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Walking in Step to the Future:
Views of Journalism Education by Practitioners and Educators

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ABSTRACT

Walking in Step to the Future: Views of Journalism Education by Practitioners and Educators

This study, based on an Internet survey of 317 educational administrators, television news executives, newspaper editors and online executives during first quarter 2004, contrasts views about preparation of students for current and future jobs by showing gaps between what employers' value most in job applicants and what educational programs are providing. Second, it addresses newsroom challenges that are shaping the industry and journalism education.

Walking in Step to the Future: Views of Journalism Education by Practitioners and Educators

Introduction

Journalism is undergoing tremendous change as technology and business practices move the industry to convergence of newspapers, television and the Internet. Today, both journalism educators and practitioners are in a unique and challenging position.

... Changes in the media are sure to alter the status quo in the classroom and in the newsroom. A stronger partnership between the classroom and the newsroom is needed. Unfortunately, because of the skepticism of both groups, the alliance has never reached its full potential.

The alliance is not needed to validate the importance of either the academy or the profession. The alliance is needed to protect and promote journalism. It should not be necessary to march in lock-step to realize that educators and journalists are on the same side. ...

The journalism tent is big enough for many orientations. We are not threatened by the journalism tent growing too big. We are threatened by the prospect of it becoming too small. ...

In the next decade, our democracy will depend on an informed public. That public will continue to need news gatherers and news explainers.

By the end of the next decade, journalism classrooms and newsrooms likely will look different, perhaps dramatically different. ...

It is ludicrous for practitioners and educators to operate so apart from one another. The relationships vary from state to state, but as a rule, very little collaboration beyond job references ever takes place. The smart people in the academy and the profession need to figure out how to improve that in the next decade. (Charles Overby, 1999)

It is against this backdrop that we look at views of journalism education by educators and journalism practitioners. Educators and practitioners are constantly walking forward into the changing future – simultaneously constrained by challenges of the daily operation, emboldened by the future horizon and grounded in current industry practice.

Previous Research

The question “What can universities contribute to the education of journalists?” continues to engender debate (Kirtz, 2002). Glasser (2002), addressing the periodic flare-up of this question, says:

No one benefits from a discussion mired in the vocabulary of ‘theory versus practice,’ ‘academics versus professionals,’ ‘education versus training,’ or – to remind everyone how old and tired this debate has become – ‘chi squares versus green eye shades.’

At the same time, perceived needs of practitioners and educators, informed by challenges posed by new economic, technological and social changes, place the discussion into new contexts.

In 1997, Ketchum Public Relations conducted a survey of media executives about journalism education and issues in the media. In that survey, media executives stressed the importance of reporting, interviewing, ethics, government affairs and current events as especially important areas for undergraduate journalism education (Lindenmann, 1997).

Other recent studies have looked at various of the aspects of convergence. Huang et al. (2002) examined practitioner concerns about skills news professionals need to learn in their current positions. Toward the top were good writing, multimedia production, new technology, critical thinking, computer-assisted reporting and visual production.

Bulla (2002) examined the impact of convergence on contemporary working journalists’ job routines and skills development and their suggestions about what journalism educators should be teaching their students.

Assessment of the educational needs of students is a never-ending process. The Freedom Forum’s *Winds of Change* study of journalism education (conducted by the Roper Center at the

University of Connecticut) interviewed journalism educators, new journalists and newsroom recruiters and supervisors (Medsger, 1996).

A variety of thoughtful pieces on journalism education appears in multiple venues.

William Woo (2003) wrote about the purpose of journalism, and journalism education, going beyond reporting and writing.

Some institutions may turn out excellent practitioners of craft. Others may produce graduates rich in historical, social, and theoretical understanding. But what does it matter if the owners of America's media are indifferent to these qualities?

The great task for journalism educators, in addition to providing practical training and academic breadth, is to equip their students with a firm sense of the public trust: how it developed, what it means to America, how it manifests itself or is betrayed in the work of journalists and news organizations. Journalism programs, departments, and schools need to become the places where such concepts are nurtured, protected, and ceaselessly advocated.

Research Questions

In the context of 2004, we ask journalism educational administrators, television news executives, newspaper editors, and online executives questions addressing the following areas:

1. How aligned are educators and practitioners on the important skills for students entering journalism for the first time?
2. How effective are university programs in training for the essential skills?
3. How aligned are educators and practitioners on the importance of particular general education areas for journalism students?
4. How aligned are educators and practitioners on the essential skills needed to make convergence successful?
5. What are the significant challenges in journalism relating to audiences, business, diversity, technology, resources and budget?
6. In what ways can journalism schools assist in addressing various challenges?

Method

This study is based on an Internet survey of national samples of educational administrators, television news directors, newspaper editors and online executives. The survey field dates were Jan. 12-March 8, 2004. The protocol was approved by the VCU's Institutional Review Board. Initial e-mail invitations were sent to each sample, with two reminder e-mails. The questionnaire was self-administered online.

