COLLEGE MEDIA review

Vol. 59 2021-2022

CONTENTS

This document compiles articles that were previously published online as stand-alone posts on the College Media Review website. During the original release period, content was not produced as bound issues; articles were uploaded individually as they were approved. For archival purposes, traditional volume and issue numbers have been replaced with a volume year, reflecting the publication cycle from July through June. CMR historically published a Research Annual each year. When publication frequency changed, some research articles were published online only. To avoid excluding any work, all online-published research articles are included.

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Research (Vol. 59): The College Newsroom amid COVID

A Statistical Assessment of Advisers and their work in College Newsrooms in 2020

Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver, EdD
Florida International University

Elizabeth Smith, EdD
Pepperdine University

Jody Kleinberg Biehl, MA
University at Buffalo

Research Associate: Lillian A. Abreu, MSW
Florida International University

Abstract: This research updates and explores the role and jobs of college newsroom advisers, the context of their work, and the newsrooms they advise. Using a survey (*N*=332) of student media advisers, the data provide important understandings for college journalism issues that have emerged, or re-emerged, in the past year: COVID-19, diversity, and prior review. Responses show, despite campus closures and some declining advertising revenues, COVID-19 did not halt the work of the vast majority of college newsrooms. On the contrary, data from this survey combined with national trends point to the growing importance of college news media across the nation. As local news outlets decrease, college newsrooms are filling the void. Open-ended responses revealed anxieties among advisers about how the pandemic would affect newsrooms in the coming academic years, especially regarding budgets and advertising revenue. For the first time, this research collected information on race/ethnicity. Participants were mostly white, although community colleges had the largest group of advisers of color. Responses reveal that 87% of advisers report that they do not edit newsroom content, although responses raise questions about the role that faculty-guided class work plays in newsrooms and how advisers define

prior review. Compared to past research, adviser salaries have increased in the past five years and 62% of advisers hold either a faculty or staff title. Overall, salaries have increased 12% among advisers since 2014.

Keywords: college media, student newsrooms, student journalism, newsroom diversity, COVID-19, prior review

Introduction

No single story has defined college newsrooms, professional journalism, and the world quite like COVID-19. The pandemic forced campus closures across the United States in the spring of 2020 and some college campuses, like those in California, continue to remain closed into 2021. Yet, most (94 %) of college newsrooms have continued to produce, according to the College Media Association's annual benchmarking survey in 2020. Yet, that production brought change: 16% of newsrooms shifted to online only and 42% reduced their print frequency (College Media Association 2020).

While budgets for many student news outlets may have hung in the balance of COVID-19 closures, college newsrooms have emerged as an even more critical source of news for those in the campus communities and for those in their local communities. The New York Times examined the growing prominence of college newsrooms in communities that have lost their local newspaper (Nierenberg 2020). In the Times' reporting, Hadar Harris, director of the Student Press Law Center, described student journalists as "playing an incredibly important role in this moment" of COVID-19 (Nierenberg 2020).

In addition to COVID-19 changes, the CMA 2020 survey highlighted two key, underexplored issues in college media today: diversity and the question of prior review.

Data from this study were collected as most college newsrooms operated remotely. COVID-19, alone, didn't just affect college newsrooms in 2020. The pandemic provided the context for several issues that gained energy, attention or infamy in 2020 and 2021: protests for racial equity, the Presidential Election of 2020, the

Capitol Insurrection and subsequent impeachment by the House of Representatives of Donald Trump.

This study seeks to better understand the place of college media advisers and college newsrooms in the journalism landscape and their ongoing challenges as well as new challenges that have emerged. It seeks to offer a statistical overview of the state of college media and to serve as a source of reference for those looking to monitor trends within published student journalism.

Literature Review

The journalism industry as a whole has faced renewed scrutiny over the past few years for a lack of diversity. In 2018, the Columbia Journalism Review characterized the lack of diversity, particularly among newspaper staffs as having "failed spectacularly" (Arana 2018) at matching the racial and ethnic composition of their communities. These discussions have also emerged in college newsrooms. In the summer of 2020, Marissa Martinez, the first Black woman ever to lead The Daily Northwestern in the newspaper's 140-year history at Northwestern University, described her own doubt as to whether journalism education and student newsrooms valued diversity: "Knowledge of data journalism or FOIA-filing can take precedence over a desire to reshape newsroom values in an interview setting" (Arana 2018).

While there is almost no data on the diversity of college newsrooms, college newsrooms have been known to follow professional newsrooms in this regard (Hussain and Bista 2017). In a 2020 study of student media advisers from across professional and scholastic journalism organizations, 93% identified as white (Smith et al. 2020). This ongoing lack of representation has ripple effects across student newsrooms.

In September 2020, a mass resignation of 43 staff members at New York University's Washington Square News raised questions about advisers, diversity and representation in student newsrooms (Robertson 2020). In that case, students accused their newly-hired adviser of homophobic and racist behavior. This situation was made more precarious by the adviser's role as then-president of College Media

Advisers. One of the students who resigned told The New York Times, "we realized we were not comfortable working in an environment like this" (Robertson 2020). This raised important questions among CMA's membership about the organization's credibility on issues of diversity and inclusion; more broadly this raised important concerns about representation among students and advisers in student newsrooms.

Prior review also remains a delicate topic in college media. It's a topic that is often glossed over at conferences and in academic discussions. Part of the problem is semantic. What defines simple words like coaching, teaching, helping, directing and editing? What, therefore, definitively counts as prior review? Professors often make suggestions on drafts of academic work; often this occurs in journalism classes that feed student media. Some private universities require advisers to read all student work before it gets published. Is this prior review? Is teaching different from coaching?

There is no clear definition across college media and there has never been an in-depth study as to what constitutes prior review. The CMA Code of Ethics states, "Faculty, staff and other non-students who assume advisory roles with student media must remain aware of their obligation to defend and teach without censoring, editing, directing or producing" (College Media Association 2013). But what separates teaching from directing? Is grading and offering suggestions on academic work editing? The CMA Code also says it "should not be the media adviser's role to modify student writing or broadcasts, for it robs student journalists of educational opportunity and could severely damage their rights to free expression" (College Media Association 2013). Yet, often, by offering suggestions, as most professors do with academic work, students improve. Rather than getting robbed, they get richer.

CMA established the guidelines to protect students whose voices and editorial freedom are key to the success of student media. At times, over-zealous advisers or administrators, worried about the image of the college or university, have certainly tried to temper student voices. In an article in Inside Higher Ed, Kovacs revealed more than 20 advisers who said they felt administrative pressure to control what students published (Kovacs 2016). Then there is the case of private universities, such as Liberty University, founded by Jerry Falwell, which has full editorial control

over student media (Koh, Rieth, and Johnson 2018). The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education keeps a list of universities, including Liberty, that have tried to suppress, censor or edit out student voices (FIRE n.d.).

Lack of clarity often leaves advisers in an uncomfortably ambiguous role. To further complicate the discussion, research over the past two decades lauds applying "the teaching hospital" method to journalism programs (Incollingo 2017; Smith, Rothfield, and Glaisyer 2011). In this model, students learn in real time as they produce meaningful journalism that serves the university and broader community. "Journalism programs should not limit themselves to teaching journalists, but should produce copy and become laboratories of innovation as well" (Anderson, Glaisyer, Smith & Rothfeld, 2011, para. 2). Producing such high-quality, impactful journalism often requires the sort of editing, polishing, rewriting and collaboration that occurs daily in professional news organizations. Additionally, as local news sites suffer across the nation (Stites 2018), student newspapers are often stepping in to fill the void (Lowe 2020). This is elevating the unique and necessary role that student journalism and student journalists serve in communities. It also makes the necessity for skills, legal and ethics training even more urgent in the college newsroom environment. Media scholar Mira Lowe characterized this shift as one that is ripe with opportunities for college journalists, "As we enter a new decade, expect this to be a golden one for emerging journalists as they report, write, produce, and disseminate stories like no other generation" (Lowe 2020).

Methodology and Sample

In fall 2020, the link to an anonymous Qualtrics survey was sent to the 685 members of the College Media Association, and 332 responses came back, for a return rate of 48.6%. The survey contained 53 questions relating to the role, responsibilities, salary, title, rank, education level, tenure status, workload, reporting responsibilities and diversity of college media advisers.

Frequencies were run on all questions, as well as cross tabulations on selected ones to pinpoint trends and focus on issues of concern, such as salary, tenure, diversity etc. A final, open-ended question solicited comments and feedback from respondents.

This survey is the latest in a series that, since its inception in 1984, has provided the only consistent source of longitudinal data about college media advisers and student media. It has proven useful to advisers negotiating contracts, salaries and roles, administrators evaluating their news outlets and faculty and researchers studying trends in college media. The survey is conducted every four to five years and has traditionally had two parts, one focused on the adviser, and a second on student media outlets, with questions on financial, organizational and demographic data. In 2014, the survey asked 31 questions about advisers and 48 questions about student media.

This year, with the upheaval felt by COVID-19, the survey was streamlined into one questionnaire that focused largely on the role of the adviser. Most of the questions from previous years also appeared, to ensure continuity and to enable accurate comparisons to prior years. Questions about diversity, COVID-19 and prior review were included for a total of 53 questions. In future years, the survey will return to the broader question set, but this year, with the enormous changes COVID-19 and remote learning foisted upon student media, it would have been too difficult to get accurate or meaningful statistics on questions relating to student media finances, organization and output. In the comments section, several advisers expressed fears for the future of their news organizations, with some worrying their media would either disappear or remain digital-only. This will provide important data for the 2025 survey.

In this survey, 52% of participants came from four-year public schools, while 33% came from four-year private schools and 15% came from community colleges. A majority—82%—of advisers are between 36 and 65 years old and 10% are older than 65. Most—88%—have had professional media experience, while a full 12% of advisers have no professional media experience before becoming an adviser. That is up by 5% from the 2014 survey. On the other hand, 18% had more than 23 years of professional media experience, mirroring the 2009 survey. The survey garnered responses from advisers from 39 states, with advisers from 11 states either not responding or not being represented. The 2014 survey featured responses from advisers in all 50 states.

COVID-19

Five items on the survey sought information related to COVID-19. The vast majority of participants (93%) indicated that their newsrooms continued to publish during the spring 2020 shutdown (see Table 1). Of those schools that continued to publish, 14% were two-year colleges, 52% were four-year public colleges, and 35% were four-year private colleges.

Diminished advertising revenue was a significant concern for college media outlets during the spring shutdown. Fifty percent of participants indicated they lost $5,000 or less. At the other end of the spectrum, 18% lost $40,000 or more. Participants indicated that 14% of college newsrooms lost between $5,000 and $9,999; 8% lost between $10,000 and $19,999; and 5% lost between $30,000 and $39,999.

This loss of revenue experienced in the spring created a treacherous future for some newsrooms. In the open-ended question, one participant described a bleak future:

Due to loss of revenue and lack of print product our reach and status in the community has been diminished. Real possibility to see operations reduced or eliminated in very near future. Students do not see digital work as unique and as worth their effort like the printed version.

Still another described support during COVID-19, even from outside the institution: *"The FCC has been most considerate to college radio stations during college shutdowns of campus or buildings where stations are located."*

With regard to compensation for lost advertising revenue, participants indicated that only 6% of colleges and universities provided emergency funding to help student media; 94% did not provide any such funding (see Table 2). This was comparable across types of school: two-year college (no schools provided funding), four-year public (92% did not provide funding), and four-year private (96% did not provide funding). As a result of lost funds, 26% of participants had to lower stipends for students in college newsrooms as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown; 74% did not have to lower stipends. Size of school appeared to be a factor in whether or not additional types of funding were provided, with schools between 20,001 and 25,000 enrollment having the largest percentage (13%).

The majority (82%) of advisers also reported that their university had not lost any media outlets in the past year. Advisers could write in the specific media outlets that had closed in the past five years. Responses included 10 radio stations, 9 print newspapers, 7 TV stations, and 6 yearbooks.

Diversity

Understanding diversity among college media advisers continues to be an important topic. Prior surveys did not collect information regarding racial or ethnic diversity, so there is no past data for comparison. This survey sought to collect information that would better illuminate dimensions of diversity among college media advisers, who help lead college newsrooms and teach college journalists. Of the participants who completed the item about race/ethnicity 87.3% of the participants self-reported as white.

Hispanic or Latinx was the next largest group with 5% of participants. Black or African American participants followed as the third largest group with 4% of the participants. Asian participants were the fourth largest group with 2%. The group categorized as "other" came in as the fifth largest group with 1%. Alaska Native or Native American was the smallest group represented with .003%, or one participant (see Table 3).

College media advisers represent a range of professional and faculty positions. Findings from this research show that 28.8% percent of advisers have tenure. Another 33.6% do not have tenure and 37.7% are in positions that do not offer tenure (indicated as N/A).

White participants were fairly evenly distributed across tenure options: 30.4% had tenure, while 31.6% did not have tenure and another 37.9% are in positions that did not offer tenure. For Hispanic or Latinx advisers who participated in the study, 31.3% have tenure, 50.0% do not have tenure, and 18.8% are in positions that do not offer tenure. For Black or African American participants, 15.4% had tenure, 46.2% did not, and 38.5% were in positions that did not offer tenure. For Asian participants, 40% did not have tenure, and 60% were in positions that did not offer tenure. For those who indicated their ethnicity as "other," 50% did not have tenure, and another 50%

were in positions that did not offer tenure. Finally, only one participant reported ethnicity as Alaska Native or Native American; that participant was in a position that did not lead to tenure.

Cross-tabulations provided showed how racial ethnic diversity was represented across types of college. Among community college advisers (n=46), 84.8% were white, 10.9% were Hispanic or Latinx, 2.2% were Alaska or Native American, and 2.2% were Black. Advisers at four-year public universities represented the largest group in the sample (n=160). At these schools, 86.9% were white, 5.6% were Black, 5.0% were Hispanic or Latinx, 1.9% were Asian, and 0.6% were indicated they were in the "other" category. At four-year private colleges (n=102), 89.2% were white. Black, Hispanic or Latinx, and "other" each had 2.9%, and Asian advisers were 2%. Four-year public schools had the largest percentage of every group, except one. The group "other" had 75% at four-year private universities and one at a four-year public college. Meanwhile, of white advisers, 51.3% worked for public four-year universities, as did 69.2% of Black advisers, 50% of Latinx or Hispanic advisers, 60% of Asian advisers.

Salary for journalism advisers may be the result of complex factors: location of the school, job responsibilities, highest degree earned, and school ranking. According to the results of this survey, only two Black advisers reported an annual salary of $55,000 or more. Only four Hispanic or Latinx advisers reported an annual salary of $45,000 or more. White advisers, the majority of the participants, reported advising salaries that were more evenly distributed across the wage categories from $25,000 or less to $80,001 or more. All participants who indicated their ethnicity as Asian reported an annual salary between $40,000 and $70,000.

Prior Review

Prior review remains a delicate topic in college media. As such, it calls out for more examination. Many of the facts collected in this survey offer a mixed and at times confusing portrait of how much input college media advisers have over the content published in student media. For instance, 87% of advisers said they do not edit student media content before publication, while 13% said they do. Of those who edit, 22.9% are from four-year public schools, while 68.6% are from private four-year

schools. Of those who say they edit, 57.1% work at schools with less than 7,500 students, while only 6.8% work at schools with over 25,000 students.

