

The Missouri Group

NEWS

REPORTING AND WRITING

ELEVENTH EDITION

PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

As news media evolve and new formats emerge, new skills as well as core journalism practices are needed to succeed. *News Reporting and Writing* confronts the issues of a new digital framework and provides the best content and practical advice to help you develop the skill set needed for a career in journalism today.

NEW ANNOTATED MODELS

In keeping with the rise of digital media, our annotated models now include samples that track a story across multiple media formats, including Twitter, blogs, print and the Web. The models throughout the book show you how to use and adapt core skills for different formats, audiences and tasks. In each model, useful annotations in the margins explain best practices for reporting, writing and editing. For a list of all the annotated models, see page 543.

<p>184</p> <p>9 The Inverted Pyramid</p>	<p>Story Organization</p> <p>185</p>
<p>ANNOTATED MODEL A Single-Subject Inverted Pyramid Story</p> <p>Man Arrested in Attack, Charged with Child Endangerment</p> <p>By Elizabeth Phillips <i>Columbia Missourian</i></p> <p>The arrest, not the assault, is the latest development, so it is emphasized.</p> <p>Details of the charges are in the second paragraph because the list is too long to put in the lead.</p> <p>The writer adds details, attributed to the police, on how the assault occurred. This information includes the "why."</p> <p>This paragraph continues the chronology of the assault and capture.</p> <p>Now that the basic facts are established, the writer adds background on the suspect, attributed to a public safety website.</p> <p>Writer gives the "what's-ness."</p> <p>The lead gives "who," "what" and "when."</p> <p>The name is not in the lead because most readers would not recognize it.</p> <p>"Where" is identified. "When" is made more specific than in the lead.</p> <p>Information about the children is pertinent because it adds to the "so what"—the children were also endangered.</p> <p>The writer offers evidence of the injuries and attributes this information.</p> <p>This typical one-subject story written in the inverted pyramid form features a delayed-identification lead.</p>	<p>ANNOTATED MODEL A Memo-Structure Story</p> <p>Parks and Recreation, City Council Discuss Plans for Parks Tax</p> <p>By Asif Lakhani <i>Columbia Missourian</i></p> <p>The multiple-element lead gives basic facts—the "who," "what" and "when."</p> <p>Subheadings introduce the paragraphs.</p> <p>The last paragraph wraps up the story.</p> <p>In a memo-structure story, subheads can reflect the answers to essential questions.</p> <p>The Multiple-Element Story</p> <p>Multiple-element stories are most commonly used in reporting on the proceedings of councils, boards, commissions, legislatures and courts. These bodies act on numerous subjects in one sitting. Frequently, their actions are unrelated, and more than one action is often important enough to merit attention in the story. You have four options:</p> <p>Subsequent paragraphs organize information by categories, not necessarily by importance.</p> <p>The writer has chosen categories that are relevant to the reader.</p> <p>COLUMBIA—Earlier this month, Columbia voters approved the extension of the park sales tax. On Monday night, the Columbia City Council and the Parks and Recreation Department attended a work session where they discussed where the tax revenue would go.</p> <p>What happened: Mike Hood, director of parks and recreation, presented a proposed five-year plan to council members.</p> <p>Cost: During the next five years, the one-eighth-cent sales tax is expected to garner about \$12 million for Columbia's parks.</p> <p>Timeline: The proposed plan divides projects into four categories: land acquisition and annual park funding, new facility and park development, improvements to existing parks, and trails and greenbelts. . . .</p> <p>Projects: The five-year plan would be front-loaded with construction projects over a four-year fiscal period between 2011 and 2015, which would leave more room for land acquisition later on, Hood said. Most of the construction projects are listed under new facility and park development and improvements to existing parks. . . .</p> <p>Comments: First Ward Councilman Paul Sturtz and Sixth Ward Councilwoman Barbara Hoppe voiced concern about front-loading the plan with construction. Both said land acquisition is more important because its value could increase over the next five years. . . .</p> <p>What's next: The proposed plan now goes to the Parks and Recreation Commission. After, it will go to the City Council for consideration. The council plans to discuss the suggested land acquisition at an upcoming council meeting.</p>

VideoCentral 

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Watch “**Going Visual: Video, Radio and the Web.**”

- Why are some radio stations shooting and sharing videos online? What do they hope to accomplish with this?
- Do you visit radio station websites and watch videos? If not, will you do so in the future? Explain.

and expense of a second inauguration? President Obama had already been sworn in as president. Author Sally Quinn explains, “We want to see the flags wave and the bands play, the parades march along and the leader of the free world standing before our Capitol dome.”