The sample of educators was drawn from the schools listed in the AEJMC directory, with e-mail addresses verified by searching university Web sites. The response rate for educators was 27 percent (91 returned from 336 eligible respondents). Eligible respondents were defined as those whose e-mailed invitations did not "bounce back" as a "disconnected" addresses. Educators accounted for 29 percent of the total respondents of 317. The characteristics of returned educator sample is:

- 51 percent undergraduate only; 49 percent undergraduate and graduate programs.
- 67 percent journalism and other mass communications programs; 8 percent journalism only; 25 percent other.
- 40 percent ACEJMC accredited; 60 percent non-accredited.
- 2 percent fewer than 50 students; 32 percent 50-199; 30 percent 200-499; 27 percent 500-999; 9 percent 1,000 or larger.
- 20 percent hold the title dean or director; 61 percent head or chair; 19 percent other.
- 18 percent designate their curriculum as highly converged; 39 percent self-designate their program as moderately converged; 29 percent as somewhat converged and 13 percent as not converged. In the questionnaire, we define a converged curriculum as one that teaches all journalism students how to generate news content for print, broadcast and online.

- For the educators, 38 percent are in the Southeast; 24 percent in the West; 25 percent in the Midwest; 14 percent in the Northeast.

The newspaper sample was drawn from the “Managing Editor” e-mail addresses in Bacon’s Information Inc.’s database of daily newspapers. The response rate was 9 percent (84 of 955 eligible respondents). The newspaper sample accounts for 27 percent of the total sample.

- 89 percent of the respondents in the newspaper sample have the title of managing editor; 11 percent other.
- 49 percent of the newspaper sample comes from papers with circulation below 25,000; 23 percent from 25,000 to 49,999; 18 percent from 50,000 to 99,999; 8 percent from 100,000 to 499,999; and 2 percent from 500,000 or more.
- For the newspaper sample, 21 percent are in the Southeast; 27 percent in the West; 38 percent in the Midwest; 13 percent in the Northeast.

The television sample was drawn from the “News Director” e-mail addresses in Bacon’s Information Inc.’s database of television stations. The response rate was 10 percent (65 of 635 eligible respondents). The television sample accounts for 21 percent of the total sample.

- 89 percent of the television sample hold the title of news director; 11 percent other.
- 19 percent of the TV sample came from market size 1 to 25; 19 percent from 26 to 50; 30 percent from market size 51 to 100; 21 percent from markets 101 to 150; and 11 percent from markets 151 or smaller.
- For the television sample, 36 percent are in the Southeast; 27 percent in the West; 22 percent in the Midwest; 11 percent in the Northeast.

The online sample was drawn from the “Online Managing Editor, Online Editor” e-mail addresses in Bacon’s Information Inc.’s database of daily newspapers and television stations.

The response rate was 15 percent (77 of 512 eligible respondents). The newspaper sample accounts for 24 percent of the total sample.

- 40 percent of the online sample hold the title of online managing editor; 60 percent other.
- 74 percent of the online sample self-identify their organization as a newspaper; 12 percent an online organization; 5 percent a television station and 9 percent other (generally combination).
- 27 percent of the online sample had fewer than 50,000 monthly unique visitors to the site; 12 percent 50,000 to 99,999; 39 percent 100,000 to 499,999; 9 percent 500,000 to 999,999; and 13 percent 1,000,000 or more.
- For the online sample, 33 percent are in the Southeast; 31 percent in the West; 15 percent in the Midwest; 21 percent in the Northeast.

A summary of response rates are below. We know that non-response has been a serious problem with online surveys for quite a while, and rates have recently been plummeting. The response rates are low, but not unusual for recent non-permission based or non-opt-in panel sampling. The eligible non-responders introduce unknown bias into the results.

Sample	Eligible	Returned	% of Total	Response Rate
Educator	336	91	28.7	27.1
Newspaper	955	84	26.5	8.8
TV	635	65	20.5	10.2
Online	512	77	24.3	15.0
Total	2,438	317	100.0	13.0

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1:

How aligned are educators and practitioners on the important skills for students entering journalism for the first time?

(See Table 1)

It is hard to find a skill that journalism educators or practitioners do not deem important for students to acquire before entering the job market. Even the skill ranked lowest in importance among the 13 tested received a mean score of 3.64 for educators and a 3.35 for practitioners – on a five-point scale. This skill, the ability to gather and edit audio, ranked well above average in importance to everyone surveyed with the exception of the print journalists, who weighed in with a mean score of 2.84.

However, there appears to be stronger agreement between educators and broadcast journalists on a majority of the skills tested in the survey than between educators and newspaper or online journalists. Broadcasters were most closely aligned with educators on five skills, including the most highly ranked skill of reporting, the third most highly ranked skill of interviewing as well as collaboration skills, computer-assisted reporting and multimedia story planning. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference between broadcast and print journalists in their alignment with educators on the No. 2-ranked skill of ethics, and no statistically significant difference between broadcast and online journalists in their alignment with educators for gathering/editing audio.

Print journalists were most closely aligned with educators on four skills, including research skills, copy editing, covering multicultural communities and creating/designing graphics.

Online journalists were most closely aligned with educators on two skills: writing across media platforms and gathering/editing video.

This may reflect the changing nature of journalism programs and schools of mass communication. As educators adjust their programs to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse journalism environment, there may be a slight movement away from teaching the skill set that traditionally focused on preparing students for jobs in newspapers.

