

Missouri School of Journalism

December 2012

**Professional Project**

VIDEO REPORTING FOR THE COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

**Professional Analysis**

TENSIONS WITHIN JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>st</sup>  
CENTURY

Pavan Vangipuram

Committee Members

Jeanne Abbott (Chair)

Scott Swafford

Andrea Heiss

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Weekly reports.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Personal evaluation.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Physical evidence of work.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Theoretical Background.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Professional analysis.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendix I: Original proposal.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Appendix II: Revisions to original proposal.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Appendix III: Edited interview transcripts.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendix IV: Sample Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Appendix V: Query Letter.....</b>	<b>164</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This project is the culmination of a semester of work at the Columbia *Missourian*, including outside reporting on the state of journalism education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the *Missourian*, I produced ten videos that documented the various ways in which residents of Columbia, Missouri, spend their summer. Having produced in the course of my graduate studies several serious articles for the *Missourian*, I wanted to be able to produce for the *Missourian* focused human-interest pieces in order to diversify my skills as a reporter.

Having spent the majority of my graduate career wedded to the field of print and digital, I also wished to branch out and learn new skills during my project semester. For that reason, I chose to produce videos, rather than report traditionally. In my internship experience I did a lot of general-assignment reporting, and I was interested in being able to make the best possible stories out of human-interest pieces, in order to prepare me for a future job as a general assignment reporter or perhaps a culture reporter.

I also have a possible interest in becoming a teacher, which is why I chose to write the analysis portion of my project on how journalism schools are adapting to the changing media environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through interviews and research, I was able to come to an understanding of the sorts of skills editors are looking for in reporters today, and I was able to come up with some concrete suggestions both for students and faculty as to how better to fulfill those needs.

I am confident that my experience in this project will aid me in either of my two intended career paths, whether I become a reporter or a teacher.

## WEEKLY REPORTS

For this professional practice portion of this project, I produced one web-video for the *Columbia Missourian* every week, from June 7 to August 25. This included planning the video, coming up with source lists and questions, and editing the video. On off-days, I did research and interviews for the analysis portion of my project. Below, I have included weekly progress reports for the twelve weeks of my project.

### **Week 1:**

This week I set up interviews with Eric Umansky of ProPublica, Bill Nichols of Politico, and Brian Storm of MediaStorm. I also compiled a detailed list of questions and topics to discuss with them, as well as researching their roles in their respective media organizations. In addition, I shot and edited a video of length two minutes detailing Shredfest, a skate event that Columbia Parks and Recreation sponsored.

I had a few issues with audio in the clip, as I did not have a directional microphone, but those issues will soon be resolved. Additionally, the lack of a tripod led to video of inferior quality, but that, too, will be resolved this week.

### **Week 2:**

This week went relatively well; I was able to complete two in-depth interviews with Eric Umansky of ProPublica and Bill Nichols of Politico, as well as film the Missouri Symphony Society at Stephens Lake amphitheater. I also set up a Youtube

account and began the process of uploading the two videos I have filmed so far. Those materials will be sent to you this week.

My conversations with Mr. Umansky and Mr. Nichols were very enlightening; though they said slightly different things, the thrusts of the conversations were very similar, and it looks as though (for new media publications at least) I'm getting a sense of what skills are needed.

Both Mr. Umansky and Mr. Nichols spoke of "web psychology" and skills pertaining to writing specifically for the web. They both mentioned that the current model of print/web, wherein news organizations write articles for print and then post those articles to the web might need revision.

Mr. Umansky and Mr. Nichols mentioned that new organizations are moving away from this paradigm, and that students would have to understand how to write specifically for the web, in addition to writing for print. Umansky went one step further, and said that learning to write for print is not a valuable skill in a 21<sup>st</sup> century newsroom, and perhaps ought to be de-emphasized in journalism programs.

"Nowadays, the news article is not a very compelling form of journalism," Mr. Umansky said.

Mr. Nichols warned against trying to produce students who were proficient in every form of new media. He said he would rather have students with a single focus (say, video, audio, or web design), with a broad familiarity with everything else. It's important to specialize, he said, and not as important to be a jack of all trades.

“Good reporting, clear, compelling writing, and a sensibility for the Internet. Those are the three things I look for. It’s frankly, very rare to find people who have all three sets of those.” Mr. Umansky said.

Mr. Umansky also said that it would be helpful to require journalism students to take a rhetoric class or an English class. Too often, he said, he finds students who are trained to write a “metro-daily style” article, with more attention to the template of a news article (a medium that’s “increasingly stressed,” in his words,) and not enough attention to clear, compelling writing.

My shoot at the Missouri Symphony Society went well, but I made a few blunders that made the editing very difficult. Specifically, I did not shoot enough b-roll from different angles, and I forgot to record an on-camera intro and outro. These are lessons I’ll remember for my next video shoots.

### **Week 3:**

This week went relatively well. I intended to shoot both Saturday and Sunday, but a torrential downpour Saturday evening prevented me from doing this. On Sunday, I filmed Columbia’s Juneteenth celebration. The shoot went well, but I was hampered by a lack of capacity on the SD card. I’m working on securing another card to increase capacity.

I was only able to do one interview this week, with Brian Storm, but the interview went very well. Storm gave me one of the most candid and honest critiques of contemporary journalism education I’ve so far encountered.

“I think the first thing I would say to de-emphasize is the idea that one person can do it all,” Storm said, echoing the sentiments of both Eric Umansky and Bill Nichols. “It’s a really, really bad model. It’s setting us up to do incredibly mediocre journalism. We should just stop it.”

While Storm recognized that beginning students (freshmen and sophomores) should be exposed to a wide array of journalism techniques, he contended that by junior year, students should intensely focus on one particular aspect of journalism, and leave the videos, audio, etc. to people who have studied it extensively.

“It might get you a job, but it’s not going to create great journalism,” he said of the “jack of all trades” model, where students learn to write, shoot photos, edit video, and a host of other skills. “The industry is short-sighted in this. They’re hiring 20-somethings who can do a lot of things for very little money. It doesn’t inform the public, though.”

Recognizing the continued importance of text, Storm, like Umansky and Nichols, emphasized the differences in writing for the web versus print. He wanted students to study those differences, as opposed to working for a print publication that uploads its print articles to the web.

“I’m down on day-to-day, highly perishable, throwaway storytelling that throws away a lot of resources and doesn’t make anyone smarter,” he said. “Focus on in-depth, robust storytelling that matters.”

Another interesting idea that Storm brought up was the all-importance of web sharing.

“If someone doesn’t tweet it, was it worth it?” he asked rhetorically, “If someone doesn’t post it to Facebook or another social media network, you fail.” He nearly went so

far as to say that any piece of web journalism that is NOT shared becomes immediately irrelevant

“Great and funny are the only things that matter on the web,” he said. “That’s the stuff that’s going to spread. Stuff in the middle, that doesn’t matter. It’s simply noise. Doesn’t move the needle in any way. It’s hard to be funny. And it’s hard to be great. But that’s the only hope.”

He ended the interview with a jeremiad on the conglomeration of news organizations, saying, “the industry got off the rails when we lost ownership of the pub[lication]s. When big business guys saw these insane margins, like 30%, they just bought us out. It doesn’t matter how much you make, you have to make more next year. The business guys have bled us to the bone. They’re killing us even though we’re making a profit.”

Storm’s recommendations fit well into the framework Umansky and Nichols provided me. He wants less emphasis on quantity and more emphasis on quality journalism, and he wants classes devoted to a deeper understanding of the web. He wants to see more Mizzou grads starting their own journalism companies and not to rely on daily newspapers for employment. A required entrepreneurial class combined with a required “understanding the web” class would round out the curriculum nicely, he said.

**Week 4:**



This week, I spent some time reviewing basic video shooting and editing techniques to correct perceived deficiencies in my previous videos. In particular, I read The Technique of Film & Video Editing, by Ken Dancyger. The book taught me several valuable techniques, and refreshed my memory on some techniques I already knew. I found his chapter on the MTV influence on video editing to be particularly helpful for the sorts of videos I'm producing. Dancyger noted the effect of MTV's quick, short videos on the first generation of web-videos to arrive in 2006. He recommended an editing technique that utilizes generous amounts of b-roll and cuts to interview subjects only sparingly.

He also suggested quick cuts to several different shots of b-roll to better illustrate what interview subjects are saying. His chapters on documentary filmmaking gave me a good grounding on camera placement and how to crop interview subjects nicely within a frame.

I was unable to produce a video this week due to pressures from my assistantship, but I made some progress in securing interview subjects for the analysis portion of my project. I was able to set up an interview with Glenn Gilbert, the executive editor of *The Oakland Press* in Michigan, for next week.

#### **Week 5:**

This week I filmed a swim lesson at Macher's Swim School. I had hoped for a larger class, but unfortunately only two students were available at the appointed time. I was lucky enough that their father gave consent for me to film the lesson.

To overcome the difficulties in presenting compelling visuals with only two students, I used tight shots and quick cuts to focus the video solely on them. I also was lucky enough to interview their father, who called swimming a “rite of passage” in Columbia. Their instructor was also candid and forthcoming. From this experience, I learned about different kinds of shots that can be used to make an otherwise uninteresting scene interesting. I also learned about how to deal with kids on video (they were somewhat nervous).

This week I also interviewed Glenn Gilbert, the executive editor of The Oakland Press, a suburban metro daily in Detroit.

Gilbert spoke of a “three-tool” reporter, which he considers ideal in new recruits. The three tools are traditional print reporting, photography and video. Gilbert said those skills are “absolutely essential” for contemporary newspaper reporting, and added a fourth tool, which he considered extremely important, but not essential. The fourth tool is social media literacy.

Gilbert prizes Twitter literacy over Facebook and recalled an anecdote where his reporters used Twitter to great effect while reporting the Supreme Court’s ruling on the Obama health care reform plan. Knowing whom to follow on Twitter, how to sift through tweets, and creating a sizable following will be essential to the future, Gilbert said. He contrasted Twitter to Facebook, which he felt to be less useful.

Gilbert also strongly emphasized a liberal arts background in journalism graduates he hires. He emphasized that journalism education is a liberal art, and not a trade school

Too often, he lamented, he encounters students who have not taken a class in logic, critical theory, or history, and he finds those students deficient.

But overall, Gilbert said he is very impressed with many of the candidates he interviews. He became a bit self-deprecatory when describing young people today, who, due to the Internet, are “miles ahead” of where he was as a young journalism graduate.

Students will have to take on more and more roles in the future, Gilbert said. In addition to writing, shooting photos and shooting video, Gilbert said new journalists will largely be required to serve as their own assigning editors (i.e. they’ll have to come up with stories at a greater rate) as well as their own copyeditors (due to the slashing of copydesks in most contemporary traditional newspapers.)

Gilbert recommended journalism schools devote 75% of the curriculum to interdisciplinary liberal arts studies and 25% to working in the journalism field. “Finding a job should not be the goal of a liberal arts education,” he said.

### **Week 6:**

This week was very busy, as I had to make up for a lost week of videos. In addition to filming swim lessons at Macher swim school; I took a camera out for the Fourth of July celebrations in Columbia, Missouri.

I posed my subjects a simple question: What does the Fourth of July mean to you? I felt this was a good strategy because it produced candid and unscripted responses, as well as producing a range of different responses. I took care to make sure I had as much diversity as possible in my interview pool, so as to elicit the widest range of possible responses.

I found that those in the older age brackets tend to view the July 4 holiday in more of symbolic sense, with Independence Day standing in for more traditional American

values, such as liberty, honesty, and Constitutional law. Younger respondents, on the other hand, tended to equate Independence Day to wars and fireworks, with only a secondary notice of the Declaration of Independence or its resultant Constitution.

So much was going on during Fourth of July that I had a little difficulty deciding what the focus of my film should be. Several bands played, and crowds focused on many points of attention. I knew that the video should have fireworks in it, but I was a little unsure as to what other elements would make a compelling story.

I finally decided it would make a better video if I had several respondents rapidly fire their response to a fundamental question regarding the meaning of Fourth of July, rather than have one or two people expound for several minutes on their personal views.

In this way, I felt I was able to give the video a quick aspect while still providing for a variety of views. As there was music playing in several places during the festivities, I thought it best to include a soundtrack of the bands playing to better give the audience a perspective of being there.

In addition, I also spent time this week researching the curricula of Northwestern University's Medill and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. While for the most part those schools offer a similar curriculum to the University of Missouri - Columbia, I was intrigued by Medill's "integrated marketing" program, which would appear to teach students both the rudiments of journalism and the rudiments of public relations at the same time.

This approach sharply contrasts with the University of Missouri's and Columbia University's program; both keep public relations and advertising wholly separate parts of their journalism schools, while still encompassing them within their journalism school.

While this will not be a major part of my final paper, it is an interesting and recent part of the journalism education landscape, and it is one I will be discussing with future interview subjects.

### **Week 7:**

This week I filmed the Columbia Farmers Market near the Activity and Recreation Center on West Worley Street. The venue offered ample opportunity for visual effect, and I was able to get good shots of happy shoppers, fresh produce, and smiling vendors.

I had a problem with the spelling of one of the vendor's names: a small typo crept into the lower third, causing the copy desk much consternation. I have since revised my double-checking technique to prevent such errors.

Another difficulty I had was in the introduction to the video. I initially intended to do an on-camera introduction, explaining where I was and what the video would entail, but I neglected to check the on-camera take before going to the editing room. The take was unusable, as my image was not squarely within the shot.

Instead, I chose to overlay the opening of the video with text, but due to the lighting, white text did not show up clearly. Black text was similarly problematic, so I chose to use a shade of purple for the text, which ended up looking garish and harsh.

In the future, I will be sure to correct for these deficiencies, and, in particular, ensure that all of my videos will have an on-camera introduction.

For the research portion of the project, I reviewed the hiring policies of several newspapers, notably the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, to get a feel for what sort of skills entry-level reporters are expected to have.

As expected, entry-level reporters are required to have a suite of skills not unlike those described by the daily newspaper editors I previously interviewed. Significantly, most publications require reporters to have a modicum of skill with photography and video, although true proficiency is typically not required. In addition, many publications would like entry-level reporters to have database skills and have evidence of filing successful open-records requests.

This information will be valuable as I continue to search for a model for the 21<sup>st</sup> century journalism graduate.

#### **Week 8:**

This week I filmed the Family Fun Fest at Flat Branch Park. The event's theme was "Around the World," and I was able to get some sterling shots of the Columbia Friends of China Chinese Performer's group, who performed a traditional song and dance at the event.

The most difficult aspect of this video was finding children to interview. As the theme of the event was "Family Fun," it seemed inappropriate not to have any children in the video. However, getting children to speak convincingly on camera was a bit of a challenge. Many seemed nervous, others seemed playful, and the camera rendered still others nearly mute.

I was finally able to find an enthusiastic child to speak with, though he was clearly still awkward in front of the camera. I will have to research proper techniques for interviewing children so that I will not be caught off-guard by such situations in the future.

For the research component of my project, I had an extended interview with Professor George Kennedy. We discussed several of the themes that have arisen in my research: specifically, the tension between the concept of journalism as a vocational school and journalism as liberal arts education.

Professor Kennedy was able to put into context many of the new strategies the Missouri School of Journalism has recently pursued – particularly the shift from rigid tracks to a more fluid, “convergence” style build-your-own curriculum.

He also mentioned a discussion to increase the number of core journalism classes required for undergraduates. While he said his own opinion was that undergraduates should spend more time in rhetoric or semantics courses, he acknowledged the need for expanded core requirements due to the recent proliferation of expected techniques (i.e. the Internet).

Kennedy was also invaluable in pointing me in the direction of the University of Kansas, which pioneered many of the changes journalism schools have now adopted.

Kennedy emphasized the need to teach critical thinking skills in contemporary journalism education and in some respects warned against the direction the field is now taking. He expressed particular skepticism toward the idea of a “convergence track,” calling it essentially an oxymoron, but he acknowledged that the field will likely trend toward a build-your-own degree style of guidance.

He suggested a more rigid set of requirements for the first two years for undergraduates, limiting the number of superfluous electives they are allowed to take, while allowing broader latitude during the junior and senior years.

Professor Kennedy and I also shared a discussion on the merits of undergraduate journalism education versus graduate journalism education. On the whole, Professor Kennedy thought that graduate journalism education offered a better opportunity for students to have a separate education and experience outside of journalism, and to bring those skills to the field.

### **Week 9:**

This week, I filmed and interviewed a family having fun at Stephens Lake Park in Columbia. The timing of the video was appropriate because the weather had just cooled after a searing four weeks, and families were eagerly enjoying the good weather. I was able to find a suitable family who was very happy to speak with me and be filmed.

I am finding it increasingly easy to shoot and edit these videos, which I attribute to the practice I have gained and the research I have done on proper editing techniques. In particular, I now know how to get decent audio and video composition, as well as how to place shots in a logical order.

One technique I used in this video that I hadn't used before was the practice of conducting interviews *before* shooting b-roll. Previously, I had done both simultaneously.

Shooting the interview first gave me the advantage of being able to tailor my b-roll shots to what the interview subject was saying.



In this way, I was able to cut my editing time significantly and also provide more compelling visuals.

**Week 10:**

This week, I interviewed Margaret Freivogel, from the St. Louis *Beacon*. An online-only publication, the *Beacon* started in 2007 by reporters who were laid off from the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*.

Our conversation centered around the topics of whether a journalism school should focus on vocational training or liberal arts education and whether convergence students should specialize in a particular medium or generalize into as many media as they can, as those will be the major questions I aim to answer in my research paper.

Freivogel said she valued liberal arts training very highly, as it allows students to go beyond the story and cut to the heart of what a story is about. “Depth of knowledge and depth of thinking: that’s what’s fundamentally important. These days, it’s very nice if somebody can shoot video, and they’re conversant in social media, but those are all tools. And they can be important, but what’s really important is the substance of what’s being communicated,” she said.

At the same time, Freivogel said, the speed of technology is so rapid that students are obliged to gain as many skills as they can. She acknowledged the tensions inherent in this situation, and advised students to “come out equipped to do some experimentation and have some creativity about how they do things.”

Freivogel also recommended journalism schools do more to instruct students in ethics, particularly in the field of Internet ethics.

“For example, the whole question of expressing your opinion vs., for lack of a better word, objective reporting. Questions of where funding comes from in a newspaper, and how you draw a line of that. How do you deal with sources? When is information verified enough to publish? All these questions look much different in the digital age than they did 15 years ago. Often times, working through case studies, you’ll never get the same case twice. How can you think through these problems? If you’ve thought through some of these things before, little bells should go off,” she said.

### **Week 11:**

This week I filmed the Mid-Missouri PrideFest, an LGBT pride celebration in downtown Columbia. I had almost no difficulty finding people who wished to speak with me, and one of my subjects, Rob McPeetie, gave me a touching account of his struggles with HIV and the discrimination he often faces as an HIV-positive gay man.

I had a little trouble with audio, since there was music playing, but was able to mute it in post-production. I also had a bit of difficulty finding suitable b-roll to shoot, since many shots looked the same (the festival was only on one block), but I used a quick-cut editing technique to get around that.

I also interviewed Karen Mitchell, a convergence professor at the University of Missouri, to gain some insight into the philosophy behind convergence education. Mitchell acknowledged that the ‘jack-of-all-trades’ journalist is largely a myth, as no one journalist has enough time to gain superb proficiency in all media skills, but she defended the curriculum’s breadth by appealing to the variety of skills students will be introduced to, after which they would find one to specialize in.

Mitchell also acknowledged that convergence provides breadth to students, but that they often lack depth in any one field.

**Week 12:**

The final week of my project was spent compiling my notes in preparation for writing the final report. I also shot and edited a video story on the first week of class for the University of Missouri. I was able to use all the techniques I learned this summer to shoot and edit the video with very little difficulty.

## PERSONAL EVALUATION

This project has been immensely edifying for me, both as a reporter and as an aspiring educator. I began the project with little to no knowledge of video production and editing, and I exited the project with the ability to quickly and accurately put together short web-videos for a daily news publication. This experience will undoubtedly aid me in my quest for journalism employment.

In addition, I was able to gain valuable insight into the ever-changing field of journalism by speaking with editors of a variety of publications. I will be able to use this knowledge to hone my skills and I hope it will give me a leading edge in my search for employment.

On the whole I did good work for the *Missourian*, but I had a little difficulty with accuracy. On a couple videos I misspelled names of sources and caused myself some embarrassment. The reason for these errors was that I was attempting to edit too quickly, and did not pay special attention to spelling.

As I progressed in my project I got better both at producing high-quality video and turning the videos around quickly. I think that improvement is the best evidence of my work and commitment to becoming a better journalist.