Television and online media help us do that.

WHAT RADIO AND TELEVISION DO BEST

During major news events, radio and television newscasters repeat their reports and update their audiences as the news develops. If you tune in to CNN, not only do you see what’s happening and listen to commentary, you also see additional headlines streaming below the picture on a ticker. You can pay attention to the news you are most interested in, and you feel as if you are witnessing history.

Of course, much of the time, journalists must write and report news after it has occurred. Many, if not most, radio and television stations provide at least some news that is written by journalists working for the wire services, such as the Associated Press or Reuters.

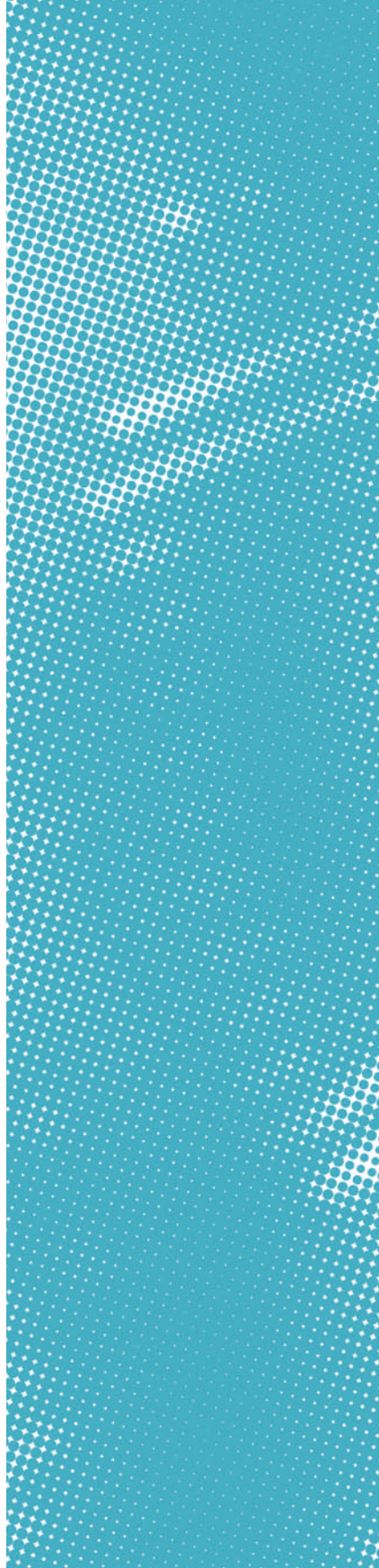
In addition, radio and television journalists might publish updates all day leading up to news broadcasts, using new media sources like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. They also often produce news for podcasts, blogs or wikis. And some have found ways to take content that used to be available only online and merge it with traditional newscasts. Information and reactions posted on social media are often shared during newscasts.

**INTEGRATED MEDIA
WITH VIDEOCENTRAL**

News Reporting and Writing doesn’t just cover the integration of print and digital media — it practices it, too, with the new VideoCentral feature. Throughout the book, call-outs in the margins link to a series of thought-provoking online videos that expand on the material covered in the print chapters with an insider’s look at journalism. Topics include legal rights of bloggers, real news versus satiric fake news, citizen journalism, shield laws and more, all accompanied by discussion questions. Turn to the inside back cover for more information on how to access VideoCentral.

EXPANDED DIGITAL MEDIA COVERAGE

Digital media coverage has been expanded throughout the book, reflecting the prominence of digital media in the new journalism landscape. Chapter 12, *Writing News for the Web*, for example, includes new coverage reflecting the convergence of print and online media, with material on writing for social media, search engine optimization and blogs, in addition to more traditional news sites.



