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***#ISOJ** Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2017*

Journal Details

About the Journal

About Us

#ISOJ The Journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism is an international journal devoted to advancing the scholarship in the area of journalism and innovative technologies. The editors invite manuscripts reporting original research, methodologies relevant to the study of journalism and innovative technologies (online, tablets, mobile platforms, etc.), critical syntheses of research and theoretical perspectives on journalism today. The journal maintains a social scientific and broad behavioral focus. We encourage submissions from scholars outside and within the journalism and mass communication discipline.

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Editors' Note

Welcome to the seventh volume of the #ISOJ, The official research journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism.

This volume features seven articles from the research papers that were peer-reviewed and selected for presentation at the April 2017 symposium.

This specific issue focuses on the role of audience engagement editors in the newsroom, the impact of product development on the journalism practice, the power of the Medium platform for publishers and independent journalists, and journalists' perceptions of statistics and data journalism.nIn addition, the issue also examines the importance of podcasts in today's news environment, the social capital investment in digital news startups, and the power of digital media on memory of significant news events.

As the journalism field is evolving, this journal serves as important role in documenting how the practice is changing and in what ways. The aim of this journal is to help document and archive the research work of the International Symposium on Online Journalism symposia.

Cheers,

Amy Schmitz Weiss

and

Rosental Calmon Alves

Co-editors

Knowing the Numbers: Assessing Attitudes among Journalists and Educators about Using and Interpreting Data, Statistics, and Research

By John Wihbey and Mark Coddington

Understanding statistics and quantitative information is becoming increasingly important to journalism practice. Drawing on survey data that includes more than 1,000 journalists and 400 journalism educators, this study offers unique comparative perspective on the attitudes of both journalists and educators. Journalists are found to see more value in the use of academic research in journalism, while differences between the groups are not significant on the importance of statistics. Among journalism educators, personal statistical efficacy, rather than possession of a doctorate, best helps predict attitudes in these domains. Implications for data journalism are discussed.

Introduction

American society is entering an era in which doubt about scientific and factual information is deepening—through the popularization of denial of scientific consensus on issues such as climate change or vaccination, and through the recent election of a president, Donald Trump, who defies journalistic efforts to factually characterize his record and policy positions (Rutenberg, 2016). In this context, thorough and thoughtful journalistic reporting based on analysis of empirical data and systematic information is both more greatly needed and more endangered than ever. It is more necessary because a suggestible public needs nuanced explanation of the foundations and limitations of new knowledge being produced by impartial, research-based communities, and more endangered because a lightning-fast, socially driven news cycle obscures public interest in such careful journalism.

Even as the news media environment has been characterized by increased speed and, at times, both greater superficiality and inaccuracy because of social media-driven trends, there have been broad calls for journalism to become more knowledge-based in its approach (Donsbach, 2014; Nisbet & Fahy, 2015; Patterson, 2013). Scholars and media observers who also emphasize the need for broad technological innovation also concede the simultaneous need for more specialized knowledge to help distinguish news, as the web creates an abundance of competing sources on any given subject (Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012).

The nature of training of future journalists in the context of the current media environment is deeply uncertain, but in many ways the challenges of the industry make long-running and unsettled debates over journalism education all the more urgent and important. What skills should be imparted? How much should journalism schools emphasize subject knowledge over technical skill? Who should be teaching the multi-faceted curricula of the present? And what is the best preparation for educators? All of these questions and more have stirred heated argument in the academy for several decades now (Folkerts, 2014; Folkerts, Hamilton & Lemann, 2013).

As society has become more data-driven across many domains, and as software for analysis of all kinds has become more available and less expensive, new possibilities for journalism have come about (Coddington, 2015). At the same time, academic literature on all subjects has become much more available online, creating a wealth of new interpretive possibilities and ways of communicating with and informing the public (Wihbey, 2016). Science—both its methods and its findings—and statistical reasoning generally have become more valuable, yet neither have been traditional strengths of journalists (e.g., Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Maier, 2002; Pellechia, 1997).

Journalism schools offer a key pathway toward improving journalism in these respects, both as the venue in which many professional journalists are trained and as a potentially fruitful connection between the cultures of professional journalism and academic research communities. In particular, as data journalism becomes an increasingly important component of online journalism writ large, there is a growing need for sophisticated training around using and interpreting quantitative information. Yet journalism educators, too, have struggled to implement scientific and statistical literacy for journalists in a substantial way (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013; Martin, 2016). This study asks whether there may be grounds for a convergence in valuing these skills and approaches between journalists and journalism educators—and between factions within journalism educators based on familiarity with scientific and academic research. It investigates attitudes toward the use of research and statistical competency among members of both communities, seeking to locate key points of agreement and disagreement that may have implications for journalism training and practice.

Literature Review

Journalists, Science and Statistics

Journalism has long played a crucial role in the public's understanding of complex issues and scientific research, with the news media being by far the most prominent way the public hears about science (Hijmans, Pleijter, & Wester, 2003; Schäfer, 2012). News coverage has a major impact not only the public, but on the scientific community itself, influencing professional legitimacy, funding, and public support among scientists (Dunwoody, 1999; Schäfer, 2012). Dunwoody (1999) posits that journalists and scientists have formed a shared culture in which they negotiate responsibility for interpreting and publicly defining scientific research, with journalists taking on more definitional authority in cases of scientific controversy. There is a long tradition of journalists and scholars arguing that journalists and scientists have even more than this in common—a shared method of ascertaining reality. Walter Lippmann (1922/1961) famously advocated for this quasi-scientific approach to testing reality in journalism nearly a century ago, and his call has been taken up since then in a variety of forms, not least in Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's (2007) articulation of "objectivity as method" as a crucial element of journalistic practice.

Most prominently, journalist and professor Philip Meyer outlined in 1973 a form of "precision journalism" that borrows heavily from the methods of social science. Meyer argued that scientists and journalists share a fundamental orientation toward reality testing, using mindsets and methods built around skepticism, replicability, and operationalization. Precision journalism, Meyer wrote in the 2002 edition of his guide on the subject, "means treating journalism as if it were a science, adopting scientific method, scientific objectivity, and scientific ideals to the entire process of mass communication" (p. 5).

Yet for all this overlap in topic, purpose, and in some cases culture and method, journalists' record in covering scientific research is remarkably spotty. Journalistic interest in science grew steadily from the 1960s through the 1980s, spurred in part by the space race and environmental concerns (Dunwoody, 2014; Pellechia, 1997). Since then, journalistic references to scientific research have remained largely steady (though very scarce in broadcast news), but have shifted heavily toward medical and health research (Bauer, 1998; Dunwoody, 2014; Pellechia, 1997). A major exception to this is journalism's heavy emphasis on political polling, which falls under the purview of social science. Journalists have made polls a significant part of their political coverage, though they tend to cover them as pieces of political information rather than science per se, with very little information on their methods and scientifically based limitations (Rosenstiel, 2005). Peer-reviewed social science is rarer: In a study of Dutch newspapers, Hijmans and colleagues (2003) found that social science was the most-covered scientific area, but it dropped behind medical research when non-university studies were excluded.

Across subjects, researchers have found that journalists have had substantial problems conveying the findings and characteristics of scientific research accurately and clearly.

Early studies on accuracy of scientific news coverage found it riddled with errors, particularly from the scientists' perspective (Dunwoody & Scott, 1982; Singer, 1990; Tankard & Ryan, 1974). In recent years that concern has shifted toward the amplification of dissenting voices and undue doubt cast on scientific research in the name of journalistic balance, with journalists often using the frameworks of political journalism to cover scientific issues and constructing ignorance rather than knowledge (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Boykoff & Mansfield, 2008; Stocking & Holstein, 2009). Across all of these cases, the most consistent complaint regarding news coverage of science is that is simply incomplete—bite-sized coverage of scientific research, with little attention to the context in which a study appears or the process by which it was produced (Pellechia, 1997). News coverage of science tends to overemphasize studies' uniqueness and scientific contribution and dramatically downplay their limitations, with minimal space devoted to their methods (Dunwoody, 2014; Hijmans et al., 2003; Pellechia, 1997).

The lack of attention to research methods in particular has a variety of causes: Journalists are eager to emphasize the newsworthiness of their story subjects and minimize any elements that might detract from that; they trust their sources and often unquestioningly adopt their ways of understanding reality (Dunwoody, 2014; Pellechia, 1997). But just as significantly, journalists' circumvention of methodological details reflects their long-held avoidance of statistics and numbers more broadly. "Mathematical incompetence among journalists is legendary," notes Maier (2002, p. 507), and his study provides some weight to that popular conception, finding dozens of types of mathematical errors in a month-long review of a single American newspaper, many of them very simple.

Yet despite the documented difficulties journalists display with numbers, there is also evidence that journalists' fear of numbers outstrips their actual inadequacy with them. In a study of the same newspaper, Maier (2003) found that a lack of mathematical confidence persisted even among journalists who performed well on a numeracy assessment or who had received good grades in math in school. This lack of confidence can lead journalists to avoid mathematical or statistical representations in news, even ones they may be capable of doing accurately themselves (Curtin & Maier, 2001; Livingston & Voakes, 2005). That this fear of numbers leads to an avoidance of statistics is especially unfortunate because mathematics and statistics are different things, and an understanding of statistics does not necessarily require an understanding of advanced mathematical functions. As Nguyen and Lugo-Ocando (2016) note, because most of the datasets that journalists use are pre-packaged, all journalists often need to evaluate and accurately present it is a questioning mindset and basic statistical reasoning.

This phobia has damaging consequences for journalism, not only in the science news inaccuracies and omissions described above, but for news coverage across a variety of subjects, ranging from business to politics to sports. Now at least as much as ever, news is quite often built around numbers. "Even when we journalists say that we are dealing in facts and ideas, much of what we report is based on numbers," note Cohn, Cope, and Runkle (2012, p. 3) in their guide to statistics for journalists. In addition to allowing journalists to avoid errors and more fully report on number-related stories, a facility with figures gives journalists more independence from their sources, allowing them to evaluate and interpret statistical information for themselves without relying on the source that provided it to them. Journalists widely recognize the importance of numeracy and statistical literacy, even those who are anxious about numbers in their work (Curtin & Maier, 2001; Livingston & Voakes, 2005). And while innumeracy and statistical anxiety persist among journalists, statistical reasoning is taking on a greater prominence within several forms of journalism through the rise of data journalism and computational journalism (Coddington, 2015).

The political analysis of Nate Silver and his colleagues at FiveThirtyEight, in particular, has brought to bear the methods of social science on political polls through a more statistically sophisticated approach to evaluating survey data, and newsrooms around the world, large and small, have incorporated data analysis and visualization more deeply into their everyday newsgathering operations (Fink & Anderson, 2015). Despite the weight of decades of journalists' recorded and perceived statistical inadequacy, it remains possible for them to develop a more thorough approach to both statistics and scientific research in their work.

The Journalism-Academy Divide

The relationship between the news industry and journalism education is an important link in explaining and resolving these deficiencies. The realm of journalism education represents the closest point of contact many journalists have with the intellectual and (social) scientific work of academy—it is the academic realm in which many of them were educated and the one whose research most closely relates to their own professional worlds. And it is also the most appropriate place to spearhead the fight against journalists' fear of and difficulty with statistics and numbers. But academic journalism education has faced its own set of pressures and challenges that have made it difficult to guide journalists toward deeper and more sophisticated coverage scientific and statistical issues.

Journalism education is defined by its marginality. It is caught between the academy and the profession—too skills-based and professional to be granted full legitimacy by the academy and the universities of which they are a part, and too bound up in the culture and priorities of academia to be seen as properly useful by the news industry. The result is a field without clout in the academy and often disdained by the profession it was established to serve (Deuze, 2006; Hamilton, 2014; Reese, 1999). The criticism of journalism education has been withering at times from within the industry (Lewis, 1993), elsewhere in the academy (Hamilton, 2014), and from within, as when communication professor Robert Picard told a gathering of journalism educators in 2014 that journalism education "has not developed a fundamental knowledge base, widely agreed upon journalistic practices, or unambiguous professional standards. Large numbers of journalism educators have failed to make even rudimentary contributions toward understanding the impact of journalism and media on society" (2014, p. 5).

The critiques from the news industry have been the most persistent and salient.

Journalists often see journalism education as unnecessary for or even irrelevant to their work; a 2013 Poynter Institute survey found that while 96% of journalism educators saw a journalism degree as very or extremely important for understanding the values of journalism, just 57% of professionals said the same (Finberg, Krueger, & Klinger, 2013). In recent years, that derision has centered on journalism schools' perceived inability to adapt to rapid technological changes in the industry (Folkerts, 2014; Lynch, 2015).

Complaints about journalism education's failure to keep pace with (or even lead) the profession have often been rooted in a concern that journalism education is too academic—too focused on research, and too highly valuing academic credentials over professional experience. This critique has echoed through the decades, going back even to the origins of journalism education in the late 1800s, and it was most famously expressed in the Freedom Forum's 1996 Winds of Change report, which called for journalism programs to de-emphasize theoretical courses and add faculty with deeper professional experience (Fedler, Counts, Carey, & Santana, 1998; Folkerts, 2014; Medsger, 1996). Some academics have met this criticism with the argument that journalism education has been stifled by the opposite—being too beholden to the profession, allowing the news industry to dictate its goals and focus overwhelmingly on producing entry-level news workers, to the detriment of sustained intellectual activity and innovation (Picard, 2014; Reese, 1999).

Some of that conflict between professionals and journalism educators has centered on the doctorate in particular as a marker of academic fitness (or obsolescence, as the case may be). For many professionals, the doctorate represents an unnecessarily onerous barrier to entry into journalism education that privileges esoteric research and keeps out experienced and qualified professionals. For many journalism academics, the degree "demonstrates a commitment to the academic profession and cultivation of certain habits of mind and inquiry" (Reese, 1999, p. 86). This split has long run through many journalism programs, with academics and professionals—often marked as those with and without doctorates—struggling for power over the program's hiring, resources, and curriculum (Folkerts, 2014; Reese & Cohen, 2000). The Winds of Change report argued that a substantial number of journalism school faculty had doctorates without relevant professional media experience and that many faculty members said a doctorate shouldn't be a necessary criterion for hiring (Medsger, 1996). Fedler and colleagues (1998) found that while most journalism faculty members had doctorates (between 66% and 89%, depending on specialty), many of those doctoral degree holders also had substantial professional experience. Many journalism schools have opted to take what Reese calls an "ecumenical view" (1999, p. 80), hiring both those with doctorates \and without, though this has not necessarily resolved the tension between the two groups.

Statistical Education of Journalists

Journalism education's status straddling the theoretical and the practical and its attempts to keep up with a rapidly changing industry have left many programs with substantial challenges in providing training in a full complement of journalistic skills and concepts, and statistical reasoning and numeracy are no exception. Several studies have found that statistical and mathematical training for journalism students is lackluster, and often outsourced to other academic units. Cusatis and Martin-Kratzer (2010) found that 64% of U.S. journalism programs required three or fewer general education credits in math, and just 12% offered a math-oriented course within their own units. Of those journalistic math courses, two-thirds were elective. Regarding statistics, in a survey of administrators, Dunwoody and Griffin (2013) found that 36% of U.S. journalism programs required most or all of their students to take a statistical reasoning course within journalism, while Martin (2016) found in a review of program requirements that just 19% of U.S. programs required journalism majors to take a statistics course, and none of them offered a course themselves that met the requirement. Journalism administrators preferred to incorporate math and statistical reasoning into a variety of courses rather than a standalone, though the depth of that incorporation is unclear (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013).

Journalism educators may not offer much in the way of statistical and mathematical training, but they're eager to publicly affirm its importance. In surveys, large majorities of journalism educators have repeatedly asserted the importance of statistical literacy and numeracy for journalists—even more than journalists themselves (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013; Finberg et al., 2013). "Administrators seem convinced of the importance of such learning but remain unwilling or unable to muster training responsive to the need," note Dunwoody and Griffin (2013, p. 535). So what's holding them back? Researchers have cited a number of factors, some of them structural: Lack of room in the curriculum—sometimes exacerbated by accreditation requirements—has been cited as a chief factor (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Griffin & Dunwoody, 2016). Another major obstacle cited by educators is a distaste for such subjects among their students. Many administrators have said their students try to avoid statistical or math training, or lack even the basic mathematical aptitude to do well in such courses (Berret & Phillips, 2016; Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013). Data show the latter concern in particular is unfounded; journalism students enter college with no worse mathematical scores on college entrance exams than their peers in other disciplines (Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013; Nguyen & Lugo-Ocando, 2016).

Journalism students' aversion to statistical training may well be fueled in part by their instructors' lack of emphasis of the skill as a crucial component of good journalism. Administrators have expressed skepticism that their faculty have the expertise to teach data analysis skills (Berret & Phillips, 2016; Yarnall, Johnson, Rinne, & Ranney, 2008). Dunwoody and Griffin (2013) found that 53% of journalism education administrators said most of their faculty would have difficulty teaching statistical reasoning in their courses, though another study rated it as a low concern (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010). A lack of faculty expertise in data and statistical reasoning might seem an odd barrier in a field whose research is primarily quantitative social science, though many journalism educators are also former journalists, having come from the often statistically apprehensive culture of the traditional newsroom.

In the classroom, too, the rise of data journalism creates the possibility for a surge in statistical and numerical education for journalists. With demand for data skills rising within the news industry, many journalism programs are scrambling to respond, whether that involves developing entirely new programs or concentrations (such as Columbia University's dual master's program in journalism and computer science) or new courses in data analysis and visualization (Griffin & Dunwoody, 2016). With both the profession and academy moving on parallel tracks toward greater emphasis on statistical reasoning and data-driven forms of evidence, this study examines the degree to which the perspectives of professionals and journalism educators diverge regarding the value of academic research and statistical analysis in journalism, as well as the differences between journalism educators with and without extensive academic backgrounds. To that end, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the attitudes of professional journalists and journalism educators regarding the value of academic research in journalism?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the attitudes of journalism educators with and without doctoral degrees regarding the value of academic research in journalism?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the attitudes of journalism educators with and without statistical efficacy themselves regarding the value of academic research in journalism?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the attitudes of professional journalists and journalism educators regarding the value of statistical literacy in journalism?

RQ5: What is the relationship between the attitudes of journalism educators with and without doctoral degrees regarding the value of statistical literacy in journalism?

RQ6: What is the relationship between the attitudes of journalism educators with and without statistical efficacy themselves regarding the value of statistical literacy in journalism?

Methodology

Sample

The survey took advantage of unique access to a wide distribution list assembled by Harvard University's Journalist's Resource project, run by the Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics and Public Policy. The online survey was sent out in September 2015 to a large initial list of more than 20,000 individuals in an attempt to recruit the target population of journalists and journalism educators. Access to this list was provided at no cost. Two email reminders about the survey were sent over the course of the subsequent three weeks.

The list included 8,964 identified journalists and media educators, as well as other academics, researchers, information industry workers, government employees, students, and others. The survey featured an initial screening question that asked respondents to identify their profession/roles. There were 2,140 respondents who self-identified in the journalist and media educator categories (these included freelancers/part-time journalists and communications instructors), yielding a response rate of 24% among those groups. Of course, it is possible there were journalists or media educators on the initial list who were not identified, which would bring down the response rate among those groups. There were 1,118 full-time working journalists and 403 respondents who self-identified as journalism instructors. Two adjacent groups were excluded from the analysis: Those who work in a profession other than journalism but do occasional freelance work (N = 461), and 158 respondents who identified themselves as mass communication instructors. This analysis, therefore, has the advantage of comparing two core groups and relatively undiluted samples: those who work full-time in journalism with those specifically teaching the practice of journalism.

The survey results represent an online convenience sample, but the underlying characteristics mirror those of the general population of U.S. professional journalists. For example, the 1,118 journalists surveyed were 46% female, slightly higher than the proportion of women found in U.S. newspapers, though close to the proportion found in TV and online-only newsrooms (ASNE Diversity Survey, 2016; Papper, 2016). The median age in journalism has also been rising and stands at about 47 (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). About 62% indicated they had worked in journalism for 20 years or more, with an additional 21% having 10-19 years of experience and 17% with fewer than 10 years. If experience measurements are used as proxies for age, the survey sample does not skew substantially toward older or younger journalists. Further, 93% of journalists in the sample indicated that they have a bachelor's degree; this is virtually identical to 92% figure that Willnat and Weaver (2014) produced in their random sample. (Among journalists examined in this paper's analysis, 49 indicated they had a Ph.D. or other doctoral degree, 412 had a master's degree, 579 had a bachelor's, and 78 had less than a bachelor's.) Of the journalists analyzed in this study, 545 worked in newspapers, 140 in television/video, and 138 in audio/radio/podcasts, a distribution across news media that also roughly corresponds with the Willnat and Weaver (2014) survey.

Likewise, the group of 403 journalism instructor survey respondents appear to be roughly in line with other surveys of journalism educators. The group was 51% female, which compares closely to the most recent ASJMC annual survey total of 46% female journalism educators (Becker, Vlad, & Stefanita, 2015). In our sample, 48% were at research universities, 48% at teaching-oriented or liberal arts institutions, and 3% at community or technical colleges. In terms of their primary preparation for work, 46% cited having been a professional journalist, 15% cited an academic advanced degree, 30% cited a mix of professional journalism and a training degree, and 8% cited a communications background. The distribution of academic degrees among our sample diverges from the ASJMC sample; specifically, 35% of the educators in our sample indicated they had a Ph.D., 50% had a master's degree, and 14% had a bachelor's degree, whereas the ASJMC survey indicates 55% of educators with a Ph.D., 35%

with a master's degree, and 8% with a bachelor's (Becker, Vlad, & Stefanita, 2015). The ASJMC survey, however, includes all types of faculty at journalism and mass communication programs, including many professors who predominantly teach mass communication, often at the graduate level, who are more likely to have Ph.D.s, while ours focuses strictly on journalism instructors.

Variables

The attitudes of journalists and educators were solicited together on the survey on a group of questions for the purposes of comparing evaluations of the importance of research and statistics in journalism. For the first of the three dependent variables, regarding the value of academic research, respondents were asked how much value they believed academic research has for journalists in five items: 1) Deepening story context; 2) Improving the framing of a story; 3) Strengthening the story's accuracy; 4) Providing ideas for follow-up stories; 5) Countering inaccurate or misleading source claims. For each response, they were given the following choices: Very important; Somewhat important; Not very important. For the purposes of a proportion test, in each case answers indicating "very helpful" were compared against the aggregate of the other two and a proportion test was conducted. The five items were combined into a single variable for overall value of academic research for journalism (Cronbach's α = .881).

The other two dependent variables measured how important journalism educators rated statistical knowledge or literacy in journalism. Respondents were asked how important it is for journalists to be able to do statistical analysis on their own and interpret statistics generated by other sources. For these variables, too, answers were recoded into two groups: "very important" in one group and both "somewhat important" and "not very important/unimportant" in the other. There was a third question in this survey section regarding the importance of using statistical knowledge for the purposes of interpreting research studies, but its findings were excluded here, as it did not contribute to internal consistency among the three questions (Cronbach's α = .553) and therefore the variables could not be combined.

One independent variable employed in the analysis was simply the attainment of a doctorate. The other independent variable was a combined measure relating to respondents' own assessment of their ability to perform data analysis. They were asked how equipped they were on three measures: 1) Do statistical analysis on your own; 2) Interpret statistics generated by other sources; 3) Interpret research studies. The choices offered were: Very well equipped; Somewhat equipped; Not well equipped. The three items were combined into a single variable, statistical efficacy (Cronbach's α = .885). In addition, the respondents' gender (51.1% female) was included as a variable because gender has been associated with math and statistical anxiety among journalists and others (e.g., Maier, 2003).

To compare journalists and educators as groups, the data were analyzed through a chi-square proportion tests. Further, in order to examine the underlying causes of attitudes among educators, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between educators' attitudes and both their educational attainment level and their statistical efficacy. Analysis was conducted via SPSS.

Results

Overall, journalists saw much more promise in the power of academic research to help improve journalism practice as compared to educators, though there were few significant differences between journalists and journalism educators on questions regarding the importance of statistical literacy for journalism. Among educators, there were two significant positive associations between statistical efficacy and their attitudes about both academic research and statistics; however, degree attainment showed no significant association.

RQ1 addressed the relationship between attitudes among professional journalists and journalism educators regarding the value of academic research in journalism practice. Across the five combined items measuring the perceived value of academic research for journalism for RQ1, 47.7% of journalism educators ($n = 403$) rated academic research "very helpful" for journalism on various measures compared to 66.4% for journalists ($n = 1{,}118$), a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2 = 180.71$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Professional journalists, then, showed stronger support for the importance of academic research in journalism practice than did educators.

We then examined differences among journalism educators' attitudes about the value of research for journalists, both regarding their own educational attainment (RQ2) and their statistical efficacy (RQ3). As the results in Table 1 show, whether or not a journalism educator has attained a doctoral degree was not a significant predictor of support for the idea that academic research has value for journalists in logistic regression analysis ($\beta = -.144$, $p = .953$), but educators with more statistical efficacy were significantly more likely to see the value of academic research in journalism ($\beta = .563$, $p < .05$).

RQ4 addressed the differences between professional journalists and journalism educators on their attitudes toward the value of statistical literacy for journalism. The statement that journalists should be able to "do statistical analysis on their own" drew about the same amount of support as "very important" from journalists (40.6%, $n = 881$) and educators (35.7%, $n = 342$; $\chi^2 = 2.341$, $df = 1$, $p = .126$). Likewise, journalists and educators were about equally likely to rate as "very important" that journalists should be able to "interpret statistics generated by other sources" (80.2% of journalists, $n = 882$; 78.6% of educators, $n = 341$), a non-significant difference ($\chi^2 = 0.283$, $df = 1$, $p = .595$).

On these items, too, we tested differences in attitudes toward statistical literacy among journalism educators between those with and without a doctoral degree (RQ5) and those with greater or lesser statistical efficacy (RQ6). In logistic regressions, having a doctoral degree did not predict that a journalism educator would see greater value in statistical literacy for journalism (see Table 1), either to do statistics on their own

($\beta = .253$, $p = .649$.) or to interpret statistics generated by other sources ($\beta = -.287$, $p = .501$).

But journalism educators with more statistical efficacy themselves were significantly more likely to value the journalistic ability to interpret statistics generated by other sources, ($\beta = 1.001$, $p < .05$). However, educators with more statistical efficacy were not more likely to see the value of journalists' ability to do statistical analysis on their own ($\beta = -.091$, $p = .870$).

As a control variable in the logistic regressions, gender did not play a significant role in predicting attitudes on the value of academic research or statistical literacy among educators. We also conducted proportion tests based on male and female respondents' perception of the usefulness of academic research and statistical literacy, and there no significant difference by gender among educators, though among journalists, female respondents were more likely to rate academic research ($\chi^2 = 50.597$, df = 1, $p < .001$) and statistical literacy ($\chi^2 = 12.063$, df = 1, $p < .001$) "very important" for journalism.

The overall effect sizes of the regression models were limited, with the largest Nagelkerke's R2 being .051 for the importance of journalists being able to interpret statistics generated by other sources.

Table 1

Logistic regression predicting attitudes among journalism educators toward journalistic importance of academic research and statistical literacy

	Value of academic research for journalism β(SE)	Importance of capacity for statistical analysis β(SE)	Importance of capacity to interpret others' statistics β(SE)
Gender (Female = 1)	.206(.24)	-1.150(.60)†	-.427(.41)
Statistical efficacy	.563(.26)*	-.091(.56)	1.001(.42)*
Ph.D./doctoral degree	-.144(.25)	.253(.56)	-.287(.43)
Constant	-.197	-1.622	-2.844**
N	403	403	403
Pseudo R^2	.022	.043	.051

Notes: Entries are the result of three binary logistic regressions that included all variables in a single model for each dependent variable. Pseudo R^2 is Nagelkerke's R^2.
† p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Discussion

This study has two primary findings regarding attitudes toward academic research and statistical literacy, one that might be expected and other more counterintuitive. Somewhat surprisingly, journalists placed a higher emphasis than journalism educators on the value of academic research to journalism, even though the journalism educators are the ones operating within the academy. Among journalism educators, those attitudes did not significantly vary based on possession of a doctoral degree, though educators' statistical efficacy was a significant predictor of valuing academic research and statistical literacy for journalists.

