

Nieman



The Offending Art

Political cartooning after Charlie Hebdo

MEYART

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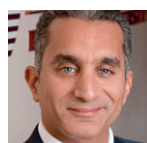
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The murder of cartoonists for the Paris-based Charlie Hebdo ignited a debate on freedom of speech

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Parsing the Equivalency Debate

Is it possible to place stories on some universal scale of import and assign coverage and empathy accordingly?

THE FACEBOOK POSTING WAS STRIKING, coming from a friend who writes powerfully about race and was now arguing against the University of Oklahoma's expulsion of fraternity members for their racist chants. "Educational institutions ought to educate—or try to," he wrote. "This was a teachable moment and should have been used to teach."

Others weighed in, until one poster effectively shut down the debate. "Instead of dialing up the umbrage meter for a bunch of drunk and stupid college students ... I wish people would get outraged—and do something about—things like this." She linked to the tragic story of a teenage mother's search for justice following rape accusations. The discussion fell silent.

Is it possible to place stories on a universal scale of impact, import, or horror and assign coverage and empathy accordingly? These equivalency debates are the natural extension of trying to hold two or more events in balance, a primitive definition of what news editors do. When their work is good, there is a complex weave of decisions hidden beneath the surface of a news report.

Why did two news stories need to compete, rather than stand on their own individual merits?



Protesters in Paris adapt a Charlie Hebdo slogan to highlight a January 7 Boko Haram massacre

But there is a pernicious quality to those equivalency arguments that suggest malevolent intent on the part of journalists and overlook more complex realities about newsgathering. As reporting resources contract and social media empower us all as arbiters, debates over where journalism aims its floodlights have grown more pitched.

These questions took on an urgent quality following the Charlie Hebdo killings in Paris. Heavy coverage by Western media soon found critics: Why did that story—with 17 victims and three gunmen dead—receive more attention than Boko Haram's murderous attack in Baga, Nigeria, with claims, according to the BBC, of between 150 and 2,000 dead? Some critics sought a discussion about the inherent differences in the stories. Others practiced ridicule, as evidenced by this tweet from a journalism professor: "US media on Baga: Hey, we just did Ebola. Isn't there someone else to call?"

The equivalency battles rang hollow to me, with more emphasis on body count estimates than the larger news significance of either development. And why did the stories need to compete, rather than stand on their individual merits? I wanted to check my reflexes so I contacted the man whose Facebook account hosted the short-lived discussion about hate speech in Oklahoma: Don Wycliff, a wise journalist and critic who served as public editor of the Chicago Tribune, head of that paper's editorial board, and writer for The New York Times editorial pages.

He said the discussion had troubled him, too, then parsed the criticism: The logistical differences of traveling to the stories that made for "huge differences in speed and

depth of coverage." The danger to reporters who enter the perimeters of Boko Haram's power. The difference between a terrorist eruption and a civil war. How we report on a "principle"—freedom of expression—under murderous attack as opposed to ongoing coverage of "an appalling, mind-boggling disregard for the sanctity of human life." The implied threat that the terror in Paris could be replicated in the U.S.

But what particularly troubled Wycliff about the equivalency criticism were two things the critics implied but did not state.

The first: That black lives are not valued in newsrooms the same as white lives. "There may be cases where this is true or where the facts suggest it, but Charlie Hebdo/Boko Haram was not one," Wycliff wrote me. "If black lives were undervalued in the Boko Haram case, it was the Nigerian government that did the undervaluing."

The second: The media is responsible for shining a light on Boko Haram sufficient to cause the world to intercede. "I think the critics vastly overstate the ability of the media to galvanize 'the world,'" Wycliff wrote.

Reading Wycliff's closing thought, I reflected on our last issue of Nieman Reports documenting the perilous conditions in which so many foreign correspondents work and the anemic support for their labor.

"That doesn't relieve the media of the duty to report, to keep trying to make the relevant interesting," he wrote, "but it does argue for some sobriety about what can be accomplished." ■



Ann Marie Lipinski
Ann Marie Lipinski

HASAN CEMAL, 2015 RECIPIENT OF THE LYONS AWARD

TURKISH JOURNALIST HASAN Cemal is this year's recipient of the Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. The Nieman class of 2015 honored him in recognition of his long career dedicated to championing freedom of the press in Turkey and as a representative of all Turkish journalists working today under increasingly difficult conditions. A journalist for the past 46 years, Cemal in 2013 parted ways with the newspaper Milliyet after it refused to publish a column he wrote. A co-founder and president of Punt024 (P24), a nonprofit initiative aimed at promoting editorial independence in Turkey, Cemal now writes a column for the Turkish news website T24. Edited excerpts from his speech at the Nieman Foundation on March 12:

I COME FROM A COUNTRY where a journalist was arrested and her mobile phone and computer seized because of a single tweet; a country where, for that single tweet, she faces five years in prison.

I come from a country where a prime minister has declared social media to be a social menace, Twitter and YouTube were banned by government fiat, and all a prime minister has to do is pick up the phone for a news item

to be spiked, or a journalist fired. This is a land where the prime minister can even decide who will or will not appear on a talk show.

Allow me the luxury of quoting from myself [on the state of journalism in Turkey]: “Editors and leading columnists fail to defend journalism against those in power because they are unable to protect journalism from their bosses. The profession is divided and weak. In order for the relationship between media and government to acquire public legitimacy, in order for the relationship between journalism and owners to obey ground rules built on respect, it goes without saying that journalists themselves must recover their own sense of integrity. We cannot sit back as if our hands were tied. Our inaction marks the death knell of democracy and an end to the rule of law.”

The column was never published in the newspaper where I had worked for 15 years. It was enough to get me fired. But, of course, I had it published on the same day, at the online newspaper T24, where I have been writing for the last two years.

Let me tell you a few [more] things about the country

where I come from. I come from a country where the prime minister has ensured that the profits from the large government tenders he controls are used to create media empires under his influence; where he has the final say on the appointment of editors in chief and columnists, and on basic editorial issues. Not surprisingly, this has resulted in a one-sided media totally under his control.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan—prime minister for over a decade and, since August, the Turkish president—is moving Turkey toward what he calls a presidential system but which is tantamount to one-man rule. He has no respect for the rule of law. He has no concern for the independence of the judiciary. He does not recognize the separation of powers. He has not learned that getting the most votes is not a license to violate democratic values, nor to force the surrender of the judiciary, nor to ignore the separation of powers, to trample on freedom of expression, to destroy free and independent media, nor to subjugate civil society. If he hasn't learned this by now, chances are he never will.

He is a man who could have led Turkey into the family of democracies, but who is now leading it back to the wilderness. We are moving from a system of “military bureaucratic tutelage” to a system of “civilian despotism.”

In Turkey I am known for having coined the expression “Gazeteci Milleti” or the “Journalist Nation.” The main qualification for citizenship of this nation is the ability to ask questions. Questioning is a way of life for us. And for this reason we are not particularly popular. And those who require not just 99 percent but 100

percent submission don't really like the “Journalist Nation.”

For example, in Turkey, President Erdogan refuses to meet with journalists who may ask him any uncomfortable questions. It has been years since he held a real press conference. He can only be in the presence of journalists whom he knows will play by his rules. If, by chance, someone finds the opportunity to rear their head and ask a real question, they will find themselves on the receiving end of a severe dressing-down.

But journalists will continue to ask questions. No dictator can divest journalists of this democratic right. Yes, we must continue moving forward. What journalists do that makes us different is that we are the voice of those who have no voice. We cry out where others cannot. And we make the whole world hear the cry that would otherwise remain lodged in the people's throat.

What I am describing is not just true of underdeveloped countries. As a profession, we must find ways to make ourselves heard—to shout with an ever-firmer voice.

When I got fired, I did what any member of the Journalist Nation would do. I started all over again. In my case it was T24, one of Turkey's new and brave online newspapers. A few days after I was told to put down my pen, I walked up a mountain on the Turkish-Iraqi border with retreating Kurdish guerrillas. I went into the field to report and to write.

And when I got home, I began devoting time to founding an organization called P24, a civil society organization that encourages editorial independence and quality journalism. How do we do that? The first step is not to give up. That, too, is not always easy. ■



Turkish journalist Hasan Cemal says he won't stop asking questions

Obsession Interlude

Quartz publisher Jay Lauf on branding, messaging apps, and why the homepage isn't dead

JAY LAUF FOUND A WAY AROUND trouble early in his career. He wanted to be a journalist but when he couldn't find a job he took a position selling ads for a trade magazine publisher. In 2001, as the dot-com bubble burst, he was hired as advertising director for *Wired* magazine, improved its finances, and was named publisher in 2006. Two years later he moved to *The Atlantic* as vice president and publisher. He helped usher the magazine into the digital age and was instrumental in the company's launch of the online business publication *Quartz* three years ago. As publisher of *Quartz*, he is overseeing a global expansion. Lauf spoke at the Nieman Foundation in February. Edited excerpts:

On going short or long

We tend to focus on stories that are either short, meaning under 500 words, or longer, deeply investigated pieces. We use analytics as guideposts. Everything from the original interface of the site to the way we do our journalism is informed by data, but I think there's as much art to it as there is science.

If you take a look at your top 100 stories in a given year, you can start to glean what works and what doesn't. There are always exceptions to this rule. But what tends to work in the social ecosystem in terms of gaining traffic and gaining eyeballs is one of those two things, rather short or rather long stories. Either be succinct—usually that involves some infographics—or say the most definitive thing on a subject, make a must-read. Those are the things that people tend to share most or come back and read most.

What I see is if you submit a 600-word piece, not every time but a good chunk of the time, the editor's going to say, "Does

this really need to be that long?" If there's a "there" there, it might be "Why don't you take five more days or two more weeks and do more reporting and actually say something bigger? I think there's a bigger point to be made here."

We try to entertain and inform at the same time with charts. A chart can stand on its own on *Quartz* just like a cute picture of a cat might. In the same way that a cute cat video may be the hottest thing on *BuzzFeed*, *Quartz* content that has charts tends to be some of the highest-ranking articles in terms of traffic.

On hosting events

Events are a huge piece of *The Atlantic*, both in terms of revenue and brand stature. I love the fact that they give you a textural three-dimensional way to connect with the audience that I think ties them more closely to the brand. It's an integral part of the business strategy for us. It's always a slower go to build those than advertising, which is just transacted at a much more rapid pace.

On the Daily Brief e-mail newsletter

It comes out first thing in the morning in three broad time zones: Asia, Europe, and in the U.S. It's one of our stellar products in terms of building a brand affinity. It has always had a better than 43 percent open rate, which is unheard of for e-mail newsletters. It's grown organically so I think that helps with the open rate.

We do sell it out almost every day to a sponsor of one kind or another. In and of itself, it's a very worthwhile venture, both commercially but also to proactively give readers a regular touch point with our brand.

On the importance of voice

How do we produce content that's different from other websites? I think it's voice-fulness. I think it's not trying to cover everything, but we're saying let's cover the stuff that our readers are obsessed about. I think we've done a good job of establishing a voice and intelligence and keeping a focus on things that are important.

There are strategies that we're tinkering with. One is the idea of *Quartz* being a global brand from the get-go and to speak in a post-national voice. I think we still speak with a pretty heavy American accent and I think we want to shed that over time. We do that by getting journalists who either have experience in, or are on the ground in, these different locales.

India is this first regional bet to try to customize a little bit. I don't think our objective is to have a bunch of Balkanized international editions of *Quartz*. But India was big enough, complex enough, and distinct enough that we felt like here's a place where we should try to cover it a little bit from the inside out. What we've done there is put Indian journalists on the ground in India so that our coverage does get into the subtleties. If you are either a British-based or anywhere but India-based journalist and you're covering [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi in the election, you might over-explain, in some ways, elements of who he is or the dynamics. Whereas if you're the Indian journalist, you might skip two paragraphs of set-up. I think it's helped us to be more knowing in that sense. It's an experiment. In January we eclipsed the million reader mark in India, so something's going right there.

On advertising

All these advertisers are shifting their dollars increasingly to the Internet. Where's

Our own editors are an obsessive bunch. They tend to have generalist abilities but a handful of things that they obsess about



Publisher Jay Lauf, with Melissa Bailey, NF '15, says Quartz wants to shed its American accent

that money coming from? It's coming out of print in a big way. It's coming out of TV a little bit, although TV seems to always have some stability.

I think a lot of companies want to do branding on the Internet. The advantage for Quartz is we're giving them a place where they feel comfortable doing it. In order to do branding well, I think they need a couple of things. They need a clean canvas to paint on. That has not existed on the Web for a long time. It's an ugly cacophony.

What we try to steer every advertiser toward is, don't just do a flat billboard that doesn't ask you to do anything. Create interactions. Use the interactive infographics that are catnip on our website in your advertising. Create sharing mechanisms. Then what we'll do is, if you had a video embedded in your ad, we'll tell you how many people watched the video and what the video completion rates were. Did they watch three seconds and punt or did they watch this whole three-minute video? Did they share it? If it's an interactive infographic, how many people clicked on it how many times? Those are all proxies for how engaged people are.

On obsessions vs. beats

Some obsessions are not necessarily intuitive, like The Next Billion [Internet users] or the Internet of Everything.

I think where obsessions get very distinct and very powerful and differentiate us are in those more micro-obsessions. Alchemy is the word I use in that instance, because it is actually a little bit of data and a lot of editorial intuition. Our own editors are an obsessive bunch themselves. They tend to have gener-

alist abilities but a handful of things that they themselves obsess about. It's why you come up with a product like ChartBuilder. That was the product of one journalist who was obsessed with the fact that he couldn't get charts built quickly and he just went deep on that and he coded it.

But then there is also looking at, "OK, what is our target audience obsessed with right now or going to be obsessed with?" Bitcoin was probably a combination of those two things when we obsessed about that. Abenomics was nobody's obsession, probably, on our staff, but we felt like a slice of our audience is going to be really, really obsessed with that, and that's something that's important to cover.

On hiring

What we hire for—and this seems obvious—is a natural curiosity. You don't want somebody who just has experience and is only relying on that. You want somebody who's constantly curious about the way the world is changing. Even the journalists who joined us in 2012, the world has shifted drastically on them, so that you better be curious, number one.

Number two, we do put a premium on quality. That can take a variety of forms. What their resume looks like and where they work, the work that they're putting out. But quality is really important, particularly, again, on the social Web where quality comes in a lot of different shapes and sizes.

I don't know that we overtly look for this, but we tend to attract—and actually this will make somebody jump up the list of

priority—journalists who have some coding experience or are actually tech savvy in an engineering sense. That ChartBuilder product was built out of that.

On messaging apps

I think people think WhatsApp is often just for kids or the general public, but it's not. In the same way, Twitter or Facebook was this funny little thing and then it was not. Messaging apps are becoming ubiquitous. There are big, big audiences to tap into.

We are tinkerers and experimenters so when you see something capturing that much of an audience, you're going to want to experiment and tinker with it. Notifications and messaging seem to be a way that more and more people are getting information. That might be an area that you could see something from us.

I think a lot of publishers are making the mistake of trying to put all their eggs into the Facebook basket, and that feels a little dangerous to me.

On the homepage

Our homepage traffic has grown since we've launched, both in terms of percentage and overall traffic. "The homepage is dead," we have said, but the truth is, even if 11 percent of our audience, up from 8 percent of our audience, is on the homepage, that's something like one million or so people who are going to the homepage on a regular basis.

How do you treat them? Give them a reason and a reward for coming back. Maybe the Daily Brief e-mail newsletter is a way to create a homepage for Quartz that's rewarding as a homepage. It will be interesting to see how this maps over time. We might be wrong on this, but the conventional wisdom would be that we want visitors to the homepage to quickly get deeper into Quartz, right? Our supposition right now is that our visitors want to be informed, and if we're a news source, and if the homepage is a place where—after you're stuck in this meeting with me for an hour—you want to quickly see what's going on with the global economy, we can reliably give it to you there. Maybe the preference actually is "no, take me deeper." We're in the middle of that experiment right now. ■

Make It New

A partnership created by Esquire's Tyler Cabot, NF '14, and Northeastern University empowers j-school students to tell old stories in new ways

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING—THE scrolls of maps marked with every police station, hospital, and border patrol outpost; the long discussions about satellite phones and kidnapping insurance; the phone call with my writer, Luke Dittrich, about “The Judge,” a gun a desert wanderer tried to convince him to purchase for protection—“Walking the Border” was an unusual story. We spent months plotting the route and safety and evacuation plans—did you know there’s a missile and bomb testing ground on the Arizona border?—and then Luke set out from San Diego and walked east. He pushed all of his gear and water until his feet bled, and then bled some more. Then we created an 8,000-word narrative about his experience.

Five years later, the story has taken another strange turn. Students at Northeastern

Breathing new life into Esquire's archives might happen via a weekly podcast or a series of animated shorts

University's School of Journalism developed prototypes to turn it into a video game in which users can control a digital Luke as he rushes past drug smugglers and searches in the dark desert for a place to camp. Others created a crowdsourced version where those who live on the border can contribute their own stories and photos. Then there was the interactive map, where Luke's walk unfolded in discrete digital chunks, one for each leg of the journey.

These students were participating in StoryLab, an initiative I launched in late 2014 with Jeff Howe, NF '10, and Dina Kraft, NF '13, who run Northeastern University's Media Innovation Program. Our collaboration, which includes a future of narrative blog called Storybench, seemed fated: Jeff and Dina are building a curriculum that will teach a new generation of storytellers how to create impactful journalism using the bleeding-edge digital tools of today.

Meanwhile, at Esquire, where I direct our R+D efforts and edit features, I've been focused on finding new ways to both tell and sell stories.

This means experimenting with paywalls

and finding innovative ways to give classics from our 81-year print archive new life on phones and tablets. And it also means considering novel ways of presenting Esquire stories, whether in a weekly original podcast series or as a season of animated shorts. Or here, at Northeastern's Ryder Hall, on a brutally cold January night in Boston, it means working with and learning from the students in StoryLab.

There were just shy of 20 of them, mostly young women, nearly all with deep design and coding backgrounds. Their task over the course of the semester will be to reimagine, rethink, re-create a few Esquire stories for the digital world.

Hands are up, keyboards clicking. I'm telling them about the writing and the editing process, how we construct stories. “How much interaction will we have with your staff?” they want to know. They want our notes and photos and research. They want to be able to sit down with our writers and editors to discuss their stories and how they plan to reinvent them.

They will get all of this. In exchange, we just ask for a window into what the future of narrative journalism could look like. ■



Esquire editors and j-school students are reimagining Luke Dittrich's story about his border walk

Taking Back the Streets At Fusion, Jane Spencer, NF '13, brings together new media and a sense of public service

IN MEXICO CITY, WHERE STREET harassment is notoriously aggressive, degrading catcalls are hurled at women on buses, sidewalks, and in their daily commutes.

Last fall Fusion embarked on a project to document the routine ways women are assaulted in public. “All The Time. Every Day.’ Surviving Sexual Harassment in Mexico City” combined interactive journalism, public art, and social activism into a digital experience on our site.

One of our goals at Fusion is to offer new forms of commentary. We’re exploring opinion formats that involve interactive graphics, comics, spoken-word video pieces—and

in this case, an artwork. (Quick background: Fusion, a cable and digital network aimed at millennials, is a joint venture of Univision and Disney/ABC, and many of our stories focus on social justice issues.)

Our Mexico City project began in Brooklyn, as a collaboration between the artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh and Fusion editor Anna Holmes, founder of the women’s site Jezebel. In 2012, Tatyana plastered the streets of Brooklyn with portraits of women talking back at their harassers. The project featured drawings of her female subjects in confrontational poses with lines such as “My outfit is not an invitation,” and “My name is not baby.” Many were defaced or ripped down, creating a conversation in the streets.

Last fall, Anna commissioned Tatyana to take the same project to Mexico City and recreate it in Spanish in partnership with Fusion. The team interviewed dozens of women in Mexico—students, mothers, politicians, and a police officer—and Tatyana created a new set of portraits and posters featuring women confronting their harassers in Spanish. The posters were plastered all over Mexico City, sparking a city-wide dialogue.

Fusion documented Tatyana’s process, creating an interactive story that included



Artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, left, in Mexico City with project participant Yucari Millán

video, artwork, and text. The piece collapsed the boundaries between journalism and activism, and gave the project a digital life that expanded its reach beyond the streets of Mexico.

Ultimately, it highlighted a problem so ubiquitous in many cities around the world that it’s tacitly accepted.

“People have asked, ‘Was there one thing that happened that made you start this project?’” says Tatyana, the artist, “and there wasn’t. It’s the sheer fact that it happens all the time.” ■

GOING DEEP
2014 VISITING
FELLOW SAMAR
PADMAKER
HALARNKAR IS
BUILDING A
DATA-DRIVEN
SITE ABOUT
INDIA’S BIGGEST
CHALLENGES

OVER THE FIVE MONTHS that I have been editor of IndiaSpend, a data-driven website that focuses on public interest journalism, our social media following has increased by about 600 percent, albeit from a low base.

Our stories are carried by prominent newspapers and websites. We are a

nonprofit, and our mission is to focus public attention on complex but important issues—such as health, jobs, energy, agriculture, and industry—that have dropped off the radar of an economically stressed and sensationalism-prone mainstream media.

I have discovered that in a media landscape starved of perspective and depth, if you demonstrate intent, readers and writers will come. And so they do—freelance journalists, experts, and university professors are eager to write for IndiaSpend.

The depth of writing talent we now attract has allowed us to embark on our most difficult project yet. “Prime Time: India’s Grand Challenges” is a new section that explores

issues critical to the future of the world’s largest democracy, convulsed as it is by epochal change. In a nation of 1.2 billion people and about 20 officially recognized main languages, this may appear a doubtful endeavor. But the great force multiplier is India’s Wi-Fi subscriber base: more than 900 million. If we get our strategy right, our small size may be irrelevant to our outsized ambitions.

