Comparing Models of
COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM

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The Center for Cooperative Media
The School of Communication and Media
Montclair State University
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CENTER FOR COOPERATIVE MEDIA

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

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The report is available online at *collaborativejournalism.org/comparingmodels.*

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About the Center for Cooperative Media

The Center for Cooperative Media is a grant-funded program based at the School of Communication and Media at Montclair State University. Its mission is to grow and strengthen local journalism, which it does through professional development and training, networking, coaching for entrepreneurial and independent news organizations, research, events, and by coordinating and advocating for editorial and business collaborations.

The Center for Cooperative Media's flagship program is the NJ News Commons, which is a network of more than 180 publishers in the state of New Jersey. The Center's focus with the NJ News Commons is on growing and strengthening New Jersey's local news and information ecosystem.

The Center has regular and project-based partnerships with several organizations whose work complements our own, such as the Local Independent Online News Publishers, the Institute for Nonprofit News, the Center for Investigative Reporting, Solutions Journalism Network, Free Press and many others, as well as major platforms including Facebook and Google.
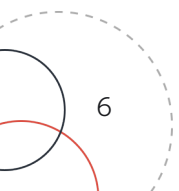
The Center's work is supported by funding from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Democracy Fund and Rita Allen Foundation.

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About the project

The Center for Cooperative Media believes that collaborative journalism is a promising practice to help support the sustainability of journalism in the digital age.

While collaboration may be anathema to journalists who are used to competition, we have observed that successful collaborations sacrifice neither quality nor independence; rather, working together produces content and reach that would not be possible for newsrooms working alone.

In early 2017 we began collecting information about collaborative reporting projects from around the world. Our goal was to synthesize this data to produce a typology of collaborative reporting models that would be of use to practitioners, funders and academics.

In May 2017, the Center organized and hosted an international symposium on collaborative journalism and cooperative news networks. More than 175 people gathered at Montclair State University for the Collaborative Journalism Summit to discuss the logistics of partnerships, hear about successful collaborations, and listen to keynote presentations about the Panama Papers and Electionland projects. We presented initial findings from our research on models of collaborative journalism at the summit. This white paper is the final product of that research.

In August 2017 the Center distributed $42,000 in grants to six news organizations to support collaborative reporting projects as part of an open call that was funded by Rita Allen Foundation and Democracy Fund.

These efforts are tied together by the Center's intention to continue to support a community of practice around collaborative journalism as one of its flagship programs. If you want to know more or get involved, email info@centerforcooperativemedia.org.

Special thanks

The Center would like to thank the many people who agreed to be interviewed for this research or otherwise provided information.
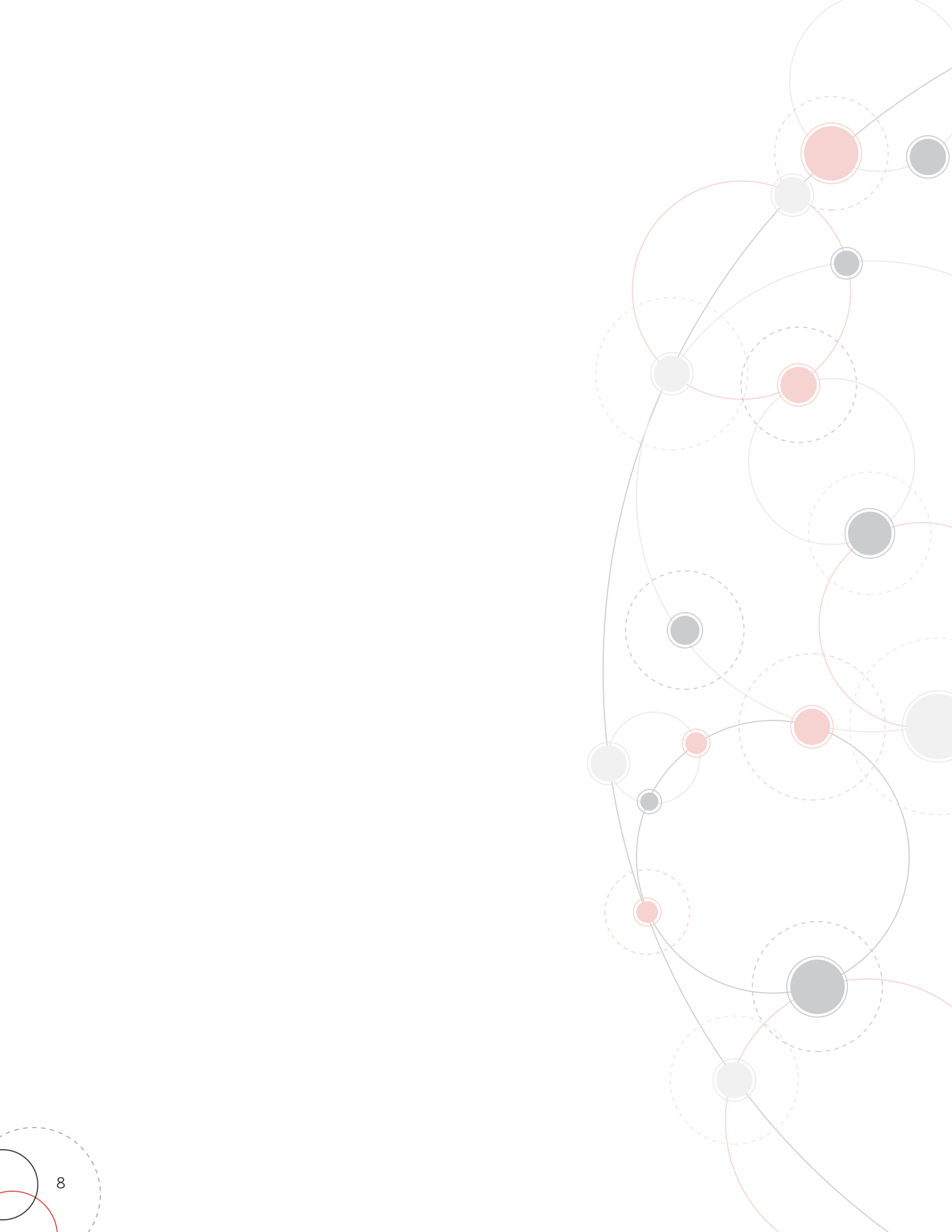
Foreword

For journalism in general, but for local news and information providers in particular, the last decade has been one of resource scarcity, uncertainty, and rapid technological development. In the U.S., as in many Western democracies, consolidation and cost-cutting have resulted in dramatic losses for local journalism in all but the largest cities (e.g. Shaffer and Doherty, 2017; Starr, 2009). Within this context, many surviving local journalism outlets have turned to collaborative journalism as a way to share data and stretch limited resources, while also providing what are often more comprehensive stories to bigger audiences.

As many are realizing, the digital age has created technological affordances that make collaboration easier than ever before. This report identifies and compares six models of collaborative journalism that span collaborations from the hyperlocal to the international levels. We provide examples of each model, and discuss common costs and benefits for each. Identifying and describing the different models of collaborative journalism is of use to journalists, funders, and scholars alike. Further, the project points to a bright spot in journalism, and highlights one of the ways that news and information providers are finding their way forward in the digital age.
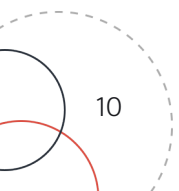
What is Collaborative Journalism?

A Brief History

In some sense all journalism is collaborative; there is usually at least a reporter and an editor, and perhaps a photographer, videographer, or visual data person. Moreover, collaboration among reporters or between newsrooms has been practiced in different forms for more than one hundred years. One of the earliest journalism collaborations was among the newsrooms that made up "the wires" in the mid-nineteenth century. "The birth of the wire service industry as we know it," Shmanske (1986, p. 61) wrote, "occurred in 1846 when six New York daily newspapers joined to form the Associated Press. The purpose of this union was to cooperate in receiving news, that is, to share all news that came in and split the expenses evenly."

In the twentieth century, especially after the advent of the penny papers, competition between outlets was the norm. "Every era of journalism features forms of competition and cooperation," Graves and Konieczna (2015, p. 1970) state. "The professional and economic logic of news in the last century made the former more visible than the latter."

Yet even during the height of profitability in the late twentieth century, when competition, not collaboration, was the most salient relationship between newsrooms, it was common practice for journalists on the same beat to collaborate by sharing notes, swapping tips, and in general helping each other out (Graves and Konieczna 2015, p. 1971). Formal collaboration during that period was most common within an organization, rather than between. For example, Cable News Network (CNN) was formed in 1980, and codified intra-newsroom sharing – between the national headquarters and its television news affiliates – with CNN Newsource, in 1988.

Gannett's USA Today Network, which gathers content from local newsrooms across the country for packaging in the national edition, was re-booted in 2015 to take advantage of the latest technology for sharing content.[1] There was also sharing between smaller newsrooms and organizations; New California Media (now New America Media) began developing collaborative reporting projects in the late 1990s "as a way to combine the strengths of ethnic media, and the intimate knowledge (including language skills) of

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[1] Mashery, "Driving Real-World Enterprise & B2B Results with APIs," accessed at *https://www.mashery.com/sites/default/files/Mashery%20Powers%20Enterprise.pdf.*

diverse communities – with those of mainstream journalism (particularly investigative reporting and knowledge of public policy and politics)."[2] At the local level, newspaper chains have been "collaborating" for decades; small suburban weeklies shared content with the large metro paper and vice versa.

However, there is a qualitative difference in the consciousness and intentionality with which collaborations are now being undertaken. The attention from outside organizations, and their money, makes a difference. "There's a lot of introspection" about collaboration now, and the organizations funding it are trying to learn lessons and see what works and what doesn't, says Denise Young, who holds the title "executive editor of collaborative journalism" at an upstate New York public radio station. She, and others like her, are part of a nascent cohort of journalists whose main focus is to manage multi-outlet collaborations.

The current excitement about collaborative journalism began in the mid-2000s, when publishers, journalism scholars, and foundations began to look at the opportunities made possible by digital networking (Benkler, 2006). In 2009, J-Lab, funded by the Knight Foundation and led by Jan Schaffer, fostered nine newsroom collaborations, four of which are still active. In 2010, Josh Stearns (now at Democracy Fund) cataloged "a growing inventory of journalism collaborations," citing nearly 40 arrangements between all manner of media outlet[3] – though not all with positive impacts for the news and the community, as we discuss in the conclusion. Also in 2009, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) began funding journalistic collaborations; as of 2017 CPB has put nearly $32 million into 29 local and regional partnerships, and counting.[4]

In 2012, the message of an event co-sponsored by the University of California-Berkeley's Investigative Reporting Program and PBS MediaShift, titled "Collab/Space 2012," was that "the longevity of individual news outlets

2   Email correspondence with Sandy Close, Executive Editor and Director of New America Media, 31 Dec. 2016.

3   Stearns, J. (22 April 2010). "A Growing Inventory of Journalism Collaborations," accessed at: *https:// stearns.wordpress.com/mentions/jcstearns/.*

4   Corporation for Public Broadcasting fact sheet on Public Journalism (12 May 2016), accessed at: *http://www.cpb.org/journalism.*

In This Report

44

Ongoing collaborations

500+

Newsrooms

$200 Million

in funding since the early 2000s

increasingly relies on a willingness and ability to collaborate."[5] In 2014, Pew Research Center declared it to be "a new era of interest" in journalism partnerships, as they called them.[6] Research on the topic has called collaborative journalism by several names, including "convergence" (e.g. Dailey, Demo, and Spillman, 2005), "networked journalism" (Schaffer, 2010), and "news sharing" (Graves and Konieczna, 2015).

In this report alone we catalog 44 ongoing collaborations (mostly in the U.S. but in other countries as well) that involve more than 500 newsrooms and other news and information providers. We also calculate that at least $200 million has been spent fostering journalistic collaboration since the early 2000s. In addition, we are aware of several other collaborations taking place across Europe and in countries like Australia and South Africa, and continue to learn of more.

5   Walsh, M. (13 April 2012), "Collab/Space 2012: Building Trust, Tools, and Relationships for Collaborating," MediaShift, accessed at: *http://mediashift.org/2012/04/collabspace-2012-building-trust-tools-and-relationships-for-collaborating-104/*; also Harris, E. (11 May 2012), "The Costs and Benefits of Collaboration," MediaShift, accessed at: *http://mediashift.org/2012/05/the-costs-and-benefits-of-collaboration-132/.*

6   Edmonds, R. and Mitchell, A. (4 Dec. 2014), "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center, accessed at: *http://www.journalism.org/2014/12/04/journalism-partnerships/.*

Defining Collaborative Journalism

The type of collaboration we are looking at here is across newsrooms, and often across organizations (the type of collaboration that would have been least likely in the era of competition). It may or may not involve a formal agreement, but always seeks to produce content that is greater than what any individual journalist, newsroom, or organization could produce on its own. While these collaborations happen at both national and local organizations, it is local newsrooms who seem to see exponential benefits from collaborating.

