of my colleagues have never been compelled to produce ID for anything other than the right to buy a drink.

I reflect on the past as we consider a new challenge. It's a special time that's forcing us to redefine what it means to be a Latino and a professional journalist. I can only imagine the waves of fear, anger, and uncertainty that journalists who are Muslim or who are of Arab heritage are experiencing.

The optimist in me predicts we won't witness mass deportations, with crowds of frightened people at the border and armed guards forcing them out. I don't foresee enough politicians willing to enact official registries for Muslims. Yet there's a disturbing level of public support for such measures, and the Trump transition team isn't ruling them out.

We've seen wartime internment of Japanese-Americans. And my own American-born mother and her Mexican immigrant parents were coerced into leaving the U.S., from Denver, in a mass deportation during the Great Depression.

So what do I do as a Latino, and a journalist?

I'll adhere to as high a professional standard as possible. I'll report and write accurately, without favor for skin tone or political bent.

But I'll also demand that as we head deeper into these changed times, I get the opportunity to speak up about editorial decisions. There has to be room to confront myths about people of different ethnicities as they emerge in policy debates. I'll also ask colleagues to refrain from labeling me as biased when I point out that an alleged fact is a racist myth.

I fear that Team Trump's coziness with advisers who consort with white nationalists will be treated as no more controversial than the president-elect's positions on trade deals. But if we aggressively question authority over the next four years, I'll feel like the industry has my back. Maybe then I'll finally shake that nagging suspicion that I've not been shown the secret handshake of journalism. ■

Collaborative Media Partnerships Can Help Rebuild Local and Regional Journalism

Restoring credibility for journalism must include rebuilding the capacity for journalists to work within the communities they cover

BY JEFF YOUNG

Jeff Young, a 2013 Nieman Fellow, is managing editor of Louisville Public Media's Ohio Valley ReSource.

THE CHASM BETWEEN THE coastal media centers and the country's heartland is laid bare. Deep discontent, long simmering in the manufacturing Midwest and Appalachian coal country, went largely unrecognized until this year's populist primal scream. Even then, national coverage often came laced with enough condescension to remind people here why they distrust the media.

Not so long ago, "the media" would have included familiar reporters from strong regional papers, now sadly downsized and in full retreat from rural bureaus and issues. This election season more often saw the occasional correspondent parachute in for the misery tour of the unemployed and addicted. Tweet some poverty porn, tut-tut at a Confederate flag, and there's no reason to get into the messiness of massive economic dislocation and the toxic legacy of resource extraction.

Yes, I'm a little bitter. And I'm oversimplifying. But I believe that restoring credibility for journalism must include rebuilding the capacity for journalists to work within the communities they cover.

Green shoots abound with recently established investigative reporting centers and collaborative media partnerships. In Illinois, the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting recently joined with other nonprofit outlets. Louisville Public Media, where I work, houses the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting, and this year we launched the Ohio Valley ReSource in partnership with public media stations in three states. The ReSource is one of eight regional journalism collaboratives recently started with short-term funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. They are in Arkansas, Indiana, the Great Lakes region, and elsewhere.

These partnerships, plus earlier projects such as Harvest Public Media and Inside Energy, can help fill the void of local and regional coverage but they must all find paths to long-term sustainability. These should be recognized as an essential public service and nurtured to allow local trust and support to grow. ■

Creating Community-Centered, Not Candidate-Centered, Narratives

At the local level, the media need to convene the conversation

BY MARK JURKOWITZ

Mark Jurkowitz is the owner and publisher of the Outer Banks Sentinel in North Carolina.

IN COVERING THE LOCAL ELECTION SEASON in Dare County, North Carolina—best known as the home of the Outer Banks—journalists can't be accused of paying too much attention to a parade of polls. For starters, there were no publicly released polls tracking the county commissioner and state legislative races that define politics down here.

We also plead not guilty to being too profoundly influenced by high-profile, overhyped debate performances. The October ravages of Hurricane Matthew washed out several scheduled candidate forums here, leaving but a single Sunday afternoon League of Women Voters (LWV) event—attended by about 60 people or so—as the only time these local candidates actually debated in public.

In addition, the incumbent state senator from the region boycotted that debate and declined to answer an LWV questionnaire because he considers the nonpartisan organization too biased. And in a tragic twist of fate, one popular candidate enmeshed in a close race for the N.C. House of Representatives died three days before Election Day.

So, unlike our counterparts in the national media, journalists here did not get misdirected or misled by a "horse race" narrative fueled by inaccurate polls and babbling pundits. Heck, there was virtually no information by which to handicap the horse race and very little by which to get a feel for the underlying dynamic.

Instead, the preferred mode of political communication in this election season was the almost daily flow of glossy attack ad mailers—often containing distortions if not outright inaccuracies—that filled our mailboxes.

But for all the differences, we did suffer from the same big problem as our peers in the national press, even if on a much smaller

scale. How do you find out what's really on voters' minds?

Inside a purple state, Dare County is a red county. Mitt Romney carried it by about 16 percentage points over Barack Obama in 2012, and it's no shock that Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton here by about 22 points.

But given its unique geography and the realities of a tourism-driven economy, local politics is not so predictably partisan. On the Outer Banks, Democrats and Republicans locked arms to strongly oppose offshore measures like energy drilling and seismic testing. And local Republicans have found themselves at odds with the Republican leadership in Raleigh on issues ranging from tax policy to state efforts to erode the authority of municipal governing bodies.

Having said that, there were clear differences between the candidates running here this fall. Democrats were more likely to speak vocally about the need to increase financial support for local public schools and to advocate on behalf of county workers, who have seen raises and benefits stagnate.

In addition, there were divisions over a number of hot button issues from climate change to early voting hours to gay and transgendered rights—the last a particularly potent issue given the controversy over the state's HB2 "Bathroom Bill" mandating that transgendered people use the bathroom corresponding to their birth gender.

But even in the modest universe of about 35,000 year-round citizens, getting a journalistic handle on the "public mood" this election season proved daunting.

Campaigns are relatively low-keyed affairs around here, and there are not many places where people gather in substantial numbers to express themselves. (Two years ago, the county commissioners convened their first town hall meeting to let citizens take the microphone and discuss their concerns. That was a lively event that lasted two-and-a-half hours and featured 25 speakers. Last year, the same event was exhausted after an hour and only five speakers.)

At the Sentinel, we thought hard about how to do the kind of reporting that would provide genuine insight into what citizens were thinking during the campaign season. It proved difficult because there is little low-hanging fruit, and because it takes a concerted and organized effort to actively engage voters in that conversation, one that requires news outlets to play a proactive, rather than reactive role.

So when thinking about lessons learned from 2016 election, and what we could have done better, I harken back to the old—and often unfairly criticized—"citizen journalism" movement that arose more than two decades ago. The idea was to bring news outlets closer to the grassroots of their communities by convening public conversations between journalists and citizens over civic issues. The hope was to get reporters out of the habit of talking almost exclusively to the professional class of newsmakers—public officials, consultants, lawyers, self-appointed "community leaders," etc.

In the heyday of civic journalism, back in the 1992 presidential campaign, Boston Globe reporters sat down with a group of ordinary New Hampshire voters to listen to what they had to say. Not everything out of their mouths qualified as pearls of wisdom. But a central theme emerged in the conversations—high levels of economic anxiety, a very potent force in any election.

I'm not even sure the Globe reporters recognized what they were hearing. But when the Republican primary votes were cast in New Hampshire that year, outsider and challenger Pat Buchanan—with his populist "pitchfork" campaign—had garnered a surprising 38 percent of the vote against sitting incumbent president from his own party, George H. W. Bush.

Creating those ongoing community conversations—by convening focus groups or hosting chats in coffee shops or in town halls—is a task that is, in theory, well suited to community papers with their ears closer to the ground. But above all else, it requires the news outlet to be the aggressor, so to speak, to be the driving force behind these conversations.

And it's hard to break the habit of relying on a candidate-centered, rather than community-centered election narrative.

For the record, November 8 proved a very triumphant night for local Republicans in Dare County. I wish we had done a better job of knowing why. ■

Journalists Need to Better Explain What Journalists Do... Including Me

If journalists don't inform the public about what we do and why, we're ceding the debate to those looking to vilify and delegitimize the press at a dangerous moment in history

BY MICHAEL CALDERONE

DONALD TRUMP'S PRECEDENT-BREAKING REFUSAL to allow a small pool of journalists to cover his travels as president-elect has revealed some common ground in our otherwise fractured republic.

Good, Trump supporters tell me. The press deserves to be treated badly after being against him.

Good, Hillary Clinton supporters tell me. The press built Trump up and obsessed over her emails.

As the news media emerges from a round of post-election self-flagellation—some deserved, some excessive—this shared antipathy toward the press's concerns shows that journalists have some work to do in convincing a skeptical public that their goal isn't to destroy or promote the president. It's to have enough access to comprehensively cover him on the public's behalf.

Not everyone's going to be swayed. My Twitter feed is clogged with Trump fans convinced journalists are essentially "dishonest scum"—to borrow from the incoming president—and armed with so much misinformation that it's impossible to have a good-faith, fact-based debate about the Fourth Estate. But for others across the political spectrum who believe the press, though flawed, still serves a valuable function in our democracy, there's an opportunity.

Michael Calderone is senior media reporter at The Huffington Post.

Journalists have some work to do in convincing a skeptical public that their goal isn't to destroy or promote the president

Take the "protective pool," for example.

Most Americans, and many journalists outside D.C., don't know that a "protective pool" of reporters traditionally follows the president when leaving the White House. It's not necessarily a glamour assignment, with pool reporters, at times, waiting outside a golf course while the president hits the links. But if assigned to ride in John F. Kennedy's motorcade in Dallas on November 22, 1963 or to cover George W. Bush reading to Florida schoolchildren on the morning of September 11, 2001, there's the potential to write the first draft of history.

Even as polls show Americans viewing the news media about as favorably as Vladimir Putin, I'd still expect many to immediately turn on CNN or Fox News, or head to a local or national newspaper site, in times of crisis. So, in this case, journalists should explain that what may look like whining—"Trump didn't take us to the 21 Club!"—is actually the press advocating for access to best serve the public. And without them, the government's word is all there is.

Some journalists recently mined their own experience to make the press's case before a skeptical public. Yahoo's Olivier Knox recalled his own experience flying aboard Air Force Two and how he and other pool reporters clarified for the larger press corps (and by extension the public) that the Vice President was safe after an unexpected landing. The Wall Street Journal's Byron Tau wrote a clear-cut Q&A on the topic of press pools and other journalists responded to questions on Twitter.

News organizations aren't bound any more by old constraints like column inches in print. So when press access issues bubble up into the mainstream, journalists have social media and unlimited space on the web to quickly explain the significance. Whether the public gets on board or not is up to them.

The recent release of emails stolen from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta's inbox was a moment when I—as someone who's covered the intersection of politics and the press spanning three election cycles—could've done better. As a media reporter, I dug through the WikiLeaks material in search of journalistic malfeasance, even plugging in the names of specific news outlets and reporters. I was looking for breaking news when what might've been most useful is an explanation of whether these exchanges were unusual, and especially, if they were journalistically unethical.

