

ASJMC

# INSIGHTS

*Winter 2016*

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Civic Engagement?**

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**Student Newspaper Funding Issues on Public University  
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**“Innovate or Die”: Is the Innovation Hype Still Relevant  
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*From the Editor*

**The Value of Data Lies in Understanding  
Its Real Meaning**

**By James L. Stewart**



ASJMC **INSIGHTS**

*ASJMC Insights*

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## THE VALUE OF DATA LIES IN UNDERSTANDING ITS REAL MEANING

*By James L. Stewart, Nicholls State University*

Data is THE trending term. Numbers drive everything from our politics to the nation's educational system. At the last several journalism-education conferences I attended, it felt like every other session dealt with "Big Data" and its role in our programs (Maybe a bit of an exaggeration, but there were a lot of them).

The message is that we need to teach our students more about Big Data. Media outlets must analyze viewing habits through page hits and "Likes" in order to maximize audience share so that advertising revenues will accrue. Data mining is a primary financial engine driving development of the evolving virtual world.

Somebody, we are told, has to pay for those apps, and the sacrifice of personal information and the barrage of pop-ups are the costs we must pay if we want to play Angry Birds, Trivia Crack or whatever is hot right now for "free."

On its surface it makes sense.

Management by objectives has been around quite some time, and it seems a very reasonable approach to decision making. MBO principles dictate that decision makers set clearly defined, measurable goals, then monitor progress toward those goals, altering tactics as indicated by assessment results.

The idea is that logic, rather than emotion or guesswork, should guide decision-making. Numbers are all about pure logic.

Who could argue with that?

Here's the rub: numbers as measurement are not purely objective.

Remember the phrase popularized (if not coined) by Mark Twain: there are "Lies, damned lies, and statistics."

It is humans who assign MEANING to numbers.

Like many students who were drawn to journalism and later found themselves in graduate-school research methodology courses, I didn't have an innate love of mathematics. I was more or less dragged kicking and screaming into the world of quantitative research to the limited degree to which I pursued it. So, in truth, my views in this area may be seen as somewhat suspect.

In any event, one thing that did stick with me is the concept that if measurements have any value, they must be valid.

You recall validity, the notion that numbers actually represent the thing they are supposed to be measuring.

Validity is that quaint and, I would argue, an often-overlooked constraint on the use of quantitative reasoning.

We seem to be spellbound by anyone who can show us beautifully executed color graphics said to represent "knowledge." We are so enthralled by the images, we don't often enough stop to question the numbers the images are supposed to represent.

It is that questioning which underpins any real value of numbers as a decision-making tool.

For example, in higher education for some time there has been concern over retention rates. Students are not graduating at a fast enough rate. The longer they stay in school, the more expensive their education becomes.

More recently, there is growing discussion of student loans and the effects of the long-term debt with which many students start their post-graduation lives.

Clearly these are vital economic and social issues.

The problem is that they are complex, and we tend to look for the simple, measurable solution.

University-level education is becoming too expensive. Okay, let's give it a new operational definition.

If it is taking too long for students to get a degree, let's cut the number of hours they take. After all, measuring the value to the individual or society of those courses like art appreciation or poetry or philosophy is just too hard to do.

On the other hand, adding up 120 hours to earn a degree is easy. And counting up the number of degrees awarded each year is even easier.

However, is a degree the same as an education?

The poor use of data is by no means limited to higher education. Anyone who believes all the rhetoric surrounding the precision of data miners has never had to endure a video advertisement for a product in which he or she has absolutely no interest just to get to a movie trailer on YouTube. In other words, the viewer is forced to sit through a pointless ad to arrive at the desired content, which is, well, another ad.

We have a greater responsibility. We should not be in the business of churning out graduates like toasters. We should be in the business of producing educated citizens.

If we are going to use data to help us make decisions, we should not twist numbers to suit our needs of the moment.

Reducing student costs en route to that education is a discussion that must take place. But, it must always start with a better definition of education, a thing not easily qualified.

Then again, the easiest way is seldom the best way.

# HOW CAN JOURNALISM PROGRAMS PROMOTE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

*By Jennifer Choi, McCormick Foundation*

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation in September 2014 made the decision to merge the Journalism and Civics programs to create the newly formed Democracy program. For the last several years, the Foundation began to recognize that our civic engagement investment strategies were so intertwined with a strong journalism ecosystem that eventually we began to map out the ways our outcomes in both programs were interconnected.

The merger caused us to rethink how we could be more intentional in making investments to reinvigorate journalism's role in civic engagement and a healthier democracy.

The overlay between journalism and civic engagement is a much nuanced one — and the existing research on the intersection between the two is relatively nascent and thin. Given the changing cultural landscape of the civic discourse due to social media and an increasingly polarizing political discourse, there has been increased interest in the relationship between the two areas, including for stakeholders funding in journalism.

The financial challenges the journalism industry is facing make it even more difficult to propose solutions on how journalism can positively impact the civic discourse. As such, a sustainability plan is essential as an outcome for long-term success.

## **Our Situational Analysis from a Local Civic Health Standpoint**

As part of the merger, we at first looked at the data on Illinois' civic health measures. It should come as no surprise that the outlook did not look very promising.

According to a Paul Simon Public Policy Institute Poll (2014), the majority of Illinois residents (89%) felt corruption was common at the state level. Of the residents

surveyed, 85% of Chicago residents believed local corruption was at least somewhat common, and 60% of those residents felt the impact of corruption, compared to 45% of Illinois residents. The University of Illinois at Chicago's Department of Political Science reported that according to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Chicago metropolitan region has been the most corrupt area in the country since 1976, and Illinois the third most corrupt state in the nation.

