

POLITICAL REPORTING IN THE  
AGE OF INFOTAINMENT

---

A Professional Project  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by

MELISSA ORIBHABOR

Jennifer Rowe, Committee Chair

AUGUST 2014

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members: Jennifer Rowe, Maggie Walter, and Barbara Cochran for their help with completing this professional project.

Specifically, I would like to thank Jennifer Rowe for the time spent going over my work and offering edits, suggestions, and help wherever and whenever I needed it.

Thank you Barbara Cochran for helping me find my sources and being my connection to the Northeast.

And thank you Maggie Walter for your feedback and for meeting with me to help me get back on track.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....ii

Chapter

1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....1  
2. CHAPTER TWO: FIELD NOTES.....5  
3. CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATION.....35  
4. CHAPTER FOUR: PHYSICAL EVIDENCE.....43  
5. CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS.....85

APPENDIX

1. REFERENCES.....128  
2. PROJECT PROPOSAL .....133  
3. CHANGES.....152  
4. TRANSCRIPTS.....154

## Chapter One: Introduction

Until now, I've never been entirely sure what I wanted to do for a future profession. The issue was never with coming up with goals, but in narrowing them down. There seems to be few professions that allow you to do many things at once. Fulfilling careers tend to be dynamic, but within one field. My ultimate career goal was to find an occupation that allowed me to take all of the areas I've studied, both as a graduate and undergraduate student, and apply them on a daily basis.

I received my first bachelor's degree from The University of Missouri with an emphasis in history, business (marketing, specifically) and sociology in 2008. I received my second bachelor's degree from The University of Missouri-Kansas City with an emphasis in print journalism and mass communication in 2011. At the University of Missouri once more, I am focusing on several aspects of journalism, primarily editing, design, and broadcast. My career goal is to have a job where I can utilize all of these areas of emphasis.

I came across Newz Group by accident. The company had a booth at a part-time job fair on campus. It turned out this company was the first place I found that actually fit with my professional goals.

Newz Group is a digital media technology and public relations company. The primary services it provides are media monitoring, digital archiving, and E-Edition hosting for print publications. It is a family-owned small business that has offices in four states, with the home office in Columbia, Mo.



At Newz Group, I was given the opportunity to write, edit, design, work with people, market a service on a broad scale, and report.

While working at Newz Group, I helped to expand its service offerings by a dozen. New services included: press release writing, hosting and distribution, Internet monitoring analytics, and media contact lists.

I enjoyed working in a public relations capacity for this company, and I would like to continue working in public relations until I have the experience necessary to move up to government or campaign communications.

What was most enjoyable about working for Newz Group was the freedom I was given to try different things, such as designing ads and writing and designing the newsletter and website. I learned about which methods of marketing and mass communication are the most effective and how to market efficiently without spending too much money. I also learned the importance of writing a press release with search engine optimization in mind, so the keywords and phrases will be picked up on Internet searches.

One of the most enjoyable and useful tools I learned involved designing. I had a basic understanding of Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Illustrator when I started working at Newz Group, but in order to design items such as ads, press/media kits, and pamphlets, I needed more than just a basic knowledge. On the job, I was able to teach myself through online video tutorials and design websites to develop the skills I needed to produce quality work.

The most challenging aspect of working for Newz Group was learning to market on a limited budget. When I began working for Newz Group, there was no

official budget for marketing or public relations and few funds were allotted for my position. As a result, there were many marketing tactics I was not able to use, such as consistently buying ad space in newspapers and magazines. To combat this, I focused a lot on direct advertising. I created postcards, mailers, fliers etc. and sent those to potential clients. Those cost less than placing an ad and did turn out to be effective.

I was also able to expand my knowledge of social media management. Until that point, I had been only a casual user of social media, except for the brief time I worked on the Interactive Copy Editing desk at *Columbia-Missourian.com*. At Newz Group, I not only had to use social media in a professional manner, but I had to keep up with them on a regular basis. That included tweeting consistently throughout the day, regularly updating Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn, and producing content for YouTube. Going into this job I knew how to use Facebook the most, the other social media platforms were a learning experience for me.

In terms of my academic research, I chose to focus on political reporting because I thought I'd like to work in that area but not necessarily as a political reporter. I want to work in communications with the government, individual politicians and/or campaigns. My research was great at giving me insight into the challenges of covering politics, political campaigns and politicians and working for Newz Group gave me the tools I need to work in that field.

By working in communications for this company, which works with politicians and campaigns across the country, and gaining experience with communication directors and press secretaries, I have a better idea of what

communication directors and press secretaries do and the skills needed to enter that field.

My research specifically focused on changes in the news industry and the topic of infotainment and how it has affected political reporters. Through research and working closely with a member of my graduate committee, Barbara Cochran, I was able to contact and interview 10 current or retired political reporters who worked for large newspapers based out of Washington, D.C., such as the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. We spoke about how the industry has changed during their careers and how or if infotainment has had an affect on them or their jobs.

Many of them also offered their own opinions of how journalism in the future may be affected by the changes they have seen. One of the most interesting points made by many of them concerned the lack of access to political figures because the politician or members of their staff prefer to disseminate messages to the public themselves, instead of dealing with reporters. I found this to be fascinating, especially considering my desire to work in political communications.

My research and professional project, which at first seemed loosely related, ended up working well together by giving me a full picture of political communications from the perspective of the politician and press secretaries and the political reporters trying to get through them to get to the politician.

## Chapter Two: Weekly Field Notes

### Week 1

#### Overview.

- Wrote an article for the newsletter about the importance of press releases
- Contacted publications to inquire about advertising
- Worked on newsletter design in InDesign
- Researched the Conservative Political Action Conference for possible promotion opportunity
- Corrected service sheet and advertisement in InDesign
- Pitched idea of developing an app for the website and portals
- Updated Facebook and Twitter
- Researched security certification
- Researched Colorado gubernatorial race
- Prepared a marketing strategy and presented. Boss agreed to run a half-page ad in a magazine in West Virginia and my supervisor, Ian, and I will be attending CPAC in St. Louis in September for networking and promotional opportunities
- Completed newsletter and sent it for review and editing
- Pitched digital solution expansion
- Designed half-page and quarter-page advertisements

- Wrote about Dept. of Justice/journalism scandal on Facebook
- Put together packets for potential clients with advertisements, service sheets and pitch letters

### **Analysis.**

I started a new method of seeking out new business called “PC packets.” They are packets put together for potential clients with special offers, a list of services, a copy of the newsletter and a pitch letter specific to the client that explains why our company can be of service to them. This week, I implemented this new strategy and I wrote several of these in a day, and I was trying to push them out as quickly as I could. I sent a version of one of the letters to another employee and she found several grammar errors that resulted from me working too fast (such as “thank you for *you* time”). I was really upset because I had already sent out about 10 of these letters with the same error in all of them. I realized that for a lot of what I do, I work way too fast focusing on the material, and I wasn’t paying enough attention to the execution.

Additionally, there had been little editorial oversight because I was overly confident in my ability. As a result, I am now sending materials to some senior employees to review before I send anything out to avoid this mistake in the future. Working in newspapers, there was always a designated person to review work; in this case, I need to seek out a person to review my work because editors are important in all jobs that require distribution of written material.

## **Research.**

I am still in the process of getting IRB approval. I filled out the form, but it seems that it wasn't complete and I still need to iron out some details. Once I finish with my IRB approval, I am going to start contacting reporters whom I would like to interview for my research. I need to call campus IRB to go through the process with them, but since this is Memorial Day weekend, I'll have to wait to do it on my lunch break Tuesday afternoon. This is a very new process for me, and I seem to be having more difficulty than I thought I would.

## **Week 2**

### **Overview.**

- Redesigned half-page ad for *West Virginia Construction News*. Original design was too wordy and didn't have a photo
- Worked with IT associate on new website front page
- Finished newsletter and sent it to staff and clients
- Made customer care calls
- Had a website re-design meeting and updated the layout I previously designed
- Wrote the content for the new website

- Wrote article about the Buchanan family history
- Wrote two blog posts about social media
- Sent in final ad to *West Virginia Construction News*
- Finished writing and putting together 40 packets of information for potential clients and sent it out
- Started work on company pamphlet in InDesign. Submitted three designs to Ian for review

### **Analysis.**

Since I started studying journalism, the bible has been the *Associated Press Stylebook*. I've memorized it pretty well and use AP style in all my writing, whether it's for school or for publication. Recently when I've been sending in work to be edited, the edits that have been suggested have not been consistent with AP style. I spoke to my co-worker who had been editing my work about what style she uses and she explained that we need to use The Gregg Reference Manual for style, not AP style. I knew there was a risk of there being a local style here, but I didn't think it would not include AP style at all. I know nothing about The Gregg Reference Manual, other than it tends to favor italics instead of quotations. I'm a little put out by the change, but will adjust accordingly.

## **Research.**

This week I had to complete the CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. It is supposed to take 4-6 hours. I did about an hour a day and finished it on Friday. The training was good, but now I'm concerned about one factor of my research – the topic of “identifiable information.” I'm wondering if I should use the names of the people I interview in my research because the training made it seem like that was not a good idea. I feel using their names adds credibility to my findings, but now I'm not sure. I think I need to change my IRB submission to state that I will not be identifying my interviewees in the final research analysis. I think I'll need more council on this topic before I proceed. My current IRB application is under review and it states that I will be using their names.

## **Week 3**

### **Overview.**

- Edited all the website content I wrote in week 2 and I submitted the material to the girl who is inputting the code for the website
- Put together a contact list of previous clients and potential clients I have been in contact with in order to better keep track of with whom I am corresponding
- Designed postcards to send to the Texas House and Senate members.



- Put together comprehensive list of all Texas Senators and House members with their press secretary information and contact information
- Sent out Texas postcards
- Started work re-designing Newz Group business cards
- Designed six half-page ads
- Wrote 500-word article about the new publisher portal
- Researched and wrote an article about broadcast news viewership
- Formatted July newsletter

### **Analysis.**

Last fall I took a magazine design class. I knew very little about InDesign and Illustrator, but I ended up doing pretty well. I followed that class up with news editing and design and I got more experience on those programs. It seems, however, that I still do not have as much skill as I would like. This stuff is still very new to me. I'm getting a lot of good feedback, and my advertisements go over well with my bosses when I send them in for review.

However, re-designing these business cards is proving to be harder than I thought. Making a new advertisement is much easier than re-designing something that already exists. I don't have the keen eye for design that I would like. To try and resolve this problem, I watch a lot of YouTube tutorials about InDesign and Illustrator, and I play with them a home in my spare time. However, I'm still constantly worried I'm not very good at it, and design is a big part of my job. I just

have to keep practicing and studying and hope my skills improve. I'm at a loss for what else I can do.

### **Research.**

I was contacted by IRB stating I needed to resubmit my IRB material with some corrections. I needed to correct my consent form and answer some additional questions; largely pertaining to whom I am going to interview and how I'm going to find them. I uploaded the requested documents and resubmitted my form. I decided to stick with using the names of the people I interview, since I don't feel any of the questions are putting their jobs or reputations in danger. Though I have the list of publications I plan to use for my interviews, I am going to begin the process of selecting which journalists I'm going to approach for an interview. I have been following several on Twitter to get a feel for their beats. I will submit my list of potential interviewees with my week 4 field notes.

### **Week 4**

#### **Overview.**

- Finished business card designs, submitted design
- Created customer feedback survey
- Found out I get to attend Arkansas Press Association SuperConference at the end of June

- Edited content to be distributed at the conference
- Designed booklet of information for conference distribution
- Corrected design for pamphlets
- Redesigned new letterhead
- Designed front page of client portal online
- Wrote articles for July newsletter
- Created list of potential services and best practices to present at Monday meeting

### **Analysis.**

June 26-29 I will be attending the APA conference as a representative of Newz Group. I'll go with the CEO, Brad, and his wife, Barb. During this conference I will be meeting newspaper publishers and journalists in publications throughout the state and there are also several speakers who will host discussions. This is not only a great networking opportunity, but also a time for me to show my value to my boss as a member of the team. I will be in charge of all the journalist and publisher relations during the conference, and my boss will be working with the administration of the APA. This is not only my first business trip, but also the first time I'm going to be working with such a high volume of journalists and publishers.

My role will be to explain to the journalists and publishers how what we do protects their content and the value of digitizing content, in order to stay competitive. Many newspapers still do not have their content available online and

are weary of digitization because they fear their work will be misappropriated through news aggregators. I have to go in well versed in topics of news aggregation, pay walls, digitization and copy write issues. I'm nervous, but I got this.

### **Research.**

My IRB application was finally approved. I started reading through bios for political journalists and hit a few issues with some of the biggest sources. With *The Wall Street Journal*, I could not find staff bios or individual contact information. It seems this is the case because all of their content is hidden behind pay walls. *New York Times* and *The Hill* do not have staff bios available or individual contact info, but I got a list of the reporters who cover national politics. I will have to use a general contact number for media relations to get a hold of the right people.

For the other publications, I found the following people. I picked so many because I figured a lot of them will tell me no, so I want to ask a lot of people. I think I'll send out an email to all the people listed below, and call the media relations number to follow-up after a week or so if I don't hear back. In the mean time, I'll work on contacting reporters at the big three listed above.

*The Washington Post*: Chris Cillizza, Robert Barnes, Sean Sullivan, Glenn Kessler and Matea Gold.

*Politico*: Jennifer Epstein and James Hohmann.

*Roll Call*: Daniel Newhauser, Frank Oliveri and Anne L. Kim.

*National Journal*: Ron Fournier, Editorial Director, Michael Catalini, Charlie Cook, Jennifer Duffy, John Aloysius Farrell, Shane Goldmacher, Elahe Izadi, Beth Reinhard and Gregg Sangillo.

## Week 5

### Overview.

- Finished the APA packet after several rounds of edits and rewrites
- Went to Staples to get packets printed and then I bound all 40 copies by hand
- Sent out business card designs to admin staff to vote and chose a winner
- Pitched several new services at a meeting that we could/should offer
- Took meeting notes, typed them up and distributed
- Input website edits from other admin staff
- Researched pricing structure for new services. Prioritized the new services list and re-pitched the top ones so I can get started on implementation. Topic focuses on offering bidding services and media contact lists
- Wrote “keep a look out” article about new services for the newsletter
- Finished newsletter, sent it to admin staff for review
- Figured out how to make the newsletter interactive through InDesign so clients can click the links in the PDF
- Designed letterhead options
- Presented marketing initiatives at an all-employee meeting
- Worked on compiling Arkansas media contacts
- Wrote lists of articles, tips and blog topics I will write for the new website
- Prepared pitch letters for PR and IT firms in New Mexico

### **Analysis.**

I had the July newsletter pretty much finished by Tuesday. All I needed was a 500-word article from my boss. The layout was complete and I only had room for his article. On Wednesday we had an all-employee meeting and I was asked to design a graph from a rough sketch my boss handed me. I did the design and gave it to him to use in the meeting. After it was over, he mentioned the graph would be great for the newsletter. I thought he was talking about the August newsletter and I thought nothing of it until he sent me his article with the image attached. He meant the July newsletter. I had a brief moment of panic because there was no more room, and that was a big image. I ended up having to expand the newsletter to six pages to accommodate.

I realized that I needed to prepare better for something like this in the future. Instead of having every section so important that it can't be cut, I need to leave space and have articles that I can afford to leave out and hold for the following month. The newsletter is sent out through email and this one is 2 MB. I'm nervous there will be an issue with distribution, but I'm hopeful it will be received well.

### **Research.**

This week I focused on reading articles from the journalists I chose last week so I can shorten the list a bit. Upon further research, many I chose were so new to political reporting, I'm afraid they might not have enough experience to speak to the shift in reporting. But, on the other hand, they can speak well to what it's like now and I can compare it to journalists who have had a longer career.

Another issue I'm working on is the Skype and consent form. I need access to a fax machine and I need to negotiate with my bosses that I can take interviews when necessary. I realized that most of the reporters will have such hectic schedules that I'll need to be available when they are available. That means I need permission to take up to an hour, during the workday, to interview someone if necessary. I'll also need access to a fax machine. I noticed this around the time a huge issue arose at my work and my bosses were preoccupied with solving the problem (confidential personnel stuff).

I was nervous about talking about it. But, I'm leaving this week to go to the APA conference with my boss on Wednesday. We'll be gone until Saturday and I think that will be a good time to discuss this. Upon being hired, they agreed to give me the necessary time I do my research, but I hadn't quite hammered out what that would entail. This next week (week 6) I'll get the necessary permissions to interview during the day.

## **Week 6**

### **Overview.**

- Submitted letterhead options to boss for review
- Made follow-up calls to potential clients
- Sent business cards to get printed
- Negotiated price of media contact service

- Input July newsletter edits
- Went to campus to post announcements of job opening for company
- Attended Arkansas Press Association SuperConference for four days

### **Analysis.**

For most of the week, I was in Eureka Springs, Ark., attending the APA conference. It was a great experience and I got to have many one-on-one discussions with editors and publishers of some of the biggest newspapers in the state. I also attended a discussion about social media and newspapers. I noticed a strong reluctance on the part of the newspaper representatives to participate in social media. Whether the newspaper had social media accounts or not, most said they didn't see the point, couldn't see the value of having social media followers or how having an employee taking the time to manage a social media site was worth it. Because I worked for the *Columbia Missourian* and *Vox* where social media was important, I was surprised at their reluctance.

### **Research.**

I had a fantastic conversation with Barbara Cochran on Tuesday and was able to get my list of possible interviewees narrowed down and tailored more accurately. Additionally, I spoke to my employer and got permission to take time out of work when necessary to interview subjects and to use the fax machine for school use if necessary. My plan was to send out my recruitment emails this week, but I had



virtually no cell or Internet reception in Eureka Springs. My boss paid for Wi-Fi in the hotel so I could work, but it just generally wouldn't connect longer than a few sporadic minutes a day. As great as the conference was, it delayed me a little bit, but I'll get the emails out this week, week 7.

People who I will be emailing in week 1: Joe Kline, *TIME Magazine*; Paul West, Washington Bureau chief for *Baltimore Sun*; Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*; Susan Paige, *USA Today*; and AB Stoddard, *The Hill*.

*New York Times*: Jennifer Steinhauer and Jonathan Martin.

*Slate*: Dave Weigel and Jacob Weisberg.

*The Washington Post*: Chris Cillizza, Dan Balz and Karen Tumulty.

*Politico*: Mike Allen, Jim Vandehei and John Harris.

*National Journal*: Ron Brownstein, Ron Fournier, George Condon, Elahe Izadi and Beth Reinha.

## **Week 7**

### **Overview.**

- Trained for Customer Service job detail
- Put together bids and leads letter
- Sent out newsletter
- Prepared back-to-school special marketing material
- Answered customer service emails

- Wrote material for website, such as detailed descriptions of new services
- Met with an analytics company to discuss using their services

### **Analysis.**

This week and next I'm taking over for the Director of Customer Service. She's on vacation so I'll be doing her job, while trying to keep up with my own. This week was primarily training, but week 8 will be mostly customer service stuff. Opening, adjusting and closing accounts. Fixing customer complaints, etc. I will not have too much time to do my own work, unless I stay late, which I will probably end up doing.

### **Research.**

I sent an email to the followers reporters requesting an interview: Paul West, *Baltimore Sun* and Dave Weigel, *Slate*.

*National Journal*: Ron Fournier (Out of office reply, response will be slow), Elahe Izadi, Beth Reinhard, Ron Brownstein and George Condon.

*Washington Post*: Karen Tumulty, Chris Cillizza and Dan Balz.

*Politico*: Mike Allen, Jim VandeHei and John Harris.

This was the email I sent:

"Subject: Request for interview: University of Missouri study on infotainment in political reporting

Hello,

My name is Melissa Oribhabor. I'm a second year graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. A member of my graduate committee, Barbara Cochran, referred me to you. She is currently the Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Reporting in Washington D.C.

My graduate research focuses on the convergence of entertainment and hard news, commonly known as "infotainment," and how this type of news impacts national political reporting. My research question, specifically, is:

RQ1: "What are the biggest challenges and consequences of covering national politics in a day of infotainment?"

Since you are a prominent political reporter, I feel your insights into this issue would be important for my research. Once my research is complete, I will submit the article to academic journals that focus on political communication and journalism.

Would you be interested in being interviewed for my academic research? I know you're very busy, so I the interview should last only about 30 minutes and will be conducted over the phone or Skype. I have 21 questions and I will be tape recording the interview to keep for my records.

Your participation is voluntary and will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you very much,

Melissa Oribhabor

University of Missouri

School of Journalism"

Some reporters do not have available email addresses and there is a notice on the website that says: “correspondence will not be forwarded.” Such as Slate’s Jacob Weisberg.

The reporters for whom I simply could not find contact info: Jennifer Steinhauer, *New York Times*; Katy Steinmetz and Joe Kline, *TIME Magazine*; Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*; Susan Page, *USA Today*; AB Stoddard, *The Hill*; and Jonathan Martin, *The New York Times*.

A few of them have a Twitter account, and I’ll try them there. But I am hesitant because I’m sure they get flooded with nonsense on their Twitter accounts.

## **Week 8**

### **Overview.**

- Answered emails and took payments from customers
- Transacted returns
- Screened troubled accounts
- Worked on August newsletter
- Called newspaper publishers in Arkansas

### **Analysis.**

This week I was filling in for the Director of Customer Service. The job consisted largely of answering customer emails, most of which concerned incorrect

content received. The job was not enjoyable, but I was able to learn a lot more about the company. One important aspect of me taking over her job for the week was to come at it with fresh eyes to see where efficiency can be improved. I have a hefty list I'll be presenting to my bosses on Monday.

One side project I worked on was contacting newspaper publisher in Arkansas to see if they'd be interested in digitally uploading their content for free, secure archiving. It was difficult, because some were confused and one guy was even upset, but overall I had good feedback because publishers understand the importance of off-site archiving, especially since the Joplin tornado.

### **Research.**

I sent out my email Monday to the list of reporters, and I've only heard back from George Condon. He agreed to be interviewed, and I followed up with the IRB consent form and I have yet to hear back from him. I don't know if I should contact him again or just be patient and wait. Additionally, I'm not sure if I sure re-send my interview request out in a week, or just be patient and wait. I'm worried I won't get enough responses.

## **Week 9**

### **Overview.**

- Pitched ideas in meeting

- Put together contact list for back to school and government
- Called Arkansas publishers
- Put together marketing materials for bids and leads
- Went over new website material
- Designed half-page ad for Newspaper Association Managers Annual Convention
- Re-designed rate sheet with new services
- Made media list and distribution list

### **Analysis.**

This week was a particularly notable week for me. In June I developed new services: press release writing, hosting and distribution. I developed a few new services, but this was the first one that was advertised on our service list. The rest will be available when the new website is up next month. This week I had my first customer contact us wanting to use our press release distribution service. He put in two orders, a big one and a small one.

This was a huge deal for me because I felt like I made a great contribution to my company and I am helping expand our company to do more public relations work.

## **Research.**

This week I sent out a follow-up email to the journalists requesting an interview. Dave Weigel from Slate responded and I sent him the IRB consent form. I'm going to start making follow-up calls this week, since the response to my follow-up email has also been slow. I figure the worse they can do is tell me no. Even if I can't get up to 10 people to agree to be interviewed, I can still get enough interviews to get a good idea of how political journalists feel.

## **Week 10**

### **Overview.**

- Filled in for Sarah in customer service for three days, again
- Created an advertisement for the South Carolina and Iowa newspaper directories
- Made edits to the new website
- Created generic press association publisher packet
- Turned in first blog post
- Sent marketing materials to potential clients in Iowa and South Carolina
- Went through *Columbia Business Magazine* to find businesses who might be interested in our services and sent them information
- Researched media kits for other companies so I can start designing ours

### **Analysis.**

This week I was focused heavily on design (outside of the three days I was working in customer service, again). I have found advertisements to be the most difficult to design because it's hard to find a balance between giving information and making the ad aesthetically pleasing. It's hard not to just throw a bunch of text on the page with some color, because the point of the ad is to tell people what we do and why it's important. This company is unique in that a lot of people don't know what we do; it has to be explained. As a result, we can't just put a stock photo and a tag line and hope for the best. My first paid advertisement was for *West Virginia Construction News*. It came in the mail this week. The ad looks ok, but I just hope we get a response from it. It'll feel awfully bad if we don't.

### **Research.**

I started off this week with a lot of excitement because I got a signed IRB consent form back from George Condon from *National Journal*. I called him to set up an interview, and I haven't heard back. I'm going to call him again in week 11. I also heard back from Paul West, from *The Baltimore Sun*. He's going to be out of town for 6-8 weeks, but I told him that is fine and I still want to interview him when he gets back. I'm waiting for a reply on that.

Dave Weigel from Slate also responded and I sent him the IRB consent form and I'm waiting for a response. I'm going to start making phone calls to follow-up with the rest of the journalists I emailed, granted I can get them on the phone. It's



hard with the bigger newspapers to get access, but at least a voice message might get a response.

## **Week 11**

### **Overview.**

- Designed the media kit
- Meeting about website
- Worked on advertising prices
- Designed E-Edition ads
- Wrote four articles
  - “4 steps to creating and executing a public relations or marketing campaign”
  - “Tips for dealing with the media”
  - “How to get your message out to the media”
  - “Tips for handling social media interactivity”
- Created a dozen images in Illustrator and InDesign for website
- Interviewed employee for “Employee Spotlight” article

### **Analysis.**

This week I got to interview a co-worker and write four articles for our website and blog. I’ve been so busy doing design work, this is the first time I’ve

really gotten to spend a day just writing articles and doing research. It was a nice break from the mental (and physical) strain of design work. Interviewing my co-worker was an interesting experience. Generally, doing profiles on someone is hard. Trying to make someone's daily routine sound newsworthy has always been a struggle for me. This has added pressure because I have to work with the subject of my article. So if they don't like the article, I have to live with the repercussions.

### **Research.**

This week was a dead week. No responses, so progress. I need to switch my approach, but I can't figure out what I can do other than just keep calling. I also think I'm going to expand the group of people I'm reaching out to. I have a lot of big fish on my list. Those would be the busiest people. I think I'll send out another wave of emails, but to reporters who are not as well known, or haven't been with the papers as long.

## **Week 12**

### **Overview.**

- Researched public relations companies
- Created images for the website
- Created list and description of new services
- Finished and sent out newsletter

### **Analysis.**

This week I only worked two and a half days, because I moved and was in an out-of-town wedding. But one thing that I worked on was very important. I went through my notes from my intro to public relations class and other PR companies to find out what services are typically offered and which ones we could reasonably offer as well. Media monitoring is an important service, but there is so much more our company can do to help businesses. Some of these services include: copy editing, writing media kits, and offering media training. I'm so far the only employee who has studied journalism, so I'll be performing the bulk of these new services. Hopefully, if there is a demand, we can hire more people who can write and edit.

### **Research.**

I had a conversation with Barbara Cochran and expanded my list of interview subjects to include: Fred Barnes, *The Weekly Standard*; Susan Page, *USA Today*; AB Stoddard, *The Hill*; Jonathan Martin, *The New York Times*; Jennifer Steinhauer, *The New York Times*; Mike Dorning, *Bloomberg*; Charles J Lewis, Hearst Bureau; Richard Dunham, Hearst Bureau; Jacob Weisberg, *Slate*.

I sent an email to them to ask for an interview. This week I'm going to continue to follow-up and try to contact people on my interview list.

## **Week 13**

### **Overview.**

- Created full Newz Group press kit
- Created PowerPoint presentation about the current state of the newspaper industry
- Got approval for new PR services
- Worked on new website
- Solicited press releases from current clients to put on the new website

### **Analysis.**

My first semester at MU, I took Magazine Editing and learned what a press kit was. I figured at some point I'd have to use press kits for stories or to research potential jobs, but I didn't think I'd eventually have to make one. This press kit was 15 pages of Newz Group information, plus 15 pages listing all the publications we work with. It took quite a while to put together.

I researched several other companies to see what their press kits looked like. Some were amazing, such as Conde Nast, but I made ours a lot more simple. I'm not quite skilled enough to create an amazing press kit. But I think the one I made is pretty good.

## **Research.**

I sent out another round of solicitations and I did get two responses. Susan Page from *USA Today* agreed to participate in the interview, and Jacob Weisberg from *Slate* responded saying he wouldn't be able to help. I'm thrilled I actually got another person agreeing to help. She's on vacation until next week, and we'll be talking then.

## **Week 14**

### **Overview.**

- Presented Press Kit, Media Kit and E-Editions PowerPoint Presentation to bosses
- Redesigned some images for the website
- Meeting with Google AdWords advisor to design campaign to launch new website and services
- Created ads for E-Edition
- Contacted 14 press associations to figure out advertising in newsletters and publications
- Went to MU part-time career fair looking for media analysts and client outreach interns

## **Analysis.**

Throughout my two years in the J-School, we talked extensively in many of my classes about the state of the traditional print news industry and how newspapers have to adapt or risk falling all together. It is easy to discuss this in an academic setting; it is another thing all together to present this information to newspaper publishers. Our new service, E-Editions, is a newspaper hosting service where we take the PDF files of a newspaper and put it online as it appears in print. It's digitizing newspapers.

There is no question that newspapers are moving online, but so many newspapers are resisting this transitions, I'm finding it hard to create a way to explain to publishers that they need to digitize their product. I'm starting with a gentle push, but it's hard not to just come out and say, "do this or face closure." Some papers refuse pay walls and E-Editions, and continue to lose money. Hopefully more of the papers we work with will see that this important and jump on board.

## **Research.**

I finally had some success this week. I interviewed George Condon from *National Journal*. I was so thrilled and I grabbed my tape recorder and called him and about two minutes into the interview, my tape recorder malfunctioned. I panicked. Mr. Condon was very understanding. He shared with me that when he has important interviews, such as with the president, he always brings two recorders. I realized my Mac has a recording feature and I was able to continue the interview. He also gave me the name of another political reporter at *National Journal* who might

be interested in helping. Next on my list is Susan Page from *USA Today*. I'm glad things are finally coming together.

## **Week 15**

### **Overview.**

- Worked on marketing campaign for E-Editions
- Re-wrote some content for the website
- Prepared ads for press association newsletters
- Finished Sept. newsletter and sent to staff for review
- Organized years of cancelled client files

### **Analysis.**

My company wants to expand and get into newspaper website creation. It was an idea my boss came up with and wanted me to look into. I know that the web framework used by *Vox* and the *Missourian* is Django. Though I have used Django extensively to edit and upload content to the websites, I have never built a website from scratch with Django. We went to the MU career fair last week looking for an IT intern, among other things. I asked every student that inquired about the internship if they knew anything about Django. No one had even heard of it. I want to be able to implement this new service, but I have no idea how to do it since we can't find an IT person who knows how to set it up and neither do I. I think I might contact the IT people for the *Missourian* to get some insight on what I should do.

## **Research.**

I had a great interview with James Barnes from *National Journal*/CNN. He worked for *National Journal* from 1987 through 2012, and is now working as a political analyst for CNN. He gave unique insight into how the industry has changed. I emailed Susan Page from *USA Today*. She asked me to email her early in the week, and I got tied up and forgot and didn't end up emailing her until the end of the week. I apologized and I hope she's still willing to help.

## **Week 16**

### **Overview.**

- Created publisher and press association services pamphlet
- Collected list of possible clients in Michigan
- Went through the new website to pick out final changes before launching
- Finished September newsletter
- Attended the Missouri Press Association convention
- Created a publisher packet for Missouri newspapers

### **Analysis.**

This week I attended the Missouri Press Association convention. Though I had intended to attend a session at the convention about newspaper digitization, I walked into the wrong session and ended up in one about newspaper ad sales. This



ended up being quite fortuitous because it spoke to something that came up a lot in my studies at MU, but I never really knew too much about.

I knew ad sales were one way for newspapers to get revenue, other than subscriptions and newspaper stand sales, but I didn't know how tough of a business that end was. In magazine editing, we had to go a magazine layout and place ads and the penalty for missing an ad was huge. But now that I see how desperate the industry is to get and place ads, I can see why the penalty would be high in the real world if an ad was missed.

The speaker talked about the fierce competition between sales reps to get huge ad contracts and how badly the newspapers depend on them. With ad sales waning, the fight to fill the ad space is heating up. I'm so thankful to not be on that end of it, but it was great to see that perspective.

### **Research.**

I emailed Susan Page for an interview and she emailed me back Saturday afternoon, Labor Day weekend, asking if I could do the interview that afternoon. Because I was in the mountains of Arkansas, I didn't get the email until that evening. I emailed her back and didn't get a response, so I called her to try and set up an interview for the week and I didn't hear back. She's probably on vacation for the holiday. I don't want to keep bothering her, but at the same time, she's too good of an interview to let go of. I'm going to keep trying, but I'm just racked with frustration that I missed my opportunity.

## **Chapter Three: Evaluation**

I did my professional project working as the Client Development Specialist at a media monitoring company called Newz Group in Columbia, Mo. This was a new position not previously occupied, so I was given a lot of freedom. My job was to foster relationships with current clients and help bring in new business. I worked 40 hours a week, and my employers allowed me to interview my research subjects during work hours. I worked on my research during my lunch hour and in the evenings after work. Working at Newz Group for my professional project was a fantastic opportunity to use what I learned at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

### **Social Media**

One of the first things I did was take over and expand the social media presence of the company. Its previous Facebook and LinkedIn pages were inaccurate or hosted incorrectly. The LinkedIn page was outdated, listed former employees as current ones and did not mention any of the services the company offered. The Facebook page was a profile page that was attached to an employee's personal page. Company pages should be hosted as a company page, not a personal profile page. I shutdown the old pages and started new ones with correct information, and I also started YouTube and Google+ accounts and took over the official Twitter page. I increased followers on LinkedIn, from 9 to 15, Facebook from

35 to 99 and Twitter from 345 to more than 500, and created three tutorial videos for YouTube and Google+. I also managed Google Analytics and Google AdWords.

## **Design**

In April, I started a monthly newsletter that has turned out to be popular among our clients. Since making the newsletter interactive in July, almost every month when the newsletter was sent out, a client responded inquiring about something in the newsletter and hits to the website increased on the day the newsletter was sent. In July, visitors to the site increase to 71 on the day the newsletter was released, up from an average of 45 visitors every other day that month. The day the newsletter was distributed generally had one of the highest number of unique visitors to the website for the month.

I designed the newsletter in Adobe InDesign. I did virtually all of the design work for Newz Group. I designed the ads to go into the various press association directories for 2014, an ad for *West Virginia Construction News*, and ads for press association newsletters and conventions. In addition, I designed the direct marketing ads that were sent to potential clients and publishers.

For the company, I designed the publisher and client pamphlets and service sheets, the company business cards, the press and media kits and publisher packets for members of state press associations with which the company works. I created a press kit, which was a large packet of information about the company that included items such as services offered, history of the company, and primary contacts. I also created a media kit because the company offers advertising on its website. The media kit has information regarding Web statistics, ad sizes and pricing.

I learned many things working at Newz Group. One of the biggest things I learned was how crucial design is, not only to newspapers but companies as well. A lot of what I did I could not do without the basic ability to use Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator. Through his job I was able to hone my skills and improve my ability to use these programs.

I saw the most professional growth in my design work, by far. I was able to do some kind of design work almost every day, and I saw a big difference between the work I did at the beginning of my project and the work I did at the end.

### **Press Association Conventions**

Newz Group works with 14 state press associations across the country. The company sponsors press association conventions, and frequently company representatives will attend the conventions.

Through attending the Missouri and Arkansas conventions, I worked with several newspaper publishers, facilitating Newz Group's digital archiving and promoting its E-Edition hosting service.

These conventions offer resources for newspaper publishers, journalists, and editors. There is usually a trade show for companies that want to market to people in the newspaper industry, there are dozens of educational sessions for attendees, and there is usually an awards banquet to honor excellence in publishing or advertising.

Newz Group participates in the trade show, and representatives of the company attend the sessions and awards banquets. Newz Group offers digital archiving and E-Edition services to members of partnering press associations. These

conventions are an opportunity to speak with the publishers the company works with remotely on a regular basis.

Attending press association conventions was an important part of my job because this was time to talk directly to publishers about our partnership with their press association and what services are available to them. I printed off and packaged the press association packets, along with the pamphlets and any other pertinent advertising and presented it at a trade show.