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF WORK

### I. Videos produced:

Shredfest: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS\\_MOMtSLLA&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS_MOMtSLLA&feature=plcp)



**Missouri Symphony Orchestra:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIWk3R9y2oo&feature=plcp>

**Mo Symphony Orchestra June 8, 2012**

Pavan Vangipuram    Subscribe    17 videos ▾



0:51 / 2:11

CC    ⚙️    🕒    📺    📱    🗑️

**Juneteenth:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QUq4ci7J5k&feature=plcp>



Swim Lessons: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2ew6p8JJcM&feature=plcp>

## Summer Swim Lessons in Columbia

Pavan Vangipuram

Subscribe

17 videos ▾





July 4: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olJrngamu-k&feature=plcp>



Farmers' Market: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F89O8RLIj4M&feature=plcp>

## Why Columbians love Columbia Farmers' Market

Pavan Vangipuram

Subscribe

17 videos ▾



**Family Fun Fest:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7H6MO3l0HK4&feature=plcp>





**Summer at Stephens Lake:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBVx1RDVzaY&feature=plcp>



## Mid-Missouri PrideFest:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhEWUbGWsm8&feature=plcp>



First week of School: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGjeM0Z2skE&feature=plcp>

### MU students describe their first week of class

Pavan Vangipuram    Subscribe    17 videos ▾



Abigail Auner, 18  
Freshman

0:18 / 2:20

CC    ⚙️    ⌚    📺    📱    🗑️

The image shows a video player interface. At the top, the video title is "MU students describe their first week of class". Below the title, the channel name "Pavan Vangipuram" is displayed along with a "Subscribe" button and a "17 videos" dropdown menu. The main video frame shows a young woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a bright yellow t-shirt. She is sitting outdoors on a grassy area in front of a light-colored brick building. The video player controls at the bottom include a play button, a volume icon, a progress bar showing "0:18 / 2:20", and icons for closed captions (CC), settings (gear), playlist (clock), full screen, and mobile view.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

No study of the current state of the Missouri School of Journalism could be complete without a thorough survey of its self-study reports that the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires for all journalism schools. Within these reports lies not only the Missouri School of Journalism's foundational mission statements, but a detailed analysis of how those missions are being pursued.

My research will include an analysis of the Missouri School of Journalism's professor curricula vitae, which will provide valuable data, from a professional perspective, about where the Missouri School of Journalism's strengths and weaknesses lie.

The accreditation reports will also be valuable in providing background for the Missouri School of Journalism, with detailed information on the process of selecting and hiring new professors and how admissions are handled. This knowledge will inform my interviews with Missouri School of Journalism staff and help guide my questions as I explore changing policy in the 21st century.

For a historical perspective, a review of foundational texts in journalism education will also be valuable. In "The College of Journalism," Joseph Pulitzer's 1904 article for *The North American Review*, Pulitzer lays down his vision for a school of journalism. Many of the educational techniques he surveyed remain relevant today and thus provide much insight for my project. In it, he writes, "All intelligence requires development. The highest profits by it, the lowest is helpless without it, Shakespeare's best play, 'Hamlet,' was not his first, but his nineteenth, written after growth and maturity..."

Later in the article, Pulitzer emphasizes the importance of professional, experiential training to foster this development in burgeoning young journalists. He asserts that instinct can be cultivated, it need not only be given from birth. The school of journalism, he asserts, should be the model and engine to provide young journalists instinct, a moral compass, and sound news judgment. More than a century later, these are the missions the Missouri School of Journalism takes upon itself.

These sentiments are echoed in modern form by John Vernon Pavlik in Journalism and New Media, where, in Chapter 12, he prescribes a “conceptual roadmap” for journalism education in the 21st century. The text outlines the various ways in which journalism has changed in the past decade and seeks to come to some definite techniques that educators can use to better prepare their students.

In particular, Pavlik suggests training future journalists more heavily in database techniques and the various methods of data storage. He also emphasizes education in new devices and the changing means of information delivery. Although the medium may change, Pavlik still emphasizes the basic newsgathering instinct that Pulitzer wrote about a century before, which the Missouri School of Journalism must continue to focus upon.

In “J-School Ate my Brain,” a humorous *New Republic* article by Michael Lewis, the author outlines the possible pitfalls of a well-meaning journalism education. A critique on the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, Lewis’s article warns against the over complication of journalism education. He writes, “The larger force at work here is the instinct to complicate. Those who run, and attend, schools of journalism simply cannot -- or don't want to -- believe that journalism is as simple as it is.”



While many of Lewis's critiques, particularly that the Columbia School of Journalism doesn't "re-create the journalism environment in the classroom," which, of course, is precisely what the Missouri School of Journalism seeks to do, don't apply directly to the Missouri School of Journalism, others, particularly the non-Missouri Method courses, are somewhat well-described.

Still, Lewis's article serves as a cautionary tale to journalism educators, and serves as an example of what *not* to do, and how *not* to run a journalism program.

Tom Dickson, in his book Mass Media Education in Transition: Preparing for the 21st Century, stresses the importance of multimedia education in contemporary journalism education. He appears to be of the opinion that the standard "news article," while perhaps not dying, is becoming more and more marginalized. News consumers want information presented to them in a variety of ways, he writes, and it is the job of the new journalists to focus on how best to present such information.

In a way, Dickson's thesis mirrors Lewis's. While Lewis contends that there "isn't much to" writing a news article, he would certainly agree with Dickson's thesis that journalism schools must better prepare their students in a multimedia setting.

Alexandra Fenwick, in her *Columbia Journalism Review* article "Robot Journalism," addresses several concerns with Dickson's prescriptions for multimedia education. Through interviews with the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism Dean of Academic Affairs Bill Grueskin and professor of computer science Julia Hirschberg, Fenwick's article explores the implications of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism's new dual journalism/computer science program.

Columbia began this program in the 2011-2012 school year as an experiment, and the interview provides a valuable insight into a new journalism paradigm which one of the Missouri School of Journalism's competitors is pursuing.

In it, Grueskin describes the program as "giving really smart young people the background skills they need to go develop and innovate things that you and I sitting in this office can't imagine." He mentions several times the new directions journalism is taking, and emphasizes the idea of "surfacing" (as a verb) stories, which means to bring stories to the forefront of discussion, a skill for which the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism apparently believes some computer science skills are necessary.

Julia Hirschberg, in her section of the interview, described new products that the first class of journalism/computer science dual majors which were indicative of the types of projects such a program could produce. It would be useful, in the comparative analysis section of the final product, to contrast such a program to the Missouri School of Journalism's convergence program.

Fenwick also explores, in her article, the challenges of re-defining journalism in a digital age. At one point, she asks her subjects whether, given a dual computer science and journalism degree, the journalists of the future will be more engineer or more journalist.

These concerns are echoed and treated in far greater depth in "Shaping 21st Century Journalism," an October 2011 report from the New America Foundation. A comprehensive study of the state of journalism education, the report details several ongoing experiments in journalism education, including the "Multimedia Urban Reporting Lab" at Temple University in Philadelphia, "Reporting Texas," at the

University of Texas-Austin and several hyper-local experiments being conducted by the University of South California's Annenberg School.

This information will be invaluable in the interview portion of the research. The report also includes a serious discussion of the changing needs of journalism students and provides a useful table to describe how different schools are meeting those needs.

The report concludes with a "path forward," combining its research to provide a list of broad suggestions for the continuation of journalism education. Many of these suggestions, such as "Redraw the boundaries of journalism education so that programs provide a broader set of skills for the multi-platform (often entrepreneurial) journalist of the future" are already being practiced to some respect by the Missouri School of Journalism. Others, such as "Collaborate with other journalism schools on state and federal news bureaus," or "experiment with ways to move aspects of journalism education to the center of undergraduate core curriculum," could be better pursued.

Regarding the tension between liberal arts and vocational education, Peter Parisi, in his September 2012 article, "Critical Studies, the Liberal Arts, and Journalism Education," makes the argument that critical studies is essential for journalism as a "rhetorical form," not as a "transparent stenography of the real."

He concludes that journalism is inherently a critical practice, and that "its study provides a powerful focus for a liberal arts education." Parisi says that journalism education and journalism itself is inextricably wedded to the liberal arts, and that they both complement one another.

Henry Jenkins addresses the concerns of teaching students to cope in a 21st-century journalism environment in his book, Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture.

He begins his book by noting that almost half of all American adolescents have created content online, and he discusses the implications for journalism educators today.

Jenkins sees a transforming role for journalists in the future; not as reporters, but as facilitators of a community conversation. The advent of the internet, in Jenkins's view, has upended many of the established journalistic theories (framing, gate-keeping, etc.) and has changed the role of journalists to something that past generations of practitioners would hardly recognize.

In "Realizing McLuhan's Dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom," Antonio Dias de Figueiredo tackles these concerns head on. This article analyzes the Internet and social media from a McLuhan perspective, detailing two experiments Figueiredo's journalism students conducted in beginning a new social network and how those results could be interpreted from the standpoint of shifting media. His analysis is instructive from an educational standpoint because he provides concrete analysis of his students' progress in attaining skills when taught from an experiential model similar to the Missouri School of Journalism's. In particular, he provides detailed explanations of the techniques he used to teach students many of the skills other sources have identified as necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century journalism schools. In addition to help with the analysis product, his research will provide help with the practice portion of this project.

Larry Dailey, et. al. in their paper "The Convergence Curriculum," take Figueiredo's focus and applies it broadly to a convergence curriculum. In particular, they attempt to offer "a conceptual framework for filling a void in the research on convergence." As convergence is itself a new paradigm for journalism education, Dailey notes early on that "A standardized definition of news convergence remains elusive even as buzz about the

term increases among media scholars and industry professionals.” This ambiguity at the heart of convergence forms the basis of the paper, in which the authors propose a model of a “convergence continuum,” which they define as a series of “behavior-based activities that illustrate the interaction and cooperation levels among staff members at newspapers, television stations and web organizations with editorial partnerships.” According to Dailey’s model, the convergence continuum allows for newspapers to cross-promote their content on a variety of platforms, which reciprocate likewise.

Gil Thelen, in his article in *Quill Magazine* entitled “Convergence is Coming,” predicts that “future newsrooms will require specialists who can learn to adapt.” In doing so, he combines two divergent models within convergence: the reporter who can do it all, and the intensely focused reporter who is extremely adept at a particular medium. Thelen, in his article, says that the future will require both: a specialized reporter who can adapt to new technology at the drop of a hat.

Thelen’s analysis will be valuable in my research, as I explore how journalism schools are adapting to a 21<sup>st</sup> century media environment.

His findings are echoed in an article by Laura Castaneda, et. al, entitled “Teaching Print, Broadcast and Online Journalism,” in which the authors conduct a case study to assess a convergence curriculum. They concluded that it is very difficult to concurrently teach students a variety of media, with many instructors tending to believe that “the convergence curriculum dilute[s] the curriculum and ‘slow[s] down’ the learning process.”

The sources reviewed above indicate deep tensions within the philosophy of journalism education, both between its definition as a liberal arts school or a vocational school and in deciding whether and at what point students should specialize in a particular medium. In particular, multimedia education has come to dominate an increasing portion of a journalism educator's time and energy, perhaps at the expense of liberal arts. Also, the shifting definition of convergence has caused some confusion in convergence professors as to how quickly to emphasize specialty and how broad a students' base of familiarity should be.

The reporter of tomorrow will be required to be versatile in a number of media, according to several reviewed sources, but he or she will also have to choose a specialty that appeals to them the most. The methods by which journalism schools mediate these tensions will form the core of a model for 21<sup>st</sup>-century journalism education. In particular, reporters will be required to adapt quickly to a changing media environment, while still holding true to a specialty of their choosing. Journalism schools will have to guide students in the path toward choosing a specialty while allowing a degree of freedom for student experimentation.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

My professional project will focus upon the various methods by which the Missouri School of Journalism and others seek to train future journalists, and shall arrive at a list of concrete suggestions for the Missouri School of Journalism to better prepare its students to a changing media landscape.

In order to examine the Missouri School of Journalism, one must immerse oneself in the educational and pedagogic theories to which the school generally subscribes in its methods. The Missouri School of Journalism, examined today as well as historically, tends to conform to the *experiential learning* model of pedagogy, also known as the “reflective approach,” “experience-based learning,” or, in lay terms, “learning by doing.”

Andresen, Voud, and Cohen, in their chapter of *Understanding Adult Education and Training* (2000) entitled “Experience-Based Learning,” defines such a pedagogy with several characteristics, including that “EBL has a primary focus on the nature of learners’ personal engagement with phenomena,” (in this case, journalism practicum), and that “debriefing and reflective thought are employed as essential stages,” (One can see this at work with the *Missourian*’s insistence on student blog posts, or in portions of lecture where students sit at the front of the class and dissect their reporting experience).

Andresen, et. al argue that experience-based learning is both “a distinctive field of educational theory,” which, “at the personal level... draws on learners’ previous life experience, engages the whole person and stimulates reflection on experience...”

Andresen, et. al also describe experiential education as a sort of backlash to the didacticism of earlier educational practices. “[EBL] supports a more participative,

learner-centered approach, which places an emphasis on direct engagement, rich learning events and the construction of meaning by learners.”

One can see echoes of this analysis in Steve Weinberg’s history of the Missouri School of Journalism, *A Journalism of Humanity* (2007). In its opening chapters, Weinberg describes the nascent *Missourian* and Missouri Method as such: “The impact of the Missouri Method derived from Williams’ plan to create a real-life daily newspaper serving an entire small city, a newspaper where faculty editors existed to explain the what, why and how to student reporters. This innovative vocational training would alternate with classroom instruction in the liberal arts and the sciences.” (Weinberg, 14).

Again, Weinberg describes Williams’s intentions with the Missouri method as experiential in nature, a sort of alternative apprenticeship, thus: “Williams borrowed what made sense from professional schools in other fields. Schools of law, medicine, agriculture, engineering and teacher education had become realities within his lifetime, in some instances replacing apprenticeships. Furthermore, each of those professional schools combined the lecture/classroom methods with hands-on practicum in real-world settings... So why not journalism?” (14)

Further evidence of the Missouri School of Journalism’s use of experiential pedagogy, particularly in making sure journalism students are able to experience real-world dilemmas, is revealed in his description of the various controversies the students and editors of the *Missourian* have historically embroiled themselves in, including investigations into Dean Edwin Turner’s misuse of funds in 1985, or Sports Editor Randy Covitz’s alleged “grudge” against then-basketball coach Norm Stewart (38) in 1981. These and other dilemmas are at the heart of an experiential theory of pedagogy



(provided student-led discussion follows afterward), as the students would be engaging in activities typically performed by professional journalist. This further exemplify the Missouri School of Journalism's dedication to hands-on experience.

Lynette Sheridan Burns, in "A reflective approach to teaching journalism," embodies many of the same themes. Her article "considers how professionals' think by doing' and provides a theoretical rational for reflective practice as a model for teaching journalism."

(5) Burns contends that a "'lived' experience provided by a problem-based pedagogy develops confidence and a sense of competence in students."

Her model for journalism education involves students encountering 'problems' that might typically occur to journalists in the field (similar to the 'problems' *Missourian* reporters face when trying to get their stories). "Discussion and identification of the problem are used to identify and test what the students know and what they need to know. They then devise a plan of action to be followed and must also negotiate larger questions of public interest and the ethical implications of pursuing the story." (12) In other words, what *Missourian* students have been doing for some time.

Burns concludes that "by focusing on the decision-making processes used by journalists, rather than providing models of best practice, this approach encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviors." Further, Burns concludes that a "reflective" or experienced-based approach "offers students an obvious answer to the questions 'Why do we need to learn this information?' and 'What does what I am doing in school have to do with the real world?'" (12)

The dangers of the experiential (or "reflective") approach to pedagogy are made clear in Susan Greenberg's *Theory and Practice in Journalism Education* (2007). If one does

not pay special attention to the theoretical lessons learned from the practicum, a valuable portion of the education is lost.

By the time of Greenberg's writing, the experiential philosophy had taken deep root in traditional journalism education.

"The experiential learning cycle consists of four main stages," she explains, "*Concrete experience* (carrying out a core skill), followed by *reflective observation* (talking or writing about doing it), *abstract conceptualization* or theory-building (thinking about how reflection will affect how you do it) followed by active *experimentation* and a repetition of concrete experience."

Greenberg's analysis suggests while much of contemporary journalism education excels in the first and second of the four stages, much work is elided in the third and fourth.

"As in other areas of professional education, there is constant debate about whether and how to make university teaching relevant to the job market," she writes. (299). In citing an American Journalism Review survey, Greenberg identifies ambivalence among journalism educators as to how much 'theory' should accompany 'practice-based journalism'.

"Too much theory has a tendency to bog down students, create a sort of paralysis and kill off their enthusiasm," she quotes one respondent as saying, while another responds, "Tutors relying [only] on their own professional experience [may] teach students the routines and practices they are familiar with, without making clear how and why those practices are open to debate. Undergraduate courses must offer more than just training." (300).

I intend in my paper to use the experiential theory of pedagogy as a foundation for its study of the Missouri Method in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular, I will pay attention on how *better* to give Missouri students more meaningful experiences, how *better* to facilitate reflective discussion of what those experiences can teach them, and how *best* to balance theory-based and practice-based education in what for some students amounts to a vocational school. All of this will be done in the context of shifting media patterns and new technology that require new methods of experiential teaching.

## Works Cited:

Anderson, C.W.; Glaisyer, Tom; Smith, Jason and Rothfeld Marika. "Shaping 21st Century Journalism," a report for the **New America Foundation**, October, 2011.

Andresen, Lee; Boud, David; and Cohen, Ruth. "Experience Based learning." First published in **Understanding Adult Education and Training**. Second Edition. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000. pp. 225-239.

Burns, Lynette Sheridan. "A reflective approach to teaching journalism." *Art Design & Communication in Higher Education*. Vol. 3, No. 1, 2004.

Castaneda, Laura, Sheila Murphy, and Heather Jane Hether. "Teaching Print, Broadcast, And Online Journalism Concurrently: A Case Study Assessing A Convergence Curriculum." *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* 60.1 (2005): 57-70. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 17 Sept. 2012.

Dailey, Larry, Lori Demo, and Mary Spillman. "The Convergence Continuum: A Model For Studying Collaboration Between Media Newsrooms." *Atlantic Journal Of Communication* 13.3 (2005): 150-168. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 17 Sept. 2012.

Dickson, Tom. Mass Media Education in the 21st Century. Lawrence Erlbaum Publishing. Mahwah, New Jersey, 2000.

de Figueiredo, Antonio Dias, Patrão Carla. "Realizing McLuhan's Dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom." *Understanding Media Today*, 2011.

Fenwick, Alexandra, "Robot Journalism." *Columbia Journalism Review*, April 19, 2010.  
<[http://www.cjr.org/the\\_news\\_frontier/robot\\_journalism\\_and\\_the\\_futur.php?page=all](http://www.cjr.org/the_news_frontier/robot_journalism_and_the_futur.php?page=all)>

Greenberg, Susan. "Theory and Practice in Journalism Education." *Journal of Media Practice*. Vol. 8, No. 3, 2007. pp. 289-303.

Kolb, David A. Experiential Learning. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1984.

Jenkins, Henry. Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Journalism Education in the 21st Century. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2009.

Lewis, Michael. "J-School Ate My Brain." *The New Republic*. July, 1993. pp. 5

Parisi, Peter. "Critical Studies, The Liberal Arts, And Journalism Education." *Journalism Educator* 46.4 (1992): 4-13. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 17 Sept. 2012.

Pavlik, John Vernon. Journalism and New Media. Columbia University Press, New York, New York. 2001.

Pulitzer, Joseph. "The College of Journalism." *North American Review*, May, 1904.

Seidman, Irving. Interviewing as Qualitative Research. Teachers College Press, New York, New York, 1998.

Thelen, Gil. "Convergence is Coming." *Quill Magazine*. July 2002.

"Self-Study Report for Accreditation in Journalism and Mass Communications."  
Submitted to the *Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications* by The Missouri School of Journalism. Columbia, Missouri, 2010.

Weinberg, Steve. **A Journalism of Humanity**. University of Missouri Press, Columbia, MO, 2008.

## PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS

### Tensions Within Journalism Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

#### **Introduction**

A revolution in a trade necessitates a revolution in the schools that profess to teach it. This is no less true of journalism than any other. In the past decade and more, the field of journalism has undergone radical and irreversible changes. Mass layoffs have affected nearly all U.S. journalistic publications; newsrooms [contracted](#) by more than 30 percent between 2000 and 2010, according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, and the trend shows no indication of slowing. At the same time, new, web-only publications, such as *ProPublica*, *Politico* and others have sprung up. Unencumbered by the burden and baggage of a decades-old print operation, these publications have carved new niches for themselves, and with them the possibility of a new, sustainable business model.

The role of journalists, too, has changed irrevocably. "We print it - you read it," was the succinct way that Bob Ingle of the San Jose Mercury News described the old relationship to readers, as reported in the [Columbia Journalism Review](#). But with the rise of user-generated media and the nearly limitless media choices the web provides, this relationship has been sorely tested. In the aftermath, new roles for journalists have emerged: that of a social media coordinator, full-time aggregator or professional blogger. Journalists today often find themselves moderating and facilitating community conversations, rather than creating them.

The journalist of tomorrow will need to use skills to perform tasks that the journalist of yesterday would hardly recognize. It is the job of a journalism school to prepare students to perform those tasks. The Missouri School of Journalism, along with most other schools, has in the past decade introduced several changes to their curriculum to meet these new challenges. Specifically, they have set up new “convergence” concentrations to teach students a variety of storytelling techniques, moved to emphasize the website portion of their various news publications, and invested considerable capital in modernizing their facilities, complete with new computers, state-of-the-art editing software, and audio, photo and video equipment.