News Reporting and Writing

Eleventh Edition

The Missouri Group

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Preface

WHAT DOES IT MEAN to be a journalist today? Has the image of the print newspaper reporter wielding a trusty pen and notebook been replaced by a journalist updating Twitter from a mobile device? How do students get their news? From a print newspaper, a network or cable news broadcast or a news blog—or from one another’s Facebook links? These are important questions in the dramatically changing world of journalism. Consider the many forms today’s journalism encompasses: 24-hour channels and news sites, traditional and online newspapers, podcasts and blogs, and even satiric programs like *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. What do these changes mean for today’s journalism students? How can they best prepare for a successful career in this evolving industry?

The staff of today’s converged newsrooms can agree on one answer: Editors want journalists who can report fully and write clearly, whether for an online news outlet, a professional blog, a cable news show or a print newspaper. The keys to being a good journalist are still as fundamental as that. We have revised the 11th edition of *News Reporting and Writing* to reflect the ways these essential skills are applied across this changing field. To this end, we have added more—and better integrated—coverage of reporting news across various media.

When it comes to integrated media, we practice what we preach: The new edition of *News Reporting and Writing* combines print and digital media into a single accessible package. Callouts in the book’s margins link to online videos that offer insider perspectives on issues of modern journalism, including the legal rights of bloggers, journalistic ethics, the common ground between real news and satiric fake news, and the power of images. Our integrated media program takes *News Reporting and Writing* beyond the limits of the printed page.

Even as we expand further into the digital realm, we continue to stress the essential reporting and writing skills that are the foundations of our profession—past, present and future, no matter the medium. We’ve also updated our current examples and issues, while still modeling in these examples—and in our own writing—the clear and descriptive writing journalism students must learn. Our emphasis on these topics in the textbook, combined with robust online support and practice opportunities, ensures that students will have more opportunities than ever before to practice and refine their skills.

New to This Edition

Revisions to the 11th edition of *News Reporting and Writing* address changes to the journalism landscape and provide additional opportunities for students to refine their reporting and writing skills in today’s world. Specifically, this new edition offers the following features:

- » **An increased and strengthened focus on Web writing and digital media.** Chapter 12, “Writing News for the Web,” has been expanded to include more coverage of social media writing, search-engine optimization and blogs, in addition to traditional news sites. The coverage of digital media is integrated throughout the book, addressing digital media alongside print and recognizing its prominence in the new journalism landscape.
- » **An even greater array of writing models.** In keeping with the growing focus on digital media, our annotated models now include samples that track a story across multiple media formats—including Twitter, blogs, print and the Web—showing students how to adapt their core skills for different audiences. All models have useful annotations in the margins of the stories explaining best practices for reporting, writing and editing.
- » **📺 Bedford Integrated Media.** *News Reporting and Writing* now includes integrated videos that expand on the material covered in the book’s print chapters. These online videos get students thinking critically about news media by giving them an insider’s look at journalism from a variety of provocative angles. Topics include shield laws and nontraditional journalists, media ownership, the culture of specialization in magazines, citizen journalism and more—and they’re all accompanied by thought-provoking discussion questions. These videos come automatically with every new copy of *News Reporting and Writing*; turn to the inside back cover for more information on how to access them.
- » **Nine new “On the Job” boxes that prepare students for contemporary careers.** In every chapter, a working journalist illustrates how the skills students learn in class will prepare them for careers across the media and in public relations—even in today’s challenging and evolving job market. The journalists profiled have wide-ranging careers, from working the White House beat to writing long-form stories for ESPN. Many of the newest boxes focus on new job opportunities and challenges created by a field in transition; they discuss how a journalist’s role can change and expand unexpectedly because of technology, and they suggest ways journalists can embrace that change and stay engaged with their work. For example, one writer explains how he graduated with a degree in magazine journalism but wound up working for a startup rather than a larger corporation, and a producer for a local NBC affiliate discusses taking on additional investigative responsibilities.
- » **New digital formats.** The Bedford e-Book to Go for *News Reporting and Writing* includes the same content as the print book, offering an affordable, tech-savvy PDF e-book option for students. Instructors can customize the e-book by adding their own content and deleting or rearranging chapters. Learn more about custom Bedford e-Books to Go at www.bedfordstmartins.com/ebooks, where you can also learn more about other e-book formats for *News Reporting and Writing*.