The “Grand Challenges” project is unabashedly ambitious. Three new initiatives should help us increase our reach. One, a launch in Hindi, the most widely spoken language; two, we will partner with grassroots media organizations that will help us with reporting while

we focus on big data; and, three, a “data room,” where readers can experience the data we use in the “Grand Challenges” stories.

Our diverse group of writers and the ability to get published in diverse media have placed us in a situation where the challenge is not ideas and stories but production resources. Right now, I and a colleague edit or rewrite everything that goes up—we release a story a day, six days a week. It isn’t easy. Our writers do not always write in English, money is always an issue (but we have enough for the next six months), and we are limited in our storytelling abilities (any volunteers?).

But, hey, this is a start-up. No one said it would be easy. ■

How virtual reality and other technologies are fostering immersive storytelling

BY OLIVIA KOSKI

Step into the Story

YOU'RE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF AN eerily empty two-lane road. Cookie-cutter apartment complexes surround you. Broad-leaved trees line the street. It looks like an average American suburb, but something's not right.

You look left, then right. Yellow police tape blocks off the street, and red and blue lights flash in the distance. You move forward a bit and notice the white outline of a body on the asphalt, sprawled with its left hand above its head. Glowing arrows beckon away from it. Following them, you end up at the passenger-side window of a police cruiser. You enter a flickering cylinder. It brightens, and a comic strip appears showing an illustration of a man wearing a baseball cap, looking down the road you just walked along.

This is a 3D rendering of Canfield Drive in Ferguson, Missouri, where Michael Brown was fatally shot by police officer Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014. Brown's friend, Dorian Johnson, who was with Brown when he died and is the man in the baseball cap featured in the illustration, is just one character you meet in this virtual world, created by graphic journalist Dan Archer with the help of photographs, satellite imagery, and video game software.

Archer, through a fellowship at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute and a partnership with Fusion, where "The Michael Brown Shooting Visualized: Eyewitness Accounts" was published last December, reconstructed eight eyewitness accounts for users to explore, guided by arrows that lead to the locations where each person observed the event. He notes that users spend on average over 10 minutes with his Ferguson piece, "practically unheard of in the ADD [attention deficit disorder] world of online news," he says. Those are promising stats at a time when media outlets are fiercely competing for users' attention. Immersive journalistic experiences like this one could become a way to keep audiences engaged while offering reporters innovative new ways to tell stories.

The goal of journalism has always been to be immersive, to bring audiences as close to unfolding events as possible. New Journalism icons like Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, and Gay Talese practiced their own form of low-tech immersive journalism by inserting themselves into their stories in imaginative ways. The qualities that lend virtual reality its "wow" factor are the same ones inherent in any well-crafted tale, fiction or non. Though



his digitally rendered version of Ferguson is far from seamless—the graphics are pixelated, and the mouse controls don't always work the way you want them to—Archer believes immersive storytelling is the best model for presenting “complexities, ambiguities and all-out contradictions inherent in larger, longer-running stories.” Someday, he hopes, this interactive model could give the old-fashioned feature a run for its money.

Immersive journalism is picking up now in part because the necessary technology has gotten better, cheaper, and more portable. The smartphone's ability to stream high-definition video as well as its increasing popularity—58% of Americans had one as of January 2014, according to Pew Research—have further accelerated adoption. Add to that the more widespread use of interactive data visualizations and advances in wearable computing and the stage may be set for a more robust adoption of virtual reality. “It's not just the media coming to you,” says Dan Pacheco, professor of journalism innovation at the Newhouse School at Syracuse University. “You move into the media.”

Immersive storytelling was on prominent display at the Tribeca Film Festival last spring in the form of “Use of Force” by former Newsweek correspondent Nonny de la Peña. When you strap on the headgear to experience the piece, the first thing you hear is crickets, then screaming. Two uniformed agents drag a man dressed in white to the ground and start kicking him. A dozen other officers stand quietly by as he screams. Other bystanders watch in horror. A man asks, “Why are you guys using excessive force?” A woman shouts, “He's not resisting! He's not resisting!”

This incident occurred in May of 2010 at the U.S.-Mexico border near San Diego. The death of Anastasio Hernandez-Rojas, the man in white, was ruled a homicide by the San Diego coroner's office. Border agents maintain force was necessary because Hernandez-Rojas, who had methamphetamine in his system, was combative. It is a very disturbing few minutes to relive. Though the computer-game feel of the graphics creates some cognitive distance between you and the action, you are confronted with the stark brutality of the beating in a way that feels more intimate than the documentary footage on which the virtual rendering is based. In the immersive version, you feel powerless to stop a violent act that feels like it's happening before your very eyes.

DE LA PEÑA ALSO PRESENTED an immersive piece at this year's Sundance Film Festival, “Project Syria.” It transports you to a lively intersection in Aleppo, Syria. You hear a girl sing in Arabic. Suddenly, a bomb explodes. People flee in every direction, and through the thick cloud of debris you see several bodies lying on the ground. A screeching fills your ears. When it stops, a narrator's voice breaks in, “A third of all Syrians have been displaced by the war.” A child runs by as the narrator continues, “Reports indicate children have been specifically targeted in the violence.” The chaotic sounds crescendo and then cease as the scene fades to black.

You are then transported to a desert, with trailers and tents visible in the distance. Translucent white figures stand before you. More and more figures and more and more tents appear as the narrator continues, “There are now over a million refugee children.” For de la Peña, the virtue of virtual reality is that it puts “people inside the story so they can experience the action as it unfolds. [It] allows you to experience stories in a visceral way.”

Just a few years ago, head-mounted displays that simulate 3D environments cost tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars. They were rarely found outside military research labs. Then, in 2012, inventor

Palmer Luckey raised \$2.4 million through a Kickstarter campaign for the Oculus Rift virtual reality system. He offered development kits to early adopters who wanted to make games for it. Facebook bought the company for \$2 billion. Though the Oculus Rift has yet to reach the general public, anyone who wants to try it out can order a prototype. Other competitors have also launched consumer-grade devices.

Video game technology has attracted journalists looking to experiment with storytelling forms, including David Dufresne, who is a fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Open Documentary Laboratory. Dufresne is convinced journalists can deepen users' experiences by borrowing narrative and nonlinear techniques from filmmakers and gamers. “The video game industry has revolutionized the narrative,” he says, particularly by encouraging audiences to participate in the story.

In “Fort McMoney,” Dufresne put the fate of a real Canadian town in Alberta, Fort McMurray, into users' hands. Fort McMurray sits atop a large oil sands reserve, and you get to decide its future in a Web-based documentary game. The experience opens cinematically. Driving down a snowy highway, you pass an overturned car. A woman's voice narrates, “You have reached the end of the road, at the world's edge.” You're eventually left to explore the photorealistic setting.

The 360-degree video Dan Edge is shooting in Africa will give Frontline viewers a new perspective



There's a woman facing you from the passenger seat of a Ford F250, door ajar. When you hover the mouse over her, everything around her blurs. When you click, titles appear on the screen identifying Marquesa Shore, a waitress and car saleswoman. She arrived in Fort McMurray two months ago and earns about \$10,000 a month. "It's good," she says. "It's good to be a woman here."

Users are then offered two choices: Get Into Her Pickup Truck or Speak To Her Later. If you choose the latter, you can explore other characters. If you choose the former, you take a ride in her truck as she tells you about life in Fort McMurray. A few minutes later, she offers to drop you off at City Hall, where you can meet the mayor. Throughout the game, users refer to a dashboard that tracks their progress. For Dufresne, this kind of gamification can attract users to stories they might otherwise ignore. "Nobody wants to read a news report or watch a movie about environmental issues," he observes. "What we saw with 'Fort McMurray' is a lot of people who came for the game stayed for the topic."

One of the biggest challenges in constructing a story with so many different possible outcomes is thinking non-linearly. Rather than watching a documentary that unfolds scene by scene, the audience explores the people and places of Fort McMurray based on their preferences. If you don't want to meet the mayor and hear her perspective on things, you can click away. If you're interested in the real issues behind the game, you can debate them with other players. As part of his fellowship at MIT, Dufresne is building a tool that he hopes will make it easier for journalists to create interactive projects of their own, a kind of Microsoft Word or Final Draft for interactive documentaries. "We lose a lot of time explaining to each other what we are doing," he says, and he hopes his software template will enable editorial teams to collaborate more efficiently.

There are potential downsides to immersive experiences. For starters, virtual reality technology can make some people feel sick. Simulators make you think you're moving when you're not, and some experience motion sickness. "You don't always get a good match between what the sensors in the system are reporting compared to what the inner ear is experiencing," says Douglas Maxwell, a project manager for the U.S. Army who has been studying virtual environments since the late 1990s. The Oculus

At MIT, David Dufresne aims to create a template for interactive documentaries

Rift developers have tried to address the problem of motion sickness by reducing the lag that can occur between a user's actions and the reaction of the program.

Simulations that supposedly portray real-world events also raise psychological questions, such as: Are you "you" when you enter these worlds or one of the individuals depicted? How do you distinguish your own views from whomever's perspective is being displayed? And where does the journalist exist in these spaces? Karim Ben Khelifa provocatively plays with questions like this in "The Enemy," an audio-video installation that puts users directly between two soldiers on opposing sides of a conflict.

Khelifa is collaborating with D. Fox Harrell, founder of MIT's Imagination, Computation, and Expression Laboratory, to tailor the action to each individual visitor. "Your virtual representation shifts depending on how you interact with the soldiers," Harrell explains. Are you looking the character in the eye, shifting to the side, or spending more time with one person than the other? The answers alter the narrative. That sort of advanced interaction creates a sense of intimate presence, says Harrell. You're not just telling people a story; they're participating in the creation of it.

"There are a lot of ethical questions, but it's not unique to digital media or virtual reality," says Harrell. "Even media that seem to be very direct are actually very subjective." Harrell points out that a unique advantage of stories with game-like qualities is that people see different perspectives with each exposure to the story and can come to their own conclusions.

As virtual reality enters newsrooms, journalists will need to develop standards for working in the new form. One of the first to test them is The Des Moines Register with an immersive experience called "Harvest of Change." It brings readers into the simulated world of the Dammanns, who have run

their farm for the past century, to illustrate how climate change, new technologies, and cultural shifts are affecting agriculture. It combines a computer-generated world with 360-degree video to depict the nuances of farm life. In the video scenes, you feel like a voyeur, witnessing intimate moments like a father-son outing on a tractor.

A team at Frontline, in collaboration with the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University and the Canadian company Secret Location, is taking users into the Ebola crisis. Director Dan Edge is filming 360-degree video in West Africa for the project, which includes a standard 2D, linear documentary as well as digital interaction. The project will present the Guinea village of Meliandou, where scientists have pinpointed what they believe is the first case of Ebola. In one planned scene, you can explore the inside of a towering, hollowed out tree, home to a colony of bats that scientists are studying to determine if they were the source of the outbreak.

While "Harvest of Change," Dan Archer's Ferguson piece, and the pioneering work by Nonny de la Peña rely heavily on computer graphics, the Ebola project replaces 3D modeling with 3D film footage. Raney Aronson, deputy executive producer at Frontline, envisions layering multimedia data visualizations into this 3D environment. "The dream would be that you could go inside the tree and then explore everything we know about it"—from inside, she says.

There are many questions to address as the team completes the project in the coming months. A big one, says Taylor Owen, research director at Tow Center, is: Where do you situate the journalist? What does narrative look like when cuts are no longer needed because the camera captures an entire room at once? In documentary interview scenes, for example, the subject is often the only person on screen. With 360-video, both interviewer and interviewee are captured and the viewer can look back and forth between them, just like they would in real life.

Though the technology is new, the ethical challenges facing journalists are not. "Any time you're creating a computational world or self, you're abstracting from the real world, taking some elements from the real world, leaving some out," says MIT's Harrell. "There are changes." The imperative of remaining true to the reported facts is the same, regardless of whether the story is intended for the evening paper or the Oculus Rift. ■

WHISTLE- BLOWING IN THE BALKANS

Independent news
outlets struggle
to survive in the
countries of the
former Yugoslavia

BY VLADIMIR RADOMIROVIC

*A protester in
Macedonia calls
for the release
of Tomislav
Kežarovski, the
jailed investigative
reporter depicted
on the mask*





IN AUGUST 2012, JELENA KRSTOVIĆ was one of the most influential people in Serbia. At just 30, she was a vice president of the country's biggest privately owned company, Delta Holding. Miroslav Mišković, the sole owner of Delta, is one of the wealthiest people in Central and Eastern Europe, having made his fortune in retail, insurance, and food production. In 2007, Forbes magazine estimated Mišković's net worth at \$1 billion.

On August 29, 2012, Krstović tweeted an Instagram photo of herself on a private jet, a Louis Vuitton notebook on her knees. "Working in the air" was her caption for the photo. The picture itself would not have been interesting—just another of Serbia's nouveau riche bragging about their wealth—had it not been for the notes. A closer examination of the scribbling revealed that Press, a pro-government tabloid that was one of the biggest dailies in Belgrade, was co-owned by Mišković and that the other owner was the mayor of Belgrade, Dragan Djilas. Before the unintended publication of this information in the tweet, the public had been in the dark as to who owned Press. The owners had been hidden behind offshore companies in Cyprus and a couple of lawyers in Serbia.

Pištaljka ("The Whistle"), an investigative journalism website I co-founded, published a story about the tweet hours after it had been posted. What followed is typical of the Serbian media scene, and of the Balkans in general. Krstović deleted the tweet half an hour after our story ran, later claiming that the tweet had been "manipulated and photoshopped." Only one other media

outlet, a small bi-weekly magazine called Svedok ("The Witness"), reprinted the story. Everyone else remained silent. Djilas, in addition to being mayor of Belgrade, was also co-owner of Serbia's biggest advertising and media buying agency.

Three months later, in November 2012, the tabloid Kurir ("Courier") published a front-page story featuring the tweet. The story appeared a month before Mišković was arrested on unrelated charges of corruption. At the time, the government was trying to replace Djilas as mayor. (He was forced out a year later.) Mišković admitted he had a stake in Press, and the newspaper folded a few days after this announcement. Djilas has never publicly commented on his relationship to Press. Jelena Krstović has not represented the company in public for the past two and a half years and has largely avoided Twitter. Her LinkedIn profile states she is no longer vice president of Delta Holding.

Opaque funding, hidden ownership, murky ties among politicians, big business, and journalists—these problems are all too common in the countries that once made up Yugoslavia. Fourteen years after the last of the Balkan wars ended, the region has made limited economic and political progress compared to other countries in Eastern Europe. Slovenia and Croatia have joined the European Union, while the rest (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo, a province that seceded from Serbia in 2008 and is recognized by a slim majority of U.N. members but not by Serbia) are at different stages of negotiations to enter the bloc.

Despite the proclaimed goal of pan-European integration and the fact that most people speak variants of the same language,

IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA, INDEPENDENT NEWS PORTALS ARE AMONG THE MOST VISITED SITES

Balkan countries remain economically and politically fragmented. Unemployment is high in nearly all the Balkan nations, with Macedonia's rate at 29%, according to the International Labour Organization. In such circumstances, it is difficult to sustain independent media outlets and easy for political or business forces to suppress critical coverage. An annual report conducted by the Journalists' Association of Serbia (UNS) recently found that 40% of journalists surveyed occasionally face censorship, a drop from 46% in 2012, but that as many as 48% believe other journalists self-censor their articles. There are, however, signs of hope as investigative reporting moves online. In Croatia and Bosnia, news portals not linked to big business or politicians are even among the most visited sites, ranking only behind giants like Facebook, Google, and YouTube.

In November 2014, the Sarajevo-based Klix, the most visited news site in Bosnia, published an audio recording of Željka Cvijanović, prime minister of Republika Srpska, the Serb entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, discussing "buying" two opposition members of Parliament (MPs) to

support the government. Instead of investigating the prime minister and MPs on possible corruption charges, police searched the offices of Klix and left with reporters' cell phones, hard drives, CDs, and flash drives. Prosecutors said the police were ordered to find out who was "eavesdropping" on the prime minister. The police search of Klix's offices led to a series of protests by journalists in Bosnia, uniting reporters across ethnic lines. "It is only by solidarity that we can prevent further erosion of media freedom," says Siniša Vukelić, a Serb journalist.

In a market as fragmented as that of the former Yugoslavia, however, it is almost impossible to sustain an independent media company. Whereas in the past a newspaper could easily have a circulation of several hundred thousand copies, best-selling dailies in Serbia and Croatia sell just over 100,000 copies now.

And there is always the issue of revenue. In Serbia, the total advertising market fell from a peak of \$260 million in 2008 to about \$200 million in 2013. This led to virtually all media looking for funding from governments, which, in turn, opened the door to

censorship, self-censorship, and the gradual disappearance of investigative reporting from the mainstream media. According to a recent report called "Soft Censorship: Strangling Serbia's Media" by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA), "there are no consolidated data about state funds participating in the media market. Unofficial estimations of media organizations vary from 15% to even 40%."

The economic crisis "sucked the air out of the debates on press freedom," says Ljiljana Smajlović, president of the UNS and editor in chief of Politika, a conservative daily, considered Serbia's newspaper of record. "Economic survival has become the motto. Everyone fears layoffs. Journalists have been pauperized over the years. Few feel secure in their jobs, while the odds of finding another journalism job, should they lose the present one, are very small." In the past six years, a "pay to play" model has developed in the region, whereby media outlets receive government grants, ads from government-controlled agencies, and direct funding in return for positive coverage and/or lack of critical reporting.

Serbian businessman Miroslav Mišković secretly held a stake in Press, one of the biggest dailies in Belgrade, before it folded amidst scandal



Take the daily *Nezavisne Novine* (“Independent Newspaper”). Željko Kopanja started the paper in Banja Luka, capital of the Serb part of Bosnia, after the Bosnian war ended in 1995 with money from the U.S. and other Western governments. In 1999, after publishing a series of stories on war crimes by Serbs in Bosnia, he had both his legs blown off in an assassination attempt. He returned to work soon after, turning *Nezavisne* into the biggest media company in Republika Srpska. But lack of advertising revenue led Kopanja to turn to the Bosnian Serb government for assistance.

According to data published by the Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), *Nezavisne Novine* received more than \$400,000 from the Bosnian Serb government in 2011 for four projects, which included distribution of the daily in Serbia, opening an office in Washington, and conducting two polls, one on the public perception of the government and the other on starting a business in the Republika Srpska. *Nezavisne Novine* has not investigated the growing business empire of Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik, though it has carried out other investigations, including one on some 5,000 cell phone numbers that had been illegally tapped by the Bosnian security and intelligence services.

Foreign publishers also carry out government-funded projects. Ringier Axel Springer, a joint venture between the Swiss publisher Ringier and the German powerhouse Axel Springer, publishes the *Blic* (“Flash”) and *Alo* (“Hello”) tabloids and the *24 Sata* (“24 Hours”) free newspaper in Belgrade. The company received more than \$600,000 in 2010 and 2011 from the Serbian government to perform environmental research. State auditors could not find evidence of any research performed by Ringier Axel Springer, while *Blic* daily published a number of articles presenting Environment Minister Oliver Dulić in a favorable light. *Blic* did not report that Dulić was selling computer equipment to as many as 70 agencies controlled by the government and had authorized payments of \$33,000 for developing a simple website and \$670,000 for advertisements during the Serbian Open tennis tournament in 2009 and 2010. These stories about Dulić were published online by nonprofit organizations, including Pištaljka.

The online migration of investigative reporting is not limited to Serbia. In Croatia, sites like *H-alter* and the ironically named *Cenzura Plus* (“Censorship Plus”) are run as nonprofits and, like their Serbian counter-

parts, rely heavily on funding from Western governments and charities, public funds not under political control, and donations from readers. *Cenzura Plus*, run almost exclusively by women, produces a weekly TV program shown on several local stations and engages in civic activism. *H-alter*, a left-wing portal, publishes comments and investigations critical of the pervasive role of the Catholic Church and nationalism in Croatia.

In neighboring Slovenia, the wealthiest of the former Yugoslav republics, the government has “indirect, but noticeable” influence on the media, according to veteran reporter Igor Mekina. “The three big dailies—*Večer*, *Delo* and *Dnevnik*—all owe money to banks controlled by the government. There are independent outlets, like the left-wing *Mladina* (“Youth”) and the right-wing *Reporter* weeklies, but their influence is limited,” says Mekina, who was foreign editor of *Dnevnik* until 2008.

“Only those media close to governments, tycoons or criminals can survive,” says Senad Pećanin, founder and former editor-in-chief of *Dani* (“Days”), an independent weekly based in Sarajevo, Bosnia. “Journalism in the countries of the former Yugoslavia survived decades of communist dictatorship, years of wars in the 1990s, but not this market totalitarianism.” Pećanin had to sell *Dani* in 2010 due to lack of funds. He is now a practicing lawyer.

Some journalists have found other ways to make money, serving as advisors to politicians, spokespersons for government agencies, or editors of official websites. Sometimes they continue reporting, despite the conflict of interest. For example, Danijel Apostolović, from 2007 to 2012 was a journalist at the Serbian public service TV, RTS, and the media advisor to Mirko Cvetković, who has served as prime minister and finance minister. He has since left journalism.

“It has become normal that a politician or a tycoon tells a journalist what to

report on,” says Igor Gajić, former editor in chief and general manager of *Reporter* weekly, which folded three years ago. Gajić now works as an advisor in the Republika Srpska government. He says he is disillusioned after getting *Reporter* through 15 turbulent years: “I and my colleagues tried hard to raise the level of professionalism and dignity of journalism in Bosnia, but we failed. The more we insisted on being true to journalism, the weirder we looked to just about everyone else. No one writes for readers or viewers anymore, but exclusively for financiers.”

