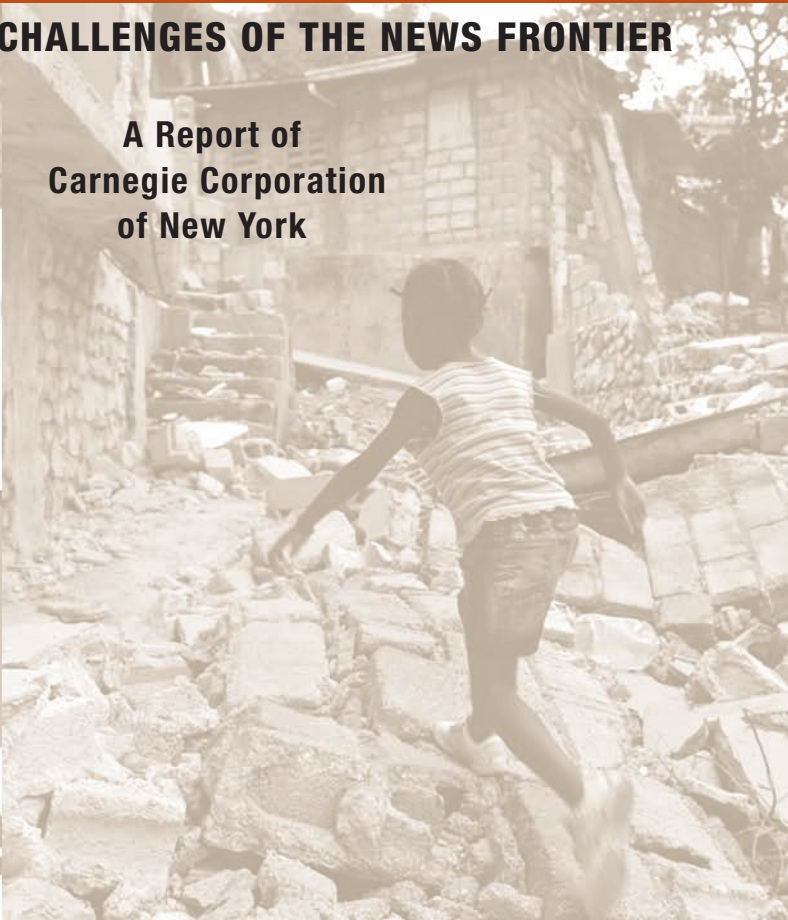




A WAY FORWARD:

SOLVING THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEWS FRONTIER

**A Report of
Carnegie Corporation
of New York**



A WAY FORWARD
SOLVING THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEWS FRONTIER



BY CHRISTOPHER CONNELL

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▶ Introduction	p i
BY VARTAN GREGORIAN <i>President, Carnegie Corporation of New York</i>	
▶ A Way Forward: Solving the Challenges of the News Frontier	p 1
▶ Appendix A	p 26
<i>Conference Breakout Sessions</i>	
▶ Appendix B	p 35
<i>Improving How Journalists Are Educated and How Their Audiences Are Informed</i>	
BY SUSAN KING Reprinted from Daedalus	
▶ Appendix C	p 49
<i>News 21: Are Next-Generation Journalists The Future of a Profession in Transition?</i>	
BY CHRISTOPHER CONNELL Reprinted from the Carnegie Reporter	

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Introduction

On the eve of Carnegie Corporation's most recent in a series of gatherings bringing together journalism deans, students, faculty members and industry leaders from across the country to consider and discuss the future of journalism, I was reminded of the famous introduction to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." As an overarching theme for the ongoing debate about "whither journalism," it seems to me that there may be a no more apt way to describe both the opportunities presented by the evolving journalism landscape as well as the pitfalls that have already—and perhaps forever—imperiled the ability of many newspapers and journalism practitioners to remain effective and economically viable participants in a world in which people get their news across a wide spectrum of media platforms.

But in any discussion of what journalism may look like, or how it will be practiced in the coming years, it is important never to lose sight of why we, as Americans, have traditionally attributed great value to the idea of having not only a free press but a whole sector of American enterprise—*journalism*—that is excellent, vigorous, independent and up to the challenge of asking tough questions when necessary and always shedding light on dark corners, whether they are in our nation or anywhere around the globe. The importance of broadsheets, newspapers, pamphlets and other publications as a means of disseminating the free expression of ideas was considered intrinsic to the strength of democracy from the earliest days of our nation. Indeed, as Thomas Jefferson noted in 1787, citizens need to have "...full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers, and to connive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people." The fact is that though Jefferson, relentlessly attacked by the press when he was president, probably often rued the day that newspapers and even muckrakers became prominent fixtures of the American scene, he remained a strong advocate of free, unfettered journalism throughout his life. Similarly, about two hundred years ago, when he visited the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville, impressed with the promise and vitality of America, understood where some of that strength came from. As he observed, "You can't have democracy without newspapers."

And yet, as we have seen in recent years, there has been a precipitous decline in the availability of news publications. In 2009 alone, over 100 newspapers were shuttered. The losses include such high-profile—and high-quality—papers as *The Rocky Mountain News*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Commenting on

the waning ranks of America's newspapers, Mike Hoyt, editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review* notes that if the trend continues, there is certainly trouble ahead. He says, " ... if newspapers go under, you lose the transparency of government. Journalists are the watchdogs, and being able to shine a spotlight on corruption or scandal is vital to our democracy."

Andrew Carnegie, who founded Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911, was equally dedicated to the idea that a democratic nation would flounder without an informed citizenry with access to not only the news of the day but also a deeper understanding about issues ranging from those that impact events on the world stage to those that affect their neighbors next door. Carnegie believed that the very freedom of a free people depends on the unfettered flow of information. Said Carnegie, "Conquerors cannot rule as conquerors a people who...publish newspapers."

Today, in this digital age, one can imagine that Mr. Carnegie might have also referenced the explosion of news and information that is available through media as varied as hand-held phones and other devices, online blogs, videos, social media networks—and whatever comes next because surely, there are new delivery methods on the horizon that most of us have not even dreamt of yet. While it is true that just a few decades ago, we might have looked to newspapers, specifically, to play a major role in advancing the progress of our democracy, in the current era, our concerns about the give-and-take of ideas that is intrinsic to the vitality of our nation must extend to the institutional and financial capacity of the many and varied types of news organizations that we now routinely check in with throughout the day.

Still, for Americans, the core issue relating to the future of journalism remains its role as a pillar of democracy. As Carnegie Corporation approaches its centennial year, we look back at our work and forward to our future with the knowledge that strengthening our democracy has long been—and will continue to be—at the heart of our mission, with the goal of enriching and securing our national life and helping to fulfill our international obligations. Journalism and its practitioners have long served as the messengers of democracy, but the great upheavals in the field that have caused a sea change in the way that we interact with the news have raised significant and as yet largely unanswered questions about where we go from here. Advances in technology, for example, have forever altered the way people consume the news, upsetting the basic business model for delivering content. In order to successfully ride the wave of technology that has swept across the world, today's journalists not only have to master the traditional arts of the trade but must also become proficient in new skills in order to reach a 21st century audience. How, though, do we best train young men and women to successfully employ innovative technologies and become both nimble and effective journalism practitioners

in a relentless—and endless—news cycle that now goes full tilt twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week? How does the business of news adapt to the new realities of online media and adopt its most successful practices while not falling victim to its worst?

It was these questions and concerns that in 2005 led us to work in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to launch the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education. Our shared goal was to develop a new cohort of well-educated journalists who are analytic thinkers and adept communicators, as at home in the virtual universe as they are in the day-to-day world of what has become a news cycle that knows no global borders and never sleeps. That initiative has grown from an original group of five of America's top journalism schools to twelve, representing our nation's pioneering universities. These institutions have dedicated themselves to being on the cusp of change in terms of journalism education, adding both deep subject learning and cutting edge technology training to the agenda for their students.

Today, as journalism finds itself at a crossroads, we must bear in mind that invigorating journalism education to meet the challenges of our new millennium is not a subject of concern to journalism schools alone. Certainly, we expect much of the schools and universities we have invested in because they are the leaders in the field of revitalizing journalism education, but they have a right to expect much from the rest of us, as well. After all, democracy requires participants. It requires creativity, dedication and action—even risk—on behalf of our ideals. That is why the Corporation and the Knight Foundation have brought together this extraordinary group of educators, students, policymakers, business leaders, and others who are concerned about the future of our nation and hence, the future of journalism. Clearly, there is much ahead of us to learn and much to do. ■

VARTAN GREGORIAN
President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

A Way Forward: Solving the Challenges *of the* News Frontier

HOPE ON THE HORIZON? CARNEGIE JOURNALISM SUMMIT SPOTLIGHTS THE NEW ENTREPRENEURS OF NEWS

Nearing the fifth anniversary of the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, in February 2010 Carnegie Corporation of New York again brought 150 faculty, deans and students from a dozen leading journalism schools to the Paley Center for Media in New York City. The objective of this year's summit, *A Way Forward: Solving the Challenges of the News Frontier*, was to assess the road ahead at what is arguably the most troubled time ever for the American news business. One in five reporting and editing positions in this once remunerative field is gone and major newspapers and networks continue to hemorrhage jobs. (Case in point: Shortly after the event, ABC News revealed plans to shed up to a quarter of its 1,400-person news staff by year's end.)

But at this Carnegie summit, while the weather outside was cold and grey, inside the Paley Center the outlook was sunny. As Dean Mills, the University of Missouri School of Journalism's dean later noted, excitement was in the air. Journalism students in the audience discovered they may have a future after all—if they can hone their multimedia skills, become news entrepreneurs and learn how to build their personal brands. The spotlight shone on several such enterprising journalists—some fresh out of college, others veterans of newspaper and television work—who are finding success with enterprises that might have been scoffed at or seen as simply impossible only a few years ago.

Politico, GlobalPost.com and PolitiFact are finding audiences and revenue models. A Turner Broadcasting executive says business has never been better for CNN and its sister networks. AOL and Yahoo! are aggressively building branded news sites, and a fledgling citizen journalism site called GroundReport.com claims 5,000 contributors around the world. There is even a nonprofit, TexasTribune.org, launched by a venture capitalist to fill the coverage vacuum of state government and public affairs. “There are new and vibrant models sprouting up everywhere on a daily basis,” said Paley Center executive vice



Susan King

Alberto Ibarгүйen

president Christy Carpenter. She also pointed out that the lineup of speakers reflected how the news world is changing. At the 2008 summit, she noted, only three of the panelists came from the online world. This year they numbered 16.

Susan King, Carnegie Corporation's vice president for external affairs and program director for the Journalism Initiative, said a key purpose of bringing the journalism students and professors back to New York was to show industry leaders the kind of intellectual sparks found at campuses around the country, and the advanced multimedia skills the new generation is acquiring. The summit was also designed to bring the academics and aspiring journalists face to face with the two foundation presidents to "better understand the expectations they have for you and from you," she said.

Indeed, the audience heard bracing words at the outset from Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation, and Alberto Ibarгүйen, president of the Knight Foundation. In an armchair discussion moderated by Lorraine Branham, dean of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, the foundation heads reiterated their intentions for the multi-million-dollar Initiative: to make journalism schools more rigorous and to make their graduates indispensable to news enterprises.

"Journalism, in my opinion, is not simply an industry. It's a utility, like water. You need it. It's essential to society," said Gregorian. Well-educated, responsible, reflective journalists are needed to "guard our democracy against manipulation by corporations, by government, by political parties, by individuals, by everybody who controls information and can inundate us with it."

When Branham questioned whether Carnegie and Knight funding was "just a drop in the bucket," Gregorian responded that lack of money had always been used as an excuse to not have major ideas, or the willpower to attempt sweeping changes. "The issue for us was to demonstrate successful models and investing in excellence."

Without journalists guarding against misinformation and manipulation, Gregorian says "the game is over."

Ibarгүйen said that measured against vast societal needs, every grant that Knight, Carnegie or the Gates Foundation makes is just a drop in the bucket. But the news industry has stopped investing in training and in R&D. "What we're looking for is leadership and for someone to write on the white space that the industry has left open," he said. On that score, Ibarгүйen admitted that what most concerned him about the Carnegie-Knight initiative is the missed opportunity around leadership: "the deans' part. It seems to me that is the great underutilized aspect of this kind of project. Somehow it really hasn't worked." He went on, "The deans have information, they have a voice, they have access to the industry, they have access to the students and the faculty, and somehow this hasn't actually delivered things that are really important."

The Initiative has three parts: (1) revitalizing journalism school curricula; (2) immersing top students in the new media/investigative reporting project, News21; and (3) providing a forum for journalism deans to speak out on vital issues. Of the program's twelve deans, only five (from Berkeley, Missouri, North Carolina, Syracuse and Texas) were on hand to hear the feedback. Dean Mills, the Missouri dean, acknowledged the remark in his conference summary: "Alberto slapped the deans real hard. I personally found that invigorating, kind of like a meeting on the budget with the provost," he quipped.

Vartan Gregorian, who earlier in his career had served as president of Brown University and before that as provost of the University of Pennsylvania, stressed the deans' role in building their schools' stature, ideally to be comparable to that of law and business schools in research universities. Gregorian said News21, with its emphasis on new tech-



Lorraine Branham

Vartan Gregorian

nology and interdisciplinary education (faculty from other disciplines co-teach seminars to prepare students for their in depth work) shows “intelligence in action.” He cited the landmark studies of Elizabeth Eisenstein describing how the printing press had revolutionized and democratized learning. “We’re working in this type of revolutionary situation” today with the Internet, he said.

Ibargüen also commended Eisenstein’s work to the audience of students and scholars. “The monks were going nuts” after they lost their monopoly on compiling and controlling



Christy Carpenter

information, he said. A century of chaos followed the invention of the printing press, and it was impossible to know who was telling the truth. But he predicted that this time it won’t take nearly as long to learn to sort through the flood of information and welter of voices clamoring to be heard on the Internet.

Branham asked the foundation heads who will pay for news now that the old advertising and subscription models aren’t producing the revenue that traditionally has supported newsrooms.

“Figuring out the business model for the news business is not necessarily the role of this particular Carnegie-Knight Initiative,” replied Ibargüen. In addition to establishing the role of the journalism school within the academy, the Initiative is trying to find ways for journalism to do its job in the future, he said. “You have to experiment ... with lots of different ways of telling the story, of getting out the news and information that communities need.” That is the tack Knight is taking with its \$25 million News Challenge, a contest that provides seed grants for journalists, software developers and other entrepreneurs to incubate digital news projects.

“We’ve come up with stuff we never would have imagined. Is any of this going to change the industry? Probably not,” said Ibargüen. But they may help people figure out how to sustain serious reporting “in a world where the fundamental relationship of the reader to the information has changed.” Readers are no longer passive and demand “a different role and relationship with the editor and the reporter who put it together.”

Gregorian worries that universities have shirked the responsibility of producing an informed citizenry on which Jeffersonian democracy depends. If it were up to him there’d be a requirement for all university students, and faculty members, to subscribe to at least one newspaper and one magazine, in print or online. They could choose from not just traditional news fare but the *Huffington Post*, *Slate*, *Salon* and other sites.

If half-a-million college students each year acquired the news habit, in a few years that would produce several million regular subscribers, said Gregorian, the former president of the New York Public Library. “Everybody would say this is an imposition on students, but they already pay for campus newspapers, theater and other activities through fees, and universities could subsidize the subscription cost for needy students. If faculty parking and meals are subsidized, why not also support the great magazines and journals of America?” he asked. “We have to try everything possible to stimulate the public’s thinking and discourse on issues of the day and about how to stay informed.”

A Nebraska student and News21 fellow asked Gregorian if people will ever again be willing to pay for news, considering the whole “free philosophy” that permeates the Web.

“I don’t know, frankly. It’s a very tough question,” said the Carnegie Corporation president. Noting the controversial deal Google has struck with authors over making available digital copies of books, Gregorian noted, “Google is in the dissemination business, not the creating business. Somebody has to write the book.” Giving rights to intellectual property in the early sixteenth century helped Venice lay the groundwork for the Renaissance, and profit motives have furthered the advance of science, Gregorian said. Today’s journalists, authors and investors all “are going to demand returns one way or another,” but how and in what format remains to be seen.

“The market demands what it wants,” said Ibargüen. When all the news organizations were providing their content for free on the Web, “why would the market pay for it?” he asked. Now that situation may be changing. Whatever happens, he said, “the market will still need information. You cannot run a community and a democracy without information.” He believes the public will pay for it “when they have no better alternative. It is also early in this revolution.” Ibargüen said when he asked an MIT professor how far along we are in development of new technology, on a scale of 1 to 10,



Alberto Ibargüen, Vartan Gregorian, Lorraine Branham

with 10 signifying a mature technology, the professor replied, “It’s hard to tell, but I’m sure we’re not past 2.”