To understand why journalism educators had less faith in the power of university-generated research insights than their counterparts in the industry, it is important to consider that those educators' backgrounds tend to be more professional and less academic than their peers in the academy. About three-quarters of the 403 journalism educators surveyed overall reported getting some significant part of their primary training for academia through the media industry: 46.1% cited professional journalism as their primary training, while another 30.5% cited a mix of journalism and academic training. Few (15.1%) reported coming to college or university teaching purely through academic training, with 35% of the sample reported having a doctorate. Many may have left the industry too long ago to witness from the newsroom the flurry of very recent knowledge-related innovations enabled by the Internet—whether the rise of online scholarly databases, the movement toward open-access online publishing of research, or the open publication of millions of datasets—and to see first-hand their importance to a quickly changing news industry.

Another explanatory hypothesis for these results, which merits further investigation, may be that journalists and journalism educators have different conceptions of academic research as it relates to the practice of journalism. Working journalists may increasingly see the value of incorporating research-based knowledge from across disciplines into their stories (and into their own backgrounding and sourcing routines), while journalism educators—perhaps habituated to conceive of academic research more in terms of communications and journalism studies—may have their own field in view and thus acknowledge the relative narrowness of much media-oriented research. In other words, contained in these results may be an implicit critique of journalism studies research by scholars themselves as it relates to journalism practice. Again, though, such a hypothesis would need to be confirmed by more detailed survey research. It may be notable, however, that there were no significant differences between journalists and journalism educators in the perceived journalistic value of statistical literacy; divergence only emerged regarding academic research, which may indicate that the two groups had different referents in mind when considering that research.

Among journalism educators themselves, this study suggests that the old division between the academic "chi-squares" and the professional "green eyeshades" has softened and become more complex, at least on this issue (Highton, 1989). Where one might expect the academically based journalism educators to be more statistically minded and research-inclined, we found no significant differences between those with and without doctoral degrees. This matches the trajectory of quantitative journalistic education over the past two decades: while mass communication researchers continue to push into more statistically sophisticated modes of inquiry, many of the field's leaders in computer-assisted reporting and data journalism instruction—such as Brant Houston, Steve Doig, and Sarah Cohen—have come straight from the news industry. In addition, it's possible that quantitatively minded, Ph.D.-holding academics have compartmentalized their statistical knowledge, seeing it as something that applies to their mass communication research more readily than journalism itself. In this sense, it is notable that while research methods courses in journalism and mass communication programs are almost invariably taught by a faculty member with a doctorate, many programs have turned to adjuncts—that is, working journalists—to teach the skills of literacy in data and statistics as they apply to journalism (Berret & Phillips, 2016).

Rather than education, it was statistical efficacy that predicted a perception of high journalistic value for academic research and statistical literacy among journalism educators. This is an intuitive finding; it is not surprising that those who are more confident in their statistical skills are more likely to see value in academic research and statistical literacy. But coupled with the lack of significant differences based on educational attainment, this finding suggests that the ability to feel comfortable with statistics and the inclination to see them and academic research as valuable to journalism are not characteristics endemic to either academic or professionally oriented journalism educators. Instead, the facility with and passion for statistics and research in journalism can emerge from both academic and professional settings and find distinct applications both in the academy and the newsroom.

Conclusion

This study offers a glimpse into the attitudes of both journalists and educators regarding two increasingly important elements of journalism: its use of academic research and its fluency with statistical analysis and reasoning. In doing so, it is not without limitations. First, the study is based on a convenience sample of subscribers to a mailing list regarding scholarship relevant to journalists, media practitioners, and students. The respondents to the survey, then, are more likely than most journalists and educators to be interested in academic research and to see value in statistical literacy. While this does not compromise the integrity of the statistical analysis and comparisons conducted within the sample, it does call for extreme caution in extrapolating the results to groups beyond this sample. Future research should address these questions with a random sample in order to produce a more generalizable result.

Second, several of the measurements are quite general; measures such as statistical efficacy and the value of statistical literacy in journalism could be deepened and broadened to include more dimensions and finer distinctions. Future research in this area could expand these variables and include other potentially helpful ones, such as years of journalism experience, years of teaching experience, or others measuring actual, rather than perceived, facility with statistics and research.

Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to the literature in this area: It is the first to compare opinions of journalists and journalism educators on the value of academic research and statistical literacy in journalism (though Finberg et al. [2013] provide some basic numbers from the two groups on attitudes toward data analysis). It is also the first to examine the role of statistical efficacy and degree attainment in journalism educators' attitudes towards those subjects. In doing so, it fleshes out the picture given by journalism program administrators (Cusatis & Martin-Kratzer, 2010; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2013) and by journalists (Curtin & Maier, 2001; Dunwoody, 2014) regarding the attitudes toward and obstacles to greater statistical and research literacy among journalists and educators. Specifically, it suggests that both priority and efficacy gaps may exist in this area within journalism programs: some journalism educators, even those with Ph.D.s, simply may not see academic research as particularly useful or important for journalists. Others may have limited confidence in their own statistical literacy, which may lead them to place a lower value on those skills for journalists as a whole. As data journalism continues to grow in importance toward the success of online journalism, these insights help put issues of receptivity, competency, and training in sharper perspective.

Journalism is going through a period of great disruption and promise, a time when business models are perilous and public trust in the news media runs low, but when the opportunities for experimentation in form and function are unprecedented. Innovative data journalism units like FiveThirtyEight and *The New York Times*' The Upshot have shown that facility with data—and the academic research through which so much of that data is generated—is crucial in seizing those opportunities to push journalism forward. Many areas of journalistic coverage, politics perhaps chief among them, could benefit from a more knowledge-based approach and a better grasp of the relevant literature, making them less subject to the claims of biased and partisan sources (Nyhan & Sides, 2011).

As journalists develop their newsrooms and as journalism educators revise their curricula and staff their departments, it is important to determine what types of people are most inclined to use research and data productively and what obstacles might exist in incorporating these resources. For journalism programs in particular to advance their training in statistical literacy and science and knowledge-based journalism, it is crucial to close both the priority and efficacy gaps by emphasizing those skills as valuable parts of journalism and by training and empowering instructors to bring them dynamically into the classroom.

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Negotiating Change: Audience Engagement Editors as Newsroom Intermediaries

By Karin Assmann and Nicholas Diakopoulos

In an effort to address their newly empowered and increasingly fragmented audiences, many newsrooms are hiring editors tasked with audience engagement. This paper investigates this new genre of news workers, the scope of their activity and their roles within news organizations. Interviews with 22 audience engagement editors working in 20 U.S. news organizations show how they conceptualize journalism, journalistic practices and standards, and how engagement strategies fulfill important institutional functions. Audience engagement editors serve as multi-tasking intermediaries between reporters, editors, advertisers, and their audiences.

Introduction

For many news organizations, the path to the digital future has been, and perhaps remains, long and painful. Audiences have embraced the tools that allow them to choose when and where they access news content with greater ease than have the organizations that produce the content. After the initial euphoria over the ability to publish online, the realization that audiences now expect their product for free, has hit home. Advertisers have taken their business online but face an increased use of ad-blockers (GoogleTrends, 2016). Social media platforms are alternative "one-stop-shop" venues of opportunity, with advantages for all stakeholders. They offer both advertisers and audiences personalized news feeds, with Facebook being the current platform of choice (O'Reilly, 2015).

It is as if audiences have stepped out from behind the curtain when consuming news content on social media. Passively, by surrendering user data with every scroll and click, and more actively by explicitly liking, sharing, or commenting, they have become measurable entities that mean potential revenue for advertisers, for social media platforms and for news organizations. Yet the latter are still trying to figure things out. News content consumers are simultaneously more elusive and more quantifiable, their behavior and preferences more transparent to the professional producers of such content who are looking for new ways to connect and to form a committed relationship with them. In many traditional newsrooms "digital first" is still contested and the divides between homepage and social, between users and producers and between newsrooms and audiences still exists (Batsell, 2015). Even in exclusively digital newsrooms, the convergence of reporters and their audiences is not a given. The space in between is where audience engagement editors reside.

This article presents a study of how news organizations employ audience engagement editors to help define and find their audiences and how those editors conceptualize engagement. Based on semi-structured interviews with 22 engagement editors in 20 U.S. newsrooms, this research explores how they position themselves and the implications of this activity for journalism practice.

Literature Review

The introduction of a new category of newsroom labor is complex—in this case involving socio-technical shifts as workers re-orient to technological innovations and to their audiences. What follows is a review of the literature addressing audience metrics as digital innovation as well as the diffusion, uptake, and implications of those metrics for journalism practice.

Audience Innovation: Metrics

The use of audience metrics has been a business decision driven by the necessity to generate revenue from otherwise free digitally distributed content. Digital news distribution brings the ability to measure if, how, and to what extent content is being consumed. News organizations' adjustments to digital methods and output are supplemented by the nearly immediate feedback from the audience through metrics such as clicks, engaged time, and shares to various social networks broken out by different geographies or devices. Inevitably, audiences become quantifiable entities (Anderson, 2011) and journalists can continue to distance themselves from their readers and adjust newsroom practices to feed the metrics machine. The pitfalls of this strategy were enumerated in a Tow Center report (Petre, 2015), including journalists' emotional responses to negative audience feedback delivered as analytics data, the exclusion of other aspects of the audience experience that could be tapped into, and the potential of other journalistic and audience needs that might coincide but are overlooked when "just the numbers" count. The visibility of audience approval through measurement tools displayed in real-time in the newsroom, has been shown to weaken journalists' standing vis-á-vis advertisers. It empowers the audience (Tandoc, 2014) as audience attention (or lack thereof) to news content becomes visible to content producers. The measured audience is not invisible; it has a voice, albeit often heard only heavily mediated and constrained through the chosen units of quantification.

Although consumers' voices online do enter into the news selection process, overall, they have been the voices of an imagined audience on social media, again compounding the divide between the actual audience and journalists' false conceptualization of their audience. In the past, only television has had a system of reconstructing its audience's attention and commercial engagement, whereas print news media constructed its own representations, based on market research, letters to the editors, and typifications of an imagined audience (Litt, 2012; Sumpter, 2000). Audience metrics, the digital innovation that enables real-time tracking of online engagement, and the audience's ability to "talk back" digitally, put pressure on journalists to adapt.

Early evidence of a power struggle between journalists and their online audiences indicates that convergence and online news production and distribution have led to material institutional changes and are bound to transform news production processes and newsroom authority (Robinson (2007). This battle between journalists and participatory audiences over control is also an effort to redefine and reclaim boundaries and concepts of professionalism (Lewis, 2012). Adjusting to this new reality is a complicating factor in the adoption of the technological innovation.

Studies investigating heavy use and reliance on audience metrics in the newsroom have cautioned about the news selection processes leaning towards audience preference based on metrics. In a study of three online newsrooms (Tandoc & Vos, 2015), it was found that journalists were marketing the news to their audiences on social media and cautioned that this new dynamic between producers and consumers of the news may undermine editorial autonomy. The "shareability" of content on social media has become an increasingly important consideration in the selection of news, suggesting that share count metrics may be filtering back into editorial decision processes (Van Dijck, 2009).

The fear and suspicion that news values and selection are impacted by market forces in light of shrinking advertising revenue has been a recurring theme, particularly in the context of broadcast television (Cohen, 2002; Gans, 1979; McManus, 1994; Witschge & Nygren, 2009). The tension between selling media content to audiences and selling audiences to advertisers is being fueled by the availability of web analytics and the empowerment of the audience as co-gatekeepers of the news media that is being produced and offered (Tandoc, E. C., 2014).

Diffusion of Digital Innovation in Newsrooms

Digital technology has afforded both journalists and their audiences many advantages. Smaller equipment, wireless connectivity and mobile devices mean more flexibility, agility, speed, independence and choice and the ability for journalists and audiences to interact. Yet newsroom convergence, the integration of analog and digital newsrooms and media, continues to be framed as a crisis for the industry and as a threat to news (Robinson, 2011). Although journalists may be resistant to the new duties and skills that they must adopt, new cultures of news production are embraced when the benefits of their adoption are made apparent (Singer, 2004).

Innovation, new technologies, processes and ideas are adopted by organizations, social systems and by actors within institutions and those interacting with it at different rates. Acceptance varies particularly when these innovations involve acquiring new skills and a challenge to current professional norms and practices. The diffusion of such innovation in newsrooms depends on a number of factors, yet is favored by the introduction of change agents (Rogers, 2003). Digital innovation that leads to change in work practices and professional identities often requires some form of institutional intervention in order to take hold.

The diffusion of various clusters of innovation are part of the overall disruption in the news industry (Ekdale, Singer, Tully, & Harmsen 2015). Whereas the news outlets most readily accepted production technologies, audience measurement and analytics received a mixed response and the transformation of journalistic practices was met with more skepticism (Ekdale et al., 2015). This resistance to a shift in journalistic practices is perhaps the most important barrier to assimilation of innovation and new relationships in newsrooms, since it goes to the core of newsroom culture. Normalization processes and modifications or adjustments to innovations in the newsroom that support old routines and norms remain the preferred modi operandi among journalists (Paulussen, 2016). Adherence to routines, professional standards, and ethics has been shown to be crucial in soliciting cooperation from members of the newsroom and challenging them leads to the rejection of proposed change (Ryfe, 2009). Newsroom ethnographies have shed light on news-workers' need for agency (perceived and real) as prerequisite for openness to the adoption of new technology (Usher, 2013), and Singer's 12-year panel survey of news editors indicate that they are open to innovation and audience inclusion, as long as their own status as authoritative provider of news is maintained (Singer, 2015).

Newsroom Culture: Journalists Adjust

While journalists strive to maintain editorial independence and authority over news selection and gatekeeping, the affordances of digital media consumption empower audiences to compete with professional journalists, (Lewis, 2012). Yet as citizens cross the boundaries of news media production and consumption, these territories become more liquid and less clearly defined, giving citizens more options (Deuze, 2008). The "monitorial citizenship" (Deuze, 2008; Schudson, 1998) of audiences scanning the vast offerings of news choices, works hand-in-hand with professional journalists' constructed definitions and self-perceptions of what it means to be a journalist. Older journalists, no longer as powerful and independent, are the losers of this new, liquid era and journalists' future requires re-negotiating identity, tied to changing professional norms (Deuze, 2008, Kantola, 2016). "The borders of the journalistic profession have been lowered and weakened … The number of 'actual' journalists has fallen, while the number of new actors working in the public sphere has multiplied" (Kantola, 2016, p. 435). Deuze (2008) describes the array of occupational ideologies that have grown out of journalism practice as demarcations, constantly challenged by market necessities and by an audience that appears to be finding its own identity vis-à-vis the news media. Incorporating new technologies and having to open up to an open field of journalistic digital products and producers has led journalists to more clearly define the distinction between themselves and “others”, as well as to reassess and redefine the boundaries of their profession (Singer, 2011).

Journalists’ perception of the audience as interlopers was convincingly documented in a study analyzing the attitudes of editors who showed disdain for readers who wrote letters to the editor, deeming the letter writers “insane or ‘crazy’” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002) and not representative of the public. Others represent journalists as out of touch with their audiences (Deuze, 2008) or spending more time focusing on each other and their profession than on those for whom they produce content (Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). Tending to the audience, responding to reader comments and mail has been delegated to journalists as an added task, outside of their reporting and writing duties. Journalists consider this extra work, not relevant to their professional mission (Da Silva, 2012). Even in newsrooms with online comment sections and editors who more participatory audience input, criticism of audience comments not adhering to journalistic standards prevails (Robinson, 2010).

In response to the troubled relationship between journalists and their audiences, as evidenced by the decline in readership and revenue (Edmonds, 2016), locating and recruiting new users for their product is the top priority for news organizations. Journalism has become not just market-driven (Chomsky, 2002) but is attention-driven as well, with journalists competing for their audience’s attention and arguably, audiences doing the same (Fengler & Ruß-Mohl, 2008). Once found, they need to use the industry term, to be “engaged.”

The terms “engagement” as well as “social journalism” have become synonymous with efforts to connect journalists with their audiences, acknowledging that web metrics are always involved. At times, metrics are perceived as being too much of a good thing and has some news organizations searching for new strategies. Practicing “engaged journalism” was described by newsroom workers in more than two dozen newsrooms studied in 2012 and 2013, as hard labor that many felt forced to do (Batsell, 2015). Downsizing and the fear of losing their jobs, had reporters tweeting and communicating with their readers online, something they felt was not within their traditional reporting duties (Batsell, 2015). Petre (2015) suggests that audience inclusion was perceived as a burden by journalists but that they also appreciated and cared about metrics as measures of their success and as valuable insights.

The need for a more sophisticated and fitting set of metrics, more suited to the needs of newsrooms, was proposed in a study examining newsroom use of metrics, advancing the idea that no “one-size-fits-all” set of analytics exists for newsrooms (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016). The wish to maintain control over what and how they produce the news, even in light of this rapprochement to their audience, remains a constant (Črnič & Vobič, 2013). Since Batsell’s (2015) study, most newsrooms have installed teams—in some cases budgets allow only for one team member—dedicated exclusively to what is referred to as “audience.” When Julia Haslanger interviewed these “social journalists” as she calls the journalists who work with audiences, she found a variety of job titles: "audience engagement editor," "community engagement strategist," "social media editor" as well as "audience development/growth" staff. She also encountered reporters, editors and digital producers fulfilling this job. She calls this a new "breed of journalism" requiring social skills and involving offline and online social events and communication skill, as well as the ability to recognize and make use of audience feedback (Haslanger, 2016).

The preceding studies have examined how "engagement" is sought by developing new, editorial metrics or by communicating with audiences and journalists in specific ways. What has not been explored in depth is how audience engagement editors are situated in the scope of journalism practice. Are they helping journalists maintain boundaries and control or are they softening the contours of the walls between producers, consumers, and marketers?

A Study of Audience Engagement Editors

The goal of this study is to situate audience engagement editors and their function in the news production ecology. What role do they play in the institutional re-arrangements that newsrooms are making to adapt to digital and audience innovations and how are they shaping journalism practice and the image of journalism? These considerations are addressed by the following research questions:

RQ1: What responsibilities and roles do audience engagement editors fulfill?

RQ2: How do audience engagement editors conceptualize journalism and their role in it?

RQ3: How do audience engagement editors define audience engagement?

Methodology

Participants for this qualitative, interview-based study were selected using the search term "audience engagement editor" on the largest social network platform for professionals: LinkedIn (Premium). The filters applied limited the search to "audience engagement editor" as being the current job listed on the LinkedIn member's profile, the location to the United States and to industry categories associated with the news media: "online media, writing and editing, newspapers, media production and publishing." This yielded 55 results. Members working for specialized outlets were filtered out to avoid including editors whose engagement activities are geared toward specialized audiences (such as sport or fashion), rather than a general audience. Of the 30 members contacted, 17 agreed to be interviewed. Respondents were asked to recommend other audience engagement editors. By snowball sampling, recruitment was extended and allowed for inclusion of professionals who were not on LinkedIn with the exact title used, but who were known as such fell within the parameters of the job description. Since the position of audience engagement editors is rather new and dynamic, this opened the potential sample up to social structures and inside knowledge known only to the practitioners (Noy, 2008). This added five more participants but two recommendations were in the original list of interviewees. This resulted in a final sample of 11 women and 11 men ranging from 24 to 56 years, with the majority in their 30s. IRB approval was obtained before contacting potential participants.

The 22 participants worked for 20 different news organizations. In two cases, two participants worked for the same organization. One participant had previously occupied the job and was still performing some of the functions. In another case, both participants work for the same news organization, but one was in charge of audience engagement for the video content of the outlet. Five of the 20 outlets are part of the Gannett Corporation. The geographic spread skews slightly to the East Coast with news organizations in: California (one), Iowa (one), Montana (one), Arizona (one), Tennessee (one), Florida (two), South Carolina (one) Philadelphia (two), Maryland (one), New York (four), Massachusetts (one), Texas (one) and Washington, D.C. (two). One outlet, not listed here, is digital only. Participants worked for a mix of local and national outlets, one national radio outlet and one local investigative news organization.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded over the phone in April and September 2016. Prior to recording the call, the participants were asked if they consented to participating and to being recorded. Sixteen participants preferred that they and/or their outlet remain unnamed. Whether or not participants wanted to be named was not relevant to the job they were being interviewed about, but a reflection either of their status within their news organization or of the level of comfort they had in giving information that may be deemed proprietary. Given the large number of participants preferring anonymity all results below are presented without names in order to be consistent.

Interviews were transcribed and imported into the MaxQDA qualitative analysis software. General codes were aligned with the four main subject areas arising out of the questions asked: Engagement (definition and practices), Audience, Journalism, and Newsroom (including the job itself and newsroom practices related to audience engagement). Coding was done using an approach based on Glaser's Constant Comparative methodology growing out of the Grounded Theory approach to qualitative analysis (Glaser, 1965). Sub-codes were added as each interview was read and re-read and trends and threads emerged. This approach does not allow for explicit theory testing, but arrives at an ethnographic description of the content out of which theories may emerge.

Results

The 22 participants in this study cover a vast spectrum of job responsibilities. Some are team members in organizations that are purposefully crafting engagement strategies, while others oversee a fleet of engagement editors and participate in setting strategies themselves. A third group are the only ones within their organization charged with "doing engagement."

A theme common to all was the impact of newsroom restructuring: re-organization, downsizing and a shortage of staff were mentioned by almost all of the interviewees when they spoke about how and why they became audience engagement editors. Their jobs had either been created as part of a recent re-organization or they had moved into the job because their original job, for example copy editor, had become obsolete. A number of comments, often framed humorously, dealt with how the hierarchies and structures as well as titles and the scope of their responsibilities were in constant flux. Several respondents were originally or still are opinion page editors and saw their move into or creation of the job "audience engagement editor" as a natural extension of op-ed work, as both involve a proximity to audiences that reporters had not typically experienced or sought.

Roles, Tools, and Tasks of Audience Engagement Editors

Audience engagement editors work in a place they refer to as "social." Actually, all but two were physically located in the middle of the newsroom and spoke about how fortunate they were to be in a strategically important location that allowed them to decide as stories were being assigned and filed, which to "move to social," meaning onto a social media platform such as Facebook. Although not all interviewees actually do this themselves, audience engagement on social media looks the same in all newsrooms: The editor or engagement team members post re-packaged, shorter versions of the newspaper's (print or online) content on a social media platform. They fashion a headline that will be more searchable according to the search engine optimization (SEO) tool they use and in some cases they select a tidbit of content out of an article that they think is "more shareable" or "snackable" and post it on various social media platform accounts that belong to their "brand."

Only a few participants actually pitch stories, yet all of them attend numerous editorial conferences to either find out what stories are being planned and what they could use and post on social media platforms or to make suggestions about additional content such as videos, photo galleries or legal documents. They all report back to the newsroom about how the content is performing along metrics, either through an email round up, a dashboard displayed in the newsroom or on monitors throughout the office. Several interviewees made it a point to emphasize that metrics were not the end, but the means, or guide toward an end: "The strategy is not about baiting the audience for metrics sake, but testing what does resonate, or dropping things that don't and finding ways to make things work" (Audience Engagement Editor, national newspaper).

While the overall goal of engagement was always described in terms that denote personal contact, interactivity, service and community, the location where this is done is "on social." Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, Reddit and LinkedIn were the main platforms, with Facebook by far the most frequently used. Homepages were deemed less important in some cases, with the agreed upon wisdom that: "We have to go where the audiences are." Related, comments on the homepages were treated as problematic by all participants. Some called the commenters “mean” and the comment section where “engagement … is about clean up.” Adding a Facebook widget, requiring identification of commenters, is deemed helpful, but Facebook as a platform makes curating easier and not as necessary because commenters tended to be better behaved.

Their efforts are always informed by metrics. The list of analytics tools used by the 22 participants and their newsrooms is long. Chartbeat, Omniture, Google Trends and Analytics, Facebook Insights as well as Twitter Analytics are the most frequently mentioned platforms. Every audience engagement editor mentioned using at least one analytics tool, with Chartbeat and Omniture and Google Analytics mentioned by half of the interviewees.

Whether the editors do it themselves or have a team they work with or oversee, posting journalistic content on social media is the core function of every audience engagement editor. All editors use metrics to learn how well content was being received and to monitor what topics are trending.

> And then it just becomes like constantly monitoring throughout the day what trends and then something can start bubbling up at any moment, so I am a multi-tasker by nature and kind of just click around a lot of the day and so seeing what’s bubbling up and if we need to put something on ice that we’re doing because something has really strong potential to do well on our site and then doing that and then pitching more to editors and I think our newsroom is really flexible when good story opportunities come up so it’s a continuous process during the day. (Audience Engagement Editor for Video Content, national newspaper)

Only one engagement editor, working for a regional investigative reporting group, makes it a point not to share the results with reporters: “We don’t share Google Analytics per se and that’s just because … we don’t have any hard and fast policy against it, I personally don’t think it’s a good practice because I think it incentivizes weird things” (Audience Engagement Editor, investigative journalism group).

But despite the quantification and open availability of metrics on screens and dashboards, audience engagement editors are also engaging reporters in their effort to explain why it is necessary to follow the metrics of audience interaction with their journalism, no matter what these insights might bring. They are, in a sense, messengers of industry news:

> One of the things that analytics makes very stark is that the things that we thought were introductory journalism—like crime reports, anything that’s a little bit tawdry—you can watch the needle move and we can literally now watch the needle move on traffic to the story and you know, you can let that lead you to disdain for the people who are you readers, who are your customers. But the fact of the matter is, I don’t think that digital readers prefer that kind of content any more or less. I think it was always there, now we can measure

> it. That's where we kind of get people to get over themselves, is part of the challenge. (Audience Engagement Editor, large regional newspaper group in the South)

> I serve as kind of the translator between my boss who is in charge of all the digital stuff and then the editors in the newsrooms to sort of say, no we are not just looking at this one metric, we're looking at the bigger picture and we are trying to find people to read your content." (Audience Engagement Editor, large national newspaper)

Activities engagement editors mentioned as part of their job covered a broad spectrum from "updating news," "re-writing" and "content distribution," all activities serving the broader purpose of gathering, editing and disseminating news, to activities that were less geared toward the audience, but more toward journalists in the newsroom. More than half of the interviewees mentioned "building the journalists' brands" and "building the brand," as well as "contributing tools for engagement" and "deciding what works," indicating that audience engagement editors, while performing editorial functions that bring information to audiences that they monitor and target, are also very focused on marketing. They help journalists learn how to "sell" themselves, how to create their own brands and how to place their content into the social news media ecosystem themselves.

Engagement editors with more seniority, who are alone or who work in smaller newsrooms are also responsible for speaking with vendors and for planning which digital tools will be used. Three newsrooms had received training by API and/or Poynter and/or the Knight Foundation. One is working with grant money from the latter to improve audience engagement efforts and yet another had received specific coaching from an engagement specialist.

Just over half of the participants spoke about the importance of building the news organization's brand or reporters' individual brands and that their job as audience engagement editors was to work towards this goal.

> With certain newsroom journalists we're trying to build up their brands and one of the ways that we do that is by making sure that we have a plan for promoting their new work whether it's a podcast or a new mobile kind of news summary for millennials and we put a little bit of promotion money into making sure that that gets promoted in social media and reaches as many people as possible. (Audience Engagement Editor, Gannett publication)

The promotion of individual journalists, whether through paid promotion (although one interviewee had just noticed that it was visible to users when a promotion had been paid for on Facebook and decided not to do it anymore) or by publishing their stories on social media in a strategic way, was often explained as being for the greater (organizational) good:

> How do we create high social performers in each newsroom who can then be on a wider community to share best practices so that we can continue to rollout, share those practices and figure out where the wins are and replicate them across the network? (Former Audience Engagement Editor, network TV, currently with a large national newspaper)

Other tools editors employed were online surveys, asking readers to send in pictures or comments or, although not as frequently, planning an RLE (real life event) that attracts attention. One editor has posted information on Facebook to start a story, that is, asked a question about something and, read the comments that came in, sourced and found a story there. It's common practice to source stories using what they see, hear, and read on social media platforms. One editor has reached out to someone who posted information about her involvement in an incident, brought that person in and pitched the story to editors who wrote a story just about this woman.