Enduring Features of the Text

Users of *News Reporting and Writing* have come to expect that every new edition of our textbook will be readable and current as well as deeply focused on journalistic essentials. We are proud to continue to offer the following features:

- » **Comprehensive coverage of all aspects of reporting and writing the news.** *News Reporting and Writing* teaches students the elements of good reporting and writing and provides the basic tools they need to become journalists across various media platforms, including advice on how to conduct interviews and research, employ media-enriched reporting techniques and create rich and well-crafted stories for the basic beats.
- » **A focus on storytelling.** From life stories to world-news reports, local meetings to national press conferences, good journalism means good writing. We use real-life examples, up-to-the-minute news story samples and a consistent focus on writing essentials to show students how to craft rich and interesting stories. In addition, Chapter 10, “Writing to Be Read,” helps students master coherence, effective language and other techniques central to captivating an audience.
- » **Thorough coverage of media convergence and online journalism.** *News Reporting and Writing* ensures that students learn how to prepare stories effectively for multiple forms of media. Reflecting changes to the journalism landscape, this book covers the rising role of technology, convergence and the emergence of integrated newsrooms, the challenges to legacy media and the future of online journalism.
- » **Unparalleled discussion of legal and ethical issues.** Throughout the book, we offer students a framework for critically assessing the ethical questions they will face as journalists. In addition, we dedicate Chapters 21 and 22 to legal and ethical matters.
- » **A chapter on math for journalists.** *News Reporting and Writing* includes a chapter on “Reporting with Numbers,” which stresses the importance of using and understanding data—a vital skill for political and business news writers in particular.
- » **Coverage of common grammar issues, Associated Press style, and proofreading and copy editing symbols—in print and with the best online tools.** The appendices provide helpful information students need to turn in polished, professionally edited copy, and an easy-to-find reference for proofreading and copy editing symbols is located at the end of the book. In addition, thousands of accompanying online exercises offer students additional opportunities to improve their grammar and AP style knowledge (www.bedfordstmartins.com/newsreporting).

Resources for Students and Instructors

As before, *News Reporting and Writing* is supported by a range of effective resources for students and instructors. For more information, please visit the online catalog at www.bedfordstmartins.com/newsreporting/catalog. The following ancillaries are available with this edition:

- » ***News Reporting and Writing* website** (www.bedfordstmartins.com/newsreporting). Here students can find links to research tools, online exercises, and all of the online videos from the book’s integrated media program. Students can also access *Exercise Central for AP Style*, a free database offering more than

2,500 questions on wire-service style and on the 20 grammar and usage errors most commonly made by journalism students.

- » **Workbook for *News Reporting and Writing*, 11th Edition.** Supplementing the exercises at the end of each text chapter, the revised workbook gives students extra practice mastering the principles of journalism.
- » **Instructor’s Manual for *News Reporting and Writing*, 11th Edition.** This revised and updated manual contains a sample syllabus; additional teaching resources; and chapter-specific overviews, teaching tips, lecture outlines, classroom activities and discussion questions, as well as answers to the end-of-chapter exercises from the main text and answers to the workbook exercises. The Instructor’s Manual is available for immediate download at www.bedfordstmartins.com/newsreporting/catalog.

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We have worked with editors at Bedford/St. Martin's for more than 30 years now. With each edition, they have challenged us to improve, and we appreciate their efforts. We would like to acknowledge the expert work of our developmental editor, Linda Stern, who kept us in line and on time. Thanks are also due to Erika Gutierrez, Jesse Hassenger, Karen Schultz Moore, Erica Appel, and Caitlin Crandell. We are equally grateful to the production team, which includes Andrea Cava and Nancy Benjamin of Books By Design, as well as our photo researcher, Tyler Thompson. We'd like to extend further thanks to our marketing team, led by Stacey Propps and including Allyson Russell.