Furthermore, the 2012 Illinois Civic Health Index (Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the National Conference on Citizenship, 2013) examined the civic health of Illinois Millennials (residents 18-29) with their national peers. The indicators included behaviors such as volunteering and donating money to a charity — in which Illinois youth were mostly on par with or slightly exceeded the rest of the national youth surveyed.

Interestingly, we also saw that nearly a quarter (24.9%) of Illinois Millennials engaged in weekly political expression; 4.5% were likely to attend public meetings; 29.8% were likely to vote in a local election and 2.2% were likely to work with neighbors to address a community issue. While Illinois youth slightly outpaced their national peers in engaging in weekly political expression and attending public meetings, they were only half as likely to work with their neighbors to address a community problem and five percentage points less likely than their national peers to vote in a local election.

But the study also reported that 67.2% of Illinois Millennials had confidence in the media, which was higher than their national peers (63.5%). So it seemed that locally, we had an opportunity to leverage a higher level of trust in the media to inspire ways we could improve civic participation rates and work with neighbors to solve community problems for young people in Illinois. And perhaps we might leverage this opportunity to work on



these larger issues of public perception of corruption at the state and local government levels.

### **Building on What We Learned from Our Investments in Youth Media**

Through the Foundation's Journalism program, the Heartland Alliance's Social Impact Research Center published a report evaluating the impact of youth media programming on its participants (2014). The study surveyed alumni who participated in a cohort of nine Chicago youth media organizations the Foundation has funded over the last ten to fifteen years. Youth media programming mostly entailed young people creating journalistic content on issues that pertained to their lives and the communities in which they lived. (I'd like to also note here that several of our youth media organizations are sponsored and hosted by our area journalism schools.)

The study found that the majority of alumni felt the strongest benefits of their experiences in youth media programming included building self-confidence, agency and voice, and systems of support (making new friends and having mentors). The study also reported that 80% of the youth media alumni consumed some news at least four days a week and 73.9% reported engaging in at least one traditional form of civic engagement in the last year.

On a more macro level, studies such as the Pew Research Center's study analyzing the local news ecologies of Denver, Macon and Sioux City (2015) showed that civic engagement and city satisfaction are positively correlated with stronger news habits in various types of markets (e.g., large, small, rural, urban, diverse). In other words, people who showed higher levels of civic engagement and city satisfaction were more likely to consume higher levels of local news.

At the same time, we were also trying to learn more about the polarizing political discourse and news consumption. For example, a Pew Research Center study (2014) analyzing the relationship between media habits and political disposition showed that news audiences tended to: (a) consume and/or share media that already aligned with their own political views; (b) not have a diverse diet of media sources; and (c) engage in a discourse with others that shared similar ideologies.

So by now we know that civically engaged youth and adults are more likely to consume more and trust local news, but the mainstream (in particular, national cable

television networks) news diet tended to be homogenous and already aligned with their own ideologies. So it doesn't seem like at least certain mainstream media news outlets are helping the civic discourse along.

The current polarizing political discourse has resulted in findings such as the recent Gallup poll (Sept. 28, 2015) showing trust in the media at an all-time low, especially among consumers under the age of 50. So how can we incentivize journalism programs to do better?

### **Local Journalism Can Play a Key Role in Promoting a Higher Quality of Civic Engagement**

In the Journalism funding world we'd discussed quite a bit the financial challenges of the industry and how shrinking newsrooms have undermined the capacity to deliver high quality journalism to the public. We know that especially legacy media institutions at the local level seem to have been especially hit hard by the rapid changes in the online media environment.

However, we also know that from the Knight Foundation's report (2015) on 18 non-profit news organizations and sustainability trends that local news organizations had higher growth rates in raising individual donor revenue than its state and regional counterparts. Diversified revenue streams (e.g., from events, partnerships, contracts) additionally seemed to trend positively in the local journalism sector.

Additionally, the McCormick Foundation's three-year (2013 – 2015) \$6 million initiative, Why News Matters, sought to ramp up the news consumption skills (i.e., news literacy) of young people, particularly in the Chicago area. In other words, we were addressing "the demand side" of local journalism. From reports furnished to us by our grantees, we learned the more youth participants consumed news and learned the critical skills to become discerning and savvy consumers of news as part of our grant-funded programs, the more they were actually likely to increase their trust in local news sources. We learned a few other key takeaways that tied into our grant making program evolution on the "supply side" that I'll speak more to later.

So it seems there might be opportunities to start with the local landscape to address some of the broader issues around trust in the media, despite the fact that the existing research on the nuances of local news ecologies and their relationship to news consumers (i.e., citizens – active or not) is still relatively broad and somewhat thin.

## Local Journalism Is a Key Point of Entry to Engaging Audiences

The local journalism sector has long been able to show positive audience engagement and brand loyalty, especially in smaller rural communities. We haven't yet been able to leverage this strength into a reliably sustainable business model – mostly because we have been more focused on massive scaling and distribution as the only means of earning revenue. But studies like the Knight Foundation mentioned above show that sustainability strategies at the local journalism sector are worth more deeply exploring.

Why can't we take a closer look at how local journalism has drawn in audiences who are eager to be in the know about their neighborhoods? How can we better connect audiences to communities just outside of their own neighborhoods and translate that into civic action to move our respective cities and towns forward?

## Local Can Also Mean Reaching New Audiences (“Audiences of Opportunity”)

Social media vehicles have already prioritized understanding audience behavior and dispositions, and customizing content to optimize the user experience. Applying those best practices for mission-driven high quality journalism on the local level might also help content providers to better respond to their target markets by building trust, loyalty and eventually financial support from these audiences.