Part of the engagement efforts clearly involved customer monitoring, not for journalistic purposes, such as sourcing, but in order to maximize distribution. There was a frequently stated awareness that all efforts served the ultimate purpose of making money through subscription or advertisement. One editor spoke about meeting with the marketing and advertisement side of his organization as often as he did with the editorial side. Another mentioned coordinating with the advertisement department when developing new editorial products. A third editor said that posting on Facebook used to be the responsibility of the marketing department before audience engagement editors were introduced on the newsroom side.

Several interviewees said that they wished that audience engagement was part of the conversation earlier than it is now. They would like to be able to involve audiences earlier, either as sources or in order to prime them. The ideal entry point for audience engagement editor involvement, one editor explained, was when the story is conceived. Currently, the earliest they intervene is during the meeting in which the story is discussed, reminding reporters and editors to think about engagement, which means delivering content for them to share online in order to promote the journalism.

Journalistic Identity

Twenty-one of the 22 audience engagement editors interviewed responded affirmatively to the question about their own identity as a journalist. The single exception called himself "a facilitator of journalism" and: "I still sort of have the idea in my mind that the journalist is the one doing the digging and the one doing the writing so it's a weird . . . it breaks my heart to say no" (Audience Engagement Editor, investigative non-profit).

On the other end of the spectrum, one participant called the question "somewhat of an insult" since it seemed obvious to her that her role was that of a journalist. Some of the responses revealed that being a journalist entailed having an input on news selection, storytelling, and the ability to pass editorial judgment:

> Yes. I think part of that has to be a reflection of the content you produce and I think we're definitely now getting to a point where I have more of an input on content that can live natively so whether we are trying to tell a discreet story on Facebook or Instagram, it requires a sense of editorial judgment. I think you have to be a journalist to get that through. (Engagement Strategist, national business magazine)

When defining journalism, the terms most frequently used were "gathering information," "editorial judgment," "help people understand," "trust," "writing" and "ethics." Some responses expanded the traditional role of the journalist to include the search for an audience: "I think a big part of what journalists do now is try to figure out who our audience is and try to reach them" (Audience Engagement and Opinion Editor, West Coast daily newspaper). "I sell stories, I trade in news stories" (Editor for Internet and Audience, national daily newspaper).

For some respondents, particularly those who had come from the opinion section or from other parts of the newsroom or who had been reporters and writers, the defining criterion was that they knew and had practiced the craft. Being able to judge what was newsworthy for an audience they were seeking on social media platforms was often mentioned as an important part of their job. One respondent gave an example of a story she was making "snackable for social" by finding the nugget about five paragraphs down in the original article. It was a quote that spoke to millennials that became the headline on their social media accounts and generated the traffic that the original article had not. One sentiment echoed by many interviewees, was the responsibility to inform:

> I don't write or report ever and I still consider myself a journalist and I think it's because what I see my job as is to get news and information to people and to learn news and information from people. That's the point of everything that we're doing here, whether you're a reporter here or an audience editor or community, you focus primarily on building communities, like the whole reason we do any of it is because we think it's important for people to be informed about their world and for us to be able to have the best information that we can to provide that to people and so you know, that's journalistic. (Audience Engagement Editor, national newspaper)

The theme of sharing journalistic practices, by exposing and spreading the reporters' journalism on a social media platform, was repeated throughout. In fact, the goal in all newsrooms, with some much closer to it than others, was to educate the reporters so that they could one day be their own audience engagement editors. One newsroom with a particularly large staff tasked with engagement, has divided their teams up: The participant interviewed was on the "embedded audience team" that interacted with individual reporters and focused on particular projects most closely. While others strategize or handle specific social media platforms that they became specialized in, these editors are hands-on coaches for reporters and editors, akin to personal trainers. The participant describes the work this team does as follows:

> So you might work with one reporter and they are really comfortable on Facebook, so you might say with that reporter, “Okay, we’re going to go all in on the Facebook platform for you, let’s talk about Facebook live, let’s talk about how you are using followers, let’s talk about how you are using comments and we’re going to go 100% in on building your community on this platform.” (Audience Engagement Editor, national daily newspaper)

Coaching, training reporters and editors literally through specialized programs or in one-on-one meetings was part of the duties of most every editor interviewed. That not every reporter was on board all the time was mentioned as well:

> I think there’s still a lot of you know, people here that like to do what they are interested in and they think clickbait and they think cat videos and they think Kardashians and they don’t want any part of it. It has taken me kind of two years to figure this out, but the conversations I am starting to have now or trying to have now is how did it impact people, did they stay on your story for a long time, not just how many pages did it get or how many users looked at it but maybe 1,000 people read it but those thousand people stayed on for five minutes so … that’s awesome. (Audience Engagement Editor, only person tasked with engagement)

Defining and Engaging Audiences

Although part of their title, the term all had the most difficulty defining was the term “engagement.” It was most commonly described with words like “relationships,” “listening,” “conversation,” “loyalty” and “community” and as “using feedback from audience,” “involving the audience,” “answer questions.” One editor distinguished between looking at engagement “through the growth editor filter” and looking at “true engagement.” The growth editor was interested in clicks, whereas her view of “true engagement” involved something she called “conversational journalism”: “And that is having a one-to-one discussion maybe on messaging apps and bots or whatever or a many-way with discussion in communities, on comments or whatever, but I think it’s really truly having a discussion with our audience” (Audience Engagement Editor, national newspaper).

Five of the editors interviewed worked for news organizations that are part of the Gannett group and all interviewees in this group spoke about engagement and their audiences in terms that aligned with Picasso , the framework that their parent company has been implementing. “Audience targeting,” “metrics,” “community connectors” and “marketing” are described as the pillars for news work.

When participants were asked to define audiences in general and theirs in particular answers ranged from “people” to “anyone,” but often circled around audience members as sources. Some interviewees spoke about strategically priming social media users by asking them questions or by soliciting information, both to generate curiosity about a topic and to learn of any useful sources in that particular community. In general, the respondents were not particularly choosy but also very general and all-inclusive, to the point of being unspecific: “(Our audience) is primarily determined by our print circulation area, the areas where we circulate and anybody in there that’s interested in the kind of things that we have covered” (Audience Engagement Editor, newspaper group in the South).

> Anyone with a digital device … don’t just write for the people who are at your city council meeting or who live in that town, write for Google and I don’t mean Google bots, I mean anyone with access to a phone or a computer. Anyone who is searching for a thing can find your thing, if that’s their search. (Audience and Opinion Editor, West Coast daily newspaper)

“This is a question we ask ourselves every day. Right now we are very interested in our local audience” (Audience Engagement Editor, newspaper group in a large metropolitan area).

Others defined their audience strictly along demographics: gender, location, platform and took a more pragmatic approach: “Well, we have statistics … as far as demographics go. Online versus the radio our audience is younger and female, predominately more female than men. Younger than our radio audience” (Audience Engagement Editor, radio network).

Four interviewees mentioned that they had “personas,” archetypical readers or audience members that had been determined as target consumers for whom they were producing content. One editor reported that photographs of different personas were hanging on the newsroom wall.

Discussion

Audience engagement editors, in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, are beholden to more than one master. All interviewees spoke about ways in which they serve the journalists in their newsrooms. They inform research and help to promote journalists’ content and themselves, their “brands” and credibility as journalists. They serve the audience by providing a link into the newsroom and bringing news topics to the attention of journalists. On the other hand, they serve their news organization, specifically the marketing department, by monitoring and measuring customer behavior.

Although praised as a form of rapprochement and reconciliation between the alienated camps inside and outside of the newsroom, as a return to local and social reporting, much of what is happening is a computer-mediated image campaign. The language of marketing, very present in the conversations with 22 audience engagement editors, specifically the term “branding,” indicates that the job of audience engagement editor is to facilitate presentation and impression management of journalists and of the organizational brand.

Audience interaction is being performed via web metrics that are being translated to journalists as impactful and working towards a greater goal. Both the technological innovation (web metrics) and the innovation in newsroom practice (tending to the audience) is being mediated by news workers who self-identify and present as journalists. They are change agents who possess enough of the characteristics of the journalists they are coaching and, in the cases examined, have internalized their continued belonging to this professional group so much so that they are convincing representatives of the group they are promoting. Monetizing engagement, that is, bringing in revenue if more people read their news product, is never explicitly talked about, but it is the implicit reality behind the jargon of “engagement,” of “listening” and caring.

Calling the definitions of “engagement” rhetorical would be an overstatement, yet they are effective in promoting the image that news organizations are trying—and must—sell in order to remain viable. It is the image of a partner to an audience that is increasingly being sought in small, local communities. During events and in conversations on social media commenting threads, audience engagement editors explain the journalism that their organizations are producing. Just as they are “selling” engagement to the journalists, they are “selling” journalism to audiences. By doing so they are allowing journalists to maintain the professional boundary, since all of this is being done in the name of journalism.

They facilitate journalists’ adoption of innovation in technology and practice. Search engine optimization, analytics dashboards and other tools, are explained and introduced by audience engagement editors, along with an explanation of the virtues of using these tools, even if skeptical journalists might find them distracting to their mission. A reminder that they and the strategies employed to engage audiences are “for the greater good” of the organization, as well as for the promotion of journalism in general and their stories in particular, serves as an effective strategy to affect institutional change.

Conclusion and Future Work

This study set out to situate audience engagement editors, representing a new form of newsroom labor, into the ecology of journalistic practice. Listening to the men and women who are doing this job reveals the thin line they are toeing between the world of marketing and the world of journalism. Fueled by the pressures of online media’s attention economy, institutional change is happening in newsrooms. Audience engagement editors are working in the domain in which this economy resides: on social media platforms and on their outlet’s website. It is where traditional journalism and their new audiences meet and provides audience engagement editors a unique position to help define journalism to both sides of this equation.

This study has shown that audience engagement editors serve as liaisons to their respective marketing departments by delivering and explaining audience metrics. Their marketing efforts take on properties of public relations: They indirectly sell the idea of journalism as well as content directly to audiences and they sell the audience's voices to journalists. Case studies that take a closer look at this dynamic would add to an understanding of the influence that both narratives have on journalists and audiences alike. How great a role do audience engagement editors have in shaping the opinion and choices of audiences?

Additional research is also needed to understand how the divide between editorial autonomy and marketing strategies, invoked for the cause of journalism and its survival is holding up in newsrooms that have mission statements in which economic survival, journalistic norms, and marketing principles appear on the same page. Finally, further research into the impact on news selection and output in newsrooms with active audience engagement teams is called for. A study similar to this report, focusing instead on the reporters and editors that work with audience engagement editors, would deliver important insights into the impact they are having on the practice of journalism. In an era in which engagement with the news and journalists' engagement with their audiences is recognized as being crucial to fostering an informed and politically enabled public, answering such questions is vital to understanding the evolution of journalistic practice in the online digital news sphere.

As newsrooms integrate audience engagement strategies and editors into their news production routines, professional boundaries are being redefined. Journalists, as this study has shown, are adopting new processes and routines beyond traditional reporting. Journalists can no longer be content to merely tell news stories, they must now also promote and "sell" them too.

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Managing Digital Products in a Newsroom Context

By Cindy Royal

Digital media tools provide new ways for media companies to distribute information and engage the public. This study explores the emerging, technology-influenced role of managing digital media products through the observations of innovators and early adopters in these positions. It assesses the attention to, or lack thereof, traditional journalistic standards and ethics in product development processes and offers insight into relevant directions for journalism curriculum.

Introduction

A prominent characteristic of the digital media environment is continuous innovation. New roles have emerged in journalism to support innovation in data presentation and engagement. These roles are often viewed as technology-support functions, on the periphery of the journalism being produced. However, these digital products, often with an audience-centric mission, provide opportunities for constituents to participate, contribute and interact with the media and one another and comprise the primary platform the audience now uses to consume journalism. Those who develop or work on teams in developing these products are often making or ignoring editorial judgments and decisions. How are news organizations assuring that these technology-based roles are exercising journalistic standards in developing digital media products?

This research is intended to help media professionals, educators and students better understand the emerging role of digital product management and to advance the conversation on how to incorporate these concepts in organizations and curriculum.

Background

Studies of *The New York Times* (Royal, 2012) and *Chicago Tribune* (Parasie & Dagiral, 2013) observed the emerging role of the programmer-journalist, those newsroom developers who were the earliest creators of interactive, digital stories. This role can be perceived as the precursor to understanding the evolving state of digital development in newsrooms. In February 2016, a panel discussion on product management was held at New York's The New School, co-sponsored by that university's Journalism + Design program and the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism at the City University of New York. During that discussion, Aron Pilhofer, who previously led the NYT Interactive News Technology team, said, "It was a few years in that it dawned on me that I was actually running a product development team" (The New School News, 2016)[1].

During Nieman Journalism Lab's annual publication of predictions for 2016, two articles dealt with the emerging role of product management. "The new hot job in those companies will be product manager, who will be the interdisciplinary heart of media organizations where editorial and business come together to create better products, drawing a page from Silicon Valley's playbook" (Herman, 2015, para. 8). Another predicted that "media organizations and journalism schools will begin to comprehend and define product management and embrace it as a relevant and critical career path" (Royal, 2015, para. 2).

Those predictions were soon to be realized. In addition to the New School/CUNY summit, the American Press Institute (Sonderman, 2016) published a white paper that explored the role of product management in news organizations. The paper was the result of discussions convened in a summit attended by "40 product-manager types from leading news organizations" (para. 6). The role of product manager was described as:

> …In the era of the "personal news cycle"—where abundant information and constant connectivity gives each individual control of her news consumption—our news products must be good and targeted to succeed. They must know who their users are, what they need, how they need it, and deliver a satisfying experience. That is what a product manager does. And increasingly this role, which has long been a staple of the tech world, is emerging in news organizations. (Sonderman, 2016, para. 4)

By the end of 2016, an article on the *Washington Post'*s plan to hire five dozen journalists also discussed integral nature of digital products.

> Now, the *Post* thinks "product" almost as news. In fact, almost 80 technologists now sit right in the new *Post* newsroom, in addition to those soon- much more-than-700 journalists. This is the face of a modern newsroom, in which software development engineers, digital designers, product managers, mobile developers and video engineering produce content in real time. (Doctor, 2017)

Often project and product management are used interchangeably and are sometimes performed by the same person, but project management is specifically focused on the execution of project functionality. Product management encompasses the broader strategic implications of the entire digital product. The function can also be described as product leadership[2] or development. Those in web, engagement or community editor positions can also perform product management functions. Increasingly, anyone taking on broad responsibility for the execution of a digital platform is taking on a product management role.

Traditionally in media organizations, the functions of technologists are seen as supporting roles. But development of technology products affects user experience and engagement with content. The simple decision of providing social bookmarks on a website to allow users to post articles on social media sites requires one to consider how the function will work, what sites are represented, what the user will be able to do on the site and how the organization will interact with the content and data associated with this interaction (Powers, 2015). For a data-driven news story, decisions must be made about how the application will be used, how the user can customize the presentation and what data and content are to be presented. These activities go much further than simply setting up navigation for a website. Are these decisions being made by individuals who understand journalistic mission, ethics and sensibilities?

Literature Review

Few academic studies have addressed the functions of those who create and manage digital media products. In developing a matrix for understanding the role of technology in cross media news work, Lewis and Westlund (2015) stated that journalism studies have primarily been focused on editorial activities. “The result has been neglect in the literature for socio-technical objects and information technology specialists, particularly when such technologies and technologists operate beyond the boundaries of the organization” (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 20). Where their study identified the discrete functions of journalists, technologists and business people as “actors”—as well as technological actants and audiences—and each one’s relationship to journalistic activities, this study seeks a more integrated understanding of the hybrid editorial and business roles technologists perform in a journalism organization. Product management represents a locus of responsibilities that cuts across a range of departments, including editorial, strategy, advertising and technology.

In his book *Engaged Journalism*, Batsell (2015) explored the changing relationship between news producer and audience by visiting newsrooms in the United States and United Kingdom. He concluded that for journalism to survive, “news providers must constantly listen to, interact with, and fulfill the specific needs of their audiences, whose attention can no longer be taken for granted” (Batsell, 2015, p. 57). His analysis identified ways to empower the audience with interactive news products—including databases, quizzes and games—and emphasized a need for metrics to measure their impact.

This type of news work has been specifically identified by Usher (2016, p. 3) as “interactive journalism,” which she defines as “visual presentation of storytelling through code for multilayered, tactile user control for the purpose news and information." Her research found that this activity involved people with unique skill sets as well as specific professional practices and claims to knowledge that are influenced by software development culture.

Other journalism research has addressed the role of digital products in civic life. Coleman et al. (2008) studied how website usability and satisfaction are correlated to positive attitudes toward civic engagement. Others have studied the civic roles of social media (Gil de Zuniga, 2012) and user-generated news (Kaufhold et al., 2010). More generally in regard to engagement, Stroud et al. (2015) analyzed the presence of interactive features, including social media buttons, hyperlinks, polls and comments, on news websites.

Researchers have begun to address innovation as it relates to newsroom processes, relationships and culture (Ekdale, et al, 2015; Gynnild, 2014; Schmitz Weiss & Domingo, 2010). Lewis and Usher (2013 & 2014) performed an early study of the cultural implications of the interaction of journalism and technology through the organization Hacks/Hackers (hackshackers.com)—an international group that provides opportunities for journalists and programmers to collaborate.

The role of product management originated in the software development field. It includes product strategy, prioritization of activities, execution of deliverables, testing, benchmarks and analytics (Nash, 2011; Newman, 2015; Perkin, 2012). Others have discussed its emerging role in media companies (Shaver, 2015; Sundve, 2015). Organizations including Vox and BuzzFeed are lauded for their technology emphases and the ways in which they approach media platforms (Case, 2015; Ellis, 2015; Kaufman, 2014; Rabaino & Mark, 2015; Smalera, 2013).

Journalism schools have long been grappling with curriculum change required to keep pace with the digital environment (Adam, 2001; Bor, 2014; Carpenter, 2009; De Burgh, 2003; Ellis, 2015; Mensing, 2010; Royal, 2005; Wenger & Owens, 2012). But the current state of digital media reflects more than a convergence approach where print, audio and video work together. The digital realm introduces new scale, economics and considerations that come from operating in a manner that is more consistent with a technology company (Royal, 2014). Research projects from universities and journalism funding organizations identified product management as a desirable skill or "superpower" (Stencel & Perry, 2016). Some programs have moved into teaching the data journalism concepts of analysis and coding, but few are teaching product management concepts (Berret & Phillips, 2016). This article helps to shed light on the need to further develop curriculum in this area.

Methodology

The methods employed in this study were structured interviews and online surveys with professionals working in and overseeing these roles at media and technology companies. This approach was selected to gain broad descriptions and insight about this emerging role. In January 2016, a series of questions were submitted to several key professionals for their feedback and initial responses. The results of this round of questions were refined and submitted to a larger number of respondents in March 2016.

Respondents were identified by contacting known professionals in the field and seeking suggestions for others who performed in or influenced this capacity. The survey was sent to 40 professionals, with 14 (a 35% response rate, with eight male and six female respondents) completing the survey or requesting a phone interview. While this is not a large number of respondents, due to the small number of practitioners and the emerging nature of this field, gaining the insight of these key players at an early stage provides an important baseline as the area of product management develops (Besley & Roberts, 2010; Blankenship, 2016). Respondents were assured that their responses would remain anonymous in publication to encourage candid insight, which means they are not identified by title or organization in the responses below. Also due to the small sample size and to further maintain confidentiality of responses, the respondents were not identified by pseudonym. This was done to avoid identification through the combination of responses. Where necessary, responses were edited to remove reference to specific companies and personnel, to also maintain anonymity.

Phone interviews consisted of the questions as the online survey and were recorded, transcribed and analyzed with the survey responses. Interview questions included general information about the respondent including their specific function and number of years in role and then moved into questions in the following areas: product, process and roles. Question dealt with defining digital products, what processes and methodologies are involved and same what roles are affected.

Responses or interviews were received from professionals from *The New York Times*, *Guardian*, *ProPublica*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Atlantic*, *National Public Radio*, *Washington Post*, *Vox Media*, *Texas Tribune*, *Austin-American Statesman*, *Medium* and other media upstarts and new projects. Respondents had either director-level or higher responsibility for products or were directly performing in a product-management capacity. Most respondents had been in their positions for three years or less, with two having more than eight years in their current role.

The responses were analyzed using modified grounded theory as an overall approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), with an emphasis on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that supports a systematic way of thinking about actions, events and associated behaviors. It is meant to build, rather than test, theory from “concepts derived, developed and integrated based on actual data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 6). It is often used to study new or emerging fields that are not yet thoroughly researched. Themes were generated through an inductive analysis of the survey responses and interview transcripts. This study both describes and explains this emerging phenomenon and its relevance to the future of media and media curriculum.

This research identified themes in the following three areas:

- Defining Digital Media Products
- Managing Digital Products
- Product Management Roles and Skills

Results

Defining Digital Media Products: Examples and Interaction

It is helpful to first define what is meant by a digital media product. As one respondent said, "We used to know what a media product was. It was a newspaper or a television broadcast. Now it's much broader."

Respondents most commonly named websites, publishing platforms, content management systems and native mobile applications (iOS and Android) as digital media products hosted by their organizations. Also mentioned by several respondents were blogging tools, revenue, advertising and subscription products, measurement tools, social platforms (including Facebook Instant Articles and Google's Accelerated Mobile Pages), automated bot projects and data archives. Some identified storytelling, slideshow, charting and quiz tools and special story formats (i.e. Kindle Singles) that their organizations had developed, as well as special project sites for sports, gardening, cooking, dating, elections, technology, books and more.

Stories themselves were often considered digital media products, particularly if they demonstrated advanced features of interactivity and user customization. These projects are commonly known as news applications (news apps, for short). The responses presented a broad view of digital products across media organizations that addressed editorial, advertising and business roles and introduced a level of complexity in managing this ecosystem.

Respondents were asked to identify specific projects, either their own or others, that were particularly good at engaging the public in civic action. Projects mentioned included:

- Political Engagement Platforms: iCitizen, Brigade, Change.org, Purple Politics
- Journalism Crowdsourcing Projects: Hearken, Groundsource, Crowdrise
- Education Community Project: Chalkbeat
- Mobile News Applications: Quartz mobile app, BuzzFeed News app, and SnapChat Discover

Some respondents discussed participation on their own platforms, as well as use of lengthy surveys and projects in which users contributed. ProPublica was identified as particularly strong in this area, with one respondent (who does not work for ProPublica) saying, “Most anything that ProPublica does is phenomenal. They fall into that perfect space of informing the direction of a story and letting a reader explore it.” ProPublica provided surveys to users about patient safety and calls to action requesting that readers forward political emails they had received. One project, “Free the Files,” requested users file public information requests to local television stations regarding political spending on ads, shared the results online and had users help with analyses.

One respondent mentioned Circa, the now defunct but recently acquired mobile application that built stories in re-usable blocks, as an example of innovation in user interface.

> Take news apps right now. If you were to say “what problems are we trying to solve?”—if we actually approached our apps that way—our apps would look a lot more like Circa. For the most part, news apps are still manifestations of our printed newspaper. To me, that is the most obvious and clearest example that product management has yet to be fully embraced within media organizations.

This example highlights the limitations of news organizations in offering innovative approaches to solving users’ problems, emphasizing challenges to innovation that are based on legacy and culture.

Respondents were asked to describe ways the public was able to interact with digital media products. Some respondents discussed traffic and page views, while others were more specific about social media participation, commenting and content creation.

> We invite our readers to participate in our journalism well before publication, as well as after, using Facebook groups and callouts inviting them to provide their perspective or to help us separate signal from noise in large document collections.

> We encourage interactivity and sharing with our products. Commenting is encouraged, and we’ve started providing project-specific emails so readers can contact us with issues or suggestions.

Others stated specific engagement goals related to their approach to mobile technology:

> About 50% of our traffic comes from phone or tablet. When my team designs a product, we tend to think of mobile first or at least foremost.

> However we are approaching journalism on any platform, we are optimizing it for a mobile audience first.

Managing Digital Media Products: Problem-Solving, Collaboration, Metrics and Civic Engagement

Respondents were asked to describe the process of managing digital products in their organization, particularly related to how decisions were made about content and user engagement features. The most common response in this area was, "it depends," which demonstrates the need for the process to be compatible with other factors, including size of organization, size of team and type of product.

> It really depends on the size and scope of the product, but for the most part, each cross-functional team makes that decision with influence at key touch points from company leadership across product, editorial and revenue.
>
> It depends on the product, because there are so many. If something is back-end infrastructure it will roll into that team. If it is primarily editorial, there is a small editorial committee, with a small group of people depending on what the product affects—mobile, culture desk, investigations. And they will work with representatives from product and technology. But ultimately the decision about allocation come down to editor/publisher decisions on what the strategic priorities are.

Solving problems, finding solutions and creating value were often articulated as the primary goal of product management.

> Our process is working with a team of designers and developers to figure out solutions to problems. We iterate and move fast and do user testing to help us confirm or disprove our hypotheses.

Another respondent echoed the importance of a problem-solving mentality.

> Product management is about solving business problems. It's not about prioritizing features.

One respondent articulated a vision of value creation.

> Ultimately, we are looking to grow high quality media brands that provide value to our users.

The characteristic that was most prominently discussed in regard to process was collaborating with a team, often a cross-functional team covering editorial, business and technical areas.

> Team conversations lead to final decisions made by the tech lead, project lead, strategy lead and lead designer in combination—based on a combination of testing and user need analysis.

> We work collaboratively with the editorial teams of our brands and even with our advertising teams. But the strategic decisions are ultimately made by the product team who facilitates the conversations and reconciles everything with business opportunities to grow and be user-focused as a valuable service.

Teamwork was perceived as a relative advantage of product management in several respondents' comments.

> What I think is really important for people entering the industry to realize is how important the existence of people who work across teams is. Coordination among everyone in the newsroom doesn't always happen, but newsrooms are better off when it does.

Another respondent indicated the compatibility of product management to existing editorial roles.

> A good editor is someone who can run a desk collaboratively, very much like a product manager.

Product management introduces a range of tools and processes to help with collaboration, many of which are borrowed from software development practices. These tools help product managers deal with the increasing complexity introduced by digital media products. The respondents commonly mentioned agile methodology.

> The new way of product management is more evolutionary. It fits more into the agile methodology of product management. It's more about iterative sprints and incremental improvement more than it is about a single thing that you build and launch.

Agile methodology introduces the features of sprints (short development iterations) and scrums (short, effective update meetings), which were also mentioned by respondents, along with application prototyping, design thinking, A/B testing, and the software tools Trello and Slack (both online project management applications) (Alexander, 2017).

But respondents often indicated loose or modified applications of these tools. One respondent emphasized experimentation and the spry nature of working with a small group.

> Whatever works! We are currently doing agile. Because we are such a small team, we aren't really following any strict agile/scrum rules.

Another respondent discussed a user emphasis in employing these techniques.

> We use a modified agile process with a heavy emphasis on user-centric design and prototyping. We use tools like Trello, Sketch, Slack and others.

Respondents also indicated an attention to short development cycles to create "minimum viable products" (MVPs) that are continually tested and adjusted.

> Lots of traditional UX research: user interviews/surveys, prototyping and user testing. We are agile-ish, mostly working in two-week sprints, but not full capital-A Agile. Design thinking drives our work throughout. We develop minimum viable products.
>
> We have a very loose scrum/agile methodology where our goal is to meet a certain feature set with a minimum viable product, and then we build features on from there until release and beyond, if necessary.

Some did not prescribe to particular processes, but emphasized continuous development and deployment.

