

special feature

The Classroom as Newsroom: Leveraging University Resources for Public Affairs Reporting

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This article reports on the development in recent years, across the United States, of programs in journalism schools and some other units of higher education that borrow from the “teaching hospital” model, following a pedagogy in which students or professional journalists produce news content directly for general audiences or do so in partnership with professional media organizations. In these efforts, the news content is posted on websites hosted by the universities involved, disseminated through partner news organizations, or freely reprinted by non-partner media organizations from the websites. The article briefly describes a variety of these programs, offers a detailed case study of the program at Youngstown State University, analyzes the similarities and differences across programs, and reflects in conclusion on how these programs serve democracy and journalism in the digital age.

In September 2010, *The Washington Post* and MSNBC.com began publishing a 23-part multimedia investigative report on failures in the U.S. transportation system. This would have been a major story about transportation no matter who wrote it and published it, but it was also a major story about journalism: The reporting was done by eleven student reporters at eleven universities (ten from journalism schools and one from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government). A similar student-produced effort in 2011 on federal regulation of food safety led to six stories in *The Washington Post* and others at MSNBC.com and in other major media (Downie, 2011).

This was a collaborative venture supported by the Carnegie-Knight Journalism Initiative, partnering with the Center for Public Integrity, one of the oldest independent nonprofit journalism organizations, and completed in a 10-week summer session at one of the participating institutions, Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. It was simultaneously an experiment in journalism education and a significant work of investigative reporting. Does it—along with other university-based efforts to publish news for general audiences—represent a promising way to reconstruct newsgathering when standard commercial news organizations are sharply cutting back on their investment in journalism?

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The “Teaching Hospital” Model

For more than a century, U.S. medical students have provided medical services to hospital patients in “rotations” during their third and fourth years in medical school. They continue into advanced training after medical school as interns and residents in hospital service where they practice medical procedures on actual patients. The length of residencies depends on the specialty; a residency may be as long as eight years. This system provides real-life training for medical students, medical care for patients, and staffing for hospitals at centers of medical research and specialized medical care.

The model has its problems and its critics. Sandeep Jauhar’s graphic memoir of his internship at New York Hospital provides many instances of the shortcomings of intern-delivered medical care (Jauhar, 2008). Perhaps the most widely recognized problem is that students, interns, and residents put in very long hours. While the hospitals get cheap labor, the patients too often get care from exhausted medical providers. Some critics object to the disjunction between the practices students learn in providing hospital care—treating extremely sick people in acute situations—and the experience of most physicians in practice who normally treat healthy patients; patients with chronic and manageable conditions; or patients who are sick, but not acute. Even so, the “teaching hospital” remains a kind of ideal in its integration of medical education, access to advanced research and technology, and expert care for critically ill patients. Can features of this model be appropriated for journalism?

U.S. Journalism Education in Context

Both public and private universities have educated students for careers in journalism for a century. In some journalism schools, students have long reported news for media outlets in their communities and beyond. The University of Missouri School of Journalism, the oldest continuously operating journalism school in the country, opened its doors September 14, 1908. On the same day, it published the first issue of the *University Missourian*, a daily newspaper with a circulation of about 6,000 that the school still publishes (now the *Columbia Missourian*). It is edited by professional journalists and staffed largely by students at the school. Eight different classes, from photo-editing to reporting, infographics, or online journalism, feed some 300 students a semester into the newsroom (and 75 over the summer). Students receive academic credit and marketable experience, but no salary for their work, although the newspaper also hires about 30 more advanced students each year for part-time work as assistant editors. Dean Mills, dean of the school, says that the *Missourian* loses money, but is still a big plus for the school. It is a laboratory for students, it keeps the school connected to the Columbia community, and it places the school in the public eye in a way that donors find appealing (Mills, personal communication, 2009, 2012).

The Missouri model did not become a template for most other leading J-schools, but at least a few schools took the plunge decades ago into utilizing student-produced news as both an instructional method and a public service. Since the 1960s, Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism has run two student-staffed news productions, *Medill Reports: Chicago* and *Medill Reports: Washington* (Snyder, 1996, p. 117). The Chicago site provides stories to a number of Chicago-area news outlets; the Washington site partners with 19 newspaper, radio, TV, and online news outlets around the country

(<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/washington/page.aspx?id=5557>, accessed July 8, 2011.) Columbia University's Journalism School began the Columbia News Service in the 1970s. It is staffed by students who produce "evergreen" feature stories available at no charge to the general media. The stories are frequently published, especially by smaller newspapers. At about the same time, faculty at Columbia also launched a weekly newspaper, *Bronx Beat*, distributed in the South Bronx. That publication evolved into a public website and served as the model for another local website, Brooklyn Ink (Boylan, 2003, pp. 197–198, 304).

The University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism has run the Capital News Service since 1990. With bureaus in Annapolis and Washington, DC, it offers daily coverage to its media partners, some 21 daily newspapers, websites, and wire services; four broadcast outlets; and 18 weekly and monthly newspapers. Graduate journalism students are eligible to participate, as are juniors and seniors in the undergraduate program, but it is no small commitment: Full-time work in one of the bureaus is a 35- to 40-hour-a-week job, though students do receive course credit, significant reporting experience, and published clips (see "Capital News Service" at <http://merrill.umd.edu/cns>).

These instances notwithstanding, programs in which journalism schools produce work directly for general news outlets have been the exception, not the rule. But in the wake of journalism's economic crisis in recent years, with the loss of thousands of jobs in newsrooms across the country, and with the convenience and low cost of online publishing, more journalism schools have developed programs that make their students the reportorial counterparts of medical students and interns at teaching hospitals. There have long been many programs in which journalism students do internships at news organizations. These continue. What is new, however, is the proliferation of programs in which supervision comes from university faculty, with or without joint supervision from partner media organizations. In these programs, the students' primary base of operation is usually their home college, not the newsroom of an independent media outlet; and the student-produced news stories are often made available at little or no cost, either to partner news outlets, or to multiple news organizations that pick up stories from a school website.