We define collaborative journalism as a cooperative arrangement (formal or informal) between two or more news and information organizations, which aims to supplement each organization's resources and maximize the impact of the content produced. Collaborative journalism is not to be confused with "citizen-," "participatory-," "engaged-", "public-," or other types of journalism that solicit information from the public or consider interaction with the public a cornerstone practice (though an engagement element may be part of a collaborative project). Rather, the collaborative journalism we identify and discuss here is squarely situated in and between newsrooms and news and information organizations that belong to the journalism field or the field of professional media more broadly (Napoli et al., 2015).[7]

We define collaborative journalism as a cooperative arrangement (formal or informal) between two or more news and information organizations, which aims to supplement each organization's resources and maximize the impact of the content produced.

We have identified two of what we think are the most important elements by which collaborations are organized: duration of time, and degree of
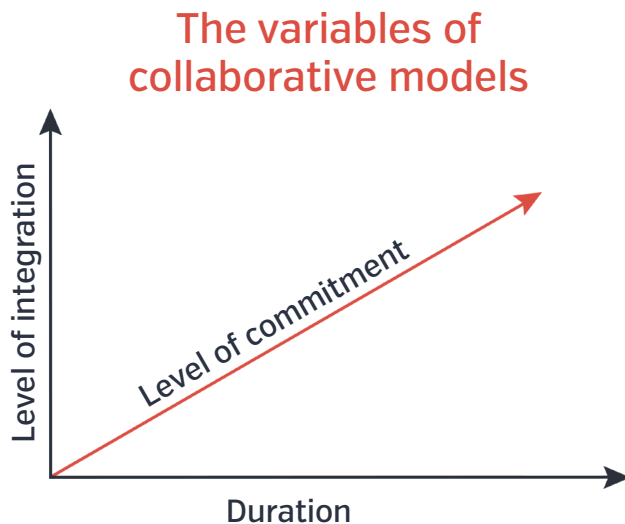
[7] Collaborative journalism expert Heather Bryant observes that collaborations involving non-news partners may be the next frontier in collaborative journalism: "Getting past competition and building trust for newsroom-to-newsroom collaboration was step one. Openness to, and execution of, collaborative partnerships with non-journalistic or platform partners is next level."

integration among partner organizations. As both of these increase, the level of commitment required to make the collaboration work also increases. Using these two variables, we have identified six different models of collaborative journalism: "Temporary and Separate," "Temporary and Co-creating," "Temporary and Integrated," "Ongoing and Separate," "Ongoing and Co-creating," "Ongoing and Integrated." We discuss each in detail in the pages that follow.
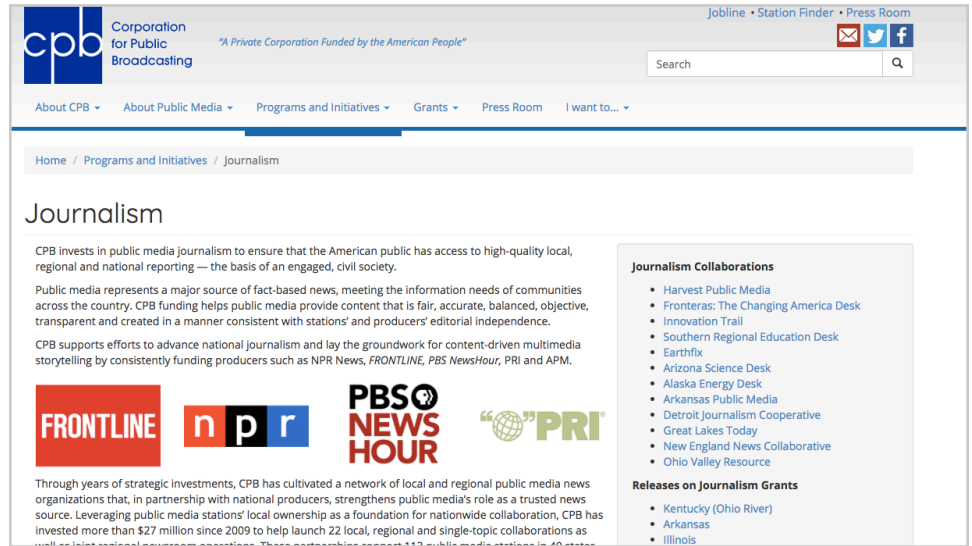
Image 1. As of 2017, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has put nearly $32 million into kick-starting 29 local and regional collaborations.

For example, a temporary collaboration in which organizations create content separately (low integration) requires a relatively low level of commitment, while an ongoing collaboration in which partners integrate their operations to the point where they share resources at the organizational level requires a high level of commitment. We place no normative judgment on the value of any type of collaboration, and have found examples of collaborations fitting each model that have produced exemplary journalism with exponential benefits to its participants and the communities they serve.

The matrix of collaborative journalism models in this report has the advantage of clarifying the most common elements of collaborative arrangements, and also identifying the changing costs and benefits associated with different arrangements.

The variables of collaborative models

Figure 1. The variables duration, integration, and commitment are key organizing principles for collaborative projects.

WHY COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM NOW?

In decades past, when profits were large and journalism as a field enjoyed a higher level of prestige, it felt natural for fellow journalists and newsrooms to see each other as competitors. Now, when profits are lean or non-existent, and trust in journalism has eroded, journalists have, in many cases, banded together for the betterment of their organizations, their product, and their audiences. Collaborative journalism may therefore be seen, from a certain angle, as 'field repair' (Graves and Konieczna, 2015), whereby journalists consciously engage in practices that are "expressly reformist" and seek to "protect journalism by changing it, legitimizing new approaches to or definitions of professional, objective reporting" (p. 1969).

The context of collaborative journalism is one reason why many of the most zealous collaborators are young, at digital-native outlets, or from outside of the journalism profession. In other words, practicing successful collaborative journalism very often requires a break with past practices and mindsets.[8] Yet legacy journalists and organizations are also increasingly seeing the benefits of collaboration; in a 2014 report, Pew observed that a "recurring theme in the Pew Research Center's journalism research over the last two years has been that of newsroom collaborations." Again and again, they "encountered news providers teaming up in new ways. Legacy media outlets are looking more than ever for ways to augment what they can produce with a depleted staff, and news startups are eager to place their work before a wider audience and figure out roads to sustainability" (p. 2).[9]

Investigative, or accountability, journalism, is also increasingly practiced through collaborations; Hamilton (2016) observed that the prize-winning investigative work he studied is increasingly the product of teams of journalists from different outlets, working together to share the costs as well as benefits from having access to multiple audiences. In our research we observe that a clear majority of the finite collaborative projects currently being practiced are investigative or accountability stories.

[8] See also Hamilton, M. (18 May 2015). "All Together Now: News Partnerships Increase in Digital Age," American Journalism Review, accessed at: http://ajr.org/2015/05/18/all-together-now-news-partnerships-increase-in-digital-age/.

[9] See also Ma, O. (Dec. 2016). "The Year Collaboration Beats Competition," NiemanLab, accessed at: http://www.niemanlab.org/2016/12/the-year-collaboration-beats-competition/; and Kramer, M. (12 April 2017), "Journalists around the world are working together more than ever. Here are 56 examples," Poynter.org, accessed at: https://www.poynter.org/2017/journalists-around-the-world-are-working-together-more-than-ever-here-are-56-examples/455494/.

Likewise, it seems that, in the contemporary moment, nonprofit or community-supported outlets are the most likely to be involved in ongoing collaborative relationships. This is perhaps because the money that has gone to funding collaborations thus far has come from organizations that tend to favor public and not-for-profit media. Yet close observers also think that there are other reasons, having to do with economic constraints and the cultural makeup of these outlets. "There's no question in my mind that nonprofits were quicker to embrace collaboration than commercial news outlets," says Bill Keller, former executive editor of *The New York Times* and current editor-in-chief of The Marshall Project.[10] Nonprofit outlets were quick to see the advantages in collaborating "for largely pragmatic reasons: mainstream media offered a much bigger audience and often absorbed a share of the costs." In addition, says Keller, commercial outlets often felt "a wariness of ceding control over the product and endangering [their] credibility."

"When you think of your audience as a community, it conditions you for collaboration. You're not starting from the mountaintop, knowing everything and transmitting it down; it's more, 'we're in this together.'"

Vice President of News at WNYC Jim Schachter cites three reasons that nonprofit or community-supported outlets might be more open to collaboration: "generally limited resources," their "mission-drivenness," and the fact that collaboration with the community has been built into their DNA from the beginning.[11] "When you think of your audience as a community, it conditions you for collaboration," Schachter said. "You're not starting from the mountaintop, knowing everything and transmitting it down; it's more, 'we're in this together.'"

However, both Keller and Schachter observed that many commercial outlets have seen the benefits of collaboration. "Two factors, at least, won over the skeptics," Keller said. "A number of nonprofits, ProPublica among the first, earned the trust of their mainstream peers by hiring good journalists and delivering quality (and prize-winning) work. And the economic challenges facing the industry made the free or low-cost work of nonprofits more

10   Keller, email correspondence, 7 August 2017.
11   Schachter, email correspondence, 7 August 2017.

attractive. At The Marshall we've partnered with 80-some other newsrooms; print, broadcast and online." Likewise, Schachter recalled that when he started his reporting career in Florida in the early 80s, there were two warring Tallahassee bureaus: for the *Miami Herald* and *St. Petersburg Times*. Now there is one joint bureau that serves both. "Necessity has made unimaginable bed fellows," he said. "Everyone is a competitor and a collaborator now." Likewise Holly Kernan, VP of News for KQED, observed for the SF Homeless Project, that "nearly everyone wanted to collaborate, regardless of profit status."[12]

The trend toward collaborative journalism that we document here signifies deeper structural changes in the field of journalism, driven by the ability to connect digitally. It is yet another manifestation of the "wealth of networks" identified by Benkler (2006, p. 1), who wrote:

> It seems passé today to speak of 'the Internet revolution'…But it should not be. The change brought about by the networked information environment is deep. It is structural. It goes to the very foundations of how liberal markets and liberal democracies have coevolved for almost two centuries. A series of changes in the technologies, economic organization, and social practices of production in this environment has created new opportunities for how we make and exchange information, knowledge, and culture.

As we document, collaborative journalism is now being practiced on a scale that constitutes a revolution in journalism. The many trials and errors of the last decade have generated cooperative efforts that have stood the test of time and are showing the way for others. While lessons are still being learned, collaborative journalism has evolved from experiment to common practice.

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12   Kernan, email correspondence, 7 August 2017.

Six Models of Collaborative Journalism

In the matrix we identify six of the most common types of journalistic collaborations. On the x axis are two variations in the *duration* of collaborations: one-time, or finite, projects, and ongoing, or open-ended collaborations. On the y axis is the *level of integration* of participating organizations: at the lowest level of integration, organizations create content independently and share it; at the next level, they work together to create content; finally, they share resources at the organizational level, indicating the highest level of integration. Though the resulting combinations are fairly distinct, several projects fall into more than one category.[13] Moreover, several of the collaborations began as one model but have evolved into a different model, as we'll see in several examples to follow.

Other variables not included in the matrix but which figure in to many collaborations include the formality of the arrangement (i.e. whether there is a contract); whether the subject of the collaboration is one topic, or spans many issues; and whether there is a community engagement element (see Appendix A for a checklist on these additional variables, for all projects discussed in the report).

The data presented here were collected inductively; that is, through the aggregation of information and materials relating to journalistic collaboration, using industry contacts, conference presentations, literature reviews, and interviews with key figures over the course of several months (see Appendix B for the list of interviews conducted for this research). The models presented in the matrix (Figure 2) are therefore the result of an analysis of dozens of collaborations and testimony from people who have been deeply involved with the movement for many years.

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[13] For clarity, when a project exemplifies one model but includes elements of other models, we will include it in the matrix as the primary model and note which other characteristics apply.

Models of Collaboration

	One-Time | Finite	Ongoing | Open-Ended
Partners create content separately and share it	*(Temporary and Separate)* One River, Many Stories; SF Homeless Project; Surging Seas; Toxic NJ	*(Ongoing and Separate)* Charlottesville Tomorrow/Daily Progress; USA Today Network; Seattle Times News Partner Network; The Climate Desk; Ohio Valley Resource; Upstate Insight; Fronteras; CNN, Associated Press, McClatchy; CALmatters
Partners work together to create content	*(Temporary and Co-creating)* Electionland; American Dream Mall; CrossCheck (First Draft News)	*(Ongoing and Co-creating)* NPR's Collaborative Coverage Project; Detroit Journalism Cooperative; Harvest Public Media; The Texas Standard; Documenting Hate (ProPublica)
Partners share content/data/resources at the organizational level	*(Temporary and Integrated)* Panama Papers; The Magnetar Trade; The Reentry Project	*(Ongoing and Integrated)* Next to Die (The Marshall Project); First Draft News; Alaska public radio arrangement; TAPinto network

Figure 2. Models of collaborative journalism

Temporary and Separate
One-time/finite projects in which partners create content separately and share it

Collaborative journalism projects falling into this model are one-time or finite projects where participants create content separately. The content may be aggregated for presentation in one place (e.g. the project's website), or may be presented in several different places (on partners' different platforms or across media). Some projects that fall under this model use a decentralized approach to coordination and content creation, which allows them to dodge the problem of competing organizational cultures and priorities. Others have specific guidelines for what should be produced by participating organizations. Those projects where decisions are not made in advance about who will produce which content tend to run into trouble.

