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INSIGHTS

Autumn 2016

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From the Editor

The Value of Independent Student Media

By James L. Stewart

ASJMC **INSIGHTS**

ASJMC Insights

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From the Editor

THE VALUE OF INDEPENDENT STUDENT MEDIA

By James L. Stewart, Nicholls State University

“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

Thomas Jefferson

We’ve all heard the quote. We’ve often repeated it, standing before our students.

We explain that the statement speaks to the belief that the very foundation of a truly free society is the exchange of information aided by an unfettered press.

It seems ironic that the value of a free press increasingly seems of limited worth on college campuses.

On the one hand I get it. I mean, what organization would be thrilled by the notion that one of its component parts had the nasty habit of publicly airing embarrassing facts? Who doesn’t cringe at the typos or grammatical errors in the school paper? The thought of what might appear in this week’s sex column or this year’s April Fools’ Issue is enough to cause tremors in even the most stout-hearted.

But, on the other hand, I have always believed the primary purpose of colleges and universities is to promote free-wheeling discussion, even though that discussion may not always be comfortable or even well-crafted.

According to a soon-to-be-published joint report by the American Association of University Professors and the College Media Association, student media are increasingly coming under assault.

Attempts to shutdown student media are certainly not new. What makes the current efforts so insidious is one

of the chief methods, which focuses on funding or rather defunding.

Conditions are excellent for this tactic.

With the continuously rising costs of tuition, books, housing and other expenses associated with higher education, students are likely happy to hear about a fee that is being reduced.

In the past there were likely administrations that tolerated the student press as it was viewed as the most effective, even if flawed, system for keeping the campus community informed. With the rise of social media, universities no longer feel dependent on this traditional conduit.

In place of a student press, universities now propose a system wherein their media relations offices are the primary source of campus information.

In some ways that system even has a certain logical appeal. For example, a traditionally under-staffed sports desk at a typical college newspaper would be hard pressed to keep up with the near-instantaneous rivers of statistics that flow from a well-oiled sports information office into the various digital media accounts of fans during the course of a contest.

Here’s the problem – while the athletic department is no doubt eager to release the yards per carry of this year’s Heisman hopeful, is it as willing to publish an exposé on its own deficiencies in Title IX compliance?

The same issue arises with all facets of campus life. The job of the university’s media relations department is to present the organization in its best light. It holds

a duty to be honest with the public, but it does not have the same social role as does an independent press.

And on campus, that independent press is usually run by students.

As academics, our own views on the student media may be a little cloudy. After all, for many of us the student media are at least slightly apart from the academic program and in some cases there is a substantial firewall between the two. While the success, or more often the perceived failure, of student media is often laid at the door of the academic program, in many cases we have very little direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of the student media on our campuses.

Nor should we. The strength of student media lies in independence.

However, while we must remember the importance of separation, we should never forget the value of student media to our campuses in general and our programs specifically.

It is in these autonomous laboratories beyond our control and protection where many of our students get their first real opportunity to actually learn the lessons we cover in class. It is here they first venture out on the wire without a net (albeit perhaps one a little lower and wider than that found above the center ring).

And in the broader sense, it is here where they first see the importance of the place journalism holds in society at large.

It is our responsibility to champion those efforts and defend those freedoms. Without an independent student press, our campuses will be poorer places.

REINVENTING TO STAY RELEVANT: A LOOK AT COLLEGE MEDIA TODAY

By Nicki L. Boudreaux, Nicholls State University

College newspapers have been able to maintain relevancy amid the changing media landscape longer than their professional counterparts due to the nature of their niche audience. But with information available to consumers from endless outlets at a moment's notice, college student media are now being forced into reinvention.

At the recent Future of Student Media Summit at Ohio University, hundreds of student journalists, advisers, professors and industry leaders converged to identify key issues facing student-run media today. In his keynote presentation at the summit, Steve Buttry, director of student media at Louisiana State University and digital-first media expert, said: "I think it's important to start this conversation with a focus on journalism. Our focus on change needs to be a focus on using technology to do better journalism, on using technology to reach more people with our outstanding journalism and on making money to fund journalism, which isn't cheap."

Buttry's sentiments concisely identify the main convergence issues facing college media and the industry as a whole: the converging media landscape, a changing media mindset, a new type of audience and revenue diversification.