Just a decade ago, the *Los Angeles Times* would not permit its reporters to take a fellowship in a professional development program at the University of Southern California because, there, they would participate in workshops, sharing story ideas they were developing for the paper with others in the program from other news organizations. There was deep resistance to collaboration across news organizations, but that old news habit is dying fast (including at the *Los Angeles Times*, which now runs stories from ProPublica and works with the University of Southern California's Center for Health Reporting; Parks, personal communication, 2009, 2012). Robert Rosenthal remembers that, as editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* just a decade ago (1998–2002), he and his colleagues opposed any kind of collaborative work with other news organizations—it was just too difficult to do. Reporters at that time, he recalls, objected to having their emails listed in their stories—collaboration with readers was no more a part of the news culture than collaboration with other news organizations. But now, organizations like his—he has directed the Center for Investigative Reporting in Berkeley, CA, since 2008—are "promiscuous when it comes to collaborations" (Rosenthal, 2010, personal communication, 2012). Newspapers large and small, obscure and influential; leaders in the field and distant followers; and many radio and television stations—they all cooperate with nonprofit and university-based news providers.

The new programs and partnerships are not without their complications and difficulties, and an overview of the present scene may offer some clues about what kind of programs best serve the general public's need for good journalism, news organizations' desire for high-quality but cheaply produced news content, and journalism schools' interest in providing quality education. Included in this overview is a first-person account of the challenges and successes of launching and operating a joint venture between a university and professional media partners. Two of the three co-authors of this paper are Youngstown State University faculty members who created and operate TheNewsOutlet.org.

The Variety of Emerging Journalism School Models

In the past half-dozen years, many more journalism schools have established programs that report stories directly for general news outlets. The sampling here should provide a sense of their variety. It also offers a look at how institutions adapt to changing conditions, reimagining their roles and missions as they do so (for a valuable and far more comprehensive survey, see Anderson et al., 2011).

In 2006, the University of Alabama graduate journalism program and the *Anniston Star* began a program in "community journalism" that emphasized the special requirements of small-town newspapers. With the "teaching hospital" in mind, the *Star* proclaimed itself a "teaching newspaper," with the newsroom as the classroom. Originally, the community journalism fellows spent the lion's share of their time in Anniston, a two-hour drive from the university campus in Tuscaloosa, and university faculty made the commute to meet with the students in Anniston. Travel was a strain for some faculty, but so was the faculty's sense that they could not readily keep in touch with the Anniston students, chart their progress, or link the Anniston-based students to other master's students based in Tuscaloosa. In the past few years, the program has shifted focus. It is now not so much "small-town newspaper"-centered, although small-town papers still are important in the program, as it is oriented to the concept of "community" and the media role in communities broadly, emphasizing new technologies and innovations in journalism. Now, the community journalism fellows spend more of their time at the university with the other students (Lowrey, personal communication, 2010, 2012). Originally supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the program has continued since the Knight grant ended, with a steady stream of applicants despite the absence of the Knight-supported student stipends.

Arizona State University's The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication began the Cronkite News Service in 2007. It has about 30 media clients, including all 14 daily or near-daily newspapers in Arizona, with regular play in about half of these and occasional B-section and business-section front-page stories in the two largest papers in the state. Steven Elliott, a veteran reporter who was AP's Arizona bureau chief for five years, has directed CNS since it began. He works with 8–10 students a semester, requiring them to commit at least two full days a week—graduate students often four days. The CNS student work is entirely extracurricular. Because the time commitment is so heavy, Elliott says that connecting this work to a conventional classroom would be very difficult. Without the "two full days" requirement, he maintains, "there would be no way to run this experience" (Elliott, personal communication, 2010). CNS emphasizes state government coverage, putting three to five reporters on it—a significant number compared to the *Arizona Republic's* three full-time capitol reporters and AP's two (when the legislature is in session, one otherwise). Students typically each produce 15–25 stories a

semester under the supervision of two faculty members who are in the newsroom full-time daily. Elliott conceives of CNS as a wire service competing with the AP, and thereby, he strategically focuses on areas the AP doesn't. For example, AP doesn't emphasize news photos in Arizona, so CNS does; AP no longer covers the introduction of bills in the legislature, so CNS makes that a priority; AP doesn't normally do weekend enterprise stories, so CNS does (Elliott, 2012).

The City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Journalism opened in August 2006, and it launched its New York City News Service in January 2007. The intention of the news service has been to assist ethnic news organizations, a goal consistent with the service obligations of a public university, according to News Director Jere Hester. The CUNY journalism program is a three-semester master's degree, and each student who participates with the news service has "boots on the ground" in one of 59 community districts from their first semester onward. "In some ways," Hester observes, "I have my finger on the pulse of the city better than I did as city editor at the *Daily News*." Hester, a veteran *New York Daily News* reporter and metro editor, realized that posting stories to the website was not enough; he would have to act as liaison, directing stories to the attention of editors around the city. NYC News Service became managers of *The New York Times*' "The Local" site in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn and partners with *Huffington Post*, and it has placed stories with the *Daily News*, as well as community and neighborhood outlets. Most of the students come to the graduate program with little or no journalism experience, but they develop professional skills and attitudes quickly. Hester notes, "I've pretty much stopped saying 'students'; I say 'reporters'" (Hester, personal communication, 2010, 2012).

Florida International University, in Miami, began its South Florida News Service (SFNS) in 2009 as a partnership with the *Miami Herald*, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, and the *Palm Beach Post*. Initially a project developed by Professor Allan Richards for his online reporting class, the news service grew quickly, with students producing about 50 published stories a semester. But the faculty determined they could do more, and FIU hired Chris Delboni, an experienced journalist, to serve as full-time news editor. Participation became open to all students, and Delboni visits the introductory journalism class to recruit students to participate (Richards, personal communication 2010, 2012; Delboni, personal communication, 2010). This allows SFNS to begin working with students when they are sophomores or juniors, so that they will be better prepared by the time they do more stories as seniors. By Summer 2012, students at SFNS had published more than 200 print stories and 30 video packages; in Spring 2013, a radio class will be offered with WLRN, a public radio station, and SFNS will add radio production to its multiplying services.