The data also reveals a challenge for those journalism programs that are trying to prepare students for converged newsrooms – those newsrooms that are asking their journalists to gather or report information on more than one media platform. The practitioners are widely divided on the importance of three of the skills in the survey: writing across platforms, gathering/editing video and gathering/editing audio.

Educators see writing across platforms as more important than any of the practitioner groups – the mean score is a 4.23. Online journalists were most in sync with a mean score of 4.17, followed by broadcast journalists at 4.03. The print respondents were more than three-quarters of a point lower than the educators with a 3.44. Educators may see this skill as more important than practitioners in the legacy media of broadcast and print because so there are so many indicators that convergence is going to be a factor in the future of journalism. Within that framework, it is no surprise that online journalists are most closely aligned with educators on this issue.

To underscore this point, the skill of gathering/editing video scores a mean of 3.38 for educators and a 3.50 for online journalists – again the closest practitioner match. Understandably, the broadcast journalists rank this skill much higher with a mean of 4.35, but print journalists see this as the most unimportant skill with a mean of 2.72. It is clear that the print respondents in this survey were not placing much value on convergence or in creating Web sites with a strong multimedia component. And finally on this point, gathering/editing audio received a mean score of 3.64 from educators, a 3.50 from online, a 3.78 from broadcast and a

2.84 from print. Again, print is outside the cluster of practitioner peers, lagging behind in placing a value on multimedia content.

In the open-ended section of the survey, many educators and broadcasters said journalism graduates must know, above all, how to write and report.

“Strong fundamental writing skills are an absolute must,” one educator wrote. Another added: “The nuts and bolts of reporting well, writing well and getting the facts straight are enduring aspects of great journalism programs.”

In the words of one educator, it boils down to “writing, writing and more writing!”

Several broadcast respondents agreed. One wrote, “Teach people how to write and ask good questions.” Another said journalism curricula should emphasize “spelling and grammar use – English, English, English.”

Research Question 2:

How effective are university programs in training for the essential skills?

(See Table 1)

The more troubling news for educators is how far off the mark practitioners think schools are when it comes to teaching students the skills evaluated by the survey. Educators score themselves below a 3.0 (2.89) on just one skill – multimedia story planning. In contrast, practitioners score educators below a 3.0 on 10 of the skills evaluated. Practitioners do give educators a better than average grade on reporting, ethics and interviewing – the three skills designated as most important in the survey. However, educators rank themselves at least three-quarters of a point higher than practitioners do on all three of those skills.

There are obviously many possible factors contributing to this disconnect. Perhaps the industry’s expectations of what schools can accomplish are set too high. Few programs allow

more than 40 credits to be completed within the major. If those courses were taken all at once, that would be just three intense semesters of journalism instruction. Or it may be that journalism schools must do more to build relationships with the profession. When practitioners say certain skills are important, what does that mean in terms of instruction? What aspects of reporting, ethics and interviewing need to be included in the curriculum? By creating a more extensive, ongoing dialogue with journalism professionals, educators may be able to do much to close the effectiveness gap revealed here and in other similar research.

Interestingly, broadcast journalists find the schools least effective overall – ranking them lowest among practitioners on five skills: reporting, interviewing, research skills, creating/designing graphics and copyediting. As we pointed out in the first research question, broadcast journalists are most closely aligned with educators on the importance of reporting and interviewing – yet they perceive the biggest disconnect in effectiveness. It is possible that programs steeped in a tradition of print reporting may be failing to address some of the unique concerns of reporting and interviewing for broadcast journalism.

Online journalists graded the schools most harshly on four skills: computer-assisted reporting, covering multicultural communities, writing across media platforms and multimedia story planning. Given the nature of online journalism, it seems appropriate that the practitioners associated with this platform set the standards on these skills very high. Online and print journalists both rank schools equally low on collaboration skills with a mean of 2.72. Broadcast is only slightly higher with a 2.76.

In relative terms, print journalists seem to be the most forgiving when it comes to grading the schools. Among practitioners they scored schools the lowest on just three skills: ethics, gathering/editing video and gathering/editing audio. As indicated in the response to the first research question, print journalists regard video and audio skills as the least significant overall,

so their judgment on the effectiveness of teaching may be tied to their indifference to the skills themselves. The concern about the effectiveness of ethics training is significant; however, educators give themselves a mean of 3.97 compared to the print journalists' score of 3.16.

This is data that may inspire more introspection on the part of journalism schools and programs. Are practitioners grading educators too harshly, or are educators getting complacent about their programs and ceasing to evolve to meet the needs of an ever-evolving industry?

In their open-ended responses, several practitioners said many journalism graduates lacked basic skills.

“The key for success in the future is to train students in the basics,” one broadcaster wrote. “I can’t believe the number who come out of school unable to write coherent sentences. Spelling, grammar, sentence structure – where did this get lost? I believe it happens when we’re dazzled by the ‘technology’ and forget about the basics. Schools need to ensure students can write correctly, or they don’t graduate.”

Another broadcast respondent said: “We get many young journalists who want to be on the air, yet don’t know how to report. They just want to have their face on TV. They need to be taught how to interview how to investigate and how pick up the phone and get basic information. There also seems to be a basic lack of knowledge in the area of journalistic ethics.”