Chicago's community foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, as part of being named a winner of a Knight Foundation community information challenge, jump-started an initiative called “Community News Matters.” The initiative yielded research showing that Chicago's lowest income communities were also information deserts, where people in underserved communities (particularly on the South and West sides) were not receiving critical information impacting their civic lives.

The McCormick Foundation's Why News Matters initiative, as previously described, set to improve the news consumption skills of young people in Chicago. A key piece of feedback we began to hear from our youth, especially on the South and West sides of Chicago, was that our youth felt that “mainstream media” (mostly local television news stations) were not only seldom covering their neighborhoods, but inaccurately portraying youth in these neighborhoods and “getting it wrong.”

The Media Insight Project, a joint initiative of the American Press Institute and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, showed that Millennials (news consumers between the ages of 18 – 34) still had voracious appetites for news according to its report, “How Millennials Get News,” but a deeper dive into African-American and Latino audiences showed that although most African-American (58%) and Latino (57%) audiences felt it was easier to keep up with the news, only 25% of African Americans reported that the news accurately portrayed their community, and 33% of Hispanic adults felt that the news accurately portrayed their community.

The McCormick Foundation funded an oversampling of African-American and Latino audiences in Chicago as part of this study, and we found that this dissatisfaction was even more so the case in Chicago – with 10% of African Americans reporting that the news accurately portrayed their community and about 18% of Latino audiences feeling the same.

Harvard education professor and researcher Meira Levinson in her book *No Citizen Left Behind* (2012) explores the notion of the civic empowerment gap. She asserted that research shows a sense of political and individual efficacy – the belief that one can influence government – is clearly correlated with engagement. In other words, “the less efficacious one feels, the less likely one is to participate” (Levinson, 2012, p. 39).

Levinson further explains the dangers of systematic exclusion and how such exclusion can “weaken the quality and integrity of our democracy” (Levinson, 2012, p. 48):

Governments that appear to serve the interests of only a narrow segment of the population cease to be viewed as democratic and cease to inspire the loyalty and commitment of those who feel excluded. Political violence by citizens – as exemplified by the Black Panthers, the riots after the Rodney King incident, and recent domestic terrorism threats—is an extreme but real possibility in a democracy, as such violence is tightly linked to feelings of disaffection and alienation (Levinson, 2012, p. 49).

This eerily resonated with me in light of the Baltimore and Ferguson riots.

And now in Chicago, we are facing a similar policing issue where we hope local journalism organizations can

partner with community members and organizations to facilitate a platform where we can hold systems accountable in a thoughtful and productive way.

Levinson implores educators to help young people to construct more empowering narratives that are truthful and not self-defeating. By validating communities' lived experiences and building a strong sense of political efficacy, we avoid destructive responses to social injustices (Levinson, 2012, pp. 108-109).

So perhaps creating inspirational journalism that promotes meaningful civic engagement requires that we be more thoughtful about how we build relationships with those who do not necessarily share our own viewpoints and lived experiences.

### **We All Have a Role – We Must All Do Our Part**

Funder colleagues such as the Knight Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, Democracy Fund, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Open Society Foundations and Rita Allen Foundation (thanks to the Media Impact Funders) convened in June 2015 to further explore the overlay and think about how as funders we can help to reinvigorate the role of journalism for an engaged citizenry in a healthy democracy.

We looked at opportunities to support the capacity of statehouse reporting and civic literacy initiatives, and explore more robust research on news consumption behaviors and the disposition to civically engage.

As funders looking at the broader needs around sustainability in the local journalism ecosystem for an informed public and thriving democracy, we at the McCormick Foundation looked at ways we could incentivize news organizations to better understand how their mission-driven content could improve the quality of civic engagement that included sophisticated ways to approach audience research – connecting audiences through authentic storytelling and building empathy, and fostering meaningful authentic engagement beyond a mere “like” or comment on an article online.

Innovative models such as the Seattle Times' Education Lab and its partnership with Solutions Journalism Network, the Center for Investigative Reporting's creative community engagement work and the New Jersey News Commons in partnership with Montclair State University's Center for Cooperative Media exemplify high qual-

ity journalism institutions amplifying core values through creative collaborations and leveraging existing resources and strengths.

The McCormick Foundation supports high quality civic learning opportunities for young people to engage in their schools and communities as they are more likely to continue to be engaged and informed citizens into adulthood. Under the newly formed Democracy program the civic learning portfolio now includes a youth media strategy — giving young people agency to create a thoughtful and authentic narrative in partnership with the broader local news community.

One of our projects to help inspire civic engagement is Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism's Social Justice News Initiative – a program to partner local journalists and organizations with students and faculty in covering prevalent local issues impacting the community. Similar to the Montclair example, higher education institutions can offer infrastructural (back office) support and can help to sustain the talent pipeline – two key factors that contribute to long-term sustainability.

On a broader scale, programs that support strong local journalism in partnership with local government agencies, community-based organizations and small to large businesses strengthens the city infrastructure. Journalism can connect various institutions on issues that have an editorial through-line that cuts across all sectors.

While it is incumbent upon the public sector, individuals, business and civic organizations to contribute to a healthy democracy, journalism institutions clearly have a significant role to play.

Journalism programs can lead in creating a more thoughtful exchange of ideas between communities that invites and includes multiple perspectives and lived experiences, and that values *all* audiences to help our communities move forward in an age of what seems to be an increasingly fractured and ideologically polarized nation.

I'm excited and optimistic about the opportunities – as journalism institutions we can take the lead in meaningfully reaching out to citizens again, build trust and work toward making our communities stronger and better.

