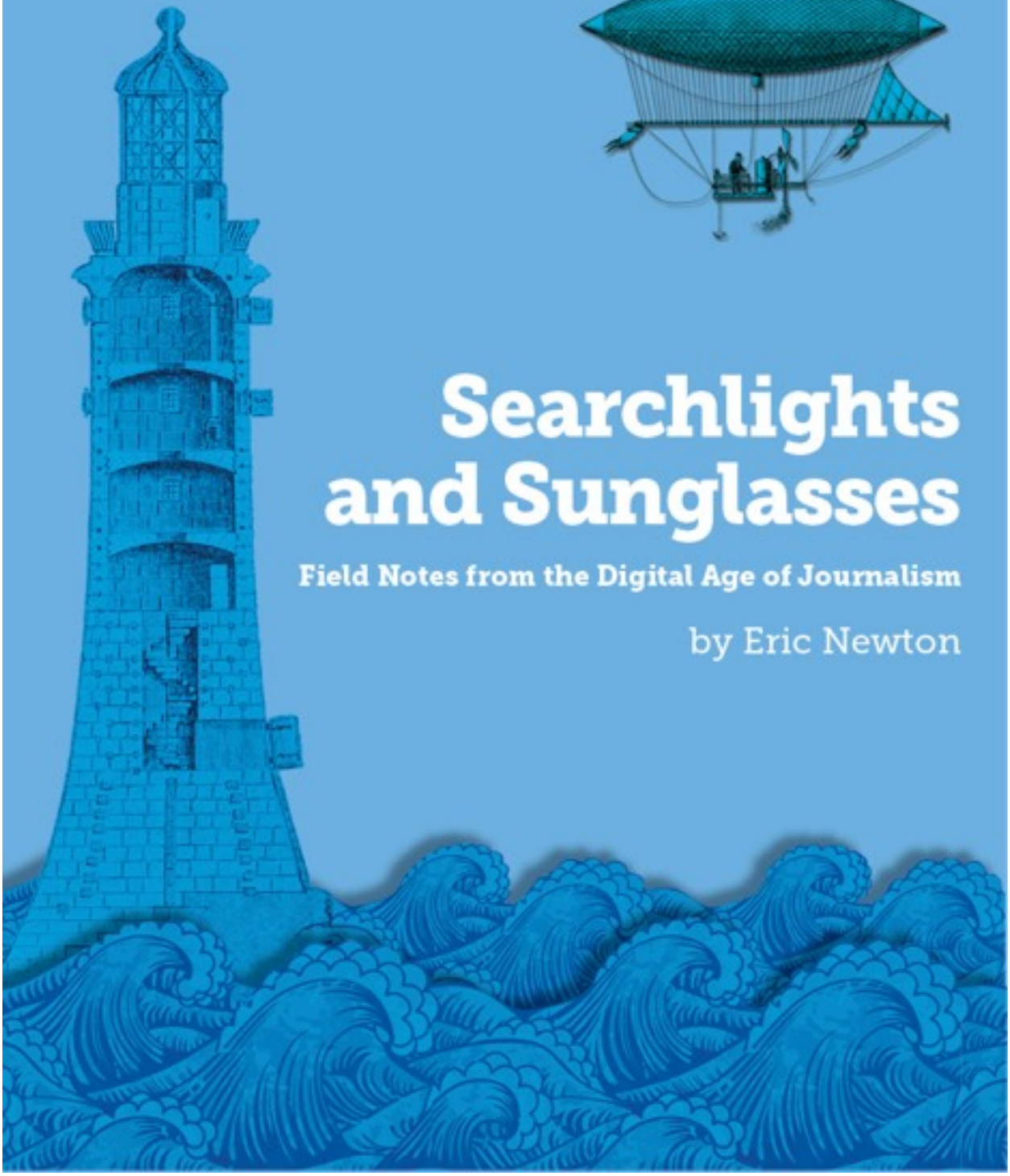
Knight Foundation



Searchlights and Sunglasses

Field Notes from the Digital Age of Journalism

by Eric Newton

Introduction

Through the centuries, we have used the symbol of a shining light to signal a search for truth. Old Diogenes looked with his lantern for an honest man. The Bible revealed the light of religious truth. The Dark Ages were bad; the Enlightenment, good. It seems only natural that journalists, when their time came, would take the metaphor to heart. From America, Mark Twain reported: “There are only two forces that can carry light to all corners of the globe — the sun in the heavens and The Associated Press down here.” Today on their websites, Scripps company newspapers display their logo, a bold blue lighthouse, shining the light “so people can find their own way.”

I thought of this one day on Miami Beach, where the summer sun beat down like a Caribbean drum, a pat-a-bee-bee-bam on hot steel. I was looking for my friends in the

crowd but could not see a thing. The light was just too bright. Everyone was hiding in plain sight. Even squinting, I could not see them through the glare.

A lantern, lighthouse or any kind of searchlight, I did not need.

I needed a pair of sunglasses.

Wandering blindly on scalding sand, it's funny what you think about. Diogenes wandered too, a cynical ascetic who was not really looking for the truth, but carrying his lantern during the day to mock all that was Greek. Diogenes was a contrarian. And he had a point: Light is not always good, nor is darkness always bad.

In the digital age of communications, journalists need new metaphors. Shining a light works when information is scarce, and it still is, at times. But today news also can be abundant. When everything is already all lit up, a searchlight is just another thing you can't see. Think of it: The Internet has become a perpetually open library of the human mind; social media, the new Messenger God of breaking news; more data produced every second than can be consumed in a lifetime. The glare is overwhelming. Truth hides in the open.

Today, journalists who want to help us see, to help us find our way, must find a way to provide sunglasses to calm the blinding light. We need honest filters. We need journalistic search engines and tools that dig deep for facts. We need digital sunglasses — technology that can tell you if social media is being generated by software like Twitter Bots or by the public relations people who manage online reputations. All in all, the role of professional journalism has at least doubled. We need to verify and clarify stories, but also navigate and curate cyberspace.

Thinking digitally could save us. Yet two decades after the dawn of this new age, most journalists and journalism educators still resist it. Too many people, processes, policies and products are creatures of the past. In a way this is to be expected. “There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things,” wrote Renaissance philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. The innovator “has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions.” Every day, however, someone pays the price for journalism’s persistent inertia. Once rock-solid companies crumble. Old-school students and professionals can’t find work. Our public policies and professional ethics preserve historical fantasies instead of embracing new realities, new possibilities.

I’ve seen this up-close. I work at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, a leader in journalism and media innovation philanthropy. The foundation is based on the personal fortunes of Jack and Jim Knight, who built the company that became Knight-Ridder, once the largest newspaper group in America. Foundations, I’ve learned, are like watering holes. Everyone shows up, from the 20-something social entrepreneurs to the venerable media icons. Access to this broad spectrum of people has shaped this book.

The younger visitors to Knight Foundation, the digital natives, travel light, no clunky machines or ideas weighing them down, fluently negotiating what Paul Simon calls these days “of miracle and wonder.” The young live lives with few boundaries. They grew up with smart phones, with literally the whole world in their hands. But the older ones, the digital immigrants, often come to see us in a state of anxious astonishment. When they started in news, no one knew that the mechanical age of mass media, inspired by Gutenberg more than 500 years ago, was coming to an end. The veterans remembered typing stories on manual typewriters. They remember how after much hot lead and

clanking presses our townspeople would get their news. Today, for every new idea young innovators have, elder journalists seem to have a new worry.

This digital book looks at how this new age is changing (or not changing) journalism and journalism education. It consists of field notes from a search for ways that great reporting can survive and thrive amid constant change. Though these articles and speeches first appeared during the past few years, disturbingly little happened to address their issues.

The book's chapters trace the outlines of Knight's journalism and media innovation grant-making during the past decade. The first describes how we arrived at this new age of communication. The next focuses on journalism education reform through the "teaching hospital" model. We then look at issues of freedom and public policy, some of which may never be settled. The next chapter examines what it means to say journalists must not just inform communities, but engage them in every facet of how news is made, from story tip to impact.

Searchlights and Sunglasses is about journalism and change. You do not need be a bleeding-edge technologist to understand this book; it's for the middle of the bell curve, the folks who by now should be changing but can't seem to get started. In a way, the book is like a giant pair of sunglasses, filtering the endless beams of "new information" about the future of news. Thanks to a team organized by the nation's oldest journalism school, the University of Missouri, with the touch of a button the book becomes a classroom edition. In this "learning layer," you will find lessons, discussions, activities, videos, links and research assignments designed to help teachers and students get the most out of a digital book experience.

What you won't find here is a final answer to the question of the future of news, because there isn't one. Like democracy itself, professional journalism is a somewhat messy experiment. We don't know exactly where it's headed, but some things seem clear. The digital age is not some kind of fad. It is nothing less than the fourth great age of human literacy — after the rise of the image, language and mass media. Visual literacy made tribes possible. Language brought us cities. Mass media inspired modern nations. Will digital literacy unite the world? Perhaps. The unprecedented power of data will not automatically end famine, disease or war. Digital tools are just that, tools. They amplify human hopes and fears. They allow the entire networked world to react, or overreact, instantly. Today's tools provide a powerful test for us all.

Without a doubt, the digital age has turned traditional journalism upside down and inside out. Almost everything is in flux: who a journalist is, what a story is, when and where the news arrives and how we deal with newly interactive communities. The times are literally rewriting the fundamental who, what, when, where and how of journalism. A journalist can be anyone. A story can be a database. It can be available anytime, anywhere in any medium. It can include commentary and analysis from the community itself. If the news community doesn't adapt, we may lose an entire century of professional journalism development. The watchdog tradition, the courage, the ethics — all of it — will be as useful as a flashlight in Miami's bright summer sun.

The one thing that isn't changing is the why of journalism, why free people need independent thinkers who will engage, on behalf of us all, in the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth. We assume readers of this book already believe an understanding of current events is essential if free people are to run their communities and their lives. You are a student, teacher, journalist or a citizen consuming and creating news. This is our starting point: We believe in journalism. The challenge is to find our

place as both chroniclers and curators of a new world, to add today's digital skills and ideas to the mix and get on with it, because much more is on the way. Truth be told, we ain't seen nothin' yet.

Chapter 1: A new age of communication

Accepting continuous change

It's no secret that today's media world is driven by technology -- smart phones, desktops, laptops and tablets -- that very few really believed would come. Digital media unleashed a tidal wave of information but at the same time destroyed traditional media economics. This was never clearer than in recent years, whenjournalism lost more than 18,000 local news jobs. The Knight Commission for the Information Needs of Communities joined others to declare a crisis in local news. Newspapers closed. Congress held hearings. Civic leaders worried about their towns.

A journalism grant-maker for more than 60 years, Knight Foundation historically funded the teaching of best practices. Suddenly, we seemed to be training journalists for jobs that no longer existed. Rather than waiting for the next disruptive technology, the foundation decided to help journalists who wanted a say in their own futures. Our first major digital effort was the Knight News Challenge, a $25 million dollar initiative to invest in breakthrough ideas in news and information. The challenge seeks innovations within emerging trends such as open data or mobile media. In six years, the Knight News Challenge reviewed more than 13,000 submissions and funded scores of projects.

Can a foundation without research and development experience change the future of news? Consider news challenge winner DocumentCloud. The software uploads, organizes and shares documents on an open-source platform. Sharing original documents with readers increases journalistic credibility. Los Angeles Times reporters, for example, used DocumentCloud to crack the scandal in Bell, California, where city leaders had overpaid themselves millions of dollars. This is just what journalists from The New York Times and investigative nonprofit ProPublica hoped for when they developed the powerful tool. After just a few years, more than 600 newsrooms are using DocumentCloud. Two years after launch, it had been downloaded 250,000 times, and the documents themselves had been viewed 60 million times.

This chapter looks at just those sorts of opportunities. In the new digital age of communications, anyone can be a media innovator. Fears of the destruction of traditional media can be replaced by the excitement of creating better, more powerful journalism. If we can adopt them as fast as they come, digital tools and techniques will narrow the gap between where journalism has been and where it needs to be.

A history of the future of news

If we look at media history through a different lens,
the past three centuries can help us predict the century to come.
We'll start with four fundamental points about the future of news:
We're in a profoundly different age of human communication.
In the long run, science fiction writers are better at predicting the future than the experts.

Every American generation grows up with a different form of media on the rise.

Young people always play key roles in inventing new forms of news media.
A definition: When I mention “news” or “media” that is meant to include, most importantly, its use for quality journalism. Journalism excellence is desperately needed, now and in the future.

From visual to digital

There have been only a few major ages of human communication: The visual age, the age of language and the age of mass media. And now, the digital age. That’s it. In all of human history, just four great phases of communication.

Evolution of Human Communication, new categories

Age	Human capacity	Date (c.)	Concept of time
Visual	Curiosity	1-2 m BC	Natural
Language	Orality	100,000 BC	Cyclical
Mass media	Literacy	1450 AD	Linear
Digital	Fluency	1991 AD	Multi

Source: Various

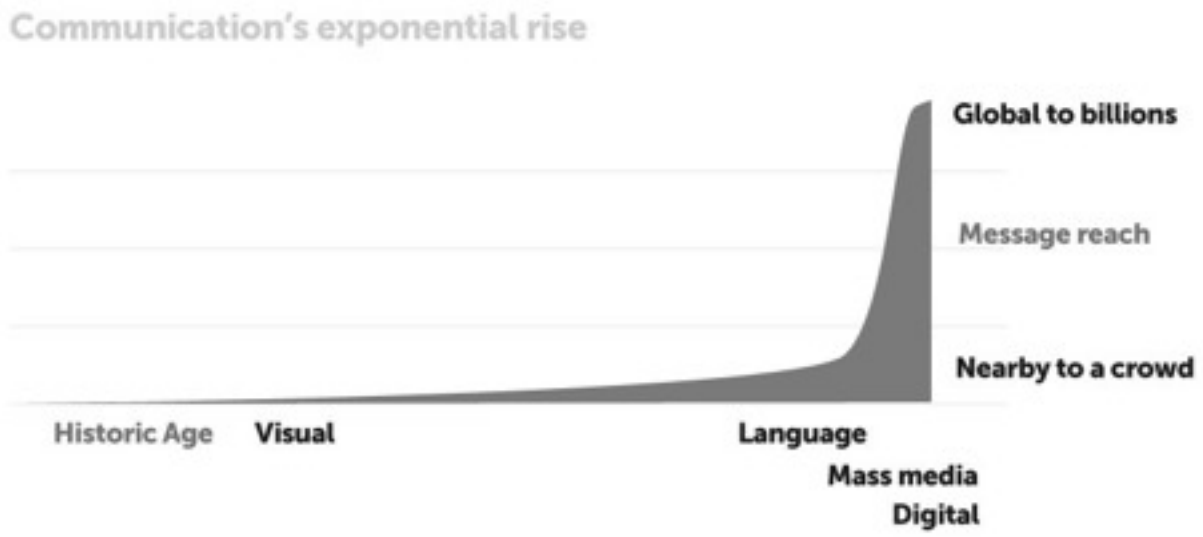
In the beginning, more than a million years ago, before language, proto-humans wandered the earth. We don’t know when the first news story occurred. But we can guess the news report went something like this: “Aaaaaaaa!” You can recreate the first news report by standing up, pointing a finger at whatever is about to eat your family and repeating the headline: “Aaaaaaaa!”

Roughly 100,000 years ago, something new happened. Language. A breakthrough. Once we could talk, we figured out how to write. (In my view, talking and writing should be

seen as two sub-eras within the larger age of language.) Whether spoken or depicted in symbols, language allowed us to say much more than ever before.

A little more than 500 years ago, the age of mass media arrived. It started with movable metal type in Europe and spread with the rise of popular printed books. Newspapers, radio and TV -- forms of mass media that came after -- had the same one-way, assembly line quality. Journalist, story, medium, audience. Today we call those forms legacy media.

Just 20 years ago, the World Wide Web arrived. Almost immediately after British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee let loose his HyperText Markup Language and its cousins in 1991, we knew something had happened. The electrons of news now make up a global network, moving in all directions at once. We could communicate one-on-one, one-to-some, one-to-many and, amazingly, the reverse. The result has been a kind of organicecosystem made up of five billion humans with cell phones who can tell you instantly if news is breaking and research just about anything.



If you draw a picture of the shape of the history of news, it's a familiar one. More than a million years of visual news and then, suddenly, language and everything else. The historic trend produces a "hockey stick" graph, mirroring the exponential adoption curve we might see when looking at the growth of digital media.

We sometimes talk of the ages of communication as distinct periods of history, but it's important to remember they overlap. As we know, on the web the visual, language and all mass media forms converge. But as you likely haven't heard, media forms joined cyberspace in pretty much the same sequence as they were developed in physical space. First, symbols. Then text, illustrations, photographs, audio and video. We taught computers to shape media in the same order in which we ourselves originally created it.

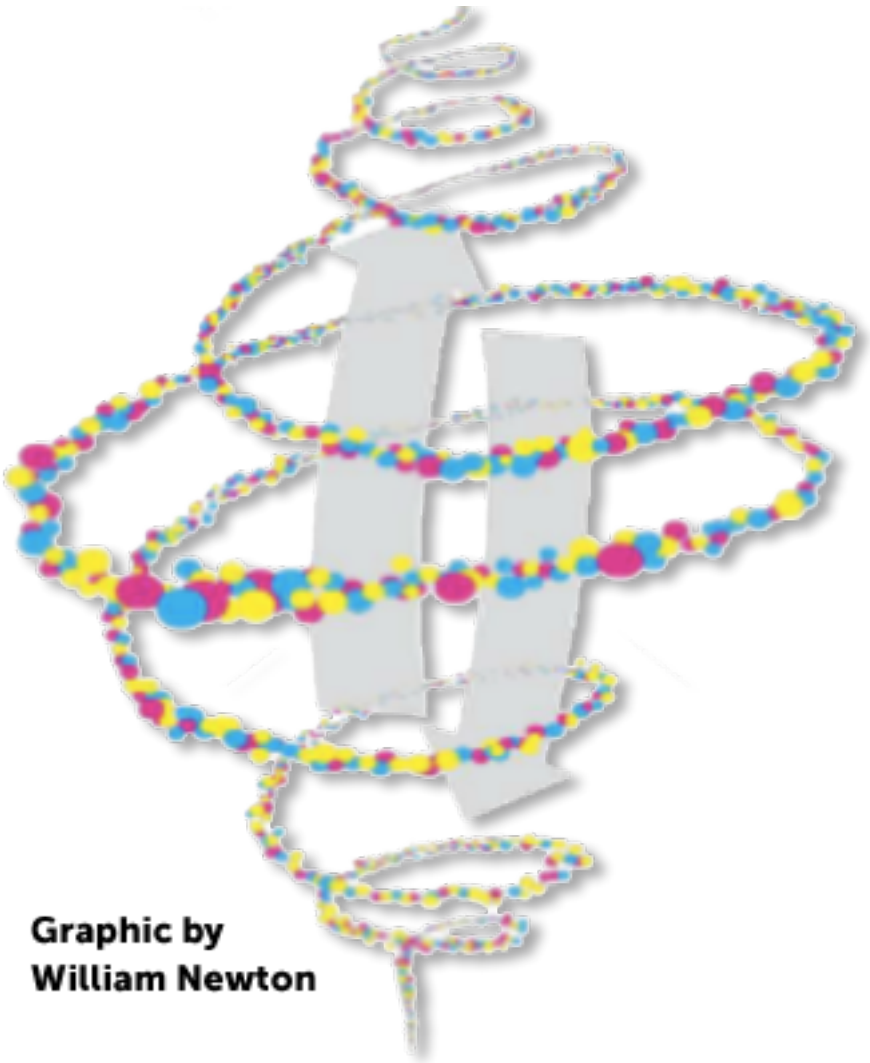
Did traditional media people see it coming? Hardly any of them. Twenty-five years ago, the American Society of Newspaper Editors has a panel on the future of newspapers. Introducing it was the legendary Christian Science Monitor editor Kay Fanning. She urged the group to stay realistic by avoiding "science fiction." Only the Wall Street Journal's distinguished panelist spoke in earnest about computers. A couple of years later, Fanning would resign over cutbacks at the Monitor. Within a generation, in 2009, the Monitor would become the first national newspaper to switch from print to digital. Shortly after that, ASNE dropped the word newspaper from its name, becoming the American Society of News Editors. Clearly, the panel on the future of newspapers could not see clearly into the future.

Some seemed to have a glimpse of things to come. The Knight-Ridder company spent millions developing editorial ideas for a tablet decades before the iPad. What it couldn't see was the technology that would make the tablet a popular consumer product and how

and when that tech would come to market. Why not? Because humans just aren't very good at predicting the future.

Here's a drawing from Joseph Pulitzer's New York World on Dec. 31, 1899. It predicts life 100 years later, in 1999. At first, it seems right: There are giant buildings, ships and airships. But look closer. The buildings are stone. The boats are steamships. The aircrafts are dirigibles. No glass towers. No jet planes. No nuclear subs. Since giant stone buildings, steamships and blimps are not routine features of modern life, we'd have to say they got it wrong.

But the idea of time, it turns out, is more complex than that. The swirling graphic on this page was drawn to explain the evolution of an idea. To me, it also shows the flow of the sum total of ideas, the flow of history. It's a kind of cyclone that not only cycles, but that also moves forward, unleashing tremendous forces. We get the future wrong because we don't see the cyclone of things happening all at once around us.



Graphic by
William Newton

That leads to my second major point. Science fiction writers dream their way to futures the rest of us can't seem to calculate. Jules Verne, for example, wrote a century before it happened that the rocket projectile would leave Florida, go to the moon and splash down in the ocean. Or you might ask why the orbits of geostationary satellites are called Clarke Orbits. Why? Because sci-fi writer Arthur C. Clarke conjured communications satellites. He went public with the idea in a 1945 magazine article. Clark would later say he had invented the most commercially viable communications idea of the 20th century, and gotten just $35 — his freelance fee. Twenty years before the web, Clark did it again,

predicting how people would be able to get all the information needed for their everyday lives from computer terminals in their homes.

How about Skype, which you could have seen on the 1960s television cartoon, The Jetsons? Or the hand-held communicators from the TV series Star Trek? (The fellow who actually invented the cellular phone said Star Trek gave him the idea.) And there's the iPad, first appearing in the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey. Imagination, we see, predicts the distant future more accurately than extrapolation. When predicting the future, it's important to think crazy. Not out-of-the-box crazy, but off-the-planet crazy.

Generational Shifts in Media

Trying to follow my own advice, I found two unconventional best-selling books and then combined their messages with everything I'd learned about history when developing the story line and editing the original content at the Newseum, the museum that celebrates news and the First Amendment. The books are The Fourth Turning, by William Strauss and Neil Howe, describing human cycles of history and The Singularity is Near, by Ray Kurzweil, predicting humans will transcend biology in one upward, exponential thrust.

This exercise revealed my third major point. Every American generation has grown up with a different form of media in ascendance. We talk today about how everything's changing, how young people seem to be in a different media world. Actually, that's not at all unusual.

Strauss and Howe list 12 generations of Americans that have come of age since the days of the American Revolution. Let's consider the earliest one, the Republican Generation. Born as English colonists, between 1742 and 1766, the youngest were mere children when the American Revolution arrived. In those early days, the media form on the rise

was the pamphlet. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" was a runaway best seller. There were colonial newspapers. But the pamphlet was the popular form. An estimated 120,000 copies of "Common Sense" were printed.

It wasn't until the next generation that the weekly papers exploded, thanks to a new contentious country, a First Amendment, and the low postal rates that Benjamin Franklin established, the latter representing the first and longest-lasting U.S. government subsidy for news.

A generation later, yet another new form of media rose up: Populist daily newspapers, not just for the elite, but for everyone: the penny press, it was called. After that came immediate news for all those papers from the Associated Press, courtesy of the telegraph.

In each case, there are myriad reasons for the emergence of new forms of media. Still, there is a clear pattern: New generation. New media form rising. Constant change.

Each American generation comes of age as a different news medium is rising

Generation	Age midpoint	Rising media	Cycle
Republican	1775	Pamphlets	American Revolution
Compromise	1800	Partisan Weekly Newspapers (Helped by U.S. Mail, Postal Service)	

Transcendental	1830	Populist Daily Newspapers (The Penny Press)	Transcendental Awakening

SOURCE: GENERATIONS AND CYCLES FROM "THE FOURTH TURNING";

MEDIA TRENDS FROM THE NEWSEUM, WEB RESEARCH

Imagine folks sitting around more than a century ago, one saying to the other: You know, our child never knew a world without daily newspapers. He is a newspaper native. He never knew how long we used to wait for news to come from the other side of the country. No wonder he has no patience. No attention span.

Sound familiar?

The Fourth Turning had a pattern of its own to reveal: About every 80 years — every four generations — there's a crisis. And about every 80 years — the length of a human lifespan, there's a great awakening. Straus and Howe trace this back to the Renaissance. They say it's a social cycle humans have created because of the interplay of generational archetypes going all the way back to our evolution as a species dependent upon the four seasons.

More cycles in time:
Awakening and crises every 80 years

Generation	Age midpoint	Rising media	Cycle
Progressive	1868	Illustrated magazines, niche publications	Civil War

Missionary	1891	Major metropolitan daily newspapers (Industrial era inventions: Light bulb, telephone, linotype, film, etc.)	Third great awakening
Lost	1909	Photography in print	
GI	1933	Radio newscasts, movies and newsreels	Depression, World War Two
Gilded	1851	The Associated Press (The telegraph)	

SOURCE: GENERATIONS AND CYCLES FROM "THE FOURTH TURNING";

MEDIA TRENDS FROM THE NEWSEUM, WEB RESEARCH

Maybe. No matter the reason, the pattern is there throughout American history. A crisis: The American revolution, followed a little more than 80 years later by the Civil War, which was followed a little less than 80 years later by World War II. Each war is associated with its own generation — and with a different form of dominant media. During the Revolution, the pamphlet. During the Civil War, illustrated magazines. During World War II, radio.

I charted the generations and their media. And so it went, through big papers, photographs and tabloids. Each adding something. Before long you could read, see, hear and watch the news.

Each generation shapes media

The cycle persists even as information explodes

Generation	Age midpoint	Rising media	Cycle
Silent	1951	Glossy color magazines (TV, color TV, home telephones)	
Baby boomers	1969	TV Newscasts (Satellite, cable, video tape)	The 1960s awakening
Generation X	1990	World Wide Web (Digital era inventions, personal computers, the Internet, domestic mail, chat, video games, multimedia)	
Millenial	2009	Mobile and social media (Cell phones, search, blogs, social media, blogosphere, smart phones, tablets, global World Wide Web, universal e-commerce, wearable media)	9/11, recession, World War 3.0

SOURCE: GENERATIONS AND CYCLES FROM "THE FOURTH TURNING";

MEDIA TRENDS FROM THE NEWSEUM, WEB RESEARCH

In this grid we see the Baby Boomers. They grew up when TV was young. When they came of age, so did television. By 1964, it was the most popular news medium in America. The Boomers became lifelong consumers and shapers of TV news. Remember "the revolution will be televised?"

The larger cycles of crisis and awakening appear to be holding. The 1960s "consciousness expansion" came about 80 years after the religious activism called the Third Great Awakening. The crisis continued with 9-11, the global recession and the great cyber war, World War 3.0, coming 80 years after World War Two.

Notice in these charts we do not track when a new medium is invented. We care about when most people are using it, when it comes of age, pops, becomes ubiquitous. That's when it shapes us and we shape it. So it's not surprising to see the role of the Gen Xers in shaping the web, and of Millennials in shaping mobile and social media. Those will be their media forms.

Digital natives will always have a special affinity for digital media, just as Boomers do for television. For writer Marc Prensky, who in 2001 coined the phrase "digital native," it means thinking "fundamentally differently." But how? In the words of Harvard's John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, it means living a global, multitasking life, much of it online, "without distinguishing between the online and the offline." Digital natives consume information and conduct relationships differently than their elders. Their habits will shape future media, and it will shape the world.

Imagining World War 3.0

Why predict a world war, and why call it World War 3.0? Because it's a war in cyberspace, a war that already has started. Our government has declared cyberspace an official arena of war. An estimated 100 countries have cyber armies. Every day there are an undisclosed number of cyber-attacks. If the cycle-of-crisis theory holds, World War 3.0 will expand until it rages around us, the first invisible war, a conflict with the potential to remake the world.

The Millennials will rise up as the heroes of WW 3.0. Though war is destruction at its most unnecessary, at the same time a global crisis can give birth to new unity and purpose. Society could emerge much stronger than before.

A final crisis or another chance to emerge stronger?

Generation	Age midpoint	Rising media	Cycle
Cyber	2035	Intelligent Media (The cloud, grids, robotics, artificial intelligence)	
Visionary	2057	Bio Media (Augmented reality, nanotechnology, media implants, enhanced human capacity	Machine Awakening: The Singularity
Hybrid	2076	Hyper Media (Cranial downloads, thought aggregators, sentient environment)	
Courageous	2098	Omni Media (Thought projection, telepathy, teleportation, telekenisis)	World War 4.0: Humans vs. Environment

SOURCE: GENERATIONS AND CYCLES FROM "THE FOURTH TURNING";

MEDIA TRENDS FROM THE NEWSEUM, WEB RESEARCH

What's next for news technology? Pew research says that in the near term, news media is becoming more personal, portable and participatory. Where will that lead? How about wearable media? Why carry a phone when soon everything you need for communication can all be in your watch? Dick Tracy will be hip again.

Will the generational patterns continue, one new form of media leading to another? It seems so, even as we move into Ray Kurzweil's exponential explosion of information technology. Why? Because people provide the fuel that drives media innovation. People want to know. They want to tell. They are billions of minds struggling to understand, billions of voices struggling to be heard.

End of the daily paper, rise of Intelligent Media

To look at the coming century, combine generational media, historical cycles and exploding technology. By 2035, we'll be in the middle of the era of Intelligent Media. All media will be smart. You'll carry on normal conversations with computers, in any language, ask them questions, have them do your research. News bots, news drones, robot scribes will be the norm.

The Leader, the first newspaper in the Territory of Assiniboia, founded in northwest Canada by Nicholas Flood Davin in 1883. The existence of newspapers was considered evidence that regions were ready for official status as towns, territories, etc. Photographer: O.B. Buell

In the United States, this also would be the time when we see the end of the printed, home-delivered, paid circulation daily newspaper. Print won't die. But that particular animal in the ecosystem, the home-delivered daily, will. Household penetration rates have declined in a straight line for 70 years. Extrapolate that and we'll see the end in April, 2043.

By then, you'll be able to experience any event anywhere on the planet as though you are there, so long as a news bot is there. The NewsBot 360 will send thousands of feeds simultaneously from all angles. You'll be able to sit in a virtual room or wear goggles and see everything, as though you were there. You may even be able to feel and smell it. So if you wanted to see a State of the Union address, or a Super Bowl, if they still exist, you always will have a great seat.

After WW 3.0, free governments will have universal data transparency. Every piece of public information will be public from the moment it enters a government computer. You'll be able to send a research bot out to look for city managers earning $800,000 a year for running small towns like Bell, California. Your digital sunglasses, the filters you use to find what you need, will be many times smarter than those of today. You will be able to access your information profile, the data that controls those filters, and correct it the same way you can correct your credit score today.

The words now describing legacy media will disappear — and so will a lot of those media. They'll morph into new forms. News will not go away. There always will be

people who try to manipulate information, to abuse power. There always will be people who try to straighten out information, to check abuses of power.

How do we know these things will happen? We don't know for sure. But we see them in books like The Martian Chronicles, movies likeThe Terminator or Total Recall, television shows like Star Trek, The Next Generation. In science fiction, robotics, bionics and artificial intelligence flourish. If you give up straight line predictions and look at the exponential pace of technological growth, they seem like a mathematical certainty.

By 2057, America will be in the midst of the era of Bio Media -- implants and augmented reality for everyone. You'll be able to tap into all the information you want about any place you go. Lots of people will appear to be talking to themselves. They'll actually be talking in cyberspace through their media implants. If a journalist wants to know what a city thinks about something, the question is asked and answered live by millions of people. Voting won't be bound by geography. You'll earn votes with civic service and use them on whatever elections you want.

Humans will become more and more indistinguishable from machines. Why would people allow it? That door already is open. Why should Uncle Mike die when a brain implant will save him? Future generations will want nanotechnology to eliminate their genetic flaws, seamless bionics to have perfect replacement limbs. That's Kurzweil's prediction in The Singularity is Near.

Computer memory space will be virtually free. A person's entire life experience will be saved in the cloud: what you thought and did, things you saw and heard. Sophisticated filters will help you pass your life experience along to your children, or to everyone. They'll be able to ask your digital memory questions after you the person are dead.

By 2076, it will have happened. Machines will be self-aware. People will talk about the creators of Data in Star Trek and Sonny in I, Robot (or Robbie, in the original) the way they talk about Jules Verne today. If the pattern holds, it will have been 80 years since the 1960s. Time for another great awakening. The Singularity is a kind of point of no return. Somewhere around mid-century, Kurzweil says, it will happen: The unbelievable result of current, quite believable, exponential increases in computing power.

That's when things really get interesting: An era of Hyper Media, machines creating more intelligent machines exponentially. The code is cracked. Human brains will accept machine downloads. Like Neo in the Matrix, you can learn Kung Fu, or anything else, in just seconds. Like the movie Avatar, the whole environment comes alive and you can communicate with it in basic ways.

News, then, is whatever we imagine we want to know at any given moment. Much more of it may be in images, with our software being able to find just the right ones. As soon as you think of a question, your filters find the answer from the world's ever-fresh aggregation of data. There is a quantum leap in our ability to solve problems. (Or create them.) Defensive software will be mandatory. Who would want their head to be hacked?

The final generation of the century will see the era of Omni Media. Will we even have language once we can be the gods we always have imagined? We will know everything, do anything: We can read thoughts, project commands to objects, move them, teleport them, change them.

Just like science fiction.

But in the end, at least in this mash-up, we still are human enough to follow the pattern of crisis every 80 years. This last crisis — the fight for our own survival. World War 4.0: Humans against a non-human foe. Maybe it's the machines, or the nanobots, or even the earth itself. But our greatest battle won't be in fighting each other, but a battle against something else entirely.

It's scary enough to want to be gone when it comes. And perhaps it won't actually come for a few hundred years. If it's sooner, some of today's children will be here when it happens. They will watch the digital people of the future either prevail and rebuild, or see the end. No matter how it comes out, you have to admit, it's a great story to cover.

From the 18th century to the 22nd we have traveled, and for some, the trip surely has been mid-boggling. Perhaps, if it is just crazy enough, if the fiction seems just impossible enough, it could become fact. No matter how it unfolds, the journey should be of intense interest to today's high school and college students. Why? Because of my final point: Throughout American history, young people have played a major role in the constant reinvention of media. Each new generation drives us forward. It's their desire to express themselves in different ways, through music, journalism or whatever you like, that forever pushes the frontiers of news.

Look at Steve Jobs. He was in his 20s when he helped develop the personal computer. At Apple he reinvented the music, telephone and portable print industries. When he died, someone tweeted: "Born to unwed parents, put up for adoption, dropped out of school and changed the world… what's your excuse?"

Have you ever seen the image floating around cyberspace of the early Microsoft team, all in their scruffy 20s? Hardly anyone invested in the early motley Microsoft crew. Other news pioneers who invented new media forms when they were young: Ben Franklin, for one. Horace Greeley. Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, Lord Northcliffe (inventor of the tabloid), David Sarnoff of radio and Philo T. Farnsworth, who got the idea of TV when he was plowing a field as a teenager.

They embraced the new media technologies of their age and used them to strengthen journalism. But it's hard to find photos or statues of these folks when they were thinking of their greatest ideas. They were just too young. No one knew they'd be famous. That won't be a problem in the era of social media. We'll have the pictures. All today's students have to do is become famous.

New skills for new opportunities

This is a lot to think about. And there's also plenty to do, especially if you are a journalism or communication major. Those things include:

- Engaging with communities before, during and after your search for news.
- Learning truthful storytelling in all media
- Watching a lot more science fiction.
- Fooling around every day with and then mastering new digital tools.
- Inventing new tools yourself — better filters, hopefully — and new business models.
- Rewriting codes of ethics and relearning media law for the digital age.
- Teaching digital media fluency to everyone.
- Finding some good sources so you can cover World War 3.0 (just in case).

I worry about journalism education. I keep thinking of the annual survey of journalism and mass communication students in America, done when social and mobile media

were just taking off. More than half of the college students surveyed either weren't sure anything was changing in media, or said nothing big was changing.

Who are these students, and who is teaching them? I trust the students at the best journalism schools are not among them, because seeing the wonder of the coming century is only the first step. The second step is to worry, because some things never seem to change. As we said in the Newseum: "Always there are those who would control news, and those who would free it; those who would use news to mislead, and those who would use it to enlighten."

Being sure you are on the right side of both history and the future requires the kind of true humility expressed by famed physicist Isaac Newton. About his heralded discoveries, Newton said:

"I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me."

Somewhere in the ocean of truth is the future of news. Happy sailing!

This is an updated version of a talk originally given to students and faculty at Arizona State University as part of the Hearst Visiting Professional program.

The opportunity: To seriously improve our news systems

Way back in the age of mass media, in 1986, professor James Beniger, then at Harvard, produced a useful chart on the civilian labor force of the United States. It showed how the bulk of American workers had moved during the past two centuries from working in agriculture to industry to service, and now, to information. Point being: the digital age didn't just sneak up on us. It's been a long, slow evolution. So shame on us for not changing our laws and institutions to keep pace.

We were well warned. Just after World War II, theHutchins Commission said that traditional media could do much better: They should take on the social responsibility of providing the news "in a context that gives it meaning." In the 1960s, the Kerner Commission said mainstream media wasn't diverse enough to properly tell the story of this changing nation. In the same decade, the Carnegie Commission said the status quo was simply not working, that public broadcasting must be created to fill the gap.

After that, a stream of reports — from the University of Pennsylvania, from Columbia and others - agreed and repeated the same three fundamental findings:
Hutchins: Our news systems are not good enough.
Kerner: They don't engage everyone.
Carnegie: We need alternatives.
Here comes digital media, and — boom! — a universe of alternatives.

So now what? This time, the report comes from the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, prepared by the Aspen Institute.

We are entering the third decade of an Internet-webbed world. Hutchins, Kerner and Carnegie and the many other reports focused on views from on high of what should be done to improve, diversify, add to — and nowadays, the talk is to save — traditional mass media.

But the Knight Commission started with communities, visiting them and hearing from their residents. News and information, the commission says, are as important to communities as good schools, safe streets or clean air. Journalism, it says, does not need saving so much as it needs creating.

As a former newspaper editor, I second that last point. Of the nation's tens of thousands of burgs, towns, suburbs and cities, how many are thoroughly covered by the current news system? Ten percent? Five? Less? How do the uncovered get the news and information they need to run their communities and live their lives.