The University of Southern California's School of Journalism (part of the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism) is letting a thousand flowers bloom—a dozen different programs involve journalism students in reporting for publics beyond the campus. For instance, Intersections South LA (www.intersectionssouthla.org), a community news site, began in 2009 to serve the South Los Angeles neighborhood, home to many low-income African-Americans and Latino immigrant residents. Both undergraduate and graduate students have contributed to the website, as well as to a twice-weekly live radio newscast. The site cross-posts radio stories from Annenberg Radio News, another learning lab that offers a public face for student contributions and covers South Los Angeles and general city news. "Intersections" has been coordinated with several classes, but it is also open to freelance contributions

from any student. To enable the latter, it posts a regular email to journalism students that lists story ideas and has led students to take on these ideas in assignments for their courses that they later convert into pieces for *Intersections* (Seidenberg, personal communication, 2010, 2012).

Northeastern University, a large private university in Boston, has long been known for its “cooperative” program across the curriculum, in which students do extensive paid internships for credit. In 2007, Walter Robinson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter and editor for 34 years at *The Boston Globe*, started teaching at Northeastern, his alma mater. Robinson’s course on investigative reporting typically enrolls six to eight students. Story after story out of these classes has run in *The Boston Globe*, a dozen of them on page one. “In all the stories so far,” Robinson proudly said, “we’ve not had a single correction or substantive complaint.” He runs a tight ship, selecting the topics for all of the stories. When Robinson started teaching at Northeastern, he found the students “writing practice stories” in their classes, but some of them were really good. “Why can’t they do real stories?” he wondered. Well, they can. In 2011, Northeastern began a reporting class in which students do news reporting for the online regional and local sections of *The Globe*.

Barbara Iverson and Suzanne McBride, faculty members at Columbia College in downtown Chicago, began *ChicagoTalks* in 2007 as a student-written online news operation, winning journalism awards and partnering with a variety of newspapers and community news outlets. In 2010, McBride also launched *AustinTalks* for Chicago’s Austin neighborhood with support from the Chicago Community Trust and the MacArthur Foundation. *ChicagoTalks* has used publicly available data that mainstream news organizations often do not devote resources to exploring. In 2011, they unearthed evidence that many of the grants in one of Mayor Richard M. Daley’s highly promoted economic development programs went to the city’s well-heeled downtown, and not to the intended blighted neighborhoods. The story was then pursued by Chicago News Cooperative, the nonprofit that reports Chicago news for *The New York Times*; two reporters from *ChicagoTalks* got byline recognition, and nine others were credited as contributors when *The Times* ran the story (Fortino & Smith, 2011). Elyn Fortino, a lead reporter on the story as a Columbia College senior (and now continuing her journalism education as a master’s student), indicated that the reporting took months of work (and freedom of information requests) to excavate the relevant public documents and produce a searchable map.

These and other new programs and partnerships differ depending on the media markets in which they operate, the distinct characteristics and missions of their universities, and the scope of available resources. What follows is a closer look at one of them, The News Outlet, operating at Youngstown State University in Ohio. We—in the voice of co-authors Francisco and Lenhoff, who have been with The News Outlet from its beginning—detail its history, its pedagogy, its goals and challenges.

The News Outlet—A Case Study

In Spring 2006, we and our colleagues on the Youngstown State University (YSU) journalism faculty called a meeting with journalism majors to listen to their concerns about the program. One student, a senior, said she was worried she wouldn’t be able to get a job when she graduated. Another

said that classes didn't offer enough of the skills that students would need in today's workplaces. One student said, "We want to go places and report real things."

When the students left, the faculty sat in the room and talked for hours. We were thrilled that our students cared, certain that they were right about many issues, ashamed that we hadn't tackled some of them earlier, and afraid that we would not be able to deliver for them. Everything was on the table, and needed to be—our curriculum, our pedagogy, our mission. Our sanity. We worried. But we felt we had no choice but to change. Every day brought a new story of yet another news organization downsizing. The crisis in journalism and our students' anxieties and criticism forced us to reconsider our most fundamental assumptions.

The News Outlet was the product of our rethinking. It started in 2009 as a simple partnership between the journalism program at Youngstown State and two professional media organizations: *The Vindicator*, Youngstown's daily newspaper, and WYSU-FM, its public radio station. The News Outlet posts stories to its own website (www.TheNewsOutlet.org) that are available to any news organization. Its evolution into a regional news service that now involves Kent State University and the University of Akron offers a glimpse into key factors facing university-media partnerships. It also illuminates issues unique to an undergraduate program at an open-access institution.

The Open-Access Mission

Several months after our initial meeting, solid plans emerged for the launch of The News Outlet. Youngstown, Ohio is a poster child of sorts for de-industrialized, struggling Rust-Belt cities. The university is an access institution, open to any student with an Ohio high school diploma or equivalent, regardless of GPA. Fifty-four percent of the university's population of approximately 14,000 students is first-generation college students, and roughly 90% receive some type of financial aid, while 20% are identified as minorities. More than 60% of first-year students take remedial coursework in math or English (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009–2010; Ohio Board of Regents Statistical Profiles, YSU Institutional Research). At the time of the project launch, the journalism program, housed in the English Department, had only two-and-a-half full-time, tenure-track faculty for 95 students in the undergraduate major, and the standard faculty teaching load is four courses per semester

The demographics of YSU's student population means that most students are in college because they want an education and the professional opportunities that come along with it—indeed, it is not unheard of for Youngstown students to attend morning classes after working the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift at a job. We knew that this kind of work ethic would be indispensable for The News Outlet project.

We also felt that our access mission gave us the responsibility to provide opportunities for students who do not have the luxury of doing unpaid internships in major media markets. We were bothered by what we saw as an increasingly exclusive profession, one that lacked the experiences and perspectives of non-traditional, working-class, and underrepresented entrants. As Loren Ghiglione, former dean and current professor of global journalism at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, notes,

Obviously it (the unpaid internship) doesn't help encourage a diverse staff in terms of economic status and essentially you're screening out students who cannot afford to work for free, and that's not good. It's not to the credit of the industries that are represented. (Ghiglione, 2012)

We feel strongly that the media are better served when diverse backgrounds and viewpoints are represented in the newsroom. We knew that our students would have to be paid for their work. By providing compensation, we have given our students time to devote to their craft, and our first intern "class" was comprised almost entirely of first-generation college students and several "non-traditional" students.