"One River, Many Stories," was an 18-month-long project based at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. The project manager curated content from legacy news organizations, local bloggers, photographers, videographers, universities, college and high school journalism programs, citizen storytellers, playwrights, musicians, and scientists to tell stories relating to the St. Louis River, a major waterway in this area. Final products included traditional journalism content, social media posts, documentaries, podcasts, and a theater production, most of which were presented via the project's main website.[14]

"Figure out: why are we partnering, what do we have to offer, and what are we missing as a group."

The editorial direction to contributors was minimal: "Tell at least one story about some topic connected with the St. Louis River and its neighboring communities. You decide how it relates to the river. You decide what needs to be told. You decide how to tell it. You have complete autonomy."[15]

Another finite project where participants created content separately, on

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14 See *http://onerivermn.com/*.
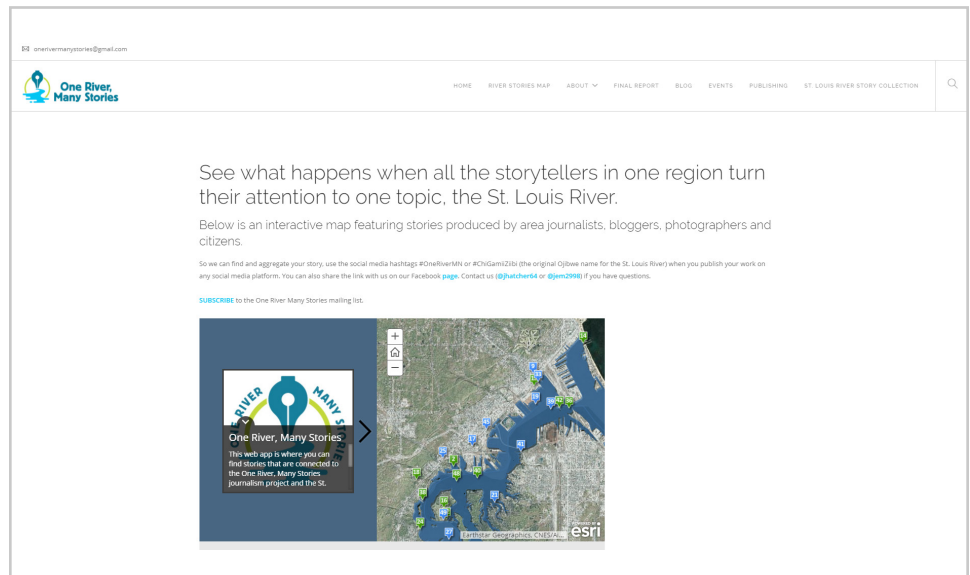15 See *http://onerivermn.com/front-page/about/#YouDo*.

homelessness in San Francisco, took a similarly conscious "hands-off" approach, letting all participating outlets – more than 70 of them – produce what they wanted, in the medium they chose. Project coordination and content production lasted for five

Image 2. The "One River, Many Stories" collaboration brought together local legacy newsrooms, bloggers, universities, artists, and scientists to tell stories relating to the St. Louis River.

months, culminating in one day of coverage across all participating outlets, each in its "own style, for [its] own audiences, however big or small" (Cooper, 2016). Lead organizer Audrey Cooper, editor-in-chief of *The San Francisco Chronicle*, described it as "everyone doing their own thing, but together" (Wang, 2016). This project also has aspects of the finite, sharing resources at the institutional level model, because there was "a data team assembled from several publications, including the Chronicle and KQED, pool[ing] resources to offer everyone some usable data sets" (Wang, 2016).[16]

Another characteristic of projects falling within the Temporary and Separate model seems to be a greater ability to engage content producers who fall outside the bounds of traditional journalism. For example, in the Toxic NJ ("Dirty Little Secrets") project, co-organized by the Center for Cooperative Media (CCM) and the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), one of the highlights was a comedy show about the New Jersey's legacy of toxic contamination.[17] In One River, Many Stories, there was a theatrical production by a local playwright.

A collaboration between New America Media (an organization of ethnic media from across the country) and nine other organizations, including six media outlets, reported on the effects of climate change, specifically in terms of sea-level rise (called "Surging Seas"[18]). They involved a data visualization firm called Stamen Group, and a hybrid research and journalism

[16] See *http://www.sfgate.com/homeless/*

[17] See *https://toxicnj.com/*.

[18] See *http://newamericamedia.org/news/environment/sea-level-rise/*.

organization called Climate Central, which gave the collaboration a deep dive into data and a visual component not usually included in traditional journalistic products.

A common benefit of these types of projects, especially when organizations of different sizes partner together, is that smaller news organizations or contributors gain much greater visibility than they would have otherwise. Also, when collaborations of this variety are around specific issues – such as a local river or homelessness – they are able to leverage contributor and community passions around such issues. One common cost or tension in projects within this model is quality control, especially when there is not a dedicated project manager or editor.

Additional Examples

- *San Francisco Chronicle* foster system investigation
  http://www.poynter.org/2017/why-the-san-francisco-chronicle-gave-its-latest-investigation-away-to-other-local-news-outlets/460504/
- The Chesapeake Bay Initiative
  http://wvtf.org/programs/chesapeake-bay-collaborative#stream/
- The Valley Fever Project
  https://www.centerforhealthjournalism.org/valleyfever

MODEL: TEMPORARY AND SEPARATE

Temporary and Separate collaborations are good for:
- *First-time collaborators*
- *Small outlets looking to expand reach/name recognition*
- *Topics that generate high interest or passion*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires Attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures	✓	
	Different levels of tech expertise	✓	
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics	✓	
	Internal buy-in	✓	
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom		✓
	Shared burden with big data		✓
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques		✓
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 3. *Temporary and Separate collaboration model*
* Requires attention from project manager.

Temporary and Co-creating
One-time/finite project in which partners work together to create content

Collaborative journalism projects falling into this model are one-time or finite projects, where participants work together to create content. These are necessarily closer and more coordinated projects than those in which participants produce content separately, and therefore require more resources, at least during some stages. When partners work together to create content, there is potential for conflicting priorities at different newsrooms to affect the collaboration. In the examples we outline here, this tension was mitigated in different ways – by general excitement about the topic and intense coordination, in the case of Electionland; by a pre-existing level of trust and high level of rapport between the partners, in the case of American Dream; and by a desire to combine resources to cover an important political event, in the case of Voting Block.

"There's no question in my mind that nonprofits were quicker to embrace collaboration than commercial news outlets."

Electionland was a collaboration between seven flagship organizations (WNYC, Google News Lab, USA Today Network, Univision, the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism, ProPublica, and First Draft News), 250 participating newsrooms, and 600 volunteer contributors. Among these partners were nonprofit organizations, freelance reporters, journalism students, and interested citizens, all of whom provided voting-day observation and/or analysis of the 2016 U.S. presidential election from locations across the country. With more than 1,100 people involved in newsgathering and reporting, "Electionland was likely one of the largest social newsgathering operations ever performed over the course of one day," wrote Fergus Bell, who ran the Feeder Desk for First Draft News.

The core team used various software (Dataminr, Banjo, Acusense, Crowdtangle, Tweetdeck), to monitor social media, as well as data from Google Search Trends and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, to identify issues at voting booths. Once they'd identified tips for local news stories, they fed the info to relevant reporters in the field. Those reporters then produced up-to-the-minute content for their local outlets as well as for the national partner

organizations.[19]

There were no written agreements about participation in Electionland, even among the seven flagship partners. There were, however, very detailed instructions for workflow, on which key participants were trained weeks in advance (Bell, 2016). ProPublica Deputy Managing Editor Scott Klein noted that weaknesses of the project included a lack of structure for identifying who published actual stories based on the tips, or a defined way to track success metrics.[20]

Image 3. Electionland brought together more than 250 newsrooms across the U.S. for a one-day collaboration covering 2016 presidential election voting.

The American Dream project was a collaboration between public radio station WNYC, nonprofit investigative newsroom NJ Spotlight, and *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, to cover the shopping/entertainment complex currently called "American Dream Meadowlands" (formerly called Xanadu), located in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The project produced five stories, which ran simultaneously, with different elements, on each newsroom's platform(s).[21] NJ Spotlight reporter John Reitmeyer reflected on the project with nothing but praise for those involved: "Working together as a group and not being afraid to share reporting and rely on each others' individual skill sets to make the finished product so well-rounded was invaluable," Reitmeyer said. "Turning this project into radio pieces, web stories and a magazine story was a big lift, and it required a lot of agility and cooperation among the reporters and editors. To their credit, everyone involved was committed to making the finished product as good as it could be no matter the extra effort."[22]

19   Examples of local stories produced for Electionland can be found at: *https://projects.propublica. org/electionland/; see also https://projects.propublica.org/electionland/about/*. Full postmortem report available at: *bit.ly/electionland*.

20   Scott Klein, presentation at Center for Cooperative Media's Collaborative Journalism Summit, May 4, 2017.

21   See, e.g. *http://www.wnyc.org/story/mall-madness-part-one/*.

22   Reitmeyer, email correspondence, April 27, 2017.

A final example of a Temporary and Co-creating project is Voting Block, which was a collaborative that brought together several local journalism outlets in and around New Jersey to cover the 2017 gubernatorial election.[23] Participants included WNYC, WHYY, WBGO, NJ Spotlight, The Record, ethnic outlets affiliated with New America Media, and several New Jersey hyperlocals. The Center for Cooperative Media managed the collaboration. Each participant chose one neighborhood block (or street) in New Jersey on which to focus, with an eye toward a good mix of the many different demographics that make up New Jersey (New Jersey is regularly named the most representative state in the country in terms of demographic makeup).

From June to November leading up to the election, the newsrooms visited the neighborhoods regularly, spoke to residents, and also brought them together at various events to discuss, in focus-group-like settings, their thoughts and feelings in a fraught political time (the engagement element of this project was coordinated by The Center for Investigative Reporting).

Voting Block was a finite project because it was timed specifically around the election, and partners worked together to create content as they shared images, audio, data, and coordination and engagement efforts. This project also qualifies as Temporary and Separate because many stories were produced by individual newsrooms and shared via the project's website.

Creating content together for a finite project allows organizations to produce a product that is greater than what could be created alone, while mitigating the need for partners to coordinate long-term. As seems to be the case with many finite projects, examples of this model tend to be investigative or accountability reporting pieces.

Additional Examples

- Voter Rights/Voter Suppression project:
  http://newamericamedia.org/2016/02/voter-suppression-and-victories-in-2016.php
- *The Toronto Star* & *El Nuevo Herald*[24]
- Five California McClatchy papers' pension story (2009-2010)[25]

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23 See *https://www.votingblocknj.com/*. Note: this collaboration is being managed by the Center for Cooperative Media, Reveal (Center for Investigative Reporting), and New America Media.

24 Edmonds and Mitchell, (2014). "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center.

25 *https://www.revealnews.org/article/mcclatchy-papers-collaborate-on-statewide-pension-story/*

Model: Temporary and Co-creating

Temporary and Co-creating collaborations are good for:

- *Investigative/accountability stories*
- *Time-sensitive projects requiring many or a wide variety of journalistic resources*
- *Leveraging unique newsroom skills in return for something you're lacking*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires Attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures	✓	
	Different levels of tech expertise		✓
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics		✓
	Internal buy-in	✓	
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom	✓	
	Shared burden with big data	✓	
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques		✓
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 4. *Temporary and Co-creating collaboration model*
* Requires attention from project manager.

Temporary and Integrated
One-time/finite projects in which partners share content/data/resources at the organizational level

In this final type of finite collaboration, participating organizations share data and/or other resources at the level of the organization. This is different from the prior two models because of the level of integration of the organizations. When partners share resources at the level of the organization, they coordinate closely and have regular contact for the duration of the project.