These conventions were a great opportunity for me to network with people in the newspaper industry, outside of Columbia, Mo. Attending press association conventions was not only a time to talk to publishers about our services but also about the newspaper industry. Should I decide to re-enter the print journalism industry as a writer or editor, I believe the connections I made at these conventions will be helpful.

### **Expansion**

One of the biggest contributions I made to Newz Group was my role in helping the company expand. When I started, the company was offering Internet monitoring but without analytics. The company used an outside vendor to provide this service. I contacted the vendor and negotiated with them to upgrade to monitoring and analytics without an increased cost for the company. As a result, we began offering a more complete Internet monitoring service.

Additionally, I was also able to increase the number of newspapers using our E-Edition and free digital archiving services from two to four.

I also expanded the service offerings of the company by a dozen since I had the skills necessary to write and distribute press releases, do design work, and create media contact lists. I spoke with my bosses about offering public relations services to our clients. They agreed that would be a good idea.

## **Writing**

I did get to do a good amount of writing while working at Newz Group. I wrote and designed tip sheets and articles that people can request through the website. This allowed me to see who was looking for public relations help, so I could better target the marketing of those services.

I also wrote and distributed a customer satisfaction survey at the beginning of my time at Newz Group, so I could get an idea of how clients were feeling and what they wanted.

One important task I had was to write press releases for Newz Group and distribute them. I wrote a total of three. I learned how to write press releases in Intro to Public Relations at MU. Public relations was a big part of my job as I worked to promote Newz Group and its services.

Over time, I became better at writing and distributing press releases. It's apparent from the difference in how rarely my first press release for Newz Group showed up in searches and how prevalent my last two were. I was able to take the SEO tools I learned and apply them to writing releases.

I've also learned that not having a proper copy editor can be disastrous. Luckily I found a co-worker with a degree in English who can catch comma splices, misuses and misspellings. Although I prefer to write things such as blog posts and

newsletter articles in AP Style and she had never used it before, it was important that I sent her my work before it went out to clients and the public. My personal editing skills increased drastically after taking Magazine Editing at MU, but it is hard to edit my own work. Editors are important no matter where you go.

Though I did get to edit while at Newz Group, it wasn't with the same frequency as working at a print publication or taking an editing class. I could feel my editing skills slipping as the project went on, and it became harder for me to think in AP Style. I wish I would have had more opportunity to edit on a consistent basis.

### **Website**

The SEO tools I learned were put into effect when I asked to re-design the website. Because I cannot do Web coding, I designed the look of the website and all of the pages and had an intern input the changes. I wrote all the content for the website, designed all the images but a couple, and designed the layout of each page. The intern input the design and text into the site, and it went live at the end of the summer with the new services. The average number of unique visitors to the website increased from 800 to 1,171 per month.

Two parts of the new website I updated regularly were the blog and the media page. Newz Group hosts client press releases on the media page, and I posted a blog post every week on Thursday. Sometimes other employees wanted to write a blog post, and I edited and posted their work that week instead.

I had never given much thought to Web design until I began working on the website. It would have been more efficient if I had been able to input the coding as well as design the layout. It took extra time to coordinate with the intern how I

wanted things to look. As a result, I've decided to learn Web coding. After watching the intern do it for months, I began to understand it quite well, and I believe with the right training, I will be able to have that skillset. Once I am finished with my graduate work, I intend to formally learn website coding and design.

Working for Newz Group was an entirely new experience for me, but unfortunately not all of the experiences were comfortable at first. The business world works differently than the journalism world, and I had to adjust. For example, I wrote a press release about a venture we were entering into with another organization. I sent the press release to the organization so it could add its own "about" section to the bottom and post it on its site or distribute if the organization wanted to. In addition to posting the release and distributing it, the organization also deleted my name and contact info and credited the release to its own PR specialist. This was incredibly hard for me to deal with. In journalism, you do not take someone else's work and slap your name on it.

But I had the opportunity to work with some really great people at Newz Group. In addition to the intern who helped me with the website, the person I feel I learned the most from was the president and CEO, Brad Buchanan. He is a man with big ideas who started the company in 1995. He was the most supportive and encouraging boss I have ever had. Whenever I came to him with new ideas, he had a "why not?" attitude that allowed me to try new things and grow in my job. He was always available to help me with anything, whether it was role-playing to prepare for an important phone call with a client, re-writing correspondence, or choosing a design for an ad.



He had constructive feedback, was open to different opinions and was flexible with my school schedule. He taught me about marketing, people management and how to have effective communication with publishers at press association conventions. Without his feedback and support, I wouldn't have been able to do my job as effectively.

I feel very fortunate to have the chance to work at a company that allowed me to put my education to use and network with newspaper publishers across the country. This was a very positive environment in which to do my professional project.

## Chapter Four: Physical Evidence

### Press Releases

I wrote and distributed a total of three press releases for Newz Group.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 22, 2013  
Contact: Ian Buchanan  
Phone: 800-474-1111  
Email: [ibuchanan@newzgroup.com](mailto:ibuchanan@newzgroup.com)

DIGITIZATION EFFORTS AIM TO PRESERVE WRITTEN MATERIAL  
Collaboration with The Digital Public Library of America, University of Kentucky,  
Kentucky Press Association and Newz Group facilitates expansion of digital archives

As the world moves online, companies and public institutions are looking for a way to upload the multitude of printed material online for easier access, organization and preservation.

The Digital Public Library of America is working to create a digital library of content for museums, libraries, universities and many other institutions across the country. The purpose of this project is to give everyone free access to information previously only available in print.

The DPLA chose five digital libraries for their pilot project, including The University of Kentucky. The Kentucky Digital Library has been working since 1997 to digitize university content. Newz Group started working with the Kentucky Press Association and the Kentucky Public Library in 2008 to convert, store and host newspapers in the state.

This group effort among the Kentucky Press Association, the University of Kentucky and Newz Group is helping to preserve Kentucky history through newspapers, oral histories, photographs and more.

"GeoTel/Newz Group has been instrumental because it is creating digital pages of our newspapers," said David T. Thompson, Executive Director of the Kentucky Press Association.

Digitization of printed materials is a crucial process to ensure the longevity of written works. The DPLA's aspiration of a large, digital library of easily accessible information is becoming a reality. Newz Group is excited to be a part of this important project.

Newz Group is a digital media monitoring service that collects, archives and hosts newspapers across the country providing licensed solutions to customers, publishers and State Press Associations.

###

If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Ian Buchanan, please call Newz Group at 800-474-1111 or email [ibuchanan@newzgroup.com](mailto:ibuchanan@newzgroup.com)

Turning  
into k Information  
nowledge



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: Sept. 24, 2013  
Contact: Melissa Oribhabor  
Phone: 800-474-1111  
Email: moribhabor@newzgroup.com

#### NEWZ GROUP EXPANDS TO INCLUDE MORE THAN A DOZEN NEW SERVICES

**COLUMBIA** – Missouri-based media monitoring company Newz Group has drastically expanded from just a media monitoring service to a media technology and public relations company. With the launch of its new website, [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com), the company unveiled its transition through more diverse offerings this month.

As the newspaper industry continues to evolve, Newz Group is responding to meet the changing demands of small businesses, governmental agencies, educational institutions, public figures and charitable associations. First starting with print monitoring, the company has grown to also offer broadcast and internet coverage as well. Now Newz Group has become a complete media resource with many new public relations services, such as:

- Press Releases: Writing, Hosting and Distributing
- Advertising
- Graphic Design
- Website and Blog Design
- Writing and Editing
- Media Research and Analysis
- Competition Analytics
- Social Media Setup and Training
- Media Training
- Media Contacts
- Social Media Contacts
- Small Business Legal Services

Newz Group offers several publisher and press association services, as well. For more information on Newz Group or any of its services, please visit [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com) or call 800.474.1111.

#### **About Newz Group**

Newz Group has been working with press associations and publishers to offer media monitoring services to a diverse clientele for almost 20 years. It has one of the fastest-growing digital archives in the country and monitors more than a third of the publications in the United States.

###

Turning  
into k n o w l e d g e



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Date: Oct. 28, 2013  
Contact: Melissa Oribhabor  
Phone: 800-474-1111  
Email: moribhabor@newzgroup.com

**Newz Group and the Michigan Press Association join to offer a digital newspaper database**

MICHIGAN – Through a partnership with the Michigan Press Association, Midwest-based media technology and public relations company Newz Group is now offering comprehensive media monitoring services in Michigan. Through the company's Newz Portal, clients can get full access to a database that digitally hosts newspapers in Michigan.

The searchable database allows users to monitor for specific keywords, view, save, organize and delete specific newspaper pages from their account. Content is available shortly after publication and users have the power to purchase only the pages they find relevant. This service offers the most comprehensive newspaper content in Michigan, even rural sources not readily available online.

Newz Group also offers several other media monitoring services in Michigan, such as Internet/social media monitoring, broadcast monitoring for TV/Radio and several public relations services such as press release writing, hosting and distributing, design and copy editing.

Newz Group's digital archives and media monitoring services are currently being used in 13 other states across the country by colleges and universities, large and small businesses, politicians, government departments, trade associations, non-profit organizations and more. All newspaper content is distributed under license.

One great benefit of the digital newspaper archive is it makes press release tracking easier than ever. Through the MPA's new GistCloud press release distribution software, available at <http://www.michigan.gistcloud.com> one can affordably send out a print, video or broadcast press release and then use the Newz Portal to track the effectiveness of the release.

For more information on the Michigan newspaper database available on Newz Portal, or other services available, contact Melissa Oribhabor at 800-474-1111 or email [moribhabor@newzgroup.com](mailto:moribhabor@newzgroup.com).

**About Newz Group**

Newz Group has been working with press associations and publishers to offer media monitoring services to a diverse clientele around the country for almost 20 years. It has one of the fastest-growing digital archives in the country and monitors more than a third of the publications in the United States.

**About Michigan Press Association**

Michigan Press Association was established in 1868 and now promotes press freedom through its public policy work, "ease of use" advertising placement, professional development programs and legal hotlines. We're a source of new ideas for newspapers and their digital & print products. Our 320-plus members reach readers in every corner of the state.

###

## Blog Posts

Part of the website re-design included adding a blog. Newz Group employees write articles for the weekly blog. Here are a few samples of blog posts I wrote.

# NEWZ GROUP BLOG

## Social media investment leads to higher customer engagement

Aug. 27, 2013

Melissa Oribhabor  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

---

Social media is a pervasive and important aspect of society and business. With 167 million Facebook users in the U.S. and 107.7 million Twitter accounts, you can't deny these social media sites are a great way to connect with people. But this connection might be more valuable than previously thought.

A [study](#) released in March 2013, published in the Journal of Information Systems Research, found that customers who participated in a company's social media platforms had a higher rate of patronage of that company. Basically, the more a customer engages with your business on social media, the more likely they are to buy your product or service. In fact, the researchers found that shoppers who actively engage a company on social media contribute 5.6 percent more revenue than customers who don't engage.

The findings in this study support the idea that investing in your company's social media can strengthen the relationship between you and your customers and help increase your revenue. However, managing your [social media presence](#) takes more than just tweeting information about your company. If you use your social media purely to promote new products or services, it could be hard to keep customer interest or gain new followers.

One important aspect of social media that companies tend to forget is that it is social. You should make it a point to ask questions, answer questions, and engage in conversation with your customers or other organizations.

This engagement should pay off and help your bottom line.

# NEWZ GROUP BLOG

## Strategies to get the most out of your social media presence

Aug. 29, 2013

Melissa Oribhabor  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

---

Social media is a great way to find out what customers think about your brand. Not very many people sit down to write a letter to a company when they are unhappy or pleasantly surprised about a product. They take to social media to tell others what they think. Often, customers will tag the companies in their posts, or post their comments to the company's page. Having a platform like social media gives customers an opportunity to speak with the company and the company an opportunity to respond to the customers. There are many social media sites, and having an account on all of them is not the most effective way to spend your time, that is why there are services such as [social media monitoring](#) to track your name on social media.

If you simply do not have the time to run a social media account, but you want one nonetheless, you can try a third party tool such as TweetDeck, HootSuite or Sprout Social. You can schedule Tweets and Facebook posts so your time is freed up to do other things. However, there are downsides to using these for posting. Many believe third party posting lowers your analytics. Here is an [article](#) from LunaMetrics about this very issue. There are reports that say third party posting lowers engagement by as much as 88 percent! To be safe, if you do choose to use a third party tool, try to mix third party usage and direct posting.

If your company is just getting started with social media or you've found your efforts have not been effective quite yet, here are some ideas that might help.

In our May 2013 Newz Group Newsletter we explained six tips to getting the most out of your social media presence. Here are those six tips:

---

1. **Find the best social media sites for your brand.** Twitter and Facebook are staples for all businesses and public figures, but should you branch out? If you're a local business, like a bakery or school, then having a Foursquare account would be beneficial. Do you have a lot of photos and infographics? Then you might want to consider a Pinterest or Instagram account.
2. **Remember the 70/20/10 rule for content.** For content you post on social media, 70% should be tailored to your audience, constituents or customers. Content from other sources, such as re-tweets or links, should constitute 20% of your posts. Lastly, 10% should be exciting information about your company, such as new products or awards.
3. **Make sure you have a Facebook page, not a profile or group page.** Profiles are for regular people, and groups are for fan clubs, not for organizations, companies or public figures. You've worked hard to get where you are, make sure you're standing on the right platform.
4. **Research the social media site before you join.** Know how popular it is, general demographic information for users and, most importantly, how to use it. For example: Pinterest has more than 11 million users and is still growing. Specifically, 80% of those users are women and the majority live in the Midwest. Knowing this information will allow you to target your Pinterest content to Pinterest users.
5. **Be mindful of length.** Try to keep tweets around 120 characters. You are allowed 140, but you need to free up 20 characters so followers can re-tweet it without having to change any of the original wording. Facebook allows 5,000 characters, but ideally you should keep posts below 250 characters so viewers can read the whole post without having to click to "see more."
6. **Maintenance is important.** Don't let your social media fall into oblivion by forgetting to update regularly. If someone is searching for you or your company and comes across a dead social media page, it could lead them to believe you are inactive as well. You can't assume potential customers or voters will go straight to your website first. Many start on social media, so make sure a quality, recently updated page is there to greet them.

There are countless articles offering advice on how to get the most out of your social media efforts. Each company is different, so tailor your strategy to what will work for you and your business.

What have you noticed has worked for you? Share in the comments below some strategies you use to increase social media engagement with your company and link to your social media sites.

Related Article: [Social media investment leads to higher customer engagement](#)

# NEWZ GROUP BLOG

## Broadcast media continues to be an important news medium for Americans

Sep. 5, 2013

Melissa Oribhabor  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

---

While social media is becoming a major source of news and information, you mustn't forget about the influence of broadcast media. Broadcast media is still the most powerful source of news, and among certain demographics, viewership of TV news is increasing, not decreasing.

According to a September 2012 Pew research study, 48% of people under the age of 50 regularly watch local news, and 34% of people under 50 regularly watch cable news. But the biggest viewership comes from people 50 and older. In fact, 60% of people older than 50 watch local news regularly, and 43% watch cable news regularly. One category that shouldn't be overlooked is the baby boomer population. According to a report by CBS News, one fifth of the U.S. population will be 65 or older by the year 2030, and currently the buying power of the baby boomers is \$3.4 trillion annually. This is why TV viewership of people older than 50 is so crucial; the buying power of this demographic cannot be understated. Therefore, when your business or organization is mentioned on national TV, you are not only reaching almost 50% of the U.S. population, you are also reaching an incredibly high percentage of people with a lot of disposable income.

If you're a small business or public figure, [tracking broadcast coverage](#) is incredibly important, because you need to know how you're being portrayed in this relevant and powerful medium. And don't fear that social media is killing traditional news. Pew also reports that even on sources of new media (ie: social media), 80% of links posted are to articles and videos from newspapers and broadcast news websites.

---



# NEWZ GROUP BLOG

## Readership of digital newspapers and magazines continues to increase

Sep. 18, 2013

Melissa Oribhabor  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

---

What is the future of print media? This is a topic discussed frequently among journalists and those hoping to join the industry. No one really knows where the industry is headed, but there are signs that clearly point in one direction: [Digitization](#). An article in the New York Times titled, "[Magazine Newsstand Sales Plummet, but Digital Editions Thrive](#)," from August 6 addressed this movement.

When looking into the decline in hard copy magazine sales, the [Alliance for Audited Media](#) found that many readers were not turning away from the magazine itself, just the print version.

"A solid base of loyal magazine readers were simply turning to the digital versions of magazines," wrote NYT reporter Christine Haughney. "Digital replica editions — which replicate the format of the print editions — now make up 3.3 percent of total magazine circulation, with 10.2 million digital replica editions sold in the first half of 2013. During the same time period in 2012, magazines sold 5.4 million."

But this move toward digitized content is not limited to magazines. Most large newspapers also have a digital, or [E-Edition](#), of their publication available to current subscribers.

"Overall circulation industrywide is flat and digital is growing," Neal Lulofs from the AAM told the [NYT](#) in April.

In most cases, the hard copy and digital version are bundled, or readers can choose to subscribe to one or the other. With the increase of Kindle and iPads, more people are opting to receiving their newspapers and magazines on their tablet instead of waiting for delivery of the hard copy.

---

Lulofs said there is evidence that newspapers are able to increase readership by offering an E-Edition of their publication, such as The Star Ledger of Newark. "The paper's daily circulation jumped 22.2 percent, with its digital circulation more than doubling in the last year," the NYT reported.

---

# NEWZ GROUP BLOG

## The impact of pay walls on media monitoring

Oct. 31, 2013

Melissa Oribhabor  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

---

For a brief period of time, anyone could access information and news on the web from most of the newspapers that had an online presence. Once a newspaper put its content online, it became free and readers could find it on the official website or pick it up through an Internet search engine. This period is coming to an end with the rise in pay wall implementation.

With the exception of the Wall Street Journal, most newspapers have been slow to jump on the pay wall bandwagon. The WSJ was one of the first newspapers to erect a pay wall; they have had one since 1997.

A pay wall is essentially a restriction to content. There are two types of pay walls: hard and soft. Visitors generally have to pay a weekly, monthly or annual subscription fee in order to access content. Some sites also allow visitors to pay per article with a credit card registered with the site.

A hard pay wall offers a minimum amount of free content. You can pay for a subscription for online content, or you can subscribe to the print version and use that subscription information to access their content online. The WSJ is an example of a news website with a hard pay wall.

A soft pay wall, sometimes called a "metered pay wall," offers more free content, generally allowing free content for a limited amount of time, or a limited number of articles. The New York Times has a soft pay wall. The NYT allows 20 free articles before a subscription is required. Many mid-sized newspapers allow content to be free within the first 24 hours after it is posted online.

Pay walls are often met with ire at first, and there are articles online dedicated to getting around them. But these pay walls are said to help make up for the money lost in the decline in subscriptions of print editions and they help protect content from misappropriation.

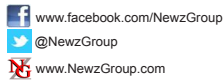
It's no surprise that large, legacy newspapers such as the NYT, Washington Post and WSJ all have pay walls. But medium to small-sized newspapers are also putting up pay walls. As a result, the amount of information you can access through an online search, or Google Alerts, is becoming very limited. As more newspapers move online and abandon their print product, such as the Kentucky Post that stopped printing in 2007 and moved online to KyPost.com, online news search engines will become obsolete as well.

The most comprehensive [media monitoring](#) available is through companies, such as Newz Group, that uses licensed content directly from the publishers. Other than subscribing individually to thousands of newspapers, using a licensed media monitoring company is the only way to get all the articles hidden behind pay walls. This is especially true for companies, public figures, government or educational institutions, etc. who need to get a broad picture of how they are being perceived in the media.

For companies, people, and organizations that rely on media monitoring, it's only a matter of time before Google Alerts and companies that operate as glorified online search engines are just not enough.

## Newsletters

Every month I created and sent out a Newz Group Newsletter. The July newsletter was the first one with live links connected to the website.



*Newzletter*  
June 2013

### Welcome to Newz Group!

Newz Group is a media tracking company that helps you stay in control of your image. We use licensed media content to monitor print, and we track online and broadcast media.

We can track newspaper content throughout the U.S. and TV and radio coverage in all 210 major broadcast markets. Want to know the buzz about you or your company? We can keep you filled in on what people are saying about the topics that matter most to you.

### What's the Newzletter?

This is a monthly newsletter that will keep you updated on the major news at Newz Group. We will also update you on important topics around the country you might find pertinent to you or your business.

We will address some frequently asked questions, introduce you to our new partners, and offer new products and services to help you expand your knowledge, grow your business, and control your name.

### Get Excited: Big news and updates from Newz Group

#### APA SuperConvention

Newz Group is pleased to announce that we will be sponsoring the Arkansas Press Association 2013 SuperConvention. It is scheduled June 26-29 at Inn of the Ozarks Convention Center in Eureka Springs, Ark.

In addition to our sponsorship, we will also be attending the convention. We have sponsored APA conventions since 1995 when we began operating the Arkansas Newspaper Clip-

## ARKANSAS press ASSOCIATION

ping Service.

We are excited to see what APA has in store this year. If you would like to know more about the convention, please visit [www.arkansaspress.org](http://www.arkansaspress.org).

Newz Group sponsors conventions for virtually all of our primary states of operation.

For a full list of the states we partner with, see page 4.

#### Smart Search

We have added a new feature to the Kentucky Public Notice website called Smart Search. It allows you to track keywords to store and organize public notices you're interested in. Links to content will be emailed to you daily. This service is in development in our other primary states of operation and will be available soon.

## Letter from the CEO

### Making Content More Valuable

In earlier Newzletter columns, we have examined the state of the news industry and how to view consumer demand as "tasks to be accomplished."

In this installment, we will look at how news organizations might make their content more valuable by improving the way they help people accomplish tasks.

The basic needs of humans do not change. But the tools and methods we use to fulfill those needs do change, and often very quickly. People adapt



Brad Buchanan is the President and CEO of Newz Group

their behavior based on the technologies they are using. When consumers change their behavior, businesses must adapt in order to stay relevant.

The traditional model of a news organization was to: 1) gather the news, 2) disseminate the news, and 3) sell the news. It was a linear, mechanistic process. People were content with waiting until the paper came out to see what happened since the last edition.

With today's technology, though, news is becoming non-linear and organic. When an event occurs, whoever hap-

See **BRAD** on page 2

### Get Connected!

"Like" our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter to keep up with important news that matters to you. Updated regularly, our Facebook and Twitter pages offer you information on big news topics concerning the media and tips for getting the most out of your PR and marketing efforts.



**Newz Group**  
PO Box 873  
Columbia, MO 65205

**(800) 474-1111**  
**info@newzgroup.com**  
**www.NewzGroup.com**

Turn **ing**  
into **k** **n** **owledge**

## What you might not know about **PRESS RELEASES**

Press releases are important to all companies, organizations, publications and politicians because they are a great way to distribute information to a targeted audience. You can't rely on just having a good website or hope the media will hear about you and choose to do a story.

The truth is reporters and editors do not have time or resources to gather and cover every event in the community or the country. If your company is doing something important, it's up to you to get the message out.

Press release writing is different than writing for social media, websites, pamphlets or internal documents. That is why many companies rely on communication specialists and PR professionals to prepare the releases. However, not all companies and organizations can afford a PR department.

As a result, many companies hire freelance writers or an outside company to write them.

Remember, not all company news deserves a press release, and distribution should correlate with the type of news. For example, if you're a locally owned business and you win a community award, you should not release a statewide press release, but sending one to a few local papers would be fine.

Additionally, all press releases sent out should be available on your own website. If you send out a press release and media outlets choose not to cover the story, that doesn't mean the release goes to waste. You should have a section on your website where constituents, customers, donors, etc. can read what you've been up to.

We are currently in the process of redesigning our

website and there will be a media section with press releases and links to articles that mention our company. If you don't have a page like this on your website, consider expanding to include one.

Newz Group now writes and distributes press releases because it is important for our clients to get the word out about their big news. Since it does take skill and proper form to write a good press release, we have talented writers who are experienced in press release writing. We can track their effectiveness and distribute to as many or as few publications as you would like.

If you would prefer to write your own press release but would like us to distribute it for you, we'd be glad to.

Press releases benefit you and the media, so the next time you've got big news, don't keep it to yourself.

## Customer Feedback Survey Contest

The winner has been contacted and has chosen to remain anonymous.

Thank you very much to everyone who participated in the survey. Your feedback

is invaluable, and we are reading all of your responses and comments. We will be having more contests in the future.

If you were not able to participate in the survey, but have some feedback you'd like to send to the company, email [customer@newzgroup.com](mailto:customer@newzgroup.com).

## Special Offer

Referral Bonus!  
Save **50%** on your research fee each time a client you refer signs up for our service.

Call for details

**BRAD** continued...

pens to be standing on a street corner with a smart phone can gather and disseminate the basic facts – to anyone or everyone in their address book – for free.

The traditional “who, what, when, where” of news stories is increasingly becoming a commodity. In order to maintain their value to news consumers, many companies are shifting their focus to “going beyond the facts,” by asking the more difficult questions of “why and what does this mean?” The need for context, meaning and fact-checking in a viral world create a demand that news or-

ganizations are uniquely poised to provide.

Going beyond the basic facts also entails creating a compelling storyline, which will draw readers and increase the value of content. It may be instructive to look at the style of an appeals court judge out of Kansas City, the Honorable Mark D. Pfeiffer. Instead of composing judicial rulings in the traditional, dry fashion, his writing at times reads as a narrative. In an article about Judge Pfeiffer, journalist John Tucker of *Riverfront Times* wrote:

“Reporters don't often linger over court documents for their gripping lyricism or narrative flow. Which is why it's so

enjoyable to stumble onto a brief or judicial opinion that's written like a novel.”

The example of Judge Pfeiffer is one journalists should take to heart. Being entertained is another task people want to accomplish. People enjoy reading good stories with characters and a plot line. If judges can write court decisions that reporters will line up to read, surely reporters can write stories that will excite subscribers, and keep them coming back for more.

The full *Riverfront Times* article: [http://blogs.riverfront-times.com/dailyrft/2012/04/patrick\\_harris\\_mark\\_pfeiffer\\_court\\_appeals\\_missouri.php](http://blogs.riverfront-times.com/dailyrft/2012/04/patrick_harris_mark_pfeiffer_court_appeals_missouri.php).

## Newz Group services

Newz Group offers a variety of services to meet your media tracking needs and more.

### Press Coverage

#### Print Tracking

This service is offered without keyword or topic limits, thus making your monitoring needs customizable. The print tracking service only generates the coverage pertinent to you and your organization.

Your digital press clips are easy to forward, download, search, and extract. Receive weekly emails of comprehensive print coverage in PDF format and/or access content on our new customer portal.

#### Monthly Management Report

The monthly Management Report is a detailed overview of all clips received during the month.

The report includes itemized details of each clipping received, displaying publication name, circulation figures, and advertising equivalency rates.

This service gives a comprehensive look at the value of your press coverage. The print tracking service is required to receive this report.

#### Searchable Digital Archiving

Digitally archive your print coverage annually, quarterly, or monthly with a mailed CD containing a record of all your clips and the optional Management Report from your coverage cycle.

### Internet Coverage

#### Internet Monitoring

Monitor news sites, social media, blogs, and corporate websites. We monitor popular social media sites such as Facebook,

Twitter, Google+, Flickr and much more.

#### RSS Feed

Your print and/or internet monitoring results are sent directly to your website via the RSS feed.

### Broadcast Coverage

#### National Coverage

Monitor all broadcast and radio news and information in real time. Coverage includes all 210 U.S. markets. There are no per clip, download, or entire broadcast fees – just one flat-rate subscription provides content from TV and radio outlets across the nation.

#### Regional Coverage

This service covers only the regional markets that matter to your organization. An annual flat-rate makes this service easy to budget, and it will never require additional fees.

A minimum of one year of service is required for broadcast coverage.

### Additional Services

#### Press Releases

Press releases can be sent out to targeted regions across the nation, with special discounts in our primary states of operation. We can also write press releases for you.

#### Digital Archiving

Make print documents easy to preserve, organize and manage with our digital archiving service. Save yourself paper and time by allowing us to securely digitize your files.

Comments, questions? Give us a call at 800-474-1111, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. CST, M-F. Or, you can email one of these staff members:

#### Ian Buchanan

Vice President  
ibuchanan@newzgroup.com

#### Kayla Schuster

Director of Corporate Resources  
kschuster@newzgroup.com

#### Sarah Frieling

Director of Customer Service  
sfrieling@newzgroup.com

#### Melissa Oribhabor

Director of Client Development  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

#### Dan Schupp

Director of Technology and Software Development  
dschupp@newzgroup.com

#### Amy Roeder

Director of Production Management  
aroeder@newzgroup.com

#### Craig Horn

Director of Research Management/Business Development  
chorn@newzgroup.com

#### Lee Brooks

Director of Texas Publications and Operations  
lbrooks@newzgroup.com

We would be glad to expand or alter your service at any time. As your needs change, be sure to give us a call so we can help you stay in control of your media presence.

**Call us at 800-474-1111 for pricing and special offers!**



## Big thanks to our press association partners

Strong relationships with media trade associations, individual content originators and other news outlets have been foundational to Newz Group's success. Through licensed resale programs, Newz Group can expose your material to whole new market segments without competing in your core franchise area. There are information consumers who want content compiled by subject matter, but who cannot afford to subscribe to every potential news source. Newz Group's aggregation and research services help bridge that gap.



Arkansas Press Association



Michigan Press Association



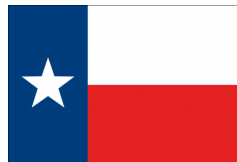
South Dakota Press Association



Colorado Press Association



Missouri Press Association



Texas Press Association



Iowa Press Association



New Mexico Press Association



West Virginia Press Association



Kansas Press Association



North Dakota Press Association



Wyoming Press Association



Kentucky Press Association



South Carolina Press Association

## A commitment to excellence

### Mission Statement:

Newz Group is a family-owned, client-focused business aimed at providing affordable, timely and accurate media information and analytics customers can use to build their knowledge base, formulate strategy and develop action plans. Our core values of trust, integrity, innovation, energy and relationship-building produce superior services customers value. As a model of excellence, our dedicated employees and use of cutting-edge technology give our customers a positive experience and unique tools to help control their name and grow their brand.

### Vision Statement:

We will become an industry leader as we continue to work closely with customers, press associations and a large and diverse collection of media outlets. We value all of our customers and as our company continues to grow, we are focused on developing our relationships with publishers and customers alike. As we take charge of our bright and successful future, we will be a standard of best practices and customer service in our industry.

### Collaborative Partners

University of Kentucky/  
Kentucky Public Library:

Working to preserve the historical heritage of Kentucky newspapers. Converting, storing, and hosting newspapers in Kentucky digitally to help protect the valuable chrono-

logical history of the state. The project continues to evolve.

ANDAC:

A collaborative industry movement to explore new ways of monetizing print media content.



### Welcome to Newz Group!

Newz Group is a media technology company that helps you stay in control of your image. We use licensed media content to monitor print, and we track online and broadcast media.

We can track newspaper content throughout the U.S. and TV and radio coverage in all 210 major broadcast markets. Want to know the buzz about you or your company? We can keep you filled in on what people are saying about the topics that matter most to you.

### What's the Newsletter?

This is a monthly newsletter that will keep you updated on the major news at Newz Group. We will also update you on important topics around the country you might find pertinent to you or your business.

We will address some frequently asked questions, introduce you to our new partners and offer new products and services to help you expand your knowledge, grow your business, and control your name.

### News and Updates

#### Portals Available

Newz Group's Client and Publisher Portals are now available. New and existing clients and publishers can access their content a lot easier with these optional portals.

The Client Portal offers a simple method for receiving and organizing clips. The Publisher Portal will make content distribution and archiving easier.

For more information on portals, see [page 2](#). Please give us a call to get set up.

## Keep a look out

#### Press Release Hosting

In addition to writing and distributing press releases, Newz Group will soon be able to host press releases on our new website. We can host text-only press releases and smart press releases with pictures, links and embedded videos.

#### Bids and Leads

Many people, such as construction contractors, maintenance companies and IT professionals, rely on bids

and leads for work. Newz Group will be unveiling our bids and leads service to make it easier for professionals to find work bids.

#### Clip Mounting

Some articles are special and should be preserved. With Newz Group's clip mounting service, we can prepare your article to make it easy to scrapbook. We can also frame the clips you find to be the most important.

## Letter from the CEO

Technology that disrupts legacy models involves personnel changes that necessitate job reshuffling. This is a normal part of business, and most often new people are plugged into different places, and work goes on as it always has.

Information technology companies have the opportunity to confront personnel changes as an opportunity to re-envision the company. Ask yourself these questions:



Brad Buchanan is the President and CEO of Newz Group

How can you reorganize to more effectively serve your clients? How can you engender greater innovation? How can you unleash the creative potential of everyone who works there?

An easy place to start is a new organizational chart. Having taught Organizational Behavior (on the side) for more than 15 years, most organizational charts look pretty much the same. They are hierarchical (with the boss

See **BRAD** on [page 3](#)

### Get Connected!

"Like" our [Facebook](#) page and follow us on [Twitter](#) to keep up with important news that matters to you. Updated regularly, our Facebook and Twitter pages offer you information on big news topics concerning the media and tips for getting the most out of your PR and marketing efforts.



**Newz Group**  
PO Box 873  
Columbia, MO 65205

**(800) 474-1111**  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)  
[www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)







Newzletter  
July 2013

## Newz Group Unveils Client and Publisher Portals

### Client Portal

Available for new and current clients who use any of our media monitoring services

You can now get all of your content in one convenient portal. The new Client Portal allows you to customize your content, organize your print clips, social media results, monthly management reports, RSS feed and more.

The Client Portal is optional. You can choose to still receive your monitoring hits through email, CD or the mail while

using the portal as well, if you prefer.

You can search your results by date and publication and organize your content into folders for easy access and sharing.

Your online monitoring hits are also available on the portal, and you can view results by site or blog. You can search your clips by key terms, and you can also subscribe to RSS feeds.

Getting set up on the portal is easy. Just call one of our staff members for more information and to get started!

Management Reports Online Monitoring My Clips Search My Clips View RSS

Publish Date: 05-01-2013 to 06-12-2013

Filter Publication: Any [Apply Filter]

Folders: Latest Clips [Folder Options]

- State 05/29/2013 Page 1 Columbia, SC: Richland County  
Column Inches: 42 Readship: 128,564 Ad Equiv: \$3,659.46  
View Clip
- Twin-City News 05/23/2013 Page 9 Beaufort, Greenville, SC: Lexington County  
Column Inches: 5 Readship: 3,651 Ad Equiv: \$23.75  
View Clip
- Index-Journal 05/17/2013 Page 11 Greenwood, SC: Greenwood County  
Headline: It's down to one  
Column Inches: 5 Readship: 16,494 Ad Equiv: \$83.90  
View Clip
- Index-Journal 05/17/2013 Page 49 Greenwood, SC: Greenwood County  
Headline: It's down to one  
Column Inches: 6 Readship: 16,494 Ad Equiv: \$100.68  
View Clip
- Lexington County Chronicle 05/16/2013 Page 1 Lexington, SC: Lexington County  
Column Inches: 3 Readship: 5,652 Ad Equiv: \$30.75  
View Clip

### Publisher Portal

Available for press associations and newspaper publishers

As content that was once confined to the printed page becomes digital, newspaper publishers are struggling to find a way to protect and store their content. Luckily, after months of beta testing, there is finally a solution - The Newz Group Publisher Portal.

Provided in conjunction with your press association, this complimentary Publisher Portal is the missing piece publishers have been waiting for. With its easy-to-use functions, users can quickly upload their content.

Once content is uploaded in PDF form, it is archived and stored in a text-searchable format that makes the preservation of this important material simpler than ever.

Upload Files Search Your Archives Browse Your Archives Edit Your Info Logout

Instructions for users  
To upload a publication, please follow these instructions:  
1. Choose the publication you will be uploading.  
2. Choose the publication date by clicking on the calendar icon next to the Publication Date box.  
3. Click Next.  
You may review previous uploads in the Browse Your Archives section. Click on the Browse Your Archives tab at the top of the page and choose the year, month, and date you wish to review.