We hope the ideas expressed by the Knight Commission will continue to make a difference. It inspired the Federal Communications Commission to do its own report on the crisis in local news, keeping the Knight recommendations in mind. Free Press, the nation's largest grassroots media policy group, embraced the report's call for universal affordable broadband. Ernie Wilson, dean of USC's Annenberg School and then-chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, called for more innovation in public media, backing things like NPR's Project Argo. Knight itself went on to sponsor Matter, a partnership with San Francisco public media outlet KQED and innovator PRX to accelerate media startups. Librarians across the country pushed the role libraries can play as digital media literacy training and Internet access centers.

The hard part is ahead of us: that is, involving every aspect of our communities, governments, nonprofits, traditional media, schools, universities, libraries, churches, social groups — and, especially, citizens themselves. How do we do that? How do we make "news and information" everyone's issue? It's a tall order.

Universities could help. Nearly two-thirds of the nation's high school graduates enroll in a college at least for a while. These institutions could make digital media literacy or news literacy courses mandatory for incoming students. Understanding and being able to navigate the brave new world of news and information is as fundamental to the college students of our nation as knowing English. Stony Brook began walking that path. There, more than5,000 students have taken news literacy under the first university-wide course of its kind, though a digital version is needed. The digital metamorphosis of a society learning to use technology to connect the data and events of daily life to the issues and ideas that can better its life — that's something more college faculty should stop fighting and start teaching.

This may not be a short-term project. It took more than 200 years for America to change from a country where most people grew food to one where most people grow information. It could take time for the wholesale rewriting of America's media policies, not to mention the trillion dollars or more needed to remake both our digital systems and our ability to use them. But remaking digital systems is all about broadband, which is all about network speed, where the United States consistently fails to make the top 10 worldwide. Every year we fail to use the e-Rate program to speed up school and library access, every year we fail to lay in fiber optic cable, is another year of opportunity for our global competitors. A nation without universal, affordable broadband is like a nation without highways and railroads, stuck on the surface streets of the new economy.

The goal is an information-healthy nation. That means not just broadband access but adoption. Thomas Jefferson expressed the same idea when he once said newspapers were more important than government. Here's his quote, updated: "The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without the Internet, or the Internet without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that everyone should receive the Internet and be capable of using it."

In the end, a lifetime has passed since the Hutchins Commission first said it, the story is still the same. The country's news and information systems still aren't good enough. They still don't engage everyone. There still are not enough alternatives. They say the gatekeepers of mass media are dead, that people can find their own way now. But many millions of American news consumers are still walking on the path where the gate used to be. Our laws and policies — even the high school and college classes we teach — will help determine the future of news in our communities. They can speed innovation or stunt it. So pick a recommendation — and have at it.

An earlier version of this article appeared on the website Nieman Journalism Lab, produced at Harvard University.

Chapter 1a: To journalism student: Yes, there are jobs

The end is near

The Knight brothers cared about informing and engaging communities. So that's what the Knight Foundation cares about. It means thinking about traditional journalism plus

the new ways people are creating and consuming news.

Media innovation helps us do everything from increasing broadband access in the communities we serve to creating new tools for hundreds of news organizations.

Today, it's safe to say there's a "media innovation community." The group is a many-ringed circus under a big tent. It works on new tools for journalists. It pushes for better broadband for everyone. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, we see journalists and technologists working together. That feels much better than the days when journalists denied change was needed, therefore opting out of their own futures.

Just plug into the news stream and you can see advances in journalism and mass communication coming faster and more forcefully than ever. Indeed, we have the good fortune to be alive during a time that is even richer with invention than the dawn of the industrial age.

New tools are being invented at a mind-blowing pace. Instead of the telegraph, the telephone and the light bulb, we're talking about microchips, laptops, smart phones, tablets. We're talking about companies like Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, from digital zeros to number one in the market, nearly overnight. We're talking about the average life span of a company shrinking from decades to — what is it now? — about five years.

As the legendary journalist Hodding Carter III once said, "This is the most exciting time ever to be a journalist — if you are not in search of the past." The same, I would say, applies to being any kind of communicator — advertising, public relations, the non-

profit world, and more.

Many of today's students are energized about creating the journalism and mass communication of tomorrow. They aren't stuck in formats created a century ago. They get to figure out how to deal with an America where by 2015 most of the data traffic is mobile, the data doubling and then doubling again. Students get to build the new companies, the new products and the new standards of the digital age. Since the new tools create a need for new rules, it's truly a great time to be in journalism education. We need digital media law, digital ethics, digital best practices. We need one communicator with the right tools to be able to do the same work as a hundred old-time communicators. We need to develop truth technology to counter those who will use the new tools to mislead.

This kind of adventure, this excitement, this digital gold rush, attracts smart people who like risk.

An engraving of Paul Revere meeting with John Sullivan from the 18th Century. Revere himself engraved the famous drawing of the March 1770 Boston Massacre, considered one of the most important events leading to the American Revolution.

Skills for digital adventurers

Here's my message to students: You still need old-school knowledge. You need to express yourselves clearly. You need to know how to mine the world for facts. But you now need more. Can you speak "tech"? Do you have any business skills? Can you work collaboratively in teams? Are you comfortable with continuous change? Do you understand why some stories make a difference and others don't? In the end, you'll need to be able to tell stories, to develop content that not only informs communities but

engages them.

If you can learn journalism plus the rest, you can get a great job. If you don't like the jobs out there, go out and create one of your own. This, of course, is what terrifies us parents. What do you mean that my child must learn to create the businesses of tomorrow? What about the bills of today?

When parents look at the news, no doubt they focus on the thousands of journalism jobs lost during the recession and the hundreds added back since it ended. What we have in news was a classic double whammy — a recession on top of a transformational trend toward digital media.

As difficult as it is for institutions to get their collective heads around the size and pace of change, they need to. As my boss, Knight Foundation president Alberto Ibargüen, puts it: "Constant change is the new normal."

One chart in particular sticks in my mind. It shows the household penetration of the printed daily newspapers in the United States. Just after WWII, there were more than 1.2 newspapers for every household in the U.S. There were both morning papers and afternoon papers — and many families took more than one. Today, the penetration rate is less than .4 papers per household. Today, a family at home subscribes, on average, to less than half a paper. On Mondays and Tuesdays those papers are so thin you actually are getting half of the paper you would have received a generation ago.

The chart shows the decline in an almost straight line, with the same downward slope, for 70 years.

Does that mean no one wants the news and ads that newspapers bring? Not at all. Consumption of digital news is soaring. Demand is fine. What's dying is the way we provide and pay for the supply. Just look at the delivery process: First, you kill a tree to make paper. You get a huge press and tons of ink and print a paper full of yesterday's news. You stack the printed papers into bundles, throw them into trucks, haul them around and toss them out. Then other people pick them up, load them into cars, unbundle them and fling them toward a porch. Sometimes the papers make it to the porch.

I love printed newspapers, the smell and the feel of them. But the truth is the energy-eating, time-consuming industrial newspaper process takes so long, by the time the thing finally gets to your door, the news can be as dead as the trees it was printed on. Someone tweeted it yesterday.

Scholar and journalist Phil Meyer, the father of Precision Journalism, extended the line in the graph showing fewer households getting papers. He estimated a possible departure date for the printed American daily newspaper. Here's what Phil says:

"If nothing happens to change it, the last reader will read the last printed, home-delivered, paid subscription daily newspaper in America in April 2043."

He didn't have an exact day.

Many people, including Phil, believe that somehow, something will happen to stop the downward trend, that there always will be daily newspapers in America.

Other than perhaps The New York Times and Wall Street Journal, I ask you: Why would

that be? For 70 years, the trend line has slanted downward at the same angle. Why would it suddenly change direction? Perhaps the baby boom generation, the last daily-newspaper generation, simply won't die. (That would be nice. We could just keep taking those newspapers forever.)

Already, newspapers in Detroit, New Orleans and elsewhere have opted out of daily home delivery. So is the death of the home-delivered paid subscription daily a horrifying prospect? No. Once we figure out the economics, we'll just provide the news on phones and tablets, and save trees.

Job opportunities expand on the Web

This media metamorphosis is making more communications jobs. Even though there are fewer writers, photographers, editors and designers in traditional news media, there are many more in media as a whole. Annual studies of graduates of journalism and communications schools show media employment rates have been steady for decades.

Looking forward, job opportunities seem to be better than ever. Today, everyone can tell their own stories. Every company is a media company. Every organization is a media organization. Everyone has a web site, uses social media, and cares about mobile media. Someone is going to do those jobs. In fact, there are so many of them I don't think our current ways of measuring employment are capturing all the jobs.

You might end up working on the website of a nonprofit, acting just as journalistically as you might have done at a daily newspaper. Or at any number of new companies, or at a company of your own. The sector of web production will only grow and grow and grow. It's growing so fast many of those jobs are not being captured by our traditional way of measuring trends. If you work on a fact-based nonprofit web site, are you a journalist,

another kind of communicator or a non-profit worker?

In just five years, the percentage of graduates of journalism and mass communication programs getting jobs writing, editing, designing or otherwise working on the World Wide Web went from roughly 20 percent of graduates to 60 percent.

Parents of today's students should feel lucky. A journalism and mass communication degree is one of the best ways anyone can start an education. It is the liberal arts degree of the 21st century. The world can now tweet, blog, take pictures and more. Journalism students who know how can teach everyone else.

Every workplace in America needs clear digital communicators. This, I think, is why enrollment in journalism and mass communication programs is booming even as traditional journalism jobs are shrinking. To lead in any field — law, business, nonprofits, government — you need to be able to communicate.

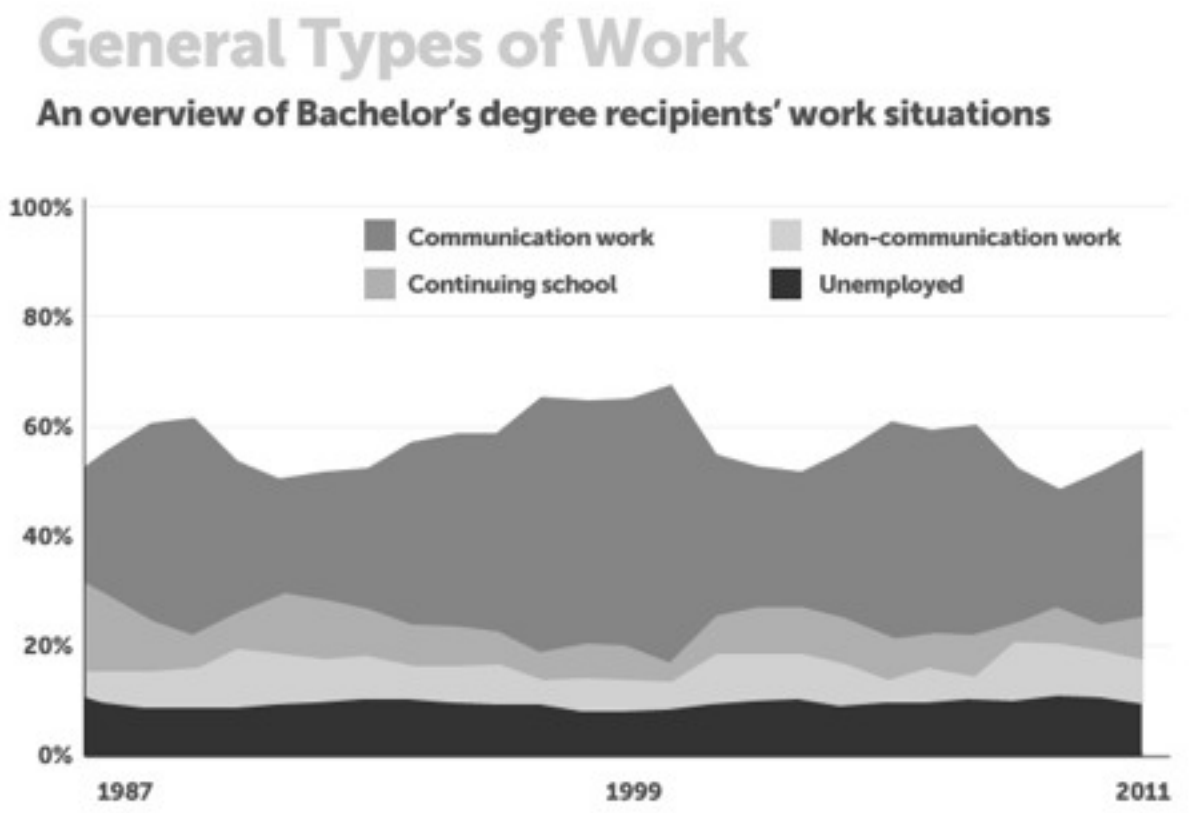


Photo Credit: James M. Cox Jr. Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, Grady College of Journalism & Mass Communication

The number of students in journalism and mass communication programs is increasing, and a larger percentage of graduates got communication work in 2011 than in 1987.

Beware the digital cocoon

Not all in the new world is sunshine and digital daisies. All this communicating is creating a vast ocean of information. The mass media used to be our exclusive filters, but are no longer. Researchers say news is becoming more "portable, personal and participatory." To make it more personal, it has to be filtered, not just in general but just for you. So you end up surrounded with the news and information that you seem to want

— and only that.

When you wrap yourself into a digital cocoon, you only talk to people you like, only see things you agree with, only learn what you already know. Without serendipity, you consume news that really isn't new but is merely an update to your existing world view. You can fix your digital settings to hold at bay the world's ability to intrude, to block the shocks and hard truths, the things you don't agree with, from making their way into your orbit.

Every day, companies design more products that allow us to personalize our digital experience as well as products that personalize it for us, whether we know it or not. These are our sunglasses in the age of bright light, and we all use them because we do think it's too bright. One study says 70 percent of the country is overwhelmed by all the information. It's a normal human reaction to protect oneself from onslaughts, of swarms of data-points bearing down on us like locusts. So we — and here, I mean the human race — react by doing what is comfortable, safe, secure.

I like to compare it to eating "comfort food." Ice cream and apple pie. Fried chicken. Cashews and a Frappuccino. It's tasty. It makes us feel good even though it is not good for us. News and information are like food. Think of news as food for your mind. (I helped the late Oakland Tribune co-owner Nancy Maynard with this idea in her book, Mega Media, and assisted digital pioneer Clay Johnson as he expanded it in The Information Diet).

A lot of comfort news is political. Maps of the blogosphere show that liberals link to liberals and conservatives link to conservatives. They share the information that tastes good to them even when it isn't good for them. This is how large numbers of people can

convince themselves to believe things that simply aren't true.

An example: Educator and investigative reporter Steve Doig reported that liberals claimed as many as 5 million people turned out for a presidential inauguration when the size of the crowd was really 800,000, and conservatives claimed as many as 500,000 turned out for a commentator's rally when the crowd really numbered around 80,000. The problem was not that political enthusiasts in both cases inflated crowd counts more than six-fold. Journalists expect that. The problem is that that some mainstream news outlets found it more expedient to use the false numbers than to actually verify the crowd size and risk the wrath of the blogosphere.

Democratic politician and sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said people are entitled to their own opinions, but not their own facts. Comfort news argues otherwise, seeing facts as little more than fashions that can be tailored to suit the needs of the audience. In other words, audience bias drives the bias in comfort news. But some things, like the number of stars on an American flag, are not a matter of opinion.

We can't ban comfort news, just as we can't ban junk food. Open societies do not work that way. As poet John Milton said centuries ago and famously to the British parliament: "Whoever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" So the question is: What good speech do we add to drive out the bad?

Consumers could and should demand honest labeling. If you run a news outlet, and you are tilting your news to conservatives, like Fox does, or progressives, like MSNBC does, why not just say so? Separate and label news and commentary. (This column, by the way, is middle-of-the-road commentary.) Journalists should be frank and let people

consume as they wish.

Prominent labeling matters. With food, journalist and author Michael Pollan reported, a pullback in the 1970s that allowed the removal of words like “artificial” from the front of fake food products may have helped lead to the nation’s current obesity epidemic. News labeling needs to be voluntary, not dictated by government, but Consumer Reports might want to try matching the claims of news organizations against what they really deliver.

Digital media literacy and its cousins

Knowing what’s really in the news you consume is called news literacy. Knowing where to get it, what to do with it and how to make news of your own is digital media literacy. Knowing what a community can do with news is civic literacy. All of these forms of literacy are mandatory in the world of modern media.

Esther Wojcicki built an extraordinary journalism program at Palo Alto High School, bundling all these skills, calling them 21st century literacies. The Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities says they need to be taught in every level of education. But they aren’t. Sadly, they were almost left out of the Common Core Standards. Teaching to the test is driving current events out of the classroom. Esther is trying, but it is very hard to get teachers who want to teach all these new forms of literacy.

Digital media literacy is as important to the collective mental health of a society as nutritional literacy is to our nation’s physical well-being. Journalism and communications students, by virtue of their education, have learned these things. My advice to today’s students is to share. Pass along what you’ve learned. Teach others how

to think critically about media, about the difference between facts and opinion. Volunteer at the local library or community center. Teach others what you are learning.

If you do, you will be in good company. Throughout the history of news, there have always been those more interested in news for private gain than those interested in news for the public good. Every communicator has to decide if for them, it's one or the other (or both). You must decide where you stand.

Jack Knight knew where he stood. More than 40 years ago, he said great newspapers "seek to bestir the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests."

We at Knight Foundation repeat that quote frequently because we take its message seriously. It sounds like a heavy responsibility because it is. Many of us find it difficult to experiment because we really want to make a difference. We don't want to fail. We can become so afraid to try new things we just don't. It reminds me of a poster I once saw about skydiving. "If at first you don't succeed," the poster said, "skydiving is not for you."

Yet the biggest mistake any of us can make today is to be afraid of mistakes. Media innovation demands risk. Reinventing journalism requires mistakes. We need to try new things and get things wrong, fail quickly but learn quickly, and always explain what we are doing and why.

In the end, all journalists have to remember is this: To err is human, to correct divine.

This is an edited version of a speech first delivered to parents, students and faculty in

the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nebraska.

Innovation, transparency and collaboration

Exactly why is the news industry staggering through the digital revolution? How are these changes affecting our communities? What should be done to help people get the information they need?

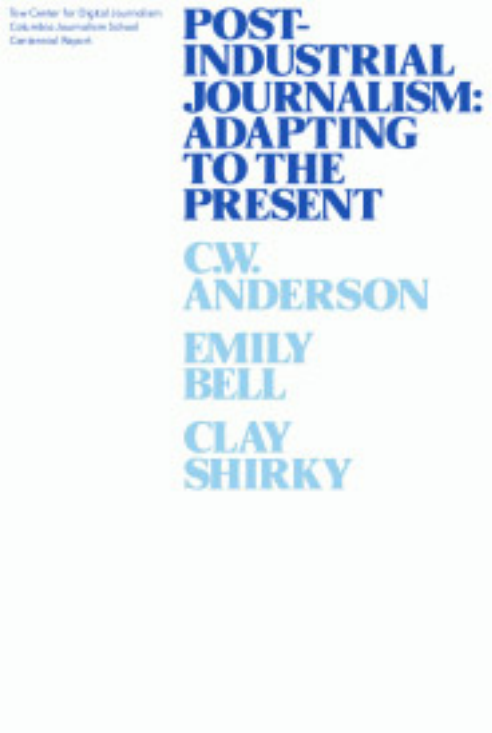
Those are just a few of the questions a raft of recent reports tried to answer. The studies come from centers, universities, journalists, foundations and think tanks. On some points — innovation, transparency and collaboration — they agree.

Summaries:

Post-Industrial Journalism

The latest (and best) of the reports came from the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, established in early 2010 at Columbia University to lead journalism into the future while serving as a research center in the present. The center is directed by Emily Bell, formerly the guru of digital content for the Guardian news group in Britain, in hope of a bridge between digital technology and journalism standards credibility.

In "Post-Industrial Journalism," we see that legacy news institutions still have a special worth. They are more than watchdogs that expose wrongdoing. They are big and powerful scarecrows whose very presence prevents wrongdoing. That said, the report argues that traditional media are losing power because even as they are losing revenue and market share, they fail to take advantage of new digital-friendly working methods and processes that could make their work cheaper, easier and more engaging. The authors list some of the ways that newsrooms can get back on top: Don't send your own reporter to a crowded press conference, but form partnerships and share content; embrace transparency, show your work to engage readers; use open-source tools and platforms made by others; let talented people experiment with storytelling, and find something you are good at and focus your energies there.



The Reconstruction of American Journalism

This report, by the professional-academic partnership of former Washington Post executive editor, Leonard Downie, Jr. and noted scholar Michael Schudson, focuses on where the money for good journalism can be found and offers several recommendations to turn the current moment of disruption into a reconstruction of American journalism.


COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW
The future of media is here
The Industry Politics & Policy Business Science Culture Magazine
Reconstruction
The Reconstruction of American Journali
A report by Leonard Downie, Jr., and Michael Schudson
By Leonard Downie Jr. and Michael Schudson
For reactions to this report, click here.

The authors talk about "reconstruction" because while the Internet has made the American media landscape more diverse than ever, it has also destroyed the traditional, ad-funded market that supported traditional journalism. The loss of reporting jobs has created gaps in local coverage and weakened the watchdog role of the fourth estate. To replace ad revenue and strengthen the public's access to information, the authors propose that the government authorize any news organization to become a non-profit; foundations support journalism projects; public radio/television and universities cover local news; a fund for local news be created with money from telecom taxes, and access to public information be increased.

Shaping 21st Century Journalism

This report focuses on leveraging the "teaching hospital" model in journalism education, It was written by a team from the New America Foundation, notably including Tom Glaisyer, a media scholar who went on to do program work at the Omidyar Network.


New America Foundation

SHAPING 21ST CENTURY JOURNALISM

Leveraging a "Teaching Hospital Model" in Journalism Education

By C.W. Anderson, Tom Glaisyer, Jason Smith and Marina Rothfeld,

Report Summary

Knight Foundation

As a long-time advocate of the teaching hospital model, I was a source for this one and glad to see these independent reporters embrace the idea so enthusiastically. The authors argue that journalism schools may be threatened with obsolescence unless they rethink their practices. But if they do reinvent themselves, they could soar to become "anchor institutions" in our emerging informational ecosystem. One way to achieve that is to provide engaging journalism to communities through laboratories of innovation. But this change will require leadership and risk-taking. This report proposes that journalism programs partner with other programs at their universities and with their local media and experiment with technology.

Bulletins From the Future

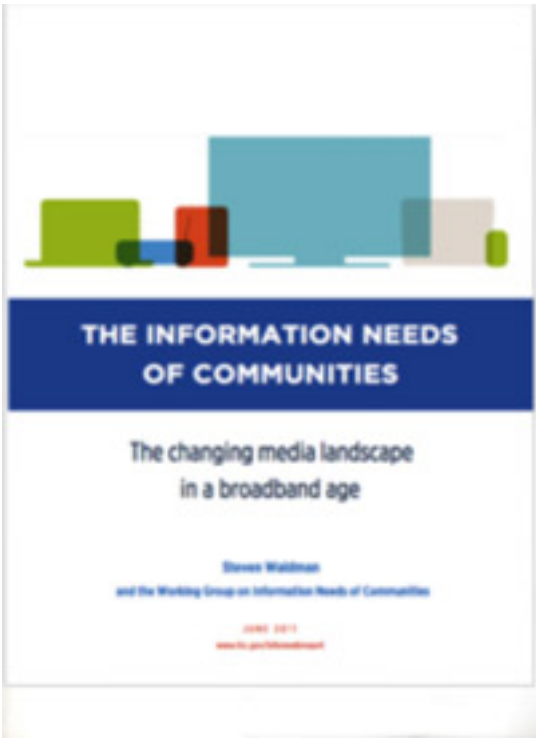
A major series in the Economist covered social media, how media is faring in different countries, WikiLeaks and other media "newcomers." Discussing impartiality, the magazine describes Fox News as "offer[ing] distinctively right-wing opinion and commentary," and says that "MSNBC... has lately been positioning itself to appeal to a left-wing crowd." From the other side of the Atlantic, the British seem to see our cable news slants more clearly than we do.

A pie chart in the report shows that American newspapers depend on advertising for 85 percent of their revenues — more than any other country. This is the very model now collapsing as ads become free or low-cost on the Internet. It reminded me of a seminar when the now-departed USA TODAY founder Al Neuharth asked circulation department leaders why they couldn't bear more of the burden of bringing in newspaper revenue. They looked at him like he was nuts. But he was right. The newspaper industry got too hooked on advertising during the time when American daily newspapers were local printed news monopolies, making tons of money on classified ads. The Economist series pointed out that other industrialized countries developed more hybrid systems, where half the revenue (or even more, in Japan) comes from subscribers paying for the content. Those nations will see easier transitions to the digital age than ours. We were the giants of advertising, and the bigger you are, the harder you fall.

The Economist stories were long on descriptions of problems but short on solutions. The "philanthrojournalism" piece was particularly weak: It suggests that foundations should fully endow nonprofit journalism, which many if not most foundation leaders worry would undermine the connection between the news organizations and the communities they hope to serve.

The Information Needs of Communities

The Federal Communications Commission Report, "Information Needs of Communities," written by Steven Waldman and the Working Group on Information Needs of Communities, is a massive 478-page tome looking at the health of American media in its different platforms (print, radio, television, and so on) as well as the evolving habits of media consumers. It notes that newspaper staffing levels are down to where they were in the 1970s; that network news staffs are down by half; and that reporters are so busy "on the hamster wheel" trying to produce copy, blogs and tweets that they don't have time to investigate stories.



Its main contribution is in declaring the crisis in "local accountability reporting" i.e., the watchdog news citizens need to run their communities. Its solutions include increased transparency, increased innovation from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and changes in tax policy to help nonprofit media organizations become self-sustaining. Other ideas include increased funding from philanthropists and foundations, as well as selling off unused spectrum bandwidth and reinvesting at least a little of that money into the media landscape. As much as I liked the massive report, you can absorb the main idea about the crisis in local accountability reporting in a later work by Waldman, this three-minute video.

Partners of Necessity

Sandy Rowe's paper, "Partners of Necessity: The Case for Collaboration in Local Investigative Reporting," concentrates on local media and determines that collaboration is the key to local accountability journalism.


Joan Shorenstein Center
on the Press, Politics and Public Policy
Discussion Paper Series
#D-62, June 2011
Partners of Necessity:
The Case for Collaboration in Local Investigative Reporting
by Sandy Rowe
Shorenstein Center Knight Fellow, Fall 2010 & Spring 2011
Former editor, The Oregonian, Portland
PRESS • POLITICS
• PUBLIC POLICY •
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Rowe, a longtime industry leader as the editor (until 2009) of the Portland Oregonian, presents case studies that include partnerships between newspapers and nonprofits, newspapers and journalism schools, and newspapers amongst themselves. The paper is especially valuable when it delves into successful nonprofit reporting experiments in Colorado, Oklahoma and elsewhere. Rowe argues that collaborations are the best way to compensate for lost newsroom resources because they pool people's skills and expertise. Because all newsrooms operate differently, collaborations also encourage flexibility and adaptability. She rightly argues that journalists need to let go of their devotion to exclusivity and internal secrecy. Her call for collaboration, transparency, public participation and networking is in the same family as former Sacramento Bee editor Melanie Sill's paper on "Open Journalism," which created a surge of interest in the phrase. I first wrote about pre-Internet versions of the techniques in the early 1990s in rough form in a workbook called The Open Newspaper.

Re-Imagining Journalism

In “Re-Imagining Journalism,” former Seattle Times editor Michael Fancher argues that the media industry must take drastic action to transform itself. “If journalism did not exist today,” he writes, “it would not be created in the form that it has been practiced for the past century.” The report offers concrete solutions in response to the Knight Commission’s recommendations in “Informing Communities.”

Fancher’s report was a one of a series of white papers produced by the Aspen Institute. Many news organizations won’t survive the digital age, and those that do are likely to have the types of hybrid models involving digitalization, community engagement, collaboration, students and nonprofits. I recommend reading this report back-to-back with one written by the former editor of The Des Moines Register, Geneva Overholser’s “On Behalf of Journalism: A Manifesto for Change.” The manifesto, written almost a decade ago when she was an endowed chair at the University of Missouri, warns that journalism as we knew it was over. A big question, then, is why so little happened between Overholser’s work and Fancher’s. Why wasn’t there a sense of urgency?

Digital tools can open up newspapers

To improve print, we must think digital. We need to use the new tools, even in traditional newspapers, to include our communities in our task of covering the news.

This is true whether you are working in the east, where, like the sun, printed newspapers are rising, or in the west, where they are setting. Digital tools make print reporters a hundred times more readable and relevant than they were in the last century.

We hear a lot about the digital delivery of news. Digital delivery is great: it allows newspapers to provide audio and video. It saves money. It gives editors infinite space and instant timing.

Yet using digital technology only to deliver the news is a horrible waste, sort of like using a space shuttle to drive to the corner store. We must stop sticking digital on the end of the industrial age mass media assembly line and calling it a day. It's a totally different, interactive medium. To succeed, journalists can't just be on the web; we must be of the web.

Used well, digital tools help us decide what to cover and give us new ways to cover it. The early adopters use them throughout the news process, to crowd-source, to analyze data, to find facts fast. For them, digital news collection is just as important as digital news delivery.

There is no dearth of tools. Some of them come from the Knight News Challenge, an open contest anyone can enter. The challenge shows we can all experiment. Even if the projects don't take off, we learn, and try again, smarter, as we search for a future where technology and truth can co-exist.

A good example is Spot.Us. The brainchild of a young graduate of New York University, it demonstrated the next evolution of crowd-sourcing. On this website, freelance journalists present the stories they would like to do. People pay small amounts of money to fund the stories they would like to see done. When those small amounts add up, the reporter does the story. If it's good enough, with permission of the participating news organizations, the story appears online, on air or in print. It's beyond crowd-sourcing, it's actually crowd-funding.

So why is this better than traditional ways of paying for stories? It engages your community in helping establish a news agenda. It doesn't allow the community to drive the news, but it does invite people into the car.

One famous example of the use of Spot.Us: a journalist wanted to go to the Pacific Ocean to do a story on a gigantic patch of garbage floating around the Pacific. She was a professional freelancer. The New York Times said they would be happy to print the story. But times are tough, and they didn't want to pay the $10,000 she needed to get into a 50-foot catamaran and sail the world's largest ocean looking for garbage.

So a hundred people used Spot.Us to donate to her story, all kinds of people, even well-known digital names like Pierre Omidyar and Craig Newmark. In the end, freelancer Lindsey Hoshaw got to go out and find the giant trash patch. The New York Times published the story and photos. Since then, hundreds of other stories that newspapers would not have been able to afford otherwise have been done through Spot.Us.

The Spot.Us platform didn't become a household name. But it proved the concept. A crowd can fund a story idea and a major newspaper can print the story, and the earth will not open up and send the reporter and editors into the flaming pit of journalistic

perdition. The crowd-funding platforms that came later -- Kickstarter, WeFunder and others -- were variations on that theme. Together they have funded millions of dollars in journalism. Even public broadcasters began experimenting with the idea of asking people to fund specific stories rather than their institutions. People, it turns out, are willing to pay for journalism that 1) they want and 2) can't be had for free.

In the global context, think of how a Diaspora community in the west or north might pay for stories in the newspapers or websites they count on from their home countries.

How many stories do you wish you could do, but can't afford? Are you willing to try crowd-funding?

Cell phones and crowd-sourcing

Next, look at Ushahidi, another early news challenge winner. Developed in Kenya, Ushahidi allows journalists to reach out to any community that has cell phones. Citizens text news to a digital site that collects and displays it. Say it's an election day. You're looking for problems at polling stations. You ask your readers to text in what they see. Their reports are collected on an interactive map. You can instantly see where your community is reporting problems.

These maps are used in more than 100 countries for anything you can think of, from reporting on disasters to stories of crime and corruption. Its founders have moved on to other ideas, like Swift River, trying to create technology that helps filter falsehoods from the digital stream.

A more detailed kind of crowd sourcing can be done with Public Insight Journalism. The creation of American Public Media, it allows you to seek volunteers from your

community willing to share their expertise to make the news better.

The Miami Herald, for example, has recruited nearly 10,000 people to be in its Public Insight Journalism network. People give their contact information. A data steward takes care of the database and training journalists how to use it. Here is an example of how it works: reporters were looking for a recording of a controversial political advertisement that had been delivered to voters by telephone. No one in the newsroom knew anyone who had a copy of the "robo-call." They asked the public insight network. In 10 minutes, they had the recording.

The Herald, like many major newspapers, has less than half the newsroom it once had. But if papers in that situation are willing to devote just one person to building a public insight network, they can replace the lost journalists with many thousands of new contributors.

Next, let's look at the innovation each of us is carrying right now. When I was a young print reporter, I hauled around a tape recorder to make sure my interviews were just right. Over my shoulder I lugged a camera. But today I can do all that with one device — my phone. The group Mobile Active has produced a mobile media toolkit for both professional and citizen journalists. A smart phone can be used as a recording studio, a camera, a map, a library, a telephone, a printing press, a telegraph — and a lot more — the history of journalism technology fits in the palm of your hand. Just one example: Journalists are now tweeting from government meetings they're covering. You tweet the notes and quotes. This generates interest in the story before you write it.

But most newspaper journalists don't do that. They haven't tweeted in the right ways because they tend to think of Twitter as just another newsboy, hawking the paper on the

streets. Write a piece, tweet the link. But that approach won't grow your Twitter followers, says our journalism vice president Michael Maness, frequent speaker on social and mobile media. Maness says many types of tweets are needed to engage a community: You need to beat the drum in advance of a story, ask questions to help you do the story, complement good comments, and yes, send out links.

New ways to tell stories

A generation ago, reporters had little to do with charts and graphs. They often were done in an entirely different part of the newspaper. Before the personal computer, they were usually done by hand and difficult to change. The opposite is true today. Data journalism has come into its own, and ways of displaying that data are finally beginning to be seen for what they are: stories.

The digital age brought us the era of Big Data. Today, rank-and-file journalists should be able to do their own charts and graphs. A new suite of data visualization tools -- timelines, maps, motion charts, pie charts — allow us to communicate a maximum amount of information in a minimum amount of time. A variety of tools, from open-source, Drupal-based Vidi to Open Street Map, are free and ready to use.

This raises a serious question about the education of journalists. For centuries, we have been, for the most part, writers. Artists, photographs and videographers were seen as specialists and proportionately few in number. The rest of us wrote. We were word people, as a rule not good at math. But today, when a clickable map, a database or an algorithm can be a story, we need journalists with numeracy. On top of that, the new age has raised the importance of both still photographs and video. The word people now must become word people, numbers people and visual people.

That leads me to the greatest digital tool of all — education.

News University is the world's most successful online journalism school. It's based at the Poynter Institute, the best journalism training organization in the United States. NewsU has more than 250,000 registered users, and without any international promotion, a third of them come from all over the globe. Journalists in Asia, in the Americas, in Africa all want training so much they found their way to News University.

There are classes for everyone — top managers, photographers, reporters, citizen journalists. They have classes in how to use digital tools, how to interview, photograph, write, understand specialty beats. All the things journalists do..And many of these classes are free. So here's a question for editors: how many of the journalists in your newsroom need a little more training?

We're willing to go the extra mile when we're chasing down stories. Can we muster even a fraction of that courage to give ourselves permission to change much faster than we're changing now? Can we embrace a learning culture, a culture of continuous change?

The basic devices we've talked about are only the beginning, as is using them in traditional ways, to find stories that shed light. There's an entirely different level of tool we need to learn next. Software and even hardware that people can use to get their own stories, like the portable radiation detectors that contradicted what the Japanese government said about danger in the wake of the recent nuclear meltdown. Those tools that are more like sunglasses than searchlights. They help us filter meaning from the rising tide of information.

Education matters. If you take just one thing away from this discussion, I hope it's this:

newspapers can't improve their print products without going digital, and they can't do that without establishing a culture of continuous change, a learning culture, in their newsrooms.

This is an updated version of a talk originally given in Vienna, Austria, before the World Editors Forum at the annual meeting of the World Association of Newspapers.

Ten tools to learn, more to explore

People who have edited large newspapers know journalism psychology. If city hall was on fire, editors could call reporters in the middle of the night, and no matter how senior they were, they would get up and go. A little cursing, maybe, but no argument.

Picture that same veteran reporter coming in after the fire. If I told him to forget about working at his desk, and instead sit on the other side of the newsroom to write the story, there would be hell to pay. "This is MY spot," he would growl. Followed by a lot of cursing, maybe, and a big argument.

That's journalism psychology. It is fine for news to change every second. It is not fine to change the way we do the news. News changes fast; not so, culture. Deadlines do this to people. Look at hospital emergency rooms or military combat units. Doctors and soldiers stick to the basics or things turn ugly. For a long time, being a workplace fundamentalist worked. (The book News, Improved explains how training can lessen defensiveness).

A notebook, a pencil, a manual typewriter. That's all a reporter needed in 1870 and that was all we needed in 1970. But change came, in the form of electric typewriters, mainframes, dummy terminals, personal computers and cell phones. We had to learn new ways to put the story into the news assembly line. Now, the innovations come not every few years but every few weeks. This has made some of the older folks more than a little anxious. They call them "fads" and "gizmos," the same labels that have greeted every new form of media.

To help out, the American Press Institute and Poynter Institute have started an online tutorial series to show journalists how to use new tools. DocumentCloud was the first: You can still see the tutorial showing how to use it to tame paper documents. Advanced uses included USA TODAY's "Ghost Factories" investigation revealing toxic wastes at abandoned factories across America.

I asked Knight's Journalism and Media Innovation team exactly what journalists should be learning. Here's the list, updated as of this writing:

DocumentCloud: annotates, publishes and manages documents; shares information across newsrooms.
Tor: allows journalists and sources to communicate securely online by bouncing communications around a network until they can't be traced back.
Timeline.js: Creates timelines about any story you can link to or embed. Great for developing graphic skills.
Scraper Wiki: A more advanced tool. You can write computer code to acquire, clean and analyze data sets. Or you can request the Scraper Wiki community of data scientists to do it.
TileMill/Map Box: A simple way to make your own maps, to use in apps.

Frontline SMS: Used all over the world, this mobile texting device lets you communicate with large numbers of people in an organized way.

Zeega: A mixed media packaging tool that allows you to make interactive documentaries in new formats with sound, videos, pictures and text.

Amara: A volunteer-driven translation system that can turn any video in any language into a captioned, understandable piece.

Ushahidi: As we've noted, perhaps the most popular of them all, a powerful yet simple crowd sourcing system that allows any group of people using cell phones to "map" just about anything.

Poderopedia: Analyzes relationships among civic, political and business leaders in a country, or a city, or a company or any organized collection of people. Visualizes relationships within these power and influence networks.

These are some of the most useful tools. There are many more. I like Overview, which helps find stories in documents by sorting them and making it easy to see what's there;Spundge, which helps filter and republish digital content; video notebook, which lets you annotate audio and video content and sync video with tweets; Storify, which helps you collect and republish social media;, and Panda, a database helper geared toward public information.