A *Huffington Post* editor asked the presidents what was being done to ensure that journalism schools are teaching these new technology skills, including how to produce and edit video. That’s “a huge issue,” according to Ibarguen. “One of the first News



Jose Antonio Vargas, *Huffington Post*

Challenge grants went for scholarships to entice engineers to study journalism at Northwestern’s Medill School, he said, adding that he had also promised support to MIT president Susan Hockfield’s idea of offering a journalism minor for engineers. Journalism schools, he said, “should engage the people who write code so they understand not only the technology but the power of storytelling.”

Gregorian said that in this age of the specialist and super-specialist, “the unity of knowledge has collapsed One of the challenges is, who provides the synthesis? Who puts things together? As a nation, we need not just isolated facts, but some organizing principals to make

things function.” He recalled T.S. Eliot’s description of hell: a place where nothing connects with nothing. “It’s the role of the journalist to connect things,” said Gregorian. “Everybody loves technology, but few appreciate the thought, rigor and beauty of the science behind technology. A whole generation of scientists did the work that makes smart cell phones and Twitter possible. But the instrument is not going to do your thinking. You’ve still got to get an education. You still have to read. You still have to learn and be curious,” said Gregorian.

A University of North Carolina student wondered how journalism students can be taught to be entrepreneurial, to which Ibarguen replied that the Knight Foundation’s News Challenge is funding start-ups that try new ways of keeping communities informed. The success of newspaper barons of old—the Knights, the Chandlers and the Ochs—was that they found profitable ways to do this “by hiring the best editors they could to deliver a quality product,” Ibarguen commented.

A Medill student said that in a room full of journalists and their professors, “it’s easy to find self-evident the importance of journalism to society. But to what extent do you think finding a way forward involves reselling the importance of journalism’s function to society?”

“I wouldn’t waste my time,” replied Ibarguen. “If journalists focus on providing news that informs and illuminates the minds of readers, people will appreciate the journalism behind it.”

Gregorian spoke of the need for Americans to develop a better understanding of the rest of the world and not to be left in the dark about other countries and cultures, especially when confronted with a sudden crisis like the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The country needs universities to prepare the scholarship and provide the specialists who speak Arab or Pashtu, and it also needs news organizations that are covering international affairs in depth, he said. Yet newspapers and networks continue to shutter their foreign bureaus because they’re too expensive. “When international crises erupt, Americans always look for instant education. The country needs journalists, as well as teachers and librarians, who are engaged in the search for truth and building the future,” Gregorian said. Still, he was not disparaging entrepreneurs, including “all the Carnegies of the world. Without them we would not be here. But at the same time, in order to keep our institutions and our democracy strong, we need journalists. We need writers, philosophers and artists to challenge us. We need a creative, thinking society, not just a consumer, entertainment society.”

I: The Hunt for the Newsroom of Tomorrow

Moderator: Andrew Heyward, former president of CBS News

Panelists:

- ▶ JOSH COHEN, Senior Business Product Manager for Google News
- ▶ MARTIN T. MOE, Senior Vice President, AOL Media
- ▶ ALAN MURRAY, Deputy Managing Editor of the *Wall Street Journal* and Executive Editor of the Journal’s Online Edition
- ▶ ELIOT PIERCE, Vice President, Advertising and Digital Strategy, Business Development and Ad Operations for *The New York Times*

This panel featured executives from two new media enterprises—AOL Media and Google News—and two of the world’s leading newspapers, *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. But the dividing line between these enterprises’ Web sites is far from distinct. The *Times* and the *Journal* operate two of the most visited news sites. The *Journal* keeps most content behind a pay wall, and the *Times* soon will begin charging frequent visitors who are not print subscribers. The *Journal* draws 1 million customers for wsj.com; even print subscribers pay extra. Both AOL and Google News are free. AOL Media has ramped up its presence in the online news world with such branded Web sites as DailyFinance, PoliticsDaily, FanHouse and Engadget. Google

News, a compendium of news from multiple sources that relies on Google's complex algorithms to determine the top stories of the day, reaches audiences in nearly 50 countries and is available in 30 languages.

Andrew Heyward asked panelists what they saw as the most disruptive forces challenging newsrooms in the next 12 months.

"We don't really have a newsroom at Google News," said Cohen, "but the biggest challenge is how to personalize news feeds for users in the way that Amazon suggests books to read or things to buy for repeat visitors." While it works to meet this goal, Google News does *not* want to become only an echo chamber of what people typically read or hear, he said.

Moe said that while the Web has broken the old monopoly that big metropolitan newspapers had on the distribution of news, that does not mean high-quality journalism will go away. "What it does often mean is that the players producing it will change."

AOL can afford to expand news operations because it draws a national audience and is not confined to a regional advertising base as newspapers are, Moe explained. "We are very bullish on the future of high-quality journalism," he said, calling it the most exciting time in generations to be in the field, with new brands emerging such as the *Huffington Post*.

The *Wall Street Journal's* Alan Murray said, "I've never had more fun than I'm having right now." But before getting to the fun, Murray expatiated on the havoc afflicting traditional newsrooms of the past. "There are so many disruptive changes that it's hard to know which ones to focus on," Murray said. "Certainly the metabolism of the newsroom is changing dramatically where you have people filing stories several times a day or several times an hour as opposed to several times a week or several times a month."

The biggest change is the relationship with your audience, according to Murray. Journalists used to think their task was to write beautiful stories and "throw them over the transom, then it was somebody else's responsibility to get those stories out to the people who wanted to read them. That wasn't something we worried about and it was almost dirty for us to worry about. It was like pimping your own stuff." Now the best journalists in this new world are those in constant contact with the people they're writing for, Murray said. On Facebook, Twitter and news Web sites, "they're constantly trying to build and cultivate and grow the community of people who are interested in the content they're providing. That's a huge change in mindset."

Pierce said the digital challenges facing the *Times* include introducing its new online pay structure, meeting demands to deliver news on an ever changing and expanding array of mobile devices and learning how to engage readers on social media platforms more effectively. He pointed to *Times's* technology reporter Brian Stelter's use of Twitter



Eliot Pierce, Alan Murray, Martin T. Moe, Josh Cohen, Andrew Heyward

to get sources, connect with readers and promote stories. (Meanwhile, the *Times* itself is no slouch on Twitter; two-million-plus folks follow its Tweets.)

Heyward wondered whether in the newsroom of the future, news organizations would cede some editing and reporting functions to customers.

Murray said it was once the sole province of the editor to decide what the most important stories of the day were. Now readers make their own recommendations. "I'm a little skeptical of some of the more utopian visions of how citizen journalists are going to come in and do all this work that paid journalists do for free and do it just as well," said Murray. "The folks who sit through endless town hall and school board meetings are the last people I want to get my news from," he added.

Google's Cohen observed that 10 or 15 years ago, the stories appearing on the front pages of the *Times* and *Wall Street Journal* carried the authority of the voice of God. "That was what you read. But now the newspaper lineup competes with so many different ways people get their news and the news that's created for them, whether algorithmically or by your users or your friends," he said. Cohen senses disdain from the established media for aggregators such as Google News, who assume that "the public, left to its own devices, would fill front pages with stories about Britney Spears and pandas." But he argues it's a mistake to think that "engaging your users is somehow going to, by definition, lower the standards of journalism."

Pierce said half the *Times* audience has an insatiable appetite for interactivity and half could not care less. "We need to get really good at recognizing which reader we're dealing with when we're serving that page," he said. Pierce favors adding widgets and applications that readers could turn on and off depending on how much interactivity they prefer.

To Heyward, this called to mind a culinary metaphor. "There's a tasting menu that the chef has prepared and there's also the a la carte menu and you're even saying that some of the customers might be allowed to go into the kitchen and cook," he said.

Pierce agreed, pointing out that the *Times* has introduced ten application programming interfaces (APIs), including one with a movie database featuring reviews by the paper's professional film critics and by readers. The database includes "every single movie in commercial release since 1910," he says, and "it's created a really nice, symbiotic relationship with our readers."

Moe argued that people go to the *Times* not "to talk to each other, but for the amazingly high-quality journalism that is being produced there." While the media need to leverage social networking and enable readers to comment on and share articles, he stressed that they shouldn't be expected to become all things; if they lose focus on producing the best journalism, they really are lost.

Heyward asked Moe how AOL fosters high-quality journalism.

"We have been hiring and will continue to hire at a very rapid clip the most talented journalists that we can find across the country," said Moe. For AOL, the newsroom of the future will be a "distributed" newsroom.

"Is 'distributed' a euphemism for people working at home?" Heyward wanted to know.

Moe said they may be working at home or out covering the news where it happens. "Potentially, the globe is our talent pool. We don't really care if people are in a newsroom because we are focusing on technology that can enable the interaction of editor and



Audience members wield their smartphones.

journalist and producer very efficiently and very effectively wherever people are."

AOL Media pays its journalists, Moe explained. Some are freelance, some full time, but they are earning a living. A new journalism economy is emerging "and we don't know exactly where that's going or how much revenue it will provide to support reporting," he admitted. "But the fact of the matter is professionals can't do the work if they're not paid."

Heyward, who, before becoming president of CBS News, helped create the network's *48 Hours* and was also executive producer of the *CBS Evening News*, said the downward pressure on journalists' pay seems inexorable. "In a world where everyone can be a journalist, it is not clear how we're going to foster quality," he said. When all the stories are driven by search engine optimization, he wondered what would happen to quality control.

Murray recalled hearing someone from the advocacy group Human Rights Watch suggest that its representatives around the world could help get news out in places the major media left uncovered. "My immediate reaction to that is no, that's not the answer. I mean your people are not out there to report the facts. You're out there to gather evidence for your particular point of view. That's not going to be the solution for the kind of journalism that I think is important to preserve."

Google applies algorithms to gauge the quality, authenticity, originality and importance of news stories on the Web, Cohen said, and relies on the collective wisdom of users to determine how much stock to put in a given source. The readers' judgments are just a single element in the filtering, but "your users can send a really strong signal for letting us know that this is the right source to add to Google News's story clusters," he said.

People know the brands of major news organizations, and "they understand agendas, real or perceived," said Cohen. He saw no problem with Human Rights Watch contributing its information "as long as I know what their agenda is and what they're bringing to the table."

Moe agreed that brand matters more than ever in this new era. In a world awash with content and gobbledygook, people need help cutting through the clutter. Brand "is not limited to traditional sources that we've heard of for 30 years," he said.

Murray concurred on the importance of brands. "The more noise there is out there, the more important the brands become," he said. He reminded the audience that there was "something perverse" about the old model of relying on ad revenues to subsidize the news. "Advertisers don't care about the quality of the content. They only care about the person who's consuming it. When readers pay for content, that's a very direct signal that they understand you are giving them something that they can't get easily someplace else," Murray said.

Heyward wondered whether we're heading for a new, demand-driven rather than supplier-distribution-driven oligopoly.

"That would be wonderful, but I think we have a long way to go before we get to that point. I do think it's what's going to enable us to survive," said Murray. Twenty-one million people each month visit the online *Journal*—10 times the print circulation at its peak. The money the *Journal* makes online "is double the entire newsroom budget of the *Wall Street Journal*," and it pulls in more from subscriptions than ads, he said.

Pierce said old school news organizations like the *Times* need to segment their news coverage, incorporating more user-generated content into sports, books, arts, travel and other sections, while keeping national and international news and politics more sacrosanct. "I don't think that you'll see a lot of user-generated content coming out of our

foreign report,” he said. But as for the other sections, “We need to explore models there to keep costs lower on the creation side, but still defend quality.”

A University of Texas graduate student asked when journalists are “going to become entrepreneurial enough to say, ‘Hey, it’s our content that’s valuable, not just the distribution sources. Let us earn a living again.’”

Moe said the journalists writing for AOL Media are paid well. But “one of the hallmarks of the newsroom of the future is going to be a wide range of models and a wide range of options for people who are producing news,” he predicted. For some it will be full-time jobs with benefits while others will be paid by the story or by a monthly stringer’s allowance.

“If I were graduating from a journalism school, I’d be a little scared about not going to a traditional company based on this discussion,” said Heyward.

“You should be,” said Murray.

A question from a Columbia student about attracting media attention to Latin America led the panelists to discuss their news sites’ appeal to international audiences.

Cohen said Google News is available in 30 languages with multiple editions in Latin America and across the globe, and each regional edition tries to reflect local diversity and culture. Internationalizing is “core to just about anything we do at Google,” said Cohen.

Pierce said the *Times*’s online edition “has been focused on the English language and we don’t currently translate.” But it successfully launched a global edition online last year, and Pierce sees opportunities for growth in revenue and audiences in Europe and Asia.

Murray added, “We think the *Wall Street Journal* should be a global brand and that means dealing in local languages. We have a Chinese edition that gets a couple of million visitors a month. We have a brand new Japanese language edition. We’re throughout Latin America, in Spanish and I believe in Portuguese, and we’re looking at more.” However, “the truth is right now our overseas readership is pretty small and even our Chinese language edition has an awful lot of readers in California. But we think it can be a global brand.”

According to Moe, even in English the major news brands “often have very large international audiences.” At least 20 percent of Engadget’s audience comes from Europe and elsewhere overseas. “We also publish in eight different languages, including Chinese, Japanese, German and Spanish,” he said.

AOL, as a digital company, views its job right now as developing brands, and those brands need to live wherever customers want them to be, Moe stressed. “I’m not even saying that AOL wouldn’t publish in paper if it made sense to do that. I can easily see a Fanhouse magazine that you pick up in your airport news stands ... if it could be done economically. I think that anyone who’s single platform is going to be in trouble.” [Note: *ESPN: The Magazine* has 1.9 million subscribers to *Sports Illustrated*’s 3.2 million.]

Heyward said waggishly, “It would be ironic if two years from now, *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are only online and Google and AOL are publishing print newspapers with a newsboy throwing it onto your lawn in the morning.”

The panelists urged students to hone both their reporting and technology skills. Murray mentioned how often *Journal* editors solicit advice from a young reporter newly hired from Harvard’s Nieman Journalism Lab. “The bad news is there are fewer jobs and they pay less, but the good news is we’re desperate for young people who grew up online.”

Moe’s message was not to lose the skills and techniques of traditional journalism. “You’ve got to add to a story, not just repeat it. You’ve got to check your facts. You’ve got to get it right Don’t lose that in all this discussion about technology.”

The session’s last word went to the moderator.

“The apprenticeship model has been reversed to a degree,” said Heyward. It is no longer just “the traditional hierarchical model where we older more experienced journalists pass on our knowledge.” What Heyward found most exciting was that “the newsroom of the future has not been invented yet.”

“That may sound glib, but for many decades, it had been invented and the model was in place and it wasn’t really changing very much,” he said. Now we’re on the verge of having to discover how to use all these different extraordinary tools, combine them with traditional skills and emerging skills to really create something new.”

II. Real Tales from the Real World:

Education of the Entrepreneurial Journalist

Moderator: Jeff Jarvis, Associate Professor, Director of the Interactive Program, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism

Panelists:

- ▶ RAFAT ALI, Editor/Publisher, ContentNext Media
- ▶ PHIL BALBONI, Publisher and CEO, GlobalPost.com
- ▶ JOHN HARRIS, Editor in Chief, Politico.com
- ▶ GENEVA OVERHOLSER, Director, School of Journalism, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California
- ▶ JOHN THORNTON, Chairman, the *Texas Tribune*

Jeff Jarvis, who teaches CUNY graduate students how to become entrepreneurial journalists, began by rattling off examples—people who have found or are building toward success in a world where the traditional media are attempting to find their way. In addition, the panel included a newspaper editor turned journalism professor and a



Jeff Jarvis fields audience questions.

venture capitalist underwriting a not-for-profit newsroom covering politics, government and policy in Texas. Jarvis started out by asking the panel to specify what journalism schools should be teaching today.

Rafat Ali, editor and publisher of ContentNext Media, an online bible of the business of digital media, said to teach students the economics of the media business as well as how to report and write. When Ali earned a master's degree at Indiana University, "none of us were exposed to any of the (media's) business underpinnings," he said. Ali earned his undergraduate degree in computer engineering in India and became a digital media reporter and editor for Inside.com and Silicon Alley Reporter before launching his own business in 2002. He made millions in 2008 when ContentNext was purchased by the parent company of the British newspaper, the *Guardian*. He stayed on board running the site now called PaidContent.org. *Editor and Publisher* once described Ali as "journalism's poster boy for career independence from news companies."

Jarvis recalled that in his generation, journalism students were told to stay away from business matters because "it was going to corrupt us, it was going to make us dirty." Ali contends that the wall between the news and business sides has been demolished.