A third broadcaster wrote: “The English skills of the candidates I’ve considered in the past three years are probably at a ninth-grade level.”

Research Question 3:

How aligned are educators and practitioners on the importance of particular general education areas for journalism students?

(see Table 2)

There is no doubt that practitioners would prefer that journalism schools were able to do it all, and so do the educators. Only one of the items included in this question generated a mean response below 4.0 when one compares responses for educators and all practitioners combined. However, there are significant differences when one compares what educators consider the most important general education courses to what practitioners deem the highest priority.

For educators, requiring courses for students in liberal arts receives a mean score of 4.67. When you look at percentages, 70 percent of all the educator respondents said liberal arts courses were very important, another 26 percent said the courses were important. This may be linked to accreditation standards, which require schools to provide a strong liberal arts background for students. All of the practitioners rank liberal arts courses as second to last in importance (mean = 4.06) with only courses in management and business practices receiving a lower mean score. This raises at least one important question: If educators feel this strongly about the value of a liberal arts education for journalists, should they not be working harder to inform the industry about why this kind of education should matter to journalism practitioners?

In the case of practitioners, current events and government affairs are ranked No. 1 and 2 for both broadcast and online journalists. In fact, broadcasters give the topic of current events a mean score of 4.81, with the survey showing 81 percent rating this coursework as very important. Print journalists put government affairs first, followed by current events. Many journalism schools teach current events as part of other skills and theories classes, and government affairs may be offered by another academic department or incorporated into a journalism course that does more than focus on the process of government. Though the survey

did not ask how effective schools are at teaching these general education curricular areas, the results of this question may be an indicator that practitioners wish schools could do more in those two areas of instruction.

In the open-ended responses, one educator said: “A well-rounded liberal arts education should be the primary goal of every good journalism school; an emphasis on reporting, editing, design, photojournalism (in whatever medium) should be second; and convergence third.”

Journalism practitioners said it’s important for students to study history and political science.

“Classes in marketing and advertising? Who cares?” wrote a broadcaster. “Classes on how the courts work, criminal science, how city government functions, politics, history, sociology – now you’re talking.”

One practitioner – a newspaper respondent – said the value of liberal arts was overrated. “I’m perturbed by this overweening preoccupation with journalism ethics, political science, history, diversity and other liberal arts drivels at the expense of practical skills.”

Research Question 4:
How aligned are educators and practitioners
on the essential skills needed to make convergence successful?
(see Table 3)

To understand the results of this question, you have to have additional background on the respondents’ views about the importance for journalism schools to prepare students for work in highly converged newsrooms. The educator mean is 4.16, and the practitioner mean is 3.98. When you look at the practitioner groups individually, you see it is the print respondents’ mean of 3.66 that is defining the lower mean response for practitioners.

On all the skills listed as potentially necessary to make convergence successful, print journalists consistently rank them lower than their journalism peers or educators. However, a note about the survey sample seems relevant here. Nearly half of the print respondents in the sample came from papers with circulations below 25,000. These are newspapers that may be less likely to seek out or be sought after for full convergence with an online and TV partner. For example, one newspaper respondent wrote, “Convergence is more important in large media markets, and it is not yet an issue of any import for most small to medium newspapers I know. ... if journalism students get caught up in the electronics and gadgets associated with convergence, I fear their basic reporting, editing and writing skills will suffer even more than they already have.”

The Web presence of such small newspapers may be relatively minimal. Future work with this data may involve comparing the larger market newspapers with the smaller market newspapers to see if any differences emerge in the responses on these questions.

By the same token, on all the skills listed for the survey question above, online journalists rank them as more important than any other set of practitioners or educators – with the exception of Web technical skills (mean = 3.56). Of all the respondent groups, the educators place the most value on this skill (mean = 3.92). This may be a place for educators to take note. When the presumed experts in the field see this skill to be less important, it may mean that educators are placing too much emphasis on this issue when trying to teach convergence. Could it be that these skills are easily acquired “on the job” or are unnecessary for most online work? Further study on this issue may be called for.

In the open-ended section of the survey, several educators and broadcast respondents cited the importance of crossplatform skills.

“Students should have exposure to and practice with multiple platforms,” one educator wrote. This respondent said it is unrealistic to expect each journalism graduate to be “really skilled producers” in print, broadcast and online media. However, the educator said, “It is realistic to expect we can help most of them to become good journalists who understand strengths of all platforms and may be good at production in one.”

A broadcast respondent agreed. “Schools should still encourage students to specialize or pick a platform. But they must expose students to the practicalities of working on other platforms.”

In particular, students must learn how to take advantage of the Web, another broadcaster wrote. “There needs to be a great emphasis on the growing necessity of Web reporting as a basic part of the job for newsroom personnel. As we continue to grow partnerships and as more people develop a reliance on the Web as an information source, we as communicators need to ensure we are making Web coverage a part of our everyday (or every *hour*) concentration.”

Print respondents were far more likely to dismiss convergence and to emphasize “traditional” skills.

“I strongly oppose convergence in the media,” a newspaper respondent wrote. “Newspaper reporters write to a completely different audience than radio or television reporters. I have done all three media so I have first-hand knowledge of this. Train journalists as specialists – not generalists.”