Overview, Zeega and Spundge also have been subjects of online tutorials, all of them free at News University as part of the permanent, Knight-endowed tutorial series. Did you notice how many of the new software tools are types of digital filters? The news community needs sunglasses even more than everyone else.

Thousands of journalists are learning these new tools. Yet most are not, and more innovations are coming. In a generation, maybe less, they will begin to arrive daily. For

the first time, both the news and the way journalists do it will change constantly.

Perhaps it will not be as frightening as it sounds. I don't even remember the last time I saw a manual typewriter. I am writing this on a tablet for a blog to be read on smart phones and, I hope, Googled, Tweeted, Facebooked and (to use a 20th century verb) debated. This is the real world, as growing, changing and boundless as the human need to know.

This is an updated version of a Knight Blog post.

The evolving profession of journalism

Where there are people, there's news. And where there's news, there are journalists. Why? Because open societies have learned that when professionals make it their business to look at the world as it really is, we all benefit. Examples:

Two news organizations, ProPublica and NPR, revealed that military doctors were wrongly treating American veterans who had concussions. Fixing this will save at least $200 million.

The Center for Public Integrity and the Washington Post exposed bad federal housing policies, and six big lenders were dumped. Taxpayers will save more than $100 million.

The Center for Investigative Reporting detailed earthquake hazards in California schools, and officials opened up a $200 million safety fund.

Just three stories, with a social impact of more than $500 million. The cost of producing the stories? About a thousand times less than that. Such is the value of watchdog journalism.

Doing stories that keep government honest is still a big part of the modern role of professional journalism. Where the press is free and plentiful, corruption is low. But there are new roles for journalists as well.

The examples above were reported with nonprofit news organizations. One, ProPublica, won, in its first year of existence, a Pulitzer Prize. In its second year, it won another. Forming new kinds of news organizations is part of a modern journalist's role.

The stories shared above were collaborations. News people chose to partner rather than compete. For-profits and nonprofit groups — worked together. Collaborating — including tapping the wisdom of the crowd — is now part of a journalist's role. To mine, curate, verify and clarify data is part of our role.

With these new tools we need new ethics. Do our 21st century responsibilities extend to an ethical obligation to be both transparent and interactive? I think so. Transparency, like the use of objective tools, serves the basic idea of fairness. Interactivity, like the use of multiple sources, serves the fundamental value of accuracy. Keeping ourselves honest, current and transparent is part of our role.

If we fail to engage the next generation we lose them — and our future. So some universities are teaching more than storytelling. Their students learn how to create and run media companies; how to work with computer scientists to invent new ways to produce, curate and deliver stories; how to create cultures that support change, and how

to interact with communities. Supporting good journalism education is part of our role.

Today, anyone on the Internet can create news, pass it along, critique it. We must tell the story of how people need reliable news and information to run their communities and their lives. We should tell people more about how and why journalists do what we do. Promoting media literacy in the digital age is part of our role.

Today, journalists can be citizens. Stories can be databases. Media can be smart phones. Audiences can be interactive. Redefining our role is part of our role.

Telling the story of journalism's impact

Professional journalists matter. We are as important as ever. We know we are a force for good because all over the world evil people try to kill us. In Arizona, we found a powerful approach to the murder of journalists in 1976, when a car bomb killed Arizona Republic reporter Don Bolles. Dying, he whispered the word "mafia." Journalists came from all over to create the Arizona project. They finished Don's work. His murderers went to jail.

Those journalists went on to form Investigative Reporters and Editors, a professional group thriving today with many thousands of members.

A generation later, in 2007, when a man with a shotgun killed Oakland Post editor Chauncey Bailey on a street corner, we knew what to do. Finish the story. Find the killers. Journalists in California created the Chauncey Bailey Project. They came from all forms of media. They finished Chauncey's story about the shaky finances of a local bakery, tying it to killings and kidnappings. Three criminals were jailed, two for life. Oakland's police chief resigned after reporters revealed that police had planned to raid the bakery, but delayed it. Then they covered it up because that raid would have saved

Chauncey's life.

In the summer of 2011, the verdicts came. The man who ordered Chauncey's murder and his accomplice are guilty: Life in prison, no parole. The man who pulled the trigger confessed and got 25 years. Prosecutor Nancy O'Malley said, "I would especially like to recognize and acknowledge the Chauncey Bailey Project (which) worked diligently and tirelessly to ensure that the defendants responsible for these senseless murders were brought to justice."' She said, "violence against the free voice of the press will not be tolerated in our society."

Ensuring that murderers go to prison is part of our role.

Is our role too big? Is it too much? Hardly. Today, an individual journalist can do more than ever. Our profession is limited only by our own imagination — and our courage.

The original version of this speech was presented in Moscow at the second meeting of the sub-group on media, part of the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission.

Chapter 2: Journalism education

Evolution or revolution?

It's hardly news that the digital age has turned journalism inside out.

But did it do the same to journalism education?

Are most journalism schools revamping everything? For that matter, are they even

practicing actual journalism? Are the best professors leading experimentation? Are colleges and universities using digital platforms to teach the new skills?

Yes, there are exceptions, but no, journalism education has not kept up. Surveys show journalism educators think much more of their work than does the news industry. Four in 10 graduates have figured out on their own that they did not get enough of an education in digital technology. From many thousands of educators, digital events draw a few hundred. The "Newspaper & Online News," the largest division of journalism educators, launched its Facebook page nearly a decade after that platform's start. It took nearly two decades for 95 percent of campus media to get onto the World Wide Web.

All this raises the big question: If schools aren't changing quickly enough, who is preparing young journalists to cope with the newest child of the digital age, the era of mobile and social media?

No matter what you may hear, it is possible for education to change. The Carnegie-Knight Initiative for the Future of Journalism Education, a $20 million partnership between the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Knight Foundation, showed that journalism schools could teach critical thinking, subject knowledge and digital technique. Its signature program, News21, brings college students from around America to Arizona State University, to work with top professionals on a major investigative project each year. The point: journalism schools can produce work worthy of any news outlet — even the front page of The Washington Post.

If given the chance, top professionals can thrive in academia. The Knight Chairs in Journalism, which began in 1990, is a $60 million network of endowed journalism chairs. Two dozen Knight Chairs hold positions at 22 universities, where they

experiment with ways to lead journalism to its best 21st century future. Knight chairs teach thousands of students and professionals each year and do journalism of their own. They connect to Knight Centers, as well as a fellowship network of Knight-funded yearlong training and media innovation programs at Stanford, Michigan, Harvard and M.I.T.

We've also learned that new forms of teaching can work. Poynter's News University, built with nearly $8 million in Knight grants, has become the world's largest digital education platform for journalism. NewsU has more than 200 interactive modules and classes, covering all skill levels and topics. Its registered users number more than 250,000.

By supporting these projects and other new ideas — the first major student investigative corps; the first entrepreneurial journalism degree; the first hybrid public-private newsroom; the first university-led digital media literacy campaign — Knight hopes to show that all institutions, old and new, big and small, rich and poor, canchange.

This chapter looks at the relatively slow evolution of journalism education in the days of an information revolution. A promising exception is the "teaching hospital" model, in which professionals and professors work together to help students learn by producing effective community journalism. Yet even that model as currently practiced falls short. In the digital age, student journalism can no longer just inform communities; it must engage them. And, through experimentation and research, it must do more than just provide journalism; by trying new things, student journalism can provide knowledge about what works and doesn't to the field of journalism.

Carnegie-Knight: Journalism schools can innovate

We all know the news about the news. A media policy report for the Federal Communications Commission, "The Information Needs of Communities," has made things abundantly clear. It details the decline of "local accountability journalism." The evidence: more than 18,000 journalism jobs lost in recent years at daily newspapers alone. This is a paradox of the digital age: more information than ever, yet less local watchdog journalism. The same communications revolution that makes everyone a potential journalist has maimed America's advertising-based method of paying for professional journalism.

The nation's institutions of higher learning have an important role to play in the local news crisis. At conventions of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, universities are showing signs of increasing interest in local journalism. This is good news. Watchdog journalism is the security camera that keeps the powerful honest.

More journalism schools are starting to do what medical schools do with teaching hospitals and law schools do with legal clinics. A Harvard report on the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education shows that journalism schools can help communities by playing a role in local news flows. Long considered the caboose on the train of American journalism, colleges and universities that develop community news systems using modern and even experimental techniques can become engines of change that advance the field of journalism.

Journalism and mass communication education, in a nutshell, is a universe of roughly 220,000 students in 500 programs graduating 50,000 students each year taught by 7,000 faculty and 5,000 undervalued adjuncts and part-timers. Since it has traditionally took its cues from industry, as the news community in general denied and misunderstood the digital revolution, so did journalism education.

Few studies explain the important trends in journalism education, but what we have raises serious issues. Scholars have shown that, despite "an urgent necessity," programs are not changing rapidly to reflect the multimedia world. Most faculty members have never worked in digital media, never mind social or mobile media. Relatively few professionals get tenure track positions, and the traditional machinery to produce new professors — PhD programs — does not come close to keeping up with the nation's diversity. Studies measuring change have failed to focus what is being required of all students, instead declaring schools have gone "digital" if they offer even one elective class in a digital subject.

Journalism education matters. Nearly 9 of every 10 newsroom hires are graduates of journalism and mass communication programs. If students are well-prepared, able to adapt to an ever-changing digital world, there's hope. Yet many graduates emerge from schools as confused about the future as the industry itself, some 80 percent of which are not accredited by the group focusing on the field, a group that until recently did not consider technological change as a major factor in its accreditation standards.

Educators need to find ways to teach more: critical thinking, topic knowledge, and the techniques and technologies essential to a post-mass media world. The big lesson of the Carnegie-Knight initiative: it can be done. Journalism schools can indeed teach the topic expertise of "knowledge journalism" and, at the same time, practice innovative real-

world digital newsgathering. Expanded, this “teaching hospital model” would attack all manner of issues. Two stand out: uniting professionals and professors in education reform and unlocking the potential of the hundreds of thousands of journalism and mass communication students to help underserved communities.

The news industry is changing its mind about the value of journalism education, according to a survey of news industry leaders in the Harvard report. Before the Carnegie-Knight initiative, news leaders were often unimpressed by journalism education. Schools were seen as unnecessary, out of touch. But today, news leaders think journalism education is improving. They said better quality leadership and faculty are essential to developing more digitally savvy, knowledgeable graduates.

In particular, they cited the efforts of the 12 Carnegie-Knight schools. They are the University of California at Berkeley; the University of Southern California; Arizona State University; the University of Nebraska; Northwestern University; the University of Texas/Austin; the University of Missouri; the University of North Carolina; the University of Maryland; Syracuse University; Harvard University, and Columbia University. All are increasing both the rigor of their teaching and their news production.

Why did the two foundations get involved? Carnegie has long been associated with higher education excellence. Knight is known for journalism education and media innovation. The two complemented each other. Carnegie’s Susan King (now a journalism school dean herself) coordinated curriculum reform grants. Knight focused on News21, designed to show that top students could do journalism worthy of the nation’s most important news organizations, and innovate at the same time.

Among the results of the initiative: new master’s degree programs in specialty

journalism; curriculum reform tearing up the old "silos" of broadcast and print journalism; and student journalism appearing in The New York Times and The Washington Post, and on CNN, NBC, Yahoo, and MSNBC.

Let's deconstruct the News21 investigation of America's transportation system. First, former Washington Post editor Len Downie presented a seminar on the topic. Then the students went to work. Their stories revealed that scores of National Transportation Safety Board recommendations were never acted upon, endangering countless lives. Their work received more than five million page views. (Subsequent News21 probes, on voting rights and the mistreatment of veterans, were even more widely consumed.)

The Carnegie-Knight Initiative wasn't perfect. The News21 stories are extraordinary. They set a new high-water mark for what student journalism can do. But, like nearly all professional investigations, they lacked deliberate community engagement or significant research on impact. In addition, demonstrations of curriculum reform failed to impress some small-school educators because they came from the "elite" Carnegie-Knight schools. The Harvard report contains criticism and potential remedies.

If journalism schools are to improve, university presidents must be involved. The first group of five universities in the initiative was chosen because Carnegie president Vartan Gregorian, himself a former university president, personally knew them. Gregorian believed they would contribute financially. He was right. Each of the presidents put money behind the idea that journalism education needs to modernize or become irrelevant. When the second group of seven universities was chosen (from schools with Knight-funded chairs or centers), those presidents also contributed.

"Knowledge-based journalism"

Among the initiative's successes: Faculty connected to the whole university by team-teaching courses with other professors. Business professors helped with business journalism classes; scientists joined in to teach science journalism; arts educators, arts journalism, and so on. The journalism students learned a great deal about the subjects they wanted to cover. Their teachers gained respect for each other. When the funding ended, many of those classes continued. Tom Patterson at Harvard went on to write a book about this "knowledge-based journalism."

Journalism schools learned they could innovate and even develop their own tools. Partnerships sprung up between journalism and engineering schools, between journalists and computer scientists. Spin-offs were common, like all-night hackathons where participants developed new software on the spot.

All this required a new open, collaborative style of teaching, learning and doing. Journalism students learned that independence does not mean they must be lone wolves like the great writers of 20th century lore. Nor would they have to work as cogs in giant news organizations run by business people they resented. They learned to work in small, integrated teams with people from many disciplines — graphic artists, business students, computer scientists, videographers, designers, and investigative journalists. These are the teams they will form themselves after graduation as they create the small, nimble media companies of 21st century.

Best of all, they created content to benefit their communities. Before the initiative, many Columbia University journalism students produced stories that, like term papers, were seen only by professors. Today, Columbia produces live journalism through a new news outlet, The New York World, named after Joseph Pulitzer's famed paper. The University

of Southern California, inspired by News21, created Neon Tommy and more than a dozen other community news experiments, including an expansion of Spot.Us, where web site users determine what stories freelancers will do and even fund them with small donations.

At North Carolina, students told compelling stories of their own, like the one about the Alaska town that must move because the tundra under it is melting. Berkeley created special websites for underserved communities, including Richmond, a city long without a daily newspaper. Northwestern designed a news service driven from the bottom up by user interests.

The Carnegie-Knight schools are not the only ones transforming. Others among of the nation's more than 450 college journalism programs are reaching out to their entire university, innovating, using collaborative models and providing engaging community content. We hoped the Carnegie-Knight Initiative would offer a high-visibility example of what happens when university presidents, deans, faculty and students all are interested in reform. We wanted to show what the turning point in journalism education looks like.

A study co-authored by Tom Glaisyer (now a grant-maker with the Omidyar Network) looked at content creation in America's universities. His headline: "A lot is going on, but a lot more could be going on."

A final round of grants in 2011 opened up the Carnegie-Knight Initiative to all schools. With Arizona State University's president Michael Crow and dean Chris Callahan providing 80 percent of the funding, Carnegie and Knight have filled in the rest to pay for News21 for at least 10 more years. It will sport a kind of "all-star team" of student

journalists. Other foundations are donating scholarship money to send top students from their states. All schools can share in the lessons of curriculum reform detailed in the Harvard report produced by the Shorenstein Center. The center also has established a website to promote "knowledge journalism" at journalistsresource.org. The site puts academic research into the hands of journalists to help increase the quality and depth of daily reporting.

We do not yet know how many universities will take reform seriously. At Indiana University, under the banner of "reform," officials announced a plan to bury an independent school of journalism within a larger school, making it appear much less nimble. The tragedy at many schools is compounded by the fact that scores of public radio and television licenses are held by universities that claim the stations are a community service even when they air no local news at all. What if universities turned their journalism and mass communication students loose to fill that unused local news capacity? If students can cure people as they learn to be doctors, why can't students inform and engage communities as they learn to be communicators and journalists?

By coincidence of the calendar, we occupy the earth today during a moment of profound transition in human communication. If our educational leaders do not choose to rethink journalism education now — with communities hungry for local accountability news and the world moving toward an information economy — all I can ask, respectfully, is this: When will the time be right?

This is an updated version of an article that first appeared in Harvard's Neiman Journalism Lab.

Journalism education reform: How far should it go?

Universities can help lead the way through the era of “creative destruction” of journalism. But only if they are willing to destroy and recreate themselves.

The Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education demonstrated that change is possible. Change at the participating schools went far beyond what the foundations funded: digital-first curriculum; deep subject knowledge; collaboration and innovation; high-impact student journalism in major media, and graduates going straight into major media roles.

We did not buy those changes. Twenty million dollars seems a substantial sum. But there were a dozen schools involved over many years. In reality, our grants represented only a fraction of a percentage point of the budgets of these schools. The grants were a catalyst. We brought hope and a helping hand. The schools did the rest.

The initiative revealed four transformational trends in journalism and mass communication education, discussed below. The best schools already are living these trends. Some educators do not accept them. They argue that budgets, presidents, provosts, faculty, students, the rules — “the system” — are roadblocks to change.

So that leaves two choices: either the system really does block change, or all of that is just an excuse. If the system is blocking things, I will suggest some ways to blow it up. But if the system is not the problem, educators should help one another by sharing road maps to reform.

If colleges and universities want to ride the four transformational trends demonstrated by the fastest-moving schools, here's what they need to do to be relevant in the future:

1. Expand their role as community content providers. Just as university hospitals save lives and university law clinics take cases to the Supreme Court, university news labs can report stories that help right wrongs. Based on the teaching hospital model, they can provide both the news and the civic engagement people need to run their communities and their lives.

2. Innovate. Journalism schools can create both new uses for software and new software itself. Anyone can create the future of news and information. Anyone includes us.

3. Teach open, collaborative methods. No longer should students be lone-wolf reporters or cogs in a company wheel. In small, integrated teams of designers, entrepreneurs, programmers and journalists, students can learn to rapidly create prototypes of news projects and ideas.

4. Connect to the whole university. This can mean team-teaching a science journalism class with actual scientists. Or creating centers with engineers or entrepreneurs. Or diving deeply into topic expertise to create "knowledge journalism." Or, even more importantly, providing the research that drives community content experiments.

University presidents had to pay for some of this reform themselves to be part of

Carnegie-Knight. Their view of journalism and communication changed. They saw the value of their schools to the wider community.

Top professionals have a critical role

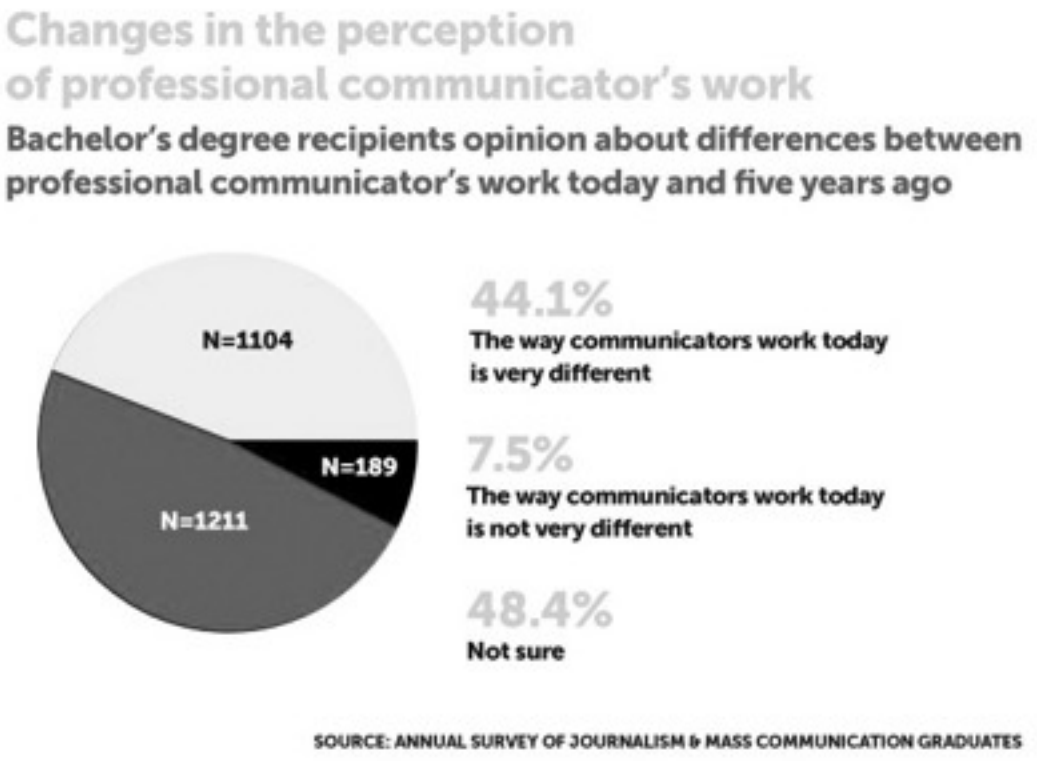
Beneath these trends lie challenges and opportunities. Probably the most important one: top news professionals are as central to the task at hand as top scholars. You can't run a teaching hospital without doctors (you shouldn't run one with without researchers, either). Professionals and professors will need to work together in ways most have not.

Curriculum reform needs to be more than dissolving print and broadcast silos. It should redefine journalism as an intellectual activity in its own right. Call it the art of critical inquiry and real-time high-impact, community-engaged exposition and analysis. If you teach journalism merely as a skill, it becomes nothing more than a skill. Teach journalism as the most exciting profession of this century, and it becomes that.

Having been part of more than $100 million in grants to universities, I would like to offer an observation: top scholars, top journalists and top schools welcome change. Mediocre schools do not. At the top, great minds think alike. The resistance comes from the middle.

Many have championed journalism and communication school reform. A diverse, bipartisan, independent Knight Commission called for "fresh thinking and aggressive action" to deal with the digital age. The FCC's "Information Needs of Communities" declared a crisis in local accountability journalism and asked universities to step up. A report by the New America Foundation detailed university content efforts and called for more.

With all due respect, journalism and communication education plays second chair, and sometimes first chair, in a symphony of slowness. Consider: on one side of campus, engineers have been inventing the Internet, browsers and search engines. But the news industry is slow to respond. Public radio slower still. Foundations even slower. Government slower yet again. Then come the journalism and communication schools, just across campus from the engineers who started it all. And finally, local public television stations.



Who suffers? Students, to say nothing of society as a whole. As social and mobile media were taking off, a survey showed that almost half the nation's journalism and communication school grads were not sure the field was "very different" from the way it was five years earlier. This, when in fact there were record news company bankruptcies,

layoffs, congressional hearings, new media empires as well as an explosion in new journalism techniques. Yet half the graduates were not sure communications work was very different. Who, you have to wonder, is teaching them?

Certainly not digitally savvy professors like Amy Schmitz Weiss and Cindy Royal, who advocate journalism education reform and teach current technology. They are among the educators who are members of the Online News Association. Yet that group's Facebook page in fall 2013 listed only 425 teachers when college-level journalism and communication faculty number more than 12,000. Perhaps that explains why college student media took 20 years to get onto the World Wide Web. Do the students who are unsure that change is happening get that idea from professors who also are unsure?

Society in general suffers as well. News and information is a core social need, as crucial to healthy communities as safe streets, good schools and clean air. As veteran editors likeJohn Seigenthaler have been reminding us for generations, journalism is an essential ingredient of democracy. To that end, and because of the local news drought, foundations arestepping up their investment in news and information projects. Journalism educators could join in. Put simply, the social and mobile era offers a do-over moment for journalism education.

My wish list for what should be done is meant to provoke. Following Jack Knight's model for a good newspaper, I hope to help educators become aware of their condition, inspire thought and rouse them to pursue their true interests.

First, journalism schools should live up to the new standards enacted by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, particularly the new flexibility in curriculum allowing students to learn more business and technology. That

said, I also hope students can continue to take even more and better core journalism classes. Journalism, the nonfiction profession, should be learned by all communication students. This is even more important now because new technology allows everyone to act as a journalist.

Some of us pushed hard for ACEJMC to adopt a standard covering technology and innovation. That passed as well. Now, all students must understand "the digital world." Schools no longer can use whatever technology they want and declare it "appropriate"; they now must use "current" technology.

(As an aside, when I came to the Knight Foundation in 2001, we had an internal rule that only accredited schools could be considered for grants. That rule lasted about a week. A professor called. I asked: Are you accredited? "Yes." Do you have a web site? "No." But it's been seven years since the World Wide Web hit. You must have had an accreditation visit. "Yes." And no one cared that you didn't have a website? "No." Do you know it only takes a few minutes to create a website? "It does?"

At that moment, I thought there should be a new rule: never mind accreditation. A better rule: If the most profound change in human communication in half a millennium comes along, and you are not doing anything about it, you can't apply for a grant. Today, that means a lot more than having a web site. It means having a good web site. It means embracing social and mobile media. It means not waiting a decade to respond to whatever comes next.)

Another new accreditation requirement calls for schools to post on the web their retention and graduation rates. That's a start, but great schools should reveal even more. After all, they are communication schools. They should design systems that allow open,

real-time reporting. Accreditation self-studies, staff technology expertise, even down to software taught or created, should appear on a school's website. The percentage of graduates who get jobs in their field should appear at the top of the home page, with an explanation if that number is zero. The ACEJMC diversity standard still needs expanding. It should consider all the social fault lines — gender, race, generation, geography, class and ideology. These fault lines may be relatively equal in impact, but on campus, the gender gap is the biggest. Look at how many students are women, more than 60 percent and growing. Look at how many deans are women. Is it 30 percent? Lower? Why is that number so hard to find?

Hiring and retaining top professionals

Several recommendations on my wish list have to do with the growing need for top journalism professionals in the academy. We need to include exceptional news professionals in the most respected ranks of academia, the way medical schools appreciate doctors and law schools respect lawyers. The $60 million Knight Chair program, at more than 20 universities, proves this can be done. Many of these chairs are national leaders. They are chosen for their genius, not their degrees. A degree is a surrogate measure of talent, and sometimes, not a very good one.

To some institutions, our professional chairs (nearly all of whom have tenure) would be unacceptable. I refer now to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the regional accreditation group with which I am most familiar. SACS is an appropriate name for a group blamed for sacking the professionals in academia.

Consider the SACS standards for hiring faculty. A university should give "primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline," the standards say. After that, "the institution also considers competence…" Also? According to SACS, the degree

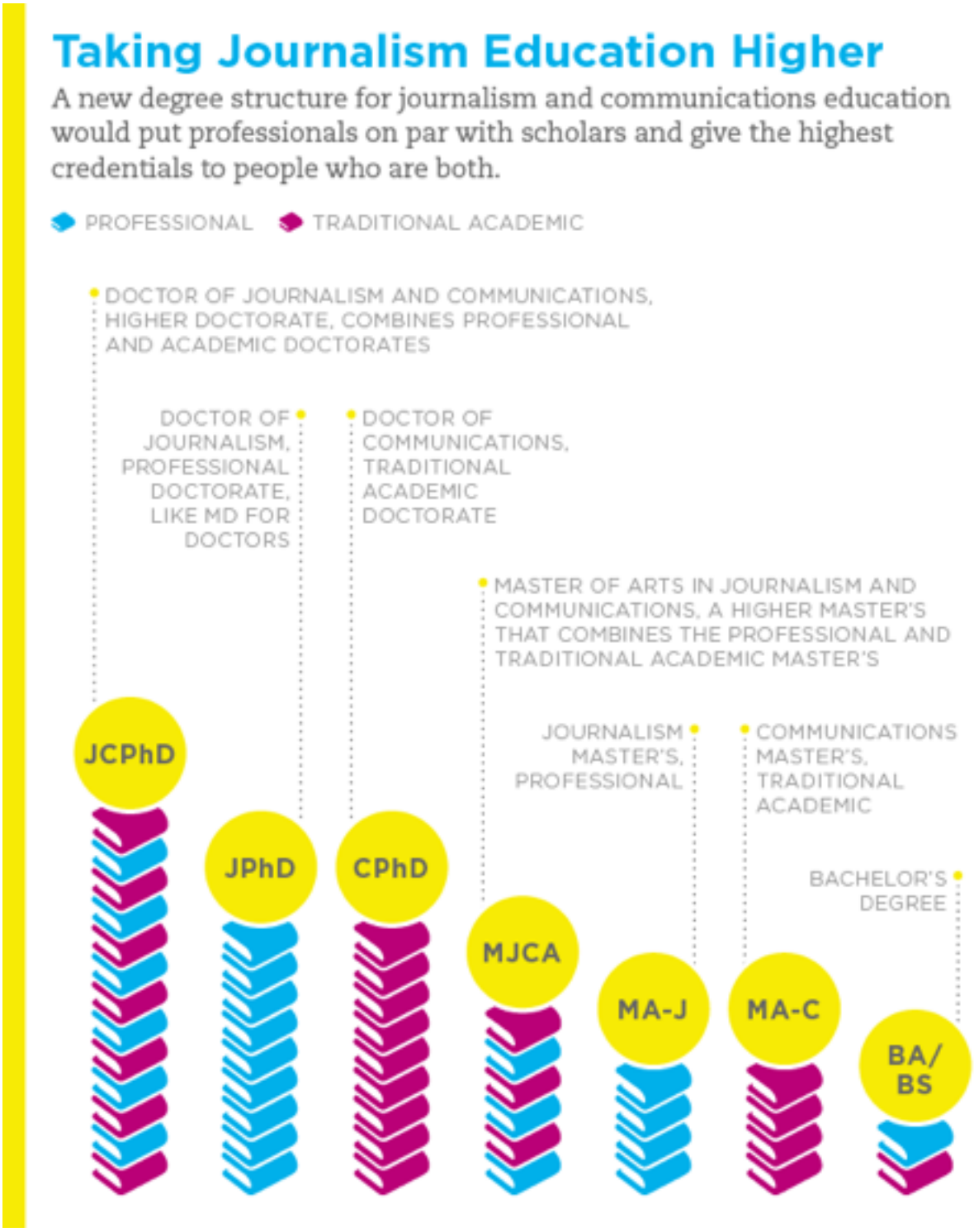
is primary, competence is an also-ran.

The SACS rules allow a school to argue for “unusual” or “exceptional” people. All one needs to do to defend worthy professionals without advanced degrees is provide a simple written explanation. Unfortunately, more than a few deans, provosts and presidents seem to think that is simply too much trouble. I’m sure there are stories to be told about the great professionals who were retained by virtue of cogent explanation. But we don’t hear them. We hear instead of faculty who have been unjustly demoted or fired. Sometimes, these people are so exceptional that Knight or another funder has given them a grant. Imagine our surprise when they are dismissed. Even though they are top professionals with extraordinary competence, singled out for their excellence by national foundations, they have been abandoned by their deans, provosts and presidents. The administrators say it isn’t their fault, that everyone should blame SACS; SACS says it isn’t their fault, the administrators are the ones who either defend staff or don’t.

Great professionals and great scholars are equal. They both make important contributions. But in academia they are not equal. Tenured professors have lifetime job guarantees; professionals often are hired on a class by class basis. Professors determine curriculum and sit on hiring committees. The “adjuncts” — professionals brought in to teach things faculty don’t know, often at near minimum-wage — don’t have a say in a school’s direction.

We can begin to address the inequities between top professionals and scholars by establishing a new degree structure that creates a professional PhD in journalism, just as there is a JD in law and an MD in medicine. Until then, we should recognize that “highest earned degree in the discipline,” for a professional, is a master’s. The City

University of New York does it. Until there is a professional doctorate, all programs should consider the master's a terminal degree for professionals.



We should push for all good schools to have a higher master's — call it an MJCA — a Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications. Just as there are MFAs and MBAs, there should be a higher master's degree for journalism. It would combine theory and practice, research and impact. Every thesis should be readable as measured by its Flesch score. Every thesis should be free and online. Before an MJCA degree is awarded, the candidate should attract significant attention to (and engagement with) his or her thesis.

We also need a professional doctorate. Call it a JPhD, a Doctor of Journalism and Communication, just as there is an MD, a doctor of medicine. To earn that degree you would need to demonstrate journalism excellence; innovation that creates new techniques, technologies, story forms or pioneering content; and, most importantly, your intellectual contribution should show community impact.

Some professionals could qualify for this type of degree in less time than it would take to get a scholarly PhD. They have spent decades in the field developing doctoral-level knowledge. But they would still need to learn how to put that work in scholarly context, show what theories it supports or debunks.

And finally, we need what the British have: a higher doctorate. This would be a JCPhD, superior to all other degrees in the discipline, a super degree. You would need to do everything the doctor of journalism and communication can do, plus everything a traditional academic PhD — call it a CPhD — can do.

The higher doctorate as well as the higher master's grant special status to renaissance people who can be both professionals and scholars. A university pioneering this idea will need courage, because all of its current PhD holders may suddenly think they have only

a penultimate degree, not the so-called “terminal degree”.

Much work remains to achieve equality between top professionals and top academics. I’m reminded of the Oregon report of 25 years ago, calling for a mix of scholars and professionals, and then “Winds of Change” 15 years ago, seeing not a coming together but a widening rift. Most notable was how so many scholars used words like “vocational,” “training” and “skill” to describe journalism, and words like “intellectual,” “scholarly,” and “peer-reviewed” to describe their work.

I wonder if scholars understand how dismissive this is. How would they feel if their chosen field was described that way? Let me try: Research without real accountability is a vocational pastime, a narrow skill applied to a limited number of jobs. Thusly seen, advanced study is an occupational degree: It qualifies you to teach and write papers, and that’s it. People who are interested in real intellectual challenges avoid PhD training.

I do not claim that the above is at all true. My intention is to show how it feels to have an intellectually rigorous endeavor — as journalism is, at the highest levels — described essentially as work for dummies. I do claim the following is true: The professor-professional gulf damages journalism education. It has become the mark of a mediocre institution when it can’t distinguish between top professionals and average ones, just as it is the mark of a mediocre newsroom when it can’t tell the difference between a good scholar and an average one.

Joining research and innovation

United, the clans will discover many opportunities for collaboration. For the first time, a serious number of journalism and communication schools are experimenting. Who will study these experiments? Who will address the social science of engagement and

impact? The answers will arise when we can get scholars and professionals to work together.

To be fair, the door should swing both ways. Newsrooms should embrace leading journalism scholars, twinning them with the best professionals in efforts to understand the digital world. Columbia University did just that when it placed editor Len Downie with scholar Michael Schudson to write the report, "The Reconstruction of American Journalism."

There's plenty to study. The "teaching hospital" model, not as it is generally practiced but as it should be, needs to produce newsrooms that more deeply understand and engage the communities they serve. In this interactive world, we need to know why some stories are debated, shared and acted upon while others aren't. These are research topics best pursued in the living laboratory that is a working community news system.

On the positive side, some schools are adapting. They are trying new story forms; teaching data visualization, web scraping and computational journalism; developing entrepreneurial journalism programs and new software (including games), and even opening a center for drone journalism. Some are experimenting with new tools as fast as they come out. Those schools are teaching numeracy as well as literacy. They will produce better students.

Some are comfortable with "reverse mentoring," where smart students teach professors about cutting-edge digital issues and professors teach students traditional journalism values, the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth.

Arizona State University is a good example of a school taking on the four

transformational trends. Faculty there are helping students provide digital news in new, engaging ways. They are innovating content and technology. They are learning to teach open, collaborative models, and they're connecting with the whole university. They have not abandoned quality journalism; they've enhanced it.

But there could be even more change. Why not teach the 21st century literacies -- news literacy, digital media fluency, civics literacy -- to the entire campus? If you have the right budgeting system, an influx of many thousands of students from other departments into yours can bring more money. At Stony Brook in New York, they are teaching news literacy to 10,000 students. At Queens University in North Carolina, they are teaching digital and media literacy to the entire community.

Money for these improvements can't be found unless it is sought. Community foundations can play a role. For years, Knight Foundation has run the Knight Community Information Challenge, encouraging more journalism and media grant making by matching community foundations that funded local projects. But few community foundations looked to their local journalism schools for a helping hand. The Knight News Challenge looks for projects that combine news, innovation and community. It tends to hear from a small number of schools. Similarly, the department of education money for tech experiments and the broadband expansion and adoption money has not gone to journalism and communication schools, with a few exceptions, such as Michigan State. Schools might try harder to get some of those federal funds.

Once the economy recovers, we'll be ripe for new federal program ideas. How about brainstorming something like a Media Corps, where students would get full scholarships for staying on after graduation to provide community content and help their schools transform? Our government is doing this for the military — giving students free

computer science degrees if they will serve the nation as cyber soldiers. Perhaps deans could organize and propose that the nation care for the communication of peace as it does for war.

We live in a paradoxical age. My concerns are mixed with excitement. All things considered, we should delight in the privilege of being alive at this turning point in history. Certainly, the students are enthusiastic. They continue to come in record numbers, ready to teach as well as learn, to find the new jobs wherever they are created. Journalism and communication schools find themselves offering the great all-purpose degree of the 21st century. What more can be done with that?

Pioneering publisher Bob Maynard used to say that all things worth doing begin with someone who passionately believes in them, even when others say they are not possible. He thought the moribund Oakland Tribune could become a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper, and it did. Al Neuharth believed The Freedom Forum could create an engaging, high-tech museum of news, and now we have the Newseum. Alberto Ibargüen believed Knight Foundation could help journalism by experimenting with media innovation, and hundreds of newsrooms are using tools developed with Knight funding.

Engaging the possible requires leadership. Even if you don't want to blow up the systems as I've proposed, if you passionately want reform, it will happen. To get there, you first have to get past the most difficult barrier of all, the voice in your heads that says it just can't be done.

Transformational trends in journalism and mass communication education are beginning, despite underlying structures. That's because people like you have decided it's going to happen, no matter what. Blow up the rulebook if you need to. If not, please

come up with better ideas. The future depends on it.

This is adapted from a speech delivered to a national conference of journalism educators at Middle Tennessee State University.

Journalism funders call for ‘teaching hospital’ model

This early 18th Century editorial cartoon depicts a gruesome autopsy. It was drawn by William Hogarth, the well-known British cartoonist whose many social satires skewered the rich, arranged marriages, sloth, alcoholism, corruption and a host of other issues.

This Aug. 3, 2012 letter was sent from journalism funders to the presidents of nearly 500 colleges:

We represent foundations making grants in journalism education and innovation. In this new digital age, we believe the "teaching hospital" model offers great potential. At its root, this model requires top professionals in residence at universities. It also focuses on applied research, as scholars help practitioners invent viable forms of digital news that communities need to function in a democratic frame.

We believe journalism and communications schools must be willing to recreate themselves if they are to succeed in playing their vital roles as news creators and innovators. Some leading schools are doing this but most are not. Deans cite regional accreditation bodies and university administration for putting up roadblocks to thwart these changes. However, we think the problem may be more systemic than that. We are calling on university presidents and provosts to join us in supporting the reform of journalism and mass communication education.

Curriculum changes have been summed up in the "Carnegie Knight Initiative for the Future of Journalism Education," a book published by Harvard's Shorenstein Center in 2011. In the “teaching hospital” part of the initiative, News21, students get special topic classes that prepare them to cover news with the help of top news professionals. This better connects journalism schools with the rest of the university, encourages deep subject knowledge and involves the teaching of digital innovation and development of

open collaborative work models. Arizona State University has developed the "teaching hospital" form of journalism education to become one of the state's leading news providers.