As always, we value your comments. You can reach us via email at Brooksbs@missouri.edu; Kennedyg@missouri.edu; Moend@missouri.edu; or Ranlyd@missouri.edu.

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News Reporting and Writing

1



The Nature of News

CHANCES ARE GOOD that you got some news today from a **Facebook** posting or a **Twitter** feed. The chances also are good that the news report you read originated with a newspaper, which put it up on a website, where it was grabbed by an aggregator. A friend of yours may have spotted it on Google and forwarded it to you and dozens of others. After reading, you may have added a comment and replied. This is the way the public conversation that is journalism works today.

The benefits of this new world of news include instant communication and the ability to share with friends, reflecting a change from the days when journalism was a one-way lecture. Mixed with those blessings, however, are serious problems. The traditional news organizations that still produce most original content are losing audience and income. The truthfulness, or even the actual source, of those Facebook posts and Twitter feeds can be difficult to discover. The uncertainty surrounding the craft and the business of journalism has never been greater.

According to the Project for Excellence in Journalism, “News organizations—old and new—still produce most of the content audiences consume. But each technological advance has added a new layer of complexity—and a new set of players—in connecting that content to consumers and advertisers.”

Those new players include aggregators, such as Google and HuffingtonPost.com, that collect, reorganize and often link to work originally done by others—sometimes without full credit and usually without payment. The new players also include Facebook, which in 2012 reached 1 billion users worldwide. The social network allows participants to exchange news, commentary, gossip and personal information without the involvement of professional journalists.

The professionals have added to their traditional tasks new roles—curator and fact checker—as they scramble to assess the accuracy and identify the sources of news that is as likely to be announced by Twitter as by the Associated Press.

Here’s just one example of how the news flows through journalism’s new conversation. After the first televised debate of the 2012 presidential campaign, the consensus among professional commentators in print and on the air was that Gov. Mitt Romney had soundly defeated President Barack Obama. But on social media, the verdict was just the opposite. A national study of 5.9 million tweets showed Obama was favored 35-22, with another 17 percent being jokes. Of the 262,000 Facebook posts examined, Obama led 40-36.

In this chapter you will learn:

1. How convergence and the forces of technology are reshaping journalism.
2. What the news is, including the elements of a good story, the presentation of news in different media and the rise of citizen journalism.
3. What roles journalism plays in a democracy, including contemporary challenges, principles of good journalism and journalists’ responsibilities.
4. How to apply principles of accuracy and fairness and how to avoid bias.
5. How to think about the issue of objectivity.
6. How to distinguish news from commentary and opinion.

Because users of Twitter and Facebook tend to be younger than television viewers or newspaper readers, these results suggest what could be a significant disparity based on age and medium.

It's hard to imagine a more interesting or more confusing time to be practicing or studying journalism.

CONVERGENCE IN JOURNALISM

Convergence is the term that describes efforts to use the different strengths of different media to reach broader audiences and tell the world's stories in new ways. Convergence demands of journalists new skills and new flexibility. Print reporters find themselves summarizing their stories into a television camera and tweeting while an event unfolds before them. Videographers find themselves selecting images to be published in the partner newspaper. Both print and broadcast journalists look for Web links to connect their stories to the worldwide audience and nearly infinite capacity of the Internet. Smartphones provide new outlets and require new storytelling techniques.

The technological revolution also has exploded traditional definitions of just who is a journalist. Millions of people across the world have launched blogs—online journals or columns. Although one estimate is that only 5 percent of those sites include original reporting, and although most have tiny audiences, many have become influential voices in the public conversation. In an effort to add personality and encourage interactivity with audience members, traditional news organizations are encouraging staff members to write blogs.

Increasingly, members of the public are being invited to respond to stories that are published or broadcast. Citizens are even being enlisted as amateur reporters. **Crowdsourcing**, as it is called, has become a reporting tool at news organizations from North Dakota to Florida. Readers and viewers are invited to submit their own stories, photographs and video. They are sometimes asked to lend their expertise to help solve community problems.