Yet, despite the high numbers who say they don't edit, 51% of advisers said their student media published articles produced in classes separate from the student newspaper. Those articles have, presumably been graded and perhaps even edited, by a professor as part of the academic process. Of those who use content from classes outside the student newsroom, 50% are from four-year public schools, while 35.8% are from four-year private and 13% are from two-year public schools. Of those not using content produced in classes outside the student newsroom, 51% are four-year public schools, 33.1% are four-year private schools and 15% are two-year public schools. In an open-ended survey item one adviser described how budget cuts could push the student newsroom to change its model to a classroom lab:

> Things are in flux for the newspaper I advise. It went online-only this fall and our printing. Budget was cut, but this could be temporary... We have not previously treated the newspaper as a lab, but are considering this, as well as internships. We do not currently pay students anything, and are considering paid internships.

The statistics practically reverse when advisers are queried if they make suggestions to student journalists. Eighty-nine percent of advisers say they regularly make suggestions to students about coverage as part of their job. Of those who make suggestions about coverage, 50% are from four-year public schools, 34.6% are from four-year private schools and 14.6% are from two-year public schools.

The numbers drop by 29% when the question shifts to the word "coach." A full 40% of advisers say they don't "regularly coach" students in their work before publication, while 60% say they do. Of those who regularly coach students, 43.9 % are four-year public school advisers, 38.6% are private four-year school advisers and 19.5% are advisers at two-year public schools. Of those who regularly coach students, 67.1% have tenure, while 32.9% do not

Of those who don't coach students, 57.1 percent have tenure, while 42.95% do not.

The numbers shift again, when the query focuses on helping students get in touch with sources. Overall, 64% of the advisers queried said they did not do this, while 36% do offer help.

The Adviser's Role, Degrees and Tenure

The role of the adviser remains varied on college campuses, with 29% of those surveyed holding tenured faculty positions, including full professor rank and/or serving as department chairs. A larger number, (38%) hold lecturer or staff positions. Some of those positions are connected to non-academic departments, like student affairs, that do not lead to tenure. This exactly mirrors responses in 2014. An additional 33% of advisers do not yet have tenure. Of those with tenure, 69% have been at the university 10 or more years. Of those without tenure, 44% have been at the university more than 10 years and 12.2% have been working without tenure for 20 or more years.

Advisers with tenure mostly (72%) work at four-year schools, with 39% at four-year public schools and 33% at four-year private schools. Fewer, but still a significant number (28%) of community college advisers have tenure. Of those without tenure, 85% are at either four-year public (56%) or four-year private schools (29%). Most (57%) of those in positions not leading to tenure are in four-year public schools, while 37% are in private and 6% are in community colleges.

More than 62% have either a staff or faculty title, while 38% have both types of title. That's a shift from 2014, when 42% had both, but it remains more than in 2009, when only 30% of advisers held more than one title. For those with faculty titles, most (71%) are assigned to journalism or communications programs. An additional 10% are assigned to English. Of those assigned to English, 61% teach at community colleges. Four-year public universities and four-year private colleges are more likely to assign faculty serving as advisers to journalism, communication of other departments. Several advisers report being assigned to other university divisions including: the Honors College, digital or visual studies, mass media and humanities/social science. One faculty member who works as a media adviser reports also serving as campus minister.

Of those advisers who are not faculty, but teach, 59% are part of journalism or communications programs, 29% are in "other" departments and 13% are assigned to English programs. This is slightly different from 2014, when 66% were in journalism or communications programs, 13% were in English. Some of the "other" departments listed include theology, religion and interdisciplinary, digital media and none.

Time spent as an adviser is split, with 55% of advisers saying it takes up 50-100% of their time, while 45% say it takes less than half their time (see Table 5). One fourth are full-time advisers. Almost all (94%) advisers work on a semester system, while 6% work on quarters. This is similar to past years. Although the survey tried to query teaching hours to assess average course loads, the question—which asked about semester hours—confused many advisers and did not yield significant results.

Advisers spent a vastly different amount of time with their student media, but 41% of advisers say they spend less than 20 hours a week with student journalists. About the same number (42%) say they spend 21-40 hours with students, while 3% spend 41-50 hours a week. On the opposite spectrum, 4% spend 51 or more hours per week with student journalists and 1% spend more than 61 hours.

Of those without faculty titles, position names differ widely by school, but 43% use either publications/media director or media adviser. Other names include director of campus activities and student media, faculty adviser, department chair, director of digital media, and director of student media.

Most advisers (85%) have a master's degree or higher. The number of advisers with master's degrees slipped from 59% in 2014 to 52% in 2020. The number of advisers holding doctoral degrees, however, has steadily risen in the past decade. In 2009, it was 21%, in 2014, it inched up to 23% and today it is at 33%. This could also be a reflection of fewer faculty and staff positions across colleges and universities (Aldeman 2021).

Of those with tenure, 69% had been at the university 10 or more years. Of those without tenure, 44% had been at the university more than 10 years, and 12.2% had been working without tenure for 20 or more years. Unfortunately, 27% of advisers

without tenure say they are also working without a fixed contract renewal date. This is a trend worth watching, as it is significantly higher than the 19% in 2014 and three times higher than the 9% in 2009.

In an open-ended item, one participant responded about the pressures of job security and advising student media: *"The legal liabilities of advising student media is an unspoken risk, as is the risk to one's faculty status given the possibilities of student behavior in pursuit of independent journalism."* Another described the loss of tenure because of institutional changes: *"It's very sad that all the work many of us have done in our classrooms, as well as to earn tenure and promotion, have been all for nothing. And no one is interested in reporting on this."*

Some list advising as part of their teaching duties, while others work on an adjunct basis by semester. For advisers working on renewable contracts, renewal dates vary widely, but 27% work on 9-month contracts, while 16% have 10-month contracts and 20% have 12-month contracts. This is a more than 50% shift from 2009, when 46% of advisers had 12-month contracts and a 12% drop from 2014.

Most advisers (67%) split their time between teaching and advising. Of those with split duties, 52-57% at all schools (four and two-year) get teaching release for advising, with advising counting as one or more courses.

One fourth receive no release and no compensation for their advising duties. Of those, 30.3 % are at four-year public schools, while 25% are at four-year private schools and 15% are at community colleges. A small number (7%) of advisers receive an extra stipend for advising in addition to course release. Additionally, 13% do not get course release, but get paid extra for advising.

Salary

Salaries of full-time advisers vary from less than $35,000 to more than $80,000, but all salaries have increased since 2014 (see Table 6). Overall, 92% of advisers make more than $40,000, a 12% jump from 2014. Three quarters (76%) make more than $50,000, and 55% make more than $60,000. In 2014, 66% made more than $40,000 and 40% earned over $60,000. On the high end today, 36% of advisers make more

than $70,000, while 19% make more than $80,000. Those higher salaries are between 6% and 10% higher than six years ago. Only 5% of advisers report making less than $35,000, which is 4% fewer than in 2014. Of those making more than $70,000, 46% had some teaching duties attached to their jobs. Advisers assigned to English had consistently lower pay rates, with none making more than $75,000. Those assigned to journalism or communications departments did better, with 35% making more than $75,000. An additional 28% of those making $75,000 or more are not assigned to university departments, while 25% are in departments other than journalism, communications or English.

Four-year private schools pay advisers both the most and the least. But overall, only four advisers reported making $35,000 or less and only seven make less than $40,000. Among top earners, those making $80,000 or more, 44% are at four-year private schools, while 40% are at four-year public schools and 16% are at community colleges. But advisers at private schools do not fare as well in the next income bracket. Of those making $75,000-$80,000, 66.7% are four-year public school advisers, while only 11.1% are advisers at private, four-year schools. An additional 22.2% are community college advisers. In the next bracket, advisers earning $70,000 to $75,000, close to half (46.2%) are from four-year private schools, while 38.5% are from four-year public schools and 15.4% are from community colleges. Most (90%) of advisers making $55,000 to $60,000 are also at four-year public schools.

Advising duties are another area that differs widely across college newsrooms. Most advisers (80%) have advising duties included in their job and do not get extra compensation for their role with student media. This is most prominent (83.5%) at four-year public schools, but is also true for more than three-quarters of advisers at private two and four-year schools. Of those who do get paid extra, 9% make $1,000-$5,000 extra, 4% make $5,000-$15,000 extra and 5% make less than $1,000 extra.

An unsettling number of advisers (63%) have no provisions in their contracts for regular salary increases. One adviser notes not having a raise since beginning the job in 2015. Some 12% enjoy automatic yearly raises, with several advisers noting they are part of a union contract. An additional 10% have to negotiate annual raises. Of

those who enjoy automatic salary increases, 18.8% are at community colleges, 12.7% are at four-year public schools and 9.25 are at private four-year schools.

Nearly half of advisers (48%) have academic or student affairs deans or vice presidents overseeing their salaries. An additional 11% have academic chairs who oversee their salaries, while 5% answer to a media board. For 6% of advisers, the university president determines salary. A worrisome 1% of advisers rely on the student government to set their salary. Although rare, this raises profound ethical and First Amendment questions. Several advisers also report answering to university human resources departments for salary issues.

Another issue of concern is that 41% of advisers still do not have set job descriptions for their role with campus news outlets. That number is down from 57% in 2014 and 62% in 2009, which is reassuring, but it is certainly worth watching. Of those with set descriptions, 21% report that they write the descriptions themselves, while 30% have them done by an academic dean or chair. Some (13%) rely on a media board, while 2% say their university president writes their job description.

As with salary, 1% of advisers say student government representatives write their job description. An additional 15% wrote in options not presented in the survey. Some of those included the students they advise (6), student engagement director, provost and human resources staff. Public four-year schools have the best record on job descriptions, with 70% of advisers having written job duties. The numbers at private four-year universities are much lower, at 50%, and are even less (47.6%) at community colleges. Smaller schools with 1,000 or fewer students are least likely (9%) to have written job descriptions for advisers, while larger public universities, particularly those with 15,001-20,000, are the most likely (92%).

Reporting Responsibilities

With regard to reporting responsibility, 29% of advisers report to a department chair, which is a 3% increase from 2014, and a 5% increase from 2009. Advisers reporting to an academic dean/vice president decreased only slightly, from 20% in 2014 to 19% in 2020, and those reporting to a student affairs dean/vice president

decreased from 17% in 2014 to 11% in 2020 (returning close to 2009 numbers with 12%).

Participants reporting to a student activities/student life director remained unchanged from 2014 levels at 15%. Meanwhile those reporting to a student media/publications board increased slightly to 9% in 2020 from 8% in 2014. Advisers who reported to a publications/media director decreased from 6% in 2014 to 4% in 2020. No participants indicated they reported directly to a student government association or a public relations dean/vice president (see Table 7).

For advisers at two-year colleges, the largest percentage of participants (41.5%) reported to an academic dean/vice president, which is a significant increase from 27% in 2014. This was followed by a department chair with 24.4% in 2020, up slightly from 22% in 2014. Advisers at two-year schools who reported to student activities continued to decline from 18% in 2014 to 14.6% in 2020. Advisers who reported to presidents and advisers who reported to a publications board both came in at 4.9%; in 2014 there were no advisers who reported to presidents and 6% of advisers reported to a publications board.

At four-year public institutions, 38.3% of advisers reported to department chairs, which is an increase from 27% in 2014. That is followed by student activities/student life directors at 19.1%, a slight increase from 18% in 2014. Student affairs deans/vice presidents decreased to 14.2% from 18% in 2014. Advisers who reported to a publications/media board came in at 5.7% in 2020, which decreased from 10% in 2014. Advisers who reported to academic deans/vice presidents, (7.8%) remained almost unchanged from 8 percent in 2014, and those who report to publications/media directors remained nearly unchanged from 2014 to 2020 (6% to 6.4%).

For advisers at four-year private institutions, the academic dean or vice president supervises most advisers (26.6%), down from 30% percent in 2014. Other areas include department chairs (18.1%), down from 24% in 2014; student affairs dean/vice president (10.6%), down from 15%; publications/media board (14.9%), a significant increase from 6% in 2014; and student activities/student life director (10%), comparable to 2014.

With regard to who is the publisher in the college newsroom, 28% of respondents stated that they are independent. This was the highest percentage of all categories. The publications board / media board as publisher was selected by 15% of participants; published by "other" was also selected by 15%; and published by the editor was selected by 14%. Advisers, student affairs vice presidents or boards of trustees were each ranked at 4%; and academic deans/leaders were listed by 3% of respondents.

At community colleges, 32% of participants reported that the publisher is the newspaper adviser. That was followed by 24% who listed the paper as independent; 11% who listed published by "other"; 8% each who listed the publisher as an editorial board / management board or the college president or the board of trustees.

At four-year public institutions, 30% reported that they are independent of the college or university. That is followed by 21% that reported a publication board or media board was publisher; 15% were published by "other": 12% identified the newspaper editor; 8% listed an an editorial board/management board, 4% said the president was publisher; 3% listed the student affairs/vice president; and another 3% reported the adviser is the publisher. At colleges that reported board of trustees as publisher, and colleges that reported the academic dean as publisher, both were minimal at 2%.

At four-year private institutions, 25% indicated they were independent of the college or university. That is followed by 13% which listed the media board as publisher; 11% which listed the editor; 8% which listed the president; 6% which named the adviser; and 4% which said student affairs or a vice president was publisher.

Limitations

Although this survey sought to collect information about the current environment facing college media advisers, it had several limitations. The survey sought to understand what roles advisers handle, how many news organizations they oversee and how many employees work in student media on their campus. But the two questions geared toward these issues did not offer enough options or go into enough

specificity, causing many advisers to leave it blank or mention it in the comments section. Also, due to confusion over what constitutes a semester hour, answers on advisers' teaching load were not included. Future versions of this survey instrument will provide participants the option to select more than one professional affiliation. Finally, the survey was sent to only CMA members. This is the formula that has worked in years past, but leaves out advisers active in other journalism settings.

Conclusions

The findings from this study highlight the continued prevalence of college media across the country, the vast differences in how colleges treat their student media outlets and the need for more in-depth research on the intricacies of how student media programs operate. First, there is a stunning lack of data on the diversity of college newsrooms. Currently, there is no way to assess how college newsrooms are succeeding or failing to reflect their campus demographics or the nation's demographics as a whole. Perhaps even more importantly, though, there is no accurate assessment of who is being trained to be a journalist, since it is common for a student to choose a major other than journalism while working in a college newsroom. While there is still much that is not known about the diversity of college newsrooms, this data does show, though, that college media advisers do not reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of most college campuses.

Future research needs to focus on the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on college newsrooms. These data indicate the pandemic has pushed college newsrooms into converging programs, managing with disappearing budgets or, in some cases, shutting down completely. In the comments section, several advisers voiced concern that administrators will use COVID-19 as a reason to cut their programs, reduce their frequency or transfer them to digital-only formats.

The effects on individual campuses, but also on the broader news landscape, need to be more closely examined. As local news shrinks, what ongoing role will campus news sites play? Will college students respond to digital-only products with the same loyalty as they have historically to print versions? Will students producing news feel the same sort of solidarity with a digital product as they do with print issues?

Still, the results from this research reveal several important improvements for college media advisers. Overall, salaries have increased for advisers since 2014. Since 2014, 92% of advisers make more than $40,000, and nearly three-quarters of advisers make more than $50,000. The number of advisers that have in-tact job descriptions has increased from 43% to 59% with advisers at four-year colleges having the highest percentages of advisers with job descriptions. The fact that tenure-track or tenured advisers have remained unchanged since 2014 can be seen as a highlight since tenure offers advisers protection from institutional retaliation and are becoming rarer at many institutions (Vedder 2020).

