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## AEJMC Hot Topics in Journalism and Mass Communication, Book Review Journalism Next: A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing Posted May 10, 2011 by AEJMC



### **Journalism Next: A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing.**

Mark Briggs. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009. 359 pp.

The Internet challenges journalists and journalism schools to keep abreast of technologies deployed to deliver the news. Feeding growing, voracious online news operations requires both traditional skills, plus the ability to deliver news quickly via smart phones, netbooks, and other devices using an assortment of software and online services.

Mark Briggs' new book, *Journalism Next*, brings together the fragmented resources available all across the Web, neatly tying the technology to what journalists do: gathering and reporting the news.

Briggs is a former interactive news manager for the Tacoma News Tribune, and a Ford Fellow in entrepreneurial journalism at the Poynter Institute. Briggs' first book, *Journalism 2.0*, was a great handbook (available as a free download) for journalists and teachers. But his new book goes into more detail and covers more ground. With *Journalism Next*, Briggs has written an easy-to-follow guide for journalism students or veteran journalists who want to learn how to tell stories across digital platforms. Beyond how-to basics on reporting with audio or video, it delves into such topics as building a digital audience and engaging with news consumers.

Like the role of the Internet in journalism or not, mastering the skills in Briggs' book gives journalism students a leg up on getting hired and doing their job well. Some 95% of the top U.S. newspapers, for example, use reporter blogs. Briggs' book fills a need in journalism education. It can be used as a stand-alone textbook in multimedia classes, or in other classes—beat reporting, for example—as a fine supplement to give students an insight into how multimedia techniques work.

The book is filled with essays from tech innovators, professionals explaining how they use technology to enhance journalism. He also offers plenty of real-world examples, with graphics

and photos, and step-by-step advice to walk readers through topics from creating an RSS feed to editing audio.

Briggs also includes the philosophical with the how-to, explaining why or how audio can be an effective medium. Audio can take listeners to the story, he says, capturing emotion and atmosphere. But he also offers down-to-earth advice on what equipment you need to get started. He spells out what a journalist should think about when preparing for audio interviews, from choosing a location to keeping it conversational. And then he offers practical information on equipment. Video and visual storytelling are also covered.

Each chapter includes a helpful “get going” checklist, which spells out the next steps to master digital journalism. In the process, Briggs breaks digital reporting down to make it less overwhelming for the novice.

The book is perfect for student journalists, particularly in a class on reporting across platforms. But it’s also a good resource for bloggers, citizen journalists, or pros who need to get current on such topics as how to use Twitter to share breaking news quickly. It’s also a readable primer for anyone interested in keeping up with state-of-the-art ways to deliver news.

In that respect, print operations have come a long way. In their first stab at delivering news on the Internet in the 1990s, for example, some newspapers drafted staffers and converted them to technicians to mostly post print stories online, usually in the wee hours of the morning. The days of the Internet as a journalistic afterthought are long gone. When it comes to breaking news, the online tail wags the print dog, making news available to readers long before print editions hit the street.

It’s easy today to find voices decrying the woes created by the transformation in the industry, caused in part by technology. Instead, Briggs finds hope. He writes optimistically about the future—uses of mobile technologies in journalism, for instance. He paints clear pictures of new models for journalism, and points out that demand for journalism has not diminished. News consumers still look for news on new platforms.

For all his enthusiasm for technology, Briggs maintains his perspective of what journalism is all about. As he says in the first chapter, “Journalism is about people, not technology.”

That is, “new” journalists must embrace new technology as something akin to a high-tech twenty-first-century typewriter. It doesn’t replace traditional journalism skills, values, and ethics. But for a typical reporter, it can give your story greater punch.

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Filed Under: Quarterly Spring 2011, Reviews Tagged With: aejmc quarterly, digital reporting, Journalism, Mark Briggs, Technology