Predrag Radonjić, deputy editor in chief of Serbian-language nonprofit KIM Radio in Kosovo disagrees. “We are mostly financed by international organizations, and this is the backbone of our freedom,” he says. KIM Radio has not only managed to operate for 15 years in a small Serbian enclave near Priština, the capital of Kosovo, which is largely Albanian, but has grown to be a respected source of information not only for local Serbs, but also for Albanian journalists.

IN NEIGHBORING MACEDONIA, WHICH also is split along ethnic lines, *Almakos*, a small Albanian-language website, has also become a credible source of information. Covering news from Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo, the site draws readers from both from the region and the diaspora. According to Web analytics company Alexa, about a third of visitors to *Almakos* come from Switzerland, which has a sizeable population of Albanian immigrants. This helps the site attract ads unconnected to local tycoons or the government.

Almakos is part of a new generation of Balkan media, developing business models that make them independent of governments and big business and establishing credibility across ethnic divisions. Still, old animosities remain. Most ethnic Macedonian journalists “fight for the Macedonian cause,” says *Almakos* general manager Semi Mehmeti, and most ethnic Albanian journalists “fight for the Albanian cause.” This was on display in the spring of 2012 during ethnic riots in the country, when most Albanian-language media blamed Macedonians and most Macedonian-language media blamed Albanians. The coverage prompted the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, an inter-ethnic organization, to appeal to fellow reporters to stop producing articles that “contribute to fueling passions and inter-ethnic tensions.”

JOURNALISTS ACROSS NATIONS ARE OVERCOMING THEIR DIFFERENCES TO FIGHT FOR PRESS FREEDOM



A 2012 protest in Belgrade organized by 99% and Occupy Serbia targets corruption. The mayor at the time co-owned the nation's largest ad agency

Macedonia's ranking in the annual Press Freedom Index that Reporters Without Borders compiles has dropped precipitously, from 34 in 2009 to 117 in 2015. In explaining the drop, the organization cited the ongoing case against investigative reporter Tomislav Kežarovski. In October 2013, Kežarovski was sentenced to four and a half years in prison (reduced to two years on appeal in January 2015) for publishing in 2008 the name of a protected witness in a murder investigation. Kežarovski had quoted a leaked police report that included the name of the witness, who was not then under protection and later said that he gave a false confession under police pressure.

The month before his arrest, Kežarovski had published an article raising questions about the police investigation into a car crash that killed Nikola Mladenov, owner of the independent weekly Fokus ("Focus"). Mladenov's newspaper was one of the last print outlets critical of the Macedonian government, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Tamara Chausidis, president of the Union of Macedonian Journalists, argues that the crash article was the real reason for Kežarovski's sentence, which she called a "chilling message

to the few remaining investigative reporters in Macedonia."

There are a few legacy titles managing to survive after years of turmoil, including the progressive Koha Ditore ("Daily Times") in Kosovo, which began publishing in 1997 as the first independent Albanian-language daily in the former Yugoslav countries. A 2010 study by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe showed, however, that most government-controlled advertising goes to other dailies, usually connected to ruling parties. Koha's editor in chief Agron Bajrami says that journalism in Kosovo is "under siege" and he's pessimistic about the future. "The economic situation in Kosovo is pathetic, and the pressure from the government is growing by the day," he says. "I am not certain we will be able to withstand much longer."

Fear of losing their jobs is an important reason journalists in mainstream media stay away from sensitive subjects. (I and a group of my colleagues were fired from Politika in 2009, after we published articles critical of Serbia's foreign policy and the pervasive graft in the government.) But having lost their jobs—or being unable to secure jobs at legacy titles in the first place—many jour-

nalists have gone on to found the online outlets that are keeping investigative reporting alive in the Balkans.

In Serbia, my publication, Pištaljka, as well as Južne Vesti ("Southern News") and the Center for Investigative Reporting have welcomed journalists who used to work for mainstream outlets. In Slovenia, a group of young journalists launched the nonprofit Pod črto ("Bottom Line") to investigate graft and corruption; its business model is based on donations from readers. In Croatia, Vjetrenjača ("The Windmill") uses a similar business model to fund data journalism on topics like public procurement and government spending.

Pištaljka, launched in 2010, relies on tips from the public. On average, we receive about 100 tips per month, about 10% of which are extremely well documented. Once we investigate the tips and publish stories, the mainstream media tends to reprint them, which brings the issues to a wider public—and, in many cases, there are consequences for politicians. Our experience so far proves that there is a motivated audience interested in investigative reporting. It is this audience that Balkan journalists must continue to engage and develop. ■

HOW

MAKE J-

In this excerpt
from her
forthcoming
e-book, Amy
Webb outlines
a new blueprint
for the future
of journalism
education

BY AMY WEBB

MAT

TO SCHOOL

(AGAIN)

TER





IN THE FALL OF 2000, I SAT IN the large seminar room at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism listening to a lecture about whether journalists should be allowed to use digital cameras. It was meant to be a difficult, complicated discussion about ethics. The problem was, I'd just moved to New York City from Tokyo, and in my pocket was one of the first mass-market camera phones. To me, it seemed more useful to talk about the ethics of accepting photos from readers, since we'd all be using similar phones within five years.

I raised that point as I held out my phone and took a photo of the whole class. The technology had not yet made its way into the U.S., but I argued that within just a few years, my classmates would see a dramatic change in their mostly analog mobile phones. Consumers would be able to take photos, e-mail them to friends on the spot or even post them to the Internet, without ever having to use a PC.

But I was immediately, and somewhat embarrassingly, dismissed. "Why on earth would anyone print a low-quality photo in the newspaper or show it on TV? That won't happen," my professor snapped back, returning the conversation to the ethics of digital cameras.

Of course, the rest isn't history; it's the present. In classrooms across the country, students are being taught about a media ecosystem that's already been eclipsed by new platforms, devices, and business models. Some of them might be wondering, as I did, whether they've made a mistake in attending journalism school at all.

I am deeply concerned about the future of journalism education in America. Journalism isn't a licensed profession in the United States, and so anyone—journalism degree or not—can call herself a reporter. It can be argued that universities exist solely for scholarship and to teach, and that they do not play a role in the day-to-day practice of modern news media. I disagree with both assertions. Universities must propel the profession forward and become the connective tissue between what's come before and what's still to come. Journalism's problems are journalism education's problems, too.

There have been many efforts to rethink journalism education, including at my alma mater. Stephens College president Dianne Lynch, Baruch College media law professor Geanne Rosenberg, the American Press Institute, and, of course, the ongoing Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education are all working on various aspects of this issue. Indeed, all of these worthwhile endeavors have crystallized the need for reform. Now, we must advance the foundation they created and radically evolve journalism education for a digital environment that is in constant flux, where the means of transmission are being built and are controlled outside the core profession and where anyone can produce content that looks like—but isn't necessarily—vetted, reported news.

Some schools welcome the disruptive change. They're offering classes in virtual reality and wearable technology. Some are betting on code, mandating courses in data science, even if syllabi don't integrate well within the rest of the curriculum. Still others are slowly transitioning away from traditional concentrations like newspaper,

magazine, broadcast, and PR to entrepreneurial journalism and data journalism.

If we can all agree that journalism education is still necessary, that its purpose serves the future of our society, then I believe we must figure out a way to make the degree matter more.

As part of my Nieman Visiting Fellowship at Harvard, I spent the past several months developing a new blueprint for journalism education. To do this, I solicited respondents through the Online News Association's educators network, via influential thought leaders in journalism and academia, and through various social media channels. I surveyed faculty and administrative staff working in academia and professionals working in all areas of journalism (publishers, editors, reporters, broadcasters, designers, product managers, and developers as well as people in sales and finance). I conducted in-depth interviews with academic leaders (deans, department chairs), journalism faculty, and professionals working in various roles within media, technology, journalism, and finance.

Together with a research assistant, I analyzed the degree and major requirements, courses offered, and faculty community at 31 universities, which are representative of the various programs throughout America. I also read all of the available research on the future of journalism education, including works from the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education. Finally, I worked with researchers, administrators, and professors at the Harvard Graduate School of Education to learn more about leadership and management within universities, educational models that must serve a changing profession, and change

management within a rigid environment like academia.

Though I am not an academic, I have served as an adjunct professor at Temple University, University of the Arts, University of Tokyo, and the University of Maryland, teaching emerging technologies and data-driven reporting. I've consulted for a number of universities, including Colorado State University, Columbia University, and the University of California-Berkeley. And I serve on the advisory board for Temple University's Department of Journalism.

I began my research with a set of assumptions about what the future of journalism education should look like. Like most non-academics I interviewed, I thought that eliminating tenure and reforming curriculum was the only path forward. Midway through my work at Harvard, I realized that catalyzing real change requires a cultural revolution. I now believe that the entire mission of journalism education must be recast for the knowledge economy, which implies recalibrating approaches to leadership, tenure, and accreditation. What follows is my analysis of the hidden challenges in journalism education—and a blueprint for how to overcome them. Because there are so many variables—some schools of mass communication include PR, advertising, and corporate communications, while others only offer journalism degrees—I am focusing exclusively on undergraduate schools that would currently meet accreditation standards and offer journalism majors.

Overcoming Hidden Challenges

A century-long strain exists between journalism schools and other departments within universities. In their paper, "Educating Journalists: A New Plea for the University Tradition," former journalism school deans Nicholas Lemann of Columbia, John Maxwell Hamilton of Louisiana State University, and Jean Folkerts of the University of North Carolina offer a meticulously-researched, detailed history of three strands of journalism education: as a social science (University of Wisconsin), as a laboratory approach (University of Missouri), and as a liberal arts hybrid (Columbia University). Outside of journalism education, this debate continues, with some dismissing journalism education as a professional endeavor serving no real purpose inside a serious research institution.

Journalism programs are an academic unit within a broad university community, even if they offer some skills-based coursework that services the profession. "Sometimes we don't do a good enough job explaining what we have to offer and how that contributes to the university's research and scholarly mission," says Maryanne Reed, dean of the Reed College of Media at West Virginia University.

Journalism programs must make a decision: to split from the university or to fully assimilate. Forming an independent school requires significant funding, hiring lots of faculty and administrative staff, and vast investments in branding and marketing, not

to mention a lengthy accreditation process. "Over the decades, some professors have speculated about going independent of the university, especially when things looked fiscally bleak a quarter-century ago, but that would have been a terrible mistake," says Sree Sreenivasan, former dean of student affairs at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Integrating more closely with the rest of the university, he adds, affords opportunities to experiment, to work with other departments on research, and to help lead—rather than follow—the industry. For journalism education to thrive, it will require funding, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and research partnerships.

My research suggests that journalism faculty and administration do not have enough clout within the university community. Deans and administrators set the vision and the overall strategy for their departments, but external faculty governance committees determine tenure requirements and promotions and set the rewards structure for others within the university. High-ranking faculty and university administration are not always clear as to what value journalism programs add to the broader community. "Journalism faculty don't really act like other faculty," says Matt Waite, professor of practice at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Journalism and Mass Communications and founder of the school's Drone Journalism Lab. "Many of us are former journalists. We didn't come up in academia. We tend to seek leadership positions in our profession, not within the university."

Journalism faculty must ascend the academic ranks. The executive management within universities tends to come from other disciplines. There are rare exceptions: Vincent Price, a communications scholar, is the provost at the University of Pennsylvania; Susan Herbst has a PhD in communication theory and is now the president of the University of Connecticut. As is traditional within academic departments, department chairs of journalism programs tend to rotate every one to three years, and the position carries little responsibility. Worse, faculty members often reject the additional layer of leadership and instead task the department chair with tedious administrative issues. When asked about the most critical skills necessary for academics working in journalism departments today, not a single respondent mentioned anything about leadership training, organizational

"THREE RETIREMENTS AND AN ACT OF GOD"



WHAT ONE SURVEY RESPONDENT SAID IT WOULD TAKE TO REIMAGINE THEIR J-SCHOOL CURRICULUM

management, or administrative strategy. By and large, departments do not mentor faculty to become university leaders. Louisiana State University created a weeklong leadership academy to help new chairs, deans, and directors from journalism schools across the country build their leadership skills. But that one week of training can't possibly catalyze organizational change without intensive buy-in and support from faculty and administration once the fall semester starts.

While research fields like science and engineering can count on outside funding, most journalism programs are funded almost entirely out of their university's general funds. Sally Renaud, interim chair of the journalism program at Eastern Illinois University, notes that "schools are struggling to finance the equipment [and] technology" required to teach classes. "Journalism has to learn to defend itself better and to educate the public about its role [within a university]. We don't do this very well."

Unlike partnerships between large companies and academic departments, which put universities at the forefront of research and development, partnerships between journalism programs and the broader journalism community have been largely transactional: Students research a project as a class or provide content as interns. And for the most part, that primarily benefits the schools. "We were asked to host interns," says Zach Seward, senior editor of Quartz, echoing a common sentiment among those interviewed: "This created more work for us than anything else. It wasn't a true partnership in any sense, where we were creating value together." News organizations, which are already strapped for cash, do not have a rubric for corporate involvement within journalism schools.

There are very few exceptions: for example, Syracuse University and Gannett are working on a virtual reality news environment using the Oculus Rift. While I applaud this effort, it would further everyone's in-

terests to create partnerships where universities research and prototype the future of news from a more practical standpoint.

MEANTIME, IN OTHER FIELDS, critical research and development is conducted in partnership among universities and external partners: Stanford School of Engineering's corporate partners include Intel, Google, Boeing, Bosch, HP, and more. The MIT Media Lab counts Hearst, DirecTV, Comcast, Pearson, Twitter, and Google among its corporate lab members. Aside from a very few cases (for example, the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia), these partnerships and programs do not exist at other journalism schools. As it stands, the future of news is being built by those working at the epicenter of technology.

The lack of political standing within a university community has a direct impact on the resources allocated to that department or school. As a result, journalism programs often struggle for funding relative to other liberal arts programs. "It's hard to continually get funding from our university to update computers, video recorders, cameras, and software and to get access to data sets," wrote one associate dean of a mid-sized journalism program who wished to remain anonymous. "University administration doesn't understand the changing nature of storytelling tools. I have to keep reminding them that we're not the English department."

Journalism programs believe that appointing non-academics to leadership positions will stimulate interest from foundations and corporations and will attract larger numbers of student applicants. In the January 2007 issue of the Harvard Business Review, John P. Kotter, professor emeritus of leadership at Harvard Business School, argued that "major renewal programs often start with just one or two people. In cases of successful transformation efforts, the leadership coalition grows and grows over time. But whenever some minimum mass is not achieved early in the effort, nothing much worthwhile happens." In order to build that coalition, the leader must be respected and trusted among her peers. In fact, I am one of those outsiders—I've been approached about four dean's positions in the past 18 months. I may be an expert on the future of media and technology, but I lack all the academic credentials and qualifications re-

quired to be viewed as an equal among established academics.

Departments and schools must redouble their efforts to identify capable, charismatic leaders, to cultivate them, to provide them mentoring, and to enable them to rise through the administrative ranks of academia. Because faculty are rarely promoted to deans from within their own departments, the entire journalism and mass communications academic community must agree to work collectively to support this change. If all schools accept this burden, it will pay significant dividends for all programs well into the future.

The current system prevents curriculum development from keeping pace with the changing realities of modern journalism. A curriculum redesign might require the approval of several key stakeholders: department faculty and leadership, faculty governance committees, a university's central administration, accreditation committees, or, for some public schools, even state boards of education. While this environment is intended to safeguard a high quality education, it can cripple fields that are in the midst of great change. When asked: "If you were to reimagine your entire curriculum now, what steps would be necessary?" one survey respondent wrote, "Three retirements and an act of God."

Many survey participants reported that their departments only self-audit curriculum once every three years, and that's mainly to ensure that courses offered are still relevant. At several schools, there is no ongoing, holistic approach to curriculum development. Survey participants cited administrators and faculty who "don't understand the value of digital journalism," "meetings upon meetings" in which "one person can completely derail everything," before a plan is formed. Therefore, meaningful change is difficult to muster. "Many of our electives could have been taught 10 or 15 years ago," wrote one assistant professor at a large university in the South.

Some schools have reframed their curriculum so that concentrations are not tied to any publishing medium or technology. Course descriptions are written so that they can be updated continuously. One strategic approach is to decouple educational components from publishing mediums. "It strikes me that much of journalism education is still very rooted in print design mentality," says Justin Ferrell, fellowships director at the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University and the former digital

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DOESN'T KEEP PACE WITH CHANGING REALITIES

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FOR THE PROFESSION

design director at The Washington Post. “That’s designing for a certain type of narrative. Web design is not about narratives. It’s about behavior. This requires a much more holistic approach to curriculum.”

Another approach to overcoming curriculum stagnation: put advisory boards to better use. Many schools maintain advisory boards, but they often convene only twice a year and have little responsibility in curriculum development. Instead, schools should create advisory boards with a combination of industry change-makers and open-minded faculty in order to meet a nexus of innovation and institutional support. Board members should be tasked with reviewing syllabi, offering feedback on courses, and performing an annual curriculum audit.

The courses offered within journalism programs are not marketed aggressively enough to others around the university. “What’s taught in a journalism program should translate into all domains,” says Lee Rainie, director of Internet, science, and technology research at the Pew Research Center and a former U.S. News & World Report managing editor. “Any organization is now its own broadcaster, its own media enterprise. A central business function is being able to find information and explain it in a way that’s compelling and makes sense to others. The right kind of journalism degree should be highly desirable by any organization.”

Building a coalition across campus to include journalism courses in general education requirements will solve a problem for other schools and will ultimately communicate the value of journalism education throughout the university. Yet, undergraduate journalism students must take nearly all of their general studies courses (economics, statistics) in other departments. Remarkably, English composition is still a requirement for nearly all journalism majors, and those credit hours must typically be taken in the English department. Courses in the journalism school rarely count toward requirements for non-majors.

For example, the syllabus for a data-driven reporting class offered at the University of Texas-Austin includes subjects like data analysis; identifying data needed to test hypotheses; how to gain access to needed data sets; how to clean, analyze, and compare data; and how to synthesize the information into an impactful story. What’s taught in this class is unique to journalism but could be applicable to students elsewhere at the university, including those studying at the College of Pharmacy, the McCombs School of Business, and the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs.

Accreditation in journalism education is a paradox, simultaneously making programs stronger and stifling momentum. There are currently 114 journalism and mass communication programs fully accredited

by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). Because accreditation is standard peer-review practice within a university, journalism departments need accreditation in order to be recognized as equals. In addition, many parents highly value accreditation when helping their children make decisions about college.

However, by its current design, accreditation can unintentionally encourage the status quo. Including preparation time, the accreditation process can take three to seven years. Most often, administrations must get new courses passed through faculty governance, which takes additional time. And, once a school begins that process, it is using accreditation standards that will have been set a minimum of one year earlier.

To its credit, the ACEJMC now includes among its criteria “instruction, whether on-site or online, is demanding and **current** [ACEJMC’s emphasis], and is responsive to professional expectations of digital, technological and multimedia competencies.” The ACEJMC is already working to emphasize applied research that informs the practice as a criteria for tenure and accreditation.

Currently, there is no incentive or reward for iteration or to significantly modernize journalism programs within a reasonable timeframe. By the late 2000s, it had taken so long for many journalism programs to incorporate interactivity into their curricula that students were graduating with skills in Flash, a software product that was already being retired in newsrooms. Although it is working to update the criteria for accreditation so that they more closely reflect the changing needs of the profession, the ACEJMC hasn’t yet fully recalibrated its model to propel the future of journalism education forward.

One concern is accreditation council and committee membership. From an outsider’s perspective, and certainly mine when I first started my research, the council may seem oddly staffed. Any organization with an interest in journalism or mass communications can apply for membership on the council, which is why some groups such as the American Press Institute, the Public Relations Society of America, and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists have representatives on the council. The ACEJMC was designed to serve the profession first and parents second—not the university system—making sure that schools produced the kinds of students news organizations wanted to hire. From a practical

standpoint, the ACEJMC is serving its intended purpose.

But the members holding those seats—those charged with determining what’s “current”—are not themselves working in the forefront of professional practice or in emerging pedagogical research. Currently the Accrediting Council meets only twice a year—once to discuss policies and requirements and once to discuss accrediting decisions. Accrediting Committee members, who are voted on by the Council, meet once a year to review reports from observations by accreditation site visit teams. Council and Committee members serving current terms have strong leadership and academic experience, but none are working on future of news projects or within the digital media space. In many ways, the ACEJMC’s challenges mirror the professional-academic divide of the communications departments they serve.

It is vital to recalibrate membership model so that those determining accreditation standards also include professionals with a deep understanding of the future of academia, the future of journalism, and the future of the workforce.

THE NUMBER OF TENURED AND non-tenured j-school faculty causes additional tension and cultural division within departments. Because journalism departments struggle for funding, they must rely on a very large number of adjuncts to teach classes. There is widespread agreement that adjuncts are seen as a connection to the professional world, relieving tenured faculty of the need to stay current with the changing media landscape. While adjuncts may have a firmer grasp on what’s happening in modern journalism, they lack pedagogical training. Worse, they may have come to the profession without any formal training in ethics, law, and history.

Many in the profession blame tenure as a primary source of journalism education’s problems. Tenured faculty who have spent their whole lives in academia and have never worked in a newsroom are often chided for their lack of professional experience. What we forget is that those faculty have a wealth of institutional knowledge about how universities work. Just as adjuncts are valued for their newsroom experience, we must value tenured faculty for their ample experience in academia. Tenure itself is not the problem. Instead, faculty must be incentiv-

ized to continue learning, collaborating, and experimenting, which they can do on campus, at conferences, or via MOOCs offered by companies like Coursera. Departments must carve out enough time and budget each year to pay for training and continuing education. Likewise, a condition of ongoing membership within a department must include ongoing learning and collaboration.