Phil Balboni's GlobalPost, launched in 2009, provides daily international news coverage online from 74 correspondents around the world and reaches more than 50 countries. It is the third media start-up for Balboni, a founder of New England Cable News, former Hearst Corporation executive and news director at a Boston television station. Balboni urged journalism schools to break down the silos between newspaper,

broadcast, magazine and multimedia tracks, teach all students how to edit and publish stories on the Web, and teach them entrepreneurship and how to run a business. "I've been talking about this for almost all my 43 years in journalism," he said. "The business of news is more important in many respects than the journalism part of news. Students should learn how to write a business plan, do spreadsheets and "love numbers." Do those things "and we will have a new flowering for journalism in America," Balboni predicted.

Veteran *Washington Post* political reporter John Harris and colleague Jim VanderHei placed a bet on themselves in 2006 when they quit their jobs and launched an all political news, all the time, news site they called Politico.com. With backing from the owner of a string of television stations, they lured other top reporters from major newspapers and magazines and Politico took off. Now it also publishes a print edition several days a week. It's thick with ads aimed at Capitol Hill, breaks stories and regularly partners with major newspaper and network outlets. Politico expanded operations instead of contract-



Geneva Overholser

ing after the excitement of the 2008 presidential election and, according to Harris, now has 15 full-time and 74 part-time employees and is still growing.

Jarvis noted that the *Post* has drawn brickbats for not starting Politico. Actually, Harris said, the *Post* had made a bid to sponsor Harris's and VanderHei's venture, but they

decided instead to run with the financing offered by Robert Allbritton, who owns the ABC network affiliates and regional cable news operations in Washington and several other cities. "It's not true that the *Post* said, 'What a dumb idea. Get back to your day job,'" said Harris. But the former *Post* journalists opted for independence from the big newspaper company for their own reasons.

"What I had was an entrepreneurial itch," said Harris. "I didn't have any entrepreneurial expertise, but I had a lot of interest in the large question that I think everybody in the room is probably interested in: what's next for journalism?" Harris doubts Politico would have been as successful if they'd stayed at the *Post*. "A place like the *Washington Post* has to worry about a dozen different things, not just our thing," he explained.

"What we've managed to do at Politico is a model that works for us. I never suggested that it has universal applicability," said Harris, who started at the *Post* as an intern

out of Carleton College in 1985. But he advised students to think of themselves as free agents, individual value creators. “To my mind, the only way that anybody is likely to have a career in journalism after about age 30 ... is by creating a franchise for yourself.”

The big companies “have destroyed journalism and run it into the ground,” he said. “You’re not going to look to them for solutions, I don’t think. We’re just one small part of the future. But you could be another one, this person over here could be another one and you have to be patient We are creating jobs. They may not be the best jobs right now, but they could be very good jobs as we grow stronger.”

Geneva Overholser, who directs the School of Journalism at the USC Annenberg School, said that five years ago she would have rather “cut my tongue out than say to a journalism student, ‘Be your own brand.’” But the former editor of the *Des Moines Register* believes “many if not most journalism jobs in the future indeed will include the skills of entrepreneurialism.” She, too, recalled when journalistic “purity” kept the editorial side divorced from the business side of newspapers. “But the fact that we didn’t worry about the



John Thornton

audience really had some bad effects on us. It got us disengaged from the audience,” Overholser admitted.

The panel’s most seasoned capitalist, John Thornton, is a skeptic about the capacity of markets to sustain serious news coverage. So Thornton created the *Texas Tribune* (www.texastribune.org), a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization that is trying to fill a void in covering public affairs, policy and political news in Texas. It solicits public contributions like a public radio station and has raised \$4.3 million to date, \$1 million from Thornton. A general partner at Austin Ventures, his specialty is investing in software and media firms, including some distressed newspaper companies. But that background has led him to the conclusion that news is a lousy business. “We frankly decided that there were easier ways to make money,” he said.

Serious journalism is a public good like clean water and national defense, Thornton said. “What that means is that market forces left to their own devices won’t create enough of it.”

Thornton predicted that nonprofit ventures like *Texas Tribune* and foundation-funded ProPublica will be a bigger part of the picture 10 years from now.



Kennedy Elliott, Medill, Northwestern University

Balboni countered that “with all due respect to John’s philanthropic support of the *Texas Tribune*, there isn’t enough money of that kind across this country to nurture and sustain these new efforts.” In this time of transformation, “I’m a passionate believer in the for-profit model,” he said.

Overholser agrees it is too soon to give up on the market, but “too early to know how the audience is going to define high-quality journalism.” She defended the idea, discussed at the previous panel, that activists from Human Rights Watch could help fill the void created by the disappearance of foreign correspondents. “Human Rights Watch has 80 people around the globe and they’re gathering information very much in the public interest,” she said. So long as they are transparent about their intent and about who is paying for their work, “the public may well decide that is an element in high-quality information.”

Thornton claimed he wasn’t giving up on for-profit journalism. “I just don’t want to have anything to do with it personally,” he said. Twenty years of investing have taught him the difficulties of starting companies even “when you have lots of wind blowing at your back.” And new media start-ups attempting serious journalism “have a ton of wind in their face. If there were a way for me to make money helping the citizens of Texas make better informed civic decisions, I’d do it,” the venture capitalist said, but “it’s just not going to happen.”

Ali said the success of Politico.com proves the value of “that constant feed of information, whether it’s news, whether it’s data, whether it’s gossip, video or whether they’re on TV or radio or print or anywhere else It’s the energy level that builds the business. It’s not journalism that builds the business.” Nobody thought that politics could be covered the blanket way that Politico.com does it. The next nut to be cracked is international journalism, he said. Ali grew his own company by getting information “any which way,” whether from SEC filings, interviews or other reporting. “Is it quality, is it journalism, is it this or that?” he asked. “Who cares, as long as the people that are reading us are getting (something) out of it?”

Jarvis asked how to attract advertisers to coverage of the state house or of foreign affairs. “Those are pretty insane things to do, aren’t they? They don’t bring with them good strong advertising business,” he said.

Balboni disagreed. Politico.com succeeded, he said because “John and his team built a brand that had energy behind it and it had damn good reporting, investigative report-

ing, breaking stories. People began to see that Politico did something that they weren't getting other places. So guess what? They started to migrate to his site." GlobalPost has landed such advertisers as Siemens, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Bank of America, Merrill Lynch and Intel. "It can be done, but it takes relentless focus and discipline," said Balboni. "You have to evangelize your product."

Jarvis brought the question back to the quandary for journalism schools. Should they try to equip students for entrepreneurial success within big, established companies, or encourage them to strike out on their own?

"Why do we have to pick? I think we should give our students the tools to go to all these different jobs," said Overholser.

With the break up of the news behemoths, "what happens to the notion of a career path in this sort of atomized cottage industry world?" asked Thornton. "Where will they learn their craft?"

Harris answered that there are career paths for those willing to take risks, like Politico's Mike Allen, who followed a conventional path from Virginia newspapers to the *Post*, *New York Times* and *Time* magazine, but left them to become the chief political correspondent at the start-up. Allen's "Playbook," an early morning summary of the day's big stories and a look ahead, has become must-reading in Washington. Allen ignored colleagues who repeatedly told him he was crazy to quit the *Post* or *Times*, but with each move he's increased the value of his personal brand, Harris said. "Now let's hope he doesn't surprise me one day and go off and start Mikeallen Inc.—but he could."

Thornton pointed out that Allen had gotten valuable training at those big newspapers. Harris acknowledged that fact, but said "if you work hard and play by the rules, you're going to get screwed. You've got to build your own brand." Overholser added that students "are going to be doing really unconventional things" in this new media world.

Ali asked, "If I were a journalism student right now, why the hell would I be thinking about working in a newspaper? That's the most depressing thing I could be thinking about." He acknowledged that PaidContent.org was owned by a newspaper company, the *Guardian*.

Jarvis asked the panelists to list in a few words the most important practical skills for students to learn and professors to teach.

Balboni: "Develop hustle and entrepreneurship." Stop dwelling on job losses and diminished prospects, and instead "face the reality as it is and make it work."

Overholser: "Be a collaborator" both with other reporters and the people in your community.

Harris: "Focus on your distinctive value ... and learn how to market that."

Ali: Develop expertise in a specialized topic. "This is the era of super specialization."



Rafat Ali

serving democracy. "A lot of what's out there that is called journalism doesn't actually serve democracy," she said.

Overholser responded that the public may be better served in this new era in which news organizations are cultivating better and closer relationships with audiences. This allows "people to have a voice who didn't in the golden days of journalism," she said.

To students who asked what they should study and specialize in, Overholser said, "We mustn't overstate the degree to which legacy media have collapsed." USC graduates are still finding jobs as broadcast journalists. It would be a mistake to say, "Sorry, we're just going to teach you flip cameras, no more."

Balboni said students should learn how to make broadcast quality video and not just "grainy, kind of jerky, YouTube" productions.

To a CUNY student who asked if there was a for-profit model for sustaining expensive investigative and international reporting, Balboni said, "I wouldn't give up hope on that." Balboni said GlobalPost today was running a five-part series "from the streets of Mogadishu and Somalia" and recently did "a multipart series on gay rights around the world reported from 30 different countries. So it can be done.... The opportunity for you as a young person to participate in that is very real."

Ali said that if he were "working on a long investigative piece, there would be multiple stories along the way. There'd be 50 things that I would be pushing on instead of waiting for the end product."

A Berkeley student asked whether the government should subsidize serious journalism.

Thornton responded, "My reaction to government intervention in journalism is just sort of, 'Eek!'" Given the precarious state of the federal budget, "it just ain't going

Thornton: "Hustle, hone a particular talent and be "promiscuous about how you monetize it."

Jarvis wondered if there were a larger role for journalism schools to play in this distressed landscape, from teaching unemployed journalists how to blog to incubating new media on their campuses. Ali suggested they could "become angel investors."

Kat Snow, who teaches at the University of California at Berkeley, voiced frustration about building public understanding of the role journalism plays in

to happen,” he added. But Thornton reiterated his strong belief that philanthropy can help. Thornton, who is married to a ballet dancer and has contributed large sums to the art, said dance companies in Texas raise half the \$40 million they spend each year. “If we had \$20 million of journalism philanthropy in Texas, in 10 years we would change the way state government operates,” he said.

Jarvis asked the students what they wanted their schools to be teaching about the business of journalism. A volley of answers came back: Computer programming. Technology skills. Marketing. Branding. How to beg for money. How to track Web traffic. Search engine optimization. How to make money from blogs.

“Good,” Jarvis concluded. “Our journalism schools now have our marching orders.”

III. Reaching the Audience in a Fragmented Media Landscape

Moderator: Andrew Golis, Editor of Blogs, Yahoo!

Panelists:

- ▶ Bill Adair, Founder, PolitiFact.com
- ▶ Ted Anthony, The Associated Press
- ▶ Rachel Davis Mersey, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
- ▶ Jack Wakshlag, Chief Research Officer, Turner Broadcasting System

Small or large, new or old, online, in print or on the air, every news organization faces the challenge of trying to connect with, hold on to and build its audience. Andrew Golis, editor of a soon-to-be-launched news blog at Yahoo! News, invited the panel to discuss “new models for audience.”

Bill Adair, whose political fact-checking Web site, PolitiFact.com, won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 2009, said people are following their interests to Web sites that aren’t tied to where they live. PolitiFact makes quick judgments on its “Truth-o-Meter” about politicians’ pronouncements; it also has an “Obameter” tracking the administration’s progress on more than 500 promises Barack Obama made during the presidential campaign. PolitiFact is a project of a regional newspaper, the *St. Petersburg Times*, which relies on the staffs of the *Times* and *CQ (Congressional Quarterly)* to sort truth from lies. Adair, who is chief of the newspaper’s Washington bureau, said people are trying to make sense of “this torrent of information ... and they want an honest broker who’s going to do their fact checking for them.”

Rachel Davis Mersey, an assistant professor at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, studies the identities people construct for themselves on social media platforms. She said people “have a lot of different social identities and choose media that help them strengthen those identities. People are using content to feel as

good about themselves as they possibly can.” People read the sports section, for instance, because it allows them to speak knowledgeably about the Chicago Bears when they’re at the office or the gym and earns them “social capital,” Mersey said. Journalists need to get accustomed to being “in the business of creating and curating content by knowing who’s on the other end,” she said.

“If everyone is using media to feel as good about themselves as possible, is there space for the hard story?” Golis asked Jack Wakshlag, the chief research officer for Turner Broadcasting System. Wakshlag answered in the affirmative. “We do a lot of research on how and why people watch the news,” he said. There are basically two types: those who pride themselves on knowing more than other people and the social connectors “who want to have something to talk about tomorrow.”

From where Wakshlag sits, the news business has never been better or brighter. That’s because there’s more to the news than the ailing newspaper business. “We’ve got 40 news bureaus across the world. Journalism is a great business for us. We’ve never made more money,” said Wakshlag, a former telecommunications professor. For CNN and its sister networks, “good journalism is good business,” he maintains.

One way CNN appeals to audiences is by respecting the diversity of the American population. That’s why the network goes to lengths to bring in diverse panels of commentators on the elections and other big stories. “It’s important for us to have African-Americans, Asians, women, people from all different parts of the country reflected and represented in the perspectives we display,” Wakshlag explained. “That’s a key part for making people feel socially connected.”



Jack Wakshlag, Rachel Davis Mersey, Ted Anthony, Bill Adair, Andrew Golis

Anthony said people aren't looking just for feel-good stories. AP is finding "that we can sell stories that do not make people feel good about themselves as long as we give them an entry point," he said. His company's ventures in social media show that people want to see what's happening behind the scenes.

Mersey said news organizations need to do a better job of listening and of packaging stories for different audiences. Too often they don't ask *why* people are watching or reading. "The 'why' is really what's going to help you invent the next generation of news," Mersey



Rabiah Burks, University of Maryland

Mersey. That woman "is not an engaged, committed reader" and she's not someone papers can readily sell to advertisers.

Wakshlag's advice to news organizations is that they cannot give their product away free on the Web and expect to eat. While CNN.com is free, he says, it sells ads based on getting 40 million visitors a month and also gets paid by TV and by cable operators.

Golis asked about building audiences for "real journalism" with "a certain edge to it."

Adair said PolitiFact is operating in such a space, between news and opinion, with its willingness to call politicians liars. "That's further than traditional news would take you," he said. "We thought our niche was to come in and, using the power of the Web and a whole new form of journalism, to go a step further than journalists had traditionally gone."

Wakshlag said journalists always have played the watchdog role. He wants networks to be more aggressive in calling out politicians on half truths, as CNN did during the last elections.

Journalists get tripped up by touting their "objectivity," Anthony said. "I prefer 'unbiased' because no one is completely objective. We all see the world through the prism of our background and experiences." He added that journalists do themselves a disservice "when we take great pains to pretend that our news is manufactured in a sterile environment" by computers. The audience wants "to see the cards. They want the hands above the table."

Golis asked how the supposedly staid AP is currently carving out its brand.

said. She described listening with other journalists to readers' comments in focus groups. The journalists "will pick up one thing: 'That lady said she liked the story I wrote on Tuesday.' But did you hear the other 55 minutes of her saying the paper is too heavy, I don't like how the newsprint comes off of my hands, I wish you would put the coupons back on Sunday, why did you drop my crossword puzzle?" said

"Audience is not one big glop for AP anymore," replied Anthony. The news cooperative is trying to be "a lot of things to a lot of different people" instead of just serving up "repurposed stuff" from members. The audiences for news have always been fragmented, he said, but "we just didn't know about it. We just weren't able to measure it. We talk about verticals. What did we call verticals 50 years ago? We called them the business section and the sports section."

Commenting on the fragmentation of audiences, Golis noted that *The New York Times* editor Bill Keller recently told the *New York Observer* that the *Times* no longer has the power to run a story on A1 "and define the debate for that week or that day the way that it used to."

But in those old days, said Adair, "when we were talking about defining the debate (it was) largely with middle-aged, middle-class white males." Wakshlag concurred, describing the newspaper audience of the 1950s as primarily white, male householders who read the paper on the way to work.

Adair gave an example of how "the democracy of the Web" helped PolitiFact debunk claims that millions of people turned out for the Tea Party rally in Washington in September 2009. PolitiFact got a tip that a bogus crowd photo was circulating on the Web and confirmed with the U.S. Park Police that the Tea Party crowd had not been as large as the photo showed. PolitiFact gave the photo a "Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire" label and enlisted help from PolitiFact readers to identify when the shot actually was taken.

"It took like two minutes," said Adair. In fact, the picture was from the 1997 Promise Keepers rally on the Capitol Mall. The debunking "went totally viral ... When you do something that matters or at least that people are interested in," it spreads. But he conceded it was much easier to get clicks on PolitiFact's story about a bogus photo than on Senator Mitch McConnell's analysis of the healthcare bill.

Mersey said that if news organizations want to reach young adults, they need to start telling government stories that matter to readers, like what stake 18- to 24-year-olds have in the healthcare debate.

