ELEVATING THE NEWS: HOW ENGAGEMENT EDITORS ASSESS SUCCESS IN THEIR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

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ABSTRACT

Community engagement is a news industry buzzword that has recently seen professionalization in newsrooms in the form of a community engagement editor. Little research has been done on this type of editor and how they know what they’re doing is working and this academic research seeks to fill that hole in journalistic knowledge. This study used 10 semi-structured interviews with engagement editors (or those who do similar work with a different title) to delve into what their position actually entails, how they measure and assess the success of their work and how that informs how they balance the journalistic and business value of their work. This study found three types of emphases in editors doing community engagement work and found seven types of barriers to assessment and measurement of success, though it did find that community engagement editors do measure a variety of things both qualitatively and quantitatively that impact their decision making. This study also found that community engagement journalists at online newspapers fall in line with traditional journalistic ideas of separation between editorial and business departments in newspapers, even if they are making strides in understanding how the two worlds interconnect.