Another newspaper respondent added: “Journalism schools seem to be over-emphasizing the importance of writing across multiple platforms – to the detriment of focusing on basic reporting and writing skills. No amount of cross-medium training can make up for lack of basic journalism skills. Ever.”

Several newspaper respondents expressed fears that convergence would displace writing and other basic skills in the curriculum.

“Any new emphasis by any journalism school on convergence must not come at the expense of basic reporting and writing skills and a liberal-arts education,” a newspaper respondent wrote. “Most new graduates’ grounding in those fundamental areas is inadequate as it is.”

Some broadcast respondents shared that fear.

“The basics are the most important,” one wrote. “If someone can write and research, she/he can be taught to modify that story for another medium. If you are not a good journalist in the first place, the medium doesn’t matter.”

Research Question 5:

What are the significant challenges in journalism relating to audiences, business, diversity, technology, resources and budget?

(see Table 4)

When you compare the mean scores for educators and practitioners as a whole, three challenges arise as the most significant: the emphasis on profits, the lack of newsroom staff and resources, and a declining audience are all making it harder for journalists to succeed. Within this framework, there are minor but interesting variations. Print journalists rank declining audience as the most significant threat. No other challenge received a mean score higher than this one did at 4.42. Broadcasters feel strongly that a lack of staff and resources is the most significant challenge. With the industry demanding that television newsrooms continue to produce more news with fewer and fewer resources, broadcasters continue to struggle with this issue. Educators rank an emphasis on profits as the No. 1 industry challenge and for online journalists, emphasis on profits does not even make it in the top three. This anomaly among the

practitioner group may be due to the fact that many online news organizations have been allowed to operate outside the budget constraints of their legacy media peers. In many cases, the online side of the business has been given a grace period in which the organization works to grow the business, but is not expected to immediately turn a profit.

Other interesting observations may be made regarding the challenges on the lower end of the scale as well. Though educators see a decrease in the qualifications of job applicants as just a little bit more than an average threat (mean = 3.08) broadcasters are quite concerned about this issue (mean = 4.16). As was noted in Research Question 2, broadcasters graded educators significantly lower on effectiveness than many of their practitioner peers. This finding on the issue of job qualifications may be related to those low effectiveness scores. Broadcasters also feel significantly more concerned about the declining quality of journalism (mean = 4.22). On the low end of the scale are print journalists, who rank the quality challenge with a mean of 3.70. Since broadcast journalists feel a more intense pressure than their practitioner peers from a lack of staff and resources and an increased emphasis on profits, it seems only logical that they would also have more concern about declining quality. With fewer people and a corporate mission to make more money, it becomes more difficult to produce quality journalism.

The data concerning the challenges of recruiting a diverse staff and covering multicultural communities may reveal a shifting media and cultural landscape. Online journalists include difficulty in recruiting a diverse staff in their top three for industry challenges, knocking out an emphasis on profits as we mentioned earlier. Broadcast journalists are nearly a half a point lower (mean = 3.36) than educators (mean = 3.84) in terms of evaluating the significance of covering multicultural communities. Broadcasters also rank the difficulty in recruiting a diverse staff as fairly low in significance (mean = 3.67) and the diversity and multicultural coverage challenges were the only two that received a mean below 4.0 for the broadcast group. Does that

mean broadcasters already feel they are doing a good job of covering multicultural communities and in recruiting diverse staffs? Or could do broadcasters simply perceive other threats as being more dire and immediate? This dimension is worth further study.

**Research Question 6:
In what ways can journalism schools assist
in addressing various challenges?**

(See Table 5)

On this research question, the results are in agreement. Practitioners and educators believe the schools can provide the most significant help to the industry in the area of basic journalism instruction and by requiring more hands-on training opportunities. Practitioners are even more adamant than educators that this is an area in which the schools can be of great assistance. In many ways, this is reassuring; it is still all about teaching journalism and practicing the craft. But the industry plays a role in helping schools to succeed on this dimension, especially in the area of hands-on training opportunities. Schools can do more to require internships and other “real world” experience, but it is the practitioners who must work harder to make these opportunities more valuable to future journalists. How many news organizations excuse themselves by saying, “It’s up to the individual student to get the most out of his or her internship”? When many media outlets continue to use interns as unpaid employees, it becomes tougher for some of the best and the brightest in our journalism schools to afford to take advantage of this hands-on training. The best internship programs are those that are structured managed and evaluated. Without that framework, they tend to lose their impact.

Of all the solutions included in the survey, the importance of schools retooling their curricula to teach students how to report across multiple platforms raises an interesting disconnect between print journalists, their practitioner peers and educators. Every group but print

ranks this solution as No. 3 on a list of approaches to help the industry. Print journalists, in general, minimize the idea that educators could help them address challenges by providing instruction on reporting across multiple platforms. Educators see this solution as even more valuable to the industry (mean = 4.10) than the practitioners (mean = 3.71), though online respondents clearly saw the benefit of this instructional approach (mean = 4.15).