Wakshlag believes the Web would make it easier for a lone reporter to break a big scandal like the Watergate story. He pointed out that it wasn't an American correspondent who uncovered election chicanery and protests in Iran, but the Iranian people themselves with their e-mails, Tweets and videos. "The beauty of the Internet from my perspective is that people can get as attached and deep as they want and fulfill the desires and the needs that they have," he said.

"But that also means they can avoid what they want," Mersey pointed out. "If you really believe that your job is to tell stories that deserve to be told, then your new challenge is to figure out how to get those people to read them."

Some people want stories from official sources and some want “more crowd sourcing,” said Mersey. “They’re not really interested in what Obama’s policy director said, but they’re interested in what people on the street said.” The same story can be told in different ways for different audiences, she added.

Golis asked if we are “moving into a culture where you have an information oligarchy” where 10 percent of people are obsessed with news and 90 percent have totally opted out.” It may always have been that way, Anthony suggested.

Wakshlag suggested there are more crossover viewers and readers than folks realize. Two-thirds of Fox News viewers watch CNN any given month, he said, and Fox’s audience reads a lot of newspapers and magazines as well. “I don’t think we should put these people in boxes,” he said. “People have these choices and they flip around a lot, which is actually a really good thing.”

An audience member Tweeted a question: How do news organizations figure out what readers and viewers want?

Wakshlag expressed skepticism about Google Analytics because the people who sign up to share information on their Web usage are self-selected. The three things he looks for are how many people come to a Web site, how often and how long they stay.

Mersey said that “in studying analytics, you’re only studying behavior. You’re not studying motivation.” That’s hard to do in the day-to-day news business, but it’s something that news innovators must consider.

The problem, said Wakshlag, is that people don’t know what motivates their choices, or don’t want to admit that they are watching pornography on the Web. “You’ve got to find smarter ways to figure out what people’s underlying motivations are,” he said.

Golis asked how AP integrates user information into its coverage. Anthony cited a Yahoo! experiment that involved blogging the Sonia Sotomayor confirmation hearings and analyzing which posts elicited the biggest audience response, then expanding on those behind-the-scenes reports. “That combination of the analytics and editorial judgment is something that we are very focused on these days,” said Anthony, who has overseen AP’s social media experiments.

Wakshlag cautioned that if decisions are made by what draws the most clicks, “you’re going to get bears falling out of trees and ... Britney Spears in

lingerie,” which is not what news is about. Anthony agreed, “That’s why editorial judgment is so important.”

Anthony, who reported from Iraq and Afghanistan for AP, said print journalists have a lot to learn “from the way visual stories are told. We’re constantly hammering into our writers: ‘Think more cinematically and show, don’t tell.’”

Another audience member asked, what about people who have no interest whatsoever in news?

That’s not my concern, said Wakshlag. “I don’t know that any of us feels we can change the appetite of Americans or the world for journalism.” What he aims for is “a bigger slice” of the existing pie.

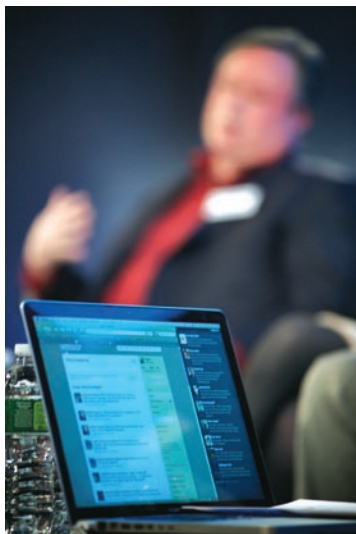
The audience might grow “if we did things differently,” said Mersey, a reporter before she turned to academe. “It would be a shame for us to think we can’t grow the pie.” Anthony agreed, saying, “It’s one of the fundamental strands of our DNA to try to bring more people into the conversation.” If news organizations accept that they cannot reach larger audiences, we’re waving a white flag, said the AP editor. Wakshlag also stressed the importance of attracting more readers and viewers under age 35.

Golis asked if the meritocracy of news from all sources on the Web will disappear if more sites put their content behind pay walls, as the Wall Street Journal does and The New York Times plans to do.

Wakshlag said there could be government grants and subsidies for the disenfranchised. “Newspapers were never free,” he noted. Wakshlag said he was fortunate to be in a business with healthy revenues on its television side. “If I had to only be a news and Internet news site, I couldn’t afford it ... You need to be a multiplatform business.”

Golis said the success of TalkingPointMemo.com (TPM)—a muckraking, liberal news site where he formerly was deputy publisher—shows that it is possible to build a profitable news operation starting with a small audience. Founder Josh Marshall raised \$100,000 in mostly small donations to launch the site in 2000 during the Florida vote recount. News organizations need to learn how to build those kinds of intimate, devoted readerships, he said.

Mersey admonished the journalists to remember that the average reader or Internet user “didn’t choose to go to journalism school. They’re not as interested in your subject as you are.” Following news is “not their natural instinct.” ■



Audience questions via Twitter

► Breakout Sessions

The conference offered the students and faculty a look at several news experiments and start-ups that could be models for newsrooms of the future. An adroit breaking news blog for The New York Times, crowd-sourced international news reporting, the Carnegie-Knight News21 experiment, a British newspaper's savvy approach to social media—all reflect fresh thinking about how journalists can and should ply their craft in a new age. Here is a closer look.

Newsroom 2020: The Skills That 21st Century Journalists Need

Discussion with:

- JEAN FOLKERTS, Dean, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina
- ED PILKINGTON, New York Bureau Chief, the *Guardian*

The session began with *Guardian* correspondent Ed Pilkington recounting how he used Twitter to gather information and sources in Haiti after the earthquake. Upon reaching Port au Prince, his main task was to “write what you see and try to convey the enormity of what you find. That part of my job was little different to the past.” But he also had a Blackberry in his pocket, and when a signal came to life after two days, he began sending Tweets from the back of a pickup truck while driving about town. “I Tweeted about seeing bodies in the street, about the comments of people living in tents” and later about being jolted awake by aftershocks.

“It was a very illustrative experience for me because it went ballistic. I got something like a thousand followers in a couple of days,” he said. Phones didn’t work in Port au Prince and “communications were diabolical,” but with Twitter he was in touch with 80 relief workers and others across Haiti. Readers sent him suggestions for stories and follow-ups. An American relief worker appealed to him for help with a group of orphans; he linked her to other aid groups with more resources.

But Pilkington told another story that suggested even more powerfully how social media tools can help reporters unearth stories that authorities would prefer to leave untold.

At the *Guardian* we’re being asked to think about how we relate to our readers, how we communicate with them, how we keep ourselves open to them, Pilkington explained.

He related how a colleague, Paul Lewis—once Pilkington’s intern—uncovered the true circumstances of a bystander’s death at a protest during a meeting of G20 leaders in London. The police initially said the middle-aged man, a street newspaper vendor named Ian Tomlinson, died of a heart attack and that the protest had delayed the arrival of emergency workers who might have revived him.

Lewis, who had been covering the protest, spent six days following up the story. He interviewed demonstrators at the scene, and later on Twitter, who offered eyewitness accounts. He collected snippets of information that made him suspicious of the police



Jean Folkerts, Ed Pilkington

version. The *Guardian* posted pictures on its Web site that also cast doubt on the official story.

The stories and pictures caught the eye of a New York investment banker who’d been on vacation in London, wandered into the protest and casually began shooting with his video camera as a line of riot police moved toward the demonstrators. His video clearly showed Tomlinson with hands in pockets walking away from the police when a helmeted officer struck his legs with a baton and roughly shoved him to the ground. Tomlinson sat up, said something to the police, got up in a daze, walked off. He then collapsed and died. After two parliamentary inquiries into the police handling of the protests, that officer is facing the possibility of manslaughter charges, Pilkington said.

Pilkington was asked his opinion of whether all the “noise” on Twitter and Facebook interferes with in-depth reporting. “Twitter is whatever anyone wants it to be,” he answered. In Haiti he saw how people used Twitter “in a very, very serious way” to get information available nowhere else. “There’s obviously a ton of noise around,” he said, but in Haiti people were desperate for news and they “were really, really grateful that I was out there putting out information.”

The New World of International News

Discussion with:

- NEIL HENRY, Dean of the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism
- KIRA KAY, cofounder of the Bureau for International Reporting
- KELLY GOLNOUSH NIKNEJAD, founder of Tehran Bureau

Neil Henry recalled his stint as Africa bureau chief for the *Washington Post* in the early 1990s. The job title sounded important, “but it was basically me covering 35

countries between Egypt and South Africa.” Now the situation is even worse, he said, with major newspapers and networks having shut their bureaus. A recent Pew study found that three-quarters of U.S. newspapers cut the space devoted to foreign news by more than 20 percent in the past three years. “Editors feel that American audiences just aren’t interested,” he added.

With America fighting two wars overseas and world events having a powerful effect on America and its citizens, “how are we going to get the news?” Henry asked. He then introduced two enterprising, independent journalists who are trying to fill this void: Kira Kay and Kelly Golnoush Niknejad.

Kira Kay is a former ABC News producer whose documentaries and other work have appeared on *Primetime Live* as well as *60 Minutes* and the PBS *NewsHour*. With a partner, she founded the nonprofit Bureau for International Reporting, which covers stories in remote lands and sells them to PBS, the *Dan Rather Reports* and other outlets. They do it with inexpensive cameras and compact lighting and edit the pieces themselves.

Kay quit ABC News after nine years “because I just wasn’t getting to do the stories that I’d gone into the business to do.” She had a masters in international relations and got a Fulbright grant to go to Southeast Asia. Later Kay received support from a Johns Hopkins University international reporting project to learn how to produce stories “almost completely on our own.” Her bureau retains the rights to its footage, and sells versions to different networks.

The Tehran Bureau is an independent, “virtual” news organization that connects journalists, Iran experts, and readers with news, opinion and analysis about Iran. It draws on the resources and expertise of the Iranian diaspora. Founder and editor-in-chief Kelly Golnoush Niknejad is part of that diaspora—she came to the United States at 17 and earned a law degree, then got a master’s from the Columbia School of Journalism. She founded Tehran Bureau out of her parents’ living room in 2008. The mainstream media weren’t interested in the stories she pitched, “so I just thought I’d do it myself.” She called it Tehran Bureau because that “sounded very journalistic,” Niknejad said, then started publishing stories on a blog and “it just took off from there.” The blog became a Web site that served as a forum for voices from inside and outside Iran, and ABC and the BBC World Service began quoting from its reports. In 2009 Tehran Bureau entered a partnership with *Frontline*, the PBS public affairs series that does investigative reporting on a global scale.

In its third year, the non-profit Bureau for International Reporting now has a budget of more than \$250,000. Eighty percent comes from grants (the Ford Foundation, Carnegie Corporation and the Compton Foundation are the major funders). The rest comes

from earned income, with public television and other networks’ paying the Bureau for stories they air and footage they license. Kay and her partner Jason Maloney paid themselves half-salaries last year but will draw full salaries this year for the first time. It’s half what they made as ABC producers, but Kay says it is enough to pursue their dream. They work from a home office in New York.

Niknejad launched the Tehran Bureau on a shoestring after moving back into her parents’ home in Newton, Massachusetts. She started with a free blog, then put up her “pro bono” Web site on Iran, which quickly gained a following and a roster of unpaid contributors. “Everyone knew I wasn’t making any money, so they didn’t expect any money from me either,” Niknejad said.

Her web site came under attack by hackers during its blanket coverage of the Iran protests. “We needed an expensive server to be able to withstand the attack and I asked people over Twitter for help to get a server up and money came pouring in,” she said. “It was amazing how generous Americans were.”

The arrangement struck with *Frontline* has put Tehran Bureau on somewhat firmer footing. Niknejad is still living in her parents’ home, but *Frontline* redesigned and is hosting Tehran Bureau and its stories on its own web site (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau>), and provides a salary, office, a phone and travel budget while she seeks additional support. The financial situation “is much better than it was, but we’re desperate for more funding,” Niknejad said in a phone call from Paris, where she was interviewing asylum-seeking journalists from Iran. Many of those reporters are in dire straits after fleeing their homeland, she said, “and if I had some resources, I could hire them.”

Henry told a student who asked how to become a foreign correspondent to “write, write, write” and then head out to gain expertise reporting in a particular corner of the world. “Once you get that sense of credibility and authority and understanding ... you can do things like Kelly and Kira are doing,” he said.



Kelly Golnoush Niknejad, Kira Kay, Neil Henry

Social Media and Journalism

Discussion with:

- ▶ J. MAX ROBINS, Vice President and Executive Director, The Paley Center
- ▶ ROBERT MACKEY, The Lede Blogger, *The New York Times*
- ▶ RACHEL STERNE, CEO, GroundReport.com

Max Robins said Rachel Sterne's Web site GroundReport.com "shows how citizen journalism can work and be incredibly compelling," while the breaking news blog, the Lede, written by Robert Mackey for *The New York Times*, is taking "one of the greatest institutions in journalism ... a step into the future."

GroundReport publishes stories from several thousand contributors around the globe, paying them modest amounts based on how many visitors click on those stories. Sterne, who came up with the site after interning for the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, said, "the idea is that we are democratizing the media playing field allowing everyone to have a voice."

GroundReport started with the notion that "user-generated content was the future and that you just open up the flood gates and everything would be amazing. The truth is, it's the complete opposite. Most user-generated content is terrible and you really need to hunt to find the best stuff," Sterne said. Now GroundReport has a "white list" of trusted, reliable contributors whose stories get posted immediately, while interns and volunteer editors review and approve copy from other sources.

The Irish-born Mackey is a former Web producer for NYTimes.com and fact-checker for the *Times's* Sunday Magazine. He's also written for the *Guardian* and produced television reports for the Associated Press and for a UN-sponsored television station during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

Mackey jumps on the biggest national and international stories of the day and remixes them with information gleaned from the Web, additional reporting and eyewitness accounts, photographs and video. He began The Lede a year ago and made his most significant contribution to the *Times's* news report on the night of the Mumbai attacks.

Like reporters in the field, Mackey said he has to sort through "a lot of chaotic information from people who maybe don't have that much to add and try to find those nuggets" that help readers understand what is happening. His experience as a magazine fact-checker comes in handy.

During the Mumbai attacks, "I was completely overwhelmed by people Tweeting about what they were seeing on CNN. It was to some extent useless," he said. But then he found a doctor who was in Mumbai visiting family and was posting informative updates on Twitter from near the scene of the attacks.



Robert Mackey, Rachel Sterne, J. Max Robins

Sterne said GroundReport's first news from Haiti came from nonprofit groups who had the only satellite phones and communications capability after the quake. She also got videos and updates from a Haitian photographer on Twitter. Getty Images was buying some of his shots, but "we gave his other work a space on GroundReport," she said.

When live blogging a breaking story, said Mackey, "what you're doing is transparently saying to the readers, 'Here's some of the conversation that's going on in the Web. It's not all of it and it's not necessarily the only thing that's important, but here are things we selected that you might be interested in finding out about.'" The links that people include in Tweets are often what he finds most valuable. "They're helping me edit the Web" and find things that are useful, he said.

Robins asked what social media tools and skills journalism students should be learning. "It's really tricky," said Stern. The tools and social media platforms she could single out today "in five years probably are going to be irrelevant."

The News21 Experience (www.news21.com)

Discussion with:

- ▶ JODY BRANNON, National Director, News21
- ▶ KRISTIN GILGER, Executive Director, News21, and Assistant Dean, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

Today News21 brings more than 90 of the nation's top journalism students together in temporary newsrooms at eight campuses to pursue in-depth reporting around common themes: religion in America, homeland security, politics and changes



Kristin Gilger, Jody Brannon

with the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley as administrator. Arizona State University and its Cronkite School took over as the base for News21 in 2009–10 when Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Knight Foundation renewed and expanded the Initiative, and Dean Christopher Callahan hired Jody Brannon, a veteran of the online news world, as the program's first full-time national director.

"I'm in charge of sending out smart, well schooled, deeply researched reporters" who are trained to tell stories in innovative ways online, in print, for broadcast and other media, Brannon explained. Their professors also get an opportunity "to stretch their muscles in new directions" in these experimental, multimedia newsrooms.

The newsrooms operated in 2006, 2007 and 2008 at Berkeley, Columbia University, Northwestern and the University of Southern California, and in 2009 at the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Arizona State University and Syracuse University as well. The program had 93 fellows last summer and a total of 132 in previous years. With this year's class, "we'll have more than 300 who are taught the News21 way," Brannon said.

Gilger said the preworkshop seminar is "the intelligence part" of the experiment and the news incubator "the action part." Columbia students, for example, were exploring aging by spending time this spring in seminars with a dermatologist and professors of health policy and social work, then taking to the field to investigate nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Meanwhile, Arizona State News21 students were being schooled on Latino issues, while in Maryland they were meeting with environmental scientists and an expert on poultry and green farming as they check out efforts to restore Chesapeake Bay.