Because we did not have the luxury of assigning a full-time faculty manager to the project, we had to be willing to put our personal scholarship agendas on hold or align them with this project. We both knew that this may be risky. Lenhoff, who had spent about 15 years working as a print reporter, joined YSU in 2000 on a degree-completion contract. She finished her PhD in 2010 while working full-time as the journalism director at the university. She was positively reviewed for tenure in Fall 2012 and the department looked favorably upon the work that she has done with The News Outlet for her tenure case. Timothy Francisco came to YSU in 2003, planning to teach literature courses with the expectation of also assisting in the journalism program. Francisco, whose PhD is in renaissance literature, earned tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2008. Before earning his PhD, Francisco worked as a beat reporter and then business journalist for nine years. While balancing two disparate fields, Francisco pursues a research agenda that includes studying the parallel issues facing traditional academia and traditional media in the wake of the digital revolution.

While trying to balance scholarship, committees, and teaching, we knew that story development, editing, and production would be time-consuming, and we wanted to minimize investing large amounts of time in editing and development, only to find that the stories did not suit the needs of the market. Our solution was to develop a collaboration in which professional media partners would contribute "sweat equity" in exchange for our paying the student interns. With media partners as active participants in story development and brainstorming, the likelihood of publication increased.

We secured funding to pay the interns from the Raymond John Wean Foundation, a Warren, Ohio community charitable foundation. The News Outlet also received funding in its second, third and now fourth years from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge. The editor-in-chief of Youngstown's daily newspaper, *The Vindicator*; the program manager for WYSU-FM; and the managing editor of Akron's newspaper, *The Beacon Journal*, commit several hours per week to work with students on stories. Once each week, interns, faculty, and media partners sit in one room to brainstorm, share resources, and develop stories. Additionally, media partners come over at other times to work one-on-one with different students, or students go to the newsrooms of media partners to work on stories.

Collaboration over Competition

In addition to providing students with needed professional experience, we believed that a collaborative model would help legacy media to provide better coverage of underreported stories. The Youngstown area is one of the most racially and economically segregated in the nation, and its newspaper's subscription base is now primarily in the suburbs. We believed this has led to increased attention being paid to these predominantly white, economically stable areas, at the expense of coverage of city-centered issues that affect already disenfranchised urban residents. We hoped to help legacy media better serve the entire community.

Because our initial media partners were focused on print and radio, our collaborative model allowed for the sharing of resources free from the pressures of competitive newsgathering. Our students produce stories in multiple platforms—print, radio, Web video and slideshow—allowing our media partners to run content according to their own missions and markets. For students, the pressure of satisfying the perceived needs of various audiences has been instructive. Our WYSU-FM partners often talk about how easy it is to lose a listener. They remind students that listeners fund the station, and that it is critical to give them content they want. Interestingly, we have never heard one of our for-profit partners talk about what might offend an advertiser. In fact, they rarely talk about what readers want or need. Instead, they talk about general standards for stories and reporting and the purpose of journalism, as if it is a common code or creed. Some students have said that our newspaper partners seem more sure of their missions than the public radio station. Other students have interpreted it differently, saying that they believe that the public radio media partners are more interested in determining and then serving the needs of their audiences, instead of thinking that they know what is best. The differences in approach to stories are one of the many pedagogical lessons.

Our News Outlet partnerships have led to collaboration between the media outlets—WYSU-FM now runs a *Vindicator*-supplied news feed both on air and on the Web, and media partners cross-promote important stories. WYSU-FM, *The Beacon Journal*, and *The Vindicator* often have different reactions to story ideas when they are first discussed. Initially, our public radio partners were more interested in softer stories and were reluctant to run any pieces that exposed problems or wrongdoing. This changed after the first semester, and it is now the public radio station that is pushing for harder-hitting pieces. The initial reluctance of WYSU may have arisen because it had never before run local news content, and its staff worried about offending listeners. Once they started receiving positive feedback from listeners about stories that looked into tougher issues, they pushed for more.

The News Outlet approaches projects from a "story-first" perspective, and we are training students to think how different platforms advance specific elements of each story—the technology does not drive the story, but rather, the story determines the technology. An important goal is to develop the students' proficiency with producing quality news coverage for multiple platforms and multiple markets: We encourage students to think entrepreneurially for a job market where a standard desk or beat at one outlet is becoming a less-likely career track.

We operate with an understanding that, in a community historically marked by economic hardships, political corruption, and cronyism, vibrant local media provide a key to recovery, and we launched this project with the notion that it is as much a public good as a valuable training tool. When students report on underrepresented and often marginalized citizens, readers are spurred to action. For example, a News Outlet report documented the deplorable state of a Youngstown group home for mentally challenged adults, including unsanitary conditions, allegations of abuse, and a suspicious death in a bathtub. The story sparked action from the state of Ohio, and a move to close the facility. Shortly thereafter, community groups, one of which was profiled in a News Outlet feature series, banded together to work for reform alongside the state team and the troubled facility itself, because citizens felt that the home, if rehabilitated, would provide valuable services to city residents. Ultimately, this effort did not succeed, and the state ordered the facility shuttered, but the attempt is a powerful reminder of how journalism spurs action.

While much of our work is intended to prepare students for careers as journalists, we recognize that the skills we help them to develop transcend a narrow definition of journalism and can be applied to an array of disciplines where information gathering and dissemination is critical. This was clear in our minds from the beginning—due in part to our institutional location within an English Department in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

One media partner asked why we wouldn't supply newsrooms with interns, so that they might gain a more real-world experience of the daily newspaper grind. We felt certain that, just as students and professors had much to learn from legacy media, the inverse was also vital—that media could learn from students and from faculty willing to experiment and to innovate. As the Knight Foundation's Eric Newton argues, there is enormous value in this kind of "reverse mentoring," in which smart students school the professors (and the professionals, we would add) about the cutting-edge digital opportunities, "and the teachers help students infuse our great values—the fair, accurate, contextual search for truth—into the new things they are creating" (Newton, 2012).