But how have students and editors received these changes? Are more fundamental changes necessary? And can journalism schools, particularly the Missouri School of Journalism, stay true to their foundational principles in the face of a rising tide?

### **Background of Missouri School of Journalism**

The Missouri School of Journalism was founded in 1908, as the world’s first journalism school, and it quickly developed for itself an “experiential” model of education. Students would primarily learn by doing, and several laboratory publications, not least of which the still-running Columbia *Missourian*, were set up to provide students the experience of working in a real newsroom. In this, the Missouri School of Journalism’s founder, Walter Williams, took the advice of Joseph Pulitzer, which he set down in an 1904 article for *North Atlantic Review* entitled “The College of Journalism”. In it, he contends that all necessary skills for a journalist can be taught; journalists need not be “born” as such. His essay belies several of the tensions that have been present in

journalism education from their start and now see new life in the age of the Internet.

(Pulitzer)

Pulitzer compared the profession of journalism to that of law or medicine, noting that “The lawyer learns nothing at college except the theory of the law, its principles and some precedents... Nor does the doctor learn to practice at the medical school ... After leaving college he must work in the hospitals to acquire the art of practically applying his knowledge.”

Pulitzer then proposed a journalism school to act as a similar sort of teaching hospital, giving students real-world experience while still in college and cultivating the instincts and news-gathering abilities of students so that they may be better equipped to come out of university on a truly professional level.

At the same time, Pulitzer proposed an ambitious and rigorous liberal arts education for journalism students, including instruction in a foreign language, the physical sciences, statistics, political science, economics, literature, the law, and ethical philosophy.

It will be seen that the Missouri School of Journalism has followed Pulitzer’s advice rather closely and with considerable success. The “teaching hospital” model of journalism education has now been practiced at the University of Missouri for over 100 years, and it has spread to other journalism schools to become a sort of standard.

In an provocative [open letter](#) sent out on August 3, 2012, several leading funders of journalism education, including Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation, Linda Shoemaker of the Brett Family Foundation, and Mike Philipps of the Scripps Howard Foundation and others, wrote that journalism schools must keep up with the changing



pace of digital technology, and that the “teaching hospital” model of pedagogy offers “great potential” in doing so. (Netwon, et. al)

The Missouri School of Journalism, has, of course, pursued this model since its inception. But the “teaching hospital” was only one half of Pulitzer’s prescription. The other involved a rigorous, if eclectic, overview of the liberal arts and sciences to cultivate what Pulitzer called “the critical faculty.”

### **Vocational School or Liberal Arts?**

Pulitzer's prescriptions bring to light a foundational controversy in the field of journalism education, one that the pressures of a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum have brought to the fore. To what extent is a journalism school a vocational school, such as a law school or a medical school, and to what extent should it be interested in providing students with a well-rounded liberal arts education, such as a major in philosophy or literature would provide?

The structure and content of a journalism school can betray to which side they fall: no journalism school can focus solely on vocational training or liberal arts, but the time they spend with each can provide a hint as to where they stand on the importance of each. For schools such as Columbia University or the University of California, Berkeley, which do not offer undergraduate degrees in journalism and instead offer a master’s program (one year for Columbia, two for Berkeley), the choice is clear: skills must trump the liberal arts, which a master’s student likely has already received during the undergraduate experience. But for undergraduates, how far should liberal arts go?

Thus far, the Missouri School of Journalism has hewn to Pulitzer's recommendations rather closely, but the proliferation of new roles in which young journalists must be trained is throwing Pulitzer's time-honored formula into question.

In September 2012, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications voted to reduce the total number of non-journalism courses accredited schools must require their undergraduates to take from 80 to 72. This reflected a greater need for flexibility on the part of accredited schools, said Doug Anderson, Dean of the Pennsylvania State University College of Communications and Vice President of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. The standards will go into effect for the 2013-2014 academic year (Anderson).

In early 2011, Anderson said, the council sent a survey to the administrators of 109 accredited journalism schools. What returned, he said, was a "crescendo of people strongly advocating the liberalization (of curricula) for convergence purposes."

"Primarily," Anderson said, "they (the administrators) thought the 80 credits with a minimum of 65 in liberal arts and sciences was too rigid and lacked flexibility for students to take a minor in an area outside of the liberal arts and sciences."

Anderson was quick to point out that the reduction of required non-journalism credits was merely a minimum, and that schools are free to require their students to take 80 or even 90 non-journalism credits if they so desire. (Anderson)

Marianne Barrett, a senior associate dean at the Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University and a member of the accrediting council, said the changes were "a consideration of the changing complexity and changing demands that are being put on journalists." (Barrett)

The Missouri School of Journalism's own self-study report for accreditation in journalism and mass communications acknowledged the emphasis that would have to be placed on technical courses focused on new media. The 2011 report described the reforms thus: "We [have] dramatically reduced the number of courses from outside Journalism that we disallow, enabling students to more easily complete minors or double majors in areas such as information technology or education." (Missouri 25)

The report also described a shift in focus toward technology-based training.

"The faculty last spring (2010) also voted to dramatically revise the curriculum in an attempt to keep pace with rapid changes in the media industry," the report said. "Since the last accrediting visit, it added a new Emphasis Area in Convergence Journalism and reshaped the old News-Editorial program into a new one called Print and Digital News."

Many editors, however, are fearful that liberal arts are slipping away from journalism education. Glenn Gilbert, the executive editor of *The Oakland Press* in Michigan, said he's a "big believer" in the liberal arts as a method for getting students to think critically and react to new news stories. (Gilbert)

"The technical end of it should be a very small part of the total education," Gilbert said. "Some students, for instance, graduate without ever having read the classics. I took a novels class that included Dickens; I took a Shakespeare class. I thought everyone did that." (Gilbert)

Though Gilbert graduated from a journalism program in the 1970s, his views echo differently in both "new" and "old" media newsrooms. Margaret Freivogel, who helped found the *St. Louis Beacon*, an online-only metropolitan publication, in 2008, said she values the "fundamental thinking" skills that a liberal arts education can offer.

“The specific skills of how you tell [a] story are probably easier to learn if you have a fundamental idea of what kind of understanding you have to have in the first place, rather than the other way around,” she said. (Freivogel)

Those subtle skills, of finding holes in a story, of constructing incisive and penetrating questions and of concocting a well-supported narrative can come from a rigorous liberal education.

“Depth of knowledge and depth of thinking: that’s what’s fundamentally important,” Freivogel said. “These days, it’s very nice if somebody can shoot video, and they’re conversant in social media, but those are all tools. They can be important, but what’s really important is the substance of what’s being communicated. If you don’t have that, you don’t have anything.” (Freivogel)

But even though editors recognize and value the critical thinking that comes from a liberal arts education, many schools feel pressure to de-emphasize liberal arts training to keep up with the flood of technology journalists are now expected to master.

George Kennedy, a professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism, has keenly felt the pressures of a multimedia world.

“I am a conservative when it comes to accrediting standards, and so I have always regretted it as those standards have been eroded over the years to allow an increasingly larger percentage of an undergrad time to be spent in the specialty, that is, in journalism, as opposed to what the university has to offer,” Kennedy said, noting that in recent years, the school has “taken advantage of every loophole that the accrediting agency has offered to include journalism and not non-journalism electives.” (Kennedy)

Kennedy mentioned that the Missouri School of Journalism recently changed down its proportion of non-journalism courses to journalism courses from 75 percent and 25 percent to 67 percent and 33 percent. Also, Kennedy said, the number of hours required to receive a bachelor's has increased from 120 to 123-126, and that extra class or two has been devoted to journalism credits. (Kennedy, Missouri)

This erosion of a liberal arts curriculum is a natural response not only to the increasing demands of employers, but, indeed, of the students themselves. Kennedy referred to “a great deal of pressure, some of it generated by the industry, some by the students themselves, to increase the level of skills training in order to give our graduates a competitive advantage.” (Kennedy)

And the limited amount of time undergraduates get (most want to graduate in four years) also exerts a downward pressure, with journalism schools often scrambling to fit as much instruction into that time as possible.

Karen Mitchell, a convergence professor at the Missouri School of Journalism described the pressure thus: “The industry is asking us to teach the students more, which we're happy to do. But you can't teach them much more and still get them out of school in four years. On top of everything else they're asking us ... ‘Can you teach them all these multimedia skills?’ I can't get them through school in four years if you want all these things.” (Mitchell)

She added: “If college is still, generally speaking, set up to be four years of a person's life, you simply cannot get the same amount of material into that four year timespan. If you want video, audio, and photo and text, and you want a highly rigorous liberal arts education, that's a bit unrealistic.”

Kennedy was quick to note that many other journalism schools have pursued a similar de-emphasis of liberal arts in favor of technical training, and that the Missouri School of Journalism, on the whole, has kept a healthy balance of technical and vocational training.

“It’s all a compromise,” he said. “A lot of professional journalists who didn’t go to journalism school don’t understand that, and don’t realize that in an accredited program, two-thirds of the program is outside of journalism. You probably get a broader liberal arts curriculum than you do as an engineering major or even an English major.” (Kennedy)

Yet the tides are unmistakably shifting away from a rigorous, classics-based education for undergraduate journalists and toward a curriculum heavy in technical skills, with liberal arts left in so far as time will allow. Kennedy suggested a solution in the Missouri School of Journalism’s “four plus one” program, wherein undergraduate journalism students stay on for an extra year to get a master’s degree in journalism as well. This, Kennedy said, would allow students more latitude to pursue a substantive minor, or even a second concurrent bachelor’s, and then come back for “a solid year of immersion in the skills and the concepts of journalism.”

Other schools have mitigated these pressures differently. The University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications requires students to either double major or take a second concentration, said Professor Meenakshi Gigi Durham of the Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Twenty-four of 120 required credits form the core of this second concentration, with forty forming the core journalism requirement. This, Durham said, gives students more guidance and direction when

choosing their non-journalism credits, and puts them into a better position to become specialized journalists (Durham, Iowa).

The University of Oklahoma Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communications has recently required undergraduates to take a second concentration as well, according to Associate Dean for Academic Affairs David Craig.

“We found that a lot of students were skating over the non journalism classes. Some of our students were just taking a little bit of a lot of things, so we required that we require a minor, to give them a bit of focus,” he said. (Craig)

Craig acknowledged that “the trend seems to be toward more courses in the major,” but he said he was “not sure what the alternative would be.”

“If you went to the extreme of getting rid of the liberal arts element altogether, then you’re really turning into a trade school, and the effect for journalism would not be positive,” he said.

However, he said, “As students get more casual with technology, I don’t think there’ll be a need to indefinitely raise the number of hours to cover technological skills. The tools are getting simpler to use over time, and even though there will be new ones, I don’t think we’ll ever expect students to learn all the tools out there.

Former Missouri School of Journalism undergraduate Chris Spurlock, who graduated in May 2011 and now works as an infographic design editor at the Huffington Post, acknowledged the pressures to learn new technologies he feels in his job, but said it would be “wrong-headed” to overly de-emphasize the liberal arts. (Spurlock)

“I don’t think the journalism school is a trade school program, and I don’t think it should become that,” he said. “I feel it in my job as well. I trained as a journalist, and now I feel my job is more of a technology job than a journalism job.”

Spurlock said that a major value of a liberal arts education was the ability to communicate with the average person. The danger of moving too far away from a liberal arts base, he said, was that journalists might find themselves lost in the world of data and computer programming and forget that their final product is meant to be consumed by laymen.

“I don’t think it’s a runaway train at this point, but I think they (university administrators) need to be conscious of it,” Spurlock said of the trend away from liberal arts. “I think they’re right on the border of taking a step too far.”

Former Missouri School of Journalism graduate student Deniz Koray, who now works as a freelancer, said the Missouri School of Journalism’s current balance between journalism courses and non-journalism courses was “fairly reasonable,” but questioned the wisdom of cutting further liberal arts classes.

“I would question the added value of that,” he said. (Koray)

Heidi White, assistant state editor for the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, which often takes Missouri School of Journalism graduates, questioned the value of many technical courses now offered.

“You can’t teach someone reporting skills on the job or copy editing skills on the job,” she said. “Those are critical thinking skills. But it’s much easier to teach someone to shoot video or audio. Those are learnable skills, whereas, you can’t really go back and teach them how to ask a well-thought-out question. They’re fundamentally different



skills. It's much more important to have a liberal arts basis than to have a class on how to shoot video. That's a great bonus, but it's not as crucial because you can teach someone that skill in a lot shorter time. Your editor at your first job is not going to sit there and teach you what questions to ask, or the history of the politics you'll need to cover for the election that year." (White)

Ultimately, White said, regardless of liberal arts or vocational instruction, "The people who are going to be good journalists are the people who are taking it upon themselves to learn outside the classroom."

### **What is Convergence?**

The pressure away from liberal arts exerts itself not only vertically, but horizontally as well. Though students and educators feel the need to spend more time training students in the tools of the craft, the proliferation of those tools and the sheer number of tasks modern journalists are expected to perform have tended to create a system where skills are spread rather thin.

Enter convergence. In 1997, the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas threw down the gauntlet and began an overhaul of its curriculum. The new curriculum emphasized cross-platform, multi-disciplinary journalism, teaching students to be video reporters one day, print reporters the next, and photographers later in the week. As its website described it: "Time was, a news reporter worked for a newspaper, broadcast station or magazine. No more. Today's news reporter is likely to deliver the same story different ways: for print, broadcast *and* online audiences."

The goal was to create a sort of all-in-one journalist, one who could arrive at an assignment with several pieces of equipment in a backpack (hence the phrase “backpack journalism”) and produce a multimedia package that tells a rich, complete story; or, at the very least, to produce graduates with at least a surface proficiency in a variety of media.

In many respects, the journalism education community has been successful in this. The Missouri School of Journalism’s convergence program, begun in 2005, has grown rapidly. And there is no doubt that convergence is responding to a very real need on the part of the editors of news organizations.

Gilbert, when describing his ideal candidate, referred to a “four-tool toolbox.”

“Specifically, what I look for as an essential today, which I didn’t even five years ago, is the ability to shoot still and video photography. That’s absolutely essential, in addition to the ability to write and report,” he said, adding that adeptness with social media (a large Facebook and Twitter following, for example) is the fourth tool.

Bill Nichols, a managing editor at *Politico*, agreed, saying that students, at the very least, must have “dipped a toe” in the myriad media by which reporters can tell a story. (Nichols)

“You have to be comfortable and familiar with technology, you have to be conversant with the world of video,” he said. “We’re not looking for documentarians, but you have to have worked in that world and have knowledge of that world.”

This leaves an undergraduate with limited time with a difficult choice: Should one gain as broad a foundation in as many different media as possible, or quickly choose an appealing one and gain mastery over it?

In many ways, this question mirrors an older debate in journalism education over whether to encourage students to specialize in a particular field of reporting or report on a wide array of subjects. Today, however, students must choose whether to specialize in a particular form of “journalism” (this can include classical newspaper reporting, database reporting, videography, photography) or spread one’s time learning as many different skills as possible.

Though editors are certainly happy with a young reporter who is willing to do it all, many acknowledge the impossibility of the task. Nichols acknowledged the necessity of familiarity with many platforms, but he regarded the idea that the newsroom of the future will be full of do-it-all reporters as “silly.”

Mitchell, too, acknowledged the tensions inherent in a converged curriculum.

“It’s a depth versus breadth situation,” she said. “We’re sending our convergence students when they graduate with far more skills, in terms of breadth, than print and digital [students]. But what they’re missing is any depth in one area.”

Brian Storm, a graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism who launched his own multimedia content company called MediaStorm in 2005, went further. He derided “the idea that one reporter can do it all” and instead encouraged students to specialize quickly in a particular form of storytelling. To Storm, freshman and sophomore years are the time for exposure to different media: by junior year, the student ought to know what sort of journalism they would like to produce.

“It’s a really, really bad model,” he said of the all-in-one journalist, “It’s setting us up to do incredibly mediocre journalism. We should just stop it. ... This idea of a one-man band, I’m totally against that. It’s not something we’re doing because it makes

storytelling better, it's because it's economically focused: how can we do journalism for as little money as possible.” (Storm)

Instead, Storm said, students should learn to work in teams, each proficient in a particular media, to put together a holistic package. He also advised convergence students, and journalism students in general, to shy away from “day-to-day, highly perishable, throwaway storytelling that throws away a lot of resources and doesn't make anyone smarter,” instead advising a focus on “in-depth, robust storytelling that matters.”

For this, he said, the undergraduate's capstone experience is key. A student, he said, must use the capstone project to highlight the depth of skill he or she received in undergraduate school. The jack of all trades approach, Storm said, “might get you a job, but it's not going to create great journalism.”

Koray agreed, and he pointed out some problems specific to the Missouri School of Journalism's convergence department.

“I'm not a huge fan of the convergence program, because it doesn't give you mastery of any one skill, and there is no opportunity to develop a relationship with a specific media outlet, so you get an idea of the culture and expectations of KBIA, or the *Missourian*, but by the time you get to understand it, you've already moved on to a different publication,” he said.

“I don't think that there's a need to master eight or nine different forms of communicating with the public. It's almost impossible,” he added.

Amrita Jayakumar, a former Missouri School of Journalism convergence student who now works as a web producer at the *Washington Post*, said Storm has a point about the difficulty of producing quality work as a jack of all trades.

“Even as a convergence student, it was tough,” Jayakumar said of mastering a variety of different media, “I can’t say I’m so good at photo or so good at video. You can’t multi-task. But at the same time you have to know how everything works.”

(Jayakumar)

She agreed also with Koray, and said that skipping around from publication to publication “doesn’t really give an institutional understanding.”

However, Jayakumar said she found the convergence program at Missouri to be helpful, saying she took some “amazing” classes and was really happy to have tried all the different media offered.

“I did learn skills that even if I don’t directly use them in my job, I can use them in my own time,” she said.

Joe Yerardi, a data journalist at the San Antonio Express-News, and Koray both suggested students specialize as soon as possible.

“If a student, even an 18-year-old freshman, has an idea of what kind of journalism they want to do when they graduate, beyond a few required courses, let them do it,” he said. Yerardi decried schools that force students to take “technical classes that don’t help you,” and agreed with Koray when he said “I don’t know what benefit there is in 15 percent core competency in every field.” (Yerardi)

For Fitz McAden, the executive editor of the *Island Packet* of Beaufort County, South Carolina, which employs about six former Missouri graduates, the tension between specialization and generalization is largely a large-newspaper vs. small-newspaper debate.

“Our newspaper here, you have got to do a lot of things,” he said. “It’s difficult, with the number of people we have — we only have eight reporters — to specialize in one thing or another and never have to be bothered with the other things.” (McAden)

In a larger newspaper, McAden said, such diversification is possible.

McAden advised students to be jacks-of-all trades in university, get an initial job, and learn what skills and activities they best like doing.

“You’ll have a better sense once you get a job of what you’re good at,” McAden said. “Sometimes it can take years, it really can. I’m not sure a lot of people really know, after four years, what they’re good at and what they want to specialize in.”

Other editors, however, recommended specialization as soon as possible, and students such as Spurlock agreed.

“I think there is a danger in people getting trapped in trying to know everything in convergence,” he said. “I think what I interpreted this convergence program to be was to give everyone a taste of everything and ask them to pick the flavor they like best... if people get that message, like I did, then they’ll be fine, but if they get caught up in the jack-of-all trades, I think that’s where the dangerous territory is.”

He added: “I don’t think there’s a good definition of what a convergence graduate is.”

To test students’ preparedness with multimedia reporting as they enter their beginning reporting class at the Missouri School of Journalism, a questionnaire was distributed to the reporting class of the Missouri School of Journalism on September 17, 2012, four weeks into the semester. The questionnaire asked students to qualitatively rate their comfort and skill level in four journalistic practices: reporting, writing, multimedia

and critical thinking. The questionnaire was anonymous and had 80 respondents. The reporting class consists largely of juniors in the undergraduate journalism program, with a few first-semester masters' students. A sample questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

On the whole, the students of the reporting class at the Missouri School of Journalism expressed a high degree of confidence in writing and critical thinking and a low degree of confidence in multimedia skills. In part this is due to the fact that the students are largely juniors, but the fact that many who expressed uncertainty regarding multimedia had taken an introductory convergence course ought to give an observer pause.

Students nearly unanimously rated their writing skills highly, with only four students expressing uncertainty regarding their writing skills. Many students who rated their writing skills highly expressed difficulty with Associated Press style, but this can be understood as an effect of the fact that the questionnaire was distributed during the fourth week of the reporting class. Many, if not most, of the students had never experienced reporting prior to the beginning of the reporting class.

Students also expressed little to no difficulty in critical thinking, rating their skills very highly. Many attributed their critical thinking skills to English classes they took as freshmen and sophomores. Others cited a critical reviewing class offered at the Missouri School of Journalism, and still others cited "college experience" as a factor improving their critical thinking skills.