Perhaps the best example of this type of collaboration to date is the Panama Papers, where participating organizations all had access to the same data and proprietary software, working together to sort through it, but writing different stories that were unique to the outlet that produced them, and publishing on many different sites.
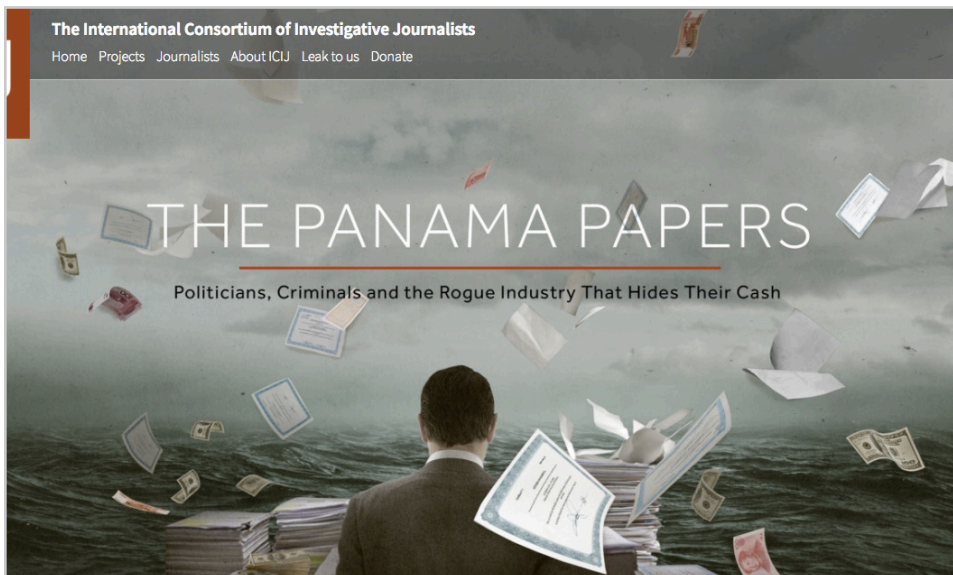
Image 4. The Panama Papers was one of the largest journalistic collaborations to date, in geographical terms, participatory terms, and the amount of data covered.

The Panama Papers was one of the largest journalistic collaborations to date—in geographical terms, participatory terms, and the amount of data covered. The project was the result of a leak of 2.6TB of data to the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, from a Panamanian bank (Mossack Fonseca) that laundered money and served as a tax haven for billions of dollars belonging to politicians and elites from around the world. The collaboration was coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), along with flagship legacy news organizations *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany), *The Guardian* (England), BBC

(England), *LeMonde* (France), and *LaNacion* (Argentina).[26] Many of the more than 100 additional media organizations that contributed initial reporting were small, online startups in countries around the world.

All organizations involved had access to the database that housed the leaked files. They communicated using a proprietary internal social network called iHub that was protected with several layers of encryption and allowed reporters from across the globe to message each other and write group posts, very much like one would on Facebook.[27] When a reporter uncovered an interesting lead in the database, he or she posted it to iHub, and anyone who had relevant information could join the discussion. There were strict rules, laid out by ICIJ, about when organizations could post stories or speak to sources. The use of the proprietary social platform, the access to the database, and the close coordination between the organizations all make the Panama Papers an example of the Temporary and Integrated model.

"Necessity has made unimaginable bedfellows. Everyone is a competitor and a collaborator now."

Another example of a finite collaboration where partners work together at the level of the organization was the project, The Magnetar Trade, between ProPublica, WBEZ Chicago's "This American Life," and NPR's "Planet Money." Two investigative reporters at ProPublica, Jesse Eisinger and Jake Bernstein, were approached by Alex Blumberg of WBEZ and Adam Davidson of NPR to look into Wall Street practices leading up to the financial crisis of 2008-09. ProPublica took the lead on the investigation, and shared its findings with WBEZ and NPR, who in turn created their own content and cross-promoted the stories.

The three organizations pooled resources to allow Eisinger and Bernstein to spend nearly all of their working hours over the course of more than two months on the project. The result was a series of stories on a hedge fund called Magnetar and its practices in the early 2000s. All three outlets produced stories for their main platforms (ProPublica published what looked

26   See *http://panamapapers.sueddeutsche.de/articles/56febff0a1bb8d3c3495adf4/*; also Greenberg, A. (4 April 2016), "How Reporters Pulled Off the Panama Papers, the Biggest Leak in Whistleblower History," Wired, accessed at: *https://www.wired.com/2016/04/reporters-pulled-off-panama-papers-biggest-leak-whistleblower-history/*.

27   Tolan, C. (4 April 2016), "How a Global Team of Hundreds of Reporters Unveiled the Massive Panama Papers Leak," FusionTV, accessed at: *http://tv.fusion.net/story/287628/panama-papers-ihub-icij-facebook/*.

like traditional print-based stories, while "This American Life" and Planet Money did radio content), but there was also a comic book to explain the main concepts (produced by ProPublica), and an "original Broadway song" based on the story (including sheet music and a video of its recording) produced by WBEZ's "This American Life."[28] The story was picked up by numerous outlets and won the collaboration a Pulitzer nomination.[29]

Also falling into this category is the project CrossCheck, run by the organization First Draft News.[30] CrossCheck is an "online verification collaboration" that launched to cover the French presidential election of 2017. Thirty-seven newsrooms in France and the UK worked together in a deeply integrated way to check out claims that were made in French media in the ten weeks leading up to the election. *Agence France-Presse* was the lead organization on the ground, and every article published had the logos of all organizations that contributed to that piece. CrossCheck based their investigations on reader-submitted stories or claims, then worked together to investigate the veracity of the content. As a multinational effort, close coordination was key. According to First Draft News Director of Research and Strategy, Claire Wardle, the CrossCheck project plans to use the data it accumulated during the election to conduct research on audience reactions to fake news, the correction of misinformation, and how news organizations can work to combat the intentional spread of misinformation in the future.[31]

When organizations are highly integrated for a collaboration, it generally requires buy-in from all levels. However, as we've seen, the payoff for such collaborations is great; working together in this way allows journalists to do work that would never be possible for any one newsroom.

Additional Example

- Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (partners differ by project)
  http://wisconsinwatch.org/about/what-we-do/

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28   See *http://www.npr.org/sections/money/2010/04/how_one_hedge_fund_got_rich_of.html*; *https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/405/inside-job*.

29   See *https://www.propublica.org/awards/item/pulitzer-prize-for-national-affairs-the-wall-street-money-machine/*.

30   See *https://firstdraftnews.com/project/crosscheck/*.

31   Wang, S. (8 May 2017), "The French election is over. What's next for the Google- and Facebook-backed fact-checking effort there?" NiemanLab, accessed at: *http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/05/the-french-election-is-over-whats-next-for-the-google-and-facebook-backed-fact-checking-effort-there/*.

MODEL: TEMPORARY AND INTEGRATED

Temporary and Integrated collaborations are good for:
- *Projects handling large amounts of data*
- *Organizations with experience collaborating*
- *Organizations with buy-in from all levels*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures		✓
	Different levels of tech expertise		✓
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics		✓
	Internal buy-in		✓
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom	✓	
	Shared burden with big data	✓	
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques	✓	
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 5. *Temporary and Integrated collaboration model*
* Requires attention from project manager.

Ongoing and Separate
Ongoing/open-ended collaborations in
which partners create content separately and share it

The next three models of journalistic collaboration are more permanent arrangements, or have evolved from finite to ongoing projects. The first of these are ongoing collaborations where partners create content separately and share it. These include some of the oldest known journalistic collaborations – the early arrangements used by the wire services fall into this category, for example. It's also the model that best characterizes contemporary sharing arrangements by big news corporations, such as Gannett's USA Today Network, and Cable News Network (CNN). But smaller news organizations – down to hyperlocal online outlets – are also using this collaborative model.

One such collaboration at the local level is between Charlottesville Tomorrow and *The Daily Progress*, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Charlottesville Tomorrow is a digital-native, nonprofit news site that began as a civic newsletter. *The Daily Progress* is the area's legacy print newspaper, now owned by Warren Buffett's BH Media Group. The collaboration began informally, when the two publishers arranged for *The Progress* to print some of Charlottesville Tomorrow's local political and education coverage, supplementing *The Progress's* shrunken newsroom while expanding Charlottesville Tomorrow's reach and giving them a "seal of credibility."[32] Hundreds of shared stories later, the relationship has been formalized and is still mutually beneficial.

At the national level, Gannett Co. in 2012 implemented a proprietary content-sharing platform between its more than 130 daily local newspapers and television stations and its flagship outlet, *USA Today*. Via the content-sharing platform, newsrooms that separately produce content anywhere in the country can share it with other newsrooms who might be interested in using it. In 2015, Gannett formalized the sharing

> *When the partners are of unequal size or power, the arrangement must be mutually beneficial.*

[32]   See *http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/*; *http://www.dailyprogress.com/*; Fitzgerald, B. (Spring 2017), "A nonprofit newsroom rescued its local newspaper. Now it wants to expand," Columbia Journalism Review, accessed at: *https://www.cjr.org/local_news/newsletter-nonprofit-newsroom-charlottes-ville-tomorrow.php*; see also Edmonds and Mitchell, (2014). "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center.

arrangement as "USA Today Network," in an effort to "continue its transformation into one, integrated organization, [and to] unite its local and national media brands."[33] The USA Today Network allows for greater awareness of local issues at the national level, and more expertise about national developments in local papers.
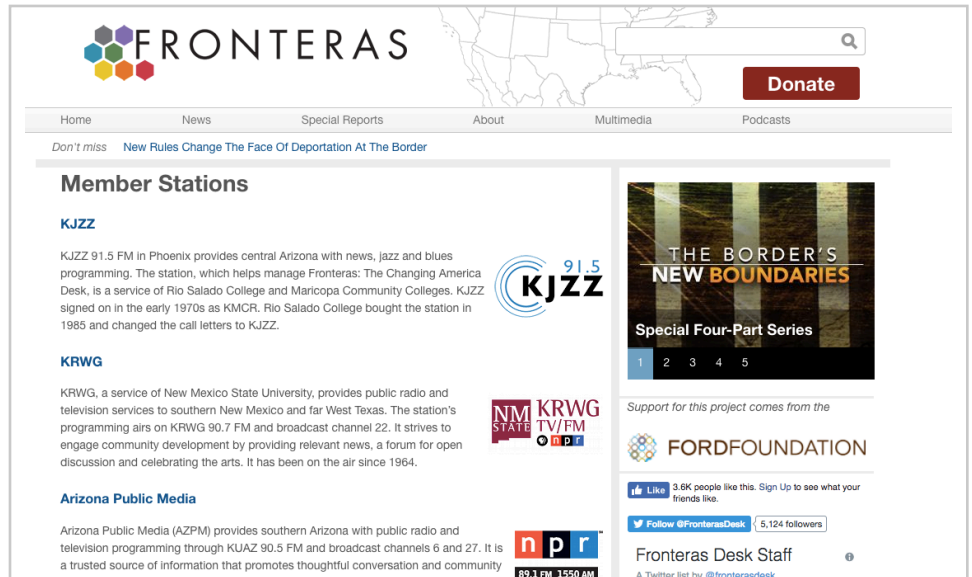
Image 5. Fronteras is a CPB-funded collaboration that brings together four public media newsrooms to cover issues in the southwestern U.S.

However, as some critics point out, the swapping of content between outlets owned by a large corporation looks in some ways very similar to practices that have been criticized as "cookie cutter" journalism, or as efficiencies sought by companies whose main goals are reducing staff and increasing the bottom line.[34] We discuss this tension further in the Discussion section.

Fronteras is another example of an ongoing collaboration in which partners create content separately and share it; this collaboration is between four public media entities in the southwestern United States (KJZZ Phoenix, KRWG New Mexico State University, Arizona Public Media, and Marfa Public Radio) and covers "the complex and controversial southwestern border with Mexico, including security, immigration, and the smuggling of drugs, weapons and people."[35] Fronteras was established in 2010 as part of the Local Journalism Center Initiative by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), but has since transitioned to being supported out of operating

33   See *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USA_Today*; Mashery, "Driving Real-World Enterprise & B2B Results with APIs;" Hochberg, A. (3 July 2014), "Case Study: Gannett's monumental task – A content management system for all." Poynter.org, accessed at: *http://www.poynter.org/2014/case-study-gannetts-monumental-task-a-content-management-system-for-all/257767/*; Gannett, (3 Dec. 2015), "Gannett Unites Largest Local to National Media Network under 'USA Today Network'," accessed at: *http://www.gannett.com/news/press-releases/2015/12/3/gannett-unites-largest-local-national-media-network-under-usa-today-network/*; Uberti, D. (Spring 2017), "Gannett and the last great local hope," Columbia Journalism Review, accessed at: *https://www.cjr.org/local_news/gannett-usa-to-day-joanne-lipman.php*.

34   Gamm, S. (24 July 2017), "Megaclustering is making its way to your daily newspaper," TheStreet, accessed at: *https://www.thestreet.com/video/14240606/megaclustering-is-making-its-way-to-your-daily-newspaper.html*.

35   See *http://www.fronterasdesk.org/content/about*.

expenses from the participants. Fronteras organizations create content in-house, and share it with each other via a content-sharing platform.

Similarly, the Seattle Times News Partner Network began in 2009 as a grant-funded experiment in collaboration between *The Seattle Times* and five hyperlocal news sites.[36] At its height it included more than 50 online hyperlocal outlets whose stories were linked to by *The Seattle Times*, and vice versa. "Success stories" from the collaboration, as listed on *The Seattle Times'* website, include a photo-sharing arrangement, trainings on topics such as mobile reporting and video editing, and two issue-specific collaborations, on homelessness and graffiti.[37] The collaboration received significant praise from the industry and from area readers, but some higher-ups at the *Times* questioned whether the benefits accrued to the smaller locals ran both ways; Batsell (2015, p. 98) quoted *Time*s publisher Frank Blethen as saying that the partner network was an "absolute bust from a circulation and advertising standpoint," because the shared ad network they tried to create failed, and he feared they were directing attention and ad dollars away from their own site.