The Converging Media Landscape

While a widely-accepted definition of media convergence is yet to be agreed upon, most researchers accept that it includes telling stories using the most appropriate medium. Oftentimes, these stories include video, audio, text and interactive web-based elements. While convergence has long been studied in both the media industry and the academic curriculum, it was not quantitatively studied in college newsrooms until 2015. In this study, researchers discovered that more than 51% of college newsrooms were practicing convergence, but most (48%)

were defining convergence as "cross-platform publishing and reporting." One respondent elaborated, saying: "We publish in print and on the website. We also have a weekly video news broadcast, we use online video, and we use blogs" (Wotanis, Richardson, & Zhong, 2015).

Some respondents described convergence as multiple campus media outlets sharing resources, like photographers and copy editors, while others described cross-training student journalists in editing, writing, photography and design. Still others said their newsroom convergence simply included newspaper and broadcast staffs sharing content (Wotanis, et al.).

While those student media outlets surveyed differed in their definition of convergence, the large majority (82%) said student reporters were producing content for multiple platforms using various technologies (Wotanis, et al.). The researchers also concluded "the fact that schools with convergence curricula were more likely to have converged media organizations is significant. It suggests that updating curricula to reflect convergence practices, which include cross-platform reporting, collaborative management, and shared space and resources, is a key for success with convergence at campus media organizations" (Wotanis, et al.).

The Poynter Institute recently reported that the *New York Times* is remaking its newsroom in "a bid for journalistic dominance," and it is clear these changes model those addressed at the recent student media summit (Mullin, 2016). At the core of their changes is a shift to storytelling and reporting and away from filling space in the print product. "Assigning editors, in the very near future, will not worry about filling space. They will worry over coverage, and the best ways to tell stories. The print hub, a dedicated group of designers and editors, will then con-

struct the print paper out of the great wealth of journalism” (Mullin, 2016).

The *New York Times*’ new look is similar to the digital-first movement already underway in college media. Some large universities with a long tradition of the daily broadsheet student newspaper are now shifting to weekly tabloid print products or monthly newsmagazines. Some smaller schools have done away with the print product altogether in favor of a digital product that includes more visual elements.

This shift in student media and in academic curricula is set to create highly skilled graduates needed in today’s media job market. In a study for the Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, researchers asked media leaders to identify their top hiring priorities. Coding/development, audience development/user data and metrics, visual storytelling, digital design, and social media distribution were listed as the top five (Stencel & Perry, 2016). This solidifies the idea that “updating curricula to reflect convergence practices, which include cross-platform reporting, collaborative management, and shared space and resources, is a key for success with convergence at campus media organizations” (Wotanis, et al.).

At the heart of this shift is a change in thinking.

A Changing Media Mindset

In a recent memo to staff, *New York Times* Executive Editor Dean Baquet outlined swift newsroom changes that, he felt, would help the organization double both digital revenue and subscribers by 2020. He recognized that a potential hurdle to this plan’s success would be the mindset of *Times* staffers. “I know it can be unsettling to let go of some traditions, to make tough decisions about what not to cover, to grapple with new skills, to work in a newsroom that is constantly changing” (Mullin, 2016).

This same hurdle is one that has kept even the most digital-forward student media organizations from achieving successful convergence.

Challenges abound in taking student media away from their traditional silos of newspaper, television, radio and web into a truly converged, digital-first media operation. In a 2008 study, Fred Endres observed how early adopters of the college media convergence model navigated the transition at Kent State University. The model utilized a single, converged newsroom where all student journalists created content. The content would then be

used by the student newspaper, magazine, radio station or television station. Students would then collaborate to put the content together onto KentNewsNet.com, a single-platform student media site (Endres, 2008).

Endres observed that the students continued to identify with their individual media outlets (print or broadcast) and not the converged digital outlet, thereby hindering the ability of the organization to truly converge.

One of the respondents to Wotanis’ study commented that “converging technology and equipment is EASY...Getting people to be excited and want to work together to create converged content is very very difficult because everyone’s agenda has different goals” (Wotanis, et al.).

At Vanderbilt University, student media director Chris Carroll has experienced the mindset obstacle first-hand. Since 2005, Vanderbilt Student Media has undergone a series of changes, trying to adopt the “convergence mindset.” In a presentation at the Future of Student Media Summit, Carroll said “we saw ourselves as a leader in the digital age when we developed a converged collaborative model with online delivery as the centerpiece. We wanted to build the Mothership, an online place where all student media outlets could work together, bringing together content creation and management teams.” They implemented the project in the fall of 2006, but by fall of 2009, it crashed. “The problem: They don’t play well with others. There was still this newspaper company mindset,” Carroll said.

Vanderbilt changed gears and, over the next few years, tried several other convergence models, all of which resulted in student journalists returning to their traditional silos of print, broadcast and web. In the fall of 2016, Vanderbilt will again try another model, one without a print newspaper at all.