Students expressed the most uncertainty regarding multimedia skills, with 46 out of 80 respondents rating their comfort and skill levels as weak. It should be noted that

most of the respondents had not yet completed their multimedia component of the reporting class, which is a required short video or audio slideshow.

Many of the students who expressed uncertainty regarding their multimedia skills had taken J2150, a lower-level course that the Missouri School of Journalism began requiring all journalism students to take in 2011.

“I’ve taken J2150, so I just have a basic knowledge and skill set regarding multimedia,” wrote one.

“I know the very basics from J2150, but that’s about it,” wrote another.

“[I’m] a little uncomfortable [with multimedia skills], wrote a third. “I know a bit after J2150, but only basic skills.”

In many ways, these responses reflect the uncertainty and mutability surrounding a convergence curriculum. J2150 is an introductory course that attempts to introduce students to still technology, video technology and audio technology, and the responses would seem to indicate that while the course does provide students with some basic experience in multimedia (“the only experience I have with [multimedia] is from J2150 - I still have a lot to learn,” wrote one student who rated his or her multimedia skills as “low”), students are exiting the class without very much confidence in their knowledge of multimedia.

Several students who rated their multimedia skills as poor expressed a distaste for the medium, with one writing bluntly: “I don’t like it, and I’m not comfortable with it. Dislike!” and another writing “Multimedia is not my strongest point, and I don’t particularly like it.”



On the other hand, several students who rated their multimedia skills highly had taken further classes in the convergence curriculum, which would suggest that the curriculum after the J2150 class is giving students a higher level of confidence.

“I feel very confident,” wrote one of his or her multimedia skills. “I’ve taken convergence reporting and am on the community outreach team.”

Others who rated their multimedia skills as “comfortable” were broadcast or photojournalism majors, and had taken intensive courses in their specialty of choice.

“I handle multimedia well,” wrote another, “As a broadcast journalist, I am used to using programs and tools.”

Another student who rated his or her multimedia skills as four out of five had taken a photojournalism class and a video art class in an effort to improve those skills.

One reason students may be expressing uncertainty after taking J2100 is that the class attempts to give students an introduction to three different types of media in one semester. The School of Journalism should review the curriculum of J2150 (a class which itself is in its infancy), with a particular focus on giving students a level of comfort before they leave the class.

The school might split the class into three, each new class giving a majority focus on one of the types of media (still photography, videography or audio recording), while giving a basic grounding in the other two.

Conversely, the reporting class itself might incorporate more multimedia components into its required objectives for students. At present, the reporting class requires students to complete a single multimedia project, typically an audio slideshow. Another required multimedia project, along with further instruction, might do well to

complement the students' text reporting skills (which forms the core of the reporting class), and allow them to exit with a greater degree of familiarity with multimedia skills. As newspapers continue to shift to online platforms and require their reporters to shoot and edit video in addition to writing text stories, an additional multimedia project would go far in preparing students for the tasks that await them at a daily newspaper.

Convergence at the Missouri School of Journalism has had a brief history. It was originally set to be a separate concentration alongside more traditional concentrations such as print/digital, broadcast, and photojournalism. In 2010, the university expanded the number of specific concentrations a journalism student could pursue from six to twenty-five, according to the 2011 self-study report that the Missouri School of Journalism submitted to the accrediting council. This was done, Kennedy said, in the spirit of allowing students maximum choice to generalize or specialize as they saw fit. The result has become a curriculum more free-flowing, a type of choose-your-own adventure that has become increasingly removed from the rigidity of past curricula.

“[Missouri School of Journalism Dean] Dean Mills' inclination is toward the highest possible degree of freedom for students. My inclination is toward a more structured environment at the undergraduate level,” Kennedy said. “I think our curriculum provides a fairly reasonable balance between those two.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

One can no longer deny that a vast and structural change has occurred in the field and practice of journalism. Schools that teach the craft have responded, on the whole, with forward-thinking programs to prepare students for the uncertainty of the future. In

particular, the Missouri School of Journalism has set up a more “converged” curriculum offering the maximum freedom for students to learn the skills they value most, while easing back on some liberal arts requirements.

The school has also pursued new, novel classes, such as “Journalism and Chaos,” taught by former Kansas City *Star* business reporter Randall Smith, which teaches students the fundamentals of the journalism business model and expects students to come up with a full-fledged business plan for a new journalism enterprise as their final project.

The Missouri School of Journalism’s teaching lab, the Columbia *Missourian*, features, as of 2011, a “community outreach team,” for which students, as part of a class, act as social media facilitators for the *Missourian*.

These additions echo well the requests of some editors, such as Nichols, who would like journalism schools to focus more upon the entrepreneurial side of journalism, or Gilbert, who prized Twitter literacy over many other skills.

Other prescriptions have yet to be fulfilled. Nichols said he would like to see schools teach a class that focused on “writing for the web.” Too often, he said, the newspapers attached to journalism schools merely post their metro daily-style articles online, which does not take advantage of the web’s possibilities.

“I do think students have to learn the rhythms and the ups and downs and peaks and valleys and sort of how to manage the news cycle of the web,” he said. “You could create a class that could help instill those skills. Look at what’s trending. What’s the big enterprise piece we want to develop that seems smart in this environment and we can lead within the morning?”

Freivogel said she would like to see greater ethics training in journalism schools, particularly regarding issues new to the web-age.

“For example, the whole question of expressing your opinion versus, for lack of a better word, “objective reporting”. Questions of where funding comes from in a newspaper, and how you draw a line of that. How do you deal with sources? When is information verified enough to publish? All these questions look much different in the digital age than they did 15 years ago,” she said.

This suggestion could entail a separate class, entitled “the ethics of the web,” or an addition to already existing ethics classes.

Freivogel also suggested more “cross-pollination” between journalism schools and other departments, particularly for master’s students. The Missouri School of Journalism offers a dual master’s in journalism and law degree, and that trend could expand to include dual masters’ in journalism and computer science (similar to what Columbia University has done). The 2010 accreditation report mentioned a partnership with the College of Engineering to allow students to pursue information technology courses as part of their non-journalism course requirement. This trend could be expanded to offer a double major.

For students, the path forward remains a bit more obscure. Pulled in two directions by the demands of a classical liberal education and a fast-changing media environment, and confronted with a smorgasbord of options as to how and in what technology to specialize, students should try as many storytelling techniques as they can during their first two years, with a clear idea of what they would like to specialize in by their junior year.

Spurlock said he would like to see the school “make the message a little louder, the message of try everything out and pick something, and pick it quickly. While they tell people that being undecided for a while is OK, being undecided forever is not.”

This suggestion dovetails well with Durham’s observation that as the curriculum shifts from rigidity to fluidity, advising takes on a more and more important role. “Advising is huge,” she said, “when you don’t have sequences.”

Jayakumar agreed, and said, “It’s better to have an overarching sense of what you’re doing.” She advised the schools keep the original tracks offered with just a bit more flexibility. “They should give grad school flexibility in the undergraduate experience with emphasis areas intact,” she said.

This would involve a curriculum balanced between the Missouri School of Journalism’s pre-2010 brand of curriculum (with six rigid tracks) and its post-2010 curriculum (with twenty-five tracks that can be easily modified).

In addition, the Missouri School of Journalism would do well to give undergraduates more focus while taking their non-journalism pre-requisite classes. Requiring the students to take their pre-requisites in a particular course track, perhaps even requiring a minor, would help direct students toward a more focused non-journalism base, which editors said was desirable.

A broad-based liberal arts education is still valued by many editors, but in the future it may fall more and more to students to read the classics in an extracurricular setting. While the Missouri School of Journalism is right to partially shift its curricular focus to technical skill, particularly in light of the proliferation of new technology, there is a limit to how much benefit can be derived from that. The Missouri School of

Journalism should not cut any more of its non-journalism requirements in the liberal arts, but instead should seek to guide and focus its students' liberal arts experience.

While headed in the right direction, the Missouri School of Journalism's convergence department could benefit from more focus. Specifically, the convergence department should come up with a list of skills for which all convergence students should be fluent by the end of their education. The department would also benefit from allowing students to form relationships with a specific media outlet – in essence, for them to choose their medium within convergence with a minimum of interference. This way, students can form an institutional relationship with a specific medium which they appreciate, be it web, radio, print, or another, while also learning the basic ideas surrounding the production of other media. This would also remove a problem that some students have of over-generalization. Editors want reporters with depth more than breadth, but they also want basic familiarity with media that aren't in the student's specialty. A more focused approach to convergence could provide that.

Above all, to make the most of their journalism school experience, students should pursue their education with an eye toward the web and the future and an eye toward the classic literature of the past. Though the journalism world has seen a cataclysm of late, editors are still hungry for smart, enterprising reporters. And they're relying on the journalism school of tomorrow to provide them.

## References and Works Cited

- Anderson, Doug. Personal interview. September 13, 2012.
- Barrett, Marianne. Personal interview. September 13, 2012.
- Craig, David. Personal interview. September 10, 2012.
- Durham, Meenakshi Gigi. Personal interview. September 10, 2012.
- Freivogel, Margaret. Personal interview. August 10, 2012.
- Gilbert, Glenn. Personal interview. July 2, 2012.
- Jayakumar, Amrita. Personal interview. September 9, 2012.
- Kennedy, George. Personal interview. August 29, 2012.
- Koray, Deniz. Personal interview. September 17, 2012.
- McAden, Fitz. Personal interview. September 11, 2012.
- Missouri School of Journalism Undergraduate Student Handbook. 2011.  
<<http://www.journalism.missouri.edu>>
- Newton, Eric; Bell, Clark; Ross, Bob; Philipps, Mike; Shoemaker, Linda; Haas, David. "An Open Letter to America's University Presidents." *Knight Foundation*.  
< <http://www.knightfoundation.org/press-room/other/open-letter-americas-university-presidents/>>
- Mitchell, Karen. Personal interview. August 17, 2012.
- Nichols, Bill. Personal interview. June 6, 2012.
- Pulitzer, Joseph. "The College of Journalism." *North American Review*, May, 1904.
- Rosenstiel, Tom; Mitchell, Amy. The State of the News Media 2011, *Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism*. 2011.  
<<http://stateofthemedias.org/2011/overview-2/>>
- "Self-Study Report for Accreditation in Journalism and Mass Communications."  
Submitted to the *Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications* by The Missouri School of Journalism. Columbia, Missouri, 2010.

Spurlock, Chris. Personal interview. September 11, 2012.

Shapiro, Michael. "The Newspaper That *Almost* Seized the Future." *Columbia Journalism Review*. November/December 2011.  
<[http://www.cjr.org/feature/the\\_newspaper\\_that\\_almost\\_seized\\_the\\_future.php?](http://www.cjr.org/feature/the_newspaper_that_almost_seized_the_future.php?)>

Storm, Brian. Personal interview. June 14, 2012.

University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication General Catalog.  
<<http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/registrar/catalog/liberalartsandsciences/journalismandmasscommunication/>>

Umansky, Eric. Personal interview. June 5, 2012.

White, Heidi. Personal interview. September 13, 2012.

Yerardi, Joe. Personal interview. September 8, 2012



**APPENDICES:**

- I: Revised Project Proposal
- II: Changes to original proposal
- III: Sample questionnaire
- IV: Query letter

## **APPENDIX I: REVISED PROJECT PROPOSAL**

Professional Project Proposal, by Pavan Vangipuram

### **Introduction**

A revolution in a trade necessitates a revolution in the schools that teach that trade. This adage is no less true for journalism than it is for shipbuilding, chemical engineering or agriculture. As technology continues to upend traditional journalism paradigms, it is well to consider how journalism schools, and specifically the Missouri School of Journalism, are adapting to these changes.

This professional project aims, via theoretical research and practice in journalism education, to arrive at constructive suggestions to move the Missouri School of Journalism forward in the 21st century. Much of my focus will be on the *Missourian*, as it is a major program in Missouri School of Journalism, and the one with which I am most familiar.

My coursework at the *Missourian* includes two semesters as a staff reporter and one semester as an assistant city editor. Through these experiences I have learned skills and concepts related to journalism education that would give me an experiential grounding in the philosophy of education to which the Missouri School of Journalism subscribes.

Professionally, I see myself headed to either a reporting position or a position as an educator; both are goals this project can further. This project will immerse me in the current state of journalism education and put me in direct contact with editors and

reporters working with papers who tend to take Missouri School of Journalism graduates, all of who have real-world needs. In this way, my project will familiarize me both with the world of working journalists and the world of journalism education

### **Methodology: Professional Practice and Analysis**

The practice portion of this professional project will entail working as a videographer for the *Missourian*. I will shoot and edit an average of one video per week that details how citizens of Columbia spend their summers. Through this experience, I will be able to put the theories and ideas uncovered through my research into practice. As D.A. Kolb writes in his classic study, *Experiential Learning*, “Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner.” (27) In my role both as a teacher and a learner of pedagogy, I shall be able to practice Kolb’s theories of experiential learning; to wit, I should learn through the professional practice portion of my project the rudiments of journalism pedagogy, by *practicing* and *reflecting upon my practice*.

Attendant to the practice section of my project will be a detailed record of all of my experiences as an assistant city editor, as I attempt to put the pedagogical theories behind my project into practice. I plan to practice throughout the summer semester, from the beginning of June to mid-August.

Additionally, I plan in my project to deliver two lectures to the reporting class on the importance of video skills and how to shoot basic video.

My professional analysis will have, as its final product, a rigorous analysis of the state

of the Missouri School of Journalism, and particularly the *Missourian*, as it is today, with concrete suggestions for future improvement.

This will be accomplished via interviews of the editors of newspapers that typically take Missouri School of Journalism graduates, graduates of the Missouri School of Journalism themselves, educators at other journalism schools, educators at the Missouri School of Journalism. Additionally, a questionnaire of current students will quantitatively measure how well students are learning the skills that editors need in today's newsroom.

Questions will focus upon the skills newsrooms most need from emerging journalists today, and how the Missouri School of Journalism is teaching those skills. Editors will be able to provide valuable information on the sorts of problems contemporary newsrooms face and how journalism graduates from this school are geared to meet them.

Interviews with former students now in the field will give a good perspective on what aspects of their education the former students found most useful in their professional practice. Those interviews will also be able to provide information on the parts of their journalism education that they found superfluous in their working lives. The author plans to interview five of those former students, and they will most likely work for the editors that I also interviewed.

Finally, interviews with journalism educators from other schools will inform my comparative analysis portion of my final project and give me a fuller insight into the challenges faced by journalism educators and how they are rising to meet them.

In total, I plan to conduct twenty-five in-depth interviews of a sample of the above-mentioned subjects. The sample will be chosen in such a way to ensure maximum diversity among the subjects. "Diversity," in this context will focus specifically on job

classification (copy editing, multimedia, page design, reporting, etc.) Further interviews will be conducted as necessary.

As Irving Seidman says in his classic text, Interviewing as Qualitative Research, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.” (3) These interviews will be semi-structured, as I plan to direct the interviews toward the specific topics in which I am interested; however, I will not have a rigid structure, so as to make my subjects more comfortable and more likely to spontaneously give me information I may not have otherwise gotten. As such, I plan, in my study, to make sense of the experiences the above-mentioned subjects have had in their contact with the Missouri School of Journalism.

My interviews with students will be based upon the input I receive from editors and former students. Based on where they find the Missouri School of Journalism excel or need work, I intend to ask the students whether or not they feel comfortable with specific skills the editors and former students feel as though they need. This survey-style interview will succeed the in-depth interviews of editors and former students.

My final product for my analysis portion will be able to be published in a trade publication, such as Editor & Publisher, Columbia Journalism Review, American Journalism Review, Online Journalism Review or the Poynter Institute. The project will be supervised by Missouri School of Journalism faculty members Scott Swafford, Jeanne Abbott and Andrea Heiss. These professors have experience in the experiential model of education that I am examining, and have many years of combined experience working with journalism students in a changing media environment.

## **APPENDIX II: CHANGES TO ORIGINAL PROPOSAL**

The proposal for this project went largely fulfilled with a few areas changed. My committee and I agreed that I did not possess enough video skills to successfully deliver two lectures to the reporting class. Instead, I undertook to gain a core proficiency in video reporting over the semester of my professional project, and I achieved that goal with significant improvement in my videos over the course of the semester.

Reviews of the self-study reports for accreditation did not prove as fruitful as I originally anticipated, leading those reports to form a less central part of my final report, but that deficiency was counterbalanced by two in-depth interviews with members of the accrediting council at the University of Kansas, who gave me more valuable information than the self-study report did.

I also did not find it necessary to look in-depth at the CVs of current professors, as they were not as helpful as I originally thought they would be.

Additionally, I planned to work as an Assistant City Editor during my project semester to aid in my technique, but I was not able to do so. Instead, I documented my experiential learning process as I learned to shoot and edit video in detail through my weekly reports.

Finally, my committee and I deemed 18 interviews, rather than 25, enough to come to a thorough understanding of the changes journalism education is going through.

## **APPENDIX III: EDITED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

### **1. Bill Nichols, Managing Editor, Politico:**

#### **Broadly, what do you look for when hiring?**

We do end up looking for younger journalists a lot. That's primarily because we have found, with mid-career journalists, it's a little bit of a crap-shoot trying to know if they will really be able to adapt to the velocity that we work, and I would argue any news organization has to work in this environment.

The speed thing, you've (young journalists) have never known anything else. We can completely sidestep having to teach, say a journalist in their 40s, how to do these things.

#### **To what extent should students have familiarity with all the different sorts of media platforms?**

The paradigm most journalism schools have is to give students a smattering of all kinds of skills, but the dirty little secret is that most reporters don't shoot great video.

What's essential in our organization is at least have a familiarity of different platforms and a deep understanding that journalism has to exist on as many platforms as possible.

The essentials of the craft are just as important now as they were before. Write crisply; be smart analytically, top-notch reporting skills.

In order to break through in this environment, you really have to be exceptional. You have to be comfortable and familiar with technology, you have to be conversant, with the world of video, we're not looking for documentarians, but you have to have worked in that world, and have knowledge of that world. You'll have to be on half-a-dozen platforms in a day.

Inherently, young journalists have an advantage; that's the world they live in. I think in a practical sense, if you can come out of a journalism school and say, "I've worked on the web, did web production in a class, had a class that I had to shoot video, and audio," you'll be all right.

### **Does that make traditional newsroom experience obsolete?**

I went to Indiana many years ago, and we had a five-day-a-week newspaper. From my vantage point, it's very reassuring and helpful to me to know that an applicant has had that experience in any way. Of course, I'd like to see some fantastic investigative clips, but even if you don't, and I'm persuaded that you're a bright person, it helps to have that newsroom experience.

You will have a much easier time adapting if you've had that experience. There's still elements of the trade, and we still say this, "we need a newspaper story on this" Perhaps not a terribly linear set of facts, and we need it quickly. It's funny; I think in the modern newsroom, I think there are increasing places for them: people who are facile at journalism, people who can see something in the morning and be able to quickly



assemble for it the web.

In today's world, you really need that; there's so much information coursing through the system.

I do think the obit; what can seem to a student as somewhat mindless on a student newspaper is actually very useful.

### **What about Convergence?**

The idea that we're going to have a newsroom full of print reporters/photojournalists/videographers is silly. I think someone who comes out of college at least having dipped a toe in those skills is useful. The world that any graduate goes into is a world of limited resources. If you can show you can do more than one thing, or learn to do more than one thing, that's very attractive.

People tend to come in the door here as web producers, but if they have reporting chops, we'll begin putting them on that track.

Another thing they emphasized at Indiana, and is true in other journalism schools, is some sort of exposure to the entrepreneurial paradigm that are currently at work in the field. Have an awareness of what the industry is going through.

### **What classes would you like to see offered?**

Writing for the web - on one hand, there's pushback to the idea that writing for the web is different. But I do think students have to learn the rhythms and the ups and downs and peaks and valleys and sort of how to manage the news cycle of the web. You could create a class that could help instill those skills. Look at what's trending. What's the big enterprise piece we want to develop that seems smart in this environment and we can lead within the morning? That's what we spend a lot of time trying to figure out. There's a pile of stories that we do, and to hell with the web. But there's another part where we're riding this wild bucking bronc of a news cycle and have to think, what can we do to move this story forward?

There isn't much difference between writing for print and writing for web, but as we move to handheld, that's going to change. How to target writing for that delivery system? A lot of students don't get to work very much on the web.

I find young people who come here, some can do it intuitively, but no one has a lot of experience in understanding how you maneuver through this wild new terrain.

Part is writing, part is news judgment, part is understanding technology, psychology of the web.

## **2. Eric Umansky, managing editor, ProPublica:**

### **What sort of hiring do you do? What skill sets are you looking for?**

I hire a lot of interns, and, you know, there are, I can't speak for everybody, so for us, I think the most useful people have two sets of skills: Good journalistic skills, traditional, good journalistic skills, ability to report, think critically and write well. Actually, writing cleanly and quickly is a traditional skill set, one that I think is actually more important than it ever has been. We are often trying to write very quickly, but have very few layers in editing and safeguards as we might have once had. There's more of a casual style, so more of the writer's words are going to come through, so the cleaner it is, the better it is.