This reverse mentoring is occurring in our partners' newsrooms. Doug Oplinger, managing editor of *The Akron Beacon Journal* and News Outlet partner since 2011, contrasts our partnership to citizen journalism. The latter, he holds, was "a fad rather than a new *and valuable* asset." Of The News Outlet, he says the following:

[It] has provided us with something that shows promise. Outstanding j-school students who are selected for the program already have achieved a high level of understanding of the role of journalists. This separates them from citizen journalists, and helps us as editors to get over the biggest hump—wondering if the writer has an understanding of fairness.

And secondly, they come with few inhibitions regarding new technology—audio, video, still images, graphics and online urgency—something that plagues many news organizations that rely heavily on workers who were trained pre-Internet. Young journalists still require a great deal of guidance and editing, but The News Outlet offers a

high-quality resource that provides veteran editors with fascinating opportunities for experimentation. (Oplinger, personal communication, 2012)

Curriculum—A Hybrid Approach

When the project launched in 2009, three courses were tied to The News Outlet: advanced reporting, a capstone senior project course, and a specially designed radio class. This curricular model allowed us to identify talent, give students a valuable experience, encourage interest in The News Outlet, and develop a larger pool of possible content for it. We had no funds to pay interns the first semester; all of The News Outlet content September–December 2009 came from courses. During that first semester, our media partners used six radio stories and 10 print packages. We hired all spring semester 2010 News Outlet interns from the three courses. For the most part, our experiences with the students in class helped to better inform our hiring decisions. We also raised our curricular expectations for all students because of The News Outlet. We wanted students to produce professional-quality work, and this end-goal proved to be a strong motivating force for us in the classroom.

At the same time, having the courses attached to The News Outlet had its drawbacks. This included placing tremendous pressure on faculty, students, and media partners. There were about forty students in the three courses, and finding time to manage their reporting projects was a burden. Students had to submit multiple rewrites and revisions for their stories. Because the stories were intended for The News Outlet, faculty had to keep working with students until the drafts reached professional quality. The time commitment became difficult to sustain. We also worried that the goal of publication was overshadowing the pedagogical missions of the courses. With the pressures to produce more and more content, too much class time was devoted to production, and not enough to discussion of current developments in media; the complexities of ethics in a shifting media landscape; and the basics of reporting, writing, and editing. It did little good for our students to be published if, in the end, they could not continue without heavy supervision.

During the spring 2010 semester, we had only one course connected to The News Outlet. During this semester, The News Outlet employed six paid interns. This model afforded faculty managers more time to devote to The News Outlet. The News Outlet's paid interns produced some important stories among the more than 35 print and radio story packages that our media partners used.

After trying both models—one with a large and another with a minimal curricular connection—we concluded that the best path for the future combines both. In other words, one or two courses with moderate enrollments of 10–15 students and a group of six to seven paid interns keeps the project operational while building for its future. The courses have less-defined ties to News Outlet daily operations, to account for the wide range of skill levels that come with our university's access mission. For example, while faculty may designate a specific assignment for The News Outlet in the advanced reporting class, other assignments are organized around varied learning objectives, and students are given the option of submitting their best work for publication. In other courses, such as magazine and feature writing, for example, instruction is only loosely tied to the News Outlet as part of a broader goal of publication or broadcast in any media outlet.

The Beat and The Street

We have tried to ensure that The News Outlet is producing stories that are meaningful and important to the community. Initially, story brainstorming sessions consisted of only media partners, News Outlet paid interns, and faculty managers. The story ideas that emerged didn't get the students enough ground level, on-the-street experience. We weren't satisfied, and we wanted the students to tell stories that the legacy media weren't providing. But how to identify the issues and the ideas? We quickly concluded that we wanted to tap into the daily lives of city residents in a more direct and personal way. We needed others to join the conversation, and we needed to get out into the community.

As an initial step, we invited an organizer for a community action group to come to weekly News Outlet meetings to help us plan and identify issues. While we were wary of becoming a mouthpiece or advocate for any group's agenda, we have been able to define this relationship in a way that fulfills the watchdog mission of the press while avoiding advocacy or public relations for any one group. For instance, in investigating the home for mentally challenged people, the community advocate did not alert us to the story, but once we were on it, he supplied names and phone number of residents willing to talk about the facility. News Outlet staffers now attend community meetings in Youngstown, and these experiences can be a powerful teaching tool.

Because we do not have students available every day, we know that our strength is not in breaking news. Besides, we believe that breaking news coverage can be mastered in basic news reporting courses. Instead, we challenge students to understand specific examples in larger contexts.

We also wanted the public to participate in setting its own news agenda. Borrowing loosely from the Spot.us model, we have experimented with a model in which story ideas gleaned from the community meetings were vetted and then put up for vote, both online and at public libraries; The News Outlet then pursued the stories that received the most votes. The community meetings teach our students that, rather than relying solely on officials and policy makers, they must speak first-hand with residents affected by the myriad problems that are part of life in an economically struggling, deindustrialized city.

Sustainability and Growth

The News Outlet has existed because of external grant funding, and of course, our goal is to be self-sustaining. We are in the early stages of piloting a sustainability plan that consists of expansion to other universities and media partners. Several other universities and media outlets in northeastern Ohio have already expressed interest. We are experimenting with a model that will ultimately rely on a combination of institutional support from participating universities and modest contributions from partner organizations. For example, currently, our university supports the program by assuming some of our operating expenses, providing space, utilities, and critical reassigned time for faculty mentors, as do Kent State University and the University of Akron, institutions which became partners in 2010. In addition, because we use all of our equipment for instructional purposes, the university purchases equipment and software with college fees. Reassigned time for faculty is a significant challenge in lean budget times caused by diminished state support, and we have been lucky to have the support of the college dean and

university provost and president, but we require much clerical and business and support. The bulk of our grant dollars are used to fill this critical need and to pay the student intern stipends and the travel expenses the reporters incur. Institutional support for the clerical and accounting positions will be critical to sustainability, and we are looking to our media partners for intern stipend support. We understand that this will be our biggest challenge; when we have had general discussions with media partners about contributing dollars to the project, none have agreed so far.