> We don't get super hung up on processes, we are not an agile shop, not using Kanban (a software development approach based on just-in-time delivery). We don't use scrum masters. We are mostly in continuous deployment and continuous development.

One respondent identified the more traditional, waterfall cycle of application development. This indicates that processes for product management have not yet been broadly adopted nor well developed, but that organizations are experimenting with different approaches based on their compatibility with existing routines. Resources supporting these techniques are widely available online. Both Slack and Trello are available for free or with free levels of usage.

Also related to process, respondents were asked how data, analytics and metrics were used in managing digital products. Several respondents mentioned different analytics platforms. Many indicated approaches that went beyond website traffic measurement and included measurement against benchmarks and goals.

> I'm most interested in user pathways through our news applications, which help me understand if the decisions we made in building out a user interface translated to readers. For long-form stories we do some scroll-depth analysis and goals-analysis in areas including subscriptions to our newsletters, social sharing, etc.
>
> Everything we do is data informed. There are very few decisions that we make in the absence of some kind of measurement. We have data that we have control over on our site. Then we have partners like Fabric and Adjust (both mobile analytics platforms) and other analytics platforms. We have a data science team that turns raw data into insights that the product, technical and editorial teams can use.

One respondent indicated the value of data to their ability to generate advertising revenue.

> We actively track data—both about our content and our audience—in real-time in order to create active feedback loops for our editorial teams and our product teams. We take these same ideas and empower our advertising partners.

A few respondents indicated frustration with their overall organizations' approach to data.

> Our team has been working on new measurements for our success, but the rest of the newsroom is still chasing page views for the most part.

Respondents expressed frustration with the effectiveness of their organization's use of metrics.

> We definitely build metrics into all our online visualizations and projects, though that typically means normal metrics like page views, visits, time on site and some social metrics based on share URLs. In a few cases we've built in usability metrics that let us know how long someone scrolled down a page or if they utilized a certain toolset or button. We should do more of that, but we should also do more to utilize and act on the metrics we gather now.

Another respondent discussed using innovative means for measuring the impact of their work.

> Everything we do is optimized for some type of impact. Impact is an important metric. Did we get someone released from prison, a law changed, legislation brought to the Senate floor, did someone make these recipes or make an informed decision about how they treat their bodies or gained help with depression?

While measuring impact is not as simple as gathering data about traffic and page views, one organization expressed more meaningful ways to build impactful reporting across the newsroom and into the organization's culture.

> This is part of the responsibility of our brilliant public relations team. Individual reporters also get told when their story makes a difference. There's a pretty good feedback loop on that. We have multiple inputs into making sure we are tracking those kinds of things. A general philosophy of our company is that we get audience feedback on all the channels we are on. People can reply to our newsletters. People will mention us on social. They will tag us in their posts. There are different email addresses that they can use. We're pretty accessible as far as people letting us know when we've made a difference.

The range of approaches described in regard to metrics exhibits particular advantage in using digital media products, with the increased opportunities to use data to make better decisions and emphasize the impact of their work. But compatibility issues were evident in responses that expressed frustration with their organizations' ability to adopt innovative techniques.

With technology personnel often originating from more technical backgrounds and experiences, how were journalistic insights and goals built into these projects? How were decisions made about the ways in which the audience would engage and participate with the content? The most common response in this area was in having journalists and editorial personnel on product teams or consulted in the process.

> How is journalism represented? By having journalists as part of the process, either with editorial personnel having a place on the team or by having editorial consulted as part of the process.

Another respondent indicated editorial personnel participating in a consulting role.

> Editors are apprised of our projects before we begin and have an opportunity to weigh the value to readers versus journalistic mission versus cost to develop. We release products and projects in stages to allow stakeholders in the newsroom and beyond to influence development with feedback and suggestions.

In some cases, editorial personnel have significant power in oversight and approval over digital products.

> Journalistic values are enforced by the editorial team. We have a strict approval process where we have to run everything by them.

One respondent, however, indicated compatibility challenges associated with integrating content into the mission of product management.

> How do you get to the point where product management is about content? That's a tricky thing. It raises a lot of church and state issues. Product managers are generally viewed as commercial side and not editorial, and that's changing.

The same respondent continued, emphasizing the risk associated with the lack of better editorial compatibility with product teams.

> A lot of things go into deferring to editorial. That is the fundamental problem. To the extent it is getting in there at all, it is getting in there in very small doses and usually by the product function abdicating it to editorial. There is usually a small group of people who are fairly junior, who tend to spend a lot of time with apps, tools or content-management-system teams. That's not editorial. That's a minimum level of checking and not really core to the newsroom. It's

> tangential, fringe. What you end up with is unambitious. There's not a lot of thinking about how journalistic values fit into the broader product that we are developing. But the only way you can make a product people want is by doing that.

Some organizations are integrating a culture within product teams to more seamlessly build a journalistic mindset into product development, thus encouraging compatibility between the processes.

> We think of interactive news presentations precisely as any editor and reporter think about a story. They have a beginning middle and end. They have a lede. They have different styles that are appropriate for different visual stories. We want our readers to take from them something about themselves that helps them understand a national phenomenon using their own situation as the lead example.

We have a very clear mission that we do investigative journalism, and everything we do should be done with that purpose in mind. This is very apparent in the entire culture of the organization, so when we make editorial-side products those are all edited as if they were written works.

Product Management Roles and Skills

While the role of product manager is the position that coordinates the product management processes, there are several other positions that are present in development of media products. These roles vary by organization but include technical personnel, designers and business resources. Respondents indicated varying levels of complexity in the organizational structure for managing digital media products.

> We have product managers, full-stack engineers, designers, front-end engineers, data scientists, analysts, graphics reporters, operational engineers and support managers. All of these roles work in small, cross-functional teams focused on a particular product or platform and its associated goals.
>
> A lead UX/UI (user experience/user interface) person. A lead developer. A lead editorial/management person. A lead business development person. Open conversations throughout. Design usually plays the role of leading the "what if" scenarios. Then development usually plays the role of "hey, team.... all that is possible, but it will take us two years to complete." Then as a team—we arbitrage based on editorial/business development needs first.

What do product managers themselves do? An idealized description was provided by one respondent.

> When it's working well, you have a cross-functional team. The product manager should be the central convener, the connective tissue. But they're not just the

> person who invites everyone. They are the ones who are also building consensus. In a media organization building consensus is incredibly important and also extremely difficult. But you don't get anything done unless you can do that.

Respondents were asked to identify the desired skills associated with a product manager. Common responses included communication, empathy, leadership, collaboration and technical proficiency. More than any one of these skills, the relative advantage of this approach had to do with the way these skills worked in concert with one another.

> We hire people as product managers that have strong user focus, understand the business and are good at facilitating collaboration between design, technology, editorial and revenue. They are team leaders who can make decisions and provide direction, but know how to build the best products by empowering the full team.

> Tied in with communication is empathy—hiring people who have the capacity to proactively try to understand things from others' points of view.

> It takes understanding disciplines in organizations, but it also takes a tremendous amount of empathy.

Some respondents expressed the ability to communicate as a mindset or way of life as central to the product management role.

> They need to know how to communicate the product needs. It is a mindset.

Another respondent expressed the need for a strong passion for communication.

> They must be incredible communicators. And they should love media if they want to be a product manager in this business.

The emphases in responses regarding the position of product management in curriculum focused on strategic thinking and data analysis and a more holistic mindset about the role of the organization in the technology ecosystem. One respondent indicated that the desirable skills included "more design thinking, user research, consumer marketing, collaborative facilitation and a comfort with data analysis are critical."

Another emphasized research and market conditions by highlighting "user research including interviewing, surveying and understanding the market, analytics, data and statistics and decision-making skills."

Respondents also indicated an interest in providing students with experience projects that would mirror what they would encounter in the professional world.

> I can't help but think of the perspective of how to put someone on a task to have my job. How did I get it? What made a difference? The most important thing I realized was working on projects on a team, as you would in the professional world. I would find something like that extremely impressive on the resume of someone who came to apply to work here. More than the technical design part, but more of actually working in an environment in which other people were involved and made decisions.

Technical skills in programming and development were also expressed as desirable, but were not the most mentioned nor identified as the most important skill by any respondent. What was more important was the ability to communicate with a range of technical and other resources.

> Some technical proficiency is helpful to further your ability to communicate with the people who are developing. But it's also important to understand the three components of it all: technical proficiency, design aesthetic and user interface.
>
> Most product managers come from a technical background. Some come from commercial background. Some might have been doing journalism at a media company on the dotcom side. They often start as a developer, then move into product-related roles. Not many come from journalism background that go into product management. It's an area of opportunity.

While communication, strategy and leaderships skills are compatible with those already present in the newsroom, a level of complexity is introduced in having to apply these skills in a technology context.

One respondent indicated the priority of journalism skills.

> Product skills are easy to teach in the context of doing the job. The newsroom skills are much harder. I can take somebody with a reasonable aptitude for problem solving and audience empathy and a reasonably analytic brain and turn them into a half decent product manager in a few months. It is much harder with someone who has never worked in a newsroom.

Another respondent was more specific about the potential alignment within academic disciplines.

> I think there is a much closer fit with entrepreneurship, business and design than there is with computer science.

Respondents were asked to predict the demand for these skills in the future. Many see this as an area with strong potential, but only if news organizations recognize its importance and set as a strategic priority.

> I think what will be the next wave will be people who can communicate between the engineer and everyone else. Not to say engineers can't communicate on their own, but we need someone whose job is it to communicate the big picture.
>
> I do see a demand for these roles, but I fear that newsrooms don't see this as a separate skill or job. They expect those skills to be part of other rolls that already exist.
>
> It is my hope that product management will move closer to the core of newsrooms and not further away and be marginalized to the business side.

Conclusion

It is evident, by the proliferation of technology products presented by news organizations, that the role of digital product management is being fulfilled, at least in some of the most innovative news organizations as represented in this study. But the specific elements of these roles are evolving and not very well defined. This study identified a broad range of digital media products—websites, mobile applications, chatbots and data interactives—with increasing complexity as they relate to news distribution and audience engagement. It identified several themes that newsrooms will need to address if they plan to move in this direction, which include the need to work in cross-functional teams, an emphasis on empathy, problem solving and creating value for users, an attention to data and the need to develop resources with a hybrid combination of communication skills and technology expertise.

This project represents an opportunity to better observe these emerging roles and to consider the journalistic qualities that should be present in decisions associated with technology products, particularly as they relate to engagement and civic participation. As digital products mature, product management will need to be understood as a core process and responsibility of media, as opposed to a technology sideline, offshoot or tangential activity. As media organizations receive increased scrutiny for the accuracy and truthfulness of their reporting, the digital projects they create will be expected to demonstrate the same sensibilities. The results of this project can help to inform the direction of journalism curriculum to include media product and engagement management approaches, thus making students more valuable and hirable in this environment.

Future studies of how users interact with and use digital products should be embarked to understand the potential responsibility of digital products in informing digital media literacy, particularly in light of the proliferation of fake news and its effect on the 2016 election. As the field emerges, a broader analysis of this professional role and its responsibilities will be necessary.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the professionals who contributed their time and expertise to this project. Their willingness to unselfishly share their experiences is greatly appreciated in helping to understand this evolving field and its potential effect on journalism curriculum.

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Notes

[1] The entire conversation, which also included Trei Brundrett, chief product officer of Vox and BuzzFeed's managing editor for mobile news Stacy-Marie Ishmael, with The New School's Journalism + Design director Heather Chaplin moderating, can be viewed at http://livestream.com/TheNewSchool/theåß-hunt-for-news-products-of-the-future

[2] Listen to the South By Southwest Interactive 2016 talk given by Shay Howe entitled "Yes, Designer. You Can Be a Product Leader," https://soundcloud.com/officialsxsw/yes-designer-you-can-be-a-product-leader-sxsw-interactive-2016.

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In 2016, Royal founded the Media Innovation Lab and launched a new undergraduate major in Digital Media Innovation at Texas State. In 2013, she received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching at Texas State University and the AEJMC/Scripps Howard Journalism and Mass Communication Teacher of the Year award. During the 2013-2014 academic year, she was in residence at Stanford University in the Knight Journalism Fellowship program, where she worked on a platform to teach journalists how to code, called CodeActually.com. Additional detail regarding her research, education and experience can be found at cindyroyal.com.

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Decoding the Podaissance: Identifying Community Journalism Practices in Newsroom and Avocational Podcasts

By Marcus Funk

Scholars and journalists are fond of contrasting podcasting with terrestrial radio. The better comparison, however, is with traditional community journalism. This almost year-long qualitative analysis of newsroom and avocational podcasts adopt a predominate focus on specific niches and articulate traditional news values. This study argues that podcasters are better at articulating internal community with co-hosts and guests than external community with listeners and fans. For journalists, it offers suggestions for building community and embracing personal podcasting; for academics, it broadens the definition of community journalism and offers a more theoretical understanding of a booming medium.

Introduction

Last April, *Economist* writer K.S.C. declared 2016 "the year the podcast came of age." (K.S.C., 2016). Aided by the proliferation of mobile technology, ultra-popular podcasts like Serial carved out household names alongside offbeat amateur productions like My Dad Wrote *A Porno*. Awareness of podcasting has more than doubled since 2006, and once-a-month listening jumped from 9% to 17% between 2008 and 2015 (Vogt, 2015). It climbed again to 21% in 2016, with 13% listening weekly. The same survey found that half of Americans older than 12 listen to some form of online radio (Research, 2016). Later, in September, the Neiman Journalism Lab made a dramatic declaration in a five-part series on the podcasting industry (Doctor, 2016): "How hot is podcasting? Stupid V.C. money hot".

Meanwhile, also in 2016, trust in mainstream news plunged to its lowest point in modern history (Ingram, 2016; Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016; Swift, 2016). So-called “fake news” became an epidemic on Facebook and Twitter (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016; Borel, 2017; Isaac, 2016; Maheshwari, 2016) that weighed heavily on the presidential election and inspired at least one shooting at a pizza parlor in Washington, D.C. (Sands, 2016; Siddiqui & Svrluga, 2016). Why did podcasting boom while traditional media floundered?

The answer may be in the community-based and immersive nature of podcasting. This analysis steps away from worn contrasts between podcasting and terrestrial radio (Berry, 2006; Bottomley, 2015; Cwynar, 2015; Menduni, 2007; Pérez, 2012). Instead, it argues the “relentlessly local” community newspaper (Lauterer, 2006) offers a more apt comparison and path forward. Community newspapers center their content around an immersive community and invite readers to share that community, and as a result they are faring relatively well financially.

That sense of community, of engagement and fellowship and devotion, is key to their successful brand. Podcasts may strike those same emotions—thus building immersive communities, which in turn could provide a media format which establishes trust and participation rather than alienation and disengagement.

Literature Review

Podcasting

When podcasts first debuted in 2001, they were digital audio files that could be streamed or downloaded through MP3 players and computers (K.S.C., 2016). On a technical level, podcasts have not evolved tremendously since; the biggest change is that they are now consumed primarily via smartphone applications, which enables listeners to listen during a morning commute or evening jog (Berry, 2015; K.S.C., 2016; MacDougall, 2011). Also essential is that podcasts are “timeshifted,” and can be saved or stored; live listening is never required, unlike traditional radio (McClung & Johnson, 2010).

Podcasting reached a breakout point in 2014 thanks largely to Serial, a popular true crime series from Chicago’s WBEZ public radio. It was originally a spinoff from *This American Life*, a flagship program of juggernaut National Public Radio; it soared to five million downloads in record time. Berry (2015) argues that *Serial* became a cultural phenomenon partly due to compelling journalism and engaging storytelling, but also as a confluence of circumstance: Innovations in technology, branding and social media made it relatable water cooler conversation.

> What *Serial* did was offer a podcast that not only had mass appeal but also presented itself as a narrative in which the audience could engage with intellectually and emotionally. It did so at a time when technology made the experience simpler and where the success of podcasts such as 99% Invisible had primed the market. (Berry, 2015, p. 171)

Although there are exceptions noting the distance between conventional radio and podcasting (Pérez, 2012), the bulk of extant studies on podcasting identify overlap and incorporation with traditional terrestrial radio. One study in Canada indicates that podcasting is extending traditional radio and news media. The so-called "podcasting renaissance" sparked by *Serial* and other programs in 2014 were largely associated with major, mainstream media—not amateur or homemade products empowered by the democratic nature of the World Wide Web (Cwynar, 2015).

Similarly, Bottomley (2015) argued there is "little about podcasting that is truly new, when the full range of radio's history and forms are taken into account" (p. 180). His analysis of *Welcome to Night Vale*, a fantasy horror program which borrows heavily from radio dramas of the 1930s and 1940s, found that creative independent programming is statistically heavily outnumbered by podcasts recorded in professional newsrooms and media professionals. Even independent podcasts rely on traditional radio tropes and techniques. There is also evidence that the typically well-educated and affluent American podcast listener is not discouraged by advertising or promotions in podcasts (McClung & Johnson, 2010); they may even be inclined to support products which share their loyalty to the growing medium (K.S.C., 2016), which is a luxury rarely shared by traditional media.

Many podcasts are essentially using updated radio technology to shake off conventional restrictions and traditions. Audiences consider "podologues," or science-focused podcasts, to be valuable sources of scientific information (Birch & Weitkamp, 2010), and comedian Paul Gilmartin used *The Mental Illness Happy Hour* to explore depression and anxiety on a deeply personal level (Meserko, 2014). Neither topic is particularly common on commercial radio, nor is the high degree of specificity and self-disclosure. A prolific network of African-American podcasters, known jokingly as the "Chitlin' Circuit," draws frequent comparisons to traditional African-American social spaces like barbershops and churches. They feature language, topics and cultural tropes that would never appear on traditional radio (Florini, 2015).

On a deeper theoretical level, such podcasts contribute to research on "phenomenology," the notion that reality is constructed through perception and consumption of mediated and real images and experiences (MacDougall, 2011; McLuhan, 1995). Podcasts cause *synaesthesia*, a holistic and immersive experience.

> Many of the listeners of podcasted religious sermons, news magazines, political pundits, and music DJs participating in this study often described a kind of organic connection or an enveloping, even holistic, involvement as part of the experience. (MacDougall, 2011, pp. 716-717)

MacDougall (2011) implicitly raises two intriguing points. The first is troubling: The well-documented use of podcasting while driving clashes uncomfortably with the holistic experience of *synaesthesia*.

The second is more pertinent to this study. MacDougall's (2011) immersive experience meshes with the well-documented informal, conversational nature of podcasts (Birch & Weitkamp, 2010; Florini, 2015; Meserko, 2014). That informality and self-disclosure reduces the distance between podcaster and audience. Could such informal immersion, such conversational dialogue, constitute a community?

Although personal and cultural connections to podcast and their topics are well documented, those associations are rarely considered extant community. Could avocational or amateur podcasts be considered journalism? And if so, could they constitute community journalism?

News Factors

Answering those questions taps the core question of journalism academe: What is "news?" How do you define "news?" The simplest explanation has deep scholarly roots (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Gans, 1979; Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1973): News is deviance, or items or events which clash with the standard routines of average readers and thus threaten their physical safety or societal status quo (Arpan & Tuzunkan, 2011; Funk, 2016; Jong Hyuk, 2008; Shoemaker, Chang, & Brendlinger, 1987; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The concept is not dissimilar from popular discussions of anxiety and worrying (Wilson & Dufrene, 2010), and is anchored in a primitive biological need to be informed of potential threats (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

> People routinely survey their environments for things that are deviant or unusual because they pose potential threats. These can be as common as a car darting in front of someone on a busy street to less frequent threats like invading armies. … Journalists fulfill people's innate desire to detect threats in the environment, keep informed about the world, and devise methods of dealing with those threats, whether real or potential. (Shoemaker, 1996, p. 32)

That deviance is typically articulated through news factors, which stem from a pivotal study of Norwegian newspaper coverage of foreign conflict. Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified 12 "news factors" that served as catalysts for coverage: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative. The more such factors were extant, the more likely an event or idea would achieve news coverage.

Although the particular factors vary a bit, that basic thesis has been replicated many times: News can be boiled down to discreet factors, and the presence of such factors motivates and accelerates coverage (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; Joye, 2010; Kepplinger & Ehmig, 2006; Lewis & Cushion, 2009; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The simplest expression of such factors emphasizes diverse conflict and prominence, also known as celebrity (Funk, 2016); this study adopts that focus.

Research on protest coverage suggests the press frequently covers such events in predictable ways, emphasizing the chaos and confrontations between activists and law enforcement, as well as the resulting arrests (Detenber et al., 2007). Budarick (2011) asserts that by covering protests in such a manner, the media contribute to the "narrative reestablishment of the social order" (p. 49). Even through their objective Twitter reports from the scene, journalists, as well as activists, may reinforce the status quo by communicating a focus on the conflict events instead of larger issues at hand.

Community Journalism

Traditional research into community journalism has focused on small, hyper-local, rural and suburban American newspapers. Such newspapers are famous for covering community happenings and garden club events, particularly when they involve "oddly shaped vegetables" (Lauterer, 2006, p. 3). Readers have a ritualistic attachment to them based upon the newspapers' physical and emotional presence in the community (Wotanis, 2012). Community newspapers are willing and able to cover logistical worries and essential concerns after a natural disaster (Dill & Wu, 2009; Hansen & Hansen, 2012), and a community-oriented approach may offer a blueprint for the future of journalism in the United States (Terry, 2011) and China (Lauterer, 2012). Immersion in local communities is so ingrained in community newspapers that female newspaper editors in traditionally underdeveloped West Virginia found that earning "insider" status in isolated and entrenched communities was more difficult than overcoming sexist stereotypes about women in the workplace (Nelson, Britten, & Troilo, 2015). Local terrestrial radio in Honduras and Armenian newspapers in Lebanon also serve clear community journalism and community building functions (Reader et al., 2015), as does an English-language newspaper for American expatriates in Costa Rica (Spencer, 2013).

However, conventional wisdom oversimplifies "community" as a specific physical place. In truth, community has little to do with physical location and everything to do with imagined emotional bonds and connections. Anderson (2006) argued that media construct community through ideological and linguistic repetition. By emphasizing particular ideas and identities, and their connections to a specific physical location, the media effectively fuse them together. He went further: Outside of nuclear family ties, very few of our identities and connections are organic. Most of our identities are shaped by modern media, as are our perceptions of physical places and the ruling elite (Anderson, 2006).

Physical location is not a requirement for community, particularly in the digital age. Online communities have evolved around national anthems posted to YouTube (White, 2015), news-oriented media in digital worlds like Second Life (Brennen & dela Cerna, 2010), and traditional community newspapers have embraced the web to reach young professionals who moved away after high school (Hansen, 2007). Interpretive communities emerged on Twitter surrounding professional coverage of the 2012 American presidential elections (Mourão, 2015); Twitter also supports Cymraeg communities, primarily of young bilingual Welsh reading and writing an old and vulnerable language (Jones, Cunliffe, & Honeycutt, 2013).

Research Questions

This study investigates potential overlap between podcasting and community journalism. It also studies community journalism conventions among both newsroom and avocational podcasts.

RQ1: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a narrow, niche focus on their subject matter?

RQ2: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate community with listeners or supporters?

RQ3: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate community with hosts, co-hosts and guests?

RQ4: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on timeliness?

RQ5: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on conflict?

RQ6: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on celebrity?

Methodology

This study explores potential overlap between podcasting and traditional community journalism principles. It also compares newsroom and avocational podcasts on a variety of subjects.

From February 2016 to January 2017, 12 podcasts were analyzed. (In one instance, a 2015 episode was mentioned in 2016 and added to the analysis.) All were secured through the Stitcher application on an android smartphone. Most were heard during the researcher's commute to and from work, but a few were studied during jogs or airplane travel. The researcher kept a notebook in his car to log reflections and recorded a series of audio notes on a smartphone while driving; this kept the discourse fresh and secure, and empowered an almost year-long analysis.

Three criteria (in no particular order) were used to determine eligibility. First, the researcher wanted a balance between podcasts by professional journalists and those recorded by hobbyists and enthusiasts. Half the podcasts were hosted by conventional journalists, including FiveThirtyEight's *Elections* podcast, WNYC's *Death, Sex & Money*, and Kara Swisher's *Recode Decode*. The others were hosted by individuals with no affiliation to a newsroom or journalism environment. Level of professionalism was not considered. An amateur podcaster discussing movies in his home is no more a professional journalist than Dan Savage, a relationship guru with a national following; although the term "hobbyist" seems appropriate for the former and belittling to the latter, they are grouped together because neither are conventional journalists. The term "avocational" seemed the best fit.

Second, an attempt was made to study a range of podcasting genres and subjects. The 12 podcasts for this analysis, therefore, covered a range of subjects from technology news, dating and relationships, video games, mortality and personal finance.

Third, gender balance was a priority. Half the podcasts in this study are hosted by women, and a few others include female co-hosts.

The researcher rotated between podcasts throughout the analysis, partly to space out the episodes of individual podcasts and partly to prevent burnout. Typically, the most recent episode of one podcast was analyzed before moving on to the next podcast, and so on, until all 12 had been studied and the cycle reset. The analysis was holistic and qualitative.

Once a particular podcast began repeating answers to the research questions, study of that podcast was considered complete. Typically, that occurred after between three and eight episodes. This strategy originated with qualitative interview scholarship, which argues that interviews should be conducted until new participants cease providing new information (Coleman, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Roulston, 2010; Stewart & William B. Cash, 2000); that precedent seemed applicable to podcasting, and preferable to improvisation.

The full list of podcasts and associated links can be found in Appendix 1.

Results

Generally, all podcasts maintained a predominate focus on their niche topics. Both journalist and avocational podcasters were better at building internal community than external community; additionally, avocational podcasters curated external community better than most journalists, and developed internal community better than most journalists. All podcasts utilized traditional news factors of timeliness, conflict and celebrity.

RQ1: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a narrow, niche focus on their subject matter?

In response to RQ1, for both newsroom and avocational podcasts, the answer is a resounding yes. Journalists retained an overwhelming focus on their topics of choice and rarely strayed; so, too, did avocational podcasters discussing topics other than journalism and the news.

The only real exceptions were deviations into the pasts and personal lives of the podcast hosts, guests, callers or audience members. Sometimes those detours meshed with the topic at hand; sometimes, the hosts became completely sidetracked.

The central pillar of community journalism is a "relentless" focus on the local community (Lauterer, 2006). As Anderson (2006) noted, though, community is imagined and not necessarily rooted in physical place. For an online social media like podcasting, community and niche are effectively the same concept.

RQ2: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate community with listeners or supporters?

In response to RQ2, podcasters articulated community with listeners and supporters in three general ways. They read feedback on the air, typically from emails or tweets; they broke the fourth wall and spoke directly to their audience, often encouraging them to contact them with feedback or ideas; or, they spoke directly with an audience member who either called in to the show or was invited for a sit-down interview with the hosts.

Those conversations can be considered external community: Community built between podcast hosts and external listeners.

Communicating directly with ordinary audience members was a lukewarm priority for most journalist podcasters. Often, listener feedback was mostly absent; *Recode Decode*, *Voice of San Diego* and *Houston Sports Talk* infrequently included listener feedback. When audiences were given a voice, it was typically broadcast at the tail end of the show; FiveThirtyEight's *Elections Podcast* and *Stuff Mom Never Told You* read questions and feedback in the closing moments of a podcast. Most journalist podcasters did not outright avoid direct communication with listeners, but they also did not embrace the practice.

The lone exception among the newsroom podcasts was *Death, Sex & Money*, which offered tremendous personal interaction with audience members. The most vivid example was the episode entitled "Why you're not having sex," which included a large collection of testimonials from ordinary listeners describing voluntary or circumstantial abstinence (Bishop, 2015). Other episodes used the same format.

Journalist podcasters were better about acknowledging dialogue with audiences. The *Elections Podcast* struggled with a term for "clickers," or online-only polls with extremely low reliability favored by Donald Trump following the presidential debates; they encouraged their audience to submit better terms for the concept (Druke, 2016a). The hosts of *Stuff Mom Never Told You* mentioned publishing the cover of the book "Feminist Fight Club" on their social media platforms, mentioning listeners may be familiar with the book thanks to the earlier social media conversation (Conger & Ervin, 2016a). Discussion of Twitter and social media is particularly common on *Recode Decode*, and its host and guests frequently referenced technology titans like Mark (Zuckerberg) or Peter (Theil) by their first names, which helps craft familiarity and community between listeners, host and entrepreneurs.