*Jennifer Choi is a program officer for McCormick Foundation's Journalism Program.*

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# STUDENT NEWSPAPER FUNDING ISSUES ON PUBLIC UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN OHIO: HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS VS. STUDENT JOURNALISTS

*By Terry L. Hapney Jr., Marshall University*

Cases of college and university administrators using funding for student publications as a mechanism to attempt to exercise control over student media arise on a fairly steady basis (Hapney & Russo, 2013). Occasionally, this comes in the form of student government associations that defund student newspapers in retaliation for reportage. Usually, funding provided by administrators and student government associations is not a license to control student newspapers on public university campuses, in particular (2013). Struggles and conflict between university administrators and student journalists over who controls student newspapers in Ohio is evident—including the issue of funding (Hapney & Lucas, 2014a).

This article begins with a review of the relevant literature associated with student newspaper budget cuts carried out by college and university administrators, including an examination of the important federal and Supreme Court cases associated with this scenario. It also outlines the method used in examining budgetary issues on four public university campuses in the state of Ohio. The views of university administrators, faculty members, and student journalists at these universities are outlined. It concludes with ideology in relation to a continual issue with which administrators, faculty members, and student journalists contend.

## **Review of the Literature**

A couple of U.S. Supreme Court cases deal directly with the issue of funding student newspapers.

The plaintiffs in *Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System v. Southworth* (2000) argued that university mandates for students to pay fees funding student media that students found in conflict with their ideologies vio-

lated their First Amendment rights. The Supreme Court disagreed, holding that the fees had the singular purpose of facilitating freedom of ideas exchanged on the campus. This, the Court maintained, is a central part of a public university's mission, so long as the fees are available to all student groups with all beliefs. The justices, in a unanimous judgment, decided that the fee system was acceptable because the university does not award funding to student groups based on the groups' views (Wood & Schilling, 2000). An optional or refund system is not required, according to the Court, leaving public universities with the choice of refusing to fund all student organizations or funding all of them no matter the views members champion (Wood & Schilling, 2000). Had this not been the Court's opinion, student newspapers may have been forced to shut down for lack of funding.

In *Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia* (1995), a student organization that gained Contracted Independent Organization status began publishing a newspaper to promote its activities. The students sued a committee of the university's student council after it denied payment to a printer to cover printing costs for the publication. The Supreme Court found that the council discriminated against the students "on the basis of religious editorial viewpoints, not religion itself" (p. 819). The Court also decided that the students were seeking funding as a student publication supported by the student activity fund in other cases. The funding was to cover printing costs that contain materials that are covered by the First Amendment.

Thanks to *Rosenberger*, administrators at public universities must treat religious student organizations in the same manner as other student organizations (Mawdsley & Russo, 1995). When universities provide students a pub-

lic forum for free speech, they cannot deny such expression based on religion without encountering free-speech problems, according to Mawdsley and Russo.

## Method

The research included in this article is part of a larger study on student newspaper governance on Ohio's public university campuses (Hapney, 2012). Specifically, this paper addresses issues related to the funding of student newspapers at public universities in Ohio. It provides a look into the thoughts of administrators, faculty members, and students on this important issue.

The data included in this article came from a mixed-methods research study that was, primarily, qualitative (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). The researcher's quantitative survey questionnaire examined administrative, faculty, and student attitudes regarding student newspapers on public university campuses in Ohio. Once data collection concluded, the researcher visited all campuses on which litigation had occurred between university administrators and student journalists. He conducted interviews and focus groups on those campuses to dig deeply into the issues and struggles among higher education administrators, faculty members, and student journalists.

This study focused on 11 of Ohio's public universities: University of Akron, Bowling Green State University, University of Cincinnati, Ohio University, The Ohio State University, University of Toledo, Kent State University, Miami University, Cleveland State University, Wright State University, and Youngstown State University. Three other state institutions were removed from the study for several reasons affecting rigor. Of the 11 universities in the study, four had experienced lawsuits related to the operation of the student newspapers on their campuses. The researcher conducted interviews and focus groups to collect data in the informants' natural workplaces and classroom environments.

The principal investigator visited the four higher education locations to conduct interviews and hold focus groups with a Business Affairs Representative (BAR), Journalism Faculty Members (JFM), administrative Legal Team Members (LTM), Student Affairs Administrators (SAA), Student Journalists (SJ), and Student Newspaper Advisory Board Members (SNABM). This article gives insight into issues of funding that face student newspapers on select Ohio public university campuses.

## Funding

This section provides guidelines related to funding that administrators should use when dealing with student newspapers on college and university campuses throughout the United States, based on how the courts are trending.

Public college and university administrators may choose to fund student newspapers with student fees. Such decisions do not violate the First Amendment rights of off-campus newspaper publishers and students who object to such use of fees because university student newspapers fulfill universities' educational goals by providing journalism experiences to students and for public discussions (*Hays County Guardian v. Supple*, 1992).

University student senates may not refuse funding for gay and lesbian student groups if they approve funding for other student groups, because public universities that fund speech or expression must do so fairly with no discrimination based on ideology. While universities are not required to supply funding to student organizations on campus, once institutions supply funding the First Amendment requires officials to provide resources without regard to content of ideas expressed by the student groups (*Gay and Lesbian Students Association v. Gohn*, 1988).

Even when students disagree with the content of campus papers, they must continue to pay student fees (*Kania v. Fordham*, 1983). Public university supervisory boards may not reduce funding of student newspapers when board members and administrators object to editorial content (*Stanley v. Magrath*, 1983).