Overall, there is a sense among the participants' open-ended responses that the massive disruption of COVID-19 has left college media and advisers in a state of flux. While that disruption means worrisome budget cuts and unknown sources of advertising revenue, it may also mean opportunities for growth and innovation. Support from institutions for the work of student newsrooms and the professional organizations that support student journalism will be needed urgently and consistently. College Media Association and others will need to explore and predict the needs of newsrooms in new ways for the coming years.

References

- AAUP. 2016. "Threats to the Independence of Student Media." American Association of University Professors. 2016. https://www.aaup.org/report/threats-independence-student-media.
- Aldeman, Chad. 2021. "During the Pandemic, 'Lost' Education Jobs Aren't What They Seem." Brookings. March 22, 2021. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2021/03/02/during-the-pandemic-lost-education-jobs-arent-what-they-seem/.
- Anderson, C. W., T. Glaisyer, J. Smith, and M. Rothfeld. 2011. "Shaping 21st Century Journalism: Leveraging a 'Teaching Hospital Model' in Journalism Education." Knight Foundation. 2011. https://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/article_pdfs/Shaping_21st_Century_Journalism.pdf.

- Arana, Gabriel. 2018. "Decades of Failure." Columbia Journalism Review. 2018. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/race-ethnicity-newsrooms-data.php.
- College Media Association. 2013. "Professional and Personal Codes." August 22, 2013. http://www.collegemedia.org/about_cma/code_of_ethics/.
- College Media Association. 2020. "Survey: College Media Continue despite Pandemic." College Media Review. September 8, 2020. https://c65.1e2.myftpupload.com/state-of-college-media-2020.
- FIRE. n.d. "Under Pressure: The Warning Signs of Student Newspaper Censorship." The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. Accessed March 1, 2021. https://www.thefire.org/research/publications/under-pressure-the-warning-signs-of-student-newspaper-censorship/#priorReview.
- Hussain, Suhauna, and Tsering Bista. 2018. "Tackling Diversity in Student Newsrooms." Asian American Journalists Association. July 29, 2018. https://voices.aaja.org/blog/2018/7/29/tackling-diversity-in-student-newsrooms.
- Incollingo, J.S. 2017. "The Teaching Hospital Model of Journalism Education." Essay. In College Media: Learning in Action, edited by Gregory Adamo and Allan DiBiase, 177–90. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Group.
- Koh, Charissa, Liz Rieth, and Isaiah Johnson. 2018. "Papered over: Biblical Truth-Telling at College Newspapers Can Sometimes Conflict with the Way Administrators Want to Portray the School. Here's a Case Study of How Liberty University Handled the Tension Last Spring." World Magazine. August 16, 2018. https://wng.org/articles/papered-over-1617301444.
- Kovacs, Kasia. 2016. "Student Reporters Face Retaliation from University Administrators, New Report Says." Inside Higher Ed. December 1, 2016. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/12/01/student-reporters-face-retaliation-university-administrators-new-report-says.
- Lowe, Mira. 2019. "The Year of Student-Powered Journalism." Nieman Lab. December 2019. https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/12/the-year-of-student-powered-journalism/.
- Martinez, Marissa. 2020. "On Diversity, College Newsrooms Don't Get a Pass." The Objective. July 3, 2020. https://www.objectivejournalism.org/p/on-diversity-college-newsrooms-dont.
- Nierenberg, Amelia. 2020. "Covid Is the Big Story on Campus. College Reporters Have the Scoop." The New York Times. November 4, 2020.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/04/us/college-journalists-covid.html.
- Robertson, Katie. 2020. "43 Student Journalists Quit N.Y.U. Paper After Dispute With Adviser." The New York Times. September 29, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/28/business/media/nyu-washington-square-news-adviser.html.
- Smith, E., Payne, L., Hettinga, K., & Norman, J. (2020). Keeping the lights on and the wolves outside: college media advisers in communities of practice. *Journal of Mass Communication Educator*. doi:10.1177/1077695820984333
- Smith, Elizabeth, Lisa Lyon Payne, Kirstie Hettinga, and Jean Norman. 2020. "Keeping the Lights on and the Wolves Outside: College Student Media Advisers in Communities of Practice." *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077695820984333.
- Smith, Jason A., Marika Rothfeld, and Tom Glaisyer. 2011. "Shaping 21st Century Journalism: Leveraging a 'Teaching Hospital Model' in Journalism Education." New America Foundation. October 2011. https://www.academia.edu/1220873/Shaping_21st_Century_Journalism_Leveraging_a_Teaching_Hospital_Model_in_Journalism_Education.
- Stites, Tom. 2018. "About 1,300 U.S. Communities Have Totally Lost News Coverage, UNC News Desert Study Finds." Poynter. November 16, 2018. https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2018/about-1300-u-s-communities-have-totally-lost-news-coverage-unc-news-desert-study-finds/.
- Vedder, Richard. 2020. "Tenure Is Dying." Forbes. April 13, 2020. https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardvedder/2020/04/13/academic-tenure-rip/?sh=5abc6c8615cf.

Table 1

COVID emergency funding and student stipend reductions by percentage

		Reduction in stipends	
		Yes	No

Emergency funding	Yes	5.9%	5.3%
	No	94.1%	94.7%

Table 2

Newsroom production during COVID shutdown by percentage

		Production	
		Yes	No
Type of School	Two-year public	14.0%	27.8%
	Four-year public	51.6%	50.0%
	Four-year private	34.5%	22.2%

Table 3

Adviser diversity in percentages

	Categorization	**Two-year public schools**	**Four-year public schools**	**Four-year private schools**
Race/ethnicity	Alaska or Native American (n=1)	100.0%	0%	0%
	Asian (n=5)	0%	60.0%	40.0%
	Black or African American (n=13)	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%
	Hispanic or Latinx (n=16)	31.3%	50%	18.8%

	Native Hawaiian or Native Islander (n=0)	0%	0%	0%
	White (n=271)	14.4%	51.3%	33.6%
	Other (n=4)	0%	25.0%	75.0%

Table 4

Advisers and editing content prior to publication by percentage

	Categorization	**Yes (n=35)**	**No (n=237)**
Type of School	Two-year public	8.6%	14.8%
	Four-year public	22.9%	55.7%
	Four-year private	68.6%	29.5%

Table 5

Hours spent advising by percentage

	Categorization	**Two-year public schools**	**Four-year public schools**	**Four-year private schools**
Time	20 hours or less	17.4%	34.8%	47.8%

	21-30 hours	23.6%	47.2%	29.2%
	31-40	9.1%	77.3%	13.6%
	41-50	2.8%	72.2%	25.0%
	51-60	0.0%	77.8%	22.2%
	61 hours or more	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%

Table 6

Adviser salaries

	Categorization	**Two-year public schools**	**Four-year public schools**	**Four-year private schools**
Pay Scale	$20,000 or less	0%	0%	100.0%
	$20,001 to $25,000	0%	0%	0%
	$25,001 to $30,000	0%	0%	0%
	$30,001 to $35,000	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
	$35,001 to $40,000	0%	100.0%	0%
	$40,001 to $45,000	0%	67.7%	33.3%
	$45,001 to $50,000	8.3%	66.7%	25.0%
	$50,001 to $55,000	11.8%	70.6%	17.6%
	$55,001 to $60,000	0%	90.0%	10.0%

	$60,001 to $65,000	6.3%	56.3%	37.5%
	$65,001 to $70,000	22.2%	44.4%	38.5%
	$70,001 to $75,000	15.4%	38.5%	46.2%
	$75,001 to $80,000	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%
	$80,001 or more	16.0%	40.0%	44.0%

Table 7

Adviser assignments by percentages

	Categorization	**Two-year public schools**	**Four-year public schools**	**Four-year private schools**
Assignments	Journalism/ Communication Department	13.4%	47.0%	39.6%
	English	61.9%	23.8%	14.3%
	Speech	100%	0%	0%
	Business	0%	0%	0%
	Not assigned	5.3%	68.4%	26.3%
	Other	23.8%	33.3%	42.9%

Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver. EdD, is executive director of the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication and dean emeritus and

professor of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Florida International University. She was named the Outstanding Woman in Journalism and Mass Communication Education for 2009 by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. A nationally known expert and researcher on the First Amendment, the scholastic and collegiate press, and the role and status of women in communication, she is the author of more than 115 scholarly articles, monographs and books. She is past president of AEJMC, College Media Advisers, the Student Press Law Center, and the Community College Journalism Association. She holds numerous awards for her service to education. In 2011 she was awarded FIU's Distinguished University Service Medallion for her outstanding contributions to FIU.

Elizabeth R. Smith, EdD., is an assistant professor of communication at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, and director of Pepperdine Graphic Media. She has 17 years of experience teaching a variety of journalism and media courses at Pepperdine, as well as advising the Graphic and directing Pepperdine Graphic Media. She has nearly 20 years of professional experience in the journalism industry, including print, web and broadcast news. She is an award-winning journalist, and in 2010 won an Emmy for her work at KTLA on the breaking-news coverage of Michael Jackson's death. Smith was named a Kopenhaver Center Fellow for 2017. Smith has partnered with the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on the topics of news literacy and understanding the spread of fake news. Her current research includes news literacy, Communities of Practice in student newsrooms, accuracy in the news, and technology and innovation in newsrooms and journalism programs.

Jody Kleinberg Biehl (BA English/Art History, 1993 MA Journalism 1997) specializes in print and web media. In 2003, she was one of three journalists selected to create an English website for Europe's largest news magazine, *Der Spiegel*. The site, based

in Berlin, now attracts 2-3 million readers per month. Before joining *Der Spiegel*, Ms. Biehl worked as a European correspondent for *The San Francisco Chronicle* and as a free-lance correspondent for *USA TODAY* and the *Boston Globe*. She also spent four years as a general assignment reporter for the Santa Rosa *Press Democrat*, a New York Times-owned paper in Northern California. She won numerous journalism awards during her time at the *Press Democrat* and in 2000 received an Arthur F. Burns fellowship, which took her to Berlin for three months as a reporter. She has reported from France, England, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Germany. She speaks fluent French and German.

July 27, 2021 / College Media / college media, covid-19, newsroom diversity, prior review, student journalism, student newsrooms

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Community newspapers the ‘lifeblood of every community’

Local publications provide ample opportunities

Yvonne Mintz is the editor and publisher of *The Facts* in Brazoria County, Texas.

It's not a newspaper most readers would have heard of. *The Facts* doesn't compete with *USA Today* or even the *Houston Chronicle*, which is right up the road.

It doesn't need to.

The Facts is just as likely to cover a local softball game or a high school graduation as it is the latest controversy at the town council.

The paper's motto reminds readers of its mission: "No one delivers local news like *The Facts*."

While sitting on a panel talking to college journalists, Mintz expanded on this idea.

"Without us, officials in this community would be unchecked in their power," she told the interns participating in the Dow Jones News Fund / Texas Press Association Center for Editing Excellence training program before they left for internships at publications such as the *Houston Chronicle* and patch.com but also the *Azle News*, *Hill Country News*, *Pleasanton Express* and *Tyler County Booster*, all in Texas.

Mike Hodges, executive director of the Texas Press Association, said of community newspapers, "They are the lifeblood of every community."

"We don't shy away from the big stuff, but we don't scoff at the little stuff. People want to read about the stuff that affects them," Mintz said.

Moderated by Griff Singer, a retired senior lecturer from the University of Texas at Austin, the journalists on the panel discussed the importance of community

journalism and the advantages in working for local media.

Ken Cooke, a fourth-generation publisher and editor now at the *Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post*, said, "It's all about serving your community, serving your readers."

And, as Hodges said, "The newspaper is a part of every single event. The newspaper's there; it's part of it. The smaller the community, the more the newspaper is a part of that family."

Hodges said that for many local journalists, the job is more than, well, a job.

"There is a common thread that runs through all of them, and that is family," Hodges said.

"A community is much like that, an extension of that."

Singer added, "We see these people at church. We see them at the supermarket. It's up close and personal. If you're working at a big metro, there's some anonymity there. You suddenly become very identified. Community allows you to get your hands dirty in so many ways. Writing. Reporting. Taking pictures."

When J.J. Kim, a Dow Jones News Fund editing intern at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, asked about the challenges of living and working in a small community, both editors acknowledged that it can be a problem.

Mintz said, "Yes, it does get awkward."

However, she said journalists just have to know their personal ethics and their boundaries.

"If you set boundaries for yourself, really the decisions are pretty easy and the community respects you," she said.

They also acknowledged the importance of maintaining credibility when Kaylee Pippins, a Texas Press Association intern at the *Azle News* asked how a recent college graduate can build credibility.

Mintz said, "Get things right. Spell everyone's name right. Be inquisitive and ask a lot of questions. Don't bow down to someone you think is more powerful than you."

Cooke said, "Be detail-oriented. Don't expect your editors to catch something you should have caught. Don't be afraid to ask questions."

Singer said, "Accuracy is always the best way to build your credibility."

All of the panelists said working in community journalism is a good place for young journalists to polish their skills and to learn new skills.

Cooke, who edits a paper with a circulation of 7,000 in a conservative town popular with tourists, said his company has a daily update and email newsletter and is expanding its work in video.

"We post stories to the web. We have an e-edition that goes along with the print, an e-newsletter," Cooke said. "We have a lot of links in that to get (readers) back to our website. We're using more video than we ever have."

Mintz said her paper also maintains a daily dashboard and is on social media a lot, posting links, not just posting 'stuff.'

"We're working harder as journalists than we ever have."

All of the panelists said the pandemic had a significant impact on their business and noted that it *is* a business.

"We gotta have the money to do the journalism," Mintz reminded the group. "The journalism doesn't get to happen unless you maintain a profitable newspaper."

The pandemic, which the panelists described as a historical event in both big cities and small towns, posed challenges.

Cooke said, “People are going to look at this pandemic decades or centuries from now to see what we reported on it.”

Mintz said, “We’ve spent a lot of time talking to schoolteachers, parents, medical professionals. One story I was particularly proud of, we took a look at the Hispanic families because they were disproportionately impacted.”

She said her publication focuses on telling stories about real people.

“That’s important no matter what level of journalism you’re at,” she said, noting that reporting on real people helps readers go beyond the numbers.

She said this is also where local newspapers can help the community.

“One of the things a community newspaper can and should do (is) to support its businesses,” she said. “You find yourself being a cheerleader for shopping local. We launched a ‘shop local, shop strong’ campaign. It was really successful. We gave out prizes and incentives for shopping locally.”

The editors also talked about potential careers in community journalism.

Cooke said there are ample opportunities to move up.

Mintz agreed, noting that she had a job opening at that moment.

She said, “It’s not glamorous. You’re not going to get rich. You can afford to support yourself. And you’ll have stories for the rest of your life.”

PANELISTS

Griff Singer, retired, senior lecturer, the University of Texas at Austin

GRIFFIN (GRIFF) SINGER retired from the University of Texas at Austin School of Journalism in 2003 after 34 years of service. Over the past 50 years, he has participated in virtually all areas related to the newspaper business and its technological changes — as a hot metal printer, a reporter, editor, teacher, newspaper consultant and now digital journalist. Because of his service all across the state, he was inducted into Texas Newspaper Foundation Hall of Fame in 2016.

He has served in reporter and editor positions at the Arlington (Texas) *Citizen-Journal*, *The Dallas Morning News* and *San Antonio Light*. For 17 summers, he moved to Houston between academic years to join the *Houston Chronicle* as an assistant metro editor and writing coach.

He has received numerous public service awards from the news industry. Alumni of *The Daily Texan* named him as the inaugural THE Friend of *The Daily Texan* in 2015. He also is proud of the 10 former students who have won Pulitzer Prizes.