I found several instances of journalists catching Clinton's team flat-footed with their reporting, forcing staffers to hash out our statements in hopes of tamping down a controversy. Of course, these weren't the emails Trump supporters and conservative outlets tended to amplify in making the case that the media is corrupt and in cahoots with the Democrats. The most damning media-related emails, to me, featured former CNN pundit and then-Democratic National Committee vice chair Donna Brazile sending primary debate questions to the Clinton campaign. But Brazile isn't a journalist.

Some pushing the collusion theme seized on instances of obsequiousness. Though unseemly, it's not unheard of for reporters to cozy up to high-ranking officials of either party. That didn't seem particularly newsworthy. Some also highlighted journalists sending pre-publication copy to sources, which is a violation of journalistic protocol. It's an issue worth covering, as I've done before, but just didn't seem like a pressing concern in the waning weeks of the election and certainly not evidence of any far-reaching conspiracy

I also didn't write about emails showing reporters had a private dinner at Podesta's house before Clinton launched her presidential bid. That's because I first reported on the Podesta dinner 18 months before the WikiLeaks emails dropped. I also didn't write on a New York Times reporter's off-the-record arrangement with Clinton because I already did in July 2015. I clearly believed such behind-the-scenes dealings were in the public's interest when covering them, but failed to seriously readdress when a much broader audience was learning about them for the first time.

If journalists don't engage in such discussions, they're ceding the debate to those looking to vilify and delegitimize the press at a dangerous moment in history when the soon-to-be-most-powerful person in the world has already laid the groundwork for doing just that. ■

Earn Back the Right to Serve as Watchdogs

While demanding transparency from political leaders, we, as journalists, must hold ourselves accountable, too

BY MATT K. LEWIS

PRESIDENT-ELECT DONALD Trump's victory stunned a lot of Americans, not the least of which were members of the elite media, who couldn't fathom the possibility that A) the so-called experts had been wrong, and B) the American public might actually want this vulgarian to be president. This seemed to be an appropriate time to revisit the constant problem of media bias.

As I grapple with my own failures this election season—as well as my own place in the world of journalism (it's healthy for everyone to be introspective and to perform a regular career audit)—I have been asking myself some serious questions.

With apologies to those who might prefer a more traditionally structured piece, what follows is a transcript of my internal dialogue (in Q&A form). I hope you find it enlightening:

Is media bias real?

Yes, and we can now see it more clearly than ever. Twitter is where journalists let their guard down and talk freely. Frequently, this platform reveals the biases harbored by so many ostensibly mainstream journalists.

Let's be honest: It's no secret that most journalists skew left-

ward. I don't believe the media has a grand conspiracy to elect Democratic politicians. The desire for ratings, clicks, and buzz are our driving force, but most journalists I know just happen to have a liberal worldview. They don't set out to bias their stories in a secular or cosmopolitan way; it just works out that way.

So the problem is more cultural than partisan?
Absolutely. As it has often been said (perhaps most famously by Andrew Breitbart), culture is upstream from politics. Most political journalists are based in New York City or Washington, D.C.—not Omaha or Topeka. Few of them regularly attend some sort of worship service. Truth be told, their geographical location is just as telling and predictive as any political registration or history of activism—although it's fair to note that many prominent journalists do have a history of having been a Democratic activist or operative.

As a center-right commentator, what kinds of bias have you seen?
Subtle bias is the hardest to detect or combat—but it can be as simple as the way someone is introduced on a show or the way the chyron identifies them. It's not uncommon to hear a liberal commentator identified simply as, say, "a columnist for New York magazine," while their interlocutor might be called "a conservative columnist" from outlet XYZ. This is a signal to viewers suggesting that the liberal pundit is completely unbiased, while the conservative-leaning journalist has an agenda.

What should outlets that are trying to do a better job of achieving balance consider?
We probably don't put enough emphasis on selection bias. The outlet's choice of segment topic is more important than 1) the way the story is covered or 2) the things guests have to say about the topic. Topics have built-in skews. So, for example, it's almost impossible for a panel discussion about Donald Trump's refusal to release his tax returns to be considered a "pro-Trump" segment, regardless of how many pro-Trump panelists pad the bench. If you want to increase ideological diversity in media coverage, deciding who gets to pick the topic is more important than deciding who gets to talk about the topic.

You started off talking about geography and religion. Why is it a problem that journalists' skews are more secular and cosmopolitan?
A journalist friend of mine who comes from a long line of Baptist preachers once told me about an evangelical rally in D.C. he attended where a pastor mentioned wanting to "slay all of Congress." He had to explain to his fellow reporters that being "slain in the Spirit" is something that charismatic Christians say (and that this pastor was not suggesting they kill members of Congress).

The point is that every group of people has certain shibboleths; the fact that so few journalists have a religious background makes them out of touch when it comes to covering traditional Americans who don't live in places like New York City or Washington, D.C. To many journalists, religious people should be viewed with skepticism.

But can't journalists learn about people who aren't like them and cover them fairly? I mean, isn't that part of the job?
Yes, but too often it comes across in a manner similar to an anthropologist observing some backward civilization. I think this bias is very subtle, but we still need to rethink some fundamental assumptions about the way we approach coverage.

For example, I recently heard journalist and author Krista Tippett talking on the Longform podcast about this, and she made an interesting point about people who are religious. If a reporter was writing a profile about an artist or musician, they might find some of the weird things he or she said to be mysterious, if mystical. Religious people are not given this same latitude for their numinousness; they are, instead, interviewed with the same degree of skepticism usually reserved for politicians.

As a member of the media, aren't you part of the problem?
I get accused of bias all the time. But it's important to distinguish between opinion journalists and news reporters. Opinion journalists are paid to have a point of view, but we should still strive to be intellectually honest.

Okay—but you live just outside of Washington, D.C., and have worked in journalism for a long time now. Do you worry about being out of touch?
I think we all should worry about that. I am fortunate to have a lot of unique experiences to pull from.

My dad was a prison guard; I went to college in West Virginia. My mom voted for Trump. This is not to say I'm some blue-collar horse whisperer, but my background sets me apart from many of my Ivy League colleagues and competitors.

Like everyone, I was stunned by Donald Trump's success. But my upbringing has helped make me more attuned and empathetic to the plight of so many of the working class white voters who, having cast their ballot for Obama twice, instead chose to pull the lever for Trump.

Pauline Kael, an American film critic for The New Yorker, claimed to only know one person who voted for Richard Nixon. For journalists hoping to tell stories and enrich people's understanding, being out of touch with a wide swath of Americans is a real indictment.

How does Trump fit into all of this?
The irony, of course, is that this liberal media bias contributed to the election of Donald Trump. Conservative voters, tired of the bogus attacks and political correctness of the media, became inured to it. As Bill Maher admitted on HBO's "Real Time" just before the election, liberals cried wolf so many times that nobody believed them when they warned about Donald Trump's very real problems.

Laments about media bias are older than I am, and they will probably always be with us. In the past, however, discussions about this problem were somewhat academic. Today, this problem looks more like an existential threat. Americans increasingly distrust and dislike the media. They are tuning us out. We are not just competing with new media outlets that have an ideological agenda; in some cases, we are competing against fake news sites.

To preserve a free nation, political leaders must be held accountable. This is perhaps the media's fundamental responsibility. While demanding transparency from our political leaders, it is incumbent upon us to hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards so that we might once again earn the right to serve in this vital watchdog capacity. ■

Matt K. Lewis is a senior contributor at The Daily Caller, a political commentator for CNN, and author of the book "Too Dumb to Fail."

Let the Interlopers In

A journalist without a college degree on the need for educational diversity in the newsroom

BY DIANA MARCUM

I REMEMBER THE DAY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES DEcided to hire me. I'd been freelancing for the paper out of California's Central Valley. Ashley Dunn, then the metro editor, came up to Fresno because no one had met me in person. Ashley is the son of Chinese intellectuals. He is married to, literally, a rocket scientist. His is not the world of non-academics.

"I might as well tell you straight up," I said. "I don't have a college degree."

"Hell," he said. "One of our best writers was the janitor before we hired him."

Some newspapers understood (long before Donald Trump spouted it) that the system is rigged. More than the system—life, circumstances.

Because of that you can't rely entirely on the traditional gatekeepers. So there were always a few journalists who had not spent their formative years in spirit-wear arguing over commas. (Not that I don't love y'all.)

One of the bright spots for me in this election is that Michael Tubbs became mayor of Stockton. (I'm on leave. I can have opinions for a bit.) I first wrote about him when he graduated from Stanford and returned to his hometown to become one of the country's youngest councilmen.

His is the long-shot tale that everybody loves. The son of a teen mom, incarcerated father, and he's black in a valley that hasn't entirely broken good ol' boy power. We love these stories because they are rare. A lot of really smart, soulful people get mixed up in the mire of life and don't get that magic stamp. Losers, to put it in Trumpian terms.

During that city council election, I went around with a mixed bag of Tubb supporters who were out canvassing. There were two idealistic Stanford kids who from the day they were born were going to go to college, and they were interested in journalism and are no doubt wrapping up postgraduate studies in the future of documentary social media about now. More power to them.

But the other kid, the one who bought a gun at 14 after his friend got killed in a drive-by, he was the storyteller. He was the one who knew how to crack a joke and talk with people and ask them about their lives, not just drill for answers to questions that he thought he already knew the answers to. He had some community college. He wanted to write. I had him send me one of his essays. It was good.

I think there's a pretty good chance he won't make it through a four-year school. The same sorts of reasons I didn't: People depending on you, rent due at the end of the month.

But if I were in charge of hiring reporters, I'd have to give that kid the edge.

We need diversity of all kinds in the newsroom, especially from places where catching a few classes at the community college can take as much Herculean effort as getting into Harvard. So that means maybe overlooking the empty box by degrees from time to time.

If we didn't know it before this election, we know for sure now that people outside the bubble aren't much reading big-city newspapers. The president-elect has declared legacy media already dead. It's a free-for-all fight against the likes of Facebook and content-gathering robots. And maybe far worse ahead.

So, as long as there's still any little breath left, keep letting in a few losers, some who didn't even make it to their college finals. We know how to keep going when we look more done than a fish fried in Crisco. We're not going to die of shock when the world is senseless. And we hold a duality that can come in handy as a reality check.

For instance, I am a "media elite" AND a white person without a college degree when there's a lot of hand-wringing from the media at not having properly dissected and reported upon uneducated white people.

Since I know this world, I can tell you the early attempts at covering "those" voters have been almost as absurd as watching a bleached-blond conservative encountering Beyoncé lyrics for the first time. That kind of coverage is not answering the question more than half the country is screaming, which is: "Who are these people?!" and "How do I live knowing these are my fellow citizens?"

Calm down.

True, some rural, uneducated types are awful. The most brutal, belligerent, abusive, plain-old-mean humans you could ever meet. I hear you also find that in Manhattan.

Others, salt of the earth. It's a cliché that fits. They preserve things. They make dreary things palatable. They work physical jobs sunup to sundown. They know what it's like to lose a kid in war. (Go to the diner; there's always a wall of photos of dead soldiers.) The good ones would deck a guy if he tried to grab your anything.

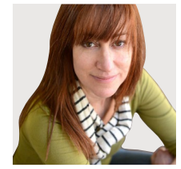
This feeling that they're losing everything their great-grandparents, grandparents and parents built has been building for a while. And there are also plenty who feel that their family legacy is not having a pot to piss in. I'd lay money that more than one of them started supporting Trump because they thought it was funny. Here's some loudmouth outfoxing all the know-it-alls.