Other *Times* editors interviewed by Batsell pointed out that the sharing of partners' content was not so different from linking to the wires or other outside sources, and that it created goodwill for *The Seattle Times* in the community. However, it appears that Blethen's arguments won the day, because the Partner Network has been greatly reduced; it is no longer accepting new partners, though it does still allow local outlets to use Times photos as well as to publish the first three paragraphs of *Times* stories if they link back to the full story.

...some higher-ups at the [Seattle] Times questioned whether the benefits accrued to the smaller locals ran both ways.

"Next to Die," run by the The Marshall Project, is another example of an Ongoing and Separate collaboration. With the aim of providing a "detailed, up-to-date schedule of coming executions" in the U.S.[38], the collaboration includes eight local news outlets, mostly in the South, and the Death Penalty Information Center, which provides data. The partnership is beneficial because everyone provides content from their zones of expertise that would

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36   See *http://www.j-lab.org/projects/networked-journalism/*.

37   See *http://old.seattletimes.com/flatpages/local/newspartners/newspartnernetwork.html.*

38   See *https://www.themarshallproject.org/next-to-die#credits*.

Image 6. CALmatters works with more than 90 news organizations across California and beyond to cover issues around California politics, economics, and society that are not being covered elsewhere.

be difficult for the others to get. "As essentially the curator of a nationwide pool of data," says local news consultant Tim Griggs, "The Marshall Project is naturally better positioned to spot trends than any one local newsroom. 'There are eight different places working within their own sphere," [Marshall Project Deputy Managing Editor Tom] Meagher said. 'When we roll them all together we can share it nationally, and highlight content they're (creating) on case pages and state pages.'"[39]

Another collaborative in this model is CALmatters. CALmatters is "a nonpartisan, nonprofit, journalism venture,"[40] and is somewhat unique in that it is the hub of numerous collaborations between different combinations of outlets. CALmatters has its own staff of reporters and editors, but also works with more than 90 news organizations across California and beyond to cover issues around California politics, economics, and society that are not being covered elsewhere. They are a content producer, but also work closely with news outlets on special projects around specific topics. They have been involved with at least five different collaborations to date, and have plans for deeper integration with the local media ecosystem in California, potentially moving them into a different model in the future.[41]

The common thread between these projects, and others like them, is that the organizations involved reap the benefits of content sharing, while maintaining a high level of autonomy and editorial independence. Cautionary notes echo the concerns of the *Seattle Times* publisher: when the partners are of unequal size or power, the arrangement must be mutually beneficial. Perhaps surprisingly, many such arrangements begin informally; some are codified as they mature. By our estimation, this type of collaboration is the most commonly practiced today, both in terms of number of organizations involved and geographic area reached by such projects.

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[39] Griggs, T. (21 March 2017), "Why Does The Marshall Project's 'The Next to Die' collaborative data initiative work so well? It's easy," accessed at: *https://medium.com/centerforcooperativemedia/why-does-the-marshall-projects-the-next-to-die-collaborative-data-initiative-work-so-well-13b716d73afd*.

[40] See *https://calmatters.org/about/mission/*; and Doctor, K. (17 Feb. 2015), "What are they thinking? CALmatters wants to shake up California statehouse," Politico, accessed at: *http://www.politico.com/media/story/2015/02/what-are-they-thinking-calmatters-wants-to-shake-up-california-statehouse-003481*.

[41] Phone interview with CALmatters Publisher and COO Marcia Parker, 1 June 2017.

Additional Examples

- Pacifica Network
  http://pacificanetwork.org/joinpacifica/how-to-affiliate-if-you-are-a-community-radio-station/
- GroundWire
  http://groundwirenews.ca/
- CNN and affiliates (NewsSource)
- American Homefront
  http://www.cpb.org/spotlight/public-radio-joins-forces-cover-veterans
- I-News Network[42] (Colorado) (*also has elements of Ongoing and Co-creating*)
- The Texas Front-Page Exchange[43]
- The (New Orleans) Lens & WWNO[44] (*also has elements of Ongoing and Co-creating*)
- California Watch
  http://californiawatch.org/about
- Ohio Valley ReSource (*also has elements of Ongoing and Co-creating*)
  http://ohiovalleyresource.org/
- CT News Junkie
  http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/about/
- KTOO Public Media/360North
  https://medium.com/facet/the-many-shapes-of-collaboration-672c0d48d74b
- Kansas Information Network
  http://kansaspublicradio.org/users/kansas-information-network
- Earthfix
  http://www.opb.org/news/topic/environment/
- Arizona Science & Innovation Desk
  http://science.kjzz.org/
- Sacramento Connect (*defunct*)
- The Climate Desk (*defunct*)
  http://www.climatedesk.org; https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2010/12/climate-desk-seven-partners-at-seven-months/
- Free Speech Radio News (*defunct*)
  https://fsrn.org/
- Western North Carolina Local Information Cooperative (*defunct*)
  http://www.j-lab.org/publications/networked-journalism/ashville/
- Pipeline (*defunct*)
  http://www.j-lab.org/projects/networked-journalism/networked-journalism-pittsburgh/
- The Oregonian News Network (*defunct*)
  http://www.oregonlive.com/news-network/index.ssf/2012/01/welcome_to_the_oregonian_news_1.html

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[42]   Edmonds and Mitchell, (2014), "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center; Roberts, M. (17 Sept. 2010), "I-News: Can Laura Frank's journalism project slow the disappearance of investigative reporting?" Westword, accessed at: *http://www.westword.com/news/i-news-can-laura-franks-journalism-project-slow-the-disappearance-of-investigative-reporting-5887110*.

[43]   Edmonds and Mitchell, (2014), "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center.

[44]   Edmonds and Mitchell, (2014), "Journalism Partnerships: A New Era of Interest," Pew Research Center.

MODEL: ONGOING AND SEPARATE

Ongoing and Separate collaborations are good for:
- *Outlets that want greater reach*
- *Topics that require the expertise of multiple organizations*
- *Outlets that need more content than they can generate on their own*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires Attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures	✓	
	Different levels of tech expertise	✓	
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics		✓
	Internal buy-in	✓	
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom	✓	
	Shared burden with big data		✓
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques		✓
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 6. *Ongoing and Separate collaboration model*
          * Requires attention from project manager.

Ongoing and Co-creating
Ongoing/open-ended collaborations in which partners work together to create content

In this model, partners are involved in an ongoing collaboration where they work together to create content. This means that organizations are more integrated than when they create content separately and share it; usually there are regular editorial meetings or calls, and there is often a person who oversees the collaboration and regularly communicates with the various organizations involved. There is also often a mutually beneficial back-office arrangement as well, such as an ad-sharing network.

One example of this type of arrangement is between National Public Radio (NPR) and many of its affiliate stations, called "Collaborative Coverage Project." In Spring 2014, NPR launched a new initiative aimed at streamlining collaboration between local affiliate newsrooms and the national headquarters. Structural changes included hiring a senior editor dedicated to collaborations (Bruce Auster), creating a specific email address for affiliates to alert HQ about news that might be relevant nationally, and creating a guide sheet for affiliates on contributing to national breaking news. They also set up a series of beat teams, which are thematic groups made up of reporters from local stations, NPR HQ, and sometimes outside groups such as Kaiser Health News, (a nonprofit based in California).

These changes were important, said Michael Oreskes, senior vice president of news and editorial director of NPR, "because you can't reinvent the process every time. You have to have agreed upon, consistent workflows… all the 'boring' things of management become significant to success."[45] Having a person dedicated to collaboration, in the person of Collaborative Coverage Senior Editor Bruce Auster, is another key to success; "Bruce's role is a leadership role," Oreskes said. "…helping everybody know what we already know, identifying opportunities, avoiding duplication, figuring out next stories."

As in any collaborative relationships, NPR and its local affiliates had to overcome some tensions; namely, a lack of trust between headquarters and the affiliates, based partly on miscommunications from collaborations that had taken place before the new system was put into place. These tensions were addressed by Oreskes in a speech to the public radio news directors, as well as in personal conversations. In early 2017, NPR announced that the Collaborative Coverage Project would grow to include additional HQ-affiliate collaborations

45   In-person interview, March 28, 2017.

specifically on the topic of statehouse news[46] they are also making new hires – as in the addition of Executive Editor Edith Chapin – to supplement their collaborative reporting team.[47] NPR's relationship with its affiliates also has elements of integration at the level of the institution, in their shared managing editor and other resources.

Ongoing and Co-creating collaboration Harvest Public Media (HPM) began in 2010 with a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). There are five "full partner stations" – covering most of the Midwestern United States (KCUR Kansas City, Iowa Public Radio, NET Nebraska, KBIA Columbia and KUNC Greeley) – as well as dozens of associate partners; and new participants continue to be added.[48] The partnership has a full-time editor in the person of Jeremy Burnfeld, who is based at KCUR. "The core of what we do is working together as partners to create content, which includes the sharing of institutional resources," explained Burnfeld.[49] "Even when an individual partner creates content on their own, it will come through the shared HPM editing infrastructure and is often tweaked or changed to better fit the collaboration before it is shared with other partners." The Harvest collaboration therefore also falls into the category of Ongoing and Integrated, because resources including editing, photography, videography, training, data, and travel funding are shared at the organizational level.

The evolution from grant-funded to partner-funded has become one of the tried and true means for a collaboration to survive beyond an initial philanthropic grant.

Harvest's funding has evolved since its inception. While it began with a grant, over time it have developed a model whereby all partner stations support the collaborative with some level of monetary participation (similar to the Fronteras collaboration). They agreed to do this because there is a clear benefit to each station from being part of the project. This evolution from grant-funded

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46   See Falk, T. (6 July 2016), "NPR, stations see progress in collaborative news coverage," *Current*, accessed at: *https://current.org/2016/07/npr-stations-see-progress-in-collaborative-news-coverage/*; and Lichterman, J. (19 Jan. 2017), "A new collaboration: NPR stations nationwide are working together to spot trends in state governments," *NiemanLab*, accessed at: *http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/01/a-new-collaboration-npr-stations-nationwide-are-working-together-to-spot-trends-in-state-governments/*; and Gourarie, C. (30 Nov. 2015), "NPR stations are collaborating more, and that's a good thing," *Columbia Journalism Review*, accessed at: *https://www.cjr.org/analysis/npr_collaboration.php*.

47   See *https://current.org/2017/08/npr-taps-chapin-to-lead-rollout-of-journalism-network/?wallit_nossession=1*

48   See *http://harvestpublicmedia.org/about-us*.

49   Burnfeld, email correspondence, 30 May 2017)

to partner-funded has become one of the "tested and true" means for a collaboration to survive beyond an initial philanthropic grant.

Upstate Insight is an ongoing collaboration made up of five upstate New York public media stations that produce content together. Begun with funding from a CPB grant in 2014,[50] the plan for the five partner stations (WXXI Rochester, WSKG Binghamton, WRVO Oswego/Syracuse, WMHT Schenectady/Albany, and associate partner WBFO Buffalo) was to "create a single multi-media regional newsroom" which would focus "on enterprise reporting, an emphasis on multi-reporter stories and coordinated deployment of reporters around significant stories," according to CPB's June 17, 2014 press release about the project.[51] They would also "develop news data capability and adopt content sharing and communications systems to support connectivity between organizations."

Perhaps predictably, these ambitious goals were not immediately met. However, when the grant ended in 2016, the participating stations had all had such a good experience, and believed so strongly in the value provided by the collaboration, that they continued to work together, and have deepened the collaboration so that they are now moving toward the vision set out by CPB in 2014. Part of the forward momentum was due to the hiring of longtime newspaper reporter and editor Denise Young, who was given the title Executive Editor of Collaborative Journalism, and oversees the day-to-day coordination of the collaboration.

"We have a conference call every Thursday," Young said.[52] "We talk about what everyone's working on, what's shareable. We share content all the time, and for small stations that's invaluable, because a lot of time [those shared stories] will provide the audience with really great locally produced content that we wouldn't have had otherwise. So it really is a huge success and we don't see it ending anytime soon, if ever." The point-people at each station are the news directors, and Young handles the logistics of the calls, always keeping an ear out for stories that may not have obvious regional interest; "I make sure everyone will be on [the calls], make sure everybody is heard. Because sometimes you're talking about content and someone may not think it's of interest outside of the station, but other people are interested."

50   Some of these stations had actually been working together, less formally, for years. So the CPB grant in 2014 formalized the partnerships and added new parameters.

51   See Corporation for Public Broadcasting, (17 June 2014), "CPB Awards Grant to WXXI, WSKG, WRVO, WMHT, and WBFO for the Creation of a Single Multi-Media Newsroom," accessed at: *http://www.cpb.org/pressroom/cpb-awards-grant-wxxi-wskg-wrvo-wmht-and-wbfo-creation-single-multi-media-newsroom*.