The Public Insight Network takes crowdsourcing to the next logical step. Pioneered by public radio, the Public Insight Network is, as the name suggests, a network of citizens who agree to share their knowledge and their insights with professional reporters. National Public Radio and *The New York Times* have teamed up in a new Public Insight Network. So have the investigative nonprofit ProPublica and local news organizations, such as the online *St. Louis Beacon*. Network members may be experts in any field of public interest. Some have professional credentials; others have valuable life experience. They join the network as volunteers. Their pay is the satisfaction they derive from enriching the content and improving the accuracy of journalism.

Even the fundamentals of journalism are evolving as technology speeds up the communication process, provides new sources for both reporters and audiences, and

“Traditional newsrooms, meanwhile, are different places than they were before the recession. They are smaller, their aspirations have narrowed and their journalists are stretched thinner. But their leaders also say they are more adaptive, younger and more engaged in multi-media presentation, aggregation, blogging and user content. In some ways, new media and old, slowly and sometimes grudgingly, are coming to resemble each other.”

—Project for Excellence in Journalism, “The State of the News Media, 2011”

reshapes journalism from a one-way flow of information to a give-and-take with audiences and competitors. One element that hasn't changed, however, is the importance of accuracy and fairness. And the essential role of journalism in a democratic society remains the one assigned to it by James Madison in 1822: "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both."

The basic skills required of every journalist haven't changed either, despite the revolution in technology. Whatever the medium, the skills of news gathering and storytelling are essential to good journalism.

WHAT NEWS IS

The criteria that professional reporters and editors use to decide what news is can be summarized in three words:

- » Relevance
- » Usefulness
- » Interest

Relevance, usefulness and interest for a specific audience are the broad guidelines for judging the news value of any event, issue or personality. These criteria apply generally, but each journalist and each news organization uses them in a specific context that gives them particular meaning. That context is supplied by the audience—the reader, listener or viewer. Journalists always determine newsworthiness with a particular audience in mind.

Elements of a Good News Story

Within the broad news standards of relevance, usefulness and interest, journalists look for more specific elements in each potential story. The most important elements are these:

- » **Impact.** The potential impact of a story is another way of measuring its relevance and usefulness. How many people are affected by an event or idea? How seriously does it affect them? The wider and heavier the impact, the better the story. Sometimes, of course, impact isn't immediately obvious. Sometimes it isn't very exciting. The challenge for good journalism is making such dull but important stories lively and interesting. That may require relying on the next three elements.
- » **Conflict.** Conflict is a recurring theme in all storytelling, whether the stories told are journalism, literature or drama. Struggles between people, among nations or with natural forces make fascinating reading and viewing. Conflict is such a basic element of life that journalists must resist the temptation to overdramatize or oversimplify it.

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Watch "**Convergence and Essential Skills.**"

- What impact does convergence have on journalistic quality? What situations call for a specialist, such as a photojournalist?
- Journalists' tweets and Facebook posts are not edited. How might this situation affect a media company's focus on basic writing skills?

- » **Novelty.** Novelty is another element common to journalism and other kinds of stories. People or events may be interesting and therefore newsworthy just because they are unusual or bizarre.
- » **Prominence.** Names make news. The bigger the name, the bigger the news. Ordinary people have always been intrigued by the doings of the rich and famous. Both prominence and novelty can be, and often are, exaggerated to produce “news” that lacks real relevance and usefulness.
- » **Proximity.** Generally, people are more interested in and concerned about what happens close to home. When they read or listen to national or international news, they often want to know how it relates to their own community. Some news organizations are turning to hyperlocal coverage as they seek to reconnect with readers; they report at the neighborhood level, sometimes by soliciting contributions from residents or citizen journalists. Independent websites devoted to this kind of extremely local coverage are springing up across the country. Increasingly, however, journalists and scholars are recognizing that communities organized around a particular interest—a sport, a hobby or an issue—are at least as important as geographic communities.
- » **Timeliness.** News is supposed to be new. With the Internet and cable and satellite television, “new” means instantaneous. Events are reported as they happen, and this poses a challenge for journalists. Speed conflicts with thoughtfulness and thoroughness. Opportunities for error multiply. Perspective and context are needed today more than ever, but both are more difficult to supply with little time for thinking. Despite the drawbacks of 24/7 news coverage, it’s clear that for news to be relevant and useful, it must be timely. For example, it is much more useful to write about an issue facing the city council before the issue is decided than afterward. Timely reporting can give people a chance to be participants in public affairs rather than remain mere spectators.