According to Carroll, the new Vanderbilt model is eliminating the bigger-branded traditional models in order to adopt media outlets based on what best delivers particular content. Here, student leaders and editors will work in a converged space, forcing interaction and shared decision-making.

A New Type of Audience

Much like the Vanderbilt Student Media and *New York Times*, all college media must embrace this changing mindset or fear being left behind. The fact of the matter

is that college media serve a unique audience, an audience that will be of significant importance to mainstream media and advertisers upon graduation. This gives college journalists and communication majors an opportunity to develop valuable skills that will be in high demand by mainstream media outlets.

In his keynote at the Future of Student Media Summit, Buttry said, “student media today have an extraordinary opportunity and imperative: To lead professional media rather than following. Professional media, for the most part, are not providing a good model for us to follow in terms of running a media business or practicing journalism. Students today are digital natives whose media consumption and buying practices are the key to future success for the media businesses where our students today hope to pursue their careers.”

Therefore, the key lies in delivering digital-first content to the digital natives that make up Millennials and Generation Z.

Generation Z, those born since 1996, are the first true digital natives. When combined with Millennials, those currently aged 20-35, this demographic tops 145 million. These are the consumers of college media, and the soon-to-be target audience of mainstream media and advertisers alike. Researchers are currently working to discover what makes these college students tick, and the answer is clearly digital (Ologie, 2015).

They send upwards of 100 text messages per day, connect to the Internet within an hour of waking up, and consume messages via multiple social media platforms (Ologie, 2015). They prefer communication to include clickable images, and they prefer “snackable” content that keeps their short attention span, which registers at only 8 seconds. Perhaps most importantly, they often consume media using up to five screens at one time, and they expect to connect to news across all devices (Stamats, 2015).

Members of both generations are content-hungry consumers and, when also enrolled in college, are consuming student media.

Hans Meyer, associate professor at Ohio University’s E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, conducted a national study to take a snapshot of college students’ news consumption habits regarding their campus student media. Meyer found that 60% of college students engage with their campus newspaper either in print or online.

More than 75% follow their student newspapers on social media, the majority being on Facebook (Meyer, 2016).

Meyer’s study underscores the fact that student newspapers are still relevant on college campuses, but proves that they must be multi-dimensional to truly engage readers.

Diversifying Revenue Streams

Decreases in traditional print advertising revenues have left many student newspapers struggling to diversify revenue streams in hopes of staying afloat. Some have found success in offering for-profit services as photo booths or social media management, while others have found new ways to sell their content to advertisers.

At *The Post*, Ohio University’s student newspaper, they have successfully packaged their online content into a regular email newsletter called *The Post Haste*, for which they sell advertising sponsorship. Other universities, including Duke and Vanderbilt, have also successfully adopted this model.

It is important to note, however, that traditional college media advertising is not dead. In a recent study done in conjunction with the College Media Association, the national organization for college media advisers, the Borrell Group surveyed both college newspaper business managers and active advertisers nationwide. The study’s objective was to “gain insight from college and student media advertisers to better understand their media allocations, spending preferences, future plans, how that spending is changing, marketing activity and implications for student media” (Borrell, 2016).

The study confirmed the dramatic decrease in traditional college newspaper advertising, with four in ten college newspapers surveyed reporting having fewer than 25 active advertisers. In addition, more than half of college media outlets reported annual advertising revenue under \$100,000, with many making up the difference with student fees or other university support (Borrell).

But of the advertiser respondents surveyed, 91% said they depend on college media to help them best reach their target audience. Seventy-four percent are using some form of mobile marketing or advertising, and 55% feel that college media websites will help them better reach their target audience (Borrell). This shows that while decreasing, college media are still relevant to ad-

vertisers as experts in reaching today's digitally-oriented generations.

The researchers also determined college media are poised for overall growth, not only as an advertising medium, but as advertising support for small businesses. In fact, college media are listed second to only mobile and online in strategic importance to advertisers. As digital natives themselves, college journalists and business managers have a unique opportunity to capitalize on their knowledge while providing much-needed services to advertisers. By offering social media services, event promotion assistance, web campaign development, and other strategic communication services to clients, college media can maintain relevance in the field while also providing billable services to clients, thereby diversifying revenue streams.

Conclusion

Alice Murray, student media adviser at Georgia Southern University's Perimeter College and 30-year newspa-

per veteran, recognizes this generation's ability to possibly save journalism as we know it. "Not only will these digital natives land good jobs, they will be the source of solutions to today's media conundrum — how to create a viable financial model to support the journalism of the future."