Universities that require students to pay fees to fund newspapers do not abridge the First Amendment by requiring individuals to pay such fees. Student journalists may edit material submitted to student newspapers, but public university administrators may not censor student newspapers if they were created as a forum for expressing student opinions, not as publications designed to further governmental programs regulated by university administrators (*Arrington v. Taylor*, 1974).

Public university administrators cannot penalize student newspapers financially for deciding what type of advertising they will accept, their editorial content, and who is hired to their staffs (*Joyner v. Whiting*, 1973). Requiring mandatory student fees to fund student newspapers is constitutional, and students cannot refuse to pay such fees because institutional officials have the freedom to

present the broadest range of ideas in various formats to their students (*Veed v. Schwartzkopf*, 1973).

## Views on Student-Newspaper Funding at Select Ohio Public Universities<sup>1</sup>

### *Funding at Hillcrest University*

*Administrator.* The student media board makes financial decisions for all student media at HU. “They determine who gets what from the budgets,” the SAA commented. “So, it includes a variety of magazines, student radio, student television, all of that.” There have been conversations taking place between the journalism program and student affairs division about finding enough money to create a position that would be a business manager for all student media at HU. “Then, hopefully, transition that person off institutional dollars so part of the revenue they would bring in would pay for that person and the person would oversee the business function but also have some editorial advising,” the SAA explained. “It’s not administering. It’s not managing. But, advising . . . How you define that role of advising, I think, is very important.”

*Student.* There is one thing that “keeps me up at night,” according to the SJ:

It’s not the \$30,000 we get from (the student media board) that scares me. But the fact that so many of our advertisements are from the university or organs of the university. The way I see the \$30,000, although (the student media board) may not see it this way, they see it as funding to a student organization, but I see it as payment for delivering 8,000 papers to campus each week. So, students . . . each student is paying \$2, basically, for 50 issues of the paper a year. I think that’s a pretty good deal. So, the funding here always annoys me. I feel more like we should just be able to charge them. ‘Hey, you want the paper?’

The SJ indicated that the editors would have to create a complicated subscription formula if it lost the university funding. “Most universities do support their paper in some way,” the JFM maintained. The SJ noted that if the university ever cut the paper’s direct support the paper would survive. It might have to move to a once-a-week basis for a while, he offered. “I’d probably have to talk most of the staff into taking a giant pay cut,” the SJ pointed out. “Or just giving up our pay altogether. I mean, we would be doing it anyhow. But if we lost

that and all the advertising, then there would be a problem.”

*Faculty.* The JFM stated that the students sell advertisements that run in the student newspaper. The JFM oversees all of the students. The week prior to this interview, a lot of the students who sell advertisements had final exams, so there were not many ads in the paper. The student media board approves the newspaper’s budget. One time the JFM was told her job was going to be eliminated. This was when the current SAA first arrived at HU:

She had no idea she had no power to get rid of (my position) . . . She wanted the money. But it was set under student fees, or somewhere it had to be spent on (student newspaper) advisers, so it didn’t change. (Student media board members) got involved by writing letters. They’re more like an advocacy group . . . If I have something going on and . . . I feel like they need to be aware . . . they’re almost . . . like my backbone. I feel like I’m in a great situation here. Obviously, you never know what might happen tomorrow.

The JFM and the student editors create the budget that then goes to the student media board for approval. Then it makes its way to student activities. “We request a certain amount from them and they tell us if we get it,” the JFM remarked. “This year we got \$30,000 from them.” The student newspaper has had budgets as strong as \$200,000. For the past few years, according to the JFM, the budget has been in the \$140,000-\$150,000 range, due to the economy. The \$30,000 student fees allocation is just a small part of the overall budget. The rest is the result of advertising sales. “We get a lot of national advertising,” the JFM declared.

Two or three years ago there were state budget cuts. Every unit on campus took a 10% cut to its budget. “We got \$27,000,” the JFM acknowledged. “Actually, it was the students’ idea to ask for 10% less. It was budget cuts and the students said, ‘Well, if everybody’s cutting, we’ll cut 10%.’ But then we went back up when the budget went back. The next year we asked for the full amount again.”

### *Funding at University of Tomorrow*

*Administrator.* The SAA offered that the funding for the paper, prior to the newspaper becoming independent,

came from student general fees. “Before, it’s my understanding that it was pretty traditional (support for) the paper.”

*Student.* The student newspaper is fiscally independent of UOT, according to the SJ. She does not have input in the budget. “That’s, sort of, a business thing. And . . . the editorial and the business side are totally separate entities. So, I usually don’t deal with anything that has to do with budget, other than the payroll budget for, like, the editorial staff.” Payroll is structured as a set amount the students use to operate every position. Students are paid per issue. “It can either be more or less depending on how (the editor feels) their performance has been or if we have extra money in the budget,” she pointed out.

*Faculty.* The JFM remarked that student fees funded the paper prior to its independent status. Advertising funds it now. The SNABM said funding for the paper comes, solely, through advertising. He said when the split occurred, the university no longer had to support a \$100,000-plus budget for the paper or the roughly 1,000-square feet of office space. “So . . . they were content . . . as content as university administration ever is with any student newspaper, because student newspapers make bonehead mistakes,” the SNABM stated. “Student newspapers . . . take on the administration. Sometimes rightly and sometimes maybe not with all the facts. So . . . that aside . . . the university was pretty content to let it, you know, be independent.”

The SNABM declared that the paper struggled, financially, for a while. One of the things the student newspaper advisory board realized was it was paying a lot of money for rent. “The location was at the south side of the campus and in a not . . . very safe area.” He approached the university’s Board of Trustees to ask the board for permission to rent office space on campus. He had ties to the university, as an alumnus. “I thought I’d get a fair hearing,” he reported. “I’ve never been so stonewalled in all my life. I was really surprised at the lack of responsiveness from the university to our requests . . . So, we decided . . . we’ll just make the best of it and go it alone.” The SNABM acknowledged they put together a business plan and retired the \$150,000 debt in three years. Now the paper has \$150,000 in the bank.