The digital age, with its often-confusing multitude of sources, splintering of audiences and growing complaints about negative news, has inspired most journalists to add two new criteria for assessing the value of stories:

- » **Engagement.** When news was only broadcast or printed on paper, the flow of information was one-way—from journalists to audiences. No more. Today, a news report is often just the beginning of the conversation. Audience members online respond to, correct and criticize the journalism. Many reporters and commentators maintain blogs and invite responses on social networking media such as Twitter and Facebook to encourage such involvement. Increasingly, a goal of both individual journalists and news organizations is to engage the public with the news and with the news provider.
- » **Solutions.** Scholars and audiences alike complain that journalists too often report problems and controversies without offering solutions. Political scientist Thomas Patterson has even argued that the negative tone of much coverage of politics and government has the effect of increasing cynicism and decreasing

participation in the most basic activities of citizenship, such as voting. More and more journalists are seeking out expert sources and inviting audience members not only to explain complex problems but also to suggest solutions.

How Different Media Present the News

The preceding list suggests two important things about news. First, not all news is serious, life-and-death stuff. The journalistic conversation that holds a society together includes talk of crime, politics and world affairs, of course, but it also includes talk of everyday life. It includes humor and gossip. All of that can be news. Second, news is more than a collection of facts. Telling the news usually means telling stories. The narrative, the humanity and the drama of storytelling make up the art of journalism. To gather the facts for their stories, journalists use many of the same techniques used by sociologists, political scientists and historians. But to tell their stories so that those facts can be understood, journalists often use the techniques of other storytellers, such as novelists and screenwriters.

The different news media give different weights to the criteria for assessing the value of news stories and require different approaches to telling those stories. For example, newspapers and magazines are better than television or radio for explaining the impact of an issue or the causes of a conflict. Scholars have learned that, although most people say they get most of their news from television, few can remember very much of what they've seen or heard on a newscast. But print can't compete with television in speed or emotional power. The differing strengths and limitations of each medium make it more likely that you'll find a lengthy explanatory story in a newspaper or magazine, while you're more likely to learn of an event from television, radio or the Internet. A newspaper lets you read the details of a budget or a box score, but television shows you the worker whose job was cut or the player scoring the winning basket. The unique power of online journalism is that it brings together the immediacy of television and the comprehensive authority of print, with endless opportunities for users to pursue their interests through the Web. Social media create new communities of interest and allow nonjournalists to join the public conversation.

“If you have any message at all, in any form, that you want to convey to the world, you now have a platform to do so. . . . Your fans and supporters are never more than a click or two away, and they're ready to help you make history—or change it.”

—David Mathison, *Be the Media*

The Rise of Citizen Journalism

We've already seen how **citizen journalists**, not employed by traditional news organizations and often not professionally trained, use the new technology and social media to report and comment on the news. Some of these citizen journalists have gone further and have created their own news sites online. The focus may be on local communities, as is the case with *The Sacramento Press*, which has three full-time staffers and 1,500 unpaid “community contributors.” Or it may be broader, as with the activist

indymedia.us, which describes itself as a “network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate and passionate tellings of the truth.”

Few of these citizen journalism outlets are profitable, and many are deliberately nonprofit. Their goal, whether local or international, is to cover communities and issues that even local newspapers and broadcast stations don’t reach. Their staffs are a mix of trained journalists and interested amateurs. Their audiences are people who don’t feel adequately served by the traditional media. Some observers have likened citizen journalists to the pamphleteers who pioneered American journalism two centuries ago.