Mike Hodges, executive director, Texas Press Association

MIKE HODGES, executive director, Texas Press Association, helps community newspapers through the TPA, a member-owned trade association of more than 400 member newspapers — dailies and weeklies. That's no easy task. Texas has 254 counties. The distance from Texarkana to El Paso is 820 miles. Austin to El Paso is 566 miles. Once you make it to El Paso from Austin, you're halfway to California.

Mike worked many years in newspaper advertising after earning a management degree at West Texas A&M University in Canyon. He has been associated with TPA since 1991. After serving seven years as advertising director, he was promoted to executive director. That was 23 years ago.

Yvonne Mintz, editor/publisher, The Facts (Brazosport, Texas)

YVONNE MINTZ is editor and publisher of *The Facts* in Clute, Brazoria County, Texas. She joined *The Facts* as a staff reporter in 1997, the year she graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in journalism.

Mintz became managing editor of *The Facts* in 2004 and took over as publisher in 2016. As a reporter, Mintz won many awards from the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors, most notably first place in investigative reporting for a series of stories that resulted in the resignation of state Sen. Buster Brown. Since then she has won honors for column and editorial writing.

Texas APME has named *The Facts* Newspaper of the Year in its category four times under her leadership. The paper earned Community Service honors for coverage of Hurricane Ike and the breaking news award for coverage of Hurricane Harvey. The paper confronts issues in its community head-on and recently won feature series accolades for stories about sex trafficking in local schools and the Community

Service award for a series of stories about methamphetamine use in Brazoria County.

Ken Cooke, publisher and editor of the Fredericksburg Standard

Editor and Publisher of *The Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post,* **KEN ESTEN COOKE**'s family has owned the *Rockdale Reporter*, in a community northeast of Austin, since 1911, when his great-grandfather purchased it. His grandfather, William Cooke, and father, Bill Cooke, a University of North Texas journalism graduate, produced a top weekly paper for that community.

Cooke returned home to work for his father after several years in the music business, and became publisher in 2007. Because of the town's economic struggles, Ken left the paper under his sister's watch while he worked briefly in public relations before becoming publisher and editor at the *Fredericksburg Standard-Radio Post* in 2012.

Under Cooke's direction, the newspaper has expanded to produce magazines and digital products. The *Standard* and its related magazines consistently place at or near the top of the division in press contests.

Cooke, who has a bachelor's degree in management from Concordia University, also serves his industry. He is a director and second vice president of the Texas Press Association, a trustee of the Texas Newspaper Foundation, and a director and past president of the South Texas Press Association.

Full disclosure: Bradley Wilson is an associate professor at Midwestern State University. He co-directs the Center for Editing Excellence through the University of Texas sponsored by the Dow Jones News Fund and Center for Editing Excellence.

August 10, 2021 / College Media / community journalism, dow jones news fund, internship, newspaper, texas press

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Research (Vol. 59): Maintaining and Framing Social Media

A Multi-Method Examination of Award-Winning Student Newspaper Tweets

Emily A. Dolan
Slippery Rock University

Brittany L. Fleming
Slippery Rock University

Abstract: The current study examined how award-winning student newspapers used social media to maintain relationships with their audiences. We employed

quantitative methods to examine 26,388 tweets for the presence of relational maintenance strategies. We then employed a qualitative analysis to understand how tweets featuring high levels of these strategies attracted audience engagement. Findings suggest that student newspapers employ relational maintenance strategies in their posts. Within each of these strategies, we identified patterns in the types of tweets that attracted high levels of user engagement. Broadly, our findings suggest that these strategies should not be centered on maintaining the relationships between audiences and newspapers, but instead should be centered on maintaining relationships between audiences and their university communities. We use these findings to propose a list of social media best practices for student newspapers and advisors.

INTRODUCTION

Young media users are considered a "hard-to-reach" audience due to the sheer amount of news information available to them, and the "perceived worthwhileness" of certain news topics (Berthelsen and Hameleers 2021; Ferne 2018). Without a doubt, the prevalence of social media helps explain this phenomenon. Recent data from Pew Research Center (Auxier and Anderson 2021) indicates that 89% of U.S. adults between the ages of 18 to 29 use at least one social media site on a daily basis. Recent data also find that roughly 53% of U.S. adults get their news from their social media feeds (Shearer 2021). This is especially true for young adults between the ages of 18 and 29, who rely on social media to obtain news more than does any other age group (Shearer 2021).

The proliferation of digital technologies has altered the news industry. A social media presence is required, and there is no age group this is especially true for than young adults. A social media presence includes more than one-way communication from news organizations, however. These platforms are focused on interactivity between sources and their audiences. The result of such interaction is the maintenance of relationships between parties.

With the significant role that social media plays in maintaining relationships, the current study seeks to understand how award-winning student news organizations employ relational maintenance behaviors on their social media accounts. We also focus on how relational maintenance behaviors are associated with audience engagement. These findings are used to develop a list of best practices for student newspapers to employ on their social media accounts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Social Media Engagement

Social media platforms, including Twitter, are altering people's relationships with news organizations by allowing users to actively engage in the conversation through commenting, retweeting, and "liking" content (Kite, Foley, Grunseit and Freeman 2016). Carr and Hayes (2015) define social media as "internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact [...] with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others." This definition highlights the chief quality that distinguishes social media from other forms of media: interactivity.

Audience interactivity is often conceptualized with regard to behavioral user engagement (e.g., Taecharungroj 2017; Tafesse 2015). In turn, engagement is often measured by examining the number of likes, shares, and comments that posts attract on social media platforms.

Organizations seek to increase user engagement on social media. Engagement increases levels of audience loyalty to an organization (DeVries and Carlson 2014; Lim, Hwang, Kim and Biocca 2015), enhance organizational image and favorable perceptions of the organization (e.g., Ibrahim, Wang and Bourne 2017), and influence the number of visitors to a news organization's website (Hong 2012). These factors likely have a direct impact on student newspapers and ultimately the future careers of the staff. Put simply, professional news organizations seek to hire employees from reputable student news outlets. It stands to reason that the more

engagement an organizational account attracts, the more likely the organization will be to attract revenue (e.g., advertisers). This is a particularly pertinent issue for student newspapers, who continually face budget cuts. Therefore, for many reasons, student newspapers thrive on the engagement they attract on social media platforms. Thus the question arises, how can student newspapers attract user engagement on their social media platforms?

One potential pathway to attract user engagement on social media platforms is through characteristics of the posts themselves. Research demonstrates that message features such as entertainment (e.g., Cvijikj and Michahelles 2013; Luarn, Lin and Chiu 2015), information (e.g., Cvijikj and Michahelles 2013; Tafesse 2015), and emotion (e.g., Yuki 2015) influence engagement variables including likes, comments, and shares.

The aforementioned research largely suggests that certain types of social media posts attract more engagement than others. When we consider user engagement as an audience-related behavior that results from systematic variance in message features from an organizational account, the relationship that exists between the account and the users who follow and interact with it becomes an exceedingly important factor in understanding user engagement.

The more online interaction resembles interpersonal communication, the higher the level of user engagement (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart and de Vreese 2013). Thus, it may be in the best interest of student newspapers to communicate in ways that resemble interpersonal interactions. This idea has not escaped researchers in organizational communication. Scholars in the realm of public relations have emphasized the importance of building and sustaining relationships with key audiences, particularly on social media (e.g., Cho and Huh 2007; van Wissen and Wonneberger 2017). Research in this area, in combination with research looking at predictors of user engagement discussed previously, suggest that employing message features centered on maintaining relationships with audiences may be a pathway to attracting user engagement.

Relational Maintenance Behaviors

When it comes to understanding how news organizations may employ message features on social media to sustain relationships with their audiences, a useful theoretical framework comes from the literature on interpersonal communication. Relationships require work; once a relationship has commenced, it must be maintained; otherwise, the relationship would dissolve. Based upon this logic, it is in the best interest of organizations to work to maintain relationships with their audiences. One way to do this is through employing specific message features that are centered on maintaining relationships.

Canary and Stafford (Canary and Stafford 1992; Stafford and Canary 1991) examined the communicative behaviors that individuals convey in interpersonal relationships in effort to sustain them. This body of research identifies five relational maintenance behaviors people employ to sustain relationships: Positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and sharing tasks.

In an interpersonal context, *positivity* refers to communicating in an upbeat manner and making situations pleasant (Canary and Stafford 1992; Stafford and Canary 1991). Newspapers would communicate positivity by behaving in an optimistic and positive manner with an emphasis on positive events and sentiments about these events (e.g., soft news, feature news, "feel good" stories).

Openness involves communicating in genuine and honest ways. In the current study, this strategy would be executed by posting about topics that feature depth and vulnerability through conveying strong affect. This could be in terms of the topics covered, or even posts from the newspaper to their audience (e.g., staff editorials about sensitive topics, retraction statements, posts discussing transparency behind the newsgathering process).

Assurances show one's commitment to the relationship, particularly in the future. In the current study, we would see this behavior executed by posts focused on the future events and issues within the community, and particularly those posts aimed at lessening uncertainty for future events and/or the plans for the publication itself (e.g., posts assuring audiences that the newspaper will be publishing, updating audiences on plans for future coverage).

Next, the *social networks* strategy references external parties (e.g., friends) that assist in maintaining the relationship. Given the shared social networks of newspapers and their audiences, this category likely references prominent figures (e.g., administration, coaches, athletes) within the community.

Finally, s*haring tasks* involves communication that references an equitable distribution of relationship-related tasks. In the current study, this strategy would be executed by language that emphasizes tasks and work to be completed by either the newspaper, their audience, or both (e.g., calls to action and proposed solutions to campus issues).

The aforementioned relational maintenance strategies apply to contexts outside the interpersonal. Although there may be slight variations on these strategies based on the nature of the relationship (e.g., romantic partners versus news organizations and their audiences), the spirit of these strategies largely remains as evidenced in studies examining relational maintenance strategies in corporate-based communication (e.g., corporate blogs) to their audiences (e.g., Cho and Huh 2007; Kelleher and Miller 2006).

Various studies suggest that relational maintenance strategies are employed within organizational contexts (e.g., corporate blogs, social media; e.g., Kelleher and Miller 2006). Specifically, in a study examining a sample of 31 corporate blogs, Cho and Huh (2007) found that while all relational maintenance behaviors were present, positivity, assurances, and sharing tasks were the most prevalent relational maintenance strategies. Cho and Huh (2007) also found evidence that the employment of these strategies differs based on type of organization (e.g., retail versus manufacturing).

Although they did not look specifically to analyze content using the relational maintenance strategies set forth by Canary and Stafford (Canary and Stafford 1992; Stafford and Canary 1991), Kelleher and Miller (2006), in a controlled experiment, found that when audiences perceived the presence of relational maintenance behaviors in corporate blogs, the more they trusted, were satisfied with, and were committed to, the organization. Although these were perceptual-level relational

variables, it stands to reason that these attitudinal variables influence behavioral and perceptual engagement.

The aforementioned literature suggests that organizations employ relational maintenance behaviors when communicating with their audiences through social media, and that the employment of these behaviors may influence user engagement. Missing from this corpus of literature is how student news organizations use relational maintenance strategies to sustain relationships with their audiences on social media, and how the use of these strategies affects user engagement.

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study is twofold. First, we examine if and how award-winning student news organizations employ the five relational maintenance strategies on their social media pages. Given the popularity of Twitter with both young adults (Auxier and Anderson 2021) and student news organizations, we limit our sample to posts originating from Twitter specifically. Second, using qualitative analyses, we examine how tweets featuring high levels of relational maintenance strategies attract audience engagement (i.e., favorites, retweets).

The following research questions guide this study:

RQ1: Are relational maintenance behaviors present in the social media pages of award-winning student newspapers?

RQ2: What themes are present in tweets that feature high levels of each of the relational maintenance strategies and high levels of user engagement?

Results from this study will likely allow for a better understanding of how student news organizations can use social media to engage with audiences. Ultimately, the results from this study would allow for the development of a "best practices" list in effort to assist student media outlets to understand best how to maintain relationships with their audiences.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Sample and Collection Period

To understand best practices of social media posts, we collected tweets from award-winning student newspaper accounts at four-year universities in the United States. We focused specifically on tweets occurring between January 31, 2021, and May 31, 2021. For our sampling frame, we obtained lists of the 2017-2020 ACP Pacemaker, CSPA Gold Crown, and CMA Pinnacle award winners, similar to sampling of past studies on student media (Bergland 2020; Fleming and Dolan 2020; Terracina-Hartman and Nulph 2016). All newspapers included in the sampling frame (N = 43) had a Twitter presence. We eliminated any accounts that were converged with other media at their university (N = 2) and excluded any schools falling outside of the United States (N = 1). A total of 40 newspapers were included in the sample, and a total of 26,388 tweets were analyzed.

Tweet Collection Procedure

Tweets were collected using Twlets, a program that downloads an account's tweets and their engagement. We then went through each newspaper's account and deleted the following types of tweets: (1) Retweets from other accounts if they were not associated with the newspaper and (2) Promoted and sponsored content. Once collected, Tweets were aggregated and submitted to the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count Analysis Program (LIWC) for quantitative analysis.

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count Program (LIWC)

The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count program (LIWC) is a tool that can be used to identify relational maintenance behaviors. LIWC is a text analysis program that quantitatively analyzes text and counts the number of words that represent different types of linguistic devices, grammar, and psychological processes (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). The LIWC program has been employed and validated in studies interested in the psychological meaning behind language (Tausczik and Pennebaker

2010) and captures over 86% of the words used in written and oral communication (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan and Blackburn 2015). This program also allows for the aggregation and analysis of high volumes of data, which makes LIWC a particularly relevant analysis tool in the present study.

Coding for Relational Maintenance Behaviors. LIWC was used to code for the five relational maintenance behaviors. Our coding categories were developed using theoretical frameworks set forth by Canary and Stafford (1992) and research using LIWC to examine relational maintenance behaviors in interpersonal online environments (Sosik and Bazarova 2014). For p*ositivity*, we examined the total percent of positive-emotion words appearing in the tweets. *Openness* was measured by examining the total percent of words relating to affect. The category of *assurances* was measured by examining the total percent of future-tense words. The *Social networks* category was measured by examining the total percent of words that reference social processes. Finally, *sharing tasks* was measured by examining the total percent of words referencing work.

Coding for Engagement. The number of favorites and retweets for each tweet within each Twitter account were collected using Twlets.

Qualitative Analysis. Our second research question regarding the content of tweets that attracted the highest levels of engagement was explored by conducting a qualitative textual analysis. Creswell's (2009) framework for qualitative data analysis was employed to complete the analysis. Given the large quantity of tweets in our sample, we focused our analysis by looking at the 99th percentile of each of the relational maintenance variables, which in turn made our qualitative analysis manageable. Within this sub-sample, we explored the content of tweets that featured high volumes of retweets and favorites.

RESULTS

We used the LIWC program to conduct analyses on the tweets of the 40 newspapers included in our sample. In total, 26,388 tweets were submitted to the LIWC program.

RQ1: Are relational maintenance behaviors present in the social media pages of award-winning student newspapers?

Each tweet from every newspaper was submitted to the LIWC program. This program coded every word within each tweet for the presence or absence of each of the LIWC categories related to the relational maintenance behaviors. In total, 814,478 total words were examined using the LIWC program. The following section reports the total number of words relating to each relational maintenance strategy across editorials. Figure 1 presents a pie chart detailing the prevalence of each of the five relational maintenance strategies we examined in our analysis.