It's certainly plausible that encouraging social media use goes hand-in-hand with encouraging social media conversation; however, even providing social media contact information during a podcast was surprisingly uncommon among journalists.

Journalists were much better about inviting discussion from guests and interview subjects. In most cases, however, those guests and interviews could hardly be considered average listeners. *Death, Sex & Money* and *Recode Decode* both predominately favor interview formats, but the guests were often famous actors or writers (for the former) and tech entrepreneurs (for the latter). On the one hand, that does constitute interaction with a listener; on the other, journalists exert tremendous authority over who receives an invitation, and they are never chosen simply because they are an interested listener. *Houston Sports Talk* also interviews a rotating cast of guests—but they are almost always other sports journalists in the Houston area, effectively helping the host broadcast journalism rather than conduct sincere communication with the audience.

Avocational podcasters, on the whole, were better at facilitating communication with audiences. The most vibrant example is the Savage Lovecast, which anchors the bulk of its show around questions from, and conversations with, ordinary listeners and sex or relationship topics of their choosing. *Ask Me Another*, an NPR game show, centers itself around dialogue and participation from enthused audience members. The Video Games Show acknowledges social media conversations more openly than many podcasts, even when letters or feedback are not read explicitly; one episode even featured a shout out to "Josh, who is a listener," and a personal story about a clumsy father spilling tequila on a PlayStation 3 (Bergin, Gurley & Friedel, 2016).

Invited guests on some podcasts follow a similar pattern: While those guests were pulled from the audience, podcast hosts control who receives an invitation. Typically guests on *Words and Money and Your Stupid Minds* were introduced thanks to their relationship with either the subject matter under discussion or their relationship with the routine hosts; their status as an ordinary audience member was rarely, if ever, a factor.

Too, avocational podcasters mentioned their social media presence periodically, but not as routinely as expected.

RQ3: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate community with hosts, co-hosts and guests?

In response to RQ3, newsroom and avocational podcasters were both much better at establishing rapport and familiarity, and thus community, with co-hosts and guests. Typically, that familiarity was established two ways: Through chipper and sincere conversation, which occurred throughout, and through disclosure of personal thoughts, feelings, anecdotes and narratives.

Such conversations can be called *internal community*: Community built internally among podcasts hosts, co-hosts and guests.

Across the board, journalists did not adopt objective or sober attitudes during podcasts. Although objectivity is considered paramount in news writing, that standard would likely feel stilted and robotic during a podcast; it would involve scrubbing emotion and pitch from every word, which would be exhausting and unnatural. Every journalist studied here reflected clear personality and obvious moods during every episode. Even when their language and word choice were objective, their tone was personable and distinct—which contributes to podcasting *synaesthesia*, even if the words themselves met traditional standards of objectivity.

Personal disclosures were not tremendously common among journalist podcasters. They were extant, however, particularly when they deviated from the topic at hand. Journalists were willing to "go there" about their personal lives, or topics unrelated to their news or careers; they were considerably less willing to show their opinions, histories or personalities concerning the news or primary subject matter. It was almost like an on/off switch—journalists could be people when they switched off the news for a moment or two, but reverted back to opinion-less professionals when the news switch was again flipped on.

Strong examples include the *Elections* hosts playfully debating who was the more "pathetic" weekend workaholic (Druke, 2016b) or Nate Silver admitting he wrongly pronounced it "Kayne West" instead of "Kanye," (Druke, 2016a); Kara Swisher acknowledging that she tweeted a great deal about Donald Trump, and arguing it fit her niche as a tech journalist (Swisher, 2016); a co-host on *Stuff Mom Never Told You* gleefully celebrating having seen a movie that her co-host had not watched, which she said was a rare occurrence (Conger & Ervin, 2016b); and the Houston Sports Talk host and a guest getting totally distracted by movies, particularly *Sully* and *Hell or High Water*, after discussing the Houston Rockets professionally and at length (Land & Seal, 2016).

Rarely did a journalist podcaster "go there" in regards to their journalistic subject matter; when they did, however, the disclosure was often deeply personal. The strongest example came on Death, Sex & Money, when the producer stepped in mid-podcast to declare that host Anna Sale was home in Wyoming after delivering a "brand new baby girl." Sale was glowing, audibly and obviously, when discussing her daughter. Admittedly, the subject matter for Death, Sex & Money is deliberately broad and emotional, but even so, the host's deeply personal disclosures and discussions fit the journalism. Too, they together explained how many episodes had been pre-recorded in the spring in anticipation of her maternity leave (Bishop 2016).

Another strong example was during a *Stuff Mom Never Told You* discussion of the "sharing economy," or applications which allow people to outsource tasks like driving or housekeeping. (Uber is a good example.) One co-host admitted that she'd discussed sharing and outsourcing in therapy, including related emotions of trust and guilt surrounding housekeeping (Conger & Ervin, 2016c). Too, the hosts of *Voice of San Diego Podcast* half-jokingly confessed to originally coining the much maligned term "convadium" regarding the San Diego Chargers' controversial plans for a combination convention center and stadium (Lewis & Keatts, 2016).

Avocational podcasters also maintained deeply personable and personalized tones and attitudes throughout each recording. Their tones and attitudes were intrinsically linked to the conversations at hand, both on-topic and off; this contributes powerfully to synaesthesia, just as it does with newsroom podcasts.

Avocational podcasters were generally more willing to embrace personal disclosures and anecdotes than journalists—particularly concerning the subject matter and discussion at hand. Although avocational hosts did periodically get distracted by personal sidebars, just as journalists did, there was no reluctance to express personal feelings or opinions about hosts, guests or the podcast's central subject. Many of those feelings were deeply personal; others were topical, but still personal and informative.

On *Your Stupid Minds*, regular hosts excitedly trumpeted the arrival of guest host "Kaitlyn 'Nick's sister' Nobel, a devoted fan of the podcast and resident Toyota Previa expert" (Dobson & Nobel, 2016). *The Savage Lovecast* was riddled with personal disclosures, including topical confessions like Dan Savage's dislike of eggplant (Savage, 2016) or frequent and deep discussions of his own marriage and sexuality. Other vibrantly personal discussions included a conversation about millennial women embracing money as an empowering tool to "lead the life you want to live;" the episode of *Words + Money* also included the not-so-emotional revelation that host Tess Wicks is a "spa girl" (Wicks, 2016). A remarkably candid and personal discussion about bathing suits and reconstructed breasts, as well as personal confessions about an "adult summer camp," populated *The Shepod* (King & Tenenbein, 2016).

Generally, there was little distance between the avocational host's personal disclosures and the subject matter at hand. Avocational podcasters were unhesitant about "going there," so to speak, and covered a great deal of personal ground.

RQ4: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on timeliness?

In response to RQ4, the FiveThirtyEight *Elections Podcast* remained judiciously current concerning polling and political events, just as *Houston Sports Talk* and *Voice of San Diego* discussed current events, upcoming elections and games, and recent happenings in Houston and San Diego. Not every podcast episode was directly fused with a recent happening, but each was clearly cognizant of current events.

Generally, avocational podcasters retained a similar focus on current events. Even when discussing old and atrocious movies, *Your Stupid Minds* mentioned recent movie screening and the Shepod regularly centered around lengthy discussions of what co-hosts were watching, eating and wearing that particular week. Such discussion was not journalistic and occasionally incidental, but that focus on the here and now did ground the podcast in a particular time and place.

RQ5: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on conflict?

In response to RQ5, conflict is a critical part of all journalism (Funk, 2016; Shoemaker

& Vos, 2009) and these podcasts were no exception. The presidential election was an omnipresent subject on the *Elections Podcast*, a regular topic on Voice of San Diego and an occasional subject on *Stuff Mom Never Told You* and *Recode Decode*. Other topics included heroin abuse in rural America and sexuality biases in romantic comedies on *Stuff Mom Never Told You*, the omnipresent challenges facing the Houston Texans on Houston Sports Talk and diverse personal challenges with mortality, sexuality, frugality and honesty on *Death, Sex & Money*. Conflict was never absent from newsroom podcasts, although it was not confined to elections or other traditional front-page subjects.

Conflict was a driving force for avocational podcasts, too. *The Video Games Show* discussed new releases and competing ideas in the retro gaming world, *Words and Money* centered on financial empowerment and achievement, and *Your Stupid Minds* savaged lousy movies from the 1980s and 1990s. Other avocational podcasts followed suit in their own niches.

RQ6: How do newsroom and avocational podcasters articulate a focus on celebrity?

In response to RQ6, celebrity, also known as prominence, is relative to a media outlet's subject matter. It can apply to individuals, institutions, or events (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Newsroom podcasts included celebrity in every episode. The most salient examples were tech executives like Peter Thiel and Mark Zuckerberg in *Recode Decode*; Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the *Elections Podcast*; local elections, particularly a controversial ballot measure surrounding a new venue for the Chargers, in Voice of San Diego; and discussions on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and "mansplaining" in *Stuff Mom Never Told You*.

Avocational podcasters, too, focused on celebrity. The Savage Lovecast discussed presidential politics and candidates at length, along with other hot-button relationship topics like open relationships and domestic abuse; *Ask Me Another* routinely included "very important puzzlers" in its lineup, typically actors and entertainment figures promoting new shows or films; and *The Video Games Show* covered prominent big-budget video games and platforms, including *Destiny* and the Nintendo 3DS.

Discussion

Podcasting sits at an odd crossroads in 2017. On the one hand, popular faith in mainstream media is in stark decline, and social media have become highways for fake news and hyperbole. On the other hand, podcasts are becoming more popular by leaps and bounds; much of that boost is due to mobile technology and the accessible combination of podcasts, smartphones and workplace commutes. That intersection is not a coincidence.

Journalist and avocational podcasts follow the same principles as traditional community journalism. They are rooted in a particular niche, they articulate multiple forms of community and are focused on traditional news values of timeliness, conflict and celebrity. Those values, particularly the focus on community building, define podcasting's ascent and offer a blueprint for rebuilding trust in mainstream media.

Too, the notion of *synaesthesia* implies that audiences may be more willing to trust a journalist's voice than their writing. In turn, they are more likely to build a common community around an audio recording than a written article, or a tweet or Facebook post.

First, it is noteworthy that journalism and avocational podcasters were generally better at building internal community (with co-hosts and guests) than external community (with listeners and average audience members). It's also worth noting that avocational podcasters were more willing than journalists to develop external community, and more thoroughly embraced self-disclosure and internal community. Reading listener emails or responding directly to audience members was not necessarily avoided, but priority was clearly given to routine journalism coverage and internal conversations among hosts.

Opening new avenues for external community seems a clear and direct method of building larger communities and growing audiences. Renovating existing podcast formats to increase audience feedback, though, risks watering down the discussion that attracts listeners in the first place.

The solution may be to introduce a second episode format devoted solely to audience feedback and engagement. Leave current podcasts unchanged, but once a week or once a month assemble podcast hosts to dive in to listener emails, Tweets and Facebook posts. Episode formats could be labelled to avoid confusion between the regular show and question and answer sessions, and the formats could be customized to reflect the podcast's particular niche. This would help audiences feel invested in the podcast, thus further building community, without forcing hosts to choose between their content and audience feedback.

It would also likely not require tremendous preparation—simply show up and respond to feedback, professionally and personally.

Second, while an abstract concept, synaesthesia offers a great deal to traditional journalists. Ultimately, the majority of social media posts and circulated news relies upon the written word. If trust in written journalism is in decline, then why not invest heartily in audio journalism? Too, if audiences subconsciously trust spoken words more than written ones, why not exploit that bias? Even a modest podcast could build faith in a particular product, or journalism in general, among increasingly jaded audiences.

Third, a reconsideration of personal disclosure in newsroom podcasts seems warranted. Hesitation is reasonable; there's no need to reinvent the wheel, and traditional objectivity is a cornerstone of American journalism. However, personal disclosures and personable discussion seem an important part of modern podcasting, and journalists are already peppering them into their broadcasts. Journalists could take them farther, and use them more frequently, without jeopardizing their professionalism.

There is certainly a limit to appropriate personal conversation in a newsroom podcast; however, that limit is farther from current practice than most journalists believe. Journalists have more permission to be personable than they realize—more opportunities to be people on their news podcasts, and fewer expectations that they be strictly *journalists*.

This article speaks to distinctions between media form and media function. A frequent academic temptation is to compare media vertically by format; podcasting is frequently compared to traditional terrestrial radio, for example. This tendency, while valuable, can overlook more pertinent horizontal similarities between mediums. This study argues that podcast's niche focus and highly personal content more closely resemble community newspapers than terrestrial radio. That comparison is academically valuable for several reasons.

It speaks holistically to the nature of podcasting, which is intrinsically rooted in community building. This analysis also furthers the growth of community journalism scholarship into niche areas beyond traditional rural and suburban newspapers.

Podcasts also cannot be easily separated by topic. Journalist and avocational podcast hosts both routinely emphasized primary news factors: Timeliness, conflict and celebrity were centerpieces of every recording, as was a specialized focus on each particular topic. This helps answer the $64,000 questions of the journalism academe: What is "news?" How do you define "news?" If avocational podcasters follow the same tropes and practices as hardened journalists, then the definition of journalism merits re-exploration. Ultimately these findings demonstrate the breadth and ubiquitousness of those news values, which helps the academy understand their importance to the journalism industry and communication in general.

Future Research

This study argues that the growth in podcasts is due to their community journalism-esque approach to building a community of listeners; it also argues that the audio nature of podcasts contributes to *synaesthesia*, which may amplify feelings of immersion and community.

Audiences and podcasters both deserve a role in this conversation. Qualitative analysis can construct the paradigm for that discussion, but surveys or interviews with journalist and avocational podcasters would be ideal for exploring how those hosts feel about community creation and audience loyalty. Determining how podcasts value listener feedback or community engagement, and how much those concerns influence podcast content, could be illuminating.

This study also recommends journalists double down on podcasting to increase trust and faith in traditional media, which has been in noted decline (Ingram, 2016; Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016; Swift, 2016). Surveys and interviews of audiences could reinforce or break this argument. Assessing podcast listener faith in journalism and traditional media, along with podcast and other new media forms of journalism, could have tremendous value for the field and academy, as would documenting an extant or absent sense of community among listeners.

Most importantly: Would jaded Americans who avoid traditional news media be willing to listen to podcasts? If so, would that lead to increased faith in news media over time, or not? A reasonable assumption can be made affirming that argument. Listeners who feel a personal affinity for a podcast likely trust the podcast host, recognize their personality and traits and may be more likely to develop trust for journalists and the news media. Surveys and interviews could confirm or disconfirm that hypothesis.

Podcasts also seem ripe for a feminist and gender-based analysis. Establishing if, and how, male-hosted and female-hosted podcasts differ in terms of self-disclosure and generated community could be fruitful. This study initially considered gender, but the subject deserves independent and thorough analysis.

Finally, journalists and academics should further contemplate self-disclosure on podcasts. Avocational podcasts were especially willing to “go there,” so to speak, and include personal anecdotes, perspectives and feelings. Those disclosures reflect a great deal about those journalists and avocational hosts as people—perhaps more that the journalists themselves realize—and contribute greatly to building communities and audiences around these podcasts. Journalists should embrace those conversations, and share a bit more of themselves and their personalities.

Blending personality and journalism on podcasts opens the door for another important question. Internal community and personal sharing are key elements of podcasting, which is growing remarkably; traditional reporting abhors personal sharing, however, and is greeted with increasing skepticism and hostility among the American public. There are two possibilities: Either podcasts are a unique media format, or they invite review of traditional journalistic notions of bias and personality. Further research is merited.

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Appendix 1: Full List of Podcasts

Male-Hosted Newsroom Podcasts:

FiveThirtyEight's Politics Podcast, formerly called the Elections Podcast. http://fivethirtyeight.com/tag/politics-podcast/
Houston Sports Talk, http://houstonsportstalkpod.podomatic.com/
Voice of San Diego, http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/category/audio/

Female-Hosted Newsroom Podcasts:

Death, Sex & Money, http://www.wnyc.org/shows/deathsexmoney
Recode Decode, http://www.recode.net/recode-decode-podcast-kara-swisher
Stuff Mom Never Told You, http://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/

Male-Hosted Avocational Podcasts:

The Savage Lovecast, http://www.savagelovecast.com/
The Video Games Show, http://videogamesshow.libsyn.com/
Your Stupid Minds, http://www.yourstupidminds.com/

Female-Hosted Avocational Podcasts:

Ask Me Another, http://www.npr.org/programs/ask-me-another/
The Shepod, http://shepod.com/
Words and Money, https://www.tesswicks.com/podcast/

ISOJ
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ONLINE JOURNALISM

The News of Your Youth: Memory and Subjective Experience of Time During Major News Events

By Terry L. Britt

The presence of numerous pieces of archival news content online presents an opportunity for online media audiences to re-engage with news events they experienced at various times of life, which can stimulate memory retrieval of both the news event and personal experiences associated with the time of the news event. New media, exemplified by sites like YouTube, may act as a sort of temporal gatekeeper in providing news of the past and promoting cognitive and emotional memory associated with the news event. This study examines this phenomenon through the concepts of autonoetic consciousness (self-awareness in experiential memory content) and the reminiscence bump (a propensity for recalling details of events in one's youth) with a qualitative interview-based study involving 18- to 23-year-old college students being shown videos of major news events that occurred when they were between 12-19 years of age. Findings show that these videos not only assist in several ways with recall of the news event, but also with memories associated with that time and with self-comparisons of attitudes and feelings about the past news event.

Introduction

For all the well-documented and repeatedly analyzed information regarding the swift and, oftentimes, traumatic set of procedural, economic, and social changes visited upon journalism by the advances of digital technology and Internet-based communication in the last 20 years, one area that seems to miss out on the conversational limelight is that of the equally dramatic changes in online news content archiving. Digitalization of information in its various forms has also incorporated information that was first produced in the past, both pre- and post-Internet, and this includes film and television archives. In discussing film archives in Australia, Hughes (2016) states that archival materials and records “affirm a verisimilitude to life as it was lived” (p. 254). When it comes to news events of the past, media archives may not be perfect representations of reality, but one would have to wonder where social and individual awareness of the past would be without what we have endeavored to save in some format.

However, with the online tools now available, there may be a more deeply significant and long-term purpose for saving the news of our collective past. With what seems to be an ever-growing corpus of content available through websites and new media-based services, YouTube being one of those (Shohet, 2010), the opportunity for people to engage with online news archives, featuring information about events both small and large in terms of scale, impact, and interest, grows at an equal rate. Understanding the roles of new media outlets, news archives, and their connection to the human mind and memory is the focus of the current study, which employs a qualitative interview method following subject engagement with archived television news videos accessible online. The study utilizes conceptual and theoretical frames from both media sociology and cognitive psychology to explore the purposes and interactions central to news archives and their potential audiences. In this instance, the analytical lens is placed upon archives of news events corresponding with the time of adolescence, which, for the purpose of this study, has been defined as 12-19 years of age, and how online archival content might assist those who use it in reactivating, reinforcing, and reassessing their memories of the news events in question and experiences associated with the same time period of the news event. This study may serve as a springboard for related qualitative and quantitative studies on relationships between human memory and news media, as well as to serve as an exploration into social and individual uses of online news archives and the importance of new media as a tool for distributing archival content.

Literature Review

One of the four main functions of the media is transmission of the social heritage (Lasswell, 1948), which involves communicating information, values, and norms both to those coming into a society from outside and to future generations of a society (Severin & Tankard, 2001). Logically, one method of ensuring that all newcomers into a society will receive information that is integral to maintaining and continuing a social heritage is the formation of an archive. In this respect, media archives constitute a key portion of the information by which societies can create and maintain collective memory, a socially agreed-upon reconstruction of memories of past events or places (Halbwachs, 1946/1992). Contemporary societies place a high value on collective memories of past events (Schwalbe, 2006), and while individual memories of past events may be unique in certain characteristics, they remain born of connections with social units (Halbwachs, 1946/1992). Thus, the media, as a social agent, contribute to collective memory by generating news content about events in the present and maintaining an archive of that content to represent those same events when they become “the past.”

The execution of the archive concept often proves more difficult than one might imagine. In documenting a national effort by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AIMA) to preserve local television station programming, Cariani (2011) explains that much of the physical media containing locally produced television programming, particularly news programs, "were deteriorating and being discarded at an alarming rate" and, "From the stations' point of view, tossing it was often easier than saving it" (p. 139). Additionally, television archives, although of great usefulness to media scholars, exist more for their value to media outlets for inclusions in documentaries or other programming, and to audiences within a marketplace as retrospective collections (Scannell, 2010).

While the continued preservation of television news for public access has seen some success through the efforts of both public and private entities—most notably, the archive of national television news programming at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee—the arrival of online-based "new media" technologies seems to have opened new ground for preserving our past. It is one new media conduit in particular, YouTube, that presents itself as a veritable linchpin for this research study and for archiving of televised news events in general.

YouTube as Gateway to the Past

A growing body of literature (Armstrong, McAdams, & Cain, 2015; Gehl, 2009; McKee, 2011; Shohet, 2010) exists on the phenomenon of YouTube as a video-based cultural depository, including content preserving or archiving news events from various countries or societies at different points in time. The video streaming and sharing site, which began in 2005 and was soon acquired by Google ("A Brief History of YouTube," 2010), has proven to compare favorably with the digital media sites of national archives and even rate stronger in some types of content (McKee, 2011). Issues of digital copyright conflicts often means that what one might find on YouTube one day may not be accessible the next (Patten, 2007). However, Gehl (2009) argues that rather than standing in opposition to corporate media and the digital content rights held by those corporations, YouTube, viewed as an archive, offers the opportunity for corporate media to take on a curation role in selecting and providing access to content through the site. In this sense, YouTube, by example, takes on the purpose of a recently developed tool for a form of digital-age gatekeeping, referring to the original theory developed by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1943) and pertaining to the process by which the media curates available information and selects messages that reach audiences (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). However, journalists as information gatekeepers are also in the position of being temporal gatekeepers with regard to how the past, through news events, is presented to audiences. Literature on this type of extension of the gatekeeping process is sparse, but one recent study including one national, one regional, and one local newspaper found a significant increase in time period references, both past and future, in published stories near the end of the twentieth century, with that trend continuing at a faster pace as the newspapers transitioned into their respective digital, online publications (Barnhurst, 2011). The increased access to online news archives may have aided journalists in acting as gatekeepers of the past, but "the modern inclination to refer to other past, present, and future events preceded and likely drove the use of resources the internet made available” (Barnhurst, 2011, p. 116). However, in keeping with traditional gatekeeping practices as well as temporal gatekeeping, online news organizations may choose to limit or ignore archival content. A study of online newspaper websites on the first, second, and third anniversaries, from 2003-2005, of the start of the Iraq War showed a dramatic drop in both use of war images on the websites’ homepages as well as in use of images of past events in the war (Schwalbe, 2006).

The phenomenon being examined through this qualitative, exploratory study concerns the ways in which new media, exemplified by YouTube, functions as a set of tools and channels for a type of temporal gatekeeping. To that effect, audience engagement with archived media content, such as news event-based videos, may activate and retrieve stored memory content associated with the time and place of the news event depicted in the media source. In recent years, this concept of memory-centric outreach to audiences through new media has been latched onto by news organizations; one of the videos employed in this study was found on the official YouTube channel of CNN. In 2013, CBS News marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy by livestreaming the network’s archived broadcasts over a four-day period in November 1963 exactly as television audiences in 1963 saw it—commercials included—and thus provided a time-shifting media event that would have been impossible or unlikely on any previous major anniversary of the news event (Britt, 2015). To further explore this idea and its relationship to human memory content requires establishment of a couple of psychological concepts central to this study.

Autonoetic Consciousness and the Reminiscence Bump

Modern research and theory in cognitive psychology may shed necessary light upon the memory re-engagement and retrieval process sparked by archival media content existent through new media channels. One of the concepts at work here is autonoetic consciousness, a type of episodic, or experience-based, memory that allows humans to consciously move back through a subjective construction of time to events previously experienced, and to do so in a state of self-awareness (Tulving, 1972, 2002). Autonoetic consciousness has also been defined as “based upon a specific human capacity of a self-reflective mental state of self-consciousness within time and other contextual dimensions so that the person virtually can re-experience the event” (Vandekerckhove, 2009, p. 5).

Taking this psychological concept and viewing it through the lens of gatekeeping theory—with new media as the metaphorical mirror—suggests there may be a dual gatekeeping process at work: The media archives acting as a gatekeeper of time and history simultaneous to the audience member’s brain and mind performing a gatekeeping process for his or her own memory content and self-aware experiences connected to the time of an event. For instance, at the actual time of a given news event, the audience member may experience thoughts and feelings connected to awareness of the news event; the person may also engage in conversation or activities with others in response to the news event. Archival media content, consumed at a later point in time, re-establishes the original event to the audience member, enabling him or her to retrieve stored memory content associated with the original event and begin the mental journey back in time through autonoetic consciousness. New media outlets like YouTube did not create the idea of the archive, but has served as a way to open up access to archival material (Gehl, 2009; Hilderbrand, 2007).

The other recent cognitive psychology concept central to this study pertains to human tendencies to store and retrieve a disproportionate number of unique memories from youth and early adulthood, something known as the reminiscence bump (Demiray, Gülgöz, & Bluck, 2009; Janssen & Murre, 2008; Koppel & Berntsen, 2015). This concept, which generally refers to experiences that occur between the ages of 13-30, has also been explored in terms of how much objective and subjective weight of importance humans give to events that occur during the lifespan years associated with the reminiscence bump (Koppel & Berntsen, 2014). The reminiscence bump has also been demonstrated in a pair of studies in which subjects identified a greater number of personally significant songs having been released during that span of life, and that those personally significant songs were more likely to be associated with episodic memories versus non-personally significant songs (Rathbone, O'Connor, & Moulin, 2017). In a similar vein, the aims of the current study focus upon a qualitative analysis of memory content, gleaned through interviews with subjects, formed during the entry and exit points of the teenage years from ages 12-19. The established literature briefly reviewed here produces a need to examine the connection between media's roles in society, media archives, and human engagement with memory processes that may be initiated and maintained with the assistance of archival news content, and results in the following research questions:

RQ1: How do news video archives help subjects to remember details about news events from their teen years?

RQ2: To what extent does engagement with news video archives assist in subjects' recall of memories associated with the time of the news event?

RQ3: After viewing news video archives, how do subjects think in the present about past news events, and about any changes in their thoughts and feelings about past news events?

Method

The study utilized a convenience sample of students enrolled in a journalism principles course at a major Midwestern university. Undergraduate convenience sampling for qualitative interview research has been used for studies developing insight into uses of social media (Smith, 2016), experiences in massive open online courses (Shapiro et al., 2017), and online buying behavior of college students (Jadhav & Khanna, 2016). Qualitative interview-based research sheds light on lived experiences of subjects and provides understanding of "particular social phenomena" (Frey, Kreps, & Botan, 2000,

p. 273); in the present study, the goal is to understand perceptions of major news events from the perspective of engagement with an online archive and the subject's own memory of the news event. Additionally, the use of college students at the time of the study is favorable for obtaining more in-depth understanding of how online news archives, such as content presented through YouTube, might interact with memory of news events due to the subjects' greater familiarity and engagement with new media sources like YouTube (Tapscott, 2009). The students received two points of extra credit for participation in the study or for an alternative assignment of a 250-word short essay about a personal memory of a major national or local news event that occurred when they were between 12-19 years of age. A total of 38 students (female = 27) participated in the study. Students were not asked their specific age, but all participating in the study identified as being between 18-23 years of age; one female student was disqualified from continuing in the study after revealing she had not yet reached her eighteenth birthday. Of the students who did participate in the study, 66% identified as White/Caucasian, 13% identified as Black/African-American, and 13% identified as Asian. Although no adverse psychological or emotional effects were expected from participation in the study, each subject was given contact information for university-based counseling and support services in the event negative psychological or emotional responses did occur during or as a result of participation in the study.