52   Phone interview, May 25, 2017.

Young also looks for ways to leverage the collaborative to save time and resources that may be better spent elsewhere, creating small shared services that also shade Upstate Insight in the model of Ongoing and Integrated. For example, there is a capital reporter in Albany who sends her stories to stations across New York state. Everyone was editing them separately, when Young decided to edit the stories herself and send them on to all of the Upstate Insight stations, saving them from duplicating efforts.

Similarly, there was a weekly call with a congressman whose district covered many of the partner stations' listening areas. Young devised a rotating schedule wherein each week someone from a different station sits in on the call and records it, then circulates the recording, along with a log of the different topics discussed, to all partners. If one of the news directors knows that a specific topic will be discussed that is of interest to his or her station, Young will field questions via email, which the reporter sitting in can ask on behalf of that station.

"You have to have agreed upon, consistent workflows… all the 'boring' things of management become significant to success."

The trust and camaraderie of the group plays an important part in sharing these services. They have to trust that the other partners will follow through on what they say they'll do and that the content they produce will follow professional standards. Young says that this has always been one of the strengths of the collaboration. "There's a high level of trust because they've been working together for years. We know each other and trust each other and we make it a priority to help the other stations when possible, because they help us. It's how collaboration should work in the journalism field." Crucially, there has been no turnover among the people involved; Young was the newest person when she joined the group in early 2016.

Of course there have been experiments that have not worked out; the Upstate Insight stations were involved in another collaboration with stations across the country to share video stories. There were monthly calls to discuss what everyone was working on, and PBS NewsHour sat in on those calls and sometimes used stories they produced. However when the funding for that project ended it did not organically continue, because their local programming did not see as great a benefit from the videos from across the country as they do with stories from around the region. "We're still maintaining some relationships with the other stations," Young explained. "But it's not as natural as Upstate Insight because everyday we're producing content for local news. … We certainly want to provide a good variety so that's why I'm still trying to

get video from the partners, but the day-to-day focus is on producing the local news report, so a story from Buffalo usually makes more sense than a story from Oregon."

To that end, one of the skills that reporters have adapted for the collaboration is "train[ing] our brains to make certain stories that can be sharable with our partners," as Young describes it. "It's how we approach the framing and writing of the story… If we go into a story knowing we're going to share it with our sister stations, it's become more of a natural process for us to write it and present it in a way that is most usable for a lot of stations and not just for us." Because they are a regional collaborative, they look for issues that will be relevant to all, such as manufacturing or the opioid crisis.

NPR's Collaborative Coverage Project, Harvest, and Upstate Insight are examples of ongoing collaborations where partners work together to create content. For Harvest, even if content originates with an individual reporter or station, it will be worked on and added to by other collaboration partners. At Upstate Insight, shared resources like an active project editor and audio from a weekly call with a congressman mean that they are working together closely to produce stories on a regular basis. Upstate Insight and NPR's relationship with its affiliates also have elements of integration at the level of the institution, in their shared managing editor and other resources—traits of the final model, discussed next.

Additional Examples

- The Texas Standard
  http://www.texasstandard.org/about-the-team/
- Detroit Journalism Cooperative
  http://www.detroitjournalism.org/about/
- KQED News Associates Project
  http://www.kqed.org/news/bayarea/partner-about.jsp
- Documenting Hate
  https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/hatecrimes
- Great Lakes Today
  http://greatlakestoday.org/about-great-lakes-today
- New England News Collaborative
  https://nenc.news/about/
- Arkansas Public Media
  http://ualrpublicradio.org/term/arkansas-public-media#stream/0
- CU-Citizen Access
  http://cu-citizenaccess.org/about-us/
- Alaska's Energy Desk
  http://www.ktoo.org/alaskasenergydesk-about/
- Southern Education Desk (*defunct*)
  http://www.southerneddesk.org/?page_id=19

Model: Ongoing and Co-creating

Ongoing and Co-creating collaborations are good for:

- *Outlets in the same region or who cater to similar demographics*
- *Outlets that want to supplement their resources and have something to offer in return*
- *Partnerships with the resources to hire a collaboration manager*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires Attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures		✓
	Different levels of tech expertise		✓
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics		✓
	Internal buy-in		✓
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom	✓	
	Shared burden with big data	✓	
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques	✓	
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 7. *Ongoing and Co-creating collaboration model*
* Requires attention from project manager.

Ongoing and Integrated
Ongoing/open-ended collaborations in which partners share content/data/resources at the organizational level

In this model, collaborations are ongoing and the organizations involved are integrated at the level of the institution. This model is not (yet) very common – but we do see it as an innovative way to address the challenges of the local media landscape. The two examples we highlight here are similar in structure: both are made up of local outlets whose editorial sides operate independently, but are completely integrated for their back-office services.

The first is CoastAlaska, which is made up of seven public radio stations in Southeast Alaska.[53] After the wire services, CoastAlaska is the oldest and longest-running collaboration that we document here. Their informal collaboration goes back more than 40 years, while their formal collaboration dates to the 1990s. After formalizing the partnership in 1994 to win funding from the state, they further codified the arrangement for a Corporation for Public Broadcasting grant in 1998 (Tait and Fuerst, 2016, p. 2). What makes this collaboration integrated at the level of the organization is that they share back-office services, including logistics around accounting, funding, engineering, and membership.

"We share content all the time, and for small stations that's invaluable, because a lot of time [those shared stories] will provide the audience with really great locally produced content that we wouldn't have had otherwise."

This collaboration, like other successful collaborations we've looked at here, has multiple components that make it work: trust between general managers, news directors, editors, and reporters based on years of working together; sharing a region with similar audiences and contexts; and sharing a need for resources or product that they could not meet on their own. While each local station operates independently on the editorial side, they are completely integrated on the business side. As of 2015, revenue for the collaborative was up 50% and aggregate membership had doubled (from 1996), staffing had grown at all outlets, and they had purchased two

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53   See *https://www.krbd.org/coast-alaska/*.

additional frequencies (Tait and Fuerst, 2016, p. 7).

Another collaboration falling into this model is TAPinto, a network of digital-native local news sites based in New Jersey. Similar to CoastAlaska, TAPinto outlets are independently operated, but share back-office services. Each local outlet is owned by a franchisee who has complete editorial and sales control, while all technological and many business aspects are handled by the TAPinto organization. An interesting feature of this collaboration is that all outlets run a proprietary content-sharing platform, and because they are all relatively close geographically, they often share stories of interest to their audiences that are produced by a different franchisee close by.

Image 7. The TAPinto network of local news sites is based on a franchise model that gives publishers editorial autonomy with business-side support.

A common example of this is in high school sports coverage, said TAPinto Founder and CEO Mike Shapiro, who ran the first three sites himself. "The original three towns' high schools play each other all the time," he said. "So when they played each other I could use the same story, with some editing for content, and new photos. So since day one the site has been content sharing and that's been a critical part of our being able even to exist."[54]

As he gained franchisees, Shapiro modified and perfected the sharing platform. "When I had more requests to expand to different towns, that's when we franchised. For franchising the content sharing is even more important. For example if you have a story where some town's zoo has a new exhibit, all relevant sites can use it." A publisher can also suggest a story for other towns when she or he publishes, or tag it with a topic on a dashboard shared by all franchisees. Crucially, when a site uses another site's story, the ad revenue is shared. "Without [the content sharing platform], I would agree with 'local can't scale,'" Shapiro said. "Local can scale, but you need the tech behind it."

Unlike other collaborations, trust is not an issue because the publishers generally work independently. Critics of the operation see many similarities between their content sharing and the "cookie cutter" journalism practiced by large corporations when they simply change the headline and use the same generic story across outlets. We discuss this tension in further detail in the concluding section.

Of course, it must be noted that sharing back-office services is nothing

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[54]   Shapiro, phone interview, 25 May 2017.

new, as many U.S. newspapers historically did exactly that through the use of joint operating agreements (JOAs). The use of JOAs rose in popularity following the creation of the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970, which allowed competing newspapers located in the same market to combine business and printing operations provided that independent editorial operations were maintained. However, by the late 90s, the use of JOAs had declined and has since all but disappeared as the industry has rapidly evolved in the digital age.[55] The landscape in terms of competition today is vastly different.

As may be clear, ongoing collaborations where organizations are integrated at the level of the institution are rare, and are the least common type of collaboration today. However, operating independent outlets that share back-end services seems to be one solution for the local journalism sustainability problem, so we may see more arrangements like this in the future.

Additional Examples

- WLRN-Miami Herald collaboration
  http://wlrn.org/how-wlrn-and-miami-herald-work-together
- The Media Consortium
  https://www.themediaconsortium.org/page/mission
- Louisville Public Media/Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting
  http://www.cpb.org/spotlight/louisville-public-media-doubles-down-news#main-content
- TucsonCitizen.com Sports Network (*defunct*)
  http://www.j-lab.org/publications/networked-journalism/tucson/

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[55] Farhi, P. (Sept. 1999), "The Death of the JOA," *American Journalism Review*, accessed at: http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?rel=ajrfarhisept99.html.

MODEL: ONGOING AND INTEGRATED

Ongoing and Integrated collaborations are good for:
- *Outlets that could benefit from back-office help*
- *Outlets that could benefit from access to more content*
- *Outlets that are willing to give away some control over operations*

		Mitigated by the type of collaboration	Requires Attention*
Tensions	Different newsroom cultures	✓	
	Different levels of tech expertise	✓	
	Expenditures on training and coordination		✓
	Managing unequal power dynamics	✓	
	Internal buy-in	✓	
Benefits		Yes	No
	Gain skills/expertise missing in newsroom	✓	
	Shared burden with big data		✓
	Greater reach	✓	
	Exposure to different workflows/techniques		✓
	Product/outcome is better than possible alone	✓	

Figure 8. *Ongoing and Integrated collaboration model*
* Requires attention from project manager.

Three Collaborative Journalism Vignettes

Finally, we discuss in detail three collaborative journalism projects – The Reentry Project, Detroit Journalism Cooperative, and Ohio Valley ReSource. These three collaborative journalism vignettes show that while collaborations are unique, they can also say something about the broader trends and models that we've observed.

The Reentry Project
Temporary and Separate: Camaraderie amidst constraints

The Reentry Project is a Knight-funded, Solutions Journalism Network-sponsored collaboration between 15 news organizations and two universities in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The goal of the project is "to reveal and investigate credible responses to the challenges of recidivism and reentry."[56] They are currently at the halfway point of a one-year grant designed to encourage more journalism around the issue of prisoner reentry into society.

The story of the Reentry Project collaboration is one of success amidst constraints. The main constraint is that of time – a common problem for collaborations and for journalists in general. "I'm dealing with people who have a lot on their plates," said Project Editor Jean Friedman-Rudovsky.[57] "They're very interested in and excited about this project, but it's one of thousands of things they have to do in a given week. [A collaborative story] takes extra time to pitch, to organize… much longer than to just tell a reporter to go and do a story and have it done tomorrow. So for news organizations that have to keep up the number of stories they're getting out there, putting up an obstacle to that is an extra ask."

Yet because of enthusiasm and an abundance of goodwill and camaraderie among the participants, the fledgling project has worked; it's produced more than one hundred stories and generated much more attention for this issue than would have existed otherwise. "I've seen it develop over the past couple months," said Friedman-Rudovsky of the friendliness of the group. "Meetings will last for an hour, and people will still stay and chat afterwards – on a Friday evening! We've had a chance to bond as people and as journalists." The in-person meetings are held once a month, and Friedman-Rudovsky is conscious of the general challenge of keeping

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56   See *https://thereentryproject.org/about/*.
57   Phone interview, June 13, 2017

communication at the level of informative but not intrusive; she tries to contact each participant via their preferred mode; for some it's on Slack, for some by email, others by phone.

Other challenges sometimes faced by collaborations, such as difficult power dynamics between larger and smaller outlets, or between legacy and digital outlets, have not surfaced in this group. This could be due in part to the fact that participants have a lot of autonomy in terms of what they report on and how. The lead paragraph of stories produced by individual outlets are shown on the project's website, then linked back to the original source. This was supposed to be part of the allure of the project for participants, Friedman-Rudovsky said, but they have only anecdotal evidence of greater traffic being generated for individual sites.

"We need to communicate about keeping metrics on whether the linking out is driving more traffic; I'm not sure anyone's been keeping track," she said. "But people have anecdotally mentioned that they've checked and seen that they're getting some of that traffic; I don't know how significant it is, but for the next six months that's something we need to look at." Producing quantifiable impact measures is a challenge for many of the collaborations we've spoken with, and there is not one common way to keep track of the benefits of collaborations for its participants or audiences.

One benefit of the Reentry Project for the community has been its extensive audience engagement element – especially with those who are the subjects of many of its stories. Because they are using the Solutions Journalism Network model, the journalists have focused on responses to recidivism and issues of reentering society after being incarcerated – rather than the problem of recidivism. Some of the money granted to the collaboration has been used to set up "listening booths" for people reentering society from prison, where they can tell their own stories. With more than ten hours of tape so far, some of the editors are using the footage at events around the city, and to make webcasts and podcasts. There is also a "listening line" phone number to call for the same purpose.