Today's student journalists are experts in digital content consumption, and the upcoming Generation Z will likely be experts in digital content creation. This picture-perfect scenario puts digital natives at the forefront of content creation that will stand out amid the clutter, attract readers, and ultimately, make money. By creating truly converged student media programs that work hand-in-hand with convergence media curricula at journalism schools across the country, universities have the opportunity to produce the innovators needed to breathe new life into news media as a whole.

Nicki Boudreaux is an instructor of mass communication and director of student publications at Nicholls State University.

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TEACHING ANALYTICS FOCUSES ON THE QUESTIONS, NOT NECESSARILY THE ANSWERS

By *Joshua Hatch*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

“Is your story really good if nobody saw it?” That’s a question Jessica Pucci repeatedly poses to her students at Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Drawing from the “tree falling in the forest” thought experiment, Pucci, Arizona’s Ethics & Excellence Professor of Practice, says the quasi-rhetorical question is intended to get her students thinking about the importance of audience. The reality is that journalists must do more than simply report and publish, she and others tell their students. Journalists also need to connect their work to real people.

Making Connections

Finding an audience is the crux of Pucci’s class on journalism analytics — a topic that has become more common in journalism schools around the country, as well in newsrooms throughout the industry.

The reason is clear. As the shift from legacy media to digital accelerates, readers (or viewers or users or whatever you want to call them) have more options; every site is a click away and journalists have to compete not just with other news outlets, but with other digital plays for our fickle attention — television, movies, social media, games and more. Using analytics to figure out who your target audiences are and how best to reach them has the potential to make your journalism more powerful. Connect your work to the people who care the most about it; that’s how you create impact.

And that’s just what Matt Veto, professor of practice at Lehigh University, works to convey to his students. As the faculty advisor to the *Brown and White*, Veto wants to get his student journalists to integrate audiences and analytics into their thinking. And not just simplistic measurements, like page views. Instead, Veto tries to bring

sophisticated strategies and ideas the industry is wrestling with into academia. For example, when a student gets excited about having written the most-read story of the week, Veto challenges that student to think deeper. “Why?” he’ll ask, “and what could you do better?”

To answer those questions, the Lehigh students turn to Parse.ly, a digital metrics and analytics tool Lehigh and several other universities have partnered with. Using the tool, students can dig into the data and begin to formulate hypotheses about the relationships between content and audiences.

The ultimate goal — and outcome — of the Lehigh-Parse.ly partnership is for students to produce reports based on specific research questions. In 2015, Veto’s students looked at engagement time for content of varying lengths and the role social media platforms play in traffic patterns. Their findings can be used by anyone to develop, test and refine theories about how to make their content more visible and useful to readers.

One of the students who worked on the “time read” report was Austin Vitelli, a rising senior who served as the sports editor last year and will be a managing editor in 2016-17. Vitelli says one of the biggest lessons he learned was how the data could be used to inform coverage and how to play stories for maximum impact, not simply maximum page views.

“We’re definitely aware of not writing just what people want,” Vitelli says, rejecting the notion that data will drive journalists to the most sensationalistic content. “We want to write stories we find interesting” and serve a public purpose. To that end, Vitelli says the staff discovered certain stories — especially those that are in the realm of “public service” — all have about the same time

spent, no matter the length of the story. That suggested to editors that they should keep those stories shorter and more to the point.

The work also has direct benefits for the careers of the students involved. Michael Reiner is a former sports editor with the *Brown and White* who is preparing to take a job with the NBA's digital media group. "What I feel really set me apart," Reiner says, referring to his job application, "was we really learned how to interpret the data."

For Amanda Zamora, chief audience officer at the *Texas Tribune*, that's just what today's journalism classes need to do. Zamora is an industry leader in the use of metrics and analytics who has focused on audience engagement at the *Washington Post* and ProPublica before heading to the *Texas Tribune*. She has also taught two classes on the topic — one at Columbia with her ProPublica colleague Eric Umansky, and another as a massive open online course (MOOC) hosted by the Knight Center for Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin.

"The biggest thing that I'm trying to get across," Zamora says of colleagues in the newsroom interested in looking at audience data, "is to take a step back before diving into the numbers. Understand what the purpose is."

Understanding the purpose is important at the micro level (what question are you trying to answer with the data?) as well as the macro level (why are metrics relevant for the newsroom?). That's a point Dana Chinn, director of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project, emphasizes. "This is not about making money," she says, "but rather about serving societal needs and making decisions about allocating limited resources so you can have the most impact."