Schools that do not update their curriculum and upgrade their faculties to reflect the profoundly different digital age of communication will find it difficult to raise money from foundations interested in the future of news. The same message applies to administrators who acquiesce to regional accrediting agencies that want terminal degrees as teaching credentials with little regard to competence as the primary concern.

We firmly support efforts by The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications to modernize standards. The council recognizes that schools need to provide students the ability to pursue career paths as journalist-entrepreneurs or journalism-technologists.

Furthermore, we believe ACEJMC should develop accreditation standards that spotlight the importance of technology and innovation. University facilities must be kept up to date. Currently, many are not.

Journalism funders agree that academia must be leading instead of resisting the reform effort. Deans must find ways for their schools to evolve, rather than maintain the status quo. Simply put, universities must become forceful partners in revitalizing an industry at the very core of democracy.

We also agree universities should make these changes for the betterment of students and society. Schools that favor the status quo, and thus fall behind in the digital transition, risk becoming irrelevant to both private funders and, more importantly, the

students they seek to serve.

The letter was signed by top representatives of Knight Foundation, McCormick Foundation, Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, Scripps-Howard Foundation, Brett Family Foundation, and Wyncotte Foundation.

Why journalism funders like "teaching hospitals"

As journalism funders said in their open letter, journalism and mass communication schools that don't change risk becoming irrelevant to the more than 200,000 students and the 300 million Americans they seek to serve. Without better-equipped graduates, who will deliver the news and information of the future?

Foundations noted the digital age has disrupted traditional media economics, and that in America today, there is a local journalism shortage. Thus, the "teaching hospital" model of journalism education — learning by doing in a teaching newsroom — seems promising. In this model, students, professors and professionals work together under one digital roof to inform and engage a community. They experiment with new tools and techniques, informed by research and studied by scholars, in a living laboratory.

The funders didn't think the letter was controversial. Yet both the Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Education covered it as such, and the journalism educators' convention and the listservs buzzed.

Some educators said there was no need to talk of change, that they'd already done it. But

that would be impossible. We've entered an era of continuous change. If you changed last year, you're a year behind. If you went digital in 2002, you're more than a decade behind. The "we-have-changed" group includes those saying that their PhDs started out as professionals, not realizing that people who cut their teeth on last century's newsrooms are not the digital pros we need to recruit for teaching hospitals.

Others said the funders cared only about gizmos, not content. Yet smart phones, social media and the Web are no more "gizmo" than the printing press was. They are driving a global revolution in digital content. For the first time in human history, billions of people are walking around with digital media devices linked to a common network. University programs should not claim to be digital when they aren't using social and mobile media for news and information.

Then there are those who say they have created "teaching hospitals" when, in fact, they have not. The professional journalists are the doctors of these hospitals; the academics are the researchers; the students are the interns and residents. They diagnose and treat with stories and forums for debate. But for a teaching hospital to be complete, you need "patients." That means not just providing real news to real people but engaging the community to be served. Students should have the experience of finding out what a community wants covered; of soliciting a community's help in reporting; of seeing scores of comments on their stories, of finding out if the community does anything with the news, whether that news has impact. The journalism programs that claim to be "teaching hospitals" are not engaging their communities. They are hospitals without patients.

Some professors said it was "anti-intellectual" to criticize current research and call for more useful studies to help us understand the technique, technology, and principles at

work in this new age. When we asked about major breakthroughs their theoretical papers had produced, or even who funds them, they fell silent. Looking back, it seems that was not the best way to start a conversation. So let's recast the question: Can we agree we need more research that helps us understand the science of engagement and impact?

Good things are happening

College presidents from places like Western Kentucky, Washington State, and Florida International University supported our letter. Mark Rosenberg of FIU, for example, said the "teaching newsroom" is central to his new dean's vision. It's good to know that Rosenberg wants to build a new Media Innovation Complex (a new facility was a boon to Arizona State).

Two schools said they were looking at creating professional-track PhD programs. One is looking at creating a guidebook of best practices by the deans and directors who are good at getting tenure for top professionals. Columbia University's guidelines are good ones. And the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications updated its standards to reflect the need for current technology and, more than that, for every student to understand the digital world.

Innovative faculty, especially younger professors, feel enthusiastic. A group of them gave a standing ovation to Richard Gingras, head of Google's news products, when he spoke at a recent journalism education convention. These are the faculty applying for micro-grants to employ Knight News Challenge tools on their campuses.

We've said it before but it bears repeating: The digital age has changed almost everything about journalism: who a journalist is; what a story is; which media provide

news when andwhere people want it, and how we engage with communities. The only thing that hasn't changed is the why. In the digital age, good journalism (and communications) is essential for peaceful, productive, free, self-improving societies.

The best schools realize that having top professionals on hand is as important as having top scholars. "Top" is the key word: Quality today does not mean a long career or a famous name. It means you are good at doing what you do in today's environment. You don't have to be a big school to make a difference. Look at Youngstown, Ohio, where students are providing community content as though they were attending Berkeley, USC, Missouri, or North Carolina.

There are hundreds of hard-working deans and directors, applied researchers, sharp professors, growing numbers of digital innovators, and creative agents of change. Look at what Dan Pacheco is doing at Syracuse University, for example, or Jeff Jarvis at CUNY. To you, we say congratulations. Keep changing. We need you to keep trying new story forms; to teach data visualization; to do computational journalism; to develop entrepreneurial journalism, build new software, and even pioneer things like drone journalism. We need you to keep learning from your students, the first generation of digital natives, as fast as you teach them.

"Each and every person in this room"

No institution within journalism education has achieved all that can be achieved. Some big pieces are still missing. For example, journalism and communication schools could be some of the biggest and most important hubs on campuses. They could become centers for teaching 21st century literacy — news and civics literacy along with digital media fluency — to the entire student body. They could, but with only one or two exceptions, most of them aren't.

The News21 project at Arizona State shows what's possible in journalism education and why it's important. The project's 2012 investigation found only a tiny number of cases of voter fraud and raised questions about the tax-exempt status of the nonprofit organization that helped push states to enact voter ID laws when there wasn't really a fraud problem. Everyone from Jon Stewart to The Washington Post used the stories. This is student work, journalism education at its finest. As Gingras said at his talk at the journalism education convention in Chicago:

"I believe we are at the beginnings of a renaissance in the exploration and reinvention of how news is gathered, expressed, and engaged with. But the success of journalism's future can only be assured to the extent that each and every person in this room helps generate the excitement, the passion, and the creativity to make it so. May you enjoy the journey, and more importantly, might you inspire others to enjoy theirs."

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in Harvard's Nieman Journalism Lab.

The promise and peril of teaching hospitals

Law students file briefs, medical students treat patients, so why can't journalism students report for the public? That's the question considered by "The Classroom as Newsroom," which covers the promise and peril of the "teaching hospital" model of journalism education.

The promise: employable students, faculty with fresh professional experience, universities providing a public service, researchers studying and informing new techniques and technologies, and communities gaining the news they need.

When students do actual journalism for a real community, their digital skills and understanding must be up-to-date. In a teaching newsroom, students learn much more about community engagement and story impact than they do by turning papers over to a professor in a classroom. They are working in a living laboratory, in anews ecosystem.

The peril: students must be protected legally. The pace of high-pressure, year-round news production can be draining. University support, while essential, may not be there. Faculty debates over the details, including a too-literal view of the "teaching hospital" metaphor, can be an excuse to resist improvement.

We see both the promise and the peril every day. Most of the experiments cited in the "Classroom as Newsroom" have been funded by Knight Foundation. Co-authors Tim Francisco and Alyssa Lenhoff are co-directors of The News Outlet, a Knight-supported "teaching hospital" journalism experiment at Youngstown State University. Columbia University sociologist and media scholar Michael Schudson is the third co-author.

Schudson, Lenhoff, and Francisco note that the number of schools trying to do actual journalism is increasing. Still, we do not have exact numbers. Statistics kept by groups like the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication are outdated. Those need to be revamped. That said, the authors have captured meaningful vignettes.

For example, schools offering students this “clinical” form of education end up placing more of them into the communications job market than the national average.

This is simply common sense. Those who learn to shoot with live ammunition develop better aim than people only pretending to shoot. Research done by Lee Becker at the University of Georgia confirmed what professionals already knew: what employers most look for in applicants are work experience and professional work samples. If the research were done today, at the top of the list would be digital skills.

Faculty who are pure scholars without professional experience would have a tough time running such real-world laboratories. If teachers with high-level professional experience cannot be hired, or if “hybrid” PhDs (scholars with past professional experience) cannot be found, then trying to launch such an enterprise may not be wise. A teaching newsroom can be dangerous legally without libel insurance and the guidance of a top professional. This could prove even more troublesome in states whose shield laws don’t cover student journalists. The pressure and rigor of providing news on tight deadlines can be great for people who have never done it. Coping with adverse community reaction and controversy requires thick skin.

These are roadblocks. Perhaps funders should revive programs that give scholars daily experience, but this time around, locate them in the best digital-first, social/mobile newsrooms.

Parsing the metaphor

As with the phrase “civic journalism,” we tend to label things to try to better describe them. Unfortunately, giving something a name can also can ruin a perfectly good idea. Some critics, for example, have picked at the “teaching hospital” metaphor, pointing out

the literal differences between medicine, which requires a professional degree, and journalism and communications, which have no professional doctorate, nor any licensing. Others argue that only large, well-funded schools can have a full "teaching hospital" model, that they simply can't do a year-round community news project.

So let's edit the metaphor. Schools with few resources might have "teaching clinics," or even "teaching first-aid stations." You don't have to run a full-fledged news site to engage a community in discussion around a particular story or issue. One size does not fit all. The Youngstown experience proves that you don't have to be a huge campus to have a teaching newsroom.

Then there's the question of revenue. Practical journalism schools, like the one at San Francisco State University, have, for years and with no resources, offered local reporting classes yielding good student work published in local newspapers. While that doesn't offer the community engagement and research options we want, it's at least a start. Other examples: The University of Alabama's "teaching newspaper" program is entirely tuition supported. The New England Center for Investigative Reporting has a variety of revenue streams, including a profitable high school journalism training program

I'm convinced teaching newsrooms will never be able to run on revenue from the news organizations they partner with. Even News21's investigations do not receive any revenue from news organizations. In the end, the question is not whether a program is expensive or no-cost, but whether it is the right size for your campus.

Many debate whether student journalists should be paid. That frame may miss the point. My youngest son plays French horn for the college orchestra, as well as the basketball team's pep band. He gets credit for one and money for the other. My oldest

son freelances as a graphic artist for pay. He works for a tech startup for equity. When he was in school, he created art for credit only. The form of compensation isn't the point; what matters is there is compensation with real value. When you learn amazing new things, that's value.

In "The Classroom as Newsroom," the authors provide useful advice about balancing classroom and newsroom to be sure academic value is there. I think that's the main thing: pay should not be a surrogate for educational value. Perhaps the kind of formal evaluation the authors call for can be directed toward this question from the student point of view. I'd also look at what knowledge these projects are providing to the field of journalism. If student journalism serves only to replace the work of laid-off local journalists, an opportunity to improve journalism and journalism education will have been wasted.

The most encouraging aspect of Lenhoff and Francisco's work is their community engagement effort. Too many student news services are one-way, assembly line news factories that spit out stories. That is (as the students say), so 20th century. Today, engagement is crucial. When hundreds of millions of people each carry a powerful mass media device in their pocket, local producers of news must know not only how to reach them, but how to interact with them. Giving students real news experience also gives them real community experience. The relationship between engagement with the news and the impact of the news is a vast new area for formal study. Scholarship may well prove what my colleague Michael Maness, Knight vice president of journalism and media innovation, says: Human-centered design of news products and projects is a key to engagement.

The most important factor in the success or failure of the teaching newsroom model may

well be the support of a university's president. If the president is behind the idea, money flows and doors open. That said, success can't happen without the right faculty, people willing to keep costs down by tightly integrating the journalism with the teaching.

The digital age heralds a time of continuous change. New forms of communication are being created faster than PhDs can be minted. Who has a doctorate in the social implications of 4G smart phone? What schools have integrated mobile media into most or all of their classes? Getting a doctorate or getting a new class through the bureaucracy (which some call a "blood sport") can take years. We need more flexible systems: Classes in "the new thing," and that new thing can always change. Doctorates that look at technologies being invented on the other side of campus, not what's already here.

Extraordinary professionals, those meeting high intellectual standards, can help journalism and communication schools develop greater clinical expertise. Professionals co-exist with scholars in law and medicine. They co-exist in art and music and business schools. They could do so in journalism as well. When they do, students and professors might be helping invent the future of news.

This article was part of an online package posted by the International Journal of Communications.

A problem with academic research into journalism?

Much has been written of late about the relatively low quality of academic research in the journalism and mass communication field. This is a critical time in communications,

and so, there's much to study. The research gap is a major source of disagreement between professionals and scholars. Professionals argue that much research is unreadable and, frankly, useless. Scholars counter that if you take the time to read the stuff, you'll find important insights.

Why do we care about research at all? It's important to the future of journalism education because publication in the so-called peer-reviewed journals traditionally has been the number one criteria for faculty promotion and tenure. Yes, when it comes to job advancement, research beats teaching.

In the professional world, journalism that makes a difference is measured by impact -- by the unjustly imprisoned freed; the criminals jailed; by the new laws or policies that save lives or stop government waste. In universities, this "community service" (as it is called) is not given the importance it deserves. Publishing in academic journals is what counts, even if those journal articles do nothing to further how journalism serves America. (See the blog post by University of Southern California's Geneva Overholser about "what's missing" in the debate about journalism schools.)

Let's look at three journals, each with the word "journalism" in its title, each widely touted by the nation's organization of journalism educators. Yet citation research -- tracking how often scholars quote each other-- raises provocative questions about these three. Not one ranks among the most cited or prestigious of the journals in the communications field, nor in the social studies field at large.

For this comparison we used databases built by Thomson Reuters, which tracks thousands of journals and citations. All three journals in question are published under the auspices of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Journalism & Mass Communication Educator and Journalism & Communication Monographs.

To qualify inclusion in the "Web of Science" database, Thomson Reuters considers: 1.) The journals' publishing standards; 2.) Editorial content; 3.) International diversity, and 4.) Correct metadata. A journal that has never been cited, for example, would not be picked up by Thomson Reuters.

Of the three, as of last year, only Quarterly had been selected for inclusion, and to receive a Journal Impact Factor in Journal Citation Reports. Educator had been rejected in January 2010 but was up for re-evaluation. As of this writing, Monographs also was "under evaluation." Considering their long lives, a spot-check showing only one of the three AEJMC"journalism-titled" journals in the database was troubling.

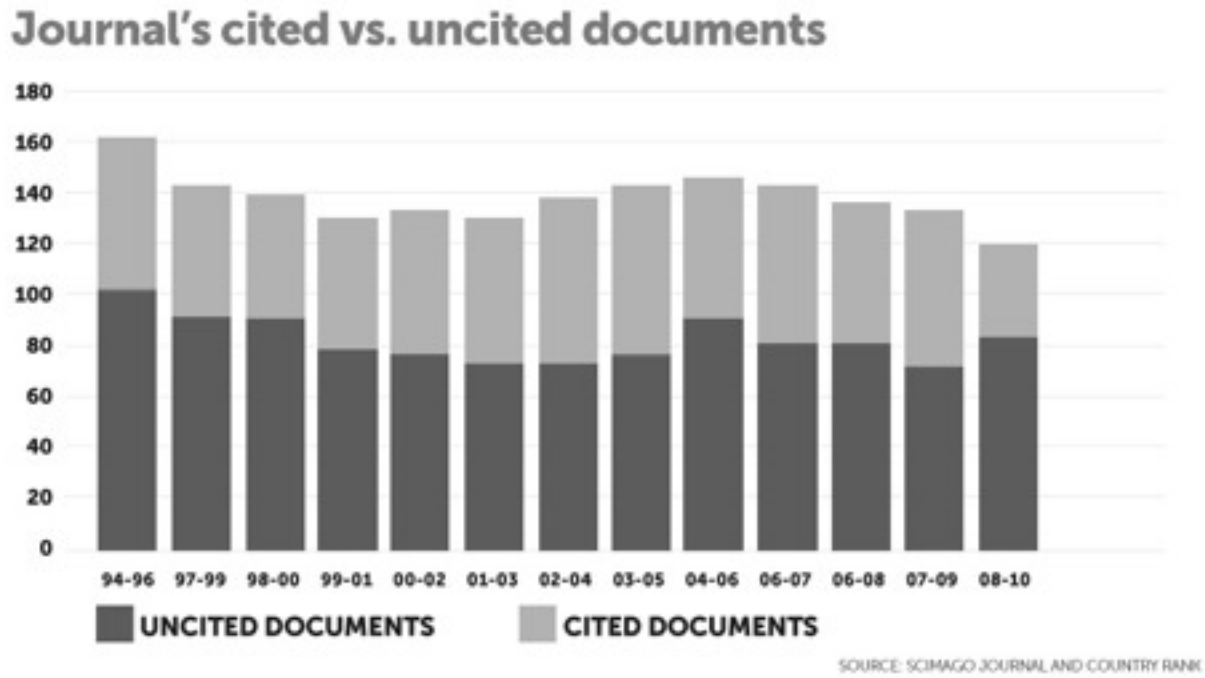
We checked the Quarterly against all the communication journals in the dataset. Given how much the journal produces, not much of it was cited in 2011. The Journal Impact Factor ranked Quarterly number 48 among the 72 communication journals. Considering the importance journalists place on their profession as the "bedrock of democracy," being in the bottom 50 percent is, again, troubling. Of the 2,943 social science journals, Quarterly ranks 1,950, according to impact measure. (The Journal Impact Factor, Thomson Reuters says, can be "used to provide a gross approximation of the prestige of journals to which individuals have been published.")

Does this mean a conspiracy against communication journals? Do social scientists simply not like journalism or communication? Hardly. Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking (first out of 72 communication journals when ranked by Journal

Impact Factor) ranks in the top 10 percent of all social science journals, again using 2011 citations. Note the words cyber and social networking in the title.

Research papers seldom cited

Another way to track citations is through Google Scholar, which confirmed relatively low numbers of citations on individual articles in the three "journalism" journals. In addition, the chart below, from SCImago Journal & Country Rank, shows that every year, at least half the Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly articles remain uncited. The latest year on record shows no citations for 69 percent of the articles. Remember, the Quarterly appears to be the best of the three AEJMC "journalism journals."



This is disquieting, given the more than 7,000 full-time and more than 5,000 part-time professors who should be reading and quoting each other (even if none of the scores of

thousands of scholars in other fields find journalism interesting.)

Someone has to ask: Is it really wise to base tenure and promotion on journal articles that are never cited? It's difficult to imagine working journalists promoted for writing stories no one ever mentions.

This also doesn't seem fair to good scholars. Why is the saying "publish or perish"? Why would a scholar who writes dozens of articles no one cites be considered in any way equal to a professor like Mark Deuze of Indiana University, whose media work and daily life research is cited by hundreds, or participatory culture rock starHenry Jenkins of the University of Southern California, who is cited by thousands?

At its 2012 convention, the Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication gave out a thumb drive with the "best" scholarly articles from decades of the three journals in question. Too many of them seemed derivative, obvious or obtuse. To quote a senior journalism educator: "There are three categories of research these days: 1. Who cares? 2. No shit! 3. I don't have any idea what you are talking about." To be generous, perhaps we should add a category: "4. Needs more work, but there might be something there."

Some of the "Research You Can Use," listed on the AEJMC website, seemed to fit into category 4: the social responsibility of news organizations, gatekeeping, agenda-setting and "framing" all seem meaningful. But through the lens of social and mobile media and its attendant participatory culture, only such classics as Marshall McLuhan's "Media is the Message" and Walter Lippmann's "Public Opinion" appear to hold their own. Yes, Lippmann was right; media still gives us a picture of the world; and yes, McLuhan was right, media type still affects content. A lot of the rest just feels out of date.

When no one cites a paper, questions can be raised about research topics and quality, but a zero probably should not be considered an absolute indictment. Perhaps no one reads that journal. Or perhaps the research is good and other scholars saw it, but they just don't care. A case in point may be "Bridging Newsrooms and Classrooms," by a team of six doctoral graduates of Indiana University, who in 2006 warned that journalism education was going to be in a world of trouble if it didn't speed up its digital transformation. "Some scholars doubt whether journalism school professors are theoretically and especially technologically prepared," it said. Yet the need for reform is "an urgent necessity." Only 56 percent of the educators surveyed were even talking about curriculum change. The paper only received about 50 citations, according to Google Scholar. Fifty is certainly better than zero. Yet the topic directly touches every other scholar in the field. Shouldn't more than 50 of the 12,000 faculty in journalism and mass communication schools be thinking and writing about the future of journalism education?

Research tough to translate

Valiant educators over the years, such as Del Brinkman (formerly of Knight Foundation), and currently, Michael Schudson of Columbia University, have tried to find and translate important scholarly work in journalism. It is tough slogging. The most quoted journalism notion in the past decade (one that media mogul Rupert Murdoch popularized in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors), did not come from a journalism journal of any type. It came from Marc Prensky, who coined the term "digital natives," and asked if they really think differently than the rest of us.

Schudson, for one, believes that journalism studies research, while not "particularly strong," is still "vastly stronger" than it was 20 years ago. Still, he says, the journals he

most depends on are not the ones published by AEJMC. Schudson's list includes Journalism, out of The University of Pennsylvania; Journalism Studies, from Cardiff; the International Journal of Communication, from USC, as well as Political Communication, the International Journal of Press/Politics, and Media, Culture and Society. Professionals hoping to learn about the field might try some of the journals Schudson lists. Good researchers from places like the University of Missouri, the University of North Carolina and elsewhere produce important work that often ends up in these sorts of journals.

How do the editors of the AEJMC journals react to being ignored, in relative terms, by other scholars? From what I've seen, their conclusions are: we don't market well enough, we don't get enough funding, and some articles aren't meant to be quoted. (Scholars have created a category of articles "not meant to be cited," which cuts down on the sting of more than half the articles in a given year not cited at all.)

We wrote Dr. Daniel Riffe at the University of North Carolina, editor of the most-cited of the three journals touted by AEJMC, the Quarterly. We asked:

1. What do you think of citation studies — specifically the Thomson Reuters impact scale -- that rank the Quarterly 48 of 72 in the communications field?

2. The SC Imago Journal and Country Rank, from the Scopus database, says nearly 70 percent of the articles in the Quarterly are not cited at all. If that is accurate, why?

3. Are journal citations in general a good measure of the quality of a journal? Why or why not?

4. What would you say to those who argue that the quality of the Quarterly and the AEJMC journals should be significantly improved? If that needs to happen, how could that be done?

5. Is there any piece of research — cited or uncited — that you think proves the value of the Quarterly in its mission of keeping up with the latest developments? Are there, for example, any of the AEJMC-cited "Research You Can Use" items that are especially illustrative?

Riffe, who is the Richard Cole Eminent Professor at UNC/Chapel Hill, said he would answer as soon as time allowed, but noted his journal work is "on hold" due to teaching demands. Six months later, at the writing of this update, he still had not replied. I am told Riffe is a fine scholar, one of the better ones. I include the questions merely to show that we tried to get an explanation from the most-cited of the AEJMC journals.

While we're waiting, here's some advice from America's great early journalist, the writer and statesman Benjamin Franklin: "If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead & rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing." Scholars, take note, when you next hear of your students setting aside traditional journals as they look for intellectual reflections and philosophical road maps on the future of journalism. No one can blame them for going to the Project for Excellence in Journalism, Nieman Journalism Lab, the Poynter Institute, PBS Media Shift, the Tow Center at Columbia, the Shorenstein Center's Journalist's Resource web site and other places where scholars and professionals work together.

UPDATE:

For a follow-up in The Philadelphia Inquirer, two leading journalism educators told me they agreed professors and professionals should join forces to study digital journalism experiments.

Said Jerry Ceppos, former Knight-Ridder company news executive and currently dean at the Louisiana State University Manship School of Mass Communication: "For starters, I would gently say that professionals could improve the accessibility of some writing and even graphics without reducing the gravitas of articles. After all, that's what professional journalists do. In addition, research areas suggested by professionals might help the journalism industries — again, without reducing the quality of content."

Jean Folkerts, professor and former dean of the school of journalism and mass communications at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, agrees. "By doing the research together, [scholars and professionals] inform each other and learn from each other. Such collaboration ends the vicious cycle of academics believing that journalists jump to conclusions without adequate data, and of journalists thinking academics have no regard for journalistic work."

So what are we waiting for? Unite the tribes. We need everyone's help to bring high-quality journalism into the digital age, to perfect new ways to keep independent news and information flowing. We need a better understanding of the "science" of how news informs and engages communities.

Demand Grows for Digital Training

Can journalism schools expand their impact and reach through more distance e-learning? The question was posed to a gathering of Knight Chairs in Journalism, after the release of "Digital Training Comes of Age," a new Knight Foundation report showing soaring demand for digital training. More and more, journalists are willing to get the training for those and other skills online.

The Knight Chairs noted that some journalism schools do offer online master's degrees as well as one-off on-line courses. They said that while schools should do more e-learning, they are not doing enough to define best e-learning practices. Many educators have an outdated idea of e-learning, they said, thinking it is little more than a lecture on-line. Howard Finberg of the Poynter Institute had a possible solution: Create e-learning modules for teachers and trainers who want to learn how to create good e-learning.

Rosental Alves, Knight Chair in International Journalism, pioneered e-learning at Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, which over nearly a decade has trained more than 6,000 journalists in Spanish and Portuguese. E-learning, he said, has two distinct advantages: the courses are low cost and self-directed modules can be taken at any time. Alves next experimented with MOOCs (massive open online courses), and found he could reach more than 6,000 journalists with just two classes.

The study "Digital Training Comes of Age" surveyed 660 journalists who took Knight-supported training programs. The survey showed that online classes are gaining popularity as a cost-effective way to reach more trainees. A third of U.S. journalists and

eight in 10 international journalists say the online classes they took were as good as, or better than, conventional classroom training. Demand for training continues to grow. More and more, journalists want digital training, such as multimedia and data analysis. Most give their news organizations low marks for providing training opportunities.

The report also includes case studies showing the impact of training. Participants said that professional development helped them learn multimedia skills to create new, engaging story forms; provided entrepreneurial skills needed to start new local news ventures; taught university professors digital fluency needed to teach the latest best practices; and helped journalists investigate wrongdoing and prompt policy change.

Knight Foundation has invested more than $150 million in journalism education and training over the past 10 years. Each year, Knight grantees, including two-dozen Knight Chairs at leading universities, teach and train thousands of journalists of all ages.

The report calls the digital age a “do-over moment” for the news industry, which has historically lagged in professional development for its employees. In the past, the cost of quality training was an obstacle news executives bridled at. Now, training of all kinds can be done online at lower cost to newsrooms and more convenience to employees.

This is good news for Knight Foundation, which has tracked newsroom training in studies published in Newsroom Training: Where’s the Investment? and News, Improved. A decade ago, our $10 million Newsroom Training Initiative tried to increase news industry investment in training. With projects like Tomorrow’s Workforce, NewsTrain and News University, we could see we had increased training. But industry investment still lagged. Before the initiative, only a third of the news organizations we

surveyed thought training budgets should grow. After the initiative, no change. Yet learning organizations are the ones most likely to survive the digital transition.

“Digital Training Comes of Age” noted: “The good news is that the reset button has never been easier to hit, nor has it ever been more powerful. The digital age has made it simpler than ever for modern day journalists to teach their peers. By putting the sum total of human knowledge at the tips of our fingers, the Internet has opened up better ways of sharing and using that knowledge. There’s more to learn, but teaching is easier.”

This blog followed a presentation for the Knight Chair luncheon in Chicago at the convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapter 3: Freedom, innovation and policy

Changing the Rulebook

In the digital age, sharing information is as easy as 1, 2, 3. Unless, of course, you live in a country that won’t allow it. In the west, we post, we tweet, we blog, we text — we pick up the phone — and without calling ourselves Citizen Journalists, we act like journalists every day. But most people in the world still reside in closed societies. Dozens of countries limit or block access to the Internet. If people there report on events, they risk jail, or worse.

How do we help the world do what most of its leaders say it should? The goal, enshrined by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, seems clear enough: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart

information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Knight Foundation's largest international demonstration project, costing more than $30 million, is the Knight International Journalism Fellowships program, run by the International Center for Journalists. Across the globe, Knight Fellows show the power of free media to improve lives. In Brazil, it means mapping a deteriorating Amazon; in China and India, it means starting new journalism education programs; in Kenya, it means exposing flaws in millions of dollars of unsound public health spending. All in all, ICFJ has logged dozens of cases of good journalism prompting new laws or policies that have changed the way communities live.

In the U.S., our issues are different. We don't seem to appreciate the true value of our media or our freedom. Our public media policies lag behind other nations, far behind Great Britain's, world-famous for its fee-supported British Broadcasting Corporation. We seem content with a public broadcasting system that not many use for news, one that doesn't change very fast. We just don't know much about our fundamental laws. We know more about cartoons like The Simpsons, for example, than we do the First Amendment.

The Newseum: Its mission is "to help the public and the news media understand one another better" and to "raise public awareness of the important role of a free press in a democratic society".

In Washington D.C., the Knight Foundation funds the Newseum, the only major museum of news. If it demonstrates anything, the Newseum shows there's no such thing as "the media." In front of the building, etched in Tennessee marble, 74 feet high, is the reason why so many journalists can say so many different things: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Our attitudes about the idea of freedom are important, as are the issues of federal media policy. This chapter covers them because they are part of the rulebook governing the

future of news.

Include social media in World Press Freedom measures

On World Press Freedom Day, you'd think the Knight Foundation would be all smiles, having invested $100 million this past decade to advance freedom of expression. But we aren't all smiles. Much more must be done.

Just look at the World Press Freedom map, produced by one of Knight's partners, Freedom House. Over time that map has come to reflect the mess of humanity at its

messiest. We try to bring some order to things by labeling the world's countries either "free" or "partly free" or "not free." Way too many are still not free. How did that happen? When you look at the map over time, patterns emerge.

After the Cold War ended, the map showed press freedom growing. But after the terrorism wars began, it showed press freedom shrinking. War ends, freedom grows; war begins, freedom shrinks. So which way is it headed now? Looking at the past, you'd have to say it would be forward — and backward.

We zigzag between different possible futures, some of which are frightening.

One of those futures, you might imagine, could be World War 3.0, so named because it

may already have started in cyberspace, where more than 100 countries already have cyber armies. Once it branches out with modern firepower, we could easily wreck the planet. Label this scenario “not free.”

Or imagine many small wars. A Return of the Tribes. Our cyberspace cloud would be a giant virtual brain at war with itself. Digital cocoons would keep us focused on what we already believe. Social media would break all news. Flash mobs rule. Attention deficit disorder thrives. We are “partly free” but going nowhere.

Soviet-era World War Two memorial in Kiev, Ukraine.

Or maybe it will be the Rise of Authoritarian Capitalism. China wins the global economic competition. The corporation is the state. Dictators run our lives. They sterilize the news. We eat up mindless entertainment to forget a world that once again is only “partly free.”

Or, one hopes, we could create a Crowd-Sourced Planet. Personal expression abounds. Education is universal. We throw out the crooks and innovate to solve our problems. In this peaceful and sustainable world, we are free.

People argue a lot about variations of these futures. The crystal ball is cloudy.

Some of the futures I've described sound like science fiction. But science is pushing us there. Our radar is fuzzier than it needs to be because in the digital age of communication we haven't fully changed the ways we measure and describe concepts like world press freedom.

We see violence and instability driving our traditional press freedom indicators downward, and digital revolution and popular uprisings pushing our hopes upward. If we can't tell where freedom really stands, how can we help it grow?

Let's start with violence. The 20th Century was a century of war, they said, and the 21st Century will be one of peace. That hasn't yet happened. We have dozens of national wars, civil wars, drug wars: The World Bank says 1.5 billion people are victims of poverty and violence. As uprisings spread, so do attacks on journalists. A violent world is not a free world.

A war of ideas

For centuries, freedom has crept forward during the lulls between the stops and starts of a continuous war between open and closed societies. The real war is not so much one of nations as it is one of ideas, increasingly happening on battlefields without boundaries, a fluid and confusing fight in which leaders attack their own people and in which people, corporations and nations can abruptly change sides.

Cyberspace was built for a fight like this. And there it sits. Our militaries defend against cyber attacks every day. We are probably already engaged in World War 3.0. We just

don't know it. The details are kept secret.

Open and closed societies don't even agree on what cyber war is. We say a cyber attack could be shutting down an electrical grid. They say a cyber attack is any news story that contracts state-approved information. We call Google a digital miracle. They call it a digital weapon.

Cyberspace censorship is growing. David Drummond, Google's chief legal officer, reported that in 2002, only four governments censored the Net. In 2011 40 did; in 2013 even more.

Voice and facial recognition software, global positioning systems, all these things can be used by tyrants to track you down. Once they tortured you to get to your sources; now they need only to acquire your digital communications records to access your most private information.

During these violent times, can America be at its generous best when making the case for freedom? It's not an easy test. But we have to try: we need the moral high ground to show how freedom of expression underpins all human rights. We need to operate in a framework of freedom, exceptions strictly limited.

A mixed record

Our record is not what it could be. As the Student Press Law Center points out, student journalists are not well protected legally, nor are the increasing number of freelance and volunteer journalists, nor, for that matter, are all full-time professionals.

America's leaders speak eloquently on the "freedom to connect." But we fail to live up to

our promises. Our Pentagon says military employees should not look at the Wikileakswebsite. Apple goes after the blogger who leaked the iPhone specs. Teachers won't let students use cell phones. The Rev. Jerry Falwell Jr. blocks his students from a local news website.

Can you hear Stalin out there somewhere, applauding? He said ideas were more powerful than guns. He would not allow his enemies to have guns. Why would he leave them free to know and share ideas? Stalin would face difficulty today in a world in which we can instantly share ideas. Like the sun, water and air, news wants to flow freely. But that doesn't stop threatened nations from fighting back. They fight and traditional press freedom indicators fall.

That said, freedom may be growing, even if our world press freedom map says it isn't. Why? Because we tend to focus on the worst human rights tragedies — journalists killed in Pakistan, Mexico and Iraq; jailings in Eritrea, Burma, China and Iran. We follow the decline of institutions. We watch the states of the former Soviet Union recreate repression. We track every negative. But what about positives? There are now 5 billion cell phones on a planet of 7 billion people. Where is that on our maps? You hold a printing press, broadcast station and telephone in your palm and can say what you want to whomever you want, times five billion. That's some free expression.

Look at Egypt, with as many as 90 million cell phones, depending on the source, for a nation of 80 million people. Suddenly, the whole media ecosystem is different. (Remember, news does not care how it flows. Like water, it takes the easiest path.) Someone might post a note on Facebook about a rally in the square, or tweet it, or call a friend, or text it, or blog it. Or people in the square might talk to each other (yes, that

can be news). Or watch it on satellite TV and share that on the Internet.

Our usual indicators show little freedom in Egypt's traditional media. But those measurements didn't matter. When Arab Spring arrived, the uprising was digital. Facebook mattered. The journalism on Al Jazeera mattered. Even Twitter mattered. People communicated. Theirs was a Digital Uprising, not yet a revolution but a protest that ousted a president.

We need a new calculation: Track the freedom in today's digital media ecosystem. Subtract the censorship, and then see where we are.

To do this, we need a real-time picture of where digital media is on the planet. Regulators should require global companies to tell us the level and type of technology in various countries. Internet providers should alert us when service is blocked. Governments must disclose far more about cyber attacks.

We need a better radar to know exactly how best to help. If many-to-many media is causing a new era of freedom in spite of institutions, not because of them, we need to deal with that. We already know enough to call for a much bigger effort. We must support good work, such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and the Inter American Press Association'sto fight against those who would kill journalists. At the same time, we must expand.

Expanding media development

Knight Foundation is supporting a legal defense fund created by the Open Society Foundations. Our part in the project's launch is to help defend bloggers and website proprietors unfairly jailed around the world, as we already do here at home with the

Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press.

On the digital front we support other work: The World Wide Web Foundation, founded by Sir Tim Berners-Lee and dedicated toward universal use of the web and The Aspen Institute's IDEA project, which pushes for greater Internet freedom through free trade. Over the years International Center for Journalists has been a key grantee, with fellowships that use digital approaches to create lasting, visible change in journalism and its impact.

Marcus Brauchli, former executive editor of the Washington Post, says press freedom is increasingly shaped in the "unsettled territory" of cyberspace. He urges support for "the journalistic standards of emerging media."

New types of media open the door for the creation of new rules. This reinvention of communications should cause western governments, the largest providers of media development aid, to exponentially increase support. But like the promised century of peace, this isn't happening, either.

Media development money is just a pimple on the nose of international aid. Globally, estimates put it at $500 million a year — the price of four F22 Raptors. This makes no sense. Media development aid creates the independent journalism that tells you whether all the other aid is being stolen. Just as freedom of expression supports all other freedoms, media aid supports all other aid.

A report by CIMA shows the U.S. spends only .003 percent of all its aid on media in developing countries. This is before calculating budget cuts. So, let's summarize our federal strategy: Spend vast amounts of money on traditional aid that keeps an Egyptian

leader in power for decades. Spend tiny amounts of foreign aid on building independent media. Watch in surprise when there is an uprising. Some media aid might have made it more obvious that all the other aid was not doing its job.

Our global challenges don't give us many more chances to get this right. We owe it to the brave people who gave life and liberty for the cause of freedom to try to do better. We know free countries prosper. That honest governments are more stable. That people must be free to act to advance their own true interests.

Let's use social media to let freedom ring. Tweet or text or blog or post a simple message about freedom of expression. Ask your friends to pass it on. Use what we have as we work to get more.

The original version of this speech was delivered on World Press Freedom Day at the Newseum in Washington D.C.