Some critics of mainstream, traditional journalism hope that these citizen journalists can fill the gaps left by reduced professional staffs or even replace the traditional sources altogether. However, research by two University of Missouri scholars shows that few of the new sites are even close to filling either role. The researchers studied citizen journalism sites and sites sponsored by traditional, or legacy, media—newspapers, magazines, broadcast television, radio and the like—in 46 randomly selected cities. Their conclusion was that the citizen sites “are much more narrow in their content and focus than the **legacy media** sites in those cities.” Two-thirds of the citizen sites they studied were blogs rather than news sites.

THE ROLE OF JOURNALISM



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Watch “**Newspapers Now: Balancing Citizen Journalism and Investigative Reporting.**”

- What are some strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism? When are citizen journalists useful?
- Will citizen journalism ever replace traditional journalism? Explain.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the five freedoms that the nation’s founders considered essential to a democracy: freedom of speech, religion, the press, petition and assembly. In the 1830s, French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville came to study the U.S. and wrote his classic *Democracy in America*. He was struck by the central role played by the only journalism available then: newspapers. “We should underrate their importance if we thought they just guaranteed liberty; they maintain civilization,” he wrote.

Challenges to American Journalism

More than 200 years after they were guaranteed, the First Amendment freedoms are still essential and still under threat. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a new emphasis on national and personal security tempted government officials and citizens alike to question just how much freedom is compatible with safety. The role of journalism in guaranteeing liberty and maintaining civilization is challenged by those who make news and those who need it.

American journalism is also under threat from growing public skepticism about how well today’s journalists are fulfilling their historic roles. National surveys by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press show, for example, that more than half the public sees bias in the news. About half say that journalists’ reports are often inaccurate. Fewer than half say journalism protects democracy, and about one-third

ON THE JOB

A Career Crosses Media Lines

Teri Finneman, a multimedia correspondent for four daily newspapers and two TV stations in North Dakota, graduated from college in 2003. Five years later, she felt compelled to return to school. New technology had provided new challenges and new opportunities. She needed new skills.

“Multimedia wasn’t even in my vocabulary at that time,” she says. “You focused on print, broadcast or public relations. It never occurred to me once to take a broadcast class or learn how to work a video camera. After all, I was planning to work in newspapers.” Times and technology change.

When she returned to the field, Finneman spent as much time shooting video, managing a blog and juggling multiple tools and multiple media as writing for print. And her perspective changed as well.

“Multimedia reporting has helped level the playing field among media outlets,” she says. “No longer does TV have the



advantage of being able to provide visual images of the 5-year-old singing sensation or the aftermath of dangerous weather. Now, newspapers send out their own videographers and offer the same footage on their websites.

“Likewise, TV stations that used to only be able to tell 30 to 90 seconds of a story can now write full-length pieces and put them online to give viewers the same amount of information that the newspaper can provide.

“Knowing a range of media also gives you flexibility in deciding the best one to use to tell a story. If you’re covering overcrowding at an animal shelter, for example, a video story is likely going to give your audience a better understanding and experience of the event than a print story can. If you’re going to a political speech outlining a new complicated program, being able to write a full-length print piece is beneficial.”

She adds, “Using various media also allows for audience engagement like never before and helps the community feel part of their local media.”

Finneman has this message for today’s journalism students: “My advice would be to become as well-rounded as possible. There are an increasing number of jobs that combine print and online responsibilities, and you will be at an advantage if you can do both.”

Now she is following her own advice and studying for her Ph.D.

say journalism is hurting democracy. In assessing coverage of the 2012 election, voters gave journalists only a grade of C–. Views of the press increasingly vary with political affiliation. Republicans are much more critical than Democrats. And those who get their news online rate the major Internet sources—such as Google, Yahoo, AOL and Slate.com—even lower than the traditional media.

On the other hand, the same surveys show that credibility has improved, at least a little, from historic lows. Comfortable majorities say they believe all or most of what they read in newspapers and see on television news. Most people give higher ratings to the particular newspaper or TV station they use than to the news media in general. And two-thirds rate journalists as highly professional. (For regular samplings of public opinion about journalism, visit www.people-press.org, the website of the Pew Research Center.)