After being briefed with consent information and giving verbal assent to continue with the study, each subject viewed, on a laptop computer, two YouTube-sourced archival news videos correlating with major news events that occurred during the time the subject was between 12-19 years of age. The videos selected for the study included a "highlights" video of CNN's November 2012 presidential election night coverage in the race that year between President Barrack Obama, the Democratic candidate running for re-election to a second term, and Republican Party challenger Mitt Romney, and an April 2010 video report from NBC affiliate KXAN-TV in Austin, Texas, on potential natural resource and wildlife damages from the BP Deepwater Horizon off-shore oil spill.

These videos were selected for the study on the basis of three criteria: first, they were both major national news events occurring during the chronological period of concern for this study; second, both events were among the top three in their respective years in the Associated Press Editors' Poll Top Ten News Stories of the Year; third, the videos had been posted to YouTube and were of a nature that spanned no more than eight minutes in duration, or, in the case of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill report, could be edited below eight minutes in duration without any cutting necessary between the start and edited end of the video. This consideration preserved the original uploaded video content as much as possible. Additionally, regarding the second criterion, the principal investigator purposely excluded news stories involving mass shootings or similar acts of violence with multiple fatalities out of concern for negative psychological and/or emotional affect that such news videos might generate within subjects participating in the study. All subjects' identities remained anonymous within the study, but basic demographic questions regarding age range, race or ethnicity, and gender were asked before subjects' viewed either of the two videos. During subjects' viewing of the two videos, the principal investigator stepped away from the immediate viewing area to avoid unduly influencing subjects' viewing or thought processes during viewing.

Following the viewing of each video, subjects were asked a set of interview questions structured on the topics of memory of the news event featured in the video the subject had just viewed (Example: "What do you remember about the day or time period of this news event?"), personal experiences and feelings associated with the time of the news event (Example: "How did you feel upon first learning of this news event?"), and the video's impact on memory recall and forgotten details about the news event (Example: "What memories did viewing the video of this news event help you to recall?"). Other questions regarding the subject's familiarity with the archival news content and consideration of preserving digital content were also asked and an analysis of responses to those questions will be addressed in another article. Subjects were allowed as much time as needed to respond to questions. The principal investigator asked follow-up questions only when needed for clarification of information within responses to the study questions. The same set of interview questions in the same order was used for both videos viewed by subjects. Internal validity of the set of interview questions was ascertained with a pre-test involving two subjects, whose responses were not included in the research analysis. Finding no signs of issues with clarity of wording, meaning, interpretation, or phrasing of any of the questions in the pre-test interviews, the set was deemed valid and continued to be used for the remainder of the study. Subject responses to each question were written by hand on the interview question form and later transcribed manually to an electronic text file. The full set of subjects' answers for each question was then analyzed both electronically for the presence of common words or phrases throughout the set, as well as analyzed manually by the principal investigator for recurring themes or similarities in answer content that might not be detected through an electronic word-match or word frequency count. Textual analysis of qualitative interview data has been used as a method in a variety of recent studies, including ethical dilemmas of using social networks as information sources (Suárez Villegas & Cruz Álvarez, 2016), the interrelationship between journalism and public relations (Macnamara, 2016), and use of development dialogues in the practice of journalism (Hujanen, 2013).

Results

A manual textual analysis of overall responses to the interview questions after both videos revealed several significant and recurring themes in relation to the research questions. As might logically be expected, nearly all subjects expressed better recall of the more recent event, the 2012 Presidential Election, than the BP Deepwater Horizon's oil spill in 2010; of the latter event, some subjects expressed difficulty in placing the exact time period (late April 2010). For most subjects in the study, the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill occurred when they were 12- to 13-years-old, while the 2012 Presidential Election occurred when they were between 14- to 16-years-old.

Emotions, Images, and Things Forgotten

In response to RQ1, the interviews revealed a strong link between engagement with the news videos and emotional affect coinciding with the time of the actual news event. In the case of the 2012 Presidential Election, this connection was often expressed by subjects as, “I remember feeling happy,” or “I felt excited,” if one was hopeful for re-election of Barack Obama that year, and expressed feelings of disappointment or resignation if one was hopeful for Mitt Romney becoming President of the United States. One recurring theme in responses regarding the election coverage video was intent to vote for a favored candidate had the then-young teens been eligible to vote in the election. Additionally, some subjects recounted participation in a mock election for President of the United States at their school on Election Day, and those same subjects indicated that they remembered feeling more excitement and interest in the actual election results that evening after participating in a mock election at school.

Remembered feelings of shock, surprise, and confusion dominated responses about memory of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Even in instances where subjects admitted weak overall memory of details of the event, they reported experiencing some type of emotional affect upon first learning of it. In a majority of the interviews, subjects remembered feeling great concern or fear for the effect of the oil spill on birds, fish, and other wildlife, and those subjects also tended to credit the video they had just viewed—one segment of which focused upon the wildlife/natural resources issue—for helping them re-engage with that emotive memory content. Subject 24, an African-American male, recalled the lingering worry he saw from his parents over the potential impact on the seafood industry, noting in the interview, “For a while, they were checking every package of seafood they bought at the store to make sure it didn’t come from Louisiana.” Several other subjects indicated that they also remembered feeling anxiety or worry about the price of seafood going up at the time as a result of the oil spill, availability of some seafood being reduced, or feeling concern or sympathy for those employed in commercial fishing in the Gulf Coast area. Such statements as those in this and the preceding paragraph suggest that archival news media can help audiences reconnect or re-engage with emotive memory experienced at the original time of the news event.

Visual content associated with the two news events also stood out among reported memories in the interviews. About one-third of the total subjects in the study stated they remembered watching CNN’s Election Night coverage in 2012, with a few others recalling they had watched a mix of CNN and a different network’s coverage, and that the highlights package video viewed in the study contained scenes or information (e.g. “red” or “blue” state results on the network’s graphic displays) that they specifically remembered from that evening. As for the BP oil spill news report, definitive memories of that event were more generalized, possibly owing to the younger age of the subjects at that time as well as the geographical distance of residency at the time for most subjects from the affected area, the Gulf Coast. One notable exception in the study was a subject originally from Texas who had a family member directly involved in an aspect of the oil spill. Typically, though, subjects who reported specific visual memories about the oil spill at the time it occurred spoke about images, on television or in news photographs, of oil-covered birds that had been rescued from the advancing oil spill in the water, or simply a proliferation of news reports similar to the one used in the study that they had seen on television at the time. Subject 9, a white female, summarized the video coverage by saying, “It seemed like it was in the news reports every day for about two weeks after it happened,” a statement echoed by several other subjects. The content of these statements throughout the study suggests a confirmation or reaffirming function to video news archives for visual images retained in memory concerning news events when they happen.

In a related matter that was posited specifically in one of the interview questions, most subjects admitted that watching the news videos in the study had helped them recover facts or images that had been lost from memory since the time of the actual news events. With regard to the CNN 2012 Presidential Election coverage video, several subjects noted that they had forgotten about the red-and-blue light coloring of the Empire State Building in New York City in accordance with state-by-state electoral vote victories for each candidate, something that was featured among the highlights in the video used in the study. Another recurring statement from subjects had to do with the closeness of the race between Obama and Romney in the early stages (“I had forgotten that Romney was in the lead for a while,” was heard multiple times in the study). A few subjects stated that they had forgotten the fact that the electoral votes from Ohio were the ones that pushed Obama over the required electoral count of 275, another item featured prominently in the CNN video. Recovered facts also came up in interviews about the BP oil spill video, most notably the information that 11 people had disappeared (and subsequently were never found) in the oil rig explosion that started the incident. These statements suggest that archival news videos also can serve as memory aids about events in the past, preserving information that people may not be able to recall on their own after the passage of time.

Conversations, Places, and Products

In response to RQ2, in exploring human memory connected to news events of the past, one of the aims of the interview with subjects centered upon memories not directly part of the news event itself, but associated with the time of the news event or the time of the subject first learning of the news event. This included a specific question about recalled conversations with family members or friends regarding the news event. In describing their memories of the news event at the time of occurrence, many subjects also divulged descriptive memories of places and activities during that same time period. In general, the interviews showed that most subjects engaged in conversation with their parents or other family members concerning the 2012 Presidential Election.

While some subjects were unable to recall specific details about the conversations, others were able to provide paraphrased statements or, in some cases, exact statements remembered from those conversations. Subject 22, an African-American male, said he remembered his mother “telling me that she thought this was the most important election in U.S. history, even more so than the 2008 election,” adding that she explained Obama’s ability to win re-election for a second term could indicate a societal change of even greater magnitude than his initial victory four years earlier. Subject 27, an African-American female, described a conversation with her stepfather and mother that was predominantly "about Congress and how we should expect them to act during a second term for Obama, and whether they would cooperate with him or not." A few subjects described the general tone of disappointment they detected in conversation with parents and other relatives who had supported Romney. "I remember being on the phone with my grandmother. She called it (the election result) before anyone else that night," said Subject 40, a white male. "I thought she had given up too early and I was trying to convince her that Romney still had a chance of winning."

For other subjects, watching the CNN election highlights video brought back memories of friends and classmates at school, and pieces of conversations with them about the election results the following day. Subject 29, a white male, recounted the sour mood most of his schoolmates were in the morning after the election. "It was interesting what they had to say. They were angry about it, and that was because many of them said they felt his (Obama's) first four years in office were a failure." Several subjects recalled the existence of school policies that forbade teachers from discussing political preferences with students, but at least a few in the study spoke about enjoying discussions with high school classmates about the election in civics or political science classes they were taking at the time. School-based interactions also tended to be the topic of memories expressed about the BP oil spill, with about one-fourth of the subjects recalling in-class discussions with teachers, reading assignments or oral reports, or in-class activities or projects directly related to ecological issues central to the oil spill controversy. Overall, although the interview data did not yield strong support for detailed memory of conversations and personal interactions, most subjects were able to recall general topics or the tone of any conversations related to the news event.

Descriptions from memory of places associated with the news events tended to be an outlying feature across the interviews as well, but those subjects who did provide such descriptions did so in quite detailed fashion. Subject 28, a white female, was able to give a description of her parents' bedroom where she watched the CNN coverage of the 2012 Presidential Election, and Subject 33, a white male, offered up specific details of the layout of the room in which he watched election results, including positioning and features of items in the room like the television set and the couch on which he was sitting on that night. Concerning the BP oil spill, Subject 12, a white female, spoke about a very unusual memory related to that news event: She and her family had started a vacation on the Gulf Coast just before tar balls generated from the oil spill washed ashore onto the beach where they were staying. The subject then described how she and her family joined others at the same beach in an effort to pick up and clear away the tar balls.

Interviews after subjects watched the news report on the BP oil spill also yielded information that could be of significant interest to researchers and professionals in strategic communications. A majority of the subjects said watching the archived news report brought up memories of an advertising campaign at the time for Dawn dish soap, in which the product was used to clean the feathers of birds, which had been rescued from the oil spill area. Most of those subjects indicated that the visual image of an oil-covered bird in the news report spurred recall of the Dawn advertising campaign. On a more negative side, about one-fourth of the subjects interviewed spoke of memories of people in their towns boycotting BP-brand gasoline stations after the spill began. “My dad stopped buying gas there, and going to a different station that was a little further away,” said Subject 18, a white female. Subject 19, a white male, noted several people he knew at the time joined in the boycott of the local BP station, but added, “Once BP finally got the oil well leak stopped, all of that boycotting started to fade out. I guess most people eventually forgave BP.” Several subjects stated that they also remembered seeing commercials from BP touting the company’s efforts to stop the underwater oil leak and provide financial relief to the affected Gulf Coast areas.

It is in this area of memory content that the concept of autonoetic consciousness may be strongest, enabling people to revisit interactions with other people, to varying degrees of detail, and to return to places they once stood or sat. At times, the process also involves re-engagement with mediated messages not directly about the past news event, but related to it.

Differences Between Now and Then

In response to RQ3, in a vast majority of the interviews, subjects, through engaging with memories of the news events depicted in the videos, spoke about perceiving changes in their attitudes, level of interest, or level of concern in the present time compared to the times of the news events in this study. Expressed changes in attitudes and concern levels prevailed in responses to questions about present-day thoughts and feelings about the BP oil spill. Subject 24, an African-American male, noting the passage of time and changes in personal maturity level since the oil spill, stated:

> I don’t think I truly understood what was going on at the time. I knew it was something bad, especially for the wildlife in that area, but when you are 12 years old, you still are wrapped up in your own world. If something like that happened today, I would be much more involved in the issue and feel a lot more affected by it.

In a similar vein, most subjects expressed a greater appreciation of the political process and level of interest in politics in the present compared to their memory-based experiences of 2012. This should come as no large surprise, given the fact that the 2016 General Election marked the first opportunity to vote for nearly all of the subjects who participated in the study.

Even for those who indicated high interest in the 2012 General Election, the opportunity to participate in the political process was cited as intensifying their awareness of their political stances. “Looking back to that time, since I’ve now voted in a national election, it’s a lot different for me, so much more emotion in it,” Subject 30, a white female, stated. Several subjects who indicated they had rooted for Obama as non-voting teens in 2012 said viewing the CNN video made them somewhat nostalgic for what they perceived as having been a less divisive and more respectful campaign between Obama and Romney, compared to the 2016 election in which they voted. “I definitely remember it very fondly,” said Subject 29, a white male. “I don’t consider myself very ultra-liberal. But I do think the way this year’s (2016) election campaigns went, it seemed to put everything then in a new context.” Subject 28, a white female, described feelings of “both happy and sad” after viewing the CNN video. “I remember how excited I was then … but also how sad I felt about this crazy election we just had, the way it tore people apart.”

The takeaway from interview data regarding RQ3 is that the archival news videos may have assisted subjects in formulating comparatives in psychological and emotional self-assessment, all in relation to self-perceptions at the time of the news events. This is also a function of autonoetic consciousness, allowing people to mentally reconstruct time elements and the memory content, which spurs perceptions of changes in self-image.

Discussion and Future Research

The interview data collected in this study point to several qualities of memory content retrieved with the assistance of media archives, in this case, television news videos of major events that are preserved through a new media-based website (YouTube). The events selected coincide in time with established literature (Demiray et al., 2009; Janssen & Murre, 2008; Koppel & Berntsen, 2014; Rathbone et al., 2017) pertaining to memory content created during a portion of the lifespan years associated with the reminiscence bump concept. Findings suggest that media archives of major news events may help audiences retrieve and re-engage with memories connected to initial awareness of the news event, especially emotional affect experienced at that point in time and visual images and information connected to the news event. The findings also suggest that audience members, having viewed archival content, may engage in episodic memory retrieval or autonoetic consciousness related to interactions with other people, self-placement in particular settings at the time of the event, and recall of other media content related to the news event being remembered. Lastly, the engagement with the archival media content may also help audience members fashion comparative self-evaluations across different points in experienced time or become aware of differences in attitudes and beliefs from the time of initial awareness of a mediated message to the present time of self-reflection. The information from this exploratory study may also help to strengthen or underscore the importance of some of the social functions of media and the relevance of building and maintaining viable, accessible archives of content to achieve societal goals.

As presented, this study does contain some limitations. The interview data from the convenience sample of 18- to 23-year-old college students may not be generalizable to older age ranges of people, who will have a different set of news events having taken place during their adolescent years and whose responses to the same set of questions regarding archival video content about those news events may be quite different. Additionally, the use of journalism students in the study may constitute a set of responses from individuals more naturally interested in and willing to engage with online news than college students in other majors or programs. Also, it is possible that some of the findings in this study may have been different in a significant way with the selection and viewing of different videos on the same news events. This may be due to differences in content, selection and emphasis of certain facts, or subjects' familiarity with the news source. Finally, the archival news videos used in this study are from U.S.-based media organizations about news events of high significance in the United States. Future research on this topic might examine the same research questions applied to memory and viewing archival news videos among older age groups, especially middle-aged adults and senior citizens, to see if similar themes emerge and remain constant with longer time spans since the time of the news event.

Going forward, additional research on the role of new media in presenting the mediated past to the public eye, and its connections to psychological and sociological structures that result from that presentation and access, may be achieved through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The present study offers enough content to substantiate further exploration of these matters. While the concept of time travel may be confined to the realms of science fiction stories in books, television, and movies, moving through the past as we remember having experienced it is a very real phenomenon, aided and augmented, in part, by the media content preserved through our own efforts. Media archives not only serve to preserve the events that of the past, but our individual and unique experiences of life connected to those events.

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Social Capital to the Rescue of the Fourth Estate: A Playbook for Converting Good Will into Economic Support

By James Breiner

Digital media entrepreneurs often lack the financial capital necessary to launch and sustain their operations and appear to be unattractive investments. However, there is ample theoretical work about how businesses and organizations harness social capital through networks to secure financial capital. Also, new digital media can become attractive investments when their social impact is measured. Examples of media organizations from Europe, Asia, and the Americas show a variety of ways social capital can be activated and realized. The theory and practice offer ways for the Fourth Estate to recover some of the influence it has lost during the digital revolution.

Introduction

New digital media can become attractive to investors when their social impact is measured. Examples of media organizations from Europe, Asia, and the Americas show a variety of ways social capital can be activated and realized. The theory and practice offer ways for the Fourth Estate to recover some of the influence it has lost during the digital revolution. This paper will offer recommendations for aspiring digital media entrepreneurs based on theory and practice.

French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu laid some of the groundwork for expanding our view of economics in his essay "The Forms of Capital" (1986). There he described how social capital and cultural capital have economic value that is often overlooked and not measured. Just as economic capital represents a stored value of "accumulated labor," social and cultural capital represent an investment of time and energy by individuals and families. The economic value of this capital often goes unrecognized because it presents itself in the guise of friendship, kinship, language, culture, educational credentials, or professional experience, he argued.

"Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition," Bourdieu wrote (1986, para. 19). "The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the value of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (1986, para. 20). When applied to media entrepreneurs, this form of capital might be described as "connections" or "reputation" or "experience," and the size of the entrepreneur's network, as well as that of their connections, would matter greatly in the prospects for growth and sustainability. Cultural capital, as Bourdieu (1986) defined it, is embodied in a person and can be "institutionalized" through educational qualifications. It could also be cultural products and processes (a television camera and how to operate it), one's language and ethnic rituals, or one's experience.

Cultural and social capital, Bourdieu (1986) wrote, are "disguised forms of economic capital" and "produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root" (para. 28). Or, as Johannisson (1988) puts it, "In personal networks, the ties are relationships of trust. Unlike contractual relationships, these have no books recording the exchanges. Imbalances are not immediately regulated but are stored, supplying a motive for maintaining the relationship" (p. 84).

Another key difference from economic capital, whose value is fixed when there is monetary transaction between two parties, social and cultural capital have an indeterminate value that is realized only when an agent attempts to convert them into economic value through contracts or commitments. These forms of capital presuppose "an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed or reaffirmed" (Bourdieu, 1986, para. 23). They take time and effort. Investing time and effort in accumulating social and cultural capital is thus a high-risk activity, Bourdieu (1986) said, because there is no guarantee of a payoff. The network members might be ungrateful or indifferent to another member's gifts or gestures of friendship and kinship. Also, developing one's cultural capital might not pay off. For example, is there more potential reward for spending eight years training to be a doctor or working in business?

Although Bourdieu (1986) treats social and cultural capital as distinct, and also uses the term "symbolic capital" at times when referring to a person's reputation, many scholars conflate all of these terms under the general term of social capital (para. 19). In this paper, we will refer to social capital as the stored value of all the interpersonal relationships and inherent traits of individuals that have not been involved in a direct economic or contractual exchange.

Media Gain Capital as Brokers

Following on the work of Bourdieu (1986), Burt (2005), a network theory scholar, proposed that the agents who broker information and bridge gaps between networks with few or weak connections can accumulate increased social capital. These "brokers" have access to information from the separate networks, and they in effect control the distribution of information within each of the networks. So, for example, an entrepreneurial media organization like the Texas Tribune, which we will describe in detail later, acts as a broker between communities as geographically distant and ethnically different as El Paso and Dallas, providing information of concern to both about Texas business, economics, politics, and policy. The publication accumulates social capital by bridging the gap with information but also by connecting the groups through cultural events, political forums, and conferences. In Burt's (2005) theoretical framework, this publication, as a broker of trusted information, earns additional social capital when the gatekeepers to the closed networks in each community—in this example, the chambers of commerce, social clubs, and cultural organizations of San Antonio and Dallas—create value for the broker by distributing the information within that network.

In a study of regional newspapers in isolated areas of rural Australia, Hutchins (2004) drew on the work of Digital Age theorist Manuel Castells (1996) to describe how these media managed to accumulate social and economic capital with their readers by interpreting the flow of information about national and international issues. Castells (1996) proposed that a major societal shift was under way in the digital age toward decentralized networks and away from centralized, hierarchical states and bureaucracies. Hutchins demonstrated that local media were actually accumulating social capital by connecting their audiences with these other networks and interpreting the meaning of national and international events for them.

Social Media and Social Capital

Although it would appear that social media such as Facebook and Twitter offer a useful tool for acquiring social capital, they are double-edged swords. At the moment, the large media organizations in most of the developed world are hedging their bets with a strategy that combines giving away their content to social media (distributed content) to expand their reach while attempting to preserve the value of their brands with their own applications and websites. Notable is the Washington Post's commitment to putting all of its editorial content on Facebook's Instant Articles platform with no link back to its own website (Breiner, 2016a).

The theory is to convert an ever-larger number of people to pay a small amount and thus increase revenues. A counter strategy is that used by several media profiled in this article, namely Eldiario.es of Spain, Mediapart of France, and De Correspondent of Holland, which convince a relatively small number of people in their countries to pay a relatively large amount—from around $66 to $110 a year—as a means of converting their social capital into economic results. Based on findings of the Reuters News Report 2016 study of media consumers in 26 countries, both strategies can make sense, depending on the situation of the media organization. On the one hand, "Most consumers are still reluctant to pay for general news online, particularly in the highly competitive English-speaking world (9% average), but in some smaller countries, protected by language, people are twice as likely to pay" (Newman, 2016, p. 7).

The tradeoff for media organizations that opt for expanding reach through social networks is that they may be diluting their brands, which are social capital. As Newman noted:

> The growth of news accessed and increasingly consumed via social networks, portals and mobile apps means that the originating news brand gets clearly noticed less than half the time in the UK and Canada. In countries like Japan and South Korea, where aggregated and distributed news is already more widespread, the brand only gets noticed around a quarter of the time when accessed through news portals. (2016, p. 7)

Social capital generated from external networks is of critical importance to entrepreneurs because they are introducing a brand-new product or service to the marketplace (Gedajlovic, Honig, Moore, Payne & Wright, 2013). Gedajlovic et al. cited Coleman (1990), who argued that social capital "is a collective good that results in increased sharing and solidarity among actors in the network collective that would be otherwise unattainable" (Coleman, 1990. p.). The key phrase for entrepreneurs is "otherwise unattainable." Their external networks are essential.

Measuring Social Capital for Investors

In recent years, a new type of investing has emerged called venture philanthropy or social impact investing, whose investors are concerned with not only economic returns but also positive social impacts. The Brussels-based European Venture Philanthropy Association, with more than 200 members, has produced a series of guides and handbooks (2016) about how to invest and how to measure non-economic impact. But for this study, a relevant example is the Media Development Investment Fund, based in New York. It makes investments in "independent media around the world providing the news, information, and debate that people need to build free, thriving societies" (MDIF, 2015). The organization has provided $153 million in financing and professional consulting to 100 businesses in 39 countries.

> MDIF measures its media investments on their sales, reach (users, readers, viewers, listeners), and financial viability (cash flow, assets, debt, growth, management), as well as the impact on holding authorities accountable and revealing corruption. And unlike an NGO or foundation, MDIF promises its investors a financial return. (Breiner, 2017a, para.)

In this study, some of the metrics developed by MDIF will be used to gauge how effectively entrepreneurial journalism organizations activate the social capital in their networks and transform it into economic capital. Many of these media organizations are not primarily interested in delivering profits to shareholders but rather social benefits in the form of a free and independent press. They measure their effectiveness by their impact on society through holding the powerful accountable. This is their strategy for attracting investors, sponsors, and subscribers. In this respect they are recognizing that the media industry is not just a source of profits.

For much of the past century, the media, or the Fourth Estate, was also an industry that could provide enormous economic benefits to investors because of the monopolistic nature of their businesses. However, with the collapse of that model and the rise of digital media, the Fourth Estate needs new economic models. Pew Research's annual State of the Media reports have tracked the declines in detail. In the United States, 18,000 newsroom jobs have been lost since 2006 (Pew Research, 2016). In Spain, 11,100 journalists have lost their jobs and 100 media outlets have closed since 2008 (PR Noticias, 2014). Similar trends have been observed in other countries. In the United Kingdom, sales of newspapers have declined by 40% in the past 10 years (Sillito, 2015). In Holland, with a population of only 17 million, daily newspapers have lost three million readers (Dutch Journalism Fund, 2015, p. 6).

Case Studies in the Conversion of Social Capital

The following section highlights eight examples of digital media startups that have accumulated social and cultural capital and translated it into economic capital. The table below compares them using some of the key performance indicators cited by social-impact investors.

Table 1: Key Performance Indicators by Publication

Publication Country (year launched)	Initial capital	Value prop-osition	Subscribers/ members	Pay wall	Accepts ads, sponsors	Revenues (latest year)	Profits	Employ ees	Twitter followers	Face book likes	*Monthly visits**	*Avg. visit length**	*Pages per visit**
Malaysiakini Malaysia (1999)	$10k+	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	16,000	yes **	yes	$1.5M	N/A	40	807k	1.7M	8.6M	5:15	3.4
Mediapart France (2008)	$4M	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	118,000	yes	no	$11.4 M	$787k	65	1.9M	550k	8.3M	3:13	2.4
La Silla Vacía Colombia (2009)	$200k	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	52,000	no	yes	$480k	N/A	13	977k	145k	631k	1:52	1.6
Texas Tribune U.S. (2009)	$4M	Texas politics, policy, business,	N/A	no	yes	$6.5M	$46k	50	133k	77k	1.5M	1:55	2.3
Eldiario.es Spain (2012)	$440k	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	19,200	no	yes	$2.6M	$235k	54	638k	368k	17.1M	8:09	2.5
De Correspondent Holland (2013)	$1.7M	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	47,000	yes	no	$4.7M est.	N/A	31	143k	747k	1.4M	2:47	1.9
Nómada Guatemala (2014)	$380k	ed. ind., inv. jour., anal.	N/A	no	yes	$240k	N/A	16	45k	73k	88k	1:31	1.8
El Español Spain (2015)	$18.7M	ed. ind., national news	13,900	yes***	yes	$2M	-$2.5M	103	267k	224k	9.7M	5:22	2.1

Notes
+ Malaysiakini also had grant support at launch.
*Similarweb.com was the source for *Monthly visits, Avg. visit duration, Pages per visit* in Nov. 2016.
All other figures in this chart are from the latest available figures provided by the publications themselves.
Monetary figures are expressed in U.S. dollars at the exchange rate when the publication reported the figures.
Some organizations did not report profits.
** Malaysiakini has a paywall only for the English language edition.
*** El Español non-subscribers can access 25 free articles a month.
inv. jour. - Investigative journalism
anal. - analysis
ed. ind. - editorial independence
M -million, k-thousand
N/A - not available

Perhaps the best place to start is with the French digital news startup Mediapart. The founders were well known journalists who believed that the best way to produce independent journalism online was to use a subscription-only model and accept no advertising. In their manifesto they declared that French media were no longer independent of political and business interests and were not doing investigative journalism, which prevented them from "performing their democratic duty to inform the public," as recounted by the Dutch scholars Wagemans, Witschge and Deuze (2016, para. 45). The authors emphasized that Mediapart's founders wielded considerable amounts of social capital in terms of their connections, name recognition, and reputation. When Mediapart launched in 2008, the founders had raised about $4 million in initial capital, half of which was their own money. Of the initial team of 25 journalists, 19 were promised a three-year contract at the same salary as the job they had to leave in order to join Mediapart. This helped convince journalists who were hesitant to join this risky startup.