Select Publication and Date  
Publication Name: Test Pub  
Publication Date: 06/12/2013 [Next]

Upload Calendar  
June 2013  
Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa  
1  
2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 10 11 12 13 14 15  
16 17 18 19 20 21 22  
23 24 25 26 27 28 29  
30

Uploaded Files  
Click a green date on the calendar to the left to display that date's uploaded contents.

The content is secure on Newz Group's servers and cannot be picked up through an online search engine, so you don't have to worry about your content being misappropriated.

Additionally, the new Publisher Portal will save you time and effort when you need to send tear sheets to advertisers. Now you can send the files

digitally and avoid the hassle of manually cutting or tearing the pages to send through the mail.

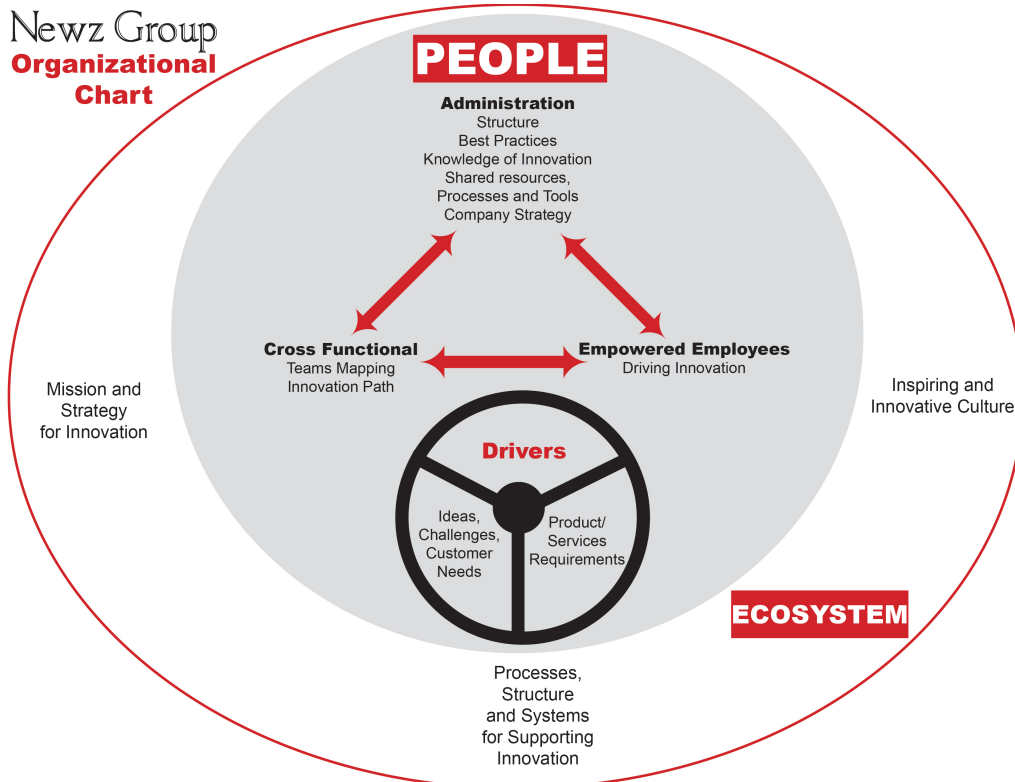
You will also save time and postage since you won't have to mail physical copies of your publication to the press association.

You can quickly upload your newspaper and not have to worry about a thing. If you

would like a tutorial on how to get started using the portal, just give us a call.

So, throw all those hard copies into storage and enjoy the flexibility and freedom of digitally uploading your content to Newz Group's secure Publisher Portal. Call or email Amy Roeder at [aroeder@newzgroup.com](mailto:aroeder@newzgroup.com) today to get started!

Newz Group  
**Organizational  
Chart**



**BRAD** continued...

on top and worker bees on the bottom). There are usually lots of boxes with peoples' names and titles in them. This is a very traditional and mechanistic approach to organizational structuring. It works well in many organizations, such as the military and the license office.

But mechanistic organizations are not well suited for situations of fast-paced change. Change creates

organizational challenges that may be dealt with more successfully in an organic environment. That is the direction Newz Group is going. Shown above is our new organizational chart.

Looks weird, doesn't it? Our basic mission and vision statements are implied in the diagram. But what is perhaps most interesting are the components that have been omitted. There is no hierarchy. The communications flow is circular, rather than top-down.

There are no names included in the picture – any worker could play virtually any role at any given time, depending on the circumstances. And, most tellingly, there are no boxes.

Everyone has various roles to play, so we did not want to pictorially box them into a single position or function. We want each person to think “outside the box,” because they have no box, symbolically on an organizational chart, or operationally in their day-

to-day functions.

Change comes at us in many forms at Newz Group, most especially technological and organizational. Here at Newz Group, we are using organizational change as a tool for restructuring processes around innovative solutions to meet customer needs. Because we live in a world of perpetual change, our organizational chart must reflect work that does not yet exist and processes that are not yet clearly defined.



# Newz Group Services

Newz Group offers a variety of services to meet your media tracking needs. We would be glad to expand or alter your service at any time. As your needs change, give us a call so we can help you stay in control of your media presence.

## Press Coverage

### Print Tracking

This service is offered without keyword or topic limits, thus making your monitoring needs customizable. The print tracking service only generates the coverage pertinent to you and your organization.

Your digital press clips are easy to forward, download, search and extract. Receive weekly emails of comprehensive print coverage in PDF format and/or access content on our new client portal.

### Management Report

The Management Report is a detailed overview of all clips received during the month, quarter or year.

The report includes itemized details of each clipping received, and displays publication name, circulation figures, readership and advertising equivalency rates.

This service gives a comprehensive look at the value of your press coverage. The print tracking service is required to receive this report.

### Searchable Digital Archiving

Digitally archive your print coverage annually, quarterly or monthly with a mailed CD containing a record of all your clips and the optional Management Report from your coverage cycle.

## Internet Coverage

### Internet Monitoring

Monitor news sites, social media, blogs and corporate websites. We monitor popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Flickr and much more.

### RSS Feed

Your print and/or internet monitoring results are sent directly to your website via the RSS feed.

## Broadcast Coverage

### National Coverage

Monitor all broadcast and radio news and information in real time. Coverage includes all 210 U.S. markets. There are no per clip, download or entire broadcast fees – just one flat-rate subscription provides content from TV and radio outlets across the nation.

### Regional Coverage

This service covers only the regional markets that matter to your organization. An annual flat-rate makes this service easy to budget, and it will never require additional fees.

A minimum of one year of service is required for broadcast coverage.

## Additional Services

### Press Releases

Press releases can be sent out to targeted regions across the nation, with special discounts in our primary states of operation. We can also write press releases for you.

### Digital Archiving

Make print documents easy to preserve, organize and manage with our digital archiving service. Save yourself paper and time by allowing us to securely digitize your files.

Call us at 800-474-1111 for pricing and special offers.

Comments, questions?  
Give us a call at  
800-474-1111, 8 a.m.–5  
p.m. CST, M-F.  
Or, you can email one of  
these staff members:

### Sarah Frieling

Director of Customer Service  
sfrieling@newzgroup.com

### Melissa Oribhabor

Director of Marketing and  
Client Development  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com

### Lee Brooks

Director of Texas Operations  
& Publisher Relations  
lbrooks@newzgroup.com

# Special Offer

Try a  
**2 WEEK FREE TRIAL**  
of our social media  
monitoring.

We track several of  
the most popular social  
networking sites such  
as Facebook, Twitter,  
YouTube, Flickr, Google+  
and much more!

Call for details  
800-474-1111



## Welcome to Newz Group!

Newz Group is a media technology and public relations company that helps you stay in control of your image. We use licensed media content to monitor print, and we track online and broadcast media.

We can track newspaper content throughout the U.S. and TV and radio coverage in all 210 major broadcast markets. Want to know the buzz about you or your company? We can keep you filled in on what people are saying about the topics that matter most to you.

Comments, questions? Give us a call at 800-474-1111, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. CST, M-F. Or, you can email one of these staff members:

**Sarah Frieling**  
Director of Customer Service  
[sfrieling@newzgroup.com](mailto:sfrieling@newzgroup.com)

**Melissa Oribhabor**  
Director of Marketing & Client Development  
[moribhabor@newzgroup.com](mailto:moribhabor@newzgroup.com)

**Lee Brooks**  
Director of Texas Operations & Publisher Relations  
[lbrooks@newzgroup.com](mailto:lbrooks@newzgroup.com)

Turning  
into knowledge

Get  
Connected!



## Newz Group Employee Spotlight: Amy Roeder



Amy Roeder  
Director of Publisher Relations

Newz Group's staff is filled with people who have been working for the company for many years. They are loyal employees who love what they do. One such employee is Amy Roeder who is celebrating her 10th anniversary with the company this month.

Roeder is currently the director of production management and publisher relations, but she began working for the company as a clipper on night shift.

She applied for the job after graduating from the University of Missouri and briefly running a local ballot initiative campaign in Columbia, Mo.

Though she hadn't initially planned to make a career out of Newz Group, she didn't find herself looking to work anywhere else.

"I ended up staying because I liked the company and I liked the people I worked with," she says.

Roeder worked as a clipper for two and a half years before eventually working her way to assistant production manager and finally director of production management and publisher relations in 2009.

Roeder's job is to make sure everything in production runs smoothly. She oversees the different production jobs and employees, and when needed, she works as a researcher, clipper and indexer.

What she does now is a far cry from what she thought she'd be doing after earning a degree in political science and working at the MU School of Law through college.

"I wanted to go to law school," she says, "but I changed my mind after working at the law school."

Roeder has many future aspirations for when she decides to change careers. She would like to run her own business or non-profit, and maybe go to journalism school to integrate her love of journalism with her passion for politics.

Roeder says Newz Group is a great place for her because she's doing something she has always been interested in.

"One of the perks of my job is I get to read the newspaper and stay up on current events, which I'm interested in anyway."

To contact Amy for publisher relations, email her at [aroeder@newzgroup.com](mailto:aroeder@newzgroup.com)

## Big News at Newz Group: New Website

Our new website is now up and running. This website offers a comprehensive look at all our client, publisher and press association services, including several new services outlined on [page 2](#).

On the site you'll also be able to find our media page where we'll host press releases. You can access Newz Portal (formerly Newz Prompt) and our Client and Publisher Portals from the site and view our media kit, press kit, company history, a plethora of client resources and much more.

The front page has streams for our Facebook, Twitter and blog pages, client press releases as well as client testimonials.

Your company can now advertise on our website.

Newz Group is also offering a wide range of public relations services. These services are outlined in detail online.

This website, just like Newz Group, is a one-stop-shop for your media tracking and digitization needs.

**Newz Group**  
PO Box 873  
Columbia, MO 65205

(800) 474-1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)  
[www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)





# New Services

## Bids & Leads

Get bids and leads on any industry, such as construction, maintenance, IT, financial audits, sales and more.

We offer content from a wide range of newspapers. From major publications to small rural newspapers, we have content that is not readily available online or through other media tracking companies.

You can be as specific or as broad as you want with your coverage. Your digital press clips are easy to forward, download, search and extract.

Service is offered without keyword or topic limits, thus making your monitoring needs customizable.

Our bids and leads service is comprehensive, and we can help you find out first about the industry jobs that matter to you and your business.

## Public Relations Services

In addition to offering tips, articles and white papers on a variety of public relations and marketing topics, we also offer several PR services, including, but not limited to:

- Graphic Design
- Website & Blog Design
- Social Media set up
- Media Training
- Writing and Copy Editing
- Legal Services

In addition to our current management report, we offer in-depth analytics. We can track the tone of your articles and make keyword suggestions to make sure you're up-to-date with the topics that affect you and your industry.

## ANALYTICS

### Clip Mounting

Some articles are more special than others. Keep those articles long-term by preserving them.

We can help you preserve important articles with framing, scrapbooking or dry mounting.

Just let us know what you want, and we can make it happen.

## RELEASE HOSTING

We can host text-only press releases and smart press releases that have links, photos and embedded videos.

This service allows journalists who are searching for information in your press release to find it easily. We can host press releases weekly and monthly.

Additionally, if you frequently have releases you want hosted, you can subscribe to an annual hosting service for an unlimited number of press releases.

## E-EDITIONS

Powered by Newz Group

Bring your newspaper into the digital age with E-Editions from Newz Group. Make your publication available on the web in an easy and seamless fashion, exactly as it appeared in print.

Your content will be compatible with tablets and smart phones, so readers can easily take the news with them. E-Editions can stand alone, because they are significantly cheaper than printing hard copies, or you can supplement your current print product.

## Media Contact List

This is a comprehensive list of contacts for all the TV, radio and newspaper outlets in a given state.

This list makes it easy to distribute press releases to targeted audiences. We can send the press releases for you to the outlets you choose from the list, or you can distribute them yourself.

Lists are updated every six months or by request.

Our media contact lists are exportable to CSV and accessible 24-hours a day through our Client Portals.

## Blog

The Newz Group blog will keep you up-to-date on hot topics, marketing and public relations, media news, journalism, important developments in market research and much more.

**Visit our new website or call for more information on these or any additional services**

## Big thanks to our press association partners

Strong relationships with media trade associations, individual content originators and other news outlets have been foundational to Newz Group's success. Through licensed resale programs, Newz Group can expose your material to whole new market segments without competing in your core franchise area. There are information consumers who want content compiled by subject matter, but who cannot afford to subscribe to every potential news source. Newz Group's aggregation and research services help bridge that gap.

Arkansas Press Association	New Mexico Press Association
Colorado Press Association	North Dakota Newspaper Association
Iowa Newspaper Association	South Carolina Press Association
Kansas Press Association	South Dakota Press Association
Kentucky Press Association	Texas Press Association
Michigan Press Association	West Virginia Press Association
Missouri Press Association	Wyoming Press Association

## Collaborative Partner: University of Kentucky/Kentucky Public Library

Working to preserve the historical heritage of Kentucky newspapers, we are converting, storing and hosting newspapers in Kentucky digitally to help protect the valuable chronological history of the state. The project continues to evolve.

## A commitment to excellence

### Mission Statement:

Newz Group is a family-owned, client-focused business aimed at providing affordable, timely and accurate media information and analytics customers can use to build their knowledge base, formulate strategy and develop action plans. Our core values of trust, integrity, innovation, energy and relationship-building produce superior services customers value. As a model of excellence, our dedicated employees use cutting-edge technology to give our customers unique tools and information to help manage their and image control their brand.

### Vision Statement:

As an industry-leading digital media firm, we will continue using the latest technologies to offer the best possible information aggregation and distribution services to commercial customers, press associations and content originators. The diverse relationships we have developed are our most precious asset, and we are committed to deepening and expanding those relationships as we continue to grow. We work to incite change, not just adapt to it, and structure the changes for the betterment of customers, our employees, and society in general.

## General Design Work

I did a lot of design work for Newz Group. Included in these samples are the media and press kits, service sheets and tips and articles I wrote for the website.



**NEWZ GROUP**  
www.NewzGroup.com

# Media Kit

2 **Main Website and Blog**  
3 **Newzletter and Portals**  
4-5 **Ad Sizes and Design Info**  
6 **Contacts**

Turning information into knowledge

800.474.1111  
info@newzgroup.com

## WEEKLY RATES AND SPECIFICS

**Client Services**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	2.79"	1.56"	\$25
Medium	2.79"	2.60"	\$50
Large	2.79"	3.54"	\$75

**Public and Legal Notice Hosting**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	2.79"	1.56"	\$10
Medium	2.79"	2.60"	\$25
Large	2.79"	3.54"	\$50

**Press Association Services**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	2.79"	1.56"	\$10
Medium	2.79"	2.60"	\$25
Large	2.79"	3.54"	\$50

**Publisher Services**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	2.79"	1.56"	\$10
Medium	2.79"	2.60"	\$25
Large	2.79"	3.54"	\$50

**Media**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	3.08"	0.78"	\$25
Medium	3.08"	1.56"	\$50
Large	3.08"	3.55"	\$75

**Blog**

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	2.81"	1.56"	\$50
Medium	2.81"	2.60"	\$75
Large	2.81"	3.54"	\$100

**Ad construction:**

High resolution photos only. At least 300 dpi. Website ad placement is fluid, so please add one inch to height and width to account for screen resolution fluctuation.

**File formats:**

Ads can be submitted in any format, though PNG is preferred.

For technical inquiries, contact  
Megan Lenek at [mленек@newzgroup.com](mailto:mленек@newzgroup.com)

## Main Website and Blog

Available at [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)

The website averages 2,100  
unique pageviews per month.

**Page Placement Options:****Client Services**

Placing an advertisement on our client services page will reach countless business owners, politicians, organization leaders and government officials.

**Public and Legal Notice Hosting (Main Page)**

This is a page that explains and links to all nine of our public and legal notice websites. It reaches anyone looking for publicly listed notices, such as contractors, lawyers and real estate developers. For information on advertising on any of our public and legal notice websites, see page 3.

**Press Association Services**

Advertising on the Press Association Services page will reach executives and board members of state press associations.

**Publishers Services**

This page reaches newspaper publishers, editors and managers.

**Media**

The media page is a news resource for journalists.

**Blog**

The Newz Group blog discusses a multitude of topics such as current events, marketing and public relations, media news, journalism and important developments in market research. Reach journalists, public relations and marketing professionals, students, small business owners and more.

Turning  
into knowledge

800.474.1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)



## WEEKLY PORTAL RATES

Size	Width	Height	Price
Small	1.89"	0.93"	\$50
Medium	1.89"	1.45"	\$75
Large	1.89"	2.19"	\$100

**Ad construction:**

High resolution photos only. At least 300 dpi. Website ad placement is fluid, so please add one inch to height and width to account for screen resolution fluctuation.

**File formats:**

Ads can be submitted in any format, though PNG is preferred.

For technical inquiries, contact  
Megan Lennek at [mlenenk@newzgroup.com](mailto:mlenenk@newzgroup.com)

## Monthly Newzletter Rates

FREQUENCY	1X	2X	3X	12X
FULL PAGE	\$100	\$75	\$50	\$30
1/2 PAGE	\$50	\$30	\$20	\$15
1/4 PAGE	\$25	\$15	\$10	\$5

## Newzletter Ad Sizes

SIZE	WIDTH	HEIGHT
FULL PAGE	7.5" x	10"
1/2 PAGE VERTICAL	3.7" x	10"
1/2 PAGE HORIZONTAL	7.5" x	5"
1/4 PAGE	3.7" x	5"

**Ad construction:**

All photos and graphics high resolution. At least 300 dpi.

**File formats:**

JPEG is preferred. PNG and PSD will also be accepted.

For technical inquiries about the Newzletter, contact  
Melissa Oribhabor at [moribhabor@newzgroup.com](mailto:moribhabor@newzgroup.com)

## Portals and Newzletter

Portals available [here](#)  
Newzletter available [here](#)

### Client Portal

The Client Portal is where our clients retrieve their digital media content. Our clients include local and state government offices, politicians, small businesses, large corporations, trade associations and not-for-profits.

### Publisher Portal

This portal is used by newspaper publishers, managers and editors. This is a secure portal for publisher to upload and archive content.

### Newz Portal

The Newz Portal is used by clients who do not receive clips through the Client Portal. Some clients prefer to download clips themselves through the Newz Portal service.

### Newzletter

Our monthly Newzletter is digitally sent out to all of our clients at the beginning of each month. It keeps our clients updated on big news at Newz Group, as well as media and small business news.

The Newzletter is interactive, so your ad can link to your website for an additional \$5 fee.

Turning  
into knowledge

**Pages:**  
Client Services  
Press Association Services  
Publisher Services  
Public and Legal Notice Hosting

**Page:**  
Media

2.79Wx1.56H

3.08Wx.78H

2.79Wx2.60H

3.08Wx.1.56H

2.79Wx3.54H

3.08Wx.3.55H

Turning  
into knowledge

Page:  
Portals

Page:  
Blog

1.89Wx.93H

2.81Wx.1.56H

1.89Wx1.45H

2.81Wx2.6H

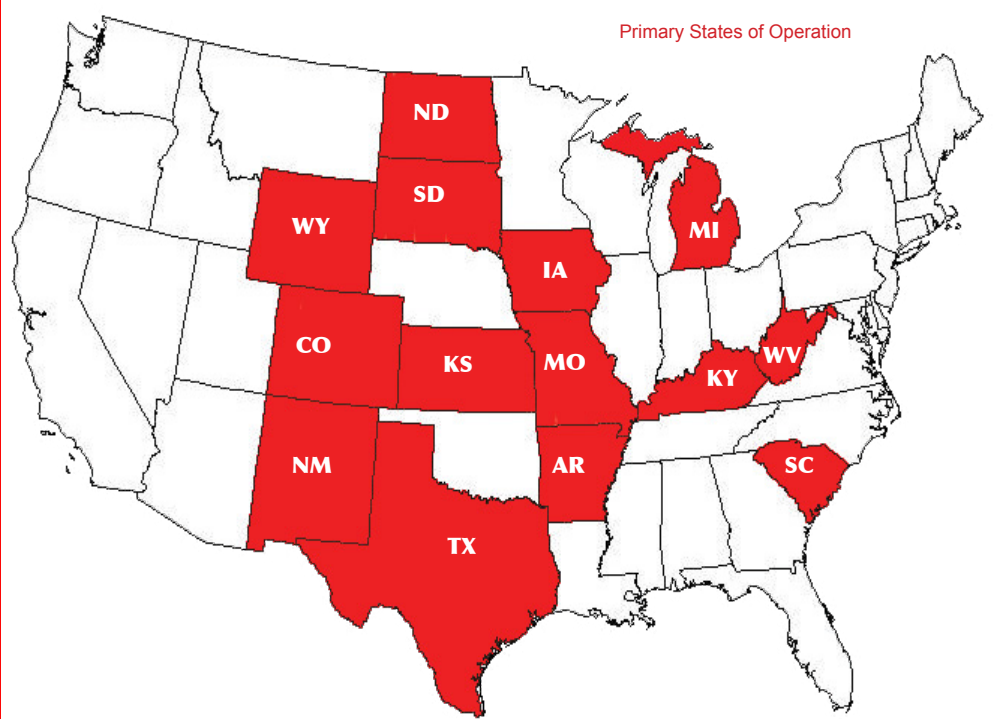
1.89Wx2.19H

2.81Wx3.54H

**Don't have an ad but want to advertise with us? We can help with that! Please contact Megan Lennek at [mленnek@newzgroup.com](mailto:mленnek@newzgroup.com) or call 800.474.1111 for more information!**

Turning  
Information  
into knowledge

800.474.1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)



Advertising and pricing:  
**Melissa Oribhabor**  
moribhabor@newzgroup.com  
800.474.1111

Billing:  
**Sierra Rudloff**  
srudloff@newzgroup.com  
800.474.1111

Technical inquires:  
**Megan Lennek**  
mlennek@newzgroup.com

General inquires:  
PO Box 873  
Columbia, MO 65205  
info@newzgroup.com  
800.474.1111



Turning  
into k<sup>n</sup>formation  
nowledge

800.474.1111  
info@newzgroup.com

Newz Group is the main operating subsidiary of GeoTel



# 4 TO CREATING AND EXECUTING STEPS A PUBLIC RELATIONS OR MARKETING CAMPAIGN

by Newz Group

There is a difference between an effective marketing or public relations campaign and just sending out a press release. Whether you're battling a public relations crisis or launching a new product or service, there are important steps to getting people to pay attention to your message.

- 1 Research**  
Whether you send out a survey, or use a *media tracking* service, the first step to any campaign is finding out where you stand, and what people think about you and want from you. Research can be expensive and time consuming, but this is the most important step. There are free survey sites, and if you use the right media tracking company, it can be very affordable.
- 2 Policy Formation and programming**  
Compile and analyze your research to decide what action you should take. Figure out the best method of communicating your ideas. What mediums are you going to use? TV advertisements? A series of targeted press releases? A social media campaign? What is your budget? How many staff members does this campaign require? What is the desired outcome of this campaign? You might choose to do a huge push to many media outlets at once, or to trickle information out over several months. In this stage, figure out how you're going to reach the people to whom you're trying to message.
- 3 Execution**  
It's time to implement your plan. If you decided to release information in steps, then start the process. If you decided to go with a hard push to many different outlets at once, then send out your press releases, advertisements, etc. It's important to track which outlet is getting what information, how often your press releases are being used, how traffic to your website has increased and other results after you send information to the media. If you're using a media tracking service, make sure you give them a heads up, as well.
- 4 Feedback and Assessment**  
In this stage, you need to take a critical look at the effectiveness of your campaign. Did it work? Did you get the desired outcome? Pay attention to what worked and what didn't so you'll know better for your next campaign. This is also where you see if any new issues arose since the campaign was launched. Look to see if there needs to be any follow-up, or if there is anything else left to do.

These steps might seem simple, but you'd be surprised at the amount of companies who do not do any research or assessment and just jump head first into a doomed campaign. If you're patient and take the time to go through all the steps, you will have a much better chance at success.

For more information, visit us at [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com) or check us out on social media.



Turning  
Information  
into knowledge

800.474.1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)

Source:  
Cameron, G., Wilcox, D. "Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics - 9th Edition." Allyn & Bacon, Inc.; 2009.



# TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

by Newz Group

## Designate a spokesperson

Before speaking to the media, you first have to decide who will be your spokesperson/liaison. If your company does not already have a designated public relations officer, someone needs to be chosen as the official representative tasked with speaking for the company.

Whoever you choose, he or she should be comfortable with speaking with members from a wide range of media outlets, and comfortable getting his or her picture taken or being on camera. Not all companies have or need a public relations department, but you do need a contact person who can accurately represent your company to the media.

## Make contacts

Face-to-face interaction is always best, but often not possible. When contacting the desired media outlet in person is not an option, a phone call is fine. However email should be a last resort. It's also important to know the right person to contact. Some smaller newspapers and TV stations have just a few reporters who cover a wide range of topics, so any reporter or editor can help.

However, many reporters, especially in bigger markets and publications, have beats (designated topics, areas or locations they cover). You can usually find this information pretty easily online. Finding the right journalist or editor to speak with can save you time and help to build professional relationships between your company and the newsroom.

## Remember to follow-up

Journalists are busy people, which is why it is up to you to follow-up with your news contact after you send out a press release, after an interview or after an article is published. If you have any questions, are unclear about how some information is going to be used, or if you just want to know when or if a story will run, follow-up with the news outlet. If following up on a press release, ask if there's any more information they need, and if so, when and how do they want it. Be timely and patient.

## Know how to give an interview

Preparing for an interview is important. It requires more than just knowing your talking points. You

should also research the reporter ahead of time so you can see the reporter's style. Be prepared with printed information the reporter can take with him or her, and make sure your answers are complete, interesting and on topic.

It can be tempting to ask the reporter to see the story before it's published, but more than likely you will be told no. At most you can ask to review quotes, but if you've prepared and you're working with a reputable news source, reviewing quotes is often unnecessary.

Oftentimes, newspapers and magazines have fact checkers who will call you a few days after the interview to make sure everything the reporter got was accurate. If no one calls to fact check, you can call to follow-up with the reporter, especially if this is the first time you've worked with the publication.

## Learn to handle bad press

A news outlet's relationship with a company, politician, organization or association should be symbiotic. Journalists need news and public figures and companies want to be in the news. This can be a positive experience and good, professional relationships can develop.

However, sometimes you'll get bad press, or a journalist will get a fact wrong, or misrepresent the truth. You can't fault the media for reporting on bad news coming out of your office, if it's news they're going to report it regardless of how much they might like you personally. But, if what they write is just plain inaccurate, you need to immediately contact the journalist, have a (calm) discussion of the facts and ask for a correction to be printed.

Dealing with the media is a necessary part of running a business or being a public figure. And, if done right, it can be a great opportunity to get the word out about your brand and get in front of the news about you.

For more information, visit us at [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com) or check us out on social media.



Turning Information into Knowledge

800.474.1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)

Source:  
University of Missouri - Columbia, School of Journalism



# HOW TO GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT TO THE MEDIA

by Newz Group

Media coverage of your company is the best free advertising you can hope for. Whether it is an article in a newspaper, a social media shout out or a story on the evening news, you can benefit from getting the word out about your brand without spending much, if any, money. Here are some ways you can effectively get your message out to the media to increase brand awareness and drive revenue.

## Press Releases (News Releases) and SMRs

Most people know what a traditional press release is. It is usually one page with a catchy headline, subhead and a few paragraphs that talk about big news in a company. Press releases are generally *distributed* through email to targeted media outlets. But there are other options than the traditional release and distribution.

A Smart Media Release (SMR) is a form of a press release that is more than just text. It has links, photos, videos, embedded links to photos, graphics and more. SMRs are ideal not just for traditional email distribution, but also for *hosting*. Whether the SMR is hosted on your website or an external site, having a SMR will help to get your release picked up in Google searches, and having it hosted on more than one site increases the chance your release will be used.

## Social Media and Websites

There are a couple of things all modern companies, organizations, politicians and government offices must have: A frequently updated website and a social media presence. When you send out a press release, anyone interested in the content is going to check out your website for more information. If your releases are available on your website, in chronological order, it tells a story of your company. Additionally, social media is a great way to quickly point people to your message. A tweet or Facebook post that links to your website and press release will help a great deal in getting your message out.

There are a lot of social media sites to choose from. Do your research to find out which ones are best for your brand, but Twitter and Facebook are generally considered staples in social media. They have the highest amount of users and will have the greatest return on message distribution.

## Media Kit (Press Kit)

There are two types of media kits: ones for advertising and one for major events and new product launches. If you sell advertising space in your publication or on your website, you should have a media kit with information about placement, pricing, traffic/readership etc.

If you're not selling advertising, you still need a media kit, but this one is for people who are interested in your company and want more information. These types of media kits are also called press kits. These kits give reporters and editors information and resources they can use to write about your new products, events or company in general.

For bigger events and product launches, consider creating an E-Kit (EPK). This is an electronic press kit that can be distributed through email, posted on your website or mailed to media outlets on a CD or flash drive. They generally have short videos, a press release, fact sheet and high-resolution photos. Remember, the easier you make it for the journalist to write the story, the more likely the story will get written.

## Media Alerts

These are great if you have an event coming up and you would like the media to cover it. A media alert works as an invitation to the media to attend, and should be distributed at least a week before the event, giving the reporter ample opportunity to make time to attend and research your company prior to attending.

Media alerts are generally shorter than press releases, and list the time, date and place of the event, why it's happening and why it's important.

Whether you're a well established company with a PR department or a small business trying to build your customer base, it's important to keep your community in the know about your brand.

For more information, visit us at [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com) or check us out on social media.



Turning  
Information  
into Knowledge

800.474.1111  
[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)

Source:  
Cameron, G., Wilcox, D. "Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics - 9th Edition." Allyn & Bacon, Inc.; 2009.

Newz Group is a media technology company that helps you stay in control of your image. We use licensed media content to monitor print, and online and broadcast media tracking are also available. We also offer a host of other services, making us a leading licensed media technology company in the Midwest. We can keep you filled in on what people are saying about the topics that matter most to you.

**Online Client Portal**

Get all of your content in one convenient portal. The online Client Portal allows you to customize your content, organize your print clips, social media results, monthly management reports, RSS feed and more.

You can search your results by date and publication and organize your content into folders for easy access and sharing. Your online monitoring hits are also available on the portal, and you can view results by site or blog. You can search your clips by key terms, and you can also subscribe to RSS feeds.

Choose one or more of the following forms of delivery:

- ✓ Online portal
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Mail
- ✓ CD

**PRESS COVERAGE**

**Print Monitoring**

Receive emails of comprehensive print coverage in PDF format. Service is offered without keyword or topic limits, thus making your monitoring needs customizable. The print monitoring service only generates the coverage pertinent to you and your organization. Your digital press clips are easy to download, search and extract.

**Newz Portal**

Newspaper content is easily accessible through this web-based content management system. Keywords and search criteria can be changed at any time to narrow or broaden results or change direction completely to begin monitoring an entirely different topic. Newz Portal will alert you with an email when suggested pages are ready for viewing. This service puts you in charge, allowing you to manipulate and control information. You can quickly find content, read a short segment of the text surrounding each keyword match and view a thumbnail of each page. An informed decision can then be made as to whether the page should be purchased, moved to an email inbox, downloaded or ignored. *Not available in all states.*

**Searchable Digital Archiving**

Digitally archive your print coverage annually, quarterly or monthly with a mailed CD containing a record of all your clips and the optional Management Report from your coverage cycle.

**BROADCAST COVERAGE**

**Newz Group can facilitate two types of broadcast monitoring:**

**Comprehensive National Coverage**

Monitor all broadcast and radio news and information in real time. Coverage includes all 210 U.S. markets. There is no per clip fee, no download fee, no entire broadcast fee. Just one flat-rate subscription provides access to all TV and radio coverage across the nation.

**Regional Markets Service**

This service covers only the regional markets that matter to your organization. Choose up to 10. A flat-rate makes this service easy to budget and will never require a per clip fee, downloading fee or entire broadcast fee.

A minimum of one year of service is required for broadcast coverage.

**INTERNET COVERAGE**

Monitor news sites, social media, blogs and corporate websites. We monitor popular social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Flickr and much more.

Turning information into knowledge

**800.474.1111**



## BIDS AND LEADS

### Bids

This is a service where you can get the publicly listed bids that matter to you and your industry. Regardless of the type of bids you're looking for, we can help you find what you need.

### Leads

This is a service where you can get articles that talk about public meetings and government decisions that affect your industry. This will help you to get early identification of leads. It's not just important to see when work is available for RFP's, it's crucial that you know when the bids are coming up so you can get them first.

You can get coverage of bids and leads broken into project types and categories.

## ANALYTICS

### Management Report

The Management Report is a detailed overview of all clips received during the month, quarter or year. The report includes itemized details of each clipping received, displaying publication name, circulation figures and advertising equivalency rates. This service gives a comprehensive look at the value of your press coverage. The print monitoring service is required to receive this report.

### In-Depth Analytics

We can track the tone of your articles and make keyword suggestions to ensure you're up-to-date with the topics that affect you and your industry.

## CLIP MOUNTING

Some articles are more special than others. Keep those articles long-term by preserving them. We can help you preserve important articles with framing, scrapbooking or dry mounting. Just let us know what you want, and we can make it happen.

## DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

This service turns corporate records, government documents, historical newspaper content or virtually any paper record into user-friendly, text-searchable digital files.

Digitizing files is important to keep a lasting record of valuable information, and to create an off site archive for all your records in case of catastrophic events. Paper deteriorates and damages easily. Digitizing your files assures you that they will be safe.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Whether you need to develop a comprehensive media marketing campaign or just need help with a few services, Newz Group has you covered. Our public relations and marketing services will help launch your business, maintain success and grow your bottom line.

- Press Release writing, hosting and distribution
- Advertising
- Graphic Design
- Website and Blog Design
- Writing and Editing:
  - Product and Company Fact Sheets
  - Employee Biographies
  - Company Biographies
  - Pitch Letters
  - Bylined Articles
  - Case Histories
  - News/Press Releases
  - Op-Ed Articles
  - Press Kit - *Includes:* Company or product background, fact sheet, executive biographies, and examples of press coverage. All desired photos must be provided by the company.
- Media Research and Analysis
- Competition Analytics
- Social Media
- Media Training
- Media Contact List
- Social Media Contact list
- Legal Services:
  - Brand and Trademark Licensing
  - Contract Negotiation
  - Franchise Development
  - Litigation Support Referral
  - Business Organization
  - Government Compliance

Turning  
into knowledge

# 800.474.1111

PO Box 873 • Columbia, MO 65205 | [info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)

Newspaper publishers are known for their fierce independence and commitment to disseminating the truth. Newz Group respects that and wants to support those efforts. Here are the services we offer to newspaper publishers.

## E-EDITIONS

Bring your newspaper into the digital age with E-Editions from Newz Group. Make your publication available on the web in an easy and seamless fashion, exactly as it appeared in print. Your content will be compatible with tablets and smart phones, so readers can simply take the news with them. E-Editions can stand alone because they are significantly cheaper than printing hard copies, or you can supplement your current print product.



### Benefits of E-Editions:

- ✓ This service allows for easier customer access to your publication.
- ✓ E-Editions offer new opportunities for advertising and growth within the industry.
- ✓ Readers outside of your distribution area can easily subscribe.
- ✓ E-Editions can have full color photos for no additional cost.
- ✓ For newspapers wanting to switch exclusively to E-Editions, it eliminates the cost of printing and allows for faster and cheaper delivery.