If you could lay politics and ideology aside for a bit, you might enjoy a visit.

Which in a very roundabout way brings me back to my point.

I can tell you about "them" because I know this world. And a newspaper gave me—an interloper—a voice.

This has been a devastating election. Big things afoot. I hope that now we tell some stories about the lives of uneducated white voters and black activists and everyone else that reach beyond politics and ideology. About now, we could all use the kind of stories that bring us together. ■



Diana Marcum covers the Central Valley and places beyond it for the Los Angeles Times. She won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing and is on leave this year finishing her book, "The Tenth Island."

ACCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTING AND SILICON VALLEY

With the lines between media firms and tech firms blurring, coverage of the tech sector presents one of the most profound accountability challenges in modern journalism

BY ADRIENNE LAFRANCE

THE FIRST TIME I VISITED FACEBOOK'S office in Washington, D.C., I was asked to sign a nondisclosure agreement. I didn't.

Then there was the time I got through an entire interview with a product manager at Apple, only to be told, after the fact, that it was presumed to be on background. "Everyone knows this is how we do things," a spokesman explained apologetically. Nope.

Just before Christmas a few years ago, HP sent me a bright pink laptop I'd never asked for. I sent it back.

I've been offered iPhones, international plane tickets, and more gadgets than I can count. "Can also send over a draft press release and a big ol' bottle of wine for sitting through my email ;)," one PR person wrote.

This is what it's like to be a technology reporter these days. Freebies are everywhere, but real access is scant. Powerful companies like Facebook and Google are major distributors of journalistic work, meaning newsrooms increasingly rely on tech giants to reach readers, a relationship that's awkward at best and potentially disastrous at worst. Facebook, in particular, is also prompting major newsrooms to adjust their editorial and commercial strategies, including initiatives to broadcast live video to the social media site in exchange for payment. Other social platforms are becoming publishers, too, including Snapchat Discover and Reddit, which recently posted job listings for an editorial team.

The lines are blurring, in some cases dramatically, between what it means to be a media company and what it means to be a technology firm. The leaders of some websites with robust newsrooms, like BuzzFeed, even refer to themselves as tech companies first, journalism organizations second. Cash-rich media start-ups and at least one legacy newspaper, The Washington Post, are owned by titans of tech.

Silicon Valley's leaders aren't uniformly champions of the press, however. Peter Thiel, the venture capitalist and PayPal co-founder, poured $10 million of his own money into the lawsuit that eventually bankrupted Gawker Media Group last spring. Univision bought Gawker for $135 million in August, and shut down its flagship site, Gawker.com, soon after. (Other sites in the former Gawker network, like Jezebel and Gizmodo, are still running.) The Gawker-Thiel showdown was a dispute in its own right, but it can also be viewed as a microcosm of the broader tension between media companies and technology companies, a relationship so strained that,

Illustration by Matt Chase

as Nicholas Lemann wrote in The New Yorker, the journalism industry should be readying itself for a "protracted war."

Against this backdrop, tech reporting presents one of the most profound accountability challenges in modern journalism. Who is best served by the coverage we have? And is it the coverage we deserve and need?

"Accountability reporting in Silicon Valley, like accountability reporting anywhere, is difficult—and essential," says David Streitfeld, a technology reporter for The New York Times. "There is no great tradition of accountability reporting in tech, no exalted predecessors the way there is with, say, White House reporting or municipal reporting. There is no Woodward and Bernstein or Kate Boo of tech reporting."

Tech coverage as we know it today got its start in the early 1980s, not from some investigative impulse but because the age of personal computing was just beginning and newspapers suddenly began selling a lot of tech-related ads. John Markoff, a longtime technology reporter for The New York Times, remembers the original culture of Silicon Valley as open and collaborative—even welcoming to journalists. In the early '80s, Markoff had access to the Homebrew Computer Club, a legendary hobbyist group whose members included the technologists who would go on to run Silicon Valley. Steve Wozniak, the cofounder of Apple, first shared his design for the Apple I computer at a Homebrew meeting in 1976.

Over the next few decades, the people running the tech sector went from occupying a niche cultural and economic space to being some of the most powerful business leaders on the planet. And the culture and influence of Silicon Valley changed dramatically. "Early on, Apple was fringe," says Kevin Kelly, founding executive editor of Wired magazine. "The difference now is that these companies are the most profitable companies in the world. This is no longer the sideshow; this is the main show."

Though Apple was at the center of an earlier open culture in Silicon Valley, it was also the company that prompted a reversal. Steve Jobs refined the art of the product surprise, generating enormous buzz for Apple by hosting keynotes where such announcements were hotly anticipated. At times, the outsized coverage of such events can seem as much a product of fan culture as it is journalism designed to serve that culture.

It's also a journalistic approach that incentivizes limited access. Silicon Valley's culture of secrecy comes, too, from the publishing power the Internet offers. Tech giants, like political candidates, no longer rely solely on the press to get out their message.

In turn, some of the world's most powerful companies end up dictating a startling degree of coverage about them—because reporters often rely solely on information released by those companies, and, with some key exceptions, get few opportunities to question them. "It's why a company like Google can dazzle people with the promise of some technology that's really not ready yet," says John M. Simpson, former deputy editor of USA Today and privacy project director for the nonprofit advocacy group Consumer Watchdog, where he focuses on Google. Compared with a crowded field of journalists covering Google, for example, Simpson has been one of the most prominent critical voices of the company's Self-Driving Car Project.

It's typical to see technology coverage that simply aggregates directly from a tech company's blog—the modern-day equivalent of a press release—with little or no analysis or additional reporting. One damning example of this lack of skepticism is evident in the early, glowing coverage of Theranos, the health-technology company that said it had developed a cheap, needle-free way to draw and test blood. It wasn't until in 2015 that an investigative reporter from The Wall Street Journal, prompted by a sunny New Yorker profile of the Theranos founder, began to ask serious questions about whether the technology actually worked the way Theranos claimed it did. That reporting, from John Carreyrou, encouraged other reporters to be more skeptical, too, and ultimately led to a federal criminal investigation into whether the company misled investors and regulators about the state of its technology.

Investigations like Carreyrou's—or getting inside the grueling corporate culture at Amazon, as The New York Times did in 2015; or detailing Google's powerful but hidden lobbying efforts, as The Washington Post has; or contextualizing the cultural complexities of programs like Facebook's Free Basics, as I've tried to do; or establishing a drumbeat of smart, in-depth coverage of the fight between Apple and the F.B.I.—is the only way to begin to understand the complex social and political impact of technology.

Technology companies "are all dedicated to revamping our daily existence," says Streitfeld, who reported and wrote the Amazon piece for the Times with Jodi Kantor. "What happens when they succeed? Who loses? When they stumble, like Facebook in India, what does it mean? The rise of tech is, in my opinion, the great story of our time."

Adds Kantor: "Technology companies are in the vanguard. They're determining where the culture is headed. It's where the culture is made, and they also let us look into our own futures."

For their Amazon story, Kantor and Streitfeld interviewed more than 100 current and former Amazon employees. The memorable anecdote about people often crying at their desks, Kantor says, came up repeatedly, and not just from the person they ultimately quoted. "I was taught long ago as a young journalist that the best stories are often investigating something that is lying around in plain sight," Streitfeld says. "In this case, Amazon had said—boasted even—from the very beginning that it was an incredibly demanding place to work. All we did is ask, what does that mean?"

A major reporting obstacle was penetrating the culture of secrecy. LinkedIn proved to be a crucial source, one Streitfeld says he combed for hours: "It's like a corporate X-ray." All in all, Streitfeld and Kantor spent more than six months—a luxury, even at the Times—reporting the story, which generated enormous public attention as well as a swift rebuke, in the form of a PR counter-narrative published on Medium. Representatives from Amazon—as well as Google, Uber, Apple, and Facebook—either declined requests for interviews for this story or did not respond at all to those requests.

"The biggest challenge to producing a story like the Amazon piece, or any reporting about the tech community that challenges the community's idea of itself, is that tech wants, expects, and quite often gets upbeat pieces," Streitfeld says. "There's a sense, in too much tech reporting, that when you cross the bridge into Silicon Valley, you're in a world where the old rules of journalism don't apply. One of the biggest clichés of Silicon Valley is when they say, 'It's not about the money. We just want to change the world.' Sometimes that even may be true. But that's a reason for better coverage, not weaker."

Yet many leading news organizations, even those with robust tech sections, aren't devoting adequate resources to develop and sustain such coverage, according to Emily Bell, director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School. "To actually cover technology properly," Bell says, "it's about society and culture and human rights. It's about politics. This idea that you can have a Washington bureau where you don't have somebody who really understands some of the issues in [computing] infrastructure or A.I., and how data is really political? They are new systems of power, and that's one of the areas where I think news organizations have been slow."

While Bell and others argue that a foundational understanding of how computers and the Internet work is essential for all reporters, technology coverage isn't limited to what's in the tech section. Technology shapes business, culture, politics, education, and every other facet of daily life. Just look at the complexity of the fight between Apple and the F.B.I. over whether Apple should have been required to unlock the iPhone owned by one of the shooters in a deadly terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California. (Eventually, the F.B.I. said it was able to unlock the device without Apple's help.)

"There's terrorism, there's technology, there's Apple, there's the F.B.I, Obama weighs in," says Pui-Wing Tam, the New York Times editor who coordinated the paper's coverage of the dispute. "It just straddles all sorts of different things. It brings what had been a very theoretical debate about encryption and privacy into the real world."

SAM HODGSON

Starbucks workers, like Jannette Navarro, shown here, regularly had their lives upended by the vagaries of scheduling software the chain used

In some ways, covering a story as big as the encryption dispute is more straightforward than figuring out day-to-day or longer-term tech coverage. "It's important to define covering technology really broadly," says Kantor, "and not to think of it as covering a bunch of start-ups in Silicon Valley only." She gives the example of a story she wrote about a piece of automated scheduling software, one that's used by huge corporations like Starbucks, which was creating stress and chaos for low-paid workers. "Here was this piece of software that basically nobody's ever heard of, really obscure, and yet it was controlling the lives of millions and millions of workers," she says. Within 24 hours of the article's publication, Starbucks announced it would change its scheduling practices.

For Kantor, covering technology means interrogating the ways technology affects people's lives—a framework so broad that it has the potential to be as dizzying as it is liberating for journalists who have to decide what to cover.

Reveal, the website of the Center for Investigative Reporting, doesn't have a technology section, per se, but it does cover technology, most of which falls within the realms of privacy and surveillance. For instance, Reveal has reported about a secretive database of alleged gang members kept by California police officers and the question of whether law enforcement should need a search warrant to access digital records. This is the kind of story that's particularly well-suited to relentless follow-up coverage—the sort of momentum you might see building in the pages of a metro daily after a blockbuster scoop. There are regulatory and legal angles to explore, plus plenty of questions about how the existence of such a database affects individuals.

Reveal published one story about how it's possible for members of the public to be in the database without even knowing, and another about legislation that would open the database to more public scrutiny. But after the latter was published in mid-July, a new story wasn't published in the surveillance and privacy section for another two months. Many of these stories require reporting time that few newsrooms have. "There's this inherent challenge between long-term, long-form, deep investigated work that runs this risk of feeling stale when the pace of news is just so fast," Fernando Díaz, a senior editor at the site, says. "We've got to figure out a more mid-weight speed for this particular beat because things just move so rapidly in technology."