When it comes to requiring courses on covering multicultural communities and diversity, broadcasters again place less importance (mean = 3.50) on this dimension than their practitioner peers or educators. Print respondents value this approach the most of all the sub-groups (mean = 3.80) with online journalists and educators close behind (mean = 3.77). Broadcast journalists also see the emphasis on schools recruiting a diverse student body and faculty as less important (mean = 3.72) than any other practitioner group, and significantly less important than educators (mean = 4.09). This supports evidence elsewhere in the study that issues of diversity and covering multicultural communities are not rising to the level of high priority for broadcast journalists in particular. Educators appear to be leading the way on the diversity dimension of the study. Accreditation requirements may be having an impact on the approach schools are taking toward journalism instruction or educators have simply recognized and accepted the need for journalists to become more diverse themselves or more adept at covering diverse communities. The question is whether the educators and practitioners who understand the need for diversity and multicultural journalism will be able to translate that knowledge into action that has impact on the profession.

Conclusion

This study surveyed 317 journalism educators, print, broadcast and online journalists using an Internet survey. Response rate within the groups ranged from 8.8 percent (newspaper journalists) to 27.1 percent (educators) for an average response rate of 13.0 percent. The data shows that there continues to be a need for better collaboration between practitioners and journalism educators.

Specific Survey Findings:

- Educators and practitioners generally agreed on the most important skills for students entering journalism for the first time: reporting, ethics, interviewing and research skills.
- Practitioners are widely divided on the importance of three convergence skills: writing across platforms, gathering/editing video and gathering /editing audio.
- Print journalists are lagging behind their practitioner peers in placing a value on multimedia content.
- Educators consistently give themselves much higher scores on doing a good job of preparing future journalists than the scores they receive from the practitioners; however, practitioners do give educators a better than average grade on reporting, ethics and interviewing skill development.
- There is disagreement about the most important courses outside of the journalism curriculum. Nearly all educators (96 percent) rank liberal arts courses as very important or important. Practitioners rank liberal arts courses seventh out of eight items and rank current events and government affairs as the two most important areas of general education study.

- Educators and practitioners in general are in agreement that students need to have convergence skills. Ranking of the most important skills varies, with the industry ranking Web technical skills the lowest.
- Educators and practitioners are in agreement that the three most significant challenges to the industry are the emphasis on profits, the lack of newsroom staff and resources, and a declining audience.
- Educators appear to be leading the way on diversity, placing more importance on requiring courses on covering multicultural communities and diversity than do practitioners, especially broadcasters.
- Practitioners and educators agree that schools can provide the most significant help to the industry in the area of basic journalism instruction and by requiring more hands-on training opportunities.

Areas for Future Studies:

- Exploring what is at the heart of the difference between how well the academy believes it is preparing students and how practitioners are grading the academy, with a goal of developing a better understanding of the industry's expectations (and whether or not they are reasonable) and taking a closer look at whether curricula are evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the industry.
- Determining if schools are putting too much emphasis on Web technical skills based on the finding that the industry ranks those skills below all other convergence skills.
- Taking a closer look at why print journalists appear to be out of sync with their peers in ranking the importance of multiple-platform storytelling. As noted, comparing answers between smaller and larger circulation newspapers may be important.

- Determining why broadcast journalists don't put more emphasis on the importance of covering multicultural communities and diversity.

This is the kind of study that needs to be repeated because of the continually changing media landscape. The researchers anticipate longitudinal tracking of these issues will reveal more concrete solutions to the challenges facing the journalism industry. We cannot walk in step to the future until we achieve some kind of consensus on what that future should look like and how best to arrive.

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**Table 1:
Skills Gap Analysis**

How aligned are educators and practitioners on the important skills for students entering journalism for the first time?
How effective are university programs in training for the essential skills?

	Importance			Effectiveness			Gap	
	Mean	N	Sig.	Mean	N	Sig.	-mean	%
Reporting	4.82	284	.011	3.70	271	.000	-1.12	-22%
University	4.84	81		4.31	81		-0.53	-11%
Practitioner Total	4.81	203		3.44	190		-1.37	-27%
Newspaper	4.94	82		3.52	79		-1.42	-28%
TV	4.80	61		3.12	59		-1.68	-34%
Online	4.65	60		3.67	52		-0.98	-20%
Ethics	4.81	286	.722	3.45	264	.000	-1.36	-27%
University	4.83	83		3.97	80		-0.86	-17%
Practitioner Total	4.81	203		3.22	184		-1.59	-32%
Newspaper	4.84	81		3.16	75		-1.68	-34%
TV	4.82	61		3.18	57		-1.64	-33%
Online	4.75	59		3.35	52		-1.40	-28%
Interviewing	4.68	283	.001	3.34	272	.000	-1.34	-27%
University	4.71	82		4.00	82		-0.71	-14%
Practitioner Total	4.67	201		3.05	190		-1.62	-32%
Newspaper	4.84	83		3.16	79		-1.68	-34%
TV	4.69	61		2.61	59		-2.08	-42%
Online	4.40	57		3.38	52		-1.02	-20%
Research Skills	4.60	284	.135	3.15	269	.000	-1.45	-29%
University	4.63	82		3.76	82		-0.87	-17%
Practitioner Total	4.58	202		2.89	187		-1.69	-34%
Newspaper	4.63	82		2.90	77		-1.73	-35%
TV	4.64	61		2.54	59		-2.10	-42%
Online	4.44	59		3.27	51		-1.17	-23%
Copy Editing	4.46	282	.069	3.22	269	.000	-1.24	-25%
University	4.52	82		3.96	81		-0.56	-11%
Practitioner Total	4.43	200		2.90	188		-1.53	-31%
Newspaper	4.55	80		2.97	78		-1.58	-32%
TV	4.28	61		2.69	58		-1.59	-32%
Online	4.42	59		3.02	52		-1.40	-28%
Collaboration Skills	4.27	284	.054	2.96	266	.000	-1.31	-26%
University	4.30	81		3.47	83		-0.83	-17%
Practitioner Total	4.26	203		2.73	183		-1.53	-31%
Newspaper	4.16	83		2.72	74		-1.44	-29%