Brannon showed video and slides of News21 fellows' work, including Columbia students' map of the explosive growth of charter schools that *U.S. News & World Report*

in demography. The students and their professors prepare for the task in semester-long seminars. During the 10-week summer reporting stint, which often involves extensive travel, professors, professional editors and Web programmers work as the students' editors and advisors. The students from 11 top journalism schools vie for the assignment, for which they receive \$7,500 each.

The project was launched in 2006

picked up and ran in its issue on high schools. There's "sophisticated thought" behind these projects and serious execution, but it's "also a heck of a lot of fun," she said.

Gilger said one current objective is to find ways to disseminate the lessons from this "on the edge, experimental journalism One of our goals is not to confine this to the 12 schools. We really want to get this idea out to as many journalism schools as possible."

Janice Castro, a Northwestern professor who oversees the Medill School's News21 program and fellows, said mainstream news organizations now are much more willing to use student-produced stories. When *Newsweek* used one student video on its Web site, an editor at the magazine told her, "You know, I wouldn't have even been talking to you last year, but everything has changed now and we want your online content in particular."

Thomas Patterson, research director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, also gave the audience a look at the center's new *Journalist Resource* Web site with tools for reporters and primers on issues from the environment to economics to social matters. To visit the site, which also features an instructor's guide for journalism educators, go to <http://content.hks.harvard.edu/journalistsresource/>

'A Way Forward'

There was no crepe hung on the news business during this Carnegie conference at the Paley Center. The conference title both framed and captured the mood: there actually may be some good news to report about the news business.

Some news start-ups are making headway, hiring reporters and editors and attracting audiences and advertisers. Some are led by news industry veterans like John Harris

who founded Politico to scratch an entrepreneurial itch, others by members of the digital generation like Rafat Ali, who are seizing opportunities from the decline of old media.

Some of these news innovators are in it for profit, while John Thornton, probably the only genuine venture capitalist in the business, has chosen the non-profit route for TexasTribune.org. He's operating from a conviction that serious coverage of government and public policy remains a money-losing proposition. Some journalists are pursuing their passions on a shoestring. Kelly Golnouch Niknejad turned her virtual Tehran Bureau blog and Web site into a place where the world looked for information during the street protests in Iran.



Dean Mills

And although jobs have disappeared and salaries are sliding, *Wall Street Journal* veteran Alan Murray is still thrilled to reach ten times more readers online than the printed paper ever reached. Editors and reporters, once resolutely aloof from, perhaps even disdainful of, readers have warmed to the two-way conversation.

It was exciting to hear, said Dean Mills, the Missouri School of Journalism dean, in his conference summary. Mills applauded the puncturing of the myth that an age had existed when everyone “read every golden word that journalists produced” and people were riveted by news from school board and city council meetings. The appetites of news junkies, he said, were subsidized by customers forced to buy the whole newspaper to get the crossword puzzles, sports pages and other features they really wanted. Audiences are now more fragmented and more diverse than ever, and gone is the day when all-powerful news organizations could presume to be sole holders of truth. As Geneva Overholser observed, the press is now being forced to give voice to people who have no voice.

Mills said it was especially heartening to hear Jack Wakshlag’s emphatic pronouncement that good journalism is good business. Indeed it is, Mills concurred, “if we are smart enough to bring people of all kinds—diverse audiences with) diverse tastes—the news and information and advertising that they want.” ■

Susan King

The Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education:

IMPROVING HOW JOURNALISTS ARE EDUCATED & HOW THEIR AUDIENCES ARE INFORMED

I’m reminded of an old newsroom saying—“Better to be lucky than good”—when I look back at the almost seven years of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Journalism Initiative. It began as a somewhat unfocused reaction to the wholesale worry about the state of journalism at the end of the 1990s. The Board of the Corporation and the then newly appointed president of the foundation, Vartan Gregorian, wanted to respond to what was seen as an increasingly entertainment-focused news business shedding its values and foreign news bureaus faster than it could stop the red ink.

The need for a democracy to be strengthened by a vital news business was the impetus for the Corporation’s initiative. After all, positive change cannot happen in school reform, the immigration system, in international affairs, nuclear nonproliferation, or the understanding of Islam—indeed, in almost any area of our national life or international relationships that lies within or beyond the scope of the Corporation’s work—unless vibrant news media engage the American public about the issues of this still-emerging century.

Since education is a foundational value and tradition at Carnegie Corporation, we decided to focus our initiative not on what was happening in U.S. newsrooms, but instead on what was happening within journalism schools at some of America’s most prestigious research universities. That was the lucky part of our decision-making: our focus on a “pipeline” strategy that would affect the next generation of journalists. By 2009, the upcoming generation of newsmen and newswomen was clearly more critical to the debate about the news business than the middle-aged “leaders.” The revolution in news via the Web was challenging the financial model of even America’s most

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secure newspapers, as well as transforming the entire way that the news is delivered, consumed, and produced.



There is an irony for me in the fact that Carnegie Corporation's journalism work began in Silicon Valley, where the Internet transformation was born, and that it took place at the home of Walter Shorenstein, who, already close to 90 at that time, represented the world of news as it was practiced in the last century. A successful businessman, Shorenstein has always been predisposed to the need for change. As a tribute to his daughter, well-respected CBS newswoman who died prematurely, he began the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University. It is both a teaching and research center and a think tank, and is led by Alex Jones, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter. The Shorenstein Center could be described as an institution at the pivot point of assessing the changing landscape of news.

In 2002, at Shorenstein's California home, Alex Jones and Orville Schell, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, assembled a few dozen deans to assess the state of the news business and to consider where it was heading as the digital challenge emerged. The deans felt they were attracting some of the smartest and most experienced students ever. But they feared that the "dumbing down" of the news business—particularly in local television news, but also network television—and the abandonment of basic beats by newspapers threatened their students' careers. They saw a crisis brewing in the opportunities available for their students and toyed with the idea of creating some university-based news business that could fill this serious-news lacuna with student-produced news and analysis.

Many times during the three years after the Shorenstein gathering, a handful of deans strategized with Gregorian and me to think about the future of news and the role that a journalism dean at a great university might play in the national conversation about changes in the news business. Gregorian, a former university president, believes that deans and other members of the academy must take on leadership roles in society. He challenged five of America's top journalism deans to become the nucleus for change in journalism education. This is the story of how a lucky strategy for changing journalism education has helped transform America's journalism schools and create an incubator for new forms of serious journalism.



Our conversations with deans began to frame a view of a journalism degree that demanded a higher quotient of intellectual pursuit along with the practical experi-

ence of producing news. In 2002, a dust-up at Columbia University, precipitated by Lee Bollinger, the University's new president, over selecting a new journalism dean, helped spotlight the need for subject depth in a journalism curriculum in addition to traditional skill-building. Too many schools of journalism continued to attract undergraduates who primarily wanted to take how-to classes to develop newspaper clips as well as radio and TV reels they could use to get a job. The emphasis on producing graduates ready to go out and get first jobs, rather than developing industry leadership, prevailed.

When Bollinger, a noted First Amendment scholar and lawyer, closed down the search for a new dean at the fabled Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, demanding that a dean must have the intellectual stature to lead a graduate program at one of America's most prestigious universities, he created headlines. There were guffaws and snickers that the academy was being pretentious about a business that had been built on the image of the hard-driving, hard-drinking, smart-but-maybe-not-schooled, "get me rewrite" reporter.

Carnegie Corporation did not want to enter into the age-old debate about whether journalism education demands intellectual rigor or is basically a skillbuilding experience. So Gregorian convinced McKinsey & Company to undertake a pro bono study of journalism industry leaders to assess their need for journalism school graduates. The industry was in the early throes of a changing business model. Journalism jobs in the twenty-first century were bound to be different than in the last century—how much different was not yet clear. But the survey emphasized three clear needs in the industry:

1. A need for analytical thinkers with a strong ethical sense, as well as journalism skills;
2. A need for specialized expertise: insights into medicine, economics, and other complex topics, and firsthand knowledge of societies, languages, religions, and cultures; and
3. A need for the best writers, the most curious reporters.

If executives still harped on the same old saw that journalism education was not critical to the business, there was also a growing realization that the majority of the recruits entering newsrooms were graduates of journalism schools. Also, the dismantling of newsrooms, which had gained steam by 2005, meant that new recruits were not getting shaped by the culture of major news organizations, but had to arrive with a sophisticated view of their profession and their work.

Training of new recruits and editorial redundancy were two items that did not survive tough economic times. Bill Keller, executive editor of *The New York Times*, had been skeptical that journalism education was the cure-all for producing better-educated journalists. However, during a panel discussion in New York in January 2008, and before an audience of two hundred journalism faculty and students, he described himself as a

“convert to the cause of journalism schools.” Keller confessed that if asked if he believed journalism schools were necessary a dozen years ago:

I would have said, “Journalism schools— ehh.” I didn’t go to a journalism school and we at the *Times* don’t hire people straight out of journalism school. We hire them from major newspapers where they’ve already had experience. [My advice would have been] ... follow the traditional route: go find a decent local or regional newspaper, apprentice yourself to that mythical grizzled editor who will teach you the skills and the values of journalism, build a body of work and learn by doing... [B]ut a lot of those local and regional newspapers no longer exist. Many of those grizzled editors have been bought out... Nobody has the time to take you under their wing and teach you basic stuff.

Keller admitted he now realizes that since so many people at his paper and others do spend time in journalism schools, “it matters that that time be useful.”

The report that McKinsey produced for the Corporation in 2005, *Improving the Education of Tomorrow’s Journalists*, supported Gregorian’s view that journalism as a profession is too important to leave to the vagaries of experiential learning. The report also surfaced the belief of editors and news leaders that students need an array of skills as well as intellectual opportunities to investigate the world. It reinforced the vision emerging from the Corporation that university-based journalism programs need to offer students multidisciplinary opportunities such as those that integrate the role of religion in geopolitics, examine the place of medical advances in influencing policy options, and look to history for context in international coverage. The world is changing at breakneck speed, and students need to know more.

Indeed, with every change in the news business, experienced, focused, specialized reporters are increasingly becoming the coin of the realm. Emerging as the news powerhouses are websites with deep coverage of specific topics like politics, health policy, business, arts, and international issues rather than “everyman” publications focused on broad topics. Along with innovation that requires Web skills, journalism schools have to be innovative in the kinds of subject courses they offer.



By the time the McKinsey study was complete, the Carnegie Corporation-sponsored conversations featured five prestigious universities and five leading journalism educators: Geoff Cowan, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California (USC); Orville Schell, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley; Loren Ghiglione, dean of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University; Nick Lemann, dean

of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University (Lemann was the dean chosen by Lee Bollinger following a task force report the University created to examine what was needed in a leader of a major research university’s journalism school) and Alex Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. These five crafted the three-pronged initiative that would win the backing of Carnegie Corporation and, just as importantly, the Knight Foundation.¹ Eric Newton, vice president for the journalism program at the Knight Foundation, participated in the intense meetings during which the initiative was shaped. The deans put together a proposal for grant funding that emphasized:

1. The Corporation’s priority of curriculum enrichment;
2. An experimental learning lab—the News21 Incubators—that would, under the leadership of professors, dig deep into content learning while producing new forms of storytelling; this focus on innovation is a Knight Foundation priority;
3. Creation of the Carnegie-Knight Task Force, which would give the deans a leadership platform for research and for making policy-focused recommendations and statements about the news media.

Knight’s president, Hodding Carter, joined Vartan Gregorian in New York for the launch of the multimillion-dollar program in 2005. By 2008, with the involvement of Carter’s successor, Alberto Ibarguen, the initiative grew from the five original deans² who helped create it to include representatives of twelve universities. Along with USC, Berkeley, Northwestern, Columbia, and Harvard’s Shorenstein Center, the other institutions that joined the initiative as full players are the College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin; the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland; the Missouri School of Journalism, University of Missouri; the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University; and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University.

A strategy, initially conceived by the Corporation to change journalism education with a few select, well-respected schools, became a strategy encompassing geographic

¹ Three reports have been produced by the Corporation to capture the evolution of the industry at a time of change: *The Business of News: A Challenge for Journalism’s Next Generation* (2002), *Journalism’s Crisis of Confidence: A Challenge for the Next Generation* (2006), and *Journalism in the Service of Democracy: A Summit of Deans, Faculty, Students and Journalists* (2008).

² Throughout this article, in referring to the five deans who helped to create the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, I am including Alex Jones, whose title, as noted earlier in the text, is actually director of the Joan Shorenstein Center at Harvard. Jones’s pivotal role in the early conversations about journalism education and his leadership of an important journalism-focused Center made him a valuable addition to this leadership team of deans.

diversity, private and public universities, and the strong, collaborative voices of top journalism school deans.



When the Carnegie Corporation challenge to journalism deans began, it was not envisioned as a long-term grant-making strategy. It was a call to action by prominent deans to take leadership in this moment of change in journalism and to make a difference. Once the discussions became serious and the deans outlined an action plan, Gregorian promised two years of funding but insisted that the president of each university underwrite the third year of the proposal from their own discretionary funds.

This grant condition was not intended to be a simple “matching funds” component, but rather a way to involve the university presidents—and involve them deeply, since it demanded a financial commitment on their part. Gregorian made trips to each of the first five campuses and won the presidents’ endorsements, which were followed up by a commitment in writing from each president. Gregorian believed strongly that university presidents often saw the journalism schools—no matter how excellent their reputations—as cash cows that did not need their attention and support. Gregorian wanted to change that perception, and when the next seven schools were invited into the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education, the presidents eagerly agreed to participate and cover the entire costs of the third year. By then the initiative had become prestigious and the presidents wanted their journalism schools to be members of this major change effort. That the dozen deans now involved in the initiative continue to meet twice a year on each other’s campuses, and that the president of the university serving as the venue for the gathering always speaks to the assembled group at a dinner, is clear indication that these presidents are involved in the success of the venture.

But assessing other elements of the initiative is not so easy. The fall of 2009 marked the fifth year that journalism students were able to benefit from the change their deans have nurtured. However, it must be noted that some schools have benefited more than others. Some interdisciplinary, integrative courses have made a major impact on campuses, others not. News21, a summer powerhouse for students and professors alike, has yet to change the culture of experimentation across the entire curriculum. The revolving door of deans—the turnover is more rapid than we expected when we began—has meant many restarts and the need to get new leaders invested in a strategy they did not create or a grant for which they cannot take credit.

The University of Texas won a renewal for its curriculum work around covering the Latino community, an effort enriched by a strong partnership with three well-respected centers at the University: the Center for Mexican American Studies, the Brazil Center,

and the Lozano-Long Institute of Latin America Studies. The additional funding led to expansion of this work. Seeing the power of these “bridges” across the campus, Roderick Hart, dean of the College of Communication, and Tracy Dahlby, the new director of the School of Journalism, decided to create deeper relationships and new courses with other leading centers at the University. They call their renewal strategy The 21st Century Journalism Challenge: Bridging Campus, Community, and the Digital Media Divide.

The University added courses that take advantage of the resources of many of its most significant campus centers and departments. One new course, Practicing Investigative Reporting in a Globalizing World, involves the faculty of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, with its emphasis on both state politics and geopolitics. All new courses will involve challenging, rigorous curricular changes and will encourage students to produce reporting projects that will feature the University’s newly upgraded news service, CapTex, a service offered to news organizations across the state.

With a new head of the University’s journalism school, there was new energy and a willingness to lay out markers for metrics that could try to measure the power of these curricular changes—not an easy thing to evaluate and not a well defined goal when we began in 2004–2005. Nonetheless, Dahlby outlined metrics that included measuring student demand, campus-wide involvement of UT Austin faculty and departments, industry involvement, and reader/viewer/listener comments on the CapTex website.

Those metrics were welcomed, but further tweaked by Lorraine Branham, the new dean at Syracuse’s S.I. Newhouse School. Branham was well versed in the opportunities presented by curriculum enrichment grants; she had joined Syracuse University after leading the first phase of UT Austin’s curriculum enrichment work as director of the School of Journalism. Reviewing the curricular experiments at the Newhouse School, Branham put her leadership behind one of the two experiments. Although legal reporting is a staple in many schools and such a program, with Carnegie Corporation funding, had been initiated as a new minor in 2006, it had not attracted enough students. Branham therefore decided to replace that minor with a science partnership that emphasized climate warming and the environmental sciences. A second minor, also instituted with Carnegie Corporation support, focused on journalism and religion, featuring challenging courses in the geopolitical dimensions of religious thought; it, too, did not attract as many students as hoped. Nevertheless, Syracuse continued to develop the minor, believing it was a strong offering that could set the school apart.