The Atlantic, where I'm a staff writer, has tried a similar approach to staying nimble, drilling down on specific beats, inspired in part by the fluid beat structure that Quartz established when it launched in 2012. When I ran the technology section, I asked one of our reporters, Robinson Meyer, to prioritize "police-worn body cameras" as one of his central beats in the months after the fatal police shooting of an unarmed teenager in Ferguson, Missouri. As part of the larger national conversation about the use of such technologies, the topic was timely, complex,

California resident Aaron Harvey urges public scrutiny of a database of alleged gang members

> "TO ACTUALLY COVER TECHNOLOGY PROPERLY, IT'S ABOUT SOCIETY AND CULTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS"
> —EMILY BELL, JOURNALISM PROFESSOR

and had huge implications for personal privacy and surveillance. Meyer's focus on what could otherwise be considered a micro-beat produced some important stories that were nationally relevant.

An unexpected benefit was, in some cases, that this narrow approach expanded Meyer's geographic focus. In one memorable story, he found a city in Idaho where police-worn cameras were already the norm. This reporting was instrumental in illuminating the politics around body-worn cameras—including the fact that police officers sometimes support mandates to wear them, a narrative that wasn't well explored at the time. It also challenged the idea that the technology was new or untested, and helped hone in on the actual accountability problems that body-worn cameras raise. He went on to write about those issues, like whether footage could be edited by officers, how it would be stored and maintained, and, crucially, how the public could access it.

Now, as a staff writer, I'm trying something similar in my own work. One of my beats is "self-driving cars." Sure, I may write up the latest Google accident report, but I'm also filing open-records requests to state and federal agencies, visiting test tracks and labs, interviewing the technologists developing sensors for these vehicles, reading academic work about robot-human interaction, and covering congressional hearings. As this technology advances and becomes more widespread, the need for investigative coverage will become clearer still. The ongoing federal investigation into a fatal crash by the driver of a Tesla using his car's Autopilot system may be a cultural turning point that will shape the future of driving. But it's also a good example of how reporters who focus on self-driving cars are (or ought to be) well-prepared to cover the investigation and the broader questions it raises.

LEFT: SANDY HUFFAKER FOR REVEAL; OPPOSITE: CARLO ALLEGRI/REUTERS

These strategies are attempts at avoiding technology coverage that is, in Díaz's words, "a mile wide and an inch deep." I'm not just covering Google, the leading company working on this technology and a prominent voice shaping public perception of it, I'm tracking the technology itself and the processes by which it will be integrated into public life.

Sara Watson, a research fellow at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism and author of the report "Toward a Constructive Technology Criticism," says the quality of technology coverage (and criticism, in particular) is improving, but there's still a long way to go. "Critical angles on technology can live in a lot of different forms: reported pieces, op-eds, blog posts, the business section, satire, science fiction," she says. "The thing that's missing on the critical side of the coverage is an attention to what the positive, constructive alternatives could be. That's the hardest question to answer, and that's especially hard if you are writing as a journalist. But helping readers imagine alternatives to the things that aren't quite working for us, or on our behalf, is the way to start holding institutions accountable." Signs of progress, Watson says, can be seen in the very makeup of some newsrooms. At BuzzFeed, for example, the tech-focused San Francisco bureau has a reporter on the labor beat. "A position that's hard to imagine a few years ago, but seems natural given all the surfacing concerns about working in technology and disruption of labor markets," she says.

In some cases, Watson argues, the critics doing the best work may be the people with the closest ties to the tech industry. She cites blogger and tech entrepreneur Anil Dash and programmer Marco Arment as people with "critical voices" who are "closest to the machine so they are well received." In other words, what they say is more likely to have actual impact.

Being a relative insider in the tech world can be helpful to reporters, too. Mark Gurman, who has covered Apple for the tech-insider site 9to5Mac since he was in high school, and who is known in the industry as a "scoop machine," snagged a tech reporting job with Bloomberg after graduating from college. He first cultivated sources at Apple because he was interested in technology—not journalism—and figured out how to go to the "right events" to meet people. Those connections, and his understanding of tech, proved valuable for him as he moved into blogging. "Talking to people who work at technology companies, you have to have a certain level of expertise," he says. "You have to be able to talk the same language."

CNN broadcast Facebook Live videos from Dallas the night five police officers were killed there

He attributes his success breaking news about one of the most secretive companies on the planet to meeting the right people over time and choosing stories carefully. "I was balancing this reporting with college," he says, "so I really only had time to focus on the bigger stories." Plus, he adds, "The scoops don't come from PR people."

Despite all the excellent tech reporting out there, the signal to noise ratio can make it difficult to suss out the muckraking from the muck. The obvious difficulty for reporters is, you can't cover everything. But the pressures are made all the more difficult by newsrooms' limited and often shrinking resources and by the tech sector's increasing involvement with the media.

Even for web-native media ventures, 2016 has been a year marked by losses. Mashable fired several editorial employees as part of a dramatic shift in editorial direction, with plans to emphasize video entertainment over news. Layoffs have also hit the International Business Times, BuzzFeed, Newsweek, and Vice News—though, at Vice, the company characterized the cuts as part of its larger expansion into video.

At the same time, audiences are as fractured as ever, forcing newsrooms to think more deliberately about who they're serving. Sites like The Information, Pando Daily, Recode, and TechCrunch are widely known in Silicon Valley, but not necessarily influential outside of the tech industry. In the opposite direction there's The Verge, a once-niche technology site that has expanded beyond gadgets coverage to focus on entertainment, science, and transportation. (Vox Media, which owns The Verge, acquired Recode in 2015.)

At The Verge, an editorial approach that prizes both breadth and depth seems to be paying off. Its editorial team is reliably quick on news-of-the-day items, but also routinely wows with original feature stories that are just as much about business, culture, health, and criminal justice as they are about technology. One memorable story, in which Colin Lecher details the monopoly on prison phone service, is impressive both for its reporting and its online presentation. It features a ticker that counts how much money you'd have to pay if the time you spent reading the article was spent making a call from prison.

The Verge also recently launched a new section—a gadget blog it calls Circuit Breaker—that exists primarily as a Facebook page, a move that shows a savvy willingness to experiment in the digital space where many of its readers already spend much of their time. It's a bold move at a time when Facebook's success appears to be at odds with the well-being of journalism organizations. Elsewhere, a growing number of news organizations find themselves leaning on billionaires for financial support.

Pierre Omidyar, the eBay founder, has launched two investigative news organizations: First Look Media, in 2013, and, before that, Honolulu Civil Beat, where I worked for several years as an investigative reporter covering politics. Jeff Bezos, the Amazon founder, bought The Washington Post for $250 million in 2013 and has since leveraged his ownership across tech products,

offering limited free access to Washington Post stories on the Kindle Fire app and free six-month digital subscriptions to the Post for Amazon Prime members, for example. He's also made substantial investments in the newsroom.

The Washington Post has had solid tech coverage since before the Bezos era, including dedicated blogs (and now newsletters) that focus on cultural and policy aspects of technology. But it's not clear that more resources for the newsroom, or Bezos's goal to dramatically grow The Washington Post's national standing, have significantly enhanced the paper's approach to tech. This is an area of particular interest to outsiders who wonder about the extent to which Bezos is involved editorially. The Post has rejected claims that Bezos has tried to sway the Post's coverage about Amazon, or himself. What the paper published about The New York Times's investigation into Amazon workplace culture was largely sympathetic to Bezos. The headline read: "Is it really that hard to work at Amazon?" To be fair, that story also repeated many of the most devastating details from the Times story. Plus, Erik Wemple, a media critic for The Washington Post, on his blog blasted Amazon's response to the Times as "weak." A spokeswoman for the The Washington Post, Shani George, said Bezos's ownership of the paper "absolutely [does] not" affect its coverage of him or his companies. The paper declined a request for further comment.

BuzzFeed, which has its own robust and serious news effort, has generated controversy for revitalizing sponsored content, an advertising strategy that's been around for a century but one that is potentially complicated in a world where atomized content travels the social web alone, unbundled from the website where it originated. Even Facebook, not a proper news organization but a platform that's now considered crucial to the journalism industry, has faced scrutiny for editorial decisions. Back in May, after Gizmodo reported that former Facebook workers said they routinely suppressed news stories of interest to conservative readers, the Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg issued a statement promising there was no evidence of this kind of bias. Internal documents, obtained by The Guardian, painted a slightly more nuanced picture: Facebook guidelines instructed editors on how to "inject" stories into Facebook's "trending topics" section—or "blacklist" topics for removal.

In August, a hoax story falsely claiming that the journalist Megyn Kelly had been fired by Fox News for supporting Hillary Clinton was promoted by Facebook as a trending topic for several hours before being removed. In September, Facebook deleted an article, posted by Norway's largest print newspaper, that featured the iconic Vietnam-era photo of Phan Thi Kim Phúc, frequently referred to as "napalm girl." Facebook initially defended the decision as consistent with standards that ban users from publishing images of naked children.

Espen Egil Hansen, the editor of Aftenposten, responded with a blistering open-letter to Zuckerberg. "First you create rules that don't distinguish between child pornography and famous war photographs. Then you practice these rules without allowing space for good judgment," Hansen wrote, calling Zuckerberg the "world's most powerful editor." Eventually, Facebook relented. But the episode set off a fresh round of debate over whether Facebook has an ethical obligation to acknowledge the journalistic functions it performs.

During a talk at the Nieman Foundation in September, Jill Abramson, formerly executive editor of The New York Times, called Facebook "the biggest publisher on earth." Pointing to the furor over its newsfeed and the takedown of the Pulitzer Prize-winning napalm photo, she said, "I don't think that [Facebook] can maintain this 'We're content neutral' stance forever. They have got to step up and take some responsibility."

All this is happening at a time when journalism's advertising-based revenue model is shakier than ever, and news organizations have all but lost their grip on distribution. Facebook drives an overwhelming volume of traffic across the Web—up to a quarter of all site visits, according to the social media management firm Shareaholic in 2015, and 40 percent of traffic to several top news sites, according to data from the web analytics firm Parse.ly. The platform's recent decision to emphasize status updates from individuals, as opposed to publishers, in people's news feeds generated panic among newsrooms that have already seen traffic from Facebook plummet in recent months.

Companies like Facebook and Google have the power to make or break a newsroom. That's what makes Facebook, in particular, a daunting "partner-competitor-savior-killer," as the writer John Herrman put it.

Media companies aren't just covering tech companies, after all, but partnering with them and, on a deeper level, competing with them. Distribution is only one element of what's at stake. Facebook and Google, along with a handful of other leading tech companies, are also scooping up a huge portion of overall digital ad revenue—65 percent of it, or $39 billion of the $60 billion spent on Internet ads in 2015, according to Pew's 2016 State of the News Media report.

Even more devastating to news organizations is Facebook's dominance in mobile advertising. In 2015, at a time when audiences were dramatically shifting away from desktops and toward mobile devices, Facebook already got 77 percent of its total ad revenue from mobile ad sales. News organizations, many of them with majority-mobile audiences, are nowhere near Facebook in terms of overall revenue or mobile share. "There is money being made on the web," Pew wrote in its report, "just not by news organizations."