There are numerous options, from auditing courses around a university to participating in hands-on training sessions or simply enrolling in a Coursera class. Last summer, I created a Summer School for Journalism Professors syllabus and released it online. It was a simple, self-directed eight-week course intended to help tenured faculty better understand the evolving nature of media and technology, a low-touch, high-impact way to catalyze ongoing learning.

Overcoming these complex challenges requires a dramatic, internal shift within departments, but that shift is necessary for the future of journalism education to thrive. In “Immunity to Change,” a book about organizational change leadership, Robert Kegan, professor of professional development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), and co-author Lisa Laskow Lahey, also of HGSE, write: “The memories of most higher education institutions are littered with failed efforts and broken dreams on the school-wide reform front, as one idealistic aspiration after another runs into the reality that it is far easier for small factions to impede a process of change than for a larger, like-minded group to bring it about.” However, in the case of journalism schools, Kegan told me that change is indeed possible: “To unlock the potential for change, deans must create a revolution, a sense of urgency and motivate their departments towards the horizon.”

That revolution must begin within departments, but it cannot be fully realized without a new blueprint for the practice of journalism education.

TENURE ITSELF IS NOT THE PROBLEM. THERE SHOULD BE INCENTIVES TO KEEP LEARNING

A New Blueprint

Previously, a journalism degree had been viewed as an asset to new journalists entering the workforce. That is no longer the case. In my survey, fewer than 25% of those working in media said that a journalism degree is necessary for the profession. Instead, degrees in computer science or data science are in demand. Executives and hiring managers interviewed at a number of newspapers, magazines, and websites indicated that a journalism degree does not impact their decisions about hiring new employees. If we agree that in order to thrive, journalism programs must become more visible and powerful within their universities, then we must also agree that the programs themselves must be recast with three key components: a foundation of exceptional liberal arts scholarship; robust, forward-thinking specialized concentrations in journalism; and a compulsory experiential learning component.

Rigorous liberal arts coursework

Among all groups surveyed and interviewed, courses centering on critical thinking, emerging social structures, and writing were reported as top priorities. Required general studies courses for a journalism major should include a semester each of macro and microeconomics as well as a probability and statistics course taught within the journalism department. Rather than the general math requirement, which only requires three credits of any math course, the degree should require empirical and mathematical reasoning, so that students learn how to apply abstract principles and theories to difficult problems. They should be exposed to coursework that mandates challenging writing while broadening their worldviews: three credits each of comparative religions/cultures, cultural anthropology, and comparative literature. In addition, the degree should require three credits each of American politics or public policy.

The Internet is redefining international boundaries and opening up new communication channels to anyone with a connection. Coursework to help students gain perspective on other nations is essential. A three-credit course on international politics or public policy should replace the foreign language requirement at many schools. Because of the rigorous demands of college coursework, it is highly unlikely that a college student will gain enough fluency to use the language studied. The time is better spent learning about the histories, religions, and political structures of other societies.

2 SEMESTERS OF NEWSROOM CO-OP



KEY COMPONENT OF THE JOURNALISM SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

Journalism coursework

These courses should include work on the following subjects specifically geared toward journalists but should not be segmented by distribution medium (such as print or digital). There are far fewer required technical skills courses in this model because that material is covered by the Newsroom Co-op below.

Mandatory courses for a journalism degree should include a history of Silicon Valley and the philosophy of the Internet as a stand-alone class, as well as a class on the First Amendment and mass communications law with up-to-date case studies. All students should be required to take business-side classes: finance for newsrooms (includes basic finance, accounting, and discussion of revenue models) and audience engagement (discussion of the attention economy, A/B testing, search, and social optimization). All students in the major should take courses to give them a more holistic foundation in journalism: design for news (principles of design elements across all mediums); deep research (methods for data mining, evaluating sources, and investigating algorithms); introductory programming (in a modern language).

Finally, the standard reporting and writing requirements should be replaced with much more focused courses that will apply across the entire field of journalism as it evolves. All students should take a nonfiction writing class: the fundamental method and practice of storytelling, regardless

of medium. (Many schools use newspaper writing as the basis for this instruction.) What's taught doesn't always translate to the Web, to mobile, or to continuous digital coverage across devices. The class I'm proposing isn't about leads and nut grafs, but rather about mastering the fundamentals of great journalistic writing. The general reporting requirement should be replaced with a mandatory investigative reporting techniques class: students should learn how to find sources; obtain data sets and documents; file Freedom of Information Act and public information requests; conduct research and interviews; obtain and understand property records, court records, search warrants, and police records; and organize large amounts of data and reporting so that it can be used for whatever story is produced.

Advanced courses on design, interactivity, and data-driven reporting as well as subject-focused reporting and writing (gender, science/medical, the arts) should be offered as electives within the department.

Two semesters of newsroom co-op

For many years, Eric Newton, the Knight Foundation's senior adviser to the president, has been advocating for a "teaching hospital" model for journalism education. "People learn by doing," he says. "Law schools have clinics, where students learn to handle cases. In teaching hospitals, medical students work alongside real doctors to learn about disease, how to deliver babies,

how to practice their craft. It is hard to believe that there is no journalism education program in America using a fully developed version of that same model." Newton's assertion is right, and there is a way to advance his theory by adding in a mandatory co-op component to journalism majors.

In this new blueprint, each journalism department would be responsible for creating and maintaining a "newsroom," a hyperlocal digital publication or digital news broadcast. The purpose of the newsroom would be threefold: to transfer real-world skills within a meaningful environment to students; provide the community with a local publication, and to catalyze external partnerships through research and development work.

While some in the academic community will be quick to argue that such a program already exists, the Newsroom Co-op does not mirror what's currently being offered. Students and professors would be required to work full time in the newsroom for two semesters. Successful co-op models in other subject areas are already in effect at many universities: Drexel University is just one of the schools requiring at least one six-month co-op for nearly all of its majors. At these schools, the co-op is taken off campus at a local employer. This model can be applied internally to the newsroom. In practical terms, this replaces the internship requirement for some schools and adds in the experiential learning component missing from so many curricula. Tenured and adjunct faculty would work together, mentoring students and ensuring continuity of coverage, even during the summer.

The newsroom model requires a vastly different approach to existing programs: Students would be required to rotate through key divisions of the newsroom, just as medical students make rotations through specialties. In two semesters, newsroom students would spend equal amounts of time in the following departments: editorial, business, production, PR/marketing/advertising, and management. Rotating students through these disciplines not only ensures that they develop practical skills required to file on deadline, but in learning all of the roles of a news organization they will have gained invaluable perspective and empathy before starting their careers in earnest. ■

This is an excerpt from Amy Webb's forthcoming e-book about a new blueprint for the future of journalism education

COVERING THE COMMUNITY

As regional titles retreat from outlying areas, local weekly newspapers matter more than ever
BY BARBARA SELVIN





Pastor Charles Burton lies in a chalk outline on the driveway of the Ferguson, Mo., police station last October as a memorial to Michael Brown, who was shot and killed by a police officer in August

LINTERMISSION WAS OVER AND THE house lights were about to go down for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's performance of Brahms's "German Requiem." It was Saturday, October 4, 2014. Rebecca Rivas, a reporter for The St. Louis American, was in the audience, her camera ready. She'd been tipped off by a source active in the protests that had erupted after an unarmed teenager was shot and killed by a police officer in nearby Ferguson.

Singing began, but it wasn't coming from the stage. A man in the rear of the hall sang, in a clear, strong voice: "What side are you on, friend, what side are you on?" Then a woman stood, a few rows away, and joined in. One by one and then more each moment, some 50 people rose, singing "Justice for Mike Brown is justice for us all." Some in the audience clapped, as did some of the musicians; other audience members looked stunned. Rivas captured it and posted a video on the American's website. It was picked up by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, NPR, CNN, and MSNBC, among other outlets.

Rivas and her colleagues on the weekly newspaper's tiny staff had an advantage over the journalists who flocked to Ferguson in the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014. The African-American community of greater St. Louis already knew and trusted the paper, which has covered that community since 1928. Missouri State Senator Maria Chappelle-Nadal, who represents Ferguson, calls The St. Louis American "the only source of information we have that's balanced and of interest." And Adolphus M. Pruitt II, president of the St. Louis City chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, says, "They cover those things that

are truly emotionally charged for the black community, in ways that go into detail on the subject and the issue.”

In addition to its news reports, editorials, and widely read “Political Eye” column, the American’s coverage of churches, community organizations, and social events has helped keep the African-American community tied together as it dispersed from the central city to the suburbs, says University of Missouri journalism professor Earnest L. Perry Jr. “Say you grew up in one part of St. Louis that was heavily African-American and moved to another part that wasn’t, you’d still have a link back to that community” through the weekly paper, Perry says.

That kind of connection is a hallmark of the community journalism that weeklies provide. Often, local newspapers are the top source for news about a community, a source that has grown in importance as regional papers have pulled back from covering outlying communities over the past 15 years. Weeklies with a strong editorial voice bring communities together—or stir debate—over issues of great local import. Some weeklies, like the American, cover not only a geographical community but also a “community of interest,” the term of art for groups with a shared orientation, whether racial, ethnic, occupational, or otherwise.

Often overlooked in discussions of the future of newspapers, U.S. community weeklies still matter to millions of readers. The total circulation of the nation’s 7,000 non-daily community newspapers is about 65.5 million, according to a 2010 National Newspaper Association (NNA) study. Seven out of 10 weeklies have a circulation of less than 15,000, according to NNA figures.

While major daily papers have expanded their online presence, there is a robust debate as to whether, or how quickly, weeklies should attempt to move their communities online. Penelope Muse Abernathy, a former newspaper executive and author of the 2014 book “Saving Community Journalism,” argues for now. But sentiment on the 265-member listserv of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors runs strongly in favor of maintaining an emphasis on print for reasons of revenue and community service.

“The weekly newspaper business is the healthiest part of the American newspaper business,” says Al Cross, director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky. Yet he sees trouble ahead due to the growing role that communities of in-

terest play in people’s lives through social media. “As we spend more time with communities of interest, do we spend less time with communities of place, and does that reduce the interest in, and demand for, news of that place?” he asks. “I think it does.”

In that sense, The St. Louis American may be luckier than most weeklies because of its dual role as a local paper and as one that covers a community of interest. It engages its readers not only with its 70,000-circulation paper, which is free on newsstands, but also through its website and active presence on social media.

Chris King, managing editor of the American, declines to discuss the paper’s finances in detail but calls the paper “a struggling family-owned business” and allows that owner and publisher Donald M. Suggs “pitches in on payroll.” Its small editorial staff—seven full-timers plus two part-timers—produces up-to-the minute Ferguson coverage online, though some stories never see print as events outpace them.

Not surprisingly, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 19, was a charged holiday in St. Louis. Both the American and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch covered it closely but with significant differences. The American’s coverage included a detailed nearly 1,900-word account of tensions throughout the day. Those tensions, between people who wanted to focus on Dr. King’s legacy and protesters, many of them younger, who wanted to honor his revolutionary spirit, resulted in a chaotic confrontation on a state university campus within city limits. The Post-Dispatch ran a 900-word story.

Margaret Wolf Freivogel, a longtime Post-Dispatch staffer who now runs the newsroom at St. Louis Public Radio, which has a content-sharing agreement with the American, notes that the American considers itself an advocate for the community it covers. King freely admits this. “We can count on everyone else to do all the bad news about the black community,” he says.

ADVOCACY IS OFTEN INTEGRAL TO THE SENSE OF MISSION AT WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

“We will let a lot of negative stories pass or do them in brief only.”

Freivogel adds: “I have a very high level of trust in their standards and in their accuracy, so it’s not like they’re just purely an advocacy organization. They’re very much a news organization.”

ADVOCACY IS OFTEN INTEGRAL to the sense of mission at weekly newspapers, such as The Mountain Enterprise, based in Frazier Park, California. Though the Enterprise covers nine hamlets in a remote area 75 miles from Los Angeles, Patric Hedlund, a documentary filmmaker turned newspaper co-owner and editor, says she never runs short of news and intrigue. Hedlund shares many instances in which her paper’s coverage made a major splash—how conflicts of interest among local government officials were uncovered, how community reporters she coached found evidence that proposed housing developments would deplete the area’s water supply, how neighbors call her to witness and record events that no one else will cover, whether it’s “sheriff’s deputies running down the street with drawn guns” or a crew cutting down 300- and 400-year-old trees that the community had thought were protected.

A newspaper like The Mountain Enterprise “belongs to the community,” Hedlund says, and the experience of having her work read each week by people she knows well has been profound after a career spent producing documentaries in Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and across the U.S. “Working on a national or international basis is not as personal as working in a community environment,” she says. “Every single thing you say here has a ripple effect on your neighbors.”

And in a region where wealthy, well-connected outsiders wield considerable influence over the future of Frazier Mountain communities, the Enterprise amplifies the voices of those locals who stand up for themselves. “People are trying to have a voice, and when there are issues, to have a way to articulate and investigate what those issues are,” she says. Hedlund has held trainings and workshops for area residents, “helping people develop their capacities to be good reporters of their own lives,” she calls it. One such reporter was soil scientist Doug Peters, whose first involvement with the paper was writing letters to the editor opposing the proposed Frazier Park Estates

development. Subsequently, on the paper's behalf, Peters read 15 volumes of environmental impact reports for that development and two others. With Peters' help, the Enterprise revealed what had been buried in the developers' report: groundwater levels at the proposed development site had fallen precipitously in the previous decade.

"The whole experience was satisfying," Peters says, "as I saw the results of my research and education published and appreciated by readers. I was able to get across my message to the community that adequate water supply for the development was doubtful." Working with Hedlund wasn't always easy, he said: "It got more challenging [as she] demanded more and more supporting information. It became downright grueling with e-mails and phone calls as deadlines approached."

In the case of Frazier Park Estates, public hearings amid continued coverage by The Mountain Enterprise led the county planning department to force the developer to redo its submission. The battle culminated in a decision by the state parks department to acquire the land in question.

"In the end," says soil scientist Peters, "a really bad project was killed and I'm glad to have helped."

Hedlund gives her readers much of the credit. Community members made 100- to 120-mile round trips to show up and testify at hearings again and again, and raised money to hire a lawyer. A California Superior Court judge ruled for the community plaintiffs, and the developer dropped his appeal. "By seeing their story considered important enough, seeing it on the front page—and it never faded—people were able to carry forward with their needs," she says. In 2007, The Mountain Enterprise's Frazier Park Estates coverage won the California Newspaper Publishers Association's first-place prize for environmental reporting.

Hedlund and her husband initially lavished their production expertise on the paper's free website, but then their print circulation dropped, putting an end to that. "The better our website became, the more our street sales diminished," Hedlund says. "The numbers kept telling us that the print product"—the paper has a paid circulation of 2,550—"is still the bread and butter for

now, and it is vital to respect that fact." Now, the website offers breaking news for free, but everything else is behind a paywall. Street sales and subscribers have increased and ad inches "are holding steady," Hedlund says.

It's the rare newspaper that doesn't depend heavily on advertising, but one such paper exists in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts, just 20 miles east of the New York border. The idea for The Sandisfield Times was born at a dinner party in 2009 among former weekenders who now live full time in the rural community. At first, the monthly paper had no ads, relying on donations. To this day, most of its staff is volunteers. In the beginning, none of them wanted to sell ads; but as its audience grew, local businesses asked for the opportunity to reach readers. The paper, which became a nonprofit in June 2013 and prints 1,000 copies a month, pays its sole employee, a graphic designer, with its advertising income, and uses donations from its annual appeal to cover other costs. Its website is free, and it has no social media presence.

Community members hold a vigil last October for Vonderrit D. Myers Jr., 18, who was shot and killed by an off-duty police officer in St. Louis



The 53-square-mile Sandisfield has no village green, town center, general store, coffee shop or diner; in short, there are few places to hang out and gather local tidings. Before the birth of the Times, “it was really hard to find out when the dump hours were, for example,” says Setsuko Winchester, a former producer of NPR’s now-defunct “Talk of the Nation” and the paper’s first photo editor. Her husband, journalist and author Simon Winchester (“The Professor and the Madman,” “Krakatoa,” “The Map That Changed the World”) was its prime mover and founding editor.

Winchester, a tall, smiling Englishman with a direct gaze and approachable manner, has lived full time in Sandisfield, population about 900, since 2002. He works from his studio, an 1812 granary with windows that wash his two-story work area in light. The main elements of the décor are framed maps, photographs, and books—thousands of books, lining shelves and piled everywhere. He came up with the newspaper’s mottoes (“Tribunus Plebis,” or “The Guardian of the People,” and “Reliable. Regular. Relevant.”), edited the paper for its first year, and still writes for it.

Longtime Sandisfield residents, many of them hardworking farmers, found little to like in the paper at first. But over time, that has changed.

With Manhattan less than a three-hour drive from Sandisfield, “you’re going to have the city folks that are going to come in and want to change everything,” says Barbara Riiska, an orchard owner who was born one town over and married into an old-time Sandisfield family. “Wait a second: What did you move out here for in the first place?” Now, though, she’s glad she can follow what happens at town meetings. The largest paper in the region, the daily Berkshire Eagle, “has no idea that we exist,” she laments.

A relative, A.J. Riiska, says that at first, he felt the paper was “kind of all about what the summer people were interested in. They didn’t even cover the Memorial Day parade” in 2010, he says in disgust. Over time, however, the paper has earned Riiska’s grudging respect. He reads it regularly. “It’s not a bad old newspaper now,” he says.

Winchester acknowledges that initially, “we were widely condemned as being elitist and further dividing the community,” but says that has changed, “grudgingly, slowly—



Patric Hedlund, editor, *The Mountain Enterprise in Calif.*; Simon Winchester, founder, *The Sandisfield (Mass.) Times*

not that we tried to campaign, but simply because we covered the town rather well.”

The lead story in the paper’s inaugural issue in April 2010 launched the newspaper’s campaign to do something about two ruined houses along a main road, houses “out of a ’50s horror film,” Winchester says. The houses were eventually demolished, and Winchester counts this as the paper’s first success.

The Sandisfield Times has continued to crusade on local controversies, but it also routinely publishes stories about town officials and the town budget, the state of town roads, obituaries, columns on gardening, and photos of the community as the seasons change. Its first issue had eight pages.

“YOU OWN EVERYTHING ABOUT THE PAPER”

Four lessons from buying and running the Outer Banks Sentinel

BY MARK JURKOWITZ

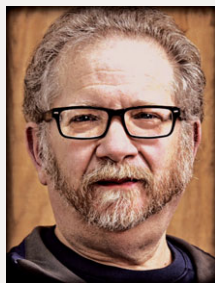
WHEN I INFORMED FRIENDS and colleagues I was leaving as associate director of the Pew Research Center’s Journalism Project to buy a weekly in North Carolina’s Outer Banks there were a number of reactions. One went this way: “You just spent eight years at Pew studying the newspaper industry and now you’re buying one?” (Unstated, but clearly implied was the question—“Do you think you should schedule an MRI?”)

At Pew, we spent many hours analyzing the U.S. newspaper industry. And what we learned helped convince me, in theory at least, that solid, credible community weeklies can be pretty strong franchises—

free from much of the overhead and mission tension that can plague metro dailies. Indeed, a 2014 Pew report identified 438 smaller new digital news organizations, many of them launched to fill gaps left by legacy layoffs. More than half—231, to be exact—were primarily covering news at the local or hyperlocal level.

Yet there are important things you pick up at ground level that are harder to see from the view at 30,000 feet. And with the caveat that there can

be vast differences among community news outlets—circulation numbers, distribution platforms, staffing levels, and even editorial mission—here are four lessons I’ve learned since buying the Outer Banks Sentinel last August that my work at Pew didn’t fully prepare me for.



Jurkowitz

Understand Local Culture
Without hedging on the core missions of accountability and unbiased reportage, it is journalistically important to get a handle on community standards and mores. It was

particularly important to me, as a newcomer, that the paper seemed in sync with its readers. I learned early on, for example, that there was squeamishness about writing and talking about suicide in this area. It helped inform the way we covered one important story—and the community appreciated it. And at a time of coarse political debate in this country, there is a certain bipartisan gentility that moderates public discourse in Outer Banks politics. That prompted us to write a story on that phenomenon, which stood in sharp contrast to the mudslinging that defined the state’s U.S. Senate race.



Chris King, managing editor of *The St. Louis (Mo.) American*

Now, it regularly fills 20, covering not just the Select Board but also Sandisfield's finance, strategic planning, technology, and cemetery committees, its board of health, and the local arts center. It's a robust local report in a place that lacked anything like it.

"The paper has been able to bring light into what's going on in town government," says Patrick Barrett, a high school history teacher and Select Board member. In one instance, a member of the town's finance committee wrote a letter in which she detailed

her grievances against the Select Board. In the next issue, Barrett responded point by point, acknowledging the justice of some of her zingers while clarifying the context of others. "It's been a vehicle for me to set the record straight," Barrett says.

In the epilogue to his 2013 book, "The Men Who United the States," about the knitting together of a disparate population, Winchester writes, "The paper is now popular, needed, and ceaselessly written to, and it's brought to Sandisfield something the village has never truly enjoyed in all of its 250 years of incorporated existence: a sense of community, a common sense of unity."