But they have also not said no, and all have said they want to continue working with the students and the project, and we take this response as favorable. We have found that our persistence and patience has paid off in the past, and we will keep asking for contributions. The long-term plan is for media partners to continue to contribute sweat equity, but also to help subsidize internships. The media partners can gain a great deal from the enterprise, but convincing them of that has been challenging, given the staffing conditions of many legacy media organizations. Initially, the media partners were concerned about the amount of time that they would need to invest in working with students. Some said they feared they could not afford the initial investment of time. We tried to be responsive by making sure that the copy they were receiving was cleaner and more fully reported. We also knew that we could win their trust and long-term loyalty if we could deliver a few really great stories. For instance, we produced a story that uncovered a huge flaw in the way Ohio was collecting taxes on gas and oil well drilling. The story may trigger a change in state law. Soon after producing that story, we delivered a few other strong enterprise pieces, and within a few weeks, the media partners were happy and praising the project. This year, one of our stories, published by *The Vindicator*, won first-place in the Ohio Associated Press awards in investigative journalism.

Will our media partners' satisfaction with the project transfer to a willingness to support it with dollars? We do not yet know. We believe the benefits of the program are substantial for them. Beyond the obvious benefits of content, media partners profit from establishing contact with local talent, so that, when interns graduate, they become strong candidates for positions at partner outlets. Several interns from our program have accepted staff positions with our media partners. Prior to The News Outlet, local legacy media hired few of our students, as our graduates simply could not compete with applicants from larger, better-funded programs—applicants who often had unpaid professional internships under their belts.

A Year-Long Proposition

An academic year lasts about nine months, but a news organization's year is 365 days. The News Outlet must deliver stories year-round. But, many students also have more time in the summer and are around campus. Nationally, universities report increases in student enrollment in summer sessions, as many students take advantage of lower tuition rates and lighter schedules to complete their degrees more quickly.

The summer also provides News Outlet faculty with critical time to plan academic year courses, projects, and staffing. The faculty members working with The News Outlet during the summer are paid a stipend, and student interns are also paid a stipend equal to what is offered during the academic year.

News Outlet managers and partners also have a "stockpile" of content developed during the full terms, as well as "evergreen" stories that require only minimal updating before publication, allowing media partners greater flexibility in filling the news hole during the summer months.

The News Outlet—Conclusions

In the case of The News Outlet, there have been benefits for each constituency—the student journalists, the university, the professional media, the community foundation, and the public. Christine Keeling, a former News Outlet intern from our first semester who accepted a position at the *Vindicator*, then moved from there to freelancing, said, "I learned a lot and your hard work and dedication with The News Outlet not only opened doors for me but for everyone who will come behind me" (personal communication, 2012). The program relies on generous donors, enthusiastic faculty, passionate students, and media partners open to new practices and new ideas—and with all of this, it is producing better news for communities.

The News Outlet and similar university-professional collaborations represent the latest incarnations of journalism education's long struggle to define its relationship with the profession (Lenhoff, 2011). The news service concept is predicated on a direct and integral relationship between journalism schools and the profession. With the spirit of inquiry and collaboration represented in the university-based news service model, journalism programs might pioneer other models that inspire radical rethinking of the university at large. As the digital revolution has eroded once entrenched boundaries between citizens and professionals; between policy makers and constituents; and even between words, images, data, and sounds, journalism programs are uniquely positioned to act as agents for greater collaboration between academic departments and disciplines across the university. The News Outlet, for example, has interns from art and graphics, as well as students from computer science and even philosophy working together to imagine effective ways of delivering information and transmitting knowledge. Journalism can provide a truly big tent under which varied disciplines and studies meet to better engage and inform communities while preparing students for the intellectual agility and collaborative skills that are the linchpins of 21st-century workplaces and economies.

Are There Common Traits?

Three factors stand out in explaining the growth of university-based news production for general audiences. First, experienced journalists who have taken buy-outs or been laid off by commercial news organizations are available to direct university-based programs. Second, the digital revolution makes online news publication possible, cheap, versatile, and convenient. Third, journalism schools are trying hard to keep up-to-date to justify their own existence in an era when young people are able to become "journalists" just by putting up a website or starting to blog.

Because each of the new programs defines its mission differently, and because they are, for the most part, small and generally very dependent on the energy, initiative, and personality of individual faculty members, it is premature to say very much about "best practices." It may be useful, nonetheless, to catalog the dimensions on which programs differ:

- The news product may be organized in an exclusive partnership with one (or sometimes several) news organizations, or the news stories may be posted to a website available for any news organizations to use for the price of a credit line.
- The program may involve graduate students, undergraduates, or both.
- The program may be enacted in a regular for-credit course or several “feeder” courses that organize assignments so that student efforts might be appropriate for outside publication—or the news service may be an extracurricular activity.
- Supervision may be by school faculty, or by faculty along with news partner editors. Some schools hire a professional journalist as an adjunct or part-time faculty member whose sole responsibility is to run the student news service and vet student work.
- Media partners may be actively involved in the classroom, or they may be relatively silent partners, receiving news copy from the schools but providing little input into shaping it.
- Students may or may not receive pay for their work.
- Clients may or may not pay a fee for running student-produced stories.
- The programs may have different goals, from providing students a venue for getting original, clever, human interest stories published to doing ambitious investigative reporting or doing short, hard-news stories that are more “hyper-local” than commercial dailies and weeklies are likely to do themselves.
- The programs may or may not have a capability for year-round news production.