Newz Group is affordable, and we will host your publication in an easy-to-use format. There is no per-page cost, just one flat rate per edition. You can keep your current subscription model and have full control over revenue and subscription information.

## DIGITAL ARCHIVE



Upload your publication to our secure servers for long-term, safe and reliable archiving. Having a digital archive of your publication is crucial for protection against catastrophic local events and data shortage failures. This is a **free** service offered back to our publishers through our partnership with press associations. Additionally, Newz Group has powerful search features that make it easy to find material using keywords or date ranges.

## PUBLISHER PORTAL

Our Publisher Portal offers one-stop uploading for E-Editions and free digital archiving. With its easy-to-use functions, users can quickly and easily upload their content. The content is secure on Newz Group's servers and cannot be picked up through an online search engine, so you don't have to worry about your content being misappropriated. Provided in conjunction with your press association, the Publisher Portal will save you time and effort when you need to send tear sheets to advertisers. You will also save time and postage since you won't have to mail physical copies of your publication to the press association.

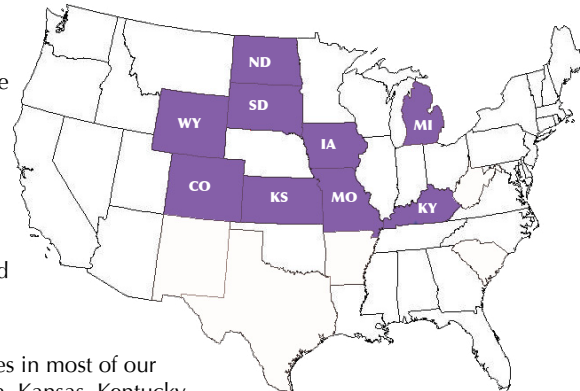
Turning  
information  
into knowledge

**800.474.1111**

We value our relationships with our press association partners and offer free services to benefit the publishers and press association we work with. We have designed platforms to help traditional media companies succeed in the 21st Century news era.

### **PUBLIC AND LEGAL NOTICE HOSTING**

We operate public/legal notice websites for nine state press associations. Legal notices and public notices are issued by the government that offer information about bids, home foreclosures, estate auctions, etc. Industry-supported legal and public notice websites protect the integrity of government-issued notices as well as maintain a valued revenue source for publications. We electronically process and publish more than 20% of all legal notices generated in the U.S.



States where we currently host legal and public notices

Currently, we host 100% of the legal notices in most of our primary states of operation: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. We are able to host all legal notices, because we receive our content in print and digital format; therefore, our coverage is comprehensive.

### **ARCHIVING/E-TEAR SHEETS**

Our statewide archives produce electronic-tear sheets that enable you to use electronic proof-of-publication pages to substantiate services to advertisers. E-Tear sheets reduce cost and increase the speed of invoicing. This is a service unique to Newz Group. With thousands of content originators uploading each week, Newz Group has developed one of the most comprehensive regional archives for contemporary periodicals in the U.S., and it continues to grow every day. The archive has proved to be a valuable tool for both information consumers and participants in our Media Partners program.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Strong relationships with media trade associations, individual content originators and other news outlets have been foundational to Newz Group's success. Through licensed resale programs, Newz Group can expose your material to whole new market segments without competing in your core franchise area. There are information consumers who want content compiled by subject matter, but who cannot afford to subscribe to every potential news source. Newz Group's aggregation and research services help bridge that gap.

Turning information into knowledge

**800.474.1111**

## Advertisements

I designed several ads for Newz Group. The samples included were primarily for press association directories and conventions.

**When you just can't help but wonder what is being said about you....**

**NEWZ GROUP**

We help businesses, organizations, politicians and publications with a variety of media and public relations services.

Through media monitoring, press releases writing and distribution, secure digital archiving and more, Newz Group will help you **expand** your knowledge, **grow** your brand and **control** your name.

**800-474-1111**

- Print Monitoring
- Internet Monitoring
- National and Local Broadcast Monitoring
- Press Release Writing and Distribution
- Digital Archiving
- In-depth analysis
- Much more!

**"They do all the work and I stay informed!"**  
- Sharon Wilkinson,  
Wyoming State Bar

**www.NewzGroup.com | 800-474-1111**

facebook.com/NewzGroup @NewzGroup

# BRING YOUR NEWSPAPER INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

With **E-Editions** and **FREE digital archiving** from Newz Group, the digital archiving provider of the Texas Press Association.



## Why should *your* newspaper have an E-Edition from Newz Group?

- ✓ Delivers a high quality product to subscribers
- ✓ Allows for full color photos without additional cost
- ✓ Supplements print product without disrupting traditional print franchise
- ✓ Gives your newspaper an inexpensive and effective digital presence
- ✓ Can increase subscribers outside of distribution area
- ✓ Offers additional advertising opportunities
- ✓ There is no charge per page

With Newz Group, you'll only have to upload your publication to **one** location to benefit from our E-Edition service and our free digital archiving service. We are your one stop for all your digitization needs.



## Contact & Connect

# 800.474.1111

[www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)



[info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)

# Newspapers are moving online. **Are you ready?**

Be prepared to transition into the new digital landscape with E-Editions from Newz Group, your trusted partner of the New Mexico Press Association.

Make your publication available on the web, exactly how it appears in print. You maintain all subscription information and revenue.



## Why should *your* newspaper have an E-Edition?

- ✓ Brings your paper into the digital age
- ✓ Delivers a high quality product to subscribers
- ✓ Allows for full color photos without additional cost
- ✓ Supplements print product without disrupting traditional print franchise
- ✓ Can increase subscribers outside of distribution area
- ✓ Offers additional advertising opportunities

With Newz Group, you'll only have to upload your publication to one location to benefit from our **E-Edition service** and our **FREE digital archiving service**. We are your one stop for all your digitization needs.

## Contact Newz Group today to get started!

Phone: 800.474.1111  
Email: [info@newzgroup.com](mailto:info@newzgroup.com)  
Web: [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)

 [facebook.com/NewzGroup](https://facebook.com/NewzGroup)  
 [twitter.com/NewzGroup](https://twitter.com/NewzGroup)  
 [linkedin.com/company/Newz-Group](https://linkedin.com/company/Newz-Group)

 Your trusted partner of the New Mexico Press Association



# Save Money

By switching from hard copy clips to our Client Portal or E-Clipz. You can reduce your monthly bill because you will no longer have to pay paper handling charges and postage fees.

## Client Portal

All of your clips are available 24 hours a day on our secure, complimentary portal. Access, organize, arrange and forward clips and internet monitoring hits. Portal allows an unlimited number of users.



## E-Clipz

Your clips arrive in a .PDF attachment through your email, making the process faster, cleaner and more inexpensive for you. You can start receiving your clips through email the day you sign up!

Get in touch with a customer service representative today to get started!

**Phone:** 800.474.1111

**Email:** [customercare@newzgroup.com](mailto:customercare@newzgroup.com)

**Web:** [www.NewzGroup.com](http://www.NewzGroup.com)

Turning  
Information  
into knowledge

800.474.1111  
[customercare@newzgroup.com](mailto:customercare@newzgroup.com)  
PO Box 873  
Columbia, MO 65202





## What can NEWZ GROUP do for you?

Brought to you in conjunction with the Iowa Newspaper Association, Newz Group offers:

### Secure Off-site Digital Archiving

- Available on our complimentary Publisher Portal

### Public & Legal Notice Hosting

- Preserving a crucial revenue source for newspapers

### E-Editions

- Secure and affordable, high-quality online hosting of print content

### Quicker Revenue

- Faster statewide advertising revenue turnaround

**Call us today for details! 800.474.1111**

### If you're looking for:

**Search**

- ✓ Automated media monitoring services
- ✓ Secure off-site archiving
- ✓ E-tear sheets
- ✓ Legal notice website hosting
- ✓ Ways to generate new revenue

Then Newz Group has you covered.

We help create and protect revenue for your members and your association.

To inquire about becoming one of our association partners, talk to Ian Buchanan at the this convention, or give Brad Buchanan a call!

**800.474.1111**  
**www.NewzGroup.com**  
**ibuchanan@newzgroup.com**



Ask a colleague at one of the 14 press associations we partner with about the benefits of working with Newz Group  
 AR | CO | IA | KS | KY | MI | MO | ND | NM | SC | SD | TX | WV | WY





**BRING YOUR  
PUBLICATION INTO THE  
DIGITAL AGE**



Newz Group is a trusted partner of the Kentucky Press Association

**Affordable  
E-Editions**

**Secure  
Digital  
Archiving**

**Convenient  
Publisher  
Portal**

**CALL  
TODAY!  
800.474.1111**

## Website

I re-designed the website. Here is an example of the front page before and after the re-design.

### Newz Group website before re-design

The screenshot shows the Newz Group website interface. At the top, the logo 'NEWZ GROUP' is displayed in a serif font, with 'NEWZ' in a larger, bold font. To the right of the logo is the contact information 'CALL US TODAY! (800) 474-1111'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for 'HOME', 'PARTNERS', 'ABOUT', 'CLIENT', and 'PUBLISHER'. The main content area features a vertical sidebar on the left with categories: 'MEDIA MONITORING', 'PUBLISHER SERVICES', 'DIGITAL SOLUTIONS', and 'ANALYTICS'. The 'ANALYTICS' section is highlighted, showing a sub-header 'ANALYTICS' and a description: 'A host of analytical tools are available, to assist customers in turning data into meaningful information. [Learn More](#)'. To the right of this text is an image of a man in a suit looking at a tablet. Below the analytics section are three main promotional boxes: 'Complete Media Monitoring Newz Portal' with a 'Learn More' button, 'Social Media Free Trial' with social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) and a 'Learn More' button, and 'Client Login' with a form for 'User Name' (test@texas.com) and 'Password' (masked with dots) and a 'Login' button. Below these are several informational sections, each with a title, a paragraph of text, and a 'Learn More' button: 'Message Distribution', 'Media Monitoring', 'Feedback and Adjustments', 'Media Partners', and 'Archiving'. The footer contains the company address: 'Newz Group, PO Box 873, Columbia, MO 65205', the phone number '(800) 474-1111', and the email 'info@newzgroup.com'. It also includes a copyright notice '© 2014 GeoTel Corporation. All rights reserved.', social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, a 'BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS' logo, and links for 'Privacy Policy | Terms & Conditions | Legal Notices'.

# Newz Group website after re-design

[Viewing Issues?](#)




[SERVICES](#) ▾
 [PUBLISHER](#) ▾
 [NOTICES](#) ▾
 [BLOG](#)
[MEDIA](#)
[ABOUT](#) ▾
 [CONTACT](#)
[LOGIN](#) ▾

Turning  
into knowledge

WITH UNEQUALED DEPTH OF COVERAGE,  
NEWZ GROUP IS YOUR  
COMPLETE MEDIA RESOURCE



## WHO WE ARE

Newz Group is a family-owned media technology and public relations company that helps you stay in control of your public image. We work with large and small businesses, government offices, politicians, not-for-profits, organizations, trade associations, independent contractors, publishers, press associations and more.



[Learn more](#)

Newz Group's comprehensive media monitoring service gives you the tools to get ahead of the message and shape the conversation. Empower your brand and grow your bottom line with one of the premier media monitoring service in the U.S. When you just can't help but wonder what is being said about you, Newz Group has the news you can use.

**Newspaper – TV – Radio – Internet – Social Media**

## WHAT WE OFFER

We offer a wide array of services for clients, press associations and publishers. Services include: media monitoring, press release writing, hosting and distributing, E-Editions, digital archiving, bids and leads tracking and more.



[Learn more](#)

### LATEST NEWS:

- Newz Group now offers national print monitoring!
- Internet monitoring analytics now available!
- The Michigan newspaper database is now available through Newz Portal! Contact us today to get the most extensive print coverage in Michigan.

800.474.1111

## RESOURCES

Find fun and functional information with our resources page. Check out our White Paper, Tip Sheets, Articles, Newz Group Newsletter, downloadable service sheets, client and publisher portal details, the auto pay form and information on advertising with Newz Group.



[Learn more](#)



PRESS RELEASES

Seat belt enforcement clicks with new campaign

### FACEBOOK



### TWITTER

**Tweets**

Andrew Gibson @AndrewGibson27 Snowy, deserted #Muzzoli @oomissourian @kris vine co/v/MogBKWnXv2  
Retweeted by Newz Group

Newz Group @NewzGroup New Blog Post --> Net Neutrality: Is It Really Dead, and Whose Fault Is It? newzgroup.com/blog/blog.php?...  
Retweeted by Newz Group

PR Daily News @PRDailyNews INFOGRAPHIC: Facebook Turns 10 bit.ly/1j7aKT4PR  
Retweeted by Newz Group

Newz Group @NewzGroup

### BLOG

**Feb. 4, 2014**  
**Net Neutrality: Is It Really Dead, and Whose Fault Is It?**  
A lot has been said about the recent Net Neutrality ruling. But what is Net Neutrality? Our IT guru explains it for you. [...]

**Jan. 30, 2014**  
**Weekly blog post moving to Tuesdays**  
Starting Tuesday February 4, a new blog will be posted every Tuesday instead of Thursday. [...]

**Jan. 16, 2014**  
**Candidates and Their (Lack of) Digital Presence**  
Writers go online to check out candidates. What are they going to find when they Google your campaign? [...]

Services:  
Client  
Press Association  
Publisher  
Resources

[Home](#) [Contact](#) [About](#) [Login](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

ADVERTISE WITH  
NEWZ GROUP!

p: 800.474.1111  
 f: 573.474.1001  
 info@newzgroup.com  
 Newz Group  
 PO Box 873  
 Columbia, MO 65205



## Chapter Five: Analysis

### Introduction

The effects of infotainment have been felt by the news industry since politicians started appearing on talk shows and comedy shows, hoping to humanize themselves to the voting public. One of the earliest examples was in 1968 when presidential candidate Richard Nixon appeared on “Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In” (Xenos 198). Even earlier than that, John F. Kennedy appeared on the “The Tonight Show” with Jack Paar in 1960.

But with the 24-hour news cycle and the Internet drawing the public away from traditional forms of news, infotainment has become even more prevalent during the past 30 years. Infotainment can be seen easily on television, with programs such as “The Daily Show” and CNN’s “RidicuList” with Anderson Cooper; however, infotainment in terms of print journalism has not been studied as in-depth. This research not only looks at infotainment in print journalism but more specifically how it affects political journalists.

### Literature Review

Moy, Xenos and Hess in their 2005 article “Communication and Citizenship: Mapping the Political Effects of Infotainment” define infotainment as the convergence of news and entertainment. The paper states that in recent years news programs started developing more elements of entertainment, and entertainment programs started to disseminate the news. The term “infotainment” is largely used

in reference to entertainment programs that have elements of news (Moy et. al. 2005, 113). “Soft news” and “infotainment” are often used interchangeably in research on this topic. Soft news includes sensationalized stories, human-interest stories, and stories that focus more on entertainment over serious hard news content (Jebril et. al., 106). An example of a news station covering soft news would be the media circus surrounding the trial of Casey Anthony, the young Florida woman who was charged with and acquitted of killing her young daughter or the flurry of news coverage that focuses on First Lady Michelle Obama’s haircut or wardrobe. For the purpose of this research, infotainment will be used as a type of soft news.

Grondin defines infotainment as “televised entertainment news” (Grondin, 347). Jebril, Albæk, and de Vreese define infotainment as “blurring the line between news and entertainment” (Jebril et. al, 105). This research will use the Jebril, Albæk, and de Vreese definition of infotainment. This research will also use the Oxford English Dictionary definition of entertainment as a derivative of “entertain” to mean to “provide with amusement or enjoyment,” (Oxford 475). “Infotainment” will be used in terms of news coverage, with a primary purpose of informing, possessing qualities aimed at amusing news consumers, and entertainment sources, with a primary purpose to provide viewers with enjoyment, adding in hard news content.

“News” is defined by Oxford as the “newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events” (Oxford 960). However, this definition also encompasses “soft news.” For the purposes of this research, news is defined as

what is traditionally considered “hard news.” Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky best sum up the difference between the two types of news:

[Hard news] usually involves political (domestic and international), economic or social topics. ‘Hard’ news demands immediate reporting due to its importance and short lifespan (continuing stories tend to follow shortly) ... ‘hard’ news enables — almost demands — accompanying commentary and analysis, whereas ‘soft’ news involves gossip, local scandal (of the social, not the political type), and human interest stories, all having little ramifications beyond their immediate circle. (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 38)

Atkinson says there has been a shift away from the more traditional news formats to a format that emphasizes storytelling with conversational dialogue, instead of the Edward R. Murrow style of monologue journalism (Atkinson 102). He contends this current model of journalism is unstable and continuing to function in this format will lead to a less informed citizenry, and, in the end, democracy will suffer (Atkinson 123).

As Gunter and Uribe found in an analysis of British tabloids between 1991 and 2001, that on average only 27.7 percent of space was devoted to hard news. In another study conducted in 2004 in the U.S., researchers found more than half of the stories that ran on the front pages of newspapers were soft news stories, which was almost a 43 percent increase from only three years prior (Weldon, 36). This shows that hard news is given less space in print publications.

Within the past 30 years, there has been an increase in the number of news sources where people can get their news. News networks between 1956 and 1996 grew from four to nine. Until 1986, there were four broadcast networks: PBS, ABC, NBC and CBS. Not counting DuMont, which ceased operations in 1956 (Poynter). FOX launched in 1986, joining the three network news giants. Between 1980 and 1996, cable news channels were developed. The first was CNN in 1980, followed by its sister channel, Headline News. Ted Turner's CNN changed the face of television news, turning it into a 24-hour service. Following his lead were NBC's cable news networks CNBC and MSNBC and FOX's cable news network, Fox News (Federal Communications Commission).

Although daily newspapers have decreased in number, from 1,745 in 1980 to 1,382 in 2011, the Internet has provided an immeasurable amount of news sites (National Newspaper Association). Additionally, news/talk radio stations have increased from 1,682 stations in 1999 to 3,984 in 2012 (Arbitron).

According to Neijens, this increase in channel options and news sources, largely developing in the 1990s, lead to the development of what is called "infotainment" (Neijens 1998, 149). Moy writes that the rise of infotainment can be attributed to the need for television programs to combat low ratings (Moy, 113). There is little consensus among other researchers as to when infotainment began and what exactly caused this new genre to develop. Xiaoxia Cao from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania agrees with Moy's explanation (Cao, 26).

Infotainment can refer to talk shows such as the now off-air “The Oprah Winfrey Show”; which covered the 2008 presidential race, soft news stories such as humanizing exposés on politicians; Anderson Cooper’s “RidicuList,” which is a humorous summation of news events presented at the end of his CNN news program “Anderson 360” or comedy programs that focus on news such as Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show,” which is a 30-minute program that discusses big news sources with humor.

### **History.**

Infotainment started as a slow progression but sped up drastically in the 1990s. Schudson wrote about a 1998 report from the Committee of Concerned Journalists that said there has been a decline in news coverage of policy issues in exchange for coverage of scandals since 1977 (Schudson 1001).

For decades, there were only three networks on television through which people could get their news. Now, there are countless avenues for news, including online news sources, social media, blogs, and myriad other television stations (Baum 92). In 2008, when applications for smartphones became available from Apple, consumers were then able to access news sources from their cellphones and later tablets, either by accessing the news website or accessing an application downloaded to the device.

According to Neijens, this increase in channels and options for news has led to an increase in infotainment (Neijens 149). News outlets have to try harder to get viewers to tune in amid the array of choices. Many news sources have increased their content to cover softer issues. Bennett writes in a content analysis study



between 1980 and 1999, sensationalism (dramatization and hype of a news story) increased from 20 percent to 40 percent of all news content. However, there are other reasons for this shift, more so than just the pressure of competition.

Infotainment is less expensive to produce (Kovach 295). It is cheaper to produce a talk show where pundits discuss the issues as opposed to journalists reporting, researching, and delivering news in a traditional format (Kovach 173).

Familiarity breeds content. Meaning consumers and advertisers tend to be happier with things they are familiar with. As a result, news organizations keep their same audience to keep their same advertisers (Ritzer 373). Lastly, they focus on quantity over quality because quantity is easily calculated (Ritzer 374).

According to Atkinson,

This approach values backstage management and management skills over policy and professional skills and promotes assembly-line production practices, cost-effectiveness, market research, and quantifiable performance targets. From the commercial viewpoint, broadcasting is just like any other delivery system with inputs and outputs, where quantity is cheaper and easier to defend than quality and where risk avoidance maximizes proven topics, treatments, and forms. (Atkinson 105)

Atkinson summarizes this data as “mcjournalism.” The term is a play on the fast food restaurant McDonald’s that is known for producing food quickly and inexpensively. “Mcjournalism” is a fast way to produce a cheap product to get more advertising (Atkinson 108).

## **Politics.**

As news producers decrease serious content, entertainment programming has taken up the role of covering serious topics or politics. Neijens says politicians who go on entertainment television shows, such as “The David Letterman Show” or “The Daily Show,” are representative of this change in television, not a change in politics (Neijens 162). One of the first instances of a politician using the entertainment format as a way of reaching a broader audience was Richard Nixon appearing on the popular 1960s/70s sketch comedy show “Laugh-In” (Xenos 198). This opened the gate for politicians to use these types of outlets to show off their personalities, such as Bill Clinton playing the saxophone on “The Arsenio Hall Show” in 1992 when he was running for president (Xenos 199).

Politicians who agree to go on infotainment shows, such as “The Daily Show,” “The Colbert Report,” “Late Show With David Letterman,” and “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” do so for specific reasons.

In a content analysis of interviews with politicians on talk shows, Shutz found that because politicians rely on public support to get re-elected, they are conscious of whether audiences like them (Shutz 213). As a result, politicians try to “gain approval” through their television appearances by humanizing themselves to the public (Shutz 218). There is also the idea that not only will appearing in this format possibly make a politician look more human, but it also gives him or her a new platform.

Baum is a leading researcher on infotainment. Through content analysis of talk shows, traditional news and campaign coverage, he concludes that if politicians

want to reach viewers who do not watch hard news, they have to reach them through nontraditional means where those other viewers would be more likely to see them (Baum 230).

“The Colbert Report” with Stephen Colbert airs on Comedy Central four nights a week immediately following “The Daily Show.” Colbert introduced a segment called “Better Know a District” where he interviews a member of Congress (Baym 360). In a textual analysis from the show’s debut in 2005 through the midterm elections in 2006, Baym looked at how this segment has affected the political landscape. He found that in 2006, all 27 of the members of Congress who agreed to be featured on “The Colbert Report” got re-elected. Causation has not been proven in this case, and as of 2012 Congress has a 90 percent re-election rate (Bloomberg). However, one of the guests, Congressman John Hall, did credit his appearance on the show with his re-election (Baym 359).

“Doing the show was a way to put a face, and a joke, to my name — and a way for my constituents to see me in something other than an opponent’s 30-second attack ad,” said U.S. House Representative Lee Terry (R-Neb.) (Baym 365). Baym asserts these appearances play an instrumental role in bringing awareness to politicians who, though little-known, have an impact on people’s lives (Baym 373). In fact, only 29 percent of people can name their representative, which he says is a symptom of faltering citizen engagement (Baym 360).

Xenos, Hess, and Moy looked at the 2000 Annenberg Election Survey to try to gauge how viewers feel about politicians after they appear on these television shows. They found that people who watch these shows do judge political candidates

based on their personalities more so than nonviewers (Xenos 205). A poll administered by the Pew Research Center determined 47 percent of viewers under 30 got some of their 2000 presidential campaign information from a late-night infotainment show (Xenos 199).

### **International.**

This shift to infotainment is not unique to the United States; in fact, it is an international development. Gunter and Uribe produced a quantitative content analysis of two major British weekly tabloids, which traditionally in Britain have been sources of legitimate hard news: *The Sun* and *The Mirror*. They looked at the range of topics, form, and style of coverage. They found that less space is devoted to news, and there has been a decrease in international news. Articles have decreased from 320 words to 160 words from 1982 to 1997 with pictures per page increasing in that time (Gunter and Uribe 389). Overall, an average of 66.8 percent of total news content was soft news with visuals increasing to 35.8 percent of the page, up from 29.2 percent (Gunter and Uribe 393).

Kees noted that Europe is “uncritically” following this softer format (Kees 319), but Kees doesn’t think it is a serious issue at home or abroad. He did a six-week content analysis of news programs in The Netherlands and found that almost all news programs had factors of entertainment in their topics, style, or format (Kees 327). He also found qualities of news in entertainment and qualities of entertainment in news (Kees 328), but he does not see infotainment as ever becoming the only form of information, nor does he think the current levels are detrimental to society (Kees 329).

Kees believes infotainment will only become a problem if politicians start strictly sticking with infotainment programs as a way to reach an audience but avoid tough questioning. He points to Clinton who frequented infotainment programs in 1992 for just that reason. If this becomes a wide-spread campaign strategy, instead of just practiced in a few cases, then the role of journalists holding policy makers accountable will become diminished, and that should cause worry (Kees 330).

### **Research Question**

One question guided this research: What are the biggest challenges and consequences of the changing landscape of political reporting in a day of infotainment? The purpose of this research is to find out if print journalists, specifically those who cover politics for major political publications or news bureaus based in Washington, D.C., think their work and sector of industry have been affected by infotainment. And, if it has, how so? Additionally, how has reporting changed since the beginning of their careers?

### **Methodology**

Structured and semi-structured interviews were used as the research method for this analysis. Structured interviewing was used for two interviews, Dan Balz and A.B. Stoddard due to time constraints. Both reporters answered the 21 questions through email. The other eight interviews were conducted over the phone. This allowed for follow-up questions and more explanation with certain questions and responses. The parameters of structured and semi-structured interviews, as explained by Fontana and Fey, state that a structured interview does

not allow room for conversation and follow-up, as opposed to a semi-structured interview that does (Fontana and Frey, 363).

The interviews that were conducted over the phone were recorded and transcribed. Those transcripts are available in the final project appendix.

All of the subjects interviewed were political reporters for large print publications or news bureaus and are based in the Washington, D.C., area. All of the subjects but two, Alex Rogers and Jonathan Martin, have been working as professional journalists for more than 20 years. They were able to speak to the changes they have seen in the industry since the beginning of their careers. Rogers was able to speak to the industry now as he entered it in 2012, right out of college, and Martin addressed political reporting as someone who transitioned from working in politics to covering politics. All of the subjects were currently working in journalism with the exception of one subject, Paul West, who retired from *The Baltimore Sun* in 2013. James Barnes no longer works full time at *National Journal* and is a contributor at CNN.

The eight semi-structured interviews left room for follow-up questions and background information on the participants. However, the two structured interviews did answer all 21 research questions. Additionally, they were both high-profile journalists, and a wealth of information about them is available for independent research. Two women, Susan Page and A.B. Stoddard, and eight men were interviewed.

### **Interview Subjects.**

James Barnes was a political reporter for *National Journal* from 1987 to 2010. He has been working as a journalist since 1984 and got his start at “CBS News” in New York in its election unit. He now works as a contributing editor for *National Journal* and a consultant for CNN.

Dan Balz has been a reporter for the *Washington Post* for 35 years. He began covering national politics in Washington and nationwide when he joined the *Post*.

George Condon is the White House correspondent for *National Journal*. He began working there in 2009. He started working as a journalist in 1971 and has been covering national politics since 1975. Before *National Journal* he worked for the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and Copley Press.

Mike Dorning is a White House correspondent for *Bloomberg News Agency's* Washington bureau. He has had that job for four years, previously working at the *Chicago Tribune* for 19 years. He has been working as a journalist since 1986 and has been covering national politics for the past 17 years.

Charles Lewis is a senior editor for the Washington Bureau of Hearst Newspapers, which owns 15 daily newspapers across the country. He began working there 24 years ago and has been a journalist for 46. He has been covering national politics for 31 years.

Jonathan Martin has worked for *The New York Times* as a national political correspondent for six months. Previously he worked at *Politico* and in politics before joining *The New York Times*. He began working as a journalist eight and a half years ago.

Susan Page is the Washington Bureau Chief for *USA Today*. She has been a journalist since receiving a graduate degree from Columbia University in 1974. She has been covering national politics since 1979.

Alex Rogers is a reporter for *TIME Magazine's* Washington Bureau. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2012 and previously worked for *The Tennessean*.

A.B. Stoddard is a columnist and associate editor for *The Hill* newspaper, which focuses largely on the United States Congress. She has been working as a journalist since 1990 and has been covering national politics since 1994.

Paul West is a recently retired journalist for the Washington Bureau of Tribune Co., which owns eight daily newspapers nationwide. He began working for *The Baltimore Sun* in 1985 as a political reporter before Tribune Co. acquired the newspaper. He has been working as a journalist since 1973 and covered national politics from 1978 until he retired in 2013. In 2010 he became the national political correspondent for the entire chain of Tribune Co. newspapers.

## **Findings**

In depth interviews with some of the most prominent political journalists in the county were focused on finding out what were the biggest challenges and consequences of political reporting in a day of infotainment, taking into account the massive changes that have occurred in society and in the journalism industry during the past 30 years.

The interview questions and responses can be broken down into four categories: technology and the 24-hour news cycle, the decline of journalists as



gatekeepers, media sensationalism and opinion journalism, and the impact of infotainment and soft news.

The longevity of many of the interview subjects' careers allows them to offer insight into how the industry has changed around them since they began working as journalists. This also allows them to see how and when, from their perspective, infotainment became a part of the industry and whether and how it affected them.

Eight of the 10 journalists interviewed have been working in the industry for more than 20 years. They have witnessed many changes in the industry in that time.

### **Technology and the 24-Hour News Cycle.**

One of the biggest changes in the news industry involves the 24-hour news cycle and technology, such as the Internet. The Internet has had a fundamental impact on the news media. According to Washington Bureau Chief for *USA Today*, Susan Page:

The biggest [change], I think, reflects technological changes which have sped up the news cycle a lot and also that there are many more avenues for people to get political information, [consumers] expect it a lot faster, and people have a lot more access to things that you're covering. ... It's faster and more transparent than it was when I started.

Charles Lewis of Hearst Newspapers also spoke of the change in technology as being one of the biggest changes in the industry, making reporting better than it used to be. "Our tools for information gathering have expanded by virtue of technology to an amazing degree," said Lewis. "The technology has helped us as reporters immeasurably and has changed our jobs for the better, making it easier to

be more accurate, comprehensive, and to see stuff otherwise we may not have time to see.”

As an example of this new kind of information gathering, George Condon referred to an article he was working on about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington. Condon is a White House correspondent for *National Journal*.

“Somebody better than I at social media could use it to find people who were actually at the march in ’63,” he said. “It’s just one way of broadening your reach.”

Access to sources is not the only benefit of the Internet for journalists. Although content online can seem fleeting, the Internet can be a good place to continue a conversation, especially after a story has run in print. A newspaper has limited space and cannot run the same story multiple times, but a website can keep a topic alive long after newspapers with similar content has been discarded. Paul West, who is a retired national political correspondent from the Washington Bureau of Tribune, Co., used the example of campaign fact-checking to illustrate this point.

It’s always been standard process, at least over the past 20 or 30 years, for news organizations to take a look at campaign commercials and try to examine the validity of the claims being made and what the candidates are trying to do. And those sorts of things before the Internet, those sorts of fact checking or whatever you want to call them — ad watch is something people sometimes called it — that would run one time in a newspaper and you know it might say, ‘candidate so and so is running this very misleading ad that makes all these claims that aren’t true, and here’s what the real truth is, and here’s the stuff that the candidate’s doing.’ And that particular critical item

would run one time in a newspaper ... and the ads would run hundreds of times on the television for weeks and weeks. The impact of the critical analysis would be pretty small. Now that you have these various fact checking organizations and fact checking sites and fact checking websites, of news organizations or of independent organizations, I think that stuff has a little more salience in this particular era.

Although reporters feel the Internet has enhanced some aspects of their jobs, it is a double-edged sword. The Internet and social media have made reporting easier and better but have also put pressure on reporters to produce more content.

Jonathan Martin, a national political correspondent for *The New York Times*, spoke of how technology has changed political reporting, speeding up the production and consumption of political news. News consumers expect constant updates, and content producers have to keep up with demand. A daily newspaper no longer just puts out news once a day, but it is generally also engaged in social media and updates its website constantly with breaking news and developing stories. West doesn't see this necessarily as a bad thing, as long as reporters are still given the time to produce traditional content.

If you're telling a reporter that they need to spend more time on Twitter or more time blogging stuff online that is aimed mainly at building an audience, that takes time away from what they could be otherwise doing that might be more valuable in the end to the public, such as investigative reporting or more in-depth analysis or digging up something that nobody else knows about as opposed to recycling stuff just to get eyeballs.

More news outlets and the need for more coverage have sped up deadlines. According to Mike Dorning, a White House correspondent for *Bloomberg News Agency*, journalists now write more stories per day and have more deadlines.

In the short time Alex Rogers has been working as a political reporter for *TIME Magazine*, he has already seen a change as a result of digital news in that journalists write a story to attract a wider audience. It's no longer just a focus on print circulation; it's also a need to get views on the website, articles shared, and a following on social media. *National Journal* political reporter James Barnes agrees:

It's all about the clicks. There was a time when reporters felt much more insulated. That may have been good or bad. Most serious reporters at mainline organizations had a sense that they had to please their editors and get some feedback from colleagues and readers. But, right now they understand their compensation is based on how many clicks does your server gets. How many hits do you get.

Another way the Internet has affected reporters is through the inundation of "news" online. Traditional news sources adhere to standards of professionalism and objectivity, but online standards vary widely. There are many reputable online news websites that do not have a print counterpart, such as *Politico*, but there are many more that are blatantly biased and inaccurate and lack accountability. Lewis expands on this point:

There are so many gradations of product. Thirty-four years ago there used to be 10 news outlets in your life — and in my life. Now with the Internet there are hundreds, thousands. The Internet has made it limitless. ... Drudge [the

moderator of an online 'news' website] and I have nothing in common. And yet people call him a journalist. They call me a journalist. Drudge and I have nothing in common. And, that's an example of a different approach to our work. I caution you not to squeeze everyone or points of view into a single mold. It may have been possible 34 years ago. It's not remotely possible now.

While the Internet has given news consumers unlimited options for accessing content, other media sources have expanded as well. During the past 35 years, television news networks have tripled (FCC), and news/talk radio stations have increased 137 percent (Arbitron). Newspapers have seen a 20 percent decline, however (National Newspaper Association).

Before 1980, Condon recalls, there were three major news networks: CBS, ABC, and NBC. Newspapers, radio, and those three news outlets were the only options for news consumers.

If you go back when Jimmy Carter was president, you had no Internet, you had the three networks. You did not have CNN, you did not have MSNBC, you did not have FOX, you didn't have transcript service. There wasn't CSPAN ... So, newspapers and TV were it. You didn't have all of the things you deal with today, news organizations like *Politico* and social media, which is so important now, certainly didn't exist then. It's been a tremendous change.

Any journalist who began working before 1980 and continued to work even at least into the 1990s would see a big difference in the media landscape. This increase in outlets has undoubtedly affected everyone.

An increase in outlets, however, does not translate to an increase in news companies. As news sources have increased, media companies have been consolidating. In 1983, 50 companies owned 90 percent of the media outlets in the U.S. But through mergers, acquisitions, and buyouts, that number has shrunk to six. These six companies are Comcast, News Corp, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS. This means the fewer than 300 executives who run these companies control almost all of the mainstream media consumed in the U.S. (Business Insider).

In the same way an increase in outlets does not equal an increase in news companies, an increase in airtime and Web space does not equal an increase in news or an increase in quality.

When a news outlet has 24 hours a day to fill, often that content is repetitive. Columnist and associate editor for *The Hill* A.B. Stoddard said the current format of 24-hour news has had a negative impact on the quality of news. That time is usually not filled with analysis, but with speculation, punditry, repetition of programs or segments that aired at an earlier time, or variations of the same topic in segment after segment.