The University of Missouri also received a renewal of its curriculum enrichment grant in June 2009 and decided to continue its emphasis on arts reporting, one strand of specialization that the journalism school had not been able to offer students before the Corporation provided support. Student involvement and faculty participation

throughout the campus fine arts and performing arts schools were high, and Missouri was already certain that this incubated curriculum specialization would continue after Corporation funding ended.

When Ernie Wilson joined USC's Annenberg School as dean in 2007, he found that the initiative's support offered him the opportunity to encourage deans at other USC schools to collaborate. Following the University of Missouri's lead, Wilson wanted to strengthen USC's arts offerings since the University is known for its creative schools, like the USC School for Cinematic Arts. A new master's program was already under way as a result of the first round of funding, but Wilson wanted a sweeping campus-wide relationship with other schools. With the ability to offer Carnegie professorships to collaborating professors and formal cross-school courses, Wilson was able to negotiate an important interdisciplinary strategy early in his deanship.

The master's degree program in specialized journalism (the arts) is a partnership with the five art schools at USC: the Roski School of Fine Arts, Thornton School of Music, and the Schools of Theatre, Architecture, and Cinematic Arts. Tim Page, a Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic, was recruited to teach two courses in the new program: Arts Writing Practicum and Arts Criticism and Commentary. After the first year, the number of students who enrolled in the M.A. program has almost quadrupled. As Sasha Anawalt, director of arts journalism programs at the USC Annenberg School, puts it: "[Students] are learning to write well from Tim Page.... Good writing that contains original thinking and is inspired by exciting, solid ideas is—and will mostly remain—the program's bedrock."

Two schools turned to a less integrated strategy for offering their students exposure to the great minds at the university. At Berkeley, a course called Key Issues focused on a series of three big ideas each semester and was taught by major professors on campus who each lecture for a month. Each semester, the subject matter was chosen in light of major news events in the political or policy world. It was deemed so successful a way to expose their students to big ideas that Key Issues is now a required course at Berkeley's two-year graduate program.

Neil Henry, the new dean at Berkeley, was a professor who taught a course the first year of the Carnegie Knight initiative on African reporting that emphasized interdisciplinary collaboration. His interests allowed him to recruit a professor from the Center for African Studies at Berkeley. He became a total convert to the idea of team teaching and what it offered students and journalism professors in terms of depth and insight. Henry's leadership as dean reflects that commitment to deeper content learning.

The Merrill College of Journalism at Maryland created a similar course, called the Carnegie Seminar, that also changes topics each semester. The students have taken on

serious material, from Islam to nuclear proliferation. Some students, though they speak highly of the quality of the lectures, complained that the complexity of the subject matter made the course tough going. The professors confessed that they learned much about the need to communicate difficult ideas more clearly, especially because it is journalists who frame these issues for policy discussions.

Deb Nelson, who runs the seminar and the one-credit journalistic practicum connected with it at Maryland, has continued to choose topics that resonate with major news events. The course for 2009 focused on economics, and was so popular it was oversubscribed. Nelson, determined to keep the seminar culture of the course, and in order to offer the journalism students an intimate opportunity to interact with some of the University's star professors, found a "very large table" to maintain the seminar format.

Jean Folkerts, a new dean at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, came to her position predisposed toward interdisciplinary curriculum. She believes journalism schools sometimes create rigid boundaries around the forms of journalism: documentaries, dailies, magazine writing, and multimedia, among others. She wants to keep the skill-building as a critical component in assignments students produce while also promoting deeper learning in specialized subjects. She plans to do so by exposing students to the richness and culture of other schools and other departments, including business, public health, and law.

Within a relatively short time, Folkerts feels the University has already broken down walls in this respect. Professors in the department of energy frontier research who saw this past summer's News21 student reporting projects—which had emerged from the new interdisciplinary coursework—asked to partner with the journalism school on solar power experiments not only on campus, but also within the Research Triangle area. "This is a connection to an important initiative on the UNC campus and in the region and I think fulfills expectations of introducing a higher level of intellectual capacity into the journalism curriculum," Folkerts reports.

Two interdisciplinary courses developed in the last year with the Kenan-Flagler Business School at North Carolina drew strong student attention in both the journalism and business school. Both courses focused on "of the moment" issues, Digital Media Economics and Behavior and Leadership in a Time of Change. The linking of business majors with journalism majors created unintended outcomes beyond the dynamic discussion from different perspectives. Extracurricular collaboration meant that when the Kenan-Flagler Business School mounted its annual Leadership Day, which features successful entrepreneurs and senior Fortune 500 executives, the journalism students were invited as well. The emphasis on entrepreneurship was also recognized by the

University's vice chancellor for research and economic development, who committed supplementary funding to support a research study of the media's handling of entrepreneurship over the past ten years.



Convinced that the intellectual capacity of journalism education will make the difference in the future, Folkerts has partnered with Nick Lemann, dean at Columbia, to produce a strategy for change in graduate journalism education. It will create clear standards for what is taught and what is learned by a student earning a master's degree in journalism, building on the boldest experiment under way in journalism education. At Columbia, a new M.A. in journalism requiring a mastery of politics, business, science, or culture and the arts is being offered along with the usual M.S. in journalism, which focuses on journalistic techniques.

This attempt to define graduate journalism education echoes the work a century ago of Abraham Flexner, who, with support from another Andrew Carnegie-founded institution (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) investigated medical schools in the United States and Canada. He called for an overhaul that set medical education in a new direction. As a result, many medical schools that did not have the intellectual capacity closed, but the standards developed during that time, and the focus on clinical practice, led to the superior reputation of American medical training. Flexner's success presents itself as a challenge to this current journalism reform movement, although it is not a perfect analogy. Unlike doctors, journalists do not need a certificate to practice their craft; but like doctors, they need theory and practice.

Folkerts and Lemann know that the marketplace will determine the real success of the change that is under way. Lemann tracks his new M.A. journalism students each year to document the opportunities they are finding in journalism. The results have been encouraging, with more than 80 percent of each new graduating class securing important, rather than simply entry-level jobs. Many have entered the brave new world of the Web, where their focus on deeper learning gives them an edge. Both Folkerts and Lemann also believe that a clear declaration of what it means to obtain a Master's degree in journalism will signal to students and the industry that not all degrees are equal.

Since 2005, when this \$16 million experiment in journalism education reform began, the criticism has been that it is an elite strategy, housed more at centers of graduate work and not where most new journalists emerge. If the strategy of change works, the ideas that emerge from the dozen members will spread wider and influence how journalism is taught across the country, particularly to undergraduates.

Tom Fiedler, the new dean of the College of Communication at Boston University, knows intimately the curricular experiments that are under way across the country. After a thirty-year career at *The Miami Herald*, from reporter to executive editor, with a Pulitzer Prize on his résumé, Fiedler spent a year at the Shorenstein Center. While there, he, along with Wolfgang Donsbach of Dresden University, produced a midterm report on curricular change under way since 2005 at the Carnegie-Knight universities.

As a new dean, Fiedler brought a determination to create a department that was an incubator for change and that echoed what he learned in his report for the Shorenstein Center. Fiedler was so influenced by learning about Flexner's strategy in changing medical schools that he borrowed the idea of that "clinical practitioner," who had transformed medical education from one of theory to one that was both theory and practice. Fiedler established a position of clinical professor of journalism and hired a former Boston investigative reporter who could take advantage of the assets of the University and produce serious news for the Massachusetts community with the help of student research and know-how.

Fiedler, recently out of the news business himself, believes that it is crucial for universities to experiment with both interdisciplinary learning and new journalistic forms. It is this experimentation that he thinks will sow the seeds of success for both journalism education and the news industry.



Rich Gordon, associate professor at the Medill School of Journalism, has been experimenting since 2005 with the idea of interdisciplinary education at Northwestern University. Although he found the News21 incubators to be exciting opportunities for students, he does not believe the real innovation in journalism education resides there. He believes the innovation can be found in the way professors think and teach ideas to a new generation of students.

Gordon may be an apt spokesperson for what it means to change the way journalism is taught at a respected research university, having been involved in three different educational experiments at Northwestern. As a result, he has a good sense of what works and what does not. He acknowledges that all three experiments "jump-started" the kind of curricular changes needed to get students ready for a different profession.

His first foray into curricular change came in 2005, when he created an interdisciplinary, team-taught course that was a prelude to the summer News21 incubator. The seminar focused on the idea of "privacy, liberty, and homeland security—not a simple narrative thread that the mainstream media would naturally cover, or do well, and therefore a topic that needed experimentation," says Gordon. By crossing disciplines, students learned the issues from different perspectives, paying attention to the areas where they intersected.

Gordon argues that this combination led students to ask better questions and follow story lines that were not clearly evident in the post-9/11 world—in other words, story lines that were innovative. That summer, one Northwestern student's discovery that the Department of Education in the Bush administration was mining student loan databases for terrorist suspects made national headlines. The seminar also morphed into something broader. Northwestern has won a grant to create an entire track focused on national security issues. A minor is now being offered to graduate and undergraduate students around the issue of national security and liberty, and scholars are examining how audiences respond to this important but sometimes difficult-to-understand news subject.

Next, Gordon co-taught a course on statistics that he wanted to be “relevant, not watered down” for journalists, and that attempted to give them a foundation in the quantitative method. “It wasn't successful,” Gordon says flatly. He gave up on the course, although Medill is still trying to craft one that will ground students in the important questions around statistics.

This past spring, Gordon created a new course on network theory with Northwestern professor Noshir Contractor, who holds a joint position in the Schools of Engineering, Business, and Communication. “It's a hot area of academic research in almost every discipline but not in communication and journalism,” says Gordon. But it is a course, he insists, that makes “a strong case for curricular innovation.” He believes this kind of interdisciplinary thinking offers students windows into the new world they will navigate, and therefore is even more valuable than the hands-on experience of the News21 incubators.

For Gordon, these three curricular experiments show the power of interdisciplinarity as well as its shortcomings. As he put it, the initial seminar on privacy, liberty, and homeland security “is living on”; the statistics course taught us “what not to do”; and the network theory course, in its first iteration, “will have an impact on our curriculum beyond the grant.”

What all these experiments in curriculum across campuses have in common is that they stretched the faculty, borrowed talent outside the journalism school, and, in an interdisciplinary fashion, approached subjects in new and experimental ways.



From the very beginning, Carnegie Corporation's call for journalism education reform has been focused on a vision: a vision of journalism that exists to serve the public, a vision that is about deep thinking, and a vision dedicated to telling the unfolding drama of today's history in a context that will keep the nation's electorate informed and prevent it from being manipulated. That vision is also based squarely on the idea that the university should serve as the centerpiece in the process of developing reporters, edi-

tors, and producers who want to tell the stories of their times; who want to help ensure the freedom of the American public; and who expect to become members of a profession worthy of its First Amendment privileges. It demands leadership from two university players: the president and the journalism dean.

That vision has driven our initiative, and it will be the key factor for judging the initiative in the future. We do not expect each and every grant to reveal a picture of a renewed world of journalism education. We *do* expect that the twelve deans, and the twelve university journalism institutions that have accepted the mantle of leadership in the Carnegie-Knight Initiative, will rise to the challenge by demanding more of their students, more of their faculty, and more of the industry. We ask ourselves each year, and we continuously ask the deans: a dozen years from now, what difference will this initiative mean to those who follow?

Over the next few years, we will not be supporting the deans with further grant funding. To continue its push for change, the Corporation has instead decided that it will use the convening power a foundation possesses to bring deans and their faculty together to examine the experiments under way on their campuses, to evaluate the News21 incubators to see if they are producing new ideas for storytelling that can serve the business, and to assess changes in the industry. Recently, the Corporation supported a few targeted research projects that are looking into the critical changes under way in the business models of news. Foundations do not make things happen, the people and institutions that they support do.

The Corporation will also rely on a few of the deans to take leadership roles in thinking about the future. Christopher Callahan, the dean of the Walter Cronkite School at Arizona State, has agreed to lead the three-year expansion of News21. (At the time of the renewal of the Corporation grant, in order to better serve all twelve members of the initiative, eight campus incubators were created that drew students from all twelve campuses, and Callahan assumed leadership of the experiment now involving more than ninety students each year). Callahan has also begun searching for a sustainable model to cover costs after 2011.

As mentioned above, Columbia's Lemann is leading a small group with North Carolina's Folkerts to set standards for what a graduate degree in journalism should mean. Alex Jones has already stated that the work on journalism education is important enough that it will become a permanent part of the Shorenstein Center's work, which, until this point, has focused more on professional journalists than the “pipeline”: a Web-based journalistic resource focused on issues will be open to all journalism professors and students.

We believe that the dozen deans now in the leadership seat at the twelve universities participating in the journalism initiative have an opportunity that few before them have

had. They have a spotlight, they have standing, they have a community of like-minded deans who are not sleepwalking through accreditations and boring debates over how to teach on the “new” digital platforms. These deans have the chance to respond to the findings of the McKinsey report that began our initiative and to justify their role in building the news business of the future. They know that new journalists have to be smarter, better educated, more nimble and entrepreneurial than their predecessors if they are going to make it in a business in which the future is just being written.

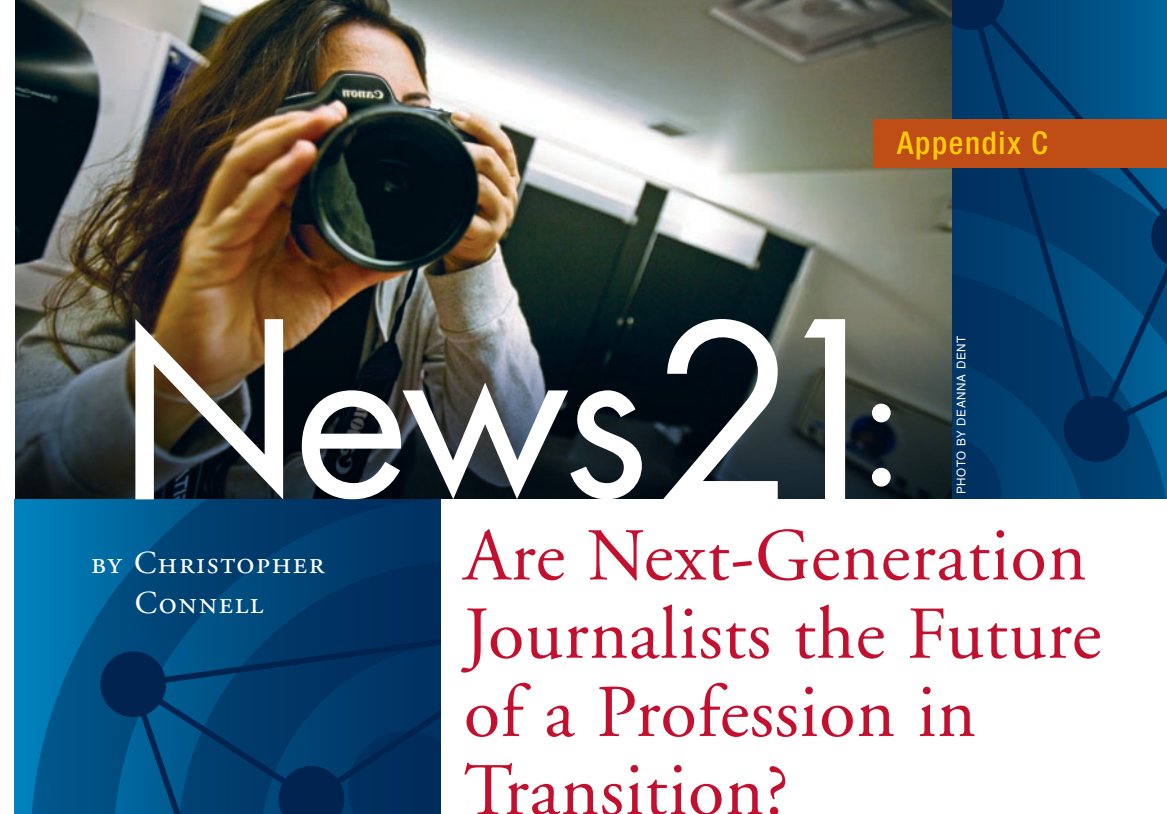
We believe deans at journalism schools should have the same clout with the industry as deans from business schools and medical schools have with their professions. Clearly, articles like this that focus on the changes under way erase what was perhaps an unfair reputation about most journalism programs: that they are bastions of old timers who tell stories about the way it used to be in the golden age of journalism. I have found an energy in these twelve schools that are led by men and women who care deeply about the business and who, unlike many of their colleagues working today in the news business, have the luxury of being able to take risks. They are preparing their students for a new world of news, and although no one can say what that world will look like, most of the faculty are anxious to experiment with new forms as long as the journalistic values of information, evidence, analysis, and ethics are not compromised.