### **How could journalism schools better inculcate those qualities?**

Sure, you could do it by rhetoric classes and English classes, and that's helpful. At a newspaper, first of all, there's less emphasis on writing, as there is online. On the Internet, you tend to have more of a voice. So for that very reason, people need to, the most useful thing that you could do is to have people writing along the lines of what they would write for us. In part, that is, increasingly, that's having an understanding of the vernacular of the web. Understanding the kind of tone and form that you can write on the web. Why do younger reporters have a traditional sense of writing, one of that is more traditional than those who are less young? I've found that to be the case, too.

[The Web] is a different vernacular. It's a different form. You have to understand the different form. The only way to understand it is to do it. Optimizing a headline is great, but it's still taking a very traditional form and popping a headline on it. It may not even

be writing, it could be a news application, like interactive. The notion, for example, of using other stories as sources, linking, drawing in other places.

It's about aggregation, smartly done. Realizing that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts.

### **Are journalism schools successful in this preparation?**

By and large, journalism schools are not. Then the question is what can they do? I don't know all the details, but you point out limited resources, so they have to make hard decisions.

Journalism schools are not... quite often, people when you look at their clips, have these incredibly traditional news-story clips. They're written for a medium that is increasingly under stress, and increasingly antiquated. A kinda metro-newspaper written story. That is a form, that also I think a lot of readers don't find terribly compelling. There's a natural drift or move toward writing things people read. Not all of that is to be celebrated.

If the material is really revelatory, you don't need to write all sassy, you just lay it out there. But if it's something that the facts are going to blow my mind, I don't care if I'll find the story compelling, as long as I can follow the story and it's clearly written. I see too much of the traditional story form. It is important that people can also understand a different form.

**What have you seen that has been successful?**

The thing I've seen most successful, is classes done as workshops, where you try to do what it is we're talking about. NYU has their Studio 20, where they go into a newsroom and work around various ideas How to do better "explainer" articles, like the old cliché, you learn by doing, having workshops.

You need to re-envision how city council is covered. Re-envision what it means to be a publication. It's something that news outlets are being forced to do.

**What about the Missouri School of Journalism and the *Missourian*?**

Missouri is doing itself no favors by carrying on these older models, and not forcing students to grapple with what they eventually will be faced with. The models are changing. The fact that it's experiential is great, but experiential in what?

I don't think you should have print paper. If it's losing money, what's the compelling reason? It should be something that should be thought through.

**Final thoughts?**

Good reporting, clear, compelling writing, and a sensibility for the internet. Those are the three things I look for. It's frankly, very rare to find people who have all three sets of those.

### **3. Margaret Freivogel, managing editor, St. Louis Beacon**

#### **How long have you been in operation?**

We're in our fifth year. I think we're not exactly in start-up mode but we're getting into a lot of things.

#### **Broadly, what makes a journalism student appealing?**

What makes a journalism student, hireable, by a journalism organization, but I think the whole world of journalism is in even a more fundamental revolution than that. What makes the kind of work we do still relevant and useful to people? The number of pure journalism organizations or the number of jobs available through them has shrunk pretty dramatically. The means through which people communicate news and info has expanded in all sorts of ways.

I can talk about what makes a reporter appealing to me. But the real challenge is: what are the new forms of reaching people we're going to develop, and what are the skills that are going toward that?

Take the profession of music: At one point, the conservatories were preparing musicians to play in orchestras and solo careers. The number of those jobs were far fewer than the number of graduates. It finally dawned on them that they need to have more of an entrepreneurial mindset to experiment and have meaningful careers with their music.

We're in a similar point in journalism. The basic skill set you need: Fundamental curiosity, ethical mindset, those are pretty similar to what has been taught traditionally. But the idea of how to go about doing the work is wide open right now. Part of j-school has to be how to get people to tackle that problem. It's a difficult problem because nobody inside of academia or the professional world knows where things are headed. It's not like you can see at this point where things are going, or what you'll need when you get there.

**What makes a reporter valuable to the Beacon? Do you value technical skills or a liberal arts training?**

What makes a reporter valuable to the beacon: first of all, there's a fundamental curiosity, capacity to ask questions to get somebody deeper and deeper into a subject and deeper and deeper below the surface from where you start. A j-school education can teach people do to that, but so can lots of other types. Should j-school be liberal arts or vocational? I think somewhere in there, the fundamental thinking skills are really the most important thing. It's the capacity to think about what you know and to understand what you don't know that might be important. The specific skills of how you tell that story are probably easier to learn if you have the fundamental idea of what kind of understanding you have to have in the first place than the other way around.

Occasionally, you'll have somebody who's a really facile writer, and they'll write over the holes of the story, and you may not notice that. Other times you have a reporter who's maybe not that elegant a writer but they really dig into the subject matter.

Depth of knowledge and depth of thinking: that's what's fundamentally important. These days, it's very nice if somebody can shoot video, and they're conversant in social media, but those are all tools. And they can be important, but what's really important is the substance of what's being communicated. If you don't have that, you don't have anything. That's where the idea of "first make people have a grounding in that kind of thinking and move from there" comes from.

**So you would fall on the liberal arts side?**

Yeah, I think probably so. I would say in some point in development, you have to do the work and have somebody figure out how you can do it better. I did that myself in two ways. one, I worked on college newspaper a lot. I also had a degree in journalism and some of the more valuable courses were when somebody would sit down with me and go paragraph-by-paragraph. I'm not dismissing that kind of training, but it has to be in addition to, not instead of, liberal arts training.

**To what degree should students specialize?**

People have different talents and capacities. I, for instance, will never be a great photographer. I might be a serviceable photographer. Certain types of stories are told best in different ways. So ideally, you'll want to match the tool to the story. If you're doing analysis, that's great for text. Profiles, you'll want to see video.

It's important for people to understand and have minimum capacity in those things that



you talked about, and at least minimally use those tools. You ought to still recognize that you want to allow people to specialize. if you're in a large newsroom, where you can have people with differing skills, or a small newsroom, where three or four people are it, you'll have different strategies. If you at least get people thinking about how to best tell the story, and then figure out how to use tools in the right way. One thing you didn't mention was data visualization and graphics. That's kind of harder to do as not your main thing, but sometimes even more useful for even telling the story, than some of the other things. That you have to pair people up, if they can't do it themselves.

Ideally, you want to be able to make a smart choice about how to tell a story and get somebody who knew how to use the tools well to do it. It's best to have basic training and then kind of figure it out from there.

**What is your opinion of convergence?**

Sounds like a good way to get people to think of how to use different methods to present a story, and I think that's good. Also, the Mizzou School of Journalism has done a terrific job of knowing what's going on in the world of journalism, and also be very responsible in designing the curriculum. I think they've done as good a job as anybody on those measures.

**What are journalism schools not teaching that they should?**

Ethical orientation. Teaching the skills to work through the ethical issues that all journalists face, which are particularly interesting issues right now, because as the media change, the bright lines that used to exist in practice that everybody used to follow don't really apply anymore. So we need to go back to fundamental ethical issues.

For example, the whole question of expressing your opinion vs. for lack of a better word, "objective reporting". Questions of where funding comes from in a newspaper, and how you draw a line of that. How do you deal with sources? When is information verified enough to publish? All these questions look much different in the digital age than they did 15 years ago. Often times, working through case studies, you'll never get the same case twice. How can you think through these problems? If you've thought through some of these things before, little bells should go off.

**What are your thoughts on the *Missourian*?**

Definitely people are kind of connecting with information in a whole variety of ways. I think at some point you have to do journalism in order to do it well. That's the point of the *Missourian*. Maybe that kind of journalism is evolving into something else, but it at least gives people a place to start with it. I would think if you didn't do that, you'd still want some sort of practice in what you're going. There's long form journalism on the web, too. People, for a while, it was fashionable to say people aren't going to read long-form on the web. But with the advent of tablets, people aren't saying that sort of thing anymore.

**Final thoughts on what journalism students need to learn to survive in this business?**

People have to come out equipped to do some experimentation and have some creativity about how they do things. To recognize that the way it's always been done may not be the best way. People behave a lot differently than they used to. You need to be able to look at that. I don't know if there's a way to teach that. Maybe so. Just to get people thinking in that direction is part it.

You always think "the revolution happened" and we're post-revolution now, but we're really right in the thick of it. There's so many opportunities do things better now, but at the same time the institutions and organizations that pay people to do journalism have lost their business model. We're in the process of inventing new ones. It would make it very hard to figure out what to teach people right now.

I think good a good option is cross-pollination between j-school, computer science, business, law. Even if its not a double-degree, if you have a course selection, that could go a long way.

**4. Brian Storm, founder, MediaStorm**

**What is an area journalism schools should de-emphasize?**

I think the first thing I would say to de-emphasize: the idea that one person can do it all.

It's a really, really bad model. It's setting us up to do incredibly mediocre journalism. We should just stop it. Teaching people to be mediocre is just crazy to me. This idea of a one-man band, I'm totally against that. It's not something we're doing because it makes storytelling better, it's because it's economically focused: how can we do journalism for as little money as possible.

The world doesn't need more volume; it needs more complexity. The way we should be doing that is in collaboration. They should teach collaboration. What they're teaching is how one person can do it all, and that's wrong. They should be teaching how to work as a team. The school doesn't teach you that. It teaches you how to be graded by yourself. It's so hard to do this stuff. I know no one who can write, shoot, code, social media distribution strategies.

You don't have to be an expert at photography if you're a great writer, but you have to appreciate what it is. I do think, in the undergrad, sure, a broad education is good.

It might get you a job, but it's not going to create great journalism. The industry is short-sighted in this. They're hiring 20-somethings who can do a lot of things for very little money. It doesn't inform the public, though, in the way we're supposed to be informing the public.

The journalism education world is reacting to where the jobs are, which is understandable, but it's very short-sighted. What I think you guys should be doing is

starting companies just like us. Take five or six of your buddies in Columbia and kick the Tribune. If you try to compete with them doing mediocre day-to-day journalism, you'll lose, because they're an established brand.

**What about the importance of text?**

Text remains very important. Every element is very important. One person can't do all of that. I don't think text is going to go away. This idea that people don't read online is absurd. I read voraciously online every day.

ProPublica is a good example of what I'm talking about. The Atavist is another good example.

The work that's coming out of quick, fast, day-to-day publishing is mediocre. If someone doesn't tweet it, was it worth it? If someone doesn't post it to Facebook or another social media network, you fail.

If you're a local, community publication, you should be doing some day-to-day, but a lot of rich stuff that has long-term meaning.

**What would you change about the undergraduate curriculum?**

From a curriculum perspective, the undergraduate curriculum is okay. What should be at the end is a capstone experience where you do what you're really good at.

I'm down on day-to-day, highly perishable, throwaway storytelling that throws away a lot of resources and doesn't make anyone smarter. Focus on in-depth, robust storytelling that matters. That capstone experience is really key. But what happens is the kids leave that capstone to a daily newspaper and they're not doing that. And the paper scratches its head and says "why don't people like our product?" It's because your product is mediocre.

I think in school you should be exposed to all the things that are happening, but only if you're 17-18 years old, and you don't know what you want to be great at. From a masters' perspective, from a capstone perspective, that doesn't make sense.

### **Then how to survive on the web?**

Great and funny are the only things that matter on the web. That's the stuff that people are going to spread. Stuff in the middle, doesn't matter. It's simply noise. Doesn't move the needle in any way. It's hard to be funny. And it's hard to be great. But that's the only hope.

The web is such a highly competitive space. And it's totally commoditized. At MSNBC, we'd put out volume and breaking news. That's what our audience expected. We suffer from not having a daily volume product in terms of staying on people's radar. But when we drop something, it explodes.

The revolution won't come from traditional publishing. The national guys are fine, the hyper-local guys are fine, but the regional guys are in trouble.

The industry got off the rails when we lost ownerships of the pubs. When big business guys saw these insane margins, like 30%, they just bought us out. It doesn't matter how much you make, you have to make more next year. It doesn't matter if you make a pile; you have to make more than you did last quarter, for your shareholders. This is the moment where journalists have to take journalism back. The business guys have bled us to the bone. They're killing us even though we're making a profit.

#### **5. Karen Mitchell, Assistant Professor, Missouri School of Journalism**

**Will the journalist of the future be an all-in-one media machine? How does convergence mitigate the tension between the urge to specialize and the need to learn as much as possible?**

The scenario you just presented I don't believe in. The scenario I would prefer is someone able to do all of those things, but will rarely exercise those skills in just one assignment.

**Papers seem to prefer generalization, while web-only publications seem to like specialization.**

Papers prefer generalization because they're trying to feed two different beasts.

ProPublica, Politico, STL Beacon are online only. Miami Herald has two products: online and print. SO they have to generalize. They have to get people who can produce content both for the web and the print production.

**What are the industry pressures the school is facing?**

The industry is asking us to teach the students more, which we're happy to do. But you can't teach them more and still get them out of school in four years. On top of everything else they're asking us to teach: Can you teach them all these multimedia skills? I can't get them through school in four years if you want all these things.

SO what we're sacrificing is – it's a depth vs. breadth situation. We're sending our convergence students when they graduate with far more skills, in terms of breadth, than print/digital. But what they're missing is any depth in one area.

**What are your views on the debate between technical training and liberal arts education? Many complain that technical training only teaches a student to write an inverted pyramid.**

Most of our journalism students don't even get into journalism classes until their junior year. Their first two years of college are a liberal arts education. That speaks pretty loudly how much the School of Journalism respects that wealth of knowledge about the world. The requirements that's all about knowing more than just how to write an inverted pyramid.

The School of Journalism might decide that just because a new technology is out there doesn't mean we have to incorporate it into our curriculum. I think the j-school is cautious and aware of what's going on out there, but we tend not to jump on the newest thing out there just because its new. For example, we don't have classes that teach you



Facebook. Community outreach class, on the other hand, has only recently been made a part of the curriculum. Sometimes the school assesses things too long, but we don't make knee-jerk reactions to things that are going on.

In my mind – do vocational training and liberal arts get equal weight? They really don't. If you look at a four-year career of a journalism student, the first two years are gen ed classes. Then you get into the j-school and really, about half their classes are skills classes vs. theory classes. That would make the School of Journalism about 25% of our education be “vocational.”

Take the class J-2150: Fundamentals of multimedia. Once you take that class, any reporting class after that is about reporting, writing, doing audio stories. There are no more lessons about how to operate a camera, or how to use Final Cut. It's about getting out there and doing these things.

### **Are people simply reading less?**

I would tend to agree that people are reading printed material less. People are no less interested in getting the information. They're reading on the iPads. They're getting their information electronically. It's kinda bogus to support their argument that people aren't reading as much.

I have become the thing that we're trying to prevent. It's all about what's convenient for

me, the consumer. The consumer is speaking pretty loudly and clearly: It's no longer about printed material. And we're not going to turn that ship around.

**How can we fit all of this instruction into four years?**

If college is still, generally speaking, set up to be four years of a person's life, you simply cannot get the same amount of material into that four-year timespan. If you want video, audio, and photo and text, and you want a highly rigorous liberal arts education, that's a bit unrealistic.

**What about job prospects for new graduates? How can they maximize them?**

A lot of people lost their jobs, but that was, in terms of where were those jobs lost, it was pretty global in terms of which industries. I really do not believe that jobs about providing information are not plentiful. I think if you're looking for that 1970s newspaper print reporter job, that might be hard to find. But in the '70s we didn't have web masters or social media directors. We have a wealth of positions out there that are about disseminating news and information, but they don't fit the exact category that we had in 1970s.

The newsroom has always been the part of the company that cost you money. I'd argue a little bit about how much a reporter was worth in 1970. It always was that you didn't make the money off the reporter.

**Is it better for a student to get an undergraduate degree or a graduate degree in**

## **journalism?**

That depends. What is a person trying to achieve? If you want to be a working journalist, do you need just undergrad or grad?

I would agree that you don't need to go through grad school to be a journalist. If you are motivated, you could teach yourself, or find other adult education classes to learn about how to run a video camera, or a still camera. A lot of what I did, I learned on the job.

If what you know is that you want to be a journalist, I would say to go undergrad at a school of journalism. If you know that you want to be more specialized, I would say go to grad school, but your undergrad could be either a j-school or in the area you want to specialize in. It makes a ton of sense to get an undergrad in, say, nutrition, if you want to be a health reporter. But how many people at 18 know they want to specialize in something? I think it makes sense to the most people to go through a school of journalism as an undergrad, and get the specialization out in the real world.

## **Where is journalism education headed now?**

In the hardware. Cellphone cameras is one area of expansion. An area that's a booming area. Pretty rapidly developed. In software, social media apps have just taken off. There are so many of them out there.

## **6. Glenn Gilbert, executive editor, The Oakland Press**

### **Are you getting hireable students?**

The students who are coming to me, that we're able to hire, have the skills that I would be looking for. Specifically, what I look for as an essential today, which I didn't even 5 years ago, is the ability to shoot still and video photography. That's absolutely essential, in addition to the ability to write and report.

### **What education should be required?**

The required education makes them at minimum three-tool players, at least from a technical standpoint, to say nothing of the traditional ability of a liberal arts education that allows people to put things in context, which is vital to this field

There is a fourth tool that I'm looking for, which is generally there, which is social media. I'd presume any journalism school is teaching this. All I know is, by and large, what's coming to me is what I'm looking for, and there's an abundance of these people. So I don't have any complaints.

I'm actually in a situation where the new journalists know more than I know. They have more technical knowledge of tools that I couldn't hope to know. In addition, they have an ability to research that puts to shame where I was at a comparable point in my career.

They can research things; they have this immense tool, the Internet, and they are exposed to so many things, so much more volume of information, that I have difficulty knowing

what their needs are.

For instance, I had someone tell me this morning that he doesn't understand why some people needed to have their hands held; they're professionals who went to college; they're not as in need of a traditional newsroom manager. Increasingly I find that I'm now requiring journalists to produce publishable content with a minimum of editing, which is revolutionary. A reporter needs to be his own editor. That's new, and that's not just for me; I had this discussion with the editor of the Denver Post. He was adamant of that. We don't have banks of copy editors anymore.

I think today's journalist requires a wider range of skills, and he or she in fact, has them.

I think that to say that you can't do in-depth journalism because of a deficiency of journalism education is really stupid. I guarantee you that today's journalism schools are producing people who can do that work.

### **Vocational or liberal arts?**

What is the goal of a liberal arts education? The technical end of it should be a very small part of the total education. Some students, for instance, graduate without ever having read the classics. I took a novels class that included Dickens, I took a Shakespeare class, I just thought everybody did that. I think the undergraduate education should be traditional liberal arts, and only that taught in the specialty that is necessary to function in the workplace.

Here's an anecdote: I once heard a story about Wayne State U professor who gave a lecture and presentation on inverted pyramid, and then turned the class over to guest speakers, and presumably had students write inverted pyramid stories on what the speakers said.

A basic lib arts education should include a composition class, a philosophy class, poli sci class, maybe math. It should be 75 percent that interdisciplinary approach, and 25% focused on the field.

### **What should be in those classes?**

In that 25% reporting class, video class, photo class, data journalism class, and social media. The rest should be teaching them critical thinking skills. Our universities are becoming trade schools. You always hear the advertisements: "Go to baker college, they can find you a job." That should not be the goal of higher education. Finding a job should not be the goal of liberal arts education. The motive is to teach a person how to think.

When I studied journalism at U of M, it wasn't a trade school, it was teaching me how to think; how to put things in context.

I'm still wedded to the idea of a liberal arts education; maybe I'm just stuck in the past.

I'm a big believer in that.

The fact of the matter is, Politico is doing long-form journalism. There's no difference

between reading an article on Politico and what you would read in a newspaper 5 years ago. When they present this particular piece, they're presenting other things as well: links, lists, graphics, video, etc. But they're presenting more than just the written piece.

### **What social media should students focus on?**

Twitter, you can use it, but what are you trying to make it do? I find that what people are trying to make Twitter do, they don't understand what it is or what it can be used for.

When I give a lecture on Twitter to my students, they've never thought of this stuff.

They're all on Facebook. Less than half were on Twitter. But Twitter is a sleeper. When it goes public, it'll be ready to go public. There's a lot to it.

Here's what I used it for the other day. I used it to get the Supreme Court ruling. I could only get it because of the people I follow. I follow the right people. I got CNN's false story, and as soon as I got it, I knew it was wrong. If you were on the Supreme Court blog, you got the story first. And if you attributed your source, you wouldn't make a mistake. Speed is everything. We're sitting there trying to get the message out on our mobile platform. I don't know what the wording of what she finally said was, but what we decided was authoritative: Obamacare has been upheld according to the Wall Street Journal. But they got their facts from the Supreme Court directly. AP would have had the story half-hour later. It enabled us to report this story very, very early, and it enabled us to do it accurate. But it's only because I follow every major news source, CNN, Fox, and following institutions. I only knew to look on the Supreme Court blog because of the story that I picked up on twitter.

The story was: How will the president find out about decision? He will find out from the Supreme Court blog. I didn't know there was a Supreme Court blog.

I think Twitter is just an amazing tool. It's like the Internet plus 10 times the Internet. It's more specialized because of who you follow.

One of the things I'm wondering about j-school: How much are you devoting to these courses? How are they filling out the curriculum? After I taught my basic reporting class and writing for media class, I'm not sure what's left out there. Can you teach a class on each of these things individually? Are you merely creating an occupation for yourself?