And that sense of unity may be, in the end, what accounts for the resilience of the community newspaper. "In many towns in this country, people don't say, 'I read that in the paper'; they say, 'I read that in our paper,'" says Al Cross, director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky. "This shows that people have a very strong identity with their local newspaper as [their] tribune and advocate, and also as a journalistic enterprise that holds up a mirror and doesn't sugarcoat things." ■

Put the Public in Publisher
Having bought the Sentinel from an out-of-town publisher who was not well-known here, I quickly recognized the need to sell myself and the paper to the community at the retail level. That meant speaking before the Chamber of Commerce and at Rotary Clubs, lunching frequently with people in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, and involving the newspaper as a sponsor of everything from the YMCA to the Martin Luther King school essay contest. In the Christmas season, we even opened our offices to host people getting their pets' pictures taken with Santa Claus—winning some new friends in the process. Indeed, our efforts to re-establish the paper as an active civic citizen have generated a very positive

response. As for the role of the publisher, this is not a job for introverts.
Print has its Virtues
Sometimes the debate about print versus digital seems to take on an almost ideological tone. The reality can be a little different. In our case, the older-skewing demographics of the Outer Banks make it a more inherently print-friendly environment. (Our local competitors include a digital-only and a print-only news outlet. We have a print and digital platform, although the latter is getting a much-needed upgrade.) Our print product allows us to publish revenue-generating "special pubs" throughout the year, to handle the retail advertising inserts that are an increasing part of our business and to earn money producing

publications and brochures for our merchants. And then there is the incalculable benefit of having an editorial insert—like the four-page Voter's Guide section we produced in October—handed out at local events. We contract out the printing of our paper and those costs are not inconsiderable. But after just switching our printing work to the large regional daily, *The Virginian-Pilot*, I can say there's a nice buyer's market for that service.
Kill the Bees Yourself
One afternoon this past summer, I got a somewhat frantic call from my editor telling me that an unlucky customer at a local mall was stung when a swarm of bees emerged from inside the Sentinel newspaper box he had opened. My first impulse was to ignore that

call. My second was that this was definitely my problem. So armed with a Wiffle ball bat and a can of industrial strength bug killer, I managed to rout the colony of angry insects. This anecdote speaks to a bigger truth. Like many community weeklies, we have a modest staff at the Sentinel—six full-timers (including my wife and myself), one part-timer, and two drivers—so it almost goes without saying: There is virtually no matter too trivial for your attention. You own everything about the paper—from its reputation to the safety of its customers who buy it. During the negotiations to buy the paper, one wise observer told me I wasn't simply buying a news outlet, I was buying a "lifestyle." Running a community paper isn't just a job; it is a way of life. ■

THE OFFENDING ART



Philadelphia Daily News cartoonist Signe Wilkinson offered a multiple-choice test in 2010

Political cartooning after the Charlie Hebdo attacks

BY JONATHAN GUYER

A black-robed, bearded figure hovers above Europe sprinkling drops of water, or maybe seeds, from a heart-shaped pouch. A white aura illuminates him against a starry sky, but his feet are rooted firmly in the earth. The title of this cartoon reads: “Prophet Muhammad.”

The Palestinian newspaper *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* published the drawing in February. The next day Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas ordered an investigation into the image and its creator, Muhammad Sabaaneh. Abbas, who after the Charlie Hebdo attacks three weeks earlier had joined world leaders in a march against terrorism and in support of free speech in Paris, described the cartoon’s publication as “a terrible mistake” and stressed that “sacred religious symbols, especially the prophets and messengers” should be respected.

Palestinian Authority police questioned Sabaaneh, who apologized for the drawing and explained on Facebook that despite the title the robed figure was not intended to be a depiction of Muhammad, forbidden by Islamic authorities, but “a symbolic figure for Islam and the Muslim’s role in spreading light and love for all humanity.” Al-Hayat al-Jadida launched an inquiry, too, briefly suspending Sabaaneh and other staff involved in the cartoon’s publication, and issued its own apology.

Sabaaneh, whose satirical illustrations have criticized everything from Palestinian political parties to the Israeli occupation, had been in trouble before. In 2013, Israeli authorities sentenced him to five months in prison because one of his cartoons appeared in a book published by his brother, Thamer Sabaaneh, a member of Hamas, the Palestinian resistance movement governing Gaza that Israel considers a terrorist organization. A few years earlier he received a series of death threats from Hamas members,

because of his caricatures of Hamas senior political leader Ismail Haniyeh.

“We should oppose everything that is forced on us, by governments or dictatorships or the authority of religion,” says Sabaaneh. And as for respecting religious symbols, Sabaaneh claims that’s exactly what his cartoon was intended to do: “The way to defend Islam is through art. When Islam is criticized through art, we should respond through art.”

Sabaaneh’s experience illustrates just how complex and contested political cartooning remains after brothers Said and Chérif Kouachi killed 12 at the offices of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo on January 7. The Paris attacks brought fresh urgency to longstanding questions around the limits of free speech, the role of satire as a form of dissent, and the relationship between political cartooning and journalism.

The Charlie Hebdo murders, and an attack aimed at Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks, who had drawn images of the Prophet

IN THE POST-CHARLIE HEBDO ERA, POLITICAL CARTOONING REMAINS A COMPLEX AND CONTESTED PURSUIT

Muhammad many Muslims considered offensive, a month later in Copenhagen, focused attention on the threat to Western satirists. But political cartoonists around the world are at risk.

In Turkey in 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was then prime minister, brought a criminal complaint against cartoonist Musa



In 2013, when the pope stepped down, Kevin Siers of *The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer* mused on possible replacements

Kart, who in the midst of a corruption investigation into Erdogan's inner circle depicted a hologram of Erdogan standing watch as thieves stole money from a safe. Lawyers sought nine years imprisonment; Kart was acquitted but Erdogan has appealed. In Ecuador, one of the best-known cartoonists in Latin America, Javier Bonilla, whose pen name is Bonil, is accused of "socioeconomic discrimination" for mocking the stutter and questioning the suitability for office of Agustin Delgado, a congressman from President Rafael Correa's ruling party. In Singapore, the government charged Leslie Chew with sedition for the cartoonist's criticism of state discrimination against ethnic minorities in his strip "Demon-Cratic Singapore." And in Malaysia, Prime Minister Najib Razak's government also accused cartoonist Zulkiflee Anwar Haque, known as Zunar, of sedition, for a cartoon criticizing a corrupt judiciary. "He points out corruption," says John A. Lent, editor in chief of the International Journal of Comic Art, of Zunar. "He's what a political cartoonist is supposed to be: a watchdog on government."

POLITICAL CARTOONISTS HAVE long served a watchdog function. In the 1870s, Thomas Nast's caricatures of William M. "Boss" Tweed in Harper's Weekly went a long way toward helping topple Tammany Hall's crooked political machine, which siphoned some \$6 million from public funds. The New York Times had published a series of investigations into Tammany's extortion, but it was Nast's caricatures, including one of a corpulent Tweed with a money bag for a face, that emboldened the public outcry against the crooked boss's malfeasance.

Tweed's furious plea—"Stop them damned pictures. I don't care so much what the papers say about me. My constituents can't read. But, damn it, they can see pictures!"—may be apocryphal but it nonetheless aptly describes the task of the political cartoonist. "Our job is to create either some doubt in your mind about an issue or create a discussion," says Christopher Weyant, a cartoonist whose work has appeared in The New Yorker, The Hill, and on the cover of this issue of Nieman Reports. "We want you to think. We want you to react."

Reactions provoked by the Charlie Hebdo attack come at a time when satirists are increasingly seen as sources of news, especially by young people. A 2012 Pew survey



In Jonathan Shapiro's 2015 cartoon, South Africa's leader kept smiling despite the nation's woes

found that about 80 percent of "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" viewers were aged 18 to 49, compared to only 40 percent of network evening news viewers. Twelve percent of adults surveyed by Pew in 2014 said they received news from "The Daily Show" in the previous week, putting it on a par with USA Today and The New York Times. Another 2014 study, this one by the University of Delaware, showed that viewers of the "The Daily Show," "The Colbert Report," and John Oliver's "Last Week Tonight" were much more familiar with net neutrality laws than viewers of mainstream networks.

The icons of American political satire—Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert—may be moving on, but new satirists and satirical

outlets are appearing to take their place. John Oliver's show, "Last Week Tonight," has stormed HBO as well as YouTube, where his channel boasts nearly 1.5 million subscribers. The Huffington Post is launching "The HuffPost Show," a weekly Web-only satirical news program that will stream online in prime time. In the U.K., satirical puppet show "Newzoids" is being viewed as a successor to the classic '80s program "Spitting Image," which skewered the Margaret Thatcher government. And the Web is creating new spaces for the distribution and debate of political cartoons. "The fact that comedians are becoming main sources of news only tells you what a failure our media outlets are," says Bassem Youssef, who last June discontinued the satirical Egyptian TV show he hosted as tolerance for dissent in the country shrank. (For more from Bassem Youssef, see "The Joke Is Mightier Than the Sword" on page 37.)

In many countries in the Middle East, tolerance for satire has decreased since the upheavals of the Arab Spring. Consider the case of Syria's Ali Ferzat, one of the Arab world's most prominent political cartoonists. For decades, the Hafez al-Assad regime tolerated his veiled visual barbs, published in the state-run newspaper Tishreen. After al-Assad's son Bashar took power in 2000, Ferzat launched the satirical newspaper al-Domari. But in 2011, the first year of the Syrian uprising, members of the regime's masked security forces kidnapped and beat Ferzat, dumping him on the road to the airport with two broken hands. Ferzat's



In 1871, Thomas Nast's drawing of "Boss" Tweed fueled outrage over corruption

colleague, Syrian cartoonist Akram Raslan, has been missing for nearly two years. “I survived an assassination attempt,” says Ferzat, who just days before his abduction drew a caricature of a lanky Assad hitching a ride with Libyan autocrat Muammar el-Qaddafi, “so freedom does not come for free.”

For Ferzat, the price of freedom has been exile. He now lives in Kuwait, where he draws for the pan-Arab daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi. Iranian cartoonist Nikahang Kowsar has also opted to work outside his home country. Back in 2000, Kowsar drew a cartoon of a crocodile choking a reporter with its tail. In Farsi, “Professor Crocodile,” as the reptile was labeled, rhymes with the nickname of Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, then one of the country’s top clerics. Kowsar ended up spending six days in Tehran’s notorious Evin Prison and was charged with insulting a religious figure and undermining national security. In Iran, Kowsar says, “We have freedom of speech; we don’t have freedom *after* speech. You are free to draw a cartoon, but you are arrested the next day if they don’t like your cartoon.”

The intimidation continued: Kowsar’s phone was tapped, his e-mail hacked. Subsequent death threats pushed him to Canada and then to Washington, D.C. After leaving Iran, he founded Toonistan.com, a cartoon-oriented social media platform, and Khodnevis, an alternative Farsi news source that prominently features cartoons.

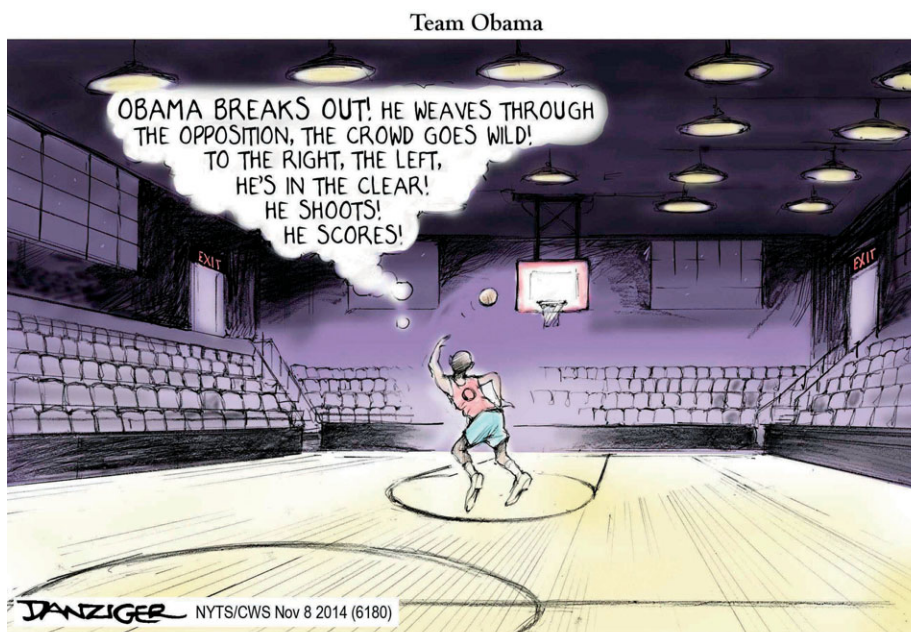


In Iran in 2000, Nikahang Kowsar’s drawing of a crocodile strangling a journalist raised a furor

Kowsar notes that, despite the risks, political cartooning is alive and well in Iran, with more illustrators addressing touchier subjects, like poverty and water shortages, largely online.

Ahmed Benchemsi, a native Moroccan who founded and edited the best-selling Arabic news weekly Nichane, has followed a similar path. Benchemsi left Morocco after advertiser boycotts depleted the magazine’s finances. He now edits and publishes Free Arabs, an online outlet he co-founded in 2012, while at Stanford University. Free

Arabs has featured over 500 bloggers, including an array of secular and progressive voices from the Middle East, and gives pride of place to political art and satire. It also produces “The Fatwa Show,” a Web video series lampooning Islamic clerics, and “The Horrific 4,” a collection of sardonic columns mocking fears around taboo topics like “the Jew,” “the Atheist,” and “the Independent Woman.” “The first thing to do if we want the Arab World to go forward is to look at ourselves in the mirror and criticize what deserves to be criticized,” says Benchemsi.



Syndicated cartoonist Jeff Danziger took aim in 2014 at President Obama’s style of governing

THE WEB HAS ENABLED KOWSAR and Benchemsi to engage new audiences and sidestep both censorship and self-censorship, as it has for Wang Liming, a Chinese cartoonist better known as Rebel Pepper. Wang began publishing his cartoons via microblogging services in 2009, accumulating over 1 million followers. But a year later, when he decided to quit his post at a Shanghai advertising company to focus full time on drawing, he discovered no Chinese publication would run his work. Each time the government shut down one of his microblog accounts, he opened another, something that happened 200 times. “Even some of my readers were detained because they shared my cartoons,” he says. He now lives in Japan and publishes exclusively via social media accounts.

While in Japan last summer, he mocked the mainland government for busing in demonstrators to a counter-protest against the democracy marches then taking place

TOP: NIK KOWSAR BOTTOM: DANZIGER/CARTOON ARTS INTERNATIONAL/THE NEW YORK TIMES SYNDICATE OPPOSITE: MOHAMED ABD EL GHANY/REUTERS



Bassem Youssef, in 2014 at a news conference, announced the end of his Egyptian satirical TV show

THE JOKE IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

The enduring role of satire in free—and not-so-free—societies

BY BASSEM YOUSSEF

WHEN I WAS HOSTING my political satire show, “Al-Bernameg” (“The Program”), on Egyptian TV, I thought that making jokes made you immune to the risks many in the media faced. The Charlie Hebdo killings proved me wrong.

We would like to tell ourselves that accepting satire is a sign of progress. But the truth is, even free societies don’t always celebrate free speech.

In 1962, Chicago police arrested Lenny Bruce on obscenity charges for his stand-up act. He was found guilty of violating state obscenity laws, a verdict that was reversed by the Illinois Supreme Court. A decade later, in Milwaukee, George Carlin was arrested for his now iconic “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.” The obscenity charges against him were dismissed, but the battle over his “Seven Words” monologue went to the U.S. Supreme Court. *FCC v. Pacifica Foundation* established the federal government’s authority to regulate the broadcast of “indecent” speech.

The persecution of satirists, directly by governments or indirectly through public pressure and workplace intolerance, has a long history. In “The Offensive Art: Political Satire and its Censorship around the World from Beerbohm to Borat,” Leonard Freedman details how, during World War I, Robert Minor, who drew anti-war cartoons for the *New York Herald*, was fired when the paper began supporting the war. After World War II newspaper editors dropped Bill Mauldin’s syndicated cartoon over his criticism of postwar America. Mauldin’s syndicate, responding to a wave of canceled subscriptions, censored and altered parts of his work—covering up a swastika in a cartoon that compared Congress’s anti-communist investigations to fascism, for example—before parting ways with him. Bill Maher, the host of HBO’s “*Real Time*,” lost his show “*Politically Incorrect*” in 2002 after sparking controversy by making comments about the 9/11

attacks some interpreted as anti-U.S.

We would like to think that violations of free speech belong to a different and distant era. But after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, French police arrested comedian Dieudonné on charges of condoning terrorism because of a Facebook post interpreted as expressing sympathy for the terrorists. Dieudonné was the most prominent of at least 54 people arrested in France on the Wednesday following the attacks. He was found guilty in March. The question of whether the comments of Bruce, Carlin, and Dieudonné are free speech, hate speech, or just bad taste has been and will continue to be answered according to which side of the joke you find yourself on. But it is always healthy to have this kind of a debate.

Western countries aren’t the only ones being selective about what constitutes free speech. Muslims do their fair share of picking and choosing, too. As a Muslim, I have seen people of my faith become angry about

cartoons they consider insulting to our prophet and our religion. However, these same people don’t become angry when other Muslims seriously tarnish our religion through their actions—ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, and many other lunatics whose actions are not worthy of belonging to any part of human history, not even the Dark Ages.

For me, satire should be directed at the two biggest authorities: the people in power and the people in media. There is absolutely no courage or chivalry in mocking people who cannot answer back. As poetic as it is to think that satire can topple governments and change regimes, it can’t do this. All it does is bring more people to the table. Whether change happens is up to the people, not the satirists.

Satire is an offending art. There will always be satirists who break taboos and make jokes that hurt and offend us and make us uncomfortable. You push the limits, but you have to be careful not to alienate people from your cause.

And there will always be people who, in the name of some higher power—God, national security, freedom—will try to decide for us what should be accepted as free speech, even as they themselves violate the teachings of God, the pillars of national security, and the tenets of freedom. They forget that those who try to tame satire always end up being the biggest source of material for satirists.

Satire will never cease, not because humans are so creative, or because freedom will finally prevail, but because humans themselves are one big joke. ■

in Hong Kong. He shared a cartoon of red-faced Chinese citizens—all dressed the same, some holding Chanel and Prada shopping bags—walking on their knees; a woman holding a portrait of Mao yells, “Let’s show Hong Kongers what it means to kneel for your country.”

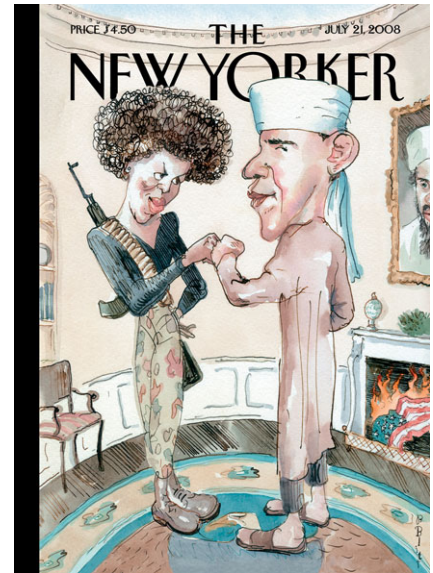
A website linked to the Communist Party newspaper The People’s Daily and its sister publication Global Times, as well as other outlets, labeled Wang a “pro-Japan traitor,” and a fresh batch of his microblog accounts was shut down. Fearing for his safety, Wang decided to remain in Japan, where he continues to draw cartoons and share them online. “I decided to throw away self-censorship,” he says of his decision not to return to China. “It is such a wonderful feeling that I can create cartoons freely.”

South African cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, better known as Zapiro, has decided to stay put, despite death threats he received for a 2010 cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammad on a psychiatrist’s couch saying, “Other prophets have followers with a sense of humor!” Tolerance for satire is a pretty good indicator of the general health of a democracy, according to Carol Hills, global cartoons editor at Public Radio International’s “The World.” “Repressive governments don’t tend to have a sense of humor,” she says. But even in democracies there are red lines cartoonists cross at their own risk.

DESPITE DEATH THREATS, ZAPIRO HAS NO PLANS TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA

Zapiro got in trouble for his cartoons of South African President Jacob Zuma, whom he always renders with a showerhead sprouting from his scalp, a reference to Zuma’s 2006 claim that showering after unprotected sex minimizes the risk of transmitting HIV. Zuma made the statement in court, prior to being elected president, while on trial for rape, a charge of which he was acquitted. Zuma currently faces corruption charges for allegedly spending some \$20.5 million in public funds on his private home.

Zapiro has chronicled it all in his cartoons. In one 2008 drawing, he depicted Zuma preparing to have sex with a blindfolded Lady Justice, who is restrained by men wearing shirts labeled with the logos of various South Africa political groups. “Go for it, boss,” one of the men says. Zuma sued



Barry Blitt’s cover for July 21, 2008 depicted innuendoes about the Obamas

the cartoonist for defamation, but dropped the suit in 2012. Zapiro continues to depict Zuma with a showerhead sprouting from his scalp. “I’ve got this platform to be controversial, to be irreverent, to be rude ... and to help people see things in a different way,” he says. “In most instances, the kind of intimidation that I might feel from politicians or their henchmen just emboldens me.”

“Punching up”—ridiculing the powerful rather than kicking people who are already down—is one of the unwritten rules of political cartooning. For some, Charlie Hebdo’s satirical style seemed to be “punching down,” more about demeaning specific religious or ethnic groups rather than dismantling discrimination and prejudice. “We’re a nation without heroes,” says Khalid Albaih, a Romania-born Sudanese cartoonist based in Qatar, referring to people in the Muslim world. “The only hero for a lot of these people is The Prophet ... When I look at Charlie Hebdo, I don’t understand the

FOR SOME, CHARLIE HEBDO SEEMED TO BE MORE ABOUT DEMEANING GROUPS THAN DISMANTLING DISCRIMINATION



In August, Chinese cartoonist Wang Liming lampooned pro-Beijing protesters in Hong Kong

TOP: ©2008 BARRY BLITT & THE NEW YORKER/CONDÉ NAST ARCHIVES. USED BY PERMISSION. BOTTOM: REBEL PEPPER

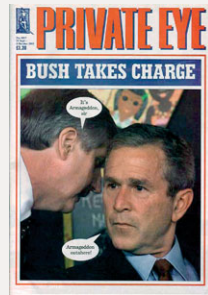
SAYING IT WITH SATIRE

Around the world journalists and cartoonists take aim at the powerful through satire. As is the case with *Private Eye* and *The Clinic*, the satirical humor is sometimes accompanied by first-rate investigative reporting.