A benefit to the organizations involved has been seeing how other outlets operate. Friedman-Rudovsky recalled an event featuring a panel on "what works" in reentry, for which radio station WURD took the lead organizing. With only a few weeks from conceptualization to event date, they had gotten the word out to such an extent that there was standing room only. One of the other partners present at the event – who represents a much larger

The
REENTRY
PROJECT

Image 8. The Reentry Project brings together Philadelphia news outlets to cover issues around prisoner reentry into society.

Image 9. JJulie Hyman [center], volunteers with Penn's Goldring Reentry Initiative at the Walk In ReEntry Services project. The weekly pop-up services opportunity serves returning citizens in the community with case management interventions and referrals. At left is Richard Lanier, 57, a former inmate who now volunteers at WIRES, working with Randy Longways [right], 55, a recently returned citizen. Photo by Tom Gralish / The Philadelphia Daily News / The Reentry Project.

organization – couldn't believe that the event was so successful after so little time to plan. "The guy from [the other outlet] repeatedly said that he was amazed that they organized it and gotten that many people there that quickly," Friedman-Rudovsky recalled. "He was so amazed. So that stuff is really beneficial. Getting outside of your own little newsroom bubble, and from thinking 'this is how things work because that's how we do it.'"

Of course the challenges to the collaboration are real, and it's not clear how long the project will last if the funding does not continue. This echoes what we've seen across other collaborations as well. However, because the newsrooms involved seem to have a genuine enthusiasm for the topic, at the very least issues around reentry will likely be higher up on the news agenda for the foreseeable future.

Detroit Journalism Cooperative
Ongoing and Co-creating: A lesson in organizational structure

The Detroit Journalism Cooperative started in 2014, in the wake of the city's bankruptcy filing and struggle to regain its economic footing. With grants from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Ford Foundation, five media organizations – *Bridge* magazine, Detroit Public Television, Michigan Radio, New Michigan Media, and WDET 101.9FM – came together to tell the story of Detroit post-bankruptcy.[58] Like many collaborative projects, Detroit Journalism Cooperative (DJC) has evolved and changed over time. The

[58]   See *http://www.detroitjournalism.org/about/*; the collaborative now also receives funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting as well as support from Renaissance Journalism.

changes reflect the success that the group has had, but their story also provides lessons about what can be done better.

In the beginning, the model was Temporary and Separate; it was formed as a finite project in which participant organizations created content individually, and content was aggregated on the collaborative's website.

The organizations were given different grants that were meant to be complimentary, but which created tension because outlets were given different amounts of money, and different requirements in terms of their participation. The unequal levels of responsibility created differences in how each organization prioritized the DJC, leading to issues around editing and workflow. However, it was also obvious that the products created by the group were relevant to the local audience and beyond; they began to gain brand recognition within the community, and several pieces of content have been picked up by national outlets.

In their second full year, they decided to leverage the 50th anniversary of the Kerner Commission report, which looked at Detroit after the riots of the summer of 1967; they called the project "The Intersection."[59] For each of eight different topics discussed in the Kerner report (e.g. power, police, poverty, racial attitudes), news outlets divvied up story assignments, sometimes also working together on specific stories. All content was posted to the collaborative's site under a special section, and they also created a print product cataloging the many different stories.

During that time they also hired a new collaboration editor in Scott McCartney. One of McCartney's modifications to the workflow of the collaborative was to stagger the release of content (to that point they had been releasing stories in bulk); McCartney noticed that most people were not spending enough time on the site to finish even one story, much less ten stories. The staggered release of content also meant that people directed to the site via social media always found something new.

McCartney cites the reporting around the anniversary of the Kerner Commission as the moment at which the collaborative went to the next level in terms of integration: "This was when the collaborative really started to cooperative with each other, started to share materials, and resources,"

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59 See *http://www.detroitjournalism.org/2016/02/25/the-intersection-an-introduction/*.

Image 11. WDET, a member of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative, held community meetings around the city to discuss Detroit's bankruptcy and future revitalization. From left, Laura Herberg of WDET, Merlton Brandenberg, owner of Jorgensen Ford Sales, Jake Neher of WDET and Joan Isabella of WDET are shown at a community lunch event. Photo by Sandra Svoboda.

he said.[60] Once the partners started working together to produce content, they were also able to leverage the various strengths of the group – one of the most common benefits of collaborative journalism. "Video in new media is god," McCartney said, "so for people who are traditionally text-based or radio, we added a video element to basically all of our stories. So if you're reading an article [on the DJC website] by Bridge magazine, now it will be accompanied by video. Our folks at TV shoot all the interviews and add that video into the story; so now you're reading an article and you see a quote and then right underneath you can see the video of the quote and maybe a bit more; you see the inflection and the body language and there's just more transparency."

They also began to meet in person on a bi-weekly basis (leveraging their geographic proximity as a regional collaborative), and forming personal relationships. As in so many collaboratives, the reporters who came up in legacy journalism had some difficulty getting into the cross-newsroom collaborative mode. But getting to know each other personally facilitated that process; "It makes that connection, where you're seeing these folks that you're working with and talking with them and you become friends, and really start to tear down the walls of traditional journalism – of keeping secrets and hiding sources and not sharing," McCartney said.

After the Kerner Report coverage, they went back to a more topic-based agenda, looking at issues that are of broad relevance to the residents of Detroit. They do stories where many partners contribute content, and they do "micro-collaborations," where two or three partners will work together on a story. They also gained a new member, Chalkbeat Detroit, which focuses

60   Phone interview, May 16, 2017.

on education news. WDET General Manager Michelle Srbinovich praised the group's ability to work together to produce content that benefits the community, while at the same time cautioning other collaborators that the jumble of grant requirements from different funders sometimes muddies the waters. "My advice would be to get the people around the table and figure out: why are we partnering, what do we have to offer, and what are we missing as a group. Then pick a topic or story and go for the funding, versus having the funding lead the way, because it only gets more complicated."[61]

This inter-newsroom, inter-medium, inter-generational sharing that occurs may be one of the ways that collaborations push the practice of journalism forward.

As was also the case for The Reentry Project, one clear benefit Srbinovich has noticed is the cross-pollination of ideas, processes, and sources that goes with being in regular contact with other newsrooms and observing how they do things. "Another thing that was unanticipated was cross-training," she said. "We'll invite other partners so they can meet the people we're meeting, and we go to brown bag lunches with them and we get suggestions for other sources who we didn't know." It also helps reporters who are trained in a certain medium to understand the workflow and constraints of other media. This inter-newsroom, inter-medium, inter-generational sharing that occurs may be one of the ways that collaborations push the practice of journalism forward.

Ohio Valley ReSource
Ongoing and Separate: Regional similarities provide fertile ground for partnership

Ohio Valley ReSource (OVR) is a collaboration that includes seven radio outlets (a few have television as well) covering adjacent areas of Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ohio.[62] As with several such collaborations, it was begun

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61   Srbinovich, phone interview, June 7, 2017.

62   The members of OVR are WMMT Whitesburg, WVPB Charleston, WKMS Murray, WOUB Athens, WKU Bowling Green, WFPL Louisville and WEKU Richmond.

Image 12. *ReSource reporter Benny Becker, with member station WMMT in Whitesburg, KY, interviews Dr. Linda Birnbaum, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Photo by Mimi Pickering.*

with a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, in 2015. OVR is also an example of organic growth from an informal collaboration between stations that wanted to supplement their coverage of the region – and that were already participating in a home-grown radio network – to a more formal arrangement.

The collaboration works because "there are lots of commonalities across the region," explained Ohio Valley ReSource Managing Editor Jeff Young. "All depended on resource extraction, traditional agriculture, and heavy manufacturing, and all have gone through radical changes in the last 20 to 30 years; and everyone is still searching for what's next for their economic base. … So we had to figure out what kind of journalism would appeal to all three states and their audiences. We settled on economy, environment, energy, and health. We also do some agriculture coverage and some infrastructure coverage."[63] The journalism produced by the collaborative has not only appealed to its regional audiences, but has gained national attention, especially since the 2016 presidential election.

The collaboration gains a lot of value and impact part from its regional focus. Again Jeff Young:

> It's useful to look at regional trends; the opioid crisis is a classic example of this. So you'll see trends move like a wave across the region. Local stories are often larger regional stories, and we can connect the dots to see what's happening. So as a regional outlet, so to speak, we're able to connect those dots and allow communities to start thinking regionally about challenges

[63] Young, phone interview, May 16, 2017.

and solutions; we provide the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas – how is each locality addressing these issues? We've had state health officials citing our reporting. So we're providing something that would be difficult for a local outlet to do on their own.

Image 13. Ohio Valley ReSource leverages its access to a region that has similar issues to create content that is applicable across several outlets.

The core of the collaborative team is seven reporters who are mostly multimedia journalists with strengths in broadcasting, and one in data. Each is stationed at one of the partner stations, and employed by that station, but their time is split 70-30 – 70% of their time goes to the collaborative and 30% goes to their home station. They've met in person twice for multi-day trainings and events, but communicate regularly via Slack, phone, and email. Young says the reporters struggled at first with switching between the local and regional frames when doing different stories, but praises everyone for having mastered that fairly quickly.

OVR falls into the category of Ongoing and Separate, but blurs into the more integrated category as well: "Generally speaking it's a reporter working on a story [separately], but in almost every example that reporter works both with me as the editor, and with the digital reporter to produce data visualization, graphics, maps, interactives… And then frequently a reporter will need an interview or scene or some other element from another region. So what I do is I ask the reporter who's in that region to do the interview, and that's a team effort; 80 percent of the stories do that. Another level of cooperation is on special projects that involve everyone on the team, helping to generate story ideas, gather interviews, gather data, etcetera."

OVR is just entering the second year of a two-year grant, and CPB has structured it so that they transition to the model adopted by Harvest Public Media and Fronteras, where the participating outlets ultimately cover the costs of the collaboration.

One of the main frustrations of the collaboration, says Young, has been on the technology side – they have not yet found a seamless way to share digital content. This is due to the different platforms on which the stations operate, with some using NPR's proprietary content-sharing software, and others using various web-based platforms. Another frustration has been on the part of individual reporters, to balance the needs of the collaboration against the needs of the individual stations. Even with all of the stations invested in and onboard with the collaboration, tensions still arise in the day-to-day crunch of putting out content, Young said. As the collaboration's

manager, he strives to be even more communicative with reporters and partner stations about the stories in the pipeline, including realistic estimates of how much time will be required to produce them.

Another thing they struggled with in the beginning was branding; "Initially we thought [OVR content] should have its own bumper music to introduce the segment, should air at the same time every day, be in the same format," said Young. "But the partner stations said, 'We already have a lot of that going on – NPR has its own branded segments, we have our own, we're starting to feel a little cluttered.' So we decided that on the air we want to sound just like the station, so we're just providing good content. In the promo we call it an Ohio Valley ReSource story, and credit CPB at the end, but other than that it's just like the local station. The real branding opportunity then is online, where we have the logo, produce the video promo; and those go on the local channel websites as well."

As is common in collaborations at this point in time, OVR has gathered a few quantifiable metrics as to the impact of its stories, but it's not a central part of the project; it was not part of the grant, and it's not clear which tools they'd use to make a comprehensive picture from the data. Young said he does keep track of how the stories are put to use and how the stories perform for the various stations, which he does by keeping a chart of how frequently the stations use the stories, and in which format (as a longer magazine-style story, a standard 3.5-minute newscast story, etc.), as well as the time of day it airs, digital impressions, and social engagement.

As a regional collaborative, Ohio Valley ReSource represents a model that appears to be finding sustainability, even if such collaborations often require grants to get off the ground. A commonality among successful collaborations of this type (and perhaps most collaborations) is a dedicated project manager, who helps control daily workflow and mediate between the various parties involved. Another commonality is finding a topic, or array of topics, that are relevant to all participants – and possibly to a larger national audience as well.

Discussion: Tensions and Opportunities

In a news and information climate that is at once saturated, yet in many cases starving for resources, collaboration between information providers has become more and more common. From the perspective of many of the players involved – publishers, foundations that support journalism, and communities hungry for quality content – greater journalistic collaboration is a promising trend. However, there are also barriers and resistance; while smaller publishers see many benefits, larger news organizations can be more hesitant (Hatcher and Thayer, 2016). Likewise, it takes a fair amount of heavy lifting up front, and no small amount of trust and goodwill, to keep successful collaborations going.

Collaborative journalism is now being practiced on a scale that constitutes a revolution in journalism.

In this report we have analyzed collaborative journalism through a lens of optimism: we believe that collaboration can become (and in many cases has already become) a cornerstone practice to ensure sustainability for local news and information providers going forward.[64] However, this optimism is tempered by the recognition that in some cases, collaboration and cooperation actually look more like downsizing in the name of efficiency. Indeed, an early collaboration between two competing newspapers in Raleigh, NC, was viewed by some at the time as a decrease in diverse voices and viewpoints.[65] Likewise, when Gannett bought the North Jersey Media Group in 2016 and streamlined operations at its newly acquired weekly newspapers, there was an increase in duplicate content across outlets, and fewer stories about individual communities.[66]

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64   See also Bryant H. (9 June 2017), "Exploring Collaborative Journalism," accessed at: *https://medium.com/@HBCompass/exploring-collaborative-journalism-cbc8ef134386*.