The SNABM recognized the paper is doing “pretty well” financially. He said he attributes that to university newspapers being “somewhat immune” to what is happening in print media. Such papers are a niche market, but they are starting to feel the effects now. “Print revenue is way

. . . down (now),” he said. “We probably (have to) reinvent ourselves again. We had a board meeting last night and talked about . . . what we can do to turn it around.”

### *Funding at Taylor White University*

*Administrator.* There is a Board of Trustees policy at TWU that addresses funding for the independent student newspaper, the SAA reported. Student publications get money from student fees to produce and publish the student newspaper, including paying the students who serve in leadership roles. The policy states that the independent student newspaper’s staff members will retain the paper’s carry-forward money. Any unspent money at the end of the academic year goes back to the student newspaper. “The other student organizations don’t (get carry-forward funds),” the SAA acknowledged. Other student organizations’ carry-forward funds go to the SAA who works with the student activities board to reallocate the money. Student media included in the receiving of carry-forward funds are the campus radio station, the independent student newspaper, and other media operations.

The independent student newspaper receives a student fee allocation of just over \$70,000. The SAA recognized that the paper is also budgeted to make \$40,000 in advertising sales. “They haven’t done that in a while,” he said. There have been no budget cuts made to the student newspaper. In fact, the administration has given them more money because the costs associated with publishing the independent student newspaper have risen. Students make the decisions regarding student-fee allocations at TWU. The SAA chairs that committee. There are also administrators on the committee, but the students make up the majority of members.

The SAA added that he thinks the lab newspaper also gets some student-fee funding, but it does not go through his office: “I think the College of (name) gets money directly from the administration without student input, and I think they may give some of that to the (lab newspaper).”

The LTM commented that she is unsure from where the funding comes for the independent student newspaper. She explained that she thinks the lab paper is recognized as a student organization that taps into a pool of fees that the student government allocates. “They have an allocation body,” she indicated. “Now, I’m sure they do get some . . . advertisements, too. But there has to be some, you know, basic, operational funding.”



*Student.* The student journalist did not mention funding during the course of the interview.

*Faculty.* The JFM with the lab paper confirmed that funding for the paper comes from the university, specifically, the dean's office, but in the case of the independent newspaper funding comes from student fees because it is a club activity. Over time, according to the JFM, it increases. He noted there have been no cuts to the lab paper's budget since he has been at TWU. "Though, we always foresee it in the future the way things are going," he offered.

### ***Funding at Buckeye State University***

Student media at BSU is converged in a major way. The student newspaper, student radio station, student television station, and student online medium work closely together.

*Administrator.* The SAA stated that there have been a couple of funding differences of opinion in terms of how funding for student media should be used. "But we've usually been able to work those through," the SAA pointed out. The SAA also remarked that the BSU student newspaper considers itself independent because the majority of its funding comes from advertising revenue. "But those dollars are getting a little scarce right now," the SAA stated. She said the rest of the funding comes through student fees: "The amount of fee that goes there is a board-established fee. Over the years, (the student newspaper advisory board) has come through with requests to increase that per student dollar amount."

The SAA declared that the funding level has stayed pretty steady over the years.

*Student.* The SJs reported that "a good bit" of student media funding comes from student activity fees. "We get a lot from advertising when we cover local football games and broadcast those," a broadcast journalism student who works for the television station acknowledged. "And we also get a lot of revenue from our production company. We do in-house commercial production, different shoots for different people. We get a lot of revenue that way." The journalists who work for the television station also have a deal with a teleproductions organization in which they have use of a media truck to do live broadcasts. The student newspaper is "an advertiser's wish," according to the SJs. They make money from student housing advertisements, advertising revenue from

Amazon, in addition to local businesses. "We are considered a student organization on campus, so we do get funding from the university as well," a student newspaper journalist recognized. The website and campus television station are also considered student organizations and receive funding from the university in the form of student fees.

Student journalists from all media indicated that the amount in student fees has been cut in recent years:

That's why we've upped our revenues on our side. That's why we go out and do the football games . . . because it's a bear to do those games. It takes a lot of time, a lot of effort, manpower that we almost don't have. But we do it because when we get cut, and we do get cut. We all took salary cuts.

Other student journalists said the budget has been "slashed" for the past two semesters. "Our salaries have gone down . . . we try to make up for it," an SJ added. "Same here. I don't think it's like, uh, necessarily like a vendetta kinda thing," another SJ commented. "It's not like the university is trying to censor us."

*Faculty.* The SNABM explained there is a student advertising staff for the student newspaper. A professional staff supervises them. They "actually do a great job," the SNABM indicated. The SNABM maintained that the university determines the level of student fees funding for the newspaper. There is a "referendum process where it can be adjusted without university direct approval, but just last year, for example, the BAR submitted a letter asking for an increase in funding because of the added expense of all the computer equipment that goes along with this and the university approved it," the SNABM noted. Since the SNABM has been at BSU, the student newspaper budget has not been cut or gone down. "It's stayed the same for a considerable period of time and then just went up."

The JFM offered that funding for the student newspaper is a 50/50 mix of student fee monies and ad revenue. "It used to be that (the student newspaper) took nothing from student fee money, but we obviously can't keep student hours in here at a decent amount." The JFM pointed out that the overall budget for the student newspaper, television station, a magazine, and the radio station is nearly \$1 million per year. It covers all co-curricular media. There are other non-curricular media, including several magazines that are not covered

by this budget. Funding for the student media was flat from spring semester to fall during this study. "But in essence we have cut budgets almost every semester I've been here," the JFM remarked. "We got an increase in student fee money. Without that we would have had to severely cut budgets."