This likely reflects yet another area where Facebook is trouncing the media: audience engagement. While loyalty to individual news brands is declining—most people who read an article on a cellphone don't end up reading any other articles on that site in the same month, according to a separate Pew study—engagement with Facebook remains high. Globally, Facebook users spend an average of 50 minutes on Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger platforms every day, a stat that's unimaginable for most media companies. That influence appears to be carrying over to an area where Facebook's involvement is still relatively new: live video. "CNN is only showing Facebook Live video," Scott Austin, a technology editor at The Wall Street Journal tweeted the night five police officers were killed in Dallas. "Facebook has become a TV broadcast network virtually overnight."

MEDIA COMPANIES AREN'T JUST COVERING TECH COMPANIES, BUT PARTNERING AND COMPETING WITH THEM

KIM KULISH/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Facebook, whose offices in Menlo Park, California are shown here, insists it is not a media company though it is a news source for many users

By almost every measure, tech companies are, in fact, far more powerful than media companies. Herrman, writing in 2015 for The Awl, argued that the messiness between the two sectors may not resolve itself until there's a clean split—one in which the press foregoes access, refuses to play by Silicon Valley's rules, and fully embraces its role as a "marginalized and aggressive" antagonistic force. Then again, he concedes, a Fourth Estate like this might not be able to sustain itself. Others, like Kelly of Wired, take the opposite tack. News organizations distancing themselves from Facebook won't solve the problems the media faces in the mobile-social age.

"The solution has to come out of the same matrix the problem is in," Kelly says. "I suspect the way we move forward is not relying on big paper investigative spotlight teams, but it will be slightly more decentralized, slightly more ecological, slightly more systematic."

In the past year or so, several leading tech companies have carved out even more prominent spots for themselves in the news ecosystem. The most recent example is the Facebook live video initiative. Before that, it was Instant Articles, a platform launched with a few high-profile publications last spring. (Instant Articles are now open to all publishers.) There have been similar efforts by tech companies to leverage news as a way to keep people's attention, including projects by Snapchat, Google News, and Apple News.

For news organizations, these partnerships represent the substantial relinquishing of distribution control, at a time when media companies have already lost their influential position as the leading gatekeepers of news and information.

"Should we be regaining control of distribution?" the Tow Center's Bell asks. "I think it will be regrettable if news organizations didn't at least have an idea of how that might happen. There is a danger to just say, 'Okay, this has been dismantled to the point where ad sales, technology, marketing, etcetera, can all be shrunk back to a really small portion of what we do, and we put faith in the idea that Google, Facebook, and whatever comes next will always make the distribution of high-quality journalism a priority.' But it's easy to see how those publishing skills may just disappear from publishing."

That prospect carries frightening implications for any journalist who believes in the importance of autonomous news operations as a foundational value. "Being really distinct from government, from commerce, is what makes journalism journalism and not PR," Bell argues. "How do you maintain that integrity of separation while at the same time really not being able to exist outside the system?"

Bell says the challenge for news organizations will be to think critically about what it actually means to be a media company today. Being a news organization won't be about selling newspapers, or even just having a website. The New York Times, for example, is selling its own dinner kits—including ingredients for recipes you can find on the NYT Cooking website.

Five or 10 years ago, leading technology-minded journalists and media theorists often talked about the importance of diversifying revenue. Today, that conversation has evolved. Media companies aren't just tasked with creating more financial streams; they're being forced to reconsider what they're actually producing and distributing—and for which of the rapidly multiplying number of platforms.

"Revenue is a proxy for product," says Bell. "Diversifying revenue doesn't just mean new ways of making money. It actually means changing completely what you do and being prepared to carry on changing." ■

The New Wisdom of the Crowd

In "The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change," Harvard Business School professor Bharat Anand examines the importance of making connections as a key to success for media companies

BY BHARAT ANAND

Scandinavian media giant Schibsted publishes Verdens Gang or VG, the number one online newspaper in Norway and the nation's number two print daily. Schibsted's approach to news is noteworthy because it "boasts some the most profitable sites of any traditional media organization in the world," writes Harvard Business School professor Bharat Anand in his new book "The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change," published by Random House this fall. One key to Schibsted's success is recognizing that today connections matter more than content. This excerpt examines the evolution of VG online:

Torry Pedersen and Espen Egil Hansen are not managers you would expect to find in charge of one of the most impressive business transformations of any newspaper in the western world—Pedersen started his career as an editor, Hansen as a photographer. But in 2000 they came together to lead the online division of VG.

During the next year and a half, two events occurred that were entirely outside the managers' control but would change their entire approach and philosophy. The first was the explosion and sinking of the Russian submarine Kursk. Hansen said, "For three or four days it was out in the Bering Sea as they tried to save the crew. It was an ongoing story, a huge drama that went on and on—we had to keep updating. It was really a wake-up call for me." Then came 9/11.

> We were one of the few news sites in the world that managed to stay afloat. We never went down. It was incredibly important for us, because we delivered news throughout, minute by minute. The main reason was our technical team. It had the nerve, the attention, within minutes, to take everything else off our news site, except four lines of news in the beginning. So our servers didn't crash. We'd update these four lines of news about the disaster as we received it in real time. This decision about four lines that we made then turned out to be important—we built from there.

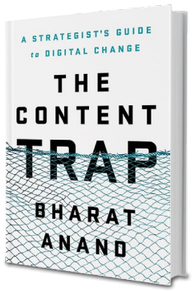
Out of these experiences Pedersen and Hansen developed an entirely new approach to journalism—a "three-layer" approach. Said Hansen:

> The first layer is live or near-live: We are telling you things as they are happening. Journalism there is a process. Underneath this first layer we have a sketch of a story—this is what has happened, this is what we know now, with more editing of the story. And finally there is the traditional news story—written in full, edited, and then published.

Coming from a traditional newsroom, the three-layer approach was sacrilege. The layers represented very different philosophies about news production. It wasn't just the difference between a daily news cycle—a culture that defines most newsrooms even today—versus a live news culture; it was the difference between traditional publishing and a wiki approach. The third layer was just like news production at a traditional paper—edit a story, then re-edit, until you're ready to publish. The first layer was exactly the opposite: publish first, even if as a single sentence, and edit later—like Wikipedia entries. A key sentence Hansen brought back to the team: "We will be back with more." "That was a crucial sentence," he says. "I don't know if anyone else did that, at least not from traditional media."

Already these changes were creating a news culture dramatically different from the parent organization's 150-year-old one. But there was more to come. Go to VG's front page today and you'll see certain unusual features: a predominance of pictures rather than text; an absence of "sections"; on the front page, a seamless blending of stories around politics, entertainment, sports, or culture; and, a long—indeed, a very, very long—page. In all these respects, VG's approach differs to this day from most major news sites around the world.

The long, "infinite scroll" feeling of the front page was decided mostly by happenstance, and ran counter to expert editorial opinion. Hansen again:



"The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change" by Bharat Anand (Random House)

> The long front page happened mostly by accident. We started to produce more, but we didn't have a strong team to edit at that point, so the front page just grew. We would add a new story at the top and just move the rest below it. Torry saw this and got mad—he felt we should prioritize more. So we reduced the length of the front page. But almost immediately, traffic fell. We then started to look into this more, experimented with short and long pages, and it turned out that people really loved the long.

This also gave rise to our visual language and philosophy. With each scroll, we offer something for every reader—culture, politics, sports, travel, technology—rather than "sections" as in a traditional paper. And we put the most important news at the top, but if you scroll down the front page, we are basically telling you that you can get the main stories of the past twenty-four hours.

Hansen elaborated: "When we started there were sections, like in the paper. From the beginning, Torry Pedersen said we needed a new approach. In every screen picture, there should be a mix of news, sports, and entertainment. The reason? There's something for every reader on every page."

And then there were the pictures, as Hansen described:

> As a photographer, I have always been interested in perception psychology. So we started with huge pictures. Torry came in screaming, "What the hell is this?" But because it was big, it was effective. When we took it down, our traffic fell. We agreed from then on that things should be both big and small—not like the archive, where everything is the same size. As journalists, we are telling you what is dramatic or important.

The reason most news sites to this day still have few pictures isn't that they aren't effective—they are. The reason is that online sites are still shaped by print prejudices. Create a newspaper in the traditional manner and the pictures that accompany news stories are the last thing put in, not the first.

Go today to most news sites launched by traditional papers and you'll see a format little changed from ten years ago—a lot of text, few pictures, similar font sizes, relatively short front pages, the print cycle determining the news day, metrics that track monthly unique visitors rather than daily, an edit-then-publish approach, and sections. In all these respects, VG chose a radically different approach. Indeed, as traditional news sites remain attached to their print brethren's hip, it's digital-first sites like Twitter and Facebook that most resemble Schibsted. In March 2015 ESPN reorganized its front page in a similar manner. Over the next several months, traffic soared.

The unorthodox Oslo-based Verdens Gang is the number one online paper in Norway

STIAN LYSBERG SOLUM/NTB SCANPIX

VG's new approach to building and running its news site was in place by 2004. But that December another world event—the tsunami that ravaged Southeast Asia—ushered in a signature feature of VG's online newsroom. Hansen described what happened:

> We created a simple tool for users to send us pictures or stories. We invited them: Create your stories here. Tell us where you are. The response was incredible—we got stories by the hundreds. I think we were the first news organization in the world with a picture on the ground sent by a telephone. This led us to ask a question we now ask over and over during major events: "Can we help readers help each other?"

In the years that followed, this question became a focal point of VG's newsroom approach during major events. In 2009 volcanic ash from eruptions in Iceland spread from Iceland to Scandinavia, then to the rest of Europe and as far south as Morocco, fueled by the jet stream. More than ninety-five thousand flights were eventually canceled across Europe and as far away as China. Every flight in Norway was canceled, including medical search and rescue helicopters—an unprecedented event. VG's response was not just to publish more content—it was to create an app. By ten o'clock the first night, it had created "Hitchhiker's Central." Hansen explained:

> It wasn't news. It was a tool. It was like a marketplace. "I have a car, I am going to Trondheim, if you want a ride, let me know and we can share the petrol." Or, "I am stuck here, need to get there." We would hide their phone number but still make the connection between readers. That's all we were doing, connecting people.

The result was remarkable:

> It took off. We were connecting people by the thousands, not only in Norway but in the whole of Europe and beyond. There were bus trips organized through this from all the capitals in Europe—Spain, Bulgaria, France, everywhere. We were sending people to weddings, to funerals. We were getting children home. We sent a cat to a cat exhibition in Finland. It was just amazing. And then people started sending pictures to the newsroom to say thank you. "We are on our way to Bulgaria, thank you, VG." So two things happened. We got pictures for an ongoing news story that involved

basically everyone. And because people sent the pictures with their phones, we had their numbers and could interview them. It strengthened our reputation.

Creating an app for users to upload car pool information is not a natural starting point for a news story about a volcano—unless you ask the question the VG newsroom now asks during any major event: "Can we help readers to help each other?" Hansen described its significance:

> That's the question we ask, not just whether there's a story we can tell them. If there's a crisis or breaking news event, we ask that question always. We will say, are you there? Do you have pictures? Click here. So if something is breaking, you will see immediately it's up there. It's just part of how we work now.

The 2009 swine flu epidemic put more wind in the sails of the new approach. The Norwegian government had recommended that every person get a flu shot and had delivered supplies. But it was up to each local community to decide where to administer the shots and who got priority. "There was a huge demand for information," recalled Hansen. VG created a wiki-based map of all the communities in Norway, allowing users to post information on where and when people could get the shot. Again, the results were remarkable: "Within minutes it started to work, and within hours the information was complete."