Students come to me with four times more knowledge than I had at their age. The information explosion has occurred. You can't imagine where I was in 1972 compared with where students are today. It's hard for someone like you to imagine

### **Final Thoughts?**

Do a better job of teaching how to do Internet searches.

### **7. George Kennedy, professor emeritus, Missouri School of Journalism**

**Is it possible to teach students so many skills in just four years? What should be the balance between liberal arts and vocational training?**



My old PhD adviser used to say all research is a compromise. The same is true of journalism education. Karen Mitchell has it right, the editors have it right, and the accrediting body has it more or less right – that is, in an undergraduate education, it's simply unrealistic to expect that you're going to produce the equivalent of a classic major and a multi-tooled investigative reporter. Probably about the best you can hope for, and what I think we strive for, is to make sure students have been exposed, at least, to the great ideas in the history of civilization, to some practical disciplines, the physical sciences, politics, economics, and that when it comes to their professional education, that they have been given the tools, at least, with which they can build a specialty.

**What should students do at Missouri to get the most of their education, in that context?**

I think at Missouri, probably the closest we come to the ideal (that is, to having it all) is with our 4 + 1 program, in which we encourage students to earn a bachelor's in four years, as often as possible, including in that degree a substantive minor field or maybe even a double major, and then coming back for a solid year of immersion in the skills and the concepts of journalism.

**Have the liberal arts been left behind?**

I am a conservative when it comes to accrediting standards, and so I have always regretted it as those standards have been eroded over the years to allow an increasingly larger percentage of an undergrad time to be spent in the specialty (that is, in journalism as opposed to what the university has to offer). The breakup here is 67-33. Here, we've

taken advantage of every loophole that the accrediting agency has offered to include journalism and not non-journalism electives. Also, we've increased the number of hours required to get a bachelor's, and those hours have been devoted to journalism credits. Now we require 123-126, traditionally, we required 120.

I will say, because I've been on the other side of it as well, that there really is a great deal of pressure, some of it generated by the industry, some by the students themselves, to increase the level of skills training in order to give our graduates a competitive advantage. It's all a compromise. I think on balance, we and the other accredited journalism schools have done a reasonably good job of maintaining that balance. A lot of professional journalists who didn't go to journalism school don't understand that, and don't realize that in an accredited program, two-thirds of the program is outside of journalism. You probably get a broader liberal arts curriculum than you do as an engineering major or even an English major.

The essence of journalism isn't "can you tweet, or post a blog, or write HTML", the essence is critical thinking, and you don't really learn that in journalism courses.

**What about the tensions inherent in a converged curriculum? Can one student do it all?**

This is the background chatter of higher education. We're trying to do it all, with varying degrees of success. We made a major, but certainly understandable, mistake when we created a separate convergence sequence. I still think its fundamentally having a separate

sequence that you call “convergence” is an oxymoron. And what we’ve been trying to do ever since is to work around that by making sure our convergence students get a least a taste of what you would call the legacy disciplines, and what we’ve done now, within the last year, really, is we’ve created this introductory convergence course that we require of all students before they even get into journalism school, to expose them to the possibilities in the hopes that they’ll be able to build on those in their later years and develop one or more levels of expertise.

I think that all the indications are that the students are grasping the concept, and the course is being well taught. It’s moving us in the direction we need to go.

We have done some de-emphasis of liberal arts, but we haven’t done as much as we probably could have, not as much as some of the faculty and some of the students wanted us to.

**Students seem to have a lot of choice, here, and not a lot of guidance.**

It is the problem of undergraduate education at a public university, where you have an awful lot of kids, 18, 19, 20 years old, for whom the most important thing that’s happening to them isn’t what they’re learning in the classroom, it’s that they’re growing up. I think we’d come a lot closer to achieving the ideal undergraduate education if we didn’t let people enroll in the university until they’re 25 years old.

**Have we fulfilled Pulitzer’s dream of a journalism school? If not, what’s the**

## **difference?**

The difference is the difference between an elite small private liberal arts college with a highly structured classics-based curriculum, and a big public university that has four or five assigned missions, only one of which probably really goes directly to the question of what's the content of your freshmen level literature course.

When I say that university education is wasted on a typical 18-year-old, I know I'm being stereotypical and unfair to what I suspect is a minority of 18-year-olds that are ready and able to learn.

We have one of the best master's programs in the country, and part of the reason is that we attract people who majored in engineering or something and come to us with a fairly solid grounding in a traditional discipline, and are able to add the skills and concepts of journalism on top of that.

## **Let's go back to convergence.**

What's clearly happening is that we, and I suppose other j-programs, are doing our damndest to catch up to where the world is headed and maybe provide a bit of leadership from time to time. As one of the old guard and a self-confessed curriculum conservative, it seems to me that it's really important for us not to lose sight of the basics in our pursuit of the latest technological gimmick.

I think we're doing a reasonably good job of maintaining our balance. And I hope and I believe that we will continue to do that, so that while we are experimenting with and teaching students to use all the communication tools and preparing them to deliver content on a variety of platforms, I think we're also continuing to do a pretty solid job of the blocking and tackling of journalism, which is to say, instilling a sense of ethics, insisting on accuracy and fairness, trying for depth wherever we can find it, always understanding, of course, that we are probably never going to be as good as we want to be at any one of those things.

Some students are quicker and more adept than others. Some are more thoughtful, and maybe slower-moving but more thorough than others. I think that as a teacher, you have to allow for those differences, and build on strength while you try to shore up weaknesses. I do think that, again, especially at the undergraduate level, we do our students a disservice if we don't at least expose them to the tools and possibilities so that they make informed choices about what to emphasize and which direction to go. Very few recent j-school graduates are going to work for Politico. More are likely to work for patch.com or the Boonville Daily News. Depending on which of those two options they're more inclined toward, if it's patch, then you'd better be prepared and inclined to produce a lot of stuff quickly and shallowly. If your goal is to work on a text publication, then you'd better be prepared to do more long-form work and more in-depth reporting, and not worry so much about your tweets.

It is all converged, which brings me up to what I said before, the oxymoronic use of having a “convergence” sequence.

Dean Mills’ inclination is toward the highest possible degree of freedom for students. My inclination is toward a more structured environment at the undergraduate level, and as we keep coming back to, I think our curriculum provides a fairly reasonable balance between those two. While we now have multiple “tracks” or “sequences” or “faculties” or whatever you want to call them, and we call them different things depending on what day of the week it is, there are still some core requirements that everyone must do, some skills everyone must master, and I think that’s pretty close to being the way it ought to be.

**8. Chris Spurlock, former Missouri School of Journalism undergraduate, infographics designer, Huffington Post:**

**What were the most valuable parts of your education?**

I saw Scott a couple weeks ago at a wedding, and I happened to be there, and we talked about the j-school for a while, and what I got out of it as a student, etc. I think that what I do on a daily basis in my job, I maybe use 20 percent of what I learned in school, and the other 80 percent has been learned on the job. Not that the school didn’t prepare me for the job I’m in, but I think that’s kind of how it is in most jobs. I think a lot of people, when they hire someone, are looking for someone who can learn what that company or news organization wants you to learn. They want to see that you are capable of learning and adapting to the things they want from you and be able to do the job they want you to

perform. That's what the university does a good job of preparing you for. Aside from the hands-on experiences you get at the j-school, I think that it's teaching you how to be a learner, if that makes sense, teaching you how to pick up new skills quickly, and when they immerse you in the technology, regardless of whether that technology is around in five or ten years, you've not only learned that piece of technology, but you've also gained an understanding of how to gain new skills. So I might now know how to write javascript, but I learned the basics of taking apart a piece of software piece by piece. I can apply that learning anywhere. So that's kind of what I got out of the journalism school was that kind of work ethic, that confidence to know you can figure it out.

### **De-emphasis of liberal arts?**

That kind of builds on what I was talking about earlier. I think it's kind of dangerous and kind of wrong-headed to put the liberal arts at the bottom of the ladder of a journalism education and kind of push it away. I can see that. I didn't really feel that when I was in school, but I could see it heading in that direction. It definitely wasn't in my conscious mind, like 'oh I don't feel like I'm getting a liberal arts education and doing too much hands-on learning of specific tools.' I don't think the journalism school is a trade school program, and I don't think it should become that. That's the danger of letting those liberal arts go. There's nothing wrong with learning a trade or working in that sort of profession, but I don't think that's what journalism is. If you don't study literature, you won't be able to draw parallels between history or fiction and tie that into your writing into the world.

**But this is a response to very real pressures.**

I feel it at my job as well. I trained as a journalist, and now I feel my job is more of a technology job than a journalism job. I find myself working more on that side of things than on the journalism side of things. Part of that is due to the path I pursued but even folks on the editorial side in journalism, in my company at least, have to know a lot more about journalism. I think they do feel a pressure to keep up with the technology, and I also feel like that see it kind of running away from them sometimes. I think that's kind of an inevitable thing at this point. Especially within Huffington Post, there's a desire to be on the front edge of everything, and I think it's easy to get swallowed up by the speed of technology. But in my company they think it's important to hang on to the building blocks of journalism.

**Did you feel this pressure in undergrad?**

It's hard, because the journalism school is an institution and institutions are slower to change than individuals. The entire curriculum itself can't change that quickly. So I think that a lot of students felt pulled in two different directions between trying to stick to the heart of the Missouri school of journalism curriculum and branching out on their own to learning what they think they need to learn. Some of the more ambitious people I graduated with worked outside of the journalism school to learn the things they thought they needed to. Took web design classes outside of school of journalism, art classes, felt i needed to do that. I also think people who stuck to their guns and said "the j-school is



going to prepare me for whatever I need to do,” I think those people succeeded as well. I definitely think the people who were more ambitious who tried to stay out on the front edge of where things were changing had a little more in the way of career prospects. Whether it’s worth it, in that it eats up too much time as a student, and not able to get a college experience, it’s kind of a fine line to walk there.

The institution has changed. There are a lot of these career paths that you can still go to school for, you do the internships, maybe get a masters’ degree, and you’re done, you’re prepared. And even if you do the extra mile, there isn’t too much to go in front of people. but in journalism it’s so different because not only is it deep, but it’s wide. People get overwhelmed because there are so many avenues; they often have a focus problem. They think employers want them to do everything. That’s not entirely the case. They want you to do a lot of things, but they also want you to have a focus. It’s best to have five skills on top of journalism education that you know how to do really well.

### **At what point to pick a specialty?**

I’m a product of the convergence program, and I can see it both ways. I can use a Sony camera, a Nikon, I could build a multimedia website if I had to. But I don’t have to. That’s not really how things work there. People don’t expect me to know how to do those things. I don’t even know if they know that I can do those things. And if they did, I’m not sure if they’d care. They need me to be damn good at what I do and have a few skills on top of it to complement those skills. I work in Adobe illustrator all day, but I also use

flash, Photoshop, html, and other web-programming languages, but they're all interrelated. A tool belt most who work in data graphics seem to have.

I think that I was encouraged by my supervisor and by some of my classmates who, in my eyes, had it figured out, that I needed to narrow my focus quickly at the end of my education. Going into my junior year, I had no idea what I wanted to do in convergence journalism. I didn't really see a place where they were doing all the stuff I needed to do. So I figured out really quickly where I wanted to go and what I wanted to specialize in, and it was a pretty narrow field, and so by that point I tried to have a very specific set of skills.

I think there is a danger in people getting trapped in trying to know everything in convergence. I didn't feel pressured toward the end of my education to continue to maintain my photography skills and my videography skills. I think what I interpreted this convergence program to be was to give everyone a taste of everything and to ask them to pick the flavor that they like the best. I think if people get that message, like I did, then they'll be fine, but if they get caught up in the jack of all trades, I think that's where the dangerous territory is. All the people I know who graduated who have good jobs. You have to hone in the thing that you like the best.

### **Suggestions for the school?**

Make the message a little louder, the message of try everything out and pick something,

and pick it quickly. While they tell people that being undecided for a while is okay, being undecided forever is not. I think that the journalism school is kind of like an awkward teenager in puberty; trying to figure out what they want their student to be. I don't think there's a good definition of what a convergence graduate does. What kind of skills they have. I feel like they need to push away that kind of jack of all trades label that they've gotten.

### **Liberal arts?**

The J-school really has to decide what kind of program they want to be and what kind of appearance to put on for people. If they want to be an immersive journalism experience where 90% of time is spent in a newsroom, they can be that. I don't agree with it, but that's fine. But if they have kids coming in, and they say we want to be in a newsroom all the time from the first day of freshman year, and Mizzou is not about that, and they shouldn't be, I think they need to be clear about that. It's important for you to have an education beyond the trade that you know. Not to rag on computer programmers or engineers or whatever, but that's the direction it seems the journalism school is moving is away from arts and culture and toward more of a skills-based education. I think that's kind of dangerous when you're trying to communicate with the average person.

I don't think it's a runaway train at this point, but I think that they need to be conscious of it. If the people who are writing the curriculum are as conscious of it as you are, and they're sitting there writing the curriculum and realize they have to walk a line, I don't

think it'll get away from them, at least, not quickly.

I think they're right on the border of taking a step too far. As a freshman, I wanted to be in a newsroom from day one. And people said, 'there's a reason you're not in a newsroom from day one, because of the way we structured the program and the kind of education we want a Missouri graduate to have,' and that's hard to for some freshmen to understand. Now, looking back, I'm glad I wasn't in the newsroom from day one. I think I wouldn't have appreciated the time I got to spend doing actual journalism as a student. That's the time many students realize they don't want to be journalism students.

I would say don't cut any more liberal arts.

It's a hard decision to do between doing what's best for your students in terms of job prospects and best for them in terms of being human beings. You come out of university as a full, well-rounded person, and I think there's a danger of not having that humanistic side of things as they've had in the past.

I have friends who work in traditional media, and there are some who are performing multiple roles within one job, but I think the direction of things is more toward the new media companies having people assigned to one role instead of several. And unfortunately the new media companies are swallowing the old. I love the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as much as the next guy, but I'm not going to work there now, because they don't understand what new media means, and they're going to get swallowed up if they

don't change. They're laying off people left and right, and it's not just the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. It's a mirror for news organizations throughout the country. It's an institution, just like the journalism school is. A few people can change quickly, but an entire company, it's more difficult. You can't just pick out everybody who's used to the old way of doing things and say sorry, we need to change quickly, because there are real jobs and real livelihoods on the line.

It's not a sustainable model.

### **Put in context of journalism school?**

I think convergence is trying to prepare people for the reality that they might have to be one of those people who have to do multiple jobs at once. The reality is you might have to do something like that. They're trying to walk the line of preparing people for that reality, but at the same time they're hopeful that that's not what happens to people, but I think they'd feel irresponsible for not preparing people for that possibility. SO that's where it gets muddled up; they're saying, "we're preparing you do all these things, but focus, and hopefully you'll be in a position where you don't have to do six different things."

I don't know if it's a good strategy. Right now, broadcast is saying, "for the most part, we're going to keep teaching you broadcast, as we've always done, and eventually the economy will turn around, and people will get jobs." but people might toil around with a

broadcast degree for four or five years because they can't get hired. So are you failing people in that way, as well? Are you setting them up to fail because they only know how to do one thing? Or are they failing people with convergence because they know how to do too many things?

I think it's worth it to keep revising. Nothing is perfect as it is, and I think they need to take a hard look at it every semester and every year and see how things are going. It's not a good practice to say, "let's try this grand experiment and see how things go in five years," because things are changing too fast.

**9. Heidi White, Assistant State Editor, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette**

**Liberal arts or Vocational school?**

I think for journalism schools, in the brief moment I've had to think of this here, the main point is, when you're a reporter, you have to be able to learn something new every day. So even if they don't spend a lot of time teaching you video or audio, or whatever, as long as you get enough to develop the skills yourself, that's enough. You can't teach someone reporting skills on the job or copy editing skills on the job, those are critical thinking skills, but it's much easier to teach someone to shoot video or audio. That's a learnable skills, whereas, you can't really go back and teach them how to ask a well-thought-out question. They're fundamentally different skills. It's much more important to have a liberal arts basis than to have a class on how to shoot video. That's a great bonus, but it's not as crucial because you can teach someone that skill in a lot shorter time. Your

editor at your first job is not going to sit there and teach you what questions to ask, or the history of politics you'll need to cover the election for that year.

### **Depth vs. Breadth?**

The people who are going to be good journalists are the people who are taking it upon themselves to learn outside the classroom. Student internships, outside reading, etc. That you won't necessarily become a video expert by taking classes is not extremely shocking to me.

We're having to learn a little bit of video. That's more of a bonus. Most of it is bad video because the reporters are not videographers. I'd rather have them be able to write the story than the video that goes with it, that's just extra. There's bad video all over the internet.

### **What is Mizzou doing right?**

There's a wide range of skills coming out of Mizzou. Accuracy, very important, and most Mizzou grad seem to have learn that very well. Dealing with public records. Basic reporting skills. I'm sure that has a lot to do with the structure of your student newspaper there, and the experience there.

### **What are some things we can improve on?**

I can't really think of anything specific, but overall, one thing j-schools should be doing better is teaching students that this is not a 9-to-5 life. You'll have to stay late if there's a

bridge crash or a plane crash. Professors aren't doing a very good job teaching that to people.

Also teaching them to teach themselves. It's important that you realize you don't stop learning when you come out of university. Nobody is going to continue to do it for you.

### **What extent to specialize?**

A lot depends on your career goals. If it's your lifelong goal to be a copyeditor, video and audio classes aren't going to do you any good. But everything is hybrid now, but at the same time, there's still plenty of room for people to specialize. At the time, you're not going to know what you want to do. You have to have a little taste of everything to figure that out. If you know you want to be a specialist, it's not going to do you much good to have that taste of everything.

### **Guidance?**

Clearly, at some point you'll have to have a good career counselor. Otherwise people will take a bunch of random stuff they don't really need.

### **What do you look for when you hire?**

People who can ask thoughtful questions, people who can put sentences together on paper in a way that understands what you're trying to say. And just experience. Even if you're the best reporter, starting out, unless you've had a couple internships and had a couple



situations where you learned to think on your feet, you're not going to write well. You'll be struggling to figure out what's going on.

On the liberal arts side, you can't learn on your own how to think critically. It would take a lot more struggle to do something like that.

**Would you suggest a reversal of the trend?**

Not a reversal. Maybe more thoughtful course creation or course track creation. If you're teaching video skills in a straight technical class, that's different if you're teaching them how to cover an event with a video camera while taking notes at the same time.

When people make references to Aristotle, if you don't have that liberal art basis, you're not going to understand what they're talking about. You have to have enough about the basics to get started.

Before colleges start changing their curriculum, they should do more one-on-ones with industry employers.

I can see the value in learning technical skills, but it should not be at the expense of liberal arts.

**10. Joe Yerardi, former Missouri School of Journalism graduate student, data editor at San Antonio Express-News**

**How has your experience in journalism school prepared you for the job you're doing now?**

It's funny, I was talking to Walker a week ago about this. He said, "I'm always amused when people say, where did you go to school," and he says Mizzou, and they say, "Wow, you must be really smart," and he says, "not really." The reputation of Mizzou is that anyone who graduates from there is this full-spectrum journalist who's ready on day one to rock everything. And that's definitely not the case.

We both basically agreed that there are only a handful of classes that taught us usable skills in the professional realm. Obviously, we're coming at it from one perspective, being in newspapers. Maybe someone in TV news or radio news or infographics or photo would have a different perspective. But really, we agreed that just a handful of classes taught us everything.

**It seems like you'd rather have even less liberal arts?**

I think they should refocus the curriculum that if you know what you want to do, you can just focus on the classes you want to do, and by cutting out these unnecessary classes, you can fill it out with liberal arts classes that are, actually very useful.

There are unnecessary technical classes that we have to take.

**Such as?**

It obviously differs, depending on what your interests are.

If you know what you want to do, going into the program, they should just let you do it. They shouldn't make you take classes that you know you're not going to use. That just takes valuable units away that could be set to classes that will teach you important skills. That includes the critical thinking skills you learn in liberal arts classes.

**What about students who don't know what they want to do?**

They should take whatever classes they want and figure it out. There should be many different tracks that students can do, or maybe even no tracks at all.

**The curriculum has been moving in that direction for some time.**

I don't think we need one-size-fits-all curriculum. Some students could benefit from more guidance, others should know what they want and should be able to do what they want.

I don't think we need to offer these theory classes, for the most part. Master's students are already adults. We should know this stuff. Undergrads should learn it. If you don't know the basic foundation of the press in American society, if you don't have a basic conception of what that is, which you can get from going on Wikipedia and spending a

couple hours there, if you haven't bothered to do that, I'm not sure that Mizzou is the place for you.

**Undergrads?**

They need to understand the field we're going in has a storied history. One four-unit class should do it.

**Well, what are the things they want you to be able to do?**

I don't know (laugh). For my position, what they wanted me to do is what I could do. It was clear what my skills were and what they weren't.