## Conclusion

The only confirmed lawsuits among these four universities centered on open records requests that had been denied by university administrators (Hapney & Lucas, 2014b). There were no confirmed cases of legal action with regard to funding issues.

Overall, the public universities examined for this article seem typical. One uses a student media board to make funding decisions based on, in large part, advertising sales with a small percentage of funding coming from student fees. This institution's student newspaper has experienced budget cuts, but they were the same as those all across the campus. Another university's student newspaper is completely independent from the institution, but was funded completely by student fees before the independent status. Its current operating budget is from advertising sales and the paper is financially sound. A third university has an independent student newspaper that is funded by advertising and student fees. A lab paper tied

to the curriculum in the form of two classes relies on student fees that are funneled through academic affairs and allocated by the dean of the college under which the newspaper falls. There have been no budget cuts to these papers. The final university examined in this study features an independent student newspaper whose funding comes mainly from advertising sales. It was mixed in terms of perception of budget cuts. Students said they had endured cuts, but that the cuts were not a "vendetta" or "censorship." The business affairs representative said there had only been increases. The faculty member said there had been cuts.

Compared to the literature on student newspapers' enduring struggles over control throughout the rest of the nation (Keierleber, 2014; Kruth, 2015; LeBoeuf, 2015; Santus, 2014; Vicent, 2013; Viera, 2015; Zweifler, 2012), these four public university student newspaper scenarios seem pretty stable as they relate to funding. As Student Press Law Center attorney Adam Goldstein said, a "University's funding shouldn't be used as leverage to regulate (a) paper's speech" (Vicent, 2013, para. 26). It appears as though administrators on these campuses take that quote to heart.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Informants in this study selected pseudonyms for their universities.

# “INNOVATE OR DIE”: IS THE INNOVATION HYPE STILL RELEVANT FOR JMC EDUCATION?

*By Raul Reis, Florida International University*

A few years back, you couldn't help but feel that everyone in journalism and mass communication education was talking about *innovation* and *entrepreneurship*. Although those words mean very different things to different folks, you couldn't open a media education-focused book or report without finding references to both. As more and more JMC programs jump onto the innovation and entrepreneurship bandwagon, you have to wonder if those concepts are just a passing fad or if they are going to have a long-lasting impact in our field and our curricula.

After at least a decade of talking about innovation and entrepreneurship (some earlier recommendations go back two decades), are those ideas still relevant and worth pursuing? Have the changes schools and departments implemented in the past decade had an effect on the graduates we are producing? At this point, have those concepts been sufficiently embedded in our curricula?

Let's start our discussion by agreeing that innovation and entrepreneurship are interrelated but actually separate concepts. In a special report on innovation that appeared in *The Economist*,<sup>1</sup> Richard Lyons, who was then the “chief learning officer” at Goldman Sachs, defined innovation as “fresh thinking that creates value,” which is probably a generic enough and forward-thinking enough characterization that lends itself to being applied to many fields, including education.

In a 1994 update of his seminal book *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, first published in 1985, Peter Drucker defined entrepreneurship as the discipline of “how to make innovation effective in the marketplace.” In his foreword to a 2015 re-edition of the same book, Joseph Maciariello also connected the two concepts by saying that “entrepreneurship is the managerial process for creating and managing innovation.”

It is possible to be entrepreneurial without being innovative—not all new successful products, services or businesses are built on innovation. But it is harder to be a successful innovator without some degree of entrepreneurship—how many great innovations languish and never find a market for lack of an entrepreneurial champion? The synergy between those two concepts—and the degree of intentionality that connects them—has become so strong, that it is almost impossible to talk about one without discussing the other.

The incorporation of innovation and entrepreneurship by business and engineering schools has been a *must* for a while, and almost a question of survival. But how do those concepts fit in at journalism and mass communication programs?

For folks such as Eric Newton, innovation chief at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State, it's no longer a matter of “if” or even “when” for JMC programs. It's a matter of “what's next.” For Newton, the innovation rocket “has left the pad” some time ago. He believes that JMC programs now need to go a step beyond and work with “the entire university to reinvent news in the public interest.”

Jeff Brown, a successful media investor and venture capitalist, who is also the current entrepreneur-in-residence at Florida International's School of Journalism and Mass Communication, has a very hands-on and tech-oriented view of innovation. He notes that “there is no separating tech and journalism anymore—they are inexorably intertwined.” For Brown, “the problem that the news industry is facing is that journalists have historically not been technologists. This has to change. Journalists must no longer be slaves to technology—they have to master it and learn the tools of the technology trade,” if they want to be successful and have long careers in this business.

Most educators interviewed for this article seem to have a similar view. Greg Luft, professor and chair of the journalism and media communication department at Colorado State, says that it's not only critical to incorporate innovation and entrepreneurship into the JMC curriculum: it's "mandatory." For Luft, programs must offer their students "many additional opportunities," without ignoring the basic skills, such as information gathering and writing. In this way students will graduate with "a broad understanding of business approaches, the importance of multi-directional approaches to storytelling, and a solid, foundational understanding in communication hardware and software."

The road to innovation and entrepreneurship taken by Luft and his colleagues at Colorado State will sound familiar to many of us. It includes:

- A combination of new courses (about a dozen in their case) and new approaches to existing courses;
- Stand-alone workshops on certain skills and topics;
- Required, core courses in multimedia storytelling and other aspects of online journalism;
- Collaboration with other programs on campus, such as business, engineering, and information science and technology, to provide interdisciplinary options for students;
- Retooling, merging, collapsing "traditional" concentrations and degree programs.