65   E.g., Morgan, F. (18 June 2008), "The N&O cuts 70 jobs, consolidates coverage with Charlotte Observer," Indyweek.com, accessed at: *http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/the-nando-cuts-70-jobs-consolidates-coverage-with-charlotteobserver/Content?oid=1209104*.

66   Center for Cooperative Media (17 March 2017), "Layoffs in Local Newsrooms: Documenting the changing New Jersey local journalism ecosystem, 2016-2017," accessed at: *http://centerforcooperativemedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/LayoffsinLocalNewsroomsFinal-1.pdf*.

Put another way, the sharing of content and resources that might look, in one context, like an enlightened effort to maximize resources or gain greater reach, can look in another like filling up with news hole with irrelevant content simply because it is available from a partnering newsroom or organization. We suggest that the difference has much to do with the impulse behind the collaboration; in the same way that the very word "collaboration" suggests a good-faith partnering for the betterment of all involved, so too does the journalistic effort that results from an earnest desire to create better content with less or different resources than would be possible alone.

The difference was described by some observers of the acquisition by McClatchy of Knight-Ridder in 2006, and the resulting ownership by McClatchy of nearly all of the local daily news providers in the Carolinas. To critics, this looked like yet another example of a corporation, following a market logic, taking away diverse voices in local communities.[67] However from a "collaboration" standpoint, and from the standpoint of the editors who were involved, this was an opportunity for individual papers that had been competitors to share stories and free up resources for other projects (Williams, 2011). The seven dailies in North and South Carolina that came under common ownership by McClatchy formed CaroNews, a collaborative arrangement in which they shared story budgets (the plans for the stories to be produced that day) and frequently swapped content.

After seeing the benefits of such sharing, "the two star papers in the cooperative took an even more dramatic step: … [they] decided to see whether they could wring some efficiency out of combining several operations. They merged their capital bureaus and sports staffs and eventually did the same with their feature staffs" (Williams, 2011, p. 8). Though the arrangement did not last, it did provide room to experiment with other types of content: "As the *Observer* leveraged its corporate parent to enrich its state and regional coverage, it continued to solidify its focus on local news. This meant dedicated staff and space in the paper for local reporting, but also cultivating new sources of news that broadened and deepened its foothold within the greater Charlotte area" (Williams, 2011, p. 9).

We do not mean to imply that all media mergers will happily become opportunities for collaboration; rather, we suggest that shared ownership is one of many opportunities for outlets that had formerly been competitors to consider working together for the betterment of their content and

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67   Tady, M. (3 Nov. 2009), "Consolidation Station: News 'Sharing' Erodes Journalism," InTheseTimes. com, accessed at: *http://inthesetimes.com/article/5119/consolidation_station_tv_news_sharing_ erodes_journalism/*.

their audiences. Because collaborative journalism is still a nascent practice, and a relatively new area for scholars who study journalism, the dividing line between "good" collaboration and "bad" is not yet clearly drawn. Agreed-upon definitions, once they are formed, will allow critics, philanthropists, and practitioners to see clearly when a collaboration is for the betterment of the communities being served.

One of the big remaining questions about collaborative journalism is whether it will ultimately prove to be a strategy for sustainability, especially at the local level. The answer hinges largely on whether collaboration results in real, measurable gains for the journalism organizations and audiences involved. As we have seen in this report, though there is little quantitative evidence, there is ample qualitative data on this point.[68] In closing, we offer four elements of successful collaborations and cheer outlets that take the leap.

Successful collaborations

- Have trained themselves to think from the beginning about framing stories in a way that is useful for partner outlets (*especially in regional collaborations*)

- Have someone who manages the nuts and bolts of the collaboration (*communication, workflow, meetings, etc.*), at least part-time

- Have a some level of trust and goodwill among participants

- Learn new practices and process through inter-newsroom, inter-medium, and inter-generational observation and sharing

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[68]   See also Stearns, J. (26 June 2015), "All Together Now: Best Practices in Journalism Collaboration," Local News Lab, accessed at: *http://localnewslab.org/2015/06/26/all-together-now-best-practices-in-journalism-collaboration/*.
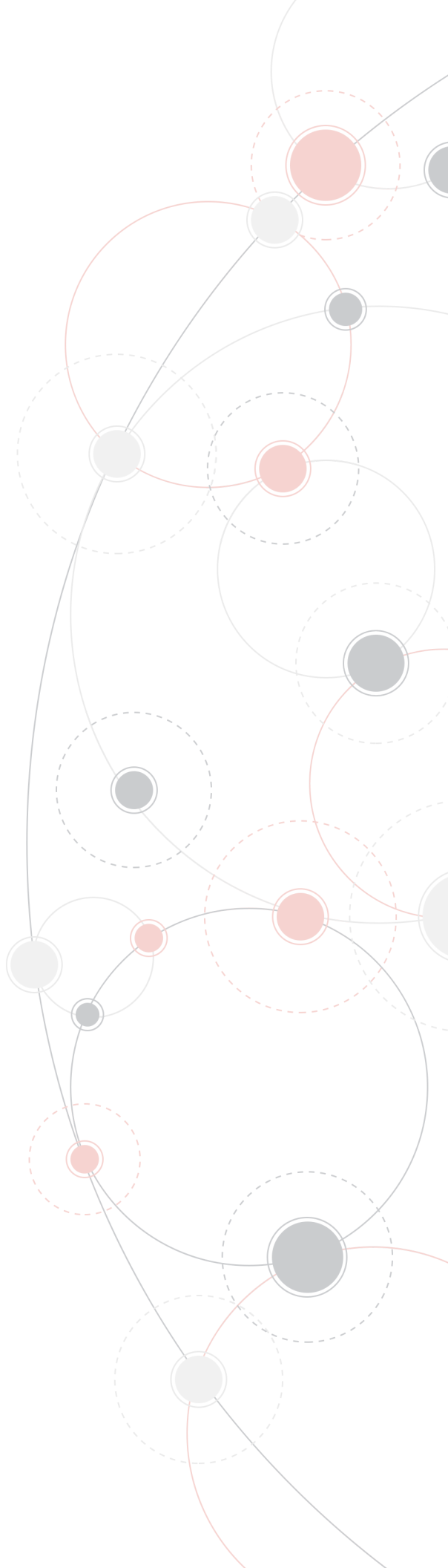
Appendix A: Collaboration Variables

	Personnel dedicated to running the collaboration	Formal agreement	Dedicated funding	Legacy media participation	Single issue focus	Community engagement	Geographic reach
American Dream Mall		✓		✓	✓		Regional
CALmatters	✓		✓	✓			Statewide
Charlottesville Tommor-row / Daily Progress		✓		✓			Regional
CNN	✓	✓		✓			International
CoastAlaska		✓	✓	✓			Regional
Collaborative Coverage Project (NPR)	✓			✓			National
CrossCheck	✓		✓	✓		✓	National
Detroit Journalism Coopearative	✓		✓	✓		✓	Regional
Electionland	✓			✓	✓	✓	National
Fronteras			✓	✓			Regional
Harvest Public Media	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	Regional
Next to Die	✓			✓	✓		National
Ohio Valley ReSource	✓		✓	✓			Regional
One River, Many Stories	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional
Panama Papers	✓	✓		✓	✓		International
Seattle Times News Partner Network	✓	✓		✓			Regional
SF Homeless Project				✓	✓		City
Surging Seas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Regional
TAPinto Network	✓	✓					State
The Magnetar Trade				✓	✓		National
The Reentry Project	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	City
ToxicNJ			✓	✓	✓	✓	State
Upstate Insight	✓		✓	✓			Regional
USA Today Network	✓	✓	✓	✓			National
Voting Block	✓		✓	✓		✓	State

Appendix B: Interviews

- **Anthony Brandon**, President and General Manager, WYPR Radio (*via email, June 1, 2017*)
- **Tracey Briggs**, Writer/Editor, Corporation for Public Broadcasting (*via phone, May 23, 2017*)
- **Heather Bryant**, John S. Knight Fellow, Stanford (*via phone, April 4, 2017*)
- **Jeremy Burnfeld**, Editor, Harvest Public Media (*via email, May 30, 2017*)
- **Sandy Close**, Executive Editor and Director, New America Media (*via email, Dec. 31, 2016*)
- **Erin Day**, Director of Journalism, Corporation for Public Broadcasting (*via phone, May 23, 2017*)
- **Jean Friedman-Rudovsky**, Project Editor, The Reentry Project (*via phone, June 13, 2017*)
- **Liza Gross**, Director of Practice Change, Solutions Journalism Network (*via email, May 30-31, 2017*)
- **John Hatcher**, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota-Duluth (*in-person interview, Oct. 25, 2016, and follow-up email correspondence*)
- **Bill Keller**, Editor-in-Chief, The Marshall Project (*via email, August 7, 2017*)
- **Holly Kernan**, Vice President for News, KQED (*via email*)
- **Jeff Luchsinger**, Director of Radio System Investments, Corporation for Public Broadcasting (*via phone, May 23, 2017*)
- **Scott McCartney**, Regional Editor, Detroit Journalism Cooperative (*via phone, May 16, 2017*)
- **Jennifer Moore**, Asst. Professor of Journalism, University of MN-Duluth (*via email, May 25-26, 2017*)
- **Michael Oreskes**, Senior Vice President of News, and Editorial Director, National Public Radio (*in-person interview, March 28, 2017*)
- **Marcia Parker**, Publisher and COO, CALmatters (*via phone, June 1, 2017*)
- **John Reitmeyer**, Budget & Public Finance Reporter, NJ Spotlight (*via email, April 27, 2017*)
- **Paula Saha**, Director of Audience Development & Events, NJ Spotlight (*via email, April 27, 2017*)
- **Jim Schachter**, Vice President for News, WNYC (*via phone, August 7, 2017*)
- **Jan Schaffer**, Entrepreneur in Residence, School of Communication, American University (*via phone, May 26, 2017*)
- **Mike Shapiro**, CEO and Publisher, TAPinto.net (*via phone, May 25, 2017*)
- **Michelle Srbinovich**, General Manager, WDET (*via phone, June 6, 2017*)
- **Donna S. Vestal**, Director of Content Strategy, KCUR 89.3 (*via email, May 30, 2017*)
- **Denise Young**, Executive Editor of Collaborative Journalism, WXXI (*via phone, May 25, 2017*)
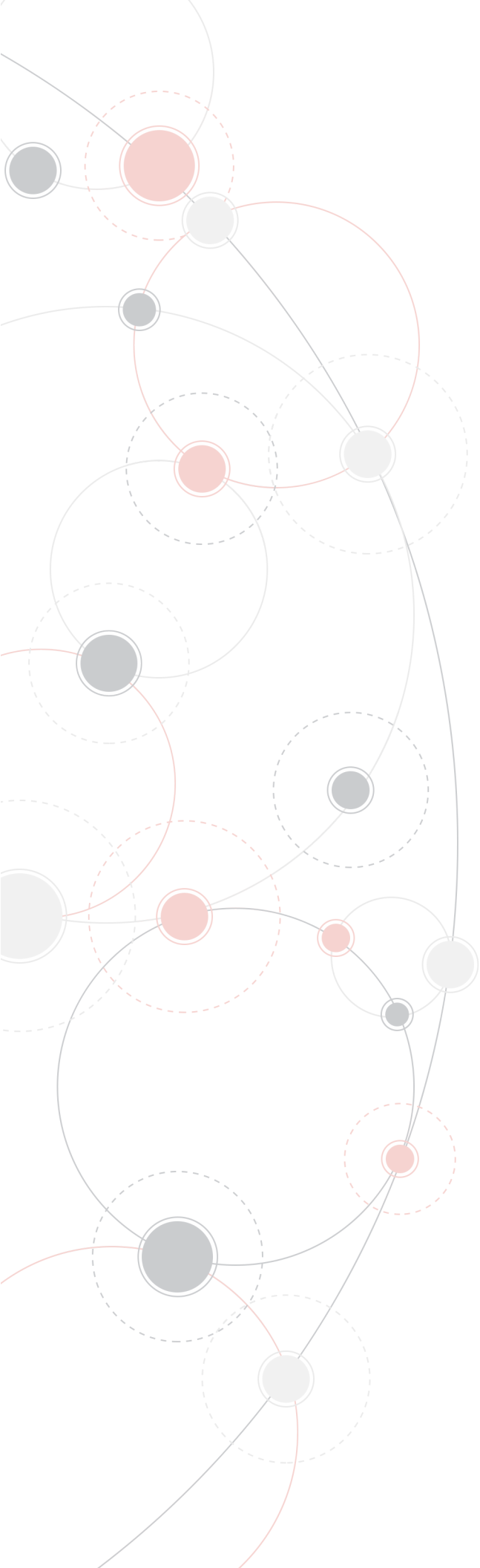- **Jeff Young**, Managing Editor, Ohio Valley ReSource (*via phone, May 16, 2017*)

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