**Is it more difficult for generalists in this environment?**

I don't know what editors are looking for. I'm not an editor; I've never been in a position to hire someone. All I can speak to is my experience. My experience is I got hired into a very specialized job. I think Mizzou prepared me very well for that, because I had a focus on what I wanted to do, and I made sure to do all the classes they offered. I was prefer they offered more classes in what I wanted to do, but they didn't, so I took all the classes I could.

**Would you advise convergence?**

I would advise they do what they want to do, and focus on that. Focus in like a laser and don't be distracted by other stuff going on around you. If you don't know what you want

to do, maybe it would make sense to sample what's there.

### **Suggestions to make this place better?**

I wish they'd offer more classes about what I was interested in, frankly. I wish they had offered classes about coding for journalism. I don't think it needs to be comp sci, but I think it could be coding for journalists. I read something recently by the current or former digital content director of the Boston *Globe*, who recommended that all journalism schools be teaching all their students to code. She recommended that every semester they should have to take a coding class. I don't know if every journalist needs that skill. In fact, I highly doubt it, certainly to that extent.

But this is the direction our journalism is going in. More and more it's presented on this thing called the Internet. If you don't understand what it is, how it works, what it's going to look like, how to tell stories on it, you're not going to tell it to the fullest extent. Not a lot of schools are embracing that.

The Internet isn't a technology. It's a medium. It's now the dominant medium for what we do, regardless of what it is you specifically do.

If you're an undergraduate, there should be some classes to teach you these critical thinking skills. That's very important for any position in journalism. I can think of almost no jobs in any field where critical thinking skills will not help you. That should be a primary goal of institutions of higher learning.

**But something's gotta give.**

Yeah, the technical classes that don't help you.

If a student, even an 18-year-old freshman, has an idea what kind of journalism they want to do when they graduate, beyond a few required courses let them do it. If a kid doesn't know what they want to do, let them sample whatever courses they want.

I want greater freedom for graduate students. Fewer restrictions.

**11. Deniz Koray, former Missouri School of Journalism graduate student,  
freelancer**

**How has your education prepared you?**

From an academic standpoint or the point of becoming a working journalist?

**Working journalist -**

I think that from the standpoint of going out and working in the field, there were definitely some classes that helped me, especially because it was immersion-style. Very hands-on, practical training, with people who know what they're doing. I don't know if I really learned much from the lectures. In investigative reporting I did. IN other classes, I'm not sure how helpful the lectures were. I think that could be re-worked to be more

efficient and useful. I thought for the intro reporting class, there was too much discussion of what was in our paper every day. It became thirty or forty minutes of “lets talk about what’s in the *Missourian*.” Doing that every day for a few months is kind of inefficient and repetitive. I think reading in our own time of important works of journalism related to what we’re trying to do, with in-depth discussion in class, would be more helpful.

### **Trend away from liberal arts?**

I didn’t come from a journalism background. Mine was pure liberal arts. A lot of people in the master’s program liked that.

I think you can only take so many journalism classes before the material becomes really repetitive. I think the division they have right now is probably a fair division. Two out of every three is outside of the journalism school, so that gives them a good background. I think that eventually it’s diminishing marginal returns. I don’t think it’s a good idea to have them take more and more journalism classes and fewer arts and social sciences and hard sciences. I think a 2-to-1 breakdown is fairly reasonable, but I think it would be pushing it if it became 50-50. I would question the added value.

### **Specialize or generalize?**

In terms of radio, TV, editing, graphics, long-form, short form, data, all that?

**Yes.**

That’s really tough for me to figure out. I think that you don’t want to know just a little

bit about everything, because then it's not exactly a huge advantage in the job market. I don't know what benefit there is in 15% core competency in every field. If they want to have students do four or five different things, I can understand if they're intro classes.

**But what about the philosophy of convergence?**

It's not the philosophy of convergence. It's the philosophy of undergrad program prior to 2012 school year. I'm not a huge fan of the convergence program, because it doesn't give you mastery of any one skill, and there is no opportunity to develop a relationship with a specific media outlet, so you get an idea of the culture and expectations of KBIA, or the Missouriian, by the time you get to understand it, you've already moved on to a different publication.

**Now you have all these new skills...**

I'm not convinced that someone doing long-form literary journalism needs to know graphics, or someone in radio. But I think there are a lot of people who like the idea of working in graphics, and could be very good at it. I think it would be best if there were a wider range of specialization, but there isn't a reason to force students to take classes in every specialization.

I don't think that there's a need to master eight or nine different forms of communicating with the public, it's almost impossible. I think you learn enough about all of them to have a little bit of familiarity. There are no, or very few editors, that are going to know more about every single field of journalism than their reporters. They'll know more about



specific focuses, but they're not going to be masters or even semi-competent in every field. It's not reasonable.

**I talked to the Oakland press, for instance, and they a four-tool toolkit. Video, Photo, Print, and Social Media.**

I think that if that's what he's seeking, with what I'm presuming the salaries are going to be, with that position, I don't know how he's saying that with a straight face. I think having all those four tools, plus liberal arts, plus newsroom experience, that level of skill is difficult to find in a 23-year-old. I think it would require seven or eight years of education to get someone with that level of skills. There are only so many classes you can take at once.

**You're saying there's a real need to specialize.**

In my opinion, they need to specialize, because at least you can distinguish yourself in a certain way, and you're not appearing the same as everyone else. It's good to have a unique skill-set. For photo, these numbers may not be right; there were 30 students in photo out of 300 graduates. So you can distinguish yourself. I think it's good to show targeted interests.

**Where does that fit into convergence?**

Well, it's kind of the opposite of the convergence philosophy. I disagree with the general premise behind convergence.

**Rather than having a convergence sequence, just have the whole thing be choose your own adventure?**

I think we need to have more sequences. I'm glad they changed it in 2010.

**What about more guidance?**

I think this frustrates a lot of students, but because they have so many pre-requisites, they're not making major decisions when they're 18-19. They're usually doing it their junior year. I think it's good to get some level of specialization, just to be able to stick out in the job market.

There's more coursework required to get students up to the job market's demands, but as a result you can only take so many classes in four years, so the liberal arts is decreasing. Again, I go back to the point that I think it's certainly possible for a 22-year-old to do four years of college and have some level of knowledge of editing software and be able to write. But if you're expecting someone to be good in all those fields, I don't see how that's a reasonable expectation. I see it a lot for local city websites, you'll see multiple platforms for each news source, but most of them are not particularly well done. And I don't blame the journalists for this, because there's only so much time in the day to do a day-turn. And I don't see how it's possible to have a good graphic, a good slideshow, a good video, and a good 700-word piece in that time. I don't see how one person can do that, especially if that person is 23-years old and working for \$30,000. The job market isn't placing that much value on them. They're at the bottom of the job market in terms of people with skills.

### **Recommendation in light of this?**

I guess it's tough, because I'm not really super-familiar with the needs of every editor out there. If there is this widespread belief that the majority of city editors for, say, Fox and CBS affiliates, and at the local level, that students should have skill levels in four or five media, I think the best is for people to develop a very basic skillset, in each, by taking one class in each field, and then like six classes in what they want to do. To have some level of rigor in the grading, so you can't skate by with a D when you don't know what you're doing in radio. Punish students for complacency.

The job market is demanding all these skills. Rather than doing the convergence model, which is four weeks of KOMU and four weeks of KBIA, and four weeks of Missourian, it's the best to have one thing, whether it's editing, or developing content, or layout, that you're really good at. But you can have a very limited but competent experience understanding radio and television, or whatever you're not working on. It should be primarily specialization. Example, my biggest interest is long-form journalism. But obviously not everything I'm going to do will be long-form. So if I'm an undergrad, I should take the most classes that are at least tangentially related to long form. However, it would also be beneficial to have some depth when it comes to other fields. But there's no reason to take multiple classes and take away from long-form.

### **What should schools do?**

I'm not really in much disagreement from what I understand to be the general

undergraduate curriculum. Requires four or five pre-reqs, to weed out students who aren't good and give them a broad understanding of the history of journalism and how it can be used in our world. Then you have the students take, at their own choosing, eight or nine other classes with their major, and it would be five in their primary cluster, and four in the other subjects in journalism. I think that would be the best way to approach it, and have the advisors of the students be completely up-to-date in the curriculum.

If there's one thing I would probably recommend, it's that if there's a way to add a different class, it would be to do away with one of the pre-reqs. History of Journalism, Philosophy of Journalism, Com Law, etc. If you're trying to save space for an additional class in your specialty, the easiest way to save our space would be to con

I think a curriculum re-designed, where three of those four classes would be more beneficial for the undergrads. When it comes to the grads, there has to be some level of product differentiation between masters and undergrad, so that's why they have those required classes (mass media seminar, etc.)

A lot of repetitions in some of the journalism classes. I think principles of American journalism is far more valuable than cross-cultural journalism.

### **Overall?**

My bigger problem isn't necessarily about the breakdown of the classes. It doesn't come with the curriculum. The problem is some of these classes, especially the applied classes,

students could learn a lot more from the classroom. The amount of learning they get from doing the stories is pretty damn high, they're maximizing their time there. I would try to re-do the lectures, but if we're getting the same results, I'm not seeing the point of the lectures. I didn't get a lot from especially the intro to reporting lectures, and I'm told there's not much difference in advanced reporting.

There was some level of panic, say, in 2003, where they said, 'wait a minute, is our old formula still useful today?'

### **From that panic came convergence?**

I think the panic was justified, but in execution, there were problems. If you are a print student, your publication is probably either *Missourian* or *Vox*. If you're a business journalist, there's obviously outlets for that. For a convergence student, there's nothing they can call home. There's nothing they can get as much one-on-one attention. I was in convergence. I definitely thought I had more guidance through the intro reporting class at the *Missourian* than anything I had in convergence. What I've been told from students who continued further along is that it only increases. And it's a problem, since I think the most important thing is to have relationships where editors can vouch for their quality of work and for students to put out high quality. Convergence students don't get that because they're always jumping around, and they don't get good clips.

Convergence isn't a specialty. The idea is that students should be familiar with every outlet. So every four weeks have them jump around; it would be better if students took an

individual class with each of these outlets. There's enough time if you structure it in a way where there are three pre reqs that test students background in ethics, law, etc. Then three classes that show some level of groundwork, then five classes that give you specialization. That'll be about 10-11 classes, and I think that's about right for what undergrads take.

**12. David Craig, Associate Dean for academic affairs, Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma**

**Liberal arts vs. Vocational school?**

I haven't noticed sort of an all-out movement away from the idea that journalism education should also be a liberal arts education. I think that right now journalism schools are struggling with the fact that they have to continue to teach fundamental skills and concepts like good writing and editing and ethical thinking, with some context of what the role of journalism is in society, but they also have to, on the practical side, teach multimedia skills, it's a broader and more complex skill set than they had to. That puts the program at tension with a broader liberal arts education.

Our school is accredited by AEJMC, and they kind of set the template for 100 plus programs around the country that are accredited. Their long-time stance is kind of a both-and, that journalism schools should provide technical skills and a liberal arts education. They actually just voted to change the accrediting standards, not to blow them up from what they were, but make a change of the required number of hours outside of

journalism. It used to be 80 hours, and now it's 72. This just happened very recently.

I think that, for a lot of our students, we could potentially lower the total number of hours in the degree, also, and we're doing some homework on that possibility, but we can also raise the number of hours in the major. Students would be pretty excited, because they get to do more skill set stuff. There's some reason to do that, because we need to keep teaching the old stuff as well as the new skills and concepts.

Students still need to learn to think critically, and some of that comes from journalism classes, and some comes from outside. Students don't understand the rationale for why there are so many hours required outside. Sometimes we have to explain the benefit.

About two years ago, we voted as a faculty to require a minor. We found that a lot of students were skating over the non journalism classes. Some of our students were just taking a little bit of a lot of things, so we required that we require a minor, to give them a bit of focus.

Another thing that's probably relevant to this: a few years ago we revised the journalism curriculum. We beefed up the multimedia component, but we also boosted the conceptual component. We created a senior capstone class called Journalism, ethics, and democracy. Everyone has to take it. It's kind of a big picture look at journalism in the role of society and the ethical foundations of journalism.

We're actually trying to get them to dig deeper into why journalism is what it is, and what the role is. That was within the major that we did that.

I think you're right that the trend seems to be toward more courses in the major, but I'm not sure what the alternative would be. If you went to the extreme of getting rid of the liberal arts element altogether, then you're really turning into a trade school, and the effect for journalism would not be positive.

As students get more casual with technology, I don't think there'll be a need to indefinitely raise the number of hours to cover technological skills. The tools are getting simpler to use over time, and even though there will be new ones, I don't think we'll ever expect students to learn all the tools out there, they should learn the most representative ones and figure out the rest.

**Students are being bombarded with choices. Should they specialize?**

Our history on that is pretty interesting. We tried to do a converged curriculum in the mid-nineties. All journalism students had to take courses in print and broadcast. We found that we didn't do a great job of integrating the two. We did online but not that much. So about three years ago, we revised the curriculum again. Now what we do is all the students in journalism have to take a course in multimedia journalism and multimedia newsgathering, then they specialize in a skills stream for print, online and broadcast, but there are also classes they can take to allow them to integrate those, such as our advanced multimedia class. As far as specialization goes, we give them an opportunity to



specialize, but we want to expose them to a broad variety of platforms. First courses they take expose them to multimedia, and they choose a skills-stream, either print or online or broadcast, then they take courses that are specialized, and they can choose classes that will integrate those. It's kind of a hybrid approach.

**Is this a surfeit of choice?**

That's a challenge to sort out. We've tried to do a hybrid, or balanced approach. We require them to get exposed to a variety of platforms, but they can pick and choose which ones to focus on. So they can still build things according to their interest. It's a tough balance, though.

**How soon should student specialize?**

It depends on the student. We want to see them get involved early in trying things in whatever media they're involved in and find something they're strong in. One of the problems of the jack-of-all trades approach, even though we need people to be good at a lot of things, most people are good at some area. They're not usually equally good at all of them. It's a good thing for the industry for people to have some depth in an area of strength, along a broad and basic skill set.

I think there's going to be a range of people, just like in the past where in small newsrooms there's a necessity of people doing more things, where in larger newsrooms there's more specialization, especially with the pressure to keep costs down and staff numbers down, that's going to produce pressure to be generalists. But especially in areas

like data journalism, where you can't fake it, you really have to know what you're doing, there's a benefit to drill down into a specialty and really know it well.

### **13. Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Professor, University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications**

#### **How U of Iowa has balanced liberal arts and technical demands?**

We're an accredited university, so there's a requirement that they have to have a certain number of hours in the liberal arts. I think 65. We also require students to not only have a journalism major. I think the number of hours in journalism they have to take is 30 and a maximum of 40. We require all of our students to also have a second major and second concentration. It depends, that can be another liberal arts major; a lot of students double in political science or a language, or international relations, or they develop their own secondary concentration so they can put together an area of interest, say, if they're interested in sports and society. They have to have at least 24 hours altogether, and 15 have to be upper-level. Most of the time they end up double-majoring.

They normally do it in a liberal arts area, but sometimes in another area, like pre-med or education, which I think is really good because we need good health reporters and education reporters.

Most faculties feel and certainly AEJMC feel that good reporters are well-rounded, well-educated, have critical thinking skills, and are knowledgeable about areas outside of

journalism.

Just the fact that the world is really complicated, there are debates out there and all sorts of issues to get into. Reporters need to report on high-stakes political issues. So journalism students really have to have an education that goes beyond the professional focus.

Even within our program they do that. They have to take a certain number of skills courses. They're actually workshops on video production and web journalism. And writing courses. But they also have to take conceptual courses, which are more broader issues in communications. There's a course on images and society, ethics, gender in mass media, etc.

The whole history of the Iowa program, we've never had sequences. We've never tracked people. We've always had a very open curriculum. Now, with convergence, we're really well positioned, because we never did have this straight-laced, this is the skills you have to have. We've always had the balance between conceptual and skills.

We were almost considered a maverick program, but now everybody wants to do what we've always done. Because mass communications is such a broad area, we graduate people who work in pub relations, web operations, so we didn't necessarily track PR students or journalism students, they could always choose their own program.

### **Guidance?**

Obviously advising has been a huge part of this, too. You have to have good advising.

We do also have a professional staff advisor as well that they can go see, and talk to them about which courses are being taught in which semester, and how they can compose a program that works for them. Advising is huge, when you don't have sequences.

### **Convergence?**

The way that technology is evolving, being high-quality is becoming easier. Technology is allowing higher quality anyway. At Iowa, their very first introductory journalism course tells them about media writing. but there's a co-requisite called Multimedia storytelling. They learn to create multimedia projects, images audio, video, data visualizations. They get an intro to all sorts of multimedia technologies. From there, a lot of other classes engage components of those things. We're trying to work more multimedia in all of our classes. After that basic class, they still have very rigorous writing classes. So they do learn to write very well. And depending on their interests, they can take photo-j, video, graphic design, and web journalism.

The way our curriculum is being redesigned is that we're teaching quality and breadth, and I don't think they're mutually exclusive.

They're going to learn a lot when they leave here as well. But as long as they have basic skills, they can continue to educate themselves. The other part of that, I should mention, is we have very good student media here, so if they want to, they can write for and work

in other capacities for the daily Iowan, which used to be a newspaper, but now expanded into ITV and have a web presences.

We leave it up to them. Realistically, these days, entry-level jobs often call for a wide variety of skills. If you're starting out, you often need to be that backpack reporter. It is a bit of a dilemma, but it seems to be what entry-level jobs are calling for here.

But here at Iowa, we really do emphasize writing. Having exceptional writing skills is a huge thing about what this university is about, and we don't let that slip.

I think everyone is trying to strike that balance. But I don't think four years of university is going to give you everything you'll need in life. The best thing we can do is give them that background.

I think it would be doing them a great disservice if we were to graduate them without a huge range of skills.

### **On the horizon?**

A lot of our recent faculty hires have been people with multimedia skills, but at the same time we're not going to let go of traditional journalism. We did a pretty recent curriculum revision, a couple years ago, when all the co-requisite of multimedia class came in. We're not going to be totally driven by multimedia needs. There's a greater philosophy of

education at work here, where we still recognize the need for students to have a broad liberal arts education.

#### **14. Fitz McAden, executive editor, The Island Packet**

##### **What do our school doing right?**

I've hired from a lot of places, a lot of journalism schools - Columbia, northwestern, and I think the folks that we get from Missouri as well as northwestern, those schools do the best job, prepare their students to hit the ground running, once they get a full-time job. There's not as much training and hand-holding involved as people from other schools. They're able to operate independently.

In order to learn how to do things, you've gotta do them; you've got to practice them. That's what happens with the Missourian, and apparently in some of the classes, too. There's more hands-on. You don't just sit around and talk about things; you actually do them. I think it makes a huge difference, not only for print, but online as well.

##### **Liberal arts or vocational school?**

I think a liberal arts education is a very good thing. I think it's worthwhile and very valuable over the years. You have a broader education. However, I think there may be a shift, and it probably has to do with the job market than anything else. Employers need the confidence when they make a hiring decision that the person they bring on board is not just going to be a deep thinker, but they've also got to do the task, whether it's

writing a story, posting a story online, using a smartphone, or whatever. You've got to have the technical skills to do these things. From my point of view, we're a small paper, and I've got to hire people who can pretty much do it all; write a story for print, write a story for online, or do a blog, or post a tweet, all of these things you've got to do. And I'm going to pick that person, I'm going to pick the person who will do all of these things, as long as they're intelligent and have interview skills. We don't have time, unfortunately, to do a lot of training, of bringing people up to speed. In a paper like ours, they have to come here pretty much knowing what they're doing. We'll give them direction this way or that, but we can't afford any longer to hire people who don't have the basic skills that this industry requires.

### **So what is a student to do?**

I think, ideally, the student is going to try to do both. I think there is going to be a shift though. There are only a certain number of hours in the day to teach, and only a certain amount to learn. If you want to equip yourself with the skills to be competitive in the job market, you'll probably have to have a bit less liberal arts than you have in the past. A lot of the things that a student needs to know when he or she graduates didn't even exist a few years ago. A lot of these things you can pick up along the way, outside of school; you can learn to take pictures with a smartphone. You can tweet; you can do Facebook posts. But the applications of all of those functions that relate specifically to journalism; it really comes down to being competitive on the job. We don't want to hire people who don't know anything about medieval England, or about Chaucer, but there might have to be more of a balance in liberal arts and the skills that you need to get a job. I think it's that

way with other degrees, other than journalism. I've got two sons that recently graduated from college, and I think in their cases, they didn't get a liberal arts degree; one got a degree in business and the other in business too, but I know things from my liberal arts, like I could quote Chaucer. They haven't read the Canterbury tales; they haven't read Dante. Those things are good to know. You are a more complete person, knowing that. You have more of an appreciation of the past. The past is prologue, as they say. But something's gotta give, in terms of if you're going to try to do it all in four years. I think liberal arts are going to have to give a little.

A lot of the classics you need to be guided through. You can get an idea, but you really need to be coached in that. It's not something that you can do on your own. But I think the whole society is moving in the direction that you're talking about.