Teaching Skills

Sophisticated questions are what separate useful metrics from trivia — the difference in developing best practices on using different social media platforms versus coming up with bottom-line page view statistics. But to develop and test their hypotheses, students still need to learn specific skills.

As a result, classes on metrics often have two components. For Chinn, about half her class is devoted to basic quantitative analysis and Excel. "This means getting journalism students away from anecdotal reporting and banning words such as 'many,' 'a lot,' 'some,' and 'oth-

ers,'" Chinn says. They have to learn to put numbers in context and interpret and describe trends accurately. A key to that is getting students hands-on access to the data.

"You have to show [students] how to leverage the data themselves — don't just rely on dashboards built by the platforms," Zamora says. "They're just designed to reflect the metrics the platforms deem important, but they may not reflect what is meaningful to you." For that, you need to actually download the data.

"That's the big 'aha!' moment," Zamora says, referring to the day when students discover how to use Excel and the power of pivot tables to begin to breaking down the data. After Zamora demonstrates those tools, the students "really get into the nitty gritty of what's working and not working."

Although that can be difficult for some classes where meaningful data might not be readily available (Pucci calls it "a constant pain point"), in Zamora's case, she gives her students sample data from her institutional accounts. (Pucci relies on the data gathered by student media organizations.)

Getting good data to work with is a challenge at Elon, too, which created the Media Analytics major in the School of Communications two years ago. According to Associate Dean Don Grady, professors have turned inward to the university's social media team, and to partnerships with research companies, but both avenues require a significant amount of coordination by professors.

But, it's worth it. "It's important to make analytics feel 'real' for students," Grady says. Having actual data in hand gives students the chance to move beyond simple tools or dashboards, which can be enticing, but also problematic.

"We get approached all the time with software and tools that people want us to test," Pucci says, but she is skeptical of relying on them.

"I am very concerned with making sure students understand the foundational elements of analytics so that they are able to talk about numbers in an editorial context," she says. If the students are only able to recite what dashboards tell them, then they won't fully make use of the data, and will fail to gain insights that can drive the business — and industry — forward.

That's exactly what Reiner took away from his classes at Lehigh. "As journalism is constantly moving," he says, "I have developed an eye for research and storytelling. Am I going to use Parse.ly at the NBA? Probably not. But, I know how to do the research and analysis, and that's applicable."

To achieve that result throughout the Cronkite program, Pucci has a three-pronged strategy:

- Evangelize the use of metrics and analytics for covering beats and identifying audiences as part of the student-run media organizations.
- Teach classes in a lab setting, including producing social media campaigns with specific goals in mind.
- Look for opportunities to insert into the broader journalism curriculum ideas for discussing and learning about metrics and analytics.

The first element of the strategy is one that Lehigh and other universities have also implemented — and don't require adjusting curriculum or changing syllabi. And since so many student media advisors come from a professional background, they are able to inject their real-world experiences.

The second strategy helps move students beyond thinking about social media in a purely personal way and toward a more goal-oriented approach. As Zamora puts it, "it's the difference between someone who is good at social because they tweet all day, and one who is looking at channels strategically." Her pedagogical approach is to have students formulate a strategy for developing an audience for a microsite.

For the third approach, Pucci is actively engaged in reviewing curricula and syllabi — especially when the college is making course adjustments — or making herself available to speak to her peers' classes.

"Some students will get a deeper understanding than others," Pucci says, "and it isn't appropriate for every class," but she says that over time, every student will be challenged to think about the role analytics plays in journalism.

Lehigh is going even further. As part of a university-wide interdisciplinary initiative called "Data X," the college is working to introduce data to students throughout the institution. For the journalism department that includes a new push to hire a joint computer science-journalism professor. According to Veto, the faculty is fully on board. "We are data-driven and we are multimedia," he

says. "Anything we can do to be at the cutting edge of things, that's something that our faculty has really been supportive of."

Focus on Audience

At the University of Florida, there is broad recognition of the increasing role metrics is playing in what journalists have to do, but rather than injecting that into the academic curriculum, the focus has been on bringing it into experiential courses, which all news students are required to take.

Students can work on one of six UF media properties, including an NPR affiliate, an ESPN radio channel, a 24/7 news/weather/sports radio station, a PBS affiliate, and various digital properties. It gives students a dose of the real-world experience.