### **Decline of Journalists as Gatekeepers.**

Journalists have been the gatekeepers of information. Throughout history they have had access to politicians and newsmakers, and the means of mass distribution of information. As gatekeepers, they shape the public conversation and decide what is important and worth reporting and what is inconsequential or frivolous. "Newspaper editors used to be sort of gatekeepers, they had a lot of

control,” said Condon. “If it was their judgment something wasn’t a story, it wouldn’t be written.”

But this new varied, vast, and digital landscape has taken some of the power away from traditional news outlets and put it in the hands of the newsmakers themselves.

In terms of political reporting, the increase in news outlets has given politicians an opportunity to be selective to whom they grant an interview. Although most of the journalists interviewed are able to secure interviews with the desired politicians because of the prominence of the outlets they work for, they do recognize an increase in the level of difficulty. “I think there is a lot more competition for interviews now,” said Page. “There are many more outlets that politicians can use to reach an audience. There’s ethnic media, there’s entertainment sources like ‘The Daily Show’ that politicians go on now. I think it’s become — the competition has become fiercer generally for news organizations.”

Dorning agreed, saying that because the media world has become more fragmented, politicians can choose which venue to go to.

Lewis said part of that decision involves where the outlet falls in the pecking order. He noted that when he worked for *The Associated Press*, his calls to national politicians were returned faster than they are now that he works for Hearst. Condon had a similar experience.

When I was at Copley, we certainly had no problem getting interviews with local politicians. You get the governor of California, the governor of Illinois, the governor of Ohio. We had papers in those three states, and you certainly

could get the mayor, the congressman, and so on. But you weren't going to get the speaker of the House; you weren't going to get the Senate majority leader. I would get called on the press conferences, but I wasn't going to get many exclusive interviews with the president of the United States. At *National Journal*, we can get, we've had one exclusive interview with President Obama, had a couple with President Bush, the second President Bush, and before that with other presidents. But it isn't so much who you work for, it's what the president and his people believe works for them.

But sometimes the smaller news outlets have better luck, even with securing an interview with the president. Condon talked about how difficult it has been for even the big newspapers to get an interview with President Obama, but the president gave many interviews to local TV stations in Ohio during his 2008 and 2012 campaigns. "He did one recently with *The New York Times* — it was the first one that President Obama has done with *The Times* since he became president," said Condon. "... In almost six years — five years — of being president, one interview with *The New York Times*. That ties them with the *National Journal*."

He said the White House staff is smart enough to know that an interview with a news outlet in Cleveland has a better chance of reaching the key voters in Ohio and the president is likely to get easier questions.

President Obama is a notoriously difficult interview to get for newspapers. In the six years President Obama has been in office, he has granted interviews to *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, and *Bloomberg News*, but that is compared to the three interviews President Bush gave to *The New York Times* between 2001 and 2005.



President Obama was called “the least newspaper-friendly president in a generation” by *Washington Post’s* Paul Farhi in a February 2013 article titled, “Obama keeps newspaper reporters at arm’s length.” He wrote that television allows the president to tailor his message without the filter that comes with print interviews.

However, Barnes said it’s not always the politicians but also the people around them who can be difficult when trying to get an interview. Barnes said advisors and staff don’t want the politician to be exposed to tough questions and they are more cautious today than they have been in the past two decades. Another aspect of this is the 24-hour news cycle.

There is certainly the proliferation of media. Politicians and press secretaries understand the dilemma they get in if they grant interviews to one news organization and not another. And I think 20, and certainly 30 years ago, you had fewer news organizations competing, sending in those interview requests. Now you’ve got such a proliferation of media outlets, and probably it’s harder for the individual politician or the press secretary to know, to really be familiar with all these news organization or media outlets, let’s call them, and it’s easier to be safe and to turn down requests than to grant requests. ... I think some politicians are leery about being part of the 24/7 news cycle.

Dorning said that because traditional media have fewer consumers compared to all other outlets (such as the Internet), it has become harder for mainstream political journalists to get access to the top newsmakers. And he is right.

According to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of people reporting that they read a print newspaper yesterday has fallen from 41 percent in 2002 to 23 percent in 2012. The number of people now getting their news online has surpassed TV and print newspapers. And online, the outlets are plentiful. With the decline in consumers of traditional news outlets, it's no surprise politicians can and do turn to social media and talk shows to get their messages out. "John Dillinger was asked once why he robbed banks, and he said, 'Because that's where the money is,'" said Condon. "Well, why do you go on 'Jay Leno'? Why do you go on 'Arsenio Hall,' why do you go on 'Oprah Winfrey'? Because that's where the voters are."

Lewis agrees. He said that politicians agree to work with those types of media outlets "because the politician is dealing with the same kind of fragmented market that I am and they are trying to reach all fragments that they can and they will deal with those different media outlets that address the different fragments, the different niche audience that they feel they should be in touch with."

Martin has also seen access to politicians decline, saying they have become more guarded in the past 40 years because of staffs who want to, as he said, "manage the news." This management of the news is a form of circling the wagons around public figures to protect who comes into their camp and what comes out of it. Political camps exert more control now over how, when, and where to distribute their message. Members of Congress are still accessible on Capital Hill, though, if a journalist can grab them for an interview in the hallways, said Rogers and Dan Balz. But that is not always an option. "Politicians today are far more guarded than they once were, as are the people who advise them," said Balz. He has been a reporter for

the *Washington Post* for 35 years. “As a result, they are less willing to do interviews ... Politicians today prefer to exercise control over interviews, when possible. Still, many make themselves available on a regular basis.”

Dorning agrees that to some extent it is difficult to get interviews with politicians, but he says the problem is nothing new. “I think it’s always been challenging in some ways to get interviews with politicians,” he said. “To some extent, the media world is more fragmented, and they can choose the venue they can go to.”

West also said the decline in access to politicians to be the biggest change he has seen in the industry since the beginning of his career. He said politicians and their advisers have more ways to get their message out to the public without using reporters.

The changes in communications methods have had an impact on the relationship between reporters and their sources in national politics; specifically, there has been less and less. It’s not a straight line, but if you graphed it on a chart, it would be a jagged line, in my opinion, going down. The amount of access journalists get to candidates. ... When you’re talking about politics you have to sometimes separate out presidential politics from other types of politics because presidential politics are by their nature different and have their own sets of rules. But [there is] basically, less and less contact between reporters and candidates, and campaigns and candidates finding more and more ways they think they can use to get

around having to deal with reporters as intermediaries. And [they] instead channel messages to voters and the public without going through reporters.

Journalists are no longer the gatekeepers they used to be, but is this a bad thing? Is there a problem with politicians bypassing the press? While of course reporters want these interviews so they can produce content based off this access, West thinks this change is a precursor to a bigger problem.

Politicians and candidates and their advisers and office holders have concluded that they just don't need to do this (deal with reporters). As time goes on, I think there's a real risk to democracy having this distance between politicians and candidates and the press. After all, the job of the reporter is to act as surrogate for the voter or the public. It's a way of distancing yourself from the public, which is inherently anti-democratic.

### **Media Sensationalism and Opinion Journalism.**

Another aspect of the current media landscape is the prevalence of sensationalized content and partisan rhetoric. Stoddard thinks one of the bigger changes in the industry has been the focus on political fights and partisanship. Some news outlets reinforce the political beliefs of their viewers, without an attempt to expose them to additional information that might challenge those preconceived political perspectives. Additionally, news stories frequently focus on partisanship as a news topic, using commentary to discuss the partisan decisions and perspectives of newsmakers.

Barnes talked about the prevalence of commentary over straight news.

“I think there is less an emphasis on actual reporting and more emphasis on commentary and thinly reported analysis,” he said. He explained that when he started in the industry in the 1980s, journalists identified with their publication and were concerned with unbiased reporting and quality analysis. Now, journalists think that in order for them to succeed, they need to look out for themselves instead — focusing on their personal brand over the publication.

“And I think the way some people go about creating that individual brand is to be edgy and provocative,” he said.

Balz said the shift toward sensationalism and partisan coverage is a result of a larger number of news outlets covering politics. This, he said, has led to broader coverage but with less substance.

In other news outlets, Dorning sees more opinion journalism, which is easier and cheaper to produce. He said journalists are now under more financial pressure than before. This pressure might be what is leading to more sensational content, and that content drives consumers. The more eyeballs a news outlet can get, the more advertising revenue it can generate. Advertisers invest in the audience, not the content. Softer news focused on entertainment over substance might be a means to an end, if it works.

“[The entertainment expansion into news] can have a positive effect if it creates a larger audience for political coverage generally,” said Balz. “But that’s not a given.”

None of the journalists interviewed considered their publications to be sources of partisan news coverage.

### **The Impact of Infotainment and Soft News.**

The political journalists interviewed do see infotainment and soft news in their industry, and sometimes that is due to the nature of the story. “Politics is more partisan and polarized so coverage of it tends to be more focused on the fight,” said Stoddard. “There is more political gamesmanship than legislating these days so we tend to write more about politics than policy.”

However, sometimes soft news coverage can be due to the topics news outlets choose to cover. Barnes said that there is more reporting on sensational and trivial matters, such as the failed presidential hopes of billionaire Donald Trump that garnered heavy coverage during the 2012 presidential campaign. He said that articles about Trump get more hits online than articles about serious political contenders, such as Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels.

Balz identifies infotainment clearly in the industry as a whole. “I would say that there is a greater infusion of popular culture into political reporting today than there was a generation ago,” he said. “That’s not necessarily a bad thing, but the risk is that too much attention is paid to trivia, gossip, or events that have little relevance.”

Page does not see entertaining news content as anything new. She points out that for years entertainers have provided political information and news organizations have been looking for a way to effectively engage the public. However, she does think there is “a bigger intersection between the two worlds than there used to be.”

The literature supports her perspective. Xenos (2006) writes about Richard Nixon appearing on the popular sketch comedy show “Laugh-In” in the 1960s when he was running for president. Additionally, a news organization trying to find the most interesting way to produce content is nothing new. It’s the increase in the intersection during the past 20 to 30 years that makes infotainment so interesting.

Martin said he has seen a bit of an increase in the industry with entertainment and digital media. He connects it largely to the Internet, which became widely accessible in the 1990s and exploded after the millennium.

If you consider the Internet to be a form of entertainment as opposed to information, if you consider unique page views or clicks to be a form of ratings, then I think you can make an argument that there has been more of a focus on that in recent years than there was in the past. There is now, unfortunately, but inevitably, more pressure on journalists to do their part to help their news organization get more viewership online. I think that’s regrettable, and I don’t think that’s something that’s gonna go away or that can be reversed. But it’s certainly if it’s not a fad at the moment, it’s certainly something that’s been around for a few years and doesn’t show any signs of going away.

However, Lewis doesn’t see infotainment as much of a problem at all. He sees a separation between entertainment and news from where he is in the industry. Additionally, the outlets he consumes don’t have characteristics of infotainment, he says, citing the “PBS NewsHour.”

This judgment that infotainment and soft news have not completely taken over the news media in this country is consistent among the journalists interviewed. Many journalists have been able to avoid dealing with it altogether, and like Lewis, don't see it as part of their jobs or everyday life. They identify it and actively choose to not engage. Although they do not engage with it, it affects them as they work to avoid it.

One effect of infotainment, so subtle that many journalists might not even notice it, is how topics that wouldn't have even been covered in the past are considered big news now. An example, Condon said, was a gaffe made by former Vice President Spiro Agnew.

There are things that wouldn't have been written 40 years ago that are written now. One of the first times we saw that things were changing, and it flows out of Watergate and Vietnam, Spiro Agnew when he was running for vice president. On the press plane, there was a *Baltimore Sun* reporter that was Japanese, whom he had known from his days as governor of Maryland, and Agnew made a joke of 'is the fat Jap asleep?' and even 10 years earlier, nobody would have written that about a private joke the vice president made on the plane. ... It was written and Agnew had to apologize and it caused a thing. What's happened is, is politicians no longer feel they're safe around reporters, there's much less things being kept on background or off the record. There were reporters who knew that John F. Kennedy was a womanizer. That certainly wasn't written. It would be written today.



Although coverage of presidential infidelity is nothing new, Condon sees this change in what is considered newsworthy as something that has even affected the bigger newspapers in the county.

West also spoke to the idea that politicians don't feel as safe with reporters as they used to. But it's not the reporters so much as the technology. With social media, catching candid moments with a politician can be ratings gold.

I think there is an increasing belief by candidates and their advisers that they don't have to subject themselves to interviews or they don't have to take the risk of agreeing to an interview or they don't want to take the chance — there's been a lot written about this — of mingling with reporters in informal situations for fear that something's going to get said and immediately get tweeted or somebody's gonna be there with a cellphone camera, a smartphone camera, and it's gonna show up on YouTube.

Even Condon, who believes infotainment has not affected his work or reputable publications, can see how the type of coverage has changed.

"[Infotainment has] affected them in the sense that a story that they wouldn't have run 10 years or 20 years ago, they run now," he said.

Page said the bigger publications she focuses on, such as *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, are largely devoid of infotainment. In fact, she doesn't recognize too much of a change in how the major print publications cover news. She sees infotainment as more of a broadcast issue than a print issue.

Martin agrees with Page, saying that when it comes to focusing on hard news over fluff, print is better off than television. "I think [infotainment has] dumbed

down the coverage,” he said. “There’s less time and dedication to doing quality reporting about politics and politicians on TV.”

Barnes agreed that infotainment is more prominent in television, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that newspapers are completely off the hook.

I’m not sure. It’s not as easy for them to put on infotainment. I think watching TV is more passive than when people read. And, infotainment lends itself more to broadcast and the Web, which is having videos increasingly. When I say I feel that infotainment has eroded traditional news standards, I think that it not only affects cable TV, it can also affect print journalists in major newspapers.

Barnes said that because major newspapers have an online presence, you want to be seen as edgy or provocative. This leads to more clicks online and more readers.

It can be hard for a reporter for a big, national newspaper to see their own publication as a source of infotainment or soft news, but even a big paper can have a history that points away from hard news content.

One aspect of the impact of infotainment that should be discussed is the ability for hard news and soft news to coexist within the same news organization. “I think there is a constant effort to balance the two, but I know at the [*Washington Post*], we put a higher priority on news rather than entertainment in our political coverage,” said Balz. “A good news organization can do both and always has done both, but the balance is important.”

True, feature stories and soft news are taking over the front pages of newspapers across the country, but some publications have figured a way to engage audiences and produce soft news without giving up the hard news slots.

This is largely made possible because of the news website. Most midsize and large newspapers have a website that is updated more regularly than a print edition is produced. The website has more space and can hold more content, so publishers don't have to give up the hard news stories to make room for the features. Such is the case with *TIME* Magazine. As Rogers pointed out, with the NewsFeed section on *TIME's* website, *TIME* staff can post articles that do not fit with the traditional, hard news print format.

"Since we've been able to expand online, we've been able to enhance our ways of telling the same story," he said. The content that is put on the NewsFeed section of the website is more of a hodgepodge of content that is not as hard-hitting as some of *TIME's* other content, but it is shorter, easier to share online, and attractive to readers.

Rogers said he doesn't feel infotainment has affected the pages of *TIME* Magazine because readers can turn to *TIME* for the hard news and then go online for the soft.

Condon agreed, saying it is possible for one publication to have it all: fluff and hard news.

[*The National Journal's*] bread and butter is policy and serious. But that doesn't mean we can't also write a story about presidential pets or presidential vacations; you're covering the whole person. And you can do

both. We have a website, we have the *National Journal Daily*, which is aimed at Congress, and we have the magazine every week. You can do the whole thing. There's no pressure to drop the serious at all.

So though the Internet has put more pressure on journalists to produce more content, it has made it possible, for at least some publications, to keep their print product focused on more serious news topics.

The interview subjects generally agreed that the publications and media companies they work for have not been seriously affected by infotainment.

"I don't feel like [infotainment] is affecting me personally," said Page. Although she didn't want to say unequivocally that it has not affected her or her publication at all, she also couldn't definitively say it has. "And I am having trouble thinking of an example of how it's affecting what we do at *USA Today*."

Balz can see a slight effect on his reporting as a result of the technological changes but not so much infotainment. "I don't think it has had a huge effect on the way I do my reporting," he said. "I continue to try to cover politics in many of the same ways I always have."

Dorning said at *Bloomberg*, there is not a push to focus on the personal lives of politicians; however, he did say there was more of a push for that while he was working for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Most of the journalists interviewed have worked for more than one publication. Because of this, they've been able to see firsthand how the focus of their work can change depending on the news outlet. In addition to their desire to produce the best content possible because of a dedication to the tenets of the craft,

journalists also have to produce work that is in line with the ideals of the publication(s) for which they work. Luckily, these reporters have been able to avoid the pressure to produce softer news.

Barnes said at *National Journal* he has not felt too much change in reporting or coverage as the industry has changed. Lewis said the same of Hearst, and West said the same of Tribune Co., except a slight pressure to get more online viewership of stories. Stoddard sees a difference because of the 24-hour news cycle. As a result of this change, her publication will cover the political battles that have become so prevalent.

The subjects also don't perceive much pressure from readers or editors to focus on the personal lives or the human aspects of politicians as a way of making news stories more entertaining. Instead, reporting on those qualities, they say, is just good journalism. "I do think the personal side of politicians is an important thing to explore, especially when someone is running for president of the United States," said Page. "I think when someone is running for president, you need to give your readers a 360-degree understanding of them. And that involves who they are personally, how they relate to people, as well as their policy position."

Stoddard doesn't usually focus on these qualities, but said, "Politicians are human, like the rest of us, so sometimes that becomes a story."

Although Balz is not pressured to focus on the personal lives of politicians, he does see that the topic has become more prevalent.

There is far more attention paid to the personal lives of politicians today than there was when I started in journalism. I think the tipping points came in the

mid-to-late 1980s. Since then, politicians have recognized that private lives are public lives, particularly for someone running for president. This, however, reflects general changes in society, in which much more attention is given to personality reporting, whether in the arts or entertainment or politics. ... In all our coverage of presidential candidates, we are trying to draw as full a portrait as possible. So, the degree to which the 'human aspect' of a candidate is relevant, we include those. I think that's true of biographical writing generally. Readers want and deserve to see a complete portrait of the people who want to be president.

In order for a news consumer to make the most informed decision of who to vote for, he or she needs to see a full picture of the candidate. Sometimes this involves who the candidate is married to, where he or she comes from and any trouble in the person's past. These points can have a strong impact on the candidate's standing with the public and is actual news. Lewis said it is important for journalists to let the public know the background of the people they are voting for.

This is certainly not infotainment. This goes back to — I would say — the change in reporting culture that was brought by the Vietnam War and Watergate, where the personal character of our leaders suddenly emerged as the roadmaps to public policy, the explanation for public policy, the explanation of their behaviors suddenly became more newsworthy because of the policies they were pursuing. Suddenly people were psychoanalyzing President Nixon. ... Suddenly you are way off policy and you're talking about

human characteristics. And, they are news-driven. Lyndon Johnson, what made him want to go to war in a losing cause that everybody in the country could see, almost, as a losing cause? What in his background led him to this fanatical mission that took the lives of 58,000 Americans? Who is this person? These are news values that are explained by the investigations into the personality and human background of our leaders. That's not infotainment.

It's important for journalists to present a candidate as a complete person, more than just a person running for office. And it's not always the journalist who chases this information.

Rogers made the point that it's the politicians who sometimes want to focus on their own human aspects when speaking to the public because they want people to know they had lives before they were elected to office. "Most of the politicians will emphasize how they're outsiders trying to change a broken system," he said.

### **Conclusion.**

The biggest challenges and consequences of the changing landscape of political reporting in a day of infotainment vary depending on the news outlet and media platform a journalist works for. But there are some changes that have universally affected journalists and how they perform their jobs, the biggest one being the Internet. And for print journalists who cover politics for these large newspapers and news bureaus, there seem to be fewer challenges to securing interviews and less pressure to produce soft news. Although the journalists say they are able to get interviews with politicians, this could be due to the prominence of

their publications. Lewis pointed out that the reputation and location of the newspaper itself plays a role in how quickly interview requests are filled. For example, *The Houston Chronicle* might not get a quick response to an interview request sent to the White House, but a request sent to the governor's office is generally fulfilled quickly.

However, political figures are finding ways to circumvent journalists' role as gatekeeper. With the multitude of avenues for message dissemination, not only are consumers shopping around for desired outlets, but so are politicians. Politicians and their staff have become more guarded and don't have to deal with journalists. They are able to get their message to the masses through the Internet, social media, and through selected news outlets.

Additionally, the journalists largely said that infotainment didn't affect them, but the act of recognizing it and then consciously avoiding it, in itself, is an effect.

Although there were differing opinions on the effects of infotainment and their severity and consequences, the biggest changes these journalists have seen are the increase in news outlets, the 24-hour news cycle, and the Internet. Technological changes and the use of digital communication have made reporting easier but have also changed how journalists do their job. The 24-hour news cycle and the Internet have sped up the production and consumption of news, and the increase in news sources have reduced the role of journalists as gatekeepers while leading to an increase in competition. This increase in competition for consumers and advertising dollars has led to an increase in infotainment and soft news as a way to gain and entertain consumers.



Political news consumers have so many options now to receive the news; journalists understand they are not the gatekeepers they used to be. Before the 1980s, there were fewer TV and radio stations and no Internet. The public relied on journalists to give them information. Now, anyone can start a news website or blog. You no longer have to be an educated journalist hired at a news outlet in order to disseminate the news. Journalists still serve a vital function because people still rely on the reputation for accuracy that traditional news outlets have, regardless of how the news values have shifted over time.

Print journalists see infotainment prevalent in their industry, with more coverage of trivial matters and personal and human aspects of politicians. There is more emphasis on commentary, opinion, politics, and Web traffic. However, there is a difference in opinion of when this happened. Whether it has been an ongoing progression during the past several decades or came about with the Internet, print journalists are seeing it more.

One of the biggest revelations is that though infotainment is prevalent in the news media, the journalists at these news outlets do not feel the pressure to engage in infotainment. They say that the important topics are still being covered.

Publications such as *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *USA Today* are not pushing their political reporters to produce humanizing materials for the purpose of Web clicks. Reporters are bringing in personal, human qualities of subjects into their writing now more than before in an effort to show a more complete picture of the candidate in order to give voters the information they need to make an informed decision.

Infotainment is prevalent, but if a publication actively works to focus on hard news qualities, the reporting will be largely devoid of infotainment qualities. But even with the political news articles themselves not having factors of infotainment and soft news, soft news stories are becoming more prevalent.

Research suggests infotainment has become a part of the news media in the U.S. and abroad. Political journalists at some of the top newspapers and news bureaus in the U.S. agree infotainment has made its way into journalism; however, they generally are not pressured by their publications to participate in it. Although advances in digital communication and an increase in news outlets have led to some problems, such as a faster turnaround for news production and opportunities for growth, such as a bigger platform to reach consumers, for now these reporters are not feeling the heat.

This research is important for a few reasons. First, the mission of journalism is to give the public the information they need to be informed about and participate in a democracy. Political reporting is crucial because it focuses on the people and the offices that govern our country and represent the American people. Without political knowledge, the public cannot make an informed decision when voting or participating in government. Therefore, understanding the pressure the political journalists face in terms of performing their job is important.

Second, infotainment is a double-edged sword. It can be the dumbing down or the softening of news, but it can also be the way to get more people to consume news. The ideal situation would be for news to focus on the serious news topics in a straightforward manner and people would be willing to watch and read it because

either they want to or it's the only option. That was the case before the Internet and before the 24-hour news cycle. News has always included human-interest stories, entertainment stories, and other forms of soft news, but its primary function was to inform the public about the important topics of the day. Condon, West, and many of the other journalists interviewed who have been working in the industry for more than 20 years agreed.

Now, the increased coverage and great number of media outlets not only give the policymakers a choice in where to go to disseminate their message but also the news consumers a choice in how, when, and from where to receive it. This freedom has had an effect on how many in the industry present news.

What this research shows was largely in line with the literature. Infotainment is a well-known part of the industry, and politicians willingly choose to participate in it in order to show their personalities and hopefully make the audience like them, as reported by Shutz (1995). Politicians also engage in infotainment to avoid harder questions, as Kees (1998) said Clinton did when he ran for president in 1992. This is important because Kees's research was published in 1998, when the Internet and even some of the 24-hour news stations were still in their infancy (Fox News, MSNBC, and "The Daily Show," all debuted in 1996). Since 1998, the United States has had four presidential elections. As a consequence, much of the older research is outdated.

A big takeaway from this research is that large news outlets are actively working to focus on hard news values. As a result, they fight the influence of infotainment if possible.

Journalists entering the print field, or who are currently working in it, have to fight the desire to write stories to get Internet clicks and focus on the traditional news values, which prefer facts over fluff and sensationalism. Not all print journalists work for a venerable news organization such as *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. So if a news organization isn't focused on hard news, it's up to the journalists to try to steer it in the right direction and to do what needs to be done to keep it afloat and put out a superior product. The future of journalism will depend on the perseverance of the people producing it and their ability to do so. Paul West summed it up the best:

Whether you get [news] on a piece of paper, whether you get it on a tablet, it's almost insignificant at this point. What's important is the quality of the journalism, the caliber of the people who produce it, the seriousness by which they produce it, and their ability to make enough money to continue to do it into the future. ... I just think it's all about keeping and maintaining an audience that will provide you with the resources to continue to do the most important thing you do, which is, as we discussed earlier, the watchdog function of journalism, whether it's exposing wrongdoing in government or letting people know more about the people who want to be our leaders.

In addition to politicians avoiding certain news outlets, the most alarming change, as West pointed out, is the separation between politicians and the press. The implications of this separation could be journalists having more difficulty holding politicians accountable, and having the access necessary to ask them the important and often hard questions. Journalists will always be able to write about

politicians but losing the opportunity to question them directly could be detrimental to the public who rely on journalists to perform the watchdog function.

Optimistic findings of the research show that the biggest newspapers in the country are still focused on the hard news that this country needs. Although journalism is in a transition, as long as outlets that have been tested time and again to be reliable and nonpartisan can survive, the public will always have a place to go when mudslinging and jokes become too much and they just want the facts.

### **Future Research.**

Many of the reporters interviewed for this research said a big issue is how politicians are being more cautious when choosing which outlets to grant interviews to and don't have to face some of the harder questions. That by itself should be studied more in depth.

The best way to study this would be to not only interview journalists about this topic specifically but also interview politicians, press secretaries, and communication directors to get an idea of how they choose which publications to grant interviews to.

More research should be done on a broader scale about politicians' aversion to certain news outlets and where the future of journalism is headed based on the changes the industry has seen.

A few questions that should be answered with more research include: Which news outlets get the highest number of interviews with national candidates during an election season? How has the access for the top news outlets changed since the

1980 presidential election? What are the specific reasons politicians and their staffs have for refusing an interview with national publications?

A point raised by Stoddard about the focus on politics over policy is also an interesting change that should be investigated more in depth. Exactly how much coverage in the past few elections was focused on the cat-and-mouse race over the actual government and policy changes spearheaded by the candidates?

A content analysis into print and television news coverage during the past few election cycles would be effective in answering that question.

**Possible Publications for Submission.**

The best publications for this research to be published are the ones that focus on political communication. The three most fitting are: "American Political Science Review," "American Journal of Political Science," and "Political Communication." These journals all focus on politics and how it relates to other fields. The most fitting for this research would be "Political Communication."

## References

- Amantea, M. (2010). The conflict between hard and soft news. University of Missouri-Columbia, 24-81.
- Arbitron. Radio Today 2013: How America Listens to Radio. 2013. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from [http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/Radio\\_Today\\_2013\\_execsum.pdf](http://www.arbitron.com/downloads/Radio_Today_2013_execsum.pdf).
- Atkinson, J. (2011). Performance journalism: A three-template model of television news. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(1), 102-129.
- Baum, M.A. (2002). 'Sex, lies, and war: How soft news brings foreign policy to the inattentive public.' *American Political Science Review*, 96(1), 91-109.
- Baum, M.A. (2005). Talking the vote: why presidential candidates hit the talk show circuit. *American journal of political science*, 49(2), 213-234.
- Baym, G. (2007). Representation and the politics of play: Stephen Colbert's better know a district. *Political Communication*, 24(4), 359-376.
- Beaujon, Andrew. "Obama will sit down with celebrities but not The Washington Post." *Poynter*. N.p., 11 Mar. 2014. Web. 5 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/243022/obama-will-sit-down-with-celebrities-but-not-the-washington-post/>>.
- Bennett, W. Lance. (2003). News: The Politics of Illusion. (4 ed.). New York: Longman.
- Cao, Xiaoxia. (2010). Hearing It From Jon Stewart: The Impact of The Daily Show on Public Attentiveness to Politics. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 22(1), 26-46.
- Deuze, M. (2005). Popular journalism and professional ideology: Tabloid reporters and editors speak out. *Media, Culture & Society*, 27(6), 861-882.
- Dunaway, Johanna, Regina P. Branton, and Marisa A. Abrajano. 'Agenda Setting, Public Opinion, And The Issue Of Immigration Reform.' *Social Science Quarterly* (Blackwell Publishing Limited) 91.2 (2010): 359-378. Academic Search Complete. Web. 28 Apr. 2013.
- Farhi, Paul. "Obama keeps newspaper reporters at arm's length." *The Washington*

Post. The Washington Post, 10 Feb. 2013. Web. 5 Apr. 2014.  
<[http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/obama-keeps-newspaper-reporters-at-arms-length/2013/02/10/3638c5ae-7082-11e2-ac36-3d8d9dcaa2e2\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/obama-keeps-newspaper-reporters-at-arms-length/2013/02/10/3638c5ae-7082-11e2-ac36-3d8d9dcaa2e2_story.html)>.

Five facts about Fox News. (2014, January 14). *Pew Research Center RSS*.  
Retrieved February 9, 2014, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/14/five-facts-about-fox-news/>.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (1994). *The art of science*. (pp. 361-374). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Giles, B. (2001). The Art of Agenda Setting. *World & I*, 16(5), 62-68.

Giroux, Greg. "Voters Throw Bums In While Holding Congress in Disdain."  
*Bloomberg.com*. Bloomberg, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 1 June 2014.  
<<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-13/voters-throw-bums-in-while-disdaining-congress-bgov-barometer.html>>.

Gunter, B., & Uribe, R. (2004). The tabloidization of British tabloids. *European Journal of Communication*, 19(3), 387-402.

Grondin, David. 'Understanding Culture Wars Through Satirical/Political Infotainment TV: Jon Stewart And The Daily Show's Critique As Mediated Re Enactment Of The Culture War.' *Canadian Review Of American Studies* 42.3 (2012): 347-370. Academic Search Complete. Web. 12 May 2013.

Jebril, Nael, Erik Albæk, and Claes H de Vreese. 'Infotainment, Cynicism And Democracy: The Effects Of Privatization Vs Personalization In The News.' *European Journal Of Communication* 28.2 (2013): 105-121. Academic Search Complete. Web. 12 May 2013.

In Changing News Landscape, Even Television is Vulnerable. (2012, September 27). *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press RSS*.  
Retrieved February 9, 2014, from <http://www.people-press.org/2012/09/27/in-changing-news-landscape-even-television-is-vulnerable/>.

Kees, B. (1998). Who's afraid of infotainment? *European Journal of Communication*, 13(3), 315-335.

Knox, Merrill. "Pew Report: 2013 'Relatively Weak' For Cable News Revenues."  
*Mediabistro*. Mediabistro Inc., 26 Mar. 2014. Web. 5 Apr. 2014.  
<[http://www.mediabistro.com/tvnewser/pew-report-2013-relatively-weak-for-cable-news-revenues\\_b218903](http://www.mediabistro.com/tvnewser/pew-report-2013-relatively-weak-for-cable-news-revenues_b218903)>.



- Kovach, B., & Rosentiel, T. (2007). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect to know*. (1 ed.). New York: Three Rivers.
- Lehman-Wilzig, S.N., & Seletzky, M. (2008). Hard news, soft news, 'general' news: The necessity and utility of an intermediate classification. *Journalism* 11(1) 37–56.
- Lutz, Ashley. "These 6 Corporations Control 90% Of The Media In America." *Business Insider*. Business Insider, Inc, 14 June 2012. Web. 15 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.businessinsider.com/these-6-corporations-control-90-of-the-media-in-america-2012-6>>.
- Mason, J. (2004). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. Michael S. Lewis-Beck & Alan Bryman & Tim Futing Liao.
- McCartney, James. "USA Today Grows Up." *American Journalism Review*. N.p., 1 Sept. 1997. Web. 5 Apr. 2014. <<http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=878>>.
- Moy, P., Xenos, M. A., & Hess, V. K. (2005). Communication and citizenship: Mapping the political effects of infotainment. *Mass Communication & Society*, 8(2), 111–131.
- Newspaper Circulation Volume. (2012, September 4). *National Newspaper Association*. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from <http://www.naa.org/Trends-and-Numbers/Circulation-Volume/Newspaper-Circulation-Volume.aspx>.
- Number of Americans Who Read Print Newspapers Continues Decline. (2012, October 11). *Pew Research Center RSS*. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/number-of-americans-who-read-print-newspapers-continues-decline/>.
- Neijens, P., & Brants, K. (1998). The infotainment of politics. *Political Communication*, 15(2), 149-164.
- Number of News/Talk/Information Stations vs. Total Stations. (2006, March 13). *Pew Research Centers Journalism Project RSS*. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from <http://www.journalism.org/numbers/number-of-newstalkinformation-stations-vs-total-stations/>.
- Örnebring, Henrik. 'Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better? Professional Journalists On Citizen Journalism In Six European Countries.' *International*

- Communication Gazette 75.1 (2013): 35-53. Academic Search Complete. Web. 17 May 2013.
- Painter, C., & Hodges, L. (2010). Mocking the news: How the daily show with jon stewart holds traditional broadcast news accountable. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 25(4), 257-274.
- Pearsall, Judy. *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Ritzer, G. (1993). *The mcdonaldization of society*. (pp. 371-379). Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Shutz, A. (1995). Entertainers, experts, or public servants? Politicians' self presentation on television talk shows. *Political Communication*, 12(2), 211-221.
- Scheufele, D.A.; Tewksbury D. (2007). Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication*, 9(20), 9-19.
- Schudson, M.(1999). Social origins of press cynicism in portraying politics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42(6), 998-1008.
- Shedden, David. "Early TV Anchors" *Poynter*. The Poynter Institute, 4 Apr. 2006. Web. 1 June 2014. <<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/74607/early-tv-anchors/>>.
- "State of the News Media 2014 Key Indicators." *Pew Research Centers Journalism Project RSS*. Pew Research Center, 26 Mar. 2014. Web. 5 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.journalism.org/2014/03/26/state-of-the-news-media-2014-key-indicators-in-media-and-news/>>.
- Stelter, Brian. "MSNBC Expands Its Liberal Lineup." *The New York Times*, 1 Apr. 2009. Web. 1 June 2014. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/02/business/media/02host.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/02/business/media/02host.html?_r=0)>.
- Waldman, Steve. "The Information Needs of Communities." The Federal Communications Commission, 1 July 2011. Web. 1 June 2014. <<http://transition.fcc.gov/osp/inc-report/INoC-3-TV.pdf>>.
- Weldon, M. (2008). *Everyman news the changing American front page* (p. 36). Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

Xenos, M. A.; Hess, V.K. & Moy, P. (2006). Priming effects of late-night comedy.  
*International Journal of Public Opinion Research,*

## **Appendix**

### **Project Proposal**

#### **Introduction.**

My education at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism has prepared me for my professional project, research and future career. All of my classes taught me a skill that I am applying to my job, but a few classes in particular stand out.

The classes that helped me most with my research were Mass Media seminar, Qualitative Research Methods and Project Seminar. I started with Mass Media Seminar my first semester and through the readings and class discussion, I decided that I wanted my research to focus on infotainment. I also learned about theories that I could apply to my research. I did further research in Qualitative Research Methods to learn how to develop a research question and choose the best way to answer said question. Although I've been researching infotainment since fall 2011, I didn't settle on the angle of my topic until I got to Project Seminar.

The one class that had a big impact on my success at my job, and in my other classes, was Magazine Editing taught by Jennifer Rowe. It's one thing to pick up proper grammar through conversation, but to learn it as intensively as I learned it in Magazine Editing was a totally different experience. To this day it is one of the most intense classes I've ever had. I learned so much each week, and every single day I am tasked with applying these lessons at work through my editing and writing.