It's just one of those things, it used to be, and it's less so now. It's like a lot of things that used to be and are less so now. There's a time for everything, and the time for everybody getting a lib arts education and then going on to postgraduate studies, a lot of people can't do that. A lot of things that we used to take for granted have sort of faded away.

### **Convergence?**

I think, to a great extent, that's a large-media company, small media company issue. Our newspaper here, you have got to do a lot of things. It's difficult, with the number of people we have; we only have 8 reporters, to specialize in one thing or another and never have to be bothered with the other things. In a larger newspaper, it's possible. If a larger



newspaper has a whole stable of videographers, that's a fine thing, but we don't and we never will. We have photographers who can shoot videos, and we have some reporters who can shoot video. You can't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. No, our video won't be the quality of *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, but it'll be good. Because we have standards. If you have standards, you won't put low-quality material out there. You'll work on it until it's good. But at a paper like ours, we don't have the choice about doing a lot of these things. We have to do them, and we'll do them to the best of our abilities.

I think it's better to be a jack-of-all trades, get an initial job, and learn what your skills are, what you like doing, what your skills are, and then as you go along, give them more and more emphasis. You can specialize, a student can specialize in something and then find out when he or she gets his first job, counting on getting a job with a company that allows them to use their specialty inside school. But that may not happen. The company might need something totally different. I think it's a gamble to specialize. Unless you're extremely good at it. If you shoot video very well, if you have a tremendous talent with it, you might be able to get job going out of school. but whoever you work for may ask you do a lot of other thing.

You'll have a better sense once you get a job of what you're good at. Sometimes it can take years, it really can. I'm not sure a lot of people really know, after four years what they're good at and what they want to specialize in. For instance, I hired a person one time, and she was very strong reporter, could have been a better writer, but very strong

reporter. She wanted to write, she thought, and it was purely because at a summer internship she had written about the military in Washington. All she could talk to me about when we were interviewing her, was I want to be a military writer. After a while, we hired her, she was bright, energetic, what she is now, she's an investigative reporter on all sorts of things: health care, insurance, etc. It took the experience you derive from a job. You taste a lot of things in a newspaper. You cover local government, police, all sorts of things. And you don't know, without that experience, you haven't tasted enough of the possibilities to know what you want to specialize in. I think to specialize too early can be sort of a limiting thing.

The experimentation period should go into your first job. I've been doing this for forty years, so I've got a little view of how things used to be. But you're mentioning all these media; but what about just getting a good story? Sinking your teeth into a good story. You don't want to lose that in all of this. After all, we're journalists. It's vitally important that we make the transition to digital and online, but it's also important to recognize a good story, and how to handle it. I'm not sure you can be taught to recognize a good story. Either you have that instinct or you don't. But I don't think we want to lose sight with all of these ways to get the news out, I don't think we want to forget about coming up with good stories.

The other thing to remember is that the good story, whether it's a feature story, or an investigative story that turns over a lot of stones, that's something that's a constant. It's always going to be there, and always going to be there to be found and retold. The

devices we use will be ever changing, there's a new this or a new that every month or every week. You could spend a lot of time learning about this gizmo or that gizmo, and by the time you get out, it's going to be totally different.

### **What can schools and students do with all this?**

A fundamental aspect of journalism education has to be basic reporting or writing.

Whether you write it at a desktop or an iPad or whatever, whether you do it as a blog, I think fundamentally a journalist has to be able to gather information and put it into plain spoken English or whatever language you're writing in. Understandable, clearly-written prose. If you're going to be what I consider to be a journalist, you have to be able to do that. I think that oughta be a basic building block in any journalism curriculum.

You'll never design an education program that's all things to all people. You'll have to have some general courses that'll be required and may be of more use to some students to others. This whole conversation is in the context of journalism school. To me, journalism is reporting and writing, and yes, that's changing. Before you're worrying about how to get the message out, you have to have the message. You have to get the message, you have to report it, and you have to compose it. First thing's first. Let's get the story, and then we'll get it out there, using the most comprehensive way possible, and certainly that means online rather than tomorrow's newspaper, which comes out several hours from now. I think you've gotta be able to gather information and process it, and processing it means writing it. It doesn't have to be a long, narrative story, but you've gotta be accurate too.

**How many Mizzou students work with you right now?**

Maybe a half-dozen people. But our staff is fluid, people are coming here for a year or so and they'll move up and go to a bigger paper. At any one time I'd say we have between four and half-a-dozen Missouri students here.

I don't think we have to toss the whole liberal arts curriculum that was part of my education, but I think some of it can be left behind with much less damage than other parts of it. I think it's probably more important for a journalist to learn a history class, two semesters of world history, than calculus for two semesters.

What journalism schools are going through now is pretty much the same as what newspapers are going through. The whole paradigm is changing. It's a cliché, but it's true. I'm having to learn computer functions. I post stories, I do tweets, I do Facebook. I never had to do that before, but you've gotta do it. It's strange, and new and different, but this business is changing, and journalism schools have gotta do it. If they want to have a good track record in placing students, they've gotta change with it. But there are fundamentals that can't change, and those are a reverence for accuracy, the ability to gather information and write it.

This is untrodden territory, and we're just going to have to think hard about it and proceed and do the best we can. If something doesn't work, then try something else.

## **Recommendations?**

For now, and for a long time into the future, everybody needs to be able to write clearly.

They need to be able to do a lot of other things. Everybody I hire needs to be able to write clearly. They can have a lot of skills, but they have to be able to get information and get it accurately. They have to be able to put a subject and a verb together and get it to read fluidly and make sense, and not have a lot of internal contradictions. They'll do a lot of other things, but without the ability to report and write well, it's not going to work, wherever they're from.

## **15. Amrita Jayakumar - Washington Post, web producer, former Missouri School of Journalism graduate student**

### **Liberal arts or Vocational school?**

I never thought of it as a liberal arts school, I thought of it as a specialization. Should students focus on one thing or become a jack-of-all trades? Since I did convergence, nobody knows what the definition of convergence is. I took all sorts of classes: photojournalism, magazine writing, and lots of others. I think it's good to have that kind of flexibility. I'm not sure whether it's best to pick one thing and focus on it

Starting out, career-wise, I was not afraid to try new things. The producing role I didn't know what much about, and it was something I learned while I was there. Maybe if I had focused only on print, or something, I don't know if I would have been open to that. But Mizzou is pretty good about even if you focus on one thing, they make you try all sorts of

things. In that way, the school prepares you whether you like it or not.

**In the past few years there's been a real de-emphasis on the liberal arts, essentially students are encouraged to take as many journalism classes as they can.**

It's actually an interesting thing. My undergrad was in engineering. Like when you take an engineering major, you're pretty much doing a vocational, job-based degree.

Obviously I regretted not having subjects you take for the pleasure of studying them.

That's what I did in journalism. I think that you have to, if you consider this economy, you do need to have that stress toward job focused skills. Right now, it's a reflection of what's going on in the world. You could argue that they may not know what's going on in the world, but it's also a reflection of real-world needs. To give a practical example, and without sounding like Mizzou is the best, when I met other people from other journalism schools, there were some very basic things they didn't know how to do, which I found very surprising. A girl I interned with hadn't been taught how to transfer the files onto a computer from a camera and then work with them. She spent a lot of time on that. I remember nodding sympathetically and thinking, "how was she not taught this, the most basic things?" So you need at least some basic skills.

If the demand is there, the moment they see a shift in students wanting to learn other subjects, it'll automatically adapt to that.

I think, honestly, real-world experience makes a better journalism education. In the first

semester, they threw us in there and made us report and interview real people. The most important thing is pushing someone into it and making them go out and start meeting people. That's the best journalism education. It's a mix of ethics and practicality.

I think those initial years are a good time to try stuff and make up your mind. You just entered college, how do you know what you want? Obviously it's not a good thing if students are forced to decide because everyone else is doing it. The trend is not necessarily good, but it reflects a necessity. It's just a fact. I don't know if you can have a view on it or just accept it, until it changes.

### **Jack-of-all trades, or master of one?**

Brian storm does have a point. Even as a convergence student, it was tough. I can't say I'm so good at photo or so good at video. You can't multi-task. But at the same time you have to know how everything works. It's like a management thing. You don't have to know all the ins and outs, but if you have a basic idea, you can do some good work. I think you should know a little bit of everything, but ultimately you have to specialize, because you have to have a skill to offer.

### **How does this relate in the context of the convergence curriculum?**

They do give you an overall feel of how everything works, like the first convergence class was fundamentals of TV/radio and photojournalism. So they made you take photos and shoot video, and do all sorts of things. Later, they put you in teams and make projects

to work on. I would say it was a good way of making you do real things, as I imagine real journalism would be like, where you're part of a team.

Obviously it has its own advantages and disadvantages, but I think they give you a fair sense of how it works. They didn't expect one person to be amazing at all of these things.

In the beginning class it was tough. I had no experience. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I don't know if the other students had years of training or whatever, but I found it overwhelming. But now I can look back at it and say, "maybe that was a good way to learn."

I was at KBIA and global journalist, and yeah, I do think it was such a short amount of time. It was half a semester, which goes by like that. It doesn't give an institutional understanding.

### **Was it helpful?**

I took some amazing classes, like the photojournalism class, or intermediate writing. I was really happy to have tried those, because I did learn skills that even if I don't directly use them in my job, I can use them on my own time.

### **Suggestions for improvement?**

I think Kennedy has a point; it would be better if they had an overarching focus, and within that you can make your own major or are flexible. If it's going to be a very, very,



subdivided thing where they pick a specialized random thing, I'm not sure that's good in undergrad. It's better to have an overarching sense of what you're doing. Keep the original tracks with a little bit more flexibility. Give grad school flexibility in undergrad experience with emphasis areas intact.

**Favorite part of Mizzou?**

It was that flexibility that we were offered. The fact they did let me mix it around and take classes I wanted to take. I took a film development class in the fine arts department. I appreciated that they encouraged you to do your own thing, but at the same time they made sure you had those core classes which now you can see were useful. Flexibility, in one word, was what I liked about Mizzou.

**16. Doug Anderson, Vice President, ACEJMC**

**How did these changes come about?**

It was the standards review committee that was charged with this about a year and a half ago. I would never look at that as endorsing or de-valuing a liberal arts education. It is the number of credits required, outside, are 8 credits below what they were. But that is up to each institution. An institution could require ninety hours if it wants to. All the revisions say is that you must have at least 72 outside. It doesn't stop an institution; it gives complete institutional autonomy, if they want to have students take more than that outside, they're free to do so.

**What methodology did you use?**

We surveyed the administrators of the 109 accredited programs. That survey was last January and February. We got 66 respondents back, so around 61% response. And I presume the Kansas office could send you that questionnaire. And so you can see the questionnaire itself. And it called for, each of the standards, we invited input - good as it, needs minor revisions, needs major revisions. Anyone who thought they needed revisions, they could say exactly what they had in mind. People really took it seriously. We wanted to survey the field, instead of listen to four people who wanted to talk the longest and the loudest at a public meeting.

**What were the results of the survey?**

It was just a crescendo of people strongly advocating the liberalization for convergence purposes. The 72 credits would be evenly divisible by three. Another factor was that some units might choose to have more credits inside the unit, they now have that freedom in whatever courses they might choose. We thought it was important particularly because Advertising and PR have become the largest majors at many accrediting universities to open the door for a PR major to take a minor in the information sciences for examples.

Primarily they thought the 80 credits with a minimum of 65 in liberal arts and sciences was too rigid and lacked flexibility for students to take a minor in an area outside of the liberal arts and sciences. All this does is open up flexibility so that individual institutions

can do what faculties think what's best for its students. There's nothing prescriptive about this.

It's still rigid in a way, but it allows for more flexibility. Obviously 72 allows more flexibility than 80.

As accrediting standards normally are, they're threshold standards that universities are expected to meet. It's now in the hands of the faculties to set the curriculum as they think best for their students.

### **What will the effects of this be?**

I would think that if students in my program chose, if we were to go to 72 credits, I don't think more would be taking accounting, I'd think they'd take business courses or something. But it's not 14-century art either, which is a classical liberal arts offering.

I think even a program that requires 80 credits, with 120 in a baccalaureate degree, that's 40 credits inside the program. That's a lot. If you go to 72, that's 48.

You're never going to get to the bottom of this, because nobody ever has.

I mean, what makes a well-rounded student? If you only take 50 credits in English instead of 56, doesn't that mean you're going through life as an un-critical thinker?

We just wanted to get good, threshold numbers, and got virtually no pushback from it.

The students must reach the core requirements of a liberal arts curriculum. All institutions have some minimum threshold.

**17. Marianne Barrett, Member, ACEJMC, Senior Associate Dean, Cronkite School**

**What do you think brought about these changes?**

My sense is that many schools felt that given the increased complexity and sophistication of the technology and what practicing journalists are being asked to do, that there needs to be more room in the journalism curriculum to continue to provide students both a grounding in journalism values but also provide the skills necessary to compete in the world of journalism.

**Sometimes it seems like editors are asking the impossible: a rigorous liberal arts education and knowledge of a variety of different storytelling techniques.**

It might seem that they're asking the impossible, but what we've found is that, I think it's true of those things, particularly when you're at a top school where students tend to be high performers anyway, they'll step up to the challenge if they set the bar high. They'll at least reach if not exceed the bar. I think that certainly one of the things we found over the last several years, because we've been requiring students to get those multimedia skills for seven or eight years, I think. What we find is that, you give the students the

challenge of learning those multimedia skills and they do. I wouldn't say it comes naturally to all of them, but because of the what you can do now with an iPhone in terms of stills and video, what you can do with very simple, consumer-oriented video equipment, posting videos to YouTube, that students are much more facile with technology, facile with social media. What we find we have to do is kind of direct their energies sometimes so that they're making correct decisions with social media. To use social media with twitter, to see what's trending. It's not second nature, but they're more facile with it than students 15 years ago were. I don't think that what small newspapers are asking to do is the impossible.

**So then are the liberal arts being de-emphasized?**

The difference between 72 and 80 credits is two classes. So in terms of number of classes we're talking about and the actual reduction of outside-of-journalism classes that students are taking, it's two. It's not like we've lost half of those liberal arts classes. A couple of things about those 72 hours is that every accredited school still has to follow university policies regarding general education policies. One of the things we're doing here is we're going to take our time regarding the liberal arts piece of it. We don't want students to lose that liberal arts focus. We don't want them taking all their outside classes in computer science. We want them to get the mix of political science, history and foreign language. Across the spectrum of accredited schools, each of us still has to follow our university's general education requirements. In almost every case, the university's general education requirements require liberal arts courses.

I don't know that it's a trend because the standard was just changed and it doesn't go into effect until a year from now, with the 2013-2014 academic year.

I think the most important thing in terms of preparing students for the industry of the future is to be flexible. Things will change. I think it's a mistake to only teach students to navigate Facebook and twitter. Those are today social media, but you have to be able to prepare students to adapt to the next new thing. And to be very flexible. We certainly don't approach things from a strictly "we're going to teach you this software, this social media," we're trying to get students to understand that they're going to have to employ a lot of different skills. The other really important thing to impart as a skill that students need to learn is storytelling skills. Whether you're talking about a iPhone, Jandycam, or Nikon DSLR, those are only tools. What's important is the storytelling skills. The tools will change, but the basic concepts, in terms of the importance of telling a good story, the elements of a good story, building it around a strong storyline, those things aren't going to change.

The standards get re-evaluated once every ten years. So for the next ten years, in terms of the number of credits the students the students have to take outside of the journalism school will be 72.

I personally participated in two accrediting council meetings where the standards were discussed, and I sat in on a session at AEJMC, but it was Doug Anderson that chaired the meeting. I could only tell you what I remember from three meetings where there were

many, many more. There was a survey sent.

It was a consideration of the changing complexity and changing demands that are being put on journalists.

### **Downsides to the changes?**

I think it's as you said, a judicious change. I think it's a little more than a baby step, but it's a judicious change. We're just going to have to see how it plays out. The way that we'll see if it plays out is looking at the schools who come up for re accreditation. So all the accredited schools will come up at some point. We'll just have to see whether there's any impact on the level of compliance of the curriculum standard.

Schools have the flexibility of doing that. The 72 hours outside the major is a minimum. There's nothing to prevent a school from continuing to require a student to take all 80 hours outside of the school.

The problem with that is, first of all it becomes a number game. The other is, in some places, like ASU, fine arts is in a completely separate school, it's not part of liberal arts. I couldn't count an arts history class as a liberal arts class, since it's not part of the liberal arts school. Schools still had a lot of leeway. One of the things the elimination of the 65 rule, or giving schools the option to, is it gets rid of the issue of well, how do I count a modern art class? The old standard was that 80 hours had to be taken out of the major and 65 had to be in liberal arts and sciences. The new rule is strictly that 72 hours has to be

taken outside of the major; it can be taken in anything. But every accredited school is still going to have to follow it's own standards. Nobody's going to be able to have all 72 hours in computer sciences or business.

**You could envision a program that is accredited that requires no liberal arts?**

Yeah, and if that becomes the standard in 10 years, we'll have to make a change. So now we've got the current rule change, it'll be in place for 10 years, we'll see what happens, how schools adapt to it, how it gets operationalized, 10 years from now, if they feel they need to revising, then they'll revise it.

**18. Esten Hurtle, former Missouri School of Journalism undergraduate, software developer at Twitter**

**Have you noticed a trend away from liberal arts?**

Yeah, I have. I think that that's the natural result of there being so much more vocational training for something like this. You can't expect someone with a liberal arts degree to go straight into understanding how new media works. You have to be trained in video editing software and things like that. It's not like you can just go to liberal arts school and get those skills. The things you'll be doing in your job will be much more complex than they were 20 years ago.

I work at Twitter, so of course I'm all for that. I think it's good for journalism, but I think



it's a large process of journalists no longer being brokers of information anymore. There are a lot more streams that people can access. It goes from how do you compete with other journalists to how do you compete with social media? You have to embrace new media and videography if you're going to be an information broker. Journalists no longer have a monopoly on information because there are so many different sources out there. It used to be that journalists would compete with one another. If you're with the *New York Times*, you're competing with *Washington Post*. If you're at the *Missourian*, you're competing with the Trib. But now you have to be the best information delivery not only of the two papers, but Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.

**Editors still seem to value liberal arts.**

I'm not saying there isn't value in it whatsoever, but since there are more complexities in the media landscape, it's only natural that if you're going to prepare people to enter that landscape, you're going to need more vocational training. They're going to have to take these technical classes. So why not take out a bit of liberal arts, but not the whole thing?

They're not focusing the journalism classes on things they need to be focusing on. I work in software development. I know that if they had focused on things and adapted to new trends faster, they probably would not have needed to take out as many liberal arts classes. There's a way to do a more focused journalism education that involves these new trends happening.

I wish that there were more Information Technology classes required, more cross-discipline, certainly vocational.

**What are your views on convergence?**

They need to figure out what they're going to be. Right now the idea of convergence is really nice, and I was talking to a friend about this the other day, and the big thing to me is that they're not teaching how to code. There's a real lack of journalists who know how to code right now, and there's a lot of job openings. It doesn't need to be a requirement, but they're trying to train everyone in everything, but they're not diving into these niches that are just coming out. You need to know how to code if you want to be a data journalists. That's a useful skill to have. It's useful for anything. And it's not being taught in convergence, which is weird to me. There are so many niches in journalism that are just coming up, and I think convergence is well-suited to dive into, and they're not. I can understand they want to be generalists, and that's fine, but they should at least have a class on it.

**Jack of all trades or master of one?**

There isn't a real good answer to that. The whole idea of being a journalist is to be a generalist. You should have this ability to understand a field quickly and be able to know it enough to ask questions about it. I think the idea of a journalist that's a master of one trade; I don't think it ever existed.

I think there's a benefit to having a key-shaped thing, where you're good at one thing, but you can also manage other things.

## **APPENDIX IV: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please do not put your name on top of this questionnaire

1. Describe your skill level in the following areas:

a. Reporting

b. Writing

c. Multimedia

d. Critical Thinking

2. Describe your comfort level in the following areas:

a. Reporting

b. Writing

c. Multimedia

d. Critical Thinking

3. What electives have you taken and do you plan to take to further your journalism education and help your career?

## APPENDIX V: ANALYSIS QUERY LETTER

3042 Quail Ridge Circle  
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

September 20, 2012

Rem Rieder  
Editor and Senior Vice President  
American Journalism Review  
University of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Building  
College Park, MD 20742-7111

Dear Mr. Rieder:

The world of journalism has changed dramatically since the advent of the Internet, and journalism schools have scrambled to prepare their students for a radically different field than the teachers once practiced in.

As part of my master's degree final project at the Missouri School of Journalism, I investigated the ways in which journalism schools have adapted to the challenges of a 21<sup>st</sup> century media environment.

This 1500-word feature, adapted from my thesis, includes interviews of former journalism students, some of today's top journalism educators and editors to arrive at an appraisal of what strategies journalism schools have pursued to meet these challenges, and how editors have looked upon these changes.

I have included a draft for your perusal, and I welcome any comments and suggestions you might provide.

Please feel free to contact me at [pavan.vangipuram@gmail.com](mailto:pavan.vangipuram@gmail.com) or by telephone at (248) 227-0494.

Sincerely,  
Pavan Vangipuram