That real-world experience starts with setting expectations. Few of the students are from north Florida and "most subscribe to 'the bigger the better mindset,' which doesn't work for us," Matt Sheehan, director of stories and emerging platforms at the University of Florida, says. "That's part of the educational campaign. You're not going to get a million clicks — you might get a couple of hundred," which Sheehan says is a good figure for them. However, it does force students to craft their work for the right audience.

That work begins with students digging through the data. "They use the analytics platform to show them where readers are coming from and how they access our content," Sheehan says. Using that data, combined with demographic information, students advance to thinking about different story forms and crafting messages on different platforms like Facebook and Twitter."

"They are focused on learning to write for a specific audience," Sheehan explains, which is a mental shift from their default mindset of writing for themselves. To encourage that change in thinking, each student writes at least six stories for a specific audience and then reviews metrics reports to see how they did, including looking at sources of traffic and referrals from other platforms.

At Lehigh, the conclusions students have come to mirror what is happening in the broader industry. "They now understand there's an audience that can provide instantaneous 24/7 feedback, and that can create new ways to engage," Veto says. It encourages student discovery, and inevitably they come up with alternate story forms, in-

cluding lists and more frequently updated short stories. “We’re seeing evidence of what they are learning in real time — how their work produces different results based on how they do it.”

By the end, both Veto’s and Sheehan’s students understand that to be successful professionally, they have to understand the audiences they are writing for.

It’s easy for many students to think they are writing for themselves or their friends. But the audience of student media is much broader. “A lot of our readers are parents or alumni,” Vitellie says, and that informs not just their story selection and editing, but distribution, too. For example, if a particular story may be of more interest to alumni, it could get a bigger push on Facebook. And knowing when Facebook stories do well — noon to four, for *Brown and White* stories — only serves to boost that further. It’s the kind of information reporters and editors can use to make better decisions and help their content reach its maximum potential.

That’s why it’s so important for all student journalists to be exposed to these ideas, Sheehan says. “Our objective is not to get everybody to be a data analyst,” he explains. “They’re not necessarily going to be the ones crunching the numbers or creating the reports. Instead, the goal is getting students to understand the fundamentals so they can quickly adapt to the tools their future newsrooms will use.”

Another benefit: the metrics tickles students’ egos. “If you get a kid passionate about writing articles, but you’re not reaching as many people as possible, what are you doing?” Lehigh’s Reiner asks. “You could just write something and stick it under your mattress.... Showing students that people are absorbing content only drives us to do more.”

Desired Outcomes

Of course, analytics isn’t an end unto itself. The goal isn’t to measure for the sake of measuring. The numbers — and the lessons — have a purpose.

It’s not just about measuring clicks, Veto says. “Engagement is the key word. We talk about the business side of things as well.”

A potential hazard of metrics-focused journalism is falling into what Veto describes as “the clickbait trap.” He continues: “And we really don’t want to do that. The

challenge is, how do we improve our traffic in principled ways and not sensationalized ways?”

Pucci would agree. “We have to be careful that we’re not producing journalists who go out and know how to grab an audience without producing high-quality journalism.”

That perfectly jibes with the main lesson Zamora tries to impart: “What questions can you be asking of the data to make more informed decisions? It’s not about the numbers, it’s about contextualizing the data.”

To achieve that, Zamora would give students sample data and specific questions: What are the optimal times for audience reach? What would have led to an overall increase in followers? “I ask them the types of questions we think about in our newsroom.”

That approach helps students come up with their own nuanced questions. When Vitelli and his peers were studying time spent on articles, they also learned how to think about the numbers they were seeing. For example, they discovered the average time spent on an article was 0.7 minutes, or 42 seconds. It’s a sobering, if not depressing, figure, but also a misleading one. Many page views can last just a second, perhaps due to a reloaded page, or a mistaken click. The key isn’t to focus on the length of time, but rather on the relative value compared to other pages.

“So when we see a story that has two-minutes per visitor,” Vitelli explains, “we are very proud of that. We are less concerned about the actual time, and more about it being interesting data.” What makes a “two-minute” story different than a “one-minute” story? “Then we use that information to advance the next work,” he says.

That’s exactly how Terry Parris makes use of analytics data in his work as community editor at ProPublica, and what he tries to impart to his students at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism program, where he is an adjunct professor. “There are two types of measurements,” Parris explains. “Quantitative and qualitative.” The former focuses on the numbers — Chartbeat, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights and the like. But it’s often the latter — the qualitative measures — that are more meaningful and tougher to get at. “How do you measure impact?” Parris asks.