		Importance			Effectiveness			Gap	
		Mean	N	Sig.	Mean	N	Sig.	-mean	%
TV		4.18	61		2.76	59		-1.42	-28%
Online		4.49	59		2.72	50		-1.77	-35%
Computer-Assisted Reporting		4.27	284	.269	3.03	264	.003	-1.24	-25%
University		4.24	83		3.34	79		-0.90	-18%
	Practitioner Total	4.29	201		2.90	185		-1.39	-28%
Newspaper		4.37	81		2.92	75		-1.45	-29%
TV		4.33	61		3.00	58		-1.33	-27%
Online		4.14	59		2.75	52		-1.39	-28%
Covering Multicultural Communities		4.03	281	.177	2.97	263	.002	-1.06	-21%
University		4.18	83		3.27	81		-0.91	-18%
	Practitioner Total	3.97	798		2.83	182		-1.14	-23%
Newspaper		4.06	79		2.80	75		-1.26	-25%
TV		3.89	61		2.93	56		-0.96	-19%
Online		3.93	58		2.76	51		-1.17	-23%
Writing Across Media Platforms		3.95	280	.000	2.81	254	.000	-1.14	-23%
University		4.23	83		3.25	80		-0.98	-20%
	Practitioner Total	3.84	197		2.61	174		-1.23	-25%
Newspaper		3.44	79		2.69	68		-0.75	-15%
TV		4.03	60		2.65	57		-1.38	-28%
Online		4.17	58		2.45	49		-1.72	-34%
Multi-media Story Planning		3.73	279	.000	2.60	244	.002	-1.13	-23%
University		3.84	83		2.89	81		-0.95	-19%
	Practitioner Total	3.69	196		2.46	163		-1.23	-25%
Newspaper		3.38	76		2.55	60		-0.83	-17%
TV		3.54	61		2.48	54		-1.06	-21%
Online		4.24	59		2.33	49		-1.91	-38%
Creating/designing Graphics		3.51	281	.000	2.94	258	.000	-0.57	-11%
University		3.81	83		3.34	80		-0.47	-9%
	Practitioner Total	3.39	198		2.76	178		-0.63	-13%
Newspaper		3.62	79		2.71	73		-0.91	-18%
TV		3.02	61		2.70	53		-0.32	-6%

Online		3.47	58		2.90	52		-0.57	-11%
Gathering/Editing Video		3.59	266	.000	3.14	230	.000	-0.45	-9%
		3.78	83		3.53	78		-0.25	-5%
University									
	Practitioner Total	3.50	183		2.94	152		-0.56	-11%
		2.72	65		2.78	46		0.06	1%
Newspaper									
	TV	4.35	60		3.19	57		-1.16	-23%
	Online	3.50	58		2.80	49		-0.70	-14%
Gathering/Editing Audio		3.44	268	.000	2.98	229	.000	-0.46	-9%
		3.64	83		3.37	79		-0.27	-5%
University									
	Practitioner Total	3.35	185		2.78	150		-0.57	-11%
		2.84	67		2.71	45		-0.13	-3%
Newspaper									
	TV	3.78	60		2.86	56		-0.92	-18%
	Online	3.50	58		2.76	49		-0.74	-15%

Table 2: Importance of General Education Coursework

How aligned are educators and practitioners on the importance of particular general education areas for journalism students?

	Importance		
	Mean	N	Sig.
Current Events	4.51	276	.001
University	4.35	80	
Practitioner Total	4.58	196	
Newspaper	4.46	81	
TV	4.81	58	
Online	4.53	57	
Government Affairs	4.47	280	.140
University	4.39	84	
Practitioner Total	5.51	196	
Newspaper	4.52	81	
TV	4.59	59	
Online	4.39	56	
Computer Skills	4.35	278	.734
University	4.32	82	
Practitioner Total	4.37	196	
Newspaper	4.31	81	
TV	4.42	59	
Online	4.39	56	
History	4.34	279	.636
University	4.31	84	
Practitioner Total	4.35	195	
Newspaper	4.38	80	