Two other classes that were instrumental in preparing me for this project were News Editing and Design and Magazine Design. I learned about search engine optimization, page layout, headline writing and so much more that I use consistently at work. Currently I am enrolled in Introduction to Public Relations, and I am working with professor John Stemmler to be as successful in my social media management and PR campaign as possible with Newz Group. He has been a great help guiding me into this new territory for being entirely responsible for a company's social media presence.

I do not have a specific area of emphasis in my journalism study at MU. There has been an even split between broadcast, editing, design and PR/marketing. I went through a few emphasis areas before I realized that I needed to get experience in the widest range of areas as possible.

I have several educational and professional qualifications that enable me to pursue this project. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Missouri-Columbia. I also have a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. I was the editor of *University News*, the weekly independent student newspaper at UMKC, and I have worked on the interactive copy editing desk at the *Missourian*. I have also worked for Columbia, Mo. TV news station KOMU-TV8, National Public Radio affiliate KBIA 91.3 and TV news station KSHB NBC Action News in Kansas City. As previously stated, the classes I have taken have adequately prepared me for research and for my job this summer. I have been extensively researching infotainment for the past two years, and I am slowly building great contacts in media and politics.

Right now I am working part time for Newz Group in preparation for completing my professional project there. Newz Group is a media tracking and distribution company in Columbia, Mo. The company works with press associations in 14 states and receives 33 percent of the newspapers in the country. Newz Group monitors print, TV/radio and online for keywords clients want tracked. Newz Group works with clients outside of the 14 key states and receives that information through larger media tracking companies. The company also offers public relation services such as press release writing and distribution.

If all goes well, I should be working there as a full-time employee once my professional project is complete. I want to work at Newz Group for a few years. I am getting a lot of experience in writing, public relations, editing and more. I enjoy this work because I get to interact with a diverse group of clients, as well as write newsletters, edit company materials, develop public relations strategies, and several other activities. However, I eventually want to move on to other work. I have decided that I want to work in the Washington, D.C. area in communications for a congressman or congresswoman. Positions such as this usually include writing press releases, running their social media accounts and websites.

This project will help get me there because my research will help me network in communications in the Washington area. Additionally, my job at Newz Group is essentially what I want to be doing in the future for a politician.

Newz Group will not only help me with networking with politicians because we have dozens of politicians as clients, but the job itself also contains many of the duties that I hope to have in the future.

### **Professional Project.**

For my professional project I will be working for Newz Group. Newz Group has been around since 1995. It is a family-owned small business run by the Buchanan family. It has about 30 employees with remote sites in Texas, South Carolina and Arkansas.

I am currently working part time and starting May 20, I will be working 40 hours a week, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. My employers have agreed to let me take time off during the summer to travel to Washington to conduct my interviews. They will also give me time off to work on my research locally. If my professional project goes well at Newz Group, my employers will keep me on as a full-time, salaried, permanent employee. This is exactly what I want. My project work at Newz Group will be for 12 weeks, ending Aug. 16.

My supervisor for my professional project and my research is Ian Buchanan. He is the vice president of Newz Group. He is fully aware of my graduate priorities, and he works next to me all day every day. All materials are approved and authorized by him.

The work I will be doing at Newz Group will include writing the monthly newsletter, twice-a-week blog posts and press releases as necessary. I will edit customer correspondence, and I am in charge of all the advertising, marketing and public relations. I will design advertisements, infographics and marketing materials. I am re-designing the website and running the Facebook and Twitter. I take photos for all of our publications and research news to track important news stories. I will track and contact politicians and companies to discuss topics in the news that are

important to them. I will be working with press associations, 35 percent of the newspapers in the country and local politicians across all 14 states we service. I help develop customer accounts, client outreach, customer calls, client account maintenance, direct sales calls, new service solicitations, administrative coordination, which is research analysis for account expansions. I will keep up with how our clients are represented in the news, and I will contact them regarding expanding their keyword search to increase the amount of coverage they receive. I will also be trained on taking payment for accounts, changing research orders, setting up new clients, and handling client cancelations when necessary.

My work will be disseminated online, through email, and through the U.S. Postal Service. The work that will be included in my final project reports will include: newsletters, blog posts, press releases, advertisements, marketing materials created, photography and interviews conducted as necessary.

I will write weekly field reports to update my committee of both of my professional work and my research progress. An email with my field notes will be sent to my committee every Sunday evening.

### **Analysis.**

My research topic focuses on infotainment and political reporting. What I am doing for my professional project is relevant because my job at Newz Group focuses heavily on politicians and the media coverage of politicians.

### **Research Questions.**

There is a lot of research supporting the theory that the increase in “infotainment” has led to politicians participating in this genre more, that



infotainment leads to more political engagement, and that the softening of political coverage has an impact on society. However, less research has been conducted on how the reporters themselves feel about this shift and how they see it affecting their jobs, the industry, and the future of political coverage. My research will attempt to answer this question:

RQ1: What are the biggest challenges and consequences of covering national politics in a day of infotainment?

### **Theoretical Framework.**

#### ***Agenda setting:***

The press is known for agenda setting through repetition of the same major stories and through focusing on a few, select issues. According to McCombs, because the media has a limited amount of time to cover a lot of topics, usually it prioritizes according to what the public and policy makers are the most concerned with.

McCombs writes that at any given time, the news focuses on five or fewer issues; this includes broadcast and print, the stories that are of highest priority to the press frequently then become important to the public, as well, because of this agenda setting (McCombs 1994, 160).

Agenda setting theory states that through the media deciding certain topics are important, the viewer then also believes that topic is important. Additionally, not only does the media determine that something is important, they also decides the degree to which that topic is important by the amount of coverage (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 11).

In “The Art of Agenda Setting,” Bob Giles wrote about the agenda setting influence The Associated Press has in the U.S. and the world. Editors at AP send content to 1,700 newspapers and 5,000 radio and TV station in the U.S. He wrote, “The Associated Press news agency is the biggest influence on what gets on front pages and at the top of newscasts in America — and elsewhere around the world.” AP sends recommendations to more than 15,000 news organizations for what news outlets should cover as “top stories” (Giles, 68).

Agenda setting theory is used a lot in political communication research because media coverage can have an impact on viewer’s opinions on political issues. One example is immigration reform. In a content analysis of newspapers and Gallup opinion data about immigration, Dunaway et. al. found that news outlets cover immigration in boarder states in the U.S. and polls in those states find that residents in those areas are more likely to consider immigration to be an important issue compared to other states. Additionally, when coverage of immigration spiked in other states, the level in which residents felt immigration was important also increased. This study is an example of the impact of agenda setting (Dunaway, et. al., 359).

### **Literature Review.**

Patricia Moy, Michael A. Xenos & Verena K. Hess in their article “Communication and Citizenship: Mapping the Political Effects of Infotainment” define infotainment as the convergence of news and entertainment. News programs started developing more elements of entertainment, and entertainment programs started to disseminate the news. The term “infotainment” is largely used in

reference to entertainment programs that have elements of news (Moy et. al. 2005, 113). “Soft news” and “infotainment” are often used interchangeably in a lot of research on this growing shift. Soft news are sensationalized stories, human interest stories and stories that focus more on entertainment over serious hard news content (Jebril et. al., 106). An example of a news station covering soft news would be the media circus surrounding the trial of Casey Anthony, the young Florida woman who was charged and acquitted with killing her young daughter or the furry of news coverage that focuses on first lady Michelle Obama’s haircut or wardrobe.

Grondin defines infotainment as “televised entertainment news” (Grondin, 347). Jebril, Albæk, and de Vreese define infotainment as “blurring the line between news and entertainment” (Jebril et. al, 105). This research will use the Jebril, Albæk, and de Vreese definition of infotainment. This research will also use the “Oxford English Dictionary” definition of entertainment as a derivative of “entertain” to mean to “provide with amusement or enjoyment,” (Oxford 475).

The definition of “news” is defined by Oxford as the “newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events” (Oxford 960). However, this definition also encompasses “soft news.” For the purposes of this research, news is defined as what is traditionally considered “hard news.” Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky best sum up the difference between the two types of news:

[Hard news] usually involves political (domestic and international), economic or social topics. ‘Hard’ news demands immediate reporting due to its importance and short lifespan (continuing stories tend to follow shortly)....‘hard’ news enables – almost demands – accompanying

commentary and analysis, whereas 'soft' news involves gossip, local scandal (of the social, not the political type), and human interest stories, all having little ramifications beyond their immediate circle (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 38).

Atkinson says there has been a shift away from the more traditional news formats to a format that emphasizes storytelling with conversational dialogue, instead of the Edward R. Murrow style of monologue journalism (Atkinson 102). He contends this current model of journalism is unstable, and continuing to function in this format will lead to a less informed citizenry, and, in the end, democracy will suffer (Atkinson 123).

Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of news sources where people could get their news: multiple broadcast channels, print outlets and online sources.

According to Neijens, this increase in channel options and news sources, largely developing in the 1990s, is what led to the development of what is called "infotainment" (Neijens 1998, 149). Moy writes that the rise of infotainment can be attributed to the need for television programs to combat low ratings (Moy, 113). There is little consensus among researchers as to when infotainment began and what exactly caused this new genre to develop. Xiaoxia Cao from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania agrees with Moy's explanation (Cao, 26).

Infotainment can refer to talk shows such as the now off-air “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” which covered the 2008 presidential race, soft news stories such as humanizing exposes on politicians, Anderson Cooper’s “RidicuList,” which is a humorous summation of news events presented at the end of his CNN news program “Anderson 360°,” or comedy programs that focus on news such as Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show,” which is a 30-minute “fake news” program that discusses big news sources with humor.

### ***History.***

The development of infotainment was a slow progression that sped up drastically in the 1990s. Schudson wrote about a 1998 report from the Committee of Concerned Journalists said there has been a decline in news coverage of policy issues in exchange for coverage of scandals since 1977 (Schudson 1001).

For decades, there were only three channels on television through which people could get their news: NBC, CBS, ABC. But with the development of CNN in 1980 and Fox News and MSNBC in 1996, there was no longer the news hour in the evening that people had to wait for. They could get news 24 hours a day on television. Now, there are countless avenues for news, including online news sources, social media, blogs and myriad other television networks (Baum 92).

According to Neijens, this increase in channels and options for news has led to an increase in infotainment (Neijens 149). News outlets have to try harder to get viewers to tune in amid the array of choices. Many news sources have increased their content to cover softer issues. Bennett writes that in a content analysis study between 1980 and 1999 sensationalism (dramatization and hype of a news story)

increased from 20 percent to 40 percent of all news content. However, there are other reasons for this shift, more so than just the pressure of competition.

Infotainment is less expensive to produce (Kovach 295). It is cheaper to produce a talk show where pundits discuss the issues as opposed to journalists reporting, researching and delivering news in a traditional format (Kovach 173).

News organizations have become more cost efficient by replacing investigative and in-depth journalism with punditry and conversations. They control their type of viewership by choosing programs that attract the viewership they desire, instead of just general news dissemination (Ritzer 377). For example, covering a story with a liberal or conservative frame to attract viewers who identify with the corresponding political persuasion. Predictability is utilized through the concept of familiarity breeds content. They keep their same audience to keep their same advertisers (Ritzer 373). Lastly, they focus on quantity over quality because quantity is easily calculated (Ritzer 374). According to Atkinson,

This approach values backstage management and management skills over policy and professional skills and promotes assembly-line production practices, cost-effectiveness, market research, and quantifiable performance targets. From the commercial viewpoint, broadcasting is just like any other delivery system with inputs and outputs, where quantity is cheaper and easier to defend than quality and where risk avoidance maximizes proven topics, treatments, and forms (Atkinson 105).

Atkinson summarizes this data as “mcjournalism.” The term is a play on the fast food restaurant McDonalds that is known for producing food quickly and inexpensively. “Mcjournalism” is a fast way to produce a cheap product to get more advertising (Atkinson 108).

### ***Politics.***

As news producers decrease serious content, entertainment sources have taken up the role of covering serious topics or politics. Neijens says politicians who go on entertainment television shows, such as “The David Letterman Show” or “The Daily Show,” are representative of this change in television, not a change in politics (Neijens 162). One of the first instance of a politician using the entertainment format as a way of reaching a broader audience was Richard appearing on the popular 1960s/70s sketch comedy show “Laugh-In” (Xenos 198). This opened the gate for politicians to use these mediums to show off their personalities, such as Bill Clinton playing the saxophone on “The Arsenio Hall Show” in 1992 when he was running for president led (Xenos 199).

Politicians who agree to go on infotainment shows, such as “The Daily Show,” “The Colbert Report,” “Letterman,” “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” etc. do so for specific reasons.

In a content analysis of interviews with politicians on talk shows, Shutz found that because politicians rely on public support to get re-elected, they are conscious of whether their audience likes them (Shutz 213). As a result, politicians try to “gain approval” through their television appearances by humanizing themselves to the public (Shutz 218). There is also the idea that not only will appearing in this format

possibly make a politician look more human, but it also gives them a new platform, as well.

Baum is a leading researcher on infotainment and through content analysis of talk shows, traditional news and campaign coverage, he concluded that if politicians want to reach viewers who do not watch hard news, they have to reach them through nontraditional means where those other viewers would be more likely to see them (Baum 230).

“The Colbert Report” with Stephen Colbert airs on Comedy Central four nights a week immediately following “The Daily Show.” Colbert introduced a segment called “Better Know a District” where he interviews a member of Congress in a “435-part segment” (Baym 360). In a textual analysis from the show’s debut in 2005 through the midterm elections in 2006, Baym looked at how this segment has affected the political landscape. He found that in 2006, all 27 of the members of Congress who agreed to be featured on “The Colbert Report” got re-elected. Causation has not been proven in this case, but one of the guests, Congressman John Hall, did credit his appearance on the show with his reelection (Baym 359). Although the show does poke fun at the politicians featured, those who agree to go on the show (some do decline) do it for the viewership.

“Doing the show was a way to put a face, and a joke, to my name – and a way for my constituents to see me in something other than an opponent’s 30-second attack ad,” said U.S. House Representative Lee Terry (R-Neb.) (Baym 365). Baym asserts these appearances play an instrumental role in bringing awareness to politicians who, although little-known, have an impact on people’s lives (Baym 373). In fact, only 29



percent of people can name their representative, which he says is a symptom of faltering citizen engagement (Baym 360).

Xenos, Hess and Moy looked at the 2000 Annenberg Election Survey to try to gauge how viewers feel about politicians after they appear on these television shows. They found that people who watch these shows do judge political candidates based on their personalities more so than nonviewers (Xenos 205). A Pew Research Poll determined 47 percent of viewers under 30 got some of their 2000 presidential campaign information from a late-night infotainment show (Xenos 199).

### ***International.***

This shift to infotainment is not unique to the United States; in fact, it is an international development. Gunter and Uribe produced a quantitative content analysis of two major British weekly tabloids, which traditionally in Britain have been sources of legitimate hard news: *The Sun* and *The Mirror*. They looked at the range of topics, form and style of coverage. They found that less space is devoted to news, and there has been a decrease in international news. Articles have decreased from 320 words to 160 words from 1982 and 1997 with pictures-per-page increasing to 2.4 from 1970 to 1992 (Gunter and Uribe 389). Overall, an average of 66.8 percent of total news content was soft news with visuals increasing to 35.8 percent of the page, up from 29.2 percent (Gunter and Uribe 393).

Kees noted that Europe is “uncritically” following this softer format (Kees 319), but Kees doesn’t think it is a serious issue at home or abroad. He did a six-week content analysis of news programs in The Netherlands and found that almost all news programs had factors of entertainment in their topics, style or format (Kees

327). He also found there is a of news and entertainment in most news and many entertainment programs (Kees 328), but he does not see infotainment as ever becoming the only form of information, nor does he think the current levels are detrimental to society (Kees 329).

Kees believes infotainment will only become a problem if politicians start strictly sticking with infotainment programs as a way to reach an audience but avoid tough questioning. He points to Clinton who frequented infotainment programs in 1992 for just that reason. If this becomes a wide-spread campaign strategy, instead of just practiced in a few cases, then the role of journalists holding policy makers accountable will become diminished and that should cause worry (Kees 330).

### ***Methodology.***

The qualitative research method that will be used in this research will be semi-structured interviews with reporters in the Washington area.

#### *Semi-structure in-depth interviews:*

According to Fontana and Frey, there are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviewing. For the purpose of this research, semi-structured interviewing will be used. Participants will be interviewed individually, alone in a controlled setting with just the interviewer present (Fontana and Frey, 363). All interviews will be conducted individually with the same set of questions, but allowing for follow-up and further explanation of responses.

Semi-structured interviews are not as rigid as structured interviews that have a set of questions and a limited amount of possible answers. Semi-structured

interviews have a list of questions as a guide, but respondents can give any kind of answer they so choose. This leaves room to ask follow-up questions not previously listed on the set of interview questions, and it gives respondents more opportunity to share information. It allows for a fluid conversation between interviewer and interviewee (Mason).

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Those transcripts will be present in the final project appendix.

Interviewing is best get behind the rationale of what the participant believes. There needs to be room for individual and specific follow-up questions. In order to answer a research question about how people feel, asking those people about their feelings is the most effective method. Deuze used semi-structured interviewing in a study about the self-perception of tabloid writers; he found tabloid writers consider what they do to be different from mainstream or hard news writers (Deuze 2005, 866).

Amantea used the same methodology in his 2010 research, "The Conflict Between Hard and Soft News." Amantea used a qualitative research method with semi-constructed interviews with TV journalists in Brussels, Belgium. He conducted eight in-depth interviews with a list of 12 questions. His conclusion was that six out of eight of his subjects believed soft news is pushing out hard news, primarily because soft news generates more money, though there was no consensus on the reason (Amantea 48).

Örnebring used semi-structured interviewing for his research titled "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better? Professional Journalists On Citizen

Journalism In Six European Countries." He interviewed 63 professional journalists UK, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden. He wanted to see what how professional journalists consider the difference between themselves and citizen journalists. He found the journalists he interviewed separated themselves from citizen journalists due to their adherence to the traditional qualities of journalism, such as gatekeeping, ethical codes and verification (Örnebring 48).

Semi-structured interviewing leaves a lot of room for explanation and when a subject is discussing how he or she feels about the nature of his or her job and the corresponding duties and pressures, there needs to be room to express the reasoning behind his or her feelings. Therefore, my research would be best suited for semi-structured interviews.

#### ***Interview participants.***

Participants will be journalists from the Washington and New York area who cover national politics in print, including popular political websites. These journalists will be contacted by telephone and email and mostly interviewed in person and on Skype, which is an video conferencing program. Understanding the limitations present because I will be working in Missouri and focusing my research out of state, some interviews will have to be conducted over the phone. I will make no more than two trips to the area to interview as many reporters as I can within those time frames. But with the busy schedules of political reporters, not all interviews will be possible in person.

Reporters will be interviewed from the following news outlets: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Politico*, *The Hill*, *Roll Call*, *National Journal* and wire service *The Associated Press*.

Sample questions:

1. Where do you work?
2. How long have you worked there?
3. How long have you been working as a journalist?
4. How long have you been covering national politics?
5. What is the nature of your job?
6. How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?
7. Have you heard of the term infotainment?
8. How would you define the term infotainment?
9. What are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians?
10. Has this been a consistent issue or a new challenge?
11. Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on politician's personal life?
12. Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on the "human aspects" of politicians?
13. Do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment over news values?
14. How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for you?

15. How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry?
16. Do you think the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral affect on the quality of news?
17. What do you think the primary function of the news media is?
18. Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment helps fulfill these functions?
19. Do you feel entertainment that focuses on news helps fulfill these functions?
20. Why do you think politicians engage in infotainment?
21. Who do you think infotainment benefits, if anyone?

***Publications.***

The best academic journals for possible publication are “American Political Science Review,” “American Journal of Political Science” and “Political Communication.” These journals take on research that focuses on the intersection of politics and journalism, especially “Political Communication.” Many of the articles in these journals are older than 2011, so new research is needed.

## Changes to original proposal

A few changes were made from my original proposal and how the research was eventually conducted. I was not able to get an interview from each newspaper outlet that was listed.

However, I was able to add other publications and news bureaus I didn't previously consider, such as *USA Today*, *Hearst Newspapers*, *Bloomberg News*, *TIME Magazine* and *The Baltimore Sun*. That turned out to be fortuitous because reporters such as Paul West from *The Baltimore Sun* were brimming with experience and examples that were useful to my research.

I had hoped to schedule some of my interviews either in person or over Skype, but all were done over the phone. Most of my subjects, understandably, were busy and were able to fit me into a small window of time when they were free, generally the same day or within a few days of when they responded to the interview request. Additionally, two of the subjects, A.B. Stoddard and Dan Balz, were unable to speak to me and instead opted to respond to my questions through email, thus eliminating the back-and-forth conversation component that allows for follow-up questions.

One of the biggest changes was the focus of my research. Initially I wanted to know what challenges print journalists faced in a time of infotainment, but since most of my subjects were not dealing with this issue directly, a lot of the responses centered around the general changes they have seen and experienced in the

industry since the beginning of their careers. Though many of those changes involved aspects of infotainment, my subjects were hesitant to say infotainment really affected them.

There were very little changes to the professional component. The work I did for Newz Group was largely in line with my work description entering into the job. My responsibilities expanded, and I took on a broader, more proactive role than I had anticipated. I did considerably more design work, travelled more and worked largely as the public relations coordinator for the company. I entered Newz Group while it was in transition, so it is no surprise my job there transitioned as well.



## Transcripts

### James Barnes

MO: What is your name?

JB: Jim Barnes. I spell my byline with James A. Barnes, so you might want to use that, I guess.

MO: Where do you work?

JB: Well, I currently I no longer work at *National Journal*. I'm a contributing editor at *National Journal*. I had been their political reporter from 1987 to 2010. I was actively engaged in reporting at the time. I am still a contributing editor at *National Journal* and I'm also a consultant to CNN. And, basically what I do for them is I help them call election results on primary nights or general election nights.

MO: How long have you been doing that?

JB: I've worked for CNN—I've been on their decision desk since 2004.

MO: And you've been working for *National Journal* off and on since the 1980s correct?

JB: Since 1987.

MO: How long have you been a journalist in total?

JB: In 1984 I worked for CBS News in New York on their election unit ,so I followed the presidential campaign. I suppose if you want to add that one year to 1987 to present. I also did some work for *National Journal* at the conventions in 2012. So I guess you could say I've been a journalist since '87. And you can throw in that one year that I worked for CBS in '84.

MO: And what did you do between 1985 & 1986?

JB: In 1985 I worked at a think tank called The American Enterprise Institute. Basically I was doing research on Congress. And in 1986 I was the chief speechwriter for James A. Baker III who at the time was the Secretary of the Treasury.

MO: How long you have been covering national politics? Since you worked at CBS in '84?

JB: I supposed you could say like '87 to 2012. And then throw in a year for '84 whatever that adds up to.

MO: What is the nature of your job now?

JB: Well right now I am trying to figure out what's next for me in the media business. Basically my job right now is primarily just as a consultant for CNN for their primary and general election night coverage. I'm trying to figure out what I want to do fulltime. I'm kind of figuring that out right now, to tell you the truth. I do not have a fulltime job. I currently do not have a fulltime job in journalism. The only thing I have going in journalism right now is as a consultant to CNN.

MO: When you were working for *National Journal*, what was the nature of your job?

JB: I was their chief political reporter. I spent an awful lot of time covering the presidential politics and the White House.

MO: Is that primarily what you did the entire time you worked at *National Journal*?

JB: Yes

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

JB: Well, I think there is less emphasis on actual reporting and more emphasis on commentary. And thinly reported analysis, I guess I would say. When I started out in this business, I, and I think most of my contemporaries looked at our so-called brand as the company we were working at. So, really for most of my career I identified myself with *National Journal*. And the kind of journalism that it did. Which was, you know, non-partisan, deeply reported analysis, that sort of thing. Now I think journalists, in order to succeed and get ahead, I think, in the media business, are a little more focused on their own individual brand. And I think the way some people go about creating that individual brand is to be edgy and provocative.

MO: What do you mean by edgy and provocative? Can you give me an example?

JB: Where you post a 400 or 600 word block piece that doesn't have a lot of obvious reporting in it, i.e. on the record quotes from people that you've interviewed and instead it is kind of characterized by throwing out an interesting hypothesis that may be kind of going against the grain simply for the sake of going against the grain. Or you know, focused on or characterized by just jumping on the news of the

moment and trying to put some kind of spin on the news of the day, the news of the moment, actually.

MO: Have you ever heard of Infotainment?

JB: Oh sure.

MO: How would you define it in your own words?

JB: Well, I think it's kind of entertainment media that sometimes has the patina of news coverage or news commentary. This isn't quite on point to that you're asking. But I look at a lot of the cable TV shows, cable talk that you see during the day or in the evening and I think a lot of them look more like entertainment television talk show than real news reporting and gathering.

MO: Which show do you feel would fall into that category?

JB: Oh my gosh, I would have to—I could sit down and look at a schedule for you, but suffice it to say—let me put it this way, it's the vast majority of them.

MO: In your experiences as a political reporter, what are some of the challenges you find in securing interviews with politicians?

JB: Depending on who the politician is, they can be pretty busy people and either they or the people around them sometimes don't want to exposed them to tough questions. So I guess I would say that those are kind of innate challenges.

MO: Has this been a consistent issue or is this a new challenge?

JB: I think that basically it's a consistent issue. However, I think many politicians are more cautious today than perhaps they would have been 20 years ago.

MO: Why do you think that is?

JB: I think politicians realize to some extent that the news business is maybe a little less substantive today and they may be justifiably concerned that they're just sort of being inserted in a story simply—well let me backtrack a little bit. I said politicians are more cautious about interviews maybe than they were 20 years ago, let's go back to what I said, is that right?

MO: Yeah.

JB: And you were asking why I think that, right?

MO: Yeah.

JB: The one, there's certainly the proliferation of media. Because politicians understand and press secretaries understand the dilemma that they get in if they grant an interview to one news organization and not another. And I think 20, and certainly 30 years ago you had fewer news organizations competing, sending in those interview requests. Now you've got such a proliferation of media outlets and probably it's harder for the individual politician or the press secretary to kind of know, to really be familiar with all these news organization and/or media outlets, let's call them, and it's one of those things where it's easier to be safe and to turn down requests than to grant requests. But I do think the sense of gotcha journalism, the sense—I think some politicians are probably leery about being part of the 24/7 news cycle. In other words, they sort of understand they might do an interview and it's just like chum being thrown into this great broiling media sea that's kind of constantly shifting hour by hour in part because of the nature of the Internet. I'm guessing, this is more of a sense of mine than based on actual discussions I've had with politicians or press secretaries, that some politicians look at that and say well, 'what's the real—what's the benefit of it?' On the same token you have some politicians who understand some of the power of social media and gaining Twitter followers and whatnot and I think they sense that being ubiquitous on cable television is a way to kind of build their own constituency, in a sense out there. So you've got guys like Cory Booker for instance who I think is—I'm not trying to say Corey Booker is not a serious guy, but he's certainly a guy who understands social media and is pretty adept at it and I think is someone who tends to makes himself available, and has for a while made himself available to cable TV. Obviously former congressman Weiner, there's no doubt that he kind of created an image of himself by being willing to go on cable TV and I think there are certain some republican politicians who kind of also understand that. I'm trying to think of a name, I think it's [unintelligible] of Utah that would fit into that mold, I think.

MO: Do you personally in your experience as a reporter feel any pressure from followers or editors to focus on politicians' personal life? Or the softer topics?

JB: I did not experience that personally at a place like *National Journal*. No.

MO: Did you feel any pressure to humanize or focus on human aspects of politicians? To humanize the politicians at all while covering the politics?

JB: Well only to the extent if you were writing a lengthy profile piece of a politician, you would want to include other dimensions of their lives than simply what they did at the subcommittee markups and that sort of thing. I think that is something that would go along with a good profile story. It would be part of a lengthy profile story. It would not only kind of give readers a fuller picture of the individual was, but it would also help the reader enter the story. I'm talking about a story that might be four or 5,000 words long. A lengthy profile piece and having some human dimensions in four to 5,000 words would probably helps keep the readers' interest.

MO: Do you feel traditional news outlets, specifically print news outlets, are too focused on entertainment over news values?

JB: Yes. All you need to do is look at a typical nightly newscast today and the kind of subjects that get covered versus 30 years ago in the Walter Cronkite, Huntley-Brinkley era. I think if you just look at the topics. Not all, I'm not trying to say it's 100 percent different, but I think creeping into news media, even the nightly news broadcast, what is basically a 22, 23-minute news holes, once you cut out the commercials, you would see stories more entertaining than they are about important news developments of the day.

MO: Would you say the same about print new sources like papers and magazines?

JB: Well certainly when it comes to what they put on the Web. Many that call themselves news outlets. Go take a look full look on what's on the front page of the Huffington Post or The Daily Beast. I think you'll see things. The *Washington Post* website, I think even yeah you can even find it in print media, sure.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affect political reporting has changed for your personally?

JB: Not much. I'll give you a perfect example. For a time in 2011/2012 Donald Trump actually got news coverage in the context on whether or not he might be a candidate for the republican presidential nomination. And anybody who knew anything about presidential politics would realize the chance of Donald Trump actually entering the GOP primary and caucuses was very slim that he was just mouthing off on whether it would be President Obama's birth certificate or other republican presidential hopefuls, he was doing that simply to get attention. I looked at that and it's like, why would you even waste any time reporting what this guy says, because it's really not, he's not going to be a republican presidential contender. But, on the other hand, when you write about a guy like Donald Trump, you are probably going to get more hits on your story than when you are writing about a guy named Mitch Daniels and whether or not he was going to be a republican presidential candidate in 2012 and he turned out not to be. He turned out not to be. He was certainly more of a viable contender than Donald Trump ever was. But when you write about Donald Trump, you're going to get a lot more hits than when you write about Mitch Daniels.

MO: Did you have to write about Trump?

JB: No I didn't. *National Journal* is the kind of place where it's still, not as much as it once was, but it's still is more of a reporter's magazine than an editor's magazine. Editors trust reporters to know what they should or shouldn't be writing about. What's really important to write about and what's not.

MO: So you think the impact of infotainment in political reporting for the news industry as a whole, you have seen a noticeable change in the total news industry to a switch toward more sensational reporting?

JB: Yes, I think that's probably a fair statement, when reporting sensational or trivial matters. It's either sensational/trivial I guess would be how I would describe it.

MO: Can you give me an example of trivial matter political reporters have to report on?

JB: Donald Trump is trivial. I don't know how else to describe that. I could probably think of some other examples, but certainly that one would be my prime example from the 2012 presidential season.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative, or neutral effect on news overall?

JB: Negative. I'm not saying it's going to kill traditional mainstream journalism. But it has a negative effect.

MO: What do you think the primary function of the news media is?

JB: I think it is to inform the public on important issues of the day and to be there in presenting as many sides of the story you can.

MO: Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment will help fulfill these functions?

JB: [answer unclear]

MO: Do you feel that entertainment that focuses on news will fulfill these functions?

JB: Yup.

MO: Why do politicians engage in infotainment?

JB: Some of them play along because it's a way for them to get invited on cable talk shows and to build up their Twitter followers and that sort of thing. I think it helps them exploit social media.

MO: Who do you think infotainment benefits, if anyone?

JB: It benefits some of the talking heads who proliferate on cable TV and they really aren't real serious, in my opinion, they aren't real serious or thoughtful people. They are just kind of up there playing a role, whether I'm going to be a liberal voice or a conservative voice. The news media business is in a very very tough transition right

now. As it figures out how to make money, with getting increasingly Internet based media. I do understand what some of the managers concerns are when they may say, 'look, we've got to throw a little bit of cotton candy out there. We've got to put on some infotainment or else we are not going to have viewers and if we don't have viewers, and guess what? We're not going to be able to pay our journalists what we'd like to pay them and we are going to have to cut staff, etc. etc.' I sort of understand what those demands are, and think the real trick is not trying to let infotainment infect and dominate news coverage and the broadcast time and cable time that these companies have—these media companies have.

MO: Why do you think newspapers haven't switched over to infotainment like TV has?

JB: I'm not sure. That's a fair question. It's not as easy for them to put on infotainment. I think watching something on television is more passive than having people read. And, infotainment lends itself more to broadcast cable and to some extent the Web, which is having videos increasingly. Videos is an increasing part of media, of that media these days. When I say I feel that infotainment has eroded sort of traditional news standards I think that it infects not only cable TV, it can also infect print journalist in major newspapers. Because their stuff is on the Web so they are sort of being seen wanting to be edgy, provocative and more of those stories are turning up in newspaper pages.

MO: So as newspapers are slowly moving online, and there are some smaller papers that opt to just be entirely online. Do you think the future of print journalism be more trivial and sensational?

JB: Yes. Because it's all about gaining the hits and the clicks. The good old days may not have been that good, where you had newspapers that so dominated communities, and had such a—well I think were better than what we had now, in terms of the product. I think I lost track of what your last question was, I want to make sure I answer it.

MO: As more things move online, news is going to become more sensational and trivial.

JB: Yes because it's all about the clicks, right? There was a time when reporters felt much more insulated. That may have been good or bad. To some extent it's bad because reporters are being response, but I think most serious reporters at mainline organizations the sense was they had to please their editor and they would get some feedback from colleagues and readers, and whatnot. But, right now I thin reporters understand increasingly their compensation is based on how many clicks do you get. How many clicks do your stories get. How many hits do you generate.

MO: What led to your transition from working at *National Journal* to working at CNN?

JB: I worked at both for a while. If you're asking me why I no longer am in day-to-day journalism at *National Journal* is because I took a buyout. These organizations are increasingly looking at how to increase our bottom line. I was pretty well paid for what I did. A lot of times experienced reporters are offered buyouts to help the bottom line of the companies.

MO: I understand, that's kind of depressing.

JB: I have to sit around and I'll probably continue to do my CNN work because it's highly specialized. And, I sit there and when Wolf Blitzer says 'CNN now predicts that President Obama has won Ohio, me and the other people who are looking at computers and notes and comments and exit poles and other data and helping to make that decision and I enjoy that kind of work a lot. In my own mind I seriously am thinking about doing other things in terms of what my next fulltime career will be. Quite frankly, right now I'm trying to figure out, can I still exist in the media? Is there a place for me in journalism right now? Or should I think about other things? I am thinking about other things.

MO: Do you think if more experienced journalists are being bought out and moved from these traditional news outlets that are obviously being replaced by newer journalists who are being paid less who don't have the experience, do you think the quality of traditional news is going to decrease as a result?

JB: I think it can. I think the younger people get hired because they are more adept. They have grown up on the Internet. They're more adept in terms of how to communicate and how to present themselves, they're much more comfortable and more familiar and they can probably do a better job. All things being equal, they can probably do a better job because they've got the familiarity with the Internet. And it's quite clear news organizations correctly understand that is where the future of news is. Because older people are dying and people aren't subscribing to newspapers as much as they used and those newspapers oftentimes aren't able to capture as much advertising dollars as they once were. The classic example of that being, just look at what is happening to the classified sections of newspapers over the past 20 years. That was a big revenue stream for a paper like the *Washington Post*. And now it barely exists.

MO: Are you going to look to join another print source, or do you think you'll primarily stick to television from this point on?

JB: I think I would love to go back to print, ideally. When you get to be a middle-aged guy and your career has been defined by traditional print journalism, there just aren't as many jobs out there as there once was. So, I have to deal with that.



**Dan Balz**

MO: Where do you work?

DB: The *Washington Post*.

MO: How long have you worked there?

DB: 35 years.

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

DB: I began my career after finishing graduate school in 1972.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

DB: I began covering national politics when I joined the Post, initially as an editor and later as a reporter.

MO: What is the nature of your job?

DB: I cover political campaigns and politics in Washington and the states.

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

DB: There have been many changes, in part due to changes in the news industry. The size of the political press corps has grown rapidly with more outlets paying specific attention to politics. Coverage today is broader and deeper, and at the same time, often more superficial. That sounds like a contradiction but isn't really.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment?

DB: Yes.

MO: How would you define the term infotainment?

DB: I agree with the definition at the top of this questionnaire.

MO: What are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians?

DB: Politicians today are far more guarded than they once were, as are the people who advise them. As a result they are less willing to do interviews, although reporters covering Congress have the ability to grab members of Congress in the

hallways for quick interviews. Politicians today prefer to exercise control over interviews, when possible. Still, many make themselves available on a regular basis.