As regards that last point, many programs shut down or operate with significantly reduced resources at the end of a semester or at the close of an academic year, producing little or no news over the summer. Whatever audience they built up during the academic year then drifts away. “The great enemy of adopting the teaching hospital model in journalism schools,” says Columbia Journalism School’s dean, Nicholas Lemann, “is the semester” (Lemann, personal communication, 2011). With this in mind, Columbia launched *New York World*, a venture designed with the teaching hospital model explicitly in view, in September 2011. It is a year-round news organization with an experienced journalist, Alyssa Katz, as editor, an associate editor, and six recent Columbia Journalism School graduates on one-year paid residencies. Privately funded, this website focuses on news related to New York City and state government, and its stories have already become widely available in other New York media. *New York World*, according to Katz, seeks to demonstrate that “civic issues are fun and meaningful and relevant to people.” Its success, Katz holds, is not easily measured, but indicators include traffic to the website, pick-up by other news outlets, and evidence that stories the *World* runs—or even questions that its reporters

raise that other news organizations then develop—change the civic discourse (Katz, personal communication, 2012).

If the journalism school programs provide the same journalism that legacy media once provided more fully, this may be a public service, but it does not advance a university's mission to be at the frontiers of knowledge. If the programs can be laboratories for journalistic excellence, that would be closer to the idealized teaching hospital model. This is not easy. It requires an investment that journalism schools have only rarely made successfully—cooperation and collegueship between the journalism professionals teaching in the university and other university-based innovators in information research and service—in the university libraries, at the university presses, in the computer science and engineering programs, in urban studies, in the schools of education, and in the neurosciences, among other fields. Journalism schools could spark and sponsor such collaboration.

It is important, at the same time, that experiments be realistic about overcoming the routine hindrances in the journalism schools to establishing high-quality, high-endurance news reporting. Two of these hindrances seem particularly notable. First, as already indicated, it is difficult to establish an enduring reputation as a reliable news source if the news operation hibernates every summer. Second, it is difficult to establish a record of consistent, high quality if the school-based news operation is an extracurricular activity, rather than a part of the for-credit curriculum. Particularly in the intense and condensed graduate programs in journalism, varying from two semesters in some institutions to three or four semesters at others, students have very little time for extracurricular activity.

That generalization is not universally shared. The *NYCity News Service* at CUNY is strictly extracurricular. However, its newsroom is centrally located on the main floor of the school; a student can scarcely avoid walking through it frequently. It has a high profile among students, and many faculty teach many classes that are oriented to it, even if they do not dedicate a specific classroom project to it. At Florida International University, the South Florida News Service shifted from a classroom-centered to a more strictly extracurricular model as it developed, freeing the news service to experiment and innovate without having to worry about meeting specific curricular goals (Richards, personal communication, 2010). However, in 2012, the program adopted a hybrid model, offering a class dedicated to SFNS, although it has also continued to welcome participation from students who do not enroll in the class.

The goals of a news organization in cooperating with a university, and the goals of a university in cooperating with a news organization, may be at odds. If the news organization wants primarily cheap content, and the university wants primarily a rich, intense, real-world, real-audience experience for students, it is not always easy to find a happy point of intersection. Generally, partnerships cannot be built out of good intentions alone; they must arise equally out of pre-existing relationships of trust. At Northeastern University, Walter Robinson's success has come out of the strong relationship with the news outlet he worked at for many years, *The Boston Globe*.

I have a very good association with the editor of the paper. You have to have that. There's gotta be trust. The newspaper has to have confidence that a journalism faculty

has the experience and oversight capacity to make certain that students get it right. (Robinson, personal communication, 2009).

The Northeastern program, Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation says, "is a sustainable model—but it requires Walter being Walter" (Newton, personal communication, 2010).

University-based Professional News Enclaves

A related but distinct innovation is what we might call university-based professional news enclaves. According to Charles Lewis, the director of one of them, the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University, there are 17 such operations today (Lewis, personal communication, 2012). The oldest of them is probably the Elaine and Gerald Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University, established in 2004. It is a stand-alone, privately-endowed investigative reporting operation housed on campus, employing as many as 15 undergraduate students at a time as interns and assistants, but it is not formally connected to any instructional function in the university. Brandeis helps to subsidize Schuster through providing overhead services, office space and utilities, and technological infrastructure. Essentially, Brandeis hosts a public service, rather than incorporating journalism intimately into its educational mission. The Schuster Institute produces work by its own small staff of professional journalists; its stories have appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and other publications.

Most enclaves are associated with schools of journalism or schools of communication, but not all. In 2008, the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies began an online magazine that offers reporting, analysis, and commentary about environmental issues. *Environment 360*, or *e360*, runs two or three original feature articles weekly, and it provides a daily news digest, as well. Supported by private foundations, the magazine employs three full-time journalists with backgrounds in both newspaper and magazine journalism. It also draws on freelance journalists, scientists, and other scholars. James Gustave (Gus) Speth, dean of the school when publication began, saw it as a contribution to one of the major goals of the school's strategic plan—"the elevation of public discourse on environment" (Speth, personal communication, 2009). In 2010, *The Hechinger Report* (www.hechingerreport.org) launched as a website devoted to news coverage of education. This arose from the privately-funded Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media, which has been hosted since 1996 by Teachers College, Columbia University, where it has provided workshops, seminars, and fellowships for education journalists. *The Hechinger Report* has three full-time professional journalists, a Web producer, and a business manager, and it also uses freelance writers and editors to publish on its website and with partners around the country, including *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, *NBC*, and others.

Investigative Newsource at San Diego State University was established in 2009 under the name Watchdog Institute by Lorie Hearn, a senior editor at the *San Diego Union-Tribune* who contracted with her former employer to publish *Newsource* reports, an agreement that has since lapsed. *Newsource* has four full-time journalists. The staff worked at first in a small, largely barren office in the university's Journalism and Media Studies School. In Fall 2011, *Newsource* formalized a partnership with KPBS, the NPR and PBS affiliate in San Diego which is located on the SDSU campus. *Newsource* moved into the KPBS

newsroom. Hearn, designated a Journalist in Residence at SDSU, maintains an office in the journalism school and teaches a course in investigative journalism.