But it was journalism ethics, not just money, that drove the founders. Edwy Plenel, who had been editor-in-chief of Le Monde, left that newspaper over censorship of one of his investigative pieces by the board chairman representing the new owners (Wagemans et al., 2016). It was Plenel's advocacy for independent journalism that helped persuade others to make the leap into the unknown, according to interviews conducted with Mediapart's founders. Plenel mobilized his symbolic capital—prestige and recognition in the field. As the authors said, "Charisma is also a form of symbolic capital. Furthermore, intellectual capital (creative ideas) and cultural capital (particular knowledge and skills, the ownership of cultural goods, recognized authority or expertise) play an important role as personal traits allowing one to build and maintain a personal network" (Wagemans et al., 2016, para. 29). One can hear an echo of Johannisson: "the key to entrepreneurial success is found in the ability to develop and maintain a personal network" (1988, p. 83).

In interviews with Wagemans and his team, Mediapart's founders described the typical mistakes of digital media entrepreneurs, such as the failure to hire people to oversee technology, finance, and marketing. They stumbled through a process of trial and error, and they needed all of the $4 million in startup capital to cover their losses. In its first two years of operation, Mediapart generated $5.7 million in revenues, but expenses exceeded revenues by $4.9 million. They broke even in the fall of 2010 (Mediapart, 2016). Mediapart has been reinvesting its profits in the operation. By the end of 2015, the publication had 118,000 subscribers paying $12 a month or $120 a year. Its staff grew to 65 employees, 39 of them journalists. It has added videos (three million views in 2015) and an application for smartphones and tablets. In its annual report, Mediapart said it is battling the French government over a claim for $5.2 million in back taxes and penalties. Mediapart had paid taxes of 2.1% on revenues, the rate normally applicable to the press, rather than the 19.6% rate for other businesses. The government insisted on the higher rate. Mediapart showed an operating profit of $3.6 million for the two years 2014-15, but after making a provision for the tax dispute, it had an operating loss of $440,000 for those years. It is appealing the tax assessment and fines.

Part of its website, called Le Club, is free and open to the public so that users can comment on articles, publish blogs, and interact with other users and the journalists. This activity has helped extend the brand beyond the paywall. The publication also sponsors debates, festivals, and rallies as other brand extensions.

Conversion Through Crowdfunding

Holland and Spain offer two outstanding examples of how notable journalists converted their social capital into economic support through crowdfunding. Like an initial public offering, crowdfunding involves soliciting financial support from the public at large. Unlike an initial public offering, which is highly regulated and activated through securities exchanges, crowdfunding is almost unregulated and is activated mainly through online social networks.

De Correspondent, a Dutch-language website, launched in 2013 after raising $1.7 million from a crowdfunding campaign that promised a different kind of journalism.

Publisher Rob Wijnberg, previously editor of a newspaper aimed at young adults, was surprised that he and the other founders managed to get so many people to pledge $66 each for a one-year subscription to a new online publication (Witschge, 2015). The main selling point he emphasized during a nationally televised fund drive was that the publication provide in-depth reporting, news analysis unconnected to political ideology, and no advertising in order to maintain editorial independence.

Two years later, editor Ernst-Jan Pfauth said one of the secrets for activating this network of Dutch citizens was “to start a movement, not a publication” (2015a).

> We told our audience that we wanted to start a publication that would serve as their daily antidote to the hypes of the day. A publication that ignores what happens only today and focuses instead on the things that happen every day. We promised our readers that we’d help them understand the world around them better. That’s what they signed up for. Not saving our jobs. (para. 9)

His comments buttress the observations of Wagemans et al. about the importance of a sense of mission and charisma in activating a network. The startup team of 13 had grown to 31 by the end of 2015, and the number of subscribers exceeded 47,000 (Pfauth, 2015b).

A startup in Spain, El Español, followed a similar pattern. Its founder was a well-known journalist, Pedro J. Ramírez, who had been forced out as editor of one of Spain’s leading newspapers, El Mundo, which he had founded in 1989. As with Plenel at Le Monde, Ramírez ran afoul of his board, which wanted him to go easy on the ruling party (Sánchez León, 2015). He exacted a measure of revenge by hiring away some of El Mundo’s top people for his new venture.


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In just 2-1/2 months in 2015, Ramírez's project broke De Correspondent's world record for crowdfunding of media by raising $4 million from 5,600 contributors. Ramírez personally invested $5.8 million of his own money from his severance deal with El Mundo. A variety of other investors provided another $9 million, so the publication launched in October of 2015 with total startup capital of $18.7 million from a variety of investors (Dircomfidencial, 2016). Clearly the prestige and charisma of Ramírez helped him gain so much capital so quickly. He was also promising journalism that would be independent of political influence. In the early days of fundraising, he said at a journalism conference, "What's happened in recent times is that the people in the business role in media have transformed themselves into a type of political commissar for politicians and the powers that be. The political and business powers have taken advantage of this to impose censorship on the newsroom" (Breiner, 2015a, para. 12). Ramírez said he would have had difficulty convincing investors and the public to invest in El Español if it hadn't been for the success of digital media like Eldiario.es, El Confidencial, InfoLibre, and other digital forerunners in Spain. He described the new trend of journalists founding their own media as a throwback to the nineteenth century in Spain when editorial people, not business people, usually ran newspapers.

Ramírez was paying top salaries to lure talent from other media and eventually build up his staff to 103; in the first nine months of operations, salaries ate up $3 million, Dircomfidencial reported, citing the company's official filing with the Commerce Registry (2016). The company had revenues of $2 million but lost $2.5 million in that first period.

With both De Correspondent and El Español, nationally known journalistic figures tapped into a network of individuals with whom they had mostly loose ties to secure crowd-funding resources in the millions of euros. They activated a latent network of individuals who responded to a promise of journalism free of political influence and ideology. In the case of De Correspondent, the revenue goals were more modest, and the funding model, completely subscription based, put a limit on the potential revenues. By contrast, Ramírez had much bigger aspirations for El Español; he wanted to compete with national publications like the one he had founded. He used a more traditional business model based mainly on advertising. So Ramírez had to tap a source of capital from deep-pocketed investors and endure the questions from those investors about when and how the publication would turn a profit, as described in Dircomfidencial (2016b).

Eldiario.es, Spain

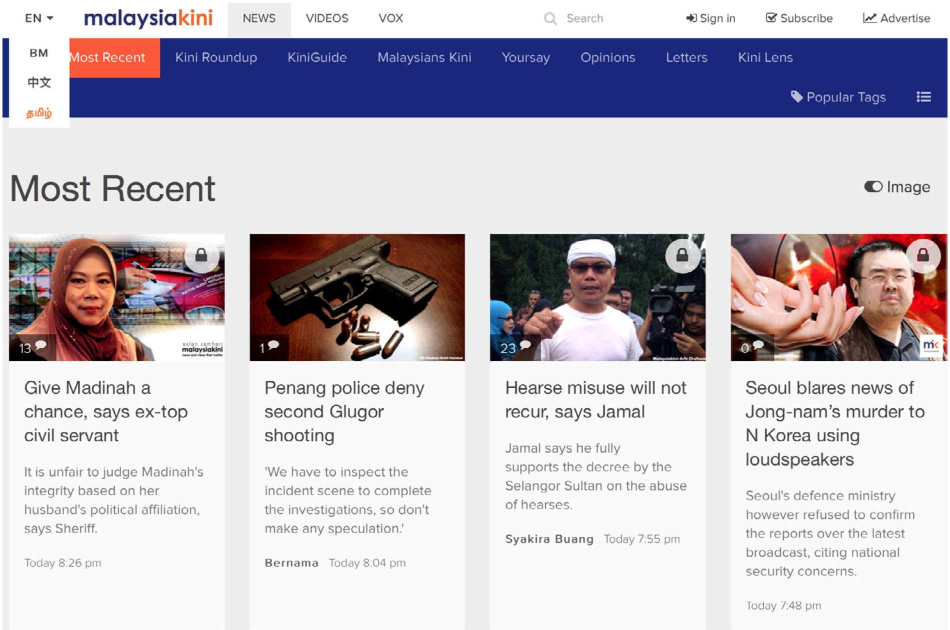
Ramírez mentioned Eldiario.es as one of the trailblazers that had opened the way for him in Spain. It is true that eldiario.es shared many characteristics of El Español, but it also had significant differences.First, the similarities. It had a charismatic founder who was the main activator of social capital in the person of Ignacio Escolar, who had worked in television and as the founding editor of the daily newspaper Público (Breiner, 2017a, para. 16). Escolar, who is a generation younger than Ramírez, left Público and launched Eldiario.es in 2012 with $440,000.

Unlike Ramírez, Escolar decided to start with a small staff and grow organically as revenue increased. Also, Eldiario.es is owned by the journalists themselves, who have been re-investing any profits in growth and improvements. The ownership structure differs in that respect from El Español, which has a significant percentage of shares in the hands of outside investors who are expecting a financial return on their investment. Escolar has made financial transparency about ownership and finances a selling point and part of his strategy to identify his brand with journalism that is independent from any political party or special interest (Escolar, 2016). Part of that differentiation is the publication's program of raising money from its "socios" or partners. They pay at least $66 a year to get access to the news a few hours ahead of everyone else as well as ad-free pages, discounts, and invitations to events. "And they allow us to remain independent," Escolar said (2016, para. 4). Those partners, who totaled 19,200 in mid-2016, brought in about a third of Eldiario.es's revenues. Although advertising brings in more than the partner revenue, no single advertiser comes close to bringing in what the partners do, so none has enough leverage to influence editorial decisions, he said. Escolar has made a habit of making a no-apologies promotion of the partners program when the publication has a major scoop, inviting readers to participate in this project of independent news.

The strategy is working. Escolar announced that the publication finished 2015 with revenues of $2.6 million, up 33% on the year, and a profit after taxes of $235,000. The staff has grown to 54, and they have gained a reputation for investigative journalism that uncovers corruption among political and business elites, who traditionally have been protected by a compliant press. Escolar's message of public service through independent journalism has allowed him to hire and keep journalists who might earn more elsewhere. And his skill as a businessperson has made the operation grow. Journalism is not a business; it's a public service, he said. "But it is a public service that has to be profitable" (Breiner, 2016b, para. 12).

Malaysiakini, Malaysia

Another entrepreneurial star in digital media is Malaysiakini, based in Malaysia, which was profiled for the Center for International Media Assistance (Carrington, 2015). Since its founding in 1999 by two former print journalists, Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran, it has survived cyber attacks, lawsuits, the arrest of its editors, financial ups and downs, demonstrations, and government attempts to censor its content. In 2016 it was reaching an audience of 8.6 million visitors a month, and its value proposition has been an unflinching commitment to telling the truth about the ruling powers. Annual revenues reached nearly $1.5 million in 2014, enough to employ 40 reporters. It also received early stage financial and training assistance from the Media Development Investment Fund, Open Society Foundations, and National Endowment for Democracy (Carrington, 2015, pp. 5-8). The funding from Open Society made the publication the target of mass protests late in 2016 by pro-government supporters, who accused Malaysiakini, Open Society founder George Soros, and the U.S. government of collaborating to overthrow Prime Minister Najib Razak, who was involved in a corruption scandal (Naidu, 2016).



A unique feature of its business model was that it published in four languages—Tamil, Chinese, Malay, and English—but only the English version was behind a paywall because that audience was the one most able and willing to pay. Subscriptions reached more than 16,000 at about $40 each annually. In this way, the founders recognized that they had different types of social capital at their disposal—one for building a base of readers who wanted to see the powerful held accountable and another that had the financial resources to back the editorial operation. As Malaysiakini has grown, it has expanded into video products and business news. Gan and Chandran have innovated constantly and sought new opportunities to grow their audience and financial support.

A sign of the social capital they have generated was the fact that at their fifteenth anniversary celebration they raised $500,000 by selling bricks for their new headquarters.

Texas Tribune, U.S.

One of "the most aggressively entrepreneurial" digital startups of the many in the U.S. is Texas Tribune (Batsell, 2015, p. 14). It has used the social capital of its two founders—one a journalist and one a software investor—to build a significant media organization focused on state government policy and politics in one of the country's largest states.

Batsell describes how software investor John Thornton decided in 2009 to put up $1 million to support a nonpartisan news source that would promote "civic engagement and discourse on public policy, politics, government and other matters of statewide concern" (p. 7). He hired Evan Smith to lead the operation as CEO and editor-in-chief. Smith, previously editor of Texas Monthly magazine, is a tireless promoter and eloquent speaker. He activated a latent network of people and organizations concerned about the loss of coverage of local news and politics caused by newsroom layoffs. The following year, Thornton gave a second $1 million with the stipulation that it be matched by other donations. The Tribune grew from 17 employees in 2009 to 50 in 2015, 35 of them journalists. It boasted of "more fulltime statehouse beat reporters than any other news organization in the United States" (Batsell, 2015, p. 4).

In its second year of operation, the Tribune found it was not raising revenue fast enough to be weaned off foundation grants, so it hired Texas Monthly's publisher, April Hinkle, who had two decades of experience selling advertising, to take over revenue generation. This hiring followed the pattern suggested in social capital research that successful entrepreneurs acquire the social capital that they lack in order to develop a successful organization. Like Mediapart, Texas Tribune needed additional marketing and sales expertise to make itself sustainable. The Tribune also hired an events planning expert from the New Yorker, and event revenue rose to more than $1 million in 2013. By the end of that year, the Tribune was generating 45% of its revenue from sponsorship and events, 34% from philanthropic sources, 13% from membership, and 8% from syndication, subscriptions, crowd-funding, and other sources (Batsell, 2015, pp. 7-10).

The publication broke even in its third year and had revenues of $6.5 million with a tiny profit in 2015, according to its annual report (Texas Tribune, 2016). Like other publications studied in this paper, the Texas Tribune has innovated constantly to tap into new networks and acquire more social capital. It has distributed its material free to more than 100 media partners to expand its reach and social impact. The publication has made a business and marketing tool of its databases of state employee salaries, political campaign contributions, and state prison inmates' convictions and sentences. These databases have attracted three times the traffic of the news stories. The Tribune also aggressively markets its journalism and public service awards as its evidence of community service.

La Silla Vacía, Colombia

Digital media entrepreneurs operating in Latin America face an entirely different set of challenges in attempting to convert their social capital into economic support. First, there is little infrastructure of foundations, NGOs, and private capital accustomed to investing in independent media. Second, the region has a tradition of closely linked political, business, and media interests that monopolize the economic capital and make it difficult to tap into social capital. The most receptive networks for an entrepreneur with a mission of independent journalism and exposing corruption are often people without much money or social capital. Among the untapped reservoirs of social and cultural capital are the region's universities as well as NGOs from Europe and North America (Breiner, 2017b, forthcoming).

Juanita León managed to overcome all those obstacles and tap into several sources of social capital when in 2009 she founded La Silla Vacía ("The Empty Chair"), a website focused on doing independent investigative journalism on how political power is wielded in Colombia. She has told her story to the online magazine Cromos (2015) as well as detailing the sources of financial capital on the publication's website under preguntas frecuentes (frequently asked questions).

León had accumulated significant social and cultural capital as former editor-in-chief of the influential weekly La Semana and as a Harvard Nieman Fellow (2007) in the United States. When she won an Open Society fellowship of $100,000 in 2009, she combined that with an equal amount from her family to launch La Silla Vacía with two other journalists. One of the biggest obstacles she faced was her own friends, who urged her not to start the publication. They wanted to protect her from what they assumed would be an embarrassing failure. They predicted that the public would have no interest in politics and that the existing media would crush her. Another issue León faced was that some journalists who had said they were interested in joining the team in the end decided it was too risky to leave safe jobs with traditional media (Cromos, 2015).

In 2016, La Silla Vacía had paid staff of 13, 11 of whom were journalists, plus an administrator and a director of business. Revenue sources were: 22% advertising; 50%

from international NGOs such as Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy; 8% from its club of supporters called Super Amigos; and the rest from alliances for specific projects such as education, leadership, gender issues, and debate forums at universities. In 2014 León reported that revenues and expenses totaled about $40,000 a month, the vast majority for salaries.

In 2016, she and her team won the prestigious García Márquez journalism prize for their coverage of the peace process in Colombia. They also won in 2013 in the innovation category for their multimedia coverage of victims of Colombia’s armed struggle. León has been outspoken about the need for journalists to innovate constantly in the new digital environment. The biggest mistake, she said, is to keep doing things the same way they always have without recognizing the interactive, multimedia nature of the web. León sees La Silla as a laboratory to test innovations in the production and distribution of news. The publication has developed extensive databases of the most powerful and influential people in the country—los Superpoderosos—showing their network connections through family, business, educational background, professional associations, and political ties. It would be quite easy to go bankrupt doing investigative journalism in Colombia, she said, because it offends so many of the people and organizations who have the resources to be sponsors or advertisers (Breiner, 2014).

Nómada of Guatemala

Martin Rodríguez Pellecer is only in his early 30s, but he has founded two notable digital news media organizations in Guatemala—Plaza Pública and Nómada, the latter launched in 2014 (Breiner, 2015b). In the literature about social capital and entrepreneurs, those who have done it once are the ones who are most likely to try it again and also the most likely to succeed because of their experience in this risky, unpredictable world of startups.

Los cinco políticos que aplicaron la fórmula para vivir inmunes en Guatemala

En la historia democrática de Guatemala, hay un grupo de 58 políticos que estuvieron entre ocho y 24 años rebotando entre una alcaldía y una plaza en el Congreso.

Rodríguez got his start as an entrepreneur when the Jesuit university in Guatemala City invited him to advise the student newspaper, and he converted it into an investigative journalism site called Plaza Pública. After directing it for three years, he decided to leave and start his own project, Nómada. In the “about us” section of the Nómada site is a kind of manifesto and value proposition condensed into nine words: independent, fresh, iconoclastic, optimistic, esthetic, feminist, investigative, avant garde, and nomad.

> We nomads don’t know what the future holds, but we know it is better. And that we will build it with our own hands. And that we have to get moving to change things. And that the world needs us to get moving. And for this we came into the world. (Breiner, 2015b, para. 9)

Rodríguez demonstrated his grasp of the necessary mindset for an entrepreneurial journalist in an interview with Breiner:

> The most difficult thing for a journalist is to think like a capitalist, to realize that you have to invest and put money on the line. You have to be flexible; you can’t wed yourself to just one thing. You have to have lots of eggs in different baskets. No successful capitalist has just one line of business; all of them have lots of businesses. (2015b, para. 3)

Rodríguez has cobbled together an annual budget of $240,000 from a variety of sources, including loans, grants, advertising, consulting, research and events. The grants come from outside Guatemala: Hivos of the Netherlands, Open Society Foundations, and the government of Norway, among others (2015b, paras. 5-7).

All that supports a payroll of 16 full-time people, many of them relatively young and willing to work for modest salaries while learning higher-level reporting skills.

Nómada recently published a list of 47 “megabusinesses” that take advantage of a law allowing them to pay very little in taxes. In many cases, these businesses are also doing substantial business with the government (2015b, para. 10). The publication’s aggressive reporting has won it recognition in its brief lifetime, a fact which it promotes on its website and in social networks.

Conclusions

Given the precipitous decline in the number of full-time journalists employed by traditional media, which was caused by a collapse of their business model, all parties interested in a vibrant independent press have been searching for solutions. One of the main discussions in the profession has centered on developing new business models and identifying new revenue sources for entrepreneurial media ventures based on digital platforms. One of the overlooked resources for these new ventures has been the social capital that the entrepreneurs can marshal to support their projects.

The theoretical work by scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Johannisson (1988), Coleman (1990), Castells (1996), Hutchins (2004), Burt (2005), Gedajlovic et al. (2013), Hess (2015), Witschge (2015), and Wagemans et al. (2016) provides a framework for developing strategies to activate the latent social and cultural capital the entrepreneurs have in their networks and convert them to economic resources for their ventures. Because the social capital they have accumulated is not recorded somewhere in a book, in the way that economic transactions are, social capital is often difficult to identify and activate. The value of social capital that lies within networks depends on continuous investment of time and energy on the part of an entrepreneur. Because social capital is disguised as friendship, kinship, shared interest, favors, gifts, or professional credentials, the parties on either side of the relationship may place different values on that capital. These uncertainties make investment in social capital a highly risky activity that requires special strategies and tactics. The eight startups from seven countries that are chronicled in this paper show a variety of different strategies based on the unique characteristics of their founders and the media markets they are working in.

Based on the experience of the eight startups described in this article, some conclusions can be drawn about essential elements of successful strategies to convert social capital to economic capital and, ultimately, to social impacts.

The founders need to have recognition and prestige both within the journalism profession and in their media communities. In eight of these entrepreneurial ventures, the founders had a positive profile that identified them with credible, reliable news sources. Nómada's Rodríguez in Guatemala did not have the recognition of millions of people enjoyed by the founder of El Español, nor did he attract the millions of dollars of investment of his counterpart in Spain, but he was able to attract enough to launch a credible publication doing notable investigative work. In the case of La Silla Vacía in Colombia, the founder's reputation was sufficient to attract economic capital from outside the country, but the local business and political culture made it difficult at first to convert the social capital into labor (potential employees were reluctant to sign on to a risky new venture) and economic support from within the home country. Founder Juanita León had to innovate strategies to tap into a network of supporters (Super Amigos) and readers interested in specific topics (leadership, education) to generate financial support.

Founders need to sell the mission and the vision; passion and charisma count. Investors and subscribers need a strong motivation to support a new venture. As Pfauth of De Correspondent suggested, "start a movement, not a publication" (2015a, para. 9). De Correspondent managed to raise its startup capital through a television campaign and continues to attract new paying subscribers at a steady pace. The promise of an independent media voice free of influence from political parties was a strong selling point for several of the media studied here, particularly in Europe and Latin America. Escolar of Eldiario.es used his publication's scoops on corruption as a platform to promote "partnerships" of $66 a year. A commitment to media independence also helped several of the publications raise money from private foundations and social-impact investors.

Connecting networks with weak ties to each other accrues social capital to the media organization. With reference to Burt's concept of the social capital that accrues to information brokers who bridge the gap between closed networks, all eight of these entrepreneurial journalism organizations positioned themselves as independent analysts, interpreters, and providers of unique content unavailable to their target audiences from any other source. For publications with a particular geographic focus, connecting their audiences to a larger world of political, economic, and social policy offered them an advantage.

Weak social ties are better than strong ties for entrepreneurs seeking to maintain independence. Several of the eight examples presented here took steps to avoid being controlled by their suppliers of economic capital. De Correspondent and Mediapart accept no advertising, no government subsidies, and no foundation funding. De Correspondent and Eldiario.es were owned and controlled by the journalists themselves in order to avoid the kinds of conflict between journalistic and editorial interests that had led their founders to leave previous employers. However, Malaysiakini, Texas Tribune, La Silla Vacía, and Nómada all depend on foundation funding to a greater or lesser extent, which makes them vulnerable to a sudden reduction in support. Most were developing strategies to offset this vulnerability. Vulnerable in another way was El Español, which raised about half of its startup capital from private investors, who were expecting an economic return. Those investors showed signs that they might insist upon changes in strategy if profits were not forthcoming in the foreseeable future, thus illustrating one of the risks that come with the capital (Dircomfidencial, 2016b).

Entrepreneurs need to develop metrics of social impact to justify continued economic support from subscribers and donors. Several publications have made a case for their social impact by citing the awards they have received from journalism groups and social-purpose organizations, notably La Silla Vacía, Texas Tribune, and Nómada. Eldiario.es has pointed to how some of its scoops have led to changes in legal or administrative procedures as well as to prosecution of officials for corruption. Although some journalists, particularly investigative journalists, frown on entering contests and award-seeking, this type of social capital is probably recommendable for entrepreneurial organizations.

Social media is a double-edged sword. As we saw earlier, a brand can reach new audiences through social media, but a large percentage of users that consume content through Facebook, by far the most widely used by news consumers, are unaware of the news organization that produced that original content. Their brands are diluted.

As shown by the varying strategies of the eight media studied here, there is no single formula for a news organization to activate its social networks and convert its social capital to economic capital in the form of monetary or labor support. Each one has to experiment to find its own sweet spot. As is always the case for entrepreneurs, the road ahead is not clearly defined. What is clear is that the success of entrepreneurial journalists will depend on their flexibility, innovation, and ability to identify opportunities through trial and error. It is a highly uncertain, risky activity in terms of the required social investment of time and energy. The payoffs, however, can be great for the entrepreneur and the community.

Any study that focuses on only eight media from seven countries has limited applicability. Media markets differ significantly in terms of such things as willingness to pay for digital news, use of social networks to obtain news, and trust in journalists, as Newman observed of media in 26 countries (2016, p.7). Those factors play a significant role in the ability of startups to generate economic capital by activating their latent social capital.

In order to make more general recommendations about the best ways to nurture emerging digital media, a much more comprehensive census is needed of digital media on a country-by-country basis, especially in the emerging markets of Latin America, East Asia, South Asia, and Africa. Each country—and, in most cases, each province, region, or municipality—has its own unique economic, political, language, and cultural profile that affects a media entrepreneur's ability to carve out a niche and achieve sustainability. As mentioned earlier, regional and local media have cut back coverage in the United States, Great Britain, Spain, and Holland, all of which affects civic engagement and participation in the democratic process. A body of research on digital media of a more granular nature, with specifics on strategies of business models, innovation, marketing, and distribution, would give media publishers better tools for creating the next generation of news media.

At the moment, given the relatively small size of the digital media entrepreneurs in terms of their market share of audience and their share of media revenues, their impact appears to be small. For those who support a vibrant Fourth Estate, their growth cannot come too soon.

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An Exploratory Exercise on Journalistic Initiatives on Medium

By Maria Clara Aquino Bittencourt

This work presents an initial exploratory exercise of a research project which investigates the transformations and continuities of digital journalism through an in-depth study on journalistic initiatives on the Medium platform. This study identifies the use of Medium as a platform for independent journalists and publications and, at the same time, its ability to curate content highlights it as one of the practices that redefines the role of the journalist in the digital environment.

Introduction

After 20 years of consolidation in digital journalism (Salaverria, 2015), the research field on this topic has grown through the development of digital communication technologies. This scenario is discussed by Oliveira and Henn (2014) as the interaction between new agents through a network in which a systemic crisis in the journalistic practice has arisen. The impacts on the autonomy and identity of journalism trigger the systemic characteristic of this crisis, which, according to the authors stem from transformations which "even though are dominated by a centripetal force which act in the maintenance of certain controls, would alter the identity physiognomy of journalism as a professional and academic field" (2014, p. 52). The problem revolves around a moment in which journalism maintains the role of protagonist in the public agenda and, at the same time, starts to dispute this position with other systems. Oliveira and Hen (2014) indicate how the meanings brought by journalism compete with multiple meanings circulating in social networks, produced by different subjects.

It is preferable to start with the idea of transition rather than take the issue of crisis as a basis. Neither the crisis nor the difficulties faced by journalists in their daily activities are denied, neither the issues of the business models are excluded (Anderson, Bell & Shirky, 2012; Costa, 2014; Saad Corrêa, 2011). It is understood that assuming a position supported by arguments that these are opportunities rather than threats - it is more productive behavior when having the objective to think about digital journalism as new theoretical and methodological paths for research are identified.

In a 2005 article that evaluates the idea of “Web 2.0” five years after the coining of this term, O’Reilly and Batelle (2009) recall that one of the main insights was the understanding of the web as a platform, which meant more than just the offering of applications throughout the Internet, but that such applications would improve through people’s usage, in a way in which it would be possible to learn from this usage and the contributions to perfect the technology offered.

The research question is driven by a sense of discomfort felt by those who deal with specific issues of this profession as well as by those who consider journalism a science and see in the crisis the opportunities to rethink the future in this area. Thus, the question is: how structured are the forms of production and the dynamics of circulation in the journalistic use of the Medium platform?