MO: Has this been a consistent issue or a new challenge?

DB: It is a growing problem, particularly in the context of presidential campaigns.

MO: Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on politician's personal life?

DB: That depends on how you define 'personal life.' I don't find pressure to delve into the personal life of politicians unless there is a particularly relevant reason to do so. Having said that, there is far more attention paid to the personal lives of politicians today than there was when I started in journalism. I think the tipping points came in the mid-to-late 1980s. Since then, politicians have recognized that private lives are public lives, particularly for someone running for president. This, however, reflects general changes in society, in which much more attention is given to personality reporting, whether in the arts or entertainment or politics.

MO: Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on the 'human aspects' of politicians?

DB: I'm not sure how to draw a distinction between 'human aspects' of politicians and the 'personal life' of politicians. In all our coverage of presidential candidates, we are trying to draw as full a portrait as possible. So, the degree to which the 'human aspect' of a candidate is relevant, we include those. I think that's true of biographical writing generally. Readers want and deserve to see a complete portrait of the people who want to be president.

MO: Do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment over news values?

DB: No. I think there is a constant effort to balance the two, but I know at the Post, we put a higher priority on news rather than entertainment in our political coverage. A good news organization can do both and always has done both, but the balance is important.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for you?

DB: I don't think it has had a huge affect on the way I do my reporting. I continue to try to cover politics in many of the same ways I always have. Changes in technology have certainly affected my approach and I'm aware that there are demands for more and different kind of political reporting and we as a news organization have adapted to those changing tastes.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry?

DB: I would say that there is a greater infusion of popular culture into political reporting today than there was a generation ago. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but the risk is that too much attention is paid to trivia, gossip or events that have little relevance.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral affect on the quality of news?

DB: It can have a positive effect if it creates a larger audience for political coverage generally. But that's not a given. The danger is that traditional news organizations succumb to replaying news reported elsewhere as opposed to reporting news themselves.

MO: What do you think the primary function of the news media is?

DB: The function of the news media is to inform and educate readers/viewers, to hold government officials, politicians, corporations and other power centers accountable, and to entertain their audiences and hopefully to make a profit doing so.

MO: Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment helps fulfill these functions?

DB: That depends on what you mean by 'news with a focus on entertainment.' It's essential to maintain the right balance between news and entertainment.

MO: Do you feel entertainment that focuses on news helps fulfill these functions?

DB: I'm not sure exactly what that means.

MO: Why do you think politicians engage in infotainment?

DB: I wouldn't say they engage in infotainment. What I would say is that infotainment is part of politics today, as it is part of so much else in society. Politicians need to reach voters in traditional and non-traditional ways. It's inevitable that they will use elements of 'infotainment' to do that.

MO: Who do you think infotainment benefits, if anyone?

DB: That's a good question, but if it as widespread as you are suggesting, someone must believe they are benefiting from it!

## George Condon

\*Note: The first few minutes of the interview did not record.

GC: It's a chain of newspapers headquartered in San Diego, with the San Diego union tribune, with other papers in California, Illinois and Ohio and there, each day varies quite a bit, because there was a more politics, the White House and other national stories and world stories. At *National Journal*, I don't have as many duties; the White House beat is the main beat. So your day depends somewhat on what the president is doing, and covering him. Because of the extraordinary cost of presidential travel now, we, like most news organizations now, don't go on every presidential trip. He's out of town today and we didn't go with him. But for the most part, you look at what the president is doing and you decide what is newsworthy in what he's doing, you balance that with if you're working on a magazine piece, you know whether your time is better spent at the office working on that or at the White House at briefings and with the president. Each day – there isn't a normal day, any more than the president has a normal day.

MO: Does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

GC: Oh sure for one thing, there was no Internet. If you go back when Jimmy Carter was president, you had no Internet, you had three networks. You did not have CNN, you did not have MSNBC, you did not have FOX, you didn't have transcript service. There wasn't CSPAN, thought I'm not exactly sure what year CSPAN started, but I'm pretty sure it was after Carter. So, newspapers and TV were it. You didn't have all of the things you deal with today, news organizations like *Politico* and social media, which is so important now, certainly didn't exist then. So, yeah. It's been a tremendous change.

MO: How do you feel social media has changed it? What impact is social media having on politics and reporting?

GC: If nothing else, Twitter is sort of the headline service there used to be. For example, President Johnson had in the White House, in the oval office, he had three TV sets that were always on to the networks, and he had an AP and UPI ticker in there, so that's where you would get your headlines and you'd find out if something was breaking. Now, Twitter is where you would get that immediately. If you just look at the skillful way that the Obama people use social media to reach voters, to know how to target and appeal to people, it's the whole Amazon.com thing of micro targeting. You buy a book about Woodrow Wilson on Amazon and you're soon going to be getting emails every time something to do with a president or Woodrow Wilson comes up. And they've done the same thing in politics.

MO: Do you think reporters—people covering politics are able to use similar avenues?

GC: Oh sure, and I'm not necessarily the poster child for that, there are reporters who use it far better than I do. But you can use Twitter to appeal to people who have been involved in something that you're covering. I'm here writing a story about the anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, and somebody better than I at social media could use it to find people who were actually at the march in '63. It's just one way of broadening your reach.

MO: And more specifically to the topic of my research, have you heard of the term infotainment?

GC: Oh sure.

MO: And how would you define infotainment, from what you've heard and what you've experienced?

GC: I don't know if I have a good definition of it. What would you use as a definition?

MO: There are a couple of definitions. You can take it from one perspective is the softening of news, focusing a bit more on fluff than harder news. And there's also the way my research is kind of looking at it, how more traditional harder news sources are bringing in aspects of entertainment, and entertainment sources are putting in aspects of news. So you have something like Anderson Cooper 360 having his 'RidicuList,' or The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, which is comedy but it also has—

GC: I guess I wouldn't use that phrase. I am not critical of politicians who use whatever they programs they can to reach voters. I am not so naïve to think the average voter out there is spending thousands to subscribe to *National Journal*. But if the president, or any other politician can reach people by going on Jay Leno, more power to them. We tend to have this feeling that all of this is brand new. We've invented it—it isn't. Jack Paar, who is the second person to have 'The Tonight Show,' he replaced Steve Allen who invented it, and he was before Johnny Carson, he had both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon on 'The Tonight Show.' Richard Nixon played the piano, decades before Bill Clinton played the clarinet on the 'Arsenio Hall Show.' It allows voters to see a different part of their president. If they can see John F. Kennedy relaxing and talking to Jack Paar, they can see Richard Nixon playing the piano, that's something they wouldn't see on 'Meet the Press.' And it's smart of a politician and they should do it. I wouldn't be at all critical. I was covering the White House in the '92 campaign when Bill Clinton went on the 'Arsenio Hall Show,' as I mentioned. Put on sunglasses and played the—did I say clarinet before?—yeah, saxophone obviously. I remember Marlin Fitzwater, who was President Bush's press secretary being very critical of it, that it was going to really hurt him. And I talked to Marlin just about a year ago and he said 'boy was I wrong on that.' It was

enormously helpful to Clinton and helped him get a lot of voters and appeal to the youth. John Dillinger was asked once why he robbed banks, and he said 'because that' where the money is.' Well, why do you go on 'Jay Leno'? Why do you go on 'Arsenio Hall,' why do you go on 'Oprah Winfrey'? Because that's where the voters are. We're not back in the days before all those shows were on.

MO: From your perspective, because you have a very strong presence on the political scene, and you're more traditional, hard news. What are some of the challenges you see with securing interviews with politicians?

GC: You know, it's different. When I was at Copley, we certainly had no problem getting interviews with local politicians. You get the governor of California, the governor of Illinois, the governor of Ohio. We had papers in those three states, and you certainly could get the mayor, the congressman and so on. But you weren't going to get the speaker of the house; you weren't going to get the senate majority leader. I would get called on the press conferences, but I wasn't going to get many exclusive interviews with the president of the United States. At *National Journal*, we can get, we've had one exclusive interview with President Obama, had a couple with President Bush, the second President Bush, and before that with other presidents. But it isn't so much who you work for, it's what the president and his people believe works for them. This president doesn't do many interviews with the traditional newspapers. He did one recently with *The New York Times*, it was the first one that president Obama has done with the times since he became president.

MO: Including his first term?

GC: Yes, exactly. In almost six years—five years—of being president, one interview with *The New York Times*. That ties them with the *National Journal*. But he has given multiple interviews to local TV stations. I challenge you to find me one major television station in the state of Ohio who hasn't had at least one, or probably two, interviews with the president. Ohio has the electoral votes, and local news reaches voters, and the White House is smart enough to know that they're going to get much much easier questions from Columbus TV stations, or a Dayton TV station or a Cleveland TV station than they are from *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*.

MO: So you think one of the reasons why the president and maybe other politicians are more attracted to softer news sources, not so traditional news sources, because they can dodge a lot of the harder interrogation, and harder questions.

GC: Oh sure, but that's always been the case. If you're talking to somebody who is the *Washington Post* White House reporter who is there very single day, knows exactly what your vulnerabilities are, knows what issues you've been dodging, what issues you're in trouble on, you're going to get much more pointed questions there. If you go on to a Columbus, Ohio TV station, A. The anchor only has a few minutes,

and you're going to get questions about 'Gee, how do you think you're doing in Ohio, do you think you can beat Mitt Romney in Ohio.' And whatever issue is important in that state. You're not going to get a question about 'Mr. President, you said if Syria used poison gas they would cross a red line. You said that on such a date, you've done nothing.' You're not going to get a Syria question from that. And they'd rather not get a Syria question.

MO: Did you see with President Bush that was more willing to do interviews with more traditional news sources, or was he also kind of steering clear?

GC: Oh this has been the case for a long time. This goes back to Gerald Ford. Gerald Ford held a press conference, think it was in the state of Ohio, actually, coincidentally. All presidents like to get out. Richard Nixon created the office of the director of communications strictly to get outside Washington and outside the White House press corp. The President George H. W. Bush—the first time I ever of heard of Rush Limbaugh was when we were on a trip to New York and President Bush went to the studio and sat down with Rush Limbaugh. He certainly knew he was going to get much more favorable questions from Rush Limbaugh than he would from any of us. You can go back in history to George Washington who knew favorable newspapers and which editors were going to be supportive and ask him more questions. That was the whole pattern in American history until Woodrow Wilson started the press conference. Picking favorable venues.

MO: Do you feel any pressure from editor or readers to focus on maybe softer news, maybe focus on the politician's personal life and steer clear of harder topics?

GC: Oh no no no, National Journal—it's bread and butter is policy and serious. But that doesn't mean we can't also write a story about presidential pets or presidential vacations, you're covering the whole person. And you can do both. We have a website, we have the *National Journal Daily*, which is aimed at congress, and we have the magazine every week. You can do the whole thing. There's no pressure to drop the serious at all.

MO: Do you feel other traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment and softer news over more traditional news values?

GC: Not really. If you're talking about newspapers. If I read the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *LA Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, will there be a story in the story in the style section about Kim Kardashian at some point? Sure. But, that doesn't mean the paper isn't just filled with serious looks at Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and healthcare.

MO: So when it comes to political reporting, you feel that the other traditional news outlets, someone of which you just mentioned, are continuing to focus on the harder news stories like they always have?

GC: What's different though, there are things that wouldn't have been written 40 years ago that are written now. One of the first times we saw that things were changing, and it flows out of Watergate and Vietnam, Spiro Agnew when he was running for Vice President. On the press plane, there was a *Baltimore Sun* reporter that was Japanese, whom he had known from his days as governor of Maryland, and Agnew made a joke of 'is the fat Jap asleep?' and even 10 years earlier, nobody would have written that about a private joke the vice president made on the plane, a vice presidential candidate made on the plane. It was written and Agnew had to apologize and it cause a thing. What's happened is, is politicians no longer feel they're safe around reporters, there's much less things being kept on background or off the record. There were reporters who knew that John F. Kennedy was a womanizer. That certainly wasn't written. It would be written today.

MO: So you think that push toward softer news for some outlets, hasn't really affected more of the staple newspapers, the big ones that make their business off being serious and not being fluffy?

GC: Well no, it's affected them in the sense, that a story that they wouldn't have run 10 years or 20 years ago, they run now. And part of that is the function of newspaper editors used to be sort of gatekeepers, they had a lot of control. If it was there judgment if something wasn't a story, it wouldn't be written. There were rumors that President George H. W. Bush had had an affair with a—what was her name, I think Jennifer Fitzgerald was her name—and the evidence was very spotty on it and no newspaper ran that story. Today you wouldn't be able to do that. Newspaper would avoid it, but it would definitely show up on some online website.

MO: So do you see that, as far as your reporting specifically, that there are some stories that you've had to write now that in the past you probably wouldn't have had to write?

GC: I'm sure that's the case. I can't think of a good example right now, because I've always enjoyed writing about the whole aspects of somebody. Certainly there were stories you don't enjoy writing. Nobody enjoyed writing stories about, details about President Clinton's sexual activities with Monica, that's not exactly why you got in the business—to write about oral sex. But, there was no question you had to write it, the president was being impeached on it.

MO: Do you think that the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral effect on the quality of news?

GC: Well, negative in the sense that, as you have people not reading print newspapers and getting their news online. You choose more what to read. It's not like you're reading a newspaper and are sort of forced to look at serious stories,



now you can target and you can say 'I'm just going to read Kim Kardashian and sports.' So yeah, a negative effect in that regard.

MO: A broader question, what do you think the primary function of the print news media is?

GC: That is broad. Very simple, to cover the news. If you're covering a country that takes up a whole continent, millions of people, that takes in a lot of things. That means there's a place in the newspaper for sports, there's a place in the newspaper for Kim Kardashian and there's a place for serious foreign policy. That's the beauty of a newspaper, it has different sections and covers the totality of life. If you're doing a good job, you're covering your community well, so you're also covering what's important in the neighborhood.

**Mike Dorning**

MO: Where do you work?

MD: At Bloomberg news, in the Washington bureau.

MO: How long have you worked there?

MD: At Bloomberg?

MO: Yeah

MD: I started here in August 2009, so I guess that would be four years.

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

MD: A long time. Since 1987, so that would be 26 years right.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

MD: Basically since 1996, so that would be, I guess 17 years, right? Yeah.

MO: What is the nature of your job at Bloomberg?

MD: White House correspondent.

MO: How does a seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

MD: The primary change is that it is much more deadline driven, and much more Web driven. Back when I started, basically you wrote that day's paper, you wrote one time a day. That was considered a daily story, and then you'd do more enterprise stories. So there's much more of a premium on short stories about what is going on. But also, there is, not too much at Bloomberg but at other places, there seems to be more opinion journalism, I think that's less of labor intensive and less costly. And all journalism organizations have much more financial pressure than they used to.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment?

MD: Certainly I've heard of it, yes.

MO: In your own terms, how would you define it?

MD: Information that is more for entertainment purposes than illumination of

what's going on.

MO: What are some of the challenges in securing interviews with politicians?

MD: I think it's always been challenging in some ways to get interviews with politicians. But the mainstream media outlets, like I used to work at the *Chicago Tribune*, and now I work here. To some extent, the media world is more fragmented and they can choose the venue they can go to. Bill Clinton started that with going on 'Arsenio,' and things like that. Barack Obama can be on shows that have more of an entertainment role and choose very precisely what he wants to do instead of submitting himself to political or economic reporters want to ask him about.

MO: Has this been consistent or is this a new challenge?

MD: In a sense, it has always been a problem even before I became involved in journalism. The traditional mainstream media has less of an audience, compared to—proportionate to all of the other channels that politicians can use to steadily become and harder for mainstream political journalists to be the one to have access to the top newsmakers. Being one step below the president, it's very easy to talk to members of congress or senators. One thing you have to realize is that if you are not a president or a former first lady or the son of John F. Kennedy, a lot of America doesn't know a lot of political figures other than Hillary Clinton, Ted Kennedy who is now dead, Barack Obama, a few others; Americans aren't that familiar with people who are active in politics, so, below the presidential level, it's not that hard to get interviews as you might think.

MO: When you do get interviews with politicians, do you feel pressure from the readers or editors to focus on the politician's life at all?

MD: Not at Bloomberg. Bloomberg is not that way at all, now at the *Chicago Tribune* there was more push in that direction, but with at Bloomberg, no, none at all.

MO: What about focusing on the human aspect of them?

MD: I wouldn't say there is a ton of pressure from editors to focus on the human aspect of politicians here at Bloomberg, but if I'm writing about someone's portrait and character, I guess that makes more readable and gives you a better connection with the person. But Bloomberg is very substantive to a fault sometimes. They are not doing stuff for entertainment purposes. Our Bloomberg material appears on the Web is used in newspapers, news services and things. The core way Bloomberg makes money is for people to pay \$20,000 a year to get the full service and those people are doing it because they are interested in economics and politics, and government and they make money by understanding that. They are not oriented to soft or fluffy things. They aren't like someone who is paying a quarter, or now a dollar for a newspaper or flipping through television channels.

MO: How much did you say those core readers pay a year?

MD: 20,000 per fingerprint. They're not allowed to share, you have to sign on with your fingerprint every time.

MO: Wow.

MD: It's a different clientele from when I was working for the *Chicago Tribune*.

MO: As far as other traditional news outlets outside of yours, do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment over news values?

MD: Particularly a lot of the cable television seems to be. Places like *The New York Times* are not, I think *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* all have a pretty good balance, but a lot of what you see on television, which is what more Americans see, is more entertainment oriented these days

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for you?

MD: For me, at Bloomberg, almost not at all. When I was at the *Chicago Tribune*, where I was until 2009, I would have editors saying they wanted me to be on top of, ya' know, the Obama kids got swing sets and things like that, they were much more into infotainment aspects of White House coverage and campaign coverage. But here, really not at all. When I was at the *Tribune* I'd write some stories that would look like of look substantively how entertainment values formed the political conversation, like ads that were running on '24' to kind of hype terrorism concerns and things. But here at Bloomberg to do not find any pressure from editors in that direction.

MO: How long did you work at the *Chicago Tribune*?

MD: Seventeen years. I started in Oct. 1990. More than that I guess, I started in 1990, I left in 2009, so 19 years.

MO: Nineteen years, ok. And overall when it comes to newspaper industry, have you noticed an impact of infotainment in political reporting, specifically?

MD: Oh sure, especially when you set aside *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, ya' know, places like the *Chicago Tribune* became much more personality, entertainment focused over the last decade or two. *USA Today* has become more that way. Any number of newspapers have.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news with have a positive, negative or neutral effect on quality of news?

MD: Probably overall somewhat negative, but I am not as worried about that as, not having any. I think the main thing is, if you have core, substantive coverage that helps. But you can have I think a kind of entertainment through comedy approach, like you have on the Jon Stewart show that I think is very substantive in the tradition of satire, that's a little different than straight news that I cover, and people in journalism school do, but I think that, I think that's an important contribution to political discussion. That does back to Jonathan Swift and his essay on 'why not let the Irish eat their babies.' That kind of—points out the absurdity of the free market response that people were abdicating to Irish poverty.

MO: In your opinion, what do you think is the primary function of the news media?

MD: I would say that, in the news media, there is a difference in the function of say, Bloomberg news versus *The New York Times*, versus community newspapers, versus cable television. Loosely defined, I would say to inform and illuminate, you wouldn't like to hear the word entertain, but certainly engage the reader. And I guess you could say that entertainment, to someone who's going to into journalism I'd say, inform and engage readers.

MO: Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment helps fulfill these functions because it engages the readers, as you said. Is that kind of what you were saying?

MD: I'd say, well done, yes it can. A lot of times what I see in cable television news, it's hard because they don't have great resources or time to do things, can be rather trite. But when you were talking earlier about human interest elements, in many ways, if you can bring to life someone's character and personality, particularly someone whose seeking political office, that's probably pretty important, and I think that can be helpful.

MO: Now on the other side of it, as far as entertainment that focuses on news, do you think that helps fulfill the function, the broader function of the news media?

MD: What do you mean by the entertainment side that focuses on news?

MO: Such as talk shows, 'Daily Show,' things that are intended to be entertainment but then cover news topics as well.

MD: I think they have something to add, I think it's different from than what I would do, but I think that does have a role to play, to the discussion, when done well. Because they are making, in an entertaining way, important substantive points and although most of them have a point of view these days, they are kind of making people aware of important controversy.

MO: Why do you think politicians choose to engage in forms of infotainment?

MD: In the Obama campaign, which I covered in 2008, and I've covered the White House since, I know their reasons were that they wanted to reach voters where they were. That's the reason for their Web strategy, the reason why they would reach out to nontraditional media, why President Clinton would be on 'Arsenio Hall,' President Bush I think did an interview with *Runner's World*. Obama's done everything from I think Jon Stewart to Charlie Rose, not to say Charlie Rose is anything but incredibly serious, but the idea is, they want to sell themselves to voters, so they go where the voters are, and they want to reach them in many different ways and going to entertainment outlets can help them do that.

MO: Who do you think infotainment benefits, if anyone?

MD: It's hard to say that one slice benefits, but I guess it benefits anyone who has a compelling story that can be told glibly and quickly. So, what it benefits is people who have a easily understood, compelling story, and it probably detracts from policy debates where there's more nuance to them. During the 60s, a lot of the cultural changes in the country, people didn't call it infotainment back then, but they were making back then, the expression was something like 'the political is personal.' And there was the personal impact of politics that people would show in very compelling ways that could change in real ways, American society, civil rights, anti-war, gender equality, nowadays, equal rights for gay people, gay marriage. There is a side that's a little more substantive to all of that. There's also the White House correspondence dinner, and the 'Access Hollywood' comes to Washington approach that's maybe sort of more glib and not a lot of substance to it. Like anything, it sort of depends on the good and bad impact.

## **Charles Lewis**

MO: Can you tell me where do you work?

CL: I am senior editor in Hearst newspaper's, Washington bureau.

MO: How long have you worked there?

CL: 24 years

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

CL: I just have to figure that out. Every ten minutes I get asked that and I have to figure that out. And when I figure it out I say holy crap. Is that right? Wow. . . 46 years.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

CL: Well I've been in Washington for 31 years. But I . . . Please, I've covered lots of things. I know you are not coming at me as a 'politics specialist.

MO: No, just somebody who just covers politics. Not necessarily

CL: Oh no, I cover politics

MO: What is the nature of your job currently?

CL: I report, edit, assign, coach, do whatever needs to be done.

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry over the beginning of your career?

CL: I'm going to talk about reporting. Reporting has changed for the better actually. In the sense that our tools of information gathering have expanded by virtue of technology to an amazing degree. And we used to have a publication called Facts on File, which was a loose-leaf folder that was supplemented every week with several pages of new information about public events for the previous week. So, if you tried to remember was it 'Tuesday' or 'Thursday' that Obama did such-and-such, we would have to get up, go to the library and pick up this loose-leaf folder called Facts on File and 'look to see, oh there it was Friday that Obama did this. So, just in terms of the gathering of information, which is the main function of a reporter, the first function, I should say. Now I could just do a search engine on a computer and have that information within five seconds. How cool is that? So the technology has helped us as reporters immeasurably and has changed our job for the better making it easier to be accurate, comprehensive and to see stuff otherwise we may not have

time to see.

MO: From your perspective where you work, what are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians?

CL: Getting their attention and their time is always a bit of a challenge. And that is determined somewhat by where the news organization is in the food chain. When I was the Bureau Chief for the AP, I think my phone calls were returned faster than they were when I was bureau chief here with Hearst. When I was the BC here or for the NY times, the speed of return would have exceeded the speed of return when my calls was as AP bureau Chief. But in the food chain, if you have twenty things to do and you have time to do six, what six are you going to choose to do? That's a personal calculus that varies from day to day. But, part of that would be the importance, the influence of the audience of the news organization that is trying to reach out to you. So, that's a variable that depends on the situation. And, all sorts of individual components that make it difficult for me to sit here and pontificate about.

MO: Do you think Hearst generally has had the same amount of difficulty compared to AP or New York Times or has that increased or gotten easier over time do you think?

CL: Melissa, we are a regional bureau. For example, we have six newspapers in Texas. And, I can assure you when we are calling members of the Houston congressional delegation; we are at the top of their list. You need to know the difference between a national org and a regional org. We are a regional newspaper. Don't compare me to CBS.

MO: Now kind of switching to more closer to my particular topic, have you ever heard of the word 'infotainment'?

CL: Sure

MO: In your own words, how would you define it?

CL: It's has got a heavy dose of entertainment and usually has information about entertainers or entertainment- try Hollywood reporter. Have you ever heard of the Hollywood reporter?

MO: Yes, I was just reading something on there this morning.

CL: And it's a serious newspaper that covers the entertainment industry. I think you are angling for more of the Hana Montana buff?

MO: It's not just necessarily that, it's more or less how print journalists view their job. Is it effective by the change in infotainment?



CL: Okay, this is what I thought you wanted to talk to me about when we set this up I am going to sneeze hold on a minute. . . It went away. Melissa, I have been thinking about the topic we are trying to get our brain around here ever since you mentioned it last week. I guess I don't understand your angle. I guess you're making an assumption that somehow that everyone in the world is interested in Hana Montana. That's just not the case.

MO: No, that is not it all

CL: Then tell me what your question is then? Is your question 'how has infotainment affected my work? ZERO! Goose-egg.

MO: One aspect of it is looking at politician's personal life as opposed to just their political perspective, so focusing on family, focusing on gaffes, focusing on the softer side of politicians as opposed to just the serious topics also factors into that as well. So, I want to see if reporters feel any pressure from editors to focus on the softer sides of the human aspects of politicians.

CL: This is certainly not infotainment. This goes back to I would say the change in reporting culture that was brought by the Vietnam War and Watergate where the personal character of our leaders suddenly emerged as the road maps to public policy, the explanation for public policy, the explanation of their behaviors suddenly became more newsworthy because of the policies they were pursuing. Suddenly people were psychoanalyzing President Nixon. 'Who is this guy?' 'How can he do this?' What made him do this? What kind of values did he have as a child? Who raised him? Does he go to church? What creed does he embrace? Where is his sense of integrity? So suddenly you are way off from dry policy and you're talking about human characteristics. And, they are news driven. Linden Johnson, What made him want to go to war in a losing cause that everybody in the country almost could see, almost, as a losing cause. What in his background lead him to this fanatical mission that took the lives of 58 thousand Americans? Who is this person? These are news values that are explained by the investigations into the personality and human background of our leaders. That's not infotainment.

MO: There is several different definitions of infotainment and I am just kind of accessing what reporters think from their own perspective what is considered that. From your own perspective is totally different from what I have been hearing from others and I am only half way through so I am sure I will get a lot of other opinions. Which is why it is so important that I talk to you because your opinion is so valuable and so different. And my one question that I have is whether speaking to your paper and what you see in other papers do you feel traditional news outlets do get focused on entertainment over new value? Or do you feel that print journalism has largely kind of stayed focus on more traditional news values?

CL: Well okay, Melissa, there are so many different gradations of product. I hate to use that word but there used to be, 34 years ago there used to be just pick a number, 10 news outlets in your life and in my life. And now there are hundreds, thousands. The Internet has made it limitless. So I think it is important that your analysis keep in mind the explosion of media outlets for example, Drudge and I have nothing in common. And yet people call him a journalist. They call me a journalist. Drudge and I have nothing in common. And, that's just an example of a really different approach to our work. So there is no, I urge you to be very cautious you about squeezing people or points of view into a single mold. It may have been possible 34 years ago. It's not remotely possible now.

MO: Well thinking about if we were to define the term infotainment as the infiltration of entertainment into news and news into entertainment, so kind of like the blurring of the lines between the two. Do you think that that could have a positive, negative or neutral effect on the quality of news?

CL: I don't see that happening. I don't see the blending as you're referring to. I'm obviously not reading the same things you're reading. In Washington, the only blending that I see on that is when Hollywood star 'A' is invited by Senator 'grunt' to appear with the senator grunt before a committee on the hill that is considering a federal appropriation or a cause that the Hollywood star 'A' is interested in and is happy to be publicized as being interested in. Well, let's just take animal welfare, the humane society, so there's a question of federal appropriations for some kind of humane society program. Hollywood star 'A' appears with Senator grunt. Senator grunt is happy with the publicity. Because, if you saw the Hollywood star you would know the senator grunt would be very pleased to be photographed alongside Hollywood star A when the Hollywood star appears before the committee to testify on behalf of the federal appropriations or the Humane Society. But that's the only blending we see here in Washington.

MO: Do you think that...

CL: I don't think I'm the right person for your interview.

MO: You really are giving a good insight...

CL: The assumptions you're making is that somehow there's this blending. Melissa, I am here to tell you, on October 2, 2013, there ain't that kind of stuff as to the extent that you seem to assume.

MO: My question was is it or is it not more or less, and you saying it's not important...

CL: More or Less, the answer is decidedly less. I hate to destroy your thesis.

MO: I don't have as much of a thesis necessarily as I more or less wanting to hear this from the perspective of print journalist because this is largely only talked about in broadcast. But I was wondering what print journalists think about if they think it's, you know...

CL: The broadcasts I listen to has nothing to do with what you're talking about. I listen to, Top of the hour, CBS news. I listen to PBS news hour in the evening. There's none of that stuff.

ML: Okay, those ones don't seem to have any of the characteristics that you would see in something like CNN or something like that which tends to be stupid-softer when it comes to these kinds of topics.

CL: That's my point. There is such an array of media outlets, I can sit here at my desk and I can take in fifty different brands or fifty different flavors of information I choose not to watch Hollywood squares. I choose not to. I choose to watch something that is not soft.

I'm just saying keep in mind that there is an explosion of media outlets that infotainment may be polluting some of them, more than others. But, it's not polluting everything

MO: I know that and that's one big aspect of it too. Is that there are definitely large chunks of it that's completely unaffected that will remain unaffected. This is more or less just getting opinion of people in the industry, and see what they are seeing. When it comes to news outlets that are a little softer on politicians, why do you think politicians choose to engage in those particular types of news outlets? Or to be interviewed by those particular types?

CL: Because the politician is dealing with the same kind of fragmented market that I am and they are trying to reach all fragments that they can. And they will deal with those different media outlets that address the different fragments, the different niche audiences that they feel they should be in touch with.

MO: That is perfect. Is there anybody else that works in any of the bureaus around that you think would be good for me to interview?

CL: People magazine has a Washington bureau and you might try them.

MO: Thank you very much I appreciate your interview.

**Jonathan Martin**

MO: How long have you worked for *The New York Times*?

JM: Started in June (2013).

MO: And where did you work before there?

JM: *Politico*.

MO: And how long have you been working as a journalist?

JM: Eight and a half years.

MO: And how long have you been covering national politics?

JM: Eight and a half years.

MO: What did you do before you were a journalist?

JM: I worked, actually, in politics.

MO: You worked where?

JM: In politics.

MO: What is the nature of your job at *The New York Times*?

JM: I am the national political correspondent.

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

JM: It's gotten fast, the Twitter era has sped up both the reporting and the consumption of political news.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment?

JM: Sure.

MO: How would you define it in your own words?

JM: Like the equivalent of fast food. It might be filling but it's not good for you.

MO: In your experience, what are some of the challenges in securing interviews with politicians?

JM: Staff. Staff that wants to restrict access because they want to manage the news or mangle their principle. There's less access now than there was in the early days to politicians because they're more guarded, they have layers of staff around them.

MO: So this is more of a new challenge then?

JM: New in the last 40 years, yeah.

MO: The last four years?

JM: New in the last 40 years. Access to politicians is not what it was because they're more guarded figures now.

MO: In your writing for *The New York Times*, do you feel any pressure from editors or readers to focus on a politician's personal life?

JM: Yes.

MO: In your writing for *The New York Times*, do you feel any pressure from editors or readers to focus on the human aspects of politicians?

JM: Sure.

MO: Do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment over news values, as in, trying to be entertaining over focusing on hard news?

JM: It depends on the news outlet you're talking about?

MO: Do you see that a lot in print?

JM: Print is better than anybody else in terms of commitment to hard news. TV is where you see more infotainment.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for you personally?

JM: I don't think it has. I don't work in TV. That's why I work in print.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry?

JM: Adversely. How's that for a sort answer.

MO: Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

JM: I think it's dumbed down the coverage, there's less time and dedication to doing quality reporting about politics and politicians on TV.

MO: The entertainment expansion into news, you think that will have a negative affect on the quality of news, correct?

JM: On TV?

MO: News in general, TV, print...

JM: You have to separate the two, I think print is sort of a hold out. I think there is still quality TV outlets that do serious reporting and analysis on politics and public affairs. But, the temptation in the TV industry to do so-call infotainment is much stronger than it is in print.

MO: What do you think the primary function of the news media is?

JM: To inform the public, private interest accountable to public interest.

MO: Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment helps fulfill these functions?

JM: No.

MO: Do you feel entertainment that focuses on news helps fulfill these functions?

JM: Depends on the nature of the entertainment.

MO: So, satire for example. Do you think that helps fulfill the functions?

JM: If people have a foundational understand of what's being satirized, sure. But's not going to be effective or funny if people don't know what's being mocked in the first place.

MO: So they have to have a base understanding of news without the entertainment before the entertainment can make sense?

JM: That's exactly right.

MO: Why do you think politicians engage in infotainment?

JM: Because they want to find a way to appeal to voters and connect to voters, beyond traditional reporting methods and sources.

MO: Do you think infotainment benefits anyone?

JM: Not really. I'm still old-fashioned.

## **Susan Page**

MO: What is your full name and title?

SP: Susan Page, Washington Bureau chief for *USA Today*.

MO: How long have you worked there?

SP: I've worked at *USA Today* since 1995.

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

SP: I've been working as a journalist since I got out of grad school and I graduated in 1974.

MO: Where did you do your graduate work?

SP: At Columbia.

MO: Other than *USA Today* what other publications have you worked for?

SP: When I got out of graduate school I went to work for *Newsday*. And then I went from *Newsday* to *USA Today*. So, those are the only two places I have worked since I've graduated. I had a bunch of summer internships, but we don't care about that.

MO: Where did you do your undergrad work?

SP: Northwestern.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

SP: I started covering national politics in December of 1979.

MO: What initially attracted you to politics?

SP: I actually had to move to the Washington bureau of *Newsday* without a particular beat. And they had an opening and I lived here so that is what they sent me out to cover – which was great. I liked it a lot. And, I enjoyed it and it's been [mostly] the White House and national politics.

MO: Currently, what is the nature of your job – if you could walk me through a pretty typical week?

SP: So, I spend about 25 to 30 percent of my time, third of my time, doing bureau chief stuff. We have a bureau here that has 17 reporters and in Washington. I work



with them setting policy, dealing with issues with about the bureau both logistical and substantive. And then, I spend, I would say, more than 2/3 of my time working as a reporter. And, as a reporter I do a couple of things: I do a weekly newsmaker interview called 'Capitol Download' that we started in January this year. I also do much of our coverage on national polls [like] *USA Today* Poll, Gallop and Pew. I do analysis of some big events, especially those involving the White House. And, especially during election years I do a lot of coverage of things like debates and big primary nights and that sort of things.

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career covering politics?

SP: There have been huge changes both in the way politics works and in the way reporters and news organizations cover politics. And, the biggest one, I think, reflects technological changes which have sped up the news cycle a lot and also that there are many more avenues for people to get political information, expect it a lot faster, and people have a lot more access to things that you're covering. They are now able to watch a speech on CSPAN that a politician is giving that you are writing about or going on YouTube to see a news event that needs covered. It's faster and more transparent than it was when I started.

MO: And do you think the changes have been positive, negative or neutral?

SP: I think they have been inevitable. And, I think there are big challenges about trying to continue to do journalism in a serious thoughtful way when a news cycle is so fast. On the other hand it's acted as a real fact check on what reporters write about because people can go and see for themselves what it is the reporters are characterizing. I think there are positive and negative aspects to it. But mostly I think it's inevitable. So, we need to figure how to accentuate the positive and deal with some of the challenges that are involved.

MO: Have you ever heard of infotainment?

SP: Yes sure, I've heard of the term infotainment which is, like entertainment- news that has become more concerned about entertainment than news value – sort of. Is that what you are talking about?