— LAURA MITCHELL, JONATHAN GUYER, AND TARA W. MERRIGAN



The Onion, U.S.
Founded in 1988 by two college students, satirical newspaper *The Onion* stopped its print edition and has been online-only since December 2013. It has often done daring satire on sensitive subjects, but it also has angered some with its treatment of traumatic events. In 2011, *The Onion* published a spoof news story reporting that Congress had taken schoolchildren hostage, portraying John Boehner holding a gun to a child's head. In several instances, media outlets and politicians have mistakenly cited its satirical reporting as fact.



Private Eye, U.K.
Since 1961, British magazine *Private Eye* has been offending readers and attracting libel suits with a mix of satirical columns and cartoons, faux news reports, and genuine investigative reporting. Offense was so great to its cover following Princess Diana's death in 1997 that some stores refused to sell the issue. The magazine's post-9/11 cover, headlined "Bush Takes Charge," mocked President George W. Bush's response to the attacks. It depicted an aide informing Bush of "Armageddon" and him responding, "Armageddon outahere!"



The Clinic, Chile
Born out of frustration with mainstream media's timid coverage of former Chilean President Augusto Pinochet's arrest at The London Clinic in 1998, *The Clinic* started out as an underground pamphlet but evolved into the country's leading satirical magazine. Crude humor and photoshopped images grab as much attention as *The Clinic*'s sharp investigative reporting, such as a special issue on Pinochet's reign of terror. In 2010, *The Clinic* beat back a boycott by conservative Catholics, angered by *The Clinic*'s criticism of the pope.



Andeel, Egypt
In Egypt where "insulting the president" is illegal, cartoonist Andeel pushes boundaries. After military leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi ousted President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, Andeel's editors at the popular daily *Al-Masry Al-Youm* grew reluctant to publish his cartoons. So he took them elsewhere—to his Facebook page, the independent online outlet *Mada Masr*, and *Tok Tok*, an alternative comics zine he helped launch in 2011. "You have to make sure your work is strong and speaks for itself," says Andeel, "and you can stand an argument."

concept. You're just calling people ignorant and inciting violence, for absolutely no reason at all."

Nicolas Vadot, vice president of Cartooning for Peace, an organization founded in 2006 by French cartoonist Plantu after violent protests prompted by caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published in a Danish newspaper, offers a different reading. The aim of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists "was to put criticism about Islam on the same level as criticism of other religions," Vadot says. "They were always punching up rather than down. They never made fun of regular people praying or going to the mosque (or rarely). They mostly made fun of those who use religion to gain power and threaten others."

While the pressures on cartoonists working under repressive regimes may be largely political, in the West those pressures can also be social and economic. Like other journalists, political cartoonists have been laid off as legacy titles retrenched after the twin shocks of the financial crisis and the collapse of old business models.

Mark Fiore, whose Web animations for the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s website won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning, suggests one reason newspapers have slashed space for cartoonists is reluctance to offend advertisers. Online, Fiore feels less fettered taking on big oil firms like Shell and Chevron or big banks like Citigroup. "A lot of it revolves around fear," Fiore says. "It's not always fear of

violence. It's fear of losing money in some cases, too, fear of stirring people up and offending people."

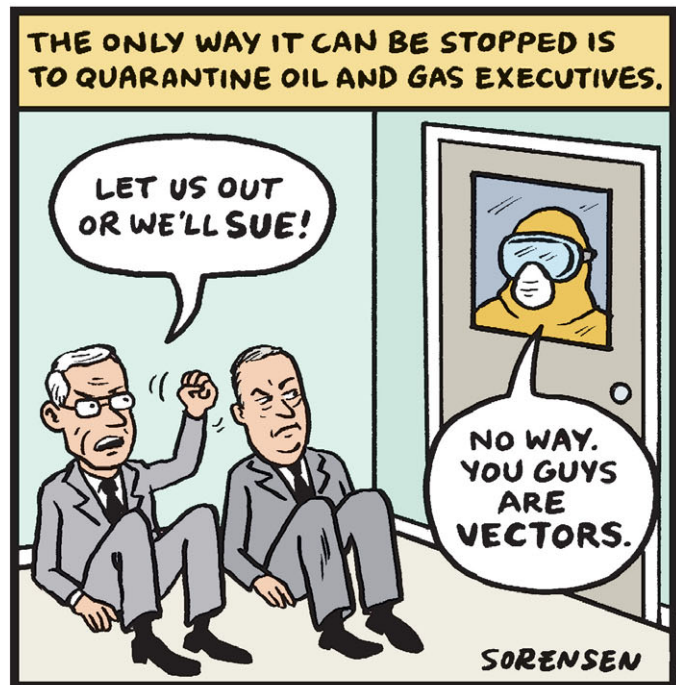
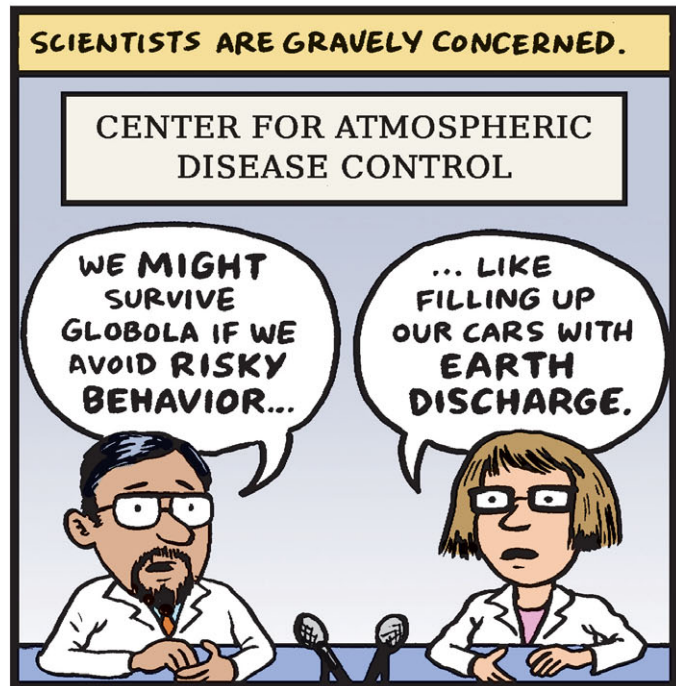
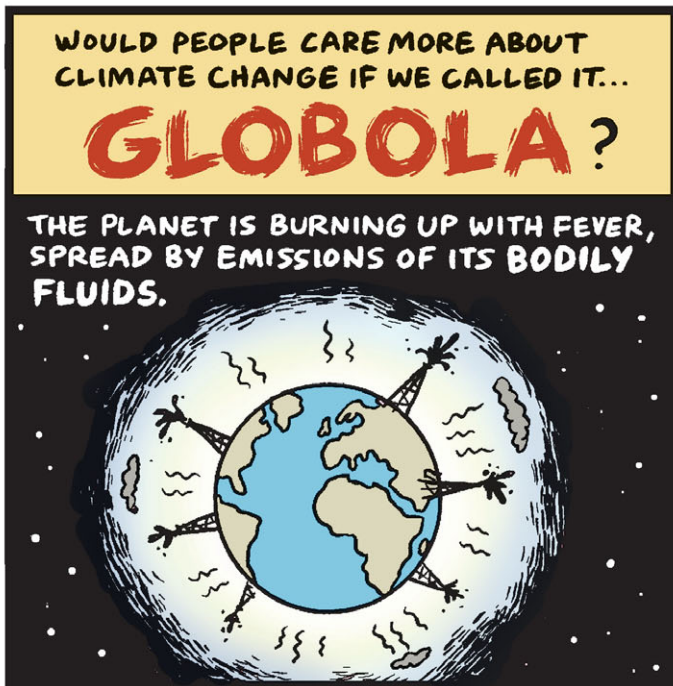
Writing for the *Creators Syndicate*, Ted Rall, a *Los Angeles Times* cartoonist whose work appears in papers across the country, attributed the decline of print cartooning to a perception that cartoonists are not serious journalists. "Corporate journalism executives view cartoons as frivolous, less serious than 'real' commentary like columns or editorials," Rall wrote. He noted that gunmen could never kill four editorial cartoonists at an American paper, as the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks did, because none of the papers have two, let alone four cartoonists still on staff.

Signe Wilkinson at the *Philadelphia Daily News* says she and her fellow cartoonists

provide important entry points into complex stories. “I completely rely on the reporting of everyone else, not just at my papers but in the entire profession,” she says. “I certainly don’t know as much as a specialist in any of the fields, but neither do our readers. Cartoons are sort of an interface between hard journalism and the opinions where most people live.” And that’s an

interface worth preserving, according to Ellen Clegg, interim editorial page editor at The Boston Globe: “At their best, editorial cartoons are satire in the classic sense. They provoke an immediate, visceral reaction. And when you add in the fact that on-line publishing is a highly visual medium, editorial cartoons are an important part of the mix.”

Jeff Danziger, a cartoonist whose work is distributed by The New York Times Syndicate and who has published 11 books of editorial cartoons, believes “American cartoonists have become victims of political correctness”—at least when it comes to hot button issues like race relations or immigration or war in the Middle East. He cites last year’s Thanksgiving cartoon by



Jen Sorenson's 2014 cartoon for Fusion contrasted fears about contracting Ebola with the lack of urgency around global warming

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Gary Varvel in *The Indianapolis Star*: The family patriarch, holding a turkey on a platter, welcomes everyone by saying, “Thanks to the president’s immigration order, we’ll be having extra guests this Thanksgiving,” as three people, including a dark-mustachioed man, climb in through the window. Bloggers called the cartoon racist for its depiction of an immigrant who appeared to be Latino. The *Star* took down the cartoon from its site, and executive editor Jeff Taylor apologized, saying the paper “offended a wide group of readers” and erred by publishing it.

Another case in point is Barry Blitt’s 2008 *New Yorker* cover showing Michelle Obama, outfitted as a 1970s black power radical, and Barack Obama, dressed in traditional Muslim attire, exchanging a fist bump in the Oval Office; an American flag burns in the fireplace below a framed portrait of Osama bin Laden. During the presidential campaign, political opponents depicted Obama as un-American and a secret Muslim. *New Yorker* art editor Françoise Mouly wanted a cover that encapsulated the tensions, and asked Blitt to give it a try. “All those innuendoes, can’t you do something with them?” she remembers asking Blitt. “All of it was being said, but just not being shown as a picture.”

Intended as a mockery of Republicans’ characterizations of the Obamas, the illustration was interpreted literally. The Obama campaign and many *New Yorker* readers criticized the cover. But, for Mouly, the illustration was a turning point: “It held up a mirror to what the country as a whole was doing, making visible the very dangerous insinuations and innuendoes, and providing a vaccination—to take a drop of poison but put it in a place where we could all look at it and deal with it.” Says Blitt, “Finding the line and putting one foot over it ... makes you reflect

BARRY BLITT, A COVER ARTIST FOR THE NEW YORKER, FINDS THAT CROSSING A LINE “MAKES YOU REFLECT ON YOUR TABOOS”



ANN TELNAES
2014

Washington Post cartoonist Ann Telnaes commented on the post-Ferguson racial justice debate

on your taboos and where they come from and what things we wouldn’t say and why.”

The Web may be more welcoming to political cartoons that cut closer to the bone as well as offering cartoonists the opportunity to push the form itself further. Jen Sorensen, a nationally syndicated illustrator who has also drawn for *The Nation* and *The Austin Chronicle*, heads the daily comics page on *Fusion*, a website geared toward millennials. The outlet publishes cartoons on issues important to young people, from unemployment to homelessness to marijuana legalization. One of Sorensen’s latest comics is a graphic novella treatment of a woman who talks about having been raped in college. “It certainly feels like I’m freer to publish probably more controversial subjects in *Fusion* than I would in a daily newspaper that’s trying to be very safe and non-controversial,” says Sorensen.

Ann Telnaes, who trained as an animator and worked for Walt Disney Imagineering, brings a digital native sensibility to her animations, illustrated GIFs, and Vine videos on *The Washington Post* website. And she’s upbeat about the potential for political cartooning in the digital age: “Depending on my idea, I choose the best medium for it, which is a whole different opportunity open to editorial cartoonists now.” In response to reports that Hillary Clinton used her private e-mail as secretary of state, Telnaes published a GIF of the potential presidential candidate digging her own grave; the headline reads: “Hillary 2016.”

Last July, as Israel pounded Gaza in retribution for rocket attacks, resulting in the deaths of seven Israeli civilians and over 1,400 Palestinian civilians, according to the U.N., Telnaes produced an animation showing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu punching a baby while staring at a masked militant, all of which played out against a soundtrack of staccato thuds. Telnaes received sexually violent and misogynistic e-mails in response to the cartoon.

For Christopher Weyant, political cartooning provokes such strong reactions because it has a kind of primal force, in part because of its ability to condense complex issues into simple yet potent images. “Our targets are always those who have power and especially those who are using their power unjustly,” he says. “If you’re walking on the edge of those boundaries, that’s a good place to be.”

For the *Philadelphia Daily News*’s Wilkinson, the most effective political cartoons may initially provoke outrage and condemnation but ultimately promote dialogue, an exchange—in comment strands, on letters pages, at kitchen tables—through which “people actually start talking about it and both sides soften up a little bit. The cartoon isn’t the end. The cartoon is almost the beginning.” ■

With reporting by Jieqi Luo, Tara W. Merrigan, Laura Mitchell, Jonathan Seitz, and Eugenia Williamson

NEED TO

Why in-depth coverage of net neutrality is crucial

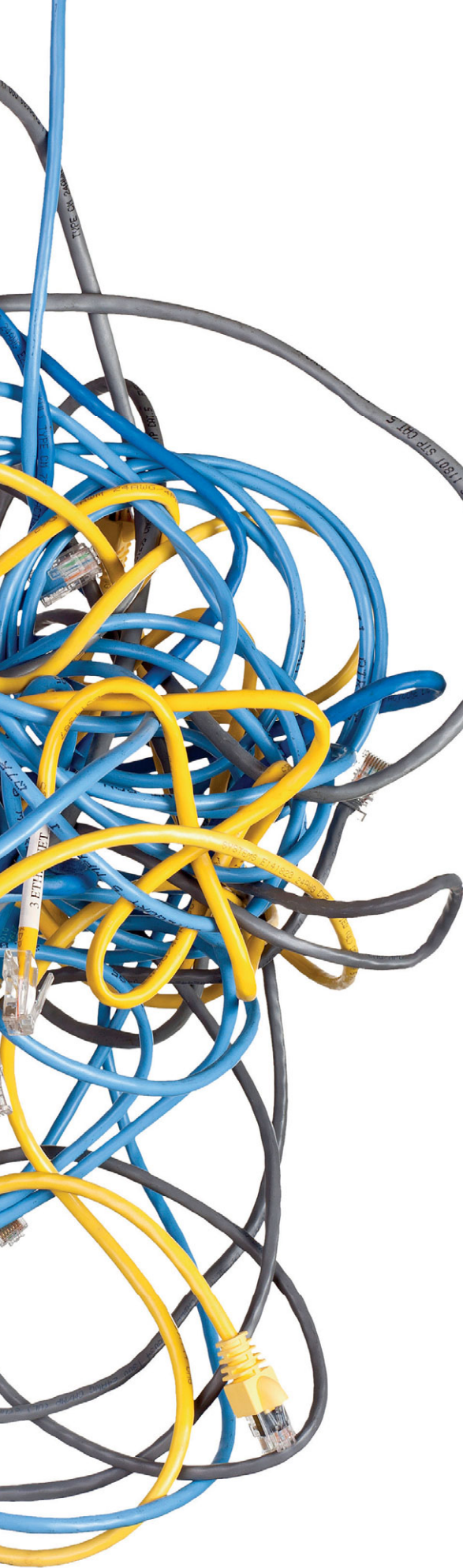
BY MICHAEL FITZGERALD

IMAGINE THAT THE WATER IN YOUR HOME runs more slowly in the morning, when you most need it. Cooking, drinking, showering, and watering the garden are all possible, but they take longer because the flow has been reduced to a trickle. You could shower late at night when water pressure seems to be higher, or you could pay more to the private water company, which regulates flows, for higher pressure around the clock. A handful of communities offer a public alternative to private water where the flow is the same for everyone, all the time.

The media doesn't cover "slow flow" particularly often or particularly well, despite the obvious public interest. Water pressure makes for a difficult story. Most people don't understand how it works; it uses specialized and complex technology; and it involves arcane rules. Plus, some of the private water companies also happen to own some of the biggest news outlets.

Replace water flows with Internet speeds, and you capture some of the challenges journalists face in covering "net neutrality," the idea that Internet service providers (ISPs) should not be allowed to limit the speed at which data flows through their networks or be permitted to charge more to heavy users. Those against net neutrality—including some ISPs, Republican legislators, libertarians, and free market advocates—object to regulation rather than





KNOW

favoring slower speeds. But that opposition pits them against large bandwidth users like Netflix, Google, President Obama, free speech advocates, some prominent members of the media, and most consumers.

The points of contention are many and complex. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and President Obama believe that if some website operators have to pay extra money to get their content to you, that could make it harder for start-ups and small businesses to get off the ground. Free speech advocates and some media experts worry that without net neutrality ISPs could restrict speech. ISPs argue that they should be free to create “fast lanes” for those who will pay for it, and they also say it would be harder to invest in infrastructure if broadband service is reclassified as a public good. They say they will not throttle access for those who don’t pay.

Publishers of video and animated content, from Netflix to video game makers, are concerned since they use a high level of bandwidth. Media companies worry because the Internet is increasingly where the audience is, and some have said they support net neutrality. TV news outlets face an additional conflict. NBC is owned by Comcast, a corporation that also owns an ISP. ABC, parent company of ESPN, is streaming sporting events, and CBS has said it wants to deliver programming via the Internet.

These concerns are not just theoretical. When you post to Facebook or watch a video online, your access to the Internet flows through an ISP, which gives it the potential to act as a chokepoint. According to a 2014 study by M-Lab—a research firm funded by sources that include Internet companies such as Google—at least a few ISPs may have done just that. Between spring 2013 and late February 2014 while Netflix was in dispute with ISPs, the study found, customers in New York and a number of other cities with Internet service from Comcast, Time Warner Cable, and Verizon received unusually poor Internet service, especially compared with service from Cablevision. The slowdowns ended when Netflix agreed to make payments to Comcast. (It made similar deals with Time Warner Cable and Verizon in the following months.)

Net neutrality is a fascinating story “masked with acronyms and bone-crushing technicalities,” says Susan Crawford, a Harvard Law School professor and net neutrality advocate. Juggling these angles and competing interests creates challenges for reporters, including, given the potential free speech issues, whether to advocate for a particular outcome. Journalists who are not activists when it comes to free expression, including preserving the open Internet, “can’t really call themselves journalists,” according to Dan Gillmor, a professor at

Arizona State's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Not everyone agrees. Lucas Graves, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's journalism school, says approaching the story as an advocate could mean missing important nuance. "It's a tremendous opportunity for explanatory journalism that really pushes past net neutrality as a black and white issue," Graves says. "This does have to be understood, in part, as a public affairs question: What is our vision for the kind of information society we want to live in?"

Journalists will get plenty of opportunities to dig into that question. The FCC on February 26th enacted rules that allow it to regulate Internet service like telephone service. It banned fast lanes as well as the throttling and blocking of data. But the story isn't over for journalists. There may be lawsuits, efforts by Republicans in Congress to pass legislation overruling FCC regulation of ISPs, or perhaps an overhaul of telecommunications policy. The FCC also overturned laws in two states preventing cities from expanding their own broadband networks, which could add competition in a field that lacks it.

Brian Fung, technology reporter at The Washington Post, doesn't consider himself an advocate. "My first duty is to explain to the best of my ability," says Fung, the main FCC writer for The Switch, a vertical within Washingtonpost.com dedicated to explaining how government and technology intersect. "I don't think necessarily my role is to advocate for one position or another."

The Post has done more stories on net neutrality over the last year than any other major media outlet, and its coverage was the most influential, according to a study by Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society.

Fung's focus on consumers has led him to periodically pen quick primers, writing in an informal voice and using humor to lighten things up. "It's kind of great because of how complicated [net neutrality]



FCC chairman Tom Wheeler published the net neutrality rules—all 400 pages—online

is," he says. After FCC chairman Tom Wheeler proposed net neutrality regulations in early February, for example, Fung wrote a piece headlined "Everything you need to know about net neutrality now, in plain English," which consisted of a Q&A between Fung and an imaginary reader. The reader asked, for example: "What's net neutrality, and why would the FCC want to preserve it?" And Fung answered: "Net neutrality is an idea about fairness. It holds that Internet providers should treat all Web traffic equally and not speed up, slow down or otherwise manipulate Internet content in ways that favor some businesses over others. It means Internet providers shouldn't slow down services like Netflix, and they shouldn't offer Netflix a 'fast lane' in exchange for a fee."

Fung took a different tack in "Congress wants to regulate net neutrality. Here's what that might look like," a piece of straight reportage looking at why Republicans wanted to use legislation to bypass the FCC while imposing many of the same rules the FCC would likely set. The piece laid out how the industry would accede to consumer protections against having Internet traffic blocked or slowed in exchange for avoiding ongoing regulation. Fung calls these kinds of pieces "milestone stories, a way to check in with

people, so if you haven't been following the story, no big deal: Here's what you need to know."

Though Fung's online coverage is sometimes adapted for the print edition of the Post, he thinks Web and print audiences are different. Fung believes the print audience is more concerned than the Web audience with the specifics of policy-making. It is not uncommon to see stories refer to the potential of regulating Internet service like a utility, but to the Washington insider crowd, Fung says, "utility-like regulation" means price controls, which are, in fact, not part of the net neutrality discussion. If Fung uses those words, he hears from angry consumer advocates, who don't want to give fodder to the ISPs. "It's often a very delicate dance to explain it in a way that doesn't necessarily provoke one side or another, but makes sense to readers," Fung says.

