

How Journalists Shift Toward Engaging Historically Marginalized Communities in a Digital Age

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discover how and why journalists within nonprofit or startup newsrooms are changing routines to engage people who would not be typical or traditional readers. This qualitative research study shows how journalists are changing routines toward engaging historically marginalized communities through technology and creativity, such as utilizing text messages and community theatre as means of engagement. This study also reveals why those changes in routines matter as journalists link new routines in engagement to the long-term vitality of journalism.

Mainstream journalism's history with marginalized communities — defined in this study as low-income residents and minorities — is not favorable, and current readership statistics reveal how damaging those trends have been for the industry. If journalists believe that news-consumption leads to more-informed people and to a better functioning democracy, then it is up to journalists to make the first move toward inviting untypical readers into the news-making process. Engaging historically marginalized communities can lead to a more stable financial future for journalism, and journalists interviewed in this study believe that engagement routines are a huge part of their role in democracy. Thanks to new technology and journalism models, there has never before been such vast opportunity to reimagine journalism in the United States and how news fits into the fabrics of individual lives.