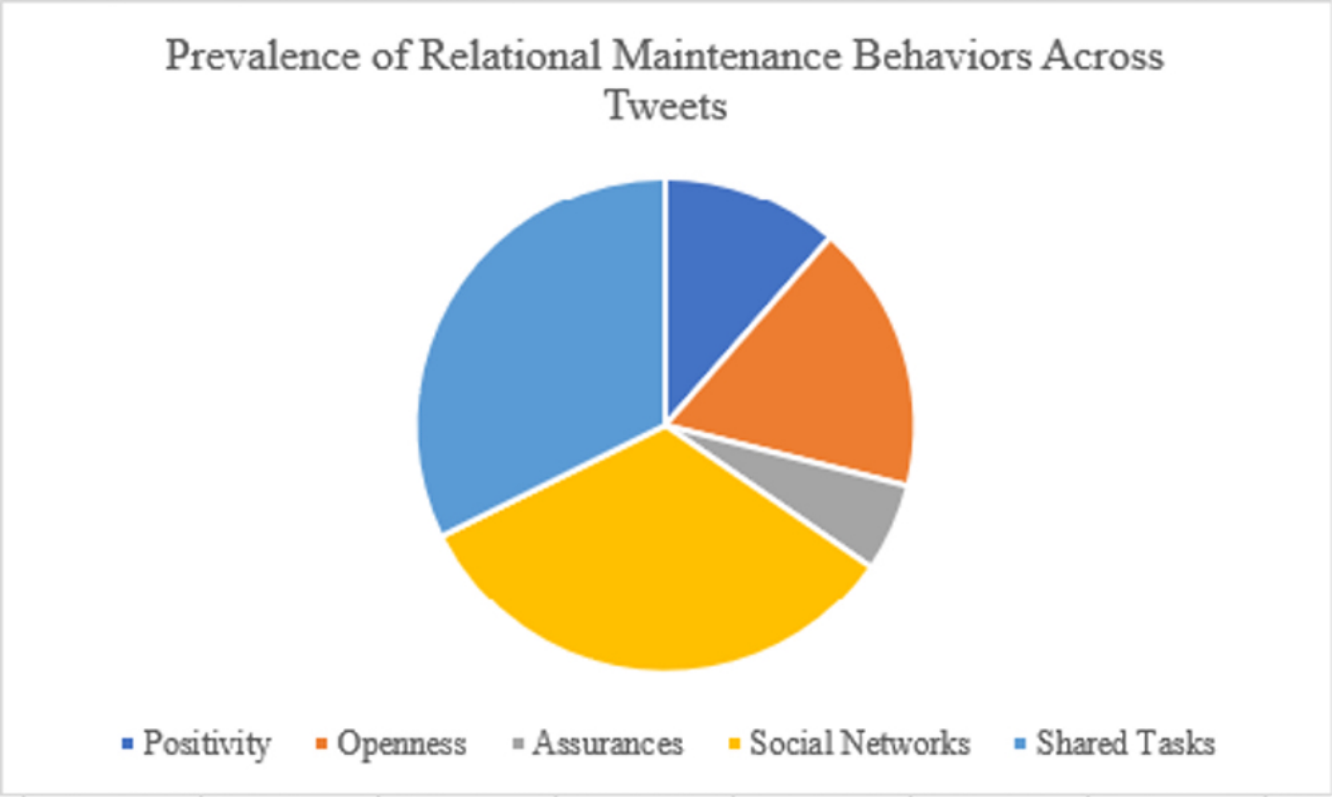


Figure 1. Prevalence of relational maintenance behaviors across tweets

Positivity. To understand how the social media accounts of newspapers employed positivity behaviors, we examined the LIWC category of positive emotion. The LIWC program examined each of the words contained across tweets for the presence or absence of 620 words reflecting positive affect (e.g., "nice," "love"). In total, roughly 2% of the tweets contained positivity-related language.

Openness. To explore openness, we examined the LIWC category of affect. The LIWC program examined each of the words contained across tweets for the presence or absence of 1393 words reflecting affect (e.g., "hurt," "happy"). In total, roughly 3% of the tweets contained language relating to openness.

Assurances. To explore assurances, we examined the LIWC category of future-time orientation. The LIWC program examined each of the words contained across tweets for the presence or absence of 97 words reflecting a future focus (e.g., "may," "will"). In total, 1% of the tweets contained language relating to future assurances.

Social Networks. To explore social networks, we examined the LIWC category of social processes. The LIWC program examined each of the words contained across tweets for the presence or absence of 756 words reflecting social processes (e.g., "talk," "mate"). In total, roughly 6% of the tweets contained language relating to social networks.

Shared Tasks. To explore shared tasks, we examined the LIWC category of work. The LIWC program examined each of the words contained across tweets for the presence or absence of 444 words reflecting shared tasks (e.g., "tasks," "work"). In total, roughly 6% of the tweets contained language relating to future assurances.

RQ2: What types of tweets within each of the relational maintenance behavior categories attract the most engagement?

> Results from our LIWC analysis provided us with the total percentages of each of the relational maintenance strategies across our total sample of tweets. To begin to explore our second research question, we examined the 99th percentile of each of the relational maintenance variables and focused our analysis on tweets within each that featured high levels of user engagement (i.e., retweets, favorites).

Positivity. In total, 327 tweets fell into the 99th percentile of the positivity strategy. Our qualitative analysis indicated that tweets with high levels of user engagement typically took one of two forms. First, tweets that shared some type of good news within the campus attracted high engagement. For instance, within our sub-sample,

the most favorited (*N* = 709) and retweeted (*N* = 99) tweet was: "With Gonzaga's NCAA Tournament championship loss to Baylor tonight, the 1976 IU men's basketball team remains the last undefeated men's basketball team to win the championship." Other examples include, "We're really proud of our team. The Daily Trojan won a total of 11 awards on Saturday from the California College Media Association, including two first-place honors and placing second best newspaper…" (*N* favorites = 97, *N* retweets = 13), and "NATIONAL CHAMPIONS!! Final score 86 to 70 BEARS WIN" (*N* favorites = 78, *N* retweets = 12). Notably, many of these tweets were sports centered.

> A second type of tweet within the positivity category that generated high volumes of user engagement were tweets featuring good news about prominent characters or entities within the community. For instance, the second-most favorited and retweeted tweet was, "Happy birthday to our wonderful president, Dr. Davies! We hope you have great day!" (*N* favorites = 93, *N* retweets = 3). Other examples include, "John Petty Jr., it's good to see you. #MarchMadness" (*N* favorites = 31, *N* retweets = 4), and "Pasta lovers rejoice! Noodles and Company on Kirkwood will be back soon" (*N* favorites = 19, *N* retweets = 3).

Openness. In total, 279 tweets fell into the 99th percentile of the openness strategy. Our qualitative analysis indicates that tweets that attracted high levels of user engagement typically appeared as those conveying a willingness to discuss emotionally charged and/or sensitive topics. In some cases, this information was positively charged. In many cases, however, the information addressed sensitive topics high in depth (e.g., "Rita Phetmixay is helping the Laos diaspora heal from generational trauma – one podcast at a time;" *N* favorites = 21, *N* retweets = 5).

> Tweets that featured direct quotes from articles featured high degrees of issue depth (e.g., "'The victims of sexual violence are used as a means to an end to punish perpetrators'") and shared opinion pieces (e.g., "Opinion | We need to get better at failing"). However, these types of tweets did not attract high levels of user engagement. Rather, information that was specific to Twitter, and did not originate in any specific article, attracted the highest levels of user engagement.

Assurances. In total, 301 tweets fell into the 99th percentile of the assurances strategy. Our qualitative analysis indicates that tweets with high levels of engagement were those that provided timely assurance about events. Oftentimes, these events related directly to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the most favorited (*N* = 333) and retweeted (*N* = 91) tweet featuring this strategy read: "BREAKING: UNC's vaccination clinic in the Student Union will open March 31. Students will receive appointment information tomorrow." Other tweets that featured high volumes of engagement featured information about other COVID-19-related aspects of education (e.g., "#BREAKING: Graduating U-M students will be invited to Michigan Stadium May 1 to watch the commencement video on the Big House big screen together. Only students will be allowed to participate;" *N* favorites = 82, *N* retweets = 13). As evidenced from the examples above, and from other tweets in our subsample, timely tweets providing assurances attracted the highest levels of engagement.

> Interestingly, tweets that provided assurances about the functioning of the paper (e.g., "We're currently updating the website with a new and improved layout and it may not be accessible or reliable during some periods from tonight until early tomorrow. Once everything is working smoothly we'll send out an update. Thank you all for your patience!") featured low levels of audience engagement.

Social Networks. In total, 289 tweets fell into the 99th percentile of the category of social networks. Our qualitative analysis indicated that tweets with high engagement were those that fostered a sense of community. Of note is that many of these tweets referenced the publication's role in the community. For instance, the most favorited (*N* = 211) tweet read, "...On Wednesday, the Texan tweeted photos of maskless students playing in the snow. This evening, we deleted that tweet. We strive to produce good journalism that helps people. That tweet did not. Thank you to everyone who responded to the tweet to hold us accountable." Another example of a community-based tweet comes from the second-most favorited tweet (*N* = 138): "No more Twitter crop, you said?" In these cases, and others, the newspaper indicates they are listening to their audience and adjusting their practices accordingly.

Shared Tasks. In total, 280 tweets fell into the 99th percentile of the shared tasks strategy. Our qualitative analysis indicates that tweets with high levels of engagement were those that featured timely campus-related issues that have been, or needed to be, solved within the community. For instance, the most favorited (*N* = 100) and retweeted (*N* = 32) tweet in our sample was, "Thread: Graduate workers are degree-seeking students who pay tuition and work about 15 to 20 hours a week. They include research and graduate assistants, as well as associate instructors. Their work is indispensable to IU, yet their stipends are among the Big Ten's lowest." Other examples include, "'Unpaid internships exploit the labor of college students and exacerbate existing inequalities in the corporate world,' the Editorial Board writes" (*N* favorites = 48, *N* retweets = 5) and "Social work graduate students form Queer Student Alliance" (*N*favorites = 61, *N* retweets = 12).

DISCUSSION

The current study sought to understand if and how award-winning student newspapers employed relational maintenance strategies in their social media posts. Results from our quantitative analysis indicate that student newspapers employ each of the five relational maintenance strategies in their social media posts, albeit to differing degrees. Specifically, student newspapers most often tweeted content that fell under the social networks and shared tasks categories, followed in descending order by openness, positivity, and assurances. Our results further indicate systematic patterns in user engagement within each of the five relational maintenance strategies.

Results from our qualitative analysis provide strong evidence that, when it comes to attracting engagement, posts that strive to maintain relationships directly with their audiences via Twitter (e.g., through speaking to them directly; e.g., "stay tuned!") do not necessarily attract the greatest volume of user engagement. Rather, tweets that address the central tenets of newsworthiness within each of these categories attract the highest levels of user engagement.

Consider the category of assurances: Although tweets that assured audiences that the newspaper would be fulfilling some function (e.g., "Once again, thanks for

tuning in! We'll have new content to share with you tomorrow," "We'll be back here tomorrow. We hope to see you then!"), featured high levels of assurances, these tweets did not attract high levels of user engagement (*N* favorites = 1, 3). Rather, tweets that were timely and featured prominent figures within the community attracted the highest levels of engagement. This assertion is further evidenced by the high volume of breaking news tweets within the assurances category, as well as up-to-date information about COVID-19-related issues.

Prominence was featured across all tweets that attracted high levels of engagement, regardless of category. For instance, the category of positivity featured positive news and information about various people and entities on campus (e.g., sports teams, university presidents, university athletes), while a similar theme was identified within the openness category. Taken together, these findings suggest that despite the "social" nature of social media, student newspapers must still be concerned with basic news values. This is not to say that student newspapers must not be concerned with employing relational maintenance strategies. Rather, the emphasis should be on the relationships within greater campus communities, as opposed to relationships between newspapers and their audiences.

A Proposed Framework for Best Practices

Results of the current study largely suggest that student news organizations should be less concerned with strengthening the newspaper-audience relationship and more concerned with strengthening the audience-community relationship. To strengthen this relationship, student newspapers should focus their social media content on the criterion of newsworthiness.

Holistically, findings from the current study allow us to create a framework of best practices that student newspapers should employ in their social media posts in order to garner the greatest user engagement. These recommendations largely point to the importance of developing a well-thought-out and intentional social media strategy, with emphasis on garnering followers and strategically posting certain types of material. In the following paragraphs, we discuss how student newspapers can craft their social media strategy according to these dimensions.

First, it is important for student newspapers to garner a large following. We would be remiss not to discuss the association between numbers of followers and engagement. The more followers an organization had, the more likely they were to attract engagement on their social media posts.

Of course, the quality of content will influence the number of followers and engagement on social media. Student newspapers, then, should strategically consider the types of content they should post on social media. The most effective content on social media, in terms of attracting engagement, mirrors the traditional criterion of newsworthiness. Audiences appear to be less concerned with their relationship with the newspaper and more concerned with their function: Providing news and information that is proximal, timely, and features people, places, and things that are prominent or recognizable to them. Our qualitative analysis provided evidence that student newspapers should frame topics that fit these criteria around the five relational maintenance strategies.

Our results also indicate that newspapers should be less concerned with promoting content appearing in their publication and more concerned with disseminating timely news about prominent figures in the campus community. Interestingly, based on our qualitative analysis of each of the relational maintenance strategies, posts that highlighted opinion pieces or direct quotes from articles did not attract high levels of user engagement regardless of relational maintenance strategy. Audiences may consider these types of posts less relevant or timely and therefore engage with them less. It stands to reason that by the time many articles are written and published, the timeliness value of the topic has decreased. By waiting to post about a topic, student newspapers decrease the likelihood of attracting high levels of user engagement. Therefore, student newspapers should take advantage of the affordances of social media, namely timeliness. Information that fits the criterion of newsworthiness should be communicated with audiences as soon as possible through social media.

Although we did not analyze promotional content in tweets, we did need to sift through our sample and exclude any promotional content featured in it. Roughly half of our sample featured promotional content (which we deleted for subsequent analyses). The format of these types of tweets varied drastically. While some

newspapers had separate promotional accounts, others tweeted promotional content directly from their news accounts. Although all these posts were labeled "promotional" or something to that effect (e.g., "sponsored"), the placement of the term varied among newspapers. Some placed the term at the start of the tweet while others placed the term at the end of the tweet. It is important for newspapers to exercise caution while tweeting promotional content. Placing the promotional tag after the content could potentially be misleading or confusing to audiences. Therefore, we suggest that, if a newspaper features promotional content on their social media, they make it clear to their audiences that the content is in fact promoted. One way to do this would be to write "PROMOTED" before the content appears.

In order to effectively communicate with audiences on social media, advisors and journalistic organizations need assistance, as students cannot employ these recommendations alone. Training materials and workshops should be conducted on both the local and national level to help student journalists understand how to connect with their audiences on social media, as well as how to employ these recommendations in the future.

Limitations and Future Research

Due to our focus on only award-winning newspapers, the results from this study should not be generalized to the larger population of student newspapers. Due to the caliber of our sample, however, these results should be taken as evidence for the set of best practices mentioned previously.

Future studies should examine the social media posts of student newspapers on platforms other than Twitter. Given that each social media platform has its own unique sets of affordances (e.g,. Instagram is image-based, Tik-Tok is video-based), we may see that these findings apply only to Twitter and not to other social media. Additionally, examining audience comments on social media posts would allow for a better picture of how audiences cognitively and emotionally process content from student newspapers. In turn, such studies could speak more to the levels and types of user engagement that posts attract.