The answer, for Parris, is to set specific measureable goals, like he did with the nonprofit’s Agent Orange investigation, which was partially crowdsourced. A key

component of the project was getting veterans to submit their stories, and they set a goal of at least 1,000 submissions. But Parris and his colleagues knew a broad “call to action” on the site would be insufficient. Instead, they needed to identify whom they wanted to reach, research that community to find out where it was located, reach out to the community and invite it to participate, and then create a feedback loop to keep the community informed about the investigation’s progress.

That four-part cycle relied heavily on analytics, but the tools were little more than Excel spreadsheets and Google docs. The key was to develop a methodology and to track progress, and that’s what Parris tries to impart to his students.

For example, Parris tracked the behavior of every Facebook post and share relating to the project, so he knew which outreach efforts were paying off. Indeed, when ProPublica was fully engaged with the community, the site was receiving 25 submissions a day. When the reporters turned their attention to other projects and didn’t engage as much with the veterans, the submissions dropped to barely one a day.

Parris says that helps him make the point to his journalism students that they can quantitatively measure qualitative objectives. Through numbers, he was able to measure impact — and how behavior changed as the project developed.

Getting students to really dig into their data and test ideas also discourages them from assuming what is true in one dataset, or at one time, will be universally true. That’s something Pucci tries to reinforce in her lessons.

“It’s my hope that ... students keep looking at the data and refreshing all the time” she says. “Don’t be rigid and robotic in analyses. Look around with a journalist’s objective eye.” And keep testing. Behavior changes, and data can show how audiences evolve, so you can evolve with them.

Another outcome, of course, is helping students land jobs. A recent search of journalismjobs.com reveals 500 or more postings that make reference to “metrics,” “analytics,” “data” or “social media.” That is five times the number of postings that mention “investigative” and similar to the number of posts that include the word “reporter.” At the very least, it demonstrates these are skills newsrooms are looking for now.

One of the challenges is how to give students experience with analytics without shortchanging other fundamentals. “There’s so much to cover in a journalism education,” Pucci says, recognizing one of the biggest obstacles in adding yet another topic to cover. So, rather than turn every student into an expert, Pucci’s hopes “to produce a small number of students who may go on to be analysts in news organizations. They’d be well-suited because they’d have a journalistic background and would understand those issues.... My hope is that it sparks an interest and carries over to a job.”

And for those already in the industry, but are lacking knowledge in analytics, the university plans to offer a five-course analytics certificate.

Whether through its undergraduate program or a certificate, Cronkite’s main objective is to prepare students for the real professional world. “Doing good journalism is not just about cranking out good stories. It’s a business. To sustain that business, stories have to perform.”

Now journalism schools are making sure their students are prepared to see their stories not just through reporting, writing and publication, but connecting with the audience and informing the next day’s story.

Joshua Hatch is the assistant managing editor for The Chronicle of Higher Education and the president of the Online News Association. He teaches online journalism as an adjunct lecturer at American University in Washington, D.C.

LEVERAGING THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF COLLECTIVE DIFFERENCES INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

By *Karie Hollerbach*, Southeast Missouri State University

Diversity is currently at the forefront of many internal and external dialogues within the higher education community. Identity diversity, centered on aspects such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, social status, etc., is just one type of diversity input that could lead to positive outcomes. In his book *The Difference*, author Scott Page makes the argument that including people on a team that are not only identity diverse, but also cognitively, experientially and vocationally diverse leverages the power of diversity to improve problem solving performance (Page, 2007). Two conditions must be present to produce the sought-after improvements: the diverse talents must be connected to relevant problems and the diverse team members must get along with one another in order to function in actual practice.

In Southeast Missouri State University's Department of Mass Media, we were able to put Page's recommendation to the test in two very different courses during the Fall 2015 semester. We utilized a diverse team-teaching assignment in both our Diversity in Communication course, which is required of every major and is also a popular elective with the campus at large, and in our Media Management course, which is required of our advertising and multimedia journalism students.

The Diversity course looks at the body of literature on media diversity and addresses a broad spectrum of topics including a history of the depictions and representations of minority and marginalized groups throughout various forms of media, an investigation of stereotypes perpetuated in the media and an examination of minority representations in all forms of media both as content creators and content subjects. Students in the course are encouraged to think about diversity from a content production perspective. They use the course readings, assignments

and discussions to explore how they will make decisions about diversity issues in their professional and personal lives.

The Media course utilizes a case study approach to teach students about both advertising and editorial decision making and project management within the context of our student newspaper, the *Arrow*. Students in the course learn management theory as it relates to the business and ethics of the news business and then apply their collective knowledge to scenarios situated in real world editorial and advertising settings. Those same theories are also utilized and tested in the students' day-to-day operational management of the *Arrow* as they are all working for the publication in either a staff member or editor/manager role.