The selection of Medium for this study was made due to the understanding that the features available and the content management structure redefine old online publishing practices, grouping in a single platform the characteristics of different computer-mediated communication tools. Furthermore, by integrating elements of websites and social networks (Boyd & Elison, 2007; Recuero, 2009) they induce a diversity of agents involved in content production and circulation. Launched in 2012, Medium is a creation of Evan Williams and Biz Stone, the duo who created Twitter. Williams worked at Pyra, which in 1999 launched Blogger, a blog creation and management platform, which effectively made it possible that anyone could share content on the Internet. Brazilians produce around 3,500 texts in Portuguese per week, thus, Portuguese is the second language among the nine operating on Medium around the world (English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Turkish, Russian, and Japanese). The text response and recommendation structure opens possibilities for participation and interaction that increase circulation, which also depends on the use of tags by users who publish content on the platform. The Medium user has a profile, through which he or she can create publications as digital magazines and recommend texts by other authors and publishers. There are already 35 million users per month around the world on the platform.

In a publication from August 2012 on Medium, Biz Stone recalls how Blogger helped democratize content publishing on the Internet, but acknowledges that these are new times and that is why Medium goes beyond the possibility of entering content on the web.

> Thirteen years ago we helped democratize publishing with a web-native approach called blogging. That was a long time ago and everything is different now—social networks, mobile devices, you name it. We felt compelled to build a content network for the technology age we’re living in now, and we have a vision for what publishing should be (Stone, 2012).

At that time, when Medium was open to public, it was based on usage patterns, so over time, the tool has been modified from the uses and appropriations made by users. Evan Williams, also on Medium, frequently presents new features, showing how the platform goes to the next level. More than a space for exchange, in which the publishers share stories and find audiences, Medium has been transforming people's behavior towards the content, changing practices that stimulate the production and the circulation of knowledge.

The experimental nature of different initiatives, which appropriate platforms such as Medium, for example, characterizes the current context of digital journalism. The way through which Medium operates—correlating opportunities of collaborative content production with circulation structures, including elements of convergence (Aquino Bittencourt, 2012; Jenkins, 2006) and spreadability (Jenkins, Green & Ford, 2013), gathering texts that, through recommendations, have increased viewing of such content—justifies choosing the platform as the focus of this analysis to investigate the issues and goals in this project.

There are two directions in this investigation on Medium: the focus on the initiatives that use the tool aiming at reinventing journalism in terms of content production and circulation and the analysis of the changes and continuities in digital journalism which are expressed through the potentiality and appropriations of the tool by multiple initiatives and agents involved in the production and consumption of the content published. The first direction implies the mapping of journalistic initiatives on Medium, which propose transformations in the forms of production and in the dynamics of circulation of content. The second generates an analysis of these initiatives, in an attempt to establish observation criteria on elements related to the processes of production and circulation of content. The methodological procedures are described in detail next.

Medium

Writing, recommending, replying and leaving notes to writers are the main media opportunities offered by Medium. The interface is light, based on WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get), with few text formatting options, though it is easy to insert images, songs and videos through hypertext. Medium bought Embed.ly and this allows embedding content from an extensive list of other platforms such as YouTube, Flickr, SoundCloud, some news websites and agencies. Medium's API (Application Programing Interface) was opened in October 2015, allowing for sharing stories from other platforms, such as Wordpress, among other possibilities. Besides the open API, Medium also allows domain customization.

Unlike YouTube, where video is the main form of communication, or Instagram, where photographs (and, now, videos) are the main form, text is still the main form on Medium. A feature in Medium that reinforces the relevance of text in the platform is letters. They are offered only for publications, not for profiles and are, basically, a newsletter. They are sent via email to the followers of the publication. Medium itself sends a daily letter to users, the Medium Daily Digest, which gathers the most popular stories according to the tags, people and publications followed by the users. The letter is customized and is not the same for every user.

Collaboration is one of the features that shape how the platform works, and in the case of certain publications, it is what defines a model based on curation. Before a text is published on Medium, it appears on other websites via sharing, it is immediately viewed by the users on the platform where it circulates first. Unlike publishing content on a website or blog, for example, and maintaining and generating visibility to the page, which is, first, disconnected from the rest of the web, publishing on Medium is part of a web of connections based on individuals following each other, besides following publications. These connections create interaction regarding the stories published, in profiles and publications alike. The text recommendation, activated via clicking on a heart icon at the end of the stories, is the currency for trading internal visibility. The conversations about stories are the motivation for the publication of new ones. That way, the spreading (Jenkins, Green & Ford, 2013) of stories happens first on Medium, and can be expanded to other platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, but does not depend on those websites. Medium is built as a web. The connections between individual profiles and publications allow the narrowing of relations around the texts, which can be edited on the platform itself, through the interactions between writers and editors. The mentioning of profiles and publications ensure the strengthening of these connections and the expansion of the conversations by linking multiple authorships to the texts of the stories.

In this research, the focus is first on the publications, which have their own stories and are written by their exclusive editors and writers, or gather stories from writers around Medium—which can be seen as a curation process (Corrêa & Bertocchi, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2011) made by the editors in search of stories to compose their publications. There are cases in which publications act both ways, uniting their own content with curation.

The organization and searching of texts on Medium is made using tags. Each text can be marked with up to five tags and the search for content can also be done through them. Thus, the list of stories appearing to each Medium user is assembled according to the tags he or she chooses to see, the profiles and publications followed and the recommendations made by the ones being followed. When someone chooses to follow a profile or a publication on Medium, he or she will automatically receive all texts published by this profile or publication, either on the web or via application. The combination of an editorial (personal) and algorithmic (via tags) curation made by Medium does not limit the content viewing as on Facebook, for example. This means that a text published by a certain person or publication will be fully distributed to all followers. However, it is clear that the more users or publications one follows, the more difficult it is to see all the content published on the platform.

Each text published on Medium comes with information on the amount of reading time, just below its title, as shown in Figure 1:

The TTR—Total Time Reading—is used by Medium as their main measurement system. The number of viewpoints is considered more relevant and is expressed via replies to the texts or by the publication of other stories. More than knowing how many people have read a story on Medium, what matters is knowing how long each person spent reading a text and how the sidebar was scrolled—irrelevant measures for short news produced to meet a demand for frequent updates, as in many digital journalistic vehicles. The reading percentage is a result of this calculation, and the more viewers a text has, the lower the reading percentage. This happens due to the traffic generated in the texts through the sharing in sites like Facebook, for example. The circulation in other platforms helps to discover how many times a text was viewed, but the number of views does not effectively match the same number of people that have read the whole text.

The editors on Medium estimate seven minutes as the ideal reading time. But long-form texts, which can vary between 30 and 40 minutes of reading, also reach a high reading percentage on the platform. An example is an article about a Brazilian train on Bang, published in May 2015, with 34 minutes of reading. The Portuguese version reached about 300 recommendations and seven replies, 25% of reading percentage and 20,000 views, big numbers for content this size on Medium.

Considerations on the Depth of Journalistic Content

In 2012, Tenore questioned what should be considered the definition of long-form. More than the content size, the author underscores the depth of references, justifying her argument with the fact that quality is attractive and would often guarantee that the reader will return to the site. She does not, however, rule out the ease with which long and quality texts may end up forgotten on the web, which can be related to the amount of other kinds of content that are shorter and focused on the speed instead.

According to Fischer (2013), long-form means: “1) a level of in-depth reporting that goes beyond the everyday standard of production and/or 2) narrative storytelling that’s presented in an appealing way, often with multimedia elements to enhance the piece”. In Brazil, Longhi and Winques (2015) started a discussion on the format, mentioning how paradoxical it might seem, in the online journalism environment, the increase in lengthy, deep text. The authors highlight: “In English, long-form is a term that has always been used to define the size and depth in which a subject is approached,” thus it is not exclusive to digital journalism (Longhi & Winques, 2015). The authors place long-form as an element of the great multimedia report, which refers to the idea that multimedia can be considered an element of the long-form format, although it is not a determinant.

In the face of the digital media consolidation, Tenore (2012) asks: how to embrace the constant demand for content without losing focus on quality? And how do you get readers to shift their attention to the amount of content and to give more value to quality content? If, on the one hand, journalists would need to think about content production with a focus on quality, another factor to consider would be how to captivate audiences around these materials. Tenore (2012) highlights the need for tools that guarantee a permanent power to the contents; and in addition to these tools, the behavior of producers and consumers of journalistic content in these spaces is a central element in the constitution of practices that value the deepening of the content, as well as the captivation of the public. Medium does not lack publications and profiles that provide long texts. However, the size of a text does not attest to its quality, nor does its depth guarantee it will be accessed, not even the reading time (TTR).

The time of writing, editing, and then presenting to the reader is one of the factors considered when talking about long-form journalism. This is a characteristic of what has been called “slow” journalism, and that Le Masurier (2015, 2016) attributes its consolidation to the discussions about a new way of thinking about journalism in the face of problems caused by pressure to produce news to meet the demands for continuous updating—something that the market itself has generated. “This journalism does not require a checklist of key characteristics to qualify as Slow. The term, like the Slow movement itself, is more a critical orientation to the effects of speed on the practice of journalism” (Le Masurier, 2015, p. 439). It is not something essentially new, as she states, since in previous centuries the practices of slow journalism were already a reality. The novelties in this context are the loss of content quality, the compromise of ethical standards and the decrease of the attention of the user, amid the abundance of contents. Without striving to define characteristics that make up what she calls slow journalism, Le Masurier (2016) says that practitioners of this format work on a critique of the limits and dangers that the speed of production and the production overload imposed by the contemporary environment of mainstream journalistic vehicles.

Hermann (2015) understands that production time adds value to the final content. Hermann (2015) speaks of slow journalism as a practice belonging to a type of ethnographic journalism. For her, journalists and media watchers understand slow journalism as a type of long-form journalism.

The difficulties of reading on the screen in the early years of the web and the diversity of activities performed on the computer are reasons pointed out by Rosenstiel (2013) for the failure of some initiatives based on long-form. Smartphones and tablets would be the most appropriate devices in their design, considering them as one-activity devices. It is understood that there is an audience for in-depth content on different types of device.

On the other hand, a simple notification that appears on the screen may distract the attention of the reader. Nevertheless, the use of mobile devices can help in content production, which is the case of Medium allowing drafts of stories, thus increasing the creation of new texts regardless of where the individual is.

Medium brings together functionalities that allow the creation of initiatives focused on long-form, as identified in the collection of publications, but goes further, by incorporating functions that require individual and collective engagement, which happens through the network structure, but is not ensured to all publications and stories on the platform.

Considerations on the Reach of Journalistic Content

The ways through which online content circulate nowadays are a result of the evolution of a digital culture described in detail by Jenkins, Green and Ford (2013) from the concepts of convergence and spreadability. In the context of this research, both notions direct the investigation issues on Medium.

As pointed out by Heinrich (2011) on the use of the expression “web journalism,” there is no novelty in the idea permeating the understanding of this type of journalism. For her, it is the “’concrete network’ of an evolving (global) journalism sphere” (Heinrich, 2011, p. 31). Castells’ (1999) notions of space of flows and network society are the basis for her argument. Understanding that network logic is more powerful than the individual powers in the network, she identifies an adequate environment for the implementation of networked structures—which refers to the model thought by Medium to consolidate the platform in the connections between its participants. The interactions enhanced by the digitalization of processes and a connectivity model marked by the network paradigm are questions used to think about journalism, in this case.

According to Heinrich (2011), the transformations resulting from the changes in the processes of investigation, production and distribution of news impact on the work of journalists as: a) The number of agents involved in these processes increase and it is no longer limited to journalists; b) The amount of information available online increases, as well as the use of tools for collecting and checking facts; c) The online environment allows instant feedback and active participation of users, redefining the communication flow, previously verticalized, and allowing the establishment of networks. These levels of impact are a result of the situation of the systemic crisis narrated by Oliveira and Henn (2014), due to the diversity of agents that can be part of the process of investigation, production and journalistic distribution.

In this context, Heinrich (2011) indicates the demand for a repositioning of journalistic organizations in the face of these impacts through a structural transformation at the moment in which the emergence of a global news sphere constitutes multidirectional information flows. “The evolution of journalism and the adaptation of new technologies thus have to be viewed as a constant flow in which the working procedures of journalists are developed and reshaped” (Heinrich, 2011. p. 16). Among several understandings, Heinrich (2011) makes an attempt to exhaust the meaning of the expression “web journalism." First, recalling that the idea is associated with citizen journalism or participatory journalism, from which the interference of different agents in the journalistic processes can be traced, thus involving topics such as participation, partnership and conversation. Jarvis, for example, focuses on the journalist as a mediator of a collective work among these different agents (2007). The creation of many publications in Medium takes place in this way: some journalists, along with other professionals, manage the publication, being able or not to produce content, but also acting as curators of contents published by writers on the platform. Conversations are established between these individuals, as a collaborative editing process, which results in the linking of the writer's profile text to the publication space on the platform.

Heinrich (2011), among the definitions she presents, points out that what brings together the understandings about web journalism is "the interplay between civic participation and journalistic action" (p. 58). Network construction is the glue between the different arguments that attempt to define web journalism. She points out, however, that among these references, there is no application to draw a conceptual model of professional journalism as well as its organization. They are considerations made randomly, without any pretension to consolidate a journalistic practice or genre.

Hypertextuality as a feature of digital journalism is undoubtedly an element that fosters the deepening and contextualization of online content. Wu, Hofman, Mason, and Watts (2011), while trying to map who says what to whom on Twitter, approach the link as an element that assists in keeping interest. In their research, they identify which blogger links, advertised in tweets, are clicked more than links published by the press, but also show how broader magazine articles are able to extend readers' interests. On Medium, the practices around the possibilities of using links in texts are diverse, but the resource strengthens the network character of the platform by linking not only texts and internal publications, but also the profiles of users, as well as in other social networking sites, can link to each other, and be mentioned in the published texts. The tags that organize the content on Medium and govern the search on the platform also act as links that guide the registration of the stories and facilitate the search for the contents. The tags, when thought of as links (Aquino Bittencourt, 2007), extol the collective character of the platform, revealing how deep and far reaching they are for the journalism practice.

Heinrich (2011) cites a post by Karp (2008), which highlights the importance of hypertextuality for the contextualization of content, for the enrichment of a dataset, sources and information about what is being addressed. By equating the way journalism uses links to mechanisms like Google or Digg, it understands that the greater the combination of the best links, the better is the use that journalism makes of hypertextuality, "because those links are determined by networks, not individuals—and networks are the most powerful force on the web" (Karp, 2008).

This hypertextuality of contents is then extended to the actors in a network. Recuero (2012) explains how the connections between individuals go beyond social ties. The tools that provide the emergence of representations of these connections are fundamental to understanding how connections are established and maintained in networks. Operating in a social network logic means that it is the content that promotes and supports connections between Medium users. Choosing to follow a profile or a publication on the platform may even be the result of a previous friendship, but since it is the content that moves the interactions in the system, the formation and duration of these relations depends, on most cases, on the quality of the content.

Methodology

A quantitative-qualitative survey was made to try to identify elements that trigger the perspective of transforming the format of the content in relation to TTR (Total Time Reading). The incipient character of the project at the time allowed only a few inferences to be proven. It was noticed that the click culture ceases to be the focus on what has been built through Medium by different publications that direct their efforts for the deepening of the texts and for the construction of visibility and reach through new strategies focused on the quality of content. It is questionable, however, if this click culture has not been replaced on the platform by a culture of recommendation, since, unlike sites in which the access to the text already attests to the popularity of the content, on Medium it is the amount of recommendations that makes explicit how much a text is viewed inside. Still, it is like exchanging it for something similar, because the recommendation still does not guarantee that the story has been read in full—nor does the access. It is at this point that the TTR becomes a relevant way to measure the consumption of stories on Medium, by linking in its measurement performance the full reading certification of the story.

Considering that the organization of the contents on Medium works through tags, it was defined as strategy the collecting of four tags to conduct the mapping of Brazilian and American initiatives: jornalismo, jornalismo digital, journalism and digital journalism. The search method for the four tags chosen was applied only to select publications. This is because it is understood that in order to achieve the research objectives of identifying and analyzing how digital journalism is transforming, it is more productive to analyze publications, which have teams to think about the production of content and the dynamics of circulation, than to focus the study on individual profiles maintained on the platform. However, the possibility of including individual profiles in data collection and analysis throughout the project is not ruled out.

At the beginning of the investigation, it was possible to notice that many publications had few followers, which caused the first collection cut: publications with less than 1,000 followers would not be included in the dataset. It was then defined that the publication description would be collected to try to understand its main purpose on Medium. The next selection sought to identify the publications in Portuguese and English. Then, a final set of six publications in Portuguese and 26 in English was identified, see the Appendix for the details.

Publications marked with the tags in Portuguese direct their content to talk about journalism, which is the word that most appears in the set of these descriptions. The same happens with the publications in English, which also due to the greater amount if compared to what was collected in Portuguese, broaden the approach regarding vehicles, news and the media. It is in the descriptions in English that technical terms of journalism are highlighted, as, for example, content, covering, newsroom, publish, story, storytelling, among others. One can see in these descriptions an objective that goes beyond the practice of reporting facts and events. In some cases, these publications propose to discuss journalism and/or to experiment with journalistic practices, formats and languages and talk about these experiments.

In order to deepen the study of these publications, a set of four criteria was established, to evaluate how the publications incorporate the elements of deepening and reach in the stories they publish:

1. Frequency of publication and size of the stories: it evaluates the periodicity of publication of stories and the average time of reading of each publication.

2. Nature of content: identifies whether the content is proper to the publication or result of curation by editors in stories of writers who are Medium users.

3. Technical characteristics of digital journalism: evaluates how publications use hypertextuality and multimedia to deepen the content.

4. Circulation strategies: identifies circulation mechanisms, indicating the tools used to spread the contents and increase the reach of stories.

Results

The selected publications, both in Portuguese and in English, do not maintain a daily frequency of publication of stories, but there are exceptions, like Agência Democratize and Jornalistas Livres, which might publish more than one story a day. What is common among most publications is that they have flaws in this timeline of content publishing, in some cases in the early days of the platform, and later on in other cases. A Nébula, for example, has some stories published many days in a row, but never more than one story a day. It is more common to see a period of non-publication than daily stories. In some cases, these periods are of some days, or even months. Launched in 2016, InsideClimateNews has only four stories published until November of that year.

Brio Stories is a publication that publishes long, in-depth articles and spends many months without publishing anything new. For a new Medium user, a publication that stays for long periods of time without being updated can be interpreted as abandoned, and therefore miss the chance to win new followers and recommendations to the stories already made available. Among the collected publications, Brio Stories is the one that has the most extensive stories, dividing many of them in chapters and converging with what Le Masurier (2015, 2016) says about slow journalism, in relation to the times of investigation, writing and editing. Revista Poleiro offers texts that surpass 10 minutes, but the majority is part of what was called here short stories, which are below 10 minutes of reading. The frequency of publication and the size of the stories are directly related to the type of content, that is, in the cases of A Nébula and The Nib, for example, the reading time is always short, around one to two minutes, because the content is always a comic strip. It is common to find stories that exceed 10 minutes of reading, showing how longer contents, deep or not, are common on the platform. This significant occurrence of stories that exceed 10 minutes converges with the popularity of longer stories. According to Medium editors, the average reading time on the platform is seven minutes. Even though long-form texts can vary between 30 and 40 minutes of reading, they also achieve a high percentage of reading.

But what makes someone recommend a story on Medium? This is a frequent question and thought here based on criteria related to the type of content and circulation strategies adopted by the publications. In addition to the personal interest that those who recommend have in the subject, one can think that there is also the reputation that a profile and a publication aim to build on Medium to be taken into consideration. In the previous example, about Bang's 35-minute story, which generated about 300 recommendations, it is important to note that the author of the story is the editor of Medium in Brazil, and has about 4,000 followers of his profile, which contributes to the number of recommendations increasing. And it is here that one realizes that it is within Medium itself that a process of construction of circulation strategies adopted to maximize the reach of a story begins. Initially, this reach will depend on who is publishing, even though the story is linked to a publication with a large number of followers. When the story is published by a user's profile and is linked to a publication, the reach can be even greater because the story is seen by the profile and the publication's followers. Thus, the circulation of stories within Medium depends on the number of followers of the publications and the profiles that are linked to them. This means that in addition to a battle for recommendation, there is a new fight for the gaining of followers.

There are publications that use only their own unique profile, without identifying the author of the story and reaching considerable numbers of recommendations, others not so much, such as Behind the Headlines, which has few recommendations of their stories. The curation of stories that a publication makes can be considered an accelerator of recommendations, since, as said before, the visibility of content is enhanced when the text is seen not only by the followers of the publication, but also by the followers of the profile in which the story is made available. It is noticed that in publications in Portuguese and English, the largest number of recommendations are linked to a profile of a writer and not to a publication.

Social media such as Twitter and Facebook have a role that complements this social networking dynamic that Medium provides through this recommendation scheme. Facebook is the social network site most used by publications, which through fan pages spread the stories, expanding the reach beyond Medium. Twitter comes second, often along with a fan page, but in many cases, both Portuguese and English, Twitter accounts are outdated.

This publication's choice of broadcasting its own content or curating writers' texts through Medium also interferes with the format of the stories, which can be more or less deepened by exploring not only the features offered by the platform editing system, but also the online medium, such as hypertextuality and multimedia. Similar practices are identified regarding the use of links and formats other than text, such as images, audios and videos to compose the stories. What should be highlighted here is that just as the reach of the stories ends up depending greatly on the amount of followers of the writers, the deepening depends on how the writers linked to the publication structure their texts. Publications that carry only their own content have more control over the composition of the stories and the formats used. Publications composed of stories published on Medium have less editing power in this sense, and in many cases none. In publications such as The Nib and A Nébula, whose stories are always a strip, the deepening is limited, as is the exploration of links and other resources of the digital medium, considering that only one image composes the story, besides the title. Although Brio Stories is composed of very long content, in some stories it invests in literary journalism, and ends up leaving aside possibilities of hypertext and even of images to add up to the stories. In this same publication, stories guided by an investigative journalistic practice, already present a little more diversity in the languages that compose the contents, which they call reports. However, their storyline reveals a goal that seems to focus on story consistency through the written/typed word rather than images, videos, or links to other content.

Hypertextuality is a resource that can be explored by publications on Medium not only through links within stories, but also through tags, which can be used to organize sections of a publication, as well as sections for organizing websites. When folksonomy (Vander Wal, 2006) became a more common practice on the web, it soon became apparent that it was useful in organizing the large amount of information circulating. Flickr and del.icio.us were some of the pioneers in using tags as a collective management mechanism, which in the mid-2000s was called social tagging. At that time, these uses were investigated understanding the constitution of what was called hypertext 2.0 (Aquino Bittencourt, 2007). The formation of a new process of information organization and search based on hypertext was seen, but it subverted earlier forms of folksonomy and converged with collective and collaborative ideals derived from the notion discussed on the web on web 2.0. This indexing system that allowed the insertion of tags describing content of stored documents was based on a free organization, made by users in a manner unrelated to programmers. It was understood at that time that folksonomy opened space for a new type of link, the tag, created by any individual web user, who could thus manage the organization and search for data online as so far was not possible.

In the case of Medium, tags play this organizing role that facilitates the search for content. The deepening of the stories ends up being a more editorial choice than organizational, as it happens when the tags are used to organize the stories of the publication. It is hypertext made by writers and readers on the platform, allowing a content management free from the action of filters based on algorithms. Among the publications selected in this analysis, few use tags to organize their content internally. For those who access the publication, the tags titling internal sections make it easier to search for stories. For those who write on Medium and are interested in linking their content to a particular publication can tag a story with the corresponding tag, increasing the chances of having the story selected by the curation of the publication.

The publications selected in this mapping are more about the content they approach, than about how they build their stories and circulate them in and out of Medium. Among the ones, which are far from a discussion of digital journalism effectively, Latterly and The Cube are interesting cases. The Cube talks about games, maintains a strict editorial policy, with rules that value the quality of the content, very grounded in opinions and interviews of people related to the world of games. It does not discuss journalism, but employs journalistic techniques for checking content, researching, and editing. Latterly is a publication that addresses issues of social justice in more than 30 countries, with the collaboration of people in several countries and writing for well-known vehicles such as The New York Times and The Atlantic, for example.

What brings these publications closer are the practices they carry out on Medium that intensify the discussions in the field of digital journalism on formats and dynamics. The exploration of the criteria of analysis shows a very similar appropriation of the composition of the stories. In some cases, the life of a publication on Medium generates learning about the uses and intensification of potentialities, such as hypertextuality and multimedia, as well as the recurrence of the newsletter as an instrument of extension of reach. There is an attempt to standardize the publications and the collaboration policies indicate the intention of the editors to adapt the stories to a set of editorial principles. Interactivity is still scarce, except for cases of stories that are highly recommended, and with the visibility they reach on Medium, generate an internal movement on the platform.

It is relevant to consider that Medium brings together practices and functionalities of other platforms and publishing mechanisms, such as blogs and social networking sites. Medium is not a journalistic or content production company. With its current configuration, it is much more a company that offers technology for publishing content, and thus ends up offering journalism a space that is independent of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, but at the same time generates new schemes of internal dependence using the model based on recommendations.

Conclusions

It is important to point out limitations of this study. Medium often makes layout changes, deletes features, resumes others, always with the goal of perfecting the user experience. These changes, however simple they seem, which go unnoticed by many users, can be limitations for the research. It was also noticed that some writers listed in some publications had no followers, which interferes directly in the visibility of the stories they publish. The same was verified in publications, some without followers and without stories, others with a very low number of followers, although with stories published. There are cases where writers who appear as contributors to a publication have never published any stories.

It is possible to notice that, among the analyzed publications, the only ones that maintain a daily frequency, with up to more than one story per day are publications of essentially journalistic bias, with very short stories, reproducing, in a sense, the practices of continuous updating. In this way, they disagree with the precepts about long-form journalism and slow journalism, and there is a need for an in-depth content analysis of this practice.

Medium has been used as a platform for publishing journalistic content of its own, by profiles and publications, but considering what has been verified in this study, curation is one of the practices that redefine the journalist's role in the digital environment. In other platforms, the activity has already been carried out. One relevant example is Twitter Moments, in which a team of journalists do journalism by curating tweets. Medium allows this, valuing the journalistic activity as a guide to publications that even without producing their own content, can compose journalistic initiatives based on the content made available on the platform.

Many journalistic publications did not appear in this study because they do not use any of the hashtags defined for the search (#jornalismo; #jornalismodigital; #journalism; #digitaljournalism). In this sense, a new series of publications could be explored in future research projects. Another area to explore could be analyzing the profiles of writers of journalistic publications and evaluate how the number of followers of these profiles interferes with the reach of the stories linked to the publications.

For the journalism industry this project has relevance when it points to the movement of independent initiatives. However, this project also aims to observe how big publishers deal with new business models for publishing content on the internet.

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Appendix

Publications collected for analysis

Portuguese publications by keyword:

#jornalismo

- Agência Democratize
- Jornalistas Livres
- Brio Stories
- Revista Poleiro
- Entusiastas de Mídias Sociais
- A Nébula

#journalismo digital

- Entusiastas de Mídias Sociais

#journalism

- Jornalistas Livres
- Brio Stories

#digital journalism

- Entusiastas de Mídias Sociais

English publications by keyword:

#jornalismo – None available.

#journalismo digital – None available.

#journalism

- The Cube
- Digital Trends Index
- We Are Hearken
- The Nib
- Haptic.AI
- Latterly
- Vintopia
- Whiter News?
- Substance
- First Draft News
- 3 to read
- The Reported.ly Team
- The Guardian Mobile Innovation Lab
- Texas Tribune
- Google News Lab
- InsideClimate News
- Thoughts on Journalism

Mother Jones
Firsthand Stories
One Bendle
Prime Mind
Thoughts on Media
Journalism Innovation
Behind the Headlines
The Local News Web
The Compass Standard

#digital journalism

The Compass Standard