His reporting has led to stories like the one on the split in the civil rights community over net neutrality. While many major civil rights groups are strongly in favor of regulating Internet service providers, others worry that strict regulations will lead ISPs to stop investing in poor neighborhoods and that they might discontinue "zero rating," which means certain data don't count against bandwidth caps. Civil

THE VERGE AND OTHER TECH PRESS EMBRACED AN ACTIVIST ROLE

rights groups worry the FCC might regard these services as a kind of paid prioritization and could call for their elimination. The story showed how what seems like an impenetrable policy debate could impact people's lives.

Some journalists, especially in the online world, have embraced an activist role. The Verge, which has run stories with headlines like "Wrong words: How the FCC lost net neutrality and could kill the Internet" and "We won the Internet back," both written by editor in chief Nilay Patel, is home to some of the most influential. These Verge articles were among the most linked to of any journalistic pieces on net neutrality, according to the Berkman Center's analysis.

The Verge's coverage is far from objective—one article compares the heads of Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T to 19th-century robber barons—but offers astute (if profane) analyses of the regulatory issues. In "Wrong Words," Patel outlines how the FCC created problems for itself when the agency classified ISPs not as telecommunications carriers but as "information service providers." He cites one judge who in January 2014 agreed with the FCC that "broadband providers represent a threat to Internet openness and could act in ways that would ultimately inhibit the speed and extent of future broadband deployment," but ruled against the FCC's ability to regulate them because the information service provider classification put them outside its regulatory purview.

IN REPORTING ON NET NEUTRALITY, it can be easy to fall into David-versus-Goliath clichés that gloss over important nuances. Comcast and Time Warner Cable are the lowest-rated companies in the 2014 American Customer Satisfaction Index, but that doesn't mean they may not have a point in suggesting that Netflix and other big bandwidth users should pay more for access. "Why [does the press] focus on 'big companies vs. consumers?'" asks Neil Sequeira, managing director at venture capital firm General Catalyst Partners and former head of AOL/Time Warner's technology investments. "It is easier to point the finger at providers," yet Sequeira points out that video products take up a lot of bandwidth. In other regulated industries, like electricity, companies do pay more during peak usage periods. Why not for bandwidth? Should consumers who use the Internet for lightweight purposes like

ON HIS TV SHOW, JOHN OLIVER COMBINED REPORTING AND HUMOR TO POWERFUL EFFECT

e-mail and e-commerce pay the same rates as heavy users?

One writer who takes the ISPs' arguments seriously is Jon Brodtkin of Ars Technica. In a piece headlined "Making the Internet a utility: what's the worst that could happen?" he detailed the industry's arguments about how regulating Internet connectivity could hurt profits. He noted where industry concerns about regulation could be valid, as with certain regulations that might be vaguely worded. He also found public comments from ISP executives effectively refuting their own concerns. Despite their concerted campaign to raise fears about regulation, at times ISP executives have suggested that FCC regulations would not significantly affect their business. "Each side says it's Armageddon if they don't get their way," Brodtkin says, "but, of course, that's not true."

Brodtkin, who started his career at print newspapers, says net neutrality is an easier story to cover at a tech site since he can assume his readers already know a lot about technology. But while Brodtkin is not writing for a general audience, much of what he is doing reflects the nuts-and-bolts reporting any journalist should follow. For stories involving regulatory agencies, read the documents, or at least read summaries of the court cases, know the important regulations, and become familiar with the vocabulary, says Lucy Dalglish, dean of the University of Maryland's Phillip Merrill College of Journalism. She also suggests talking to people from all sides of the story to gain context.

Covering net neutrality in a way that's accessible to the general public is a challenge. In fact, some of the best reporting lessons don't come from a journalist at all, but from comedian John Oliver's HBO show "Last Week Tonight," which ran a 13-minute segment on the subject last June. Oliver, of course, can get away with things in the name

of satire that no news anchor could, such as comparing cable companies to mob thugs or describing the Internet as "an electronic cat database." At the end of the segment, Oliver asked his viewers to submit comments on net neutrality, and by the next day the FCC's online commenting system had stopped working due to heavy traffic. It turns out that there had been a record number of public comments received for an agency issue. TV news shows could learn a thing or two from Oliver.

There had not been much TV coverage in 2014 before Oliver did his segment. A Pew Research study found that between January 1 and May 12, on 30 programs across eight major networks (NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox, CNN, MSNBC, PBS and Al-Jazeera America), net neutrality was covered only 25 times, six of them on Al-Jazeera America.

Suzanne Lysak, who spent more than 20 years as a producer, reporter, and anchor and is now assistant professor of broadcast and digital journalism at Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications, says television coverage has increased as the news has gained momentum, particularly after President Obama in November called for strong net neutrality regulations.

But she also says one challenge with net neutrality is that it lacks elements that TV producers like, such as good video. "It's a little bit on the esoteric level in terms of the audience," says Lysak. "In the daily news meeting, it might be labeled as 'not a TV story.'" But Oliver used graphics effectively in his segments, especially a damning one showing how Netflix download speeds progressively worsened on Comcast's network for months, until Netflix agreed to pay Comcast a fee.

Oliver also used an Internet entrepreneur to discuss the issues faced if net neutrality did not become reality. The entrepreneur happened to be himself, with a made-up company, but plenty of real entrepreneurs sent open letters to the FCC and made comments in other news coverage and reports.

The reaction to Oliver's show shows that many Americans care deeply about Internet regulation, if the story is presented in a way that makes the potential impact clear. Diving into the details to make the seemingly complex understandable to a typical reader has always been the job of the journalist. As the debate over net neutrality continues—in public, in Congress, perhaps in the courts—journalists will have plenty of opportunities to tackle that challenge. ■

The Triumph of the Social Platform Distributed content—editorial distributed solely through social media—offers news outlets new ways to build audience and revenue

BY JOSHUA BENTON

LAST AUGUST, WHEN BUZZFEED announced a new \$50 million round of venture capital investment, a lot of journalists heard a new phrase for the first time: distributed content. The company announced it would be spending some of that new money to start a new division, BuzzFeed Distributed, which it described as a team of 20 staffers who would “make original content solely for platforms like Tumblr, Imgur, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine and messaging apps.” In other words, a team of people producing content that will never even appear on buzzfeed.com.

Being on social platforms isn’t new to publishers, of course. But most news sites use Twitter and Facebook as marketing tools, to drive traffic back to the mothership. BuzzFeed Distributed lives only in social streams. It’s an imperfect analogy, but imagine if The Seattle Times hired 20 reporters whose only job was to write stories for the Miami Herald.

Why would BuzzFeed spend millions on producing content for other people’s platforms, with no obvious financial benefit? Well, VC firms do keep handing them money—they have to spend it somewhere. But more importantly, BuzzFeed wants to follow its users’ attention. And those users are in-

creasingly moving to social platforms where publishers’ old tricks don’t work any more.

“I think there’s a good chance that in five to 10 years the Internet is going to look really different, just like it did five or 10 years ago,” BuzzFeed Distributed head Summer Anne Burton told a reporter from journalism.co.uk in August. “And one of those trends might be that people consume media within the places where they’re also networking with their friends. We just want to figure that out and figure out what people like and people share, and establish an audience in those places and show that we’re the best at making things that people love to share.”

If you’ve watched for it, you might have seen a few other steps in a similar direction in recent months:

- Reported.ly, the new start-up from Pierre Omidyar’s First Look Media, was born in December without a website of its own. It has something like a core home on Medium, but its work lives primarily on social platforms. “We don’t try to send people away from their favorite online communities just to rack up pageviews,” editor in chief Andy Carvin wrote in its first post on Medium. “We take pride in being active, engaged members of Twitter, Facebook, reddit—no better than anyone else there.”
- In January, Snapchat, the visual chat app mega-popular among teens, debuted Snapchat Discover, a new space where around a dozen publishers publish stories directly into the app, specially designed and formatted to look Snapchatty. Official numbers are hard to come by, but all indications are that Discover is reaching huge audiences and successfully charging astonishingly high ad rates.
- NowThis, a touted start-up that creates short videos designed for social platforms, abandoned efforts to build a website audience in February in a rather direct way: It killed its traditional homepage. “We were having an easier time getting people to consume our video if it was placed in-feed, rather than linking them back to our website,” said Ashish Patel, its vice president of social media said.
- Facebook, arguing that linking out to news stories provides a bad experience for users, is currently trying to convince news organizations to publish their stories directly on Facebook, not only on their own websites. The lure: Facebook will use its advanced data and technology to make more money selling ads against their content than publishers could on their own—and they’ll each share in the take.

You can see the common line through all these: The triumph of the social platform. In one sense, nothing new—Facebook colonized the world’s eyeballs some time ago. But the pitch to publishers has changed. It used to be: Spend some time cultivating a following of our network—we’ll send you a ton of traffic. That’s now evolving into: Give up some of your independence and step inside our walls—we promise we’ll make it worth your while.

This shift is a predictable result of the rise of mobile devices. When I started using the Web in the 1990s, every website—whether NYTimes.com or someone’s food blog—lived, in a technical sense, on the same level. Each had a URL I could enter into any Web browser. The largest megacorp and the smallest site could live in browser tabs side by side, and the link—the humble blue underline that defined the medium—connected them all as equal citizens of an open platform.

But the iPhone and the rise of smartphones that followed it repackaged the Internet into apps. The open Web became just another app, living alongside all the others. Of every hour an average American spends on his or her smartphone only about seven minutes are spent in the Web browser.

BuzzFeed Distributed is one of the leaders in creating content specifically and solely for social platforms



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, at a conference in 2014, wants news outlets to publish stories on Facebook in exchange for a share of ad revenue

And teens and young readers increasingly aren't just digital natives but smartphone natives. Social platforms are their centers of attention. And newer platforms are—intentionally—not designed to be friendly to news or anything else that wants a share of that attention.

Facebook and (especially) Twitter are built around links—they're hubs that point you elsewhere. That's what can make them such great engines of promotion for news. Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, and others are all about keeping you contained inside the experience. Instagram, for example, doesn't allow linking; the only way to add a link to an Instagram post is to buy an ad. Snapchat doesn't do links either; the only way to direct its users to news stories is to strike a business deal to become part of that Discover platform.

Even apps that might seem more friendly to publishers typically aren't interested in optimizing for their needs. A few news outlets have experimented with WhatsApp, the popular chat app, using it as a sort of breaking-news broadcast service. But the app doesn't make that easy, limiting messages to small groups of users and just generally being a pain. When asked about the complaints of publishers, a WhatsApp spokesman said, essentially: This app isn't

for you, and we're not going to shape it to your needs.

So you have these apps and platforms that draw a huge share of user attention. Fewer people are seeking out a news source directly; they stumble across news in social streams that are decreasingly aligned with the interests of news publishers. That's the context in which distributed content—publishing under someone else's roof—is happening.

What's a publisher to do? There are no easy solutions, but here are a few ideas.

- **Bet on native advertising.** This is BuzzFeed's edge; its argument to advertisers is: We know how to make content for social better than anyone else. Not relying on banner advertising means not relying on pageviews. If it can build successful editorial content on Instagram, it can build successful advertising content

Publishers should consider adopting strategies aimed at seeking more eyeballs from the social stream

there. Native is only going to get bigger in the near term.

- **Focus more energy on the platforms that are still open.** Why have we seen a boomlet in e-mail newsletters? One reason: E-mail is still an open platform, and no one controls access to your in-box. Podcasts? An open standard that anyone can publish to. In both cases, the customer gets to decide the relationship with the publisher, not a middleman.
- **Consider going premium.** Competing for attention (and ad dollars) on the open Web will keep getting harder. Figuring out where you can create high-value products you can charge a small audience for is key.
- **Go for scale.** The reason so much venture capital is pouring into the BuzzFeeds and Vox Medias and Business Insiders of the world is that investors believe they have the chance to be the next generation Time Inc. or NBC or Reuters. Navigating the world created by these social platforms is a task made easier when you're big enough to get noticed. ■

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

Data Is News

Data-driven projects and news-based games should be presented as journalism, not frilly add-ons

BY JAKE BATSELL

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE LAUNCHED in late 2009 with a newsroom of veteran journalists and rising stars. And while that respected crew of reporters, editors, and columnists would go on to unearth their share of political scoops, it wasn't traditional reporting and writing that propelled the Tribune to early prominence. Instead, the Tribune quickly made its name as an interactive resource for readers to do their own exploring.

During its first year the Tribune's biggest traffic magnet was a series of more than three dozen interactive databases that enabled readers to scour their neighborhood's school rankings, look up an inmate in the state prison system, or snoop on their office mate's salary. The databases connected readers to more than one million public records they otherwise might not have known how to find. Collectively these databases were an unexpected hit, drawing three times as many page views as the site's stories.

"Publishing data is news," the Tribune's Matt Stiles and Niran Babalola told readers

This is an edited excerpt from "Engaged Journalism: Connecting with Digitally Empowered News Audiences" by Jake Batsell (Columbia University Press) Copyright 2015 Columbia University Press

in a blog post outlining their philosophy. "It aligns with our strategy of adding knowledge and context to traditional reporting, and it helps you and us hold public officials accountable." Embracing that mentality, the Tribune created what almost instantly became its most popular calling card, a database listing the salaries of nearly 700,000 public employees. The salary database drew a flurry of complaints from state employees who considered it an invasion of privacy and from readers who called it the digital equivalent of "water-cooler gossip." But ultimately it was an easy-to-use tool that connected readers with publicly available information. That ethic of accessibility informs all the Tribune's interactive news or apps. The databases also bring in revenue. For example, each salary listing has its own digital page with several ads placed by corporate sponsors.

The Tribune is part of a growing tide of newsrooms that are creating interactive platforms for readers to use in whatever ways matter most to them. Major U.S. newsrooms have long employed a handful of computer-assisted reporting specialists who acquired data through public records requests, sorted and analyzed the databases, and summarized the most attention-grabbing figures in their stories (or highlighted them in accompanying sidebars and graphics). The approach certainly produced a lot

of worthwhile journalism, but a key element was missing: enabling readers to explore the data themselves. In the digital era that basic expectation of interactivity has become one of the most essential components of effective journalistic engagement.

Aron Pilhofer, executive editor of digital for the Guardian in London, remembers precisely when his mind-set in regard to data journalism changed. In May 2005 the pioneering journalist-developer Adrian Holovaty launched chicagocrime.org, a website that combined Google Maps with data from the Chicago Police Department to create interactive block-by-block crime maps. The site gave Chicago residents the ability to easily track crimes in their neighborhood, regardless of whether the incidents made television news or the metro briefs column in the Tribune or Sun-Times. "It totally changed the way I thought about journalism ... the idea that data itself, presented to readers in a format that they, then, could investigate, could itself be an act of journalism," Pilhofer said during a 2012 training webinar sponsored by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas. That's the hallmark of effective data journalism. No matter how artfully an interactive project is designed, the ultimate test is whether the public can use it.

"If something's useful, it'll live in the wild," said Matt Stiles, who left the Texas Tribune to join NPR's news apps team in Washington, D.C. With every app the NPR apps team creates, for example, Matt Stiles and his colleagues strive to solve a problem for readers—"not just dump it [data] but to let them explore it with a good experience What story are we trying to tell? What is someone going to bookmark and use again? What is someone really going to want?" For example, NPR's mobile Fire Forecast app synthesizes data from the U.S. Forest Service with interactive mapping technology to give users a personalized current assessment of the wildfire danger based on their location.

News outlets can appeal to readers' competitive instincts by pulling them into digital "gamified" experiences that are even more immersive. The Telegraph in London



START

News organizations that empower readers to dictate their own experience follow a number of common practices:



1

Treat data as journalism

did just that during the summer of 2013 with an interactive feature that was fun, compelling, and wonderfully simple—and took only a few days to build. “How to spot a Stradivarius,” published in connection with an Oxford museum exhibit featuring twenty-one of the world-renowned violins, challenged users to listen to three short audio clips and see if they could pick out the fairest fiddle of them all. Users listened to three audio clips, each less than a minute—one played with the Stradivarius, one with an eighteenth-century German violin, and one with a £40 (about \$67) violin from the supermarket. Users dragged and dropped each violin into the box that they thought matched the corresponding clip.

Whether you guessed right or not, the Stradivarius challenge provided a brainy five-minute escape and perhaps the impulse to pass the story along to a friend. Telegraph readers shared the game repeatedly through Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks. When I spoke with members of the Telegraph’s interactive team in London, they said they considered the Stradivarius project a relative success, especially given the minimal staff time spent creating it.

To make a newsgame, ask: Does the game inform? If it doesn’t, it is only a game. Does it entertain? If not, it is only journalism

“It’s not the best, by far,” said Mark Oliver, an online graphics editor who spent roughly half a week creating the feature. “But in terms of the amount of time that we spent building it, it was pretty successful, I think.” Oliver and Conrad Quilty-Harper, an interactive news editor, said they don’t have a fixed formula for gauging the success of interactive games. When a project goes live, they pay close attention to page views, social media shares, and comment activity, as well as more subjective factors like the tone of the comments. The Stradivarius test, which drew roughly five thousand responses from people sharing their results, “was probably a midlevel-high success,” Quilty-Harper said. “But then, some graphics we’ve done have thirty thousand or forty thousand [shares]. If we get something that does fifty shares and we spent three days on it, that’s dramatically unsuccessful.”

On the other hand, a news game that catches on can attract a motivated and loyal subset of users, as the Texas Tribune found in 2011–12 with its daily trivia game about Texas politics, Qrank. Rodney Gibbs, co-founder of Ricochet Labs, which developed Qrank, said the game was designed for those “microboredom moments” when you’re waiting in line or picking up your kids.

Reeve Hamilton, a staff writer, was in charge of updating the daily Qrank quizzes with newsy nuggets and tidbits from the Tribune’s stories and interactive features. “There were a lot of inside jokes embedded in it that you would only get if you were paying attention,” Hamilton said. “It gave people a reason to come to the site.”

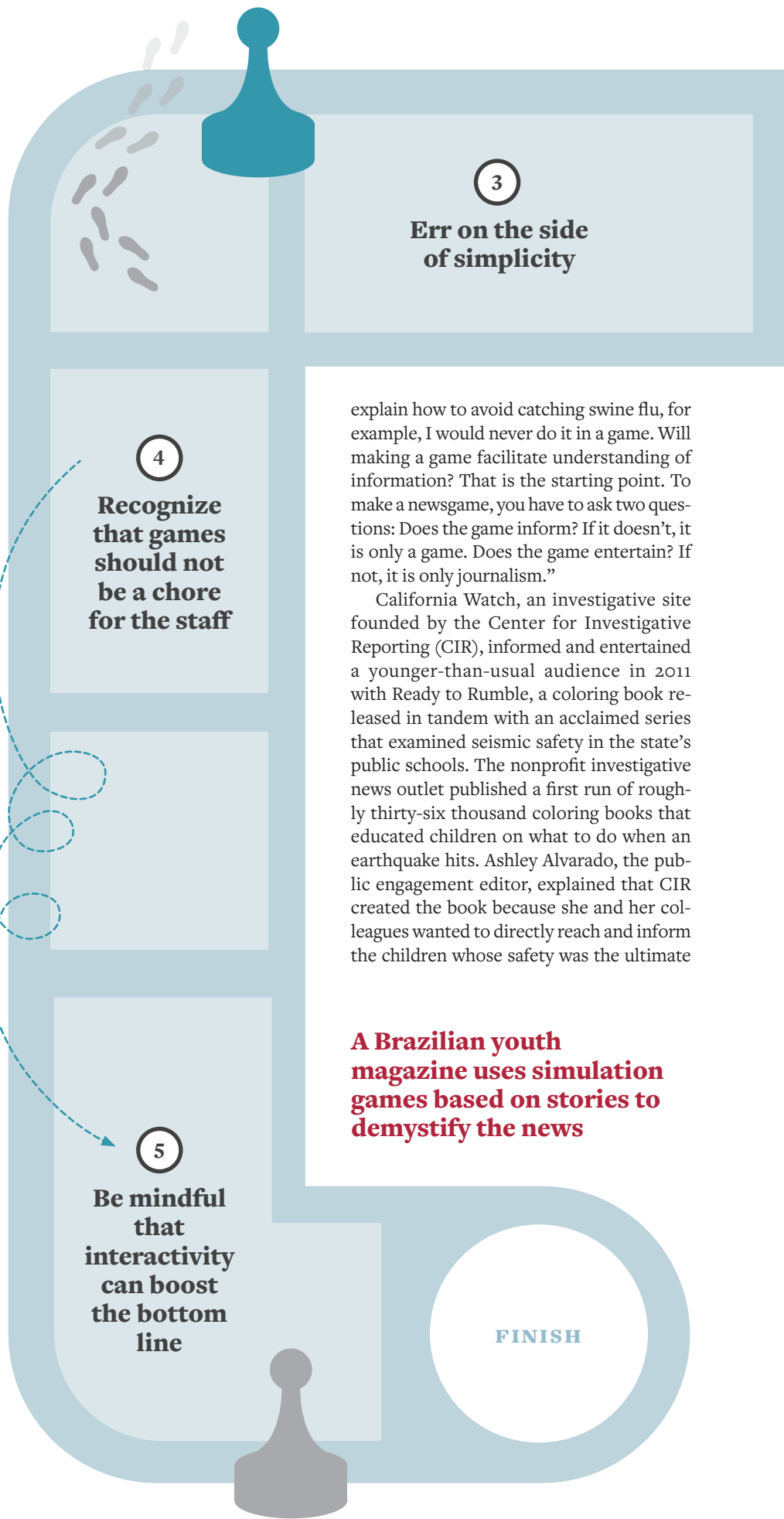
Players accumulated points for correct answers and were ranked on a leaderboard as they competed for monthly prizes worth hundreds of dollars, such as dinner for two at an upscale Austin restaurant. “You basically have to read everything on our site to get a perfect score,” said Emily Ramshaw, the Tribune’s editor. “The facts we stick in there sometimes are so obscure.”