As social media grows, so does First Amendment appreciation

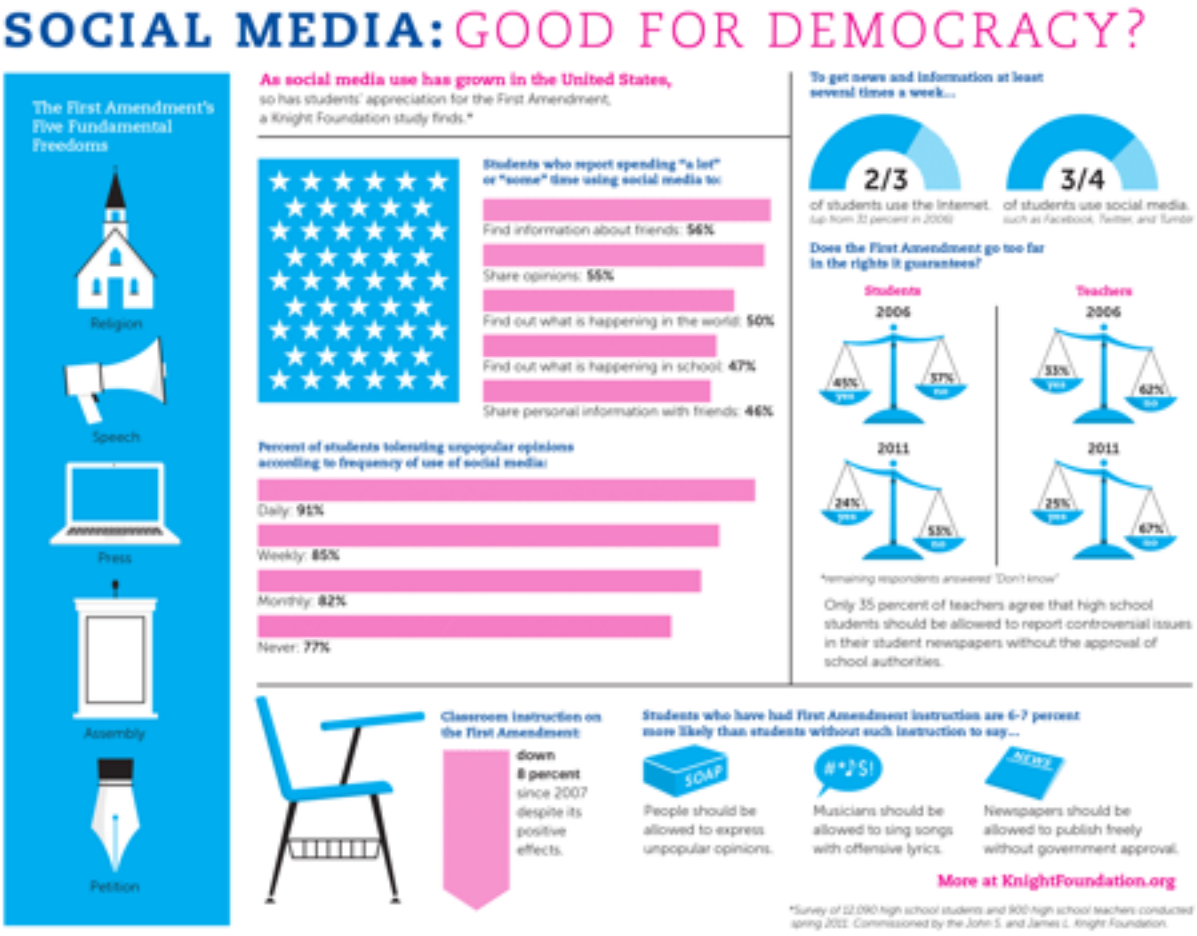
Each year on Constitution Day, students and teachers celebrate the most fundamental laws of our republic. This year, they should celebrate Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and all other social media children of the digital age.

Why? Because, it turns out, social media are good for the Constitution. More precisely, social media are good for the First Amendment, the lead item of the Bill of Rights,

etched into our national history in 1791, protecting freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly and petition.

"The Future of the First Amendment," a study funded by the Knight Foundation, concluded that today's social media fads are good for that 220-year-old law.

As researcher Ken Dautrich put it: "There is a clear, positive relationship between student usage of social media to get news and information and greater support for free expression rights."



Dautrich, a University of Connecticut professor, has done four major national surveys of high school students on First Amendment issues and has co-written “The Future of the First Amendment: Digital Media, Civic Education and Free Expression Rights in the Nations’ High Schools.” For the 2011 national study detailed here, he surveyed 12,090 high school students and 900 high school teachers.

The findings were exciting.

Fully 91 percent of students who use social networking to get news and information daily believe people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions. But only 77 percent of those who never use social networks to get news agree that unpopular opinions should be allowed.

These sorts of surveys are good at establishing connections, but not as good at explaining why those connections exist. Do social media make you a First Amendment lover? Or do First Amendment lovers just use more social media? Or are both things true?

How it works exactly, I can’t say. But the connection makes sense. Students using their cell phones to express themselves — to text, tweet and blog and post — are more interested in rules having to do with freedom of expression.

The First Amendment survey also showed students’ use of digital media for news and information is growing. Since 2006, it has doubled, with three quarters of the students getting news from social media several times a week.

Appreciation for freedom improved right along with that. In 2006, 45 percent of the

students surveyed said the First Amendment "goes too far." But by 2011, only 24 percent thought there was too much freedom.

Public opinion shapes law

You might ask: Since our courts determine how the First Amendment is to be interpreted, why do our opinions about it matter?

Because the Supreme Court's decisions reflect long-term changes in public attitudes — and that's as true for First Amendment doctrine as it is for other parts of the Constitution.

As Judge Learned Hand put it in 1944: "I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts and minds of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it."

Since young people represent the future of American public opinion, they are the real overseers of the future of the First Amendment.

That's why we need to survey their attitudes.

Some of the study's results were frightening. While more students now understand that government can't censor the media in this country, nearly 40 percent of them still think state censorship is allowed. While more students say they think about the First Amendment, most of them still don't.

There is still plenty to teach about how responsibility comes along with all these rights.

Even so, when we see the numbers start to move in the right direction, it's cause for celebration. Should we thank our nation's teachers for the recent improvement in First Amendment attitudes?

Not really. The percentage of students getting First Amendment instruction in school seems to be going down. Only 30 percent of the teachers said they are teaching it, though 86 percent admit the First Amendment is "very important". This is a shame. The surveys show that if you teach high school students about the First Amendment, they'll learn.

I'm afraid many teachers actually are a drag on First Amendment learning. The survey says most teachers do not support free expression rights in a school context. They don't think the school newspaper should print controversial articles. They do not believe students should post things about school on their Facebook pages. They think social media hurts teaching.

Are young people learning as much about freedom via texting as they are via teaching? Maybe. To their credit, teachers say more digital media literacy education is needed in schools. I agree.

The digital age has dramatically changed how we consume news and information. Students are adapting to these changes faster than adults, using them for networking and news, and now, to better appreciate freedom.

Maybe we should learn something from them.

UPDATE:

This article, distributed by the American Society of News Editors, originally appeared as an opinion piece in newspapers nationally. Since its appearance, Knight Foundation partnered with ASNE to create Free to Tweet, a scholarship competition for noteworthy social media expressions of freedom. ASNE also produced a teacher's guide to social media.

News consumers mix and match information sources

Local news ecosystems are more complex than is commonly understood. The digital transformation of news is causing us to mix and match content with media in new ways. Mobile media, for example, are becoming popular for "out and about news," like restaurant tips or weather reports. The web, accessed by desktop, is seen as especially good for education news and local business news. Local TV is popular for weather, breaking news and traffic. Newspapers are best for overall civic news, especially government news.

The study detailing these findings was a partnership between the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Pew Internet & American Life Project in partnership with Knight Foundation.

Almost half of us, the survey said, don't have favorite news sources. We don't turn to particular "packages" of news. What's more, we are no longer hooked on "appointment news." There's no need to wake up for the paper at 6 a.m. or sit down to the television

newscast at 6 p.m. All that news lives in cyberspace. We send each other the news, through social and mobile media. Some 41 percent of us are creating our own news flows by contributing stories or data of our own.

Most of us now get news from three or more sources. Increasingly, we consume news a la carte — picking the correct vessel for each type of news, as one would choose a bowl for soup at a buffet. We do not yet fully understand the complexity of these a-la-carte flows of local data, events, issues and ideas, nor why they are different across generations.

As study co-author Tom Rosenstiel puts it: "Research in the past about how people get information about their communities tended to focus on a single question: 'where do you go most often to get local news?' This research asked about 16 different local topics and found a much more complex ecosystem in which people rely on different platforms for different topics. It turns out that each piece of the local information system has special roles to play."

For those concerned about the future of self-government, some of the findings are worrisome. The newspaper comes out on top for local government news. But not that many people actually care about local government. (Just look at local election turnout). So most people — 69 percent — don't think the death of the newspaper would matter. Yet without government news, we can't mind our own civic store — and that's the reason you hear about increasing numbers of scandals.

This article originally appeared in the Knight blog.

4 Cs of successful community media

This is an edited excerpt from an interview for "Empowering Independent Media," a publication produced by theNational Endowment for Democracy's Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA). My point was that policy makers need to think about the long-term survival of media they are seeding and feeding.

Question: Which business models do you see emerging that seem most likely to be able to help support independent media in developing and emerging countries?

Newton: Business models need to match the realities of the local media ecosystems where they intend to operate. In general, all models have four successful elements: relevant and credible content, appropriate technological connectivity, vigorous community engagement and innovation in seeking capital.

Those are the four Cs:

Content

Connectivity

Community

Capital

The most successful models tend to show more than one source of revenue. On the expense side, the model must match up with the revenues — trying to create a highly professional investigative reporting project on an annual budget of $25,000 a year simply may not work. But at that level, a volunteer citizen media project might be sustainable.

Q: Given your long-term investments in media development, what best practices have you identified that help independent media become self-sustaining? How are those changing?

Newton: Community engagement is key. The content must engage people, the connectivity must engage them, and when appropriate, they need to be asked directly for money to help. News proprietors need to be able to clearly show the impact of the work. If people do not believe news and information matters, if they do not see the impact of journalism, it is difficult to establish and maintain professional media organizations.

Q: What approaches seem least likely to work?

Newton: Here's a recipe for failure: Get all your money from an out-of-country source, create a media model that exists only in richer countries, use technology that's too old or too new to reach people, become fixed in your ways and do not develop the capacity for continuous change. Be an editorial-only operation with no good business people and no good technologists. Don't check your facts, write about things that don't matter in ways that are difficult to understand, don't allow for feedback of any kind and do not collaborate with anyone. You'd be surprised how many people try it that way.

Q: What critical gaps in management and business-side skills have you observed among both traditional and new media?

Newton: We need more design, technology and business people in these operations, good ones who can iterate but also journalists who can "speak" tech, or who can understand business. We need differently taught journalist-programmers who can design high-tech platforms and differently trained journalist-proprietors who can run companies — renaissance people who can operate in different fields.

Q: Going forward, how will these changes and gaps affect your foundation's investments in media development and training?

Newton: The speed of change in digital media will continue to present significant challenges. The reality is that no one really knows what the future will be. We know that the fair, accurate contextual search for truth will always be important. We know free expression is the social sunlight that makes civilizations prosper. We just don't know enough yet about the new forms to settle into larger decisions. In general, we have increased our journalism and media work and have advocated for other funders to do the same. The digital age is a critical transition in the history of news, and we think investments now will have a good chance to show high-impact results.

What can the Federal Trade Commission do?

Consider the Roman philosopher, orator and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero. Two thousand years ago, when Cicero was sent to the provinces, he was unhappy with the commercial news packets coming from ancient Rome. As New York University's Mitchell Stephens explained in "A History of News," Cicero wrote back to Rome to complain. He wanted to know how the senate voted. Instead, he got stories about Gladiators and ostriches. Many people have felt this way — that the news isn't what they wish it was.

The Newspaper Association of America tells us there are fewer than 1,400 daily papers covering more than 50,000 cities, counties, and "minor civil divisions" like towns and

villages. This means a great deal of our democracy is not being covered by the fourth estate. It always has been that way. A newspaper I edited, the Oakland Tribune, won awards for watchdog coverage. But we thoroughly watched over perhaps only 5 percent of the government within our region.

The point is, the market has not suddenly failed to provide news in the public interest. Markets always pick and choose. That's why I like to repeat this statement, made by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy:
"Journalism does not need saving so much as it needs creating."
The Federal Trade Commission should care about shrinking local flows of news and information. But it also needs to think about how American might create 20 times more than what we have now. What is holding us back from that goal?

This nation has made rules involving media for hundreds of years. They start with Benjamin Franklin's postal subsidies for the colonial press. For the most part, though, our nation's current media policies are just old and in the way.

Our policies are children of the industrial age, not the digital age. They often block innovation and the creation of new journalism.

Some examples:
Public media. Much of the government money that flows to public media is status quo money. Not good enough. Why shouldn't everything the Corporation for Public Broadcasting funds should be for media innovation, for making public media more local and more interactive? That would require a new policy.
Nonprofit digital startups. Our old rules don't treat them fairly. Tax rules make it hard to switch to being a nonprofit, or a L3C. Nor do the rules allow these types of news

organizations to exercise as much community leadership as for-profit entities, in, for example, the writing of editorials. Access rules don't give nonprofit news organizations equal access to press galleries.

University journalism. Students everywhere are showing they can do great journalism. (By the way, if the nation's 200,000 journalism and mass communications students spent just 10 percent of their time doing actual journalism, that would more than replace the journalism lost in the past 10 years from the elimination of jobs by badly run news businesses.) But our old rules don't treat student journalists fairly. Many of our shield laws don't protect them. They aren't considered true journalists.

The government itself is a huge producer of mass media today. In general, however, it is not a very good producer. For the most part, local, state and national government can't seem to use new technology to do a better job obeying its own freedom of information laws, not even on the people's websites that it now runs.

I'm not sure how much of this the Federal Trade Commission can or should try to change. Some of it falls squarely on the shoulders of digital media literacy. If schools and universities expand the teaching of that literacy, the Ciceros of the world will demand more on their own. There is one big thing the FTC can do. Be sure consumers have universal broadband access.

If you don't have digital access, it doesn't matter what kind of journalism falls in the forest. You won't hear it. You won't be part of the digital public square. The FTC should be out there saying: "hey, Federal Communications Commission, we are going to dog you until you deliver on universal affordable broadband for all consumers." That's the level playing field upon which everything depends.

UPDATE:

This speech was originally was presented at a Federal Trade Commission hearing on the future of news. Since then, Knight Foundation focused two of its grant competitions, the Knight News Challenge and the Knight Information Challenge, specifically on the challenges of open government.

Why we need a public media technology transformation fund

This letter was submitted to the Federal Communications Commission after it hired Steven Waldman, founder of Beliefnet.com, to produce a comprehensive study of America's news systems. Waldman's 2011 report was named "Information Needs of Communities" after the Knight Commission report that preceded and inspired it. As my update at the end of the letter shows, private foundations continue to pursue these projects, though the federal government has been slow to change.

Dear Mr. Waldman,
Thank you again for the invitation to speak at the Federal Communication Commission's recent Future of Media Workshop.

You've asked how a content-neutral Public Media Technology Transformation Fund might accelerate media innovation in America.

Below are some ideas I hope you will find helpful. I should note this is not an official paper from Knight Foundation. These are my own personal views, after three careers, as a journalist, a news historian and a media philanthropist. At the same time, my views obviously are informed by work our president, Alberto Ibargüen, and our team at Knight have done since 2007 to try to advance media innovation.

Why a public media technology transformation fund?

The Federal Communication Commission has embarked on what may well be the most significant reexamination of public media policy since the Carnegie report recommended the creation of public broadcasting.

The issue: How are we going to deal with the digital age?

How can we help existing public broadcasters transform, to recapture significant past public investment in public media and secure its future? At the same time, how do we broaden the definition of public media to help the new startups, which are accomplishing amazing things with lesser resources?

At the heart of this is technology. Digital technology is causing the "creative disruption" that is remaking media ecosystems. The government has helped public broadcasters turn their external television and radio signals into digital signals. Now it needs to help them turn their internal news and information collection systems into modern digital systems.

Digital tools provide new ways to do journalism. Technological breakthroughs allow one well-trained journalists to do things that used to require dozens if not hundreds of old-school reporters. A major fund would maximize the adoption of these changes in public

broadcasting. For the first time, having only two reporters at a public radio station need not be an impossible editorial challenge. With breakthroughs in crowd-sourcing (Public Insight Journalism), data-mining (TracFed, Sunlight Foundation) and automated applications (OpenBlock), two reporters can do the work of many more.

Yet despite comments to the contrary, public broadcasting is not adopting those tools rapidly enough, and is thus missing an opportunity to rapidly gain in popularity. Projects such as PBS Engage, NPR Argo, the joint public media platform, and web work by Frontline and NewsHour are notable. But the money involved is a fraction of the operating costs of the organizations involved. Even the most innovative among them might devote no more than 10 percent of their budgets to technology transformation.

The Knight Commission for the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy recommends that we increase support for public media aimed at meeting community information needs. Why? Because the creative destruction of new information technology is causing the heart of America's news system — the daily newspaper — to cut back dramatically on local coverage. If public broadcasting could turn its "most trusted" brand toward local news and greater interactivity, that would help communities across the nation.

Philanthropy has started new, nimble, web-based public media organizations that are rapidly gaining audience. We also are funding new open source technology that helps nonprofits as well as businesses automate and improve journalistic functions. In a contest like the Knight News Challenge, however, thousands enter but only dozens win. We are leaving a lot on the table. We have proven the concept that a content-neutral technology fund can accelerate media innovation. But we seem to be working with the

early adopters, not the middle of the bell curve, and certainly not, as a whole, public broadcasting. And most foundations are not doing what we are doing. A report from the (then-named) Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media, called "Funding Media, Strengthening Democracy," notes once again that grant makers must move faster and more seriously into technology in their media funding.

Washington can approach this problem in myriad ways. One that resonates with the challenges of the age and with the experiments we have funded is a content-neutral technological fund that would help the existing public broadcasters and the new startups, which — who knows? — may either replace, become partners with or even eventually be absorbed by traditional public broadcasters. A fund could help make technological innovations universally usable in the public media system. It could help public broadcasters use digital technology to become more local and more interactive. And it will help during a time when money is scarce and public broadcasters are hard pressed to keep the lights on and innovate at the same time.

Government should create a Public Media Technology Transformation Fund for all the same reasons it promotes universal broadband. Without it, the nation will simply not be competitive in this century. People must have access to broadband, but also have reasons to use it. Today, the multiplier effect of these investments is hard to ignore. If we unleashed open source software applications and the technology needed to operate them, and gave away money for code and machines to news organizations across the country, we would be building a new field of public media innovation — by both repurposing existing content and creating new content.

Everyone can win. A local newspaper, a commercial or public broadcaster, ethnic and alternative media, citizen media, new web-based startups, all of them can use open

source news technology. The technology does not care whether they are liberal or conservative, old or young, city dwellers or rural Americans, black or white or any color of the rainbow. People will still be free to choose what news they would like to consume; they will, in fact, have greater choice in a media ecosystem richer in local media.

Seven ways a major fund could make a difference

To illustrate, I've set the fund at $300 million a year, not because any particular number needs to be set in stone, but to make the point that a major fund can accomplish major things. This would be one dollar per American per year, to preserve previous investment of billions and to try to help public media's new leaders create a new future.

Here are seven ways a major fund could produce major results:

1. Technology Transformation and Tool Adoption
in Existing Public Media Organizations

A general grant fund might give out half the total amount set aside each year, say $150 million a year. That money could be flexible, given out across silos. Any kind of organization could apply. It could be one-time money for new machines, software and technology staff.

I would give traditional public broadcasters infrastructure grants when 1.) Their project (even an existing one) makes use of digital technology to create news and information that is more local, personal, portable and participatory. 2.) They are willing to co-support their futures by finding matching money within their own organization. In Philadelphia, I like WHYY's idea to start a web-based local project called News Works using significant amounts of its own money. But I worry that WHYY's entire web operation is simply not nimble enough. Can it use all the open source software being

invented nationally as well as doing its own project? In Miami, we helped public broadcasters develop a community video platform, uVu. But they need more than an experiment. They need more money to scale the platform, to provide cameras and training to all the community groups that will feed the video into uVu, and to set aside an increased web staff for a few years to make sure it takes root.

Existing public media organizations also could use this one-time money to cover broadband streaming costs while they make the business model changes needed to cover those costs long term.

We should expand the definition of an existing public media organization to include the nonprofit news organizations now thriving on the web, so long as they can demonstrate a commitment to news in the public interest. I define news in the public interest as the news people need to run their communities and their lives. Established web-based public media outlets, such as the Center for Public Integrity, could reach far larger audiences with a steady stream of new technology. The same is true for the new investigative reporting centers. If a center proves itself editorially, if it is raising significant funds for content from its local supporters, it could qualify for a technology grant that expands its capacity during the next five years. These "new traditionals" are offering high quality news for the news stream, which is a goal of public broadcasting. Many newspapers now have no journalists in Washington and no one covering the statehouse. At relatively low cost, this kind of news can be provided by the new traditionals, provided they have the technological capacity to keep up with changing software. Many of the most iterative web-based public media organizations now change their websites fundamentally every few weeks. That kind of culture of constant innovation needs to be built into both existing and new public media.

This can be an open-ended annual fund or a time-limited initiative along the lines of the Public Television Digital Conversion project. Based on the reaction to our Knight News Challenge, I would suggest at least a five-year effort. It took many years to establish the status quo in public broadcasting. It will take years to transform it. Simply scaling up the projects that already are good — the common public media platform and Public Insight Journalism, for example — could take most of what this fund has to offer in the short term.

2. Partnership and Mergers through Technology

A substantial amount of money, perhaps $55 million a year, could be set aside to help existing public media improve through partnerships and mergers.

If a public radio station and a public television station want to create a joint website (such as Ideastream in Cleveland), they can grow their memberships and keep their technology costs under control at the same time,. This would free up more money for local journalism. Some forward-thinking public broadcasters (Denver, Austin) are partnering with new web-based investigative projects. There are only a few, though. A partnership and merger fund could change that.

America's media policy has never been a single policy, but rather, as fits our power-sharing philosophy, a mishmash of diverse things done by different agencies. We see that in communities as well. In some communities, you might have strong public broadcasters (the less than 20 percent with good newsrooms). In most, you might not. You might but lucky enough to have one of the good 211 systems. Or one of the few good community access cable channels. Or one of the new web-based public media outlets. Or strong libraries that can teach digital literacy. But if your community is normal, you'd be

lucky to have even one of these in a significant form. Compare that to what is being lost through the 13,000-plus newsroom jobs cut in the past few years at daily newspapers.

Again, I would define public media partnerships quite generously. Local governments interested in 2.0 kinds of community engagement applications might also qualify, so long as they are open source and sharable and subject to community input. Partnerships between universities and both public and private media are obvious choices as well.

Ethnic media should be included. Something like 25 percent of America consumes ethnic media, and technology needs there are huge. A whole suite of basic templates, content management systems and applications could be developed in partnership with such groups. Ethnic media are forming hubs to translate their work into English and share it more broadly (New American Media), partnering with local foundations (San Diego), or collaborating with traditional media (New York, San Francisco). A partnership fund could spread those best practices more broadly.

Even if all a merger fund did was help public radio and public television create dozens of Ideastreams, the nation would be better off. But a larger goal is more useful: A merger or partnership fund would encourage all media people to look more broadly and intelligently at their local media ecosystems.

3. News Technology Testing Labs

This could be a $25 million annual fund that would transform the roles of both the university and the nonprofit media innovation community by creating technology hubs that would act as universal help desks, retooling labs and distribution centers for a new generation of open source software.

We've learned from the Knight News Challenge that "interoperability" of software, even open source software, is key. One of our experiments might be adopted by only a handful of news organizations; another, by thousands of websites, even mobile media. This difference can be a purely technical one. Editors or news managers might want the new technology, but, depending on the software profile of their existing operations, they simply may not be able to adopt it.

Enter the News Technology Testing Lab. You could look at it as a technological version of the local journalism centers already funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The labs could be based at major universities through competitive bid, or in a networked way within nonprofit media developers.

Universities would need to show that they will use this money to forge a new relationship between computer science and engineering departments and journalism or communication schools. (This will add a key element to leading journalism schools and prepare future journalists for a high-tech world.) Media innovation nonprofits would need to prove they can partner with major media organizations to test the new tools. .

The testing lab would take the open source software emerging in the public media center, rewrite it and promote its adoption by public media. Take a program like OpenBlock, which scrapes the web for crime statistics, building permits, restaurant inspections and other public information, and organizes it by neighborhood block. It was written as open source code in the software framework Django. A testing lab could rewrite it to work on other platforms, test the new versions, develop frequently asked questions, build a software developer community around the application, or introduce it into an existing community. If public radio or public television websites in America all had their own versions of OpenBlock's open source code, an astonishing amount of

information would be available to news consumers. In addition, these kinds of data tools make it much easier for reporters to find important stories. And when consumers can easily find public information on the web, they demand more of it from their public institutions.

We believe technology labs could be run at two dozen major cities, in various geographic locations, for roughly $1 million a year per location. A five-year startup commitment would be needed. By then, universities or nonprofits could either develop new revenue around the labs or build them into their existing operations, or both. If you focus on a few major university cities where the highest-speed Internet exists, you will be developing at the "top end," and as faster broadband spreads, so will this new technology.

All in all, news testing labs would help speed adoption of open source software and the applications that run on it. They would be able to develop numerous applications to run on the universal public media platform proposed by NPR and its public media partners.

4. Media Innovation Projects: a "circle of champions"

Spreading the adoption of existing technologies is not enough. In the digital-age culture of continuous innovation, a steady stream of even newer ones must be invented. Thus, an additional $20 million per year can seed the most promising open-source media innovation projects.

Nonprofits advancing open-source media innovation technology could qualify for funding to "scale" if they have won a previous open competition, such as the Knight News Challenge or one of the two dozen other major technological competitions run by philanthropy. In other words, federal money could be available to scale the "circle of

champions" — those whose fresh open-source software has received the best results from field tests with media partners. This leaves a creative role for philanthropy: helping identify new ideas. But it puts national leadership behind the notion that the best of these breakthroughs in the open-source software world should have the best chances of universal adoption.

Since this software can be used by business as well as public media, it can also help accelerate digital transformation on the commercial side. An example of this: DocumentCloud, a new tool for investigative reporting invented by a nonprofit in connection with employees from ProPublica and the New York Times. If resources existed to widely train toward the adoption of this software, citizen journalists as well as professionals will find it easier to use original source documents in stories. In addition, when the news links to the underlying source documents, stories have greater credibility. Users can trace citations back to their source. In five years, DocumentCloud will be in popular use at the largest news organizations. A federal program could accelerate its distribution. In the digital age, speed matters.

Open-source tools could be funded even if for-profit entities develop them. A number of notable Knight New Challenge entries are open-source tools created by for-profit entities (DevelopmentSeed, Stamen). Others build on existing open-source tools (PRX), or are built-from-scratch projects (DavisWiki). They range from mapping to data visualization to local wikis. Ventures like Google's Summer of Code, where Google pays students a summer stipend to work on pre-approved open-source projects, are notable models.

5. Senior Fellowship Fund for Master Teachers

A senior technology fellowship fund could be a $20 million "senior geek squad" of

traveling fellows who retrain public media for the digital age. Google, for example, allows its engineers to devote 20 percent of their time to whatever kind of work they want, including volunteer work. A public-private partnership, possibly with philanthropists organizing the competitive aspect, could choose fellows each year to travel to public media sites around the United States — for digital transformation projects like training, new interactive product adoption and revamping existing systems. These would be professional technologists who treat the media organizations as clients. They would be experts on tech-enabled journalism, data-driven reporting and visualization, multimedia, contextual delivery, content management systems, plug-and-play widgets and applications. Even at $20 million, not even half the existing public media outlets would be able to host such fellows.

6. Scholarship Fund for Tomorrow's Media Technologists

In addition, a $20 million annual scholarship fund could create a cadre of students co-majoring in computer science and journalism. Northwestern and Columbia have started these kinds of programs and many other universities are considering them. A pilot program at Northwestern has proven successful. A major expansion would ensure we are graduating at least 200 of our best and brightest students each year who can help us reshape our public media landscape. In return for the scholarship, the students would each spend a year as a circuit rider helping public media better transition to the digital age, working with the senior fellowship program above. After their year of service, many will go on to join the private sector.

7. Beyond the Classroom: Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is arguably the most important literacy of the new century. But few educators are actually using digital tools to advance this goal, even though digital teachers never sleep and are available to any student of any age at any time. An annual

$10 million fund could award grants to leading journalism schools and professional organizations for digital platforms that offer digital media education to all: everything from digital literacy to training for citizen journalists to public media training. In some of Knight Foundation's pilot programs, educational digital games are among the most popular teaching tools. Schools that teach journalism or news literacy classes could apply for classroom grants for current technology. Examples of these kinds of platforms, started by Knight but not sustainable without additional funds, are highschooljournalism.org and newsu.org.

Conclusion

A Public Media Technology Transformation Fund could create a culture of constant innovation within public media, needed not only to protect the public's previous investment, but to offer more choices to the American consumers.

A Technology Transformation Fund could do more than prevent the unnecessary dismantling of public investment in quality broadcasting as consumers continue to seek out news that is portable, personal and participatory. A fund could help provide the tools for a community news renaissance in the United States, repositioning the nation as a creative force internationally in building high-tech community news systems.

History shows us that not all Americans wish to, are able to or can afford to consume news and information through the commercial system. Noncommercial alternatives provide more choice. This is why billions are donated to public media by "viewers and listeners like you."

As a public media consumer, here's my view: If you want to increase money for public media, you need to increase the media being offered to the public. Meaning, we need

public media that is more local, more interactive and more diverse.

In some parts of the nation, public broadcasting is a primary news source. It would be a poor use of government funds to do nothing more than support the status quo when we know the future is digital — not just digital signals but digital platforms and news collection tools.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting's innovation efforts are laudable, but proportionately puny, perhaps as little as 10 percent of its budget. And CPB money is only a fraction of the overall public media budget. So right now, technology transformation money is a fraction of a fraction of what we are putting into public broadcasting.

Worth noting are such efforts as Public Radio Exchange, incubated at the Station Resource Group, which demonstrate that government can invest in innovation for public media when it sets its mind to the task.

Also, while philanthropy, including Knight Foundation, has demonstrated how easily new tools can be developed, private grant makers simply do not have the resources to "scale" these innovations. If we try, we will be hard pressed to continue to develop new ideas.

Let me end with two personal observations.

At the Newseum, we studied news and information going back to the earliest spoken word. I can think of no period of history, from the Roman roads of old to universal phone service funds of today, when successful leaders did not try in some systematic

way to improve their news and information technology. In all the history work we did, I have no memory of any American leader saying, “we would have succeeded if we just hadn’t spent that much on our information technology.”

At Knight Foundation, I have been impressed by the boundless human creativity driving ideas for new technologies in this new age. One of our projects is with web creator Tim Berners-Lee and the Media Standards Trust. By creating an open source micro-formatting system, that project is helping The Associated Press and hundreds of newspapers meta-tag news stories, so news organizations can, in essence, footnote the news. Eventually, this may provide an entirely new way of searching for news. Instead of getting whatever stories a Google algorithm provides, you might be able to find only eyewitness accounts of an event, or accounts from award-winning journalists, or from the writer on the scene the longest, etc.

Finding ways to help public media grow to use these innovations is essential if we are to have public media in the future. Old tools are just not much help these days. The old metaphor for journalism was to shine the light, and people would find their way. Just try using a flashlight at noon on Miami Beach. Not much help. What you need in a world that is all lit up is not a flashlight but a good pair of sunglasses. They still help you find your way. In the digital age, we do indeed need new ways of looking at things.

UPDATE:

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s plan to advance “the 3Ds,” digital, diversity and dialogue, hasn’t changed its basic approach. Video, audio and fundraising race on line but CPB is still a status-quo-supporting bureaucracy; it experiments with a tiny slice of the budget. Other federal agencies have been little help. Google and the Associated Press started media/tech scholarships,

not government. Northwestern University's news innovation lab started with foundation funding, not government's. KCET in Southern California and Link TV merged on their own, not as a government-funded project.

PBS Digital Studios opened to fanfare, but basic station budgets don't seem to be changing. Government initiatives did not create accelerators like Matter at KQED in San Francisco, the innovations from PRX, the Mozilla project that puts programmers in newsrooms, or even the civic software from Code for America. Tax money still goes to content, not the politically neutral technology changes essential to the future of public broadcasting. Web-based public media startups have taken in millions of dollars and users in the gaps left by public broadcasting.

A bright spot is NPR, which dropped the word radio from its name and promoted a digital expert to its top content job. Overall, public radio draws most of its funding from private sources. Yet much of that comes in from local stations. As national content moves on line, they must either develop better news relationships with their communities, or die.

The public case for universal, affordable broadband

When a big newspaper goes bankrupt, or shuts its doors for good, what's really at stake?

In recent years, great American cities have asked themselves that question. In

Philadelphia and Chicago, once rock-solid newspapers have filed for bankruptcy protection. In Seattle and Denver, the “second daily” has closed.

But what does it really mean, for the city in question, for the greater community, for us, as consumers of news? Does it matter?

An august body of experts, everyone from a First Amendment lawyer to a software engineer, traveled the nation to answer that question.

Their conclusions appear in a 118-page report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy.

The commission says:
Information is as vital to our communities as good schools, safe streets or clean air.
The current financial challenges facing private news media could pose a crisis for democracy.
Journalism does not need saving so much as it needs creating.

That makes sense to us here at the Knight Foundation. The Internet has thrown our longtime news delivery systems — tree to paper to press to truck to your driveway — into a state of economic chaos.

But rather than try to turn back the clock, we’re trying to help create what’s coming next.

Community action

We have seeded more than a hundred community news experiments — and have been surprised by how many have quickly taken root.

Traditional news organizations also are using digital technology to their advantage. They're reaching greater numbers than ever, working with local bloggers and citizen journalists, interacting with — rather than talking at — their communities.

What can a community do to help? The Knight Commission offers 15 ideas, from championing news literacy in the public schools, to making public libraries centers for digital training and access; from creating public broadcasting that is more local and more interactive, to building city hall websites that actually make public information easy to understand.

But my favorite is this one:

America needs universal, affordable broadband access. Everyone, no matter their age, race, income or neighborhood, should be able to go online to get whatever they want — video, audio, photos and text — from anywhere in the world as fast as anyone else can.

A need for access

In the digital age, countries without high-speed broadband will become second-class nations filled with second-class citizens, able to vote but not knowing why they should; able to work but not knowing how to find a job online.

Trains like this one, on a route to and from Canada, carried mail and newspapers along with its other duties. Until the telegraph, as a general rule news could travel only as fast or far as the leading transportation system of the day.

This isn't the first time we've faced a need to connect the nation. In the 19th century, we linked East and West with the transcontinental railroad. In the 20th, we linked driver to destination with the United States Interstate Highway System.

Today, we need to link people and ideas. Nearly two dozen other nations now rank ahead of the United States in high-speed broadband. That just won't do.

Digital cities will be the best markets for local news products, the most interesting laboratories for new ideas, the perfect places to chase the American Dream.

UPDATE:

After this column appeared in the Miami Herald, the Knight Foundation went on to help several "Knight communities" (cities where the Knight brothers once owned newspapers) win federal broadband deployment grants. That said, universal broadband access needs to be followed by universal adoption. Yet

municipal wi-fi and other free Internet systems are routinely opposed by cable and phone companies. Public libraries provide both free access and in many cases digital media literacy training, but they need more support. One promising effort is Connect2Compete, offering low-cost Internet access. Another is the Knight School of Communication at Queens University in Charlotte, which has taken on the mission of raising the digital media literacy rate of the entire city.)

In addition, universities across the country did a series of research papers and public events to keep a conversation going on the ideas in the Knight Commission and FCC reports, both named "Information Needs of Communities." The videos from the University of Missouri events can be seen here.

Chapter 4: Community engagement and impact

'Time to change journalism'

In the digital age, we don't just consume the media, we are the media. Friends, neighbors, co-workers, family — seemingly, everyone is tweeting, posting, liking, commenting, creating and using news.

But news by itself is not enough. Knight Foundation believes communities are at their best when informed and engaged. For news to matter, people must act on it. Solutions require people to engage with each other as well as the issues at hand. Impact requires

community.

To help replace local news lost in the digital upheaval, the Knight Community Information Challenge put up $24 million to encourage local foundations to do more journalism and media projects. One such effort is the New Jersey News Commons with the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. It combines public broadcasting, nonprofit and student journalism with community engagement projects. We expect it to provide both information and a platform for debate, improving the way the community rebuilds after Hurricane Sandy. We've also supported recovers.org for communities that want to plan before disaster strikes.

News is essential. It isn't the only ingredient for community change, yet it remains a key element, particularly the verified, clarified forms of news we call journalism. In recent years, Knight has granted more than $20 million to investigative journalism programs through its Investigative Reporting Initiative. Grants to nonprofits like ProPublica and the Center for Investigative Reporting have paid for themselves hundreds of times over in social benefit.

Not all community news is investigative. Knight worked with the National Endowment of the Arts to create a pilot arts journalism competition that inspired the NEA to build arts journalism into its traditional grant making. Studies like the Soul of the Community show that arts and social offerings are part of the glue that binds people to their communities in ways that increase prosperity.

Investigative news, arts journalism … how does a news organization decide what a community wants and needs? Public radio station WBEZ in Chicago does it by asking the community. Enter Curious City, where people can vote on the issues they think

should be reported. Or consider the Virtual Assignment Desk, an experiment run by New York University. There, people sometimes cover events they have nominated when the staff of The Local is occupied elsewhere. Or take a look at PolicyMic, a platform where the big issues can be debated. News leaders know that high-impact journalism often taps into pre-existing networks of people organized around the topic in question. So engagement can increase impact. To engage communities, news providers of all types, from investigative journalists to the neighbor down the block, need to be open about how and why they do what they do. Yet transparency is not as easy as it sounds. Even the best reporters find it difficult. “Mainstream journalism has a bias for bad news,” says the web site of the Solutions Journalism Network, co-founded by Dan Bornstein, co-writer of the “Fixes” column in The New York Times “Opinionator” section. “Newsworthy solutions exist everywhere. It’s time to change journalism. It’s time to change the world.”

When we let communities grab hold of some of the tools of journalism, we may find quite a few folks putting the searchlight down and reaching instead for their digital sunglasses, to filter out the news they can’t do anything about and to seek the shades of meaning needed to solve problems.

If investigative journalists don’t explain why their work matters, who will?

Police investigated the scene of Oakland Post editor Chauncey Bailey.
(David Paul Morris/San Francisco Chronicle via Associated Press)

This really happened. It's the annual conference of the Investigative Reporters and Editors. I am in a hotel ballroom with some of the world's best journalists, even on a good day, a tough crowd.

I start by asking a few questions from the podium.

"How many of you believe investigative reporting is worth much more to society than it costs?" Nearly all the hands go up.

"How many believe that the average American — the cashier at the grocery store — understands the true value of investigative reporting?" Only one hand goes up.

“How many of you believe it is your responsibility to explain the value of investigative reporting to society?” Only a third says yes.

There you have it. Investigative reporting is valuable. People don’t understand its value. Yet the journalists (at least most of them) think it isn’t their job to explain things.

For at least a century during the age of mass media, journalists convinced themselves that they didn’t need to bother. No one else was doing journalism. They could do it the way they wanted.

But in this networked, two-way world, people are now committing millions of acts of journalism every day through blogs and social media platforms. Journalists could invite them into the professional journalism process. Or they might convince themselves they don’t need journalists anymore.