MO: Yes, the way that I'm finding it in my research it's news that enters in aspects of entertainment and entertainment that enters in aspects of news. So, the best well-known example is how CNN has their 'RidicuList' with Anderson Cooper and how 'The Daily Show' talks about news but is comedic as well. You've noticed this trend yourself as well, correct?

SP: There have always been, since we are going to the entertainers' side, there have always been entertainers that ripped of the news, right? Johnny Carson did. And,

that is not new. They are kind of very influential now. Politicians are more likely to go on a show like 'The Tonight Show' or 'The Daily Show' [now more] than in the past. And that has definitely been a trend. But the idea that there are entertainers that provide information or talk about the news, I don't think that's new. I also don't think it's new that news organizations look for ways to engage their listeners or their viewers in entertaining ways. There is more, there's been a bigger intersection between the two worlds than there used to be.

MO: Do you see that interception in print as well?

SP: I am trying to see if there are examples of it at *USA Today*. I'm not sure I do. I think of it as being maybe most obvious in TV. I'm not saying there are no examples in print, but I'm having trouble thinking of one. Do you have one you can think of?

MO: That's why I'm doing this research is because most of the opinion it is that it is most affecting television. And so, I want to see if the reporters are feeling like it is affecting them, too.

SP: I don't feel like it's affected me personally. And I am having trouble thinking of an example of how it's affected what we do at *USA Today*. But I wouldn't want to say it's got no affect at all or I'm trying to think about if there might be some examples, but they are not coming to me. I mean we care a lot about having readers come to us to read us and be engaged by us and to trust us. But the whole infotainment thing, I can't think of an example of how that's affected what we do here.

MO: When it comes to politics what do you see is some of the challenges that you see in secure interviews with politicians at *USA Today*?

SP: We have had huge success with getting interviews with politicians. We had interviews last year with both President Obama and Mitt Romney. We have had interviews with Michelle Obama and with Anne Romney. So, I think that *USA Today* almost has uniquely has an ability to get interviews with leading figures. I'm sure we are the only print organization that has interviews with all four of those characters in last year's campaign. I don't know, maybe there might be a TV outlet that did. But, because *USA today* is a national newspaper, and a huge newspaper and one that's pretty straightforward we are one that has great success at getting interviews with politicians.

MO: Do you think your success has been consistent? Have you seen a change in the ease of getting interviews? Has it always been this easy for you guys?

SP: No, I think there's a lot more competition for interviews now. Because, there are many more outlets that politicians can use to reach an audience; there's ethnic media, there's entertainment sources, like 'The Daily Show' that politicians go on now. I think it's become—the competition has become fiercer, generally, for news

organizations. But, I think *USA Today* is kind of uniquely positioned to do well, even in this new world.

MO: Do you as someone who is not just covering politics in general but you also cover the individual politicians as well, do you feel any pressure from editors or from readers to focus on the personal lives of politicians?

SP: I do not feel pressure from editors or readers to do that. I do think the personal side of politicians is an important thing to explore especially when someone is running President of the United States. And that's one reason, for instance, that I did an interview, a kind of a personal in-depth interview with Ann Romney last year about her and her struggle with MS and her relationship with her husband. I think that's something that's legitimate and something to explore when someone is running for national office. But that does not reflect pressure from my editors or my readers.

MO: And, on that same token, as far as covering personal life, is this in an effort to humanize them at all or is it just because the personal information is important for the voters?

SP: I think when someone is running for president, you need to give your readers a 360-degree understanding of them. And that involves who they are personally, and how they relate to people as well as their policy position.

MO: Do you feel that traditional news outlets, print outlets specifically, have become too focused on entertainment over news values?

SP: I don't think we have. No.

MO: Have you noticed other prints publications that you've seen have made that shift a bit?

SP: The print publications that I would read enough to have a serious sense of what they do would be, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*. I take those four print subscriptions at home and I read those publications every day. And, I don't think it's true of any of those. I also keep an eye on places like, I read a lot of *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*. And, I also don't think that's the case with them. And so of the publications that I follow enough to and have a sense of, I would say that's not the case.

MO: Do you think the rise of infotainment has affected political reporting for you at all? Or do you think *USA Today* been able to largely avoid this trend?

SP: I think it has a certain affect. In that we know that 'The Daily Show' has become influential with young people – for instance. And we know that public official and

political candidates go on shows like that in order to reach an audience is something we cover. I think that's all pretty traditional, right? If a public official is going to make a speech someplace, we are going to go cover it in that place. So I don't see it as a big impact of what we do, I don't.

MO: How do you think the impact infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry in general?

SP: You do see a big emphasis on the personal, in a lot of the TV coverage, not the nightly news, but the morning shows, and so on. But, I'm not sure that's actually infotainment. Isn't that what journalists always tried to do with prominent people and people running for office. I'm not sure that's an infotainment impact. I think someone in TV would be in better position to answer that.

MO: So, you're not really seeing it in print. From your perspective it's more of a TV issue?

SP: I guess, I'm saying I'm not seeing it, apart from politicians choosing to go on entertainment shows, I'm not sure I see a huge impact of it on TV either. But, you would get a more sophisticated and knowledgeable answer from someone whose working in TV.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news like news stations, with increased competition adding in more aspects of entertainment is having a positive, negative or neutral effect on the quality of the news?

SP: I don't see a big impact. I guess to the degree in which it encourages the organizations to focus on the trivial rather than the significant that would be a negative impact. But I'm not seeing a wholesale change in the way that major news organizations cover the news.

MO: In your opinion, what do you think is the primary function of the news media?

SP: The primary function of the news media is to cover the important things that are happening in our country and culture and our help our readers, listeners and viewers be informed of them and understand them.

MO: How do you feel that entertainment news programs help fulfill these functions?

SP: What do you mean by entertainment news?

MO: News that does focus on trivial and the news that does have a few more aspect on entertainment, do you think that those types of news programs help fulfill those functions?

SP: I can see a presidential candidate on a show like ‘The Daily Show’ or ‘The Tonight Show’ give people one more dimension of him to look—to try to decide who they are and if they are the person they want to lead the country that would be valuable. If you mean they focus on what people look like or some inadvertent gaffe that gets blown up, then I think that’s a less positive thing.

MO: You say there is a long history of talk show hosts ripping on the news and things like that and entertainers generally talking about the news has always been an important part of our culture, do you think that aspect fulfill the function of the news?

SP: I don’t know if it fulfills a function of the news. Back to the early days of our country there were political cartoonist who scored political points with cartoons and, satirical articles that were looking at American politics at its founding. And, I think that’s a component of a democracy that was valuable. It was then and it is now.

MO: From your perspective, why do you think politicians choose to engage in infotainment?

SP: Because it’s a way to convince people to vote for them.

MO: Just another avenue?

SP: It’s one more way to reach voters in the hopes of convincing them that you are the person they should vote for.

MO: Do you think Infotainment benefits anyone?

SP: I continue to struggle with the word ‘infotainment.’ Do I think the fact that politicians go on different kinds of shows now benefit people? Yeah. It’s like, if you’re looking for a three-dimensional look at someone, I think that’s a good thing. Do I think satire is an important part of our democracy? Absolutely. It’s not to the exclusion of other things. You need serious coverage. You need interviews with serious journalists on substantive topics as well. But, yes absolutely. I think it is part of our modern culture and our historical culture and it is one valuable aspect to a democracy.

MO: What do you think the future is for political reporting for the newspaper industry?

SP: I think it’s easy to talk about political reporting for the news industry because the newspaper industry is undergoing a lot of changes. And, we don’t know what is going to happen to the newspaper industry in the future. I feel confident there is going to be a *Wall Street Journal* covering the news in general and journalists covering politics in particular and now we’re exploring 15 different ways that may

be different in the future. It utilizes Twitter and Facebook. It relies on walls and postings, it increases uses of videos. There's lots of ways we are changing with times fundamentally. But the fundamental role of journalists in covering politics and particular for politicians overall to explain to provide contacts. This will be the case regardless of the language in which it is delivered.

**Alex Rogers**

MO: Where do you work?

AR: I work for *TIME* Magazine at the Washington D.C. Bureau

MO: And how long have you worked there?

AR: I started as an intern last year, last June (2012). I was on one of those provisional, hour-by-hour temp contracts, and I then I was fully hired in January of this year (2013).

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

AR: Before that I was at Vanderbilt University, an intern at the *Tennessean*.

MO: You said you went to Vanderbilt University?

AR: Mhm.

MO: And when did you graduate?

AR: 2012.

MO: Congratulations.

AR: Thank you, thank you.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

AR: When I was an intern at the *Tennessean*, I was fortunate enough to intern during an election year, so I think the first story I wrote was on the southern strategy. This was around when Newt Gingrich was going to come to Tennessee. And then I covered other things at the state capital there, and then another story about democratic fundraising events. At the time, with Ashley Judd. When I was an intern at the time, they gave me ample opportunity to write and I covered a variety of topics. I haven't really been covering the Hill like I am now for very long, which started last fall. And I really started, and I'm there pretty much every day.

MO: What is the nature of your job at *TIME* Magazine?

AR: Our main congressional correspondent, Alex Altman, he would be the main guy who would write stuff for the print magazine, so we did a cruise control article and he did a profile of, and I'm more of an online content writer, so I'll write an article every day, just things coming out of the Hill, online and the magazine. I'll help out

with the national page and the front most of the time, and then if we do a cover story like [unintelligible] I'll help out with that. At the bottom you might be able to see my name, reporting by Alex Rogers.

MO: In your opinion just by what you've seen in the past few years, how have you seen political reporting change in the industry?

AR: Well that may be a better question for my colleague Alex since I haven't been around as long as he has, I think with the advent of everything moving to digital, you see a drive to ways to tell a story to attract a wider audience. So you'll see Michael Crowley, he wrote an article, recalling a time in the D.C. bureau going up there as a correspondent, and he wrote a pretty smart article on the Iran negotiations and basically if you don't have time to go through a large [article for the magazine] here's a piece online you can go to. In three minutes, with pictures and text. It's pretty much a shorthand version of trying to understand a very complicated topic. Some say that BuzzFeed is trying to get into that type of journalism. And it's being adopted by a variety of different news outlets online.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment before?

AR: Yeah, I mean, it's something we talk about every day, I think when I was hired, the first goal you have is to inform and I think the secondary one is to entertain.

MO: How would you define Infotainment?

AR: How would I define it? I don't want to use the two words that are in the definition, but guess infotainment would be a way of educating the reader in a way that is easily digestible. If there's more of a technical term than that, and I'm mistaken, please let me know.

MO: I want to get an idea of how people in the industry define it just from what they've heard so I can kind of compare that to the scholarly definitions of it. The definitions that I've found through research are the melding of entertainment and news, so you have traditional news sources that are adding in aspects of entertainment and entertainment sources that are adding in aspects of news. And I see this more prominent in broadcast, so with this research I'm looking to see how popular and how necessary it is in print journalism.

AR: When I think of the word, in terms of print journalism, at least what we do online. We have a NewsFeed section of our website, and I see that would be more conducive to the entertainment brand than maybe other aspects of the news website. It's all with stories that are informational, but are meant to be shared.

MO: That could play a part of it, too. Writing a story with the intent of it going viral or, writing a story with the intent of it trying to serve a news function, but also



trying to make it more entertaining also, instead of just focusing on the hard news aspects of it.

AR: Yeah, I think that would be more of our NewsFeed section than our political section. You can kind of see from the numbers online how well a story does. And I think when you're writing hard news, it doesn't really have the same goal as entertainment. I think when you're writing on serious topics, you have to be completely on message, whatever you're trying to report on. And, I mean there's obviously the [unintelligible] making sure everything is well written, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's—you're not writing an article trying to gain readers, you're writing an article because it's an important topic people need to know about.

MO: With your job, do you get to interview a lot of politicians?

AR: Yeah, every day I go down to the Hill and I'll interview politicians on certain topics.

MO: What are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians?

AR: On the Hill, if you have relationships with the politicians, it's easier. For me, I go whenever the votes are, so if there's a vote in the senate, they'll come in and out of the room and into the chamber, they have to go to their offices, so I'll catch them when they're going to catch the train, or I'll catch them getting on the elevator. So the access is there, you are with them all the time and eventually you get to know them, and they recognize you, the same thing on the house side. So the longer you're here, the better access you can attain, but even if you're just a new reporter like I am, you can get some pretty impressive access. There was a similar thing when I was working at the *Tennessean*. You try to catch them as they go in between different places, yet again if you say you're writing a magazine article on them, writing a story on them, you travel with them and go with them to their offices. It's not like the White House.

MO: Do you feel any pressure from editors or readers to focus on politicians' personal life when you're writing about the politicians you interview?

AR: I think that the politicians personal life—if I'm writing an article about the farm bill, [a politicians personal life] doesn't really play at all in the story. If you're writing a profile of somebody, than that could be interesting, that could help you understand as a reporter what they're interested in.

MO: What about focusing on human aspects of them in a news story?

AR: A lot of the politicians will say 'I'm a small business man,' 'I'm a farmer,' 'I'm a doctor,' especially nowadays, it's more important for them to get it across that they

had a prior life before they got to D.C. With the exception of Mitch McConnell who is now running ads as a guy who can get things done, most of the politicians will emphasize how they're outsiders trying to change a broken system.

MO: Do you feel traditional news outlets, print outlets specifically, are too focused on entertainment over news values?

AR: No. Not at all. At the same times, we have an amazing blend of hard news, and culture as well. There are some magazines that are designed specifically for the intent of entertainment, but *TIME* doesn't have that.

MO: Do you think that impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry? If so, how do you think it has?

AR: I guess what we have now is a variety of different ways of getting your news. If you're really interested in Miley Cyrus, you can Google Miley Cyrus, depending on the top five searches for that, what will come up. I think that every news organization has their own personal mission, I don't think that *TIME* really has really needed to change, *TIME's* readers are really focused on what we do best. So for us, I don't really see the advent of infotainment really affecting us. But since we've been able to expand online, we've been able to enhance our ways of telling the same story.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral effect on the quality of news?

AR: Can you help me out, first off, with how entertainment has effected news?

MO: I'm thinking about it from the perspective of the softening of hard new, trying to make news more entertaining, trying to focus more on the softer aspects of it. So if you think of something like 'The Daily Show' for example that covers news topics, but tries to do it in a really interesting, entertaining sort of way. So as far as print newspapers doing it, do you think that is positive, negative or neutral when it comes to the quality of news.

AR: I think 'The Daily Show' has had wonderful impact on news, there's always been comedic reporters and I think Jon Stewart is one of the best that's out there. He packages it in a way that is extremely entertaining, and what he did with the first responders last year, there are things he covers that are extremely valuable. But in terms of entertainment seeping into news, you can also argue the opposite. You see BuzzFeed going into a little bit more of long form journalism now, *Politico* just released *Politico Magazine* this past week because they wanted to do some more long form, hard news as well. I think from a journalists perspective, there's enough appetite out there for multiple different ways of storytelling. I think for us, we see an uptick in Web traffic during the government shutdown, just as I'm assuming every

other outlet covering that story did because people want to understand how it's affecting them. So, I can see how entertainment has seeped into news in some respects, just because there's more outlets than ever to obtain in the news in whatever format you want it to be in.

MO: So you're thinking it's kind of a good thing? Entertainment and news together, you think that's positive?

AR: I mean I don't know if they've ever been mutually exclusive. The front page of every newspaper is hard news because that's what everyone wants to see, and in the back of every newspaper you have the style section, and whatever else you can see as being more entertaining. I think everyone has a thirst for the more serious topics of the day, especially in terms of politics, and I guess for me how the decisions on Capital Hill are affecting everyone's day-to-day life. I wouldn't say that entertainment has seeped into hard news, it hasn't really effected us that much. I think really with an online format, you have more ways of picking up the same topic.

MO: And what do you think the primary function of the news media is?

AR: The primary function is to inform, I think you have a nice way in the magazine to explore parts of the world that most people can't access, so we'll have a cover story on Michael Bloomberg and days afterword and we'll spend a few days with him, not everyone has that ability. But everyone has the ability to understand what a day in the life of his shoes should be like because our D.C. bureau chief Michael Scherer wrote a great cover story on it. I mean the primary thing is to inform, and report the truth and I think a secondary aspect is to entertain.

MO: Ok, so to sum it up. News and entertainment together, you feel helps fulfill these functions, because news requires a bit of entertainment—it kind of does both parts, correct?

AR: You have to be careful about trying to do something purely for entertainment in a hard news sphere. So if you're writing a political story and you're trying to make it entertaining, you don't want to fall into the vice of overblowing it, something significant. You have to be able to be hard hitting and tell something exactly how it is. But I don't think news has ever been mutually exclusive, not just entertainment, not just hard news. I think every media organization out there has had a combination of both to appeal to a wide variety of interests.

MO: In your opinion since you deal with politicians, why do you think politicians choose to engage in infotainment and interact with publications to TV shows that have more of an infotainment focus?

AR: There's a humanizing element for Ted Cruz to go on Jay Leno. You see this savvy politician who takes his shots and he probably, after the government shutdown, there has been a significant buzz around him and now would be a good time to let himself open a little bit and try to get past the things that have been written and now he wants to try to get into a moment where could let the nation understand a little more of his softer side, if you well.

MO: What did you say he went on?

AR: Jay Leno.

MO: Jay Leno. Ok.

AR: Ted Cruz is a good example of a politician trying to get outside of just being known for his opposition to Obamacare. Now he's trying to be known by some of the values he expressed on the show.

MO: My last question is, who do you think Infotainment benefits, if anyone?

AR: Who does infotainment benefit, if anyone? I don't know if I define infotainment in the proper, theoretical, academic sense, but the news benefits everyone. People who are interested in whatever they decide to be interested in and if that's politics or the VMA's, and twerking, that's their decision. I think the whole process is just a continual reexamining of life. These are very broad questions that the news gets them to. What should the role of government be? What does twerking say about the American social fabric? I mean, I'm not exactly sure if I'm understanding the proper academic term of infotainment, but no news organization has ever just been a purely—a source of hard source to understand complex topics, it's also been a source of entertainment as well.

**AB Stoddard**

MO: Where do you work?

AS: *The Hill* newspaper, I am a columnist and associate editor.

MO: How long have you worked there?

AS: since 2006, but worked at the same paper between 1996-1999 as a reporter.

MO: How long have you been working as a journalist?

AS: since 1990

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

AS: since 1994.

MO: What is the nature of your job?

AS: I write a column, post on our blog, tape Web videos, appear on TV and do radio - every week.

MO: How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

AS: Politics is more partisan and polarized so coverage of it tends to be more focused on the fight. There is more political gamesmanship than legislating these days so we tend to write more about politics than policy.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment?

AS: Yes

MO: How would you define the term infotainment?

AS: News that focuses on the most sensational or outrageous aspects of a story rather than the most important.

MO: What are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians?

AS: Politicians are often reluctant to talk, so some of them avoid interviews, particularly those on the record.

MO: Has this been a consistent issue or a new challenge?

AS: This is an old challenge.

MO: Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on politician's personal life?

AS: No, and I usually don't, but some of the stories from their personal lives that impact their work or their experience in Congress are often fascinating, and relevant.

MO: Do you feel pressure from editors or readers to focus on the 'human aspects' of politicians?

AS: Politicians are human, like the rest of us, so sometimes that becomes a story.

MO: Do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused on entertainment over news values?

AS: Not all of them.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for you?

AS: Because we publish in a 24 hour news cycle we have to cover everything and that will, in many cases, contain a lot of coverage of political battles.

MO: How do you think the impact of infotainment has affected political reporting for the news industry?

AS: We tend to seek out the political, instead of the policy, angle of each debate because it has become more entertaining to readers, viewers, listeners, etc.

MO: Do you think the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral affect on the quality of news?

AS: Negative, but the 24 hour news cycle has had just as much of a negative impact, if not more negative.

MO: What do you think the primary function of the news media is?

AS: It is our job to report to the public, and in some cases to analyze the news to provide voters the context in which events occur.

MO: Do you feel news with a focus on entertainment helps fulfill these functions?

AS: No.

MO: Do you feel entertainment that focuses on news helps fulfill these functions?

AS: Perhaps. Most young Americans now get their news from Jon Stewart.

MO: Why do you think politicians engage in infotainment?

AS: Many politicians, though not all of them, enjoy the spotlight and seek attention on television, Twitter, etc. because they believe publicity aids their reelection, fundraising, etc.

MO: Who do you think infotainment benefits, if anyone?

AS: In many cases it sells.

## Paul West

MO: I know that you recently retired, but where did you previously work?

PW: I worked at the Tribune Washington Bureau, which is the *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and a lot of other newspapers.

MO: How long did you work there?

PW: I went to work for the Baltimore sun 1985 as their political reporter, and the *Baltimore Sun* was eventually acquired by the *Los Angeles Times*, which was then acquired by the Tribune Company. In one way or another I was working with various elements of that company since 1985.

MO: How long have you been working as journalist?

PW: I started in 1973.

MO: How long have you been covering national politics?

PW: I guess I would say since about 1978 maybe, '79, '78 I guess. I mean ya know, when you do politics at the state level, which is what I was doing when I worked for a paper in Texas, it evolved into national stuff when I moved to Washington. I got to Washington in 1978. So I would say that was when I started doing national politics.

MO: When you were working up until you retired, what was the nature of your job?

PW: I did a lot of different jobs. I started out as Washington Correspondent for the *Dallas Times Herald* in 1978, I became the *Dallas Times Herald's* Washington Bureau Chief a few years after that. I then was hired by *The Baltimore Sun* as their national political correspondent in 1985. I became their Washington Bureau chief in 1991. Then I moved over to become the national political correspondence for the entire Tribune chain in 2010.

MO: So you clearly have been working as a journalist covering politics for a very long time. I'm sure you've notice how things have changed since you got started. How does it seem political reporting has changed in the industry since the beginning of your career?

PW: Well, you could write a dissertation on the subject. The several basic changes are, the most obvious are the changes that have affected journalism in general over the years, specifically the evolution of Internet and digital communications, that's a huge piece. But that's true of journalism in general. Political journalism, I would say the influences of other communications modes on first print journalism, ya' know the written part of journalism as opposed to electronic journalism, that's a big piece



of it. And then there's the whole separate issue of the role of the reporter and the relationship between reporters and candidates, politicians and their staff, that whole set of issues. A variety of different changes.

MO: The change between the reporter and the candidate. Can you talk a bit more specifically about how that's changed?

PW: Yeah, it's been a progression or a deterioration depending upon how you look at it. A devolution I think, as opposed to an evolution. The changes in communications methods have had an impact on the relationship between reporters and their sources in national politics, specifically there has been less and less. It's not a straight line, but if you graphed it on a chart, it would be a jagged line, in my opinion, going down. The amount of access journalists get to candidates. You have to divide somewhat. When you're talking about politics you have to sometimes separate out presidential politics from other types of politics because presidential politics are by their nature different and have their own sets of rules. But basically, less and less contact between reports and candidates and campaign and candidates finding more and more ways they think they can use to get around having to deal with reporters as intermediaries. And instead channel message to voters and the public without going through reporters.

MO: Have you heard of the term infotainment?

PW: Yeah, I saw that and I've heard of the term. I don't know how you'd define it exactly. Tell me how you are using it.

MO: We I'm using it as kind of the intersection between entertainment and news, so news sources having elements of entertainment and entertainment sources adding in elements of news. A kind of subsection of that is the kind of softening of news, so focusing on softer topics as opposed to traditional hard news topics.

PW: Okay, so give me some examples of what you're talking about. I think I know what you're talking about, but give me some examples.

MO: The best examples that I see tend to be in broadcast, so you see things like 'The Daily Show' and things like that, but you also have CNN and Anderson Cooper has the 'RidicuList.' He'll be serious and then he'll switch over to something comedic. With print, one of the reasons why I'm doing this research is because I want to see if print reporters are seeing it at all in their industry, because it is more prominent in broadcast. So, with print, I've noticed more of just a focus on softer news, more focus on features, and when it comes to political reporting, too – More of a focus on the softer topics as opposed to the hard news questions.

PW: Well, I mean you have to realize in any kind of journalism, your goal is to communicate with a reader, or I guess a viewers, you have to communicate with an

audience, so it's in your interest to make whatever you- I'll just stick to what I do which is writing, what I do, what id did – you want to make what you write interesting enough that people will actually read it. A lot of people get into or justify their work as journalists on the basis that what you're doing is providing information for, in this case voters, that can help them make an informed decision in a democracy. And that reporters in that sense play a number of different roles, including holding candidates to the truth, truth-squading or fact checking, whatever you want to call it. This is sort of the opposite side of the spectrum from what you're talking about, there has been a very healthy growth of places where readers or voters can go, whether it's Politifact or things like that, there are various resources that news organizations or reporters use to fact check things that candidates do. And one of the benefits of the advances in communication like the Internet, is that these websites are there all time to go to and they can become a growing resource as more information is added to them. One of the frustrations in the early days of doing this – I'm rambling a little bit, but just to talk about one thing that reporters do – it's always been standard process, at least over the past 20 or 30 years, for news organizations to take a look at campaign commercials and try to examine the validity of the claims being made, and what the candidate are trying to do. And those sorts of things before the Internet, those sorts of fact checking, or whatever you want to call them, ad-watch is something people sometimes called it, that would run one time in a newspaper and you know it might say 'candidate so and so is running this very misleading ad that makes all these claims that aren't true and here's what the real truth is and here's the stuff that the candidate's doing.' And that particular critical item would run one time in a newspaper, and the ads would one time in a newspaper and the ads would run hundreds of times on the television for weeks and weeks. The impact of the critical analysis would be pretty small. Now that you have these various fact checking organizations and fact checking sites and fact checking websites, of news organizations or of independent organizations, I think that gives stuff a little more salience in this particular era. I don't think, to go back to your question, I don't think that print journalists are necessarily that conscious of trying to tailor their, to try to match the infotainment that you might see on TV, reporters are aware that a lot of voters, especially younger voters, get a lot of their information from 'The Daily Show' or humorous or satirical programs on television, as opposed to more traditional news sources, but I don't think that necessarily leads you to approach what you do any differently. Having said that, to go back to the original point. You do want people to read what you're writing, often that means that you want to not only be a lively writers, but you want to personalize the story in ways that make it less dry, and make it at least somewhat more accessible to readers. Does that make sense?

MO: Going back to something you said a little earlier about access – what are some of the challenges to securing interviews with politicians now?

PW: I think the biggest challenge, and again this depends on specific candidate or the specific race, but I think there is an increasing belief by candidates and their

advisors that they don't have to subject themselves to interviews or they don't have to take the risk of agreeing to an interview or they don't want to take the chance—there's been a lot written about this—of mingling with reporters in informal situations for fear that something's going to get said and immediately get tweeted or somebodies gonna be there with a cellphone camera, a smartphone camera and it's gonna show up on YouTube. People are much more guarded and much more cautious, and that has put much more distance between reporters and candidates. I do think YouTube, which predates Twitter, YouTube was a very important part of that. There were a number of famous incidence where candidates were caught on tape saying things. And there's no question that the power of having something on tape, on video is much greater than print, obviously it's much more important to electronic news organizations, which are more much influential than print organization are, etc. etc. So that's part of it.

MO: This issue with access, is this a new issue, a new challenge or is this something you've seen ongoing since you started working in journalism?

PW: It's ongoing; it's just become more and more difficult. Access has been steadily reduced. That's particularly true of presidential politics. The most recent example being the Romney campaign, where there was very little contact between the presidential candidate and the reporters who were covering him. But the same was true of Obama. It's true of presidents. It's always been true, but from a reporter's standpoint, it's gotten worse. Basically, politicians, and candidates and their advisers and office holders have concluded that they just don't need to do this and as time goes on I think there's a real risk to democracy in having this distance between politicians and candidates and the press since after all the job of the reporter is to act as surrogate for the voter or the public. It's a way of distancing yourself from the public, which is sort of inherently anti-democratic.

MO: In your own work, do you feel that you ever had pressure form editors or readers to focus on the personal life of politicians?

PW: No, I was lucky. I think it depends on who you're talking to and who the news organization is. I was very lucky to have worked for news organizations and to have worked under editors who didn't necessarily care to be the first people to report a personal scandal of a personal nature involving the personal life of a political figure, as opposed to looking, we always want to be looking for information about candidates that will be important to voters that will help them make an informed judgment, that includes whether that particular candidate or politician is honest, and certainly that's a very important part of the job. The watchdog function of a journalist and of journalism is one of the most important things that journalists do, but that doesn't necessarily go into the question of digging into aspects of their personal life that don't have a relationship to their ability to do their jobs.

MO: Do you feel, just from what you've observed and from understanding the industry well, as far as print publications are concerned, do you feel traditional news outlets are too focused overall on entertainment over news values?

PW: Traditional news organizations? Well I don't know. If you consider the Internet to be a form of entertainment as opposed to information, if you consider unique page views or clicks to be a form of ratings then I think you can make an argument that there has been more of a focus on that in recent years than there was in the past. It's sort of a cliché that a politician or candidate or an office holder who is being critical of a news organization will make the claim that a particular story was printed or run in order to sell newspapers in the old days, or in order to get more advertising revenue or whatever by getting a bigger audience. And I don't think that was ever the case over the old form of journalism before the Internet. That was cliché, that was a stereotype that just wasn't, at least in my experience, it's not that it never happens in our business, but at the news organizations that I was fortunate enough to work for, that simply wasn't true. When you worked on a story, you wanted a good story, you wanted a story that people would be interested in talking about, and you wanted a story that would shed light on something important, or even not important, but it would just tell people something they didn't know. But you never thought, 'Oh, if I do this it's going to sell more newspapers.' There is now, unfortunately, but inevitably, more pressure on journalists to do their part to help their news organization get more viewership online. I think that's regrettable and I'm not sure that's something that's gonna go away or that can be reversed. But it's certainly if it's not a fad at the moment, it's certainly something that's been around for a few years and doesn't show any signs of going away. Does that make sense?

MO: Yes it does, and I've heard that too from some of the other people that I've spoken to. So you feel that, with the publications you got work for, you don't really feel like the impact of infotainment really affected your political reporting, correct?

PW: Well, again. I'm sure that if I thought about it, there would probably be ways that I might think that there was an effect. Because I think that depends on how you define it. It's not a term that I think about a lot when I think about the work that I did. So it's hard for me to make a categorical statement and say no, but I've tried to explain what I thought, and I don't think anything really pops into my head that comes up as a clear example of that sort of thing, other than what's happening now with the not very subtle and sometimes overt pressure to do things to get more online viewership.

MO: Do you think that the entertainment expansion into news will have a positive, negative or neutral effect on the quality of news?

PW: It's hard to say, I guess I don't see it having a direct effect beyond the things that we've talked about. I mean if you're telling a reporter that they need to spend more time on Twitter, or more time blogging stuff online that is aimed mainly at building

an audience, that takes time away from what they could be otherwise doing that might be more valuable in the end to the public, such as investigative reporting or more in-depth analysis, or digging up something that nobody else knows about as opposed to recycling stuff just to get eyeballs, so if that's infotainment, then that's a harmful effect. Even if it's more indirect than influencing exactly- it doesn't mean that political reporter for the *LA Times* is going to spend a lot of his time, trying to write jokes that are going to make 'The Daily Show' or something like that. That's not something that is going to happen anyway, but that person wouldn't set up a separate blog that's necessarily devoted to entertaining people about politics with jokes, or something like that.

MO: When it comes to entertainment sources that focus on news, do you think that that helps fulfill the functions of journalism?

PW: Let's take the best example. I've only been a sporadic consumer of the—a lot of people know think 'The Daily Show' is an important journalistic institution, I have a very good source, as an example, a good source who thinks that the criticism that Jon Stewart gives of politicians or public officials provides a very valuable reality check that isn't happening elsewhere. And so I think that that's something that's probably important. I just don't watch that show very much, so I'm not a very good source on that. I might be more inclined to watch 'Saturday Night Live.' I think those programs—I think you could go back through and perhaps people you've talked to have—you can go back through the history of entertainment and satire in the television age, whether you're talking about 'The Tonight Show,' or Bob Hope, or any of these people and going back 50 years or more, that's always been—television entertainment has always been a barometer of public opinion, sometimes a leading indicator of public opinion, ya' know even long before the Internet or long before 'The Daily Show,' and long even before 'Saturday Night Live,' the one thing you didn't want to be, if you were a politician, is the subject of jokes on Johnny Carson or 'The Tonight Show.' So that in politics that was seen as a warning sign that someone was in trouble if they were making jokes about them. If you're the president or you're an elected official, you don't want people laughing at you. I don't know in your research how you divide all that stuff out, and whether you consider that a piece of what you're talking about. People think of Jon Stewart as a form of journalism, I think he's more like Johnny Carson than he is like Maureen Doud or somebody who writes commentary. That's a bad example, because she is something of an entertainer, a straight journalist, a political reporter, a Dan Blaz of the *Washington Post* would be pretty far from Jon Stewart.

MO: He's actually the next person I'm interviewing, Dan Balz.

PW: That's good.

MO: Why do you think politicians choose to engage in infotainment, or soft news outlets?

PW: Because it's a great way to show their human side, and that's very important to a politics, because of what we've been talking about, because these are huge audiences, whether you're talking about Bill Clinton on 'The Tonight Show,' what was then the 'Arsenio Hall' program, people going on MTV back when that was a big deal, or going on 'Saturday Night Live' or these other programs, first of all those are big audience, those are a lot of voters, and it's a chance to humanize yourself and often without putting yourself at risk of facing a tough question or an uncomfortable question you don't want to answer.

MO: Do you in your writing focus on human aspects of politicians or were you told that you needed to focus on human aspects of politicians?

PW: What do you mean by human aspects?

MO: More of a personality of them, their families, things like that. Their flaws, their positive sides, things that don't necessarily have to do with their political agenda.

PW: Oh sure, if you're a reporter the question you get from your family or your friends about somebody that you cover is 'what's he or she like? What kind of a person is he or she?' and you certainly want to convey aspects of personality and character, character is very important in presidents in probably all elected officials, but especially in the most important offices. I think you have to separate out issues like character, what sort of a person somebody is from the more tabloid types of things. But especially when you're covering a presidential candidate, nothing is off limits, you want to look for anything that will illuminate a person or a candidate or a politician or elected official, you want to find whatever you can that will illuminate them for voters. And I wouldn't say that, I was fortunate enough. I was never getting pressure to go look for sex scandals or something like that. But certainly you want to look at everything, every aspect of the people that you're covering.

MO: Do you think infotainment benefits anybody?

PW: It benefits the entertainment companies that put it on, it benefits the people who, if they're on television, it benefits their careers. I think we talked about the fact that it can benefit a candidate or a politician or an elected official under certain circumstances. That's why the president continues to participate in those sorts of programs from time to time. It helps him get his message out, it helps him connect with the public with the voters on a different level, so sure. I think that everybody who knows the area can benefit from it. Without getting up on a soap box, you can look into whether there's a coarsening of the culture that's a bad thing, or you can look into whether that takes away people's attention from more serious subjects like public policy, but sure I think there are lots of benefits for the people involved in it.

MO: From what you've observed, do you think newspapers are going in that direction, or do you think newspapers will keep doing what they do and not really be affected?

PW: I think newspapers have already been affected. I think the term newspaper is an increasingly archaic term, I think we're in the twilight of the age of newspapers, I don't think we're in the twilight of the age of news organizations. I think you have to be careful. A newspaper, if you're talking about a dead tree printed product, that's a delivery mechanism that's gonna go away. If you're talking about a newspaper as a news organization whether it's the *Los Angeles Times*, or *The Baltimore Sun* or the *Washington Post*, or *The New York Times*. Whether you get it on a piece of paper, whether you get it on a tablet, it's almost insignificant at this point. What's important is the quality of the journalism, the caliber of the people who produce it, the seriousness by which they produce it, and their ability to make enough money to continue to do it into the future. I take the example of *The New York Times*, which is the best news organization in America, if not the world, they're constantly moving in the direction of different sorts of engagement with their audiences and attempts to be livelier in what they produce, whether it's written articles or the videos that they're doing, or the multimedia stuff, magazine style that they've moved into. I just think it's all about keeping and maintaining an audience that will provide you with the resources to continue to do the most important thing you do which is, as we discussed earlier, the watchdog function of journalism, whether it's exposing wrongdoing in government or letting people know more about the people who want to be our leaders. So I think all of that becomes a very blurred line between journalism and what you're calling infotainment. Does that make sense?