The experiment worked in some ways but not others. Players found ways to cheat. And over time the game became a drain on Hamilton’s time—he spent roughly an hour every night updating the quiz. “It was quite an undertaking,” he said.

Gibbs conceded Hamilton’s point: “For all its strengths,” he said of Qrank, “it took constant feeding.” In September 2012 the Tribune discontinued the Qrank experiment; Ricochet Labs sold the game’s technology to another gaming company, and Gibbs became the Tribune’s chief innovation officer.

Still, during its twenty-month run Qrank created a sense of competition and excitement for the roughly eight hundred to nine hundred unique users who participated each month. Realized to their maximum potential, news games can spread the impact of journalistic projects far beyond their original publication outlet. Nicholas Kristof, The New York Times columnist, and Sheryl WuDunn, a former Times reporter, supplemented their best-selling book “Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide” (2009) with a Facebook adventure game in which players complete quests to unlock actual gifts that support women and girls around the world. Kristof announced on his public Facebook page in August 2013 that the game had reached one million players and raised more than \$400,000 for global women’s causes. “Games can do good,” Kristof told his Facebook followers.

In Brazil, simulation games aimed at young people demystify the news by assigning players enticing roles and missions, such as an undercover cop who poses as a trafficker to infiltrate the mafia. The Brazilian youth magazine *Superinteressante* and its publishing house, Editora Abril, have developed several such games. Fred di Giacomo, the former youth department editor for Editora Abril, describes his editorial process in deciding which topics were worthy of a news game: “First you need to think about when it’s worth creating a game. Is the story I want to tell best told through a game, a post, or an infographic? If I had wanted to



3

Err on the side of simplicity

explain how to avoid catching swine flu, for example, I would never do it in a game. Will making a game facilitate understanding of information? That is the starting point. To make a newsgame, you have to ask two questions: Does the game inform? If it doesn’t, it is only a game. Does the game entertain? If not, it is only journalism.”

California Watch, an investigative site founded by the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), informed and entertained a younger-than-usual audience in 2011 with *Ready to Rumble*, a coloring book released in tandem with an acclaimed series that examined seismic safety in the state’s public schools. The nonprofit investigative news outlet published a first run of roughly thirty-six thousand coloring books that educated children on what to do when an earthquake hits. Ashley Alvarado, the public engagement editor, explained that CIR created the book because she and her colleagues wanted to directly reach and inform the children whose safety was the ultimate

4

Recognize that games should not be a chore for the staff

5

Be mindful that interactivity can boost the bottom line

FINISH

2

Keep the data fresh

goal of the series: “While California Watch articles are written for adults, we recognize that oftentimes children are those most affected by the stories we report.” Several media partners helped cover printing costs for the coloring books, which were translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, traditional Chinese, and simplified Chinese.

Contests also can help individual bloggers build a bigger following, as Mark Luckie discovered years before he became Twitter’s manager of journalism and news. In the late 2000s Luckie started a blog called 10000Words.net that covered the intersecting worlds of journalism and technology. To promote the blog Luckie began to run contests on Twitter, offering prizes as modest as a \$5 or \$10 gift card. “That was the point that I realized 10,000 Words was a business, and I needed to do something to make it more engaging to take it to the word-of-mouth stage,” Luckie said.

The contests helped Luckie engage his core audience and attract additional readers to the blog. Luckie later sold 10000Words.net for an undisclosed amount to WebMediaBrands Inc. (now Mediabistro Inc.), parent company of Media Bistro.

The Texas Tribune returned to the world of news games in May 2013 with the Session Scramble, a photo scavenger hunt held during the frenetic final two weeks of the state legislative session. “Think of it as Instagram with cut-throat competition instead of sepia tone filters,” the Tribune proclaimed in announcing the contest, whose assigned hunts ranged from the newsy (taking shots of demonstrations at the capitol) to the silly (legislators high-fiving each other). Funded by corporate sponsors, the Session Scramble drew 1,243 photos from 244 participants vying for prizes that included a spa retreat and three nights at a Caribbean hotel.

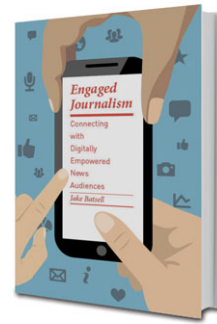
The sheer journalistic effort involved in creating a comprehensive data-driven

interactive project is considerably more intense than a lighthearted attempt to engage readers through a newsy quiz or contest. But from the reader’s perspective, the end result is largely the same: journalism becomes more accessible and participatory.

News organizations that empower readers to dictate their own experience follow a number of common practices:

- **They regard data as journalism—so they treat it that way.** Most news websites follow the conventional practice of leading their home pages with a lengthy story or an embedded broadcast, not an interactive database. But data-driven projects can anchor home pages and should be presented as journalism in their own right, not extras or add-ons. Designing interactive projects to stand on their own also is important because readers are increasingly likely to find them through search or social media, outside their original context on a home page.
- **They keep the data fresh.** To be truly interactive resources, data apps need to be refreshed at least once or twice a year with the most current information available. It’s not always possible to refresh every app, but in those cases news organizations should make clear that the apps are not being updated. “We kind of owe it to readers to keep updating it,” said veteran data journalist Jennifer LaFleur.
- **They err on the side of simplicity.** When building the Stradivarius feature, the Telegraph’s Mark Oliver said the goal was to appeal to novices and experts alike. Ultimately the team opted for an approach based on simplicity.
- **They recognize that games should not be a chore for the staff.** Over time, as momentum for Qrank faded within the Texas Tribune newsroom, the game became a burden for Reeve Hamilton. News games can whip up enthusiasm in, and deepen the loyalty of, core users, but

Posted 10 days before the end of 2013, The New York Times dialect quiz rocketed to the top of the list of the year’s most-visited stories



“Engaged Journalism: Connecting with Digitally Empowered News Audiences”
By Jake Batsell
Columbia University Press

the games take work and can drain energy from other journalistic pursuits. When it’s clear that the energy has waned, it’s time to move on.

- **They are mindful that interactive features can boost the bottom line.** The Texas Tribune’s public salary database created its own digital ad inventory by giving each salary entry an individual page on the site. However, page views are not the only way to make participatory news features pay. The Tribune also seeks out sponsors for contests like Session Scramble and earns several thousand dollars a month from Google by adding sponsored microsurveys to its databases, which earn the Tribune a nickel each time a user answers a question. When newsrooms create interactive platforms that fulfill readers’ needs—practical, whimsical, or otherwise—they must somehow find a way to capture that value. Their survival depends upon it.

At its finest, interactive journalism can provide a riveting and memorable experience that you can’t wait to share with your friends. That happened in December 2013 when The New York Times published an interactive news quiz called How Y’all, Youse, and You Guys Talk. The quiz created a personal dialect map based on participants’ answers to which-word-do-you-use questions, such as whether one drinks from a water fountain or a bubbler. The feature was published with only ten days left in 2013, but it still rocketed to the top of the Times’s list of most-visited stories for the entire calendar year.

“Think about that,” Robinson Meyer, the Atlantic’s technology editor, writes. “A news app, a piece of software about the news made by in-house developers, generated more clicks than any article.” Astonishing things can happen when a news organization invites its audience to participate. ■

1955

William Woestendiek died on January 16 at a Mesa, Arizona nursing facility. He was 90 years old.

He got his start in journalism as editor of the University of North Carolina's student publication, The Daily Tar Heel. During his career, Woestendiek held top editor positions at several newspapers, including The (Colorado Springs) Sun and The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer. He served as director of the University of Southern California's journalism school from 1988 to 1994, when he retired.

As an editor, Woestendiek guided two papers to Pulitzers. The first came in 1965 while

he was managing editor at the Houston Post, which won for an exposé on government corruption in Pasadena, Texas. The second came in 1981 while he was executive director of the Arizona Daily Star. It was for the paper's investigation into the athletics department at the University of Arizona.

Woestendiek is survived by his wife Bonnie, three children, and four grandchildren.

1974

Patricia O'Brien, writing under the pen name "Kate Alcott," authored a novel "A Touch of Stardust," which was published by Doubleday in February. It peeks behind the scenes of the classic movie "Gone with the Wind."

1977

Paul Solman is one of three co-authors of "Get What's Yours: The Secrets to Maxing Out Your Social Security Benefits," published by Simon & Schuster in February.

1981

Zhao Jinglun died on January 24. He was 91.

The first Nieman Fellow from mainland China, he was a columnist for the Hong Kong Economic Journal and The China Internet Information Center, a news site sanctioned by the Chinese government. He contributed articles to The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and The Christian Science Monitor.

He also had held a number of university research posts, including one at Harvard's John Fairbank Center.

1982

Alex Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School, will step down from his position on July 1 after 15 years.

1984

Jan Jarboe Russell's book called "The Train to Crystal City" about a secret internment camp in Texas during World War II was published in January by Scribner.

1990

George Rodrigue started in January as editor of The Plain Dealer in Cleveland, Ohio. For the previous few months, he had been the assistant news director at Dallas's WFAA. Prior to making the jump to TV news, Rodrigue had been managing editor at The Dallas Morning News for 10 years.

1992

Charles Onyango-Obbo launched a Pan-African news site last May. The site, called Mail & Guardian Africa, seeks to bring a "deeper understanding to Africa's possibilities and difficulties today ... give voice to perspectives that both Afro-optimists and Afro-pessimists don't want you to hear."

1999

Dimitri Mitropoulos took over the helm of the Greek daily newspaper Ta Nea in May 2014. As executive editor, Mitropoulos manages 120 journalists. He was previously a political commentator with the newspaper.

"DEADLINE SCHOLAR"

Steve Oney, NF '82, remembers the delightful erudition of Nieman classmate Piero Benetazzo



Piero Benetazzo, NF '82, a longtime reporter for La Repubblica, died of cancer at his home in Rome on January 11. He was 78. Benetazzo, who started his career as a correspondent at ANSA wire service, filed dispatches from around the globe. He covered revolutions in Africa and economics on the continent. The first Nieman from Italy, he was passionate about life, journalism, and justice.

All through that year the parties at Lippmann House never really got going until Piero Benetazzo uncorked a bottle of Freixenet Cordon Negro. To the close-knit Nieman class of 1982, this cheap, sparkling wine summoned not only appropriately high spirits but an equally appropriate heightened sense of purpose. At 46, Piero was the eldest in our group, and he taught us that joy could walk hand-in-hand with knowledge.

A big man with an unruly moustache, swept-back graying hair, and old-world manners, Piero was every inch the dashing foreign correspondent. As a reporter for ANSA in 1968, he was the only Western journalist in Prague when Soviet tanks rumbled in to crush the anti-Communist Prague Spring. He had a world beating scoop. Later at La Repubblica (of which he was a founder) he covered the Iranian hostage crisis, Chile under Pinochet, and the Angolan civil war.

The breadth of Piero's work was impressive, but he was not a hard-news writer in the American tradition. Like the best European journalists of his generation, he infused all that he wrote with a deep understanding of history. The term that truly fit him is deadline scholar.

Part of Piero's charm was that he did not take himself too seriously. He was light on his feet, and as the best so often are, he was humble. He was also a ham. When Rome-based NPR correspondent Sylvia Poggioli, his talented wife, needed someone to read English translations of speeches by important European figures, she invariably drafted him. To a generation of "All Things Considered" listeners, an uncredited Piero Benetazzo was Pope John Paul II.

Although Piero had been an altar boy in his hometown of Belluno, he was nonobservant. Thus Sylvia arranged for his funeral to be held at the Tempio Egizio (the little Egyptian Temple) in Campo Verano. "You're giving him the send-off of a pharaoh," a friend told her. To which those of us in the class of 1982 raise a glass of Freixenet. In Piero's company, everything was possible.

“MENTOR, TEACHER, AND CONFIDANTE”

Mary C. Curtis, NF '06, celebrates the indelible influence of Dori Maynard, NF '93, on journalism



Dori Maynard, NF '93, who died of lung cancer on February 24 at 56, was a trailblazer on the issue of newsroom diversity. She championed broadening the concept beyond racial diversity, arguing that the make-up of a newsroom staff should reflect the communities it covers. After working at the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Bakersfield Californian*, and *The Patriot Ledger* in Quincy, Massachusetts, she took over as president of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education in Oakland, California. Her late father, Robert, a 1966 Nieman Fellow, had co-founded the institute in 1977. Dori became president of the institute in 2002 at a time when some people thought diversity was no longer an issue. Dori knew better and kept on pushing.

You could say I owe my life in journalism to the Maynard family—the people and the institute.

As a little girl growing up in West Baltimore, I knew that my neighborhood and neighbors were stereotyped and caricatured in the newspapers and on the television. But I didn't have a clue about how to make a life in journalism and change those images. The Maynard Institute's Editing Program for Minority Journalists filled in what my college education and early newsroom supervisors left out. This grueling journalism boot camp in Tucson, Arizona honed skills and left its survivors with confidence and direction.

I returned to Tucson to teach in the years the program remained based at the University of Arizona, though my debt could never be repaid. Seeing the successive groups of leaders of every age, place, and race was exhilarating, and it was a balm for the occasional setbacks that occur, even in newsrooms proud of their inclusiveness.

Take a roll call of journalists making a difference and you will hear a variation of my story. Maynard was our finishing school.

I had gotten to know Dori Maynard in the years after Tucson; she bolstered the work of her father, **Robert C. Maynard, NF '66**, and the institute's other co-founders when she took over its leadership in 2002. The “Fault Lines” workshops she led across race, class, gender, generation, and geography taught, as the institute says, “an appreciation for the ways in which those lines shape our perception of ourselves, others and events around us.”

Dori Maynard was mentor, teacher, and confidante, with a combination of passion and sweetness perfect for the tough work she felt she had to do. That work is more important than ever in an America that has grown much more diverse in the years since the founding of the Maynard Institute. The institute changed the life of that little girl with dreams, and it continues to change the world—as the rest of the “family” remembers and steps up.

2001

Mark Pothier has been named assistant managing editor at The Boston Globe. Pothier now oversees the Sunday and Monday opinion sections and has a seat on the Globe's editorial board. Previously he was the business editor.

2004

Masha Gessen's “The Brothers: The Road to an American Tragedy,” about the Tsarnaev brothers, accused of orchestrating the bombing at the Boston Marathon finish line in 2013, will be published by Riverhead in April.

2005

Joe O'Connor is the new president and general manager of WFAE, a Charlotte, North Carolina NPR news station. O'Connor previously spent eight years as general manager at Rhode Island Public Radio.

2007

Craig Welch has left The Seattle Times for National Geographic, where he is continuing to report on the environment.

2008

Dan Vergano has moved to BuzzFeed News, where he is a science reporter based in the media company's Washington, D.C. bureau. He is covering science politics and policy. Vergano previously worked at National Geographic.

Holly Williams, along with the CBS Evening News team, received the Jack R. Howard Award and \$10,000 from the Scripps Howard Foundation for “Holy War,” early coverage of the emergence of ISIS in Syria and Northern Iraq. The judges said, “This early reporting of what is now an international crisis is heroic, farsighted and truly a public service.”

2009

Kalpna Jain is senior education editor at The Conversation US, a nonprofit website that launched last fall to offer news and views from the academic and research community. She works with academics on articles related to research, policy, analysis, and commentary around education issues in the United States.

2010

Alissa Quart's book of poetry, “Monetized,” was published in March by Miami University Press. Quart's poetry takes a hard look at the commercialization of American culture.

2013

David Abel of The Boston Globe received the Ernie Pyle Award for Human Interest Storytelling and \$10,000 from the Scripps Howard

Foundation for “The Richard Family,” a two-part narrative about overcoming physical challenges and living with grief after the Boston Marathon bombings.

Laura Wides-Muñoz joined Fusion in January as director of news practices. She had spent the previous eight years working as a reporter in the Miami bureau of the Associated Press. She is responsible for ensuring that Fusion's journalism meets its standards.

2014

Susie Banikarim has been named vice president of content strategy and audience engagement at Vocativ, a media start-up that seeks to tell original stories using the untapped troves of the Deep Web. Banikarim will be in charge of audience growth, social media, and editorial marketing.

Hard Lessons Getting an education— in and out of the classroom

LAST FALL, I SAT IN ON A CLASS at Harvard University filled with students who were working on graduate degrees in higher education. The professor posed a simple but enlightening question. She asked how many of us had attended a community college, or knew someone who had.

I was among the few in the room of 60 or so people who raised a hand.

I had gone to a community college before earning my bachelor's degree from a small, public university in Florida. But, apparently, a number of my Harvard classmates were unfamiliar with the institutions that serve so many of this country's poorest students, including those who are, like I was, the first in their families to go to college.

As a longtime education reporter and a mother, it was disheartening. Here were dozens of brilliant men and women who undoubtedly will become administrators and other leaders who will help guide the futures of our colleges and universities. They will be asked to tackle problems in areas such as degree completion, but lack important insights into a key piece of the higher-education equation—and a key student population.

Earlier in the semester, I had quietly celebrated the ethnic and racial diversity of the class. I'd estimate that nearly half the students were black, Latino, or from other minority groups. The discussion about community colleges, however, made me rethink what it means to have diversity in educational leadership.

That experience made me think about what diversity means in our newsrooms. As journalists, our backgrounds color how we view the communities we cover and how

we interpret what we see and hear. Our experiences affect what stories we pursue, how we report them, and the importance we give certain news items in our newspapers and on our TV and radio programs.

I write about education through the eyes of the poor. I can't help it. And, really, I think my newsroom is better because of it.

I was born into a family that was too busy trying to make sure everybody ate and had shoes to worry about what kind of education anyone got. My Grandpa Wamsley was a West Virginia coal miner with 20 children, including my mother, who dropped out of school before the ninth grade. My dad was one of eight kids raised on a subsistence farm in the midst of Appalachia. As a teenager and an adult, he almost always worked two or three jobs at a time to pay the bills.

I grew up in a Florida trailer park about 45 minutes south of Daytona Beach. In school, I was the girl who wore the same pair of magenta-pink pants two or three days in a row. I was the kid who devoured everything on her lunch tray—even the soggy broccoli and the bits of lettuce covered in watery orange dressing—because I knew it would be my best meal of the day.

Denise-Marie Ordway



I write about education through the eyes of the poor. And, really, I think my newsroom is better because of it

I was the youngster who hated to miss school because that was where I got love and encouragement from teachers like Mrs. Virginia Allen, who told me I was smart and pretty. It was also my refuge, the place I was safe from the evils that haunted my life—physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect.

Later, I was the teenager who knew little about college or how to get there. I had to figure much of it out on my own. In college, I struggled to find my direction and relied on friends to help me navigate the often-confusing world of financial aid, campus housing, and academia.

These are the experiences I've drawn upon when writing about issues such as teacher quality and college access. When I investigate problems and ask tough questions, I try to represent parents and students who don't have the time or the courage or the know-how to do it themselves.

That was the case in late 2011, when I began investigating a hazing that killed a drum major at Florida A&M University (FAMU). I discovered that school officials had been unwilling or unable to control a culture of abuse that had existed within FAMU's famous marching band for decades.

Over the next year, I uncovered a slew of additional problems, including financial mismanagement and troubling admissions procedures that were contributing to the university's low graduation rates. State leaders demanded big changes at FAMU in Tallahassee. Among the results was a string of firings and forced resignations and retirements, including that of the university president.

I acknowledge that, over the course of my career, I have worried sometimes about not having the same quality of training that my media colleagues have had. I didn't go to graduate school. I didn't even go to journalism school. But I understand the need to hold accountable those who control our schools, colleges, and universities. I know firsthand that education and a positive learning experience can help transform a person's life. ■

Denise-Marie Ordway, a 2015 Nieman Fellow, is a senior reporter at the Orlando Sentinel



Laura Poitras, director of the Oscar-winning documentary “Citizenfour,” is the 2014 recipient of the I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence. Video of the awards ceremony is online

+ NIEMAN.HARVARD.EDU, AWARDS & CONFERENCES

“We don’t stop being citizens if we’re journalists. As citizens there are certain things we’re obligated to speak out against, for instance, Guantanamo being an obvious example.”

—LAURA POITRAS

NiemanReports

Post-Charlie Hebdo Attacks

- French documentary filmmaker Florence Martin-Kessler, NF ’11, on the role of political cartoons in French culture
- Bernard Edinger, NF ’85, on the fears and concerns of French Jews

From the Archives

The departure of labor reporter Steven Greenhouse from The New York Times occasioned stories about decades past when many papers staffed that beat. In its January 1952 issue, Nieman Reports took note of the departure of Louis Stark from the beat. President Harry S. Truman praised Stark as “the dean of all reporters on the labor scene” in the nation’s capital.

NiemanLab

Newsonomics

News industry analyst Ken Doctor’s weekly column examines what’s working and what’s not with business models

“Don’t Try Too Hard to Please Twitter”

The social media desk of The New York Times reports on what it learned in 2014

The Discovery Channel

The Internet Archive has big plans to expand, thanks to a \$600,000 grant from the Knight News Challenge

NiemanStoryboard

Upcoming Conferences

A round-up of narrative journalism gatherings across the U.S. and beyond

5 Questions for Jessica Stern

The expert on terrorism talks about going to the “edge of insanity” to write “Denial,” her memoir about being raped at gunpoint as a teenager

“What 14 Great Writers Taught One Journalism Class”

Journalism professor Matt Tullis pulls together the best advice from guest lecturers whose work appears in The New York Times Magazine, Esquire, The Washington Post, and other outlets

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TO PROMOTE AND
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