It comes down to one question: If investigative journalists don’t explain the impact of their work, who will?

We say this as allies. After the media money meltdown of 2008-09, when everyone said journalism was doomed, Knight Foundation announced an investigative reporting initiativetotaling $15 million. Including endowments, the figure is closer to $20 million. You can’t spend that much without learning a few things.

We learned news organizations can go from birth to a Pulitzer with lightning speed, that newly invented open-source document-handling software could be used by hundreds of newsrooms, that nonprofits and for-profits can collaborate and that journalism

education has an amazing role in investigative reporting. (Just one example of all this: a major student investigation on the national transportation system that ran on the front page of the Washington Post.)

Today, there are scores of recently born nonprofit news sites. By 2013, more than 80 nonprofits were members of the Investigative News Network. Many foundations that didn't care about news and information now fund it.

Though there are fewer journalists in traditional media organizations on the commercial side, we are seeing how new techniques and technologies can multiply investigative powers.

Journalism doesn't look dead to me.

We've also learned something about business. Just because an investigative unit is a nonprofit doesn't mean it escapes reality. A story by itself does not save the world. It must be seen, understood, acted on and yes, paid for.

We learned the new nonprofit organizations need: content that matters; connectivity, to reach people; a community they've engaged, giving them access to cash. I call them the Four Cs — content, connectivity, community and capital.

Tracking the impact of investigative reporting

All impact can't be reduced to numbers. What you can track, however, shows results that are too miraculous to keep from the public:

Three examples:

ProPublica and NPR revealed that veterans were being wrongly treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at a cost of more than 30 times what's needed. Multiply that by the tens of thousands of veterans, and one can say that by fostering change in the military's diagnosis and treatment regimens, this reporting is saving society — conservatively — $200 million.

The Center for Public Integrity and the Washington Post exposed lax U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development loan policies. Six big lenders were kicked out of the program. That's a saving of at least $100 million to taxpayers.

The Center for Investigative Reporting and its dozens of commercial partners exposed earthquake hazards in California schools, and officials finally made it easy for schools to tap a $200 million quake safety fund.

I've used these examples before. It's hard not to. Just three stories add up to half a billion dollars in social impact, plus the priceless impact of lives improved or saved. This suggests a new approach for lawmakers who are interested in deficit reduction. Increase by a hundredfold the number of investigative journalists in America and let nature take its course.

If journalists don't tell the story of their impact, who will? For every reporter who buys this argument there are at least two who don't. They fear getting stuck doing only stories with large measurable savings to society. They also can give real-world examples: Numbers or no numbers, journalists need to expose the cops who run wild, or nurses who kill people, or colleges that brush aside rape.

Journalists must be able to do stories even when they cost society money. Like the money spent to replace railroad ties in New England because the first batch was made with the wrong concrete. Or the money spent to shut down the death penalty system in Illinois because they executed the wrong people.

Journalists need to do some stories even if nothing happens right away. Like exposing the companies getting rich from war with no-bid contracts. The military industrial complex can be hard to change.

True, not all investigations have measurable dollar impacts. Should that excuse journalists from trying to count the ones that do? If relentless monitoring of the gas drilling industry saves millions (or billions) because we avoid water pollution cleanup, journalists need to add those numbers up. If exposing credit card company abuses saves consumers many millions, or even billions, journalists need to tally that as well. And when the numbers aren't there, but the impact still is, why can't that story still be told?

ProPublica founder Paul Steiger explained it this way: "Where there are clear dollar savings, we should take credit for them. When the success is qualitative, we should rejoice in that."

Either way, it is up to the journalists. With the many thousands of traditional journalism jobs that have vanished in recent years, too many of them investigative, journalists can no longer say "it's not our job." This is a fact-based profession. Fact-based arguments about our value are better than faith-based arguments.

The facts may not be kind to journalism. Even prize-winning journalism can produce no impact. Yet the reasons why a story did not make a difference can be important to know. Was the investigation's revelation actually old news to the community? Did it pale in comparison to other issues? Was the news organization trusted? Was it engaged with the community? Did it try to get a debate going? Did it follow up on the stories? In the end, did people think their actions mattered, that change was possible?

Even if impact is complicated, there are ways to explain it. I'm not saying you should beat your chest and scream "Look what I did!" I'm saying you should report how a piece of news was revealed and spread and what the community did about that. Shine your light. Then come back later and provide some shades of meaning. Investigative reporters are good at that on other stories, and telling this story — the story of the role of journalism — greases the machinery that produces the other stories. If journalists can more clearly communicate their dollar value, and their even bigger social value, the wheels will turn. It should be easier to raise money and harder to cut budgets. On the whole, the future of investigative reporting will be brighter. Journalists may not like to crow, but these days, they better at least tweet.

At ProPublica they do much more, following story results regularly and issuing reports on how to track investigative impact. This kind of thorough accounting suggests that as journalists become good at following up, at explaining why their stories mattered, academia may get better at it as well. Certainly it would give the News Literacy Project a lot of good material.

You don't have to be the size of ProPublica to do this. I'll do it myself by going behind the scenes of a story you may have heard me mention before. In 2007, on a street corner,Oakland Post editor Chauncey Bailey was killed by a man with a shotgun. The reason: To stop him from investigating strange dealings at a local bakery.

Knight Foundation gave the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education a $125,000 grant to create the Chauncey Bailey Project, an investigation that included nonprofit journalism, commercial journalists and student journalists from all media. Call it an experiment in collaboration. It was a bumpy ride, but it turned out to be a prototype for what the Center for Investigative Reporting did later throughout California and the

nation. That's because Dori Maynard at Maynard Institute, Robert Rosenthal at Center for Investigative Reporting, Sandy Close at New American Media, and Martin Reynolds at the Oakland Tribune — and many others — made it work.

The journalism revealed Chauncey's murder was part of a pattern of murders, kidnappings and other crimes. It identified the trigger man, an accomplice and the mastermind. In addition, after the journalists revealed that police had delayed a raid that could have prevented the murder, and then tried to cover it up, the police chief resigned.

The man who ordered the murder of Chauncey Bailey was guilty. So was his accomplice. They're looking at life without parole. The trigger man, who flipped on them, got 25 years.

Did the Chauncey Bailey project have impact? District Attorney Nancy E. O'Malley said this: "The investigation and prosecution of these violent crimes has been a top priority of my office ... With today's verdicts, justice was served, and we hope that the outcome will provide some closure to the families of the victims ... These verdicts also stand for our abiding conviction that violence against the free voice of the press will not be tolerated in our society."

The prosecutor continued: "I would especially like to recognize and acknowledge the Chauncey Bailey Project (which) worked diligently and tirelessly to ensure that the defendants responsible for these senseless murders were brought to justice."

Here is the bottom line: a $125,000 grant, a new model in investigative collaboration, three convictions, police chief resignation, and press freedom and justice upheld. Money

well spent; a story of impact, not just told to a room full of investigative reporters but blogged, tweeted, put out there in speeches and in letters. We should keep telling these stories until we have found a way to show everyone how good journalism matters, including that clerk at the grocery store.

This is an edited version of a luncheon talk delivered at the annual convention of the Investigative Reporters and Editors.

The story is not all that matters

Investigative reporting deserves a great deal of attention, not only because it represents journalism at its purest and most potent, but because it is perennially at risk. In the digital age, the economics supporting this public service work have been totally unhinged. To try to help, Knight Foundation invested many millions in nonprofit investigative reporting. It is easy to see why. Jack and Jim Knight were newspapermen. We're the only foundation of our size with a platoon of people who grew up in the news business. We know investigative reporting punches above its weight. Even though some stories don't pan out, all in all, it creates impact far beyond the initial investment.

Our foundation belongs to the choir, however, and the choir is a closed system. During this past century, America's tight network of journalists taught itself real professional reverence for the Fourth Estate: Taught itself, but often ignored everyone else. Not long ago the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism released a survey about local news. A headline in the survey deserves attention: Sixty nine percent of

America believes that if local newspapers no longer existed, it would be no big deal.

If newspaper news is gone, people think, they'll just get the news from radio, TV and the Internet. Journalists know that's not so. Daily papers still produce most of the country's local news. People do not know this fact. How did the nation become so badly informed about the mechanics of how they are informed?

Journalists are at least partly to blame. We chose not to tell people how news systems worked. We did not want anyone in the kitchen as we alone worked out our recipes for news. The results? Journalists have helped create a nation of functional news illiterates. Sure, the educational system helped a lot, too. But journalists played a big role. Since we did not really understand our communities, it did not bother us in the least that our communities did not understand us.

In Orlando, I polled 800 investigative reporters and editors and confirmed a few things. They believe their journalism produces impact. They believe no one understands that. Finally, they believe (at least two thirds of them) that this is not their problem.

I disagree. This is the digital age, the age of the rising value of transparency. From now on, part of a journalist's job should be to help his or her community understand how news works. Yet most journalists seem to be otherwise occupied. It is as though we are still fighting over the cookbook while the kitchen is on fire. Before journalism can open up, its industrial-age workplace culture must change. American newsrooms are among the most defensive workplaces measured. Performing with the perfectionism of a nuclear power plant crew or the strict routine of a military combat unit might sometimes help journalists cover the news. But such cultures can be toxic to innovations.

At the heart of all this is the great, glorious story. The entire 20th Century journalistic gestalt put the story at center stage. Many journalism schools pushed it hard, but they were wrong. The story is not the only thing that matters. An extraordinary story by itself may not change the world. An amazing story may not even be seen. A wonderful story might cause no change at all. Someone must absorb it, share it, act on it and pay for it.

I learned this the hard way. One investigation I put on the front page would produce immediate change, say an emergency water rationing law within 24 hours. But another — almost scientific in similarity, by the same people, same quality, same display, same day of the week, only the topic different — would trigger no reaction at all, not even a call or letter. Clearly, something mattered that had nothing to do with our journalism; that something was the community.

Communities would have a word with journalists not just about story selection but about fundamental storytelling skills, if we asked. Accuracy is an issue: Every single day journalists still wrongly portray giant swaths of the American community, feeding stereotypes and sewing fear. Context is an issue: Journalists still too often take the cheap, easy, sensationalistic way out, failing to report the news in a context that adds meaning. Fairness is an issue: The idea that journalism must be carried on behind closed doors is inherently unfair to the communities we serve. That inward focus keeps journalists from engaging their whole communities and stifles accountability and transparency.

Journalists do these things, mostly without even thinking about them, in violation of their most sacred covenant. “Every journalist believes that he or she works, ultimately, for the reader, not for the editor, or for the publisher, or for the corporation, or for those

opaque financial institutions that hold the stock," said John Carroll, who edited three major newspapers with distinction. "We all know journalists who have lost their jobs on principle. They have refused to kill important stories or to write glowingly about politicians or advertisers who don't deserve it. They have done this because their first loyalty is to the reader."

Journalistic loyalty to citizen and community begs the question of transparency. Being fair doesn't just mean reporting the many sides of a story; it also means showing people your side. Let them behind the curtain. Who are you? Why are you doing this story? What objective tools are you using? What's your news ethic? Showing your work is a best practice in digital journalism, the finished story being only one form of interaction with the public. Networked journalists talk with their communities about what they are working on, solicit tips, post unedited interviews, and much more.

For news organizations transparency also means explaining where the money comes from. Knight Foundation, in fact, has adopted a new policy: to receive grants from us, news providers need to reveal their project's major donors. The best of them don't need to be told: They already do. The others have misplaced fears. They don't want to show how the sausage is made because they're afraid it opens them up to criticism of bias. But keeping the secret is what's making them look bad.

Can investigative reporters further open up the way they work?

Let's take the book by Thomas Peele, Killing the Messenger, about the story leading up to Oakland journalist Chauncey Bailey's murder. As you know, the Chauncey Bailey Projectled the journalism that found the killers. The district attorney credited the project with a glowing testimonial. As you probably do not know, Peele's voluminous

tome left out the quote. The book tells people everything about the murder except one thing: that the journalism mattered.

Who speaks for journalism? Book reviewers don't focus on it. Readers don't know about it. The Chauncey Bailey Project has won more than a dozen awards given by journalists to journalists. It has been explained at the conferences given by journalists for journalists. It will be taught to the students of journalism, up-and-coming members of the choir.

Highlighting impact

If they can muster just a fraction of the passion they use to chase the news, journalists can better explain their profession through open contests and open conventions.

Journalism contests have proliferated. Just the major ones number roughly 200. If you count regional awards, there are thousands. If the prize is big enough, news organizations tell their audiences they won. That's not the same as reaching out to the legions of people who don't know where their local news really comes from. If our contests cared about communities, not just journalists, they would help people know how the journalism happened and why that mattered.

Suppose a great investigation gets a state to release earthquake safety funds for schools. If an open contest picks the story as a winner, the contest organizers would then alert PTAs, teacher organizations, administrator's organizations, even state officials in the place where the journalism made a difference. The contest sends letters, posts on Facebook, blogs, emails, does videos and holds community meetings explaining the winning story. Why do this? Because, the contest would explain, the role of journalism is

not understood. I'm still waiting for that sort of contest to happen.

Journalism conferences also have multiplied. Why should any conference of journalists take place without at least one session involving leaders and citizens of the host community? If investigative reporter and professor Lowell Bergman can get CIA and FBI officials to come to his Logan investigative reporting symposia, certainly a more mundane journalism convention could attract a mayor, city council or other community leaders. In those sessions, attendees take apart the news flows, talk frankly about them, hear complaints, and offer suggestions.

Open contests and open conventions would create thousands of new community encounters every year. Yet they don't exist.

Professional organizations and publications can help explain the role of journalism by focusing more on its impact. They can show how to track it, explain how to be accurate and not self-serving when reporting it. Where there is no impact, they can unpack those projects and see where they failed to engage people.

Journalism schools could explain the role of journalism by teaching 21st century literacies — digital, media, news and civic fluency — to every student in their universities. Understanding the role of journalism should be part of those literacies. Yet those who teach news literacy too often fail to use the techniques of the digital world. By failing to hop on that bus, they'll likely be left behind. Books like Detecting Bull are just not enough. Eventually, digital media literacy will be digitized itself and integrated into K-12 schools, and become a general education requirement for college graduation.

There are some 100,000 general news journalists in America. There are perhaps

220,000 journalism and communication students and professors, and some 500,000 people loosely categorized as doing nonfiction editorial work. If we open up, change our orientation to reach outward, we could engage millions. If each had 400 Facebook friends, journalists could engage the entire nation. The problem is that it's hard to find a journalist whose list of friends doesn't include many other journalists.

To have a conversation about why journalism matters, we also would have to listen to those who find news, as it is presented today, too boring, too negative, too slanted or simply out of touch. If we truly listen, and engage, we will begin to see why some of our work causes instant change and other stories do absolutely nothing. By thinking beyond the story, in the end we can help the story.

There is an as-yet-undiscovered science of impact. Do stories create more impact when people think that their communities actually can fix the problems? When they have the groups, tools or systems to fix it? What makes them consider this particular problem a priority? These are complex questions. They dovetail with network theory and ideas about social capital. Two foundations, Gates and Knight, are hoping insights on digital media impact will come from a major project we've funded at the University of Southern California.

The primary colors of journalism

Producing good journalism is difficult. It deserves more respect. If journalists are more open and in better conversation with the communities they serve, that will help. But that's also hard to do, especially for the older generations, because it requires breaking

habits and taking on a new view of a world that is changing almost beyond imagining.

Crayola crayons started with eight colors. There are now 133 crayons. But in cyberspace the colors number in the billions.

At the start of the 20th century, Crayola hoped to help young artists see the world with eight basic crayons. The first colors were red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, brown and black.

Around this same time, English writer Rudyard Kipling summed up the basic way journalists explained the world with these lines in "The Elephant's Child":

"I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who."

How has the world changed in the past 100 years? We have blasted off to worlds beyond Crayola's eight basic crayons. Search the web for modern computer color, 36-bit color, and you'll see it supports not thousands nor even millions but, they say, 68.71 billion colors.

So what about journalism? How many billions of bits of new meaning do our digital

tools support? Certainly visual journalists can benefit from a world of infinite color, but what of the rest of them?

Kipling realized his serving men had limits. The poem concludes:

"I let them rest from nine till five,
For I am busy then,
As well as breakfast, lunch, and tea,
For they are hungry men.
But different folk have different views;
I know a person small—
She keeps ten million serving-men,
Who get no rest at all!

She sends 'em abroad on her own affairs,
From the second she opens her eyes—
One million Hows, two million Wheres,
And seven million Whys!"

Today's children, the digital natives, are growing up in a world where new tools can express reality in all its billions of colors. We digital immigrants need to drop our old ideas of what journalists can do and use the power of the digital age to program billions of "serving men" in search for true things. Or never mind programming, we could just ask the billions of serving people who now make up the population of this planet.

The alternative, sticking with the old frameworks, leads only to despair. The membership in Investigative Reporters and Editors, for example, is still down 20

percent from its peak of 5,000. The American Society of News Editors census is grimmer. Its latest total is 38,000 daily newspaper journalists, down from the peak of 56,900 in 1990. Daily paper newsrooms are operating at staffing levels not seen since the 1970s. Put simply, there are 19,000 fewer cooks in the kitchen.

Yet the collapse of the newspaper's economic model is not the collapse of news. Print newspaper advertising is in free fall. But web traffic is up. We have new "power tools" — super sunglasses that allow us to filter data without the journalistic armies of old. New organizations like the Investigative News Network and new digital news outlets are rising. The Online News Association is booming. Student journalism is rising. NPR looks good. Journalistic bloggers are emerging. Crowd-sourcing and volunteer reporting are gaining momentum. Social media floods us with breaking news, even real-time, one-the-scene alerts on events such as the Boston Marathon bombing.

It's the closed systems, the inward-looking systems, that are collapsing. The open systems, the outward-facing ones, are growing. There are thousands of new digital companies born each year with billions of dollars in venture capital, many of them looking to be the new curators, verifiers and platforms for news and information. They seek to be resources for talent. They are well designed, continuously interactive and looking in earnest for the personalities, digital and otherwise, of the niche communities they seek to serve.

Once we get caught up in this new age, some believe news flows will rearrange themselves and new business models will eventually emerge. But tomorrow is not today. In the meantime, we can't solve our most difficult problems without journalism that holds society accountable. We don't know if our communities will become worlds of extreme distrust or vibrant social action, whether they will be hyper-connected or

broken apart by sharp class divisions. We do know, however, that the future requires transformational leaders in news with the courage to try new things, not folks who have played the survivor game at their news organizations and just don't have anywhere else to go.

The digital age demands a new focus on filters and context, on not just verification but also curation and interpretation. It needs people who want not to dismember systems piece by piece but start over with a new design. We need to listen to news people like Larry Kramer, who argues in his book C-Scape that since every company is now a media company, curation is a job that can't be ignored. We need to find the people today who are ready (as visionary journalist Bob Maynard was two decades ago) to describe their news organization as "a geographically discrete dynamic database" and "an instrument of community understanding." Were he alive today, Bob likely would have said newsroom transparency is mandatory, and that knowing enough about where we live to help our neighbors see why journalism matters is not a lofty goal but the very least we can do.

This is an updated version of a talk presented at the Logan Symposium on Investigative Reporting at the University of California at Berkeley.

Why journalists should like the #opendata movement

As a young reporter I went each week to the police station to copy the crime log. When there were patterns of burglaries or violent crimes, I did full stories. But the crime log

itself was news. I carefully typed each item, no matter how small, on my manual typewriter. At 2:30 a.m. Thursday, a naked man was seen walking down Miller Avenue… The crime log was a popular standing feature in the weekly Mill Valley Record, as they are to this day in many American newspapers.

The log was public information. Police could keep investigations confidential, but the crimes themselves were public record. In the digital age, that kind of data can be released directly to everyone with a device to catch it. Through our Technology for Engagement initiative, in fact, Knight Foundation supports governments and others that want to better inform and engage communities. In addition, Knight News Challenge: Open Gov, as well as grants to the TheGovLab, OpenElections and Textizen, focuses on improving the ways citizens and government interact with or without journalists as the "middle men."

Many journalists just aren't paying attention to how governments are opening up data. Part of that is cultural. Governments do keep secrets. As the amount of information grows, so do the secrets. Good journalists, operating ethically, try to ferret out the secrets that should be public. We often find ourselves, with the help of organizations like the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the National Freedom of Information Coalition, suing the government, forcing it to obey its own open records laws. In addition, news organizations and state freedom of information groups tenaciously demand better open government laws.

Journalists see so many efforts to hide public information that they start to think everyone in government is a scoundrel. That's not always so. Governments are becoming big digital age publishers. Today the city of Mill Valley publishes far more civic information than its long-gone weekly newspaper ever could. Instead of declaring such

data “not good enough,” or ignoring it, journalists might become experts on these emerging forms, even encouraging and assisting government when it does the right thing. Strong flows of data are the seeds of good journalism, and of public engagement that solves problems.

Data is technical — and let’s face it, journalists are word people. Unfortunately, many of us can’t pass this basic math test. Computer-assisted reporting was seen for too long as a special skill taught only by Investigative Reporters and Editors. But now, all reporting is computer-assisted reporting. Newsies who have learned to embrace data find rich returns in readership. The Global Editors Network celebrates data journalism with a major contest.

Here are some things about information flows all journalists should know:
Since its launch, the Code for America Commons has grown from a small collaborative experiment in civic innovation to a thriving database with (as of fall 2013) 661 apps used in 382 cities.
Cities like Philadelphia are creating “chief data officer” positions, people who could be a journalist’s best friend.
A growing community of innovators is sharing Digital Citizenship successes like the game Community PlanIt in Boston, which got more people involved in schools.
Does this mean we should no longer care about secrets? Not at all. We still need campaigns like Sunshine Week, which shows how open government helps all Americans. We absolutely need to keep suing and calling for better laws.

Carrots and sticks together might be a better way to move society’s most stubborn animals. Many journalism organizations still support the philosophy of open government and the values of great journalism; they are ready to fight the good fight.

But the old school champions try to do it with sub-standard websites, no mobile apps, and no collaboration with partners like the Sunlight Foundation, the Digital Library of America, the Knight-Mozilla fellowships and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab.

A few groups are trying new things, like the Reporters Committee, which helps people get access to public meetings or records. But that's not enough. We need to agree that the only real solution to freedom of information is technological. Liberals are a little more liberal with public records. Conservatives are a bit more conservative. Yet neither side releases much more than half of what it should. Government systems need to be redone so all public information is public from the moment it enters the system. Since these are computer systems, that means freedom of information advocates, along with journalists in general, need to be tech savvy. It also means we need to find new ways to work together to open up ways for people to interact with lawmakers.

In a perfect world, governments would release all data. In the real world, cities, states and agencies say they do not have the money to replace their vintage computers. The next best thing is for news sites to display government datasets, using tools like Deep Dive from the University of California at Berkeley. Journalists who post all the data can still ferret out stories but also let their communities dig in and get their hands dirty. The Texas Tribune's searchable datasets are the most visited part of the site (especially for the salary figures of public servants.)

The new world holds as much for journalists as before, maybe more. If I were a reporter in Mill Valley today, I'd try to know everything about city data: what was online, whether it was accurate, what wasn't there, and why. I'd put on my digital sunglasses and curate it, filtering to see what's there. I'd post my own data sets when others can't.

Most importantly, I'd find a way to engage the town in conversation about what it all means. I'd try to connect the data and events of daily life to the issues and ideas of a better world.

This article was posted originally on the Knight Blog.

Ready for 'open journalism'?

Miami's winter breezes are usually refreshing, but a season ago, particularly so, thanks to a discussion paper from Melanie Sill for the University of Southern California. Influential journalists, it appears, are talking more seriously about a basic question of the digital age: How can they move beyond just informing communities to truly engage them? Former Sacramento Bee editor and senior vice president Sill concludes that professional journalism can indeed be "transparent, responsive and enriched through vibrant two-way connections with a networked universe." In "The Case for Open Journalism Now," she details open, collaborative approaches taking hold at news organizations across the country.

What's Open Journalism? I'd describe it as trading up from the industrial age one-way assembly line model of mass media to the 21st century two-way networked system of communication — the information world most of us live in. The open approach turns lectures into conversations. It honors not just our nation's need to know, but its need to tell. It means newsrooms define communities not as "the great unwashed," but a collection of many voices struggling to be heard.

This is a CMYK color bar and chart used to calibrate color printing. The letters stand for Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black. Even today, color computer printers use the same system.

Open journalism equals diversity. When journalists properly engage their communities, stories about women, people of color and many other groups are far more accurate, and far less stereotypical.

Sill's discussion paper is a worthy product. It allows for public comment and has more than 100 "ideas, arguments and illustrations for open journalism." Most refreshing is Sill's concession that this is not a new idea. It is simply made ever more practical by today's technology. She credits the Oakland Tribune for its "open newspaper" practices of the 1970s and 1980s. More than a decade later, in the 1990s, some civic journalism advocates claimed that they pioneered a "movement" by pushing for papers to engage with communities. The Tribune's leaders would never have tried to claim such a thing. What they did was read journalism history. Before a handful of corporations bought up America's newspapers and started rotating editors town-to-town like so many traveling salesmen, community newspapering was a story of engagement. Knowing the past helped the Tribune's owner, Bob Maynard, better see into the future.

Sill's hope (and mine) is that the time for open journalism has finally arrived. Perhaps all the crowd-funding experiments, ranging from the early Spot.us to today'sKickstarter, as well as the crowd-sourcing projects, such as Public Insight Journalism, will serve to prove the point.

This article originally was posted on Knight blog.

What community foundations say about local media ecosystems

When the first Media Learning Seminar was held in 2007, some of the community foundation leaders looked a bit puzzled. Hundreds of them had come in the winter to visit Miami, but not everyone was sure why. Knight Foundation had invited them, as representatives of America's more than 700 local foundations, to talk about what we saw as troubling trends in local media. Back then, the journalism weather was stormier in some communities than in others.

Community foundations are ways for people to invest in the future of their communities. They have boards that reflect the towns where they exist. They take in donations, often large ones that grow their endowments. They make grants to support causes their donors and boards believe will improve local life.

At our first meeting with them, Knight staff did a lot of talking. News and information, we said, is just as important to communities as good schools or safe streets or clean air. Excellent journalism can help a community solve problems. Without it, problems fester.

So I told the story of the little Deerfield Forum, a volunteer citizen website created by that town's Friends of the Library with a $25,000 micro-grant from Knight via J-Lab. The library volunteers had been concerned because their local elections were not drawing any candidates for public office. No one seemed interested in solving local problems. Perhaps, the library volunteers thought, it's because there was no newspaper to report them, no bloggers debating them. So the friends decided to report and write their own news stories about their little New Hampshire town.

Here is The Forum's pledge:

- To report the news with accuracy and objectivity, and treat people with respect.
- To provide content to help citizens make informed decisions about local issues.
- To facilitate community debate.
- To furnish an opportunity for creative expression.
- To correct our errors in a timely manner.

Any journalist might agree with those points. Bear in mind, though, these are volunteers. They just wanted to help their town — and they did. Once the information started flowing, things in Deerfield started happening. The number of people running for public office went up. Voter turnout went up. Next election, the same thing happened. Then it happened again. Seven years after its 2005 launch, The Deerfield Forum is still going strong, its founder went on to win a seat in the state legislature.

At times, only in a very small town can you clearly see big things. For decades, scholars have debated the relationship between information and community engagement in our democratic republic. But the importance of local news is not something they debate in Deerfield. It's something they practice. They know their volunteer journalism matters.

None of us predicted at that first conference that the recession of 2008 and 2009 was coming. We didn't see it. But it did confirm what we were saying. The collapse in value of America's newspaper companies was unprecedented, stunningly so. Suddenly, you could buy a share of New York Times stock for less than it cost to buy the Sunday edition of theNew York Times. When the U.S. Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation held a hearing on the future of journalism, Knight president Alberto Ibargüen testified about the Digital Age paradox in local news. "A high school student can more easily access information about swine flu or the crisis in Darfour than corruption in city government or decisions about education in his town.

After that, the tone of the Media Learning Seminar changed. No longer were there any puzzled looks. No longer did Knight Foundation staff do most of the talking. The meeting became a place where community foundations could tell each other what they were doing about America's crisis in local news. For the 2010 meeting, to confirm that we were on the same page, I worked with Esther Thorson from the University of Missouri to survey the foundation leaders.

I retold the Deerfield story, adding that some big city folks might object to the beautiful simplicity of the lessons of the little New Hampshire town that brought democracy back from the dead for the whopping sum of $25,000. It's true that Chicago or Detroit are not Deerfield, and urban ecosystems are more complex, more like a run through the rain forest than a stroll through the park. So leaders like Terry Mazany of the Chicago Community Trust and Mariam Noland of the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan were right to ask tough questions. Our cities face big challenges, they said, and our journalists need to be tigers.

For the first time I brought up an example I've used many times since. The Texas Tribune, like the Deerfield Forum, didn't exist in the 20th century. Its digital news site launched in November 2009, with $3.8 million in philanthropic support and professional staff. It focuses on state politics. One early story had the state rethinking the funding that was keeping dangerous day care centers in operation. Another had hospitals admitting that they were sending baby blood smears without permission to be part of the federal DNA registry. The Tribune won a new Knight grant to refine its model. It has a strong business and technological staff to go along with its journalists. We hold it up as proof that the new digital nonprofits have a real chance. In anybody's rain forest, from the start, the Tribune has been a tiger.

Why all this talk about media ecosystems? Because thinking about news and information that way helps us see how it really works. Community foundations are used to a local media dominated by daily newspapers. Local dailies may indeed be the tall trees in the forest. But they aren't the only trees. There are weekly papers, ethnic papers, alternative papers, free papers, monthlies, newsletters, magazines, radio, TV, and now blogs and websites and now social and mobile media.

In this information environment, when anyone who is networked can create as well as consume news and information, we have city hall websites, nonprofit websites, church and school and library websites, to name only a few. Yet despite all the digital diversity, there are some trends that apply, some laws of the jungle. Here are some of them:

First, information consumption keeps growing. Statisticians from the University of California at San Diego and elsewhere report that information consumption by a typical American adult now takes up 12 hours a day. How is that possible? Anyone with children knows how. People today consume more than one form of media at the same

time.

Researchers working for Microsoft were among the first to study this. One called it "continuous partial attention." If you are listening to the radio, reading work email and talking on the phone, that counts as triple. If you did that all day, you only need four hours to consume 12 hours' worth of media. Whether we like it or not, multi-tasking is here to stay.

Next, traditional media keeps shrinking. There's no simple way to say it. All the new media competition means that fewer people are watching traditional local TV news or network TV news or reading the daily newspaper. Does this mean no one cares about news? No. Online users of news are rising fast.

Third: It's all about the money. Many daily newspapers have larger audiences online than they do in print. So why can't they make more money? Because the economics of digital advertising are different. Online ads bring in less than a tenth of the money that print newspaper ads used to bring in. Every year, print advertising falls. The World Association of Newspapers said that most of the world's media executives believe that by 2015, most of their revenue will need to come from online sources. But North American editors, perhaps still suffering from their addiction to print advertising, don't think they will need to get as much of their revenue digitally. Unfortunately, the American editors are wrong.

Finally: Digital is here to stay. Media consumption becomes more digital with each generation. This is true in any developed country. Since these statistics were collected, digital media has become even more important to the young. It's older folks who prefer television and newspapers. Choice of form or mode of media, it turns out, happens at a

young age and stays with us.

If we've agreed that media is in transition, let's take a look at a community media ecosystem in the context of what foundation leaders see. Obviously ecosystems vary from place to place. We've drawn our basic ecosystem elements from the report "Informing Communities," by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities. It was the first major commission to look at news and information since the creation of public broadcasting. In Appendix One, the report says, a healthy community should have eight things going for it.

They are:

1. Most government information and services for my city can be found through a clear, easy to use portal. Of the community foundation leaders we surveyed, more than half said their towns or cities did not have such a portal. This is disturbing for several reasons, not the least of which is the fact that government information belongs to the people. If the government does not put the public's information on the web in an accessible way, how is civic life supposed to happen? In our ecosystem graphic, we'll turn the stream black to symbolize a lack of a good public information flow.

2. Government in my city offers public information openly and holds meetings openly. Most community foundation leaders said, yes, that's the case. So on our ecosystem map, we will leave the sun turned on. (As a former newspaper editor, however, I need to observe that this perception, though valid, is at odds with Sunshine Week research, which says as many as 80 percent of the local governments violate their own open records and meeting laws.) But it's a community foundation ecosystem experience we're describing here, so no change in the map.

3. Quality journalism in your city: growing in volume, shrinking, or staying same? Seventy-five percent of the community foundation leaders surveyed said the news stream is shrinking. (When we had asked the leaders before the media meltdown of 2008-2009, only 41 percent of them said quality local journalism was shrinking. Hence those puzzled looks at the first Media Learning Seminar.) To symbolize the decline in these community institutions that have been there for a century or more, we'll color the trees black in our local ecosystem map.

4. Local websites where ordinary citizens can discuss and debate community events and issues. Yes, a slim majority of community foundation leaders agree there are local web sites and other digital venues for debate. But it's a close vote. In our ecosystem map, those tweeting birds symbolize debate. We'll need to leave a few birds in and take some out.

5. Vibrant libraries or other centers where people can learn digital literacy and get access to the Internet. Absolutely, community foundation leaders said, by a clear and strong majority, we have libraries and other places where people can learn to get on the Internet. Still, in a fourth of the communities, this is not the case. That would be like a fourth of America not being connected to roads. Even so, most of the leaders felt good about their libraries, so we'll keep our frog jumping in the ecosystem map. Libraries and other community centers may be a place to build upon.

6. Easy to find information on issues I think are important, like health, jobs, the environment, arts and so on. Mostly, community leaders said no, they didn't have that easy-to-find information. Quality of life information is important, of course. Everything doesn't have to be investigative reporting. Some projects might tell people what's going on that they want to know. News you can use. It's the underbrush in our ecosystem map,

and because the leaders said it's not there, we'll remove it.

7. The schools teach media literacy. Many have no idea what their schools are doing, but those who have an opinion said no, there isn't enough teaching of media literacy. From the reports we have seen, we would agree with the foundation leaders on this. The Knight Commission said digital media literacy should be taught in all schools, but that still hasn't happened. There's still a lot of teaching to the test. The test, by and large, doesn't care if you know civics, news literacy, or any of the things we hope citizens of the 21st century will know. In our map we'll get rid of the rocks and clouds.

8. High speed, affordable broadband accessible by everyone. By the largest margin in the entire survey, community foundation leaders said this just had not happened. Seventy-six percent said they didn't have universal broadband. Of all the survey items this is the one that's a bit out of date. (If we were to do the survey again next year, the White House would say, we'd see a picture of broadband everywhere.) But having connections is not the same as using connections. The poor, the elderly and rural America are second-class citizens when it comes to broadband. So what should we wipe out in the ecosystem map to symbolize broadband adoption? The sky.

What these foundation leaders think matters, since they control $50 billion in endowments, and make at least $4 billion a year in local grants. To review: Government portal, no; open government, yes; journalism shrinking; debate isn't vibrant; little quality of life information; libraries are good; no digital media literacy and no universal broadband.

The first graphic below shows a healthy media ecosystem, according to the Knight

Commission, and the second shows what community foundation leaders said their local media ecosystems actually look like.

Who turned out the lights? It's safe to say the nation's community foundation leaders don't have the most positive views of their local news and information systems. The good news is that this analysis presents the lowest common denominator. In any given community, there may have been more strong points than shown here, places on which to build.

Community foundations are giving more to local news and information than they used to, and planning to give even more in the future. What are the smart things they are doing? They are increasing their own communications capacities as well as their grantees, experimenting with new digital approaches and sharing their learning, making more detailed maps of their own community media ecosystems. No matter what they want to accomplish, community and place-based foundations know they need healthy news-and-information ecosystems to do it.

UPDATE:

This is an updated version of a talk presented at the annual Media Learning Seminar for Community Foundations as part of the Knight Community Information Challenge. Further advice for foundations can be found in the booklet Journalism and Media Grant Making.

A local affair

When Knight Foundation first started working with the National Endowment of the Arts on the issue of arts journalism, we asked four questions: Is arts journalism in trouble? Does it matter? Can anything be done to help? How can we — the Knight Foundation, the nation's leading private funder of journalism innovation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, the nation's leading advocate for the arts — improve the situation? Let's look at the questions and answers:

1. Is arts journalism in trouble?

Nationally, arts journalism is doing well. Locally, it is not. Nationally, the medium of film is an example of the positive post-Internet trend. Even as film critics shrink in traditional media, the victims of the new economics of the digital age, they are blooming in cyberspace. As the film critic Roger Ebert reported in the Wall Street Journal article, "Film Criticism is Dying? Not Online" :

"The Web and HTML have been a godsend for film criticism. The best single film criticism site is arguably davidbordwell.net, featuring the Good Doctor Bordwell and his wife Kristin Thompson. Their names are known from their textbooks, studied in every film school in the world. But they are not users of the obscurantist gobbledygook employed by academics who, frankly, cannot really write. They communicate in prose as clear as running water."

In communities across America, however, the story is quite different.

ArtsJournal.com editor Douglas McLennan estimated that in 2006, roughly 5,000 people covered arts beats for American newspapers. Now, he believes, that number has

been cut in half. This rate of cutback would be higher than average. The American Society of News Editors census shows that in the past decade, one in three newsroom jobs has been lost.

Even more than community journalism, traditional local arts journalism in the U.S. is going through a messy digital transition, often disappearing in many communities.

Reported former Orlando Sentinel theater critic Elizabeth Maupin in her article for Harvard's Nieman Reports, "A Journalistic Vanishing Act":

"Intelligent Internet journalists are taking up the slack, at least in some cities … websites exist for theater, books, art, dance and other kinds of music, and more are springing up all the time. Yet many of those sites don't pay their writers, and most struggle to make ends meet. In many cities, especially smaller ones, substantive blogging has not sprung up to replace what has been lost. "

2. Does it matter?

The Knight Commission for the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy would say it does. News and information, the commission said, is as important to community well-being as safety, the environment, education. In fact, quality flow of news and information is necessary to determine how a community is progressing on any issue.

Like news, the arts are a type of glue that can bind communities. A Gallup Research project funded by Knight Foundation, Soul of the Community, shows that three things strongly connect people to their communities: openness, social offerings (such as concerts and other arts events), and aesthetics, such as beautiful parks. Prosperous

communities tend to have more of the types of people who feel this kind of attachment.

How can a community appreciate the benefits of the arts without quality news and information telling them who is doing what, what's available and what people are saying? Or without providing critical reviews and features on artists and their craft and demonstrating how the arts serve as a catalyst to better our lives?

3. Can anything be done to help?

Journalism in America does not need to be saved, the Knight Commission says, so much as it needs to be created. Rather than embark on a search for the past, the commission urges us to look ahead.

This means being neutral about the delivery mechanisms of news. If, as Pew research indicates, digital news is becoming more personal, portable and participatory, then the question becomes: How can arts journalism do this? How can it be mobile, customized and interactive?