Finally, we selected posts from a timeline that included the COVID-19 pandemic. It may be the case that in circumstances outside of a pandemic, we would see different types of posts and engagement behaviors. Ideally, a longitudinal study of social media content could provide more insight as to how student newspapers employ relational maintenance behaviors on social media in ordinary circumstances.

CONCLUSION

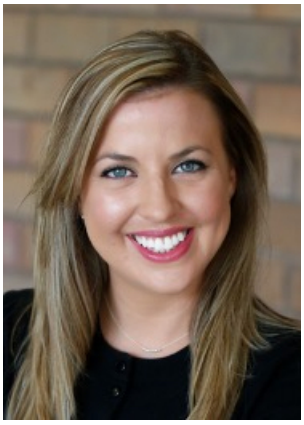
Overall, our findings suggest that that student newspapers employ the five relational maintenance strategies in their posts. The emphasis on employing these strategies, however, should not be on maintaining the audience-newspaper relationship. Instead, these strategies should be employed in effort to strengthen the audience-university community relationship by means of posting content that is timely and features prominent and proximal figures.

REFERENCES

- Auxier, Brooke and Monica Anderson. 2021. "Social Media Use in 2021." Pew Research Center. Accessed June 1, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/
- Bergland, Robert. 2020. "How Award Winners Deploy Social Media." *College Media Review*, 57. http://cmreview.org/research–vol-55-social–media–use–and–yearbooks/
- Berthelsen, R., & Michael Hameleers. 2021. "Meet Today's Young News Users: An Exploration of How Young News Users Access Which News Providers Are Worth Their While in Today's High-Choice News Landscape." *Digital Journalism* 6, no. 7: 1-18.
- Canary, Daniel J. and Laura Stafford. 1992. "Relational Maintenance Strategies and Equity in Marriage." *Communication Monographs* 59, no. 3: 243-267.
- Carr, Caleb T. and Rebecca A. Hayes. 2015. "Social Media: Defining, Developing, and Divining." *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 23, no. 1: 46-65.

- Cho, Soyoen and Jisu Huh. 2007. "Corporate Blogs as a Public Relations Tool: A Content Analysis Applying the Relational Maintenance Framework." 57th Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Public Relations Division.
- Cvijikj, Irena Pletikosa and Florian Michahelles. 2013. "Online Engagement Factors on Facebook Brand Pages." *Social Network Analysis and Mining* 3, no: 4: 843-861.
- Creswell, John W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- DeVries, Natalie Jane and Jamie Carlson. 2014. "Examining the Drivers and Brand Performance Implications of Customer Engagement with Brands in the Social Media Environment." *Journal of Brand Management* 21, no: 1, 495-515.
- Ferne, Tristan. 2018. "Beyond 800 words—Part 2: Prototyping Formats for News and Generation Z". *Medium*. Accessed July 12, 2021. https://medium.com/bbc-news-labs/beyond-800-words-prototyping-newstory-formats-for-news-e3102e783b5f
- Fleming, Brittany L. and Emily A. Dolan. 2021. "What's In an Editorial Frame? How award-winning student newspaper editorials framed COVID-19." *College Media Review*, 58, https://c65.1e2.myftpupload.com/whats-in-a-frame/
- Hong, Sounman. 2012. "Online News on Twitter: Newspapers' Social Media Adoption and Their Online Readership."*Information Economics and Policy* 24, no. 1: 69–74.
- Ibrahim, Noor Farizah, Xiaojun Wang and Humphrey Bourne. 2017. "Exploring the Effect of User Engagement in Online Brand Communities: Evidence from Twitter." *Computers in Human Behavior* 72, no. 1: 321-338.
- Kelleher, Tom and Barbara M. Miller. 2006. "Organizational Blogs and the Human Voice: Relational Strategies and Relational Outcomes." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11, no. 2: 395-414.
- Kite, James, Bridget C. Foley, Anne C. Grunseit and Becky Freeman. 2016. "Please Like Me: Facebook and Public Health Communication." *PloS one* 11, no. 9: e0162765.
- Kruikemeier, Sanne, Guda van Noort, Rens Vliegenthart, and Claes H de Vreese. 2013. "Getting Closer: The Effects of Personalized and Interactive Online Political Communication." *European Journal of Communication* 28, no. 1: 53–66.

- Lim, Joon Soo, Young Chan Hwang, Seyun Kim and Frank A. Biocca. 2015. "How Social Media Engagement Leads to Sports Channel Loyalty: Mediating Roles of Social Presence and Channel Commitment." *Computers in Human Behavior* 46, no. 1: 158-167.
- Luarn, Pin, Yu-Fan Lin and Yu-Ping Chiu. 2015. "Influence of Facebook Brand-Page Posts on Online Engagement." *Online Information Review* 39, no: 4: 1-16.
- Pennebaker, James W., Ryan L. Boyd, Kayla Jordan and Kate Blackburn. 2015. *The Development and Psychometric Properties of LIWC.* University of Texas at Austin.
- Shearer, Elisa. 2021. "More Than Eight-in-Ten Americans Get News from Digital Devices." Pew Research Center. Accessed June 1, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/12/more-than-eight-in-ten-americans-get-news-from-digital-devices/
- Sosik, Victoria Schwanda and Natalya N. Bazarova. 2014. "Relational Maintenance on Social Network Sites: How Facebook Communication Predicts Relational Escalation." *Computers in Human Behavior* 35, 124-131.
- Stafford, Laura., and Daniel Canary. 1991. "Maintenance Strategies and Romantic Relationship Type, Gender and Relational Characteristics." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 8, no. 2: 217–242.
- Taecharungroj, V. 2017. "Starbucks' Marketing Communications Strategy on Twitter." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 23, no. 6: 553-571.
- Tafesse, Wondwesen. 2015. "Content Strategies and Audience Response on Facebook Brand Pages." *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 33, no. 6: 927-943.
- Tausczik, Yla R. and James W. Pennebaker. 2010. "The Psychological Meaning of Words: LIWC and Computerized Text Analysis Methods." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 29, no. 1: 24–54. doi:10.1177/0261927×09351676.
- Terracina-Hartman, Carol and Ralph Nulph. 2016. "Measuring the Visibility of College Media at 'Home.'" *College Media Review* 53: 46-64.
- Van Wissen, Nadine and Anke Wonneberger. 2017. "Building Stakeholder Relations Online: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Dialogic and Relational Maintenance Strategies on Facebook." *Communication Management Review* 2, no: 1, 54-74.
- Yuki, Tania. 2015. "What Makes Brands' Content Shareable on Facebook?" *Journal of Advertising Research* 55, no: 4: 458-470.



Emily A. Dolan, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the Department of Strategic Communication & Media at Slippery Rock University. She teaches and researches in the areas of persuasion, interpersonal communication, and digital and social media. Her research is centered on message processing with an emphasis on the effects of digital and social media on emotion regulation processes.

Brittany L. Fleming, Ph.D. is an associate professor in the Department of Strategic Communication & Media at Slippery Rock University. She teaches digital media and broadcast production courses and advisees two award-winning student media organizations, The Rocket and WSRU-TV. Her research focuses on best practices in student media and media convergence. Fleming is a CMA certified college media adviser and is on the Executive Council for the Society for Collegiate Journalists.

College Media Review / October 5, 2021 / College Media

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Review: ‘News for the Rich, White and Blue’

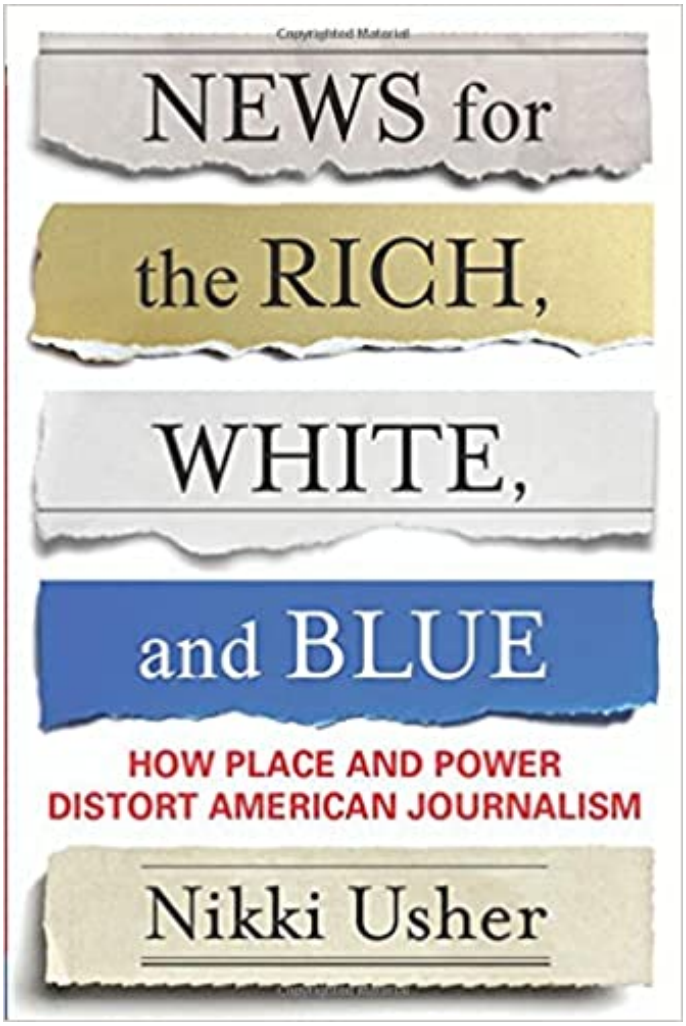
Author Nikki Usher proposes a “post-newspaper consciousness” framework to viewing media today

Reviewed by Carolyn Schurr Levin

I live in a town where, while we do have local newspapers, none of them regularly cover school board meetings (or police or fire department or other town meetings, for that matter). I would venture an educated guess that many – if not a majority of – college newspapers don’t regularly send a reporter to cover student government meetings, either in person or virtually during the pandemic. This state of affairs, both on campus and off, no doubt, is not good. In her recent book, “News for the Rich, White and Blue,” Nikki Usher tells us why.

“Journalism anchors American democracy by connecting people to the places they live,” Usher writes, “providing them with critical news and information as well as a sense of cultural rootedness and belonging.” If journalists are not covering the day-to-day meetings and events that impact our lives, are we getting what we need to be an “active and engaged citizenry,” college students and adults alike? We are not,

Usher forcefully argues. She shares with her readers studies reflecting the underlying premise that without local news, the public cannot make informed decisions



In connecting "the broad themes of place, power, and social inequality to what is happening to journalism in the United States today," Usher analyzes her "normative vision of the role of news in democracy," maps journalism's retrenchment, shares empirical results (and her worries) about the current state of journalism, but also does ultimately offer promising proposals for a way forward. In thinking about the crisis in journalism through place, Usher depicts how "markets, race, class and politics intersect to shape the news" we see.

An associate professor of journalism in the College of Media at the University of Illinois, Usher has written a dense, academic book complete with quantitative studies, several appendices and detailed notes with her research methods. But, she says, this book "is not intended only for academic audiences." (emphasis added). And she is right – Usher's historical analysis of "the crisis in journalism through place" and her suggestions for "alternatives and paths forward as a way out of the dismal future of news for the rich, white and blue" is worthy of consideration for all of us involved with or merely interested in journalism.

As for the current state of journalism, Usher is certainly not alone in writing about her worries. Just in Chapter 1, she laments: "Journalism perpetuates inequities and the status quo," "[o]ne would be hard-pressed to find a general-interest newspaper, large or small, that does not have a legacy of racial exclusion, keeping

people *in* place and *out* of places of power," and "[p]erhaps one of the biggest concerns surrounding the messiness of our contemporary media system is the fear that audiences will develop blind spots that in turn leave them vulnerable to a host of persuasive influences, undermining their ability to make informed political decisions."

The concerns don't end there. "Journalism has a class problem," Usher posits in Chapter 2, explaining the "Rich" and "White" parts of her title. As for "Rich," she says that "[r]esearch suggests that journalists devote more coverage and attention to the powerful and wealthy." As for "White," the death of George Floyd and the significance of Black Lives Matter underscored the "embarrassing whiteness of legacy news outlets." And the "Blue" in the title? Usher asks: "Is the news that's left just news for the left?" (Although this is her premise, she does also recognize right-leaning media outlets, for example that "Sinclair-owned local television stations will likely "push a similarly obscured partisan agenda.")

"The future looks grim for newspapers," Usher writes. "Given the market ceiling on digital subscribers, diminishing returns on digital advertising, and technological infrastructure barriers that benefit the platform companies," the commercial viability of newspapers is suspect. Usher joins so many others in writing about the converging factors leading to the questionable economic viability of newspapers. But what I found most appealing and unique about Usher's book was her "Place as the Way Forward" conclusion.

Despite the sorry state of local journalism that she depicts, she concludes with a decidedly more optimistic outlook. There are ways to keep places both "informed" and "united," she argues. "If we reimagine the core functions of journalism, leverage expertise, and consider how to take the best of what the newspaper ethos of journalism can offer to places. . . the news that powers democracy can be more inclusive" and we can "get the democracy we deserve," she writes.

Usher proposes a "post-newspaper consciousness," or a way of thinking about how to do the best of newspaper-style journalism in a time of limited resources. She proposes "solutions journalism," which aims to provide solutions rather than simply dispassionately reporting on problems. She proposes unbundling the news or

scaling back on journalistic functions. By this, she means that other community institutions can serve community information needs and rather than being duplicative, news organizations should use their skills to focus on accountability journalism, a unique value proposition that cannot be found elsewhere.

And one of Usher's most compelling and applicable proposals for student media outlets may be her proposal for "journalism of authenticity and diversity." She suggests that higher education may be one of the best places to start thinking about how to fix journalism's diversity and inclusion problems. Her solution includes rethinking federal work-study programs to include student-run media where more students would be able to participate in these organizations. This would allow students to gain journalism skills "without sacrificing paying for living expenses or having to work extra jobs." She unequivocally argues that "[t]o make journalism more inclusive, the unpaid internship racket has got to end."

These are just some of Usher's proposals to reimagine journalism and journalism education. Whether they are ultimately realistic or not, they make "News for the Rich, White and Blue" a thought-provoking read.

Carolyn Levin

Carolyn Schurr Levin, a media and First Amendment attorney, is a partner at Miller Korzenik Sommers Rayman LLP in New York. She was the Vice President and General Counsel of Newsday, Vice President and General Counsel of Ziff Davis Media, and Media Law Adviser for the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University. She teaches Media Ethics & Law at City University of New York's Baruch College, and has also taught media ethics and law at Stony Brook University, Long Island University, and Pace University. From 2010-2019, she was the faculty adviser for the Pioneer, the student newspaper at Long Island University, during which time the Pioneer won 28 awards.

November 16, 2021 / College Media

College Media Review

Journal of the College Media Association

Applying Scanlan's 'The Coaching Way' to media design instruction

Editor, adviser can assume coaching role

By Melanie Wilderman

I first heard of Chip Scanlan's "The Coaching Way," in 2004 when I was preparing to teach my first college-level class, Introduction to Media Writing, as a very green master's graduate and new adjunct instructor for my alma mater. I was 23 years old and, like many new instructors, terrified my students would think I was a fraud. "The Coaching Way" saved me that first semester. It guided me as a teacher as much as it helped guide my students.