"Can we help readers help each other?" may seem an odd question for a news organization to ask. News, you might think, is something that's broadcast; it isn't "social." But the question shifted VG's mindset about what it did—from "being important" to "being relevant," as one editor put it. It changed the way VG covered news, and it changed what VG covered. And with dramatic results, as Hansen described: "For each large news event, we gained traffic and reached a new peak. These stories are absolutely critical for us." ■

FREDRIK SOLSTAD/VG VIA NTB SCANPIX

Torry Pedersen of Norway's VG advocates a three-layer approach to covering breaking news

SEEKING THE ULTIMATE COMPLEMENT

Growth often comes not from providing better content, but from offering better and cheaper complements

While Schibsted has capitalized on the power of "user connections"—fostering the development of networks that connect users—Bharat Anand's research also underscored the importance of "product connections." One example is the case of complements—where a user's value from consuming two products is greater than the sum of her values from consuming each alone. As Anand points out, this particular idea isn't a new concept, and it's been popularized recently by economists Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff. But it has special relevance for content companies, as value shifts from content to its complements. In his book, Anand offers four lessons about complements:

1 Expand your vision, don't narrow it Some complements are obvious: Hot dogs and ketchup, printers and cartridges, razors and blades, right and left shoes. But many are not.

Tire manufacturer Michelin offers restaurant guides, eventually becoming so successful in doing so that it creates a worldwide standard for assessing food quality. It's not that making tires somehow translates into skill at recognizing good food; it's that making customers aware of high-quality food in faraway places spurs driving.

Complements often explain the success or failure of innovative products, too. A big reason for the Kindle's success wasn't the features that improved e-reading, but a key complement that facilitated e-purchasing: wireless connectivity. Growth and innovation often come not from offering better content, but from offering better and cheaper complements.

It's good not to define products or business boundaries too narrowly. To do this, ask what complements your customers find useful when they buy from you, not just what features they care about in your product alone.

At its launch, the iPhone was basically a phone with a few added features. It had all of nine applications: Maps, Stocks, Weather, iPod Calculator, Mail, Camera, and a few others. At first glance, the apps weren't what made the iPhone unique; BlackBerry and Nokia phones also had some. But Apple's were accessible by simply touching the screen, and the product was easy to use. Apple's hardware innovation seemed to be driving sales and success once again.

Within a year, however, the consumer research indicated something quite interesting, and quite different. Whereas users of other smartphones spent about 70 percent of their time on plain-vanilla phone service—making calls—exactly the reverse was true of the iPhone. The nine apps alone—the complements to hardware and voice services—were accounting for more than 55 percent of time spent by Apple iPhone users.

2 Dare to price low—but know where to do so Managing complements requires not only identifying them and increasing their supply; it requires pricing them right. But what's "right"? Apple's pricing of iPod and iTunes violated perhaps the best-known rule in the book for pricing complements—the familiar razor-razor blades model.

"Price the durable cheap, and make profits off the consumable," was the conventional thinking around complements pricing. The rule had worked beautifully for decades—for Gillette and other manufacturers. It had also worked marvelously in other product settings, such as printers and cartridges, or consoles and videogames.

Why did Apple reverse this tried-and-true approach? It had to do with who was on the other side of the table when it came time to splitting profits. For every song downloaded, only one studio held the artist's rights. So Apple's position was a bit like negotiating against a monopolist. But when it came to the $100 in profits that Apple commanded from the iPod, the company was negotiating with dozens of near-commodity component assemblers. The power there rested with Apple.

"Price hardware low, services high" is a rule that's sensible for razors or printers, where a single firm made both products. But it wasn't for Apple, since it didn't. Indeed the real lesson about complements pricing turns out to be this: Price according to where you have a competitive advantage, not just based on rules that make sense for others.

3 Exclusive connections: From industry complements to product complements Did it matter whether 99-cent iTunes songs or free pirated music was the real complement to iPod sales? Both yielded similar quality music. Both could be played however long the user wanted. And both made similar contributions to iPod profits. But the two differed in an important respect: iTunes benefited iPod users only; because of its DRM technology called FairPlay, no other MP3 player could access iTunes. Pirated music, on the other hand, aided every MP3 manufacturer.

The fuss over apps isn't because the total number of apps matters to the average, or avid, user. What does matter is exclusivity over them. Create one million apps and it might appear like you're creating a powerful ecosystem for your device, but their competitive effects are neutralized if they are available on competing platforms. Create "killer apps" exclusive to your platform, and that is the nightmare scenario for your rivals.

Consider Maps. In 2012 Apple removed Google's acclaimed app from the iPhone, replacing it with one of its own. It did so not because Google's product was bad or unpopular. Quite the reverse: About 25 percent of smartphone users used it actively. The frightening scenario for a product developer (in this case, Apple) is negotiating with a provider of the killer complement (in this case, Google).

View Apple's decision to remove Maps through the lens of software quality and it appears foolish. View it through the lens of complements management and it suddenly appears far less so.

4 Ask not what your core business is, but know when you're someone else's Complements are marvelous when it comes to creating value for your customer. But when it comes to capturing that value, they invariably benefit at your expense. Consider razors and razor blades, printers and cartridges, CDs and concerts: In each case, one product benefits from lowered prices of the other. So it's important not just to know what business you are in—an increasingly popular strategic question—but to know whether you're someone else's complement.

"Companies are sufficiently focused on their strategy and not on their complements' strategy, but that's how the game is often played," Yale economist Barry Nalebuff told me recently. "You can have the world's best gas pumps. But if you don't have a convenience store, you just lost to somebody who does. GMAC made more money from GMAC [its auto financing arm] than from selling cars. Railroad companies recognized a decade ago that they were worth more for the fiber rights alongside their tracks than for the railroad themselves."

Content businesses continue to learn about the economics of complements the hard way. Ninety-nine-cent and DRM-free music was a choice by Apple, free office applications through Docs a choice by Google, and $9.99 e-books a choice by Amazon. In each case the choice related not only to a strategy for propping up value in the company's core business but to reducing the price of, or even commoditizing, the complements. Therein perhaps lies the greatest challenge for content producers: Their future will depend not only on what they make but on how effectively they manage value-creating opportunities in adjacent areas.

—BHARAT ANAND

Introducing the 79th Class of Nieman Fellows

Twenty-three journalists, including the first Nieman Fellow from Ukraine, are studying at Harvard for the 2016–17 academic year

U.S. Fellows

Michelle Boorstein
Religion reporter for The Washington Post, studies the renegotiation of religion's place in American public life. Her examination will include legal issues, sociological changes, and the history of secularism.

Lolly Bowean
General assignment reporter for the Chicago Tribune, studies the cultural differences between African-American descendants of American slavery and the children of black immigrants.

Tyler Dukes
Investigative reporter for WRAL News in North Carolina, studies best practices for j-schools and newsrooms trying to democratize data-driven reporting for underserved communities.

Felicia Fonseca
Arizona-based correspondent for The Associated Press, studies the plight of American Indian tribes and their efforts to build sustainable economies that don't rely heavily on federal system.

Katherine Goldstein
A former senior editor at Slate and Vanity Fair, studies digital journalism strategies for hiring and retaining a diverse workforce and the particular challenges facing working mothers in the industry.

Roland Kelts
Tokyo-based author, contributing writer to The New Yorker and columnist for The Japan Times, studies streaming media content and the spread of Asian popular culture in the West.

Brady McCollough
Projects reporter for sports and news at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, studies the future of football in America, focusing on medical research and the role journalism plays in communicating the findings.

Jeneé Osterheldt
A lifestyle columnist for The Kansas City Star, studies theories of discrimination and their application to storytelling on diverse subjects. Her research will include black and women's studies.

Jason Rezaian
A reporter for The Washington Post and the paper's former Tehran bureau chief, studies what the new arc of U.S.-Iran relations means for American foreign policy in the Middle East.

Mary Louise Schumacher
The art and architecture critic for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, studies emerging strategies within the fields of architecture and urban design for addressing issues of racial and economic inequity.

Heidi Vogt
East Africa correspondent for The Wall Street Journal, studies religions, particularly the way Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Judaism adapt to societies with an increasing diversity of faiths.

International Fellows

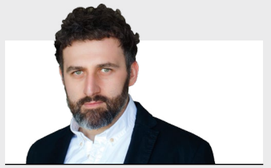
Jassim Ahmad
UNITED KINGDOM
The head of multimedia innovation at Reuters, studies how journalism organizations are exploiting technology, focusing on platforms and storytelling formats.

Georg Diez
GERMANY
A reporter and columnist covering politics and culture for Der Spiegel, studies how a new web-based journalistic platform could enable a worldwide digital salon.

Christian Feld
GERMANY
A Brussels-based political correspondent for ARD German TV, is designing a program to teach European journalists about policies governing cyberspace.

Nkem Ifejika
UNITED KINGDOM/NIGERIA
A presenter at the BBC World Service in London, is exploring media ownership and organizational structures in Nigeria, and how these might be overhauled.

Kim Kyoungtae
SOUTH KOREA
An editor for Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation, studies the role of media in peacefully solving international conflicts, focusing on northeastern Asia.



Maciek Nabrdalik
POLAND
A documentary photographer and member of the VII Photo Agency, studies the social transformations caused by migration, with a focus on religious practices.

Chisomo Ngulube
MALAWI
Chief editor for TV News at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, is examining how to maintain journalistic standards during an era of media convergence.

Karin Pettersson
SWEDEN
The political editor in chief at Aftonbladet, Scandinavia's biggest daily paper, studies how extreme right-wing and racist movements use digital platforms to reach audiences.

Subina Shrestha
NEPAL
A filmmaker and correspondent for Al Jazeera, studies international human rights issues as a lens into how Nepali women and minorities may achieve political rights.

Robert Socha
POLAND
Deputy executive producer for TV documentary programs at TVN Poland, is comparing European and U.S. developments in virtual reality and video storytelling.

Alisa Sopova
UKRAINE
A freelance producer and reporter for The New York Times in Ukraine, studies different writing techniques in English, with a focus on American journalistic tradition.

Marcela Turati
MEXICO
An investigative journalist covering the Mexican drug war, studies current and past systemic violence and its impact, focusing on resilience and the role of the press.

In selecting the Nieman class of 2017, Nieman Foundation curator **Ann Marie Lipinski**, a 1990 Nieman Fellow, was joined by **Laura Amico**, the news editor for multimedia and data projects at The Boston Globe and a 2013 Nieman Fellow; **Henry Chu**, most recently the London bureau chief for the Los Angeles Times and a 2015 Nieman Fellow; **Rohit Deshpande**, Sebastian S. Kresge Professor of Marketing at Harvard Business School; and **James Geary**, Nieman's deputy curator and a 2012 Nieman Fellow.

1966

Robert Caro, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, is the 2016 recipient of the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

1976

Yoichi Funabashi is the recipient of the 2015 Shorenstein Journalism Award, presented by the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University to honor a journalist who has helped American readers understand the complexities of Asia. Funabashi is the former editor in chief of Japan's Asahi Shimbun.