Arts journalism has instructive parallels to other endangered forms of specialty journalism. As traditional media makes the difficult transition to digital media, perhaps the largest "missing journalism" category is investigative reporting. What investigative journalism is to self-governance, arts journalism is to community life. Both are specialties involving reporters trained to reach the highest levels of understanding. But both are fields of personal engagement and interest. Americans have strong opinions about how they should run their lives and their communities. This opens the door to new forms of community engagement in both arts and investigative journalism. Unfortunately, like investigative journalism, arts journalism has been easy to cut.

As investigative reporting has dropped out of daily newspapers, individuals and communities have been willing to donate funds to see it done in new digital formats. Nonprofit news sites have popped up in nearly every state. Their funding varies from state to state. But a new study by the Investigative News Network shows that these startups have fared better than both the average business startup and the average nonprofit startup. I think this is because the journalists running them do not think failure is an option. More importantly, I think it's because what they are doing is important.

The ultimate future of these new nonprofit sites, like the future of news itself, is uncertain. Despite their small staffs and fragile budgets, they are providing thousands of investigative stories seen by uncounted millions of people. If what Harvard professors call the "creative destruction" of our traditional news systems is only a temporary event, and the commercial side eventually corrects itself, these sites will have provided crucial watchdog content to help the transition. If the structural changes affecting journalism are permanent, and some content no longer has commercial support, period, then these sites are at least a start toward a solution.

In this light, what's interesting about arts journalism is that, unlike investigative journalism, the arts are already supported by economic systems. No one buys a ticket to go to the city council meeting. But every day, people purchase tickets to see exhibitions, theater, dance and musical performances. Under their own power, arts providers have banded together to create new information hubs on the web — they see it clearly in their best interest. This offers economic and partnership possibilities beyond what we are seeing in investigative reporting.

4. How can NEA and Knight show their interest and concern?

NEA and Knight have funded university-based programs to train traditional arts journalists. In past decades, such programs helped train new staff when traditional news organizations were adding reporters. New arts reporters always benefited from additional training. The model worked well when traditional journalism was growing. But in recent years, as traditional journalism has cut back, Knight and NEA became concerned about training people for jobs that no longer exist. So we've taken a break from that approach.

NEA and Knight already have a history of working together on ArtPlace, a place-based program to help revitalize arts in communities across the country, with both federal and philanthropic leaders. This raised an obvious question: Is there an equal to ArtPlace for arts journalism? Could Knight and NEA partner in a Request for Proposal process that would allow the eight resident Knight Communities to propose new forms of arts journalism?

The Knight communities represent a cross section of America, living laboratories where news and information experiments can be tried. The foundation has tested this topic with its arts program site, KnightArts.org. The site receives significant web traffic.

We wanted to be as open as possible to new ideas: To collaborate with unusual partners, try new approaches, proposals that achieved both arts-journalism goals and others, such as education. These projects would improve the flows of arts journalism in communities and have a good chance of sustaining themselves.

So we decided to hold open contests in the eight Knight communities, hoping that winners and runners up would represent the kind of fresh thinking the Knight Commission calls for. Our hope was that a contest would encourage new arts news

techniques, technologies and networks of the future.

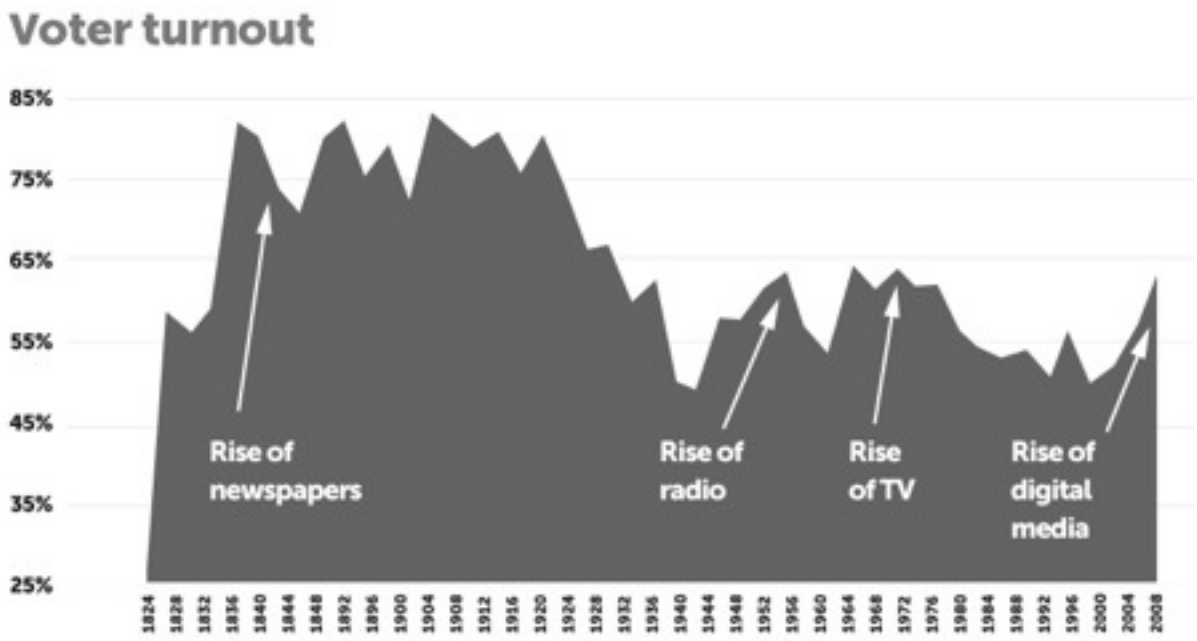
Plenty of people lament the disaggregation of news that leaves specialty reporting fending for itself in the Digital Age. But to the entrepreneurial minded, this is a time of great excitement. In the era of creative destruction of traditional media, we can emphasize creation.

That's how the Community Arts Journalism Challenge came about. Given the extraordinary numbers of entries and the excitement generated by the winners, we're glad we did it. The Charlotte Arts Journalism Alliance links five major media players, including the Charlotte Observer, with the University of North Carolina to increase arts coverage in the city. CriticCar is gathering citizen reporting on the Detroit arts scene. Art Attack is increasing arts coverage in a partnership between the Philadelphia Daily News and Drexel University.

UPDATE:

This article originally appeared in the Knight blog. After publication, the National Endowment for the Arts announced that the arts journalism contest was so successful that NEA would add journalism grant-making to its regular local arts grant making program. Here's one of the winners of that program, the Macon Arts Alliance.

Does a rising new form of media encourage presidential voting?



Our great political scientists may not agree with this, but perhaps a few other scholars might want to take a look. From George Mason University, via Wikipedia, the graphic above shows presidential election turnout in the United States for the past two centuries.

There are four notable upward spikes in U.S. election turnout: 1820s-1850s, which coincides with the rise of the mass circulation newspaper; 1920s-1940s; which matches the rise of radio; 1950s-1960s, matching the rise of television, and the mid-1990s to today -- the rise of the World Wide Web and digital media. (Plus two mini-spikes in presidential voting, after the Civil War, when the American illustrated magazines rose,

and just before the turn of the century, when big city papers rose.)

Historic upticks in American presidential voting happen to match the rise of new forms of mass media. Is this coincidence? I doubt it. Yet I am not saying that the rise of popular new media forms caused the spikes. I am theorizing that the rise of a major new form of media is an ingredient in a complex recipe that, in the end, results in more presidential voting. In fact, the same underlying social conditions that caused the rise of the new media forms might also be responsible for the rise of presidential voting.

Connecting the early press to engagement

In his book The Creation of the Media, Pulitzer Prize-winning Princeton scholar Paul Starr argues that in the early 19th century, there was a tight relationship between political activity and newspapers. The first political parties inspired "party newspapers," which accelerated the growth of the penny press, making newspapers cheap for all, which accelerated party activity, and so on.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the French political thinker who studied America in the early 19th century, wrote, "if there were no newspapers there would be no common activity." Our great poet Walt Whitman said: "America is a newspaper-ruled nation." Abraham Lincoln, as a young postmaster, read newspapers from all over the country, using them to master America's emerging democratic language, a speaking style that interested people across the sprawling country.

In the 1920s to the 1940s, during the rise of radio, the second major spike in presidential voter turnout occurs. Many would say it's because women got the vote in 1920. Others would say it was because of the big issues of the day, such as the New Deal. Others might say President Roosevelt's radio-broadcast fireside chats played a role.

What if it was all these things? A new group of voters exposed to big issues and a president's message coming into the home via radio news?

This is the chain of events that could make the rise of a major new form of mass media an ingredient in a presidential voting spike:

1. Because the emerging medium is new, a lot of Americans pay attention to its novelty, including some who don't normally vote;

2. Since the new medium carries news, the pool of people aware of that news, including political news, increases;

3. Some people who didn't talk about politics before start doing just that;

4. Savvy politicians realize they can use this new media to increase turnout by targeting potential voters;

5. The politicians reach a wider audience, either by political parties dominating newspapers, presidential fireside chats via radio, live televised presidential debates, or a president dominating social and mobile media;

6. It works. Voter turnout increases as new media consumers become politically active, but…

7. It only works for a few elections, because eventually, the rising medium is no longer novel, and the pool of potential voters settles back to normal.

Can I prove any of this? Not a word. It is a hunch. Yet isn't this pattern just too odd to be a total coincidence?

Columbia University Sociologist Michael Schudson says that scholarship suggests the rise of TV and the web is linked to greater political interest, but that it is still in the realm of theory.

We are experiencing the fourth big spike right now — it's a good time to study the rise of presidential voting, particularly among the young, and the emergence of digital media, popular among the young. The first version of this article was posted on Knight blog before the 2012 election, and I predicted then that voter turnout might again increase, or at least youth voting. In fact, the youth vote, as a percentage of total vote, increased one percent in 2012, surprising the experts.

The hunch that emerging mass media forms, new and on the rise, can make a big difference, came out of a talk I gave at Arizona State University, showing that every American generation has grown up with a different form of media on the rise. My hope was that the talk would help today's journalism students seize the day, and relax into new information delivery worlds like this one.

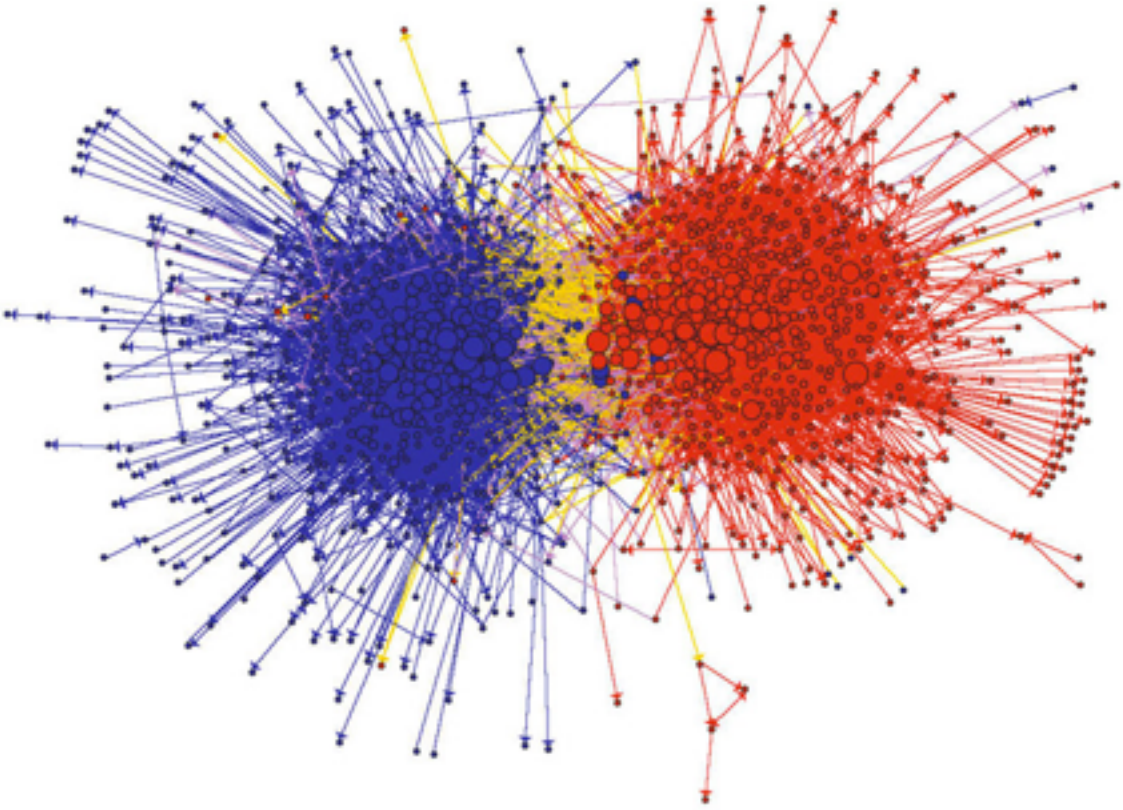
Could social and mobile media keep presidential voter turnout soaring? Probably not. But the new forms keep coming faster and faster. Who knows what the next wave will be, and which presidential candidate will rise up to exploit it?

A bad idea that lingers

Traditional news media have made a destructive mistake by encouraging anonymous comments on their websites. But it's not too late to do away with this bad idea. The 2012 election — probably the greatest digital political event in American history — would have been the perfect opportunity to change things. Yet another opportunity that slipped away. The election turned out to be one of the nastiest, most negative and least factual ever. (The Wesleyan Media Project reports presidential election ads on television were 70 percent negative in 2012, up from 9 percent in 2008.)

Anonymity brings out the beast in us. Steven Clift, founder of E-Democracy.org, has a long experience with political debate, which has led him to two simple rules: real names, and no name-calling. Letting your comment section turn into a sewer weakens the reputation of a newspaper or any other fact-based business. What's more, allowing it is just unethical. Professional journalists grant anonymity to sources only when there is no other way to get important information. That same ethic should apply to newspaper web comments. Only leakers should be anonymous. I've been arguing for years that the Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics, untouched since the web took hold, should be updated to deal with our digital dilemmas. The Poynter Institute is on the right track with its event on "the new ethics of journalism" and the book by the same name.

A map of the political blogosphere showing how liberals link to liberals, conservatives to conservatives.



Credit: Lada Adamic and Natalie Glance

Anonymity doesn't need help. MIT Center for Civic Media director Ethan Zuckerman talks about the graphics of "the political blogosphere." Actually, it's not one but two spheres: a liberal sphere and a conservative sphere. Only a tiny center wants to link to people of both persuasions, the rest of them just want to sink into their comfortable cocoons. Traditional media used to think they could provide the bridge between the factions. My mentor, Bob Maynard, said those bridges should be "structures of integrity" — held together by facts, by civil discussion, by real people using their real names to make constructive and useful comments, being able to withstand social earthquakes because, with mutual respect, they would bend and not break.

Clift's post, "Civility Online: Why are you hurting America?, " hopes media leaders will

wake up. As he has noted: “Major media made a huge mistake when they bought into the idea that ‘no one knows you’re a dog online’ was a good thing. Now they are throwing up their hands wondering why the jerks they are empowering by design are acting like animals.”

Real people, real debate, real democracy. Some newspapers, radio and television stations already are moving in this direction, using Facebook for commenting, or requiring registration to post comments. We can add millions of new facts to the next election cycle with one simple decision: go with open, transparent, civil debate. Go with real names.

UPDATE:

After this Knight Blog post, the nation’s largest newspaper group, Gannett, switched to Facebook registration for web comments. The McClatchy group and others followed; even The Huffington Post said it would switch. But some mainstream brands, and many younger and alternative brands, are staying with anonymity.

An experiment: Journalists take time to engage with a community

A journalism convention came to South Florida a while back and its leaders actually set aside some time to meet community leaders. I moderated. It was a joint convention of theSociety of Professional Journalists and the Radio and Television Digital News Association. It was in Fort Lauderdale. From the start, you could see the “community

engagement lunch" was long overdue.

Local residents learned about the daily realities journalists face. They learned that both organizations have strong codes of ethics. The journalists learned that community members have longstanding issues and media outlets seeking credibility as a source of news and information must address them.

We started by looking at the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities. Did the locals and journalists agree that news and information are core community needs? They did. Had they noticed the digital-age growth of traditional media's advertising-based model and the resulting local journalism cutbacks? They had.

Then we got into it. Here were the major topic areas: 'Identify sources whenever possible'

Community members said they are on the side of the journalists who oppose anonymous comments on traditional media web sites. They said they won't comment themselves because of all the hate mongering. Good point. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics says journalists should "always question sources' motives before granting anonymity." The Radio and Television Digital News Association code advises: "identify sources whenever possible." Yet many news organizations do the opposite. They neverquestion the motives of readers who comment on their websites. The comments remain anonymous. They do not "identify sources whenever possible." What is the point of having a code of ethics if journalists ignore it?

When real names are required, conversation becomes civil. But no technology can guarantee all names will be real, observed Howard Saltz, editor of the Sun Sentinel in

Fort Lauderdale. Some people will always fake an identity to get in. True, but major news organizations like the Gannett newspapers, have switched to Facebook registration and found other ways to require real names. When they do, bigoted name-calling falls off fast and people are more likely to post thoughtful comments.

Half a story now, half later

One-sided stories are a real problem, said Mary Ross Agosta, communications director at the Archdiocese of Miami. The 24/7-news cycle creates "frustrating" situations when reporters post part of the story now and the rest later. Unfortunately, many people never see the second version. Mohammad Shakir, director of the Asian-American Advisory Board, talked about another harmful shortcut: how wire service stories written by people outside the community can contain stereotypes and factual errors that would not have been there had the story been done locally. These are valid issues, and again, fly in the face of ethical values journalists promote. Resisting the temptation to be first when it's more important to be right — that is a constant struggle. Perhaps hearing the damage that wrong stories can do can help us do the right thing more often.

Of cats and trees: Where's the good news?

Several community members said there just was not enough good news in the media, that every story seems to have a villain. Too often it really does seem to be that way. As Walter Cronkite used to say, it's not our job as journalists to cover all the cats, just the ones that get stuck up in the tree. Clearly, Walter would have been shocked to see the millions watching lol cats on YouTube, with almost none of them stuck up in trees.

What happened? In the old days, journalists had to cram the news into small packages, limited by the size of the paper or the newscast. Since we could cover only one cat, it was the one that needed a spotlight, the one up in the tree, the one we needed to get down.

The other cats were boring. But the world of finite journalism was smashed two decades ago with the World Wide Web. Now, a newspaper or television station can use as much web space as it wants. YouTube covers all the cats, not just the ones in trees. Traditional media still gets hung up on the tree thing.

Tell us what you are up to

Community members and journalists agreed there should be a lot more transparency. News organizations should explain how they operate, making sure phone numbers and other contact information is easy to find, even putting codes of ethics on their websites so the public knows they exist. We also agreed that cable news, at least in recent years, is giving people the impression that everyone in journalism has an agenda and no one cares about the facts. Yet there are times (believe it or not), when a journalist's stance is that he or she actually has no stance. This is not a "view from nowhere," as some might say. It's a view from wherever you need to be to call it the way it is, the way a referee dances around to find just the right angle to see if a player's foot stepped out of bounds. If you are that kind of journalist, there's nothing wrong with saying so.

What's more, when there is an overwhelming amount of evidence on one side of a question, that's what people want to know. They can smell something wrong with the false idea of "balance" that for every fact you have to run around and find someone to dispute it.

Whose problem is this, anyway?

Shrinking local news staffs in recent years are pushing more journalists into covering topics they do not know much about. Yet we need reporters with expertise, community members said. Could community groups help, we asked, by putting more general information on their own websites? Some are, but they admit they could do more. The

Broward County Sheriff's Office, for example, has its own radio show (where they interview reporters about what they think of stories in the news as well as how they do their jobs). Commander Michael Calderin summed it up this way: "Whose responsibility is it to care about community news and information? Everyone's."

Scott Leadingham, director of education for the Society of Professional Journalists, developed and co-moderated the Fort Lauderdale lunch. He believes these "open sessions" should continue. At first, he had worried it would become a gripe session, putting the journalists on the defensive. But it did not. He was pleased with the quality of the conversation. These sorts of sessions, he says, "need to happen all over the country." Congratulations, Society of Professional Journalists!

Kenny Irby also thought the conversation was a success, which is saying something. Irby is director of community relations and diversity at the Poynter Institute, the top journalism training organization and home to News University. Irby offered to help duplicate the Fort Lauderdale session. It reminded him of the "time out for diversity" events he did in the late 1990s, with one important difference.

These days, if community members do not like the local news, they can do something about it. They can beef up their own websites, and go out and publish news of their own and tell traditional media to take a hike. If there were no other reason, that alone makes community engagement an essential element of local news reporting. Yet it is difficult to find any news organization interested in the techniques of human-centered design, of understanding exactly what needs journalists are trying to meet.

UPDATE:

Since this article originally appeared in Knight blog, the Sun Sentinel won journalism's highest honor, a Pulitzer Prize gold medal for public service, for articles revealing reckless, harmful speeding by law enforcement officers on South Florida's highways. The paper still posts anonymous comments. The Society of Professional Journalists decided against holding a community engagement session at its 2013 convention. It was as though the Ft. Lauderdale meeting never happened. "Culture," as business guru Peter Drucker once said, "eats strategy for breakfast."

Chapter 5: Simmering opportunities

Many roads to change

Not everything a foundation does is conceived as a major initiative. Between 2003 and 2012, Knight Foundation made more than 650 journalism and media grants totaling more than $310 million. Projects fell under the general headings of journalism, media innovation, freedom of expression and community, and they came in all sizes.

The best part of this work is seeing the modest turn to the transformative. Just two examples:
With the American Society of News Editors and the Radio and Television Digital News Association, Knight funded a major youth journalism initiative. Its SchoolJournalism.org portal inspired the creation or improvement of thousands of middle and high school media outlets, helping re-ignite secondary school journalism in the U.S.

With the Associated Press, newspapers nationwide and many others, we created

Sunshine Week. That national campaign provides an annual status report on the state of freedom of information, aimed at that those who use open government laws — for the most part, not journalists, but citizens themselves. Sunshine Week seems to have helped slow the never-ending attempts to roll back freedom of information in the U.S.

Today, we continue to promote new digital tools and best practices through media innovation programs, endowed journalism training and teaching programs. Here's a kind of crazy salad of issues I've been thinking about lately: digital media literacy, including First Amendment education, IRS nonprofit media rules, a collaborative challenge fund for "teaching hospital" experiments in journalism education and, last but not least, clear writing.

Of those, let's look at two:

Digital Media Literacy — Call it news or digital literacy, civics or media literacy. No matter what form it takes, thriving communities need it. These are 21st century literacies, keys to the growth of an information economy. Part of modern literacy is understanding how news really works, and how, in many ways, it's like food. Because we are talking about digital media literacy, though, we need to find ways to use digital media tools to better make and consume news.

Foundation Collaborations — Some of our successes (like the Challenge Fund for Journalism) emerged because foundations worked together through a funders group we started a decade ago. As a foundation started by one of America's great newspaper families, Knight hopes to continue working with foundation colleagues on issues like clear writing, funder transparency, open source licensing, technology for engagement,

and nonprofit media transformation. An example: Funders are creating a Challenge Fund for Innovation in Journalism Education to support the “teaching hospital” model

This, the final chapter of Searchlights and Sunglasses, looks at things still simmering. (You can explore the work of our grantees at knightfoundation.org.) Will all the news community’s projects succeed? No. In fact, the more we venture into the unknown, the higher the risk, the greater the chance of failure. As in science, though, experiments are not really failures if you learn from them.

Some may say we should not be so ambitious. But that isn’t the Knight way. In the early 20th Century, after Jack Knight inherited the Akron Beacon Journal, he and brother Jim built it into what was once the biggest (and many would say best) newspaper group in the country. Later, Jack said he really didn’t inherit a newspaper, he inherited an opportunity. That’s all any of us have: the opportunity to try.

How much comfort news is in your information diet?

We the people are fat. So much so, medical experts have declared an obesity epidemic costing this nation untold billions. There’s an even bigger epidemic out there, less obvious, but no less dangerous. Just as we consume too much comfort food, we are,

more and more, consuming “comfort news.”

I’ve mentioned comfort news before, but it deserves a fuller explanation. You are on the Internet, listening to talk radio or watching cable TV. You say, “HEY, I agree with that guy!” — and you feel good. But how much protein, how much fact, is involved? Are you getting real news, or an opinion pretending to be news?

Comfort news is the brain candy of the news stream. Like comfort food, it brings temporary pleasure. Yet if we consume nothing else, society pays the price.

We share comfort news within our like-minded circles to convince ourselves something is true when in fact it may not be. Both conservatives and liberals do it. It’s the reason the political blogosphere has separated into two giant groups that do not link to each other. It’s why so many conservatives can’t accept the scientific evidence that humans are causing climate change. It’s why so many liberals can’t accept the data showing Americans have more guns than ever, but, in recent decades, violent crime has fallen. Comfort news is the reason why we know so much about celebrities and so little about

what our government does or how to solve our most pressing problems.

This trend is the underbelly of the information revolution.

What food does for the body, news does for the mind. We need food every day to live. We need news and information every day to function in a free society.

Both the food and news systems are shaped by markets, technology, personal choice and public policy. Just as some people prefer to grow their own food, some prefer to blog their own news. There's a crusade against national fast-food chains; there's a crusade against fast-food news. People talk about organic, homegrown "slow food," and they're starting to talk about carefully produced, unrushed "slow news."

Like modern agriculture, modern news technology offers an amazing array of choices. Used badly, however, it can amplify our worst tendencies. Some scholars, including Ralph Lowenstein, dean emeritus of the University of Florida School of Journalism and Communication, saw it coming. Forty years ago, he warned that interactive electronic news could lead people to surround themselves in "a political, social or educational cocoon. "When that happens," he wrote, "society will suffer, since it is likely to be divided into highly polarized and probably unempathetic people."

Polarized? Unempathetic? Welcome to 21st century America. We have healthy food, but we often choose to eat the other. We have good journalism, which as I say is based on FACT — the Fair, Accurate, Contextual search for Truth — but we tend to consume too much spin, opinion, the equivalent of empty calories. We're becoming Comfort News Central, a Fat Head Nation, where (this is fact, not spin) attack ads outnumber all other forms of televised political advertising.

Eli Pariser's best-seller The Filter Bubble documents our retreat into our own little entrenched worlds. Every day, media and technology companies are finding new ways to help us block out the things we don't want to see and hear. Search engines remember our clicks and serve us more of what we like. In this era of information overload, 70 percent of us say we are overwhelmed. So we welcome those filters, using whatever digital sunglasses we can find.

Comfort news undermines civic debate

Yet we also complain — as did half the people in Chicago during a poll by the Chicago Community Trust — that we don't know enough to vote. I'd wager the newsless of Chicago haven't checked websites like Project Vote Smart. It's easier for us to blame "the media" than it is to change our own news consumption.

Too much comfort news is as bad for the body politic as too much comfort food is for the body. Too many fat people, and we get rising healthcare costs. Too many fat-headed people, and we can't think clearly enough to fix the problem of rising health care costs.

The solution: pay attention to what we feed our brains. Stop blocking out so much of the world, and take in some informative fruits and vegetables along with the sweet stuff. Make ourselves uncomfortable once in a while by seeking out facts that do not mesh with our opinions. Try going on a news diet, where we limit those news carbs. If we created our own South Beach Diet for news, what would that look like?

This is easier said than done, of course. It isn't just a question of willpower. The stresses of modern life lead to its excesses. We develop coping habits that are hard to break. While knowledge alone can't solve the problem, it is an important first step. To be a

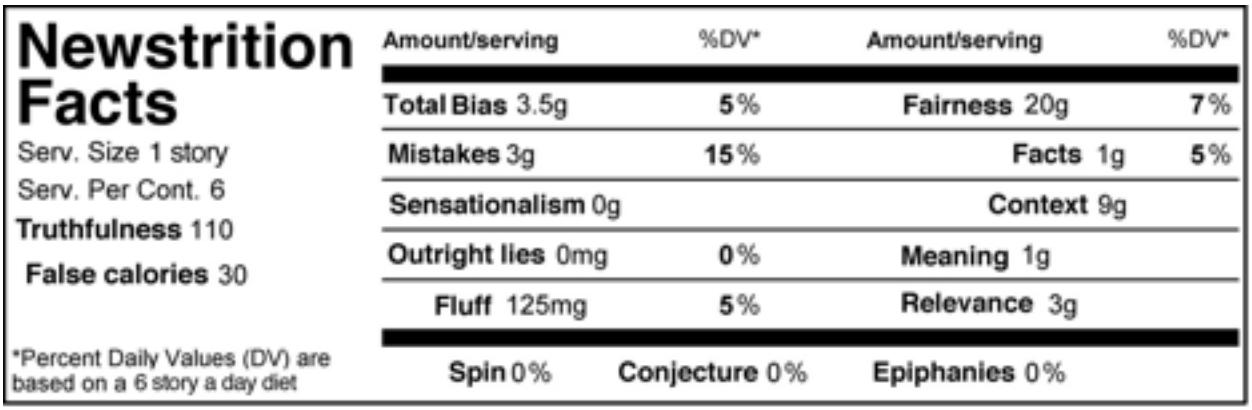
first-class citizen in the digital age, you need digital-media fluency. The Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities concluded that digital media fluency should be taught at all levels of education. But there's even more to it. Knight invests in journalism excellence (the art of making important news interesting). We push for journalism education and public media reform, helping legacy institutions learn new ways to inform and engage with communities. We work to accelerate media innovation so that the best of the news and information humanity has to offer can be easily created, found, used, and shared.

The foundation believes that a healthy flow of news and information is just as important to communities as healthy air or water.

Yet we're under no illusion about who drives media consumption. We the people do. We get the media we demand, the media we deserve. More and more, we are the media. Recognizing media consumption trends could kick start a host of new self-help groups: Comfort Media Anonymous, America Unplugged, you name it.

In the end, what's true for food is true for news: we are what we eat. As Knight Chair and food journalist Michael Pollan says: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." When you think of your information diet, try this mantra: "Consume news. Not too carelessly. Mostly facts."

This is an updated version of an opinion column that originally appeared in The Miami Herald.



Newstrition Facts

Serv. Size 1 story
Serv. Per Cont. 6
Truthfulness 110
False calories 30

*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 6 story a day diet

Amount/serving	%DV*	Amount/serving	%DV*
Total Bias 3.5g	**5**%	**Fairness** 20g	**7**%
Mistakes 3g	**15**%	**Facts** 1g	**5**%
Sensationalism 0g		**Context** 9g	
Outright lies 0mg	**0**%	**Meaning** 1g	
Fluff 125mg	**5**%	**Relevance** 3g	
Spin 0%	**Conjecture** 0%	**Epiphanies** 0%	

Would nutrition labels work for news?

Matt Stempeck, research assistant at the MIT Center for Civic Media, once asked the question: "What If We Had a Nutrition Label for News"?

Good question. Anyone who can break down and communicate the nutritional value of news will be an American hero.

In a free press system like ours, it will never happen, but it's both fun and educational to imagine a nutritional label on each news story. This spins off of Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer's observation that the new unit of organization of news is the story, not the news outlet. Instead of buying a newspaper to get the package, everything that's in it, we search the web for a single news story that we really want to see.

Let's say we agree that great journalism is the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth. Our nutritional system for news should evaluate stories on that basis. It is possible to hunt down the fairness, the facts, the context and fundamental truthfulness of each

story, just as you can their nutritional parallels: carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and the overall quality of being “real food,” full of fiber and all else that entails. It is equally possible to flip the formula — to evaluate unfairness, inaccuracy, contextual distortion and untruth with their doppelgangers, the sugar, salt, fat and additives that make food dangerous.

Breaking it down in this way would do for news nutrition what labeling has done for food nutrition: make it something consumers can understand.

Knight Chair Michael Pollan has pointed out that while we have had food labeling for a long time, we have in a sense negated it by allowing companies to market their products with flashy packaging that makes false food appear to be real. During the Nixon administration, a rule was dropped that had required the use of the word “artificial” on packaging of products that were not real food. The result: an explosion in processed foods. The slogan appeals to our feelings, the label to our intellect. The obesity epidemic suggests a lot of people don’t make it from the front of the package back to the label. Pollan says, even those who read nutrition labels are going down the wrong road if they focus on vitamins without thinking about whether the food is actually the real stuff from the natural world the human species always has eaten.

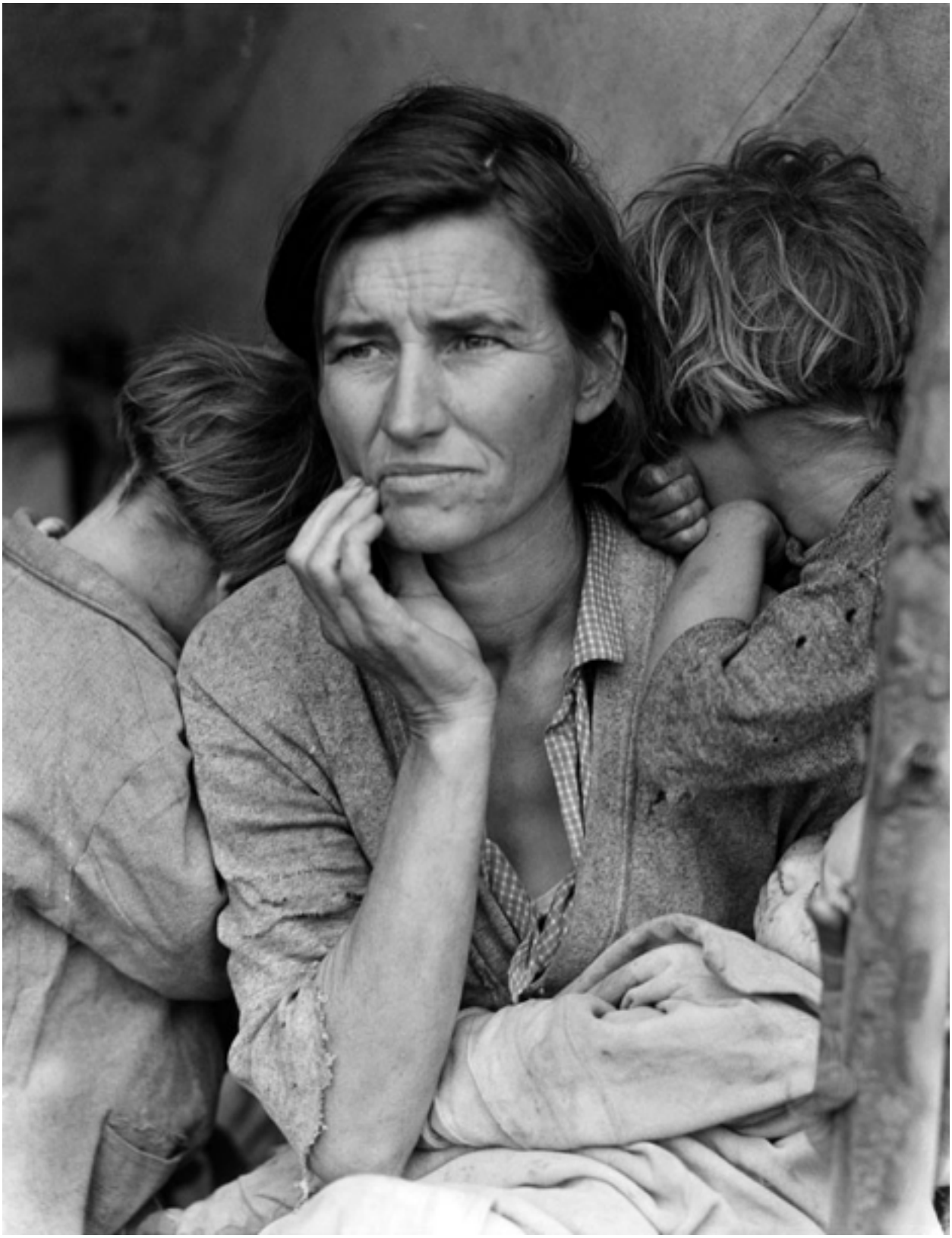
We’re reminded, then, that information, while essential, may not by itself change behavior. You can't just inform, you also have to engage. In “Switch: How to Change When Change is Hard,” writers Chip and Dan Heath popularize the metaphor of a person’s decision-making system being like a rider on an elephant. The rider is the thinking mind; the elephant is the emotional mind. When your rider wants to go one way but your elephant wants to go the other way, guess which way you go?

The Heath brothers say the secret to change is to find ways to reach the elephant. In West Virginia, this was done in a successful billboard campaign showing how much fat was in whole milk by using a giant glass of milk, an equals sign, and five strips of bacon. Consumption of non-fat and low-fat milk increased.

What would that billboard look like, if it were focused not on food, but on news?

This article originally appeared in the Knight blog.

Little rules that created a big problem



The power of news doesn't depend upon whether the chronicler is a for-profit or nonprofit journalist. This 1936 Dorothea Lange photograph of Florence Owens Thompson, better known as the Migrant Mother, told the story of the plight of American farmers during the Great Depression. Lange's iconic photos, done under the Farm Security Administration, were distributed for free to newspapers around the country.

Funders, nonprofit journalists and academics gathered awhile back to discuss the challenges nonprofit news outlets face in getting charitable 501c3 status. The gathering was part of a project called the Nonprofit Media Working Group, a partnership between Knight Foundation and the Council on Foundations.

The group is chaired by Steve Waldman, senior media policy scholar at Columbia University. Waldman was the lead author of the first major government report in a generation on the state of local news. Among the findings of that FCC report was that IRS nonprofit media rules appear out of date and thus are unhelpful to the growing field of nonprofit news outlets.

An HDTV segment from Dan Rather Reports outlines the story of Public Press, a small San Francisco news outlet that has been seeking nonprofit status for more than two years. (That particular story had a happy ending: Finally, after a 32-month wait, SF Public Press did receive nonprofit status.)

The Rather segment reported the growth of nonprofit media. It speculated that the IRS may be confused or overwhelmed by nonprofit digital media requests. Rules under which the IRS grants nonprofit media status, the segment noted, were created long before the Internet. So it’s a reasonable guess that the tax rules, like those of so many other institutions, just haven’t adapted to the digital age.

Still, Rather's story did not interview any IRS officials. The IRS issued a statement saying it could not comment on specifics of any single case, but that "novel" applications get special consideration. Later, however, a scandal erupted when IRS officials were found to be singling out some groups for special scrutiny. Given the incomplete IRS response, it's also a reasonable guess that the words in nonprofit media applications, such as "being a government watchdog," could have gotten those thrown in the scrutiny pile. Regardless of the reason they were set aside, however, the old nonprofit media rules became the justification that the IRS used to delay or deny the applications.

Why is this important? At Knight Foundation, we think news and information are core social needs. Our bi-partisan commission said we need new thinking and aggressive action to increase both information flows and community engagement. Knight has been involved in hundreds of experiments to do just that.