TV	4.41	59	
Online	4.25	56	
Political Science	4.25	279	.010
University	4.14	84	
Practitioner Total	4.29	195	
Newspaper	4.29	80	
TV	4.50	58	
Online	4.09	57	
Liberal Arts	4.24	280	.000
University	4.67	84	
Practitioner Total	4.06	196	
Newspaper	4.14	81	
TV	3.97	59	
Online	4.04	56	
Management & Business Practice	3.85	280	.130
University	3.77	84	
Practitioner Total	3.88	196	
Newspaper	3.94	80	
TV	3.71	59	
Online	3.98	57	

Table 3 Importance of Convergence Skills for Students Entering Journalism for First Time

	Mean	N	Sig.
Prepare Students for Convergence (importance)	4.03	271	.000
University	4.16	80	
Practitioner Total	3.98	191	
Newspaper	3.66	77	
TV	4.09	58	
Online	4.30	56	
Write for Multiple Platforms	4.20	264	.000
University	4.35	80	
Practitioner Total	4.14	184	
Newspaper	3.78	72	
TV	4.34	59	
Online	4.40	53	
Collaboration Skills	4.35	266	.012
University	4.31	81	
Practitioner Total	4.37	185	
Newspaper	4.21	72	
TV	4.34	59	
Online	4.63	54	
Multimedia Story Planning	4.19	264	.001
University	4.19	80	
Practitioner Total	4.18	184	
Newspaper	3.92	72	
TV	4.20	59	
Online	4.53	53	
Web Technical Skills	3.69	261	.008
University	3.92	79	
Practitioner Total	3.59	182	
Newspaper	3.49	70	
TV	3.76	58	
Online	3.56	54	
Capture Video Clips	3.71	258	.000
University	3.83	82	
Practitioner Total	3.65	176	
Newspaper	3.33	64	
TV	3.92	59	
Online	3.75	53	
Capture Stills	3.76	263	.321
University	3.80	81	
Practitioner Total	3.74	182	
Newspaper	3.63	70	
TV	3.75	59	
Online	3.89	53	
Capture Audio Clips	3.61	255	.021
University	3.68	79	
Practitioner Total	3.57	176	
Newspaper	3.34	65	

TV	3.69	58
Online	3.74	53

Table 4		Significant Industry Challenges	Mean	N	Sig
Emphasis on Profits			4.25	266	.001
University			4.51	78	
	Practitioner Total		4.14	188	
Newspaper			4.16	76	
TV			4.31	58	
Online			3.94	54	
Lack of Newsroom Staff & Resources			4.21	266	.172
University			4.09	78	
	Practitioner Total		4.26	188	
Newspaper			4.20	76	
TV			4.41	58	
Online			4.17	54	
Declining Audience			4.29	265	.053
University			4.08	77	
	Practitioner Total		4.37	188	
Newspaper			4.42	76	
TV			4.38	58	
Online			4.30	54	
Recruiting Diverse Staff			3.91	265	.205
University			3.97	78	
	Practitioner Total		3.88	187	
Newspaper			3.97	76	
TV			3.67	58	
Online			3.96	53	
Covering Multicultural Communities			3.62	266	.039
University			3.84	79	
	Practitioner Total		3.53	187	
Newspaper			3.60	75	
TV			3.36	58	
Online			3.63	54	
Declining Quality			3.88	259	.010
University			3.89	75	
	Practitioner Total		3.88	184	
Newspaper			3.70	73	
TV			4.22	58	
Online			3.74	53	

Keeping Up with New Technology	3.77	267	.003
	3.75	79	
University			
Practitioner Total	3.78	188	
	3.54	76	
Newspaper			
TV	3.78	58	
Online	4.13	54	
Job Applicant Qualifications	3.61	259	.000
	3.08	76	
University			
Practitioner Total	3.83	183	
	3.71	73	
Newspaper			
TV	4.16	58	
Online	3.63	52	

Table 5 Solutions for Industry Challenges

	Effectiveness as Solution		
	Mean	N	Sig.
Basic Journalism Instruction	4.79	267	.042
	4.75	79	
University			
Practitioner Total	4.80	188	
	4.88	76	
Newspaper			
TV	4.83	58	
Online	4.67	54	
Hands-on training	4.45	267	.000
	4.18	80	
University			
Practitioner Total	4.57	187	
	4.50	76	
Newspaper			
TV	4.67	58	
Online	4.57	53	
Report Across Multiple Platforms	3.83	267	.000
	4.10	79	
University			
Practitioner Total	3.71	188	
	3.33	76	
Newspaper			
TV	3.81	58	
Online	4.15	54	
Recruit Diverse Student Body & Faculty	3.88	266	.071
	4.09	79	
University			
Practitioner Total	3.79	187	
	3.82	76	
Newspaper			
TV	3.72	58	

Online		3.81	53	
Multicultural Communities - Diversity		3.72	265	.254
University		3.77	79	
	Practitioner Total	3.70	186	
		3.80	76	
Newspaper				
TV		3.50	58	
Online		3.77	52	
Media Management & Business Practices		3.61	267	.055
		3.39	80	
University				
Y	Practitioner Total	3.71	187	
		3.74	76	
Newspaper				
TV		3.67	58	
Online		3.72	53	
Certify Competency in Computer Skills		3.42	266	.101
		3.30	79	
University				
Y	Practitioner Total	3.48	187	
		3.32	76	
Newspaper				
TV		3.67	58	
Online		3.49	53	