As a newly appointed department chair, I immediately realized that we were not giving voice to the power of diverse individuals by scheduling our Diversity course to be taught semester after semester by the same two African American female assistant professors in the department's multimedia journalism option. This result was analogous to the unintended social consequences of advertising idea explored by Richard Pollay (1986). The department did not intend to send the message that diversity instruction should be shouldered by one curricular option's female minority faculty members. And yet, our previous course scheduling actions were saying that loud and clear.

Our Media course had two different curricular options students enrolled in it. But, it was only being taught by the multimedia journalism faculty member who serves as the faculty advisor to the *Arrow*. She was doing double the course preparation work to make sure that both ad-

vertising and editorial perspectives were covered in the course and that the students received equitable attention as either advertising or editorial staff members for our publication.

The solution to both of these courses' issues was found by using the power of diversity in all of its forms to create a positive result. The faculty member teaching the Media course was also one of the female faculty members who had been teaching the Diversity course. My challenge: I needed to identify a second faculty member who could contribute to the identity, cognitive, experiential and vocational diversity of both courses and then present a team-teaching partnership opportunity to the pair of them for their upcoming fall teaching schedules. I would also have to secure the approval of the dean and the provost as team-teaching, while encouraged, has to be calculated as part of a faculty member's teaching load and authorized for it to be included in the final course schedule.

The second faculty member that I selected to recruit for the team was one who had already been involved in successful, impromptu collaborations with the existing female faculty member. This met Page's required condition that diverse team members must be able to work together in harmony. It is certainly acceptable if they agree to disagree at times, but they must respect each other's diverse perspectives, heuristics and interpretations of things. The second faculty member could also make unique offerings to the four forms of diversity which would, in turn, provide the team with diverse talents that were applicable to addressing the existing challenges in both courses. This met Page's other required condition that people's differences be meaningful and appropriate to the task at hand.

The mechanics of the solution were as follows: a female African American assistant professor with a law degree who had a professional background in journalism would partner with a male Caucasian instructor with a business degree who had a professional background in advertising to teach both the Diversity and the Media courses in blended formats that would utilize online components as well as face-to-face class meetings. Both faculty members enthusiastically agreed to take on the team-teaching assignments, and the dean and the provost were quick to grant approval for what they both felt was an innovative teaching arrangement. The faculty members met several times to prepare the respective course outlines, to divide the course management tasks equitably and to discuss how they each wanted to bring their own diverse iden-

tity, cognitive, experiential and vocational talents to the narratives of the Diversity course and the Media course.

Consistent, planned interaction between the two faculty members, in both the online and face-to-face environments, was a cornerstone in both of the courses. In the Diversity course, the advertising professor took the lead in developing and administering the online materials that served to introduce students to unit concepts that both instructors had jointly prioritized as important. The multimedia journalism professor took charge of the in-seat reinforcement of those same concepts and designed activities to help students apply them. Each faculty member would often appear in the other faculty member's area: the advertising professor would attend and participate in the face-to-face class sessions and the multimedia journalism faculty member would engage in the online forum discussions. A similar approach was also followed in the Media course.

Both courses had full enrollments for the Fall 2015 semester. Student reaction to both courses was extremely positive and nearly identical in nature. Students commented repeatedly about how much they liked having two faculty members with diverse backgrounds teaching the courses and that they appreciated the different perspectives that both faculty members provided through their interactions. The class discussions, whether online or face-to-face, were also highly rated for both courses as were the assignments which students noted were extremely relevant to their lives and their career aspirations. Students asked if the department would consider teaching more courses in this manner because they appreciated the diverse viewpoints and teaching methods that the two faculty members brought to both courses.

The two faculty members also praised the experience. The female African American multimedia journalism faculty member said that team-teaching these two courses was the best teaching experience that she has had in her 15 years in the department. The male Caucasian advertising faculty member also identified these two courses as his best teaching experiences in his five years in the department.

Both faculty members said that watching and interacting with another diverse instructor helped them grow professionally and personally. The two faculty shared Southeast's College of Liberal Arts teaching award for their exemplary work on the Diversity and Media courses.

Where could the positive influence of collective differences make an impact on your program's curriculum? Page summarizes his operational framework in the prologue of his book where he writes, "In sum, rather than being on the defensive about diversity, we should go on the offensive. We should look at difference as something that can improve performance, not as something that we

have to be concerned about so that we don't get sued" (Page, 2007, p. xxix).

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