Waldman's follow-up study at the Federal Communications Commission, named Information Needs of Communities, detailed the loss of more than 15,000 journalism jobs in recent years, nearly all local. The study concluded that this amounted to a crisis in "local accountability journalism," the journalism producing news we need to run our governments and our lives.

The FCC report pointed to nonprofit tax regulations as unfriendly to new media models. At the same time, there were several publicized cases of 501c3 status being long delayed. So Knight funded a working group with the Council on Foundations to look into the issues the report raised. The group asked: Are the rules being misunderstood? Are there confusing or contradictory regulations that need clarifying or updating? Does the

underlying law need addressing?

With all this as a backdrop, a panel chaired by Waldman looked at the nonprofit media questions. Working group member Cecilia Garcia, then of the Benton Foundation, said the nonprofit sector must play a larger role in media, but that foundations by themselves can't sustain nonprofit news. Kevin Davis of the Investigative News Network noted that in-depth journalism has been cut more than other forms, because, as a rule, it is not profitable. During INN's long effort to get charitable status, it had to strike the word "journalism" from its mission statement, and agree to operate at a "substantial loss" (not making a profit wasn't good enough for the IRS).

Marcus Owens, attorney for the working group, from Caplin & Drysdale is a former IRS official who once oversaw nonprofit applications, including those from media organizations. He noted that the original nonprofit rules reached back to 17th century English law to define what is charitable. Public "education" projects may be charitable. Though journalism projects meet that definition of educational in the rules, for some reason the IRS does not automatically believe they are educational. (So much for Henry Ward Beecher's 1873 pronouncement: "Newspapers are the schoolmasters of the common people.")

The major issue, Owens said, is the part of the rules saying nonprofit media need to be produced differently from commercial media. That's why the IRS has questioned nonprofit revenue generated by ads, subscriptions and syndication. Since commercial media depends heavily on those sources, the logic goes, nonprofit media should not. That might have worked fine in the 1960s, when nonprofit media did not look like daily newspapers. But it's incredibly outdated in the digital age.

As it deliberated, the working group did find that these distinctions are not valid in an era of collapsing ad models and, indeed, the convergence of for-profit and nonprofit business models. In the digital age, can you really tell the difference between a sponsor, an underwriter, an advertiser and a marketing partner? The important point is that the rules allow nonprofit media to collect "unrelated business income," and when they do, it can be taxed. So agents should not be telling nonprofit media applicants that advertising is not allowed.

Garcia said foundation money alone can't bridge the local "market gap" left by commercial media. Foundations (including Knight) often urge nonprofit media to be entrepreneurial. "Once we seed an organization," Garcia said, "there needs to be a systematic, strategic way to replace our funds." Local media need local support. Their relationships should be with their communities, not with faraway funders.

Nonprofit news organizations need multiple revenue sources

Joel Kramer, a working group member whose MinnPost has become a model of successful nonprofit news, said his $1.5 million revenue includes 25 percent from advertising and sponsorship, and only 20 percent from foundations. He also draws revenue from events, syndication and other sources. A diversity of revenue sources, Kramer said, is crucial to nonprofit media success.

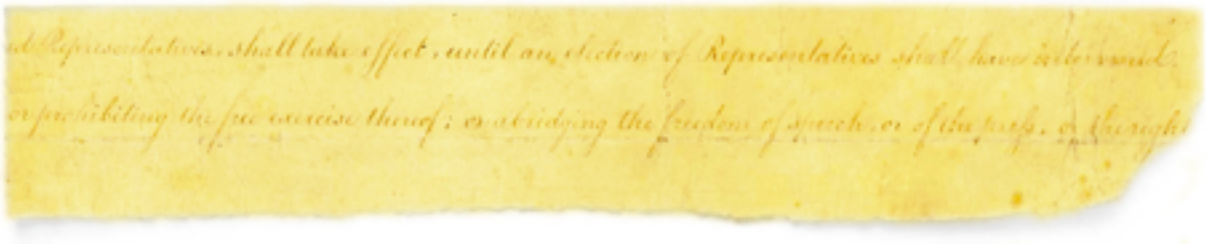
Kramer and other panel members thought it would be better for the IRS to stick to the basics: nonprofit news status should hinge on whether a news outlet benefits the community rather than shareholders, and whether it provides news and information that adds to our common knowledge on matters of public interest.

The working group's report concluded that the rules were indeed outdated. The FCC's chairman supported it with a statement. A group of deans from leading journalism schools agreed. Celia Roady of Morgan Lewis, and other lawyers in Washington, have recommended the IRS and Treasury Department update the rules. All of the above, plus the full list of working group members, can be found at this Council on Foundations web page.

I think we're making progress. Still, it's deeply disturbing that the IRS rules governing nonprofit media applications are not just old, they are 50 years old. How many other regulations have been made obsolete by the digital age? How long will it take for society to catch up? What is that costing us?

UPDATE:

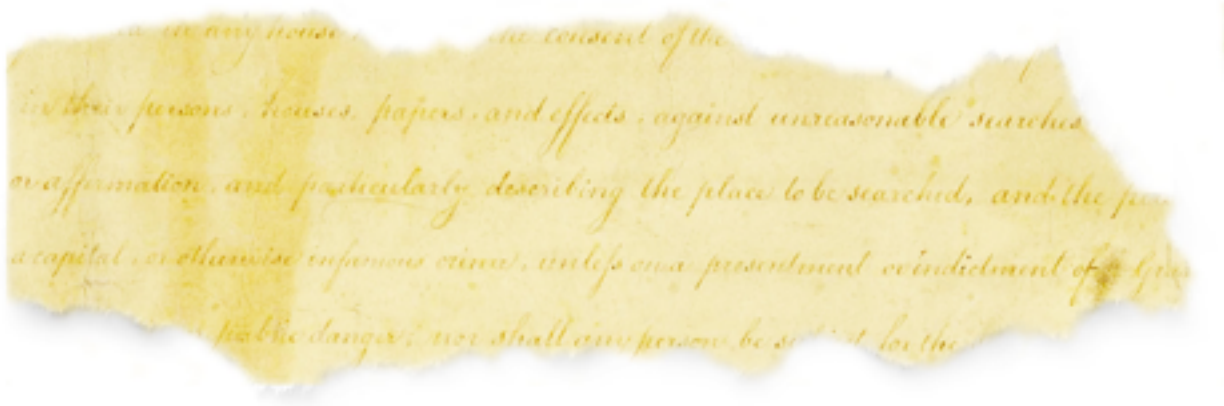
The working group seems to have made a difference. The IRS has approved all the news organizations singled out in the group's report, and some 20 others. Since the outdated regulations can still be evoked in the future, however, the Council on Foundations still hopes to change them



A First Amendment example

We've done a string of studies about First Amendment education in America's high schools. The following sketches out what our "Future of the First Amendment" surveys — 2004,2006, 2007 and 2011 — have been saying. Initially, I had seen First Amendment education as a school issue. Now, I think young people can learn about the nation's five fundamental freedoms outside the classroom as easily as they can inside. Maybe even more so.

This research started in a roundabout way. After the 9-11 terrorist attacks, support for the First Amendment among adults dropped significantly. In 2002, the First Amendment Center's annual "State of the First Amendment" survey reported that 49 percent of adult Americans thought the First Amendment went too far in the rights it guarantees. Suddenly, America's fundamental freedoms seemed to be up for debate. At the time, Knight Foundation's journalism program had a high school journalism initiative. So we contacted the survey group used by the First Amendment Center and proposed a new version of the survey — for America's high school students, teachers and administrators.



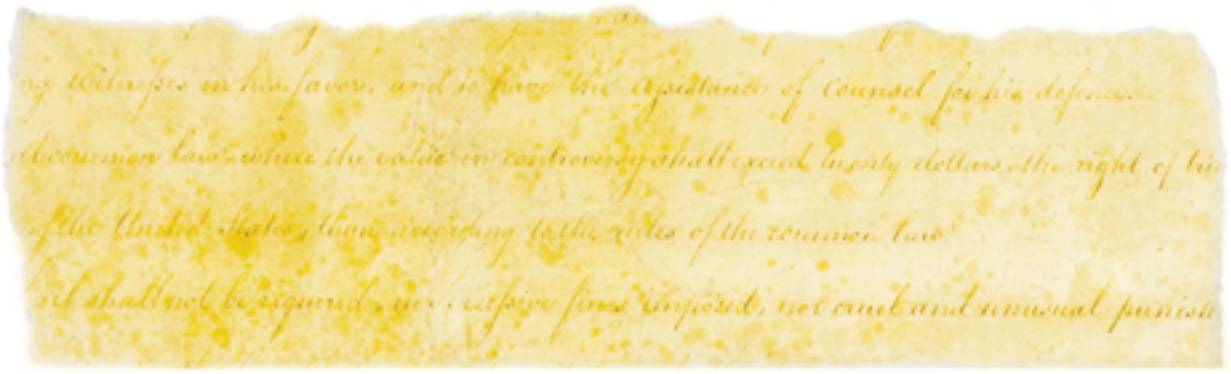
The core of the survey covered the basics. What do school folk and their students know about the First Amendment? Did they care about the 45 words that give Americans the right to say nearly all other words? Each survey asked core questions on freedom of religion, speech, the press, assembly and petition. We also added new questions to probe why students believe the way they do.

2004: More than 100,000 students, teachers and administrators took the first survey. The results revealed a surprising lack of First Amendment understanding and appreciation in high schools. Three-fourths of the students said they either didn't know or care much about the First Amendment. This news made national headlines. Liberals and conservatives alike agreed: something should be done.

A bright spot: students who get First Amendment teaching in schools know more about it than those without classroom instruction. In addition, student journalists, who get even more instruction, have a larger understanding and appreciation of the amendment. A lot of people, including me, thought it reasonable to believe that increased teaching would help move students toward a better understanding of and appreciation for the First Amendment.

2005: Congress created the annual Constitution Day, requiring public schools to teach about the Constitution every year on Sept. 17, the anniversary of the 1787 signing.

We invested in teaching and resource programs, trying to put a First Amendment focus on Constitution Day. Grantees, including the Bill of Rights Institute and the Newspaper Association of America, distributed classroom materials. Channel One produced news stories and video lessons. We reached some 40,000 teachers. Our experiment hoped to show whether the combination of news stories about the survey, the Constitution Day mandate and new teaching materials might increase First Amendment teaching and learning.



2006: Our second survey showed that teaching of First Amendment issues increased significantly. Yet students seemed to be going in the wrong direction. More students this time around said the First Amendment goes too far — 45 percent, up from the first survey's 35 percent. Perhaps many of the teachers who had recently started teaching the First Amendment weren't very good at it. The teachers who had low opinions on freedom tended to pull the students down to their beliefs. On the other hand, teachers

strongly supporting individual rights helped bring the students up.

In other words, the increase in teaching did not equal increased learning. We started to question the idea of Constitution Day-style solutions. We wondered about other ways students could learn about the First Amendment. After all, the public seemed to like the First Amendment again. (By 2006, the percentage believing it "goes too far" had fallen from 49 percent to only18 percent). Some scholars claimed (wrongly, it turned out) that young people didn't care about public life, so out-of-class lessons just wouldn't work. The team working on the research realized it didn't know enough. We wanted to know more about the power of Constitution Day, who influences young people, and whether they consumed news.

2007: Our third survey showed that Constitution Day had not been observed in schools as much as we thought it was. Teaching of First Amendment issues was falling off. But student support for the First Amendment increased. The survey also showed that parents, not teachers, have the greatest impact on young people's news choices. Students were indeed connected. But they consumed news digitally rather than traditionally. So the journalism team thought out-of-classroom projects might move First Amendment numbers forward.

By this time, many of our grants to increase teaching were running their course. We did continue to help education reformers like First Amendment Schools founder Sam Chaltain produce teaching materials and books through his Five Freedoms Project. But we worried about the difficulties of trying to reform the nation's educational system. America's largest foundation, the Gates Foundation, had put out a report on its massive high school reform efforts, detailing how complex, expensive and difficult education

reform can be. We continued to wonder what, if anything, could happen outside the classroom that might help the First Amendment.

2011: Our fourth survey showed that high school students who used social media had greater First Amendment knowledge than those who didn't. In the midst of the social and mobile media revolution, for the first time since we started the surveys, student understanding and appreciation moved strongly in the right direction.

Again, this time, teaching decreased, but learning numbers improved. How could there be less teaching but more learning? Perhaps using social media is like being on a school newspaper: you express yourself in public, so are more interested in the rules that govern public expression. Or perhaps it's simpler than that. Maybe students support freedom when it directly benefits them. They believe music lyrics and student newspapers should not be censored, for example, but don't feel the same way about traditional print newspapers. Since a large majority of students use social media, it's "theirs," in the same way that music is theirs.

Many high school teachers, however, would dispute the idea that social media is a good thing. Digital natives love it; teachers, not so much. This seemed to offer another opportunity. Knight, along with the First Amendment Center and the Newseum, sponsored a college scholarship contest, "Free to Tweet" as well as a teacher's guide to social media.

Looking beyond the classroom

What should future First Amendment surveys ask? Should we look more carefully at how teacher beliefs affect students? Or try to figure out where teachers get their skewed ideas about the First Amendment? Do their beliefs relate to demographic, geographic,

ideological, educational factors, or others? Are teachers who are suspicious of digital media the same as those who don't have strong First Amendment knowledge and beliefs? If teachers used social media more, would their First Amendment attitudes and knowledge improve? Or is the whole thing much simpler than we are making it out to be: the further away society gets from a violent event like 9-11, the less we worry that our open, tolerant attitudes make us vulnerable.

All in all, put into context, the glass seems half full. First Amendment awareness and understanding among high school students appears to be increasing. High school journalism is plentiful (though mostly not on line), shows a survey by Mark Goodman, the Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism. And the American Society of News Editors-led Sunshine Week seems to have helped rally many groups to help people understand why Freedom of Information laws are important.

After 9-11, FOI laws were rolled back. That trend now seems to have slowed, and in some states, stopped and reversed itself. But at the national level, many argue, the current administration is less transparent than its predecessors. It may be that the seemingly unstoppable military-digital-industrial complex is the hidden source of this increased secrecy. An "FOI audit" technique I developed in California seems to confirm this. (The "audit" consists of using the freedom of information laws to, in essence, require the government to report its own performance under those laws.) The first Knight Open Government Survey showed few federal agencies following the president's open government order, signed on his first day in office; even after a stern letter from the White House chief of staff told agencies to shape up, a second survey showed progress was still slow.

Topics like greater public awareness of freedom and the success of high school journalism might seem high-minded. But caring about them is not an academic exercise. Our work makes a difference — exactly how much of one is difficult to say. Changing the future is a tricky business. Media ecosystems are just as hard to unravel as any other kind. We can't go back in time and see what happens if we don't make our grants, so we make our best efforts to measure and predict.

Such projects as Knight's high school initiative had enough value to draw strong partners, including the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. Others, such as the News Literacy Project, drew local funding, and some found sustaining funds from colleges and schools, such as Prime Movers in Philadelphia.

We helped several groups raise endowments, including Student Press Law Center, which fights for student journalists; the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which defends all American journalists and the Committee to Protect Journalists, a champion of journalists worldwide. We joined with the Poynter Institute to create News University, now with 250,000 registered users. NewsU.org is such an effective educational model, Poynter made it central to the organization. The Newseum, the world's only major museum of news, donated games to NewsU that teach the importance of news and the First Amendment to thousands of students every year. Sunshine Week has provided open government news stories read by millions of Americans.

These groups publish lengthy lists of accomplishments. They free news organizations, improve journalism, keep people out of jail and save lives. But the overall trends they seek to shift — excellence in journalism and journalism education, public awareness of the importance of journalism and open government — are moving targets, often pushed

by much larger forces than foundation grants. Efforts to increase diversity in commercial news organizations, for example, smashed into what may be a permanent economic brick wall. As the book News in a New America explains, when traditional news organizations grew and made money, they increased diversity. Today, as the organizations shrink, so does newsroom diversity (which may then push the community away and increase the rate of the news organization's shrinkage). Newsroom training is in a similar position, shrinking with the news outlets.

Despite the uncertainties, we keep trying. We plan to continue the First Amendment research with our collaborator, Dr. Kenneth Dautrich, a senior researcher at The Pert Group and professor at the University of Connecticut. Dautrich, who has worked with us since the start, co-authored a 2008 book, "The Future of the First Amendment," about the first two surveys. I continue to wonder about out-of-classroom alternatives. Are social networks and games legitimate alternatives to traditional classroom work? In the 21st century, it seems harder to improve classroom teaching than it is to create a popular game or YouTube video. This, too, is a rich area to explore. We've done some early work on educational games, technology for innovation and digital media literacy, partly in connection with strengthening libraries in Knight Communities.

The Knight Commission for the Information Needs of Communities has recommended that digital media literacy be incorporated at every grade level. (Digital media literacy certainly includes First Amendment education, along with civic, news, media and digital literacies.) Our grantees have called for universal digital literacy at standard-setting groups, teacher colleges and testing institutions. Including the First Amendment under the umbrella of digital media literacy can offer another pathway for educators. In recent years, we have experimented with news literacy at Stony Brook in New York and digital media literacy at Queens University in Charlotte. Perhaps these projects will

demonstrate the democratic, educational and economic benefits of 21st century literacy.

A good portion of Knight Foundation's work involves starting new things. This isn't usually how people think about government or foundation funding. Many do good work by doing what we would call charity: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day." Foundations call their work philanthropy: "Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." And a few foundations do what you might call venture philanthropy: "Find a better way to fish, help people teach that, and see if you can end hunger." These are different approaches: charity focuses on present-day needs; philanthropy, on opportunities to change the future. It's riskier, to be sure. But when it works, the rewards are plentiful.

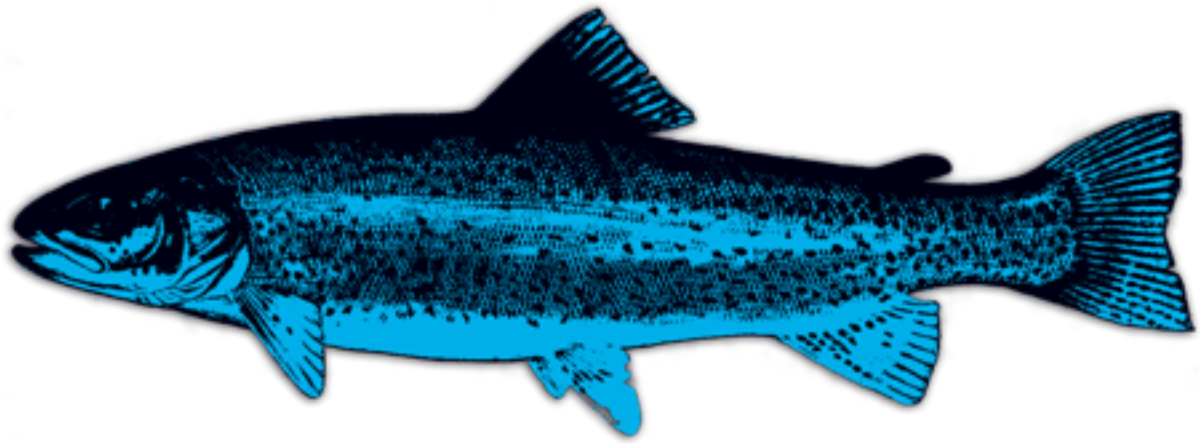
When you look at venture capital successes in starting digital media businesses, venture philanthropy doesn't seem all that bold. Just think of how digital media has changed since the first Future of the First Amendment survey: Facebook, if it were a nation, would be the third largest in the world. Then Twitter came along, and people across this planet, it seems, tweet more than all the birds. The younger generation, the digital natives of this social, mobile media world, seem to have a greater appreciation for the freedoms that make it all possible — much greater than the high school students who came before. To me, it's a hopeful sign that these new digital tools can amplify the best in us.

The original version of this post appeared in the Knight blog.

How the Challenge Fund for Journalism helped nonprofits weather the recession

I've written about how during the past decade, journalism funders have been finding more and better ways to work together. During the past seven years, for example, we teamed with others to help journalism nonprofits develop better business practices through a project called the Challenge Fund for Journalism.

A recent study of the Fund showed how it helped 53 journalism nonprofits, both professional organizations and media outlets. The fund's partners were Ford, which created the project, as well as Knight, McCormick, and Ethics and Excellence in Journalism. The management consulting firm TCC Group coordinated.



Some organizations, usually the smallest, got fundraising and administrative training only. Others got training as well as a grant that they could collect only if they could raise twice as much funding by themselves. That's like giving away a fish if someone can catch at least two more on their own. Hence, the name of the report, "Learning To Fish." As noted before, the largest amount of philanthropic money given away each year in the U.S. comes not from foundations, but from individuals. The challenge fund helped nonprofit journalism groups learn to fish where most of the fish really live.

The foundations put in $3.6 million, and the grantees found nearly $9.5 million in matches. Nine in 10 made their matching goal. In addition, 85 percent said they experienced positive organizational change as a result of the project. The groups that did the best realized that "business as usual" was no longer an option. They appealed to individual donors and broadened their foundation requests to include grant-makers who care about the issues journalists cover, such as civil society or public health. They built new firewalls so certain types of no-strings corporate grants would be allowable.

The International Center for Journalists, for example, doubled revenue from planned gifts and bequests between 2009 and 2012. The Center for Public Integrityramped up efforts and revenues from individual donors. Investigative Reporters and Editors diversified its revenue streams.

Obviously, the better a group is at delivering the goods, the better its fundraising position. TCC's coaching, peer meetings and other efforts helped the organizations during a time of "drastic upheaval," as Ford's Calvin Sims put it, that caused regular sources to dry up. Said Andy Hall, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism: "The greatest value of the initiative was that it enabled us to try out new strategies for growth, which ultimately helped change our business model."

The center added board members who knew how to raise money. It expanded its corporate sponsorships, and introduced new fundraising events.

Too often we take for granted the important role nonprofits play in training and professionalism, or, as Bob Ross of Ethics and Excellence puts it, "maintaining a vibrant journalism sector." That's why Clark Bell of the McCormick Foundation is right when he says that, these days, even "healthy organizations have to be willing to revisit and overhaul their business models."

UPDATE:

After this post appeared in Knight blog, journalism funders began discussing a follow-up project, a Challenge Fund for Journalism Education, that would offer micro-grants to universities that develop "teaching hospital" experiments.

Clearer writing means wiser grant making

Clarity matters. That seems obvious. Yet in our nation's capital, when the Sunlight Foundation released a 2012 study measuring how well lawmakers communicate, we learned that even clarity can be controversial.

Sunlight found that members of Congress have made a big leap these past seven years in their ability to talk clearly. You would think all would jump for joy. We want open government. Clear talk is more accessible than jargon. But no. Sunlight's news release — and most of the news coverage — took a different tack. They asked: "Is Congress getting

dumber or just more plainspoken?"

That's just wrong, and it brings into focus a big issue for foundations.

Too often, we fall into the trap of thinking complex communication equals intelligence. Fancy words mean you're smart; simple words mean you're dumb. Because my foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, was founded by two of America's leading newspapermen, we think about this topic a lot. We believe you have to be smart to convey difficult subjects with clarity. If you can do it, your work will be more effective.

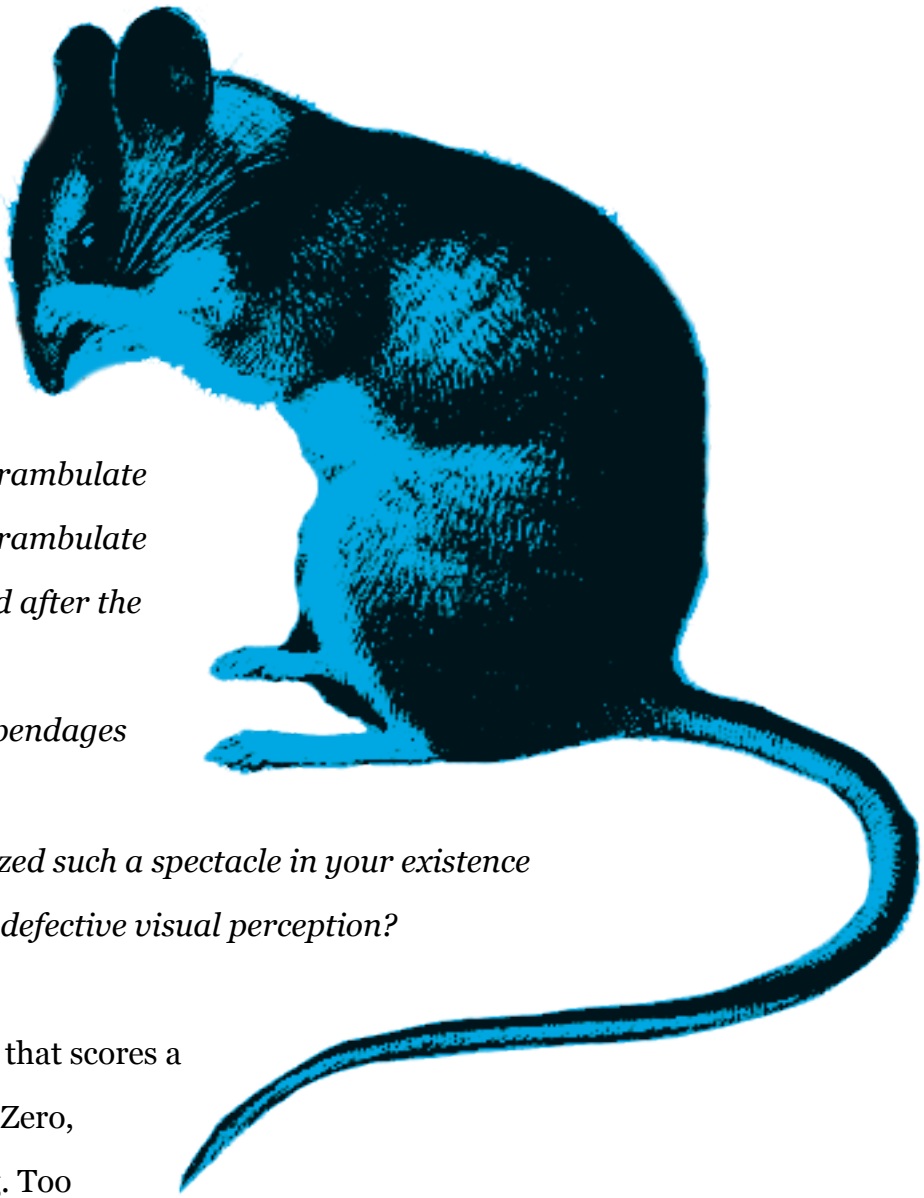
To measure Congress, Sunlight used something called the Flesch score. Rudolf Flesch, author of Why Johnny Can't Read — And What You Can Do About It, created this measure of readability. The higher your Flesh score, the clearer your writing. The clearer you are, the more people you reach.

Let's test the Flesch score of a classic children's song:

Three blind mice
Three blind mice
See how they run
See how they run
They all ran after the farmer's wife
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife
Have you ever seen such a sight in your life
As three blind mice?

Run a spell check in Microsoft Word, and if your settings are right, a Flesch score will pop up. Without line breaks, “Three Blind Mice” scores a nifty Flesch of 70. No wonder everyone understands it.

Yet too many writers at too many foundations would feel compelled to change this simple song by layering on foundation-speak. It would go more like this:



Three rodents with
defective visual
perception
Three rodents with
defective visual
perception
Visualize how they perambulate
Visualize how they perambulate
They all perambulated after the
agricultural spouse
Who severed their appendages
with a kitchen utensil
Have you ever visualized such a spectacle in your existence
As three rodents with defective visual perception?

On a scale of 0 to 100, that scores a Flesch 0. Unlike Coke Zero, Flesch 0 is a bad thing. Too often, this is how we in philanthropy talk and write. We litter our prose with jargon. Our message becomes vague. Truly, how can we expect to help people if they can't understand us?

At the Knight Foundation, our mission is to advance "informed and engaged communities." That can't happen without clarity. So we use the Flesch score. We try to keep our internal documents at a Flesch 30 or higher; our press releases, Flesch 40; our speeches, Flesch 50. Since any readability test is only a rough measure, we don't sweat

decimal points. Numbers rounded off are fine.

Knight is certainly not the only foundation that believes you must speak to a society to help improve it. Michael Bailin, president of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, wrote: "The real threat of unclear language is its power to extinguish thoughtful public discourse."

Indeed. How can we expect a community to act on a study if only a few Ph.D.s can understand it?

Clarity strengthens discourse

Even worse, noted Tony Proscio, author of "Bad Words for Good," is what folks do when they don't understand: "People who can't puzzle out your real meaning will soon draw their own inferences about it." That's right. We remember in narratives. If a story has a hole, we fill in the missing piece, using our imaginations when we don't have any facts.

After a dozen years of grant making, I've learned, sometimes the hard way, that clarity does matter. When the writing is clear, we understand each other. Paperwork moves faster. Questions are fewer and smarter. Discussion is richer. The money we give away achieves more. People know what they are trying to do and why. Clear writing allows all parties to get on the same page and move in the same direction. Think about a grant as a common dream of a better future. Clear writing helps us dream together.

It can be fun. At Knight Foundation, we run seminars like "Writing Tips and Tricks." Mary Ann Hogan sometimes helps us out as a writing coach. Not long ago we gathered at lunchtime to play "Jargon Jeopardy," a version of the game show that rewarded clarity. During the game, the tired foundation word "stakeholder" came up. The host

(me) joked that the only stakeholder who lived up to the title was Buffy the Vampire Slayer. She not only held stakes but plunged them into the hearts of the undead. I wish I could do that to some of the news releases foundations put out.

Federal agencies have been urged to keep their writing simple. Under the new Plain Writing Act, officials must communicate more clearly with the public — use the active voice, avoid double negatives, favor personal pronouns, and run the other way if someone says "incentivizing."

The nonprofit Center for Plain Language, founded for federal workers, gives awards for the best and worst of government-speak, including a "turnaround" prize for the most improved agency.

The average American communicates at about an 8th-grade level. That does not mean America is in the 8th grade. It means only that we prefer a level of clarity that can be understood by everyone all the way down to the 8th grade. Congress is now talking at a grade level that reaches down to the 10th grade; it used to be the 11th. So its members got a little clearer — to answer Sunlight's question, they became more "plainspoken." They may or may not be dumber. That's an entirely different question.

If you ask me, Congress is still not clear enough. There's still a lot of "Three Rodents with Defective Visual Perception" going on in Washington. (That version of the song, by the way, scores at Grade 28. It's pretty easy to hide what you're really doing if no one can understand you.)

Of course, clarity doesn't equal truth. But it helps. Though Sunlight was wrong to equate simple words with simplemindedness, it still did two good things:

First, it raised the issue. Second, it called attention to a useful new website: capitolwords.org. The site is a gift of the digital age. You can type in a word and see who said it in Congress, when, and why. You can see which words members most used each day, track their usage over time, and see which words your congressperson used most. You can even type in "clarity" to see what kind of debate Sunlight created with its study.

The holy book of clear writers, The Elements of Style, offers this wisdom: "Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell."

What is the penalty, in foundation work, for writing that does not make every word tell? We waste money that isn't ours to waste.

I remember years ago looking at a report from a longtime grantee. The project was to get young people into a certain career. After a decade, and much expense, not one young person who had gone through the program had gotten into that profession. I looked carefully at the reports and at our grant documents. The grantee's work fell within the language of the grant. But the grant never set a clear goal. Talk about "defective visual perception."

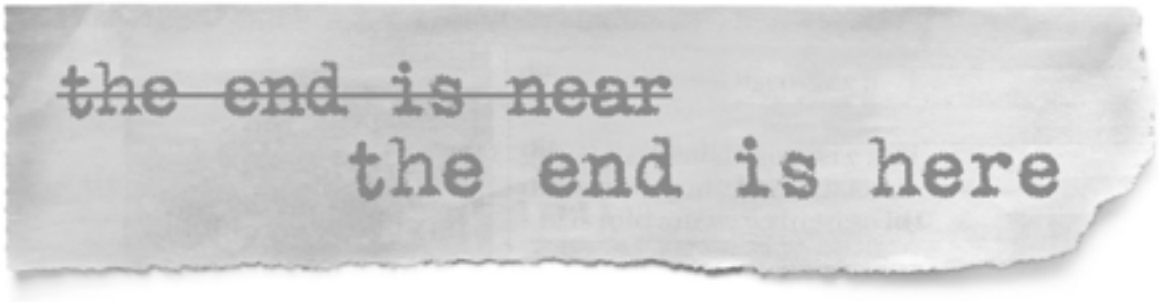
If I could wave a magic wand: Grantees would help edit foundation paperwork about their projects. Grant write-ups (our internal summaries) would be so clear they could be

news releases. Grantee reports would be so honest you could put them right online. Grantees would blog their benchmarks. The foundation would speak clearly and candidly not only about what it has done, but about what it's thinking of doing and why.

How do you make these changes? One word at a time. So, when you next look down at the sentence in a grant write-up that says, "The primary stakeholder will operationalize the leverage so they can scale their sustainability infrastructure," don't panic. Just please change it to "They will hire a fundraiser."

UPDATE:

After this piece (Flesch score 68) was published by the Chronicle of Philanthropy, Knight Foundation gave a grant for Project Madison, a tool to help the public write legislation.



Acknowledgements

I'm grateful for the digital age itself, because it bounced me from editing newspapers (journalism's present) to creating a news museum (journalism's past) to working with Knight Foundation's extraordinary group of people to fund media innovation (journalism's future.)

Everyone at the Foundation helps with the work. There's no way to thank one without thanking them all. But don't just take my word for it…

At the Plaza ballroom in New York City in the summer of 2012, Knight Foundation won the Syracuse University i-3 award. It stands for "influence, impact and innovation" and goes to an organization or individual who has captured the public's imagination about what media can do. CNN and YouTube won for bringing video to presidential debates; Blue State Digital for changing political campaigns, and Foursquare for linking cyberspace to physical space.

ABC TV host, anchor and political journalist George Stephanopoulos presented the award. Here's what he said: "This year, for the first time, a foundation has won the i-3 award — the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation of Miami, Florida — for redefining the role philanthropy can play in media innovation.

'… No journalism grant-maker today has the influence of Knight. When I host 'This Week' from Washington, I do it from the Knight Studio at the Newseum. When I recognize courageous global journalists at the International Center for Journalists, there's Knight again, as that organization's largest, longest funder. Knight brings its digital edge to many different programs — it has a network of endowed journalism chairs and training programs, reaching thousands of students and professionals, and the best-known e-learning … Knight funded Sunshine Week to fight for freedom of information. Knight's report on the Information Needs of Communities sparked the FCC's interest in that issue.

"Knight Foundation stands for informed and engaged communities. Its impact in

communities provides better access to broadband, improved digital and media literacy, new tools to engage people in civic affairs and even new ways to start nonprofit news organizations. Its Knight Community Information Challenge has brought hundreds of community foundations into news and information grant-making. The Carnegie Knight Initiative for the Future of Journalism education has helped leading journalism schools change the way they teach in the digital age.

“Early on, the Knight Foundation created a contest to spur media innovation, the Knight News Challenge, which has produced tools and techniques now used by hundreds of newsrooms and thousands of journalists. The news challenge showed that anyone, from 20-something computer programmers to the staff of the Associated Press, can and should try to shape the future of news. At a time when many devalue journalism, Knight’s open "R&D" helps both the profit and nonprofit sectors come face to face with journalism’s future.”

That’s quite a tribute. I don’t see how it would have been possible without the foundation’s hard-working staff and forward-thinking trustees.

Special thanks to our president, Alberto Ibargüen, the skeptical optimist who challenges and encourages our work, and our vice president for journalism and media innovation, Michael Maness, who pushed me to write further into the future of news. Thanks to former vice president Paula Lynn Ellis, who helped the foundation reform itself, and Knight program associate Marie Gilot, whose edits came at lightning speed, right on deadline, as well as Michele McLellan and Maria Mann, journalists and friends who read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions.

Mary Ann Hogan, my writing coach and spouse, helped me tune and tone. Interns Romina Herrera and Katrina Bruno of Florida International University researched, wrote and edited, as did program assistant Luis Linares and administrative assistant Lauren Rothstein, who compiled "books to read." Creative director Eric Cade Schoenborn and designer Chris Rosenthal are responsible for everything that looks good about the project's responsively designed HTML 5 website. Michael Bolden, Marika Lynch and Elizabeth Miller from our communications team made my Knight Blog posts, the press materials and this book coherent, as did our contract copy editor Connie Ogle. Andrew Sherry, vice president of communications, pushed the project from day one.

Midway through the project, the University of Missouri's Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute offered me a fellowship to help develop the book's "learning layer," which we hope will help teachers who care about the digital transformation of journalism education bring these ideas into the classroom. Thanks to Dean Mills, dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, home to the oldest and largest "teaching hospital" model of journalism education, for the opportunity. Thanks also to Reynolds executive director Randy Picht and Roger Gafke, professor emeritus and director of program development, who coordinated the Institute's contribution.

Reynolds selected a helpful team of graduate students, researchers and educators to produce the classroom activities and suggested assignments, readings and research. They are: Mark Goodman, Professor and Knight Chair in Scholastic Journalism at Kent State University; Cathy Collins of Massachusetts, a certified library/media teacher and journalism educator; Ruben Valadez, journalism/photojournalism teacher at Eagle Pass High School in Southwest Texas; Judd Slivka, consultant and former director of information services at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources; Mimi Wiggins Perreault, doctoral student and Huggins Fellow in the University of Missouri School of

Journalism; Greg Perreault, journalist and Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Missouri; Adam Maksl, assistant professor of journalism at Indiana University Southeast. Their full bios appear on theReynolds Institute web site.

Their contributions were too many to detail. As the primary author and editor, however, the responsibility for any errors or omissions is mine.

About the author

Eric Newton, senior adviser to the president at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, joined the foundation in 2001. As journalism program director and then vice president for journalism and media innovation, he oversaw the development of more than $300 million in grants and helped build the department from a one-person operation into a team of seven.

Before joining Knight, Newton was founding managing editor of the Newseum, the world's first museum of news. He started at California newspapers. As managing editor of theOakland Tribune under Bob and Nancy Maynard, he helped the paper win 150 awards, including a Pulitzer Prize, and co-founded the First Amendment Project, a nonprofit law project.

His best-known books are Crusaders, Scoundrels, Journalists and The Pulitzer Prize Photographs: Capture the Moment, the latter still touring after a decade as a traveling exhibit. Named a distinguished alumnus of San Francisco State University, where he

earned a BA in journalism, he became a Rotary International Scholar at the University of Birmingham, England, where he was awarded an MA in international studies. He has taught journalism at all levels.

Newton shared a Peabody Award for Link TV's "Mosaic: World News from the Middle East," which ran from 2001 to 2012. He won the Reddick Award at the University of Texas for service to the field of communications, the RTDNA First Amendment Award for Sunshine Week and the Markoff Award at the University of California, Berkeley for support of investigative reporting.