Market forces are eroding, reshaping, and changing the news business at a frantic pace, and the thoughtful, long-term thinking that exists in foundations often does not match the heartbeat of change under way in the commercial media. But degree-granting institutions like journalism schools do not turn on a dime to embrace change, and for that reason, they are good partners with foundations. By definition, universities must constantly renew themselves, and although they are in constant motion preparing for the next semester, they also always have their eye on the next decade.

The real results of the Corporation’s work in journalism will be seen a decade from now, when the graduates of these institutions (and graduates of other institutions challenged by our vision) are making the decisions about news. I do not know if these graduates will be making the decisions in great newspaper newsrooms, at small international documentary start-ups, in daily, city-focused Internet websites, or at their personal laptops connected to some virtual news “way station.” But I do expect them to be defining the news that I read, watch, and hear. And I expect that news to be more informative, more multilayered, and more interactive than it is today. ■

SUSAN KING

*Vice President, External Affairs and Program Director, Journalism Initiative,
Special Initiatives and Strategy*



BY CHRISTOPHER
CONNELL

Are Next-Generation Journalists the Future of a Profession in Transition?

It’s 7:35 a.m. on the beach in Lincoln City, Oregon, and the mellifluous Roger Robertson, morning host on KBCH AM 1400, is on the air with “a couple of young gentlemen” who have come a great distance. “News21 is the program that they are with. Phil and Andrew, you guys are from where?”

“Roger, we are coming here from Syracuse, New York,” replies Phil Tenser, a freshly minted broadcast journalism graduate from Syracuse University.

“On purpose?”

“On purpose, yeah,” says Tenser. “We’re here to study youth and technology as part of a national project. We are sponsored by the Knight Foundation and Carnegie Corporation. We are trying to study youth and technology and tell the stories in ways that will also help inspire the future of journalism.” That may sound presumptuous for someone ten days out of college, he allowed, but given the parlous state of the economy and the news business, “you can’t avoid it.”

Tenser and partner Andrew Burton aren’t just being interviewed. They are filming Robertson and the KBCH studio with a flip cam and taking photographs, all the while soliciting listeners to contact them with stories. Before the sun sets over the Pacific, they

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will have posted on the Internet a blog, pictures, video and sound from their 25 minutes on air with the Larry King of this stretch of coastal Oregon. And they were not alone. They were part of a larger army of 93 News21 fellows who fanned out across the country from eight campuses with high def cameras, sound recorders, laptops, iPhones and other devices in search of that elusive future for their beleaguered profession.

News21 is a multi-million dollar experiment by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the James S. and John L. Knight Foundation to determine if these next-gen journalists can awaken interest in news where their elders have failed, and to do so first by studying in depth important issues—liberty and security; the role of religion in American life; the country’s dramatically changing demographics—and then spin out stories with all the multimedia tools that the digital age has to offer. Their work can be viewed at www.news21.com.

A crippling recession has created further hardships for an industry that was already in a tailspin. Venerable newspapers such as the *Rocky Mountain News* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* have folded, and big city dailies from Los Angeles to Minneapolis to Chicago to Philadelphia to Hartford are in bankruptcy. Tens of thousands of reporters and editors have lost their jobs. News operations that closed foreign bureaus to pinch pennies now are retreating from covering the nation’s capital. The august *New York Times* had to sell both classical radio station WQXR and its glittering, new skyscraper to keep the wolves at bay. News magazines struggle with their own anorexia, while entertainment news and vituperation dominate the airwaves.

Elevating Journalism’s Place in the Academy

A profound belief that democracy cannot thrive without good journalism initially led Carnegie Corporation President Vartan Gregorian and Vice President Susan Robinson King to reach out to journalism deans and presidents of five leading universities—Columbia University, Harvard University, Northwestern University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Southern California (USC)—to consider how to bolster the education and practice of journalism. Later the Knight Foundation joined the effort, and the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education was formally launched in 2005. By revitalizing the curricula and intellectual quotient at journalism schools, they sought to ensure that a new generation of well-trained reporters, editors, producers and ultimately news executives would rise up to sustain the media’s role as democracy’s watchdog. Not incidentally, the deans also hoped to win new respect for their schools within the academy and from the industry that hires their graduates.

Their principal tool for gaining this leverage would be News21, a summer laboratory showcasing the talents of their top students. The deans of the four journalism schools

and the director of Harvard University’s Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy would select the summer’s topic a year in advance, and each journalism school would arrange a seminar for fellows to study that issue in depth, with faculty drawn from across university disciplines. The fellows—ten from each journalism school and four from Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government—would be paid \$7,500 stipends to report and produce their stories over an intense ten weeks on the road and toiling on campus under the guiding hand of faculty and professional editors and web designers.

The number of fellows doubled in the summer of 2009 after seven more top tier journalism schools were welcomed into the News21 tent. Newsrooms were opened at Arizona State University, the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina and Syracuse University, while the three other newcomers—the University of Missouri, University of Nebraska and University of Texas—joined Harvard in contributing fellows to the eight test beds.

Emphasis on Innovation

From the start, the News21 fellows have faced two daunting challenges: to come up with stories of national importance and to tell them in ways that break the mold of traditional news media. The deans regarded innovation and invention as the higher priority. “The experimental was the most important side of this. Otherwise, it was just a really rich, pleasant internship program,” said Alex S. Jones, the Shorenstein Center director. Geoffrey Cowan, former dean of the Annenberg School at the University of Southern California, said he envisioned News21 as the journalism school equivalent of an engineering school laboratory, only this one “would be about inventing what journalistic storytelling could be like.”

Former Berkeley journalism school dean Orville Schell, another of the original deans, had a practical objective in mind, too. He was dismayed at the paucity of openings in the broadcast news business—a particular strength of Berkeley’s—and believed News21 could help fill that void. “I’d been sitting at too many meetings where people lamented that the serious media were melting away before their eyes,” said Schell, now Arthur Ross Director of the Asia Society’s Center on U.S.-China Relations. “There were big gaps in the journalistic food chain, like a salmon run with no salmon ladders.”

Knight Vice President Eric Newton coined the moniker for the experiment. News21 is short for News for the 21st Century: Incubators of New Ideas. These would be stories reported and told in 21st century ways—such as using Adobe Flash to stream audio, video and slide shows—and the storytellers themselves were mostly 20-somethings, speaking to their own generation, accustomed to getting news online, not from newspapers, and tuned more to *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and the *Colbert Report* than to

the nightly news or *Meet the Press*. Back in 2005, some news leaders thought all the talk about how the digital revolution would transform the industry “was crazy, but if you look at where we are today, we weren’t crazy enough,” said Newton. “We were moving in the right direction, but no one had an appropriate sense of urgency.” USC’s Cowan observed, “We didn’t know that old journalism would collapse, but we knew how important new journalism would be.”

The deans had chosen as News21’s first topic the difficult balance in post-9/11 America between keeping the country safe and protecting civil liberties. While all pursued stories clustered around that theme, the fellows at the different test beds did not then and have never since functioned as a single army under joint command. Cowan, one of the framers, had expected that they would operate as one large investigative unit, à la the students that Ralph Nader attracted to Washington for his “Nader’s Raiders” exposés.

The 2006 fellows scored remarkable successes in getting their stories in major newspapers and on national television broadcasts. They landed a string of big stories about privacy and security in *The New York Times* and the Associated Press as well as on the PBS *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* and CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360°*. The Columbia fellows followed the money trail from the post-haste creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Northwestern’s Laura McGann made headlines with an exposé on how the FBI was sifting through college students’ financial aid records. Other fellows

from Northwestern’s Medill school produced eye-catching reports on how government and industry digitally tracked citizens’ digital transactions. The USC Annenberg fellows examined the social impact of stepped-up enforcement of immigration laws. And the Berkeley fellows sent four teams of reporters around the world to capture glimpses of the everyday lives of young soldiers and sailors serving in U.S. peacekeeping missions in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa, at bases across the Middle East, in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan and near the demilitarized zone in South Korea. *Anderson Cooper 360°* devoted a full hour to the documentaries produced by three of Berkeley’s teams.

Bob Calo, a Berkeley senior lecturer who directed its News21 newsroom in 2006 and 2007 and was the national director in 2008, remembers telling his graduate students not to approach their interview subjects like some “network fancy pants,” but as peers. “We wanted to do a narrative experiment and come up with a fresher and different way to report on the military. Most of the soldiers serving in places like East Africa and Kyrgyzstan are young and so was my staff of reporters,” said Calo, a veteran television news producer. “Instead of having that Ted Koppel conversation—‘Young man, where are you from and how do you feel?’—these were 27-year-olds looking at each other across a cultural divide.”

From News21 to Newsweek

Katie Connolly, a fellow from Harvard, was on the team that journeyed to South Korea to report on how efforts to downsize and transform the U.S. military were playing out on the peninsula. “Bob Calo really emphasized innovation to us,” she said. “That was in the forefront of our minds: how do we tell the story in a way that *The New York Times* wouldn’t?” Connolly, a trade policy wonk from Australia, wasn’t thinking about journalism when she enrolled at the Kennedy School. But she caught the bug from News21, landed a job at *Newsweek* and spent all of 2008 on the campaign trail covering John McCain. Connolly, now a political reporter in *Newsweek*’s Washington bureau, said, “I came back from News21 thinking, ‘This is the coolest job ever. You get to talk to interesting people and learn about fascinating topics and go to really cool places.’”

She also learned how to “craft an interesting narrative out of a boring policy topic like military transformation...It was actually the knowledge component that has been the most useful for me because I am a print journalist now, not a multimedia journalist. All the stuff I learned was fun and great, but I haven’t had to use a video camera or Flash or anything like that since.”

Aliza Nadi and Cerissa Tanner, who followed the rock band Hello, Dave, on a USO tour across the Middle East, became TV news producers at *Dateline NBC* and *Current TV*. Nadi said, “News21 was a fantastic opportunity to go beyond what we learned in grad school, take risks in our storytelling, experiment in our style, and brand a type of



An early version of the News21 homepage for 2009.

journalism that's raw, intimate, and transparent." Tanner said the experience allowed her "to develop my own distinct voice and brand of storytelling." She added, "The fact that *Anderson Cooper 360°* aired my documentary the month I entered the job market looked pretty friggin' hot on my resumé," said Tanner.

Although the liberty-vs.-security stories impressed mainstream media editors and producers, those same packages elicited a collective ho-hum from the internet *avant garde*. One such verdict came from Mark Glaser, executive editor of MediaShift, a PBS blog and web site that bills itself as "Your Guide to the Digital Media Revolution." Glaser opined in August 2006: "From what I've seen so far, the fellows have done some great investigative work on topics such as digital data trails and life in the military abroad—but I wonder whether they are doing really cutting-edge, innovative work that will live on beyond the annual program." The fledgling News21 web site, he added, was "clunky."

Patricia Dean, associate director of the USC journalism school, said the work that first summer "wasn't as multimedia because the world wasn't as multimedia then." Calo observed, "We showed we were capable of doing mature reporting that would be valued nationally and locally. Where we didn't succeed was having those people focused on the digital future saying, 'Wow! You blew our minds.'"

Religion in America—and Tattoos

In each of the following three summers, the News21 stories would be presented in ever deeper and more complex multimedia packages designed to attract eyes on the web. But as the work moved closer toward the cutting edge, it also became harder for newspapers and networks to run the stories or even adapt them for their web sites. The religion topic that the deans chose for 2007 wasn't one "that lent itself to breaking big stories," said Merrill Brown, News21's first editorial director, "but it did lend itself to creative, multimedia storytelling, and we did a way better job at that in year two." Traffic to the News21 web site tripled to three million page views.

One Medill feature practically went viral: a multimedia look at tattooed Christian rock fans who advertise their beliefs with vivid body art. Fellows Brad Flora and Ben Helfrich found their subjects at Cornerstone, an annual religious concert and happening on 500 acres of farmland in central Illinois. Medill's Mrinalini Reddy eventually got a freelance follow-up feature in *The New York Times* on her story about how television sitcoms were shattering stereotypes about Muslims with series like Canada's *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and a U.S. show, *Aliens in America*. Columbia's fellows journeyed to India over spring break with professor and religion writer Ari Goldman and returned to examine how immigrants were finding ways to practice their faiths in America, from Buddhists and Baha'i to the Mandaeans, adherents of an ancient Gnostic religion. Berkeley



University of Maryland News 21 Fellows Shauna Miller and Andrew Smith (R) prepare to videotape an interview with Rich and Malynda Madzel (L) on the topic of interracial marriages in the common room of a condominium in Columbia, Maryland

produced a "Moral Compass," a roulette-wheel-like web graphic that spun out answers to where nine major religions stood on questions of sex and morality. Their "God, Sex and Family" package also mapped states with the fewest abortions (Idaho), the most divorces (Arkansas) and other values-laden distinctions. USC fellows followed seekers of spirituality off beaten paths to Mount Shasta and to a dome in the California desert where tourists lie down to listen to soothing "symphonies" played on crystal bowls.

MediaShift's Glaser said News21's web site and multimedia were much improved in 2007 and he applauded the replacement of "the traditional objective journalism structure...with a more personal tone and narrative." But, he said, "there's still the nagging problem of fellows trying to engage online communities in a subject—and then abandoning the project as they leave the program each fall."

With the wide-open race for the White House and the likelihood that the Democrats' standard bearer would be either the first African-American or the first female nominee, the deans' choice of the elections as the topic for 2008 was an obvious one. But it posed a new challenge: with the blanket coverage in the major media, it would be hard for the fellows to get a word in edgewise with their reporting. Columbia journalism dean Nicholas Lemann defends the choice. "A national election is a huge, huge, huge thing," he said, and many races and issues below the top of the ticket are inadequately covered. "My thought was, let's not be perverse and not cover this very important and consequential election that all our students are dying to write about—but let's not send them to cover the Democratic National Convention, either." But web traffic slumped, few stories found a second life elsewhere, and a partnership with National Public Radio yielded little. Again, most stories were geared for the web, which made them harder for traditional media to pick up. "The bigger commitment you made to innovation, the harder it was to distribute a lot of stories because you stopped doing traditional nuggets

Blogs, Videos Catch Journalism Experiment As It Happens

of content,” said Calo. “We weren’t producing television segments per se. Everything was cross platform, linked together and integrated into the web. You could do quality work, but it wasn’t as easily parceled out to mainstream media partners.” And to Calo, pushing forward on that front was more important “than getting our heads patted by mainstream media.”

Expanding and Extending the Initiative

The funders and the founding deans always planned to bring other top journalism schools into the initiative; Berkeley was the lone public university in the original gang of five. Six of the seven added for the second phase were large, public institutions. Arizona State University (ASU) and its Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, newly ensconced in downtown Phoenix, were to become the new base of operations for News21 (Berkeley had been the administrative base for the first three summers). Calo and ASU dean Christopher Callahan crafted a proposal in 2008 that secured an \$11 million commitment from Carnegie Corporation and the Knight Foundation to support the expansion of News21 and to extend the experiment for three more years. They argued that the case for it was still compelling:

The Initiative sought to address central issues at the intersection of public journalism and journalism education. Among those issues were the disconnect between traditional journalism and millions of younger Americans, a general malaise and uncertainty inside the profession...and the extreme disturbances in the media industry due to quickening technological change. There was also a notion that among the nation’s top graduate schools of journalism, there was a window of opportunity to lead: they possessed an already built infrastructure for media production, a cadre of the nation’s most talented young reporters, and faculty members all too aware of the parlous state of American journalism.

The News21 experiment, they said, “could offer solutions and strategies to an increasingly jittery profession,” while at the same time allowing the journalism schools to improve their curricula. They said News21, which had gotten by with a part-time director in its first two years, would hire a full-time director and web site programmer to turn the experiment into “a live, vibrant, year-round enterprise” with “a nationally recognized news site.” While each school and dean would retain autonomy over its work, the national coordinator “would serve as the editor/publisher of the overall site” and seek to foster closer collaboration and a more “cohesive” product.

Callahan turned to Jody Brannon, a veteran editor at Microsoft’s msn.com, USA-Today.com and washingtonpost.com, to fill those shoes. Brannon also had academic credentials, having earned a Ph.D. at the University of Maryland’s Merrill School with

Continued on page 60

Jody Brannon, national director of News21, exhorted this year’s 93 fellows to chronicle their work in progress through blogs, Twitter, video, audio and contributions to a Ning (a digital bulletin board for these “next-gen journalists”). Here are vignettes from those blogs as well as their responses to questions posed by e-mail by Christopher Connell.

JENNIFER WARD, Syracuse University

Jennifer Ward is a triathlete, foodie and aspiring reporter from Winnipeg, Canada. In a videoblog last winter, she likened the News21 experiment to preparations for a difficult race. Speaking over soft music and a slideshow of her warming up in the snow, Ward said: “I look at it as if we are a bunch of people new to the sport of running. We’re trying to figure out which shoes to buy, what the proper form is, the pace that’s right for everyone...I definitely feel a bit of that same trepidation and excitement.”