1978

Danny Schechter, who died in 2015, is the namesake of a new journalism prize. Bestowed by the nonprofit Global Center, dedicated to developing socially responsible media, the Danny Schechter Global Vision Award for Journalism and Activism will be awarded annually to an individual emulating Schechter's journalism and social activism. Jose Antonio Vargas is the first recipient.

1979

Hanns Victor Lewis, a former acting national news editor at The Boston Globe, died on October 30, 2015 in Corpus Christi, Texas. He was 70. Lewis was an information specialist in the United States Army from 1968-1969. He joined the Globe in 1979, where he also held the position of assistant foreign editor. He finished his journalism career there before retiring to Corpus Christi.

Sabam Siagian, the first editor in chief of The Jakarta Post, died in Jakarta on June 3. He was 84. The first Nieman Fellow from Indonesia, Siagian began his career at the Christian newspaper Sinar Harapan (later renamed Suara Pembaruan) and became the editor in chief of the English-language Jakarta Post in 1983, a position he held until 1991. He continued writing columns about Indonesian foreign policy until his last months.

1980

William R. Grant, an award-winning reporter and television producer, died on May 15 of complications from pneumonia. He was 72. He had worked at The (Louisville) Courier-Journal in Kentucky, the Detroit Free Press, and the San Francisco Chronicle. At Boston's public broadcasting station WGBH, he spent two years as managing editor of "Frontline" and a decade as executive editor of "NOVA." At New York's WNET, he was executive director of public television series and specials centered on science and natural history. Over the course of his career, Grant won 13 Emmys and eight Peabody Awards.

1981

David Lamb, a longtime foreign correspondent for the LA Times, died on June 5 in Alexandria, Virginia. Lamb, who had been battling lymphoma and esophageal cancer, was 76. He had reported from the frontlines of the Vietnam War for United Press International and covered the fall of Saigon for the Times. He returned to Vietnam 20 years later to open the paper's Hanoi bureau. He also was the Times bureau chief in Cairo, Nairobi, and Sydney before leaving the paper in 2004. Lamb was the author of several books, including "Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns."

1983

Eli Reed's photography retrospective, "Eli Reed: A Long Walk Home," published in 2015 by the University of Texas Press, was named one of Photo District News' photography books of the year.

1984

Derrick Z. Jackson spent the fall semester at Harvard Kennedy School as a Joan Shorenstein Fellow. A Boston Globe columnist as well as a climate and energy writer for the Union of Concerned Scientists, he is examining race and climate change.

1990

Yossi Melman is interviewed in "Zero Days," directed by Alex Gibney. Melman, a journalist specializing in security and intelligence affairs, was a consultant on the cybercrime documentary.

1994

Larry Tye is the author of "Bobby Kennedy: The Making of a Liberal Icon," which was published by Random House in July. Tye traces Robert F. Kennedy's path from staunch anti-communist to liberal icon.

1998

Howard Berkes of NPR has been recognized by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) for "Inside Corporate America's Campaign to Ditch Workers' Comp," a collaboration with ProPublica's Michael Grabell. COSH called it one of 2016's outstanding health and safety stories.

1999

Chris Hedges is the author of a new book, "Unspeakable: On the Most Forbidden Topics in America," written with David Talbot. The book, published by Skyhorse Publishing in October, explores issues such as the rise of Donald Trump and Black Lives Matter.

2001

Ken Armstrong of The Marshall Project is a winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting, sharing the prize with T. Christian Miller of ProPublica for "An Unbelievable Story of Rape."

2004

Masha Gessen's book "Where the Jews Aren't: The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan, Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region" was published by Schocken in August.

2005

Ines Pohl will assume her new position as editor in chief of Deutsche Welle, Germany's international broadcaster,

"THE MIND OF SOUTH AFRICA"

Daniel Berger, NF '63, recalls the South African journalist who found common ground with Nieman Fellows from the American South

Allister Sparks, *NF '63, former editor of South Africa's Rand Daily Mail, died in Johannesburg on September 19 of complications from pneumonia.*

The struggle between the forces of segregation and civil rights in the South was the big story when the Nieman Fellows came together in September of 1962. The class was heavy with Southern (white) journalists who had been covering it.

Into this group walked that year's South African fellow, Allister Sparks, who had been covering apartheid, its excesses and discontents. It was a perfect fit. Discussions raged comparing the two situations, trying for each country to distinguish the particular from the universal. There was much talk of W.J. Cash's classic book, "The Mind of the South." This made such an impression on Allister that he wanted to render the same service to his own country, and almost three decades later did, with "The Mind of South Africa."

Allister had done his spell in London, and enlightened us on the differences in folkways of ourselves and the denizens of Fleet Street. Some years later, as the Baltimore Sun's London correspondent, I realized how his insights had prepared me.

Allister was always eager to absorb all he could of American life. We were invited to witness a Harvard football game (Yale, of course) from the press box and attend the coach's locker room press conference. Allister showed up, wearing a silk ascot round his neck, no doubt the attire for a sporting event in Johannesburg but a bit conspicuous in a Cambridge locker room.

A year or two later, a South African diplomat from Washington came through the Midwest, to enlighten some of us about the misunderstood regime he had the honor to serve. I dropped Allister's name. The diplomat was happy to tell of an indignant parliamentarian so infuriated that he punched out Allister in the legislative halls of Cape Town. The government's disapprobation may have helped Allister rise to the editorship of the Rand Daily Mail.

Allister kept up his American connections. He and the late **Saul Friedman**, NF '63, exchanged visits. Allister's London and American contacts served him well when the ownership of the Daily Mail, discouraged by the black readership Allister was attracting, unceremoniously dumped him. He was able to carry on covering the story as a foreign correspondent in his own land for The Washington Post and the Observer of London. In the latter's service he won the Louis Lyons Award.

I always thought that the value of the Nieman year was best exemplified by the richness Allister took from it, and contributed to it, and I believe he agreed.

LEFT: MICHELLY RALL/GETTY IMAGES; OPPOSITE: JOSHUA MCKERROW/THE CAPITAL GAZETTE

"THE BRAVEST MAN I EVER MET"

Judy Nicol Havemann, NF '80, describes how Robert Timberg "changed many minds, including mine"

Robert Timberg, *Marine, reporter, editor, acclaimed author and Nieman Fellow in the class of 1980, died on September 6 in Annapolis, Maryland, of respiratory failure.*

He was the bravest man I ever met. Shockingly disfigured by a land mine that blew off his face when he had only 13 days left in his tour of Vietnam, he endured 35 reconstructive operations. At Harvard, we hung out. He never once mentioned Vietnam.

Oddly, he chose one of the most public of careers, journalism, in the most visible of venues, Washington. He turned out to be good at it. He was a reporter's reporter. He hated show-offs and "bullshit, self-help" articles and books.

During Nieman seminars, when the questions veered toward "accommodating cocktail party chatter," in the words of **Paul Lieberman**, Bob was the Nieman who most often asked tough questions. He was friendly with the entire Nieman class but gravitated toward the "foreign" Niemans—**Suthichai Yoon**, whose English-language newspaper, the Nation, in Thailand was continually threatened with being shut down for its fearless reporting; **Daniel Passent**, who was the political columnist for Polityka, the chief newsmagazine in Poland, as the Communist party clung to power; and South African **Aggrey Klaaste**, who never walked out of a room without automatically checking his back pocket for his "pass."

Timberg said he decided to become a journalist almost as a fluke—his wife told him he had written good letters from Vietnam. He got a master's degree from Stanford University, and landed a job on the Annapolis Evening Capital—without ever publishing a word, or learning to type.

After his Nieman year, he had risen to White House correspondent for the Baltimore Sun when he wrote "The Nightingale's Song," profiling his fellow Naval Academy grads who had become leading figures in the government during the Reagan years. At the time, Vietnam vets were still suspect in many quarters, but Timberg's deeply researched journalistic account of John McCain's ordeal as a prisoner of war in Vietnam changed many minds, including mine.

In his 2014 book, "Blue-Eyed Boy," he finally wrote about his wounds. It drew on all the threads of his extraordinary life—his great writing talent, his wide reading, his energy, fundamental kindness, competitiveness, smarts, and yes, bravery, to tell the story of, in his words, "how I decided not to die."

He reluctantly agreed to be the master of ceremonies when the National Endowment for the Humanities launched what by that time had become the obligatory federal veterans program for those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This self-controlled, acclaimed author whose book exemplified transparency and openness looked out over a sea of high-level officials of government agencies and lost it.

He asked, "Where the fuck were you when WE came home."

in March 2017. Pohl joined Deutsche Welle in 2015 as a foreign correspondent based in Washington, D.C.

2007

Andrea McCarren won her 21st Emmy Award for regional news reporting at the 58th News and Documentary Emmy Awards - National Capital Chesapeake Bay Chapter in June. She was recognized in the general assignment reporting category for her reporting and producing work on "What is a Free Range Kid?," about "free range parenting." It aired on WUSA9, the D.C. CBS affiliate.

2008

Gaiutra Bahadur has been named a Sheila Biddle Ford Fellow at Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute, part of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research. She is spending the current academic year working on a biography of Janet Rosenberg Jagan, an American Marxist who in her 70s was president of Guyana.

Kate Galbraith has been honored by the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS) for her article "New Print Magazines Are Embracing Narrative and Finding their Niche." The story, published in the Fall 2014 issue of Nieman Reports, was reprinted in the Spring 2015 IALJS Literary Journalism newsletter and named the year's best article.

2009

Margie Mason is among the Associated Press staff members who contributed to "Seafood From Slaves," a series that won the AP the 2016 Pulitzer Gold Medal for Public Service. The series exposed the inhumane practices common in Southeast Asia's fishing industry and led to the release of more than 2,000 slaves.

2010

Beth Macy is the author of "Truevine: Two Brothers, a Kidnapping, and a Mother's Quest: A True Story of the Jim Crow South," published by Little, Brown in October.

2011

Tony Bartelme is the author of a new book, "Send Forth the Healing Sun: The Unexpected True Story About Teaching Brain Surgery in the African Bush." It tells the story of U.S. neurosurgeon Dilan Ellegala who, after taking a sabbatical at a remote hospital in Tanzania, began NGO Madaktari, a group that sends hundreds of doctors around the world to create a new model for global health.

Stefan Candea is the co-founder and coordinator of a new investigative journalism network, European Investigative Collaborations (EIC). Network members weigh possible story ideas, and EIC partners—including Der Spiegel and El Mundo—work together to develop tools for investigative reporting.

2012

Kristen Lombardi was honored with a Dateline Award from the Society of Professional Journalists and a National Association of Black Journalists Salute to Excellence Award for "Environmental Justice, Denied," about environmental problems that disproportionately affect minority communities and the little done to address them. She contributed to the Center for Public Integrity project.

Raquel Rutledge has been recognized by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) for her Milwaukee Journal Sentinel investigation into a chemical linked to hundreds of injuries and some fatalities in workers at flavoring companies across the nation. The story, "Gasping for Air," was named by COSH as one of 2016's outstanding health and safety stories.

David Skok is an associate editor and head of editorial strategy at the Toronto Star. Skok formerly was The Boston Globe's managing editor and vice president, digital.

2013

David Abel is the story director, writer, and producer of "Sacred Cod," a documentary about the collapse of New England's cod fishing industry. It premiered at the 2016 Camden International Film Festival. It will air on the Discovery Channel in 2017.