For those who may not be familiar, Scanlan, a seasoned journalist and former writing instructor for The Poynter Institute, detailed his approach as an editor in a 2003 Poynter article. He said he approached coaching journalists first with the

SAMPLES: In examples of students' final designs for the basic business card assignment, note that they make decisions concerning color, font and placement of simple shapes to create the business cards. In doing so, they are primarily practicing the concepts of dominance, balance, hierarchy and space in their work.

question, "How can I help?" Then he listened to the answer. Sounds simple, right? Even Scanlan admitted this, but it's an important first step, and what follows is a more intense progression of open-ended questions throughout the writing process and a back-and-forth between editor and journalist (or, in educational settings, between teacher and student) that requires participation from both parties. He calls this style "The Coaching Way."

Many of us who teach journalism or other forms of media writing are comfortable with Scanlan's method and consider it ideal for teaching our students to write. But a little secret I discovered: It also works brilliantly when teaching design. In his 2003 article, Scanlan wrote that the coaching method is "based on the idea that the power to recognize a story's problems as well as the means to fix them lie within the person reporting and writing the piece." Replace"story" with "design project" and "reporting and writing" with "designing," and it becomes clear that these tactics have promise for developing skills other than writing. The crux of "The Coaching Way" is that it's simply an effective and potent teaching style.

Because I've been attached to this method for so long, a few years ago I began to realize I was using it automatically in other courses, specifically a one-credit special course I've been teaching each fall since 2017, Graphic Design for Media Storytelling & Promotion.

Additionally, this method can be applied effectively in a college newsroom setting, either with an adviser or student editor taking the coaching role. In my previous position as a college newspaper adviser for eight years, I'll say there is nothing more rewarding than watching the students you have coached become the coaches themselves for other staff members.

The method is helpful especially when you have a class full of students starting at different levels of skill and experience, ranging from "I have never opened InDesign," to "I do this stuff daily for my job." I started paying more attention to "The Coaching Way" tactics I was using in the design class and have developed step-by-step instructions that can be used for just about any basic design assignment, for example, a business card. The setup and instructions for this process follow:

The Idea

To use "The Coaching Way" method to coach students with varying levels of design competence on a basic project early in the course.

The Goals

- For beginning design students: Introduce and use basic InDesign tools.
- For intermediate design students: Showcase use of InDesign skill within defined parameters.
- For all students: Create a personal business card while considering these *seven elements in the design: *dominance, balance, hierarchy, unity, color, space* and *gestalt.*
- For me as the instructor: Split my time well between beginning and intermediate students, encourage students to take a primary role in their design work through all stages from planning to final draft, help beginners become more comfortable with software and basic design concepts, and challenge intermediate students to work creatively within strict parameters.

**If you Google "elements of design" or peruse design textbooks, you will come across many lists with varying numbers suggesting there are seven or 10 or 25 "basic elements of design," or you might find a listicle with a headline like, "The only five design concepts you'll ever need to know." The lists are plentiful and the content overlaps a lot. The seven*

elements of design mentioned above, and explanations and examples of each as I teach them, are a compilation coming mainly from three design textbooks: The Elements of Graphic Design by Alex W. White, The Non-Designer's Design Book by Robin Williams, and Design Elements: Understanding the Rules and Knowing When to Break Them by Timothy Samara.

The Assignment

Design a basic business card, within parameters set by instructor. I use the business card as the first assignment. It's a small project, not likely to overwhelm a beginning designer.

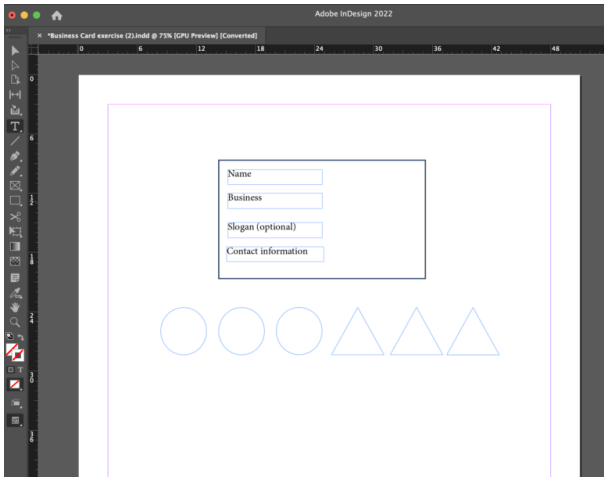
Step 1: Begin

SAMPLES: Students who are less familiar with the programs and concepts can keep the design quite simple with use of the shapes, while those with more experience can experiment with advanced tools in the design program to manipulate the shapes, while still staying within the perimeters of the requirements.

with lectures and examples introducing students to the seven design elements previously mentioned, as well as a brief introduction to color theory. Concerning color, I mainly focus on a simple color wheel and complementary colors along with how color is used to convey tones or emotions. We go deeper into color theory later in the semester.

Step 2: To begin the project, students open an InDesign document I have previously set up for them. Note: You do not have to use InDesign. Just about any design software, including open source programs, will work for this simple project. I purposely limit the elements they are allowed to put into this assignment to keep it

simple. This serves to calm the apprehension of beginner students but can also challenge the more advanced students to be creative within these restrictions; it can be a lesson that simple design can be creative and interesting. The document I set up for them looks like this:



Step 3: I explain that their goal is to design a business card with the text information they see in the document: name, business, slogan (optional) and contact information. For the design elements, they may use only the shapes they see in front of them. They can, however, use any fonts and colors they choose, and they can distort and change the shapes in any way they see fit. They must use at least one circle or one triangle. They can delete extra shapes, but they cannot add any. *Instructors can certainly make changes to these parameters , but I suggest keeping the shapes simple, and the written content minimal.*

Step 4: Students start working. At this point, it is often helpful to divide students into groups based on their levels of design skill or experience. I normally assess this with a simple survey before this class meeting or at the beginning of class.

- For those who need more introductory software help: I get them in a group and show them how to use the basic tools to move objects, add and change text, change the size or color of objects and text, and other basics.
- For those with more experience: I instruct them to jump into the design work and challenge them to try a tool in the software that they haven't used before. I encourage them to play and experiment before they get down to the specific goals of the assignment.

- After I get the beginners more confidently working in the software, I transition to "The Coaching Way" tactics. I circle the classroom and start by asking individual students (remember Scanlan's first question), "How can I help?" Their requests are usually all over the place to start, and that is fine. People approach design in different ways. The important part on my end is to listen carefully to each question or request. During this time, I also encourage students not to get too hung up on one small detail and to work toward getting all elements on the page.

Also at this stage, I look for opportunities to ask the more advanced students to lend a hand every now and then to their beginning-designer peers. This can help prevent my spending too much time with any one student and increase the confidence of the more advanced students. As a bonus, I will often learn something new from a student. Design programs include so many tools and variations, I find it impossible to know them all, even in software I've been using for 20 years.

Step 5: Once the students have something partially designed, I can delve deeper into coaching. Just as I do when coaching writers, I ask the design students open-ended questions to get them thinking and participating in their own work and revisions, not just awaiting my instruction. For this assignment I might ask:

- *What colors strike you and why?*
- *What are you trying to convey with your font choice?*
- *What do you think is holding you up at this point?*
- *What do you like/not like about what you have so far?*
- *Ideally, what tone or message do you hope to convey when this is complete?*

Step 6: Depending on the amount of class time you have, Step 6 might need to happen in the next class session because students need to have a full draft of the project before you proceed to this step. In a full draft, all the elements the assignment asked for are there, but some revisions will be necessary before a final draft. Once students have a full draft, I sit down one on one with them to discuss it. This doesn't have to be a long discussion, but it is a vital step in the coaching process. I have them tell me what they like or don't like about the first draft. I ask them what was a challenge for them. We use a rubric that includes those seven elements of design from the lecture, and I have them explain to me how they

considered each element. Key point: *The students* do most of the talking in this meeting. When they finish, I point out any inconsistencies in their understanding or use of the design elements and add any other advice I might have for revisions for the final draft.

Step 7: After these brief meetings, students finish revisions and turn in the final drafts. Since this is the final step, it's a good time to note how I talk about grading in this particular course. While I do not use a sliding scale grading philosophy in most of my classes, it makes sense to do so in this class. As mentioned previously, the students usually come in with widely differing abilities and experience with design software and concepts. Additionally, this is an elective course, which also makes me feel more comfortable with this strategy. A note about grading from my syllabus explains it this way:

Due to the nature of the course, and the varying levels of students' skill and experience in graphic design practice and software, assignments will be graded using a completion method and with consideration to each student's skill level upon entering the course. For example, on a project, you will be asked to take into consideration a certain number of elements in the design. I will not grade you in comparison to other students for the skill of design, but on evidence of how you considered and attempted each element in your work.

Student reactions/outcomes:

In student feedback on university evaluations for the last three years, on a 5-point scale with 5 being most positive, the majority of responses to questions about the class are 4s and 5s with a smattering of 3s, and few 1s and 2s. I do find it easier to receive higher scores in an elective course, so I don't mention these scores to brag but rather to indicate how I have noticed the coaching method being received positively. Students can also provide written responses on these evaluations; some comments relevant to the coaching method follow:

- Projects were flexible for a range of skill levels.
- Melanie was very patient and taught us things that catered to all levels of knowledge with Adobe. The assignments were easy to learn and test out different techniques.

- I loved how Melanie was intentional with each of us and made us feel comfortable to speak up.
- It taught me some basic techniques I did not know with InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. I came in knowing limited information and I felt way more confident leaving the class.
- I thought the class was really well-organized and did a great job of exposing us to the design platforms and giving us time to be creative and play around.
- We were able to tailor the assignments to help our own goals, so the course was applicable to everyone.
- I came out of it extremely proud of myself.
- With the class being so hands-on, we were able to learn through practice in class and have the availability of the professor to help when needed.
- She was able to teach so much in such a short amount of time, and was able to answer and provide help to various levels of knowledge of the programs.
- The individual work structure allows advanced students to dive in while new students receive assistance.
- The amount of time we got for exploration in this course was very valuable. Being dedicated to this explorative process was very helpful in increasing our skills and creativity.

I do see some complaints in the evaluations, mostly from the students who come in with the most design experience feeling like they need more of a challenge. This is not surprising, and I continue to look for ways to challenge those students. Some are looking for challenges with software they don't already know or tools they don't know within software they have used, while others are looking for challenges concerning the type of projects assigned.

When Scanlan suggested that "The Coaching Way" gives reporters the power to fix problems in their own stories, he was also quick to note he is not suggesting reporters don't need editors. He clarified that the editor's role is essential to the process. I echo Scanlan on this sentiment and do not suggest that using the coaching method for design lessons will mean the students do not need us as teachers. They need us very much in these coaching moments. Of course, after the lessons stick, there is little that provides more joy than watching a student successfully teach someone else the very thing you first taught them. After 18 years of instructing at

the college level, I do not have many of the same fears or worries that I did back in 2003, but I do still hold onto "The Coaching Way" as closely as I ever did and still allow it to guide me as I guide my students.

References

- Samara, T. (2014). *Design Elements: Understanding the Rules and Knowing When to Break Them.* 2nd ed. Rockport Publishers. Beverly, MA.
- Scanlan, C. (2003, May 14). *The Coaching Way.* Poynter.org. Retrieved from https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2003/the-coaching-way/
- White, A. (2011). *The Elements of Graphic Design.* 2nd ed. Allworth Press. New York, NY.
- Williams, R. (2014). *The Non Designers Design Book.* 4th ed. Peach Pit Press. Pearson Education. San Francisco, CA.

Melanie Wilderman, Ed.D., is an associate professor of journalism and director of Oklahoma Scholastic Media at Gaylord College, University of Oklahoma. A former news reporter, she teaches introductory media and writing courses, multimedia journalism, and media design. Her research interests include scholastic journalism, journalism education, community journalism and service-learning. Wilderman contributes feature pieces regularly to several magazines and has had scripts produced for both the stage and short films. She was named the 2012 Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists Teacher of the Year and, in 2019, the Austin Revolution Film Festival's Randall Greenland Screenwriter of the Year. mgwilderman@ou.edu

January 4, 2022 / College Media / coaching, journalism, mass media, media, student media

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Shoot-out returns to NYC

B&H Photo Video provides prize for top photographer

It's been two years since photographers were able to participate in a Shoot-out as part of a national College Media Association convention. Two years ago, the headline was, "11 photojournalists document city in crisis." This year, the 18 students were assigned to create "an image — worthy of a postcard — showing what life is like in the city that never sleeps after two years of the pandemic."

And this year, they had an Apple Award as an incentive to win and a prize donated by B&H Camera Video —a Sony ZV-1 Digital Camera valued at nearly $900.

Some years, with the judges, a mixture of professional photographers, college photography instructors and media advisers as well as scholastic photography instructors and media advisers, the top entries are close. This year, 43 individuals judged the entries and all but 11 ranked the winning entries as one of their top entries. Nine of the judges said the winning entry was their choice for first place. No other single entry has scored so high in recent years.

A street performer dressed up as Spider-Man poses for a photo with a group of tourists at Times Square, New York City, March 11, 2022. Photo by Josh Kotler.

FIRST PLACE — Josh Kotler, University of Massachusetts Boston (Charles Henriques, adviser)

SECOND PLACE — Rayni Shiring, Slippery Rock University (Brittany Fleming, adviser)

THIRD PLACE — Jacob Spotts, Milwaukee Area Technical College

HONORABLE MENTION — Dom Ferreira, University of Massachusetts Boston (Charles Henriques, adviser)


CMA NYC 2022

VIEW GALLERY OF IMAGES

Kate Plows, a visual arts instructor with the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District, said the winning image this year had the "best postcard-worthiness for a shot of NYC."

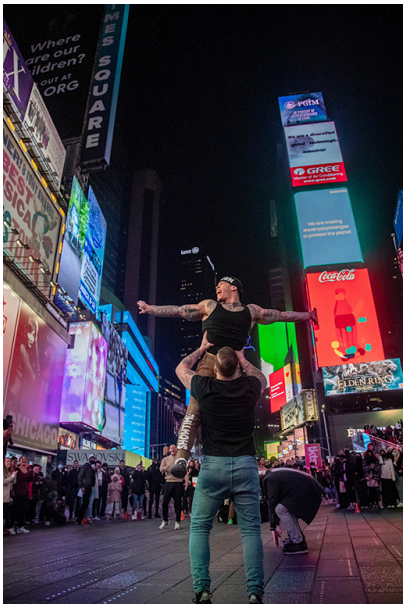
“The blur adds a wonderful effect of movement,” she said. She added that she would recommend a tighter crop.

Alicia D. Otto, participant in the 2020 NYC Shoot-out and now administrative coordinator for university advancement at Missouri Western State University, said, “This photo is touching on many levels. It captures the innocence of youth (If we disregard that his parents may have had to pay for ‘Spiderman’ to pose with their kid.), but we see the action continuing around them as they stop to pose – that is NYC at its finest! And the kid, in true New York style, seems completely unimpressed with ‘Spiderman!’”

Tara Haelle, an independent science/health journalist, said the image exemplifies excellent framing and use of focus and shutter speed.

She said, “It captures both the frozen moment in time as well as movement.” And she added that it “captures one aspect of what the city is about with the energy of being ‘back to normal’-ish.”

The students who participated attended a one-hour critique of their images conducted by **Sonya Singh**, assistant director of student publications at California Baptist University, and **Bradley Wilson**, associate professor at Midwestern State University.