Ward and fellow Mary Buttolph, a photographer and environmentalist, spent weeks in Nixa, Missouri (an “evangelical epicenter”) and Eagle, Colorado (a “boom town”) pursuing stories about teens and technology. The pair explored how the evangelical church culture met technology in Nixa. All the churches they visited had web sites, and one pastor took text messages from congregants during services.

May 22. Our days in this persistently sunny town have been spent meeting pastors, visiting schools, and barging in on youth events. Last night we were invited into the home of one of the area youth pastors, where we promptly derailed their discussion on the Gospel of Luke.

In Eagle, Colorado, Ward voiced frustration about hitting dead ends and coming up empty in their search: “That’s what’s hard about this project: you can have 15 interesting conversations, and yet not a single compelling story idea will emerge.” But they also were met with kindness and help from former strangers. “It’s amazing how people start caring about what two random journalists are doing in their town.”

MAURA WALZ, Columbia University

Walz focused on multimedia reporting while earning a master’s degree. Her News21 team traveled to Minnesota to look at the growth of ethnic charter schools. She responded by e-mail to a question about balancing innovation and good journalism.

I don’t believe that most innovations have come because someone wanted to be “innovative”...[They] come about because someone is trying to solve a problem, because they want to do something that they can’t do right now. Someone wanted an easier way to share videos, and now we have YouTube. Somebody else wanted an easier way to find out who the cute girl in his calculus class was and meet her, and now we have Facebook. Of course those things have expanded far beyond that as people figured out they could use those tools for other purposes, but the core of the innovation was figuring out a way to solve a problem.

I’m not sure that News21 had a specific enough problem that we wanted to solve or process we wanted to improve...[T]he most concrete goal I had was to do great journalism and tell the stories in compelling ways using multiple mediums and new tools.

SARA PEACH, University of North Carolina

Sara Peach was an environmental activist before returning to her alma mater for a master’s degree in jour-

Continued on page 58

nalism. She doubled as reporter and editor-in-chief for UNC's project looking at how the country can slake its growing thirst for energy. Peach first wrote an introductory blog titled "Powering the journalism of the future."

Welcome to an experiment. This summer, I'm working with a team of reporters to develop new ways of telling stories online...

How can we involve our audience? How can we be more transparent? How can audio, video, 3-D graphics and Facebook applications expand the reach and power of our stories—or become the stories themselves...We welcome you as a fellow experimenter in the journalism of the future.

BRAD HORN, Syracuse University

Brad Horn enrolled in graduate school with experience as a documentary filmmaker. His first video blog for News21, shot on a snowy Syracuse street last winter, used music, cutaways and split screens and made clever use of questions written on scraps of paper as storyboards.

This project is the future of journalism, right? So what are we doing? We're doing youth and technology...What does it mean to live a modern life? Some sort of personal Internet device attached to your hip all the time? And what does it mean to be able to see and talk to people on other continents? How does that change the way people live?...Often in student projects the broader world doesn't care about them. My hope is that we can create something that people actually want to be part of...and something that touches hearts.

Horn and Melissa Romero went to El Mirage, Arizona, a town with a large immigrant population, and visited a family of ten who shared a single laptop computer. Horn let the camera roll for two hours as kids and parents cycled on and off the laptop.

June 29. El Mirage. Woe unto you if you ever decide to set up a video camera in a room full of kids under 15-years-old...I had to say 'Get away from the camera!' about every 10 minutes. All the poking and prodding of the poor camcorder. I think someone even kissed the lens. But when I sat down to edit the tape it wasn't the typing and the MySpacing and the clickety-clacketing that made this video what it is. It's the kids...Thank god they didn't listen to me.

In another blog, Horn told of meeting a 16-year-old who "has gone digital native" since moving to Arizona from Mexico five years ago.

When I told him and his family about Skype—thinking I was being all Mr. Cutting Edge, 21st Century Man—as a way to keep in touch with family in Mexico, Luis pulled out his iPod Touch and typed in "s-k-y-p-e" so he could remember to download the program later.

JENN HUETING, University of Missouri, Columbia, at UNC News21

A perennial challenge for journalists is finding real people to illustrate their stories. Two Arizona State University fellows, pursuing a story on undocumented immigrants who enlist in the military, found such a family using Twitter, the social networking tool that allows users to send messages worldwide in bursts of 140 characters, or about 30 words.

Jenn Hueting, a University of Missouri graduate student and News21 fellow at UNC, tried to replicate their success on Facebook. She was in for a surprise when she sent a string of messages to strangers:

It didn't take me long...to discover how easy it is to snoop around on Facebook...Honestly, this did make me feel a bit like a creeper. And apparently Facebook thought I was a weirdo as

well and sent me a warning. [The warning: "You are engaging in behavior that may be considered annoying or abusive by other users."]

Hueting expressed a wish that Facebook had a way of allowing reporters to troll for willing sources for stories.

Unfortunately, that wonderful Facebook world does not exist, and because my innocent behavior was deemed as potentially 'annoying or abusive,' I was sent back to square one...begging friends for help. Sad day.

ANDREW BURTON and PHIL TENSER, Syracuse University

No fellows posted online more of their adventures and mishaps than Syracuse undergraduates Phil Tenser and Andrew Burton. At a soapbox derby in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Tenser got clipped by a young racer who neglected to apply the brakes. He toppled headfirst to the ground, unconscious, as EMTs rushed to his aid. Burton Twittered updates from the scene and the hospital emergency room:

@pstenser survives to tell the tale of a soapbox derby gone bad—is responsive & talking to doctors. photo, video to come

Soon there was a blog titled "Becoming the News" showing the race (from two video cameras) and Tenser's frightening tumble in slo-mo (from Burton's).

Tenser and Burton hit pay dirt in an Oregon beach town, Lincoln City, when they found a teenager named Kaity Curry who chronicles high school life in a colorful cartoon blog she calls Frankensteinbeck. They quickly posted on the Syracuse News21 web site, www.youngandthewireless.com a "sneak preview" of their video on Kaity Curry. Then, life intimidating art, Tenser and Burton turned up in a panel in Curry's next cartoon, with Tenser wearing earphones, wielding a boom mike and balancing a laptop, and Burton holding a camera and saying, "This is just so cool. You're taking communication to the most primitive level—images. That goes back to hieroglyphics. Yet you're combining that with technology to make it accessible and modern."

SHARON MCCLOSKEY, Columbia University

More than a few News21 fellows have worked as professional journalists, usually for a few years directly out of college before enrolling in graduate school to learn new skills and advance their careers. Sharon McCloskey followed a different path to journalism school and News21. She is switching careers after a quarter century as a lawyer handling commercial and consumer litigation, including a stint as a deputy state attorney general in New Jersey. A deft writer, McCloskey saw News21 as an opportunity to hone not only reporting and story-telling skills, but to accelerate her own adjustment to the Internet age. News21, she said, "brings me and people like me into the 21st century."

"I come from a generation that just reads newspapers and is still very paper oriented. I see the benefit of trying to change the viewing habits of my generation," she explained. Already she has changed her own. Five newspapers used to land on McCloskey's driveway in Red Bank, New Jersey. "We had the state and local papers as well as the Wall Street Journal and New York Times. I stopped that. Now I go online and read most of my news there. I still get the Times delivered on the weekend, but the rest of the time I used the thing they call the Times Reader. I download the paper before leaving the house and flip through it on the train into the city."

And has she caught up with classmates who grew up with computers and were already at ease with the new, technological demands of the job?

"It depends on who you ask," McCloskey said with a laugh. "I'm better than I was."

Continued from page 56

a dissertation that examined online journalism by major media. The deans chose the changing U.S. demographic tapestry as the topic for 2009, and Callahan and Brannon sought to get the eight incubators off to a faster start by bringing 39 fellows and a score of advisers to Phoenix in early April to share ideas and be tutored in digital storytelling techniques.

“News21 Needs to Go Far Beyond That”

In the tradition of Knight’s Eric Newton, who puckishly told a News21 gathering in 2008 that their task was “to think about new forms of truth-telling...in a totally new technological era, and create some innovations that will help keep the human race from destroying itself. No pressure,” Callahan told the fellows that they “really need to dream.”

“If what you accomplish at the end of the summer is having produced fantastic stories that are really interesting and really important and really matter and have never been told before and you get them published in the *Washington Post* or *The New York Times* or the *Los Angeles Times*—if that’s what we accomplish this summer, we fail. We fail miserably,” he said. “News21 needs to go far beyond that.”

In an interview, Callahan explained, “What I was trying to get across in a not so subtle way was that this project needs to be more than great journalism done in a traditional way, because the reality is that Carnegie Corporation and the Knight Foundation could take those resources and invest them in *The New York Times* or NBC News or the *Washington Post* or *Time* magazine to do great journalism. This needs to be something more.” That something more, he added, “is taking advantage of an incredible smart group of young people who think differently about news” and who are capable of coming up with new ways to keep the public informed.

News21’s lofty aspirations can give pause to even its most seasoned participants, the faculty. Susan Rasky, a Berkeley senior lecturer and former chief congressional correspondent for *The New York Times*, said, “You go to bed at night thinking, ‘Oh, my God! They are not really innovating. They’re just figuring out how to do what’s already been done,’ and ‘Oh, my God, the reporting is only half as deep as I want it to be because they don’t have [enough] time to report and produce.”

Brannon made the rounds of the eight newsrooms over the summer. When she visited Columbia in early July, several fellows remarked on feeling overwhelmed. Not to worry, the director assured them; everyone felt that way.

While News21 was originally for graduate students only, 16 of the 2009 fellows were undergraduates, including half those selected by Syracuse University’s Newhouse

School. Steve Davis, the chair of newspaper and online journalism and News21 executive director, confessed in a telephone interview a few weeks from the finish line to feeling that “we probably didn’t push the envelope enough...[and] ended up being a little more traditional than we wanted.” In hindsight, he said, Syracuse asked its fellows to do too much as they went out to 11 prototypical communities that the *Christian Science Monitor* had earlier selected for its “Patchwork Nation” reporting project. Newhouse students regularly go on reporting trips around central New York during the school year, but News21 was like no other assignment, Davis said. “They were very excited about it, to tackle a story as a team and spread out around the country. Part of the whole News21 thing is to have [that] experience and do something that you otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to do.”

Building a “Piece of the Future”

News21 has served as a springboard into the profession for many. Former fellows can be found at major news organizations (AP, *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, *Newsweek*) as well as start-ups. Brad Flora, the lead reporter on Medill’s Christian tattoo project, is the founder, editor and publisher of *The Windy Citizen*, a free, online news site that aggregates local Chicago news and encourages Chicagoans to submit their own stories, videos and photos and rate what interests them most. Flora said his site has attracted 70,000 visitors a month. “There’s lots of talk about the future of journalism,” he said. “I’m actually building a little piece of this future here in Chicago.”

Laura McGann, who exposed the FBI’s snooping through student financial aid records, is editor of the *Washington Independent*, an online investigative news site. She called News21 “the most important part of my formal journalism education...[It] offered me a chance to do the kind of reporting that young reporters just don’t normally get to do.”

Most other former fellows contacted spoke highly of News21, although some were disappointed that their stories did not get picked up by mainstream media. That may change now under Brannon, who told the Columbia fellows, “My role as national director is to ensure that the whole world sees your journalism and hopefully offer it to enough media partners that they’ll want to run your stuff on their sites or in their publication or on their television show...Everyone’s thirsty because they see great, excellent, free copy.”

Indeed, the success of Pro Publica, a nonprofit investigative reporting organization bankrolled by two philanthropists who made their fortune in the savings and loan industry, demonstrates just how thirsty news organizations are. *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CBS’s *Sixty Minutes* and others all have collaborated with Pro Publica’s well-paid staff of investigative reporters. In an earlier era, big newspapers might look

down their nose at reporting done by student journalists. But in the Internet era, they ignore it at their peril. Thanks to the web, “you can now do actual journalism without having to have a media partner, and then go and find your media partner later, or not at all,” said Knight’s Newton. “It gave impetus to this notion that the students could not only join together and be an investigative force larger than what nearly all news organizations can muster, but a force that could be creative in figuring out new ways to display and disseminate this news.”

No Monopoly on Experimentation

But this also raises another challenge for News21. It is far from the only entity practicing experimental journalism. As riots in Tibet and Xinjiang, China, and election protests in Iran demonstrated, ordinary people are using cell phone cameras and Twitter to broadcast their own news around the world.

“The web has very low barriers to entry,” said Columbia’s Lemann. “You get lots and lots and lots and lots of people trying web journalism in every possible way, shape and form. That’s nice. It’s a period of very vigorous experimentation, some at News21, some in start-ups and individual news outlets, some inside big news organizations. There are thousands of these things going on. It’s nice to have News21 as part of this general feeling of experimentation.” But, he added, “I can’t look you in the eye and say News21 rises above all else as the most significant experiment in innovation in journalism.”

Still, News21 has provided a jolt of energy that has surged through the faculty and curricula at the country’s top journalism schools. “The unexpected pleasure of News21

is that it’s helping to reform faculty as well, getting them tuned up,” said Berkeley’s Calo. Leslie Walker, the Knight Visiting Professor in Digital Innovation at the University of Maryland and former *Washington Post* columnist and editor of *washingtonpost.com*, said, “All journalism schools are struggling with the transition that’s roiling through the news industry. Most faculty members haven’t worked in the news media for a long time and haven’t experienced those changes. One of the beauties of News21 is that faculty members are learning alongside the students in these multidisciplinary newsrooms.” News21 “gave us a jumpstart” in making the Medill curriculum more multimedia and interactive, said Ellen Shearer, who runs the school’s Washington news bureau. “It’s had an impact on our curriculum,” said USC’s Patricia Dean. “The team of people that work on News21 during the summer get a lot of terrific ideas that we then push into our classes and into the curriculum.” Judy Muller, the former ABC News correspondent and National Public Radio commentator who has taught at USC since 2003, said, “News21 radically changed my approach to teaching journalism and continues to set the standard, as far as I can see, for a successful marriage of content quality with innovative delivery.”

A Place for Nonprofit News?

Google, Facebook and, much earlier, the first web browsers all were invented at universities, although not at their journalism schools. News21’s participants so far haven’t produced a Twitter or even a blog that is a must-read for journalists. But some of its impact may not be known for years. Can it be sustained after the foundation funding runs out? That, too, is an unanswered question. But one of the tasks for Callahan, Brannon and their colleagues going forward is to explore the sustainability of a university-based, nonprofit news organization.

“This may be the biggest challenge facing the News21 partnership. It will require creative thinking about how public and private universities could partner to build a free-standing news operation that has as its primary asset the credibility of a diverse group of young American reporters, their schools and mentors,” the deans’ funding proposal said.

Already, these journalism schools have succeeded in getting their voices heard in serious discussions about the future of the news business. At a January 2008 Carnegie Corporation summit on “Journalism in the Service of Democracy,” *New York Times* editor Bill Keller said he was “a convert to the cause of journalism schools.” Keller, an English major at Pomona College, confessed that he used to disdain them and thought the best education a young reporter could get was under some “grizzled editor” at a small newspaper. Now, he said, “I’ve come to think of journalism schools as maybe the last resort” to give students the wisdom they need. Recalling Keller’s remarks, Berkeley’s



2009 Columbia University News 21 Fellows with (in middle front) Managing Editor Adam Glenn, National Director Jody Brannon, and Associate Professor and News21 Editorial Coordinator LynNell Hancock. Carey King, the Columbia newsroom manager, is at far right.



CHRISTOPHER CAMERON

Arizona State News 21 Fellow Chyrstall Kanyuck profiled Chief Warrant Officer Sam Chavez as part of her News21 project, “Fighting Battles: Latinos in the Military.”

Calo said, “You could argue that this is the first time that graduate journalism schools have had a key role in journalism. Their role before was always ancillary.”

Whether News21 reports reverberate in the mainstream media and whether it’s a leader or laggard on innovation, the timing of the initiative was impeccable. And Carnegie Corporation’s Susan King believes the foundation chose the right leverage point to bring about change in the profession.

“I’m convinced that if we had tried to change the news business, which is what was being asked of us at the beginning, we couldn’t have gotten anything done. Working on the pipeline and forcing the schools to face up to these challenges was the only lever to bring about change,” said King, a former ABC News correspondent. “It is serving us well to have helped create this entrepreneurial, well-educated generation because they are going to be flexible enough to move with the business—and some will define what that future is.” ■

Christopher Connell is an independent journalist who writes frequently about education and other public policy issues. He has written previously for Carnegie Corporation about its journalism education initiative, and authored a 2002 Corporation white paper, Homeland Defense and Democratic Liberties: An American Balance in Danger? Connell, a former Associated Press education writer and assistant Washington bureau chief, also writes the annual Internationalizing the Campus reports for NAFSA: Association of International Educators. He lives in Alexandria, Virginia. cvconnell@gmail.com.



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