Katrin Bennhold is winner of a 2016 Marco Luchetta International Press Award, a prize given by Italy's Fondazione Luchetta Ota D'Angelo Hrovatin to honor investigative journalism with a social message. Bennhold was recognized for her New York Times story "Migrant Children, Arriving Alone and Frightened."

Alexandra Garcia was on The New York Times team that won an Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association for their work on "Outlaw Ocean," a multimedia series on lawlessness on the high seas.

Yaakov Katz is the editor in chief of The Jerusalem Post, Israel's leading English-language newspaper. Katz spent nearly 10 years at the paper as a military correspondent and defense analyst. Most recently, he served for two years as a senior policy advisor to Israel's minister of education and diaspora affairs.

Laura Wides-Munoz has been promoted from director of news practices to vice president for special projects and editorial strategy at Fusion.

Betsy O'Donovan is the new general manager of DTH Media Corporation, publisher of The Daily Tar Heel, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's independent student newspaper.

Jane Spencer has joined Guardian US as deputy editor, strategy. She will spearhead innovative projects, focusing on mobile and video. Most recently she worked at Fusion.

Beauregard Tromp has been appointed deputy editor of South Africa's Mail and Guardian. He has been news editor at the paper since early 2016. He has reported from three dozen countries in Africa.

2015

Celeste LeCompte is the recipient of a 2016 Mirror Award for her article "Automation in the Newsroom," published in the Summer 2015 issue of Nieman Reports. The cover story, which was recognized in the "Best Single Article – Digital Media" category, explores how algorithms are helping reporters expand coverage, engage audiences, and respond to breaking news. The Mirror Awards, administered by Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, honor excellence in media industry reporting.

2016

Grzegorz Piechota is the recipient of the Silver Shovel Award, which recognizes lifetime achievement and contributions to the International News Media Association. Piechota began his career at Poland's Gazeta Wyborcza in 1996 as a reporter, rising to head its multimedia newsroom.

Chris Weyant is the illustrator of a new children's book, "Can I Tell You a Secret?," which was written by Anna Kang and published by Harper Collins in May. It is the third children's book by the husband-and-wife team.

NIEMAN'S FIRST NOBEL

Members of class of 1988 reflect on Nobel prize winner Juan Manuel Santos

FERNANDO VERGARA/ASSOCIATED PRESS OPPOSITE: LISA ABITBOL

Juan Manuel Santos and his wife Maria Clemencia Rodriguez

Colombian President **Juan Manuel Santos**, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, is the recipient of the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Nobel Committee selected Santos for the prize "for his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end, a war that has cost the lives of at least 220,000 Colombians and displaced close to 6 million people," according to a statement. Santos has said he will donate the prize money to help victims of the conflict.

Santos's Nieman classmates **Rosenthal Alves**, **Eduardo Ulibarri**, and **Eugene Robinson** reflected on their history with Santos, who was deputy publisher of Colombia's El Tiempo newspaper prior to his Nieman year.

"I was delighted to see that [Santos won]," said Alves, director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas, Austin. "I think it's good for Colombia. I think it's very fair because Juan Manuel has had an obsession for working toward this in a country where he knew that this is a very complex issue. He knew he would face fierce opposition, and that the peace would be used as a political tool, as it was."

Robinson, a Washington Post columnist, added, "I can only imagine his disappointment at the vote rejecting the agreement, and my guess is that his reaction to the Nobel will not be one of personal pride, but of hope that maybe it can get the peace process underway again."

Santos' classmates were not surprised when he embarked on a career in politics. Ulibarri, a Costa Rican journalist, said that Santos had the traits necessary to become a successful, compassionate politician. "I have also always perceived him as a highly focused, methodical, and strategic person, qualities that have shown during the long, complicated, and to an extent, unprecedented and admirable peace process in Colombia."

Alves added: "Sometimes we joked this guy one day will become president of Colombia. ... A couple of decades later, sure enough he was and is the president of Colombia."

SHINING A LIGHT ON SLAVERY AND RESEGREGATION

The AP and Tampa Bay Times honored for their investigations

The Nieman Foundation hosted the ceremonies for three prizes earlier this year:

Steve Taylor and Margie Mason

Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism
The Associated Press won the 2015 Taylor Award for its series "Seafood From Slaves," which exposed the inhumane, abusive practices pervasive in Southeast Asia's fishing industry. The series led to the release of more than 2,000 slaves, prosecution for a number of offenders, and significant reforms. The AP journalists behind the series were Asia regional reporter and 2009 Nieman Fellow **Margie Mason**, Myanmar correspondent Robin McDowell, national writer Martha Mendoza, and Myanmar reporter Esther Htusan. The Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism was established by the Taylor family, publishers of The Boston Globe from 1872 to 1999, to encourage fairness by U.S. journalists.

Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism
The Tampa Bay Times won the 2015 Bingham Prize for "Failure Factories," a multimedia series disclosing how district leaders in Pinellas County, Florida transformed five local elementary schools into some of the state's worst through resegregation and intentional neglect. The Times team behind the series included education reporters Cara Fitzpatrick and Lisa Gartner, investigative reporter Michael LaForgia, data reporter Nathaniel Lash, photographer Dirk Shadd, and editor Chris Davis. The Bingham prize, established in 1967 to commemorate the work and life of journalist Worth Bingham, honors investigative reporting for stories of national significance where the public interest is being ill-served.

J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project
Susan Southard won the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize for "Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War." Nikolaus Wachsmann won the Mark Lynton History Prize for "KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps," while Steve Luxenberg was honored with the J. Lukas Work-in-Progress Award for "Separate: A Story of Race, Ambition and the Battle That Brought Legal Segregation to America." Established in 1998, the Lukas Prize Project includes three prizes honoring the best in American nonfiction writing.

Democracy At the Dinner Table

A photographer sees a disconnect between U.S. citizens and the government

I OFTEN FEEL MY JOB IS TO TRICK people into paying attention to the world around them. Beauty, light, and composition are my tools to draw one's eye into the events and issues many would rather avoid.

When I started as a photographer, I described myself as a community journalist. At the Concord Monitor in New Hampshire I started a column called "This Life" to spotlight everyday people and the often invisible moments of life. While spending days in the homes of strangers, I learned a new and more important tool: intimacy.

Years later, as a staff photographer for The Washington Post, I found myself on the deserted streets of D.C. an hour after American Airlines flight 77 hit the Pentagon. Before I knew the details of 9/11 I witnessed police frisking Sikh taxi drivers wearing turbans. Confusion and cultural ignorance surfaced. The Post sent me to Iraq and Afghanistan. I had never considered the possibility of being a war photographer.

In Iraq, covering suicide bombings and roadside bombs became a gruesome daily routine. I quickly grew frustrated with the disconnect between the war and our readers.

I returned to the tools of the community journalist and started another column called "Unseen Iraq," this time for the Post. Again, I focused on highlighting the seemingly invisible moments of life but this time for those involved in war. I never stopped covering the bloody reality of war, but realized that people wouldn't care about the suffering of others unless they could relate to them first. Intimacy.

While covering the Middle East through the years, many people in the countries I cover have asked me how citizens of the United States see democracy. Most of them have wrestled with the concept in their own country, experiencing protests or war.

In Iraq, the first person to ask me this was a prostitute. Halla styled herself from posters of Britney Spears. She turned to prostitution to support her two kids after her civilian husband died in 2003 as the result of a U.S. bomb. I answered her by mentioning ideas from the Bill of Rights. But, since then, the question has haunted me. To many people across the globe, democracy is intertwined with capitalism and money. To others, it means the ability to vote or freedom of speech. But the word democracy often is influenced by their own experiences with the U.S. military, drones, and corruption.

After covering failed and fledgling democracies in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, I am intrigued by the definition of democracy in my home country. I see a disconnect between U.S. citizens, the government, and how people cling to the word "democracy."

For the past few years I've felt compelled to return home to produce a long-term ethnographic study of democracy in the United States—a multimedia piece providing an intimate window into how the country's citizens see democracy and the role of government in their lives. A project that will push people to pay attention to the politics that shapes their lives. A visual record that documents the state of democracy at this moment in U.S. history.

Who knew my year at Harvard would coincide with such an unusual presidential campaign and the rise of Donald Trump. I took Jane Mansbridge's democratic theory course in the Kennedy School, exploring political philosophers from Aristotle to Muhammad Asad. Matthew Desmond's class, Poverty in America, was eye-opening. Many of my classes overlapped in ways I never expected. In Helen Vendler's class on Yeats I read words lamenting, questioning, and remembering war.

Reconciling ideas about democracy from what I studied and what people believe has been a challenge. Taking advantage of my time at Harvard, I picked the brains of many of the most dedicated minds on this topic. I invited professors from Harvard and activists from Boston to my tiny Cambridge apartment for "democracy dinners" where, prodded by good wine and food, candles, and a record player, intense conversations on democracy unfolded.

There were disagreements and allegiances. Professors and authors contributed their expertise and experiences to help find an answer to what democracy means today, and suggested questions for the people I will meet while on the road for this project. We discussed where one should go, what metrics to use, and what questions to ask.

My project on democracy in America began in North Carolina a day after the presidential election. I move to a different county every month, having more democracy dinners along the way. Coverage has started with an @ourdemocracy Instagram feed. I am trying to use photography, once again, to bridge a society so polarized we seem unable to see each other clearly. ■

Andrea Bruce

My plan is to travel around the country asking people questions about democracy

Andrea Bruce, a 2016 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance photographer and co-owner of the photo agency NOOR

LEFT: JONATHAN LEVINSON; OPPOSITE: LISA ABITBOL

Nieman Online

Filmmaker Laura Poitras, Bob Woodward, and Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, discussed journalism's role in exposing government abuses during a Sept. 11 celebration of the Pulitzer Prize centennial. Additional videos now online feature biographer Robert Caro, "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, and reporters Sara Ganim and Sacha Pfeiffer

NIEMAN.HARVARD.EDU/PULITZER

"The wonderful thing about power is that it's dangerous to exercise it. It's also dangerous to not exercise it."

—BOB WOODWARD
ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE WASHINGTON POST

NiemanReports

From the Archives
"Islam: Reporting in Context and With Complexity," the cover story for the Summer 2007 issue, examined the challenges journalists encountered in their coverage of Islam and of extremism in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. The package features a look at the media's misperceptions of the war in Iraq, an Islamic scholar's insights on the many faces of Islamism and jihadism, and photo essays by Anja Niedringhaus, Iason Athanasiadis, and Alexandra Boulat.

Engaging Your Audience
In excerpts from an American Press Institute report, Mónica Guzmán, NF '16, offers practical guidance on how to build audience—and relevance—by listening to and engaging with readers. The former Seattle Post-Intelligencer online journalist talked to 25 news leaders and innovators across mediums to create a set of best practices in audience and community engagement.

NiemanLab

The Newsonomics of Podcasting
News industry analyst Ken Doctor explores how the on-demand audio world is growing and adjusting to its success. The five-part series looks inside the business of podcasting and examines host-read ads, financial support from listeners, and the role journalism and news can play in the evolving medium.

NiemanStoryboard

Digital Innovations and Storytelling
New York Times multimedia editor Yuliya Parshina-Kottas and "Frontline" managing producer Andrew Metz were among the presenters at 2016 Seoul Digital Forum, an international conference examining virtual reality, Instagram, and other trends in digital storytelling. The white paper, "Doing Good Journalism in Unexpected Ways," outlines the takeaways.

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