A Times Square performer seizes his big moment, entrusting the strength of a tourist. Prior, other street performers interacted with the crowd gathered around as

they built the anticipation for the pinnacle of the performance.

The group then voted on a **CLASS FAVORITE** — an image by **Rayni Shiring** of Slippery Rock University (Brittany Fleming, adviser).

Later, 43 judges ranked the 38 images submitted for the content.

JUDGES INCLUDED:

Debbie Coffer, Alison Strelitz, Cary Conover, Mark Grabowski, Debra Klevens, Kate Plows, John Beale, Michelle Evenson, Mark Murray, Brian Hayes, Pierce Srail, Al Drago, Dylan Wilson, Alicia Otto, Jane Blystone, Margaret Sorrows, Greg Cooper, Tara Haelle, Jeff Grimm, Jim McNay, Don Green, Carmen Wendt, Tripp Robbins, Whitney Huang, Meagan Abo, Matt Stamey, Sam Oldenburg, Linda Drake, Terri Real, Lori Oglesbee, Deanne Brown, Stacey Skoric, JG Domke, Carrie Webbenhurst, Todd Maisel, Crystal Gwizdala, Bridget Haggerty, Diane Davis, Mark Webber, Mark Dolejs, Meghan Moore, Eric Thomas, Hillary Warren, Robert Hanashiro

March 21, 2022 / College Media / college media, photo, photography, photojournalism, shoot-out

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Session on conflict in Ukraine prompts timely discussion

‘Disinformation, Dictators and The Undaunted: Covering the Ukraine/Russia War’

The class

The last-minute addition to the College Media Association Spring National College Media Convention was certainly on a timely topic: the conflict in Ukraine. The course description:

> *During this session you will first learn context and history for the current Russia/Ukraine conflict including a discussion about Putin, propaganda and power in Russia, and about Ukrainian revolution, civil war, Ukrainian culture and a comedian turned president. Then you will get inside information about what is happening in Ukraine right now, and you will get tips on how to make this global story relevant to your local university or college audience.*

The speakers

- Michael Finch, Bryan College, moderator
- Roxy Lorino, Ukrainian-American film director
- Andrew Nynka, editor of the *Svboda* and the *Ukrainian Weekly*
- More photos

Reporters should highlight humanity when covering Ukraine

By Elena Eberwein

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, social media has been abuzz with the potential that this conflict may turn into World War III.

“I would rephrase that to say, it’s here,” said Andrew Nynka, editor of *Svoboda* and *Ukrainian Weekly*.

Nynka and award-winning Ukrainian-American filmmaker Roxy Toporowych Lorino became emotional in a workshop Saturday morning while discussing the

state of Ukraine and the conflicts they have witnessed leading up to the recent invasion.

Andrew Nynka, editor of the Svboda and the Ukrainian Weekly, discusses the situation in Ukraine at the college media national convention in New York City. Michael Finch of Bryan College moderated a discussion entitled "Disinformation, Dictators and The Undaunted: Covering the Ukraine/Russia War" at the College Media Association convention Saturday, March 12, 2022. Panelists were Andrew Nynka, editor of the Svboda and the Ukrainian Weekly, and Roxy Lorino, Ukrainian-American film director. About 50 students and advisers attended the 50-minute discussion. Photo by Bradley Wilson

They knew each other as children, growing up in the Ukrainian Diaspora in the United States. They attended Ukrainian summer camp and ski camp together.

"It's a tight-knit community," Toporowych Lorino said.

Both Nynka and Toporowych Lorino witnessed the Maidan Revolution, or Revolution of Dignity, in 2014. Clashes during this conflict led to the death of 108 protestors and 13 police officers. Nynka said the sound of sniper bullets hitting wooden shields continues to haunt him.

"Hearing an 18-year old kid call his mom and say mom I love you, we're going forward," said Nynka as his voice cracked.

He said being captured by the Russian military is his worst fear. He has seen how ruthless the Russian military can be firsthand.

Nynka said to imagine being a Ukrainian in Ukraine in this present moment. Men from age 18 to 60 have been asked to stay in the country. Women are left making the decision of whether they want to leave their families.

Nynka said many elderly grandparents are thinking "This is my land. Where am I going to go?"

And with grandparents staying behind, other family members have to decide if they are willing to leave their relatives behind.

"Nobody wants to be a refugee," said Toporowych Lorino.

The trailer for Toporowych Lorino's feature film "Julia Blue" left her wiping tears from her eyes.

"I'm sorry they're all still there and I just worry about everybody," she said referring to her cast and crew.

Toporowych Lorino has created a war room in her home. She tracks the Julia Blue cast and crew and her Ukrainian family members on a wall map. Each morning when they text her their status and location, she updates the map.

Roxy Lorino, Ukrainian-American film director, discusses the situation in Ukraine at the national college media convention in New York City. Michael Finch of Bryan College moderated the discussion entitled "Disinformation, Dictators and The Undaunted: Covering the Ukraine/Russia War" at the College Media Association convention Saturday, March 12, 2022. Panelists were Andrew Nynka, editor of the Svboda and the Ukrainian Weekly, and Roxy Lorino, Ukrainian-American film director. About 50 students and advisers attended the 50-minute discussion. Photo by Bradley Wilson

She has worked to raise money to send to a friend who has become a blacksmith during the conflict. Her friend welds the poles to hold IV bags. She also sends money to family members who sew balaclavas and mesh netting to use as protection on the front.

"This war is such a big monster," she said. " I just had to think what can I do that I can actually do."

Nynka said when it comes to covering Ukraine, student journalists should remember, "You don't have to solve the world's problems, you have to have a passion." He said there are so many ways to cover this story, students should look for new angles in their own communities. He also said to advocate with editors to be able to go deeper with human sources.

Elena Eberwein is working on her master's in journalism at Emerson College in Boston with a projected graduation in May 2022.

PHOTO GALLERY

March 24, 2022 / College Media Review

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

Legal analysis: Why Sarah Palin (still) matters for student journalists

‘This is—and has always been—a case about media accountability’

By *Carolyn Schurr Levin*

You may be tired of reading about Sarah Palin and her potentially “groundbreaking” libel case against *The New York Times.* However, so much has happened since our 2019 analysis of her case that I thought it was time for an update. I will focus on how the recent 2022 court resolution of this 2017 libel lawsuit impacts what student journalists do, and how best for campus media advisers to advise them.

First, a bit of background. On June 14, 2017, *The New York Times* published an editorial entitled “America’s Lethal Politics,” which stated that there was a connection between a 2010 advertisement by Palin’s political action committee and the 2011 Arizona mass shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabby Giffords, D-Arizona, and others. The byline for the editorial was “By The Editorial Board.”

The New York Times changed the language of the editorial and published a correction two days later, on June 16, 2017, after readers noted there was no connection between the Palin advertisement and the Giffords shooting. The correction read, in full: “An editorial on Thursday about the shooting of Representative Steve Scalise incorrectly stated that a link existed between political rhetoric and the 2011 shooting of Rep. Gabby Giffords. In fact, no such link was established. The editorial also incorrectly described a map distributed by a political action committee before that shooting. It depicted electoral districts, not individual Democratic lawmakers, beneath stylized cross hairs.” But, *The New York Times* did not apologize to Palin.

Palin sued *The New York Times* for libel. Her lawyers, Elizabeth Locke and Ken Turkel, were quoted as saying, “This is—and has always been—a case about media accountability.” On the other hand, *The New York Times*’ lawyers framed the case as “incredibly important because it’s about freedom of the press.”

So, what's happened now?

Former Gov. Sarah Palin speaks with attendees at the 2021 AmericaFest at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix. Photo by Gage Skidmore.

Palin faced a high bar to prove her case because of the actual malice standard required for public officials to win libel cases. Palin, of course, as a former governor of Alaska and former vice presidential candidate, is a public official. The actual malice standard holds that public officials have to show that news outlets knowingly published false information or had acted with "reckless disregard" for the truth. That standard was established in the 1964 decision in another case involving *The New York Times*, *New York Times v. Sullivan*.

The jury trial, which began on Feb. 3, 2022 in federal court in Manhattan before U.S. District Judge Jed Rakoff, lasted two weeks. *New York Times* former opinion editor James Bennet testified that he had not intended to blame Ms. Palin for the 2011 shooting. Instead, he said, he was trying to make a point about the heated political environment.

Palin countered in her testimony that the New York Times was trying to "score political points" with the editorial, which she said left her feeling "powerless" and "mortified." She also said the newspaper's correction was insufficient — and did not include her name.

The jury agreed with *The New York Times* that there had not been actual malice, returning a unanimous verdict in favor of *The New York Times* on Feb. 15, 2022.

The New York Times celebrated the jury verdict. "It is a reaffirmation of a fundamental tenet of American law: public figures should not be permitted to use libel suits to punish or intimidate news organizations that make, acknowledge and swiftly correct unintentional errors," a spokeswoman said in a statement.

But, in a strange twist, BEFORE the jury rendered its decision, Judge Rakoff issued a decision saying that no matter how the jury decided, he would dismiss the case because there had been no actual malice. Based on this unusual procedural situation, Palin made a motion to disqualify Judge Rakoff. Without waiting for a decision on her disqualification motion, on March 17 she also appealed the jury verdict, seeking

a new trial with a new judge. The motion and the appeal are still pending. Many media lawyers believe that Palin's case is heading for the U.S. Supreme Court (meaning that you will likely be reading a *CMR* Palin update #3 at some point).

In the meantime, the Palin jury verdict gives some guidance (and relief) for student journalists reporting on public figures on their campuses. Here is our takeaway:

1. **Correct your mistakes**: You will make mistakes. *The New York Times* makes mistakes. But here is what *The New York Times* did well. They promptly corrected their error two days after the Palin editorial ran. This point cannot be overstated. Don't be scared to admit your mistakes. Don't ignore them. Acknowledge and promptly correct them. For all sorts of reasons, this is good practice. And, in the unlikely event that you are sued, it will be evidence that you had no actual malice, as the jury unanimously found in Palin's case.
2. **Don't lower your standards for public figures**. The Palin jury got it right. Public figures, such as university presidents, and maybe even student leaders and prominent professors on college campuses, have a very high bar to win libel cases. They must prove that you knew what you published was false or that you published it with reckless disregard for the truth.

But, even with the leeway that the actual malice standard provides, student journalists should not focus on that margin of error. Rather, they should strive to get it right, whether writing about an unknown student on campus or the university provost.

Many, including current Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch, have opined that the actual malice standard on which the Palin jury based its verdict should be revisited, revised or even overruled. "The proliferation of falsehoods is, and always has been, a serious matter," Justice Thomas has written. "Instead of continuing to insulate those who perpetrate lies from traditional remedies like libel suits, we should give them only the protection the First Amendment requires." Justice Gorsuch has agreed. "What started in 1964 with a decision to tolerate the occasional falsehood to ensure robust reporting by a comparative handful of print and broadcast outlets," he wrote, "has evolved into an ironclad subsidy for the

publication of falsehoods by means and on a scale previously unimaginable." And, Donald Trump also famously urged "opening up the libel laws."

Thus there is reason to suspect that the long-established fault standard for public officials in libel cases may change. Attorney Thomas Kane, writing in the *National Law Review*, made the point that we shouldn't "be surprised if someday *Palin v. New York Times* is taught right after *New York Times v. Sullivan* in Constitutional Law classes." Professor Bill Kovarik agreed, writing in The Conversation, "I can see the Palin case providing a vehicle to return libel laws back to a time when it was much easier for public figures to sue the press."

Former Gov. Sarah Palin speaks with attendees at the 2021 Young Women's Leadership Summit hosted by Turning Point USA at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. Photo by Gage Skidmore.

But, eminent media lawyers George Freeman and Lee Levine have argued for maintaining the buffer provided by the actual malice standard. "The last thing we need is a greater disincentive to report about corruption in and negligence by local officials and institutions because of the threat of financially devastating libel suits arising from honest errors," they wrote in a March 8, 2022 editorial in *The Washington Post*. Libel cases aren't going away. In fact, there is evidence that more are being brought than ever. The Media Law Resource Center reported on data from 12 major news media companies indicating the number of libel cases rose from 74 to 115 between 2016 to 2021, compared to the preceding six years.

We ended our 2019 legal analysis of Palin's case with this observation: "The *Palin v. New York Times* lawsuit is far from over, two years later." Now in 2022, we can update that ending with a new one. The *Palin v. New York Times* lawsuit is still far from over, five years later.

Where does this leave us? Despite all the high-level criticism of the actual malice libel standard for public officials and public figures, IT IS STILL THE LAW. The legal

rules haven't changed ... yet. Perhaps more importantly, the ethical standards for thorough, fair and meticulous reporting certainly haven't changed, and they won't.

Carolyn Schurr Levin, a media and First Amendment attorney, is a partner at Miller Korzenik Sommers Rayman LLP in New York. She was the vice president and general counsel of Newsday, *vice president and general counsel of Ziff Davis Media, and media law adviser for the School of Journalism at Stony Brook University. She teaches Media Ethics & Law at City University of New York's Baruch College, and has also taught media ethics and law at Stony Brook University, Long Island University, and Pace University. From 2010-2019, she was the faculty adviser for the* Pioneer, *the student newspaper at Long Island University, during which time the* Pioneer *won 28 awards.*

Carolyn Levin

April 18, 2022 / College Media / journalism, sarah palin, the new york times
College Media Review /

College Media Review
Journal of the College Media Association

CMR Research Annual Vol. 58 is available

Back it up with data…

From the editor: I saw a photo of an adviser colleague on social media recently, proudly sporting a t-shirt that proclaimed "I BACK IT UP WITH DATA." This year, *College Media Review* continues to uphold this sentiment by releasing Volume 58 of the print Research Annual of CMA's flagship journal.

This past year's scholarly publications have been compiled into a hard copy as a print-on-demand volume that can be purchased here for $5.

It features a publication by Katherine Fink of Pace University in a study titled "Freedom of Information in College: How Students Learn to File Public Records Requests." Fink uses a qualitative approach to delve into the process of filing FOI requests and using those results to advance student reporting.

Associate Editor Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver continued her longitudinal research gathering data on the many facets of college media advising work in a study co authored with Elizabeth Smith of Pepperdine University and Jody Kleinberg Biehl

from State University of New York at Buffalo. The research, "The College Newsroom Amid COVID: A Statistical Assessment of Advisers and their work in College Newsrooms in 2020," extends and builds upon data throughout the years, starting in 1984. The authors report on the many variables that pertain to our jobs as advisers, such as responsibilities, salary, title, rank, education level, tenure status and workload. This year includes information on diversity, prior review and how COVID-19 impacted our work in college newsrooms.

In a year that was characterized largely by the pandemic, Brittany L. Fleming and Emily A. Dolan of Slippery Rock University explore how student media editorials framed COVID-19 in award-winning student publications. Their study, "What's in a Frame? How Award-Winning Student Newspaper Editorials Framed COVID-19," offers an analysis of the editorial tone in the college media landscape this year and provides a framework for future editorial reporting.

I hope you will consider browsing these studies in *College Media Review* by purchasing the Research Annual and that you not only find the data useful in your daily advising endeavors, but that it may also spark some questions or ideas for future studies. It is gratifying to report that, amid our hectic lives as college media advisers, we are guided by experience and support of our colleagues, and we, too, "BACK IT UP WITH DATA."

Special thanks to CMR Associate Editor Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver, Managing Editor Bradley Wilson and Webmaster Bill Neville for their work in bringing Volume 58 to fruition.

–Lisa Lyon Payne, editor CMR

College Media Review / August 6, 2021 / College Media
College Media Review /