The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism began operation in 2009 as a 501(c)(3). As of Summer 2012, WCII had produced 70 in-depth news reports made available to the public through more than 200 newspapers, radio, TV, and websites (Hall, personal communication, 2010, 2012). It has four full-time journalists and a corps of volunteer journalists, as well. Housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Journalism and Mass Communication, it offers paid internships for students—\$38,000 in internship salaries to students in the school and the school's recent graduates, usually three interns at any one time. Director Andy Hall provides in-classroom teaching in interviewing and computer-assisted reporting, and he also contributes one-on-one editorial work with students. The university provides both space and Internet access to WCII, but WCII purchases its own computer, copier, telephone, and insurance. WCII, then, is on the "enclave" model, but it is more fully integrated into the educational mission of the university than Schuster, *e360*, or Hechinger. Other journalism school-based programs include USC's California Healthcare Foundation Center for Health Reporting, Boston University's New England Center for Investigative Reporting, and—the largest of the enclaves—Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University, begun in 2008. IRW's executive editor Charles Lewis and senior editor Wendell Cochran are also appointed as tenured members of American's School of Communication. This brings IRW closer to the primary educational mission of the school than is the case with some of the enclaves, and IRW also hires American University student journalists, as well as students from many other schools in its work.

At least two enclave programs are based in law schools. They offer free legal advice and representation to any of the various new, nonprofit, often online news operations, and also to other news organizations. At Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society, the Online Media Legal Network was founded in early 2010. It has taken on litigation and helped with Freedom of Information Act requests, prepublication review, nonprofit formation work, and other issues. They offer pro bono support to online news operations that adhere to "journalistic standards of truth, fairness, and transparency," giving preference to those that do original reporting or use traditional news sources in "new and innovative ways," from online aggregators to bloggers and others. They put potential clients in touch with individual lawyers, law firms, or law school clinics that provide legal services either free, at low cost, or at full fare. As of Summer 2012, OMLN's network included 270 member attorneys, law firms, and law clinics in all 50 states, and it had served more than 200 clients on more than 400 legal matters (Hermes, personal communication, 2012).

In 2009, four Yale Law School students established the Media Freedom and Information Access Practicum (mfia@yale.edu), creating a course for academic credit in Spring 2010 that served to recruit students for a media law clinic supervised pro bono by two media lawyers. In its first year, the program offered a "FOIA Bootcamp" for journalists and nonprofit litigators. It engaged in appellate work, winning an access appeal for a freelance journalist and a state FOIA appeal for a Connecticut nonprofit. It helped *The New York Times* to litigate FOIA denials and represented the AP in a freedom-of-information request in Connecticut. While MFIA has represented clients both prominent and obscure, it also sets its own agenda. It has filed an amicus in defense of the public's right to attend administrative hearings; it has

filed FTC comments urging FOIA reform. In general, it seeks rulings that, if favorable, can open up government.

The Opportunity for Peer Review and Quality Control

News production in a university-based setting should be open to formal evaluation, as are other research and teaching endeavors in universities. What do students think of their experience with writing or producing for general media? What do the general media think of the quality of the work they get from these programs? What do faculty think of the programs? Do they find the emphasis on publication and the need to meet the criteria of the partner news organizations a constraint on the quality and depth of the work students do, or do they find it an incentive to develop student work in ways that they would not otherwise be inclined to do? How does the work produced for general news outlets compare to work produced by the same or similar students for classroom assignments? No classroom evaluations are perfect or accomplish everything one would like, but many models of evaluation and self-evaluation exist and should be adopted by these programs. Universities should be both aware of and encouraging of this novel element of their educational enterprise that has such a prominent public face, but they should also subject it to review. Within the standard academic repertoire of universities, recurrent evaluation and review is routine and useful, not punitive and threatening.

Conclusion: Teaching Hospitals and Music Schools

We are frequently reminded that democracy cannot survive without an informed citizenry, but these terms are far too vague for the statement to be either true or false. What do we mean by "democracy"? In fact, what do we mean by "an informed citizenry"? The American founders rarely spoke about "informed citizens," and on the few occasions when they did, they seemed to mean that citizens should know enough about candidates for office to be able to judge character and deny office to demagogues—they certainly did not mean that citizens should learn about and develop opinions concerning the issues of the day (Schudson, 1998, pp. 69–73). Today, we expect much more. In fact, the current distress about a shrinking capacity for news reporting is ironically a sign of progress—that our aspirations for democracy and our expectations for journalism have come so far that news is widely understood to be a public resource.

But how can this resource be sustained when the business model of the newspaper has suffered such a sudden and profound collapse? There does not seem to be any single solution, but colleges and universities, as the cases examined here suggest, are one part of a solution. Still, the new journalism programs remind some people more of music schools (or other schools for the arts) than medical schools: Music schools enroll highly motivated and often talented students and turn them out as improved, well-qualified musicians who enter a world in which relatively few will be able to make a living as performing artists. Are the journalism schools making promises they cannot fulfill? Or worse, are they undercutting journalistic employment by reducing the incentive of news organizations to hire?

To the extent that the new J-school efforts produce brands of news that conventional news organizations know how to produce but have chosen not to in their constrained circumstances, there is at

least some theoretical merit to these concerns. But to the extent that the J-schools devote themselves to projects conventional news organizations have rarely or never undertaken (think of CUNY's compiling data from 59 New York City locations for one story on public schools; or of hyper-local reporting or the coverage of community meetings or city agency public meetings that mainstream news organizations have scarcely ever covered; or of Youngstown State's efforts to canvass neighborhoods for story ideas; or of Northeastern's exclusive focus on investigative reporting that has always been underproduced in the mainstream media), this is value added to the nation's news, not inexpensive novices displacing expensive reporters. And to the extent that the J-school programs provide a culture that demands that students rethink what the "job" of journalism is, reshaping and reimagining it, they take on a task that media organizations are also tackling, but for which there is no one true path—the more ideas and experiments, the better. This is part of why the medical school ideal has captured the imagination of some journalists and journalism educators. As former *Los Angeles Times* editor Michael Parks at USC put it, "I think J-schools should be more like medical schools, not just teaching best practices, but looking for better practices" (Parks, personal communication, 2009). The J-school programs should not replicate traditional news models, but should confront the astonishing possibilities of the new informational world. When the pros in the news organizations and the pros and students in the classroom collaborate, they can bring those possibilities to life.

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