In the case of my own program at Florida International, we embedded innovation and entrepreneurship not only into the majors and courses, but also into the school's very mission, vision, and strategy. We now talk about innovation and entrepreneurship the same way we talk about the other three cornerstones of our mission: diversity, globalization, and community engagement.

Moving innovation and entrepreneurship into the core of our mission forces us to think about it when we are contemplating, discussing, and making decisions about *everything*, including not only curriculum, but also academic scholarship, fundraising, outside partnerships, jobs and internship opportunities, all the way up (or down, if you prefer) to making budget decisions.

On a daily basis, that translates to offering the students as many opportunities as possible to develop their entrepreneurial and innovative skills. That process may start

in the classroom, but it doesn't stop there. Following the "teaching hospital" model we adhere to, we currently offer industry and community partnerships that apply those skills learned in class to hands-on projects within real-life situations and settings. In addition, the school has immersed itself in the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem of South Florida, leading events such as Media Party Miami and Panther Cage (a "Shark Tank-style" student competition) that bring to our campus hundreds of participants from Miami and Latin America.

Additionally, we have secured grants for new positions, such as our Knight Innovator in Residence; new lab spaces, such as the Media Innovation Incubator Lab, and also joined forces with organizations like LAB Miami (a collaborative workspace), the Knight Foundation, ICFJ, Hacks/Hackers, SPJ, PRSA, Social Media Club South Florida; and industry partners (*Miami Herald*, Univision/Fusion, Telemundo, Discovery Channel Latin America) to co-sponsor programs and events that bring together students, faculty, industry professionals and community members around those issues. We hosted our first official StartUp Weekend event in late November, which attracted almost 200 participants.

Besides the obvious benefits that come from the skills-building workshops and seminars—as well as from classroom instruction—these programs and partnerships have opened up dozens of job and internship opportunities for our students and alumni. As a result of these efforts, virtually no social media, digital media, entrepreneurship or media innovation event takes place in Miami today without some kind of participation or involvement from the SJMC and our students and faculty.

Innovators-in-residence and entrepreneurs-in-residence are only one way in which JMC schools and departments are trying to bridge the gap between what's going on in the industry and what's going on in classrooms and labs. Some programs, such as the College of Media and Communication at Texas Tech, have gone a step beyond and hired new tenure-track faculty in charge of bringing innovation and entrepreneurship into the curriculum. Texas Tech already has a new distance master's program in Strategic Communication and Innovation, and is planning to offer a college-wide certificate program in innovation and entrepreneurship, starting in 2016.

### Slow to Change?

Are JMC programs too slow to change, when it comes to incorporating innovation and entrepreneurship? In

“How to Make J-school Matter (Again),” published in August 2015, Amy Webb, who describes herself as a “media futurist” and was most recently a Nieman Fellow at Harvard, starts her report by observing that the media technology revolution has happened *despite* journalism and mass communication schools, as opposed to *because* of them. Webb points out that, although many J-schools have welcomed “disruptive change,” creating courses on topics such as virtual reality, wearable technology, coding and data science, those syllabi do not always completely integrate within the rest of the curriculum.

Meanwhile, she writes, “the ways in which news is reported, written, packaged, and produced are being redefined by decidedly nontraditional organizations.” She mentions BuzzFeed and Vox Media as examples of news organizations that are not only redefining content, but also “organizational management structures” within media companies.

One of the main obstacles preventing j-schools from embracing innovation, as identified by Webb in her report, is that “the current [university] system prevents curriculum development from keeping pace with the changing realities of modern newsrooms.” Organizations like BuzzFeed are looking for a new breed of journalist, well-rounded individuals that are “part-product, part-editorial,” and who are “able and willing to see the bigger picture of a news operation,” working in a “very different way than journalists who came up in a typical newsroom.” However, in the words of Eric Harris, BuzzFeed’s chief business operations officer, journalism programs around the country move at a much more deliberate and slower pace.

When it comes to larger j-school curricular changes, for example, with all the restrictions placed on departments, schools, and colleges by the faculty, administration, state higher education boards, and even accrediting bodies, it becomes indeed much more challenging for journalism programs to move as fast as the industry moves.

But should journalism and mass communication programs be always reacting to the industry? Shouldn’t we instead be playing a much bigger role in anticipating what the next trend or innovation will be? Shouldn’t we be the ones testing the waters and pointing the industry in new directions? Shouldn’t we be the laboratories where innovation is thought out, developed, applied, and tried out?

From the tone of this article, you have probably inferred that I look at those as rhetorical questions. Yes, indeed. If we want to stay relevant, we have to be more dynamic, nimble, creative, “disruptive,” and ready to embrace change. We also have to build long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with the media, communication, and tech industries. However—and above all—we have to embrace our roles as leaders, being more pro-active and less reactive, building our programs as the real innovation laboratories and incubators they need to be.

*Raul Reis is a professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Florida International University. His most recent book, Writing and Reporting for Digital Media, co-authored with Michael Sheerin and Kate MacMillin, was published by Kendall/Hunt in fall 2015.*

## ENDNOTES

1. “Something new under the sun.” *The Economist*, Oct. 11, 2007.



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*The Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication* promotes excellence in journalism and mass communication education. A valuable resource for chairs, deans, and directors, ASJMC is a non-profit, educational association composed of some 190 JMC programs at the college level. Most association members are in the United States and Canada. Eight international journalism and communication schools have joined the association in recent years.

[www.asjmc.org](http://www.asjmc.org)